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# ODYSSEY ORACLE



## In this Oracle . . .

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Emily Auerbach, Project Director; Oracle Editor  
Kevin Mullen, Writing Instructor; Oracle Editor  
Beth McMahon, Oracle Designer

eauerbach@dcs.wisc.edu  
kmullen@dcs.wisc.edu

262-3733 or 712-6321  
890-3330 or 572-6730

Photos by Dick Baker, Hedi Rudd, and Keith Meyer

[www.odyssey.wisc.edu](http://www.odyssey.wisc.edu)





# ODES TO ODYSSEY

My Odyssey is like a quilt.  
Each of my classmates represents a different  
textile and fabric being woven in.  
Because of Odyssey,  
we will be stitched together for life.  
I couldn't be happier to have gotten  
a chance to know all of you.

**(DeAngelo Hood)**

Odyssey was a dream to me.  
I found out I can be whatever I want to be.  
Odyssey is a dream come true  
And it is there waiting for you.

**(Lenora Rodin)**

Welcome to my Odyssey class  
Where you come to learn if you're ready or not.  
Welcome to my Odyssey class  
Where you get a meal, and your belly's always full.  
Welcome to my Odyssey class  
Where we agree to disagree.  
Welcome to my Odyssey class  
Where making new friends is the norm.  
Welcome to my Odyssey class  
Where you have to read your writings out loud.  
Welcome to my Odyssey class.  
Where the teachers bring the best out of you.  
Welcome to my Odyssey class  
Where help is always available.  
Welcome to my Odyssey class  
Where I enjoy going every Wednesday night.

**(Brandi Whitlock)**

Odyssey is that open door  
that for many of us was closed.  
Odyssey is the place where a group  
of different people, different nationalities,  
come together to learn.  
Little did we know that we were  
wise beyond our years,  
not because we have read books,  
but because life has taught us  
and keeps teaching us every day.

**(Heydy Pichardo)**

Twelve years strong, thirty students deep  
Here knowledge is what we seek  
Together for an odyssey one night a week  
Here we speak life back into history  
From Gandhi, Socrates, Shakespeare and Dr. King  
And many more that guide us to learn to see  
Learning to look beyond the surface and  
understand messages  
Analyze how history still is relevant in the present  
Not just a product of our environment,  
here we're much more  
Thirsting for books to feed our minds and core  
We seek to find our voice amongst the crowd  
Using it as a weapon to hold ourselves down  
Think it, speak it, do it because anything's possible  
Creating our own skies to be unstoppable  
Twelve years strong, thirty students deep  
Here knowledge is what we seek  
**(Lakoyé Buford)**

Odyssey, what a journey it has been  
From Plato's closet to *Macbeth*  
You made sure to push us to do our best.  
I don't know whether to laugh with joy  
or jump up and down,  
but I cannot see myself frown.  
Odyssey has been such a wonderful journey  
that if given the chance  
I would do it again without a worry.  
**(Melissa Dominguez)**





Odyssey, Odyssey,  
 Why have you chosen me?  
 Was it my lack of happiness,  
 Or feeling sorry for myself for my previous actions?

Odyssey, Odyssey,  
 Why not decline me?  
 Was it the way I smiled at the thought of change,  
 Or the passion that sparkled in my eyes at the sight of help?

Odyssey, Odyssey,  
 Why have you stuck by me?  
 Was it because I had no one else ,  
 Or because I even believed such a thing?

Odyssey, Odyssey,  
 Why have you challenged me?  
 Was it because I saw potential in myself,  
 Or felt I had more to gain than I had to lose?

Odyssey, Odyssey,  
 Why have you chosen me?  
 I know . . . I am someone who believed in change,  
 Someone who wanted change,  
 And someone who was willing to sweat  
 to make it through this change.  
 Even through the blessing I can't seem to ask otherwise,  
 Why have you chosen me?  
 Because I choose to change myself.  
**(Prodajaé Huntley)**

One room  
 Thirty strange faces  
 One focus  
 Thirty different beginnings  
 One direction  
 Sixty different feet  
 One goal  
 A million different obstacles  
 We hope  
 A collection of questions  
 We learn  
 A search for answers  
 Together an Odyssey  
 Where thirty become one  
 Together we walk  
 Leaving no one alone  
 Changing statistics into success  
 Leaving footsteps for who's next  
 Praise God for chances like this!  
 I'm a proud Odyssey Project graduate!  
**(Jessi Hodges)**

My life has been a roller coaster  
 up and down  
 up and down  
 and I'm tired of it.  
 But when I started Odyssey  
 I saw my life going up and up  
 The sky is the limit.  
 Then my roller coaster went crashing again  
 Down, down go my hopes, happiness, and,  
 worst of all, my faith.  
 Panic! What are my options?  
 Wash my hands and give up!  
 Run away!  
 Later realizing I made a big mistake.  
 If it weren't for Emily and Odyssey faculty  
 I honestly don't know where I would be  
 God sent  
 Inspiring  
 That is what the Odyssey Program is to me!  
**(Latesha Jackson)**



Odyssey  
 I am a free floating spirit  
 Life is a journey  
 It speaks to me and I hear it  
 So many people  
 So many loves  
 Granted from above  
 My heart rejoices in the prospect  
 Of being near it.  
 Life is a journey  
 It speaks to me and I hear it  
 This life  
 I'm not frightened  
 I choose to live it. (**Veronica Tinajero**)

Odyssey, a beautiful star,  
 has given me light in the  
 darkest night,  
 has given me company  
 in my loneliest night.  
 This shiny star is reachable.  
 It will take me to my destiny.  
 (**Natalia Rodríguez**)

Odyssey,  
 Odyssey,  
 I love Odyssey  
 It made me see  
 It made me believe  
 Made me succeed  
 My mates, my teachers  
 I love them  
 And they love me  
 Odyssey made me  
 Odyssey, it's me  
 It's a need  
 Without it,  
 how can you see?  
 You can be Odyssey  
 And so are we  
 Just believe! (**Joseph Lentz**)





# SONGS OF OURSELVES



## Song of Jessi

I rock to the beat of progress.  
My melody is eager, upbeat,  
rapidly pursuing my future.  
My chorus is the synchronized  
sounds of my loved ones  
motivating me to accomplish my dreams  
whispering sounds of support.  
If you listen to the treble in the background  
you'll hear the echo of past tragedies  
blended in perfectly with the bass that's powered  
by the strength of all my past triumphs.  
As the last verse comes to a close,  
the harmony lets you know  
I'm still singing  
and it's time to move on to track 2 (**Jessi Hodges**)



