

Harlem Theme

Writer: Langston Hughes | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Themes

Dreams and Delayed Justice : The major theme in this poem is the importance of dreams. Here, "dream" means the rightful demand of equality and freedom for the black Americans. The poet talks about what will happen if the dreams of black Americans are frequently neglected. He asks:

"What happens to a dream deferred?"

He compares it to a raisin drying up or rotten meat. These images show the broken promises of equality in America. The last line, ***"Or does it explode?"*** warns that if dreams are crushed for too long, they may turn into anger and violence.