



The Complete Poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar

Paul Laurence Dunbar , William Dean Howells (Introduction)

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From Reader Review The Complete Poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar for online ebook

Mary Ann says

I had not heard of this author, ever, in my college or high school time. I only discovered him while visiting Wright Brother monuments and museums located in Dayton, OH. I decided that I needed to learn about this man. I was amazed at his work. Not that he could do this work, but that his work, while it is poetry, it is a great quantity and it covers so many different things in his life. It covers love, laughter, death, work, slavery. It is in a dialect and plain English. He shows such emotion in his work. I read a little every day and just thoroughly enjoyed this work.

Lydia says

I have not read many poetry books and, in truth, I have not read a poetry book in many years. Poetry should be read in stages when it is easier to absorb what the author may be trying to convey. This book took a while and I should have read another book while reading this one.

I enjoyed the book. I thought it was well written poetry of the African-American experience in the United States. Dunbar poetically writes of the many aspects of the human spirit --- happiness, joy, sorrow, love, courtship, marital relationships, family, work.

The book was first published in 1895, so it was able to relate aspects of life as a slave through poetry. Some of poems are written in the slave dialect, which takes some time read. In fact, because of that dialect, for me, it was necessary to read some of the poems several times. Some of them of fun the read and others are cause of great sorrow. Dunbar refers to many of his themes as lyrics, perhaps relating to the style which he wished to have poems viewed. An example: sunshine and shadow; lowly life; hearthside.

I think that there were so many themes of the poems that anyone can take away something from them. Some of my favorites were Accountability, Ode to Ethiopia, An Antebellum Sermon, Keep a Pluggin' Away, The Dillante: A Modern Type, After While, One Life, We Wear the Mask, The Party, The Oak Tree, The Paradox. Dunbar pays tribute to notable individuals of the time Lincoln, Harriet Beecher Stowe, the soldiers of Fort Pillow, The Colored Soldiers, Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, Whittier, Robert Gould Shaw.

Poetry can be somewhat complex, especially in the what the author wants to convey. It is worth taking the time. I felt that this book is worth having in anyone's collection. A companion book that I read before reading Dunbar's book of poetry was "Lyrics of Sunshine and Shadow: The Courtship and Marriage Paul Laurence Dunbar and Alice Ruth Moore," the disintegration of the marriage between two complex personalities.

Steve says

Liked a great many of his poems. Including, Antebellum Sermon, Colored Soldiers, The Old Front Gate, the Colored Band and When they listed colored soldiers.

Miss Clark says

This is the definitive edition of America's first African-American poet's work, as it brings together all of Dunbar's poems and well worth a read.

Dunbar's short stories are also excellent examples of early 20th century American literature, with wonderful local character and dialect, both of which are seen throughout his poetry.

Illiterate says

Dunbar uses simple repetitive rhymes. Occasionally strong images press against the simplicity. But when the content is weak, the poems are irritating jingles.

Cheryl says

I adore Paul L Dunbar and love his poetry, it speaks to me in a way that makes me feel it is written only for me.

Matt Miles says

"Now in our time, when poets rhyme For money, fun, or fashion, 'Tis good to hear one voice so clear That thrills with honest passion."

The excerpt above could serve as a thesis statement for the best of Paul Lawrence Dunbar's poetry, including "Sympathy", "Ode to Ethiopia," and "The Haunted Oak": like many of his best poems in this collection they use standard English to convey the author's anger and frustration with the continuing effects of racism in his own lifetime. Even the dialectical poems are worthy of recognition for their commitment to capturing the voice of a people in a more dignified way than had been attempted up to that point. Unlike the standard English poems, they don't seem interested in addressing racism overall, but they do seem to attempt to humanize people of color by allowing them agency in their own poems. These characteristics make the dialectical poems both imperfect and important.

While many of the dialectical poems have been seen as problematic, they helped bring the clear, honest voice of a skilled and, at his best, passionate poet to light for over a century. I'm glad to see this, and I know I'm not the only one. Langston Huges and Maya Angelou are among the names of deservedly celebrated authors who appreciated and built on his work. Thanks to Paul Lawrence Dunbar and other poets who found inspiration in his work, American literature has become richer than it otherwise would have been.
