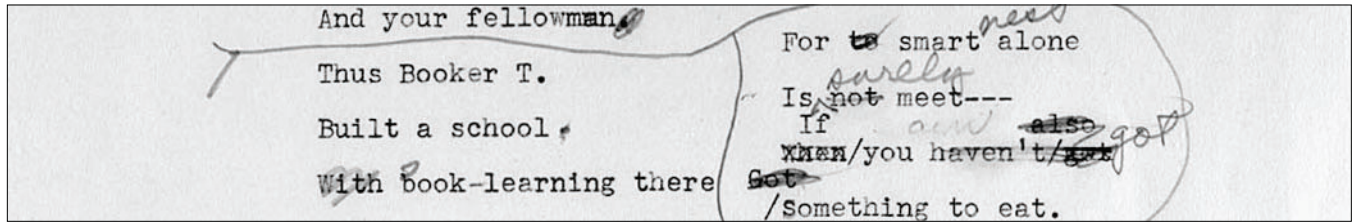


LANGSTON HUGHES' DRAFTS OF "BALLAD OF BOOKER T.": EXPLORING THE CREATIVE PROCESS



Quick and easy activity ideas to start using Library of Congress primary sources in the classroom

Teacher Instructions

Goal

Four typewritten, marked-up drafts and a final copy of Hughes' poem "Ballad of Booker T." are available on the Library of Congress Web site, and allow students to follow the creative process as the poet makes changes to his work over the course of three days.

Background

How can five typewritten pieces of paper provide a glimpse into the mind of a great writer?

In the 1940s, the poet Langston Hughes was a major author who worked in many different literary forms, from poems and short stories to newspaper columns, essays, and songs. He was also a prominent public figure who produced commentaries on culture and race relations in the United States—one publisher later called him "the unchallenged spokesman of the American Negro".

With that in mind, you can see why a poem from Hughes on the subject of influential but controversial African American educator Booker T. Washington might be subject to scrutiny by the public. You can also speculate as to why Hughes might put such a poem through a thorough revision process.

Activities

Teachers can have students:

- Compare the drafts and the final copy to find some of the edits that Hughes made as he revised the poem.
- Speculate about the reasons for the author's edits. Can students identify any possible shifts in the poem's attitude towards Booker T. Washington?
- Read an early draft and the final copy out loud. How have Hughes' edits changed the way the poem sounds?
- Speculate about why Hughes might have written this poem when he did, twenty-five years after Washington's death.

For more information and teaching ideas in a post from Teaching with the Library of Congress:

Booker T. Washington and the Atlanta Compromise.

<http://blogs.loc.gov/teachers/2011/07/booker-t-washington-and-the-atlanta-compromise/>

For more classroom materials and other teacher resources from the Library of Congress, visit loc.gov/teachers



Primary Source

Drafts of Langston Hughes's Poem 'Ballad of Booker T.'

Hughes, Langston. "Drafts of Langston Hughes's Poem 'Ballad of Booker T.'" Poem in manuscript. May 30-June 1, 1941. From Library of Congress: *Words and Deeds in American History: Selected Documents Celebrating the Manuscript Division's First 100 Years*.

[http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mcc:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(mcc/024\)\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mcc:@field(DOCID+@lit(mcc/024)))

BALLAD OF BOOKER T.

1st draft
May 30, 1941

Old Booker T.

Was a practical man.

He said, Till the soil,

and Learn from the land.

Let down your buckets

Where you are:



In your own backyard

~~Could~~ There could

~~Right~~ be a star.

Train you ~~heart,~~ *head,*

Your ~~head,~~ *heart,* and your hand.

To help yourself

And your fellowman

Thus Booker T.

Built a school,

With book-learning there

And the workman's tool.

He started out

In a simple way---

For ~~(Yesterday~~

Was not today.)

Sometimes he had *com-*

Compromise in his talk---

For a man must crawl

Before he can walk

And in Alabama in '85

A joker was lucky

To ~~stay~~ ^{be} alive.

But ~~was~~ Booker T.

Was nobody's fool:

You may carve a dream

From an humble tool---

And the tallest tower

Can tumble down

If ~~is~~ ^{the} not rooted

In solid ground.

