**Directions:** Respond to these questions on a separate sheet of paper and label each poem.  Answer the questions completely.

**Mother to Son**

By Langston Hughes 1902–1967

Well, son, I’ll tell you:

Life for me ain’t been no crystal stair.

It’s had tacks in it,

And splinters,

And boards torn up,

And places with no carpet on the floor—

Bare.

But all the time

I’se been a-climbin’ on,

And reachin’ landin’s,

And turnin’ corners,

And sometimes goin’ in the dark

Where there ain’t been no light.

So boy, don’t you turn back.

Don’t you set down on the steps

’Cause you finds it’s kinder hard.

Don’t you fall now—

For I’se still goin’, honey,

I’se still climbin’,

And life for me ain’t been no crystal stair.

**Directions**: Answer these questions and be able to verbally explain “**why**” you selected your answer.

1. In this poem, boards with “tacks and splinters” and “boards torn up” are symbols for
   1. Run-down housing
   2. A life that has had many difficulties and challenges
   3. The ungrateful way the mother’s son treats her
   4. The lack of compassion each man has for his fellow man
2. What might “reachin’ landin’s” symbolize in the mother’s climb?
   1. Destructive forces in her life
   2. Portions of her life that held magic for her
   3. Compassionate forces in her life
   4. Places in her life where she had to stop and make decisions
3. Why do you think the word “bare” is on a line all alone?
   1. To emphasize the son’s brutality
   2. Because Hughes couldn’t think of anything else to add to that line
   3. To emphasize how difficult and “bare” of luxuries the mother’s life had been
   4. Because it rhymes with the word “stair”
4. What is the most likely meaning for “turnin’ corners” in the context of the poem?
   1. Places in her life where she set new goals or had to try to solver her problems in a new way
   2. Places in her life where she felt like she had failed
   3. The point in her life when she knew her son would be successful
   4. Her need to find a father figure for her son
5. What is the theme of the poem?
   1. Don’t be so foolhardy and headstrong that you get hurt
   2. When you are in trouble, look to your mother for advice
   3. Don’t give up; complete the goals you have set for yourself
   4. You need to love all of mankind
6. The crystal stair is a metaphor that is used throughout the poem. Why do you think Hughes makes the stairway “crystal?”
   1. Crystal is beautiful, but it is also fragile and breaks easily
   2. Crystal sparkles in the sunlight
   3. Crystal has different colors in it depending on how the light hits it
   4. You can almost see through crystal
7. Why is a “stairway” a particularly appropriate metaphor to describe the wisdom the mother is trying to impart to her son?
   1. Stairways are almost always dirty and rough
   2. One has to clean and wax a stairway to make it look good
   3. A stairway takes steady persistence to climb and it can go up and down
   4. Stairways are often found in expensive houses
8. What is the most likely age of the son?
   1. Elderly
   2. Infant
   3. Young man
   4. Decease
9. The style of language used in the poem, which is particular to a particular cultural or geographic region, is known as
   1. Dialogue
   2. Dialect
   3. Diction
   4. Idioms

10.  Use evidence from the text to infer what type of life the mother has had.

11.  What advice is the mother giving to her son?  Put it into your own words.

12.  When the speaker tells her son not to "set down on the steps" to what is she referring?  Based on the context of this poem, what might it mean to "set down"?  Explain your answer.

***SONNET 18* by William Shakespeare (English / Shakespearean Sonnet)**

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?   
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:  
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,  
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:   
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,  
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;   
And every fair from fair sometime declines,  
By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimm'd;  
But thy eternal summer shall not fade  
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;  
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,  
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st;   
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,  
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

1.Explain the **rhyme scheme** for the entire poem?

2. Shakespearean sonnets are organized by **quatrains** and **couplets**. What is a quatrain? What is a couplet? Looking at the rhyme scheme, how many quatrains and couplets does the Shakespearean Sonnet have?

3. What are the specific points of comparison between “thee” and a summer's day, and how does “thee” rate in the comparison? (Better? Worse? How do you know?)

4. What do these lines mean?

*Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,  
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:*

5. What does the line “But thy eternal summer shall not fade” mean? Why do you think the speaker chose the season of summer in particular? Why not Fall, Winter, or Spring? How would the poem work with different seasons? Note: Often in poetry, seasons are symbolic of the life-cycle.

6. At line nine, the poem begins to emphasize how the beloved’s beauty will avoid the fault of fading, a fault that all other beauties share. What stands the test of time? And what can “thee” be preserved in it?

***Some keep the Sabbath going to Church*** by Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

Some keep the Sabbath going to Church –

I keep it, staying at Home –

With a Bobolink for a Chorister –

And an Orchard, for a Dome –

Some keep the Sabbath in Surplice –

I, just wear my Wings –

And instead of tolling the Bell, for Church,

Our little Sexton – sings.

God preaches, a noted Clergyman –

And the sermon is never long,

So instead of getting to Heaven, at last –

I’m going, all along.

