

Harlem Mosaics

Whit Frazier



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The year is 1927, and Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes are feverish with youth, gin, and artistic ambition. They are riding high on the achievements of the Harlem Renaissance—the most dynamic and shocking literary movement in American history. To make their mark on the world, they decide to write an authentic African-American opera rooted in the folktales and songs of the South. Despite these lofty ambitions, the messiness of everyday life and the pressures of patronage get in the way. The blues opera Hughes and Hurston work so hard on never materializes. At first it's simply reduced to a play. Then its very ownership is brought into dispute. Eventually Hughes and Hurston's friendship comes to a final and irreparable end. Through all their arguments, love affairs, discussions and diversions, the characters work to create a new Modernism that is both accessible and relevant to contemporary Black life, and to the generations of readers and writers, artists and poets, both black and white, to follow. Harlem Mosaics is based entirely on true events. In lyrical prose that evokes the heady 1920's, it tells a story that reads as a cautionary tale, a love story, and a social novel, reintroducing us to these brilliant and important artists. The novel includes an introduction by Marc Primus, of the Afro-American Folkloric Troupe, who knew and produced the works of both Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston.



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