



This writing prompt was developed in conjunction with Lightbox interviews with Solmaz Sharif and Tyehimba Jess. For more information, please see www.lightboxpoetry.com.

Into Conversation

Read Tyehimba Jess's "Mark Twain vs. Blind Tom" as well as the poet's commentary on the poem in his Lightbox interview. Write a poem of your own that puts two personal, cultural, or historical figures into conversation. These might be people you've encountered in your own life, characters from famous books or movies, or significant players from history. Try using characters or figures from different contexts in order to explore or unveil new histories, contexts, and relationships between them. You might, as Jess does, use a quotation as a starting place, or you might create a dialogue between the figures solely from your imagination or from research at the library or on the Internet. What might these figures say to each other? How would one respond to the other? As you craft the poem, think, too, about how you might arrange the poem to allow for multiple ways of reading it. The in-class activity included with this classroom portfolio can suggest a starting point.