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| “We Wear the Mask”(Paul Laurence Dunbar, 1872-1906)A mask on a black background  Description automatically generated with low confidenceA person in a suit  Description automatically generated with medium confidenceWe wear the mask that grins and lies, Collective pronounIt hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,— End rhyme This debt we pay to human guile; Iambic tetrameter 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 Enjambment        We wear the mask. Iambic dimeter We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries Apostrophe To thee from tortured souls arise.We sing, but oh the clay is vile Religious allusionBeneath our feet, and long the mile;But let the world dream otherwise,       We wear the mask! Refrain (rondeau) **1 pt: Literary precis**: TAG + WHAT. HOW. (defendable thesis) The norm of A is the last; that is, do not refer to the author [poet] by the first name. Oh, NMMG: Never make a mistake on the genre. **4 pts: Body**: 2-3 hamburgers with a line of reasoning **1 pt: Conclusion**: a wider perspective with a PCHL analogy |  Paul Laurence Dunbar, in his poignant poem, “We Wear the Mask,” unmasks the painful reality of African-Americans by employing regular rhythm and rhyme that soon relaxes to give voice to “myriad subtleties” their silenced mouth tries to vocalize. While loosening the rhythm and rhyme of Stanza 1, Dunbar also builds and delivers pathos with the accumulative, affective diction.  Dunbar creates musical rhythm using iambic tetrameter with an occasional variation in Line 9 and Line 16, both of which are the last line of each stanza. The line “We wear the mask” contains only four syllables, that is, half of iambic tetrameter. By departing from the regular rhythm, the poet emphasizes these shorter lines, which reaffirms the daily reality of Black Americans who are forced to wear “grins and lies” (line 1). This refrain, “We wear the mask,” further accentuates the musical element of this poem, qualifying this poem as a rondeau. With the musical aspect of the rondeau and the formal nature of iambic tetrameter and end rhyme, however, the poet transforms the earlier attitude of conformity and accommodation into that of protest and defiance: see how the last use of such a refrain ends with an exclamation mark (line 15). The use of diction “subtleties” frustrates the reader’s anticipation of neat rhyming couplet since there is no other line that shares the same rhyme with Line 5. As Dunbar varies the elite, learned forms of prosody, he also transforms the attitude of conformity to that of protest.  Dunbar’s deliberate deviation from the dictates of rhythm and rhyme also helps control the urge to sentimentalize the emotional distress the collective “we” face daily. [Incorporate some selections of details: “bleeding heart” (line 4); “our tears” (line 7); supplicating to Jesus (line 10). Afterwards, present two meat patties (your literary comments on the featured quotations). Add a closing statement: e.g. Dunbar materializes the “mask” so that America can see the “tears” and feel the “bleeding heart” of the Black America. His restraint in emotional outburst as well as in rhythm and rhyme accentuate what lies beneath the imposition of the mask: the human voice with “myriad subtleties.”] Conclusion: this last 1 point is the hardest to get. You would want to share a very specific perspective or understanding; there is no “point” in rehashing your precis/ introduction. 1) Wider perspective: e. g. Literature alone cannot redress our bad history, the historical distortion of the humanity of Black Americans. However, Dunbar appeals his readers to see the subtleties the real face under the mask tries to “mouth.” 2) Popular culture analogy: the masked rebels in the movie *V for Vendetta* 3) Historical analogy: the masks worn during the Black Plague or the mask we wear in 2021Or 4) Literary analogy: the anonymous narrator of *Invisible Man* |

