

Book Guide

Milwaukee Public Library Summer Reading Program



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| Book Title: | There Was a Party for Langston: King o' Letters |
| Author: | Jason Reynolds |
| Illustrator: | Jerome Pumphrey and Jarrett Pumphrey |

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| Recommended Audience | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> K5 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 st | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2 nd | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3 rd | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4 th | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5 th | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 6 th |
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| Length of Time to Read: 20-30 minutes |
| Summary: Get ready to get down! Once upon a time in 1991, a group of legendary writers gathered at the New York Public Library and threw a party to honor the life and work of Langston Hughes. In his picture book debut, award-winning author Jason Reynolds celebrates the great “word makers” who inspired him to write. Artist-brother duo Jerome and Jarrett Pumphrey activate the author’s playful storytelling with their signature illustrations, made using handcrafted stamps. |
| Before Reading (Create Interest): Invite your students to think about the best party they’ve ever been to. Ask: Where was the party? Were you celebrating a special event (birthday, graduation, wedding, etc.)? Who was invited? What kind of food did you eat? Was there music, dancing, or another activity? Did you get to stay up late? Who taught you how to party? Have your group share some of their favorite party memories. Next, tell them you’ll be reading a story about a special party that happened at a library. Show them the front cover and rotate the book to read the words inside the crown. Ask if they can guess who the party was for. Then read aloud the inside front flap to reveal if they were right. Invite your students to share what they already know about Langston Hughes or any of the other authors pictured inside the front cover. |
| During Reading (Discussion/Questions): Pause as you read to see if your students can spot all the letters and words in the illustrations. Read expressively, rotating the book as needed so your students can see. Invite younger students to say fun parts of the book along with you. Encourage movement as you read. Students can give themselves a “snug hug” or make “pinky promises” when you get to those pages. Do some of the dance moves from the book (like shimmying, bopping, and boogie boogie wiggling) and invite your students to join in. |

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After Reading:

Author Jason Reynolds features many celebrated Black writers in the book – including writers who were inspired by other writers. Ask your students to recall as many writers from the book as they can. Flip through the pages again, looking for anyone they missed (don't forget the authors peeking out from the shelves). Find out if your students have heard of or read any of these authors. Have them pick one to learn something new about. Who inspired that author to start writing? Who were their heroes?

STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) Connection:

Throw a Party for Your Favorite Author

Ask: Whose “word-child” are you? Is there an author you love so much they make you want to dance? Make a list of your students' favorite authors and, from these names, have them vote on ONE author who is their absolute favorite. Count votes to determine the winner. Next, plan a party for that author. Decide when and where the party will happen and who your students want to invite (it's okay if it's just your class). Have your students design and write invitations to the party. Work together to decide how you will celebrate your author. Will there be music, dancing, or games? What should everyone wear? Do you want to display quotes or read favorite passages by the author? What else can your group do to show the world how awesome your author is? Finally, have the party!

Constellation Design Challenge

Poet Maya Angelou wore a dress covered in constellations to the party for Langston. Ask your students if they know what a constellation is. Use the included instructions to help them make constellations.

Crack Each Other Up with Mad Libs

Tell your students they can be word makers, too. Use the guide provided to review the different types of words with your students. Then, ask them to come up with the words you need to fill in the blanks on the Mad Lib. Keep the page hidden so they can't see it. Once you've filled in all the blanks, read the story out loud to your class (laughter is encouraged). Make copies of the Mad Lib and have your students repeat the process in pairs or small groups. Remember – don't read the story out loud until the end!

Ideas for younger or older children

Invent a Dance Move

Circle up with younger students. One at a time, have each student come up with a new dance move and make up a name for their move. Ask the rest of the group to repeat each dance move after they see it.

Blackout Poetry

Many writers are inspired by other people's words, books, and art. Make copies of the included handout and challenge older students to create a Blackout Poem.

Additional Notes: Visit <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/> to find and read the poems that Jason Reynolds mentions in the back of the book (including “Caged Bird” by Maya Angelou, “Legacy” by Amiri Baraka, “Mother to Son” and other poems by Langston Hughes).