

Read the poem below, then answer the text based questions that come after.

Hanging Fire
By Audre Lorde

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 ashy
what if I die
before morning
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.



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- 1) Who is speaking in the poem?
- 2) What do you think this poem is about?
- 3) What is the speaker worried about?
- 4) Why does the poet repeat “and momma’s in the bedroom with the door closed?”
- 5) What do you think you know about the poet after reading this poem?
- 6) What specifically in the poem reveals their character/emotions/fears?
- 7) Is the poet complaining? Why or why not?
- 8) Is there conflict in this poem? Is it internal or external? How do we know?

