Name/Period: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Golden Shovel Technique

**We Real Cool**

BY [GWENDOLYN BROOKS](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/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.

Gwendolyn Brooks, “We Real Cool” from *Selected Poems.* Copyright © 1963 by Gwendolyn Brooks. Reprinted with the permission of the Estate of Gwendolyn Brooks.

Source: *Poetry* (1959)

**Here are the rules for the Golden Shovel:**

* Take a line (or lines) from a poem you admire.
* Use each word in the line (or lines) as an end word in your poem.
* Keep the end words in order.
* Give credit to the poet who originally wrote the line (or lines).
* The new poem does not have to be about the same subject as the poem that offers the end words.

If you pull a line with six words, your poem would be six lines long. If you pull a stanza with 24 words, your poem would be 24 lines long. And so on.

**The Golden Shovel**

BY [TERRANCE HAYES](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/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*.

II. 1991

Into the tented city we go, we-

akened by the fire’s ethereal

afterglow. Born lost and cool-

er than heartache. What we

know is what we know. The left

hand severed and school-

ed by cleverness. A plate of we-

ekdays cooking. The hour lurk-

ing in the afterglow. A late-

night chant. Into the city we

go. Close your eyes and strike

a blow. Light can be straight-

ened by its shadow. What we

break is what we hold. A sing-

ular blue note. An outcry sin-

ged exiting the throat. We

push until we thin, thin-

king we won’t creep back again.

While God licks his kin, we

sing until our blood is jazz,

we swing from June to June.

We sweat to keep from we-

eping. Groomed on a die-

t of hunger, we end too soon.