## Song of Patricia

I never thought about tomorrow, the future, or where I wanted to be.  
It didn't matter who I shattered while I was only trying to do me.  
What gave me strength is the love from my kids that I had taken for granted.  
I never want to be outside of their love again  
just because I'm being selfish and only trying to do me.  
God has lifted me up to heights I never dreamed  
and now I can share the love of my kids  
instead of only trying to do me. It's a blessing, yes,  
it's a sho nuf blessing. (**Patricia McKnight**)



## Song of Brenda

Unbreakable like a rock  
my faith and pride will always be.  
Soft like a cloud my heart and sight,  
Without them I wouldn't be me.  
Bright and strong I will be  
when I succeed.  
(**Brenda Juarez Cruz**)

## Song of Janina

I see perfection in them.  
I see hard work in them.  
I see dedication in them.  
In my boys...  
I see tears in them.  
I see change in them.  
I see men in them.  
In my boys... (**Janina White**)



**Song of Latesha**

Mother, daughter, sister, aunt  
 All of these titles I have been  
 called more than once.  
 I love the roles I play in this life.  
 I will have these titles until I die,  
 and I don't mind. I wouldn't have it  
 any other way. I think I like them  
 better than my name anyway. (**Latesha Jackson**)

**Song of Sahira, the Southern Sullen Girl**

She longs for sunshine  
 Yet she adores the night  
 Her father is the sun  
 Her mother the moon

She wears the strength of Venus  
 Yet she's delicate as a rose  
 She walks among the humans  
 Yet her mind flies high above

Her hair is a forest of bare trees  
 Her neck a thin river of fresh waters  
 Her chest a nest where a thousand butterflies  
 Flutter their bright wings

Her gaze holds the howlings of the wolves  
 And her head wears a wreath of  
 Peonies and blue birds  
 This is the song of the southern sullen girl  
 (**Sahira Rocillo Ramírez**)

**Song of Nissa**

Her outer skin seems so tough and strong.  
 Inside her soul, she's hard on herself and doubts her every move.  
 She stares and wonders if she'll ever be anyone but who she sees.

She's been through so much  
 The pain and anger begins to show  
 Her eyes can't hide what her soul has always known.

Waiting on a love to grow  
 To turn these veins into vines and intertwine.

This single mother full of gray hair has all she needs.  
 Four children and all. (**Nissa Uriostegui**)

**Song of Veronica**

Like a flower  
 Like a flower  
 I will be here today  
 Like the sun  
 I will be here tomorrow  
 Like the moon and the stars  
 When the sun sets  
 I will be here with you...  
**(Veronica Tinajero)**

**Song of Margarita**

Caring, loving, yet sometimes crazy  
 Brown skin, long golden hair,  
 Dark brown eyes, short and sassy.  
 Hard working....  
**(Margarita Cid Luna)**

**Song of Lenora**

A hot sultry  
 moist day in July  
 That is Lenora.  
 A woman who cries all night till sunrise  
 That is Lenora  
 A dedicated hard-working sympathetic person  
 That is Lenora  
 Say it loud I'm black and I'm proud  
 That is Lenora.... **(Lenora Rodin)**

**Song of DeAngelo**

I am strong  
 I am kind  
 I am shy and meek,  
 I am well controlled???  
 And I am slow to speak  
 I've been torn down and broken  
 And even forgotten  
 I rise, I fall  
 And I make mistakes  
 I'm nowhere near  
 Perfect, but I know how to fake.  
 I am short and small  
 And easily looked over, but  
 If you get in my way  
 You'll get stepped over  
 I am me and I'm hard  
 To describe 'cause life  
 For me ain't been an easy ride  
**(DeAngelo Hood)**







### Song of Michelle

Michelle is short but thinks she's tall  
standing at only 5 foot 3  
She is considered a fun size can't you see!  
No need to try and knock her down  
because wherever she goes, she's sure to  
wear her crown. Michelle, Michelle, Michelle  
with a smile to brighten up a room and  
coarse hair. Michelle sings from her  
heart and really enjoys fresh air. (**Michelle Conley**)

### Song of Natalia

I used to be afraid,  
afraid of everything.  
afraid of showing who I am  
and not feeling like a fool.  
I've learned how wrong I was.  
Life is about risk, adventures,  
and happiness.  
I did take some risks that made me strong and secure.  
I've adventured myself into the unknown,  
and I've reached  
the happiness that I was waiting for.  
(**Natalia Rodríguez**)



### Song of Derek

Standing on faith, running this race, maintaining his grace  
Derek, knowing where his strength comes from—above.  
Lord bless these lyrics, it's the song of Derek. (**Derek Dodd**)



### Song of Brandi

Drinking wine resting my mind  
this is my time to unwind.  
It's my world, my world,  
Up at 6:30 making that money.  
it's my world, my world,  
Going home to feed my honey.  
It's my world, my world,  
Talking to my son about the man he has become.  
It's my world, my world,  
Enjoying my life trying to make it right.  
It's my world, my world,  
Calling my daughter making sure she is fine.  
It's my world my world,  
Getting all nice and looking to enjoy  
the night with my girls.  
It's my world, man, this is my world! (**Brandi Whitlock**)

**Song of Chris**

Work all day, play all night  
 I don't get sleep . . .  
 Grind till my palms bleed  
 I don't get sleep  
 Close my eyes for a few minutes  
 daydream  
 but I don't get sleep  
 Daughter to feed and a family with needs  
 so I don't get sleep  
 Far from perfect but I'm the rock for my team  
 so I don't get sleep  
 Oh I get tired but I'll sleep when I die  
 because I don't need sleep (**Christopher Villalpando**)

**Song of Prodajaé**

Beloved determined happy to live  
 Optimistic energetic  
 Pessimistic at times  
 Contradictive obstinate  
 open heart to mind. (**Prodajaé Huntley**)

**Song of Lakoyé**

Hear me roar through my silence  
 I'll show you a world beyond my shyness  
  
 Born a lover, not a fighter  
 Building a plane to take me higher  
  
 I see beauty in a world of hate  
 Keep it pushing for my kids' sake  
  
 My heart bleeds pain but I'm still alive  
 Seen things that could've made me blind  
  
 These lips never tell lies  
 Not an ounce of deception on my mind  
  
 Sometimes get lost in the hearsay  
 Doubting my ability to make a way  
  
 A quiet girl stuck in her stubborn ways  
 Too fearful to make a change  
  
 Nobody has the slightest clue who I am

Figuring me out is an impossible exam

So much more than what meets the eye  
 A light shines bright on my inside

I become one with my dreams  
 The only place I'm comfortable to  
 be me

This woman has a lot to show  
 But only if she gives herself the  
 option to grow

