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How to Use the Reader's Guide

This guide was created to aid readers by providing a brief overview of the life and work of Langston Hughes. Its success is based on the understanding that Poetry Circle participants will have read it in advance of the discussions. The Poetry Circles address four different works: *The Collected Poems*, *The Best of Simple*, *The Big Sea*, and *Not without Laughter*.

Most readers will be familiar with Langston Hughes. This guide does not address all the questions readers may have about the works--those discussions should happen during the Circle sessions--but it provides background information and images that will assist participants in reading and gaining a deeper understanding of the works without doing outside research.

There are several parts to this guide. The chronology provides dates significant to the personal, cultural, and intellectual life of Langston Hughes. I attempted to set his life within the social and cultural events that affected his art. The narrative section addresses Hughes' life, especially those incidents that are reflected in his work. I have also provided some guidance to reading the works. For an in-depth discussion of his life and its effect on his work, you should consult one of the many biographies written about Hughes, especially Arnold Rampersad's two-volume work *The Life of Langston Hughes*. The selected bibliography provides a comprehensive listing of Hughes's major publications as well as representative secondary sources.

It is my hope that this guide will help facilitate more successful, enriching and rewarding discussions of these important works of Langston Hughes.

Acknowledgments

It is altogether appropriate that we salute Langston Hughes. This National Poetry Project, a direct descendant of the University of Kansas's "Langston Hughes: Let America Be America Again—An International Symposium on the Art, Life & Legacy of Langston Hughes" that celebrated the centenary of his birth, is a remarkable forum to continue the celebration of the life and work of a man who was instrumental in defining the direction of African American literature. Hughes's multigeneric abilities were instrumental in allowing him to leave his mark, indeed his legacy, in all phases of American art. An essayist, poet, novelist, playwright, autobiographer, journalist, lyricist, and writer of children's books, Hughes is the one person who has acknowledged, addressed, and appreciated a myriad of facets of black life in Africa and the Diaspora. It is with great pleasure that I created this guide.

This project would not have been possible without the guiding hand of a number of individuals. Maryemma Graham and Bill Tuttle's vision of a Hughes' centenary—and the superb implementation team that they assembled—was a daunting one. The international symposium and the celebration of the life of Langston Hughes that occurred in February 2002 will long be remembered not only for its extraordinary success, but also for its impact in transforming us into a more inclusive community. Dr. John Edgar Tidwell took the germ of an idea—the poetry circle—expanded upon it, and brought Langston Hughes back to the people of Kansas through a network of statewide programs developed for individuals of all ages. We are extremely grateful to the Kansas Humanities Council, which generously supported the initial Kansas model, organized by Sandra Wiechert and the Lawrence Public Library, and second, the statewide project under Dr. Tidwell's direction. The original reader's guide was created for that project, "Reading and Remembering Langston Hughes," so that a common body of knowledge would be made available to readers of all levels.

It is my hope that you will find continued use for this expanded edition, supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities, which has provided full support for the Langston Hughes National Poetry Project. Like all projects, this is a collective effort. First and foremost, thanks goes to Barbara Watkins for her keen intellect, critical eye, and generous spirit; to Doretha Williams, one of our younger scholars, and LHNPP's dedicated project manager; and to the staff of the Project on the History of Black Writing. I'd like to express my personal thanks to Robert E. Hemenway, chancellor of the University of Kansas, for his continued intellectual, emotional and financial support for this project; and for his commitment to the humanities in general and to Hughes in particular.

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Chronology

- 1859 John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry.
Langston Hughes's grandmother's first husband, Lewis Sheridan Leary, died in the raid.
- 1899 James Nathaniel Hughes and his wife, Carolina "Carrie" Langston Hughes, move to Joplin, Missouri, in search of greater racial and financial freedom.
- 1902 James Langston Hughes was born on February 1, in Joplin, Missouri.
- 1903 October—James Nathaniel Hughes abandons Carrie and baby Langston and moves to Cuba, then to Mexico.
Carrie takes Langston to live with his grandmother, Mary Leary Langston.
- 1907 Mother Carrie Hughes and son Langston move to Topeka, Kansas. Langston attends first grade in Topeka.
His mother takes him to the library, where he falls in love with books.
- 1908 Carrie takes Langston to visit his father in Mexico.
- 1903-15 Hughes lives primarily with his grandmother in Lawrence, Kansas.
He attends Pinckney School in Lawrence in second grade.
- 1909 The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is founded.
- 1914 Carrie Hughes marries Homer Clark. She leaves Langston with "Auntie" and "Uncle" Reed in Lawrence.
- 1915 April—Mary Langston, Hughes's grandmother, dies.
Langston moves to Lincoln, Illinois, to live with his mother and begins the eighth grade there.
- 1918 Langston publishes short stories and poems in the *Central High Monthly Magazine*, in Cleveland, Ohio.
He excels in track and other sports.
- 1919 Langston spends the summer with his father in Mexico.
February 17, the 369th Regiment returns from France and marches up Fifth Avenue to Harlem.
February—The First Pan African Congress organized by W. E. B. Du Bois meets in Paris.
Marcus Garvey founded the Black Star Shipping Line.
NAACP holds a conference on lynching and publishes *Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889-1918*.

Race riots in Charleston, South Carolina; Longview, Texas; Washington, D.C.; Omaha, Nebraska; and Chicago, Illinois.
Oscar Micheaux's first film, *The Homesteader*, is released in Chicago.

- 1920 Hughes graduates from high school in Cleveland, Ohio.
On a train to Mexico to visit his father again, Hughes writes "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" as he crosses the Mississippi River in St. Louis.
August—Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) Convention is held at Madison Square Garden.
James Weldon Johnson appointed first Black officer (secretary) of the NAACP.
- 1921 Hughes attends Columbia University for one year. He drops out to work odd jobs.
Hughes discovers Harlem: he meets Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois, Countee Cullen; and Jessie Fauset, writer and literary editor of *The Crisis*; he publishes "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" in *The Crisis*.
Shuffle Along by Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake, the first musical revue written and performed by African Americans, opened May 22, at Broadway's David Belasco Theater. The play launched the careers of Josephine Baker and Florence Mills.
The Second Pan-African Congress is held.
Colored Players Guild of New York is founded.
Representative L. C. Dyer of Missouri sponsors bill in Congress to make lynching a federal crime.
- 1922 Langston withdraws from Columbia University. He continues to publish in *The Crisis*.
The first anti-lynching legislation is approved by House of Representatives.
The Harmon Foundation is established to promote Black participation in the fine arts.
- 1923 Hughes writes "The Weary Blues" after visiting a Harlem cabaret.
He travels to Africa and Europe while working on a merchant ship. He writes "I, too."
Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life is founded by the National Urban League. Charles S. Johnson is the editor.
The Chip Woman's Fortune by Willis Richardson, the first serious play by a Black writer, is staged by the National Ethiopian Art Players on Broadway.
The Cotton Club opens.
Marcus Garvey is arrested for mail fraud and sentenced to five years in prison.
Jean Toomer's *Cane* and Marcus Garvey's *Philosophy and Opinion of Marcus Garvey* are published.
Bessie Smith makes her first recordings of *Downhearted Blues* and *Gulf Coast Blues*.

