



# The Oxford Anthology of African-American Poetry

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For over two centuries, black poets have created verse that captures the sorrows, joys, and triumphs of the African-American experience. Reflecting their variety of visions and styles, *The Oxford Anthology of African-American Poetry* aims to offer nothing less than a definitive literary portrait of a people.

Here are poems by writers as different as Paul Laurence Dunbar and W.E.B. Du Bois; Countee Cullen and Langston Hughes; Gwendolyn Brooks and Amiri Baraka; Rita Dove and Harryette Mullen; Yusef Komunyakaa and Nathaniel Mackey. Acclaimed as a biographer and editor, Arnold Rampersad groups these poems as meditations on key issues in black culture, including the idea of Africa; the South; slavery; protest and resistance; the black man, woman, and child; sexuality and love; music and religion; spirituality; death and transcendence.

With their often starkly contrasting visions and styles, these poets illuminate some of the more controversial and intimate aspects of the black American experience. Poetry here is not only or mainly a vehicle of protest but also an exploration of the complex and tender subtleties of black culture. One section offers tributes to celebrated leaders such as Sojourner Truth and Malcolm X, but many more reflect the heroism compelled by everyday black life. The variety of poetic forms and language captures the brilliant essence of English as mastered by black Americans dedicated to the art of poetry.

Loving and yet also honest and unsparing, *The Oxford Anthology of African-American Poetry* is for readers who treasure both poetry and the genius of black America.

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