

An Analysis Of Langston Hughes' Works

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Langston Hughes and the Literary Voice of the Harlem Renaissance

[Langston Hughes](#) is considered to be the poet laureate for readers who are the African descent. Born in 1902, Langston Hughes was a prominent writer in the Harlem Renaissance ("Writer Langston Hughes Used Many Styles"). He has been an active member of the social and political causes of that time and used his poetry to record his cultural protest. Hughes has written almost 50 books, and one of his dramas, named *Mulatto* was such a hit that it was performed 373 times on Broadway ("Writer Langston Hughes Used Many Styles").

He wrote in various literary genres, which include poetry, plays, short stories and novels as well but he got famous for his poetry. One of the legacies of Langston Hughes is the freedom of creative expression, whether it is personal or collective. He is undoubtedly one of the most appreciated and universally acclaimed poets who has followers of all age groups. The reason that Hughes's poetry is different from conventional poetry is that his work possesses both controversial political work and lyrical poetry as well.

Race, Injustice, and African American Life in Hughes's Poetry

If Langston's poetry is closely analyzed, then one can see the dominant subject matter of his work. Most of his poems revolve around the theme of issues faced by the African-American class ("A Reading Guide To Langston Hughes"). He had a direct and cynical approach towards racial discrimination. That is why the major focus of his poems is on the lives of the Black Americans who were treated as second-grade citizens and more like slaves. He is known as "The architect of black poetic tradition." [Langston Hughes](#) emerged as the voice of African Americans in the 1920s after the publication of his first poem, which provided him with more than moderate success.

One of the landmark essays of Langston Hughes is known as "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," which was initially published in *The Nation* in 1926. In this essay, Langston stated that "An artist must be free to choose what he does, certainly, but he must also never be afraid to do what he must choose" ("A Reading Guide To Langston Hughes"). By this statement, he is not only backing the subject of his work but also calling out future-generation poets to write on the topic of racial discrimination. He has given this responsibility to the new writers to raise voices against segregation

by color, caste or creed. This shows the reason why he took up this topic for his poetry: he was against racialization.

Furthermore, he stated in the same essay, “I am ashamed for the black poet who says, ‘I want to be a poet, not a Negro poet,’ as though his racial world were not as interesting as any other world” (“A Reading Guide To Langston Hughes”). This implies that Hughes was proud of his racial background and honestly wrote about it. Watching his face suffering so badly, it was almost impossible for him to turn away from this subject of race. This subject almost permeated every aspect of his life, from writing to public reception and character. However, it is not that his subject matter only consisted of social and political topics. Hughes’s poetry had a very diverse subject matter, as his poems are about music, politics, America, love, and dreams. It can be said that Hughes wrote about all the real things, like ordinary people leading ordinary lives and the world that was not beautiful for all, like those fictional realms where everything is perfect and beautiful.

Dreams, Hope, and the Enduring Appeal of Hughes’s Work

Nevertheless, whatever the subject Hughes has chosen, he has made it worth loving and appreciating. One of his famous poems is “Dreams” which can be regarded as the poem which has the least impact of any racial or political touch. This particular poem is found in almost every English textbook in America. This poem revolves around the theme of hope, and the quote from the text states, “Hold fast to dreams, For if dreams die, Life is a broken-winged bird, That cannot fly” (“A Reading Guide To Langston Hughes”). This shows that Hughes has written on almost every subject matter. This makes his poetry different from all the other poets and their conventional standards of poetry. He also utilized the theme of music in poems that were not used by other poets of that time.

He once stated, “Our folk music, having achieved worldwide fame, offers itself to the genius of the great individual American composer who is to come” (“A Reading Guide To Langston Hughes”). It is proof that Hughes has employed music with the structural and organizational complications of other traditions in his poems, too. One of his poems is “Po’Boy Blues,” and this poem resembles the Blues tradition so much that a person cannot read it without listening to 12 bar blues (“Writer Langston Hughes Used Many Styles”).

Therefore, as an American Poet, Hughes has offered a change in his work with both his political and formal novelty in poetry. This makes his poetry distinct from the conventional poetry of the 20th century. His honesty and pride for being a black poet made his work more memorable and beloved. He used his skills for a bigger cause, and that made him a famous poet of all time who is not only followed by African-American readers but also by children, musicians, and historians of all racial backgrounds. He felt it was his responsibility to raise his voice against racial relations and encouraged other poets as well. He is undoubtedly the architect of the black poetic tradition.

Works Cited

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