Selection Review #1

The Dream Keeper and Other Poems

“The Dream Keeper”

1. **How does the poet use metaphor in this poem? What does he suggest about dreams, life, and poetry?** The writer of this poem uses metaphor in several ways. He speaks to readers who are “dreamers,” that is, people who have goals and ideals of a better life. The poet openly calls these dreams “heart melodies.” This is the first metaphor. Then, he suggests or implies that the dreams are a kind of delicate treasure. This treasure can easily be hurt by the “too-rough fingers of the world.” These “rough fingers” are a metaphor for the harsh realities of life, and also harsh people who discourage others from having dreams. The poet wants to use poetry as a way to protect people’s dreams from these harsh realities. He compares poetry to a “blue cloud-cloth” that he can use to wrap up the dreams and keep them safe (this is also a metaphor). These metaphors show that the poet thinks dreams are very important and valuable, but also easy to spoil or destroy. He believes that there are many situations and people in life who will destroy others’ dreams. He believes that poetry is a way of keeping the dreams safe.

2. **Explain how this poem appeals to the reader’s physical senses.** This poem appeals to the senses of hearing, sight, and touch. The poet appeals to the sense of hearing when he calls the readers’ dreams “heart-melodies.” He appeals to the sense of sight when he speaks of a “blue cloud-cloth.” Finally, he appeals to the sense of touch through the description of the soft, delicate cloud-cloth, and also the “too-rough fingers” of the world.

3. **How does the poet create a contrast (sharp difference) between the first part of the poem and the ending? Why do you think he creates this contrast?** In the first part of the poem, the poet creates a gentle, lovely, faraway feeling. He does this by using words like “dreams,” “dreamers,” “heart melodies,” and “blue cloud-cloth.” However, the term “too-rough fingers of the world” spoils this dreamy mood. It brings us back to earth with a thump. It reminds us that life in the real world is often hard and painful. The poet might have many reasons to create this contrast. One reason might be to remind his readers that dreams are important, but they have to live in the real world. Another reason might be to show that poetry is important, because real life has a tendency to discourage people and take away their dreams.
Selection Review #2

The Dream Keeper and Other Poems

“Dreams”

1. **Tell about the two word pictures used in this poem to describe the life of a person who has no dreams. What is the poet’s message?** The first word picture used to describe the life of a person without dreams is that it is like a bird that cannot fly because its wing is broken. The second metaphor compares this kind of life to a barren, snow-covered field in winter. The injured bird and the empty field are both unable to do what they are supposed to do. The message is that people need to keep their dreams alive. When they give up on their dreams, they cannot enjoy living or do the things they want to do.

2. **Tell about the rhyme scheme and rhythm pattern of this poem. How does breaking a rhythm pattern help the poet make his point more effectively?** Each stanza of this poem has a simple **a b c b** rhyme scheme. Most of the lines have a simple rhythm, with two stressed syllables in each line. However, in the third line of each stanza, this rhythm is broken. The third line in each stanza is longer than the others, with three stressed syllables. This makes the poem read awkwardly at that point. It limps along, just like a bird that cannot fly. In this way, the sound and rhythm of the poem show the awkwardness that the poet is describing when he talks about people who lose their dreams. We can not only understand, but even hear, how frustrating it is.

3. **Why do you think this poem’s message is an important one for young people today?** There are different ways to answer this question. One is that this poem’s message is important because young people today face many challenges and difficult situations. These challenges could make them want to give up on their dreams.
Selection Review #3

The Dream Keeper and Other Poems

“Song”

1. **To whom is this poem addressed? What three pieces of advice does it offer?**

   This poem is addressed to a “lovely, dark and lonely” person, who is also “a child of night.” This suggests that it is addressed to African Americans, and especially to young people. First, the poem encourages its readers not to be afraid of new experiences. They should be open to life outside of their comfort zone. Second, it warns them that they will meet with trouble and pain as they do this. In particular, they may find that some doors are closed to them. However, the third part of the message is that they should be prepared to stand up for their rights. They should also be prepared to wait, because it may take a long time for justice to come.

2. **What symbols do we find in this poem, and what do they mean? What symbolic actions does the poem encourage readers to take?**

   There are three main symbols in the poem. The sun and light symbolize life out in the open of broader society, outside of a person’s life alone, or with people who are like him or her. The wind symbolizes trouble and pain that occur as people open themselves up. The wall and the closed gate symbolize barriers that are set up to keep some people out. In this case, these were barriers created by white society to keep African Americans out. The speaker encourages the reader to take several symbolic actions. “Bare your bosom” and “Open wide your arms” mean, “Open up; don’t be afraid of new people and new experiences. Let people see you as you really are.” “Beat with bare, brown fists” means, “Stand up for your rights. Fight to be accepted as full members of society.”

