

# The Black Experience Along the Ohio River in Poetry

## A Mini-Unit

Suggested for  
Grades 11-12

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In this unit, we'll read the stories of three sibling poets from Cincinnati – Clara Ann, Priscilla Jane, and Aaron Belford Thompson – and Raymond Garfield Dandridge and examine their poetry and how each records the Black experience.

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## Ohio Standards & Objectives

**Ohio High School Social Studies American History Standards:** Historical Thinking and Skills, Industrialization and Progressivism

**Ohio English Language Arts Standards:** RL.11-12.1, RL.11-12.2, RL.11-12.4, RL.11-12.9, RH.11-12.1

**Ohio Social and Emotional Learning Standards:** C4.1.d, C4.2.d

**Ohio Standards-based Objectives:**

1. Analyze cause, effect, sequence and correlation in historical events, including causation and long- and short-term causal relations (Am Hist.)
2. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain. (ELA RL11-12.1)
3. a) Determine two or more themes of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another. b) Produce a thorough analysis of the text. (ELA RL11-12.2)
4. Determine the connotative, denotative, and figurative meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text; analyze the impact of author's diction, including multiple-meaning words or language that is particularly evocative to the tone and mood of the text. (ELA RL11-12.4)
5. Demonstrate knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century foundational works of American literature, including how two or more diverse texts from the same period treat similar themes and/or topics. (ELA RL11-12.9)
6. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole. (ELA RH.11-12.1)
7. Evaluate how societal and cultural norms influence personal interactions (SEL C4.1.d)
8. Respond to social cues that differ depending on the societal and cultural norms of the environment (SEL C4.2.d)

## Indiana Standards & Objectives

**Indiana English Language Arts Standards:** 11-12.RL.2.1, RL.2.2, RL.3.1, RV.3.2, SL.2.2, SL.2.4, SL.2.5, SL.4.1

**Indiana Ethnic Studies Standards:** ES.1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2

**Indiana United States History Standards:** USH.1.3, USH.3.5

### Indiana Standards-based Objectives:

1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain. (ELA 11-12.RL.2.1)
2. a) Determine two or more themes of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another. b) Produce a thorough analysis of the text. (ELA 11-12.RL.2.2)
3. Determine the connotative, denotative, and figurative meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text; analyze the impact of author's diction, including multiple-meaning words or language that is particularly evocative to the tone and mood of the text. (ELA 11-12.RV.3.2)
4. Engage in a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas by referring to specific evidence. (ELA 11-12.SL.2.2)
5. Expand conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives. (ELA 11-12.SL.2.4)
6. Conduct, debate, and discuss to allow all views to be presented; allow for a dissenting view, in addition to group compromise; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task. (ELA 11-12.SL.2.5)
7. Evaluate a speaker's perspective, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, as well as assessing stylistic choices such as word choice, points of emphasis, and tone. (ELA 11-12.SL.3.2)
8. Using a range of informal and formal tasks, present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, address opposing perspectives, ensuring the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience. (IN ELA 11-12.SL.4.1)
9. Students identify and analyze their social, ethnic, racial, and cultural identities and examine societal perceptions and behaviors related to their own identities. (ES.1.2)
10. Students evaluate how society's responses to different social identities lead to access and/or barriers for ethnic and racial groups in relation to various societal institutions, including but not limited to education, healthcare, government, and industry. (ES.1.3)

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11. Students investigate the origins of various ethnic and racial groups, examining the historical influence of cultural, socio-political, and socio-economic contexts on those groups. (ES.2.1)
12. Students explain the reasons for various racial/ethnic groups' presence in the U.S. (indigenous, voluntary, or forcible). (ES.2.2)
13. Students compare and contrast how circumstances of ethnic/racial groups affected their treatment and experiences (indigenous, voluntary, forcible) as a response to the dominant culture of the time. (ES.2.3)
14. Students identify and explore current traditions, rites, and norms of an ethnic or racial group(s) and how they have or are changing over time. (ES.3.1)
15. Students assess how social policies and economic forces offer privilege or systematic oppressions for racial/ethnic groups related to accessing social, political, and economic opportunities. (ES.3.2)
16. Students examine historical and contemporary economic, intellectual, social, cultural and political contributions to society by ethnic or racial group(s) or an individual within a group. (ES.4.1)
17. Students investigate how ethnic or racial group(s) and society address systematic oppressions through social movements, local, community, national, global advocacy, and individual champions. (ES.4.2.)
18. Identify and tell the significance of controversies pertaining to slavery, abolitionism, and social reform movements. (USH.1.3)
19. Explain the importance of social and cultural movements within the Progressive Era, including significant individuals/groups such as Booker T. Washington, Ida B. Wells, W.E.B. DuBois, NAACP, muckrakers and Upton Sinclair and including movements such as the Harlem Renaissance, women's suffrage, labor movements, and socialist movement. (USH.3.5)