- 1924 Hughes returns to Harlem.
March 21, Civic Club Dinner, sponsored by *Opportunity*, brings Black writers and White publishers together. This event is considered by many to be the formal launching of the New Negro Movement.
- 1925 Hughes moves to Washington, D.C.
"The Weary Blues" wins him first prize in the *Opportunity* contest. Other winners were Countee Cullen and Zora Neale Hurston.
Small's Paradise Nightclub opens in Harlem.
- 1926 Hughes moves back to Harlem.
He publishes *The Weary Blues*, his first collection of poems.
He enters Lincoln University in Pennsylvania.
Hughes, Wallace Thurman, Zora Neale Hurston, Aaron Douglas, and Richard Bruce Nugent launch *Fire!!!* literary magazine.
Hughes publishes the essay "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" in *Nation*.
- 1927 Charlotte Osgood Mason becomes a patron of many New Negro artists, including Hughes and Hurston.
Hughes publishes *Fine Clothes to the Jew*.
In Abraham's Bosom, by Paul Green, with an all-Black cast, wins the Pulitzer Prize.
Porgy by Dorothy and DuBose Heyward opens at the Theater Guild on Broadway.
Duke Ellington plays at the Cotton Club.
Ethel Waters first appears on Broadway.
Marcus Garvey is deported.
A'Lelia Walker opens a tea room salon called "The Dark Tower."
- 1929 Hughes graduates from Lincoln University.
Negro Experimental Theater, Negro Art Theater, and National Colored Players are founded. Wallace Thurman's play, *Harlem*, written with William Jourdan Rapp, opens at the Apollo Theater and becomes hugely successful.
Black Thursday, October 29, Stock Exchange crashes.
- 1930 Hughes publishes *Not without Laughter*, his first novel.
The Green Pastures (musical), with an all-Black cast, opens on Broadway.
- 1931 Hughes meets and encourages Margaret Walker, then a novice poet, to continue her work.
April through July, the Scottsboro trial is held.
August 16, A'Lelia Walker dies.
Hughes publishes *Dear Lovely Death; The Negro Mother and Other Dramatic Recitations; and Scottsboro Limited*.

- 1932 Hughes travels to the Soviet Union.
Hughes publishes *The Dream Keeper*.
- 1934 Hughes publishes *The Ways of White Folks*, his first collection of short stories.
- 1935 Hughes is awarded a Guggenheim fellowship.
March 19, Harlem race riot.
October 10, *Porgy and Bess*, with an all-Black cast opens on Broadway.
October 25, Hughes's play *Mulatto*, the first full-length play by a Black writer, opens on Broadway.
- 1936 Hughes writes the play *Troubled Island*.
- 1937 Hughes writes the play *Soul Gone Home*.
Hughes works as a journalist for the Baltimore *Afro-American*.
- 1938 Hughes writes the play *Don't You Want to be Free?*
Hughes founds the Harlem Suitcase Theater and a theater in Los Angeles.
- 1940 Hughes publishes *The Big Sea*, an autobiography.
Hughes is awarded a Rosenwald fellowship.
- 1942 Hughes publishes *Shakespeare in Harlem*, a book of poems.
- 1943 Hughes writes for the *Chicago Defender*. He creates his Simple character in columns for the paper.
Hughes is awarded an honorary Litt.D. by Lincoln University.
- 1947 Hughes is a poet-in-residence at Atlanta University.
He publishes *Fields of Wonder*.
- 1949 Hughes teaches at University of Chicago's Laboratory School.
He publishes *One Way Ticket*.
- 1950 Hughes publishes *Simple Speaks His Mind*, his first volume of Simple sketches.
- 1951 Hughes publishes a translation of Federico Garcia Lorca's *Gypsy Ballads*.
Hughes publishes *Montage of a Dream Deferred*, his first book-length poem in which he successfully sustained jazz cadences.
- 1952 Hughes edits *The First Book of Negroes*, an anthology.
- 1953 Hughes is subpoenaed to appear before Senator Joseph McCarthy's House on Un-American Activities Committee in Washington, D. C. Hughes was considered a security risk by the FBI until 1959.

- 1954-55 Hughes publishes several books for young readers, including *Famous American Negroes*.
- 1956 Hughes publishes *I Wonder as I Wander: An Autobiographical Journal*, his second autobiography.
- 1957 Hughes publishes *The First Book of Jazz*.
- 1958 Hughes publishes *The Langston Hughes Reader*.
He edits *The First Book of Negro Folklore*.
He publishes *Tambourines to Glory*, a novel that was later (1963) to appear as a musical play.
- 1959 Hughes publishes *The Selected Poems*.
- 1960 Hughes edits the anthology *An African Treasury: Articles, Essays, Stories, Poems by Black Africans*.
- 1961 Hughes is inducted into the National Institute of Arts and Letters.
He publishes *Ask Your Mama*.
He publishes *The Best of Simple*.
- 1962 Hughes publishes *Fight for Freedom: The Story of the NAACP*.
- 1963 Hughes publishes *Five Plays by Langston Hughes*.
He edits the anthology *Poems from Black Africa*.
- 1964 Hughes publishes *New Negro Poets: U. S. A.*
- 1965 Hughes defends Martin Luther King Jr. from attacks by militant Blacks.
- 1966 Hughes is appointed by President Lyndon B. Johnson to lead the American delegation to the First World Festival of Negro Arts in Dakar.
- 1967 Hughes edits the anthology *The Best Short Stories by Negro Writers*.
Hughes dies of prostate cancer on May 22 in New York City.
The Panther and the Lash: Poems of Our Times, his last volume of poems, is published.
- 1969 The Langston Hughes Community Library and Cultural Center (Queens Borough Public Library), the first public institution named after Hughes opens.
- 1973 Hughes's *Good Morning Revolution: Uncollected Writings of Social Protest*, edited by Faith Berry, is published.

