

## Possible Themes and Working Thesis Statements for “Harlem”

### Theme # 1:

Dreams deferred lead to the defeat of the human spirit.

- This theme, while it does not blatantly state the topic of the poem, is not specific enough. It does not account for a few mildly positive aspects of the poem.

### Theme # 2:

Dreams deferred deflate the human spirit.

- This theme is slightly more specific, but once again, “Harlem” addresses more than deflation.

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### Thesis # 1:

In “Harlem,” Langston Hughes uses **diction** and **stanza form** to illustrate how “dreams deferred” can **deflate** and **aggravate** the human spirit.

- This thesis states the devices that will be used to explore the theme. The statement also clarifies the nature of the work’s theme: deflation and aggravation.

### Thesis # 2:

In “Harlem,” Langston Hughes uses **metaphor**, **diction**, and **stanza form** to illustrate **that** “dreams deferred” / deflate and aggravate the human spirit.

- This second thesis incorporates a new device: metaphor. The inclusion of metaphor in the thesis will allow me to discuss and explain the many significant examples of metaphor in the poem within the body of the essay. In addition, the new thesis statement eliminates the use of uncommitted language (i.e. how and can).

### Thesis # 3:

In “Harlem,” Langston Hughes uses **simile**, **diction**, and **stanza form** to illustrate that “dreams deferred” deflate and aggravate the human spirit.

- This thesis statement has changed very little from the second. It finalizes the type of devices analyzed in the essay. I have removed metaphor from the thesis and from the body of the paper in order to address a precise form of metaphor known as simile.