

Name: _____ Class: _____

Knock Knock

By Daniel Beaty
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Daniel Beaty is an award-winning actor, singer, writer, and poet. He is known for incorporating music, movement, and words in his productions. In this poem, Daniel Beaty explores the relationship between a father and son, and how the son is impacted by his father. As you read, note how the speaker's tone shifts throughout the poem.

- [1] As a boy I shared a game with my father.
Played it every morning 'til I was 3.
He would knock knock on my door
and I'd pretend to be asleep
- [5] 'til he got right next to the bed.
Then I would get up and jump into his arms.
"Good morning, Papa."
And my papa he would tell me that he loved me.
We shared a game.
- [10] Knock Knock.

Until that day when the knock never came
and my momma takes me on a ride past corn fields
on this never ending highway 'til we reach a place of
high
rusty gates.
- [15] A confused little boy,
I entered the building carried in my mama's arms.
Knock Knock.

We reach a room of windows and brown faces.
Behind one of the windows sits my father.
- [20] I jump out of my mama's arms
and run joyously towards my papa's
only to be confronted by this window.
I knock knock trying to break through the glass,
trying to get to my father.
- [25] I knock knock as my mama pulls me away
before my papa even says a word.

And for years he has never said a word.
And so twenty-five years later, I write these words
for the little boy in me who still awaits his papa's knock.
- [30] Papa, come home cause I miss you.



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I miss you waking me up in the morning and telling me you love me.
Papa, come home, cause there's things I don't know
and I thought maybe you could teach me:

- [35] how to shave;
how to dribble a ball;
how to talk to a lady;
how to walk like a man.
Papa, come home because I decided a while back
I wanted to be just like you.
[40] But I'm forgetting who you are.

And twenty-five years later a little boy cries,
and so I write these words and try to heal
and try to father myself
and I dream up a father who says the words my father did not.

- [45] Dear Son,

I'm sorry I never came home.
For every lesson I failed to teach, hear these words:
Shave in one direction in strong deliberate strokes to avoid irritation.
Dribble the page with the brilliance of your ballpoint pen.
[50] Walk like a god and your goddess will come to you.

- No longer will I be there to knock on your door.
So you must learn to knock for yourself.
Knock knock down doors of racism and poverty that I could not.
Knock knock down doors of opportunity
[55] for the lost brilliance of the black men who crowd these cells.
Knock knock with diligence¹ for the sake of your children.
Knock knock for me for as long as you are free,
these prison gates cannot contain my spirit.
The best of me still lives in you.
[60] Knock knock with the knowledge that you are my son, but you are not my choices.
Yes, we are our fathers' sons and daughters,
but we are not their choices.
For despite their absences we are still here,
still alive, still breathing,
[65] with the power to change this world,
one little boy and girl at a time.
Knock knock
Who's there?

We are.

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1. **Diligence** (*noun*) careful and persistent work or effort