

## Zora Neale Hurston

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Zora Neal Hurston was born in Nostasulga, Alabama on January 7, 1891 and raised from an early age in Eatonville, Florida, She received her education at Howard University, Barnard College, and Columbia University, where she studied under German American anthropologist Franz Boas..

Zora was a writer and folklorist, whose anthropological study of her racial heritage, at a time when African American culture was not a popular field of study, influenced the Harlem writers of the 1930s. Zora's work also had an impact on later African American authors such as Ralph Ellison, Alice Walker, and Toni Morrison.

Eatonville was the first incorporated African American town in the United States, and Hurston returned there after college for anthropological field study that influenced her later output in fiction as well as in folklore. Hurston also collected folklore in Jamaica, Haiti, Bermuda, and Honduras. *Mules and Men* (1935), one of her best-known folklore collections, was based on her field research in the American South. *Tell My Horse* (1938) described folk customs in Haiti and Jamaica.

As a fiction writer, Zora was noted for her metaphorical language, her story-telling abilities, and her interest in and celebration of Southern African American culture in the United States. Her best-known novel is *Their Eyes Were Watching God* published in 1937, in which she tracked a Southern African American woman's search over 25 years and 3 marriages for her true identity and a community in which she could develop that identity. Zora's prolific literary output also included the novels *Jonah's Gourd Vine* published in 1934, *Seraph on the Suwanee* published in 1948, and short stories, plays, journal articles, and an autobiography, *Dust Tracks on a Road* published in 1942. Zora's work was not political, but her characters' use of dialect, her manner of portraying African American culture, and her conservatism created controversy within the African American community. Throughout her career she addressed issues of race and gender, often relating them to the search for freedom.

In her later years Zora experienced health problems, and she died impoverished and unrecognized by the literary community in Fort Pierce, Florida on January 28, 1960. Her writings, however, were rediscovered in the 1970s by a new generation of African American writers, notably Alice Walker, and many of Zora's works were republished. In 1995 a two-volume set of her fiction and nonfiction writings was published. *Go Gator and Muddy the Water: Writings by Zora Neale Hurston from the Federal Writers' Project* appeared in 1999. Hurston wrote this collection of articles on the folklore of African American Floridians for the Florida Federal Writers' Project between 1938 and 1939. The 1995 and 1999 collections contain previously unpublished work.

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#### Books by Zora Neal Hurston

*Jonah's Gourd Vine* (Philadelphia & London: Lippincott, 1934; London: Duckworth, 1934);

*Mules and Men* (Philadelphia & London: Lippincott, 1935; London: Kegan Paul, 1936);

*Their Eyes Were Watching God* (Philadelphia & London: Lippincott, 1937; London: Dent, 1938);

*Tell My Horse* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1938); republished as *Voodoo Gods. An Inquiry into Native Myths and Magic in Jamaica and Haiti* (London: Dent, 1939);

*Moses, Man of the Mountain* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1939); republished as *The Man of the Mountain* (London: Dent, 1941);

*Dust Tracks on a Road* (Philadelphia & London: Lippincott, 1942; London & New York: Hutchinson, 1944);

*Seraph on the Suwanee: A Novel* (New York: Scribners, 1948);

*I Love Myself When I Am Laughing ... and Then Again When I Am Looking Mean and Impressive: A Zora Neale Hurston Reader*, edited by Alice Walker (Old Westbury, N.Y.: Feminist Press, 1979);

*The Sanctified Church* (Berkeley: Turtle Island Foundation, 1981);

*Mule Bone: A Comedy of Negro Life*, by Hurston and Langston Hughes, edited by George Houston Bass and Henry Louis Gates Jr. (New York: HarperPerennial, 1991).

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#### Editions and Collections

*Spunk: The Selected Stories of Zora Neale Hurston*, edited by Bob Callahan (Berkeley, Cal.: Turtle Island Foundation, 1985);

*The Complete Stories*, edited by Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Sieglinde Lemke (New York: HarperCollins, 1995);

Folklore, Memoirs, and Other Writings, edited by Cheryl A. Wall (New York: Library of America, 1995);  
Novels and Stories (New York: Library of America, 1995);  
Sweat, edited by Wall (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1997).

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Rose Parkman Davis, *Zora Neale Hurston: An Annotated Bibliography and Reference Guide* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1997).

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Michael Awkward, ed., *New Essays on Their Eyes Were Watching God* (Cambridge, U.K. & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990);  
Harold Bloom, ed., *Zora Neale Hurston* (New York: Chelsea House, 1986);  
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Robert Bone, *Down Home: A History of Afro-American Short Fiction From Its Beginnings to the End of the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Putnam, 1975);  
Gloria L. Cronin, ed., *Critical Essays on Zora Neale Hurston* (New York: G. K. Hall, 1998);  
Arthur P. Davis, *From the Dark Tower: Afro-American Writers, 1900-1960* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1974);  
Nick Aaron Ford, *The Contemporary Negro Novel* (Boston: Meador, 1936);  
Henry Louis Gates Jr. and K. A. Appiah, eds., *Zora Neale Hurston: Critical Perspectives Past and Present* (New York: Amistad, 1993);  
Steve Glassman and Kathryn Lee Seidel, eds., *Zora in Florida* (Orlando: University of Central Florida Press, 1991);

Trudier Harris, *The Power of the Porch: The Storyteller's Craft in Zora Neale Hurston, Gloria Naylor, and Randall Kenan* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996);

Robert E. Hemenway, "Zora Neale Hurston and the Eatonville Anthropology," in *The Harlem Renaissance Remembered*, edited by Arna Bontemps (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1972);

Karla F. C. Holloway, *The Character of the Word: The Texts of Zora Neale Hurston* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987);

Lillie P. Howard, *Zora Neale Hurston* (Boston: Twayne, 1980);

Howard, ed., *Alice Walker and Zora Neale Hurston: The Common Bond* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1993);

Langston Hughes, *The Big Sea* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1963);

John Lowe, *Jump at the Sun: Zora Neale Hurston's Cosmic Comedy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994);

Mary E. Lyons, *Sorrow's Kitchen: The Life and Folklore of Zora Neale Hurston* (New York: Scribners, 1990);

Pearlie Mae Fisher Peters, *The Assertive Woman in Zora Neale Hurston's Fiction, Folklore, and Drama* (New York: Garland, 1997);

Deborah G. Plant, *Every Tub Must Sit on Its Own Bottom: The Philosophy and Politics of Zora Neale Hurston* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995);

Eric J. Sundquist, *The Hammers of Creation: Folk Culture in Modern African-American Fiction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992);

Darwin T. Turner, *In a Minor Chord: Three Afro-American Writers and Their*

*Search for Identity* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971);

Alice Walker, "In Search of Zora Neale Hurston," *Ms.*, 3 (March 1975): 74-90;

Paul Witcover, *Zora Neale Hurston* (New York: Chelsea House, 1991).

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