

Those Winter Sundays

By Robert Hayden

Sundays too my father got up early
and put his clothes on in the blueblack cold,
then with cracked hands that ached
from labor in the weekday weather made
banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him.

I'd wake and hear the cold splintering, breaking.
When the rooms were warm, he'd call,
and slowly I would rise and dress,
fearing the chronic angers of that house,

Speaking indifferently to him,
who had driven out the cold
and polished my good shoes as well.
What did I know, what did I know
of love's austere and lonely offices?

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Born Asa Bundy Sheffey into a poor family, Robert Hayden's parents left him to be raised by foster parents. Due to extreme nearsightedness, Hayden turned to books rather than sports in his childhood. Some of his best-known poems can be found in his collection *A Ballad of Remembrance*. Hayden was the first African American to be appointed as Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress.

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