



# Unlocking Meaning: A Semantic Analysis of Denotation and Connotation in Langston Hughes' Poetry

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## Abstract

This article discusses a semantic analysis of the denotative and connotative meanings in three poems by Langston Hughes: "Dreams," "Mother to Son," and "Harlem." The research uses a qualitative descriptive approach with the theoretical framework of meaning by Geoffrey Leech (1981) and the semiotic approach of Daniel Chandler (2007). The analysis results show that each poem not only conveys individual aspirations and challenges but also represents the collective condition of marginalized communities. The connotative meanings of words and metaphors in the poems serve as a form of resistance to social oppression, implying resilience and emotional depth rooted in a history of struggle. Thus, this study demonstrates that literary works are not only a medium for artistic expression but also an instrument that responds to social injustice and inspires collective awareness in the fight for freedom.

**Keywords:** *Langston Hughes, Poetry, Semantics, Denotative and Connotative Meaning, Harlem Renaissance*

## Introduction

Language is a medium for communicating human ideas. It not only serves as a tool to convey information but also as a means to build social relationships, express emotions, and share worldviews. Human communication is purposeful and strategic, as Kellerman suggests that individuals use meaningful words to express ideas and feelings in order to build social connections (as cited in Lula Wahyu Anindita & Ubaidillah, 2024)). Therefore, language becomes a crucial element in every aspect of human life, including in artistic and cultural realms such as literature.

Literature is a form of communication that conveys ideas, emotions, and meanings through language. It not only reflects human life but also explores inner and social experiences through symbolic and aesthetic expression. According to Wicaksono, literature is a work created by an author whose inspiration comes from human life and uses language as its main medium (as cited in Gibson et al., 2024)). In this sense, literature can be considered as an imaginative and creative writing. Poetry is a literary genre that reflects the writer's expression (Schneider, 1931, as cited in Güzel, 2023). Among various forms of literature, poetry occupies a special place in utilizing language traditionally and imaginatively to convey deep meanings.

Poetry is one of the most powerful forms of literary expression in conveying emotions, thoughts, and social realities through rhythm, imagery, and figurative language. In this regard, poetry is categorized as imaginative literature because its creation heavily involves the poet's imagination to produce meaningful and inspirational works. This imagination enables the poet to construct deep, layered meanings through dense and symbolic word choices. As Sakinah and Aufa A. (2019, cited in Rustandi, 2020)) stated, poetry requires a high level of imagination to produce quality works that inspire readers.

This unique characteristic allows poetry to communicate universal human experiences while reflecting particular cultural and historical contexts. In this sense, poetry is the practice of using language to create works of art filled with implicit meanings. The beautiful words in poetry often force the reader to trace and interpret messages not directly conveyed by the author (Ratna Said , Oktariyani , Rahmi Usman, 2023) .Therefore, poetry has long been an important medium for preserving cultural narratives, promoting social change, and articulating struggles both individually and collectively.

One important aspect of poetry analysis is examining the denotative and connotative meanings of the words used. Understanding this semantic aspect is essential for interpreting the deeper layers of meaning in a poem. Denotative meaning refers to the literal meaning or dictionary definition of a word. This meaning is the most direct and objective, independent of emotional or cultural influences (Leech, 1981). For example, the word "tree" denotatively refers to a tall plant with a trunk and branches. According to Chandler (2007), denotation is the first level of meaning in semiotics, where a sign directly refers to its referent without additional meanings.

In contrast, connotative meaning encompasses emotional, cultural, or subjective associations related to a word. The same word "tree," for example, could have connotations such as growth, stability, or even wisdom, depending on the context in which it is used (Leech, 1981). Chandler, (2007) further explains that connotation is the second level of meaning, where the meaning of a sign is shaped by cultural codes, social context, and personal interpretation. In poetry, words are chosen carefully not only based on their explicit meaning but also because of the deeper symbolic message the poet wishes to convey. The interaction between

denotation and connotation allows poetry to evoke strong emotions, convey symbolic messages, and invite readers to make a deeper interpretation.

