

Name _____

7th Grade Language Arts Distance Learning Assignment

Week 4

A Note to Parents

This week, your student should read "[Mother to Son](#)" by Langston Hughes.

(<https://www.commonlit.org/en/texts/mother-to-son>) In this poem, a mother utilizes metaphor to communicate the struggles she's faced and the importance of perseverance to her son.

Consider discussing the themes of [Friendship & Family](#) and [Resilience & Success](#) as they relate to the text. These big questions can help drive discussion: "How does a person overcome adversity?" and "What can you learn from family?"

Ways to support your child:

- Ask your child about this poem:
 - What was "[Mother to Son](#)" About
 - What did you learn about? About [Resilience & Success](#)?
- Watch the following clips with your child at home:
 - '[The Harlem Renaissance](#)' (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GfcO2HKyPVE>)
 - '[Langston Hughes - Biography](#)' (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inP76rkYUso>)

Day 1, Activity 1: Vocabulary Review

Step 1: Review the below vocabulary words by revisiting your work from weeks 1-3.

Step 2: Write a short response journal discussing how to approach a difficult challenge.

Step 3: Include in your journal at least five of the below vocabulary words, used correctly. *You may have to change the form of the word (ex: go, going, gone).*

Accuse	Allow	Coordinate	Doubt	Impostor
Interrogate	Mock	Rigid	Sprawl	

[illegible]

Day 2, Activity 1: Your Opinion

“The American Dream” is the belief that anyone, regardless of their background, can become successful and happy in this country. In your opinion, do all Americans have equal access to the American Dream? What are some factors that could make it easier or harder to achieve happiness?

Day 2, Activity 2: Reading a Poem

Use the following steps to read and interpret the poem.

1. **Read** the poem all the way through, at LEAST twice. *At the end of the poem, write your first impressions or immediate thoughts—positive or negative.
2. Determine who the **speaker** of the poem is. You don’t have to *name* the speaker, just find out what you can about him/her/it. *Highlight and annotate any details in the poem that give away any information about the speaker.
3. What is the **subject** of the poem? What does the speaker think or feel about the subject? *Write a short sentence answering these two questions under your first impressions.

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Mother to Son

By Langston Hughes
1922

Langston Hughes (1902-1967) was an American poet, activist, novelist, and playwright. He is also considered one of the leaders of the Harlem Renaissance, which was the cultural, social, and artistic movement of black artists that took place in Harlem between the end of World War I and the mid-1930s. As you read, take notes on the metaphor and larger message presented in the text.

- [1] Well, son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
It's had tacks in it,
And splinters,
[5] And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor —
Bare.
But all the time
I've been a-climbin' on,
[10] And reachin' landin's,
And turnin' corners,
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.
So boy, don't you turn back.
[15] Don't you set down on the steps
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now —
For I've still goin', honey,
I've still climbin',
[20] And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.



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"Mother to Son" by Langston Hughes (1922) is in the public domain.

Day 3: Conversation with the Speaker

Look back at your opinion regarding whether all people have equal access to the American Dream. How is your opinion different and/or similar to the speaker's opinion? Why do you think the speaker feels the way she does?

Complete the following Text-Dependent Questions for Day 4.

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. In the poem, whom is the speaker addressing and about what?
 - A. A mother is telling a story to her child about her own childhood.
 - B. A mother is describing for her son the climb up a crystal staircase.
 - C. A son is recounting a conversation with his mother about his struggle to earn a comfortable living.
 - D. A mother is warning her son about the difficulties of life and the struggle to persevere.

2. Which of the following best explains the significance of the staircase in the poem?
 - A. The narrator describes a tiring climb up a beat-up staircase, which represents her persistence through difficulties and challenges in life.
 - B. The narrator describes a crystal staircase, which symbolizes her goals and the hard work she has done to accomplish her dreams.
 - C. The narrator describes her climb up a dirty staircase that transforms into a crystal stair, which represents her ability to rise above difficulties.
 - D. The narrator describes herself going down a staircase that is falling apart, which represents her fleeing a difficult life.

3. PART A: Which of the following statements best describes a major theme of the poem?
 - A. Never forget your family.
 - B. Persevere when life isn't easy.
 - C. Hope is the answer to all challenges.
 - D. Respect your elders.

4. PART B: Which of the following quotes best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "Well, son, I'll tell you: / Life for me ain't been no crystal stair." (Lines 1-2)
 - B. "It's had tacks in it, / And splinters, / And boards torn up, / And places with no carpet on the floor — / Bare." (Lines 3-7)
 - C. "I'se been a-climbin' on, / And reachin' landin's, / And turnin' corners" (Lines 9-11)
 - D. "So boy, don't you turn back. / Don't you set down on the steps / 'Cause you finds it's kinder hard. / Don't you fall now — / For I'se still goin', honey" (Lines 14-18)

5. How does the poem's use of language and free verse contribute to the author's purpose?

Day 4: Your Life Advice

In Langston Hughes' poem, the mother gives her son life advice through the extended metaphor of life being a set of stairs. Think about someone you care about—a sibling, a friend, or a younger family member—and think about a piece of advice you would give him or her. Is it about life? Love? School? Now, think about what you could compare that concept to in an extended metaphor.

Using your thoughts as inspiration, use Langston Hughes' poem as a model to write your own poem. Some words have been included in the lines below for guidance, but if they don't work, you may cross them out. **Be authentic.** "Mother to Son" was written in a working class, black vernacular of the 1930s. Write your poem *in your own voice*.

Well, _____, I'll tell you:

It's _____

And _____

And _____

And _____

But all the time

I _____

And _____

And _____

And _____

So, _____, don't _____

Don't _____

Because _____

Don't _____

Because I _____

And _____

(repetition of 2nd line)

[1] Well, son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
It's had tacks in it,
And splinters,
[5] And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor —
Bare.
But all the time
I've been a-climbin' on,
[10] And reachin' landin's,
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So boy, don't you turn back.
[15] Don't you set down on the steps
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now —
For I've still goin', honey,
I've still climbin',
[20] And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

Day 5: Learning from What You've Read

Think back on the texts you've read the past four weeks: Norma Fox Mazer's short story, "Tuesday of the Other June," Rudyard Kipling's poem "If," "What My Father Said" by Alan King, and this week's poem. Each of these has dealt with overcoming obstacles and parents' advice. What lessons do these texts offer regarding overcoming obstacles or following a parent's advice? Write an extended response answer to this question using one quote from at least two different texts as support for your answer.

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