

**F. E. W. HARPER: UPLIFTED FROM THE SHADOWS**

STUDENT HANDOUT 3

The following are five poems written by Frances Ellen Watkins Harper.

**Thank God for Little Children**

Thank God for little children,  
Bright flowers by earth's wayside,  
The dancing, joyous lifeboats  
Upon life's stormy tide.

Thank God for little children;  
When our skies are cold and gray,  
They come as sunshine to our hearts,  
And charm our cares away.

I almost think the angels,  
Who tend life's garden fair,  
Drop down the sweet wild blossoms  
That bloom around us here.

It seems a breath of heaven  
Round many a cradle lies,  
And every little baby  
Brings a message from the skies.

The humblest home with children  
Is rich in precious gems,  
That shame the wealth of monarchs,  
And pale their diadems.

Dear mothers, guard these jewels,  
As sacred offerings meet,  
A wealth of household treasures  
To lay at Jesus' feet.

**God Bless Our Native Land**

God bless our native land,  
Land of the newly free,  
Oh may she ever stand  
For truth and liberty.

God bless our native land,  
Where sleep our kindred dead,  
Let peace at thy command  
Above their graves be shed.

God help our native land,  
Bring surcease to her strife,  
And shower from thy hand  
A more abundant life.

God bless our native land,  
Her homes and children bless,  
Oh may she ever stand  
For truth and righteousness.

### **The Slave Mother**

Heard you that shriek? It rose  
So wildly on the air,  
It seemed as if a burden'd heart  
Was breaking in despair.

Saw you those hands so sadly clasped--  
The bowed and feeble head--  
The shuddering of that fragile form--  
That look of grief and dread?

Saw you the sad, imploring eye?  
Its every glance was pain,  
As if a storm of agony  
Were sweeping through the brain.

She is a mother, pale with fear,  
Her boy clings to her side,  
And in her kirtle vainly tries  
His trembling form to hide.

He is not hers, although she bore  
For him a mother's pains;  
He is not hers, although her blood  
Is coursing through his veins!

He is not hers, for cruel hands  
May rudely tear apart

The only wreath of household love  
That binds her breaking heart.

His love has been a joyous light  
That o'er her pathway smiled,  
A fountain gushing ever new,  
Amid life's desert wild.

His lightest word has been a tone  
Of music round her heart,  
Their lives a streamlet blent in one--  
Oh, Father! must they part?

They tear him from her circling arms,  
Her last and fond embrace.  
Oh! never more may her sad eyes  
Gaze on his mournful face.

No marvel, then, these bitter shrieks  
Disturb the listening air:  
She is a mother, and her heart  
Is breaking in despair.

### **My Mother's Kiss**

My mother's kiss, my mother's kiss,  
I feel its impress now;  
As in the bright and happy days  
She pressed it on my brow.

You say it is a fancied thing  
Within my memory fraught;  
To me it has a sacred place--  
The treasure house of thought.

Again, I feel her fingers glide  
Amid my clustering hair;  
I see the love-light in her eyes,  
When all my life was fair.

Again, I hear her gentle voice  
In warning or in love.  
How precious was the faith that taught  
My soul of things above.

The music of her voice is stilled,  
Her lips are paled in death.  
As precious pearls I'll clasp her words  
Until my latest breath.

The world has scattered round my path  
Honor and wealth and fame;  
But naught so precious as the thoughts  
That gather round her name.

And friends have placed upon my brow  
The laurels of renown;  
But she first taught me how to wear  
My manhood as a crown.

My hair is silvered o'er with age,  
I'm longing to depart;  
To clasp again my mother's hand,  
And be a child at heart.

To roam with her the glory-land  
Where saints and angels greet;  
To cast our crowns with songs of love  
At our Redeemer's feet.

### **The Burdens of All**

We may sigh o'er the heavy burdens  
Of the black, the brown and white;  
But if we all clasped hands together  
The burdens would be more light.  
How to solve life's saddest problems,  
Its weariness, want and woe,  
Was answered by One who suffered  
In Palestine long ago.

He gave from his heart this precept,  
To ease the burdens of men,  
"As ye would that others do to you  
Do ye even so to them."  
Life's heavy, wearisome burdens  
Will change to a gracious trust  
When men shall learn in the light of God  
To be merciful and just.

Where war has sharpened his weapons,  
And slavery masterful had,  
Let white and black and brown unite  
To build the kingdom of God.  
And never attempt in madness  
To build a kingdom or state,  
Through greed of gold or lust of power,  
On the crumbling stones of hate.

The burdens will always be heavy,  
The sunshine fade into night,  
Till mercy and justice shall cement  
The black, the brown and the white.  
And earth shall answer with gladness,  
The herald angel's refrain,  
When "Peace on earth, good will to men"  
Was the burden of their strain.

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