

The Poetry of Langston Hughes

"Mother to Son"

"Dreams"

"A Dream Deferred"

Essential Question #1

How can readers distinguish between a poem's author and a poem's speaker?

The poet is the poem's author; he/she is the physical writer of the poem. The poem's speaker is the voice that speaks the poem's words--the individual who is presenting the idea through the poem. Sometimes, they are the same, but most often, they are not. In many cases, the poem's speaker is not obvious and is considered to be unknown.

Langston Hughes 1902-1967

- ▶ Major poet during Harlem Renaissance
- ▶ Writing focuses on themes related to the African-American experience



“Mother to Son”

Facing Life’s Challenges

- ▶ What kind of problems do people experience?
- ▶ What kinds of barriers are difficult for them to overcome?



Copy the chart in your notes. As you read, record your inferences about the speaker.

In order to understand the speaker of a poem, you need to make inferences –logical guesses or conclusions- based on clues in the poem.

Clue	Inference
The title is "Mother to Son"	The speaker is a woman.

SOAPS

Title of Poem: "Mother to Son"

Author & Facts: Langston Hughes

- ▶ had a difficult life

- ▶ wrote during the Harlem Renaissance

Subject: keep trying to overcome life's struggles

Occasion: personal experience of life in Harlem

Audience: general audience; other African Americans

Purpose: to encourage readers to keep trying in life

Speaker: a mother is speaking to her son

Essential Question #2

Why do writers use figurative language like similes and metaphors in their poetry?

Writers use metaphors and similes to invite the reader to make a comparison between two unlike things and to note a surprising characteristic they share.

“Dreams” and “A Dream Deferred”

Think about goals you have set for yourself but are not sure you can achieve. How does the possibility of failure make you feel? What if someone told you that you *couldn't* achieve your goals and dreams?



“Dreams” and “A Dream Deferred”

- ▶ The poem “Dreams” warns of what happens when goals fall by the wayside.
- ▶ The poem “A Dream Deferred” illustrates what could happen if you choose to put off your dreams or procrastinate.
- ▶ As you read, think about how the speaker’s advice might influence their outlooks toward their futures.

Post-Reading

Text to Text Connection

- ▶ What similarities do you see between the poems “Dreams” and “A Dream Deferred”?
- ▶ How are the poems different?

Use evidence from the poems to support your answers.

SOAPS

Title of Poem: "Dreams"

Author & Facts: Langston Hughes

- ▶ Wrote during the Harlem Renaissance
- ▶ Wrote about African-American life themes

Subject: keep trying to achieve your dreams

Occasion: personal experience

Audience: general audience; other African Americans

Purpose: to show you cannot live to your full potential if you let your dreams die

Speaker: unknown narrator-possibly poet

SOAPS

Title of Poem: "A Dream Deferred"

Author & Facts: Langston Hughes

- ▶ Lived a hard life

- ▶ Knew that many African Americans felt dreams were the only thing they had

Subject: warning to people to not give up on their dreams or wait until later to achieve them

Occasion: personal experience

Audience: general audience; other African Americans

Purpose: to deny your dream is to deny your hope for a better future

Speaker: unknown narrator-possibly poet

Follow-up: Life Lessons

Choose one of the three poems by Langston Hughes.

In your notes, write the life lesson that can be gained from reading this poem. Briefly describe the poem to help support your choice of lesson.