

**Issue Date**

February 1, 2002

**First Day City**

New York, NY

**Photographer**Henri Cartier-Bresson  
Paris, France**Designer**Richard Sheaff  
Scottsdale, AZ**Art Director**

Richard Sheaff

**Typographer**

Richard Sheaff

**Modeler**Banknote Corporation  
of America, Inc. (BCA)**Manufacturing****Process**

Offset, Microprint

**Printer**Banknote Corporation  
of America, Inc. (BCA)**Engraver**

N/A

**Colors**Magenta, Cyan, Yellow,  
Black, PMS 1545 (Brown)**Image Area**.82 x 1.39 (in.)  
20.828 x 35.306 (mm.)**Format**

Pane of 20 (1 design)

**Plate Numbers**"B" followed by five (5)  
single digits**Marginal Markings**© 2001 USPS, price,  
plate numbers in all four  
corners, plate position  
diagram, barcode.**Langston Hughes**

This 25th stamp in the Black Heritage series honors Langston Hughes on the centennial of his birth.

One of the most original and versatile writers of the 20th century, Langston Hughes was born on February 1, 1902, in Joplin, Missouri. He published his evocative poem, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," in 1921 at the age of 19. Hughes's first book of poetry, *The Weary Blues*, was published in 1926. That same year he published his groundbreaking essay, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," which became a manifesto for African-American artists.

A leading figure of the Harlem Renaissance, Hughes continued to write prolifically throughout his life. His poetry and plays during the 1930s reflect the hardships of the Depression, as well as the devastating consequences of ongoing racial injustice. In the 1940s Hughes created his popular character Jesse B. Semple—nicknamed Simple—who appeared in the newspaper column Hughes wrote for the *Chicago Defender*.

Although his writing found expression in many literary genres, Hughes considered himself above all a poet. His innovative verse combined jazz, blues, and the black vernacular with traditional poetry.

The black-and-white photograph on the stamp was taken in 1946 by Henri Cartier-Bresson, who was a friend of Hughes. "He was a noble human being," Cartier-Bresson later reminisced to Hughes's biographer Arnold Rampersad. "But he was also natural, always smiling, always good-humored, even if you could sense that he kept something in reserve."




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**FIRST DAY OF ISSUE**


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# Langston Hughes



SHORTLY BEFORE HIS DEATH in

1967, Langston Hughes was asked for a one-sentence description of his life's work for inclusion in

*Who's Who in America*. His response was simple, elegant, and characteristically ambitious. "My seeking has been to explain and illuminate the Negro condition in America," he wrote, "and obliquely that of all humankind." One of the most original and versatile writers of the 20th century,

Langston Hughes's extraordinary literary career reflected his belief that, for the black artist, racial pride and creative freedom are of utmost importance.

Born on February 1, 1902, in Joplin, Missouri, James Langston Hughes published his evocative poem, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," in 1921 at the age of 19. After one year at Columbia University in New York, Hughes spent the next three years working in menial jobs, traveling abroad, and writing poems. Hughes's first book of poetry, *The Weary Blues*, was published in 1926. He enrolled that same year at Lincoln University—the oldest historically black college in the United States—and graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1929.

That same year Hughes published his groundbreaking essay, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," which became a manifesto for African-American artists. Hughes became a leading figure in the Harlem Renaissance, a vibrant flowering of African-American literature, music, and the visual and performing arts during the 1920s and early 1930s.

Hughes continued to write prolifically throughout his life. His poetry and plays during the 1930s reflect the hardships of the Depression, as well as the devastating consequences of ongoing racial injustice. In the 1940s

Hughes created his popular character Jesse B. Semple—nicknamed Simple—who appeared in the newspaper column Hughes wrote for the *Chicago Defender*.

This 25th stamp in the Black Heritage series honors Hughes on the centennial of his birth with a photograph by Henri Cartier-Bresson. The French photographer and the American writer were good friends, and shared an apartment for a short time in the 1930s. "He was a noble human being," Cartier-Bresson later reminisced to Hughes's biographer Arnold Rampersad. "But he was also natural, always smiling, always good-humored, even if you could sense that he kept something in reserve." The stamp was designed by Richard Sheaff and was issued on February 1, 2002.



Langston Hughes

upper left Photo by James Latimer Allen. Courtesy Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, background: Courtesy Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Used by permission of Harold Ober Associates, upper right: *Not Without Laughter* illustration by Aaron Douglas, © 1930 courtesy of the Aaron and Alta Douglas Foundation. Reproduced by permission of Alfred A. Knopf Publishers, Inc., upper right: *Fire!!* illustration by Aaron Douglas, © courtesy of the Aaron and Alta Douglas Foundation.

