



Langston's Train Ride

By Robert Burleigh

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Robert Burleigh's inspiring text captures the magical moment when Langston Hughes came to believe in himself as a writer, as he first wrote "The Negro Speaks of Rivers."

Clackety clack clack clack...

Can you hear the rhythm of the train?

Langston Hughes did. Traveling to see his father in 1920, as he listened to the sounds of the train -- metal on metal, wheels on rails -- Hughes's imagination took flight. On that ride, he was inspired to write his first famous poem, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers."

This picture book tells the story of Langston Hughes's rise to accomplishing his dream of being a writer. With bold, striking illustrations by Leonard Jenkins, here is a book for any young person with a dream.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 1-5—The train that carried Hughes from Ohio to his father's ranch in Mexico is the vehicle that propels both this slice-of-life picture book and the 18-year-old's journey as a poet. As Burleigh describes the moment in his well-crafted, first-person narration, words drifted into the passenger's consciousness as the rhythm of the wheels and the specter of the Mississippi assaulted his senses. The mighty river conjured up ancient African rivers, and by the end of the trip, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" was scrawled on an envelope. Vibrant mixed-media collages will dazzle viewers. Even the shadows pulse with color and pattern. Jenkins has a gift for figural painting and an exciting sense of composition. Layers and reflections add to the dream-like mood of the long ride. Images are pulled from the paintings and screened in simplified form under the text; they appear as reverse silhouettes on backgrounds of brilliant color. The end result is a joyous celebration of the journey and the word. The story of the published piece frames the trip. An introduction and afterword place the piece and the poet in context. Alice Walker's *Langston Hughes* (HarperCollins, 2002) and Tony Medina's *Love to Langston* (Lee & Low, 2002) offer complementary information on Langston's life, the latter in poetic form. Worthy of reading in and of itself, Burleigh's book also offers multiple curricular connections from trains, journeys, and writing, to rivers, Harlem, and the black experience.—Wendy Lukehart, Washington DC Public Library

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From [Booklist](#)

Gr. 3-6. The great Harlem Renaissance writer Langston Hughes wrote one of his most anthologized poems, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," at the age of 18 while on a train to visit his father, who left when Langston was a child. This dramatic picture book focuses on the instant when the young writer scribbled his famous poem on an envelope. In an author's note, Burleigh explains that his aim was to capture "the moment when Hughes came to believe in himself as a writer." But what are Burleigh's sources for picking this particular moment? In Hughes' autobiography *The Big Sea* (1940), the poet makes clear that he already had "a whole notebook full of poems" by then, so the message seems forced. The appeal here is the poem itself, printed in full, and in Jenkins' beautiful, rhythmic collage illustrations, which capture the changing view through the train window, the dreaming writer in his seat, the sweep of African American history in the poem, and the vital Harlem streets where Hughes' poetry is celebrated. Hazel Rochman
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About the Author

Robert Burleigh is the author of many books for children including *Flight: the journey of Charles Lindbergh*, which won the Orbus Pictus award. He lives in Chicago, Illinois.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jason Hill:

Book is written, printed, or descriptive for everything. You can understand everything you want by a guide. Book has a different type. As it is known to us that book is important point to bring us around the world. Next to that you can your reading proficiency was fluently. A reserve Langston's Train Ride will make you to possibly be smarter. You can feel considerably more confidence if you can know about every thing. But

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Rose Sosa:

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Stephen Hawkins:

In this period of time globalization it is important to someone to receive information. The information will make professionals understand the condition of the world. The healthiness of the world makes the information much easier to share. You can find a lot of sources to get information example: internet, newspaper, book, and soon. You can observe that now, a lot of publisher that will print many kinds of book. Typically the book that recommended to your account is Langston's Train Ride this publication consist a lot of the information with the condition of this world now. This particular book was represented how do the world has grown up. The words styles that writer require to explain it is easy to understand. Typically the writer made some study when he makes this book. That's why this book ideal all of you.

Erma Ward:

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