

Richard Wright—“Between the World and Me”

- At what point in this poem did you realize what “the thing” actually was? Is there significance to the poet wanting the reader to realize later rather than sooner?
- There is a transformation that takes place here: from past tense to present tense, from a “thing” to the person of the narrator—why would the **poet** use these transformations? that is, what should the reader “see”? experience? understand?
- What “surprise” might the sun pour “into the eye sockets of the stony skull”? Why a “yellow” surprise?
- Notice the title of the poem: given the transformation portrayed in the poem, what exactly **is** “between the world and me”?
- Why might Coates have selected this poem both to title and provide an epigraph for his book, a book he is writing to his son? (But obviously, he intended to publish the book, so who is his audience? and why would he want his audience to see the book as a letter to his son?)

epigraph—a short quotation intended to suggest a theme