- 1994 Hughes's *The Sweet Flypaper of Life*, written with Roy DeCarava, is published.
- 1994 *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*, edited by Arnold Rampersad and David Roessel, is published.
Five Plays by Langston Hughes is published.

Langston Hughes Reader's Guide

To fling my arms wide
In some place of the sun,
To whirl and to dance
Till the white day is done.
Then rest at cool evening
Beneath a tall tree
While night comes on gently,
 Dark like me --
That is my dream!

To fling my arms wide
In the face of the sun,
Dance! Whirl! Whirl!
Till the quick day is done.
Rest at pale evening . . .
A tall, slim tree . . .
Night coming tenderly
 Black like me.
 —"Dream Variations"

Langston did fling his arms wide and embraced life—all of it. He embraced his life's beginnings spent in poverty and mobility. He embraced his life in Missouri and in Kansas and in Mexico, Illinois, Ohio, New York, Washington, Italy, France, Russia, Spain, Asia, and Africa among other places. He embraced his successes and his failures, his loves and his losses. He embraced his place in America and his struggle not to be consumed by a land that can only see black poets as "other." And he danced. He made wonderful music in his poems and his narratives. He blended the rhythms of poetry into song in his plays. He whirled the lives of people he knew and others he had only heard about into sounds of love and laughter and pain and longing that have lasted well after he had embraced that tender coming night. The pale evening of Langston Hughes's life provided rest for the man who understood that his life had been framed and informed by the contradictions and complexities that were for the most part out of his control. But he never let those elements interfere with his life's quests. He seldom spoke of the intimate parts of his life, but he talked often, yet cagily, about the rest. He was articulate and artistic in the delivery of his messages. He used almost every communication forum then known to man: journalism, plays, poetry, blues, jazz, fiction, and even political propaganda papers. His life was not all sweet, but he embraced and loved it all.

So since I'm still here livin'
I guess I will live on.
I could've died for love--
But for livin' I was born.

Though you may hear me holler,
And you may see me cry--

I'll be dogged, sweet baby,
If you gonna see me die.

Life is fine!

Fine as wine!

Life is fine!

—"Life Is Fine"

Life was not always fine for James Langston Hughes. It's not clear when he lost the first name he shared with his father or if anyone in his family ever called him "James"; what is clear is that the world came to know his work and love the man they called by his middle name. Langston Hughes was born on a troubled road. His father, James Nathaniel Hughes, upset and angry with the Oklahoma Territory's all-white examining board for not allowing him to take the bar exam after he had studied law by correspondence, took his wife and moved to Joplin, Missouri, in 1899. On February 1, 1902, Langston was born. His father could not cope with the pressures of trying to raise a child and take care of a wife in abject poverty under the constraints of being black in America. So, when Langston was eighteen months old, his father left. He left Langston, his mother, and the country. He moved to Cuba, then to Mexico. Langston's mother, Carolina "Carrie" Langston Hughes, refused to go with him. Carrie was unable to find meaningful work in Joplin, so she moved from town to town, with baby Langston in tow. When the responsibility of taking care of him and trying to work a series of low-paying jobs became too much for her, she took Langston to Lawrence, Kansas, to live with her mother, Mary Leary Langston. Carrie didn't completely abandon her charge to her mother. Over the next twelve years, the young Langston would sometimes, but not often, live with his mother. He started school in Topeka, where his mother, who had attended the University of Kansas for a while, worked as a stenographer for a "colored lawyer . . . named Mr. Guy."

Carrie insisted that Langston attend Harrison Street School, a white school that was a few blocks from the rented room they shared. There Langston learned many lessons. He learned that his mother was a fighter and had not hesitated to go before the school board to insist that her son be admitted to this white school. He learned that most of the white teachers he would interact with were kind and thoughtful, but he also learned that there would always be the some who were not. One teacher's racist remarks instigated some of the white children to "grab stones and tin cans out of the alley and chase [him] home." He also learned there not to hate all white people; some of his classmates came to his rescue and saved him from the terrorists. The time Langston spent with Carrie in Topeka was the time she used to introduce her son to the theater, to libraries, and to books.

When Langston was five or six years old, Carrie and her estranged husband decided to reconcile. Carrie took her son and her mother to Mexico in anticipation of that reunion. The first night they were in Mexico City, an earthquake drove people from their homes and theaters into the Alameda and scared Carrie back to Kansas. Carrie continued to move from town to town in search of a better job and a better life. When the opportunity presented itself, she took her son with her. Langston even spent one rather unremarkable summer living with his mother in Colorado. But their times together were brief and sporadic. Most of the first thirteen years of his life were spent with his maternal grandmother in Lawrence.

Life in Lawrence for Langston was filled with music, poetry, books, family, more poverty, and loneliness. Mary Leary Langston, part Native American and part African American, was a proud and gentle woman. Unlike other women in her position, Mary Langston did not do domestic work. She became a landlord instead, renting out rooms in her house at 732 Alabama to students at the University of Kansas. Langston often spent Saturday afternoons at KU sporting events, particularly football games rooting for the Jayhawks. Those events created happy childhood memories. What wasn't happy were the constant moves.

If she could rent out the entire house, Langston's grandmother would sometimes move the two of them in with close family friends James and Mary Reed at 731 New York. The ten to twelve dollars a month she would net was not enough money to lift them out of poverty or to provide basic necessities for her and Langston's needs, but it did pay the mortgage on the house. So close were Mrs. Langston and the Reeds that Langston called them "Auntie" and "Uncle," although there was no blood connection between them. Instead, the Reeds, Mrs. Langston, and young Langston were joined emotionally and spiritually.

Life was not always easy for Langston and his grandmother. They found spiritual enrichment and comfort at St. Luke A. M. E. Church at 900 New York Street. The church, in addition to supplementing the Christian education encouraged by his grandmother and promoted by Auntie Reed ("Uncle Reed was a sinner and never went to church as long as he lived, nor cared anything about it . . . But both of them were good and kind—the one who went to church and the one who didn't. And no doubt from them I learned to like both Christians and sinners equally well."), was also a source of many of the rhythms Langston credits as influencing his poetry. Hughes confesses, however, in his autobiography *The Big Sea*, that the young Langston wasn't always eager to attend services. He reflects on the lingering emotional pain and personal embarrassment he suffered for once faking a religious conversion. The pain of harboring the lie that he had seen Jesus and deceiving Auntie Reed and the rest of the parishioners that night at St. Luke's caused Langston not to believe in Jesus anymore because "he didn't come to help." Langston realized that by faking a vision of Jesus, he had trespassed on the faith that Auntie Reed had in him.

