Harlem: A Dream Deferred

by Langston Hughes

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?

Langston Hughes

James Mercer Langston Hughes was an American poet, social activist, novelist, playwright, and columnist. He was one of the earliest innovators of the then-new literary art form jazz poetry.

Born: February 1, 1902, Joplin/ Died: May 22, 1967, New York City

Education: Columbia University, Lincoln University

Awards: Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards, Quill Award for Poetry

Albums: Black Nativity, Weary Blues
Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences. Be sure to cite the line number!

1. How does the sum total of all of the imagery add up to answering the question put forth by the speaker in line one, “What happens to a dream deferred?”

2. What is the unspoken message the speaker is telling the reader about going after their own dreams?

3. Now, vandalize Hughes’ original poem by rewriting the poem for what images you see when your dreams are deferred. Use the following outline for assistance.

___________________________: A Dream Deferred

By ____________________________

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it ____________________________

Like a ____________________________?

Or ____________________________ like a ____________________________--

And then ____________________________?

Does it ____________________________ like ____________________________?

Or ____________________________ and ____________________________--

Like a ____________________________?

Maybe it just ____________________________

Like a ____________________________

Or does it ____________________________?