

English II
Mrs. Daniel
Literature

Comparing and Contrasting Texts

One thing you will have to do on both your benchmark exam and your state test is compare and contrast multiple texts – basically, you will have to look for the similarities and differences between two different pieces of literature.

Read and annotate the two texts below:

“Mother to Son”

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've 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've still goin', honey,
I've still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

From All Over But the Shoutin'

Rick Bragg

It is my first memory, and the best. It is sweeter than the recollection I have of the time she sat me down in the middle of a wild strawberry patch and let me eat my way out again, richer than all the times she took me swimming in jade-colored streams and threw a big rock in the water to run off the water moccasins, It is even stronger than the time she scraped together money for my high school class ring, even though her toes poked out of her old sneakers and she was wearing clothes from the Salvation Army bin in the parking lot of the A&P. It was not real gold, that ring, just some kind of fake, shiny metal crowned with a lump of red glass, but I was proud of it. I was the first member of my family to have one, and if the sunlight caught it just right, it looked almost real.

I wish I could just accept the myth that she never went to see me and or my brothers play basketball or baseball because she was too tired and not because she was ashamed of her clothes. I would like to believe she didn't even notice how her own life was running through her hands like water. But the truth is she did know, and she did think about it in the nighttime when her children were put to bed and there was no one left to keep her company except her blind faith in God and her own regret.

My mother ached for a house, for a patch of ground, for something. When I was a young man and we would take drives through town, she stared at the homes of others with a longing so strong you could feel it. She stared and she hoped and she dreamed until she finally just got tired of wanting.

The only thing poverty does is grind down your nerve endings to a point that you can work harder and stoop lower than most people are willing to. It chips away a person's dreams to the point that the hopelessness shows through, and the dreamer accepts that hard work and borrowed houses are all this life will ever be. While my mother will stare you dead in the eye and say she never thought of herself as poor, do not believe for one second that she did not see the rest of the world, the better world, spinning around her, out of reach.

In fact, poor was all she had ever witnessed, tasted, been. She was not some steel magnolia thrust into an alien poverty by a sorry man, but a woman who grew up with it, whose own mother would just forget to eat supper if there wasn't enough to go around. Her sisters wed men who worked hard, who bought land, homes and cars that did not reek of split beer. Through their vows, and some luck, they made good lives and had good things that had never been worn or used before. Momma, bless her heart, picked badly, and the years of doing without spun a single, unbroken thread through her childhood, her youth, her middle age, until the gray had crept into her hair. We have to go back a ways to find the start of it, to a little rented house so deep in the pine barrens that night fell like a black cloth. It is lit by lanterns and ringing with a young woman's cries as a new baby appears, kicking and screaming, like she knew what life had in store.

1. How is the genre of "Mother to Son" and *All Over But the Shoutin'* different?

2. Describe the mother in "Mother to Son" and Rick Bragg's mother in *All Over But the Shoutin'*. How are they similar? How are they different?

3. Which of the following words best describes the tone of “Mother to Son”

- a. Apathetic b. Ambivalent c. Inspiring d. Mocking

How do you KNOW?

Objective 1D, DOK 2

4. Which of the following words best describes the tone of the excerpt from *All Over But the Shoutin’*?

- a. Reverential b. Critical c. Comical d. Capricious

How do you KNOW?

Objective 1D, DOK 2

5. Which of the following is the best statement concerning the point - of - view of each passage?

- a. Both selections use first person point - of - view in order to impart a very astute and articulate tone.
- b. “Mother to Son” uses first person point - of - view in order to make the poem more personal, while *All Over But the Shoutin’* uses third person point - of - view to give a more objective tone.
- c. Both excerpts utilize first person point - of - view: “Mother to Son” uses first - person point - of - view to enhance the realism of the poem, while *All Over But the Shoutin’* utilizes first person point - of - view to emphasize the personal feelings the author has towards his mother.
- d. “Mother to Son” utilizes first person point - of - view to give a more embittered tone, and *All Over But the Shoutin’* utilizes a first person point - of - view to give a more formal and reverential tone.

How do you KNOW this?

Objective 2E, DOK 3

6. Complete the following statements of theme or author’s purpose for each selection:

In “Mother to Son” Langston Hughes wants his readers to understand ...

In *All Over But the Shoutin’* Rick Bragg wants his readers to understand ...