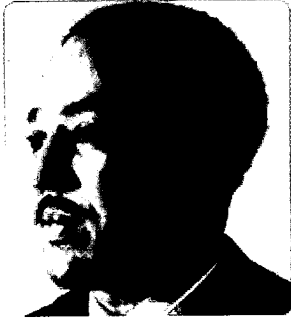


Biography

Langston Hughes



Langston Hughes wrote from 1926 to 1967. In that time he wrote more than 60 books, including poems, novels, short stories, plays, children's poetry, musicals, operas, and autobiographies. He was the first African American to support himself as a writer, and he wrote from his own experience.

Langston Hughes, whose full name was James Mercer Langston Hughes, was born in 1902 in Joplin, Missouri. He was the only son of James Nathaniel Hughes and Carrie Mercer Langston. His parents divorced when he was young and his father moved to Mexico. Because his mother traveled a lot to find work and was often absent, his grandmother raised Hughes until he was 12. His childhood was lonely and he often occupied himself with books. It was Hughes's grandmother, a great storyteller, who transferred to him her love of literature and the importance of becoming educated.

In 1914 he moved to Lincoln, Illinois, to live with his mother and her new husband. It was here that he started writing poetry he wrote his first poem in the eighth grade. A year later the family relocated to Cleveland, Ohio. Despite all the moving around, Hughes was a good student and excelled in his studies. He was also good looking and popular with the other students, during his senior year at Central High School in Cleveland, Ohio, he was voted class poet and editor of the yearbook.

After high school, Hughes traveled in Mexico, Europe, and Africa sometimes by working on freighters. By 1924 he had settled in Harlem, New York, and was an important figure during the Harlem Renaissance. The Harlem Renaissance was an African-American cultural movement that focused on literature, music, theater, art, and politics. One of his favorite pastimes was to sit in clubs and listen to the blues as he wrote his poetry.

Hughes died on May 22, 1967, in New York, NY. Some of his books for children and young adults include: *Popo and Fifina: Children of Haiti*, *The Dream Keeper and Other Poems*, *The First Book of Negroes*, *The First Book of Rhythms*, *Famous Negro Music Makers* and *Don't You Turn Back*.

In February 2002 the U.S. Postal Service issued a commemorative stamp honoring Langston Hughes. This stamp was the 25th in the Black Heritage series and marked Hughes's 100th birthday.