



Paul Laurence Dunbar

Topic Guide for Chronicling America (<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>)

Introduction

Born in Dayton, Ohio, Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906) was the first African American to gain national recognition as a poet. His body of work includes 12 books of poetry, five novels, four books of short stories and a play. He also wrote a number of newspaper articles, essays and songs. His writing style used two distinct voices—standard English and turn-of-the-century African American dialect—and was praised by contemporary critics, including William Dean Howells, writers and the general public. Two major themes of his works were the difficulties experienced by African Americans and their efforts to achieve equality. At the age of 33, Dunbar died from tuberculosis. He is buried in Woodland Cemetery in Dayton, Ohio.

Important Dates

- June 27, 1872: Paul Laurence Dunbar is born in Dayton, Ohio, to former slaves, Matilda and Joshua Dunbar.
- 1892: Dunbar gives his first public reading at a Western Association of Writers meeting.
- 1892: *Oak and Ivy*, Dunbar's first collection of poems, is published.
- 1895: Dunbar moves to Toledo, Ohio.
- 1896: *Majors and Minors*, Dunbar's second collection of poems, is published.
- 1896: Dodd Mead and Co. publishes *Lyrics of a Lowly Life*, which combined Dunbar's first 2 books.
- 1897: Dunbar travels to England to tour the London literary circuit.
- March 6, 1898: Dunbar marries Alice Ruth Moore, a teacher and poet from New Orleans, Louisiana.
- 1900: Dunbar is diagnosed with tuberculosis. He and his wife move to Colorado.
- 1904: Two years after separating from his wife, Dunbar returns to Dayton to live with his mother.
- February 9, 1906: Dunbar dies of consumption (tuberculosis).
- June 26, 1909: A monument honoring Dunbar is unveiled at Woodland Cemetery in Dayton, Ohio.

Suggested Search Strategies

- Try searching the following terms in combination (as an "all" word search), proximity or as phrases: Paul Dunbar, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Dunbar, poet, poem, Oak and Ivy, Howells.
- Limit your search by date to find information about specific events.

Sample Articles from Chronicling America

- "[Mr. Howell's Discovers A Poet in Paul Dunbar](#)" *Courier* (Lincoln, NE), September 26, 1896, Image 4.
- "[Paul Lawrence Dunbar](#)" *Hawaiian Star* (Honolulu, HI), October 26, 1897, Image 7, col. 4.
- "[Lover's Lane](#)" *Coconino Sun* (Flagstaff, AZ), October 15, 1898, Image 3, col. 1.
- "[Negro Poet Robbed](#)" *Colored American* (Washington, DC), September 1, 1900, Image 11, col. 1-2.
- "[Religion](#)" *Blue-grass Blade* (Lexington, KY), December 18, 1904, Image 2, col. 4.
- "[Death of Paul Dunbar](#)" *Stark County Democrat* (Canton, OH), February 13, 1906, Image 7, col. 6.
- "[To Honor Negro Poet](#)" *Marion Daily Mirror* (Marion, OH), May 26, 1909, Image 2, col. 2.
- "[Get Somebody Else](#)" *Goodwin's Weekly* (Salt Lake City, UT), May 18, 1918, Image 10, col. 4.
- "[The Paul Dunbar Memorial](#)" *Broad Ax* (Salt Lake City, UT), July 1, 1922, Image 2, col. 4.