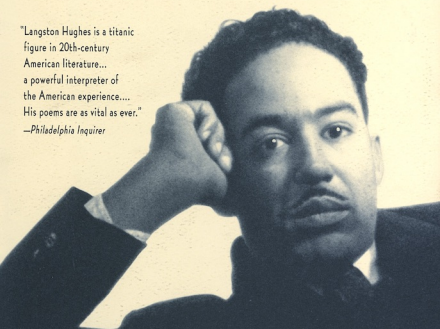




The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes

"Langston Hughes is a titanic
figure in 20th-century
American literature...
a powerful interpreter of
the American experience....
His poems are as vital as ever."
—*Philadelphia Inquirer*



Arnold Rampersad, *Editor*

David Roessel, *Associate Editor*

Acclaim for

The Collected Poems of **LANGSTON HUGHES**

"[Hughes] is one of the essential figures in American literature. His career is much larger than the body of his poetry alone. By his work and his example, he has enriched our lives."
—*The New York Times Book Review*

"Outspoken, down-to-earth, delighting in the cadences and diction of African-American song and speech, Hughes's vision of America is in many ways as timely today as in the decades in which these poems were written."
—*Christian Science Monitor*

"In [Hughes's verse], you hear the bottleneck guitar-playing of . . . Robert Johnson, the sarcasm of a Miles Davis trumpet solo, the towering authority of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.'s oratory."
—*Cleveland Plain Dealer*

"The joy in Hughes's poems is his enviable ability to re-create the innate rhythms and spark of a people, a neighborhood, a city, a country. . . . We stroll Lenox Avenue with a man who is alternately angry and overjoyed, celebrating his people as he warns them . . . His focus never wavers. [H]e is all of his people, and as their voices vary, so does his. . . . This is the author as loquacious, unleashed social commentator who . . . holds up a mirror and shows us the world."
—*Boston Globe*

"The Hughes who comes across in these pages is a true poet of the people. Rooted in the black experience, his poems are driven by the same democratic urge that inspired Walt Whitman, Carl Sandburg, and William Carlos Williams."
—*Philadelphia Inquirer*

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ARNOLD RAMPERSAD, Editor

DAVID ROESSEL, Associate Editor

VINTAGE CLASSICS

Vintage Books

A Division of Random House, Inc.

New York

FIRST VINTAGE CLASSICS EDITION, NOVEMBER 1995

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All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. Published in the United States by Vintage Books, a division of Random House, Inc., New York, and simultaneously in Canada by Random House of Canada Limited, Toronto. Originally published in hardcover by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., New York, in 1994.

Much of the poetry in this collection was originally published, sometimes in somewhat different form, in the following Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., titles: *The Weary Blues* (1926), *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (1927), *The Dream Keeper* (1932), *Shakespeare in Harlem* (1942), *Fields of Wonder* (1947), *One-Way Ticket* (1949), *Montage of a Dream Deferred* (1951), *Selected Poems of Langston Hughes* (1959), *Ask Your Mama* (1961), and *The Panther and the Lash* (1967).

The Library of Congress has cataloged the Knopf edition as follows:
Hughes, Langston, 1902-1967.
[Poems]

The collected poems of Langston Hughes / Arnold Rampersad, editor,
David Roessel, associate editor. — 1st ed.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 0-679-42631-0

1. Afro-Americans—Poetry. I. Rampersad, Arnold. II. Roessel, David
III. Title

PS3515 L274A17 1994

811.52—dc20 94-14509

CIP

Vintage ISBN: 0-679-76408-9

Book design by Virginia Tan

Manufactured in the United States of America

20 19 18 17

Be-Bop Boys

Imploring Mecca
to achieve
six discs
with Decca.

Tag

Little cullud boys
with fears,
frantic,
nudge their draftee years.

Pop-a-da!

Theme for English B

The instructor said,

*Go home and write
a page tonight.
And let that page come out of you—
Then, it will be true.*

I wonder if it's that simple?
I am twenty-two, colored, born in Winston-Salem.
I went to school there, then Durham, then here
to this college on the hill above Harlem.
I am the only colored student in my class.
The steps from the hill lead down into Harlem,
through a park, then I cross St. Nicholas,
Fifth Avenue, Seventh, and I come to the Y,
the Harlem Branch Y, where I take the elevator
up to my room, sit down, and write this page:

It's not easy to know what is true for you or me
at twenty-two, my age. But I guess I'm what
I feel and see and hear, Harlem, I hear you:

hear you, hear me—we two—you, me, talk on this page.
 (I hear New York, too.) Me—who?
 Well, I like to eat, sleep, drink, and be in love.
 I like to work, *read, learn, and understand life.*
 I like a pipe for a Christmas present,
 or records—Bessie, hop, or Bach.
 I guess being colored doesn't make me *not* like
 the same things other folks like who are other races.
 So will my page be colored that I write?
 Being me, it will not be white.
 But it will be
 a part of you, instructor.
 You are white—
 yet a part of me, as I am a part of you.
 That's American.
 Sometimes perhaps you don't want to be a part of me.
 Nor do I often want to be a part of you.
 But we are, that's true!
 As I learn from you,
 I guess you learn from me—
 although you're older—and white—
 and somewhat more free.

 This is my page for English B.

College Formal: Renaissance Casino

Golden girl
 in a golden gown
 in a melody night
 in Harlem town
 lad tall and brown
 tall and wise
 college hoy smart
 eyes in eyes
 the music wraps
 them both around
 in mellow magic
 of dancing sound
 till they're the heart
 of the whole big town
 gold and brown