The application of denotative and connotative analysis is particularly relevant in understanding the works of Langston Hughes. Langston Hughes, one of the key figures of the Harlem Renaissance, is known for his ability to capture the struggles, hopes, and cultural identity of African Americans through his poetry. His poetry remains relevant today as it continues to inspire discussions on race, identity, and the power of language in shaping social consciousness. His works reflect the realities of black life in America, using simple yet meaningful language to convey themes of resilience, racial pride, economic hardship, and hope.

Hughes' poetry often adopts everyday language combined with the rhythms of jazz and blues, making it accessible while also conveying profound socio-political messages (Huggins, 2007). Some of his poems, such as *Dreams*, *Mother to Son*, and *Harlem*, showcase this technique by blending literal meanings with rich symbolic meanings. By analyzing Hughes' poetry using denotative and connotative approaches, readers can understand how he uses simple yet powerful language to deliver social and political messages. This understanding not only enriches literary appreciation but also helps uncover the social and historical realities that the poet seeks to voice.

Several studies have examined Langston Hughes' poetry from various perspectives, including semiotics, stylistics, and figurative meaning analysis. One relevant study is by Riana & Ilham (2015), which analyzes three of Hughes' poems—*Mother to Son*, *Trumpet Player*, and *The Negro Speaks of Rivers*—using Michael Riffaterre's semiotic approach. This study emphasizes that poetry cannot be understood directly but must be approached through a heuristic and hermeneutic reading process to uncover hidden meanings (matrix, model, hypogram, and significance). Their findings indicate that Hughes' poems reflect the spirit of liberalism, particularly individual freedom and social justice for African Americans during the 1920s. Riffaterre's approach underscores the importance of symbolic interpretation in understanding poetry as a complex sign system.

Meanwhile, a study by (Pelata et al., 2023) focuses on analyzing Hughes' *Dreams* in its Indonesian translation. Through a qualitative approach, the study reveals that the poem contains two main metaphors illustrating the importance of dreams in life. First, life without dreams is compared to a bird with broken wings, and second, it is likened to a barren field. The study highlights that Hughes' use of simple diction allows readers to grasp the profound poetic meaning. However, this study has not explicitly differentiated between the denotative and connotative meanings of the metaphorical words, leaving room for a more detailed semantic analysis.

A study by (Ricardo Nababan, Fombagdodo Laia, 2024) analyses figurative language in selected poems by Langston Hughes using a descriptive qualitative method with Arvius' theory. This study identifies seven types of figurative language used, including metaphor, personification, simile, metonymy, symbolism, hyperbole, and irony. Metaphor was found to be the most dominant rhetorical device (61.67%) because it effectively conveys complex ideas, evokes emotions, and builds cultural connections. The study's findings show that Hughes' use of figurative language provides depth of meaning and expressive power in his poetry. These three studies contribute significantly to the understanding of Langston Hughes' poetry.

However, none have specifically focused on a deep semantic analysis of the denotative and connotative meanings in *Dreams*, *Mother to Son*, and *Harlem*. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by examining how the word choices in these three poems carry both literal and symbolic meanings that reflect the experiences and struggles of the African American community during the Harlem Renaissance.

The novelty of this study lies in its semantic approach, focusing on denotative and connotative analysis as a tool to uncover the emotional and symbolic meanings in Hughes' poetic language. Thus, this study offers a new perspective on Hughes' poetic language, demonstrating how careful word choices function not only as literary expression but also as a tool for historical and social documentation.

Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the denotative and connotative meanings found in Langston Hughes' poems *Dreams*, *Mother to Son*, and *Harlem*?
2. How do these meanings reflect the hopes and struggles of African Americans during the Harlem Renaissance?

By answering these questions, this study aims to deepen the appreciation of Langston Hughes' poetic language and its function as both a literary work and a reflection of social reality.

## Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative research design with a semantic approach to analyse the denotative and connotative meanings in selected poems by Langston Hughes. The descriptive qualitative design was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of both explicit (denotative) and implicit (connotative) meanings contained in the texts of the poems. According to (Creswell, 2018), qualitative research aims to understand social or cultural phenomena through an in-depth exploration of textual and contextual data. This approach focuses on the analysis of language use in a poetic context, including the symbolism and metaphors used to convey the experiences and struggles of the African American community.

In this study, the data collected consists of written texts from three selected poems, namely *Dreams*, *Mother to Son*, and *Harlem*, which were chosen based on their thematic relevance to the concepts of hope and life struggles. In line with the principles of qualitative research (Creswell, 2018) the data is analyzed through an interpretive process involving the researcher's subjective understanding of the meaning embedded in the texts.

The main theoretical framework used is Geoffrey Leech's (1981) theory of meaning, which divides meaning into conceptual, connotative, social, affective, reflective, collocative, and thematic meanings (Leech, 1981), as well as Daniel Chandler's semiotic approach, which emphasizes the relationship between signs, meaning, and interpretation within a cultural context (Chandler, 2007).

### **Data Collection**

Data collection is carried out through a literature review involving deep reading and noting relevant linguistic elements within the poem texts. According to (Mestika Zed, 2004), a literature review is a research method that aims to gather, read, and analyze information from various written sources to establish a solid theoretical foundation. In this context, the first step is to repeatedly read the poems to understand the general meaning of each stanza. Next, words, phrases, and sentences with denotative and connotative meanings are identified. The data collected consists of direct quotations from the poem texts that show the use of symbolic, metaphorical, and emotional language.

For example, in the poem *Dreams*, the phrase "Hold fast to dreams" is noted for its denotative meaning as an invitation to hold tightly to one's dreams, but connotatively, it symbolizes the importance of hope in facing life's challenges. Additionally, interpretive notes are recorded to help understand the cultural and historical context of the poem, particularly regarding the African American community's experiences during the Harlem Renaissance. In line with the literature research concept from (Mestika Zed, 2004), this process involves tracing primary and secondary sources to support objective interpretation. The main instruments used are Geoffrey Leech's semantic analysis framework and Daniel Chandler's semiotic approach to examine the meaning and signification of language in these poems.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis is performed following the qualitative data analysis model proposed by (Huberman, 2014), which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

- **Data Reduction:** Relevant text quotes are selected and grouped based on their denotative and connotative meanings. Words or phrases with explicit meanings are identified and noted, while symbolic or figurative meanings are analyzed using a semiotic approach to understand the implications and emotions conveyed. For instance, in the poem *Mother to Son*, the metaphor "Life for me ain't been no crystal stair" is analyzed at the denotative level as

a statement that the speaker's life has not been easy, while at the connotative level, it represents struggle and resilience in facing life's challenges.

- **Data Presentation:** After analysis, the results are systematically organized in tables and narrative descriptions to facilitate the identification of linguistic patterns and emerging themes.
- **Drawing Conclusions:** In the conclusion stage, the analyzed data is compared to find similarities and differences in how meaning is conveyed in the three poems. For example, all three poems share themes of hope and struggle, but *Harlem* places more emphasis on the consequences of deferred dreams through rhetorical questions such as "What happens to a dream deferred?", which connotatively reflects disappointment and anger due to social injustice. Through this process, the study interprets how Langston Hughes uses poetic language to communicate themes of resilience, identity, and social justice in his works.

### Research Goals

This study aims to contribute to the understanding of semantics in Langston Hughes' works, focusing on how his poetic language reveals themes of resilience, struggle, and social justice. This research also seeks to show how denotative and connotative meanings in Hughes' poems not only convey literary messages but also reflect the social and cultural realities of African Americans during the Harlem Renaissance.

