Shallow Thought
Looking out into a fiery hell,
seeing increasing amounts of young bystanders thrown away
because of someone else’s humiliation and agony.
Looking into a world of animosity,
bullets flying, babies crying
and no one is to blame.

According to Keisha’s own analysis, the “fiery hell” in this poem referred to her neighborhood, which she described as the site of increasing gang violence. The “humiliation and agony” related to the circumstances she believed were often behind much of that violence. As she explained, when a gang member was killed by someone from another gang, the violence would escalate because, among other things, one group had been humiliated; thus, her use of the term “thrown away” rather than “killed” to emphasize the unnecessary loss of life which was a regular occurrence in her world. In Keisha’s view, many of the young people who found themselves caught up in these situations were in “agony” because they were constantly losing loved ones and believed there was no way out.

Two other poems, “Dreams” and “Black Reign,” are also representative of Keisha’s prolific literary output:

Dreams
I have so many dreams to remember,
so many moments to cherish.
My life had no light until…
you, burning upon the sun;
To kiss you is a dream come true,
a moment to cherish.
To have the pleasure of being
around you is a blessing.
When you simply speak,
I am speechless.
When you smile,
I am paralyzed with life.
There isn’t a word in the world
to express the way I feel for you,
not one.
But you, you are like the ocean
that glimmers in the night,
like the birds that cry in the morning
I wish I could hold you forever,
but I dream you will stay with
and hold me
with incredible strength.
Your features are so beautiful
they would blind the
normal eye,
but not mine.
You are a dream and I
want to have you
and dream over,
and over,
again.

Black Reign
Mysteriously she wanders
through the night,
trying to find
a way out of the clouds
of darkness.
She’s lost in the rain
without a doubt, she’s
lost in a love
of which she’s been bought.
She’s so lost she cries,
to let out the hurt
through her eyes.
The rain is falling and
constantly moving her
in the wrong direction.
After she cries, the sun appears,
then she sees the rain disappear.
The bells start to ring,
and the birds begin to sing.
She realizes she’s thy Black Queen,
and she shouldn’t let
anything stand in her way
for she is thou Black Queen
with thy Black Reign.

In both poems, Keisha shows competence in the use of sophisticated descriptive techniques to paint provocative mental images. For example, in “Dreams,” she begins by acknowledging the difficulties inherent in expressing feelings of intense emotion (“There isn’t a word in the world to express the way I feel for you”), but goes on to capture some aspects of those feelings using metaphor and hyperbole (e.g., “you are like the ocean that glimmers in the night, like the birds that cry in the morning,” “your features are so beautiful they would blind the normal eye, but not mine”). This poem also reveals her skill in employing other rhetorical devices such as oxymorons (e.g., “When you smile, I am paralyzed with life”).

“Black Reign” demonstrates other aspects of Keisha’s emerging literary aptitude. For example, the poem cleverly links the images of rain and tears. The rain, which “is falling and constantly moving her heart in the wrong direction,” is likened to a flow of tears so copious that they prevent a distraught person from thinking clearly. The “night” and the “clouds of darkness” are subsequently linked to the confused emotions that prevent the subject of the poem from seeing the “sun” or the light of reason. Keisha additionally uses the homonyms “rain” and “reign” to enact the counterposing themes in this poem. Once the rain is gone—that is, once the subject has finished crying and can see her situation clearly—then she is once again able to reign or take control of her life.