
Langston Hughes: Poetry through the Senses

Middle (6th – 8th grade)

Time required: 30-40 minutes

Specific recommendation: 7th grade Language Arts/Social Studies

Goals/Objectives:

- Identify and categorize lines of poetry in “Daybreak in Alabama” based on three senses [sight, touch, smell]
- Identify particular sounds and elements of music in “Daybreak in Alabama”

Common Core Standard:

- RL.7.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text

Materials:

- **Song of America Links**

To print:

Basic Musical Elements handout: <https://songofamerica.net/downloads/basic-musical-elements-handout/>

Song of America “Daybreak in Alabama” worksheet:

<https://songofamerica.net/downloads/daybreak-in-alabama-worksheet/>

Song of America “Daybreak in Alabama” song page: <http://songofamerica.net/song/daybreak-in-alabama>

To reference:

Song of America Langston Hughes page: <http://songofamerica.net/writer/hughes-langston>

Song of America “Artists, Movements, and Ideas” essay “Harlem Renaissance”:

<https://songofamerica.net/artists-movements-ideas/harlem-renaissance/>

To listen to:

Song of America Langston Hughes radio program:

<https://songofamerica.net/program/langston-hughes-and-the-harlem-renaissance/>

Instruction:

Part One

- The teacher introduces Langston Hughes [<http://songofamerica.net/writer/hughes-langston>] and the Harlem Renaissance, including popular musical styles of jazz and blues
 - Suggested artists to introduce in this part of the lesson could include Louis Armstrong (jazz) and Bessie Smith (blues)

- The teacher gives each student a copy of the poem “Daybreak in Alabama” by Langston Hughes [<http://songofamerica.net/song/daybreak-in-alabama>] and the “Daybreak in Alabama” worksheet [<https://songofamerica.net/downloads/daybreak-in-alabama-worksheet/>]
- The teacher chooses one to two students to read the poem aloud to the class
- The teacher asks the students to underline the line “And the scent of pine needles” and write the line in the “smell” box of their chart and the line “And poppy colored faces” and write the line in the “see” box of their chart
- *Guided Practice*
 - Students are paired up to complete three sections of the chart [see, touch, sound] by writing exact lines from the text that correspond to those three senses
 - Students review their work by volunteering to write their answers on a class chart that mimics their worksheets

Part Two

- The teacher introduces the song “Daybreak in Alabama” and students will listen to the song [<https://songofamerica.net/program/langston-hughes-and-the-harlem-renaissance/>] at 40:12, or 39:24 with Thomas Hampson introduction]
- The teacher explains different elements of music [speed, volume, instrumentation] and will add one element from the song to the class chart
 - Refer to the *Song of America* Basic Musical Elements handout for an easy guide to talking about music:
<https://songofamerica.net/downloads/basic-musical-elements-handout/>
- Students listen once more to the song and independently write one element of the song in their charts
- Students share what they have written with the class and add upon the class chart
- Class discussion/ Exit Slip: “How does the sound add meaning to Langston Hughes’ words?”