

Mexican Whiteboy Poetry Activity

Part I Instructions: In *Mexican Whiteboy*, Danny explores his identity and the relationships he has with his family. Today you will read a series of poems and respond to each one after reading it.

Cross by Langston Hughes

My old man's a white old man
And my old mother's black.
If ever I cursed my white old man
I take my curses back.
If ever I cursed my black old mother
And wished she were in hell,
I'm sorry for that evil wish
And now I wish her well
My old man died in a fine big house.
My ma died in a shack.
I wonder where I'm going to die,
Being neither white nor black?

What are some adjectives you could use to describe the narrator's attitude in this poem? How does this relate to what you know about the novel so far?

Refugee Ship by Lorna Dee Cervantes

like wet cornstarch
I slide past mi abuelita's eyes
Bible placed by her side
She removes her glasses
The pudding thickens

mamá raised me with no language
I am an orphan to my Spanish name
the words are foreign, stumbling on my tongue
I stare at my reflection in the mirror
brown skin, black hair

I feel I am captive
aboard the refugee ship
a ship that will never dock
a ship that will never dock

Analyze the metaphor in the last four lines of this poem. What might the author be trying to say?

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 carpet on the floor-
Bare.
But all the time
I'se been a-climbin' on,
And reachin' landin's,
And turnin' corners,
And sometimes goin' 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 finds 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.

Based on what the mother says to her son, what kind of a life has she had? What message might she be offering her son? How does it relate to *Mexican Whiteboy*?