3. **What is alliteration? What examples of alliteration do we find in this poem? How do they help to create the changing moods or feelings of the poem?**

   Alliteration means repeating certain consonant sounds found at the beginning or in the middle of words. The first line of “Song” contains alliteration since the “l” sound is repeated (“Lovely, dark, and lonely...”). Repeating this soft, liquid sound helps to create the first stanza’s gentle, nurturing mood. The second stanza begins with alliteration in the repeated “w” sounds (“wide,” “whirl,” “wind”). Since the “w” sound is a blowing sound, like the wind, repeating it in this way creates a feeling of movement. The fourth line of this stanza contains alliteration in the repeated “b” sounds (“Beat with bare, brown fists...”). These “b” sounds makes us think of a drum beating, or the fists beating on the gate.
The Dream Keeper and Other Poems

“Minstrel Man”

1. **Why is this poem called “Minstrel Man”? What is ambiguous about the identity of the speaker?**

   The poem is called “Minstrel Man” because the speaker seems to be a performer in a minstrel show. He makes his living laughing, singing, and dancing to entertain others. However, the identity of the speaker is ambiguous (it can be understood in more than one way). The poet might be also talking about himself, comparing himself to a minstrel in a figurative way.

2. **Explain how the poet’s life is similar to that of a performer in a minstrel show. Why does he think that the people who criticize him are wrong?**

   The poet’s poems are like the minstrel’s songs. They are his way of making a living. They might make people laugh. Some people think he is “playing up to” white readers because some of his poems show the comic side of African-American life. However, the poet, like the performer in the minstrel show, is doing what he has to do to survive. He thinks the people who criticize him are unfair. They do not understand the pain he feels. They do not know how it hurts him to keep hiding his feelings. They do not realize how deeply he cares about the situation of his people.

3. **What is parallelism? How is parallelism used in this poem?**

   *Parallelism* means stating similar ideas using similar patterns of words. This poem is made up of three questions that follow a similar pattern. The pattern is: “Because my mouth/ throat/ feet show that I am happy, you do not think/ hear/ know how I am really suffering?” The poem repeats this question three times using different words. This makes us sense how frustrated and upset the speaker really is.

4. **What is this poem’s message about African Americans as a group, not just the minstrel or the poet? About people in general?**

   This poem reminds us that African Americans throughout history have had to face suffering of which most whites are not aware. Also, most people have struggles or sorrows that we do not know about. They may seem cheerful or lighthearted on the outside. However, they may be suffering inside. It is a mistake to judge people on the basis of what we can see: how they act, or how they appear to feel.
Selection Review #5

The Dream Keeper and Other Poems

“The Negro”

1. **For whom is the writer speaking in this poem? How do we know?** In this poem, the writer is speaking for the whole race of black people. We know this because he mentions events and situations from many different places and times involving black people. These events and situations come from different times in history and from different parts of the world.

2. **Describe the structure of the poem as a whole. What is special about the first and last stanzas? What insight do these stanzas give us into the poet’s goals in this poem?** The poem is composed of six short stanzas. The first and last stanzas are unusual because they are exactly the same. They tell us that the poet’s goal in this poem is to lead readers to think about the history and the shared experiences of black people all over the world.

3. **Tell about the structure of the stanzas in this poem. What do the four stanzas in the middle have in common?** In each stanza of this poem, the first line begins at the margin. The first line always states a general idea. Two or three indented lines follow this first line. These indented lines give examples of the general idea stated in the first line. The four stanzas in the middle each begin with the words, “I’ve been a...” Each one states a role that black people have played in history. The second and third lines give an example from a faraway place and an example from African-American history.

4. **How does the poet show African-American history relating to the history of black people all over the world? Give examples. What point is he making?** The poet says that black people have been slaves, both in ancient Rome and in early America. As workers, they built pyramids in ancient Egypt and skyscrapers in New York. They sang songs of sorrow from Africa and created popular tunes in America. They were harshly punished in African colonies and lynched in the American South. The poet wants to make both blacks and whites aware of the long history of black people around the world. He wants them to think about the black tradition of overcoming hardship. He wants them to question the unfair treatment given black people in countries that were supposed to be modern and civilized.

