Mississippi—1955 (1955) By Langston Hughes
(To the Memory of Emmett Till)
Oh what sorrow!
oh, what pity!
Oh, what pain
That tears and blood
Should mix like rain
And terror come again
To Mississippi.
Come again?
Where has terror been?
On vacation? Up North?
In some other section
Of the nation,
Lying low, unpublicized?
Masked—with only
Jaundiced eyes
Showing through the mask?
Oh, what sorrow,
Pity, pain,
That tears and blood
Should mix like rain
In Mississippi!
And terror, fetid hot,
Yet clammy cold
Remain.

From A Wreath for Emmett Till By Farai Chideya
Emmett Till's name still catches in my throat,
like syllables waylaid in a stutterer's mouth.
A fourteen-year-old stutterer, in the South
to visit relatives and to be taught
the family's ways. His mother had finally bought
that White Sox cap; she'd made him swear an oath
to be careful around white folks. She'd told him the truth
of many a Mississippi anecdote:
Some white folks have blind souls. In his suitcase
she'd packed dungarees, T-shirts, underwear,
and comic books. She'd given him a note
for the conductor, waved to his chubby face,
wondered if he'd remember to brush his hair.
Her only child. A body left to bloat.
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“The Death of Emmett Till” by Bob Dylan
'Twas down in Mississippi not so long ago
When a young boy from Chicago town stepped through a Southern door
This boy's dreadful tragedy I can still remember well
The color of his skin was black and his name was Emmett Till
Some men they dragged him to a barn and there they beat him up
They said they had a reason, but I can't remember what
They tortured him and did some things too evil to repeat
There were screaming sounds inside the barn, there was laughing sounds out on the street
Then they rolled his body down a gulf amidst a bloody red rain
And they threw him in the waters wide to cease his screaming pain
The reason that they killed him there, and I'm sure it ain't no lie
Was just for the fun of killin' him and to watch him slowly die
And then to stop the United States of yelling for a trial
Two brothers they confessed that they had killed poor Emmett Till
But on the jury there were men who helped the brothers commit this awful crime
And so this trial was a mockery, but nobody seemed to mind.
I saw the morning papers but I could not bear to see
The smiling brothers walkin' down the courthouse stairs.
For the jury found them innocent and the brothers they went free
While Emmett's body floats the foam of a Jim Crow southern sea.
If you can't speak out against this kind of thing, a crime that's so unjust
Your eyes are filled with dead men's dirt, your mind is filled with dust,
Your arms and legs they must be in shackles and chains, and your blood it must refuse to flow
For you let this human race fall down so God-awful low!
This song is just a reminder to remind your fellow man
That this kind of thing still lives today in that ghost-robbed Ku Klux Klan.
But if all of us folks that thinks alike, if we gave all we could give
We could make this great land of ours a greater place to live.

Mood:
Directions:

Part 1:

Read each poem then find the following in each poem:
- Draw a box around a simile or metaphor
- Circle specific words that have strong connotations (feelings or emotions—positive or negative—associated with the word)
- Underline three examples of imagery (sentences that allow you to “see” what the poet sees)
- Determine the mood of each poem

Part 2: Complete the following chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poem</th>
<th>What details of the murder of Emmett Till does the poem focus on?</th>
<th>What do you think the purpose is of focusing on these details?</th>
<th>Reflect on the poem. Which lines or images affected you? How did they affect you?</th>
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