“Let America Be Great Again”

1. What words, thoughts, images, etc. first come to mind after reading this poem?
2. What are the various pictures of America the author paints? (Discuss the idealistic version of America the author paints, i.e. a land of liberty, opportunity, freedom, etc., compared with the alternative notion that the ideal is seldom reached by particular groups.)
3. According to Hughes, what specific things have interfered with America reaching its potential?
4. This poem was written by Hughes in 1935. What are some of the ways American society is different today than in 1935?
5. What does the author mean when he says that “America was never America to me?”
6. According to the poem, what groups of people in particular have struggled gaining access to or obtaining the American Dream and why? o The poem mentions Native Americans, African Americans, the poor, and immigrants. To delve into this further, teachers can break students up into groups and instruct them to spend time compiling a list of the various ways these groups have been denied equal opportunity, or have suffered based on not having access to the American Dream.
7. Are there additional groups of people not necessarily referred to in the poem that have also been deprived of all America is supposed to have to offer? (i.e., women)
8. How does the tone change throughout the poem?
9. How does the poem compare to the quotes we examined?
10. What is Langston Hughes’s ultimate message about America and the American Dream?
11. Is this poem a negative portrayal of America? Explain. (Discuss with students how while the author is pointing out how America hasn’t reached its potential or provided the opportunity to all people equally as it should, he also exhibits a sense of hope that it still can be the ideal America.)
12. Although this poem was written in 1935, do you think the themes still have relevance today? Has America fulfilled its potential in your opinion? Explain.