

# Adolescence

Claude McKay

There was a time when in late afternoon  
The four-o'clocks<sup>1</sup> would fold up at day's close  
Pink-white in prayer, and 'neath the floating moon  
I lay with them in calm and sweet repose.

5 And in the open spaces I could sleep,  
Half-naked to the shining worlds above;  
Peace came with sleep and sleep was long and deep,  
Gained without effort, sweet like early love.

But now no balm—nor drug nor weed nor wine—  
10 Can bring true rest to cool my body's fever,  
Nor sweeten in my mouth the acid brine,  
That salts my choicest drink and will forever.

## Editorial Notes

1. **Four-O'Clocks:** perennial flower that blooms late in the day