5. **What is tone in a work of literature? What is the tone of this poem? How does the poet create this tone?** **Tone** in a work of literature is the writer’s attitude toward the subject. In this poem, the poet’s attitude or tone is dignified, proud, and serious. It is also slightly bitter. The poet creates this serious, dignified tone by using short, direct sentences. He does not use a lot of long words or fancy language. He lets the facts speak for themselves.
Selection Review #6

The Dream Keeper and Other Poems

“The Negro Speaks of Rivers”

1. **What is a simile?** How does the poet use similes and comparisons to describe the rivers he has known? A simile is a figure of speech that compares two things by using words such as like or as. The poet says that he has known rivers “ancient as the world” and “older than the flow of blood in human veins.” These comparisons emphasize the fact that rivers are very old, as old as the world itself. The phrase “older than the flow of human blood in human veins” also hints at great suffering. This idea of suffering comes up again in the simile “My soul has grown deep like the rivers.”

2. **Define personification.** How is personification used to describe the rivers? How does the speaker seem to feel about the rivers? A writer uses personification when he or she describes a nonliving thing as if it were a person. For example, in the poem the speaker states that the Congo River “ lulled him to sleep.” This reminds us of mother lulling a child to sleep. It also refers to the Mississippi “singing.” It says that the Mississippi’s “muddy bosom turn[ed] all golden in the sunset.” The rivers are described as if they were women. The speaker gives a warm, friendly, personal picture of them.

3. **What periods of history does this poem call to mind?** The poem calls to mind the beginnings of the human race when it mentions the Euphrates and the dawn of time. When it mentions the Congo, it makes us think of the time when Africans had little contact with outsiders. They lived in Africa and there were few written records. The reference to the Nile calls to mind the great civilization of Egypt. Mississippi and New Orleans make us think of slavery in America. We also remember the way it ended.

4. **Who is the speaker in this poem?** The poem suggests there is a special relationship between the great rivers and the race of black people. What is this relationship? The speaker in this poem is not just Langston Hughes, but also the entire race of black people through history. The poem suggests that black people have had a close relationship with the great rivers. The rivers have been like a mother or a lover. They have comforted people in times of sorrow, and shared their joy in times of victory. Like the rivers, black people have a long and proud history. Like the rivers, they have endured the good times and the bad. They have gone through pain and suffering and have become stronger, deeper, and wiser as a result.
Selection Review #7

The Dream Keeper and Other Poems

“I, Too”

1. **What real-life scene does the poet describe in “I, Too”? How did this scene point up the situation of African Americans in the early part of the 20th century?** In this poem, the poet describes a scene in which someone is sent to eat in the kitchen when company comes. This would usually happen in a wealthy white person’s house. An African-American working in the house would have to eat in the kitchen. Eating in the kitchen was a sign of low social status. It also meant the person would probably eat the leftovers. Hughes uses this idea to show how African Americans were treated in those days. They did not have the same rights as white Americans. They also did not often have much share in America’s wealth.

2. **How does the situation change in the second long stanza (lines 8-14)? What part of lines 2-7 hints at this coming change?** The second long stanza is set in the future. In this picture, the person who had to eat in the kitchen has grown strong. He sits at the table and no one dares to send him away. We should not be too surprised at this. The lines, “I laugh,/ And eat well,/ And grow strong” hint that this person will not always be pushed around.

3. **The second stanza (lines 8-14) shows us Hughes’ ideas about the future of black people in America. What did he think would happen? What new twist does the following stanza bring (“Besides/ They’ll see how beautiful I am/ And be ashamed”)?** Lines 8-14 show us that Hughes thought things would improve. He thought that black people would become strong. They would gain economic and political power. Then white America would not dare to ignore them anymore. This has been true since the Civil Rights era of the 1950s and 60s. In the next stanza, the poet hopes that those in power would not only share their power out of fear. He hopes they would see the beauty in African American culture, realize that racism was wrong, and be ashamed.