Poor single mother at twenty two  
 But rich in love and value

Hear me roar through my silence  
 I'll show you a world beyond my  
 shyness  
 (**Lakoyé Buford**)



**Song of Shaneika**

Her eyes have seen many things from beautiful people to  
horrible outcomes  
Her ears have heard many stories, some true and some lies  
She's smelled some of the best cooking in the world and  
some smelly, homeless people  
She's touched some of the softest furs and bodies that lie  
soulless  
Her mind wanders from things that have occurred to things  
that could happen



Bur her heart's so numb she barely gets to enjoy the present  
Her soul screams for help but her voice remains quiet  
But her house remains beautiful... (**Shaneika Sanders**)

**Song of Nitia**

I've always known this person, Nitia  
Who's always driven and wanted to be a  
doctor, counselor, dancer, owner,  
even a singer  
Any form of success  
is where I can see her

She has gone through trials  
she's been up and down  
But she's graceful through this time

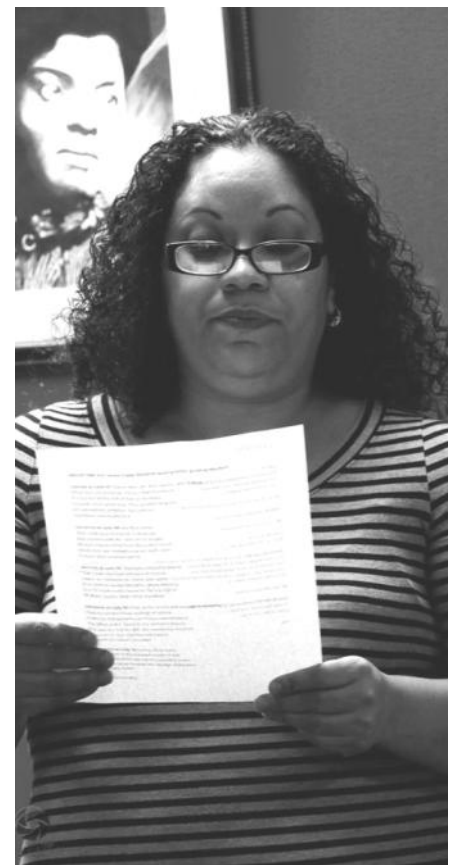


and managed to maintain her smile  
Because she knows her situation is  
only temporary... (**Nitia Johnson**)

**Song of Melissa**

She was born into a crazy world  
As her parents would hold  
all the answers to the questions  
that were untold.  
She runs freely through her  
grandmother's  
land as her life just began.  
She noticed that her dreams were  
beginning to unfold, but she asks why  
is it so cold?!  
Life hasn't always been good to her,

but she still manages to smile  
and as she looks at her kids she  
knows  
that it was all worthwhile.  
No matter what's thrown at her  
she manages to rise because she  
knows that it's not all lies.  
There are always ways to make  
it out without a shred of doubt  
All she wants to do is scream and  
shout.  
Lovely are those kind words  
that can only be heard by the  
singing birds.  
Melissa is as sweet as she can be





where I come from and the parents that created me. I am grateful and kind to everyone. I am me. I love me like no one else does. I learned to find myself in the things I like and the things I do. I've had my heart broken and I have been battered. I have been abused and I have been raped. I have been beaten and I have been mistreated but none of those people are around anymore to hurt me and not to see my light shine brighter than the bulb they damaged the first round. I'm strong and a fighter and I stand up for what right. I'm an open book if you'd like to read me but my content is so complex you'll need Webster's to figure me out. I am me, I am Myisha Denise Black. (**Myisha Black**)

and if you don't believe me  
ask her in a dream!  
(**Melissa Dominguez**)

### **Song of Myisha**

I am me. I can't help but to be just that. I love to be needed and wanted. I am a strong single mother who works 40 hours a week. I do what I have to for my child. I wake up and move because I know that she deserves the best any mother can provide. I am caring and loyal. I'm true to myself and true to others. I'm complicated at times and I don't see eye to eye with everything or anyone who tells me the sky is green instead of blue. I'm not dumb but very intelligent and intellectual. I am friendly and I don't have many enemies. I'm a firecracker before the 4th of July. I am me. I'm loving and special. I'm giving and compassionate. I am me. I can't help but to be sensitive. I've been hurt and shunned. I've been let down and scared but I carry my wounds with honor and dignity. I am proud of

### **Song of Heydy**

The song about Heydy is a song that talks about all the different ups and downs of life. I used to be mad at life because I thought life had let me down, when in reality I let myself down. When life was hard it was not because people made it that way for me. It was because my decisions led me down that road. I have changed. My road seems to be better





# CREATIVE CORNER



## Words vs. Violence

What is this world coming to  
where instead of talking we shoot?  
The hate and rage of a race,  
and the pain across a nation's face,  
we see it on TV, and say this couldn't be me.  
Just this weekend the outrage hit our community.  
Another African American young man is dead

because of police brutality,  
when words could've been used instead,  
another hurt mother who lost her son.  
Just when you think the war is over,  
the battle has just begun. (**Mikiea Price**)



## From My Views

I've always been driven by people's pain and respected their situations  
this world will drive you insane that's not limited by races  
manipulation and hatred has hardened the purest hearts  
so the thought of helping the people has left me no place to start  
it's like no one believes in love, for material things we aiming  
all we want is the fortune, all we want is to be famous  
and I can see myself drifting, far out of people's attention

trying to save the world with unintended intentions  
my motives are more on riches, I used to believe in humans  
but the hatred we show each other has made me feel like we're ruined  
I've lost myself in my hopes that one day we will see  
how secrets keep us in bondage and how the truth sets us free  
how if we feed each other the purest and most beautiful things  
that loving each other unconditionally will be our dreams  
But all I see is the vengeance, feed off of each other's ignorance  
live off government assistance with free my brother shirts from prison  
everybody on drugs the good is being resisted  
taking each other's lives cuz we live meaningless and senseless  
relationships are broken cuz broken people turn insecure  
then our love for power controls and alters all that was pure  
my hope for the future has changed, I no longer know where I stand  
I don't trust in no one's advice, I feel lost with no helping hands  
I've grown weary of where I'm going and how I think things should be  
but the truth—my world's the same ain't nothing changed but me . . . Damn  
(**Shaneika Sanders**)



### Have You Ever Felt Love?

Have you ever felt love?  
I have.  
I felt the butterflies in my stomach  
when I heard his name.  
Have you ever felt love?  
I have.  
The feeling of love when he

touched my face  
with his hands.

Have you ever felt love?  
I have.

