

Background information:

James Mercer Langston Hughes, (February 1, 1902 – May 22, 1967) is best-known for his work during the Harlem Renaissance. Lauded as the "Poet Laureate of Harlem" in the 1920s, Langston Hughes was one of the first African Americans to earn a living solely as a writer. Hughes was known mainly for his poetry. But he also wrote plays, novels, a wealth of nonfiction pieces, and even an opera.

In his explorations of race, social justice, and African-American culture and art, Hughes' writing vividly captures the political, social, and artistic climates of Harlem in the 1920s and 1930s. During that time in Harlem large numbers of African American workers moved to New York. They came not just for jobs but also to escape the inherent unfairness and obvious and accepted racism of the South. (The South had laws keeping blacks and whites separate allowing whites to have more rights and greater freedom than blacks.)

There were various patrons of the arts during the "Harlem Renaissance," both black and white, including the very wealthy A'Lelia Walker who ran an influential meeting group from her home. Walker paid African-American poets, novelists, musicians, and others so they could create and invent artistically. Three main political figures kept the hopes of freedom for African Americans alive and made Harlem a political hotbed of activities. The three figures were W.E.B. Dubois, James Weldon Johnston, and Marcus Garvey.

Unlike other notable black poets of the period, Hughes refused to separate between his personal experience and the common experience of black America. He wanted to tell the stories of his people in ways that reflected their actual culture, including both their suffering and their love of music, laughter, and language itself.

deferred = definition: *deferred* - To put something off until a later time; Synonyms: postponed, delayed, held back

A 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?

Complete the chart below

	Comparison	Action	Image/feeling created
A dream deferred is like	a raisin in the sun	dried up	dead, shriveled, withered
A dream deferred is like	a sore	fester than _____	
A dream deferred is like	rotten meat		
A dream deferred is like			
A dream deferred is like			
A dream deferred is like			

Answer these questions using complete sentences.

- 1) What type of figurative language does Hughes use?
- 2) What is the message of the poem?
- 3) How does each comparison show Hughes message?
- 4) How does Hughes poem connect to the times he lived in?
- 5) How does his poem connect to your life experience?
- 6) What does each of the comparisons have in common?
- 7) Why do you think he chose these comparisons?
- 8) Which image do you most relate to in your own experience you wrote about?

Extension: Now, on binder paper, write your own figurative language poem about when you experienced something being deferred.

- 1) It can be the topic of your quick write or something else.
- 2) You must have at least 3 similes in your poem.
- 3) You can use metaphors, personification, and idioms as well.
- 4) Your poem must be at least 5 lines long.
- 5) Your poem will have more impact if you move beyond a specific thing and more into general emotions

This completed worksheet and your poem are due

Thursday, October 28 at the beginning of class

Poem frame (if you need it)

A _____ **Deferred**
by _____

What happens to a _____ deferred?

Does it _____

like a _____?

Or _____ like _____

And then _____?

Does it _____ like _____?

Or _____

like _____?

Maybe it just _____

like a _____

Or does it _____?

Note: your poem should be written on binder paper or typed. This is paper is not a final draft