**Sabbath**- a day set aside for rest and worship

**Bobolink** – a small New World blackbird.

**Chorister** – a member of a choir

**Surplice**- a loose white linen vestment varying from hip-length to calf-length, worn over a cassock

by clergy, acolytes, and choristers at Christian church services.

**Sexton**- an officer of a church, congregation, or synagogue charged with the

maintenance of its building and graveyard. A sexton also rings the bells of the church.

1.Most people go to a church or a specific place for religious worship. Where is Dickinson’s place of worship?

2. Dickinson uses contrasts throughout this poem to show how her belief in worship is different than others. A sexton is an officer in the church who among other things, rings the bell to start/finish the service. Who/what is Dickinson’s sexton?

3.What is the **tone** of the line, “God preaches, a noted Clergyman-“? What is the purpose of this line?

4.What is the **rhyme scheme**?

5.What is the overall **tone** of this poem?

6.What is /are the **theme(s)** of this poem?

7.Explain the **symbolism** when Dickinson says, “I, just wear my Wings.”

8.What are two **metaphors** in the poem and what does each mean?

9.What do the last two lines mean and what message is Dickinson sending about her religion compared to others?

“**No Man is an island**” from *Meditation 17* by John Donne

No man is an island,  
Entire of itself,  
Every man is a piece of the continent,  
A part of the main.  
If a clod be washed away by the sea,  
Europe is the less.  
As well as if a promontory were.  
As well as if a manor of thy friend's  
Or of thine own were:  
Any man's death diminishes me,  
Because I am involved in mankind,  
And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;   
It tolls for thee.

**Note**: Promontory: a point of high land that juts out into a large body of water.

1.What does Donne mean when he says, "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main"? How does this apply to us today?

2.Why does Donne say Europe should be concerned if a single clod of land is washed away into the sea? How does that correspond to the way humanity should be concerned if a single person dies?

3.Why does Donne think that "Any man's death diminishes me"?

4.Why should a person never "send to know" (i.e. ask) for whom a funeral bell is tolling? What is the inevitable answer? What does this mean?

5. How can this poem apply to you?

***The Road Not Taken*** by Robert Frost (1874-1963)

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,

And sorry I could not travel both

And be one traveler, long I stood

And looked down one as far as I could

To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,

And having perhaps the better claim,

Because it was grassy and wanted wear;

Though as for that the passing there

Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay

In leaves no step had trodden black.

Oh, I kept the first for another day!

Yet knowing how way leads on to way,

I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh

Somewhere ages and ages hence:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—

I took the one less traveled by,

And that has made all the difference.

1.In what season was this poem set (line 1)? How is the season in the poem **symbolic**? Explain the symbolism.

2. Why might Frost have chosen to write about roads that go through woods rather than roads

that go through a wide-open plain? What might the woods symbolize (Think about the

expression, “We’re not out of the woods yet.”

3. Explain how the symbolism of the split in the road.

4. From what the speaker says in lines 6-10, is one road really “less travelled” than the other?

Explain the contradiction in these lines.

5. Explain these lines and how they relate to decisions people make today? Do you agree with

this sentiment?

*Yet knowing how way leads on to way,*

*I doubted if I should ever come back.*

6. Explain the last line. What does he mean and how does this relate to the poem’s theme?

7. How would you describe the **tone** of the poem-the speaker’s attitude towards the subject

(Think about line 16 and the “sigh”)? Explain.

***In Flanders Fields*** by Lt. Col. John McCrae (1872-1918)

In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
      Between the crosses, row on row,  
   That mark our place; and in the sky  
   The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.  
  
We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
   Loved and were loved, and now we lie,  
         In Flanders fields.  
  
Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you from failing hands we throw  
   The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
   If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
         In Flanders fields.

***In Flanders Fields* by Lt. Col. John McCrae (1872-1918)**

(A copy of this poem was given to Jenna Pomarico by her grandfather.  This is a poem that he and others serving in World War I would often recite.)

***Note***: Poppies are flowers.

1.Discuss the **imagery** of the poem in the first stanza. What kinds of images are used? Why?

2. From what **point of view** is this written?

3. How does point of view contribute to the poem’s **theme**?

4. Which is your favorite **stanza**?  Why?

5. Does this poem have a **rhyme scheme** or is it written in **free verse**? If it has a rhyme scheme,

what is the rhyme scheme of this poem?

6. What is being asked of those who read this poem?

7. Why would soldiers recite this poem?

***I’m Already Home*** by Tim McGraw (As performed on the 2007 Academy of Country Music Awards)  
  
You're reading this, my mama's sittin there  
Look's like I only got a one way ticket over here  
I sure wish I could give you one more kiss  
War was just a game we played when we were kids  
Well I'm layin down my gun and hanging up my boots  
I'm up here with God and we're both watching over you  
  
So lay me down  
In that open field out on the edge of town  
And know my soul   
Is where my mama always prayed that it would go  
And if you're reading this  
I'm already home  
  
If you're reading this halfway around the world  
I won't be there to see the birth of our little girl  
I hope she looks like you  
I hope she fights like me  
And stands up for the innocent and the weak  
I'm layin down my gun and hanging up my boots  
Tell dad I don't regret that I followed in his shoes  
  
So lay me down  
In that open field out on the edge of town  
And know my soul   
Is where my mama always prayed that it would go  
And if you're reading this  
I'm already home  
  
If you're reading this, there's gonna come a day  
When you'll move on and find someone else, and that's ok  
Just remember this  
I'm in a better place  
Where soldiers live in peace and angels sing Amazing Grace  
  
So lay me down  
In that open field out on the edge of town  
And know my soul   
Is where my mama always prayed that it would go  
And if you're reading this  
  
If you're reading this...  
I'm already home

***I’m Already Home*** by Tim McGraw

13. From what **point of view** is this written? How is this similar to *In Flanders Fields*?

14.What is the **theme**?