## Kentucky Standards & Objectives

**Kentucky Social Studies Standards:** HS.UH.CH.1, HS.G.HE.1

**Kentucky Reading and Writing Standards:** RL.11-12.1, RL.11-12.2, RL.11-12.4, RL.11-12.9, RI.11-12.1, L.11-12.3

**Kentucky Standards-based Objectives:**

1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain. (RL.11-12.1)
2. a) Determine two or more themes of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another. b) Produce a thorough analysis of the text. (RL.11-12.2)
3. Determine the connotative, denotative, and figurative meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text; analyze the impact of author's diction, including multiple-meaning words or language that is particularly evocative to the tone and mood of the text. (RL.11-12.4)
4. Demonstrate knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century foundational works of American literature, including how two or more diverse texts from the same period treat similar themes and/or topics. (RL.11-12.9)
5. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole. (RI.11-12.1)
6. Examine the ways diverse groups viewed themselves and contributed to the identity of the United States in the world from 1877-present. (HS.UH.CH.1)
7. Assess the reciprocal relationship between physical environment and culture within local, national and global scales. (HS.G.HE.1)
8. Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening. (L.11-12.3)

## Resources

**Materials:** Computer or Print-out of webpage biographies (under Resources below) and poems (selected poem suggestions in starting on page 8), supplemental texts or articles

**Resources:**

- Aaron Belford Thompson Biography: <https://invisibleindianapolis.wordpress.com/2019/07/10/poetry-and-african-american-life-in-west-indianapolis/>
- Clara Ann Thompson Biography: <https://queensofqueencity.com/2019/02/04/clara-ann-thompson/>
- Priscilla Jane Thompson Biography: <https://queensofqueencity.com/2018/01/07/priscilla-jane-thompson/>
- Raymond Garfield Dandridge Biography: <https://handeaux.tumblr.com/post/190659907032/despite-affliction-cincinnati-poet-raymond>
- Aaron Belford Thompson's *Morning Songs*: [https://www.google.com/books/edition/Morning\\_Songs/iAUnAAAAMAAJ](https://www.google.com/books/edition/Morning_Songs/iAUnAAAAMAAJ)
- Aaron Belford Thompson's *Echoes of Spring*: <https://archive.org/details/echoesofspring00thom>
- Aaron Belford Thompson's *Harvest of Thoughts*: <https://archive.org/details/harvestofthought00thom/>
- Priscilla Jane Thompson's *Ethiopia Lays*: [https://www.google.com/books/edition/\\_/hwUnAAAAMAAJ](https://www.google.com/books/edition/_/hwUnAAAAMAAJ)
- Priscilla Jane Thompson's *Gleanings of the Quiet Hours*: [https://www.google.com/books/edition/Gleanings\\_of\\_Quiet\\_Hours/UgUnAAAA\\_MAAJ](https://www.google.com/books/edition/Gleanings_of_Quiet_Hours/UgUnAAAA_MAAJ)
- Raymond Garfield Dandridge's *Poet and Other Poems*: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/a/amverse/BAD9015.0001.001?view=toc>
- Pre-Civil War, Civil War, Reconstruction, World War I, Harlem Renaissance era reading materials with a Black focus

## Procedures

### **Class Assignments and Activities:**

1. Break into small groups to recall and discuss the Black experience on the Ohio River...
  1. Before and during the Civil War
  2. After the Civil War during Reconstruction
  3. During World War I
  4. Currently
2. Read one biography per small group.
3. Report your biography based on historical context to the whole class.
4. Each group reads their respective poem then discusses its meaning and context.
5. The group report to the class their analysis.
6. Whole group analytical discussion on poems, combining all poems.
7. Assessment

### **Individual Assignments and Activities:**

1. Refresh on the Black experience before, during, and after the Civil War along the Ohio River, as well as during the World Wars.
2. Read the biographies.
3. Read the poems.
4. Discuss or write paper on poems in a historical and sociological context.
5. Assessment

### **Evaluation:**

1. Informal assessment of participation, engagement, or mastery
2. Project in which student displays mastery by their own design (essay, documentary film, painting, etc.)

## Guiding Questions

1. How might any of these poems be specific to Cincinnati history, geography, and culture?
2. How do the poems' structures (form, diction, rhyme, style) lend to the message?
3. How do the poets' genders define their voices?
4. In what ways do you see the effects of the Civil War in the poems?
5. In what ways does the Black experience differ in reality from what we're told?
6. Each poet has a call to action for the Black community. What are they? How do they differ?
7. What does the United States mean to these writers?
8. How are these writers portraying the Black experience during World War I?
9. In what ways do you see sparks of civil rights in the poems?
10. How do you see these issues relevant to today? Share a story.

