Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **Poetry Unit**

**Langston Hughes: *Background on Writer***



Langston Hughes wrote from 1926 to 1967. In that time he wrote more than 60 books, including poems, novels, short stories, plays, children's poetry, musicals, operas, and autobiographies. **He was the first African American to support himself as a writer**, and he wrote from his own experience.

Langston Hughes, whose full name was James Mercer Langston Hughes, was born in 1902 in Joplin, Missouri. He was the only son of James Nathaniel Hughes and Carrie Mercer Langston. His parents divorced when he was young and his father moved to Mexico. Because his mother traveled a lot to find work and was often absent, his grandmother raised Hughes until he was 12. His childhood was lonely and he often occupied himself with books. It was Hughes's grandmother, a great storyteller, who transferred to him her love of literature and the importance of becoming educated.

In 1914 he moved to Lincoln, Illinois, to live with his mother and her new husband. It was here that he started writing poetry he wrote his first poem in the eighth grade. A year later the family relocated to Cleveland, Ohio. Despite all the moving around, Hughes was a good student and excelled in his studies. He was also good looking and popular with the other students, during his senior year at Central High School in Cleveland, Ohio, he was voted class poet and editor of the yearbook.

After high school, Hughes traveled in Mexico, Europe, and Africa sometimes by working on freighters (cargo ships). By 1924 he had settled in Harlem, New York, and was an important figure during the Harlem Renaissance. (The Harlem Renaissance was an African-American cultural movement that focused on literature, music, theater, art, and politics). One of his favorite pastimes was to sit in clubs and listen to the blues as he wrote his poetry. Hughes died on May 22, 1967, in New York, NY.

1. What 2 facts about him do we probably need to know in order to understand his poetry? Why?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **Poetry Unit**

**Langston Hughes: *A Dream Deferred***

 Directions: Read through the poem, annotate it then, answer the questions at the end.

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore--
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over--
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

1. What does the word “deferred” mean? (Look it up!) What is the question that he is asking?
2. What literary device is used most often in the poem? What is the effect of it?
3. What is the theme (or message) that the author is trying to get across to the reader through this poem?