15.What lines best represent this **theme**? Explain.

16.Discuss the **imagery** of the poem. What are the most effective images?

17. What can be **inferred** by the line “I’m already home”?

18.Discuss the **diction** of the poem. Point out words that are particularly well chosen

    and explain why.

19. **Tone** describes the author’s attitude toward his/her subject.

What is the **tone** of this poem?

20.What effect does the **repetition** have on the poem’s tone?

ADD THIS POEM INTO THE POETRY UNIT:

“Ithaca” by C.P. Cavafy p. 711 (Good Poem)

* What extended metaphor is used in this poem?
* What do you think Cavafy is suggesting in the line “pray that your road’s a long one”?
* What does Cavafy mean by lines 4-13?
* What do you think Ithaca symbolizes in this poem? What do you think “arriving in Ithaca” could mean for all of us?

***"Travelin' Soldier"*** by The Dixie Chicks

Two days past eighteen  
He was waiting for the bus in his army green  
Sat down in a booth in a cafe there  
Gave his order to a girl with a bow in her hair  
He's a little shy so she gives him a smile  
And he said would you mind sittin' down for a while  
And talking to me,  
I'm feeling a little low  
She said I'm off in an hour and I know where we can go  
  
So they went down and they sat on the pier  
He said I bet you got a boyfriend but I don't care  
I got no one to send a letter to  
Would you mind if I sent one back here to you  
  
Chorus: I cried  
Never gonna hold the hand of another guy  
Too young for him they told her  
Waitin' for the love of a travelin' soldier  
Our love will never end  
Waitin' for the soldier to come back again  
Never more to be alone when the letter said  
A soldier's coming home  
  
So the letters came from an army camp  
In California then Vietnam  
And he told her of his heart  
It might be love and all of the things he was so scared of  
He said when it's getting kinda rough over here  
I think of that day sittin' down at the pier  
And I close my eyes and see your pretty smile  
Don't worry but I won't be able to write for awhile  
*[****Chorus****]*  
One Friday night at a football game  
The Lord's Prayer said and the Anthem sang  
A man said folks would you bow your heads  
For a list of local Vietnam dead  
Crying all alone under the stands  
Was a piccolo player in the marching band  
And one name read but nobody really cared  
But a pretty little girl with a bow in her hair  
  
*[Chorus x2]*

***Travelin' Soldier*** by The Dixie Chicks

21.What is the setting of the first **stanza**?

22.What is the **theme** of this poem?

23. What lines best represent this **theme**? Explain.

25. What is your favorite **stanza**? Explain why.

27.What effect does the **repetition** of “But a pretty little girl with a bow in her hair” have on the poem’s tone?

26.Note: ***TONE*** describes the author’s attitude toward his/her subject. What is the tone of this poem?

The attitude may be stated in so many words or implied.  Diction (word choice) is a key to tone.  Tone can be (among other things):

Affectionate        aggravated        aloof            amused

Angry            apathetic        appreciative        approving

Arrogant        bitter            calm            celebratory

Condescending    contemplative      critical            cynical

Dark            dejected            depressed        desperate

Despondent        didactic            disappointed        disapproving

Disgusted        disinterested        distant            droll

Earnest            ecstatic            emphatic        encouraging

Enthusiastic        excited            facetious        formal

Happy            haughty            hurt            Informal

Intense            ironic            joyful            lackadaisical

Languid            light-hearted        melancholy        melodramatic

Nervous        neutral            nonchalant        optimistic

Paranoid        passive            patronizing        pessimistic

Plaintive        playful            Pleading        proud

Romantic        sad            sarcastic        scornful

Serious            sincere            somber            soothing

Superficial        suspicious        sympathetic        uninterested

Whimsical        wistful             wry

***MOOD*** is the situation’s **atmosphere** or the character’s **feelings**.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Calm | Cheerful | Chilling | Comical | Dark |
| Depressing | Dismal | Eerie | Fanciful | Foreboding |
| Gloomy | Grim | Grotesque | Heart-breaking | Heartrending |
| Holy | Hopeful | Horrific | Intense | Joyful |
| Light | Lighthearted | Melancholic | Morbid | Mournful |
| Mysterious | Ominous | Optimistic | Pessimistic | Powerful |
| Romantic | Sad | Sinister | Soothing | Sorrowful |
| Spiritual | Spooky | Terrifying | Threatening | Tranquil |
| Whimsical |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |