# The Golden Shovel Poetry Assignment

# We Real Cool

BY [GWENDOLYN BROOKS](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/gwendolyn-brooks)

               The Pool Players.        Seven at the Golden Shovel.

            We real cool. We

            Left school. We

            Lurk late. We

            Strike straight. We

            Sing sin. We

            Thin gin. We

            Jazz June. We

            Die soon

1. What are you left wondering from this poem? What background information would like to have?
2. What is a possible theme from “We Real Cool?”

**The Golden Shovel** By [Terrance Hayes](http://www.poetryoutloud.org/poet/terrance-hayes)

*after Gwendolyn Brooks*

I. 1981

When I am so small Da’s sock covers my arm, we

cruise at twilight until we find the place the real

men lean, bloodshot and translucent with cool.

His smile is a gold-plated incantation as we

drift by women on bar stools, with nothing left

in them but approachlessness. This is a school

I do not know yet. But the cue sticks mean we

are rubbed by light, smooth as wood, the lurk

of smoke thinned to song. We won’t be out late.

Standing in the middle of the street last night we

watched the moonlit lawns and a neighbor strike

his son in the face. A shadow knocked straight

Da promised to leave me everything: the shovel we

used to bury the dog, the words he loved to sing

his rusted pistol, his squeaky Bible, his sin.

The boy’s sneakers were light on the road. We

watched him run to us looking wounded and thin.

He’d been caught lying or drinking his father’s gin.

He’d been defending his ma, trying to be a man. We

stood in the road, and my father talked about jazz,

how sometimes a tune is born of outrage. By June

the boy would be locked upstate. That night we

got down on our knees in my room. *If I should die*

*before I wake*. Da said to me, *it will be too soon*.

1. How does this poem “The Golden Shovel” relate to “We Real Cool?” Make several comparisons.

**Your Assignment**

You will be creating your own “Golden Shovel” poem using an important line from your poem. This poem should be 10 lines or more—meaning that your line(s) that you choose should be at least 10 words long.

Arrange the words from your line as the ends of each line in your new poem.

This will be due on **Tuesday, January 17th**