

In the Mood

Langston Hughes’s poem, “Harlem Night Song,” describes a couple walking the streets of Harlem, a part of New York City. But the poem tells you much more than that.

One of the most important parts of this poem is the *mood*—the way the words make the reader feel. A poem can feel angry, thrilling, sad, or any other emotion.

In this activity, you will consider what mood Hughes creates, and how, in “Harlem Night Song.”

Directions: Answer the questions below to explore the mood in “Harlem Night Song.”

1. What lines are repeated in the poem? _____

2. What mood do those lines create? How do they make you feel? (Hint: What do they tell us about the people in the poem? What does it mean that the lines are repeated?) _____

3. Look at the six lines in the middle of the poem. How do they contribute to the mood? What words in particular help create the relaxed and dreamy mood? _____

4. How do you feel after reading this poem? Would you want to be one of the people in the poem?

On Your Own
Draw a picture or describe an illustration to accompany this poem. The picture should capture the same mood as the poem does.

With a Partner
Choose a different mood setting for a poem (happy, angry, excited, etc.). Write a list of words or phrases that you could use in a poem to create your mood.