**Four Gwendolyn Brooks Poems
and One Song to go with If Beale Street Could Talk**

**Beale Street Blues**

Lyrics by W. C. Handy

I've seen the lights of gay Broadway,

Old Market Street down by the Frisco Bay,

I've strolled the Prado, I've gambled on the Bourse;

The seven wonders of the world I've seen,

And many are the places I have been,

Take my advice, folks, and see Beale Street first!

You'll see pretty browns in beautiful gowns,

You'll see tailor-mades and hand-me-downs,

You'll meet honest men, and pick-pockets skilled,

You'll find that business never ceases 'til somebody gets killed!

If Beale Street could talk, if Beale Street could talk,

Married men would have to take their beds and walk,

Except one or two who never drink booze,

And the blind man on the corner singing "Beale Street Blues!"

I'd rather be there than any place I know,

I'd rather be there than any place I know,

It's gonna take a sergeant for to make me go!

I'm goin' to the river, maybe by and by,

Yes, I'm goin' to the river, maybe by and by,

Because the river's wet, and Beale Street's done gone dry!

**An Aspect of Love, Alive in the Ice and Fire**

BY [GWENDOLYN BROOKS](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/gwendolyn-brooks)

                                                                                 LaBohem Brown

In a package of minutes there is this We.

How beautiful.

Merry foreigners in our morning,

we laugh, we touch each other,

are responsible props and posts.

A physical light is in the room.

Because the world is at the window

we cannot wonder very long.

You rise. Although

genial, you are in yourself again.

I observe

your direct and respectable stride.

You are direct and self-accepting as a lion

in Afrikan velvet. You are level, lean,

remote.

There is a moment in Camaraderie

when interruption is not to be understood.

I cannot bear an interruption.

This is the shining joy;

the time of not-to-end.

On the street we smile.

We go

in different directions

down the imperturbable street.

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Source: *Blacks* (Third World Press, 1987)

**Boy Breaking Glass**

BY [GWENDOLYN BROOKS](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/gwendolyn-brooks)

Whose broken window is a cry of art

(success, that winks aware

as elegance, as a treasonable faith)

is raw: is sonic: is old-eyed première.

Our beautiful flaw and terrible ornament.

Our barbarous and metal little man.

“I shall create! If not a note, a hole.

If not an overture, a desecration.”

Full of pepper and light

and Salt and night and cargoes.

“Don’t go down the plank

if you see there’s no extension.

Each to his grief, each to

his loneliness and fidgety revenge.

Nobody knew where I was and now I am no longer there.”

The only sanity is a cup of tea.

The music is in minors.

Each one other

is having different weather.

“It was you, it was you who threw away my name!

And this is everything I have for me.”

Who has not Congress, lobster, love, luau,

the Regency Room, the Statue of Liberty,

runs. A sloppy amalgamation.

A mistake.

A cliff.

A hymn, a snare, and an exceeding sun.

Gwendolyn Brooks, “Boy Breaking Glass,” from *Blacks* (Chicago: Third World Press, 1987). Reprinted by consent of Brooks Permissions.

Source: *Blacks* (Third World Press, 1987)

**The Bean Eaters**

BY [GWENDOLYN BROOKS](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/gwendolyn-brooks)

They eat beans mostly, this old yellow pair.

Dinner is a casual affair.

Plain chipware on a plain and creaking wood,

Tin flatware.

Two who are Mostly Good.

Two who have lived their day,

But keep on putting on their clothes

And putting things away.

And remembering ...

Remembering, with twinklings and twinges,

As they lean over the beans in their rented back room that is full of beads and receipts and dolls and cloths, tobacco crumbs, vases and fringes.

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**We Real Cool**

Launch Audio in a New Window

BY [GWENDOLYN BROOKS](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/gwendolyn-brooks)

The Pool Players.
        Seven at the Golden Shovel.

            We real cool. We

            Left school. We

            Lurk late. We

            Strike straight. We

            Sing sin. We

            Thin gin. We

            Jazz June. We

            Die soon.

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