

CLOSE READING AND ANNOTATION

Staple this sheet to the printed source.

Annotate each piece (poem, article, chapter from novel) using the **Says/Does** method. Identify **four Says** phrases or words in the piece. In the first column, identify what the text **SAYS**. This is the **content** of the piece. In the second column, explain what the text **DOES**. These are the **creative writing techniques** used by the author to convey his/her message. In the **BECAUSE** column, explain the **impact** the author is trying to make on the reader.

Title of the piece: <i>"Mother to Son"</i>			
Author: <i>Langston Hughes</i>			
Format (circle one): Poetry Magazine article Book			
Paragraph/ stanza numbers	SAYS (content)	DOES (verbs and writing techniques used to convey the message)	BECAUSE (impact on the reader)
Lines 1-8	<i>"Life for me ain't been no crystal stair. It's had tacks on it, And splinters, And boards torn up, And places with no carpet on the floor— Bare."</i>	<i>Creates an image of damaged stairs. The damaged stairs are an extended metaphor.</i>	<i>The author's mother is using the stairs to make the point that her life has been very difficult. The damaged stairs represent the difficulties she has faced in her life.</i>
Lines 9	<i>"I'se been a climbin' on, And reachin' landin's, And turnin' corners, And sometimes goin' in the dark Where there ain't been no light."</i>	<i>The language is meant to sound as though the speaker is not well educated.</i>	<i>The language in the poem suggests the woman's lack of education was just one of the challenges against which she persevered.</i>
Lines 12-13	<i>"And sometimes goin' in the dark Where there ain't been no light. "</i>	<i>The absence of light is a metaphor.</i>	<i>The speaker in the poem is explaining how she has persevered through hard times even when there was no light. Light is a symbol of hope.</i>
Lines 14-20	<i>"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 going' honey, I'se still climbin'"</i>	<i>Maintains the metaphor, that the stairs are a symbol of life. Now the narrator tells the son not to sit or fall or turn back when he is on the stairs.</i>	<i>The speaker in the poem is encouraging her son to persevere, just as she has done.</i>
Line 21	<i>"And life for me ain't been no crystal stair."</i>	<i>Repeats Line 2.</i>	<i>The speaker emphasizes the point that life is hard, by repeating Line 2.</i>

Use these **verbs** to describe **what the text does**.

Analyzes	Concludes	Details	Justifies	Proves
Argues	Connects	Develops	Lists	Qualifies
Asks	Contradicts	Distinguishes	Narrates	Questions
Asserts	Contrasts	Discusses	Offers	Reflects
Challenges	Debates	Dramatizes	Opposes	States
Clarifies	Demonstrates	Elaborates	Predicts	Suggest
Compiles	Defines	Establishes	Presents	Summarizes
Compares	Describes	Evaluates	Proposes	Traces

Use these **creative writing techniques** to describe to **what the text does**.

Anecdotes	Figures of speech	Point of view
Character development	Heavy description	Plot development
Dialogue	Imaginative language	Underlying theme
Emotional appeal	Metaphors/similes	Vivid setting

Who is the **audience** for this piece: How do you know? Explain.

The speaker in the poem is a mother and her message appears to be to her son because she addresses the audience using the words "son, boy, and honey".

The message could also be meant for a much wider audience. Langston Hughes was a writer during the Harlem Renaissance. Much of his poetry dealt with the topic of discrimination experienced by Black Americans.

What is the **purpose** of this piece? How do you know? Explain.

The purpose of the poem is to encourage or inspire people to persevere. Langston Hughes was a writer during the Harlem Renaissance. Much of his poetry dealt with the topic of persevering in the face of discrimination.

Based on the **audience** and **purpose**, to what extent does this piece connect to your thematic statement? Explain.

This poem uses a mother as the narrator. She appears to be speaking to her son, encouraging him to persevere, which follows the thematic statement, "Parents can inspire or discourage their children." The purpose of the poem is to inspire or encourage, just as a mother would in real life.

What is the **organizational structure** of the writing? Explain.

This poem is written as a dramatic monologue and so it is organized in a problem/solution structure. The narrator in the poem is a mother. The poem has only one stanza and uses no obvious rhyme scheme.

Why did the writer develop his/her **theme** using this **organizational structure**?

The poem allows the author to make an effective statement that sets up the problem. This piece doesn't require an explanation of setting, characters, or time. The brevity of the piece is part of its

power. The piece is also effective because the narrator is speaking directly to the reader about how to solve any problem in life through perseverance.