

LIFE IS FINE: A Do-It-Yourself Poetry Worksheet

Inspired by Langston Hughes's "Life Is Fine"

Name: _____

Objective: Use comparison, repetition, vivid images, and a turning point to write about life, struggle, survival, or choosing a new direction.

Content note: The poem includes references to emotional crisis and suicide. You may write personally, fictionally, or about a character. You never have to share private experiences aloud.

1. Warm up: Describe life

How would you describe life - yours, someone else's, life in general, or the idea of life? Complete the line at least three different ways.

Life is _____ like/as _____.

Life is _____ like/as _____.

Life is _____ like/as _____.

2. Choose your writing direction

Choose A or B, or combine the parts you like. You may change the prompt to fit your voice.

- Prompt A:** Write a poem comparing the state of life to the state of something else.
- Prompt B:** Write about a moment when you or someone else intended to do something, changed course, and the change led to a better outcome.
- Combine:** Use a life comparison to tell the story of a difficult moment and a turning point.

3. Build your central comparison

List three possible comparisons. Choose one that gives you strong images, sounds, movement, or emotion.

Life is like...	What do they have in common?	Feeling or tone

4. Find the turning point

BEFORE / THE STRUGGLE	AFTER / THE TURN
<i>What was happening? What did the speaker want, fear, or believe?</i>	<i>What interrupted the plan? What changed? What became possible?</i>

Life is Fine

Langston Hughes

**I went down to the river,
I set down on the bank.
I tried to think but couldn't,
So I jumped in and sank.**

**I came up once and hollered!
I came up twice and cried!
If that water hadn't a-been so cold
I might've sunk and died.**

But it was Cold in that water! It was cold!

**I took the elevator
Sixteen floors above the ground.
I thought about my baby
And thought I would jump down.**

**I stood there and I hollered!
I stood there and I cried!
If it hadn't a-been so high
I might've jumped and died.**

But it was High up there! It was high!

**So since I'm still here livin',
I guess I will live on.
I could've died for love—
But for livin' I was born**

**Though you may hear me holler,
And you may see me cry—
I'll be dogged, sweet baby,
If you gonna see me die.**

Life is fine! Fine as wine! Life is fine!

From The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes, published by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.
Copyright © 1994 the Estate of Langston Hughes. Used with permission.