Mary Leary Langston not only insisted that her grandson attend church and Sunday School, but she and the Reeds were adamant that he get a good education. After attending first grade in Topeka, Kansas, where his mother was then working, Langston entered Pinckney School at 801 West 6th Street in Lawrence for the second grade. At Pinckney, Langston, along with all the other primary-level black children, were taught in a separate room by a black teacher. The segregation did not affect his ability or



Langston Hughes and, possibly, "Uncle," James Reed, Lawrence, Kansas, c. 1914. Reprinted by permission of Harold Ober Associates Incorporated.

eagerness to learn. The love of books that had begun in 1907, when his mother took him with her to "the little vine-covered library on the grounds of the capitol" in Topeka, continued to grow. At that library he fell in love with librarians and with libraries. Then, when he was six, "books began to happen" to him; so much so that he "believed in books more than in people." Books were constant, unwavering, and good company. His love and belief in books charted the wonderful, exciting path that his life would follow. His belief in books and his personal and racial histories were instrumental in grounding the lonely boy, who was being raised in unstable, poor conditions, in a proud, rich heritage.

During the times Langston lived with the Reeds, he attended New York School at 936 New York Street. Bright and precocious, Langston often disrupted his fourth grade classroom with unsolicited comments. He later began his struggle for social equity in Lawrence public schools. His eighth-grade teacher, Ida Lyons, at Central School, 901 Kentucky, moved all the black children into what Langston called the "Jim Crow row" to teach them. Protesting the segregation, Langston and some of his friends were remanded to the principal's office and expelled from school. This was probably an inherent reaction in him. His grandmother's first husband, Lewis Sheridan Leary, "always believed that people should be free" and died at Harpers Ferry in the raid with John Brown. Her second husband, Charles Langston, shared the same beliefs. Langston's grandmother held on to those beliefs that all people should be free and passed them to her daughter. That may have been one of the reasons Carrie was attracted to a man like James Nathaniel Hughes, who left the country rather than live under the constraints of racism. So, when Langston convinced his friends that there was something wrong with them being relegated to the Jim Crow row and protesting against it, his resistance was perfectly natural. The children were reinstated when Dr. Grant Harvey, an African American physician, took on their case and intervened.

Getting an education in Lawrence wasn't easy, but it was effective. Hughes received a wonderful educational foundation in Lawrence schools and libraries. Those facilities also came to recognize the contributions that Hughes had made to them and to the world. The new Pinckney School, which was built in 1930 and sits further back on the same lot as the old one, named its library "The Langston Hughes Library for Children" in 1991. Only the first floor remains of Central School; however, the Lawrence Public Library, where Langston would often read during his lonely boyhood years, became the Lawrence Arts Center. Those places and the home he shared with his grandmother and with the Reeds "a block from the Kaw River, near the railroad station" have either transformed or disappeared, but their influence on Hughes's life and the lessons he learned in Lawrence live on in his work. Not only was the Kaw River important to Hughes, so were all his ancestral rivers.

I've known rivers:

I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the
flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.

I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln
went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy
bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:
Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.
— "The Negro Speaks of Rivers"

Langston's young life followed the flow first established by his mother, father, and grandmother. His father became relatively successful in Mexico after a time and began to contribute minimally to Langston's needs. Carrie continued her sporadic involvement in his life, and the Reeds for a short while were his caretakers. But his primary path was laid by his grandmother. Mary Leary Langston surrounded her life with an aura of racial and personal esteem. Langston recounts his pride in her when, as the last surviving widow of John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry, he traveled to Osawatomie, Kansas, where she "was honored by President Roosevelt—Teddy—and sat on the platform with him while he made a speech." Mrs. Langston's first husband, Lewis Sheridan Leary, a freedman, fought alongside John Brown at Harpers Ferry in 1859. Her second husband, Charles Howard Langston, searching for greater racial and financial freedom, moved to Kansas. Charles Langston had a deep desire for autonomy and to be able to progress beyond the strictures he found in farm life, so he owned a grocery store in Lawrence. He paid little attention to his businesses and, consequently, died broke. He left little other than memories of his quest to quench those desires and a talent for literary expression that he passed on to his grandson. Charles Howard Langston was not the only family member with writing talent. In 1855, his brother, John Mercer Langston, was the first black American to be elected to public office. In 1894, John Mercer Langston, who shared his brother's energy and enthusiasm for freedom fighting, wrote his autobiography *From the Virginia Plantation to the National Capital*. Both brothers knew the importance of money. However, when John Mercer Langston died, he left to his heirs stocks, bonds, and a large house. Charles Howard left Mary Leary Langston memories, "some fine speeches," and a home she had to mortgage.

Material things had no real importance to the young Langston. As a teenager, he rejected his father's life in Mexico because this life was bound in materialism. His father funded Langston's education at Columbia University on the grounds that he become an engineer—a career that would provide an excellent income. Langston attended for a while then dropped out, not because he couldn't do the work (he had a B+ average), but because his heart was focused on more ethereal quests, like writing poetry. As a young child, he knew that he had cousins in St. Louis who were relatively wealthy; yet, no matter how financially strapped they were, his grandmother never appealed to them for money. Instead of concentrating on money and materialism, Langston focused on more soul-satisfying matters. Langston followed his grandmother's lead. She passed her life's lessons onto her grandson during the years she raised him in Lawrence. Mary Leary Langston died in 1915, but she left a legacy of pride, strength, and love to her grandson.

Well, son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
It's had tacks in it,
And splinters,
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor--
Bare.
But all the time
I've been a-climbin' on,
And reachin' landin's
And turnin' corners,
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.
So boy, don't you turn back.
Don't you set down on the steps
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now--
For I've still goin', honey,
I've still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
— "Mother to Son"

After Mary Leary Langston died, Langston's life changed. He spent several months with the Reeds, then left Lawrence to reunite with his mother. The previous year, Carrie had married Homer Clark and moved to Lincoln, Illinois just outside Chicago. Langston joined them there and completed grammar school. Still seeking a better life and a better job, Clark moved the family to Cleveland, Ohio, shortly after Langston finished grammar school. Langston did well at Central High in Cleveland. He published poems and short stories in the school's monthly magazine, was the class poet, and excelled in track and other sports. Carrie had another baby, a son, and Langston adored the child. But all was not well. Clark remained restless and worked at a series of odd jobs, including jobs in the steel mills and coal mines. The day Langston graduated from high school, neither his mother nor his stepfather was there to support and congratulate him. Clark was out of town looking for a new job in a new town; Carrie lived in Chicago. Langston, with some degree of bitterness, reflected in his autobiography on his parents: "My mother traveled about the country looking for my step-father or for a better job, always moving from one house to another where the rent was cheaper or there was at least a bathroom or a backyard to hang out clothes. And me growing up living with my grandmother, with aunts who were really no relation, with my mother in rented rooms, or alone trying to get through high school—always some kind of crisis in our lives. My father, permanently in Mexico during all those turbulent years, representing for me the one stable factor in my life. He at least stayed put."