By using this design and methodology, the study is expected to uncover how Langston Hughes uses language to express complex emotional and social experiences through symbolism and metaphor in his poetry.

### Results

#### The Denotative and Connotative Meanings in the Poems *Dreams*, *Mother to Son*, and *Harlem*

This section presents the results of a semantic analysis of three poems by Langston Hughes: *Dreams*, *Mother to Son*, and *Harlem*. The analysis focuses on revealing the denotative and connotative meanings of key words or phrases within these poems.

#### *Dreams*

In the poem *Dreams*, Langston Hughes conveys a profound message about the importance of holding on to dreams. He uses strong metaphorical imagery to illustrate the bleakness of life without hope.

**Hold fast to dreams**

**For if dreams die**

**Life is a broken-winged bird**

**That cannot fly.**

(Hughes, "Dreams," lines 1–4)

- **Dreams**
  - Denotative: Aspirations or desires.
  - Connotative: A symbol of hope and the future that must be preserved.
- **Broken-winged bird**
  - Denotative: A bird with a broken wing that cannot fly.
  - Connotative: An individual without hope, unable to thrive.

**When dreams go**

**Life is a barren field**

**Frozen with snow.**

(Hughes, "Dreams," lines 5–7)

- **Barren field**
  - Denotative: A desolate, infertile piece of land.
  - Connotative: A life without direction or meaning.
- **Frozen with snow**
  - Denotative: Covered with snow.
  - Connotative: Emotional freezing; absence of growth.

**Mother to Son**

This poem depicts the voice of an African American mother advising her child to remain strong in the face of life's harshness. Hughes uses the metaphor of a broken staircase to represent life's struggles.

**Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.**

**It's had tacks in it,**

**And splinters,**

(Hughes, "Mother to Son," lines 2–4)

- **Crystal stair**
  - Denotative: A sparkling crystal staircase.
  - Connotative: A life of ease, luxury, and without hardship (which the mother has not experienced).
- **Tacks and splinters**
  - Denotative: Small sharp objects like nails and wood fragments.
  - Connotative: Obstacles, wounds, and suffering along the journey of life.

**I've been a-climbin' on,**

**And reachin' landin's,**

**And turnin' corners,**

(Hughes, "Mother to Son," lines 5–7)

- **Climbin', landin's, turnin' corners**
  - Denotative: Moving upwards and changing direction.
  - Connotative: Perseverance in facing changes and challenges in life.
  -

**And sometimes goin' in the dark  
Where there ain't been no light.**

(Hughes, "Mother to Son," lines 12–13)

- **Goin' in the dark**
  - Denotative: Moving in the darkness.
  - Connotative: Living in uncertainty, hardship, or oppression.

**So boy, don't you turn back.  
Don't you set down on the steps  
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.**

(Hughes, "Mother to Son," lines 14–16)

- **Turn back / set down on the steps**
  - Denotative: Turning around or sitting on the stairs.
  - Connotative: Giving up in life; losing determination.

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

(Hughes, "Mother to Son," lines 18–20)

- **Still climbin'**
  - Denotative: Continuing to climb the stairs.
  - Connotative: Determination and resilience in facing life's difficulties.

### **Harlem**

The poem *Harlem* raises a rhetorical question about the fate of deferred dreams and depicts the psychological and social consequences of continuously suppressed hope.

**What happens to a dream deferred?**

**Does it dry up**

**Like a raisin in the sun?**

(Hughes, "Harlem," lines 1–3)

- **Dream deferred**
  - Denotative: A dream or hope that is postponed.
  - Connotative: Social and personal disappointment due to unfulfilled dreams.
- **Raisin in the sun**
  - Denotative: A grape that dries up in the sun.
  - Connotative: A dream that dries up, losing its vitality.

**Or fester like a sore—**

**And then run?**

(Hughes, "Harlem," lines 4–5)

- **Fester like a sore**
  - Denotative: A wound that becomes infected.
  - Connotative: A deferred dream turning into an emotional disease; a



social wound.

