

# Beyond the Page: Visiting Langston

Subject: Language Arts; Social Studies

Running time: 18 minutes

## Objectives

The student will:

- gain a deeper understanding of the book *Visiting Langston*, written by Willie Perdomo and illustrated by Bryan Collier;
- be motivated to read more books and find out more about the author, illustrator, and subject matter; and
- learn more about Langston Hughes and Harlem's artistic past and present.

## Synopsis of the Book

In this first-person story told in conversational verse, a young African American girl goes with her daddy to visit Langston Hughes' house in Harlem. She praises Hughes' poems, which sound to her like jazz, and talks about his trips to Africa. At his house she sees his smiling photographs and discovers a special connection to him. She writes poetry, too—hip-hop style. Her poems celebrate her love for her family and her community. She's proud she's from "Harlem world" and a "Harlem girl."

## Synopsis of the Video

At the Beyond the Page Café, Today's Special is *Visiting Langston*, written by Willie Perdomo and illustrated by Bryan Collier. Our host Shelley reads the story aloud to the Café's visitors as we view an animation of Collier's illustrations. Collier used paper collages and watercolors to re-create Harlem during Hughes' era and today. After reading the story, the children have an online chat with Willie Perdomo, who talks about Langston Hughes, and with the illustrator, Bryan Collier, who explains how he became an illustrator. Finally the kids watch a video about Harlem.

## Preview Questions/Discussions

1. What do you like best about poetry?
2. Why do you think a young poet might want to visit a famous poet's house?
3. Whom do you admire? What do you want to find out about him or her?
4. Have you made collages before? Why are they fun to make?

## Post-Viewing Questions

1. Why is the girl in the story excited about visiting Langston Hughes' house?
2. How is the girl similar to Langston Hughes?
3. What did you learn about Harlem?
4. At the Beyond the Page Café, kids get information from books, videos, and the Internet. If you wanted to learn more about Langston Hughes, what media would you choose? Explain your choices.

## Related Activities

1. In the online chat, Bryan Collier shows how he makes collages with magazines and watercolors. Have students work in groups to make a collage of their community. Help them add text and magazine photographs that tell why their community is special.
2. Discuss what the girl in the story loves. Ask students to write a poem about the things they love. Encourage them to read aloud their poems. Collect students' poems in an illustrated class book.
3. Read a poem by Langston Hughes, such as "I, too, sing America" or "Dream Variations," reprinted with permission on the Academy of American Poets Web site (go to the search page <http://www.poets.org/poems/search.cfm> and type "Langston Hughes"). Suggest they shut their eyes and make pictures in their minds of what they hear. Reread the poem, then discuss how it makes students feel. Invite students to draw a picture to go with the poem. Display them in the classroom.
4. Use the book to review or introduce the concepts of rhythm, rhyme, and repetition. Help them experience rhythm by telling them to clap their hands as you reread the page that begins "I love hip-hop..." Work with students to record on the board examples of rhyme, such as blouse / house, and repetition, such as Langston / Langston. Students may enjoy finding examples of rhythm, rhyme, and repetition in their own or their classmates' poems.
5. Call on volunteers to recall the online chat with Willie Perdomo, the author, and Bryan Collier, the illustrator of *Visiting Langston*. Help students formulate their own questions for the author and illustrator. Encourage them to send their questions and comments to Perdomo and Collier at the following address:

Willie Perdomo and Bryan Collier  
c/o Henry Holt & Co.  
115 W. 18th Street, Floor 6  
New York, NY 10011-4113

## Resources

### Disney Educational Productions


[www.Edustation.Disney.com](http://www.Edustation.Disney.com)

Additional information, including books, videos, and Web links.

### Langston Hughes Poetry Day

<http://www.poets.org/npdm/readday.cfm>

Celebrating Langston Hughes Poetry Day of April 2, 2002, with links to eleven of Hughes' most famous poems; an audio clip of Hughes reading a poem; and a brief biography; and more.

 Educational Productions  
(800) 295-5010

### Langston Hughes (1902-1967): Teacher Resource File

<http://falcon.jmu.edu/~Eramseyil/hughes.htm>

Useful links about Langston Hughes in these categories: biography, bibliography, criticism, lesson plans, and e-texts.

### National Education Technology Standards Project

<http://cnets.iste.org/index2.html>

(Scroll to Search Lessons. Pull down Awesome Authors.)

Collier, Bryan, *Uptown; illustrated* by Bryan Collier (Henry Holt & Co., 2000).

Medina, Tony, *Love to Langston; illustrated* by R. Gregory Christie (Lee & Low Books, 2002).

©Disney