

# Good poetry analysis mother to son essay example

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



The relationship between parents and their children can often be somewhat contentious, not seeing eye to eye; however, the intention of a parent's tough love is usually to ensure that their child can survive in the harsh world that lays in front of them. This is exacerbated when individuals of color must teach their children how to deal with a world that does not afford them the same rights and acceptance as white children.

This is certainly the case in Langston Hughes' poem "Mother to Son," in which a mother discusses the difficulties she has endured as a black woman to her son. The aim of this poem is to allow the son to understand these essential truths of life as they must live it in the moment, and to struggle through these hardships in order to make it out the other side. In this poem, Hughes provides the perfect maternal figure - never judging but always encouraging, placing upon him the expectation to succeed.

The poem takes the form of a lecture a mother is giving her son, indicating the hardships that African-American people, particularly women, have to deal with: "life for me ain't been no crystal stair" (line 2). Life is equated to a stairway; while those with privilege have the ability to climb those stairs easily, her stairs have "tacks" and "splinters" and "boards torn up" (lines 3-5). This broad metaphor for a hard life is meant to illustrate just how unequal the path of African-Americans is compared to whites, something they will never understand and which black people must deal with in order to thrive. The mother's primary message is to persevere, never giving up on the life that he wants: "Don't you set down on the steps / 'Cause you finds it's kinder hard" (lines 16-17). This poem instills the values of hard work and dedication, the mother taking the son to task in order to make sure he

commits himself to climbing the 'stairs' of life.

One interesting element to the poem that instills this sense of perpetual motion and struggle is the mother's honesty and humility in tone. The mother's own sense of vulnerability is palpable as well. She tells the son that his journey will never end - because hers hasn't: " I'se still goin', honey, / I'se still climbin', / And life for me ain't been no crystal stair" (lines 19-21). She places her own sense of emotional investment in the child's success through her words, encouraging him and saying " Don't you fall now" (Hughes, line 18). Life for everyone, especially discriminated minorities such as they, is hard, and nothing is to be gained by just giving up and falling down the stairs.

Looking at the values of " Mother to Son," it is clear that Hughes wishes to instill a sense of perseverance, respect for previous generations, and dedication in his readers. In this poem, the mother has no specific set of moral or ethical frameworks she is making her son adhere to; she just wants to make sure he works hard enough to succeed. All he has to do is keep climbing, because that is all anyone can do. Perseverance is the hallmark of this poem's message, and the ultimate value that is conveyed through Hughes' depiction of a mother teaching her son about life.

## **Works Cited**

Hughes, Langston. " Mother to Son." The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes, Vintage Books, 1994. Print.