The Black Experience Along the Ohio River in Poetry

**The Muse's Favor**

By Priscilla Jane Thompson

Oh Muse! I crave a favor,  
Grant but this one unto me;  
Thou hast always been indulgent —  
So I boldly come to thee.

For oft I list thy singing —  
And the accents, sweet and clear,  
Like the rhythmic flow of waters,  
Fall on my ecstatic ear.

But of Caucasia's daughters,  
So oft I've heard thy lay,  
That the music, too familiar —  
Falls in sheer monotony.

And now, oh Muse exalted!  
Exchange this old song staid,  
For an equally deserving —  
The oft slighted, Afric maids.

The Muse, with smiles consenting,  
Runs her hand the strings along,  
And the harp, as bound by duty —  
Rings out with the tardy song.

The Song

Oh, foully slighted Ethiope maid!  
With patience, bearing rude upbraid,  
With sweet, refined, retiring, grace,  
And sunshine ling'ring in thy face,  
With eyes bedewed and pityingly  
I sing of thee, I sing of thee.

Thy dark and misty curly hair,  
In small, neat, braids entwineth fair,  
Like clusters of rich, shining, jet,  
All wrapt in mist, when sun is set;  
Fair maid, I gaze admiringly,  
And sing of thee, and sing of thee.

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Thy smooth and silky, dusky skin,  
Thine eyes of sloe, thy dimple chin,  
That pure and simple heart of thine,  
'Tis these that make thee half divine;  
Oh maid! I gaze admiringly,  
And sing of thee, and sing of thee.

Oh modest maid, with beauty rare,  
Whoe'er hath praised thy lithe form, fair?  
Thy tender mein, thy fairy tread —  
Thy winsome face and queenly head?  
Naught of thy due in verse I see,  
All pityingly I sing of thee.

Who's dared to laud thee 'fore the world.  
And face the stigma of a churl?  
Or brook the fiery, deep, disdain —  
Their portion, who defend thy name?  
Oh maiden, wronged so cowardly.  
I boldly, loudly, sing of thee.

Who've stood the test of chastity,  
Through slav'ry's blasting tyranny,  
And kept the while, their virtuous grace,  
To instill in a trampled race?  
Fair maid, thy equal few may see;  
Thrice honored I, to sing of thee,

Let cowards fear thy name to praise,  
Let scoffers seek thee but to raze;  
Despite their foul, ignoble, jeers,  
A worthy model thou appeal,  
Enrobed in love and purity;  
Oh who dare blush, to sing of thee?

And now, oh maid, forgive I pray,  
The tardiness of my poor lay;  
The weight of wrongs unto thee done —  
Did paralyze my falt'ring tongue;  
'Twas my mute, innate, sympathy —  
That staid this song, I sing to thee.

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The Black Experience Along the Ohio River in Poetry

**The Old Saint's Prayer**

By Priscilla Jane Thompson

Within a dark and cheerless hut,  
    Where haughty spurned to stray,  
Where even sunshine paused not long,  
An old saint knelt to pray.

Her ill-clad form was bent with age;  
    Her crisp hair specked with snow;  
Her eboned face was upward turned:  
Her voice was deep and low.

Long had she worn her armor bright;  
    Oft Satan's host defied;  
Full sixty years she'd faced the brunt,  
And still she was not tired.

Her faith was stronger than the winds,  
    That rent lake Galilee;  
She laid her crosses at His feet;  
His blood, her only plea.

Before a living God she knelt;  
    She felt His presence near;  
She prayed with all her heart, this saint,  
She knew her Lord would hear.

Her trammled race, bowed to the dust,  
    Beneath the tyrant's sword,  
Abused and crossed on ev'ry side,  
She laid before her Lord.

In earlier, gloomier days than these—  
    Those bitter days of old,  
When children, plucked from breaking hearts,  
Were hurried off and sold,

Hail she not felt His kindly arm  
    Embrace with father's care,  
And bear her up, she knew not how,  
    From utter, dire, despair?

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She knew on whom her hopes were built,  
    To whom her wrongs to tell,  
She felt a peace steal o'er her heart,  
That told her, all were well.

And all is well, oh blessed saint,  
    Thou lowly one divine!  
God strikes the shackle from dim eyes  
And bids the light to shine.

And now behold, yon eboned youth,  
    Is nerved to face the fray,  
And lead a weaker brother through,  
Unto a brighter day.

Yon dusky maid, with dauntless zeal,  
    Forced by a vague command,  
Aspires to widen intellect,  
As well as tutor hands.

Oh! many a noble, eboned youth,  
    By that low uttered prayer,  
Was made to feel a discontent –  
That forced him from the rear.

And up the line of intellect,  
    Was led by His strong hand,  
'Til with his fair-faced brethren.  
He faltering takes his stand.

Thou strong and mighty one in prayer,  
    Thou heir to bliss on high –  
Cease not thine ardent, heavenly chant,  
Jehovah heeds thy cry.