4. **Why does the speaker call himself “the darker brother”? Why does the poem begin and end with two lines that are almost the same: “I, too, sing America... I, too am America”?** The word “brother” is very important. It reminds us that black and white, rich and poor, we are all human beings. Even though the speaker has to eat in the kitchen, he is closely related to the people sending him away. They cannot pretend that his situation has nothing to do with them. The beginning and ending lines give us the key to the poem. The poet wants his readers to remember that African Americans are just as much a part of America as anyone else. Without them, America would not be what it is today. As long as they cannot reach their goals and fulfill their dreams, America has not reached its goal either.
Selection Review #8

The Dream Keeper and Other Poems

“Mother to Son”

1. **Explain what the mother (the speaker in the poem) means by “Life for me ain’t been no crystal stair.” Why do you think the poet chose to use the image of a crystal stair?**

   The line “Life for me ain’t been no crystal stair” means that the speaker’s life has not been an easy or smooth one. She has had to struggle for everything she has achieved. A “crystal stair” could probably only exist in a magical setting, such as a fairy tale. Crystal is a smooth, transparent, very expensive kind of glass. It is the complete opposite of the mother’s hard, painful, difficult life.

2. **What extended metaphor does the speaker in this poem use to describe her life? List some of the details included in her description.**

   The speaker uses the extended metaphor of a stairway to describe her life. The details in the description make it sound like a very rundown stairway. There are tacks, splinters, and missing boards in this stairway. In some places there is no carpet. The speaker also mentions landings and corners to turn. She says that in some places she had to keep going in the dark because there was no light.

3. **Each detail in the picture of the stairway tells us something about the speaker’s life. Explain what the different details might mean.**

   In this description, the tacks, splinters, and missing boards might stand for problems and setbacks. The places where there is no carpet on the floor suggest times in her life when she was too poor for even the smallest comforts. Landings might stand for times when she reached a stopping place where she could rest. Corners to turn probably mean changes in her life. Going on in the dark probably refers to times when she felt she had no hope and did not know what she should do.

4. **What is the understatement found in this poem? What does this tell us about the mother?**

   The statement “Life for me ain’t been no crystal stair” is a huge understatement. The woman is saying that she has not lived a life of luxury, like a rich person. In reality, however, her life has been much harder even than that of the average person. This use of understatement shows us that the mother has a good sense of humor. This is probably one thing that has helped her overcome the hardships she has faced. She is not a person who feels sorry for herself. Even though she admits there are problems, she keeps on going.

5. **What idea does the poem give us of the way the woman looks at life? What is her advice to her son? What message do you think the poet was trying to give young people in general?**

   The poem shows us that the woman has a hopeful approach to life. Even though her life has been very hard, she still sees herself as “climbing” toward something better. Her advice to her son is, “Don’t give up.” The poet was probably trying to encourage young people. He wanted them to think about the way older people faced the challenges of the past. This could give them the courage to handle the challenges they face in their world.
Selection Review #9

The Dream Keeper and Other Poems

“Youth”

1. **How does Hughes describe youth in this poem? What is the theme of the poem?** In this poem, Hughes describes youth as a time of traveling or marching toward a goal. His theme or message is that we should let the past go and focus on the future. The future is what we make of it, so we should actively pursue our goals. This message relates to people pursuing their personal goals. It also relates to young African Americans’ dreams for justice and equality, especially at the time when Hughes wrote the poem.

2. **How does Hughes describe the future and the past in this poem? Explain his use of simile and hyphenated adjectives.** The future is described with a simile: “tomorrow/ Bright before us/ Like a flame.” This simile suggests that the future gives young people hope. It also encourages and guides them in times of hardship. The past, “Yesterday,” is described through the use of hyphenated adjectives. Hughes calls it, “A night-gone thing,/ A sun-down name.” When the sun sets and night comes, “yesterday” is gone. In the same way, the past is over and done. Young people are not as likely as older people to be held down by the past.

3. **How does the poet use ellipsis in this poem? How does this affect the feeling it gives you?** The poet uses ellipsis when he leaves out the word “is” in stanzas two and three: “Yesterday [is] a night-gone thing... dawn-today [is a] broad arch above the road [on which] we came.” Leaving these words out makes the lines shorter. They are quick and snappy. This fits in well with the confidence, eagerness, and impatience of youth.

4. **How is the present time described in the poem? What is the poet’s tone or attitude toward “Youth”?** Hughes calls the present “dawn-today.” He compares it to an arch over the travelers’ road. His tone or attitude in this poem is strong and confident. He encourages young people who dream of making life better in the future.

5. **Explain how this poem relates to the dreams of young African Americans for justice and equality. How did Hughes view this struggle?** The poem speaks to dreams of racial justice as well as personal goals. Hughes approved of this struggle. He did not think African Americans should be held back by the past. He wanted them to pursue their dreams boldly and confidently.
Selection Review #10

The Dream Keeper and Other Poems

“Stars”

1. **Tell about the setting (place and time) of this poem. How does the speaker feel about this place and time?** This poem is set in Harlem at night. A mother is singing her little boy to sleep. It is clear that the speaker loves the city of Harlem, since he uses beautiful, musical language to describe it. He also loves the night. For him, night is a time when the people in Harlem can rest and forget their troubles.

