

Hurston, Zora Neale (1891-1960)

Encyclopedia Article

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Hurston, Zora Neale (1891-1960)

A prolific novelist, folklorist, anthropologist, and critic, Zora Neale Hurston was one of the inspiring personalities of the Harlem Renaissance. Her diverse interests intertwine in her most influential novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), where the narration of a black woman's quest for self-identity is interspersed with folk-tales, which Hurston had collected during a research trip supervised by noted anthropologist Franz Boas. In 1943, her autobiography *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942) won *The Saturday Review's* Anisfield Award for the best book on race relations. Although this award made her a well known public figure, she always refused the role of spokesperson for the African American community. She also held controversial views on race, which led her to write an article against school desegregation in 1955. In the years following her death, notably in the 1980s and 1990s, Hurston's work has achieved a prominent position in the American literary canon.

Further Reading:

Bloom, Harold, editor. *Zora Neale Hurston-Modern Critical Views*. New York, Chelsea House Publishers, 1986.

Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. *The Signifying Monkey-A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1988.

Hemenway, Robert E. *Zora Neale Hurston-A Literary Biography*. Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1977.

Walker, Alice. *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*. New York, Harcourt Brace, 1983.