Thou canst not live to see the day,  
    When thy race shall be free,  
To swell the volume of His choir.  
The Lord hath need of thee.

But, when the last o'er-whelming foe,  
    Before thy race, shall fall,  
Methink thy thankful, heavenly chant,  
Shall rise above them all.

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**To a Little Colored Boy**

By Priscilla Jane Thompson

Oh, pure and sportive little child,  
    Be happy while you may;  
Ring out your laughter loud and clear;  
    Be blithe, enjoy your day.

Your eyes of sloe, they sparkle bright;  
    Your rounded, dusky cheeks,  
Are ever dimpled in a smile,  
    From each week into weeks.

Build high your castles in the air;  
    Dream on of manhood's fame;  
What matter, if your pure, young, heart,  
    Deems each man's chance the same.

I hold your little hand in mine;  
    Fast wags your childish tongue;  
Your prospects doth look bright to you,  
    Because you are so young.

Thou knoweth not, poor little boy,  
    What Future holds for thee,  
Thy dreams are not extravagant,  
    And yet, they canst not be.

This mass of midnight curly hair,  
    This soft and dusky skin,  
Will bring not fortune's smile to you,  
    When childhood's day will end.

Thou art a child, of promise rare;  
    God, for some cause, profound,  
Hath cast thee in a finer mold,  
    Than most about you found.

E'en now your little high-aimed heart,  
    A pris'ner seems to be,  
And with impatience beats the bars,  
    Of helpless infancy.

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You'll bloom a rare high-minded, man;  
    Surpassing fair-faced men;  
Would God, the Future, held for you,  
    The hope it holds for them.

Would tint your path of life could be,  
    Like theirs, with roses strewn:  
Would that your thorns, be brushed aside,  
    As often as their own.

Would that the world, which you must face,  
    Were free from this low sin,  
To meanly wrong a fellow-man,  
    For darkness of his skin.

I look me deep into thine eyes;  
    My love is mixed with grief;  
To think that naught, within my power,  
    Can later, bring relief.

But pure and sportive little boy,  
    When time his trials lend,  
Think not that you are destitute;  
    In me you have a friend.

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**The Old Freedman**

By Priscilla Jane Thompson

He sits in front of the bright, blazing grate;  
    A poor old freedman, maimed and gray;  
With worn hands folded, he sits and waits,  
    His Master's summons, from day to day.  
His ebon brow is seamed deeply with care;  
    His dim eyes, robbed of their scanty sight,  
By the dazzling red of the ember's glare,  
    Sets him to dreaming as though 'twere night.

And his hard, early life comes, scene by scene,  
    As acts appear on a play-house stage;  
While he sits with a thoughtful smile, serene,  
    And views the past, in a dreamy maze.  
Yes, now he can smile as he thinks on those days,  
    For the fire of youth has long fled his breast;  
He has cast the burden of past care away,  
    And humbly looks to his Master, for rest.

He hears the fierce screams of his mother, wild,  
    Anguished and startling, and loud as of old;  
While haplessly he, her remaining child,  
    Is hurried "down the river," and sold.  
And now comes the scene of that sugar farm,  
    Where the lash and fever, rules supreme;  
Where the humid, sickly, atmosphere, warm,  
    Brings on a giddiness, e'en in his dream.

He is hoeing cane, with a stalwart pace,  
    And with him, a girl, the joy of his life;  
With her graceful figure and dark brown face,  
    And her sunny smile — his own fair wife.  
When e'er the overseer's back is turned,  
    He lends a strong hand to her lagging row;  
That her exacting task may be earned,  
    To ward from her back, the brutal blow.

Despite the appalling crosses of life,  
    He deems himself, e'en a happy man;  
Just to have her near and to call her 'wife',  
    And to hurriedly press her little worn hand.

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The third scene is on, and now he behold,  
His Lucy coming with eyes filled with tears;  
"Oh Ruben," she's crying, "why I'm to be sold!"  
The words fall like doom upon his shocked ears.

Again that dull giddiness rises within,  
His lower limbs weaken, he rests on his hoe;  
He feels her embraces again and again,  
Then turns she, and back to the "big house" doth go.  
Her fleeting form brings him back to himself;  
He drops his hoe, with a desperate groan;  
He'll make the rude trader take back his foul pelf  
He'll claim his wife, for she is his own.

Oh, futile struggle! he sees his fair love,  
Borne off by the rude, evil, trader, who spoils,  
While he helplessly, calls on his Father above,  
And is fiercely, brutally, lashed for his toils.  
Oh! let us pass over the dark days that came,  
And rev'rently screen this act of his life!  
When the anguish of Rizpah, who mourned for her slain,  
Could not be compared, with his grief o'er his wife.

