

# 1 Masters and Robinson

## 1.1 Robinson

- Grew up in Gardiner, Maine. Descendant of Anne Bradstreet, wrote narrative poems. Had a wit to him, and was accomplished.
- Poems are set in Tillberry Town. His poetry “anticipates” Masters’s book.

## 1.2 Edgar Lee Masters

- Born in Kansas, wrote free verse.
- Published Spoon River Anthology, a set of 250 epitaphs spoken by the inhabitants of a cemetery in the fictional town of Spoon River.
- Richard Cory - a put-together man who had a lot of money and then killed himself. Had some serious depression, despite being refined. The poem uses Cory to make a point about money and happiness and all that. Cory wears a mask.
- Miniver Cheevy - believes he was born in the wrong time period. As Carraway put it, “You can’t relive the past.” He has had a bad time of life, and sees the present era as uncultured. He longs for the times of Thebes, and Camelot, and the Trojan War. Missed the “medieval grace of iron clothing.”
- Butch Weldy - a man who settled down and then got an explosion. Didn’t even get compensation.
- Thomas Rhodes is a recurring character in the poems. Ran the church, the store, and the bank.
- Fiddler Jones - Starts with 40 acres, ends with 40 acres, no more rich. Enjoyed life and has no regrets.
- Coonie Potter (hardworking farmer) and Redhead Sammy (local musician)
- Petit, the poet was based on a real friend of Masters’s who wrote several undistinguished books of poetry.
- He’s blind to everything around him his whole life, and his poetry isn’t all that great.
- Richard Bone carved epitaphs, and as he grew more knowing of the people around him realized the things he carved were false. Compares himself to an historian who is ignorant or corrupt.
- Mrs. George Reese - Husband worked at the bank, and is unjustly in prison thanks to Thomas Rhodes’s unscrupulous son. Acts her part anyway.
- Lucinda Matlock - values family highly, says it takes life to love life. Works hard, but loves her work.

# 2 The Harlem Renaissance

## 2.1 Background

- Harlem Renaissance had black writers writing in conventional and unconventional forms.
- Important portion of Black history, and of literary history.

## 2.2 Langston Hughes

- Was a poet in school, and continued on to write dialect poetry in the style of Paul Lawrence Dunbar, and free verse in the style of Carl Sandberg.
- Wrote a large amount of things. Fascinated by the sights and sounds of Harlem, living in NYC and supporting himself as best he could.
- Published :
  - The Weary Blues (1926)
  - Fine Clothes to the Jew (1927)
  - Shakespeare in Harlem (1942)
  - Fields of Wonder (1947)
  - One-Way Ticket (1949)
  - Montage of a Dream Deferred (1951)
  - Ask Your Mama: 12 Moods for Jazz (1961)
  - The Panther and the Lash: Poems of Our Times (1967)
- First African-American to earn a living solely from writing.
- I, Too
  - is a protest on Jim Crow laws
  - Starts with a nod to Walt Whitman. This is fairly damn clever.
- 2. The speaker uses the image of the kitchen and the table to describe the state of racial inequality in America, demonstrating that the Black population is downtrodden and viewed as lesser in American culture, but soon they will be viewed as equals and be ashamed for how they behaved.
- 3. The speaker expects to move from the Kitchen to the Table by becoming strong enough that nobody would tell him to move to the Kitchen when company comes, which is a parallel to the etc.
- Harlem
  - This is the Dream Deferred poem, and is influenced by Bebop Jazz of the 1940s.
  - Asks what happens to a dream deferred, uses similes to explore the idea.
  - Asks if it explodes in the last line. This implies there will be some event if a dream is deferred too long.
- The Weary Blues
  - Draws from the blues, which was a good movement and was primarily African-American before we stole it and ran with it for a few decades.
  - Attempts to capture the musicality of the blues with a sad raggy tune and the rhythm in words.