



7th Grade English

Unit 1 Generations “Poetry Collection” Worksheets

TEXT QUESTIONS ➤

Poetry Collection 1: Mother to Son • To James

Langston Hughes • Frank Horne

DIRECTIONS: Respond to these questions. Use textual evidence to support your responses.

1. (a) **Analyze** What qualities does the mother in “Mother to Son” demonstrate through her words and actions? (b) **Draw Conclusions** Why does the mother need these qualities?

2. (a) **Interpret** What is a symbol of hardship in “Mother to Son”? What is a symbol of ease and luxury? (b) **Compare and Contrast** How are these symbols similar and different?

3. (a) **Make Inferences** What theme, or message about life, does the poem “To James” suggest? (b) **Support** What lines from the poem support your inference?

4. **Compare and Contrast** How are these two poems similar and how are they different?

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Poets use **rhythm** and **repetition** to emphasize ideas and to create the musical sound of the poem. Rhythm is the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in spoken or written language. The stressed syllables are sometimes called the “beats” in a line of poetry. Some patterns of rhyme have a regular series of beats per line. Free verse uses a pattern that is closer to the rise and fall of spoken language.

Poets also use repetition. Any element can be repeated, such as a word, a phrase, a sentence, a rhyme, or a rhythm.

A. DIRECTIONS: Read “Mother to Son” aloud. Then, answer the following questions.

1. **a.** How many lines in the first two sentences (lines 1–7) have 2 to 5 words per line?

- b.** What is unique about lines 2 and 20? _____
- c.** What happens to the rhythm in line 7? _____
2. How does the punctuation help you understand the rhythm of the first two sentences?

3. **a.** Which word is repeated the most at the beginning of lines?

- b.** How does the repeated word represent climbing a stair?

4. Why is the line “Life for me ain’t been no crystal stair” repeated at the end of the poem?

B. DIRECTIONS: Read “To James” aloud. Then, answer the following questions about rhythm and repetition.

1. The speaker asks James five or more questions. How do question marks and short lines affect the rhythm of the poem?

2. How are the ellipses used in the poem’s stack of questions?

3. The poem has three sections. In the first, the speaker describes the last race James has run; in the second, the speaker describes watching James race; in the third, the speaker gives James advice. What central idea does this structural rhythm help express?

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A **symbol** is an object, person, animal, place, or situation that represents, or stands for, something else. A symbol has its own literal meaning, but it also stands for something larger than itself—usually an abstract idea. For example, a rose is literally a flower, but it might symbolize love.

In poetry, the use of symbolism can offer clues to the poem’s **theme**, or insight about life. Poets usually do not provide the meaning of symbols or state the poem’s theme directly. Instead, readers must make *inferences*, or educated guesses based on text details.

A. DIRECTIONS: Answer the following questions about the poem “Mother to Son.”

1. ____ In the poem “Mother to Son,” the staircase might be said to symbolize life. Which of the following does the “crystal stair” more likely symbolize?

- a.** a hard life **b.** an easy life

2. In the poem “Mother to Son,” what might the wooden staircase symbolize?

3. Identify two details from “Mother to Son” that support your answer to Question 2.

4. One of the themes of the poem “Mother to Son” is to *keep going when life gets difficult*. Identify a detail from the poem that supports this theme.

B. DIRECTIONS: Answer the following questions about the poem “To James.”

1. ____ In the poem “To James,” the race can be said to symbolize life. Which of the following might “victory” in the race symbolize?

- a.** showing you are better than others **b.** achieving your goals

2. One of the themes of the poem “To James” is *it’s important to always try your best*. Identify a detail from the poem that supports this theme.

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WORD LIST

flung

catapulted

lurched

A. DIRECTIONS: Match each word from the word list above with the appropriate sentence. Some words may change form from past tense.

1. James _____ himself toward victory in a dash of speed.
2. In his mind, the speaker _____ alongside James as he ran the race.
3. To break the tape at the finish line, James _____ himself through the other runners.
4. The speaker tells James to _____ out of the starting blocks in the race of life.
5. Hurtling to victory is the same for James as _____ to the finish line.
6. Saving nothing from the race means that James has _____ himself forward to the finish line in victory.

B. WORD STUDY: Change the underlined word or phrase to match the connotation of the poem. Choose one of the words or phrases in parentheses or use one of your own.

Example: The speaker encourages James to trot to the finish line.

Corrected: The speaker encourages James to sprint to the finish line.

1. In "Mother to Son," the mother screamed at her son about never giving up. (explained to, lectured)

2. In "Mother to Son," the mother says, "don't you turn back ... / 'Cause you finds it's kinder hard." (incredibly, somewhat)

3. James pops out of his starting blocks in the race. (explodes, breaks)

4. In "To James," the speaker in the stands is mindful of James. (considerate, proud)

WORD STUDY ➤ **CONNOTATIONS AND DENOTATIONS**

The **connotation** of a word is the feeling or association that goes with the word. **Denotation** is the dictionary definition of a word.

A. **DIRECTIONS:** Choose which word in each pair best completes the sentences.

1. (*rosa rugosa*, roses)
 - a. The bride carried a bouquet of_____.
 - b. The botanist lectured on the history of_____ in the area.
 2. (father, patriarch)
 - a. The_____ of the entire family made arrangements for them all in his will.
 - b. Our _____ plans to build a treehouse for us this summer.
 3. (canine, dog)
 - a. Tom asked his parents if he could have a_____.
 - b. The vet specializes in _____ surgery.
 4. (cloudburst, thunderstorm)
 - a. The pilot was worried about reports of a_____ in the flight path.
 - b. The drought was helped by the sudden _____ yesterday.
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B. **DIRECTIONS:** Choose the word in each pair that best completes the sentence.

1. (expensive, fashionable) The jeans were too_____ for him to afford on his allowance.
2. (uproar, action) The exciting movie was filled with lots of noise and _____.
3. (unclear, transparent) The motives behind the decision became _____.
4. (edible, delicious) The park ranger told the group which food in the forest was_____.
5. (yielding, fertile) The farmers staked out homesteads on the_____ plains of the region.

WORD STUDY **CONNOTATIONS AND DENOTATIONS**

A. **DIRECTIONS:** Choose the word in each pair that best completes the sentence.

1. (trudged, walked) Marcus _____ up the steep hill with his heavy backpack.
 2. (vague, dim) The light in the early evening became_____.
 3. (longsuffering, patient) The _____ coach had endured six losing seasons.
 4. (unexcused, unforgiven) Nan had three absences that were_____.
 5. (anxiety, terror) The documentary about the tragedy on Mt. Everest caused the audience members to feel_____.
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B. **DIRECTIONS:** Choose one of the following words to complete each sentence below.

race	skip	hop	scamper	scuttle	slither
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1. The snake gradually emerged from its hole and began to _____ toward the sleeping campers.
2. When Jed accidentally burned his foot by being too close to the campfire, he began to __ around in pain.
3. One activity on our outing was to _____ stones across the water.
4. Small animals, such as the chipmunks, started to _____ ahead of us to hide until we passed by.
5. The day was so hot that we put our swimsuits on and started to _ toward the lake to swim.
6. The small creepy crawly bugs had to _____ out of our sleeping bags as we began to shake them before we went to bed.