And now, clears the smoke, that is black as the night;  
He stands firm a giant with Gettysburg's brave  
The death blows he deals, in the hand to hand fight,  
Serve vengeance to rebels who late held him slave.  
And now, he is come to the calm years of peace;  
His restless wand'rings in search of his wife;  
When despaired and discouraged, his wanderings cease.  
And he fills with religion, the void of his life.

And now the last scene, the triumphant, the grand!  
With dim sight renewed and infirmities, fled,  
Fair Lucy once more is pressing his hand,  
And Jesus is placing a crown on his head.  
For there, in front of the bright blazing, grate,  
With a sad, kind, smile, and expressionless eye,  
At the end of the day, in the even, late,  
He hid taken his fight, to his home on high.

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**What Mean This Bleating of the Sheep?**

By Clara Ann Thompson

*And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? 1 Samuel 15:14.*

America, proud freedom's land  
Thy flag is trailing in the dust!  
Where are thy boasted precepts grand,  
Thy pledge of faith: "In God We Trust?"

Thou criest to the world's oppressed,  
Who stretch to thee appealing hands,  
"Come hither, come! here end thy quest,  
Thou'lt find a refuge in this land."

"This land of love and liberty,  
Far-famed in history and song;  
Where Justice holds supremacy  
Where God is feared and faith is strong."

Oh, cease thy boasting freedom's land!  
'Twere sweeter far to hear thee weep;  
If thou hast heeded God's command,  
What mean this bleating of the sheep?

Thy founders fled, with hearts aflame  
With freedom's fire, across the waves;  
Ere long, to them the Tempter came,  
And offered them a band of slaves.

Alas! they failed, those founders proud,  
And as they gained in freedom's power,  
There followed ever, like a cloud,  
The shadow of that testing hour.

And when they stood, from England free,  
A voice came from that shadow deep,  
E'en while they shouted, "Victory",  
"What mean this bleating of the sheep?"

For lo! they rose at Freedom's call,  
And rent their galling chains away,

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But left the black man still a thrall,  
Without a hope of Freedom's day.

And so that warning shadow spread,  
Until it covered all the land;  
And civil war, the nation's dread,  
Clutched at its throat with bloody hands.

And brother strove with brother then,  
Upon that awful field of blood,  
Until the fettered African,  
Before the world, a free man stood.

Alas! they did not loose his bands  
Because they hated slavery,  
But that their fair united land,  
Might ever undivided be.

And so they broke the galling chains,  
And bade the African go free;  
But cast a stigma on his name,  
That blighted all his liberty.

In this great Freedom's land he saw  
That other nation's refuge found,  
While prejudice's cruel law  
In chains of thralldom held him bound.

He saw the laws that make men free,  
For him grow feeble from disuse;  
And boasted Christian charity  
Sink to oppression and abuse.

Again we hear the solemn words,  
Forerunner of King Saul's defeat—  
"What mean this lowing of the herds,  
What mean this bleating of the sheep?"

For more than fifty years have passed,  
Since you declared the black man free,  
And still your fetters hold him fast,  
Bound in that other slavery.

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You care not that he's proved his worth,  
    You care not for his loyalty;  
The land that gave the black man birth  
    Has proved his deadly enemy.

You block his pathway to success,  
    By force, deceit, and strategy;  
And oft your brutal prejudice,  
    Finds outlet in the mob's wild sway.

You cause for mobs you'd glorify:  
    The black man's crime 'gainst womanhood.  
And while you flaunt the baleful lie,  
    You hound the women of his blood.

Yes, hound them till you bring them low,  
    Protected by your laws unjust;  
Then call them vile names, when you know  
    They're but the victims of your lust.

How dare you boast of chivalry,  
    And haste to shed the black man's blood,  
While you, like wolves, feast greedily  
    On unprotected womanhood?

You, lifting guilty hands to God,  
    Vow universal liberty;  
While 'neath your feet, the trampled sod  
    Reeks with the blood of tyranny.

Your brother's blood, though dark his face,  
    Shed by the fiendish mob's decree;  
His crime? A member of that race  
    You've held long years in slavery.

You dragged him, bleeding, through the streets,  
    To where you'd built a ghastly pyre;  
You tortured him like savage beasts,  
    Then cast him, living, in the fire.

Your mothers with their babes were there,  
    To view that feast of fire and blood;  
Your sisters, wives and sweethearts fair,

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God pity such base womanhood!

Oh proud, vain women of the South,  
You also have a work to do!  
For jealous pride has sealed your mouths  
Till you've become the victims too.

Too proud to own your sister's wrongs,  
Or say your men do aught amiss,  
You languish in your broken homes,  
Or join in revels such as this.

Yes, revels that should make you blush;  
Instead, you lend a helping hand  
To make your lauded Sunny South  
The fest'ring plague spot of the land.

Arise! Arise! count not the cost!  
Where is your boasted Southern fire?  
That nation is forever lost  
Whose women sink into the mire.

