***I Hear America Singing* and *I, Too Sing America***

Walt Whitman lived from 1819-1892 and lived some of his life in Brooklyn and Manhattan; Langston Huges lived from 1902-1967 and spent some of his life in Harlem. Walt Whitman was, incidentally, one of Langston Hughes’ favourite poets. Some poems deal with personal identity whereas others deal with a broader concept –in this case the American Identity.

Read through the poem *I Hear America Singing* by Walt Whitman:

Walt Whitman (1819-1892)

                       ***I Hear America Singing.***

    I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,
    Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe
              and strong,
    The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,
    The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off
              work,
    The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the deck-
              hand singing on the steamboat deck,
    The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing
              as he stands,
    The woodcutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way in the morn-
              ing, or at noon intermission or at sundown,
    The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at work,
              or of the girl sewing or washing,
    Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,
    The day what belongs to the day—at night the party of young
              fellows, robust, friendly,
    Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.

**Answer the following Questions:**

1. Who does the speaker represent
2. What does the speaker care about?
3. What is the tone of the poem?
4. How does the speaker feel about the America he hears singing?
5. Who is the America that Whitman hears? Who is not included?
6. Can you relate to this poem (maybe looking at Canada)…why or why not?
7. If you could visualize the poet speaking what would that look like/sound like?

**I, Too**

By [Langston Hughes](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/langston-hughes)

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.

They send me to eat in the kitchen

When company comes,

But I laugh,

And eat well,

And grow strong.

Tomorrow,

I’ll be at the table

When company comes.

Nobody’ll dare

Say to me,

“Eat in the kitchen,”

Then.

Besides,

They’ll see how beautiful I am

And be ashamed—

I, too, am America.

Langston Hughes, “I, Too” from *Collected Poems.* Copyright © 1994 by The Estate of Langston Hughes. Reprinted with the permission of Harold Ober Associates Incorporated.

**Answer the following Questions:**

1. Who does the speaker represent
2. What does the speaker care about?
3. What is the tone of the poem?
4. How does the speaker feel about the America he hears singing?
5. Who is the America that Whitman hears? Who is not included?
6. Can you relate to this poem (maybe looking at Canada)…why or why not?
7. If you could visualize the poet speaking what would that look like/sound like?

 **\*Create a Venn Diagram Comparing the above two poems**