

**haughtiness** Being arrogantly superior.

**gold mines** The discovery of gold in California in 1848 and the period of panning and mining for gold that followed is a significant period in American history.

**huts** A reference to slave accommodation on plantations.

Does my haughtiness offend you?  
Don't you take it awful hard  
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines  
Diggin' in my own backyard.

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You may shoot me with your words,  
You may cut me with your eyes,  
You may kill me with your hatefulness,  
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?  
Does it come as a surprise  
That I dance like I've got diamonds  
At the meeting of my thighs?

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Out of the huts of history's shame  
I rise  
Up from a past that's rooted in pain  
I rise  
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,  
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

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Leaving behind nights of terror and fear  
I rise  
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear  
I rise  
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,  
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.  
I rise  
I rise  
I rise.

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### UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

#### KEY POINT

The poet uses similes to signify resistance to oppression and the indomitable power of the human spirit.

'Still I Rise' is a powerful challenge aimed at the people who have oppressed the speaker and her community. Instead of expressing simple anger at the unfairness of one group oppressing another, she challenges the very foundations of oppression by asserting her pride in who she is. She is proud of herself and her people and implies that this pride is rooted in the strength and resilience of her people. The similes she uses, of oil wells and diamonds, assert that the wealth of her innate qualities more than equals the pride brought by material wealth.

The speaker's spirit is compared with a force of nature through the use of vocabulary relating to the natural world. The range of vocabulary varies from dust, usually seen as worthless but is overpowering when it rises like a storm, to moons and suns, sources of light and life with many positive connotations.

The poem has several themes:

- racism
- oppression
- pride in oneself and one's background
- feminism
- beauty
- independence.