

# WHAT SO ★ PROUDLY ★ WE HAIL

*The American Soul in Story, Speech, and Song*

## I, Too, Sing America

LANGSTON HUGHES

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*Langston Hughes (1902–67) was a celebrated African American poet and short story writer. Born in Joplin, Missouri, he moved often in his youth before settling in Cleveland, Ohio where he attended high school. He began writing as a teenager and first published his poetry in his school newspaper. He attended Columbia University but left before graduating, instead immersing himself in the Harlem Renaissance, a blossoming of African American art, writing, and thought in the 1920s and 1930s centered in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City. Hughes' writing helped to develop the jazz style of poetry, drawing on the improvisation and lyricism of the music, and much of his poetry explored themes of racial and social inequality.*

*As you read “I, Too, Sing America” (1945), consider the following questions: To whom is he responding that he “too” sings America? Who else sings America? How does the beginning of the poem—“I, too, sing America”—relate to its ending—“I, too, am America”—? (emphasis added)? Whose “darker brother” is he? Why does he think that things will change? On what hope does he draw?*

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.  
They send me to eat in the kitchen  
When company comes,  
But I laugh,  
And eat well,  
And grow strong.

*Read the entire poem at the Poetry Foundation:*  
[www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15615](http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15615)