

9

UNIT

Freedom

Langston Hughes (1901–1967)

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this unit, the students will be able to:

- ask and answer questions for a range of communicative purposes.
- comment on implied meaning, e.g. writer's viewpoint, relationships between characters etc.
- identify rhyme schemes and figurative language in poems.
- evaluate different points of view (e.g., first-person, third-person narrative). examine an author's point of view or purpose in a text. critique how authors distinguish their position from that of others.
- demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing in different varieties of texts. observe hyphenation conventions. produce legible work that shows the correct spelling of the conventions of punctuation and capitalization.
- use the aspect of time correctly in speech and writing.
- develop précis writing skills and write précis effectively.
- use summary skills to write an objective summary of the given text and poems.

Pre-reading:

Look at the title of the poem, *Freedom*. What do you think this poem will be about?

- Is it about personal freedom, social freedom, or something else?
- Do you think the poet will be happy, sad, or frustrated? Why?

About the Poet

James Mercer Langston Hughes (1902–1967) was an influential American poet, social activist, novelist, playwright, and columnist. He was a leading figure of the Harlem Renaissance, a cultural movement in the 1920s that celebrated African American culture. Hughes often wrote about the struggles, desires, and aspirations of Black Americans, emphasising themes such as racial identity, injustice, and the quest for freedom. His works express a powerful sense of dignity, pride, and hope in the face of adversity.

Freedom will not come
today, this year
nor ever
through **compromise** and **fear**.

I have as much right
as the other **fellow** has
to stand
on my two feet
and own the land.

I **tire** so of hearing people say,
*let things take their **course**.*
Tomorrow is another day.
I do not need my freedom when I'm dead.
I cannot live on tomorrow's **bread**.

Freedom
Is a strong seed
planted
in a great need.
I live here, too.
I want my freedom
just as you.

Literary Devices

Metaphor: Hughes compares freedom to a strong seed, symbolising growth, and contrasts it with "tomorrow's bread," highlighting that freedom cannot be delayed.

Enjambment: Continuous lines create a sense of urgency, pushing the reader forward without pause.

Alliteration: Repeated consonant sounds add rhythm and musicality, enhancing emotional impact.

Repetition: The frequent use of "freedom" emphasises its importance and the speaker's strong desire for it.

Imagery: Vivid images make freedom more tangible, helping readers visualise the need for autonomy.

Contrast: The speaker's active pursuit of freedom opposes the passive attitudes of others, stressing urgency.

Structure of the Poem

'Freedom' by Langston Hughes is a five-stanza poem that is separated into uneven sets of lines. The first and fourth stanzas have four lines (making them quatrains), the second and third have five (they're quintains) and the final stanza has only three lines (making it a tercet). The poem is written in free-verse but there are some examples of rhyme within it. For instance, "fear" and "year" in stanza one and "stand" and "land" in stanza two. These rhymes are used to emphasize certain lines and make sure the reader is paying close attention to how the lines work together. The Irregular Line Alignment in the poem (with lines staggered or indented in places) reflects a visual manifestation of the poem's theme of struggle. This structure can represent the irregular, uneven path towards achieving freedom. It may also create a sense of disruption or tension, echoing the disjointed and often difficult process of gaining social, political, and personal liberty.

Theme

The central theme of *Freedom* is the urgent, unwavering demand for immediate freedom and equality. Langston Hughes emphasises that freedom cannot be achieved through passivity, compromise, or deferred promises. The poem reflects the frustration of those denied their rights and highlights the need for active resistance against injustice. It also explores the idea of universal equality, asserting that freedom is a fundamental right for all, not something to be postponed or earned over time.

Glossary:

Words

Meanings

| | |
|------------|---|
| bread | a type of food made from flour, water and usually yeast mixed together and baked (old-fashioned, slang) money |
| compromise | an agreement made between two people or groups in which each side gives up some of the things they want so that both sides are happy at the end |
| course | to move or flow quickly |
| fear | the bad feeling that you have when you are in danger or when a particular thing frightens you |
| fellow | used to describe somebody who is the same as you in some way, or in the same situation |
| tire | to become tired and feel as if you want to sleep or rest; to make somebody feel this way |

Reading and Critical Thinking

A. Answer the following questions:

1. Whose perspective is the poem written from? How does this perspective influence the poem's message?
2. How does Langston Hughes criticise those who believe in gradual change for freedom?
3. Why does the poet reject the idea of "tomorrow's bread"?
4. Do you agree with the poet's view that freedom should not be postponed? Why or why not? Support your answer with examples.
5. If you were in the poet's position, how would you express your demand for freedom? Write a short paragraph.

