Mother to Son

BY [LANGSTON HUGHES](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/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,

5 And boards torn up,

And places with no carpet on the floor—

Bare.

But all the time

I’se been a-climbin’ on,

10 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.

15 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’,

20 And life for me ain’t been no crystal stair.

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| Vocab | Mother to Son  BY [LANGSTON HUGHES](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/langston-hughes) | Questions |
|  | 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—  7 Bare. | Who is the speaker?  Who is the speaker speaking to?  What kind of staircase is the speaker comparing her life to? What does this suggest her life has been like?  What is being contrasted in this stanza? What is the purpose of contrasting these things? |

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|  | Mother to Son  BY [LANGSTON HUGHES](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/langston-hughes) |  |
| I’se: I have  I’se: I am | But all the time  I’se been a-climbin’ on,  And reachin’ landin’s,  And turnin’ corners,  And sometimes goin’ in the dark  13 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’,  20 And life for me ain’t been no crystal stair. | Metaphorically, what has the speaker been doing throughout her life?  What advice is the speaker giving to the boy?  What kind of life does a crystal stair represent? |

What is the theme of the poem (the poet’s message)?

Writing Task: How does the metaphor of a stair express the poet’s message?