

Mother to Son
by Langston Hughes

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've 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've still goin', honey,
I've still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

Who is the speaker?

Who is the speaker's intended audience?

Speaker compares _____ to _____
_____ using an extended metaphor.

What does the speaker describe?

What can the reader infer?

What has the speaker done?

What can the reader infer?

What does the speaker say to do?

What can the reader infer?

What are some examples of
dialect in the poem?

What can be inferred based on
the dialect?

What does the speaker continue
to do?

What does the speaker want?

What is the topic of the poem?

Write a theme statement for the poem.

SPEAKER

Just as a short story has a narrator, a poem has a speaker. The **speaker** is the voice that "talks" to the reader. The speaker may be the poet or a fictional character. (Be aware that even when a poem uses the pronouns "I" or "me", it does not always mean that the poet is the speaker). Identifying the speaker, and understanding his or her situation, is an essential part of discovering the meaning of the poem.

What the speaker thought:

What the speaker did:

How the speaker felt:

*What can be inferred based on line 7 in the poem? Why is line 7 the only line with one y and what was the author's purpose in formatting the poem this way?

What is the subject of the poem?

What is the poet's tone (attitude towards the subject?)

How others reacted towards the speaker: You might have to make an inference.

Infer what might have motivated the speaker to talk with her son?