The summer after graduation Langston returned to Mexico to spend time with his father. Age and experience had caught up with Langston. No longer was he the naive child longing to be with his parents. During that visit he made startling revelations about his father. He recognized that James Nathaniel Hughes had personality traits and goals

antithetical to his own. The elder Hughes was materialistic. Life in poverty in Lawrence had taught Langston that there were more valuable things in life that money could not buy. He recognized that his father had adopted the personae of the racist whites that he detested in the United States. He was treating the Mexicans in the extreme manner that racist whites had treated blacks. As hard as it was for Langston to accept these characteristics in his father, he knew that there was one thing that would always separate them: James Hughes hated Negroes. Langston loved them and, more than that, he needed them: he needed to be *with* them.

Langston was to fulfill his need for Negro life in New York, particularly in Harlem. He found the folk. The day Langston got off "that underground ride to Harlem" he saw them: hundreds of colored people milling about, talking, laughing, working. Absorbing the sights and the sounds and mixing with people, Langston developed his artistry. Harlem was the life he had been longing for. A life filled with black people, and their sounds and their rhythms and their voices and their lives. He began writing more and publishing his poems, particularly in *Crisis*. Much of his work reflected his new-found Harlem life and picked up the sounds and the rhythms that surrounded him. Just tinkering around, he wrote "The Weary Blues."

Droning a drowsy syncopated tune,
Rocking back and forth to a mellow croon,
 I heard a Negro play.
Down on Lenox Avenue the other night
By the pale dull pallor of an old gas light
 He did a lazy sway. . . .
 He did a lazy sway. . . .
To the tune o' those Weary Blues.
With his ebony hands on each ivory key
He made that poor piano moan with melody.
 O Blues!
Swaying to and fro on his rickety stool
He played that sad raggy tune like a musical fool.
 Sweet Blues!
Coming from a black man's soul.
 O Blues!
In a deep song voice with a melancholy tone
I heard that Negro sing, that old piano moan---
 "Ain't got nobody in all this world,
 Ain't got nobody but ma self.
 I's gwine to quit ma frownin'
 And put my troubles on the shelf."

Thump, thump, thump, went his foot on the floor.
He played a few chords, then he sang some more---
 "I got the Weary Blues
 And I can't be satisfied.
 Got the Weary Blues
 And can't be satisfied---

I ain't happy no mo'
And I wish that I had died."
And far into the night he crooned that tune.
The stars went out and so did the moon.
The singer stopped playing and went to bed
While the Weary Blues echoed through his head.
He slept like a rock or a man that's dead.
—"The Weary Blues"

This poem about a piano player in Harlem became very special to him. He kept writing and rewriting, attempting to create a satisfying ending to it. Revision of his work was not a Hughes trait. Despite his "one write" poetry, Hughes became the most well-known writer of the era and helped to define the newly developing explosion of black arts and letters that has become known as the New Negro or Harlem Renaissance.

Aaron Douglas, an African American artist from Topeka, clearly delineates the task he and Langston had before them in creating their wonderful "authentic Negro" art: Your problem Langston, my problem, no our problem is to conceive, develop, establish an art era. Not white art painted black. . . . No, let's bare our arms and plunge them deep through laughter, through pain, through sorrow, through hope, through disappointment, into the very depths of the souls of our people and drag forth material crude, rough, neglected. Then let's sing it, dance it, write it, paint it. Let's do the impossible. Let's create something transcendently material, mystically objective. Earthy. Spiritually earthy. Dynamic.

And create it they did. They became part of this great Negro Renaissance and established their legacies as artists.

Alain Locke, the "mid-wife" to this younger generation of artists, was the first to contact the fledgling poet. Locke wrote Hughes, asking if he could visit. Hughes refused. His life and habitats had none of the glamour of the life he imagined the Negro intellectuals shared. Working and living on the docks, he did not want the "distinguished professor from Howard, a Ph.D. at that" to visit him there. After all, Langston "knew only the people I had grown up with, and they weren't people whose shoes were always shined, who had been to Harvard, or who had heard Bach." It was not until editor and novelist Jessie Fauset contacted him, invited him to a *Crisis* luncheon, and agreed to let him bring his mother that Langston met the intelligentsia face to face. Hughes and Carrie attended the luncheon and were notably impressed with the people who attended, but not enough for Langston to participate wholeheartedly. Instead, Hughes interrupted his work and his place in the movement. He sailed for Europe and Africa.

His re-entry into the Renaissance began almost as soon as he returned to the States in 1924. He went straight to Harlem, bought a pack of cigarettes, and attempted to immerse himself in this segment of his life as a poet. Hughes sold a few poems. Others he shared first with his new acquaintance, poet Countee Cullen. Through Cullen Hughes was invited to a NAACP benefit cabaret party, where he met some of the most important people of the time: Walter White, Mary White Ovington, James Weldon Johnson, and Carl Van Vechten. Hughes moved to Washington, D. C., where he attempted to enroll at Howard University, but he had no tuition money, and there were no available scholarships. The harsh winter, in terms of the weather and the treatment he experienced among Negroes, fostered creativity. Hughes wrote a "great many poems."

Those works wore the beat and rhythm of the blues and spirituals. Langston lived and listened to the blues. He loved the places where black folk congregated and talked and sang about life: the barber shops, barrel houses, the shouting churches, nightclubs, and bars. In these places he found the stories, the rhythms, and the people he would recreate in his work. Hughes submitted the piece he had worked on three years earlier, "The Weary Blues," to an *Opportunity* magazine contest. He won first place. More importantly, he met Zora Neale Hurston and Eric Walrond, among others, and re-acquainted himself with James Weldon Johnson, Alain Locke, and W. E. B. Du Bois. It is appropriate that this was the poem that earned him prominence as a young poet. It included the blues of his life. In it was the first blues verse he had ever heard in Lawrence, Kansas, when he was a little boy:

I got de weary blues
 And I can't be satisfied.
 Got de weary blues
 And can't be satisfied.
 I ain't happy no mo'
 And I wish that I had died.

