GRADE 11
SBA REVIEW

MOTHER TO SON
Mother to Son
By Langston Hughes

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 carpets on the floor,

Bare.
But all the time
I’s been climbin’ on
And reachin’ landin’s
And turning corners
And sometimes goin’ on 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 find 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.

1. The poet deliberately uses dialect to help the reader understand that the speaker in the poem

A. Doesn’t care what other people think about her poor grammar
B. Has not had the privilege of a formal education because she has had to work all her life
C. Is a lazy woman who doesn’t want a better standard of living
D. Is mocking her son’s poor grammar in an effort to shame into improving his speech

2. In the first stanza, lines 1 – 5, the writer compares the speaker’s life to a “crystal stair”. Based on this comparison, the reader can conclude that

A. The speaker has made poor choices in life that led to severe consequences
B. The speaker resents the wealthier class
C. The speaker has faced many hardships and painful experiences
D. The speaker has poor self-esteem and is embarrassed by her environment

3. In stanza 2, lines 8-13, the speaker indicates that she

A. Has worked hard, persevered, and never allowed life’s difficulties to deter her
B. Has depended on other people to aid and care for her
C. Has lost hope for a better future
D. Always knows exactly what the right choice is and never feels lost or insecure

4. The mother’s attitude toward and concern for her son is best expressed by which line from the poem?

A. “Well, Son, I’ll tell you/Life for me ain’t been no crystal stair.”
B. “So, Boy, don’t you turn back./Don’t you set down on the steps…”
C. “I’se still climbin’…”
D. “And life for me ain’t been/no crystal stair.”

5. How does the poet use dialect in this poem to help the reader understand the character of the Mother and her concern for her son?