NEGRO HERO (To suggest Dorie Miller)

GWENDOLYN BROOKS

I had to kick their law into their teeth in order to save them.

However, I have heard that sometimes you have to deal

Devilishly with drowning men in order to swim them to shore

Or they will haul themselves and you to the trash and the fish beneath.

(When I think of this, I do not worry about a few Chipped teeth.)

It is good I gave glory, it is good I put gold on their name

Or there would have been spikes in the afterward hands.

But let us speak only of my success and the pictures in the Caucasian dailies

As well as the Negro weeklies. For I am a gem.

(They are not concerned that it was hardly The Enemy my fight was against

But them.)

It was a tall time. And of course my blood was

Boiling about in my head and straining and howling and singing me on.

Of course I was rolled on wheels of my boy itch to get at the gun.

Of course all the delicate rehearsal shots of my childhood massed in mirage

before me.

Of course I was child

And my first swallow of the liquor of battle bleeding black air dying and

demon noise

Made me wild.

**Answer these questions for the stanzas they are beside.**

**Diction**: What words stand out to you in this stanza and the next one? **CIRCLE THEM.**

**Connotation**: Are these words positive, negative, or neutral? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Think about this: Is it ok to hurt someone if you end up helping them in the end?

**Topic**: What’s the author saying in this stanza?\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**Tone:** What’s the tone \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Summary**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**Parallelism:** Underline 2 examples from the third stanza.

1. What’s being emphasized in the first example? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. What’s being emphasized in the second example? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Alliteration: CIRCLE** 3 examples of alliteration used in the third stanza.

Alliterations can make increase the speed of how we read a text. Why might the author want this section sped up? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

It was kinder than that, though, and I showed like a banner my kindness.

I loved. And a man will guard when he loves.

Their white-gowned democracy was my fair lady

With her knife lying cold, straight, in the softness of her sweet-flowing sleeve.

But for the sake of the dear smiling mouth and the stuttered promise I toyed

    With my life.

I threw back!—I would not remember

Entirely the knife.

Still—am I good enough to die for them, is my blood bright enough to be

    spilled,

Was my constant back-question—are they clear

On this? Or do I intrude even now?

Am I clean enough to kill for them, do they wish me to kill

For them or is my place while death licks his lips and strides to them

In the galley still?

(In a southern city a white man said

Indeed, I'd rather be dead.

Indeed, I'd rather he shot in the head

Or ridden to waste on the back of a flood

Than saved by the drop of a black man's blood.)

Naturally, the important thing is, I helped to save them, them and a part of

    their democracy,

Even if I had to kick their law into their teeth in order to do that for them.

And I am feeling well and settled in myself because I believe it was a good job,

Despite this possible horror: that they might prefer the

Preservation of their law in all its sick dignity and their knives

To the continuation of their creed

And their lives.

**Metaphor/Simile:** Take some examples and explain both sides of the comparison.

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**Purpose:** What’s the purpose of all the questions?

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What effect does this create? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Think about this: How do we normally react to words in parenthesis?

**Rhyme:** Label the rhyme scheme. What purpose does the rhyme serve? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Think about this: The seventh stanza wraps up/highlights a point from each stanza. Why use those specific examples?

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**Theme:** How does this conclusion show the theme of this poem?

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