2. **What does the poet mention in his description of the city? These lines in the poem remind us of the lullaby that the mother is singing. What similarities do you see?** The poet describes the city building and dreaming, but he also brings in the mother’s song or lullaby. These lines in the poem remind us of a lullaby because they have an easy, regular rhythm. The words and ideas follow a simple pattern. They create a safe, secure, happy feeling, just as a lullaby does.

3. **What is the poet’s advice to the “dark boy”? What does he mean by this advice?** The poet’s advice to the “dark boy” is to reach out and take a star. This probably means he should hold fast to one dream or desire. He should put his best effort into reaching that one goal. This will help him to have a better life in the future.

4. **What is apostrophe? How does the poet use apostrophe to express his feelings in this poem?** Apostrophe occurs when a speaker or writer pretends to be talking to someone or something that cannot answer back. This might be an idea, a thing, or a person who is dead or absent. The writer is really trying to say something to his or her readers by doing this. For example, the speaker in this poem begins by talking to the stars and the night over Harlem. He knows that stars and night cannot hear or answer him. This is a way for him to show how much he loves Harlem nights and finds them beautiful. Later in the poem, he speaks directly to the “dark boy.” Of course, the boy is being rocked to sleep, so he is not listening. He might even be imaginary. However, the things the speaker tells him show his concern for the children of Harlem. He is expressing his dream that they will live in freedom and dignity.
Selection Review #11

The Dream Keeper and Other Poems

“Color”

1. When the speaker in this poem says “Wear it...,” what does he mean? When the speaker says “Wear it...” he is talking about skin color or race. He is giving advice about the attitude people of color, especially African Americans, should have about their appearance.

2. What similes does the speaker use to describe the right attitude to have about one’s color? What do these similes mean? The speaker says that people should wear their skin color “like a banner” and “like a song.” These similes suggest pride and confidence. A banner is a kind of flag that an army would carry into battle. A banner is held high to say, “We are still fighting. We are not giving up.” Similarly, you sing a song when you feel strong and confident.

3. What similes are used to describe the wrong attitude to have about one’s color? What do these similes mean? The speaker says that people should not wear their color “like a shroud” or like a “moan or cry.” These similes suggest death or sorrow. A shroud is a grave cloth. You would only wear a shroud if you thought your life was not worth living. Moaning and crying are noises people make when they have given up hope. Hughes does not want people to look at their skin color as a terrible problem or mistake.

4. Describe the structure of this poem. Tell how rhyme and rhythm are used. This poem can be divided into two matching halves. Each half begins with the line, “Wear it” (meaning your color). The next two lines tell how you should wear your color, and the last line tells how you shouldn’t wear it. The two halves also have matching rhythm and rhyme patterns. The first three lines of each half are short and strong, while the last line (about what not to do) has a weak, falling rhythm. In each half, the third and fourth lines rhyme. This strengthens the contrast between the “right” and “wrong” attitudes. The speaker’s position is clear: you have to choose between the two.

5. Describe the mood or feeling of this poem. Why might some people find this poem’s message surprising or shocking in 1932? The mood in this poem is strong, proud, and confident. Some people might have found this poem surprising or shocking in 1932, because in those days many people thought that dark skin was a curse. African Americans often were not treated with dignity and did not have the same rights as other people. The actions of white society suggested that color was the problem. People did not realize that unfair laws, customs, and attitudes were the real problem. They would be surprised to hear Hughes say that black people should wear their color with pride.
Literature Test #1

The Dream Keeper and Other Poems

“The Dream Keeper”

1. List at least two metaphors that are stated or implied in this poem. Explain the meaning of each one.

2. To what physical senses does this poem appeal? Give an example for each.

continued...
3. What does Langston Hughes say in this poem about dreams, about life, and about his own role as a poet?
Literature Test #2

*The Dream Keeper and Other Poems*

“Dreams”

1. What two comparisons or metaphors are used in the poem “Dreams” to describe the life of a person who gives up on his or her dreams?

