ASK-IT Self-Questioning Strategy

☐ A = Attend to the clues as you read.

Looking at the following passage

**Mother to Son**

BY LANGSTON HUGHES

Well, son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
It's had tacks in it,
And splinters,
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor—
Bare.

First as I read, I ask myself: Do the bold-face letters of the title of the paragraph provide a clue that the poem is about a mother conveying something to her son?
Second as I read the first line ("Well, son, I'll tell you:"), I realize this poem is written from the mother’s point of view.

☐ S = Say some questions.

😊 Who: About whom is the poem describing?

⇒ What: About what is the poetry describing? What does the mother want to tell the son?

⏰ When: When is the action in this poetry occurring?

↔ Where: Where is this poem occurring?
| Why: Why is the mother telling him about how hard her life has been? |
| How: How is the son going to react to this knowledge from his mother? |

| K = Keep predictions in mind. |

| Who: About whom is the poem describing? |
| First, I predict it is going to be a poem about a mother and a son. |

| What: About what is the poetry describing? What does the mother want to tell the son? |
| Second, I predict this is going to be about perseverance and resilience. |

| When: When is the action in this poetry occurring? |
| Third, I predict that this poem is occurring during the 1920’s. |

| Where: Where is this poem occurring? |
| Fifth, I predict that this poem is occurring in the United States. |

| Why: Why is the mother telling him about how hard her life has been? |
| Sixth, I predict that the mother wants to tell her son some lesson she has learned. |

| How: How is the son going to react to this knowledge from his mother? |
| Seventh, I predict the son is going to hear the wisdom of his mother’s words. |

| I = Identify the answers. |

| Who: About whom is the poem describing? |
| First as I read, I ask myself: Do the bold-face letters of the title of the paragraph provide a clue that the poem is about a mother conveying something to her son? |
| Second as I read the first line ("Well, son, I'll tell you:"), I realize this poem is written from the mother’s point of view. |
What: About what is the poetry describing? What does the mother want to tell the son?

Third as I read the next line (“Life for me ain’t been no crystal stair.”), the mother wants her son to know that life has not been easy for her.

When: When is the action in this poetry occurring?

Fourth, I now realize that she is talking to her son when he is old enough to understand her descriptions of “It’s had tacks in it,
And splinters,
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor—
Bare.”

Where: Where is this poem occurring?

Fifth, I do not know the answer to where this conversation between the mother and the son is occurring from the first section of the poem. I will have to keep reading to see if this is answered.

Why: Why is the mother telling him about how hard her life has been?

Sixth, I do not know the answer to why the mother is telling the son about how hard her life has been. I will have to keep reading to see if this is answered.

How: How is the son going to react to this knowledge from his mother?

Seventh, I do not know the answer to how the son is going to react to this knowledge from his mother. I will have to keep reading to see if this is answered.

Talk about the answers.

Who: About whom is the poem describing?

First, I firmly believe my prediction is correct by reading the title and the first line of the passage and likely be written to describe what the poet’s mother would say to the poet.
What: About what is the poetry describing? What does the mother want to tell the son?
Second, I hope this poem ends on a positive note talking about perseverance and resilience rather than leaves me sad.

When: When is the action in this poetry occurring?
Third, the author wrote in the 1920's during the Harlem Renaissance when I believe the action of this poem was to have occurred although it can be true during any decade.

Where: Where is this poem occurring?
Fourth, I do not know the answer to where this conversation between the mother and the son is occurring from the first section of the poem. I will have to keep reading to see if this is answered.

Why: Why is the mother telling him about how hard her life has been?
Fifth, I do not know the answer to why the mother is telling the son about how hard her life has been. I will have to keep reading to see if this is answered.

How: How is the son going to react to this knowledge from his mother?
Sixth, I do not know the answer to how the son is going to react to this knowledge from his mother. I will have to keep reading to see if this is answered.