When he planted his sweet soft kisses  
on my lips.

Have you ever felt love?  
I have.

When he is there to protect me  
from anything.

Have you ever felt love?  
I have.

When he whispered in my ear that he  
Loves me . . .

I felt love. (**Brandi Whitlock**)



### Hard and Heavy Steel

With music loud  
flowing through my ears  
Bass deeper than the  
ocean floors  
I move fast as if I'm a  
predator stalking its prey.  
Heart's beating hard from

a quick warm-up that's  
jolted my heart rate to the  
point of a beating V-8  
Blood's warm and feels like  
oil is running through my veins  
Grab a hold of that cold  
Hard and heavy steel  
Then I'm lost in a world  
that's unexplainable, just a  
whisper in the open air. (**Christopher Villalpando**)



### Confused

Confused . . .  
What am I to do?  
I'm lost  
I have nothing  
I am . . . confused.  
I work hard  
I'm dedicated

I am good to others even when  
They're not good to me.

Why do these things happen to me?  
I am . . . confused.

Should my loyalty be taken for granted?  
No one cares about things like that anymore.

But these few things,  
Loyalty, honesty, commitment, trust, love,  
These are what matters to me.

These mean the world to me because  
Without these things

Well . . . I'm confused. (**Latesha Jackson**)



### Frankie

Frankie, do you remember we  
sat in the park  
underneath that tree  
trying to figure a way into  
tomorrow for free?  
We didn't pay that day  
but we paid in another way.

See, it all cost, even what's lost,  
but you were my friend right to the end.  
Frankie, that time will never be again.

(**Patricia McKnight**)



**In My Dreams**

In my dreams  
I'm free to be  
Anything that I want to be  
From a princess that has everything  
her heart desires  
To an ant that has to work for hours

In my dreams I'm flying high  
in the clouds and I don't know  
if I want to come down

In my dreams I'm walking beside  
you hoping that it's true  
but I forgot God has you!

In my dreams everything is clear  
as water but I shouldn't bother  
to search for the truth  
Oh why do I feel blue?  
Is it because the only way  
that I can see you is  
in my dreams?

**(Melissa Dominguez)**

**Life!**

The moment they placed you in my arms,  
I knew that it started . . . Life!  
From the start it was a journey  
That was clear to me . . . Life!  
I haven't been perfect and I knew  
that it was going to be hard . . . Life!  
You showed me that it was OK  
to let go of that fear . . . Life!  
Never did I imagine that you would  
fill my world full of love and laughter,  
but the most important thing that you  
gave me was a reason for living  
and that to me is . . . Life!

**(Melissa Dominguez)**

**In Your Arms**

While I lie in your arms  
I see stars and the moon moves closer  
While I lie in your arms  
I'm looking at you like my favorite poster  
While I lie in your arms  
I feel your heart beat  
While I lie in your arms  
I feel our hands meet  
While I lie in your arms  
I feel the sun on my skin  
And the next blink I begin  
To feel the soft caress of your hands  
I feel the butterflies flap their wings  
In my belly like I'm a teenager all over again  
Nervous for the first kiss  
While I lie in your arms  
I feel you lean into me for a kiss  
I feel the warmth of your lips. . . .  
This is reality and it is oh so true  
While I lie in your arms  
I'll never again feel blue. **(Myisha Black)**

**My Little Angel**

I see you watching me  
with your big eyes and little feet.  
I hear you calling my name,  
asking questions and having no shame.  
I feel you touching my arm,  
knowing that you are meaning no harm.  
I see you growing up,  
but still not grown enough to talk back.  
I love my little Angel, my child.  
Being without her would drive me wild.  
Smiling and laughing  
Humming and playing  
Singing or dancing  
It's all the same.  
I love you, baby girl,  
With all of Mommy's heart.  
You'll never know how much I love you,  
Not until the day we are apart. **(Myisha Black)**

**A Slave at Heart**

Under law we might be “free”  
 Does it matter?  
 We’re still treated unequally  
 We now have more opportunities  
 Does it matter?

Differences are still between you and me  
 We are no longer bound by “chains”  
 Does it matter?  
 We still feel the same (**Lakoyé Buford**)

**We Fail**

We fail to realize our own worth  
 Lowering our standards for less than we deserve  
 We fail to know what we’re made of  
 Getting lost confused with love  
 We fail to walk away  
 From bad habits of our everyday  
 We fail to understand  
 How much of our destiny we hold in our hands  
 We fail to know  
 How much we still need to grow (**Lakoyé Buford**)

**Work of Art**

I am a work of art still searching for self-worth  
 Throwing away bad habits for growth  
 Striving for strength, greatness, and peace  
 To become the woman I was destined to be  
 I am a work of art  
 A change waiting to be birthed  
 Ready to find my purpose here on earth  
 Filled with flaws perfectly imperfect  
 Heart and soul dance to my own music  
 I am a work of art  
 Finding my voice amongst the crowd  
 Learning to let my imagination run wild  
 Building an empire and legacy to leave behind  
 Learning that pain only makes you wise  
 I am a work of art  
 Still gluing together pieces that were broken  
 Wrapping myself back up to be reopened  
 Collecting dust until people see  
 The beauty and value inside of me  
 I am a work of art (**Lakoyé Buford**)





# PROSE POEMS AND POETIC PROSE



## WORDS

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

Words. Oh, them indelible words sharper than any two-edged sword. Once spoken it is impossible for them to be rubbed out, washed out, or altered. They become unforgettable and remain sketched in the mind and memory forevermore. Words take on a life of their own. They can be used as adjectives to describe one's being, whether true or false, whether positive or negative, whether good, bad, or sad. Words. Oh, them indelible words.

Words. Oh, them beguiling words. That is why it is said that "The pen is mightier than the sword." Yes! Words have many purposes. They can be used to deceive, lead astray, cheat, deprive, charm and divert, and they can lift you up or tear you down. In other words, words have the power to make you or break you. Have you heard the phrase "sticks and stones may break my bones but words can never hurt me"? Well, that is just not true because many people have been hurt by simple words. Words. Oh, them beguiling words.

Words. Oh, them perilous words with their many hidden dangers and traitorous ways waiting patiently to betray someone's confidence in themselves or another. Words can be very dangerous unless used properly. The Bible says in Matthew 12:37, "For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." Words. Oh, them perilous words.

Words. Oh, them essential words. They are the prerequisite to our communication, and without them we would not be able to communicate with others. Words. Oh, them essential words.