He said, Train your ~~heart,~~ *head,*

Your head, and your hand

For ~~to~~ ^{ness} smart alone
Is ~~not~~ ^{surely} meet---
If ~~any~~ ^{also} ~~you~~ haven't ~~got~~ ^{got}
/Something to eat.

~~Train your~~ ^{heart} ~~be~~
Your head, and your hand--
For Booker T.
Was a practical man.

[AC7059]

BALLAD OF BOOKER T.

by
Langston Hughes

2nd draft
May 31, 1941

~~old~~ Booker T.
 Was a practical man.
 He said, Till the soil
 And learn from the land.
 Let down your buckets
 Where you are:
 In your own backyard
~~There could be a star.~~
 Train your head,
 Your heart, and your hand,
 To help yourself
 And your fellow man,
 For smartness alone
 Is surely not meet—
 If you haven't ^{got} also
 Something to eat.
 Thus Booker T. went and
 Built a school,
 Book-learning there
 And the workman's tool.
 He started out
 In a simple way—
 For yesterday ~~was~~ today
 Was not today.
 Sometimes he had ~~some~~
 Promise in his talk—
 For a man must crawl
 Before he can walk—
 And in Alabama in 185
 A joker was lucky
 To be alive.
 But Booker T.
 Was nobody's fool:
 You may carve a dream
 With an humble tool.
~~But~~ The tallest tower
~~may~~ ^{can} tumble down
 If it be not rooted
 In solid ground.
 He said, Train your head,
 Your heart, and your hand—
 For Booker T.
 Was a practical man.
~~Let down your buckets~~
~~Where you are~~
 In your own backyard,
~~There could be a star.~~
 He said, ^{he, is your} ~~such a~~ star.
 Let down your buckets
 Where you are.

Said he, seek
and

at Tuskegee
got
with

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negro

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are
bar
car
gar
jar
mar
par
rar
star
scar
tar
far

he, is your

[Ac 7059]

BALLAD OF BOOKER T.

Booker T.
Was a practical man.
He said, Till the soil
And learn from the land.
Let down your bucket
Where you are ~~and~~,
Your fate is here ~~and~~,
And not afar.
To help yourself
And your fellow man,
Train your head,
Your heart, and your hand.
For smartness alone's

Surely ~~xxx~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ not meet---
If you haven't ~~him~~ at the same time
Got something to eat.
~~xxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ and Thus at Tuskegee

He ~~built~~ a school
With book ~~learning~~ there
And the workman's tool.
He started out
In a simple way---
For yesterday
Was not today.
Sometimes he had
Compromise in his talk---
For a man must crawl
Before he can walk---
And in Alabama in '85
A joker was lucky
To be alive.
But Booker T.
Was nobody's fool:
You may carve a dream
With an humble tool.
The tallest tower
Can tumble down
If it be not rooted
In solid ground.

~~xx~~ So, being a far-seeing
~~xx~~ practical man,
~~xx~~
He said, Train your head,
Your heart, and your hand.
~~xxxx~~ Your fate is here
And not afar,
~~xxx~~ Let down your buckets
Where you are.




[AC7057]

4th draft,
June 1, 1941.

BALLAD OF BOOKER T.

by
Langston Hughes


Booker T.
Was a practical man.
He said, Till the soil
And learn from the land.
Let down your bucket
Where you are.
Your fate is here
And not afar.
To help yourself
And your fellow man,
Train your head,
Your heart, and your hand.
For smartness alone's
Surely not meet—
If you haven't at the same time
Got something to eat.
Thus at Tuskegee
He built a school
With book-learning there
And the workman's tool.
He started out
In a simple way—
For yesterday
Was not today.
Sometimes he had
Compromise in his talk—
For a man must crawl
Before he can walk—
And in Alabama in '85
A joker was lucky
To be alive.
But Booker T.
Was nobody's fool;
You may carve a dream
With an humble tool.
The tallest tower
Can tumble down
If it be not rooted
In solid ground.
So, being a far-seeing
Practical man,
He said, Train your head,
Your heart, and your hand.
Your fate is here
And not afar,
So let down your bucket
Where you are.

