

I Want to Write

by Margaret Walker

I want to write

I want to write the songs of my people.

I want to hear them singing melodies in the dark.

I want to catch the last floating strains from their sob-torn throats.

Line 5 I want to frame their dreams into words; their souls into notes.

I want to catch their sunshine laughter in a bowl;

fling dark hands to a darker sky

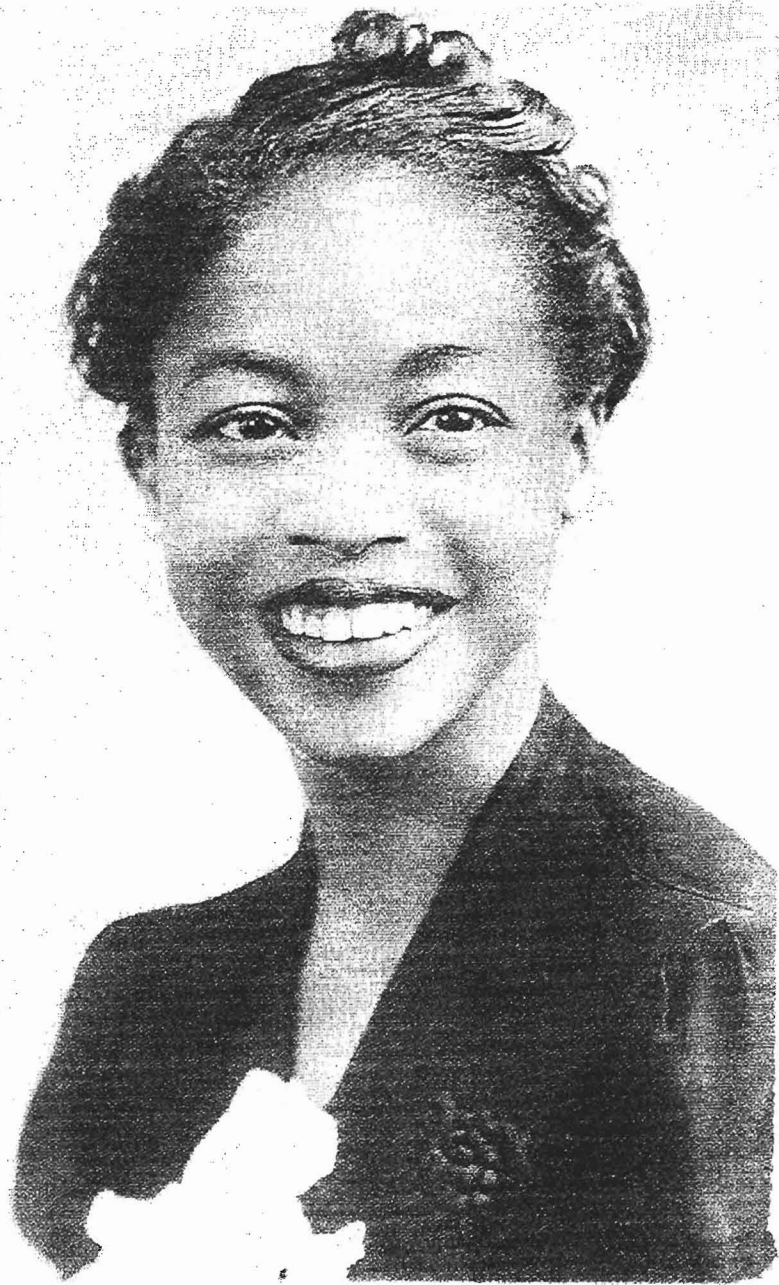
and fill them full of stars

then crush and mix such lights till they become

Line 10 a mirrored pool of brilliance in the dawn.

Words to Know

strains: (*n.*) sounds of music



Born in 1915, in Birmingham, Alabama, poet and novelist Margaret A. Walker graduated from Northwestern University when she was only 19. She was one of the youngest Black writers to publish a volume of poetry. Her first collection of poems For My People won the prestigious Yale Series of Younger Poets Award in 1942. Walker is also well-known as the author of Jubilee, a historical novel that tells the story of a slave family during and after the Civil War. Walker often wrote about the lives and experiences of African Americans.

Unit 3

“I Want to Write” by Margaret Walker

Text Structure

1. What is the purpose of the texts below the photograph?

Literary Analysis

2. Why does the poet want to write? Who are her people?

Text Structure

3. Poetry is written in many different forms, from ballads to sonnets to limericks to haiku. What do you notice about the form and structure of this poem?
How is it similar to or different from other poems you have read?

Words and Phrases in Context

4. Examine the imagery and descriptive language the poet uses to describe her people. What tone does her language convey? What is the poet’s perspective on her subject?