Brown Bag Items for *Witness* – Spring ‘15

(maintains the lower case punctuation of Karen Hesse)

1. “felt like skidding on ice as i read,/felt like twisting steel.” (7) (1 other student selected this quote)
2. the words “coon” and “minstrel show” (7)
3. “how alone you want to be leanora?/you’re already nothing but a wild brown island.” (7) (5 other students selected this quote)
4. “don’t blame me/the roads were bad.” (8)
5. “at the klan meeting last night/the dragons talked about lighting you/and your daddy up/to get them some warmth on a cold day.” (10) (1 other student selected this quote)
6. “you’d be cheap fuel, they said./they liked the smell of barbecue, they said.” (10) (1 other student suggested this quote.)
7. “i turned my back on willie pettibone and walked out of school./i didn’t know where i was going./i just walked out…/i was that scorched.” (10) (2 other students selected this quote)
8. “leanora’s dark hand stoking esther’s silk face.” (12)
9. “i never had a colored girl in my kitchen before.” (12) (1 other student selected this quote)
10. “no low-down white boy’s gonna stop leanora sutter/from getting an education” (13) (2 other students selected this quote)
11. “it’s a pitiful state of affair when a colored preacher/can lure good white folk from their hearths.” (12)
12. “if we are patient, my good neighbor,/we can stay here at home,/we can take care of our problems at home/and down there in harlem, the/ negro problem will/settle/itself. “ (16) (1 other student selected this quote)
13. “i am being buried, too,/in all this whiteness.” (27) (3 other students selected this quote)
14. “if she wins/she’ll be the first woman/governor in/this whole damn country./imagine.” (28)
15. “we cast those who are not like us into the arms of satan.” (31)
16. “together we cast a long shadow, neighbor,/and with our shadow/we cast our foes in darkness” (31)
17. “and now he’s dead/and he was rich/and he was white.”(35)
18. “…they planned for weeks to kidnap,/to kill./to see how felt./to prove they could./it didn’t matter about jail,/or being haunted by a ghost,/didn’t even matter about going to hell.” (38)
19. “100 percent American men” (24)
20. “i know i shouldn’t be running liquor…would have been trapped in this valley forever.” (46)
21. “i can still see it when i close my eyes.” (53)
22. “in that dark and narrow place/i opened a hole for myself/but no matter how i turned,/the light from the cross/curled its bright claws under the door.” (54) (8 other students selected this quote)
23. “i was born protestant./but i’d join the catholic church/before/Ii’d throw my lot in with the klan.” (58)
24. “klan can seem mighty right-minded, with their talk of family virtue,/mighty decent, if you don’t scratch the surface.” (59) (1 other student selected this quote)
25. “there’s a kind of power they wield/a deceptive authority.” (59) (2 other students selected this quote)
26. “it took having the hirshes here/to see straight through/to the end of it.” (59) (1 other student selected this quote)
27. “i can have sleeps with no fearing.” (60)
28. “to think of what they could drive from my life/with their filthy/little/minds” (61) (4 other students selected this quote)
29. [the negro soldiers] “like a long streamer of dark silk” (40) (1 other student selected this quote)
30. “i don’t know if he could see me well enough/to judge the color of my skin./i don’t know if my color mattered one whit to him.” (41)
31. “those negro soldiers chased the rebels out.” (41)
32. “an act of god,/neighbor,/to express the lord’s anger/that one/of his special children/had fallen.” (68)
33. “and when that sort of scoundrel/starts hiding under hood and robes,/no good can come of it.” (69) (2 other students selected this quote)
34. “grabbed esther, and rolled her to safety/locked in my arms,/the two of us cradled in a mess of seed and dandelion.” (72)
35. “safe in a nest of dandelion. (73)
36. “we [klan] didn’t send it” (75)
37. “put a colored girl in the paper,/call her a hero,/just cause she saved a kid/from being hit by a train./a jew kid.” (76)
38. “but the colored girl,/i never saw anyone move so fast./she ran like a deer,/like a deer in a rifle sight,” (76)
39. “maybe i didn’t try because something,/something kept me in my place,/watching that colored girl run.” (76)
40. ‘100 percent americans/what is a 100 percent american?” (79) (1 other student selected this quote)
41. “what is the ku klux klan?/is it the patriotic organization it claims to be?/ 100 percent americans/what is a 100 percent american?/what of catholics, jews, negroes,/citizens of any other race or color born here,/whose fathers were born here,/ and grandfathers./are they not every bit as 100 percent american as the klan?”(79) (4 other students selected this quote)
42. “something has slipped and as a result/we are all/sliding/back toward the dark ages” (88) (5 other students selected this quote)
43. “they’d tie them both to the tracks next time,/make sure neither walked away.” (75)
44. “they prayed with me as i declared the klan a/movement of god.” (70)
45. “enlightened humanity,/ now there’s something the klan could discuss at their next/cross burning.” (90)
46. “why couldn’t they plant a bottle of liquor/in the pockets of a hanged man?” (95)
47. “sara chickering says,/the animals and the plants are too young for such things/and esther is, too.” (96)
48. “i do have talkings to God and deep thinkings//every day.”
49. “how silent my world would be/without esther” (104) (1 other student selected this quote)
50. “if a dog dies between night and morning,/neighbor,/it is blamed on the/klan.” (107)
51. “pack up their poison/and go.” (108)
52. “that’s when the roar started inside my [Merlin’s} head.” (115)
53. “there is only one way/to redeem myself/with my klan brothers./only one way to redeem myself/with god. (116)
54. “i cannot get in bed with viola.” (120)
55. “persecution is not american” (125)
56. “it is not american to give the power of life and death/to a secret organization/….it is not American to have bands of night riders/apply the punishments of medieval europe to/freeborn men.” (125) (3 other students selected this quote)
57. “viola is silent. she simply hands harvey a thank-you note.” (128)
58. “i saw them/in their hoods/in their robes,/like ghosts.” (132)
59. “merlin didn’t make a bullet shoot through my daddy./i know./i did see who did.” (133)
60. “if i tell God in johnny reeves’ own church,/God does know what to do.” (141)
61. “a long time ago i wrote miss helen keller/about how maybe we’d be better off/if no one could see./then nobody would mind about/a person’s skin color.” (152)
62. “every generation/has felt somewhat the same/for two or three thousand years/and still the world goes on.” (154) (3 other students selected this quote)
63. “he’s pretty smart, mr. field,/for a skinny, half-blind, old white man.” (160)
64. “someone had to pay for me being a colored girl in a white world” (160)