

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

## Dreams

By Langston Hughes  
1941

*Langston Hughes (1902-1967) was a poet, an author, and an activist. He was also an important leader in the Harlem Renaissance, an artistic and social movement of black artists in Harlem, New York during the 1920s. In this poem, a speaker describes the importance of dreams. As you read, take notes on what the speaker says life would be like without dreams.*

[1]     Hold fast<sup>1</sup> to dreams  
         For if dreams die  
         Life is a broken-winged bird  
         That cannot fly

[5]     Hold fast to dreams  
         For when dreams go  
         Life is a barren<sup>2</sup> field  
         Frozen with snow



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1. to hold something tightly  
2. **Barren** (*adjective*) unable to grow anything; lifeless

## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which sentence describes the main theme of the poem?
  - A. Dreams are difficult to keep alive.
  - B. It's important to aim high with your dreams.
  - C. It can feel impossible to accomplish your dreams.
  - D. Having dreams is an essential part of life.
  
2. PART B: Which detail from the poem best supports the answer to Part A?
  - A. "Hold fast to dreams" (Line 1)
  - B. "For if dreams die / Life is a broken-winged bird" (Lines 2-3)
  - C. "Hold fast to dreams / For when dreams go" (Lines 5-6)
  - D. "Life is a barren field" (Line 7)
  
3. How does the repeated phrase "hold fast to dreams" contribute to the poem?
  - A. It stresses the importance of not letting your dreams go.
  - B. It shows how dreams can be difficult to keep and hold.
  - C. It suggests that people don't work hard enough for their dreams.
  - D. It shows how most people have to fight to accomplish their dreams.
  
4. What does the poet mean when he compares a life without dreams to "a broken-winged bird" (Line 3) and "a barren field" (Line 7)?

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## Discussion Questions

**Directions:** Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. In the poem, the speaker describes life without dreams as bleak and empty. What do you think life would be like if people didn't have dreams?
2. Describe a dream that you hold on to. Why is it important to you to not let this dream go?
3. Do you have a person in your life who encourages you to hold onto your dreams? Who is that person? Why does that person encourage you to hold onto your dreams?