

# POETRY

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*Tiffany L. Davis*

## **Within Those Forty Minutes**

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\*Bell Rings\*

### **Homerom**

They—  
    walk in  
Tired—from late calls, throwing balls, Biggie Smalls  
Blasting—through wireless things  
How—technology swings  
    the  
minds of our youth, as they—  
    walk in.  
Tuck in—  
    your shirt now!  
Pull up—  
    your pants now!  
Did you iron your shirt? What length is your skirt?  
Good—  
Morning ----- What's wrong?  
Tuck in—  
    your shirt now!  
Pull up  
    Your pants are sagging, dropping, falling  
Into their thoughts and patterns  
Moods swing, Babies bring  
Their issues, need tissues  
Sit. Down. Now!  
  
Quiet.  
As the announcements begin, which sports team will win  
And who will spend

Their time in deten-tion  
Detain and refrain from what your world has taught you?  
Are you prepared for what this world has brought you?  
I pledge,  
    We pledge,  
        Recite pledge, but hold no allegiance  
to those who scare your freedom  
Those who dare to bleed them  
    from the cradle to the grave

Just say the pledge and behave!

Proceed.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Period**

Math sucks  
when you—can't count them bucks  
when you—can't keep them ducks  
    in a row.

Math sucks  
when your mom's coins don't add to  
the value and price—  
    of them Js.  
    Carolina Blue.

It don't add up to—  
The cents ain't common  
When a fraction of moms and dads don't  
Reciprocate  
the love in their language, they sink to the  
    bottom.  
But mathematics will save them  
Numbers  
    Don't  
        Lie<sup>1</sup>  
Jigga's words, Brooklyn's Babes

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<sup>1</sup> See Jay-Z. "Reminder." *The Blueprint 3*, 2009. Genius.com, <https://genius.com/Jay-z-reminder-lyrics>.

Math sucks  
when you can't define those blurred lines.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Period

Goggles hang next to white lab coats  
That ain't for us  
They say

Mister, Mister, did Rza bomb atomically?  
Yo, Miss, Rza said,  
"Socrates' philosophies and hypotheses  
is how we be droppin these"<sup>2</sup>  
crazy ass Science projects!

THEY play ball. Genetics.  
THEY rap. Genetics.  
The other *they*, say THEY ain't meant to do nothing more  
cuz. Genetics.  
Sit. Sit on stools.  
Listen. Listen to lessons  
Brought to you by a man, with a plan,  
But this ain't your field.

THEY say,  
"I know the best scientist, chemist, and physicist  
They live on my block  
Or, used to  
Now, they live in Cell Block 00187  
Trapped  
Trapping mathematics and science  
mixing and flipping. Serving  
The block is their Project."

Goggles hang next to white lab coats  
"That ain't for us,"  
They say.

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<sup>2</sup> See Wu-Tang Clan featuring Cappadonna. "Triumph." Wu-Tang Forever, 1997. Genius.com, <https://genius.com/Wu-tang-clan-triumph-lyrics>.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Period

Hunger pangs.

Don't nobody eat that schooly.

I do.

Players' cards bang.

Stand on line, watching that packaged cookie.

Come on!

Last one. Please bring out more.

Next!

More please

as this is my big meal, the One meal.

So hungry, I feel

In the depths of my soul

I'm pretty sure I told

this lady to put more fries

on my tray, the day has come and gone

with only one meal, because

my mom said so.

Eww, mystery meat

Schooly still bussin

Yo, pass that

Muffin!

Stuff it into my bag.

Later, the pangs play drums within my

stomach this reality which leaves me

hungry for more

as

This can't be life.

Schooly will fool me, as this ain't grandma's cooking

But, she ain't here no more...

### 4<sup>th</sup> Period

Connect this lesson to my history.

Tell me the truth

Or let me go free.

Sun, be still  
The fight is not over  
Your cup will runneth over  
as they fill  
your head  
with lies.

Every month is February for us.  
Nina Simone and Billie Holiday's  
Strange Fruit still hangs  
but in disguise.

It has transformed.  
Hands Up! Don't Shoot!  
Oh, no longer a noose.

Still under attack  
A date, which will live in infamy  
or days, like today.

A marriage of two histories,  
American and Black  
Which will they teach today?  
Sir, go sit in the back.

You're late again, where's your pass?  
This lesson ain't meant for me, this is your history class.

### **5<sup>th</sup> Period**

Ain't ain't a word  
Leave that at the door  
Take your slang and bad habits  
And tell them, Nevermore

The pen is your heart  
Be deliberate  
Here is where you soar  
Creativity, use it.

Those who came before you  
Chose words to carry on

The fire that raged within  
The pen that's mightier than the sword.

C'mon, ain't nobody trying to read no Shakespeare.

Ain't ain't a word  
Leave that at the door

Kendrick is their bard,  
A poem better have a flow  
How do you even spell  
    O-NO-MA-TO-POE-IA  
They've been dying to know.

C'mon, ain't nobody trying to read no Shakespeare.

Ain't ain't a word  
Leave that at the door

Listen folks, I get what you're saying  
Another assessment given  
With classical Jazz in the background playing

Begin your narrative  
You have a story to tell  
Brooklyn is where you come from  
Even a rose, still grows, through hell  
    Or concrete  
So let me repeat

Take out your pens and write  
Don't stop until you're told to do so  
Be inspired by those who came before you  
Genetics blessed your rhythm and flow

C'mon, ain't nobody  
    You got one more ain't  
        And there's the door!

Fine. Othello!  
Yeah, he's a Moor

Now we're talking flavor  
Leave your prejudice at the door

But what about Hughes?  
Who?  
That's news to me  
I, Too  
Langston is who, I want to read

Yo, Teach, let's rap  
My pops told me school is a trap  
This stuff don't matter  
I'm about this paper  
Make these pockets fatter

Teach, make them see  
The world is bigger than  
    These Brooklyn  
        Streets

Teach, pull a rabbit out of a hat  
    dance, sing, rap  
    do all of that

Don't lose them.  
*They* don't love them.  
You are them.  
Make them – love them.

But, they aren't trying to read Shakespeare

So, make them feel Shakespeare  
    make them feel the words they choose  
    make them honor Langston Hughes

Words are your power, use them wisely  
English class is where you can harness them  
    Precisely  
Cuz, ain't ain't a word.

I'll see you guys tomorrow. Ju heard!