



## Lesson Plans for There Was a Party for Langston

Written by Jason Reynolds; Illustrated by Jerome Pumphrey and Jarett Pumphrey

February is Black History Month and the perfect time to pay tribute to black authors, past and present. *There Was a Party for Langston*, a debut picture book by multi-award-winning author Jason Reynolds, is a celebration of Langston Hughes and African American authors he inspired, told through the lens of a party held in 1991 at the New York Public Library's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. This story explores how Langston Hughes became the "king of letters," shaping letters to create words that became poetry, and inspired generations of authors. Below are some activities to encourage your students to explore words and writing. Maybe the next Langston Hughes or Jason Reynolds is sitting in YOUR classroom right now!

### Block Center

#### Poetry Blocks

Create your own poems using blocks. Think poetry magnets, but with blocks! Using the big paper or plastic blocks, write words on pieces of tape and place one on each block.

Once the children stack the blocks, write down whatever poem they created. It will be fun to see what they will create.

For older children, write out a poem on poster board or butcher paper, and see if they can recreate the poem using the blocks.



## Art

### Alphabet Art

Use the alphabet as inspiration for this unique art activity. Brainstorm words that start with different letters of the alphabet. Typically, the first letter in their name is a good place to start. Once you've come up with a list of words for each letter, the children can create art based on that word. For example, making a "mountain" out of the letter M or a "duck" out of the letter D.

Using a cut out of the letter and a variety of art supplies, such as, paper, glue, and crayons allow them to create their alphabet masterpiece.

[Preschool Alphabet Book - From ABCs to ACTs](#)



# Dramatic Play

## Set Up a Party in Dramatic Play

Party hosting requires many skills. Not only is it a great way to learn about teamwork and problem solving, but it is also a great way to work on writing and even math skills.

Collect any props you may need for the party – streamers, plates, cups, hats, invites, planning checklist, etc. Have the children work together to plan to decorate the dramatic play center, decide on the menu, and count out how many plates and cups they may need for their party.

Consider including a Play-Doh cake making area, a gift-wrapping station, and a writing space for creating invites or writing thank you notes. The possibilities are endless!

Click this link for a party activity kit inspired by the book: [9781534439443\\_as\\_there\\_was\\_a\\_party\\_for\\_langston\\_activity\\_kit.pdf](#)

# Literacy

## Compound Word Puzzles

Wordplay makes kids love language; it inspires writing and helps kids learn new vocabulary. As children develop language, wordplay develops naturally and early. Think of the ways little children play with language – it might be rhymes or silly words or trying to figure out words based on background knowledge. Compound words fall into this category.

Compound words are just two simple words put together to form a new word. Obviously, compound words are larger than the individual words that form them but helping kids differentiate between the words is vital to their understanding.

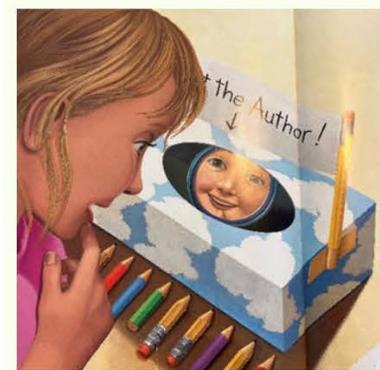
*Thumbtacks, Earwax, Lipstick, Dipstick* by Brian P. Cleary and *Word Play* by Ivan Brunetti are both non-fiction books that read easily and introduce children to compound words. To put it into practice, cut and laminate the [puzzles at the end of this document](#) and let your students build their own compound words.

# Writing

## Becoming Authors

Langston Hughes inspired a generation of authors, and you can too! Set up a writing space in your classroom. It can be a designated area or set out on a table temporarily. Provide the children with blank pages stapled together like a book and interesting writing utensils. Invite your students to write a book either by leaving it open ended or by suggesting a topic. “You really seem interested in stars lately. Would you like to make a book about them?” Write with your students. Talk about your writing and ask questions about theirs. Offer to help them add words to the pages when needed. Don’t forget to take the time to allow students to read their work to others. And maybe set up a spot in your reading nook to display your student novels!

Make a “Meet the Author” box to have at the center. Place a mirror at the bottom of a tissue box or shoe box. Place a sign above the box that says, “Meet the Author”. Encourage your students to look inside the box to see that they are authors too!



# Music/Movement

## Learn Some New Dance Moves

This particular book was partially inspired by the photo below of Maya Angelou and Amiri Baraka dancing at an actual party for the grand opening for the Langston Hughes Auditorium at the New York Public Library’s Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem.

No party is complete without some great music and dancing. This book provides a great way to introduce children to a new style of music and dance.

Swing dance and jazz music was very popular during the Harlem Renaissance. Watch the videos linked below for a quick how-to video on swing dancing. Once you've done that, play some jazz music using your Hoopla app and have a jazz music dance party. You can even make up your own dance moves!



[Learn how to Swing Dance! I DANCE at The Children's Museum of Indianapolis - YouTube](#)

[How to do the Charleston! I DANCE at The Children's Museum of Indianapolis - YouTube](#)



## Where to Next?

Click the link below for some read “alikes” for *There Was a Party for Langston!*

[Preschool Read Alikes for 2024 Nashville Reads! | Nashville Public Library](#)

Comments or questions? Contact BBTL at [bringingbookstolife@nashville.gov](mailto:bringingbookstolife@nashville.gov)

NPL's Early Literacy Initiatives are brought to you by



For the complete list of supporters, please visit [nplf.org/begin-bright](http://nplf.org/begin-bright)

