

Robert Hayden



# Robert Hayden

*Essays on the Poetry*

Edited by Laurence Goldstein  
and Robert Chrisman

*Ann Arbor*

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## Chronology

- 1913 Born (as Asa Bundy Sheffey) in Detroit, Michigan, on 4 August.  
Parents give him up for “adoption” to William and Sue Ellen Hayden.
- 1930 Graduates from Northern High School, Detroit.
- 1932 Enters Detroit City College (Wayne State University).
- 1936 Secures work as researcher and writer for the Detroit Writers Project Administration.
- 1938 Enters summer school at the University of Michigan.  
Wins Hopwood Award (summer) for “Heart-Shape in the Dust.”
- 1940 Publishes *Heart-Shape in the Dust*. Marries Erma Inez Morris.  
Writes music and drama criticism for the *Michigan Chronicle*.  
Studies with W. H. Auden at the University of Michigan (1941).
- 1942 Wins Hopwood Award (major) for “The Black Spear.”  
Daughter Maia born. Becomes a member of the Bahá’í World Faith.  
Granted bachelor’s degree, Detroit City College.
- 1944 Becomes teaching assistant in the Department of English at the University of Michigan. Awarded master’s degree from the University of Michigan.
- 1946 Appointed Assistant Professor in English, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee.
- 1948 Publishes manifesto, “Counterpoise 3,” and *The Lion and the Archer* (with Myron O’Higgins).

- 1954–55 Travels to Mexico on Ford Foundation Fellowship.  
Publishes *Figure of Time*.
- 1962 Publishes *A Ballad of Remembrance*.
- 1966 Awarded Grand Prix de la Poésie, First World Festival of  
Negro Arts, Dakar, Senegal. Publishes *Selected Poems*.
- 1968 Defends his art at the Black Writers' Conference, Fisk  
University.  
Records poems for Library of Congress.
- 1969 Resigns from Fisk University and teaches at the University  
of Louisville and University of Washington.  
Begins his tenure as Professor of English at the University  
of Michigan.
- 1970 Publishes *Words in the Mourning Time* (National Book  
Award nominee).  
Receives Russell Loines Award from the National Institute  
of Arts and Letters.
- 1971 Reads "The Night-Blooming Cereus" as the Phi Beta  
Kappa poem at the University of Michigan. Serves as  
Visiting Professor at the University of Connecticut and  
Denison University.
- 1972 Publishes *The Night-Blooming Cereus*.  
Serves on staff at Bread Loaf Writers' Conference in  
August.
- 1974 Visiting poet, Connecticut College.  
"In Memoriam Malcolm X," by composer T. J. Anderson  
with text by Hayden, sung by Betty Allen in Avery Fisher  
Hall, New York.
- 1975 Elected Fellow of the American Academy of Poets.  
Appointed consultant in poetry at the Library of Congress  
(serves two terms 1976–78).  
Publishes *Angle of Ascent*.
- 1978 Publishes *American Journal* (expanded edition published  
posthumously, 1982).
- 1979 Inducted into the Academy of American Poets and  
Institute of Arts and Letters.

1980 Included in a group of American poets honored by President Carter at the White House, 4 January.  
Dies 25 February. Buried in Fairview Cemetery, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

For a comprehensive chronology, see Fred M. Fetrow, *Robert Hayden* (Boston: Twayne, 1984); and Ponthella T. Williams, *Robert Hayden: A Critical Analysis of His Poetry* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987).