

- **Author's Background** –
  - o Parents were freed slaves from Kentucky
  - o Known as the most influential African American poet in black literature.
  - o Dunbar was financially unable to attend college and took a job as an elevator operator.
- **Time Periods** –
  - o Fredrick Douglass died in 1895 which was the same year the poem was published.
  - o Abraham Lincoln was president
  - o Realism just emerged in literature
- **Use of Literary techniques**
  - o **Paradox** – Although Dunbar never said the poem is about African Americans, the subject of the poem “mask” reveals his feelings about the pains of slavery.
  - o **Personification** - “We wear the mask that grins and lies” is just one example of personification in this poem.
  - o **Imagery** – Dunbar has used plenty of visual imageries such as “Beneath our feet.”