Words. Oh, them indelible words, sharper than any two-edged sword. Once spoken it is impossible for them to be rubbed out, washed out, or altered. They become unforgettable and remain sketched in the mind and memory forevermore. (**Lenora Rodin**)



## My Son

Staring at these four walls is driving me insane. What did I do to deserve this pain? Not being able to go anywhere. I miss the wind in my hair. When will I be set free? My due date. I'm in agony. Now they are telling me that I have to stay in this hell-hole until I'm 39 weeks. You were supposed to come August 27, but you came a month and a half sooner. Now looking in your eyes these four walls was worth it. I had a boy, 6lbs. 11 ounces, 10 fingers and toes. We stayed in the hospital for two more days. Since then I've been proud to call you my boy. You are heaven sent because the doctors told me that I couldn't have kids. My life has meaning, and I'm no longer insane. (**Kelly Hayes**)





### **I am the Truth**

I feel broken and abandoned sometimes due to the unlasting love I've encountered. I only find myself insecure in love because my past experience of it always leaves a bitter taste in my mouth. I trust people to be who they are, but I have trust issues because of who they are. I often look for something good to say so I won't come off as angry as I really am. I feel unmotivated to do damn near anything and unmoved by the beauty that surrounds me. Yet I feel so strong and full of ambition. I only fear that my "ups" will never compare to my "downs" and therefore makes me question if it's even worth the effort. I am more of what my world has made of me than what I have made of my world. The more lost I am, the more found I feel. I've given so much to the world around me with nothing back in return. I think I'll keep the rest for myself. Something is changing in me and I'm not sure I quite understand it, but I know this—I'm tired of going against the grain. "Let go, let flow." Maybe in that process I'll create the world that I want to be defined as.... **(Shaneika Sanders)**



### **My Seed**

You are my seed and I promise that you won't have need. From the moment they placed you in my arms I knew that you were going to fill my life with fields of Hope and Dreams.

God planted you in my garden and said:

*Here you are, it's yours, this seed is special and will only flourish for you, so here you got not one, but two.*

My seed needs water and sun, but wait it has just begun and the sun has shone, grow my seedlings grow because of you I have to stay focused and make sure that I have done everything that I have promised.

It takes a lot of work to tend to my Garden and, no, I haven't forgotten how big you have gotten and will get—don't forget, you guys are a duet. I want you to grow as big as you Dream and never let anyone or anything stand in your way of what you want to be because you are and always will be the seed that God planted in my Garden for everyone to see. **(Melissa Dominguez)**





### Letter to My Child

*Dear Journee,*

You have changed my life  
TREMENDOUSLY! You bring so much joy  
to this cruel world. The happiness you  
bring to me you'll never understand until  
you have your own children. As your  
mother, I'm writing you these words of

love. Take my advice, sweetheart. This "thing" we're living  
called Life is hard but it gets better. Don't overwhelm  
yourself trying to satisfy society. Life is about more than  
what you see. Enjoy it, baby, and don't waste any time. Use  
it wisely.



Education is very important. I hope you choose to further your education and go to college right  
out of high school. Go and get the college experience I wish I could have received. I promise I will  
try everything in my power to make sure you have that opportunity and all doors are open to you.  
Beyond that, it's up to you, baby girl, to take those necessary steps. Take advantage of what I have  
laid out for you. Be all that you can be. I have and will always be your #1 fan and support team. I  
love you, Journee!!

P.S. I hope I have set a great example for you. I have made mistakes. I am NOT perfect. But I hope  
that I have shown you that all things are possible. Don't give up, Baby. The Devil can't win if you  
keep fighting.

Love always and forever,  
*Your Mother (Latesha Jackson)*



### Thanks and Glory to God

These last few months have been extremely hard for me.  
Do I feel I have made any accomplishments? No! But I know  
that I have not given up—not on myself and definitely not  
on my daughter. She is my motivation 100%.

Lately I not only have been on a search for housing but also  
a soul and religious search. I was raised in a church up until  
I was old enough to decide I did not want to attend  
anymore. It was not that I don't believe in God, because I  
do, but I just did not understand His word. But I know He  
has never given up on me, and He is just waiting on me to  
come to Him looking for a relationship. After all that I have  
been through and am going through, I owe Him all the  
thanks and glory that we are still healthy and alive.

**(Latesha Jackson)**

# LOVING LANGSTON HUGHES

## "In Time of Silver Rain"

In time of silver rain  
The earth  
Puts forth new life again.  
Green grasses grow  
And flowers lift their heads,  
And over all the plain  
The wonder spreads  
Of life,  
Of life,  
Of life! . . .

In this poem Langston Hughes is describing spring time. He describes it as something beautiful and how spring brings new life. Also, he shows how everything is picture perfect during this time.

I picked this poem because spring is my favorite time of the year. I also believe everything is better, and even people are in a good mood. This winter is almost draining my energy, and I can't wait for spring. **(Heydy Pichardo)**



## "How Thin a Blanket"

There is so much misery in the world,  
So much poverty and pain,  
So many who have no food  
Nor shelter from the rain,  
So many wandering friendless,  
So many facing cold,  
So many gnawing bitter bread  
And growing old!

What can I do?  
And you?  
What can we do alone? . . .

How thin a blanket ours  
For the withered body  
Of despair!

"How Thin a Blanket" is about the people that are suffering, and it explains how difficult it is to give them help. Langston Hughes is using repetition of the phrase "so many" to emphasize the number of people that are suffering. . . . In the third stanza, Hughes uses a metaphor of a thin blanket to represent that little help that we can offer to those who are suffering.

I think the repetition of the words "so many" generalizes all the different types of suffering. . . . In the second stanza he uses questions and a break from his previous pattern to make the reader think in which ways we are helping. Finally, I don't really agree with how he states that we can be of little help to them. I think that if we focus on one person or one cause instead of generalizing like Hughes does in the first stanza, then we can make a bigger impact on the people in need. **(Veronica Tinajero)**



**"Walls"**

Four walls can hold  
So much pain,  
Four walls that shield  
From the wind and rain.

Four walls can shelter  
So much sorrow  
Garnered from yesterday  
And held for tomorrow.

I chose to write about "Walls" because no one really thinks about what goes on between four walls. It's crazy that the same four walls that provide you shelter and keep you warm also harbor deep, dark creatures. How can something that is a necessity also be the same place where you feel bound by chains? These four walls are at times just like "The Allegory of the Cave." Langston Hughes makes it very clear that even when you leave, you come back to the same four walls holding the pain of yesterday for tomorrow.