The ending is the polished poet's:
 And far into the night he crooned that tune.
 The stars went out and so did the moon.
 The singer stopped playing and went to bed.
 While the Weary Blues echoed through his head.
 He slept like a rock or a man that's dead.



Cover illustration for *The Weary Blues*, by Miguel Covarrubias, 1925

Not all of life in Harlem was wonderful for Hughes. The large numbers of African Americans there were mostly migrants, who had headed north looking for a better living. Many had not adjusted well to the harsh New York winters, or the cold Northern life:

What happens to a dream deferred?
 Does it dry up
 like a raisin in the sun?
 Or fester like a sore---
 And then run?
 Does it stink like rotten meat?
 Or syrup over like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
 Like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?
 — "Harlem"

Lorraine Hansberry adapted this poem for her play "A Raisin in the Sun," as it was indicative of migrant aspirations—mostly deferred. The freedom and social equity that

African Americans sought was also delayed. In his poem "I, too," Hughes writes of this de facto situation, ending the poem with hope, instead of possible violence.

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I'll be at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed---

I, too, am America.
—"I, Too"

Langston Hughes breathed a remarkable life into his work, whether he was making social criticism, recreating the lives of the people he loved and needed, or talking about love relationships. The scholars who will be conducting the discussion sessions for the Langston Hughes National Poetry Project help keep those works alive. Discussion leaders will draw upon the relationships between history, biography, and autobiography in their sessions on Hughes's autobiography *The Big Sea*. In addition to uncovering the implications of the title to Hughes's life experiences, the key to understanding this work is an exploration of the development of Hughes's racial identity for himself and others of African descent during the turbulent 1920s and 1930s. An historical analysis of the African American experience in Kansas, in particular, and in the United States, in general, during the first half of the twentieth century is critical to understanding his work and the development of his world view and ideologies.

Facilitators will help explain how growing up black in Kansas affected Hughes's work. They will help Poetry Circle participants wrestle with questions such as, how did Hughes's poetry sustain a sense of personal and group identity when de jure and de facto racial segregation threatened self-actualization? How did Hughes's humor, especially in the Jesse B. Semple sketches, reveal a racial mechanism for survival and control in a world that was often hostile to the presence of African Americans? In today's world, where issues of diversity (racial, gender, class, etc.) are vigorously debated, what can we learn from reading the poetry and character sketches as we remember Langston Hughes?

Hughes developed the Simple tales from a character he heard about in the barber shop he frequented, but had never met. He intended this character to be funny as well as far-reaching in the underlying messages he delivered to his readers. These sessions will raise issues with the participants including Hughes's choice of humor as a vehicle to talk about important topics such as race relations, the atomic bomb, poverty, and religious faith; and how he uses humor to make insightful comments on life and the world. Mark Twain said that humor was a good weapon against hypocrisy. Does Hughes effectively use humor as a weapon? Hughes set up each "Simple" story as a dialogue. Discussions should address the advantage of using this structural device.

The discussions of *Not without Laughter*, Hughes semi-autobiographical novel set in Stanton, a fictional town that represents Lawrence, will be led by scholars interested in Hughes as autobiographer, humorist, and humanist telling the African American tale. These sessions will address Hughes as a Kansan, as an African American, as a poet and writer living by his writing, as a person who lived in the first seventy years of the twentieth century, and grappled with the political, social, racial, and economic struggles of that period. Hughes uses his coming-of-age story to tell about life in Kansas at a critical period in American culture, as well as infusing a variety of cultural elements such as blues and jazz rhythms into this novel. The novel touches on many themes of interest to today's readers: family relationships, class differences inside the African American community, migration, and female-headed households. Hughes, however, is not interested in dwelling on the victimization or pathology of the black community.

The Collected Poems discussion sessions should focus on the way Hughes uses poetry to offer a rich and provocative experience. These discussions will provide a forum in which to raise important issues for discussion, especially Hughes's vernacular voice and its penchant for capturing the nuances of everyday speech. Hughes had a remarkable ability to capture the speech of the "low down folk." Discussions will explore how Hughes enables the outsider to "walk in the shoes" of black Americans; how Hughes' art dignifies the anguish and frustration of an oppressed people; how Hughes demonstrates his ear for authentic (and often amusing) language; and how his art transcends the limits of time and place to express the human condition that makes us recognize one another as creatures caught in the overarching ordeal of existence.

The world has benefitted greatly from the life and work of Langston Hughes. This man of many talents, who was born in Missouri and raised in Lawrence, became a world citizen and shared his gifts with us. It is altogether appropriate that we honor his life through celebrating his legacy and continuing to read and discuss his work.

I play it cool
And dig all jive.
That's the reason
I stay alive.

My motto,
As I live and learn,
is:
*Dig And Be Dug
In Return.*
—"Motto"

We dig you Langston.



Langston Hughes and Ethel "Toy" Harper, Winter 1946. Reprinted by permission of Harold Ober Associates Incorporated.

Selected Poems of Langston Hughes

"Bitterness is not a part of me and so I cannot spew it. I see myself, I see the Negro people as, first of all human beings . . . aspiring for all the things that other Westerners aspire (sic), but conditioned by the outside pressures of prejudice and discrimination. Some of these situations are tragic, many of them humorous, all of them are wonderful to write about. If we human beings were not the resilient animals that nature has made of us, perhaps our species would not have survived. . . . But the universality which is common to all men, makes of us all, basically brothers."

—Langston Hughes, quoted by Arnold Rampersad in *The Life of Langston Hughes* Vol. 2, 1941-1967, *I Dream A World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988; 272.

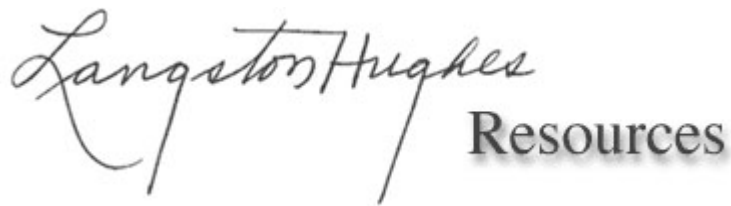
- "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," 23
- "Mother to Son," 30
- "The Negro Mother," 155–56
- "Dream Boogie," 388
- "Harlem (2)," 426
- "Danse Africaine," 28
- "Jazzonia," 34
- "Trumpet Player," 338–39
- "When Sue Wears Red," 30
- "Dream Variations," 40
- "The Weary Blues," 50
- "Evenin' Air Blues," 225
- "A House in Taos," 80–81
- "Homesick Blues," 72
- "Chicago Blues," 592–93
- "Po' Boy Blues," 83
- "Gypsy Man," 66
- "Lament over Love," 69–70
- "Red Silk Stockings," 122
- "Bad Man," 112
- "Early Evening Quarrel," 231
- "Song for a Dark Girl," 104
- "Gal's Cry for a Dying Lover," 104
- "Black Gal," 121
- "Hard Daddy," 124
- "Sylvester's Dying Bed," 140–41
- "Ballad of the Landlord," 402–04
- "Juke Box Love Song," 393
- "Air Raid over Harlem," 185–88
- "Frederick Douglass: 1817–1895," 549
- "Chant for May Day," 209–10
- "Mulatto," 100–01

"The New Cabaret Girl," 87
"Share Croppers," 185
"The South," 26–27
"Brass Spittoons," 86
"Minstrel Man," 61
"Merry-Go-Round," 240
"Genius Child," 198
"Motto," 398

". . . words big with the building of life rather than its destruction, filled with faith in life rather than doubt and distress, such words entering into the minds of men, last much longer than today's dinner in the belly or next year's overcoat on the back. And such words, even when forgotten, may still be reflected in terms of motives and actions, and so go out from the reader to many people who have never seen the original words themselves."

—Langston Hughes in *Rampersad*, Vol. 1, 362.

Please feel free to explore the volume of *Collected Poems* on your own and to suggest additional poems for discussion.



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WEBSITES

Lawrence CyberVillage <http://www.ci.lawrence.ks.us>

A community service of the Lawrence Public Library that describes resources in the arts, education, and local history and updates on community events.

Langston Hughes in Lawrence http://www.ci.lawrence.ks.us/local_history/lh_index.shtml

This site includes an exhibit on Langston Hughes in Lawrence prepared by the Watkins Community Museum of History that identifies real places and events that Hughes uses in his semiautobiographical novel *Not without Laughter*. A second link replicates a walking tour, led by local historian Katie Armitage, of Hughes' residences, schools, church, and the Carnegie Library in Lawrence. Other links include an article published in the *Lawrence Journal-World* on the Lawrence City Hall inscription taken from Hughes poem "Youth" and an article from the *University Daily Kansan* on Hughes' literary work and the establishment of the Langston Hughes visiting professorship at the University of Kansas.

American Jazz Museum <http://www.americanjazzmuseum.com>

The story of jazz—its origins and greatest performers told through the sights and sounds of one of the most interactive museums in the country. Exhibits, educational activities, special celebrations, and the "Jammin at the Gem" anual concert series.

University of Missouri Press <http://www.system.missouri.edu/upress/hughes.htm>

The University of Missouri Press has published the collected works of Langston Hughes in 17 volumes. This compilation of his novels, short stories, poems, plays, essays, and other published work provides readers and libraries with a comprehensive source for the first time of one of the twentieth century's most prolific and influential African America authors.

C-SPAN's American Writers Series http://www.americanwriters.org/writers/hughes_hurston.asp on the Harlem Renaissance writers features Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston on September 24 and 28.

The Poetry Daily site, www.poems.com

Blackwriters.org, www.blackwriters.org

Literate Nubian, www.literatenubia.com

A Website of various poetry links, www.linklane.com/p/poets.htm

A Hughes Timeline http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/masterpiece/americancollection/cora/hughes_timeline.html from PBS provides information about Hughes's life, in the context of his work and major world events.

Internet School Library Media Center. E- Text available at <http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/hughes.htm>

The Academy of American Poets <http://www.poets.org> - on line exhibit with biographical information, poetry, and bibliography. Allows you to find any poem or poet, listen to it, join a discussion form, see events, and search other literary links.

Favorite Poem Project <http://www.favoritepoem.org/archive/index.html#henderson> - Howard Michael Henderson discusses and recites Hughes' poetry.

Favorite Poem Project <http://www.favoritepoem.org/archive/index#chin> - Pov Chin discusses and recites poetry.

Modern American Poetry http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/g_/hughes.htm - a collection of critical, historical, and biographical information.

Who was Langston Hughes? An Essay by Eric J. Sundquist.
<http://www.commentarymagazine.com/9612/decobs.html>

<http://longman.aaawl.com/kennedy/hughes/biography.html> Biography, critical overview, and links.

It's a Hughes Thang! www.cwrl.utexas.edu/~mmaynard/Hughes/hughes.htm University of Kansas

Langston Hughes Tribute <http://langstonhughes.8m.com/> - poems, pictures, paintings, links to other places. Created by Christopher Kamsler

Harlem Renaissance website <http://www.nku.edu/~diesmanj/harlem.html>

Kansas City Public Library <http://www.kcpl.org/sc/exhibits/autographs/hughes.htm> - offers viewing of 1st draft "The Bitter River"

Langston Hughes's *Weary Blues* <http://www.geocities.com/xxxjorgexxx/hughes1.htm> - poems in English and Spanish with audio clips of jazz accompaniment.

Langston Hughes Society <http://www.uga.edu/~iaas/home.html>

Library of Congress <http://lcweb.loc.gov>

New York Public Library, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture
<http://www.si.umich.edu/CHICO/Harlem/>

<http://www.redhotjazz.com/hughes.html>

<http://www.liben.com/Hugheslinks.html>

<http://discoverytheater.si.edu/sweet/tss03.htm>

<http://www.sdcoe.k12.ca.us/score/langhu/langhutg.html>

<http://www.myhero.com>

Other Websites

<http://www.chipublib.org/oo1hwk/litlists/harlemren.html>

<http://www.usc.edu/Library/Ref/Ethnic/harlem.html>

<http://ie.uwindsor.ca/jazz/hughes.html>

<http://www.learner.org>

<http://server.music.vt.edu/hughes/home.htm>

<http://www.blockhead.com/lhughes.htm>

<http://mickey.queens.lib.nu.us/spec/langston.bio.html>

<http://www.harlemlive.org>

For Teachers

http://www.aw.com/englishpages/lit_wkbk_hughes.htm

<http://tlc.ai.org/hughes.htm>

LESSON PLANS

African American Autobiography for Middle School Students. Unit plan by Delores Marshall.

Artistic Justice: the Artist as Historian and Social Critic. By Medria Blue. English, African American history. Grades 6-8.

The Blues Impulse-An Era and the Ambiguity of Adolescence. Unit plan by Sequella Coleman. Poetry, social studies, reading, English grades 6—8.