- **And then run**

- Denotative: Flowing out like pus.
- Connotative: Painful and lasting psychological impact.

**Does it stink like rotten meat?**

(Hughes, "Harlem," line 6)

- **Stink like rotten meat**

- Denotative: The smell of decaying meat.
- Connotative: A dead dream; a burden that is socially and emotionally repulsive.

**Or crust and sugar over—**

**Like a syrupy sweet?**

(Hughes, "Harlem," lines 7–8)

- **Crust and sugar over**

- Denotative: Covered with a sugary crust.
- Connotative: False appearance; a dream that seems beautiful but is damaged inside.

**Maybe it just sags**

**Like a heavy load.**

(Hughes, "Harlem," lines 9–10)

- **Sags / heavy load**

- Denotative: To droop due to weight.
- Connotative: A deferred dream becomes a psychological burden, constantly weighing down.

**Or does it explode?**

(Hughes, "Harlem," line 11)

- **Explode**

- Denotative: To burst apart.
- Connotative: An outburst of anger, violence, or social rebellion as a result of prolonged oppression.

Table of Denotative and Connotative Meanings in Langston Hughes' Three Poems

Poem	Word/Phrase	Denotative Meaning	Connotative Meaning
Dreams	Dreams	Aspirations, hopes	Symbol of hope and the future that must be preserved
	Broken-winged bird	A bird with a broken wing	A life without hope; inability to thrive
	Barren field	Desolate land	Life that is empty and meaningless
	Frozen	Covered with	A life frozen, undeveloped, and

Poem	Word/Phrase	Denotative Meaning	Connotative Meaning
	snow	snow	numb
<b>Mother to Son</b>	Crystal stair	A sparkling crystal staircase	A life of ease, luxury, and without obstacles (which the mother hasn't had)
	Tacks and splinters	Small sharp objects	Obstacles, wounds, suffering in life
	Climbin', turnin' corners	Moving upward, changing direction	Hard work facing life challenges and changes
	Goin' in the dark	Moving in the darkness	Living in uncertainty, oppression, or without guidance
	Turn back / set down	Turning around / sitting down	Giving up in life; losing determination
	Still climbin'	Continuing to climb stairs	Persistence, resilience, and an unyielding spirit
	<b>Harlem</b>	Dream deferred	A postponed dream or hope
Raisin in the sun		A grape drying in the sun	A dream that has dried up; loss of vitality
Fester like a sore		A wound that becomes infected	A dream that becomes a social/emotional disease
Run		Flowing out like pus	Painful, lasting psychological impact
Rotten meat		Decaying meat	A dead dream; a burden that is repulsive
Crust and sugar over		Covered with sugary crust	False appearance; a dream that looks sweet but is damaged inside
Sags like a heavy load		To droop due to weight	A deferred dream becomes a constant mental burden
Explode		To burst apart	Anger, violence, or social rebellion due to long-term oppression

## Discussion

### **These Meanings Reflect the Experiences of Hope and Struggle Among African Americans During the Harlem Renaissance**

After identifying the denotative and connotative meanings in the poems *Dreams*, *Mother to Son*, and *Harlem*, this section will discuss how these meanings reflect the experiences of hope and struggle among African Americans during the Harlem Renaissance. Through powerful metaphors, symbolism, and imagery, Langston Hughes not only voices personal aspirations but also conveys the collective condition of a community grappling with oppression and marginalization. This perspective aligns with Kutzinski (2016, cited in Elaref & Ahmed, 2024), who argues that Hughes' works highlight the complexity and nuance of the American experience, especially from the African American perspective. The following discussion outlines three main aspects: the dimension of hope in the language of the poetry, the symbols of life's struggles, and the socio-historical relevance of the poems within the context of the Harlem Renaissance.

