

Literary Analysis of Langston Hughes' Poem

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?

The fascinating poem by Langston Hughes is a combination of pain and sorrow for the missed opportunities and struggles of African Americans. A short poem shows the challenges people faced in the 20th century. Racial inequality and the unfulfilled promises of the American Dream is the issue can be traced through the poem. The psychological and emotional aspects and consequences of deferred dreams are the supplementary ideas described in the essay. The style of the writing resonates with the cultural and historical context of the Harlem Renaissance, when the African American artists and writers strive to assert their voice as a response to systemic racism.

“What happens to a dream deferred?” is the question the poem starts with. In fact, it is the major inquiry that invites the reader to reflect on the outcomes of unattained dreams. The author does not provide a direct answer but shares numerous options. Every following line emphasizes the possible results of a neglected or postponed dream.

“Does it dry up / like a raisin in the sun?” and *“Or fester like a sore— / And then run?”* are the metaphors that help to imagine what happens when you have your hope lost. They are aimed at letting readers understand that deferred dreams can lose their power and leave nothing behind.

Later in the poem, the author compares unfulfilled dreams with the *“stink like rotten meat”* or *“crust and sugar over— / like a syrupy sweet.”* What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you imagine these options? Rotten and decayed meat with sweet syrup on top of it is not the best idea.

Finally, the writer closes the poem by suggesting that deferred dreams create an ongoing burden, weighing down individuals and communities. Hughes uses the image of a heavy load to imply that the emotional and psychological costs are not easily shaken off. The cumulative effect of these burdens is significant and enduring.

In his poem, Langston Hughes consolidates the emotional and psychological consequences of dreams deferred due to systemic racial inequality. Great imagery and impressive metaphors emphasize the frustration that accompanies the inability to gain the aspiration. The poem is relevant not only for people of the time but also for contemporary readers. Struggles for equality, justice, and acceptance illustrate how unfulfilled dreams accumulate and create a profound sense of loss. Hughes’ work continues to resonate as a powerful commentary on the impact of racial oppression on the lives of African Americans.