Creating Blues: An Interdisciplinary Study. Language arts, music, art, writing; grades 6-8; by Medria Blue.

Discovery Theater. Sweet and Sour Animal Book by Langston Hughes. From Discovery Theater, Smithsonian. Information on the 1997 play based on Hughes' alphabet book.

In Search of Afro American Poets in Modern Times. By Cynthia H. Roberts; biography poetry. Special education, learning disabled, and socially emotionally maladjusted. Grades 9-12.

Langston Hughes: Voice Among Voices. By G. Casey Cassidy. Biography, autobiography, short stories. Comparative literature unity for grades 7-12.

Living Pictures Representing the History of Black Dance. By Michelle Edmonds-Sepulveda. Dance, drama, poetry. Grades 6-8.

Poetry for "Special" Students. Special education, language arts, grades 7-12. By Victoria Malison. From Yale New Haven.

The Role of the African Playwright as a Griot. By Gerene L. Freeman. Creative writing, drama, English, Afro American history. Grades 10-12.

SCORE Teacher Guide. The Poetry of Langston Hughes. Grades 9-10; From San Diego County Office of Education.

Steps Toward Writing Poetry. By Pearl Elaine Mitchell. Grades 4-6. Poetry, language arts.

The Stranger Redeemed: A Portrait of a Black Poet. A biography unit. By Ivory Erkerd. Middle school grades 7-8.

Tales from the City. Unity plan by Bill Coden. Harlem Renaissance. Black history for college track English. Grade 10.

Understanding and Appreciating Poetry: Afro Americans and Their Poetry. By Frances Ellen Pierce. Poetry reading language arts, Grade 6.

We, Too, Sing America. By G. Casey Cassidy. Poetry Black history literature. Grades 7-12.

AUDIO RESOURCES

Berger, Jean. *Songs.* New York: Broud Bros. Four songs with poems by Langston Hughes.

Bonds, Margaret. *Ballad of the Brown King: A Christmas Cantata for Chorus of Mixed Voices.* New York: S. Fox Pub. Co., 1961. Music by Margaret Bonds with text by Langston Hughes.

Bontemps, Arna Wendell. *Anthology of Negro Poetry.* 1 sound disc. Folkways, 1961.

Gordon, Ricky Ian. *Genius Child: A Cycle of 10 Songs.* Williamson Music; distributed by Hal Leonard, 1995. Music by Ricky Gordan, using poems by Langston Hughes.

Hughes, Langston. *The First Album of Jazz for Children, with Documentary Recordings from the Library of Folkways Records.* New York: Folkways Records, 1954.

— — — *The Glory of Negro History.* 1 sound disc. New York: Folkways Records, 1958.

- — — *Langston Hughes: The Making of a Poet*. Washington, D.C.: National Public Radio Cassettes, 1988.
- — — *Langston Hughes Reads His Poetry [Abridged]*. Audiocassette. Harper Audio, 2000.
- — — *Langston Hughes Reads: One Way Ticket, The Negro Speaks of Rivers, the Ku Klux Klan and Other of His Poems*. Audiocassette. Caedmon Audio Cassette, 1992.
- — — *Langston Hughes Reads and Talks About His Poems*. Audiocassette. Spoken Arts, 1987.
- — — *Poems from Black Africa*. 1 cassette recording. Caedmon
- — — *The Poetry of Langston Hughes*. 1 cassette. Caedmon, 1969?.
- — — *Poetry and Reflections*. 1 cassette. Caedmon, 1980.
- — — *Simple Speaks His Mind*. 1 sound disc, Folkways Records, 1952.
- — — *Simple Stories*. 1 cassette. Caedmon, 1968. (7 stories from The Best of Simple and Simple's Uncle Sam.)
- — — *Story of Jazz*. Distribution North American, 1985. Audiocassette.
- — — *Tambourines to Glory*. 1 sound disc. Folkways Records, 1958. (Gospel songs by Langston Hughes and Jobe Huntley.)
- — — *The Voice of Langston Hughes* 1995.
- Hughes, Langston, and Kurt Weill. *Street Scene (1989 English National Opera Cast)*. 1989.
- Hughes, Langston and Charles Mingus. *Weary Blues*. 1958.
- Siegmeister, Elie. *Madam to You*. Sound recording. Composers Recordings, 1979.
- Siegmeister, Elie. *Ways of Love: Langston Hughes Songs*. 1 sound disc. Five pieces for piano. New York: CRI, 1986.
- Swanson, Howard. *Seven Songs*. 1 sound disc. New York: American Recording Society, 1953.
- Jericho — Jim Crow*. 2 sound discs. New York: Folkways, 1964.
- The Beat Generation*. 3 sound discs. Santa Monica, Ca: Rhino/ Word Beat, 1992. (Includes "Blues Montage" Langston Hughes with Leonard Feather).
- The Spoken Arts Treasury of 100 Modern American Poets Reading Their Poems*. 1 sound cassette. New Rochelle, N.Y.: Spoken Arts, 1985.

VIDEO RESOURCES

- Black Americans of Achievement Video Collection II, Langston Hughes: Poet*. Produced and directed by Rhonda Rabian and Jerry Baber; executive producer, Andrew Schlessinger. Bala Cynwyd, Pa.: Schlessinger Video Productions, 1994.
- Cora Unashamed*. PBS / Exxon Mobil Masterpiece Theatre, 2001.
- The Harlem Renaissance and Beyond*. Mt. Kisco, N.Y.: Guidance Associates, 1990.
- I Hear America Sing*. PBS biography.
- I'll Make Me a World*. PBS Film Series. Chronicling African Americans and struggle for citizenship. Features Langston Hughes.
- Langston*. Davis, Ossie. (a play) New York : Delacorte Press, 1982.
- Langston Hughes*. Annenberg CPB Project. New York, N.Y.: New York Center for Visual History, 1988.

Langston Hughes: The Dream Keeper. South Carolina Educational Television Network, a New York Center for Visual History production; director, St. Clair Bourne; producer, Robert Chapman. Santa Barbara, Calif.; Intellimation, 1988.

Langston Hughes: The Poet in Our Hearts. Derry, N.H.: Chip Taylor Communications, 1995.

Looking For Langston: A Meditation on Langston Hughes (1902-1967) and the Harlem Renaissance: with the Poetry of Essex Hemphill and Bruce Nugent. Sankofa Film and Video. New York, N.Y.: Water Bearer Films, 1992.

Voices and Visions: Langston Hughes. VHS 1998.