6. In the first stanza, Hughes states that freedom will not come through *"compromise and fear."* Why do you think the poet uses these words specifically? What might this say about his opinion on the current political or social climate at the time the poem was written?
7. The poem includes several contrasts between the speaker's view on freedom and the more passive stance of others (e.g., *"Let things take their course"*). How does this contrast add to the power of the speaker's argument for immediate action?
8. Find an example of repetition, enjambment, and a metaphor in the poem. Explain how each of these literary devices contributes to the overall meaning and impact of the poem.

B. Read the following statement and tell whether you agree with it. Provide two examples from the poem to support your answer.

"Hughes uses direct language and strong imagery to clearly oppose the idea of waiting for freedom. His words do not suggest negotiation but demand immediate action."

C. Choose the correct option for each question.

1. The poet suggests that freedom cannot be achieved through:
a. Patience and perseverance. b. Compromise and fear.
c. Courage and unity. d. Knowledge and education.
2. The speaker compares freedom to a seed because:
a. It is difficult to find. b. It can be easily destroyed.
c. It must be planted and grown. d. It is available to everyone.
3. Why does the poet mention *"tomorrow's bread"*?
a. To emphasise that freedom can be postponed.
b. To show that food is more important than freedom.
c. To illustrate that freedom must be experienced now, not in the future.
d. To highlight the importance of patience.
4. What is the effect of the first-person perspective in the poem?
a. It creates a sense of distance.
b. It makes the poem impersonal.
c. It allows the poet to speak for a group while expressing personal feelings.
d. It focuses on the lives of others, not the poet.
5. Which of the following best describes the tone of the poem?
a. Humorous and light. b. Calm and accepting.
c. Urgent and demanding. d. Mysterious and suspenseful.

D. Complete the following statements using information from the poem.

1. According to the poet, freedom will not come through _____.
2. The poet is tired of hearing people say, _____.
3. The metaphor "*Freedom is a strong seed*" suggests that freedom is _____.
4. The poet cannot live on "*tomorrow's bread*" because _____.
5. The speaker wants freedom because _____.

Vocabulary and Grammar

A. Read the following sentences and use context clues to determine the meaning of the underlined word. Then, select the most appropriate definition from the options.

1. The scientist conducted an **exhaustive** study on climate change.
a) brief b) thorough c) incomplete d) limited
2. The manager's **meticulous** attention to detail ensured the project was completed without any errors.
a) careless b) careful c) quick d) indifferent
3. The novel was **intricate**, with numerous characters and overlapping storylines.
a) simple b) complex c) boring d) predictable
4. The new software update is **seamless**, making the transition from the old version effortless.
a) smooth b) difficult c) broken d) incomplete
5. The teacher's **astute** observations during the class discussion helped clarify many complex concepts.
a) ignorant b) observant c) confused d) inattentive

B. Read the following paragraph and correct any errors related to capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and hyphenation.

she went to the store to buy too kilos of apples and to dozen bananas it was a lovely day but she forgot her shopping list when she returned home she found out that she had bought the wrong items how could i be so careless she thought

Aspects of Time

Aspects of time refer to the different ways actions or events are viewed in relation to time. They show whether an action is completed, ongoing, habitual, or has been happening over a period of time. The aspects are primarily expressed through the use of **verb tenses**, which indicate when an action occurs and how it relates to time.

There are four main aspects of time in English:

1. **Simple Aspect:** Describes actions or states that are general, habitual, or completed at a specific time.
 - **Present Simple:** Describes general truths, habits, and routines.
Example: She **reads** books every day.
 - **Past Simple:** Describes completed actions that occurred at a specific time in the past.
Example: They **visited** Quetta last summer.
 - **Future Simple:** Describes actions that will occur in the future.
Example: I **will travel** to Karachi next month.
2. **Progressive (Continuous) Aspect:** The progressive aspect emphasizes actions that are ongoing or in progress at a certain point in time. It is formed using the verb "**to be**" + **present participle** (-ing form).
 - **Present Progressive:** Describes actions happening right now or around the present moment.
Example: She **is reading** a book.
 - **Past Progressive:** Describes actions that were happening at a specific moment in the past.
Example: I **was working** when the phone rang.
 - **Future Progressive:** Describes actions that will be in progress at a specific point in the future.
Example: I **will be traveling** at this time tomorrow.
3. **Perfect Aspect:** The perfect aspect expresses actions that are completed relative to another time.
 - **Present Perfect:** Describes actions that happened at an unspecified time in the past but are still relevant now.
Example: She **has finished** her homework.
 - **Past Perfect:** Describes actions that were completed before another action in the past.
Example: They **had left** before I arrived.
 - **Future Perfect:** Describes actions that will be completed by a certain point in the future.
Example: By next week, I **will have finished** the project.
4. **Perfect Progressive Aspect:** The perfect progressive aspect is used to describe actions that were happening in the past, are happening in the present, or will be happening in the future, but with a focus on the

duration or ongoing nature of the action.