America proud freedom's land,  
Your flag is trailing in the dust!  
Where are your boasted precepts grand,  
Your pledge of faith: "In God We Trust?"

Did you thus trust Almighty God,  
The blacks would have their liberty;  
Nor would you wait until His rod  
Drives you again to set them free.

How dare you say you trust your God,  
And keep your mob and Ku Klux Klan?  
Did you thus trust Almighty God,  
You'd scourge the monsters from the land!

Had you such faith, your Freedom's vow,  
You made to God, you'd dare to keep;  
And He would not be asking now:  
"What mean this bleating of the sheep?"

He asked that question years ago,

## The Black Experience Along the Ohio River in Poetry

And well you know the price you paid;  
Your streaming blood, your cries of woe,  
A bitter lamentation made.

He speaks again; you'll not obey;  
You raise weak arms against his might,  
But soon there'll come a bitter day  
When he will scourge you to the right.

E'en now your wards from foreign lands,  
Are forging chains of Anarchy;  
And while you chain the African,  
They'll bind you in their slavery.

You welcome knaves to liberty,  
But scorn the loyal African;  
You'll learn the worth of loyalty  
When Anarchy invades the land.

Beware, America, the proud!  
Thou'lt surely bitter harvest reap;  
Once more there comes in accents loud:  
"What means this bleating of the sheep?"

Seek not like King Saul by device  
An answer to that question deep;  
Who said it was for sacrifice,  
He spared the cattle and the sheep.

For God beheld his sinful heart,  
And spoke the words of doom to Saul;  
Unless thou from this sin depart,  
America, thou too, shalt fall!

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**Uncle Rube's Defense**

By Clara Ann Thompson

Whut do I keer ef de white-folks do 'buse us!  
I'm go'n to stand fuh de cullud race;  
Whut do I keer ef de roscals do 'cuse us  
All, when dere's only one man in disgrace?

White-folks a-thievin' and rahin' an' kickin',  
Uddah white-folks, ez still ez a mouse;  
Aftahwhile, somebody steals a few chickens,  
Den, dey wan'to search old Deacon Jones' house.

Habn't proved yet, dat a cullud man took dem;  
'Coons gen'ly steal de chickens,' dey say,  
Runnin' 'roun' here a-peepin' and a-lookin',  
Givin' de re'l thief a chance to git away.

Ev'ry low trick dat de black man's a-doin',  
'Flects right back on de race, as a whole;  
But de low co'se dat de white man's pursuin',  
Casts not a blot on his good brudder's soul.

Let de black man do somepin wuth mentionin',  
White-folks ez still and shy ez a fawn;  
Let him do somepin dat's mean an' belittlin',  
Umph! don de whole race has got it an' gone.

I don't deny dat some blacks is a-tryin'  
Hawd, to make de race 'pear like a cuss,  
But do ez dey will, — you know I ain't lyin',  
Dere's white-folks a-doin de same er wuss.

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**“Showin’ Off”**

By Clara Ann Thompson

Showin’ off! dat’s one fault children,  
    Dat’s a-harmin’ of de race;  
An’ wuss thing – you’s like to find it  
    Lurkin’ in mos’ any place.  
Find it ‘mongst de older people,  
    And de youngsters dat you meet,  
You kin see it in de churches,  
    In de homes, an’ on de street.

‘Tain’t no use to try to stop it,  
    Seems it’s bound to have its way,  
Spoutin’ round amongst ou’ people,  
    An’ it’s got a mighty sway.  
Dah! it’s gone into de pulpit;  
    See dat preacher? – Preachin’ fine!  
Ev’rybody’s eye is on him,  
    An’ he shows a well trained mind.

But dat scamp is at bis elbow,  
    Whisp’ring folly in his ear,  
An’ dat man begins to holler,  
    Like he thinks de folks can’t hear;  
Commence racin’ bout dat platform,  
    Like he don’t know whut he’s ‘bout –  
Done got puffed up wid attention  
    Go’n’ to make some sistah shout.

An’ dem sistahs rise respondin’,  
    Makin’ sich a great to do,  
Case dey’re bound to show dat preacher  
    Dat dey’s got de spirit too.  
Can’t say I don’t b’lieve in shoutin’,  
    ‘Case I b’long to dat Ol’ School  
An’ you know dat mos’ ol’ timers  
    Will stick up fah ol’ time rules.

But I mus’ he straight about it,  
    Speak de truth since I commence  
So, ef we will keep on shoutin’,  
    I say: Let us shout wid sense!

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I don't blame de younger people  
Sometimes, when I see dem scoff,  
'Case rnos' all uv dis great shoutin's  
Nothin' else but showin' off.

Showin' off! Great patience! Children,  
Once I saw two cullud men,  
Git to quar'lin' 'bout some trifle,  
Half in fun when dey begin,  
Till dey saw de folks wus watchin',  
Den deir wrath rose like a gale!  
N ex' dey took one to de dead house,  
An' de othah one to jail.

