

The Negro Speaks of Rivers by Langston Hughes

Name: _____ Date: _____

Class: _____

Activity 1: Without looking at the print version, listen to the two audio recordings of Langston Hughes reading “The Negro Speaks of Rivers.” As you listen, on a separate sheet of paper write down the words from the poem with line breaks and punctuation where you think they belong according to the audio. (Your teacher may provide you with a copy of the poem without line breaks or punctuation to copy the words from.)

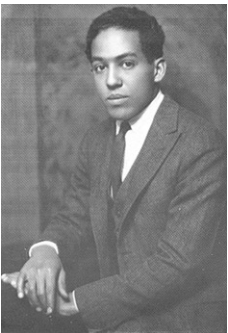
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Activity 2: Now your teacher will hand out a print copy of the poem that shows the line breaks and punctuation used by the poet, Langston Hughes. How does his version differ from yours? Which version matches the audio recording better? Compare with classmates and have a class discussion.

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Activity 3: Pick two lines of the poem for a close reading. Focus on these two lines and write a two-page explanation of what these two lines mean, why Hughes chose them, and how they work into the rest of the poem. If there is more than one way a line or word could be interpreted, note and explain all of these interpretations. For a guide on how to do a close reading, see <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~wricntr/documents/CloseReading.html> and http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/reading_lit.html.

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James Mercer Langston Hughes, (February 1, 1902 – May 22, 1967) was an American poet, novelist, playwright, short story writer, and columnist. He was one of the earliest innovators of the new literary art form jazz poetry. Hughes is best-known for his work during the Harlem Renaissance. First published in *The Crisis* in 1921, the verse that would become Hughes's signature poem, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers", appeared in his first book of poetry *The Weary Blues* in 1926:[30]

From http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Langston_Hughes