

Visions and Voices and the USC Libraries have collaborated to create a series of resource guides that allow you to build on your experiences at many Visions and Voices events. Explore the resources listed below and continue your journey of inquiry and discovery!



Letters from Zora

IN HER OWN WORDS

USC LIBRARIES RESOURCE GUIDE

Actress Vanessa Bell Calloway will take on the role of Zora Neale Hurston in a provocative multimedia production written by Gabrielle Pina and directed by Anita Dashiell-Sparks. With live music composed by Ron McCurdy, the performance will illuminate Hurston's prose, her life, her distinctive array of friends and foes and her unique view of a jazz-age world.

Through the analysis and dramatization of personal letters and selected excerpts from Zora Neale Hurston's impressive body of work, *Letters from Zora* will explore Hurston's controversial views on integration, segregation and social justice and will showcase a life that was filled with artistic and literary triumphs as well as abject poverty and self-doubt. Additionally, the letters and corresponding narrative will examine Hurston's delicate financial and artistic dance with her patron Charlotte Osgood Mason and her relationships with other notable luminaries such as Richard Wright, Countee Cullen, Alain Locke and Langston Hughes. The piece will also reflect on Hurston's fall from grace and her untimely death in 1960. Archival footage will showcase the events, places and icons referenced in many of Hurston's letters, and McCurdy's original score will serve as a live soundtrack, with music performed by students from the USC Thornton School.

MICHAEL HOOKS of the USC Libraries has provided the following biographical sketch and selected the resources below to help you learn more about Hurston's life and work. Visit the online version of this guide at libguides.usc.edu/content.php?pid=306311 for more resources, including information about archival manuscript collections that contain materials by and about Hurston.

Biography of Zora Neale Hurston

Zora Neale Hurston, novelist, playwright, poet and anthropologist, was born on January 7, 1891, in Notasulga, Alabama, the fifth of eight children. Her parents were John Hurston, a carpenter and Baptist minister, and Lucy Ann Hurston, a schoolteacher. At the age of three, the Hurston family moved to Eatonville, Florida, an all-African American community located north of Orlando. In 1904, Hurston's mother passed away, and her father subsequently remarried. For the next several years, due to problems with her father and his new wife, Zora led an itinerant life, moving from relative to relative, and then working as a domestic, and next as a wardrobe girl with a Gilbert and Sullivan repertory company. Because of the family issues, Zora had little educational opportunities until she enrolled in Morgan Academy (now Morgan State University) in Baltimore, Maryland. She followed that in 1918 by enrolling at Howard University in Washington, DC, attending the college preparatory program until 1919 and taking university courses off-and-on until 1924.

By January 1925, Hurston lived in New York City, where she began her literary career. This was the time of the Harlem Renaissance, when black artists began to "explore black culture and express pride in their race." In addition, she combined her studies in anthropology with her writing career. She transferred to Barnard College in New York City, where she was offered a scholarship in anthropology and subsequently earned her B.A. in 1928.

While at Barnard College, Zora came to the attention of and received tutelage from the renowned anthropologist Franz Boas, who was teaching at Columbia University. She conducted field research (1927-1932) in the American South thanks to a fellowship from the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, collecting folklore and interviewing a former slave. As result of this work, she published an article, "Cudjo's Own Story of the Last African Slaves" (1927). Unfortunately, in the early 1970s, this article proved to be plagiarized from a previous work by another author.

Hurston received additional fellowships, including a Rosenwald Fellowship in 1934 and a Guggenheim Fellowship for the period 1935-36 that resulted in what some say was "her most fruitful anthropological field research which produced her finest literature." In 1934, she published her first novel, *Jonah's Gourd Vine: A Novel*, followed in 1935 by *Mules and Men*. From 1936 to 1938, Hurston studied in Jamaica and Haiti on another Guggenheim Fellowship. This activity resulted in the book *Tell My Horse*, which came out in 1938.

Hurston wrote several other books, including the novels *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), *Moses, Man of the Mountain* (1939) and *Seraph on the Suwanee*, and her autobiography, *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942).

In addition to writing novels, articles and her autobiography, Hurston also wrote musical revues; created a concert program of African American art with Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida; worked with the WPA Federal Theater Project; taught drama at the North Carolina College for Negroes in Durham, North Carolina, now North Carolina Central University; taught part-time at Florida Normal in San Augustine, Florida, later becoming Florida Memorial University; worked as a maid, then as a librarian at Patrick Air Force Base; took a job as a reporter for the *Fort Pierce Chronicle*; and was a substitute teacher at Lincoln Park Academy, the black public school in Fort Pierce.

Poor health plagued Zora the last months of her life. She suffered a stroke in late October 1959, and then died of hypertensive heart disease on January 28, 1960, while living in the Saint Lucie County Welfare Home.

Selected Books by Zora Neale Hurston

Jonah's Gourd Vine: A Novel (1934)

Leavey Library: PS3515.U789J66 1990

Mules and Men (1935)

Doheny Memorial Library: GR111.A47H86 2008

Leavey Library: GR111.A47H86 2008

Their Eyes Were Watching God (1937)

Leavey Library: PS3515.U789T5 2000

Moses, Man of the Mountain (1939)

Doheny Memorial Library: PS3515.U789M6

Dust Tracks on a Road (1942)

Doheny Memorial Library: PS3515.U789Z465 2006

Seraph on the Suwanee (1948)

Doheny Memorial Library: PS3515.U789S4

***I Love Myself When I Am Laughing...And Then Again
When I Am Looking Mean and Impressive:***

A Zora Neale Hurston Reader (1979)

Edited by Alice Walker

Doheny Memorial Library: PS3515.U789I2 1979

Selected Books about Zora Neale Hurston

New Essays on Their Eyes Were Watching God

Edited by Michael Awkward

Doheny Memorial Library: PS3515.U789T636 1990

Leavey Library: PS3515.U789T636 1990

Zora Neale Hurston

By Harold Bloom

Leavey Library: PS3515.U789Z96 2008

Critical Essays on Zora Neale Hurston

Edited by Gloria L. Cronin

Doheny Memorial Library: PS3515.U789Z67 1998

Leavey Library: PS3515.U789Z67 1998

Zora Neale Hurston:

An Annotated Bibliography and Reference Guide

Edited by Rose Parkman Davis

Special Collections: Z8428.66.D38 1997

Zora Neale Hurston:

Critical Perspectives Past and Present

Edited by Henry Louis Gates and K.A. Appiah

Doheny Memorial Library: PS3515.U789Z963 1993

Leavey Library: PS3515.U789Z963 1993

The Character of the Word:

The Texts of Zora Neale Hurston

By Karla F. C. Holloway

Leavey Library: PS3515.U789Z72 1987

***The Assertive Woman in Zora Neale Hurston's Fiction,
Folklore, and Drama***

By Pearlie Mae Fisher Peters

Doheny Memorial Library: PS3515.U789Z8 1998