

Sympathy

Paul Laurence Dunbar

Why is the bird’s song not evidence that the cage has been accepted?

TOTAL TIME	TUMBLETA PASSAGE LOCATION
30 minutes	Poem - complete poem

TEACHER SETUP

Open the work in the Enhanced Reader and cue the span using the START and END anchors below.

START	I know what the caged bird feels, alas!
END	I know why the caged bird sings!
PASSAGE ID	sec-sympathy-01

THE MOVE

Trace how a repeated image changes across a poem

WHY THIS PASSAGE

The poem steadily corrects an easy misreading of song as happiness. The bird first senses the free world, then injures itself trying to escape, and finally sings not from contentment but because song is the remaining form of protest and appeal.

MARK

Underline images of the world outside the cage. Circle injuries caused by the bars. Box every version of “I know.” Star the lines that explicitly redefine the song.

NOTICE

- What does the bird know exists outside the cage?
- How does the second stanza change the meaning of confinement?
- Which words in the final stanza reject the idea that singing equals joy?

THINK

Answer provisionally: Why is the bird's song not evidence that the cage has been accepted? Choose the strongest interpretation you can defend from this passage alone.

WRITE

Write a short evidence-based response. Use at least two details from the assigned passage and explain how they support your interpretation.

CLOSE

Name the single detail that most changed or sharpened your interpretation, and say why.

STRONG ANSWER

The song is not acceptance because the poem identifies it as the final expression of a creature that still desires freedom. After physical escape fails and causes pain, the bird's voice becomes a prayer and plea rather than a celebration of captivity.

EVIDENCE

Use one image of desired freedom and one phrase from the final stanza that names what the song really is.

WATCH FOR

Do not treat the caged bird as simply cheerful or resilient. The poem explicitly frames the song as protest born from suffering.

SOLO

Read independently.

SUPPORTED

Narration + highlighting.

LISTENING

Listen; same evidence task.

STUDENT PAGE · GRADE 8 · LESSON 277

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TUMBLETA PASSAGE LOCATION	Poem - complete poem

PASSAGE ID	sec-sympathy-01
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Your teacher will open or cue the work in the Enhanced Reader. Use the location and verbatim anchors below to confirm the assigned span.

START

I know what the caged bird feels, alas!

END

I know why the caged bird sings!

READ / LISTEN TO THE ASSIGNED PASSAGE SOLO: read independently. SUPPORTED: use narration and highlighting. LISTENING: listen to the assigned passage. The question and evidence task stay the same.

1. **MARK** Underline images of the world outside the cage. Circle injuries caused by the bars. Box every version of “I know.” Star the lines that explicitly redefine the song.
2. **NOTICE** What does the bird know exists outside the cage? How does the second stanza change the meaning of confinement? Which words in the final stanza reject the idea that singing equals joy?
3. **THINK** Answer provisionally: Why is the bird’s song not evidence that the cage has been accepted?
4. **WRITE** Write a short response using at least two pieces of evidence from this passage.
5. **CLOSE** Name the single detail that most changed or sharpened your interpretation, and say why.