I come down de street a walkin',  
Feelin' mighty good an' spry,  
See two well-dressed men a-talkin',  
One looks up an' ketch my eye;  
Den his voice is raised in laughtah,  
Augerment, or mighty scoff,  
An' thinks I: Lawd help dat dawky,  
He's done gone to showin' off.

Showin' off has made good women,  
Fill deir homes wid costly things  
Pictures, furniture an' cawpets,  
Well nigh fine enough fur kings.  
Den go straight into dat washtub,  
Whaur dey labor night an' day,  
Till dey's nigh worn to a shadah,  
Gittin' money 'no ugh to pay.

'Tain't no use in talkin' children,  
I could go on fah a hou'  
Till you'd git tired hear'n' me tellin'  
'Bout fool things I's seen fo' now —  
Dawkies standin' 'bout de sidewalks,  
Showin' off to passersby,  
Till dey spile a good location;  
Makin' 'gainst both you an' I.

'Case you know de unfair white folks —  
Put us all into one boat:

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“Won't have dawbies livin' 'round us!”

Yes, jes' set us all afloat.

Well, I won't go any funder,

Fah you all know whut I mean,

An' mos' all dese things I'm tellin',

Ev'ry one uv you have seen.

Well, sometimes it sets me laughin',

Den, it almost makes me cry:

People lookin' o'er deir shoulders,

Tryin' to ketch deir neighbor's eye,

'Stid uv lookin' whaur dey's goin';

Nex' dey's fell into de trough,

Children, do git down to bis'ness;

Quit dat tomfool showin' off!

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**Emancipation**

By Aaron Belford Thompson

Three cheers! well may we shout with joy,  
And hail Emancipation;  
Our fetters long have been destroyed;  
We are a free, free, nation.

No more like cattle on the hills,  
That feed upon the clover;  
Shall wait our brethren for their doom,  
Unable to discover.

No more upon our brother's track,  
We'll hear the blood-hounds bayin;  
The cries of men to bring him back,  
With curse and evil sayings.

No more our maidens bought and sold,  
The southern tyrant's booty;  
No more the brutal trader's gold,  
Shall buy the sable beauty.

No more our brave and gallant youths,  
Shall tremble of the morrow;  
Behold, sweet liberty and truth,  
Hath broke the chains of sorrow.

For now we stand on freedom's plain,  
With joy and exultation;  
Though scarred and maimed,  
From bondage chain,  
We'll hail Emancipation.

Three cheers! we'll shout our liberty;  
Long may our nation live,  
Large, large, may grow her fruitful tree,  
And sweetest manna give.

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**On the Southern Side**

By Aaron Belford Thompson

On either side of the river's bank,  
Sweet nature hath waken the bloom;  
And the vernal trees, and the grasses rank,  
Subdue drear winter's gloom.

As thunders along the turbulent tide,  
To the end of her flow in the sea;  
How little she know, that her channel divides,  
The land of the slave and the free.

The bondman ne'er ceased from his toil in the corn.  
He sang, yet the strains were not glee;  
To the twilight of eve, from the dawn of the morn.  
He had gazed on the land of the free,

Long, long, had he toiled on the southern shore.  
And gazed on that flowing tide;  
And oftentimes grim thraldom he sadly deplored,  
As he looked on the northern side.

But the rigorous law, and the river's flow,  
Defied him to venture the tide,  
For the hands of the spoiler, had threatened the blow.  
Should a bondman fail to abide.

No hopes for his freedom, his head decked with gray,  
Is bowed low with trouble and grief;  
And his heart throbs with sighs,  
As he longs for the day,  
When death shall bring his relief.

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**A Congratulation**

By Aaron Belford Thompson

Whut brung you from Virginger?  
An' when did you git back?  
I's glad to see you Moses,  
Sho I am, an' dat's a fact;  
An' how is I a gittin 'long?  
I thought I heard you say,  
Jes' toler'ble I thank you;  
Been livin' de same ol' way.

Say! how is ol' Virginger?  
Whut route you say you took,  
Down through Culpeppah county?  
I knows huh like a book;  
You found down dah good people,  
An' I 'lowed you would befo',  
You see I wasn't lyin';  
Did they hate to see you go?

I kin see you've had good eatens,  
Kaise you's lookin' slick an' stout;  
Dem fok'es eat in Virginger,  
An' de grub is nevuh out.  
Go way boy! now hesh I tell you!  
Talkin' bout dat cracklin' bread,  
Go way wid dem greasy chittlins.  
An' dat steamin' soda bread!

You kaint tell me 'bout dat cookin',  
How dem women fry sweet co'n;  
Fau you see I know all 'bout it,  
Right down daw I's bred an' bon';  
Knows all 'bout dat greasy co'n-bread,  
Like a wedge in size an' weight,  
When you tech it wid yo' fingas,  
It will crumble in yo' plate.

