

Yale University Library
Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library

Guide to the Langston Hughes Collection

JWJ MSS 28



by Michael Forstrom

July 2003

P. O. Box 208330
New Haven, CT 06520-8330
(203) 432-2977
beinecke.library@yale.edu
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
P. O. Box 208330
New Haven, CT 06520-8330
(203) 432-2977
beinecke.library@yale.edu
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

CALL NUMBER: JWJ MSS 28

CREATOR: Hughes, Langston, 1902-1967

TITLE: Langston Hughes collection

DATES: 1924-1969

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 1.75 linear feet (4 boxes + 1 art storage item)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The Langston Hughes Collection consists of correspondence, writings, photographs, sound recordings, video recordings, electronic files, and other material documenting the life, work, and remembrance of Langston Hughes. Series I, Josephine DeWitt Rhodehamel Gift, is organized into three subseries: Letters from Langston Hughes, Writings of Langston Hughes and Writings of Others. There are letters to Rhodehamel and holograph and typescript versions of poems for Dear Lovely Death. Series II, Material from Other Sources, is organized into four subseries: Correspondence, Photographs, Audiovisual Materials, and Electronic Files. There are groups of letters to Arna Bontemps, Harold Jackman, Arthur Spingarn, Nathaniel White and others. Audiovisual material consists of commercial recordings of Langston Hughes's work, as well as video recordings of two sessions from Yale University's "Langston Hughes and His World" conference in February 2002. Electronic files include preliminary and final versions of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library's online exhibition, "Langston Hughes at 100."

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.hughesar>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.hughesar>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

■■■■ item barcode

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

The Langston Hughes Collection was acquired through various gifts and purchases to complement the Langston Hughes Papers (JWJ MSS 26). Audiovisual materials and electronic files were acquired or produced at the time of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library's Hughes centenary exhibition and conference in 2002.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Box 2: Restricted fragile material. Reference surrogates have been substituted in the main files. For further information consult the appropriate curator.

Box 4: Folders 30 and 34 are unused. Original recordings are in Box 2, folders 38 and 39.

Conditions Governing Use

The Langston Hughes Collection is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Preferred Citation

Langston Hughes Collection. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Processing Information

This collection contains small groups of material, some of which were formerly part of the Langston Hughes Papers (JWJ MSS 26). These materials were removed from the Hughes Papers during reprocessing because they derive from sources other than Langston Hughes and his estate. Other groups of material were acquired or produced by the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library during the Hughes centenary exhibition and conference in 2002. Audiovisual Materials and Electronic Files were added to the Collection in 2006.

LANGSTON HUGHES (1902-1967)

A biographical timeline is provided in the Langston Hughes Papers (JWJ MSS 26).

Scope and Contents

The Langston Hughes Collection consists of letters, manuscripts, audiovisual recordings and other material documenting the life, work, and remembrance of Langston Hughes. The collection spans the years 1924-2002.

The collection is housed in 4 boxes and organized into two series: Josephine DeWitt Rhodehamel Gift and Material from Other Sources. Box 2 contains material that is *Restricted Fragile*.

[Series I, Josephine DeWitt Rhodehamel Gift](#), is organized into three subseries: Letters from Langston Hughes, Writings of Langston Hughes and Writings of Others. Letters from Langston Hughes, housed in box 1, consist exclusively of letters from Hughes to Rhodehamel, of Berkeley, California, dating from 1930-40. Letters mention Rhodehamel's efforts to acquire particular pieces of work by Hughes for herself and "the library," his work and travel, and his gratitude for her interest. The Writings of Langston Hughes subseries contains holograph and typescript versions of poems for *Dear Lovely Death* (1931) laid in decorated boards. There is also a typescript copy of Louise Thompson's article on Hughes' first novel, *Not Without Laughter* (1930).

[Series II, Material from Other Sources](#), housed in boxes 1, 3, and 4, is organized into four subseries: Correspondence, Photographs, Audiovisual Material and Electronic Files. The Correspondence subseries consists of correspondence from Hughes to others and is arranged alphabetically by recipient. There are groups of letters to Arna Bontemps, Harold Jackman, Arthur Spingarn, Nathaniel White and others. More than 20 letters to Arna Bontemps, dating from March to September 1948, deal with their anthology *The Poetry of the Negro* (1949). Most of Hughes' letters to Harold Jackman are brief, but longer letters from 1924 and 1933 respectively touch on the economic hardships of life in Paris and the production of Hughes' plays, "Mulatto" and "The Ways of White Folks," by the Harlem Experimental Theatre. Hughes solicited Arthur Spingarn's help in early December 1935 to obtain royalties from the American Play Company for the Vanderbilt Theatre's production of "Mulatto," and subsequent letters, also dating from December 1935, discuss Spingarn's efforts on his behalf. There are many brief letters and cards to Nathaniel White, one of Hughes' assistants, dating from the late 1940s to early 1950s. Enclosures, third-party correspondence and correspondence to Hughes are noted in the folder description. There are photographs of Hughes dating from 1934 and 1969.

