

Remembering the Past

Directions: Read the following poem about memories of childhood. When you answer the questions that follow, consider how the speaker of the poem remembers her youth.

Nikki-Rosa

Nikki Giovanni

childhood remembrances are always a drag
if you're Black
you always remember things like living in Woodlawn
with no inside toilet
and if you become famous or something
they never talk about how happy you were to have
your mother
all to yourself and
how good the water felt when you get your bath
from one of those
big tubs that folk in Chicago barbecue in
and somehow when you talk about home
it never gets across how much you
understood their feelings
as the whole family attended meeting about Hollydale
and even though you remember
your biographers never understand
your father's pain as he sells his stock
and another dream goes
and though you're poor it isn't poverty that
concerns you
and though they fought a lot
it isn't your father's drinking that makes any difference
but only that everybody is together and you
and your sister have happy birthdays and very good
Christmases
and I really hope no white person ever has cause
to write about me
because they never understand
Black love is Black wealth and they'll
probably talk about my hard childhood
and never understand that
all the while I was quite happy¹

¹Nikki Giovanni, "Nikki-Rosa," *Black Feeling, Black Talk/Black Judgement* (Detroit: Broadside Press, 1970).

Black Like Me
Lesson 8
Handout 24 (page 2)

Name _____
Date _____

1. Describe the speaker of the poem.
2. Find examples of positive memories in the poem. Underline them.
3. Find examples of negative memories in the poem. Circle them.
4. Was the speaker happy with her childhood? Why or why not?
5. Why does the speaker say that white people would never understand "Black love is Black wealth?"
6. Would you imagine that John Griffin's childhood was different from the speaker of the poem's childhood? How?