

## Poetry as a form of Expression

### Influence and Impact

Harlem 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

Langston Hughes

*Harlem (What Happens to a Dream Deferred?)*

1951

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In 1951, Langston Hughes wrote "Harlem". The title of this poem alludes to the Harlem Renaissance, a Harlem based period in African American history where art was brought to the forefront within the black community. One of Hughes' most common works, this piece greatly influenced Lorraine Hansberry. The title of her most well-known play, *A Raisin in the Sun*, is a line from this poem. Both the poem and the play express the anguish many African Americans experienced during segregation as they tried to accomplish their dreams. As both works convey, dreams should be acknowledged not ignored.