The Audiovisual Material subseries consists of audio and video recordings acquired or produced by the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library for the Library's 2002 exhibition "Langston at 100" and the Yale University conference "Langston Hughes and His World" which was held by the University's Department of African American Studies and the Beinecke Library in February 2002. The material includes both commercial recordings relating to Hughes, and video recordings of "Langston Hughes and His World" conference sessions "An Evening of Jazz and Poetry" and "The Theatre of Langston Hughes." The Electronic Files subseries consists of preliminary and final .html files for the online exhibition "Langston Hughes at 100."

[Restricted Fragile](#) materials are housed in box 2.

Collection Contents

Series I: Josephine DeWitt Rhodehamel Gift, 1930-1940

0.21 linear feet (1 box)

Gift of Josephine DeWitt Rhodehamel, 1964

LETTERS FROM LANGSTON HUGHES

b. 1, f. 1	Correspondence Includes clipping of poems in Russian and printed advertisement for the 1936 Curran Theatre production of "Mulatto"	1930-40, n.d.
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WRITINGS OF LANGSTON HUGHES

b. 1, f. 2	"Dear Lovely Death," poems, holograph and typescript, corrected	1931
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WRITINGS OF OTHERS

b. 1, f. 3	"Langston Hughes, Novelist," article by Louise Thompson, typescript carbon, n.d. corrected	
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Series II: Material from Other Sources, 1924-2002*1.33 linear feet (2 boxes)*

Correspondence and Photographs acquired by gift or purchase from various sources. Audiovisual Material and Electronic Files acquired or produced by the Beinecke Library for the Hughes centenary exhibition and conference in 2002.

CORRESPONDENCE

b. 1, f. 4	Bontemps, Arna Includes letter from Bontemps to Hughes	1948-64, n.d.
b. 1, f. 5	Franklin, "Miss"	1927 Feb 27
b. 1, f. 6	Friedberg, Leavia Includes printed invitations and letters to Hughes from Josh White and the Negro Actors Guild of America	1942, n.d.
b. 1, f. 7	Gallop, Donald	1950-51
b. 1, f. 8	Hill, Lawrence Contains copy of letter	1963 Sep 24
b. 1, f. 9	Jackman, Harold Includes review of Gilpin Players 1936 production of "Little Ham" at the Karamu Theater	1924-37
b. 1, f. 10	Rutherford, Tom Includes letter from Rutherford to Bernard Knollenberg	1942 Sep
b. 1, f. 11	Spingarn, Arthur B. (Arthur Barnett)	1935
b. 1, f. 12	White, Nathaniel Includes postcard from White to Hughes	1946-51, n.d.

PHOTOGRAPHS

b. 1, f. 13	Photograph of Langston Hughes	1969 Jul
b. Art, f. 14	Photograph of Langston Hughes by Sibyl Anikeeff	[1934 Sep 15?]

AUDIOVISUAL MATERIALS

Commercial Sound Recordings

b. 3, f. 17	<i>Black nativity - gospel on Broadway</i> [Compact disc] Re-release of VeeJay 5022 (1962) Collectables, COL-CD-7161	2000
b. 3, f. 18	Amaize, Odekhiren. <i>The Negro speaks of rivers, and other art songs by African- American composers</i> [Compact disc] Musician Showcase Recordings, MS1011	1999

AUDIOVISUAL MATERIALS > Commercial Sound Recordings (continued)

