**If We Must Die**

If we must die, let it not be like hogs

Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,

While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,

Making their mock at our accursed lot.

If we must die, O let us nobly die,

So that our precious blood may not be shed

In vain; then even the monster we defy

Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!

O kinsmen we must meet the common foe!

Though far outnumbered let us show us brave,

And for their thousand blows deal one deathblow!

What though before us lies the open grave?

Like men we’ll face the murderous, cowardly pack,

Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!

 --Claude McKay, 1919

**The Negro Speaks of Rivers**

I’ve known rivers:

I’ve known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates (River) when dawns were young.

I built my hut near the Congo (River) and it lulled me to sleep.

I looked upon the Nile (River) and raised the pyramids above it.

I heard the singing of the Mississippi (River) when Abe Lincoln went down to New Orleans, and I’ve seen its muddy bottom turn all gold in the sunset.

I’ve known rivers:

Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

 --Langston Hughes, 1920

**Excerpt from *Their Eyes Were Watching God***

To Janie’s strange eyes, everything in the Everglades was big and new. Big Lake Okechobee, big beans, big cane, big weeds, big everything. Weeds that did well to grow waist high up the state were eight and ten feet tall down there. Ground so rich that everything went wild. Volunteer cane just taking the place. Dirt roads so rich and black that a half mile of it would have fertilized a Kansas wheat field. Wild cane on either side of the road hiding the rest of the world…

“Whut we gointuh do round heah?”

“All day, Ah’m picking beans. All night Ah’m pickin’ mah box [guitar] and rollin’dice. Between de beans and de dice Ah can’t lose. Ah’m gone right now tuh pick me uh job work wid de best man on de muck[in the Everglades]. Before the rest of ‘em gits heah’…”

They rattled nine miles in a borrowed car to the quarters that squatted so close that only the dyke separated them from the great, sprawling Okechobee. Janie fussed around the shack making a home while Tea Cake planted beans. After hours they fished. Every now and they they’d run across a party of Indians in their long, narrow dug-outs [canoes] calmly winning their living in the trackless ways of the ‘Glades. Finally the beans were in. Nothing much to do but wait to pick them. Tea Cake picked his box a great deal for Janie, but he still didn’t have enough to do…

Day by day now, the hordes of workers poured in…They came in wagons from way up in Georgia and they came in truck loads from east, west, north and south. Permanent transients with no attachments and tired looking men with their families and dogs in flivvers [cheap, old cars]. All night, all day, hurrying in to pick beans. Skillets, beds, patched up spare inner tubes all hanging and dangling from the ancient cars on the outside and hopeful humanity, herded and hovered on the inside, chugging on to the muck. People ugly from ignorance and broken from being poor.

 --Zora Neale Hurston, 1937