



LANGSTON HUGHES AND HIS POETRY

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ABSTRACT

Langston Hughes is a representative of the Blacks, an evidence of African-American's sufferings. He is known for registering the sufferings faced by the Blacks in the hands of Whites in his poems. He presents America is the affluent society only for Whites and the segregated society for the Blacks. This close discrimination is well-presented in his poems. His poems are not an imaginary illustration of unregistered evils directed against the Blacks and he proves a rebel with a firm resolve to prepare the people for a struggle and make them agitate for the poor's emancipation from the hegemony of the domineering race, White. At the core, this paper describes Langston Hughes as a champion of the Blacks and dwells on their passionate identification with it. His poems reflects his anger against the White capitalists is also discussed.

Key Words: *Poverty, Exploitation of Labourers, Non-supportive Government, Poems of Langston Hughes.*

INTRODUCTION: Born James Langston Hughes in Joplin, Missouri, Langston Hughes (b. 1902–d. 1967) was likely the most influential writer who emerged from the Harlem Renaissance. He was the first one of this group to establish an enduring national and international reputation. Hughes established his national standing as the “Poet Laureate of the Negro Race” with *The Weary Blues* and the controversial essay “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” in 1926. By the time he graduated from Lincoln University, Pennsylvania, in 1929, he had published a second volume of poems, *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (1927). Having lived in Mexico for more than a year as a teenager, by 1929 Hughes had also visited West Africa, France (where he spent several months), and Italy. Extended trips to Haiti, Cuba, the Soviet Union, and Spain followed, as did translations of his poems into Spanish, German, French, Russian, and many other languages. Though best known as a poet, Hughes was a prolific and versatile writer working in numerous literary genres as well as in journalism and popular history. Widely celebrated for his blues poetry and, more recently, for his experimental poems from the 1950s and early 1960s, Hispanic



American audiences in particular praised Hughes for his verse influenced by international communism. However, this radical verse landed him in serious trouble at home. In the 1940s and 1950s, Hughes became the target of smear campaigns and FBI surveillance. Although Hughes disavowed his political past in his 1953 publicly broadcast testimony before Joseph McCarthy's infamous Senate subcommittee, a measure of unease about his communist leanings has lingered in Hughes scholarship in the United States, where his radical poetry from the 1930s has traditionally had relatively few admirers—until now. Ironically, the very simplicity that made his writing accessible to and popular with so many different audiences across the world also fueled the belief among many scholars that Hughes's writing lacked literary complexity. As a result, neither his novels nor his autobiographies have met with abundant critical analysis, much less acclaim. Quite in contrast to Hughes's short fiction, especially the Simple stories from the 1940s and 1950s, these texts have attracted the critical attention they deserve only since the third quarter of the twentieth century, and especially in the early twenty-first century. Similarly, scholars have neglected Hughes's plays, his translations of writers such as Federico García Lorca and Jacques Roumain, and his extensive journalism. Since the mid-1990s, however, the landscape of Hughes studies has changed significantly as scholars have increasingly challenged the view of Hughes as a straightforward and even shallow writer. It is changing even more in the twenty-first century.

LITERATURE REVIEW: Not many studies have been conducted about Langston Hughes's poetry and the critique of colonialism in his poems. Some critics wrote about his biography and his poetry in general but it had never been looked at closely. David Chiniz (1996) wrote "Literacy and Authenticity: The Blue Poems of Langston Hughes" in which he analyses his poems. Faith Berry (1992) tackled the poet's biography before and after the "Harlem Renaissance". On the other hand, Mary Culp (1987) argues the religiousity of the poetry of Hughes. This study unlike the previous studies conducted about his works, focuses on some of his poems in which the theme of colonialism is obvious. It is clear that it needed courage for black writers to express themselves. But the poet has wisely expressed his burdens and the hardships of the black people and the mixed people from a black parent and a white parent in his poems such as "I, Too", "Cross" and "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" but indirectly.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS: On September 22, 2016, the New York Times published the poem "I, Too" by Langston Hughes on the [back page](#) of its stand-alone print section on the Smithsonian's new [National Museum of African](#)



[American History and Culture](#) in Washington, DC. This is a poem I believe can be used to spark discussion with students. Begin by reading [“I, Too”](#) aloud to your students. Pair students to reread the poem one or more times. Ask them to react to the poem in writing, answering the question: Why do you think the New York Times dedicated an entire page of their newspaper to print the poem? Next ask partners to share their thoughts with each other. Open the discussion to the class. Follow this discussion by asking for ideas about why the New York Times chose this poem to celebrate the new museum. Perhaps one or more of the students will make observations about the poem as commentary on the experiences of African Americans in America. This then creates the impetus for a conversation about the need for the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Extend the discussion with other poems by Hughes such as:

- [“The Ballad of Booker T.”](#)
- [“The Negro Speaks of Rivers”](#)
- [“The Weary Blues”](#)

Consider offering a choice of poems to individual or small groups of students to continue the conversation about how Langston Hughes used poetry to present his ideas about the African American experience.

CONCLUSION: Langston Hughes was a brilliant Negro poet. His poem is always full value of life. Primarily it described his humanity and his care of his social condition, as Negro or Black American. Most of his own poems are racial in theme and treatment, derived from his race and community experience especially in his poem “Negro”. In this poem the writer knows the destiny of Black American condition at the time. They got bad treatment of White American who regard Black race is inferior status. Hughes expresses his emotional experiences and makes the reader think about what exactly it was like to live his life during that time. Hughes is Black poet proud to be a Negro. We can know it when we read this poem, Hughes identified himself by saying “I am a Negro”, and then he describes himself and his race as having been a slave, worker, singer and victim who suffered discrimination. This poem is well expressed poem and makes us touched with what he describes all about Africa. It is remembering us the case of discrimination between Africa and American, between blacks and whites. Black American faced discrimination in all aspect of their society at that time like in education, workplaces, and public facilities. Black American did not achieve same equality like White in all aspect of society.



White American must dominate and Black is inferior and will remain no social equality in their life.

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