

Harlem Quotations

Writer: Langston Hughes | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Quotes

"What happens to a dream deferred?"

Exp:

The poet asks what happens when a dream is delayed or not fulfilled. Here, "dream" means the rightful demand of equality and freedom for the black Americans. Langston Hughes is mainly talking about the dreams of African Americans who were denied freedom, equality, and opportunity for a long time.

***"Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?"***

Exp:

The poet compares an unfulfilled dream to a grape drying in the sun. When a grape dries, it loses its juice and freshness. Similarly, a delayed dream loses its energy and life.

"Does it stink like rotten meat?"

Exp:

The poet says that an unfulfilled dream can become disgusting or painful, like rotten meat. It means that ignoring dreams can make life bitter and unpleasant.

***"Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load."***

Exp:

The poet says a delayed dream might become a heavy burden. It means it weighs on the person's mind and makes them tired or hopeless.

"Or does it explode?"

Exp:

The poet wonders if unfulfilled dreams finally burst out in anger or violence. It means that when people's hopes are crushed for too long, they may react strongly or rebel.

LxNotes