
Date: _____

Thinking About the Selections: “Dreams” and “Dream Deferred”

Langston Hughes (1902 – 1967) Langston Hughes, born in Joplin, Missouri, was the first African American to have a strictly literary career. As a young man, he held a variety of jobs—teacher, ranch hand, farmer, seaman, and nightclub cook, among others. He drew on all of these experiences, but even more so on his experience as an African American man, to create his great body of work. “Dream Deferred” and “Dreams” illustrate his ability to express the spirit of black America.

Part I Directions: Actively read Langston Hughes’ two poems “Dreams” and “Dream Deferred” (40)

Part II Directions: After actively reading “Dreams” and “Dream Deferred”, answer the following questions in complete sentences and on a separate sheet of paper (60)

1. **Respond:** Which poem affected you more? Why?
2. **(a) Recall:** What is the first question asked in “Dream Deferred”? **(b) Infer:** How is the question answered? **(c) Speculate:** Why does Hughes use six questions and only one statement in the poem?
3. **(a) Compare and Contrast:** How does the last line of “Dream Deferred” contrast with the rest of the poem? **(b) Draw Conclusions:** What is the effect of this contrast?
4. **(a) Recall:** To what two things does the speaker in “Dreams” compare life? **(b) Interpret:** Restate in your own words the advice “Dreams” offers.
5. **Apply:** How might you apply the advice Hughes gives in “Dreams” to your own life?

Dream Variations

by Langston Hughes

To fling my arms wide
In some place of the sun,
To whirl and to dance
Till the white day is done.
Then rest at cool evening
Beneath a tall tree
While night comes on gently,
 Dark like me--
That is my dream!

To fling my arms wide
In the face of the sun,
Dance! Whirl! Whirl!
Till the quick day is done.
Rest at pale evening . . .
A tall, slim tree . . .
Night coming tenderly
 Black like me.



Dreams

by Langston Hughes

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.

Dream Deferred

by Langston Hughes

What happens to a dream deferred?
Does it dry up
Like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
Like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
Like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?