

One-Way Ticket

Langston Hughes

ILLUSTRATED BY JACOB LAWRENCE

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Unit 1

S I L H O U E T T E

Southern gentle lady,
Do not swoon.
They've just hung a black man
In the dark of the moon.

They've hung a black man
To a roadside tree
In the dark of the moon
For the world to see
How Dixie protects
Its white womanhood.

Southern gentle lady,
Be good!
Be good!



"SILHOUETTE"

ONE-WAY TICKET

I pick up my life
And take it with me
And I put it down in
Chicago, Detroit,
Buffalo, Scranton,
Any place that is
North and East—
And not Dixie.

I pick up my life
And take it on the train
To Los Angeles, Bakersfield,
Seattle, Oakland, Salt Lake,
Any place that is
North and West—
And not South.

I am fed up
With Jim Crow laws,
People who are cruel
And afraid,

Who lynch and run,
Who are scared of me—
And me of them.

I pick up my life
And take it away
On a one-way ticket—
Gone up North,
Gone out West,
Gone!



"ONE-WAY TICKET"

TOO BLUE

I got those sad old weary blues.
 I don't know where to turn.
 I don't know where to go.
 Nobody cares about you
 When you sink so low.

What shall I do?
 What shall I say?
 Shall I take a gun
 And put myself away?

I wonder if
One bullet would do?
 As hard as my head is,
 It would probably take two.

But I ain't got
 Neither bullet nor gun—
 And I'm too blue
 To look for one.



"TOO BLUE"

In the eyes once soft benighted
 And the cotton field is frightened
 A thousand miles away.

They draw up restrictive covenants
 In Australia, too, they say.
 Our President
 Takes up important matters
 Left by V-J Day.
 Congress cases Stalin.
 The *Tribune's* hair
 Turns gray.

Daddy-o
 Buddy-o
 Signs his name in uphill letters
 On the check that is his pay.
 But if he wasn't in a hurry
 He wouldn't write so
 Bad that way,
 Daddy-o.

GRADUATION

Cinnamon and rayon,
 Jet and coconut eyes,
 Mary Lulu Jackson
 Smooths the skirt
 At her thighs.

Mama, portly oven,
 Brings remainders from the kitchen
 Where the people all are icebergs
 Wrapped in checks and wealthy.

Diploma in its new frame:
 Mary Lulu Jackson,
 Eating chicken,
 Tells her mama she's a typist
 And the clicking of the keys
 Will spell the name
 Of a job in a fine office
 Far removed from basic oven,
 Cookstoves,
 And iceberg's kitchen.

Mama says, *Praise Jesus!*
Until then
I'll bring home chicken!

The **Diploma** bursts its frame
To scatter star-dust in their eyes.

Mama says, *Praise Jesus!*
The colored race will rise!

Mama says,
Praise Jesus!

Then,
Because she's tired,
She sighs.



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"GRADUATION"