Dem delicious soda biscuits,  
Was de best you evah eat;  
An' dat good ol' home-cured-bacon,

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An dem hams is hard to beat;  
In all de homes you tarried  
    In every neighborhood,  
You found de young fo'kes clever,  
    An' de ole fo'kes kin' an' good.

You nevah seen sich clever fo'kes,  
    You say in all yo' life?  
Now Mose, mind whut I tell you!  
    Right down dah pick you a wife!  
Gals down daw's wo'th somethin';  
    Dey all kin cook an' sew;  
Their han's is not too tender,  
    To ply 'em to de hoe.

Dey's all de time contented,  
    An' never care to roam, except —  
Whut's this you tell me?  
    You've brung a good wife home?  
I thought that you'd been co'ten,  
    By that sotah sheepish smile;  
Hush! you didn't marry Liza,  
    Ol' man Sutton's bady chile?

Well I'm beat to hear dat Moses,  
    So I mus' shake han's a new;  
Gone an' married Liza Sutton!  
    Ha! Ha! Ha! ef dat don't do.  
Few fok'es know de sutton fam'ly,  
    An' their standin' jes like me,  
Mark de works I'm 'bout to tell you!  
    You done married Quality.

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**Time to Die**

By Raymond Garfield Dandridge

Black Brother, think you life so sweet  
That you would live at any price?  
Does mere existence balance with  
The weight of your great sacrifice?  
Or, can it be you fear the grave  
Enough to live and die a slave?  
O, Brother! be it better said,  
When you are gone and tears are shed,  
That your death was the stepping stone  
Your children's children cross'd upon.  
Men have died that men might live:  
Look every foeman in the eye!  
If necessary, your life give  
For something, ere in vain you die.

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**To An Unhinged Judas**

By Raymond Garfield Dandridge

Cannibalistic vulture,  
Grown fat upon your brother's blood,  
The Tide you do not seek to stem  
Engulfs you in its flood.

The cords you bind about his hands,  
Hold your hands doubly fast;  
And when you rend his anchor chain,  
Your bark adrift you cast.

The day you snuff his light of hope,  
And dim ambition's guiding spark,  
You doom yourself to ever grope  
In tractless waste of endless dark.

O! blasphemer of sacred trust,  
Go hide your dirty, double face!  
Far better were you dead at birth  
Than live to sacrifice your Race.

Vile cringing cur, unfit to hang,  
Live long to writhe in pain  
Beneath on-marching feet of those  
Who fall – to rise again.

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**Supplication**

By Raymond Garfield Dandridge

(Dedicated to Cincinnati Branch, N. A. A. C. P., and sung to the air, "America")

Dear Lord we come to Thee,  
In quest of Liberty,  
Thy mercy lend.  
We know no better way  
Than serve, obey and pray,  
Protect us night and day,  
Almighty Friend.

Unsheathe Thy vengeful sword,  
Cleave us a way, O Lord,  
As naught else can.  
Let no base foe oppress,  
Let no vain thought repress  
Our future usefulness  
To God and Man.

We have no ancient creed,  
We have no glutton's greed  
To satisfy.  
We seek the lofty height,  
Where Justice, Truth and Right,  
Condemn oppressor's might,  
Like God on High.

May World Democracy  
Include equality  
For every one.  
Father, all-wise and just,  
Do as Thou wilt with us,  
In Thee, alone, we trust,  
"Thy will be done."

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### **Color Blind**

By Raymond Garfield Dandridge

True I am black not by my will;  
I had no choice of hue,  
And none was given you.  
By His decree our roles we fill.  
Red man, Yellow man, Brown man,  
You too, man of white,  
What cause or right  
Have we to emphasize our clan?  
The haughty King, of royal birth,  
The peasant, craftsman, and the slave,  
Stript naked, stand alone on worth,  
Beyond the portals of the grave,  
Before that Bar where all men find  
The Judge of judges color blind.

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**My Grievance**

By Raymond Garfield Dandridge

Yes, I admit a grievance.  
I also boldly challenge you –  
Come stand where I once stood and fell!  
I dare say you will do as well.

Yes, I have long been underpaid,  
Although my brain and brawn has made  
You rich. O! when do I commence  
Receiving honest recompense?

Yes, I am lynched. Is it that I  
Must without judge or jury die?  
Though innocent, am I accursed  
To quench the mob's blood-thirsty thirst?

Yes, I am mocked. Pray tell me why!  
Did not my brothers freely die  
For you, and your Democracy –  
That each and all alike be free?

Yes, I am loyal. But how long  
Must I subsist on bitter wrong?  
How long shall I give smile for blow,  
How long! How long! I ask to know?

Yes, I admit a grievance.  
I also boldly challenge you –  
Come stand where I once stood and fell!  
I dare say you will do as well.