

# Zora Neale Hurston

FROM AN EARLY AGE, Zora Neale Hurston was fascinated by African-American oral culture. Raised in Eatonville, Florida, a self-governing, all-black town near Orlando, Hurston reveled in the stories, songs, and wordplay that she heard on the front porch of the general store, the town's social center. The voices she heard and the lessons she learned in Eatonville infused a lifetime of writing with authenticity, wisdom, and keen observation.

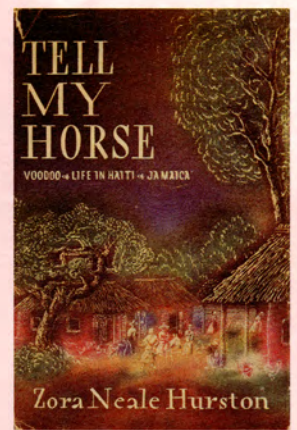
As a key figure in the Harlem Renaissance, a flowering of African-American literature, music, and the visual and performing arts that took place primarily in the 1920s and 1930s, Hurston is known to many primarily as a writer of fiction. Her 1934 novel *Jonah's Gourd Vine* chronicles the rise and fall of a gifted black preacher. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, her 1937 masterpiece, broke new ground in its portrayal of a black woman's search for identity, love, and freedom. *Moses, Man of the Mountain*, published in 1939, portrays the biblical Moses as a figure from black folklore, and the 1948 novel *Seraph on the Suwanee* revisits several of Hurston's earlier themes, with the cast of characters changed from black to white.

But Hurston was also an accomplished folklorist, and from the late 1920s through the early 1940s she traveled in the American South,

Jamaica, and Haiti to collect and study the stories, music, and ceremonies of the communities she visited. She discovered links between African-American and African-Caribbean folklore, and two collections of the folklore she studied, *Mules and Men* and *Tell My Horse*, resulted from her work. She also wrote plays, more than 50 short stories and essays, and an award-winning autobiography.

When Hurston died in 1960, her books were out of print. However, her work was rediscovered during the 1970s, and new generations of readers and students have subsequently discovered the originality of her vision and become forever captivated by her insightful writing.

This 19th stamp in the Literary Arts series features a portrait by artist Drew Struzan, based on a 1934 black-and-white photograph taken in Chicago by Carl Van Vechten, to whom she dedicated her second book of folklore. The stamp was issued on January 24, 2003, in Eatonville, Florida.



*Zora Neale Hurston*



left center, background and author signature: Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, photographs used with permission of the Estate of Carl Van Vechten;  
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Stamps printed by Sennett Security Products (SSP) / No. 678 in a series / January 24, 2003 / Printed in U.S.A. / © 2003 United States Postal Service

**Issue Date**  
January 24, 2003

**First Day City**  
Eatonville, FL

**Artist**  
Drew Struzan  
Pasadena, CA

**Designer**  
Howard E. Paine  
Delaplane, VA

**Art Director**  
Howard E. Paine

**Typographer**  
John Boyd  
New York, NY

**Modeler**  
Donald H. Woo

**Manufacturing Process**  
Gravure

**Printer**  
Sennett Security  
Products (SSP)

**Engraver**  
Southern Graphic  
Systems

**Colors**  
Magenta, Cyan, Yellow,  
Black, Gold (PMS 871)

**Image Area**  
1.41 x 0.84 (in.)  
35.81 x 21.33 (mm.)

**Format**  
Pane of 20 (1 design)

**Plate Numbers**  
"S" followed by five  
(5) single digits

**Marginal Markings**  
© 2002 USPS, price,  
plate numbers in  
four corners, plate  
position diagram

## Zora Neale Hurston

With this 19th stamp in the Literary Arts series, the U.S. Postal Service honors novelist, folklorist, and anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston (1891–1960) for her artistry and her celebration of black culture.

As a child growing up in Eatonville, Florida, Hurston was fascinated by African-American oral culture, including the stories, songs, and wordplay she heard on the front porch of the local general store. Hurston's mother encouraged her children's aspirations, exhorting them to "jump at de sun." "We might not land on the sun," Hurston later explained, "but at least we would get off the ground." In 1925, she moved to New York, where she became a key figure in the Harlem Renaissance, a flowering of African-American culture during the 1920s and early 1930s.

As a writer, Hurston didn't just get off the ground; she soared, writing four novels, two books of folklore, an autobiography, and more than 50 short stories and essays. She is best known for her 1937 masterpiece *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, which broke new ground in its portrayal of a black woman's search for identity, love, and freedom.

Hurston was also an accomplished folklorist, traveling during the late 1920s through the early 1940s to collect black folklore in the American South, the Bahamas, Jamaica, and Haiti. Two books resulted from her studies of the stories, music, and ceremonies of the communities she visited, and Hurston's sharp eye for cultural detail still delights readers who primarily know her as a great novelist.

Stamp artist Drew Struzan based his portrait of Hurston on a 1934 black-and-white photograph taken in Chicago by Carl Van Vechten, to whom she dedicated her second book of folklore. The background of the stamp art recalls the setting of Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.



FIRST DAY OF ISSUE





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HL

ZORA NEALE HURSTON



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*Zora Neale Hurston*

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# Zora Neale Hurston



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1891 - 1960

*"Ships at a distance have every man's wish on board."* WII

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**First Day of Issue Dedication Ceremony**

January 24, 2003

Zora Neale Hurston Street Festival of the Arts

Eatonville, Florida

# ZORA neale hurston

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**REMARKS**

DR. LOIS HURSTON-GASTON

Member and Representative of the Hurston family

THE HONORABLE CORRINE BROWN

U.S. Representative

**TRIBUTE TO ZORA**

ELIZABETH VAN DYKE

Actor

OSSIE DAVIS

Actor/Producer/Writer

**STAMP DEDICATION**

MURRY E WEATHERALL

Vice President, Diversity  
United States Postal Service

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HURSTON FAMILY MEMBERS

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Mrs. Vivian Hurston Bowden

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# ZORA neale hurston

**W**ith this nineteenth stamp in the Postal Service Literary Arts commemorative stamp series, the U.S. Postal Service honors novelist, folklorist and anthropologist, Zora Neale Hurston.

Born January 8, 1891, in Notasulga, Alabama, Hurston grew up in Eatonville, Florida, the community known as "the oldest, incorporated municipality in the United States founded by people of African descent." There she experienced the self-confidence and pride of heritage which still mark today's townspeople.

Hurston is recognized for documentary of the folk ways and traditions of rural, southern Blacks. The central female writer of the Harlem Renaissance, she became a favorite for her wit, style and Eatonville folklore.

She wrote four novels, two books of folklore, an autobiography and more than 50 short stories and essays. Hurston used her creative genius to celebrate the unique culture of African-Americans through her writing and dramatic presentations.

*This stamp is based on a portrait of Hurston on a 1934 black-and-white photograph taken in Chicago by Carl Van Vechten. The background of the stamp art recalls the setting of Hurston's novel, "Their Eyes were Watching God."*





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