

Countee Cullen

Poet Description:

Countee Cullen was probably born in Louisville, Kentucky, though Cullen himself later liked to claim New York as his birthplace. In any case, he was at some point informally adopted by the Reverend A. and Carolyn Belle Cullen; prior to that he used the name Countee Porter. The Reverend was not only a minister but also a black activist in Harlem. Cullen himself absorbed the activism but realized his literary inclinations and homosexuality?see the simultaneously racial and sexual transgression of "Tableau"?would take him in different directions. He wrote much of his early poetry while a student at New York University from 1921-1925 and at Harvard from 1925-1927, and it is notable not only for its sometimes unforgettable concision and its almost musical politics and racial commentary, but also for its groundbreaking use of purportedly "white" traditional forms. Unlike Langston Hughes, he had little interest in how jazz or the blues might be adapted by black poets; unlike Sterling Brown, dialect was not to be the ground of his achievement. A much-celebrated 1928 marriage to W.E.B. Du Bois's daughter collapsed almost immediately. Thereafter Cullen worked as an English and French teacher at Frederick Douglass Junior High, wrote a novel, translated Euripides's play *Medea* from the Greek, and wrote two collections of children's verse. Also see Charles Johnson's edition *Countee Cullen: Collected Poems* (2013).

Race/Ethnicity:

African ^[1]

Picture:



Gender:

Male ^[2]

Sexuality:

Straight ^[3]

First Name:

Countee

Last Name:

Cullen

Birth & Death Dates:

Saturday, May 30, 1903 to Wednesday, January 9, 1946

School of Poetry:

Harlem Renaissance ^[4]

Birth Place:

Louisville , Kentucky

United States

See map: Google Maps ^[5]

Kentucky US

Death Place:

New York City , New York

United States

See map: Google Maps ^[6]

New York US

Group visibility:

Private - accessible only to group members

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

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

[6] <http://maps.google.com?q=40.714353+-74.005973+%28%2C+New+York+City%2C+NY%2C+%2C+us%29>