

# Example of how langston hughes uses his poem essay

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



## **“ The Negro Speaks of River’s” to express the African Movement to America**

Langston Hughes was one of the most vocal people in “ The Harlem Renaissance.” “ The Negro Speaks of River” is one of his most popular poems; a short poem vividly expressed with figurative language.

The one line “ My soul has grown deep like the rivers.” standing by itself is emphasizing the resilience of the Negro. Cruelty has developed his resistance and like the river, his soul has grown deep. The choice of the river as a symbol for the Negro is an excellent one. Whether a river starts big or small, as it makes its way to the ocean it becomes bigger; on its way it may encounter obstacles; it may have to change its course; and sometimes it even goes underground, but in the end it arrives conqueror. This is the dilemma of the Negro. The next stanza, the longest stanza in the poem, describes the Negro’s journey to America. His travel is symbolic to the great Euphrates, the Congo and the Nile. As the poet changes to the first person, he is comparing himself to these great rivers. In comparison, he is insignificant; yet, he does not allow that fact to stand in his way; instead he draws courage from them. One day just like the rivers he will put down his heavy burdens and arrive safe and proud at his destination. The speaker looks at these rivers and finds a kind of tranquility that he could not find anywhere else in nature.

Even though Hughes speaks about these rivers in the third stanza using the first person, it is clear that he is not referring to himself literally. The records show that Hughes was only seventeen when he wrote this poem, however he was not blind to the treatment of his people especially those who suffered in

slavery. He never experienced the atrocity of slavery; nonetheless he empathizes with the slaves and these ancient rivers, images of age are the theme of the Negro's suffering. The fact that they are located in Africa tells a story of their own. From Africa Hughes travels to New Orleans and the Mississippi continues the story of the Africans. Hughes was well aware that despite the abolishment of slavery Negroes were treated as if they were still enslaved and "The Harlem Renaissance" of which Hughes was a part was a means to bring equality to his people. Obviously Hughes could not have done the things he uses the first person to describe but it was his way to show disgust with what was happening in the sixties. He was declaring that whatever happened to his people was happening to him too.

"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."

These lines are profound; it is the arrival of the African into America. It is where Lincoln witnessed slavery at its worse and decided that such disgraceful acts should not be practiced in America. Hughes wanted to impress on his readers how much the Negro has suffered; to raise them to the challenge to help end a vicious era to a close. Hughes was quite stricken by what was happening around him and was determine to become a part of this movement, to end inequality in America. The last lines of the poem, though there are slight changes, echoes the message in the beginning of the poem. The theme is the same, adversity can make one strong. The use of the four named rivers in this poem is not a chance encounter, they are chosen because of their link to Africans. The Congo divides black and white Africa; and the Mississippi divides the North from the South in America. Like

the river that has endured many hardships, and continues to flow; the Negro gain gain strength from his hardship and become victorious.

Langston Hughes Poem, " The Negro Speaks of Rivers" is a very reflective poem considering his youth. It is his masterpiece, although there are many other underlying themes, his main theme is using the flow of the river to represent the body.