

James Weldon Johnson

Poet Description:

James Weldon Johnson's work and multiple careers defy easy characterization. He was born and grew up in Jacksonville, Florida, where his grandfather had moved after a hurricane destroyed his business in the Bahamas. Johnson graduated from Atlanta University and then studied law, serving simultaneously as principal of the Stanton School. But he also began writing poems, which served as the lyrics for songs his brother John, a trained musician, had begun composing. At the turn of the century, both brothers were in New York composing songs for Broadway musicals. One earlier composition, "Lift Every Voice and Sing," was called the Negro National Anthem by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. From 1906 to 1909, Johnson served as Washington's ambassador to Venezuela. On his return, he wrote his novel *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912). He would later become a key organizing figure in the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s, editing groundbreaking collections of poetry and spirituals, writing his autobiography, and collecting a series of biblical stories in verse, including "The Creation," in *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse* (1927).

Race/Ethnicity:

[African](#) ^[1]

Picture:



Gender:

[Male](#) ^[2]

Sexuality:

[Straight](#) ^[3]

First Name:

James Weldon

Last Name:

Johnson

Birth & Death Dates:

Friday, June 16, 1871 to Sunday, June 26, 1938

School of Poetry:

[Harlem Renaissance](#) ^[4]

Birth Place:

Jacksonville , Florida

United States

See map: [Google Maps](#) [5]

Florida US

Death Place:

Wiscasset , Maine

United States

See map: [Google Maps](#) [6]

Maine US

Group visibility:

Private - accessible only to group members

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[4] <http://modernamericanpoetry.org/school-poetry/harlem-renaissance>

[5] <http://maps.google.com?q=46.880607+-87.363281+%28%2C+Jacksonville%2C+FL%2C+%2C+us%29>

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