

TAKE YOUR POET TO WORK DAY

July 16, 2014

Langston Hughes

*I will not take 'but'
for an answer*

Langston Hughes—poet, novelist, and playwright—was born in Joplin, Missouri, in 1902. After his father left the family, he lived with a grandmother in Kansas while his mother sought work. Following his grandmother's death, Hughes lived most of his adolescence with his mother and her husband in Lincoln, Illinois, where he began to write poetry. He wrote in his autobiography, *Big Sea*, "I was unhappy for a long time, and very lonesome, living with my grandmother. Then it was that books began to happen to me, and I began to believe in nothing but books and the wonderful world in books -- where if people suffered, they suffered in beautiful language, not in monosyllables, as we did in Kansas."

Hughes was a prominent figure in the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and one of the first to write poems in the newly formed "Jazz Poetry" style. He met strong resistance from black critics for his work, with complaints that he portrayed blacks in a negative light rather than highlighting their aspirations and potential. His work was popular among the black middle class, whose lives his work most often celebrated.

Before his death in 1967, Hughes published numerous collections of poetry and several novels and plays. He is known as the first black American to earn a living from writing and speaking.



Want to take your favorite poet to work for Take Your Poet to Work Day?

1. Color your poet
2. Cut out your poet along dotted lines
3. Attach a popsicle stick to the back of your poet with tape or glue
4. Take your poet to work as shown



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