b. 3, f. 19	<i>Jimmie Lunceford and his orchestra, 1941-1945</i> (French import) [Compact disc] Classics 862	1996
b. 3, f. 20	Lincoln, Abbey. <i>Abbey is blue</i> (Japanese import) [Compact disc] VICJ-60490	2000
b. 3, f. 21	Lincoln, Abbey. <i>Straight ahead</i> [Compact disc] Candid, CCD 79015	1989
b. 3, f. 22	Lutcher, Nellie. <i>The Best of Nellie Lutcher</i> [Compact disc] Capitol Jazz, CDP 7243 8 35039 2 6	1995
b. 3, f. 23	<i>Midge Williams and her Jazz Jesters, 1937-1938</i> (French import) [Compact disc] Classics 745	1994
b. 3, f. 24	Siegmeister, Elie. <i>Selections</i> [Compact disc] CRI American masters series, CRI 814	1999
b. 3, f. 25	<i>Weary blues with Langston Hughes, Charles Mingus, and Leonard Feather</i> [Compact disc] Verve 841 660-2	1990
Commercial Videocassettes These videocassettes are commercial and have not been digitized.		
b. 4, f. 26	<i>Black Americans of Achievement Video Collection II, Langston Hughes</i> (1994) [VHS]	1994
b. 4, f. 27	<i>Looking for Langston</i> (1989) [VHS]	1992
b. 4, f. 28	<i>Stormy Weather</i> (1943) [VHS]	1991
Media Produced by and for Beinecke Events Box 2: Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.		
b. 4, f. 29, ■■■■ 39002104618237	<i>Langston Hughes at 100</i> <i>1 Videocassette (VHS)</i> This is a videocassette copy of the original recording. It has not been digitized. Accompanied by program	2002 Feb 1
b. 2, f. 38, ■■■■ 39002104618302	"An Evening of Jazz and Poetry," Langston Hughes and His World: A Centennial Celebration conference, Yale University (Tape 1 of 2) <i>1 Videocassette (Hi8) 01:39:08 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> [Aviary] jwjms002839002104618302.u.mp4 Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	2002 February 22

AUDIOVISUAL MATERIALS > Media Produced by and for Beinecke Events (continued)

b. 2, f. 38, ■■■ 39002104618310	"An Evening of Jazz and Poetry," Langston Hughes and His World: A Centennial Celebration conference, Yale University (Tape 2 of 2) <i>1 Videocassette (Hi8) 01:42:27 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> [Aviary] jwjms002839002104618310.u.mp4 Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	2002 February 22
b. 4, f. 31, ■■■ 39002104618245	"An Evening of Jazz and Poetry," Langston Hughes and His World: A Centennial Celebration conference, Yale University (1 of 2) <i>1 Videocassette (VHS)</i> This is a videocassette copy of the original recording. It has not been digitized.	2002 Feb 22
b. 4, f. 32, ■■■ 39002104618252	"An Evening of Jazz and Poetry," Langston Hughes and His World: A Centennial Celebration conference, Yale University (2 of 2) <i>1 Videocassette (VHS)</i> This is a videocassette copy of the original recording. It has not been digitized.	2002 Feb 22
b. 2, f. 39, ■■■ 39002104618328	"The Theatre of Langston Hughes," Langston Hughes and His World: A Centennial Celebration conference, Yale University (Tape 1 of 2) <i>1 Videocassette (Hi8) 01:09:51 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> [Aviary] jwjms002839002104618328.u.mp4 Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	2002 February 23
b. 2, f. 39, ■■■ 39002104618336	"The Theatre of Langston Hughes," Langston Hughes and His World: A Centennial Celebration conference, Yale University (Tape 2 of 2) <i>1 Videocassette (Hi8) 01:35:02 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> [Aviary] jwjms002839002104618336.u.mp4 Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	2002 February 23
b. 4, f. 34, ■■■ 39002104618294	"The Theatre of Langston Hughes," Langston Hughes and His World: A Centennial Celebration conference, Yale University [VHS] This is a videocassette copy of the original recording. It has not been digitized.	2002 Feb 23
b. 3, f. 35	<i>Langston Hughes Reads - CD format</i> [Compact disc]	n.d.
ELECTRONIC FILES		
b. 3, f. 36	"Langston at 100" website, .html files, preliminary version	[2002]
b. 3, f. 37	"Langston at 100" website, .html files, final version ("Web and library versions")	2002 Jan 30

Restricted Fragile

0.21 linear feet (1 box)

Box 2: Restricted fragile material. Reference surrogates have been substituted in the main files. For further information consult the appropriate curator.

b. 2, f. 15	Box 1, folder 9
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b. 2, f. 16	Box 1, folder 12
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b. 2, f. 39	Box 4, folder 33
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Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

African American authors -- 20th Century -- Archives
American literature -- 20th Century
Authors, American -- 20th Century -- Archives
Harlem Renaissance -- Archives

Genres / Formats

Born digital
Compact discs
Photographic prints
Videocassettes

Occupations

Authors
Poets

Names

Bontemps, Arna, 1902-1973
Hughes, Langston, 1902-1967
Jackman, Harold, 1901-1961
Rhodehamel, Josephine DeWitt
Spingarn, Arthur B. (Arthur Barnett), 1878-1971
White, Nathaniel

Corporate Bodies

Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
Langston Hughes and His World -- New Haven, Conn. -- 2002
Langston Hughes at 100 (Exhibition : New Haven, CT) -- 2002
Yale University. Dept. of African American Studies