#### **The Dimension of Hope in the Connotative Language of the Poems**

The connotative meanings of words such as *dreams*, *climbin'*, and *raisin in the sun* in Hughes' poems reflect the strong sense of hope in the lives of African Americans. In *Dreams*, the word "dreams" becomes a symbol of vitality—without it, life is likened to a bird with broken wings. This suggests that hope is not just a desire but a source of strength to survive. For African Americans, dreams symbolize resistance to the injustice and poverty that plague their community. Without hope, life becomes empty and directionless.

In *Mother to Son*, the dimension of hope is also reinforced through the narrative of a mother who continues to climb "the staircase of life," even though it is full of tacks and splinters. Hope in this poem is not passive; it is active and persistent. It mirrors the spirit of resilience within the African American generation that refuses to give up, even when the social structure offers no way forward. This connotation suggests that hope is a force to be preserved and fought for, even in difficulty.

In *Harlem*, the rhetorical question "What happens to a dream deferred?" underscores the importance of hope itself. A deferred dream does not simply fade away but festers, presses down, and even has the potential to "explode." This indicates that repressed hope, over time, can become a serious source of social unrest. For the African American community, dreams constantly deferred by an unjust system generate tensions that could eventually erupt in rebellion or profound social change.

Overall, the imagery in Hughes' poems emphasizes that for the African American community, hope is not just an illusion or a dream suspended in the air; it is a psychological and existential struggle against the systemic injustices they face.

Poems like *Harlem* reflect how deferred dreams—"a dream deferred"—not only result in frustration but also serve as a symbol of resistance against structural oppression that marginalizes the voices and existence of Black people.

This aligns with (Joseph C. Asangaeneng, 2023), who suggests that African American literature has historically served as a battleground against the dominant white narrative that defines Black people as "the other." In this context, Black identity is not seen as an autonomous entity but is always subordinated to the white identity, which is positioned as the absolute norm. Thus, through metaphorical and symbolic language, Hughes not only expresses collective suffering but also demands recognition of Black identity as an independent and empowered subject. Therefore, the connotative meanings in his poetry serve not only as an aesthetic expression but also as instruments for interrogating power relations and building collective awareness that rejects the role of "the other" and asserts authentic existence in the American social landscape.

### **Struggle as a Social Metaphor**

Langston Hughes does not only write about hope, but also brings struggle to the forefront as a central theme through social metaphors. In *Mother to Son*, the metaphor "the staircase is not crystal" becomes a symbol of the hard life faced by African Americans, filled with wounds, yet must be endured. Life is not a smooth path but a process fraught with pain and obstacles. This poem depicts the harshness of life in the face of racial inequality and how individuals must continue to fight to achieve their goals despite the difficulties they encounter. As found in Maya Angelou's poems, as analyzed by Nathaniel Ojima Sunday and Ene Edem Ekpo, the theme of Black identity formed under pressure and repression becomes central to representations of struggle and resilience in African American literature (Ekpo, 2018).

The metaphor "broken-winged bird" in *Dreams* and "heavy load" in *Harlem* represent the effects of systemic oppression on the bodies and souls of Black people. A bird that cannot fly and a heavy load are not just personal images but represent the collective condition of African Americans hindered from achieving freedom and prosperity. Within the context of the Harlem Renaissance, these metaphors suggest that the struggle of Black people is not just individual but deeply rooted in a long history of social and political inequality.

The struggles in these poems are not only physical but also spiritual and symbolic—from climbing the steep staircase to bearing the weight of deferred dreams. Through these symbols, Hughes invites readers to understand that the African American struggle is not just about survival, but about preserving dignity and aspirations in the face of adversity. Indeed, Hughes maintained his commitment to the Black struggle throughout his career, successfully navigating both the intellectual worlds of Black and White communities while preserving his cultural posture, even when the simple depictions of Black people he presented were rejected by some circles (Dualé, 2018).

