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Paule Marshall 1929-

In her first work, *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, American novelist Marshall depicted a young black girl's increasing sexual awareness and search for identity1363

Claude McKay 1889-1948

Jamaican-born American poet McKay was a forerunner of the militant spirit behind the Harlem Renaissance and the civil rights movement, evidenced in his poem "If We Must Die": "If we must die, O let us nobly die. . . / Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack, / Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!"1375

Ron Milner 1938-

American dramatist Milner affirmed family values in the play *What the Wine Sellers Buy*, in which Rico—a pimp and hustler—tempts those around him to trade morality for material gain1402

Thomas Mofolo 1876-1948

The first great figure of modern African literature, Lesothan novelist Mofolo wrote about the legendary Zulu warrior Chaka in *Chaka*, an epic tragedy of paramount literary and historical significance1410

Toni Morrison 1931-

One of the most important American novelists of the twentieth century, Morrison won the Pulitzer Prize for *Beloved*, the story of a former slave's daughter who returns from the grave to seek revenge for her brutal death1422

Ezekiel Mphahlele 1919-

While in self-imposed exile in Nigeria, South African writer Mphahlele published *Down Second Avenue*, which has been called "the autobiography of most Africans"1446

S. E. K. Mqhayi 1875-1945

Regarded as perhaps the last great tribal bard, South African writer Mqhayi was deemed *imbongi yesizwe*—poet laureate of his people—for his *izibongo*, or traditional African lyric poetry composed in the Xhosa language1459

Walter Dean Myers 1937-

Although he grew up with the idea that "writing had no practical value for a black child," American author Myers went on to publish several award-winning novels for black teens, including *Fast Sam*, *Cool Clyde*, and *Stuff* and *It Ain't All for Nothin'*1469

Gloria Naylor 1950-

Focusing on seven black female residents of Brewster Place—a dilapidated ghetto neighborhood—Naylor immortalized the spirit she admired in her mother, aunt, and grandmother in the novel *The Women of Brewster Place*1482

- Ngugi wa Thiong'o 1938-**
 Author of *Weep Not, Child*, the first English-language novel to be published by an East African, Ngugi later rejected Western influences and insisted on writing in indigenous African languages1495
- Lewis Nkosi 1936-**
 In *Mating Birds*—a novel that has been viewed as an indictment of apartheid in the author's native South Africa—Nkosi wrote about a young Zulu student who is about to be hanged for allegedly raping a white woman1515
- Christopher Okigbo 1932-1967**
 Often called Africa's finest poet, Okigbo was committed to social justice in writing and in deed: at the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War in 1967, he was killed in action as a member of the Biafran Army1522
- Sembène Ousmane 1923-**
 When he realized that his fiction reached only a limited audience in his native Senegal, Ousmane became a filmmaker; he wrote and directed *Mandabi*, the first African movie to reach an international audience1531
- Gordon Parks 1912-**
 Regarded as a modern Renaissance man for his pioneering accomplishments in several fields, Parks wrote, directed, produced, and composed the musical score for the film *The Learning Tree*, a work based on his autobiographical novel of the same title1551
- Okot p'Bitek 1931-1982**
 Ugandan writer p'Bitek pleaded for the preservation of the cultural tradition of his native Acholi people in his prose poem *Song of Lawino*1559
- Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. 1908-1972**
 A flamboyant and controversial U.S. Congressman from New York, Powell made enormous political gains for black Americans, documenting his views on American race relations in *Marching Blacks* and *Keep the Faith, Baby!*1581
- Dudley Randall 1914-**
 Called Detroit's First Poet Laureate, Randall founded Broadside Press, a Michigan-based publishing company that helped launch the careers of many black poets. A renowned poet himself, he is the author of *Cities Burning* and *After the Killing*1592
- Ishmael Reed 1938-**
 Proponent of Neo-Hoodooism—a concept that incorporates aspects of voodoo and other cultural traditions into literature—novelist and poet Reed satirized American political and social systems in *Yellow Back Radio Broke-Down*, *Mumbo Jumbo*, and *Reckless Eyeballing*1608
- Jacques Roumain 1907-1944**
 With the poetry collection *Ebony Wood* and the novel *Masters of the Dew*, Haitian writer Roumain introduced to literature the distinctive psychological viewpoint of the Afro-Haitian1627
- Sonia Sanchez 1934-**
 Sanchez rocketed to literary fame with her first works *Homecoming* and *We a BaddDDD People*—two volumes of poetry that use urban black dialect to reach a wide audience1647
- Léopold Sédar Senghor 1906-**
 Former president of the Republic of Senegal, Senghor was instrumental—along with Aimé Césaire—in formulating the concept of negritude. He wrote: "But if I must choose at the moment of ordeal/ I would choose the verse of the rivers, of the winds and of the forests. . . / I would choose my weary black people, my peasant people."1671
- Ntozake Shange 1948-**
 Shange's best-known play—*for colored girls who have considered suicide/ when the rainbow is enuf*—combines poetry, prose, music, and dance to portray the sufferings and joys of seven African-American women1688

Wole Soyinka 1934-

Nobel Prize-winner Soyinka is one of Africa's finest writers. He incorporates traditional Yoruban folk-drama with European dramatic forms to create works that are considered rewarding, if demanding, reading1703

