



If We Must Die  
Claude McKay

- If we must die, let it not be like hogs  
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,  
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,  
Making their mock at our accursed lot.
5. If we must die, O let us nobly die,  
So that our precious blood may not be shed  
In vain; then even the monsters we defy  
Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!  
O kinsmen! We must meet the common foe!
10. Though far outnumbered let us show us brave,  
And for their thousand blows deal one deathblow!  
What though before us lies the open grave?  
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,  
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!

**Study Questions**

1. What is the end rhyme pattern? What words rhyme?
2. Is the meter iambic pentameter? Pound it out on your desk!
3. What is the theme – problem and /or solution – in each quatrain?
4. How does the ending couplet sum up the theme of the poem?
5. What simile is used in line 1?
6. What literary technique is used in line 4?
7. Against what threat is the poet rallying his people?
8. What is the tone (mood, emotion) of the poem?
9. Who do you think the “monsters” might be in line 7?
10. What is your personal reaction to the poem? Why?