[A67059]

BALLAD OF BOOKER T.
by
Langston Hughes

Booker T.
Was a practical man.
He said, Till the soil
And learn from the land.
Let down your bucket
Where you are.
Your fate is here
And not afar.
To help yourself
And your fellow man,
Train your head,
Your heart, and your hand.
For smartness alone's
Surely not meet—
If you haven't at the same time
Got something to eat.
Thus at Tuskegee
He built a school
With book-learning there
And the workman's tool.
He started out
In a simple way—
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Sometimes he had
Compromise in his talk—
For a man must crawl
Before he can walk—
And in Alabama in '85
A joker was lucky
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But Booker T.
Was nobody's fool;
You may carve a dream
With an humble tool.
The tallest tower
Can tumble down
If it be not rooted
In solid ground.
So, being a far-seeing
Practical man,
He said, Train your head,
Your heart, and your hand.
Your fate is here
And not afar,
So let down your bucket
Where you are.

Langston Hughes
Final draft
of "Ballad of Booker T."
Monterey, California,
June 1, 1941.

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PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS TOOL

OBSERVE

REFLECT

QUESTION

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FURTHER INVESTIGATION

http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Primary_Source_Analysis_Tool.pdf



Guide students with the sample questions as they respond to the primary source. Encourage them to go back and forth between the columns; there is no correct order.

TEACHER'S GUIDE ANALYZING PRIMARY SOURCES

OBSERVE

Have students identify and note details.

Sample Questions:

What do you notice first? · Find something small but interesting. · What do you notice that you didn't expect? · What do you notice that you can't explain? · What do you notice now that you didn't earlier?

REFLECT

Encourage students to generate and test hypotheses about the source.

Where do you think this came from? · Why do you think somebody made this? · What do you think was happening when this was made? · Who do you think was the audience for this item? · What tool was used to create this? · Why do you think this item is important? · If someone made this today, what would be different? · What can you learn from examining this?

QUESTION

Have students ask questions to lead to more observations and reflections.

What do you wonder about...
who? · what? · when? · where? · why? · how?

FURTHER INVESTIGATION

Help students to identify questions appropriate for further investigation, and to develop a research strategy for finding answers.

Sample Question: What more do you want to know, and how can you find out?

A few follow-up activity ideas:

Beginning

Have students compare two related primary source items.

Intermediate

Have students expand or alter textbook explanations of history based on primary sources they study.

Advanced

Ask students to consider how a series of primary sources support or challenge information and understanding on a particular topic. Have students refine or revise conclusions based on their study of each subsequent primary source.

For more tips on using primary sources, go to

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers>

http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Analyzing_Primary_Sources.pdf



Guide students with the sample questions as they respond to the primary source. **Encourage them to go back and forth between the columns; there is no correct order.**

TEACHER'S GUIDE ANALYZING MANUSCRIPTS

OBSERVE

Have students identify and note details.

Sample Questions:

- Describe what you see. · What do you notice first?
- How much of the text can you read? What does it say? · What do you see that looks strange or unfamiliar? · How are the words arranged? · What do you notice about the page the writing appears on? · What size is the page? · What do you see on the page besides writing? · What other details can you see?

REFLECT

Encourage students to generate and test hypotheses about the manuscript.

- Why do you think this manuscript was made? · Who do you think created it? · Who do you think was intended to read it, if anyone? · What do you think was happening when it was created? · What tools and materials were used to create it? · What can you learn from examining this? · If someone created something like this today, what would be different? · What would be the same?

QUESTION

Have students ask questions to lead to more observations and reflections.

- What do you wonder about...
who? · what? · when? · where? · why? · how?

FURTHER INVESTIGATION

Help students to identify questions appropriate for further investigation, and to develop a research strategy for finding answers.

Sample Question: What more do you want to know, and how can you find out?

A few follow-up activity ideas:

Beginning

Have students choose a section of the manuscript and put it in their own words.

Intermediate

Select a section of a manuscript. Speculate about the purpose of the manuscript, and what the person, or people, who created it expected it to accomplish. Do you think it achieved their goals? Explain why you think so.

Advanced

Examine a section of the manuscript. Think about what you already know about this period in history. How does the manuscript support or contradict your current understanding of this period? Can you see any clues to the point of view of the person who created this manuscript?

For more tips on using primary sources, go to

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers>

http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Analyzing_Manuscripts.pdf