Wallace Thurman 1902-1934

A self-described "erotic bohemian" during the Harlem Renaissance, American writer Thurman attacked the favoring of light-skinned over dark-skinned blacks in *The Blacker the Berry*, a work whose title comes from the African-American saying "the blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice."1725

Melvin B. Tolson 1898?-1966

A Gallery of Harlem Portraits celebrates the cultural diversity of Harlem during the 1920s and delineates poet Tolson's hope for interracial unity1734

Jean Toomer 1894-1967

Cane—an innovative volume of avant-garde poetry, short stories, drama, and prose vignettes—explores African-American culture and spirituality in the rural South and the urban North and is considered Toomer's greatest contribution to literature1748

Desmond Tutu 1931-

World-famous South African archbishop Tutu is one of the foremost critics of his country's system of apartheid. In his speech collections *Crying in the Wilderness* and *Hope and Suffering*, he called for the end of apartheid in South Africa and freedom for blacks worldwide: "You are either for or against apartheid. . . . You are either on the side of the oppressed or on the side of the oppressor. You can't be neutral."1769

Amos Tutuola 1920-

Hailed as the founder of Nigerian literature, novelist Tutuola is best known for *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, a work noted for its blend of traditional Yoruban folktales and unconventional use of the English language1776

Derek Walcott 1930-

West Indian poet Walcott delineated his struggle between opposing African and European values in the poem "A Far Cry from Africa": "I who am poisoned with the blood of both,/ Where shall I turn divided to the vein?/ I who have cursed/ The drunken officer of British rule, how choose/ Between this Africa and the English tongue I love?"1790

Alice Walker 1944-

In the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Color Purple*, Walker portrayed the life of Celie, a poor Southern black woman who is victimized physically and emotionally by men for thirty years. While attacked for its unflattering view of black men, *The Color Purple* is one of the most popular books in America today ..1808

Margaret Walker 1915-

Since the publication of her first poem, "I Want to Write," when she was nineteen years old, American author Walker has devoted nearly fifty years to celebrating black American culture1830

Booker T. Washington 1856-1915

Chastised by his opponents as a fawning accommodationist but embraced by his followers as a misunderstood pioneer in the early struggle for black rights, American writer Washington urged racial cooperation in his 1895 Atlanta Compromise speech: "To those of my race who . . . underestimate the importance of cultivating friendly relations with the southern white man, . . . I would say cast down your bucket where you are, cast it down in making friends in every manly way of the people of all races by whom we are surrounded."1851

Phillis Wheatley 1753?-1784

Commonly referred to as America's first black author, Wheatley was the first African-American to have published a collection of poems in the United States. (Jupiter Hammon published a single broadside poem in 1761.) While popular during her day, *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* is now of more historical than literary interest1879

Walter White 1893-1955

A blond, blue-eyed African-American, Harlem Renaissance writer White infiltrated lynching organizations and reported his findings on mob violence in *Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch*1903

John Edgar Wideman 1941-

Blending European and black literary traditions, Wideman focused on the lives of families living in Homewood—a black ghetto district in Pittsburgh where Wideman himself was raised—in *Damballah* and *Sent for You Yesterday*1917

John A. Williams 1925-

Williams is best known for *The Man Who Cried I Am*, a novel about a plan to round up 22 million African-Americans when they become too “unruly.”1932

Sherley Anne Williams 1944-

American writer Williams hoped to “heal some wounds” made by racism in the wake of slavery in *Dessa Rose*, a novel about a whip-scarred, pregnant slave in jail for killing white men1950

August Wilson 1945-

Heralded as a major new voice in American theater, playwright Wilson is in the process of examining each decade of the twentieth century through the medium of drama. So far, *Ma Rainey*, *Joe Turner’s Come and Gone*, and *The Piano Lesson* have garnered enthusiastic reviews1962

Harriet Wilson 1827?-?

Considered the first novel in English published by a black American woman, *Our Nig* tells the tragic story of Frado, an indentured mulatto servant who is beaten by her white mistress and deserted by her traveling husband1975

Charles Wright 1932-

Wright—a “black black humorist”—depicted the difficulties black men face in their quest for the American dream in *The Wig*, the story about a fair-skinned black man who bleaches his hair “silky smooth blond.”1984

Richard Wright 1908-1960

Wright’s acclaimed *Native Son* is one of the first works to portray—often in graphic, brutal accounts—the dehumanizing effects of racism on blacks. Focusing on Bigger Thomas, a young black chauffeur who accidentally kills a white woman, Wright attacked racial injustice in America, as he continued to do in *Black Boy*1994

Frank Yerby 1916-

Dubbed by one critic “the prince of the pulpsters,” American novelist Yerby is one of the most popular writers in the United States. Typical of his books, the blockbuster *The Foxes of Harrow* is a lush Southern romance about a dashing young man’s adventures2022

Al Young 1939-

Inventor of the genre “musical memoirs”—a hybrid of autobiography, criticism, mysticism, music, and poetry—American author Young created such memorable characters as O. O. Gabugah, MC, and Shakes—a young black man who speaks in Shakespearean English2032

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