- **Present Perfect Progressive:** Describes actions that started in the past and are still ongoing or recently finished, with an emphasis on duration.

Example: I **have been studying** for two hours.

- **Past Perfect Progressive:** Describes actions that were ongoing in the past and had continued up until another point in the past.

Example: She **had been waiting** for an hour before the train arrived.

- **Future Perfect Progressive:** Describes actions that will have been ongoing up until a certain point in the future.

Example: By next month, I **will have been working** here for five years.

C. Read the sentences below and correct any mistakes related to the use of time aspects.

1. By the time he arrives, I have finished my work.
2. She will be work at the office tomorrow.
3. They have been finishing the project before the deadline.
4. I was studying when you called me last night.
5. She will have been living in Pakistan for two years when she moves to Dubai.

Oral Communication

Asking and Answering Questions

Instructions:

- Pair up with a classmate.
- Take turns asking and answering the following questions.
- Use clear, precise language and maintain formal tone.
- Provide detailed and thoughtful responses.

Questions:

1. In the poem "Freedom," Hughes speaks of a desire for immediate freedom. Why do you think he rejects the idea of waiting?
2. Do you agree with Hughes that freedom cannot be achieved through compromise and fear? Why or why not?
3. Hughes uses strong imagery in the poem, such as "freedom is a strong seed." What does this metaphor suggest about the nature of freedom?

4. If you were living in the time when Hughes wrote this poem, how would you feel about his message? Would you support his perspective?
5. The poem criticises passive acceptance of injustice. Can you think of a situation today where this message is still relevant? Explain.
6. How does the poet's use of direct language and repetition make his message more powerful?
7. Imagine you are a person who believes in waiting for freedom. How would you respond to Hughes' argument?
8. How would you explain the poem's message to someone who has never read it?
9. Do you think the concept of freedom Hughes presents is still relevant today? Why?
10. If you were to add one more stanza to the poem, what message would you include?

Writing Skills

Summary and Precis

Both summary and precis involve condensing a longer piece of writing into a shorter form. However, there are key differences in their purpose, structure, and approach.

- **Summary:** The purpose of a summary is to provide a brief overview of the main ideas or points of a text while retaining the original meaning. It includes the essential information but omits unnecessary details.
- **Precis:** The purpose of a precis is to condense the original text into a shorter, more concise form, maintaining the author's tone, style, and emphasis. A precis also focuses on reducing the length while preserving the core message, but it is generally even more concise than a summary.

Comparison of Summary and Precis

| Aspect | Summary | Precis |
|----------------|--|--|
| Purpose | To provide a brief overview of the main ideas or points of a text. | To present the essential meaning of the text in a condensed form, maintaining the author's tone. |
| Length | Generally longer, around one-third of the original text. | More concise, around one-fourth to one-fifth of the original text. |
| Content | Covers the main ideas and important points of the text. | Focuses on the essential meaning without unnecessary details. |

| | | |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| Style and Tone | Neutral, may use simpler language. | Retains the author's original tone and style. |
| Structure | Follows the structure of the original text. | Organised in a clear, logical flow but may not strictly follow the original sequence. |
| Objectivity | Remains objective, without personal opinions. | Remains objective, without personal opinions. |
| Language | May use slightly different words for clarity. | Stays closer to the language of the original text. |
| Focus | Provides a general understanding of the text. | Emphasises clarity, precision, and conciseness. |
| Application | Used for summarising chapters, articles, or reports. | Used for academic writing, note-taking, and exams where conciseness is crucial. |

A. Read the poem "Freedom" by Langston Hughes carefully.

1. Write a summary of the poem in your own words.
2. Write a precis of the poem, maintaining the author's tone and main idea.

Instructions:

- Ensure your summary is around one-third of the poem's length.
- Your precis should be even more concise, around one-fourth to one-fifth of the poem's length.
- Do not include any personal opinions or interpretations in your summary or precis.
- Maintain the original tone and message of the poem.

B. Explain the following lines with reference to the context.

I have as much right
as the other fellow has
to stand
on my two feet
and own the land.