2. State the poet’s message or theme in this poem. Why is this an important message?

*continued...*
3. How does the poet use rhyme and rhythm in this poem? What is the relationship between the sound or form of the poem and the message that it communicates?
Literature Test #3

The Dream Keeper and Other Poems

“Song”

1. Symbolism is important in the poem “Song.” Two of the important symbols are “the wind” and “the wall with the dark closed gate.” Tell what each of these symbols represents.

2. Define “alliteration.” Give at least two examples of alliteration from this poem, and tell how each one helps to create a particular mood in the poem.

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3. Summarize the three important pieces of advice that Hughes offers young people in this poem.

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4. Explain how the message of this poem applies to your life today.

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Literature Test #4

The Dream Keeper and Other Poems

“Minstrel Man”

1. What is *ambiguity*? Explain why the identity of the speaker in “Minstrel Man” is ambiguous.

2. What similarity does the poet see between his own life and that of a minstrel man? In this poem, he responds to people who criticized his poetry. What is his response to them?
3. Why is this poem a good example of *parallelism*? How does the parallelism help get the poem’s message across?

4. The theme of this poem can also be understood at a more general level than that of the minstrel or the poet. State at least one more general way to view the poem’s message.
1. What is unusual about the first and last stanzas of “The Negro”? What do these two stanzas tell us about the main idea of the poem?

2. Describe the way each stanza of this poem is printed on the page. How do the last two (or three) lines relate to the first line?
3. In the middle stanzas of this poem, the poet shows how the experience of black people in America relates to the experience of black people in history throughout the world. Using the graphic organizer below, give two examples from the poem.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Black Experience In America</th>
<th>Similar Experience in World History</th>
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<tr>
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4. Describe the writer’s tone in this poem, and tell at least one way his writing style conveys this tone.

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Literature Test #6

The Dream Keeper and Other Poems

“The Negro Speaks of Rivers”

1. To what does the speaker compare the rivers he has known? What fact about the rivers does he emphasize?

2. Give two examples of personification found in the poem. What seem to be the speaker’s feelings toward the rivers he has known?

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3. Several periods of history come to mind as we read this poem. List at least three of them.

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4. The poem suggests several ways that black people as a race are similar to the rivers they have known. Tell about one similarity.

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Literature Test #7

The Dream Keeper and Other Poems

“I, Too”

1. What real-life situation is described in “I, Too”? How is this real-life situation similar to the status of African Americans at the time when Langston Hughes wrote the poem?

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2. How does the speaker in the poem change his situation? What does this say about Hughes’ hopes for his people’s future?

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3. The speaker hopes that those in power will have a change of heart that is not only based on fear. What other reason(s) does he hope might bring about a change?

4. In what way is the speaker a “brother” to those who are mistreating him? What is the importance of the two similar lines, “I, too, sing America... I, too, am America”? 
1. Why does the mother in this poem say that her life has not been a “crystal stair”? Why is this an understatement?

2. What extended metaphor is used to describe the mother’s life? List at least three details that are given in this description, and tell what each of them means.
3. What do we learn from the poem about the kind of person the mother is? Give specific examples from the poem.

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4. What is the mother’s advice to the son? How could this advice be useful for young people today? Explain.

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Literature Test #9

_The Dream Keeper and Other Poems_

“Youth”

1. What word picture does Hughes use to describe youth?

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2. How does Hughes use _simile_ and _hyphenated adjectives_ to describe “Tomorrow” and “Yesterday”? What attitudes of young people toward the past and the future does he suggest?

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continued...
3. What is *ellipsis*? How does the use of ellipsis affect the feeling this poem gives us? How does this help convey the poet’s attitude or tone?

4. How does this poem relate to the dreams of young African Americans for justice and equality? What was Hughes’ message for the young activists of his day?
Literature Test #10

The Dream Keeper and Other Poems

“Stars”

1. How does the speaker in the poem feel about night in Harlem? Why does he call it a “little breath of oblivion”?

2. How does the speaker describe the city? In what way does this description remind us of a lullaby?
3. What does the speaker mean by the advice “Reach up... and take a star”? To whom is this advice addressed?

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4. Define *apostrophe*. Tell how it is used in this poem.

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Literature Test #11

The Dream Keeper and Other Poems

“Color”

1. List the two similes the speaker uses to describe the right attitude to have about race. Tell what these similes mean.

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2. List the similes the speaker uses to describe the wrong attitude to have about race. Explain their meaning.

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continued...
3. The first and second halves of this poem are very similar. List at least two similarities. Be specific.

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4. Describe the mood (feeling) of this poem. Tell about one thing the poet does to help create this mood.

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