

# Langston Hughes

Born 1929

Died 1999

## Word Smart

### Writer

Born in Joplin, Missouri, James Langston Hughes was born into an abolitionist family. Hughes attended Central High School in Cleveland, Ohio, but began writing poetry in the eighth grade, and was selected as Class Poet. His father paid his tuition to Columbia University on the grounds he study engineering. After a short time Langston dropped out of the program with a B+ average, all the while he continued writing poetry. Later, his poems, short plays, essays, and short stories appeared in the NAACP publication *Crisis Magazine* and in *Opportunity Magazine* and other publications.

In 1923, Hughes traveled abroad on a freighter to the Senegal, Nigeria, the Cameroons, Belgium Congo, Angola, and Guinea in Africa, and later to Italy and France, Russia and Spain. One of his favorite pastimes whether abroad or in Washington, D.C. or Harlem, New York was sitting in the clubs listening to blues, jazz and writing poetry.

One of Hughes' finest essays appeared in the *Nation* in 1926, entitled "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain". Langston Hughes was a prolific writer. In the forty-odd years between his first book in

1926 and his death in 1967, he devoted his life to writing and lecturing. Langston Hughes died of cancer on May 22, 1967. His residence at 20 East 127th Street in Harlem, New York has been given landmark status by the New York City Preservation Commission. His block of East 127th Street was renamed "Langston Hughes Place".

Resources: <http://www.redhotjazz.com/hughes.html>

*Created by Cherrie Snead 5E*