This poem speaks to me because every day people go home, bound by four walls, and are abused. So the same thing they call home is like a torture chamber or prison to them. For example, when I leave work, I love to go home and wind down, but some days it's so chaotic I just want to run. The same four walls that provide me with shelter from a storm also have a storm brewing inside. Inside my same four walls are the unpaid bills and struggles I will be faced with tomorrow. At times I think to myself that if walls could talk, it would be one hell of a conversation!! (**Michelle Conley**)

**"Dreams"**

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

The reason why I chose "Dreams" is because sometimes we have to put our dreams on hold or they are altered due to life changes and hard times. We often think we can no longer accomplish our dreams because of our life setbacks, but I realize those setbacks help us tell our story better and make us stronger and more determined to pursue our dreams.

(**Mikiea Price**)

**"My People"**

The night is beautiful,  
So the faces of my people.

The stars are beautiful,  
So the eyes of my people.

Beautiful, also, is the sun,  
Beautiful, also, are the souls of my people.

This poem is about how Hughes sees his fellow African Americans—that his people are beautiful. Hughes corresponds the night to the faces of his people and then says the stars are beautiful and so are the eyes of my people. He must have seen that sparkle in every one of his people's eyes. . . . In all his people, the soul shines bright and beautiful, like the sun. . . .

People say a lot of bad and hateful things to me, but I don't judge them because I see beauty in them. Soon they will feel bad because all I have to say to them is, "It's OK, you're still beautiful, even when hateful." . . . (**Joseph Lentz**)

**"I, Too"**

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.

They send me to eat in the kitchen . . .

Tomorrow

I'll be at the table . . .

In "I, Too," Langston Hughes wrote about racial shaming—how white people sent him to eat in the kitchen, especially when they had guests over. They tried to make him feel unworthy of eating with them. They looked down on him, yet he was confident that one day he would have enough power to not comply with this. He would have accomplished a status that would make it impossible for others to shame him. . . .

I, too, want to be American one day and come out of the shadows of the system. I want to achieve my goals and expand my mind. I want to sit on the other side. I want to use my mind to help others, and stop being on the begging side. I want to conquer, achieve, and help. I want to make it out alive with a story of success and help others. **(Sahira Rocillo Ramírez)**

. . . I feel this poem is about man (in general) standing tall and keeping a positive mindset to always move up in life. Hughes conveys powerful emotion in this poem. He starts his poem almost the same way that he ends, insinuating that he too and the black community are equals. I believe when Hughes writes "I," he in fact is speaking for the black community.

A specific technique in this poem could be that Hughes uses repetition to emphasize importance. "I, too, sing America...I, too, am American." This makes a big impression on me with those two phrases, being as I was born in America and this is the land I represent as well. . . . At one point,

Hughes states, "I'll be at the table," and one can only picture that in one's mind. . . . I can perfectly visualize a man being mistreated, forced to have to eat in the kitchen alone, and then with a sense of freedom, ending up at the table, eating with others. This results in equality through perseverance.

I chose this poem to write about because I too feel that I always try to keep a positive attitude and strength to keep moving up in life. Success is a big part of who I am and how I want to live, especially setting an example for my daughter. I grew up in a black community and witnessed disadvantages among those who were less fortunate. Being as I was half white and half Mexican, I struggled with where I fit in within my community. I never let anyone put me down or make me feel bad about who I was or where I came from. I have seen and been in contact with many different types of people. My conclusion is that we are all equal and all have a chance at living above and beyond, always keeping hope.

**(Christopher Villalpando)**

**"The Negro Mother"**

Children, I come back today

To tell you a story of the long dark way

That I had to climb, that I had to know

In order that the race might live and grow . . .

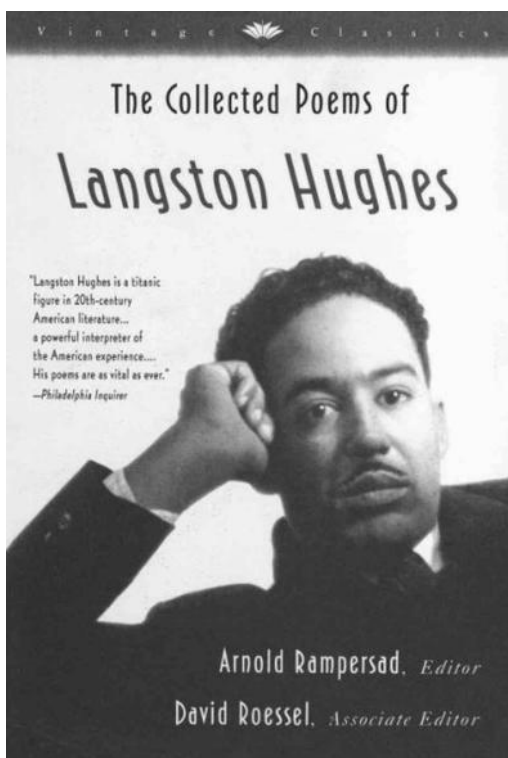
I like to think of this poem as voices from the past. Black mothers from slavery remind us what they had to endure just so we, blacks today, can have a chance here in America. . . .

This poem spoke volumes and just reminded of how blessed I truly am despite the adversity and personal struggles I face. If black mothers back in slavery could keep their head up after being ripped away from family, raped by owners, and working in the hot sun all day long, I can suck it up

and stop making excuses of why I am not where I want to be in life. Sometimes it takes looking at someone else's troubles to make you realize just how good you have it. **(Lakoyé Buford)**

This poem relays the journey of a Negro Mother who was a slave. She speaks of this struggle to continue to believe that one day there would come a change. She speaks of the degradation and humiliation she endured at the expense of slavery. She speaks of prayer and how with it she was able to carry and hold tight to the dream that her children were born free. That's what she lived for. Hughes was speaking on behalf of many Negro women. . . .

I remember bits and pieces of the Civil Rights Movement. I remember my grandmother, who was born in St. Louis, telling us of the struggles of her mother and my great-grandmother. It's as though I am living her dream that is proceeding in reality. **(Patricia McKnight)**



**"Theme for English B"**  
 The instructor said,  
*Go home and write*  
*A page tonight.*  
*And let that page come out of you—*  
 Then it will be true.  
 I wonder if it's that simple? . . .

"Theme for English B" is the voice of a young black student who is trying to find the truth in his own life via an English assignment. As the only black student in the class, the student is unsure how to write his paper. Should he represent a typical English student, or should he stay true to his true self? The poem relays a struggle for his personal identity.

The author starts the poem with a statement from his professor, "Any piece written from the heart will be true," and then quickly followed that up with his own personal doubts. He lists everything that makes himself different from his classmates. Then again, there were similarities between the two. By expressing these, he shows us his personal dilemma. He is both part of black Harlem but in a white class. Through his words we see that we can all learn from one another because we all bring a different perspective to the table.

