

Name

Mundy

Date

### Hanging Fire

I am fourteen  
 and my skin has betrayed me  
 the boy I cannot live without  
 still sucks his thumb  
 in secret  
 how come my knees are  
 always so achy  
 what if I die  
 before the morning comes  
 and momma's in the bedroom  
 with the door closed.

I have to learn how to dance  
 in time for the next party  
 my room is too small for me  
 suppose I die before graduation  
 they will sing sad melodies  
 but finally  
 tell the truth about me  
 There is nothing I want to do  
 and too much  
 that has to be done  
 and momma's in the bedroom  
 with the door closed.

Nobody even stops to think  
 about my side of it  
 I should have been on Math Team  
 my marks were better than his  
 why do I have to be  
 the one  
 wearing braces  
 I have nothing to wear tomorrow  
 will I live long enough  
 to grow up  
 and momma's in the bedroom  
 with the door closed.

by Audre Lorde

- African-American, female poet

Theme: We're not alone.

Speaker: feels alone

No punctuation → stream of consciousness

- personification  
- acne / race

Immaturity

Juxtaposed questions

uninvolved?  
- not helping the speaker answer?

dramatic

vague argument

speaker feels discriminated against

Describe the speaker of the poem.

feels lonely, sad, "momma" makes her sound young  
dramatic - fearful

In what point of view is the poem written?

first (1st person)

What do you think this poem is about?

The separation b/w mother + daughter  
fear

How does the image "the boy I cannot live without/ still sucks his thumb/in secret" affect the meaning of the poem?

- other people in her life have problems - everyone has problems - reinforces the theme that we're not alone.

What is the speaker worried about?

Stanza 1 - appearance, others opinion  
growing up  
the future  
death

What else can you figure out about the state of mind of the speaker?

depressed - worried, anxious  
negative outlook / negative impact on herself

Why does the poet repeat "and momma's in the bedroom with the door closed?"

- adds to the speaker's anxiety  
- refrain  
- adds to the alienation b/w speaker + mom

What specifically in the poem reveals their character/emotions/fears?

- questions  
- repetition  
- motif of death (repetition)

What do you notice about the structure of this poem?

- no rhyme / rhythm  
- refrain ties things together

In what form is this poem written?

free verse

Where does the poet use language in surprising ways?

Answers will vary.

What conflict exists in this poem?

Internal w/in the speaker.

What is the tone of this poem?

Neglected, pessimistic, sad, depressed