

Name: _____ Date: _____

Analyzing Poetry

Below is the poem "Dreams" by Langston Hughes. The notes on the sides define words that you might not know. After you read the poem a few times, complete the activity on the next two pages.



Dreams

Used this way, *fast* means "tightly or firmly." So to hold fast is to hold tightly.

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

A *barren* field is one in which few or no plants are growing.

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

—Langston Hughes

Langston Hughes was an African-American poet and author. He lived from 1902 to 1967 and is known for his poems, stories, essays, and plays about African-American life.

Directions: Follow the prompts to mark the poem on page 1 of this activity and answer the questions below.

Structure

1. Look at the last word in each line of the first stanza. Circle the two words that rhyme. Then connect the circled words with a line.
2. Look at the last word in each line of the second stanza. Circle the two words that rhyme. Then connect the circles with a line.
3. Fill in the blank:
In each stanza, the second and _____ lines rhyme.
4. Choose a colored pen or pencil and use it to underline the first line of the poem. Then find where this line is repeated. Use the same color to underline the repeat of line 1.
5. At the end of each line, write the number of syllables it contains. For example, you would write "7" at the end of line 3, because line seven contains four syllables: Life is a bro-ken-winged bird.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
6. Do the lines in the first and second stanzas have a similar pattern of syllables? Explain.

First Stanza

7. Line 1 tells the reader to "Hold fast to dreams." What do you think it means to hold fast, or tightly, to a dream?

8. Line 2 says, "For if dreams die." In your own words, briefly explain what it means for a dream to "die."

9. What might cause a dream to die?

10. Fill in the blank:

The first stanza includes a metaphor: The poet compares life without dreams to _____.

11. What feelings or emotions are created by the image of a broken-winged bird that cannot fly? Explain.

12. In the first stanza, what feelings or ideas do you think the poet is expressing about what life is like if you give up on your dreams?

Second Stanza

13. Identify the metaphor in this stanza.

14. What emotions, sensations, or ideas does the image of "a barren field/Frozen with snow" bring up? Explain.

15. In the second stanza, what ideas do you think the poet is expressing about what life is like if you give up on your dreams?

Whole Poem

16. In one sentence, summarize the main idea of this poem.