The Harlem Renaissance (1920s–1930s) was a time of cultural and intellectual rebirth among African Americans, deeply tied to the search for identity, artistic expression, and resistance to oppression. As (Azmi et al., 2018) explain, this movement used art as a peaceful means of struggle to change stereotypes and demand rights. Hughes, as a central figure of this movement, used poetry as a medium to voice the social realities experienced by his community. Through richly metaphorical language, he depicted the challenges faced by Black people in racial, social, and economic terms.

The connotative and metaphorical meanings in Hughes' poems are rooted in the realities of life during an era of racial segregation, structural poverty, and civil rights deprivation. In his poem *Harlem* or *A Dream Deferred*, Hughes clearly illustrates the disappointment and despair experienced by Black people when their long-held dreams are shattered (Usman Kizi Khodjiyeva et al., n.d.). *Harlem* or *A Dream Deferred* reflects the collective frustration of Black society against the promises of justice that are continually postponed by the state. It reveals the deep injustice against Black people who continue to be oppressed despite their struggle for basic rights.

Additionally, *Mother to Son* reflects the values of generational resilience—that the struggle does not begin or end in one moment but is passed on as a form of resistance and continuity. This resonates with the spirit of the Harlem Renaissance, which sought to liberate African American narratives from stereotypes and raise their dignity historically.

Thus, the connotative meanings in Hughes' poetry not only serve an aesthetic function but also act as a cultural strategy to build collective awareness and political identity. This is consistent with (Shikha Sharma & Dr. Neetu Tyagi, 2024), who emphasize that African American literature serves as an important space for articulating the complexity, struggles, and victories of the Black community, as well as a tool for empowerment and resistance. Through works like these, Hughes contributes to a deeper understanding of the struggles and hopes of the African American community during the Harlem Renaissance.

### **Literature as a Means of Resistance, Inspiration, and Education**

Through these three poems, Langston Hughes successfully reflects various aspects of the African American experience during the Harlem Renaissance. *Dreams* highlights the importance of maintaining hope, *Mother to Son* depicts resilience and struggle in the face of adversity, and *Harlem* shows the consequences of constantly deferred dreams. In addition to being a form of literary expression, Hughes' works also have highly relevant educational value, especially in the context of teaching. These poems can serve as teaching materials that inspire students to understand the importance of resilience in facing life's challenges. In the educational world, the concepts of hope and struggle raised in *Dreams* and *Mother to Son* can teach students not to give up on their aspirations, even when facing various obstacles.

Moreover, *Harlem* teaches students about the social impact of injustice and the importance of awareness of the social conditions around them. By understanding how deferred dreams can lead to social dissatisfaction, students can better appreciate the importance of fair opportunities in education and life. In a broader context, such literary learning can be used as a tool to increase students' critical awareness of history, social justice, and the importance of fighting for their rights in various aspects of life, including education.

By reading and analysing Hughes' poetry, students not only learn about the history of the Harlem Renaissance but also gain inspiration to continue striving and not giving up on their dreams. The Harlem Renaissance era was not just about artistic expression but also about building identity, voicing injustice, and fighting for a better future. Hughes, through his poetry, became one of the most influential voices in this movement, providing hope and strength for generations that continued to fight for equality, both in social life and in the world of education.

### Conclusion

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that Langston Hughes' poems serve as a reflection of the hopes and struggles of the African American community during the Harlem Renaissance. Through the effective use of denotative and connotative meanings, Hughes successfully captures the complexity of human experience and the challenges faced by his community within a broader social context. The dimension of hope reflected in words like "dreams" and "climbin'" demonstrates that, despite facing various obstacles, the spirit to pursue one's aspirations must be maintained. Additionally, symbols of struggle, such as the metaphor of "a staircase not made of crystal," emphasize that life is full of difficulties, yet each individual must continue to fight despite pressure and uncertainty.

Thus, Hughes' work is not only valuable as literature, but also functions as an educational tool that can inspire future generations to maintain hope and continue striving for a more just and equal world. These poems invite readers to understand the importance of resilience and resistance against injustice while reminding us of the power of hope as a driving force for social change.

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