I can relate to this poem. I believe anyone still struggling to figure out their own place in life can. It's hard to find commonalities with other people when the differences are so obvious. I believe Langston Hughes and I have similar beliefs. I too believe in diversity. I am better when I am exposed to more than just my world. I really enjoyed this poem and love that he was able to have this insight during his time. **(Jessi Hodges)**

It's like an "I am" poem. Hughes writes about himself being everything he feels, everything he sees, and everything he hears. It states how we as humans are one, though we share different races. We humans share a lot of the same likes and dislikes even though one race is granted more freedom than the other; perhaps it's that separation that makes it possible to learn things from each other. . . .

Langston Hughes paints us a picture of being the only colored person in his class and how from the hill of his school down to Harlem through the park, then across the street going towards the Harlem Branch Y towards his home, he's thinking about how to let his homework page "come out of him." He also paints a picture of what we as humans crave, like pipes for Christmas, and how we like to "eat, sleep, drink, be in love, work, read, learn and understand life." Human nature makes us want all of these things. Because of the examples it makes him question, "Will any page be colored that I write?" There were also some comparisons between him and his instructor when he said, "it will not be white. But it will be a part of you, instructor. You are white—yet a part of me, as I am a part of you. That's American." I love that rhyming rhythm Hughes ended the page with by saying, "As I learn from you, I guess you learn from me—although you're older and white—and somewhat more free . . . This is my page for English B."

. . . I compared this poem to my Odyssey class because my classmates are different races and have been afforded different opportunities in life; we vary in age and all come to the table with different stories, yet we are all in this room together because of our similarities. Most if not all of us have encountered poverty and injustice in different parts of the world.

We came into this class in the same place in life where we were wanting and ready for change, and we got into this class by allowing our admissions page to come out of us. . . . This poem makes me want to open my eyes to our connections as humans instead of continuing to focus on everything that separates us and segregates us. **(Shaneika Sanders)**

"Frederick Douglass 1817-1895"  
Douglass was someone who,  
Had he walked with wary foot  
And frightened tread,  
From very indecision  
Might be dead,  
Might have lost his soul,  
But instead decided to be bold. . . .

This powerful poem consists of lines showing how courageous Frederick Douglass was. It also talks about how if he didn't stand up and be courageous, all that he was trying to accomplish would have never worked. He set his goals and set great statements that helped him to the path of freedom. I believe that Langston Hughes was writing about how he admired Douglass' logical approach to proceeding toward his goals for black people for freedom. Even though Frederick Douglass died in 1895, his legacy still lives on. "He died in 1895. He's not dead." He still lives on in all of us. **(Dorothy Katana)**

“So Tired Blues”  
 . . . Gonna throw the sun  
 In somebody’s face  
 Recreate  
 The human race—  
 Cause I’m tired,  
 Tired as I can be. . . .

In “So Tired Blues” he is talking about being tired of everything, from wanting to go back to sleep because the sun is bugging him to how he is tired of people and wants to create a new race. Instead of letting the sun beat him down and make him weak, he will rise and be strong. He’s tired of explaining himself and wants to be left alone.

I can relate to this poem in many ways. I, too, am tired—tired of having to deal with people that cannot see past their own selfish needs. I’m tired of having to explain things over and over again. I’m tired of waking some mornings and feeling like no one appreciates me. I’m tired! (**Melissa Dominguez**)

“Curious”  
 I can see your house, babe,  
 But I can’t see you.  
 I can see your house,  
 But I can’t see you.  
 When you’re in the house, baby,  
 Tell me, what do you do?

This poem to me was about Hughes telling a woman I see your physical body, your materialistic wealth, and how you carry yourself in the public eye, but I can’t see your heart. I can’t see what you think or feel or your personality and character—things that

make you you. Behind the makeup, who are you?

I felt like I’m the woman he was talking to. I feel like most people around me judge me and feel they know me based off the things they can see. Most folks believe I have no struggles, pains, or worries because I don’t complain or because I carry myself like I don’t. The fact I don’t share feelings I guess makes people feel I’m a certain type of person, and then they expect me to be that person they created in their imagination for me to be. Though I don’t stand behind my material things or care to be defined by them, it is all I choose to show. In my entire life, the only person who has ever asked me who I am is a person I’ve never trusted—at least not enough to tell them my truth. (**Shaneika Sanders**)



“Troubled Woman”  
 She stands  
 In the quiet darkness,  
 This troubled woman  
 Bowed by

Weariness and pain  
 Like an  
 Autumn flower  
 In the frozen rain . . .

(Poetic response)

She then walks and bathes  
 Under the rain  
 Shackled in the prison of her mind  
 This troubled woman  
 She has forgotten how to act.  
 Then she walks on  
 The scattered diamond path  
 She feels the panic  
 Panic rising  
 Rising from her head  
 Her head garnished with dead flowers  
 Dead flowers crowning her head  
 This troubled woman  
 With her broken wings  
 And a crown of flowers  
 On top of her head. (**Sahira Rocillo Ramírez**)

“Still Here”

I’ve been scared and battered.  
 My hopes the wind done scattered.  
 Snow has friz me, sun has baked me.  
 Looks like between ‘em  
 They done tried to make me  
 Stop laughin’, stop lovin’, stop livin’ —  
 But I don’t care!  
 I’m still here!

This poem to me means that Hughes or the person he is talking about has been basically to Hell and back. No matter what God has thrown at him, he is still here and standing strong. I like how he used the snow to compare how cold life has been. How the sun baked him was almost to me all that hard work, sweat, and tears that have burned him deeply. Many have tried to change him, and they tried to take his laughter, make him stop loving, or simply take his life. At the end, it doesn’t matter because he’s still here.

I can relate to this poem in many ways. I’ve had it really rough growing up, and there were times when I thought I wouldn’t make it. I know how it is to be beaten down, stepped on, ridiculed, and made to feel unwanted, but

I took all of that to make me a stronger person. It has shown me that no one can bring me down unless I allow them to. You have the power to make the best of what has been given or thrown at you to make you stronger. You can look back and say, “I’m still here!”  
 (**Melissa Dominguez**)





**"Harlem"**

What happens to a dream deferred?  
Does it dry up  
like a raisin in the sun? . . .

Langston Hughes's "Harlem: Dream Deferred" is very vivid. He uses adjectives that have you almost tasting and smelling what he is saying. "*Does it stink like rotten meat?*" Can you smell the meat? Wow, I sure can. "*Or fester like a sore—and then run?*" We all can imagine a sore that has got infected and has pus running out of it. "*Or crust and sugar over*"—that almighty protective covering. Yes, Mr. Hughes, I understand dreams that are put on hold, and I thank you for bringing them to life in words.

