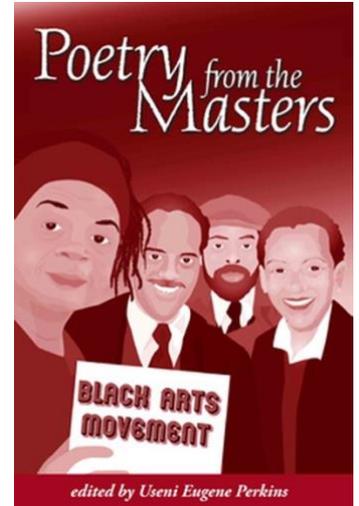


Poetry From The Masters: The Black Arts Movement

Edited By Useni Eugene Perkins

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The Black Arts Movement spanned less than two decades, but left an indelible mark on American literature and Black America. Considered one of the single most controversial periods in the history of African-American literature, it inspired and reflected the political and social activism of the 1960s and 1970s and challenged societal ideals, producing the powerful works of poets Nikki Giovanni, Haki Madhubuti, Sonia Sanchez, Quincy Troupe and the Last Poets. In this volume the dynamic Black Arts Movement is explored through selections of poetry from the most significant poets of the period, complemented by biographies that discuss the scope and content of each writer's work, as well as his or her historical significance and impact on the literary world. This is the second volume in the *Poetry from the Masters* series.



Reading Level: Ages 9-12

Themes: activism, literature, poetry, Black history, US history,

Pre-reading questions

- Have you heard of the Black Arts Movement? Share what you know.
- Do you recognize any of the poets pictured on the cover? Read the poets listed on the back of the book. Do you know any of their poems?

Discussion Questions

- What is the Black Arts Movement? When did it start and how long did it last?
- Who were some of the poets of BAM?
- What is the significance of the Black Power Movement as it relates to the Black Arts Movement?
- Besides poetry, what areas of the arts did the Black Arts Movement include?
- What was the impact of the Black Arts Movement? Where do you see its influence today?
- Larry Neal said 'the Black Arts Movement is radically opposed to any concept of the artist that alienated him from his community.' What does that mean and why is it important?
- The foreword to this book, written by poet, publisher and scholar Haki Madhubuti, is titled 'A Changing of the Conversation.' Discuss the significance of that title. How did the Black Arts Movement change the conversation?

Define these words

Activism
Aesthetic
Afrocentric
Cadence
Charismatic
Canon
Dialogue
Ideology
Liberation

Prolific
Revered

Arts/Music

- Select a poem from the Black Arts Movement to depict in another medium (ex: dance, music, art)
- Find video of The Last Poets or Sonia Sanchez reading their poems. Which hip hop artists or poets do you think they influenced? Where can you hear their influence in music or poetry today?

History

- Research the Black Panther Party, the Black Liberation Front and the Republican of New Afrika. What were their missions? How did they differ from organizations such as the NAACP?
- Describe the historical context during which the Black Arts Movement emerged. Which issues do you think impacted BAM poetry the most? How do you think BAM poetry impacted those issues?
- A number of publishing companies were born from the Black Arts Movement. Why do you think this was important? How many are in business today? Research those companies, their missions and their latest publications. How have the companies changed? What's remained the same?

Writing

- Select a poem from the Black Arts Movement that resonates most with you. Write a poem in response to it.
- Choose one word to describe the Black Arts Movement to someone who's never heard of it. Explain your answer.
- If you were introducing the Black Arts Movement to a friend, what's the first poem you'd suggest they read and why?
- Many poets of the Black Arts Movement are still active writers and speakers today. If you had the opportunity to interview one of them, what questions would you ask?

About the Editor

Useni Eugene Perkins is poet, playwright, activist and distinguished figure of the Black Arts Movement. He has written numerous books, 25 plays including several children's musicals. His piece, Hey Black Child, originally penned as lyrics for his children's musical "Black Fairy," gained international recognition and was published as a picture book in 2017.

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