**Instructions:**

1. Read the poem.
2. Answer the multiple choice questions to help you understand the poem. When you are done, raise your hand and I will give you the answer key.
3. Annotate (mark up) the poem by noting unfamiliar words, figurative language, poetic devices and anything else that is noteworthy about the poem.
4. Follow the outline to compose a one-paragraph analysis of the poem. Hint: use the multiple-choice questions and answers to help you get started.

**Mother to Son**

By Langston Hughes 1902–1967

Well, son, I’ll tell you:

Life for me ain’t been no crystal stair.

It’s had tacks in it,

And splinters,

And boards torn up,

And places with no carpet on the floor—

Bare.

But all the time

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.

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,

I’se still climbin’,

And life for me ain’t been no crystal stair.

1. In the first seven lines, to what is Hughes comparing a stairway with “tacks in it and splinters?”
   1. The carpet on the stairway
   2. The other people who live in the run-down housing
   3. The son
   4. Life
2. In this poem, boards with “tacks and splinters” and “boards torn up” are symbols for
   1. Run-down housing
   2. A life that has had many difficulties and challenges
   3. The ungrateful way the mother’s son treats her
   4. The lack of compassion each man has for his fellow man
3. What might “reachin’ landin’s” symbolize in the mother’s climb?
   1. Destructive forces in her life
   2. Portions of her life that held magic for her
   3. Compassionate forces in her life
   4. Places in her life where she had to stop and make decisions
4. Why do you think the word “bare” is on a line all alone?
   1. To emphasize the son’s brutality
   2. Because Hughes couldn’t think of anything else to add to that line
   3. To emphasize how difficult and “bare” of luxuries the mother’s life had been
   4. Because it rhymes with the word “stair”
5. What is the most likely meaning for “turnin’ corners” in the context of the poem?
   1. Places in her life where she set new goals or had to try to solver her problems in a new way
   2. Places in her life where she felt like she had failed
   3. The point in her life when she knew her son would be successful
   4. Her need to find a father figure for her son
6. What is the theme of the poem?
   1. Don’t be so foolhardy and headstrong that you get hurt
   2. When you are in trouble, look to your mother for advice
   3. Don’t give up; complete the goals you have set for yourself
   4. You need to love all of mankind
7. The crystal stair is a metaphor that is used throughout the poem. Why do you think Hughes makes the stairway “crystal?”
   1. Crystal is beautiful, but it is also fragile and breaks easily
   2. Crystal sparkles in the sunlight
   3. Crystal has different colors in it depending on how the light hits it
   4. You can almost see through crystal
8. Why is a “stairway” a particularly appropriate metaphor to describe the wisdom the mother is trying to impart to her son?
   1. Stairways are almost always dirty and rough
   2. One has to clean and wax a stairway to make it look good
   3. A stairway takes steady persistence to climb and it can go up and down
   4. Stairways are often found in expensive houses
9. What is the most likely age of the son?
   1. Elderly
   2. Infant
   3. Young man
   4. Decease
10. The style of language used in the poem, which is particular to a particular cultural or geographic region, is known as
    1. Dialogue
    2. Dialect
    3. Diction
    4. Idioms

**Instructions:**

1. Read the poems.
2. Select one poem for your formal analysis.
3. Annotate (mark up) the poem by noting unfamiliar words, figurative language, poetic devices and anything else that is noteworthy about the poem.
4. Write a one-paragraph analysis of the poem’s theme that roughly follows the two-chunk format (TS, CD, CM, CM, CD, CM, CM, CS). Your topic sentence is a thematic statement, your CDs are lines from the poem that support/exemplify the theme, and your CMs are your explanation of these lines and their meaning(s).
5. When you are finished, prepare a five question, multiple-choice quiz based on the theme/meaning, figurative language, and poetic devices in your poem.