

# The biography of langston hughes



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Langston Hughes Thesis: one country into one non-segregated society. The segregation which happened in the U. S. A should serve as a warning and today's goal should be to keep our society from any type of racial segregation. Following part of the thesis will be dealing with racial segregation which is depicted in Langston Hughes poems.

Like many African Americans, Hughes has complex ancestry. Both of Hughes' paternal great-grandmothers were enslaved African Americans and both of his paternal great-grandfathers were white slave owners in Kentucky. According to Hughes, one of these men was Sam Clay, a Scottish-American whiskey distiller of Henry County and supposedly a relative of the statesman Henry Clay. The other was Silas Cushenberry, a Jewish-American slave trader of Clark County. Hughes's maternal grandmother Mary Patterson was of African-American, French, English and Native American descent. One of the first women to attend Oberlin College, she married Lewis Sheridan Leary, also of mixed race, before her studies. Leary subsequently joined John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry in 1859 and died from his wounds.

In 1869 the widow Mary Patterson Leary married again, into the elite, politically active Langston family. (See *The Talented Tenth*.) Her second husband was Charles Henry Langston, of African-American, Euro-American and Native American ancestry. He and his younger brother John Mercer Langston worked for the abolitionist cause and helped lead the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society in 1858. Charles Langston later moved to Kansas, where he was active as an educator and activist for voting and rights for African Americans. Charles and Mary's daughter Caroline was the mother of Langston Hughes. Hughes in 1902

Langston Hughes was born in Joplin, Missouri, the second child of school teacher Carrie (Caroline) Mercer Langston and James Nathaniel Hughes (1871-1934). Langston Hughes grew up in a series of Midwestern small towns. Hughes' father left his family and later divorced Carrie. He traveled to Cuba and then Mexico, seeking to escape the enduring racism in the United States. After his parents separated, his mother traveled seeking employment, and young Langston Hughes was raised mainly in Lawrence, Kansas by his maternal grandmother, Mary Patterson Langston. Through the black American oral tradition and drawing from the activist experiences of her generation, Mary Langston instilled in her grandson a lasting sense of racial pride. He spent most of his childhood in Lawrence.

In his 1940 autobiography *The Big Sea* he wrote: " 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." After the death of his grandmother, Hughes went to live with family friends, James and Mary Reed, for two years. Later, Hughes lived again with his mother Carrie in Lincoln, Illinois. She had remarried when he was still an adolescent, and eventually they moved to Cleveland, Ohio, where he attended high school. His writing experiments began when he was young. While in grammar school in Lincoln, Hughes was elected class poet. He stated that in retrospect he thought it was because of the stereotype about African Americans having rhythm.