

# The life and literature of langston hughes



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

James Langton Hughes is known as one of the most influential and realistic African-American authors of all times (Dace 8). His works still act as a mirror that reflects our society's morals and opinions that are hidden behind skin deep façades. Born in 1902, to James and Carrie Langton, and brought up by his grandmother due to constant absence of his two parents who later divorced, James admits to have been able to get his inspiration for writing from his moments of pain. Having lived and visited different places both in the United States and other continents, James wrote what he believed were the evils experienced in a society and are seldom addressed.

Although Langton Hughes works were phenomenal, he never gained the recognition he deserved due to the timing of his writing, the content and his lack of identifying and adhering to a specific genre.

Hughes is considered to be the voice of the post slavery African-American community that was experiencing racial discrimination and segregation. His focus was mainly on the lives of the poor black people and the struggles they encountered in their daily lives. In his famous article, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" and his anthology "The New Negro", he focuses on the lives of a population oppressed by slavery by a people who preach love and equality before the eyes of an all loving God (De Santis 22). He focused on the freedom that was given to African Americans yet racial segregation and discrimination was embraced (Dace 30). The content of his poem was focused on shaming the lies of the 'White people' who at the time wanted to be congratulated for abolishing slavery and not to be condemned for embracing discriminative policies against black people.

The timing of his work was also another factor. Currently, when we look at his work and the rhymes he used, we can hear the voice of a man in need of change and against oppression of his people. We see the struggles that he saw and understand the pain that he felt because he expresses it in raw and pure words ((De Santis 22). Conversely, during the time when he wrote these words, the oppression and discrimination in the society could not allow him enough audience to make his point. He was seen as another angry black man. It was during the time when political and legislative policies had massive and great influence on the literature industry (Rampersad 1079). A time, when people were forced to listen to what was termed as good for them, which in this case did not include radicalization message. It was also a volatile time, when the white people felt like they were losing power to former slaves and the black people wanted to fight for what they termed as equality and end of discrimination. The political arena felt that the best way was not to allow for publication and publicizing of certain articles, poems and books.

Finally, Hughes never really concentrated on one genre. This is mostly because of the influence and exposure he got as he travelled the world. For instance when he started he would use jazz rhythm in his poems which brought him to fame, later on when he went to Asia and visited the Former Soviet Union, his writing changed to more narrative than the previous jazz rhythmic that the people were accustomed to. Yet upon his return to New York, he was involved in the writing and production of plays which is a completely different genre from the two aforementioned. Finally, once he

settled and stopped moving, he wrote historical books which made him embrace a completely different genre.

Recognition leads to influence, and it is obvious that several factors downplayed the amount of influence that Hughes might have had had he been properly recognized. Conversely, his works still remain undeniably raw, precise and inspirational as they come from a place of pain, experience and need to communicate a message about humanity and societal evils. The passion expressed in his work remains the same throughout the different genres he explored and has remained unchanged regardless of the time.