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x20  
\$6.80



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PLATE  
POSITION



FIRST DAY OF ISSUE

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# LANGSTON HUGHES

COMMEMORATIVE STAMP

First day of Issue

New York, NY

February 1, 2002

**W**ith the 25th stamp issuance in the Black Heritage Commemorative Series, the United States Postal Service honors writer Langston Hughes on the centennial of his birth.

Born February 1, 1902, in Joplin, Missouri, Hughes displayed an early talent for writing. When he was only 19, his poem "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" was published in the June 1921 issue of "The Crisis Journal." Hughes is considered one of the most important American writers of the twentieth century. Although he considered himself a poet first, he also wrote novels, short stories, and plays. Hughes' first book of poetry, *The Weary Blues*, was published in 1926.

Hughes was considered one of the leading voices in the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s. The Harlem that Hughes loved and where he lived most of his life was an exciting place. In 1926, his groundbreaking essay "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," which proclaimed the importance of both creative freedom and racial pride, served as a manifesto for Harlem Renaissance writers.

This stamp features a black-and-white photograph of Hughes taken in New York City by his friend, the renowned photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson. The stamp was designed by Richard Sheaff of Scottsdale, Arizona.

## Celebrating 25 years of Black Heritage Stamps

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up

like a raisin in the sun?

Or fester like a sore --  
and then run?

Does it stink like rotten meat?

Or crust and sugar over --  
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags  
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?



# LANGSTON HUGHES

COMMEMORATIVE STAMP

First day of Issue

New York, NY

February 1, 2002

## HOST of CEREMONY

JOHN SAWYER III

Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee

## NATIONAL ANTHEM

ARC GOSPEL CHOIR

## INTRODUCTION of GUESTS

JOHN SAWYER

## WELCOME

HOWARD DODSON

Chief, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture

## REMARKS

The Honorable CHARLES B. RANGEL

U.S. Representative

## TRIBUTE TO LANGSTON HUGHES

### Remarks

RAMONA BASS, Co-administrator of the Estate of Langston Hughes

### Interlude

*Harlem, You're My Girl* from the new musical *Little Ham*, based on a play of the same name by Langston Hughes, sung by GENOVIS ALBRIGHT

### Reading of Poems

HAKI MADHUBUTI, Poet, Publisher of Third World Press

Distinguished Professor of Chicago State University

SONIA SANCHEZ, Award Winning Poet

### Interlude

*I Wanna Big Fat Daddy* from *Good Times Blues*, sung by MADAME PAT TANDY

*This Little Light of Mine* from *Good Times Blues*, sung by GENOVIS ALBRIGHT and MADAME PAT TANDY

## STAMP DEDICATION

HENRY PANKEY

Vice President, Delivery and Retail, United States Postal Service

## INTERLUDE

RANDY WESTON

Pianist – Composer

## CLOSING

*Lift Every Voice and Sing* led by ARC GOSPEL CHOIR

## HONORED GUESTS

VINNIE MALLOY

District Manager/Postmaster, United States Postal Service, New York District

MARGRETT ANN DUNCAN, relative

MARJOL RUSH, relative

JOYCE MORGAN, relative

PAUL GOTTLIEB

Chairman, The Academy of American Poets

CARY GOLDSTIEN

Publicity and Events Director, The Academy of American Poets

CHARLES FLOWERS

Acting Executive Director, The Academy of American Poets

JERRY PINKNEY

Designer of the first Black Heritage Series stamp

KENNETH P. NEILSON

Director, All Seasons Art



*Langston Hughes  
Black Heritage Series*



FIRST DAY OF ISSUE



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Rodney Lawrence Hurst Sr. Papers  
Thomas G Carpenter Library  
Special Collections



# Langston Hughes

## Black Heritage Series

**First Day of Issue:** *February 1, 2002*

**First Day City:** *New York, New York,*

*site of the Schomburg Center for  
Research in Black Culture*

**Stamp Photographer:** *Henri Cartier-Bresson*  
*Paris, France*

Langston Hughes, who is featured on this U.S. stamp, was one of the most innovative and influential African-American writers of the twentieth century.

Hughes was born in Joplin, Missouri on February 1, 1902. He grew up in the Midwest and published his first poems when he was a teenager. After briefly attending Columbia University, he worked at odd jobs in the United States and abroad. During this period, Hughes experimented with poetry that used the rhythms of jazz and

blues music. He also broke with tradition by writing about the lives and dreams of the poorest blacks. Many of his early poems were published in a book, *The Weary Blues*, in 1926.

That same year, Hughes also wrote an essay expressing pride in his African heritage and announcing his determination to explore racial themes in his work. This essay helped launch the Harlem Renaissance, an important artistic and literary movement of the 1920's and 1930's.

After earning a degree from Lincoln University in 1929, Hughes continued to write about ordinary blacks. Best known for his poetry, the prolific Hughes also wrote novels, short stories, plays and essays. Langston Hughes died on May 22, 1967 in Harlem, New York.