



## Activity Guide Finding Langston

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**Themes:** Personal connection / Poetry / The blues /  
Understanding yourself, others / Being understood

Like Langston, many of us have gone through big changes over the past few months. These activities can help you learn how to navigate your feelings during this time and connect with those you care about—maybe even make new connections along the way!

### Write Your Own Blues Song

“The blues” is a style of music that was originally written and sung by mostly African-Americans in the southern United States.

Blues songs come in many formats and are almost always about a problem, but can be funny too. For instance the iconic 12-bar format often turns the problem into something amusing or unexpected in the last line of the stanza. In this style the first line states the problem, the second line repeats the first, then the third line, rhyming with the first two, resolves the problem. This is called an AAB format.

Another example of this format is a song written by Big Mama Thornton, which was made very famous by Elvis Presley: Hound Dog.

Now try it for yourself! Write your own blues song to the tune of Hound Dog and share it with your family and friends!

### Unexpected Friendships / Getting to Know You

When Langston met Miss Fulton and Clem, he had no idea that either would become his friends until he got to know them. Once he did, he realized they had a lot more in common than he thought. He also says you can think you know someone, but not really know them at all.

Try getting to know your family, friends or fellow students a bit better this year by playing a few of these fun games. Maybe you’ll make a new friend or learn something new about the people you already know!

### Things in Common Game

1. Split up into teams or small groups.
2. Give each group 5 minutes to find out what they have in common.
3. Whichever team has the most in common wins.

## One or the Other

Come up with questions that challenges players to make a choice and explain their answers. For example:

- Would you rather eat pizza or tacos?
- Would you rather spend the day at the beach or an amusement park?
- Who makes a better pet: a cat, a dog, a hamster or a bird?
- Which is better: ice cream, cookies, pie or cake?

## What If

Take turns answering these “what-if” questions (or others you make up):

- What if you could only eat the same meal for an entire month, what would it be?
- What if you could spend the day with someone you’ve never met, who would it be?
- What if you had to listen to only one song for an entire month, what would it be?
- What if you could go anywhere in the world, where would it be?
- What if you could choose a super-power, what would it be?

## Two Truths and a Lie

1. One player reveals 2 things that are true about themselves, and one thing that is untrue.
2. The other players guess which statement is untrue.
3. The first player reveals the answer.
4. Take turns and keep going!

## Write a Poem or a Letter for Someone You Care About

Langston finds part of a Langston Hughes poem in a letter his Mama wrote to his Daddy. Write your own poem (or a song) and send it to someone you know to show them that you care. Maybe it’s about an inside joke or memory that you share. Maybe it’s about them and how they make you feel. Maybe it’s about their favorite color or animal or food or something else they’d appreciate. It can be silly or sweet—whatever you think will brighten up their day!

## Inside Out

“So the poetry you read is a way of putting all the things you feel on the inside outside.” –Clem

Many of us are going through a lot of big feelings these days. Sometimes it’s difficult to express our thoughts and feelings to others, or even understand them ourselves. Create your own book (or notebook) of poems, and each day write about how you’re feeling. There are many kinds of poems (like limerick, haiku, shape poem, narrative, free verse, lyrical and sonnet) and not all have to rhyme. Try a few. It can be helpful letting our feelings out in other creative ways, too—like painting, drawing, sculpting, collage, dance, music and more!!

## Finding Community

Little by little, Langston’s life starts getting better once he finds the library and discovers Langston Hughes’ poetry. The poems help him connect to his feelings, and with people who share common interests and end up caring about him. Let a grownup know if you’d like to take a class or join a group of people interested in something that you connect with, like art, cooking, robot-making or comic books.