OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES:

Students will be able to identify with characters from the book and write their own epistles.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

Copies of *Backpack Blues: Ignite the Fire Within.*

SUGGESTION:

Parent or teacher, if you wish, you may choose to omit poems you do not feel are about a theme or subject matter appropriate for your tween or teen. A very few of the poems may be about edgy topics, but they are handled in a manner which will enable you to discuss the theme as you would like to address it.

PROCEDURE:

Ask students to define the word *epistle*.  Explain that the *epistle or epistolary* comes from the Latin word for *letter.*

1. Read “Dear Mama” by Langston Hughes. Ask for student reactions to the poem.
2. Read page 122 of *Backpack Blues: Ignite the Fire Within.*
3. Turn to page 65 of *Backpack Blues: Ignite the Fire Within.* Read “Shannon Traynor.”
4. Discuss the poem.
5. Have students write an epistle or epistolary poem. They may address it to their mother, their father, another family member, a classmate (Never Allow Real Names), a teacher, a first responder or first responders, a former boyfriend or girlfriend, a grandparent, someone they miss, or another person of their choice.
6. Share poems.