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I, Too, Sing America: Three Centuries Of African American Poetry



Synopsis

Powerful and diverse, this unique collection of African American poetry spans three centuries of writing in America. Poets bare their souls, speak their minds, trace their roots, and proclaim their dreams in the thirty-six poems compiled here. From lamentations to celebrations, the poems of Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Gwendolyn Brooks, among others, reveal the ironies of black America, juxtaposing themes of resistance and reconciliation, hope and despair. Eminent scholar Catherine Clinton further illuminates these poems through brief biographies of the poets and notes on the text. The result is an authoritative introduction to twenty-five of America's best poets. Prize-winning artist Stephen Alcorn lends his own artistic vision and passion to the collection, providing stunning visual interpretations of each poem. Together they create a stirring tribute to these great poets.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In this well-chosen collection, Clinton, an author and editor of women's history books for adults, chronologically presents work by 25 poets, from Lucy Terry and Phillis Wheatley to Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen to Maya Angelou and Alice Walker. Because only six of the poets are represented by more than one poem, however, readers are unlikely to get a strong sense of any one poet, despite the biographical entry on each. Alcorn's (Langston Hughes: An Illustrated Edition) abstract mixed-media illustrations on grainy, almost linenlike paper recalls Harlem Renaissance artist Aaron Douglas and, at times, the kaleidoscopic space of Marc Chagall. Each illustration is a complex response to the poem, inviting readers to both study the artwork and muse over the text.

Facing each biographical note is a full page of taupe-and-white pattern, however, which quickly grows monotonous, particularly in comparison with the striking forms and splintered spaces of the full-color art. Rather than relegating the artwork to a supporting role, this book places the paintings on at least the same level as the classic poems. While those who love poetry may wish there were more poems, the strong selections that are included here?coupled with the dramatic paintings they have inspired?are likely to put readers on the trail to the poets' further works. All ages. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Grade 5 Up-How do three centuries of African-American poetry fit into 128 pages? With a firm editorial hand, as exhibited in this volume. Clinton has selected one poem (or occasionally a few) by 25 prominent poets from the 1700s to the present. A page of brief biographical and critical text introduces each poet's work. The result is introductory and broad. Readers will need other resources to explore these writers more fully, but this collection should "touch the imagination," as the author hopes. Each poem is illustrated on the facing page with one of Alcorn's strong, colorful, and imagistic paintings (reminiscent of the work of Aaron Douglas and the Harlem Renaissance). This artwork as well as the taupe patterned block prints make this book a truly beautiful visual interpretation of the collection. This title could serve as an introduction to Arnold Adoff's *The Poetry of Black America* (Harper, 1973) and *I Am the Darker Brother* (S & S, 1997) or stand alone in any collection. Nina Lindsay, Oakland Public Library, CA Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

I had this book years ago, I loan it to a friend who did not return it. Back then lived in another state. I was happy to be able to replace it

Great deal! Thank you!

Well it must was posted in very small print that these were cassette tape songs. I have been unable to use do to no cassette tape player

This volume presents the truth of the African-American experience. If you are an educator, throw away the history books that portray one-dimensional Euro-Centric apologetics of America's second greatest national shame. So also, set aside the equally one sided views of the greed-poisoned youth of what has informed everything "cool" in American culture. Pick up this book that shows the articulate rage of justice denied. The artwork alone would be worth the price of purchase as it would

tell the tale as well. But the poems and mini-bios present an awesome invitation to research a culture rich in literacy and experience. This book should be in every elementary school library in America and on the shelf of every home of everyone that dares to call themselves "American" (Afro or otherwise)

Not only does this book give you a variety of African-American poets, it also supplies you with a brief background of each author. This gives you some of the ingredients it took to make each poem. There are thirty-six poems total. Of the twenty-five poets, Clinton, (author), selects more than one piece from some of them. For those who only know of a few poets, this book allows you to learn about others. The illustrator (Stephen Alcorn) Uses lots of color to express the feelings of the poem. These are the type of pictures that you must look at with a keen eye. A lot of symbolism is used in his drawings. You can get a general idea of the poem by looking at the pictures. To check this book out would be an injustice. this is a must buy book. Everyones library should consist of this poetic history.

This is an excellent poetry book with a diverse group of African American poets. The artwork also inspires discussion. I use this book as part of my homeschooling lessons on poetry. Many thought provoking poems to enjoy and ponder.

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