

To fling my arms wide
In some place of the sun,
To whirl and to dance
Till the white day is done.
Then rest at cool evening
Beneath a tall tree
While night comes on gently,
Dark like me—
That is my dream!

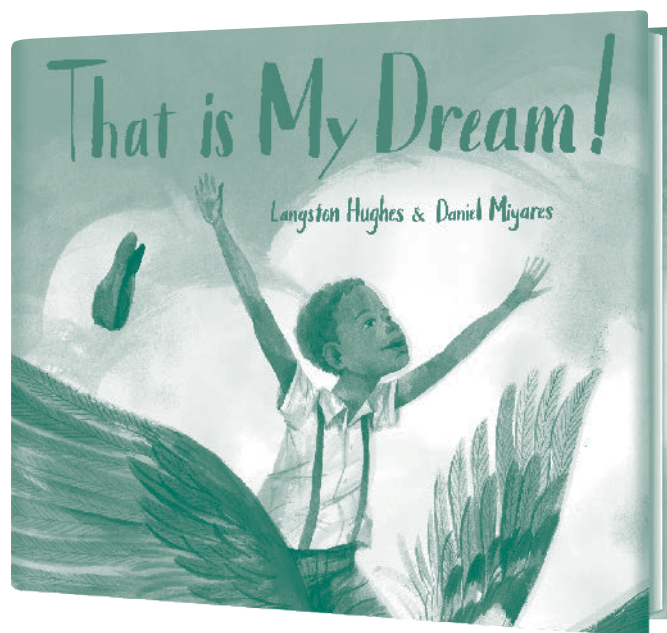
That is My Dream!

A picture book of Langston Hughes's "Dream Variation,"
illustrated by Daniel Miyares



That is My Dream!

Classroom Activity Guide



Grades: ALL | HC: 978-0-399-55017-1
GLB: 978-0-399-55018-8 | EL: 978-0-399-55019-5

ABOUT THE BOOK

Langston Hughes’s inspiring and timeless message of pride, joy, and the dream of a better life is brilliantly and beautifully interpreted in Daniel Miyares’s gorgeous artwork. Follow one African American boy through his day as the harsh reality of segregation and racial prejudice comes into vivid focus. But the boy dreams of a different life—one full of freedom, hope, and wild possibility, where he can fling his arms wide in the face of the sun. Hughes’s powerful poem is as relevant—and necessary—today as when it was first written.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR

LANGSTON HUGHES (1902–1967) is one of the most beloved and celebrated American poets of all time. His first poem to be published was “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” which appeared in *The Crisis* magazine in 1921. His first book of poems, *The Weary Blues*, which includes the poem “Dream Variation,” was published in 1926 when Hughes was only twenty-four years old. Hughes was an important leader of the Harlem Renaissance during the 1920s. He was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1935, a Rosenwald Fellowship in 1940, and an American Academy of Arts and Letters grant in 1947. In addition to poetry, Hughes wrote short stories, novels, memoirs, essays, and plays.

DANIEL MIYARES is the author and illustrator of *Float*, an ALA-ALSC Notable Children’s Book, which the *Boston Globe* called “a perfect wordless book”; *Pardon Me!*; and *Bring Me a Rock!* He also illustrated *Surf’s Up* by Newbery Medalist Kwame Alexander. He lives in Lexena, Kansas, with his wife and their two children. Visit him on the web at danielmiyares.com or on Twitter at @danielmiyares.

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Before sharing the book, familiarize readers with the life of Langston Hughes. Create a time line showing when he lived and marking important events, both in his life and the wider world. Display photos of Hughes, and explain that his first poem was published before the age of twenty. Read the text of the book without showing the illustrations. Ask children to predict what the illustrations will portray based on what they imagine as they listen.





IN THE CLASSROOM

Identifying Patterns and Making Comparisons

Repetition is an important element in poetry. This poem can be neatly divided between the first nine lines (ending with “That is my dream!”) and the last eight lines, as you can see below. The first section corresponds closely with the second. Have students examine the poem in two parts. Students can look for patterns that occur in both sections of the poem and then compare the differences. Examine each line and consider the variations that occur and why. Develop a choral performance with alternating voices for each part of the poem or for the correlating lines.

*To fling my arms wide
In some place of the sun,
To whirl and to dance
Till the white day is done.
Then rest at cool evening
Beneath a tall tree
While night comes on gently,
 Dark like me—
That is my dream!*

*To fling my arms wide
In the face of the sun,
Dance! Whirl! Whirl!
Till the quick day is done.
Rest at pale evening . . .
A tall, slim tree . . .
Night coming tenderly
 Black like me.*



Art Extension

Birds are featured in several of the illustrations, including one page where the children imagine themselves taking flight upon birds. Explore the symbolism of birds and flight in this poem using the following discussion prompts. Students can then use wordle.net or tagxedo.com to create a word image that captures their imaginative thinking about birds and flight.

- Would you like to fly? Why or why not?
- What does freedom mean to you?
- What would be the hardest part of flying?
- What do you think it’s like to be a bird?
- Do you think birds are free?
- Would you be scared to fly?

Found Poetry

One way to engage students and promote creativity is to invite them to write their own poetry. An easy way to start is with found poetry. This involves taking words, phrases, and sometimes whole passages from other sources and reframing them (the literary equivalent of a collage) by making changes in spacing and lines or by adding or deleting text. Not only does this encourage creativity, it also ensures a close reading of the original. Since “Dream Variation” is a relatively short poem, teachers may want to create a list, index cards, or magnetic strips showing the available words. Students can then work individually or in groups to compose their own poem using the words in *That Is My Dream*. Teachers can give students the option to change the word forms (for example, *fling* to *flinging* or *flung*) and add words not in “Dream Variation.”

Fluency and Performance

This poem features a variety of verbs and descriptive nouns. Have students make up movements (hand motions or dance) to coincide with the actions in the poem. Students can work in small groups to plan a reading of the poem that involves showing the movements. Creative approaches to choral reading could involve alternating readers, echoing voices, or rhythmic interpretations.



Name: _____

WORD CHOICE

Poets choose their words carefully as they try to conjure images for readers. Consider how the poem “Dream Variation” would change if different words were chosen. Why are these the right words? In the space below, list as many synonyms as you can for each word.

Fling _____

Wide _____

Whirl _____

Dance _____

Rest _____

Cool _____

Tall _____

Gently _____

Dark _____

Quick _____

Pale _____

Slim _____

Tenderly _____

