

Speech to the Young

Speech to the Progress-Toward

(Among them Nora and Henry III)

Gwendolyn Brooks

Say to them,
say to the down-keepers,
the sun-slappers,
the self-soilers,
5 the harmony-hushers,
“Even if you are not ready for day
it cannot always be night.”
You will be right.
For that is the hard home-run. **A**

10 Live not for battles won.
Live not for the-end-of-the-song.
Live in the along. **B**

Analyze Visuals ▶

What can you **infer** about the relationship between the girl and the woman in the picture?

A SOUND DEVICES

How many examples of **alliteration** can you find in the first stanza?

B MAKE INFERENCES

What attitude does the speaker express in lines 10–12?



Mother to Son

Langston Hughes



Lady, Ernest Crichlow. Etching, 22" × 18". Photo by Maureen Turci, Mojo Portfolio. Courtesy of the Estate of Ernest Crichlow.

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. **C**
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. **D**

▲ Analyze Visuals

What personality **traits** would you expect the woman in the painting to have?

C SOUND DEVICES

Notice the **assonance** created by the use of the long *o* sound in lines 12–14. What words contain this sound?

D LYRIC POETRY

What is the main idea the speaker is expressing about her life?

Comprehension

- 1. Recall** In “Speech to the Young,” what does the speaker tell the young to say?
- 2. Recall** What two things does the speaker in “Speech to the Young” say we should *not* live for?
- 3. Represent** Create a sketch of the stairway described by the speaker in “Mother to Son.”



READING 4 Make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of poetry. Compare and contrast the relationship between the purpose and characteristics of different poetic forms. **RC-8(D)** Make complex inferences about text.

Literary Analysis

- 4. Interpret Meaning** What does the speaker in “Speech to the Young” mean by “Even if you are not ready for the day/it cannot always be night”?
- 5. Examine Dialect** In “Mother to Son,” words such as *ain’t* and *kinder* are examples of **dialect**, the particular way language is used in a certain place or by a certain group of people. Dialect is an important element of Langston Hughes’s style. What does Hughes’s use of dialect help you to understand about the speaker?
- 6. Identify Figurative Language** What **metaphor** is used throughout “Mother to Son”? What does it tell you about the mother’s life and how she has responded to it?
- 7. Make Inferences About the Speakers** In your own words, describe how you picture the speaker in each poem. Use the inference equations you made as you read to help you.
- 8. Analyze Sound Devices** For each poem, use a chart like the one shown to record the instances of **alliteration** and **assonance**. Which poem makes greater use of these sound devices?

<i>“Speech to the Young”</i>	
<i>Alliteration</i>	<i>Assonance</i>
<i>say/sun-slappers/self-soilers</i>	

- 9. Analyze Lyric Poetry** Review the relationship between the purpose and characteristics of lyric poems on page 633. Next, think about each poet’s message. Then explain why each poet’s choice to use a lyric poem as his or her form was an appropriate one.

Extension and Challenge

- 10. Creative Project: Poetry** Write a short poem in which the speaker explains a lesson learned from life.

What is good **ADVICE**?

Which speaker’s advice do you think is best? Why?