***Aprons Of Silence***

By Carl Sandburg

Many things I might have said today.

And I kept my mouth shut.

So many times I was asked

To come and say the same things

Everybody was saying, no end

To the yes-yes, yes-yes,

me-too, me-too.

The aprons of silence covered me.

A wire and hatch held my tongue.

I spit nails into an abyss and listened.

I shut off the gable of Jones, Johnson, Smith,

All whose names take pages in the city directory.

I fixed up a padded cell and lugged it around.

I locked myself in and nobody knew it.

Only the keeper and the kept in the hoosegow

Knew it--on the streets, in the post office,

On the cars, into the railroad station

Where the caller was calling, "All a-board,

All a-board for . . . Blaa-blaa . . . Blaa-blaa,

Blaa-blaa . . . and all points northwest . . .all a-board."

Here I took along my own hoosegow

And did business with my own thoughts.

Do you see? It must be the aprons of silence.

1. Sandberg writes, “Only the keeper and the kept in the hoosegow” in the last stanza. What is a hoosegow?
2. Why does the author say that silence is like being in hoosegow?
3. According to the author, what is the “apron of silence? What does the apron symbolize?

Vocabulary:

Gable

Hoosegow