

LANGSTON HUGHES AND HIS POETRY

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ABSTRACT: *This article describes the personal life, childhood, biography, career and poetry of Langston Hughes. Also, another purpose of this article is to present his achievements, the critical opinions of people towards his works and the uniqueness of his poetry.*

Key words: *Poet, social, publish, newspaper, college, poetry, documentary, famous, life, life.*

James Mercer Langston Hughes was an American poet, social activist, novelist, playwright, and columnist from Joplin, Missouri. Hughes was one of the first innovators of the literary art form called jazz poetry and is best known as a leader of the Harlem Renaissance. He famously wrote about "a time when blacks were fashionable," which was later paraphrased as "when harems were fashionable." Hughes grew up in many Midwestern towns and became a prolific writer at an early age. In his youth, he moved to New York City to pursue a career there. He graduated from high school in Cleveland, Ohio, and immediately began studying at Columbia University in New York City. Although he dropped out, he caught the attention of a New York publisher, first The Crisis magazine, then a book publisher, and became known in Harlem's creative scene. His first collection of poems, *The Weary Blues*, was published in his 1926 year.

Hughes eventually graduated from Lincoln University. In addition to poetry, he wrote plays, published short story collections, novels, and several nonfiction books. From 1942 until 1962, as the civil rights movement gained momentum, Hughes contributed an in-depth weekly opinion column to the influential black newspaper, the *Chicago Defender*. Like many African Americans, Hughes was of mixed race. Both his paternal great-

grandmothers were enslaved Africans, and his paternal great-grandfathers were both white slave owners in Kentucky. According to Hughes, one of these men was Sam Clay, a Scottish- American whiskey distiller from Henry County who was said to be a relative of politician Henry Clay. Another putative paternal ancestor named by Hughes was Silas Cushenberry, a Clark County slave trader who Hughes claimed to be Jewish. Husand's maternal grandmother, Mary Patterson, was of African American, French, English, and Native American descent. One of the first women to attend Oberlin College, she married Lewis Sheridan Leary, also of mixed race, before graduating. In 1859, Lewis Leary participated in John Brownand's raid on Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, where he was mortally wounded. Ten years later, in 1869, the widow Mary Patterson Leary remarried into the elite and politically active Langston family. Her second husband was Charles Henry Langston, who was of African American, European American, and Native American descent. He and his brother John Mercer Langston were abolitionists and helped lead the Ohio Anti- Slavery Society in 1858. After his marriage, Charles Langston moved his family to Kansas, where he became an educator and activist for African American suffrage and rights. His and Maryann's daughter, Caroline, became a teacher and married James Nathaniel Hughes. His attempts at writing began at a young age.

At Lincoln High School, Hughes was chosen as the class poet. He stated that in retrospect he thought it was due to stereotypes that African Americans had rhythm. On May 22, 1967, Hughes died at Stuyvesant Hospital in New York at the age of 66 from complications following abdominal surgery for prostate cancer. Their ashes are buried under a floor medallion in the center of the lobby of the Schomburg Center for the Study of Black Culture in Harlem. This is the entrance to the auditorium named after him. On the floor is a cosmogram of Africa called Rivers. The title is taken from his poem "The Black Talks About Rivers". In the center of the cosmogram is the line: "My soul has deepened like river sand". Hughes read poetry on the album Weary Blues with music by Charles Mingus and Leonard Feather and also provided lyrics for Uhuru in Africa by Randy

Westonand, Harry Burleigh composed the poem "Beautiful, Dark and Lonely" From the collection *The Dream Keeper and Other Poems* to 1935's *Music*, his last work of art. Set by Italian composer Mira Sulpizi, lyrics to music in his 1968 song "Songs". The life has been presented in films and on stage since the end of the 20th century. In *Looking for Langston*, British film director Isaac Julien claimed him as a black homosexual icon - Julien believed that Hugh sexuality has historically been ignored or undervalued. Hughes' film credits include Gary LeRoi Gray and the teenage Hughes in the short film *Salvation* (based on part of his autobiography *The Big Sea*) and Daniel Sunjata as Hughes in *Brother to Brother*. *Dream Harlem*, a documentary by Jamal Joseph, explores jobs and the environment. Some of his most famous poems include "Harlem Mando," "Weary Blues," "The Negro Speaks of River Sands," "I Sing America Too," and "Make America America Again." and "Theme of the English Band." Writing in the early 20th century, Hughes eschewed intellectualized modernism and detached formalism for poetry shaped by the lives of ordinary men and women. Even more so than Whitman, his appeal to the common man was always somewhat remote.

Walt didn't really write the way the people in the Bowery band spoke. Nevertheless, his poems display creativity and beauty, especially addressing the struggles of everyday life for black Americans. His poems are usually easy to understand (some are very short), but the complexity lies between the layers of imagery he uses. His first poem published in a nationally known magazine was "The Negro Speaks of the River," published in *Crisis* magazine in 1921. In 1925 he won *Opportunity* magazine's first Poetry Prize for "The Weary Blues," which became the title of his first collection of poems, published in 1926. Langston Hughes suffered from loneliness caused by his parents' divorce. He started liking reading books to make up for the time his parents didn't spend with him. His love of reading developed into his desire to write. He wanted to recreate the strong influence that other writers had on him.

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