. . . In my addiction, God put a crust covering over me and my dreams because He knew that I would come back to them once I got my life straightened out. Dreams never die—only the people that dream them. Yes! This poem is so sweet and juicy. This short poem packs a big bomb punch. It "explodes" in the mind and soul and beckons deferred dreams to fruition.

Yes, God, the Odyssey Project, and its entire dedicated staff have helped to make my dream explode and come to pass, and for that I am forever grateful. Thanks to all of you for not letting my dreams "sag like a heavy load." (**Lenora Rodin**)

**"Afraid"**

We cry among the skyscrapers  
As our ancestors  
Cried among the palms in Africa  
Because we are alone.  
It is night,  
And we're afraid.

In the poem "Afraid," Langston Hughes speaks on being afraid of the metaphorical skyscrapers and imagines crying, looking up at these larger-than-life objects. In life I've been afraid of so many things to the point that I was practically a turtle hiding from the world, choosing to stay hidden rather than be bold and stand up to the world. But now I'm no longer afraid to stand up to the world and show it who I really am. (**DeAngelo Hood**)

**"Mother to Son"**

Well, son, I'll tell you:  
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair . . .

This poem is about a mother letting her son know life hasn't been easy for her. Also, it may not be easy for him either, but he has to keep going like she has. The emotions I feel are sad but also some encouragement. The mother is the one speaking.

Hughes is using metaphors. He is saying that life has had splinters, tacks in it, and boards turned up. This lets us know exactly how hard life is. It puts you in the mindset of a broken-down house. It also says "keep climbin'." To me that means keep going and you'll reach the top!

The poem makes me think of me and my sons. I want them to know life was/is hard for me. It might be just as hard for them, but they as well should never give up. This poem touches me. I think I will try to instill a drive in my children just like this. I think everyone should keep going, no matter the course of the journey. (**Janina White**)

The meaning of this beautiful poem is perseverance. A mother explains to her son through her own experiences how hard and difficult life is, and she explains the best way to confront it. No matter how hard life is, we have to keep on going.

Hughes used the metaphors of the ascending stairs in this poem, describing life. Life is not easy or as beautiful as crystal. The mother compares her life to an ascending staircase that had splinters and boards torn up, which made it hard for her to step up. Even though these stairs were so difficult to climb, she never gave up and confronted every single step.

Langston Hughes used repetition in his inspiring poem in sentences like, “So boy, don’t you turn back- don’t you sit down on those steps- don’t you fall now,” to emphasize the mother had big expectations of her son. She wants her child to be as strong and courageous as she is.

For me as a mother, it is very important that my child learns from my own experiences. I also want to educate her on the big value of perseverance and to work hard to achieve her goals. As parents, we want to be recognized by our kids and the best way to get this is to see them practicing and listening to our advice.

My assignment as a parent is to prepare my kid day-by-day to be ready to confront the struggles of life and to try to make sure she does not make the same mistakes that I have. One of the quotes I remember from my parents is, “money does not grow up on trees,” showing me that it is not as simple or easy as we think. Nothing in life is free or simple to get. We have to prepare ourselves and educate ourselves first because then the rest of the journey will be a bit easier to go on.

**(Natalia Rodríguez)**

Langston Hughes writes “Mother to Son” with a voice of a mother, not his own voice. It is about a



*Drawing of “Mother to Son” by Stanley Sallay ‘07*

mother telling her son to keep trying, that life is not always easy.

The mother uses a metaphor of stairs; she states that her life has been hard. Her metaphor uses tacks, splinters, and boards torn up to show some of the hardship you can encounter in life. The mother uses repetition when she said “and reachin’, and turnin’, and sometimes going, and splinters, and boards, and places” to increase the impact of this poem. Another technique Hughes used was slang, which gave the impression that the mother was not well educated. For example, she says “I’ve been and I’ve still going.”

I think this poem is beautiful because it gives good advice that a mother could give to a son. It relates to me because I have kids and I want them to never give up. I think it is how she describes it for her son. There are challenges, but there is always a way to overcome them. **(Veronica Tinajero)**

This poem is about a mother talking to her son about her life and how hard life has been for her, how in life nothing is easy. You’re going to have ups and downs. You may want to give up on life, but don’t let the bad stop you from doing what you have to do to keep going. . . .

This is my favorite poem because my mom used to read this to me when I was young. This poem reminds me of my life and how many times I wanted to give up on life, only to keep moving forward. I always tell my kids to do better than what I have done. But I also let them know that you will have a hard time in life, and it won’t be easy. Just pray about it and keep moving. Just because you get knocked down once or twice doesn’t mean that it is the end for you. It just makes you a stronger person. **(Brandi Whitlock)**

In Langston Hughes’ poem, “Mother to Son,” he conveys hardship, strength, and fear as a mother explains to her son how her life has been. She

tells him that her life has been full of pain; however, she never gave up and she wanted the same for him.

He uses many techniques throughout this poem. His metaphor of the crystal staircase brought a clear image of what he wanted to get across. He also adds a lot of tactile images when the mother talks about tacks and splinters. As I read the poem, I got the allusion that the two different staircases are the same as Cinderella’s two lives. There is the crystal staircase, which represents Cinderella’s happily ever after, whereas the broken down staircase represents Cinderella’s life with her step-mother and step-sisters: full of pain, hard work, and brokenness.

This poem relates to my life in so many ways. All my life, I had felt like every time that I started climbing a couple of stairs, I would stumble and fall back down to the bottom, lying there and drowning in my depression. As a mother now, I see my oldest following in my footsteps and I try to guide him by keeping myself climbing to the top. **(Nissa Uriostegui)**

In the poem “Mother to Son,” Langston Hughes talks about how hard life can be. He wrote as a mother talking to her son about the hardships of life and how important it is not to give up, no matter how hard it gets.

Langston Hughes uses the image of a crystal staircase to depict something beautiful and how life is nothing like that. He compares life’s trials and tribulations to tacks, splinters, and bare floorboards. As I read the poem, I could imagine this distorted, torn up staircase.

I can compare this poem to my life in so many ways. At the young age of 26, I’ve been through a lot. I’ve had many bumps along the road called life, but I’m still moving forward. Every tack and splinter I’ve stepped on to this day has only made me stronger. **(DeAngelo Hood)**

# “ALL THE WORLD’S A STAGE”: SHARING SHAKESPEARE

All the world’s a stage  
And all the men and women merely players;  
They have their exits and their entrances  
And one man in his time plays many parts.  
--William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*

