|  |
| --- |
| John Keats. 1795–1821 |
|    |
| 635. **When I have Fears that I may cease to be** |
|    |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| WHEN I have fears that I may cease to be |   |
| Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain, |   |
| Before high pil`d books, in charact'ry, |   |
| Hold like rich garners the full-ripen'd grain; |   |
| When I behold, upon the night's starr'd face, | *5* |
| Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance, |   |
| And feel that I may never live to trace |   |
| Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance; |   |
| And when I feel, fair creature of an hour! |   |
| That I shall never look upon thee more, | *10* |
| Never have relish in the faery power |   |
| Of unreflecting love;—then on the shore |   |
|   Of the wide world I stand alone, and think, |   |
|   Till Love and Fame to nothingness do sink. |  |

**Acquainted with the Night**

**by** [**Robert Frost**](http://www.internal.org/Robert_Frost)

|  |
| --- |
| I have been one acquainted with the night. I have walked out in rain -- and back in rain. I have outwalked the furthest city light. I have looked down the saddest city lane. I have passed by the watchman on his beat And dropped my eyes, unwilling to explain. I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet When far away an interrupted cry Came over houses from another street, But not to call me back or say good-bye; And further still at an unearthly height, O luminary clock against the sky Proclaimed the time was neither wrong nor right. I have been one acquainted with the night. |

# “A Voice”

### by Pat Mora

Even the lights on the stage unrelenting
as the desert sun couldn’t hide the other
students, their eyes also unrelenting,
students who spoke English every night

as they ate their meat, potatoes, gravy.
Not you. In your house that smelled like
rose powder, you spoke Spanish formal
as your father, the judge without a courtroom

in the country he floated to in the dark
on a flatbed truck. He walked slow
as a hot river down the narrow hall
of your house. You never dared to race past him,

to say, “Please move,” in the language
you learned effortlessly, as you learned to run,
the language forbidden at home, though your mother
said you learned it to fight with the neighbors.

You liked winning with words. You liked
writing speeches about patriotism and democracy.
You liked all the faces looking at you, all those eyes.
“How did I do it?” you ask me now. “How did I do it

when my parents didn’t understand?”
The family story says your voice is the voice
of an aunt in Mexico, spunky as a peacock.
Family stories sing of what lives in the blood.

You told me only once about the time you went
to the state capitol, your family proud as if
you'd been named governor. But when you looked
around, the only Mexican in the auditorium,

you wanted to hide from those strange faces.
Their eyes were pinpricks, and you faked
hoarseness. You, who are never at a loss
for words, felt your breath stick in your throat

like an ice-cube. “I can't,” you whispered.
“I can't.” Yet you did. Not that day but years later.
You taught the four of us to speak up.
This is America, Mom. The undo-able is done

in the next generation. Your breath moves
through the family like the wind
moves through the trees.

Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906)

              **We Wear the Mask**

    WE wear the mask that grins and lies,
    It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—
    This debt we pay to human guile;
    With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
    And mouth with myriad subtleties.

    Why should the world be over-wise,
    In counting all our tears and sighs?
    Nay, let them only see us, while
            We wear the mask.

    We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries
    To thee from tortured souls arise.
    We sing, but oh the clay is vile
    Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
    But let the world dream otherwise,
            We wear the mask!