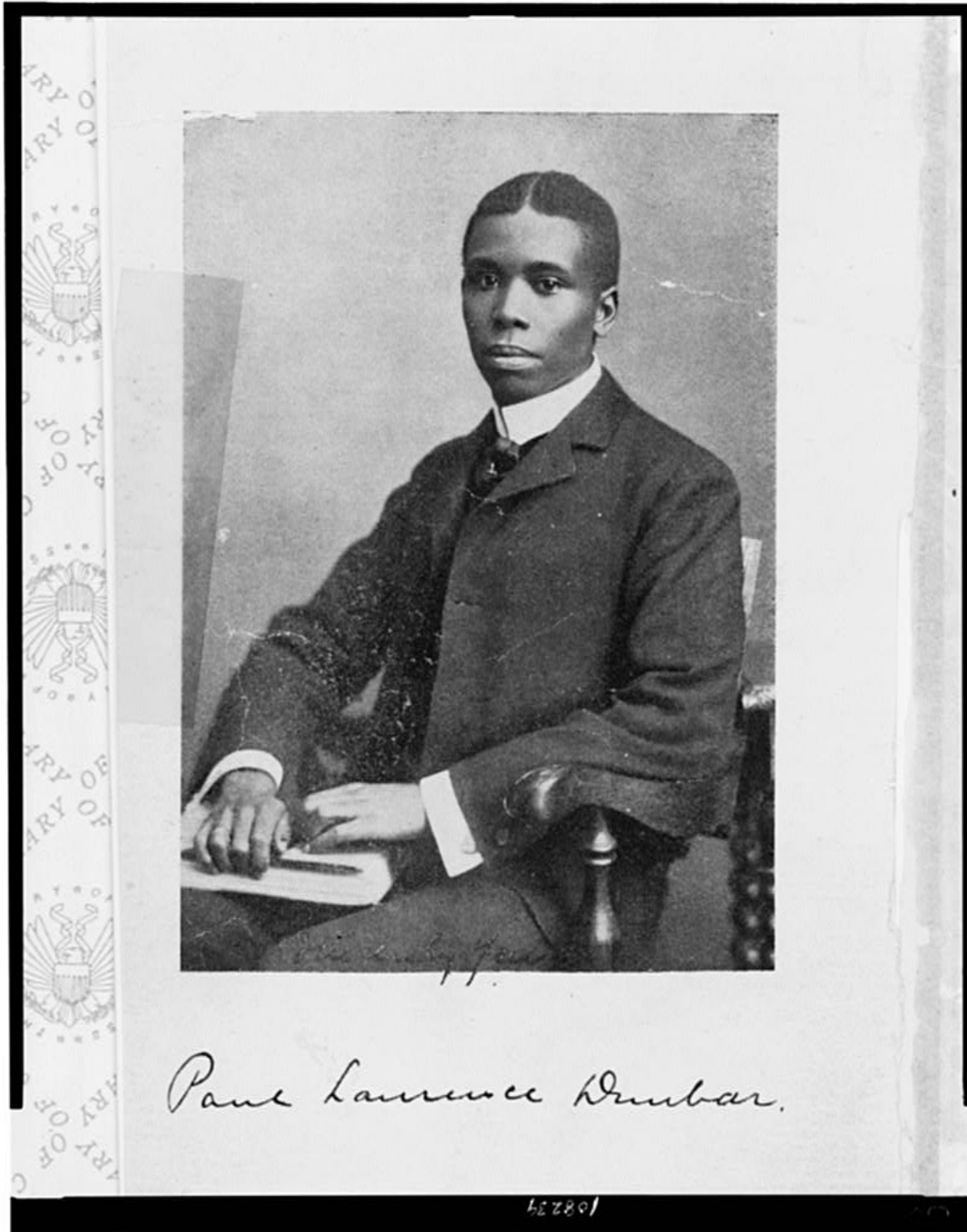


## ALBUM INQUIRY STARTER SET: PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

### Album Description



*I am going to try and build an ISS for the Today in History topics found here -Today in History Collection . Using some or all of the primary sources that are referenced in the article, I will build an album and make suggestions for inquiry strategies to use alongside the sources. This will be a generative build - using the sources and information from the collection to bring a lesson or activity format alongside the sources and information.*

## From the Today in History Collection - June 27

- Paul Laurence Dunbar was born on **June 27**, 1872, in Dayton, Ohio. Although he died when he was only thirty-three, Dunbar had achieved international acclaim as a poet, short story writer, novelist, dramatist, and lyricist.
- Dunbar was the child of former slaves. His father escaped bondage, fled to Canada, and returned to the U.S. to fight in the Civil War as a member of the Massachusetts 55th Regiment. At the time Dunbar's mother escaped enslavement via the Underground Railroad, emancipation was declared. His parents met years later and married in Dayton, Ohio, where Paul was born. From his mother's many stories of the South, young Dunbar acquired an understanding of Southern life and came to speak both Southern dialect and standard American English.
- The Dayton area was a center of Black religious activity. Dunbar attended the Eaker Street A.M.E. Church where he gave his very first poetry recitals. Nearby Wilberforce College boasted prominent African Americans such as W. E. B. DuBois among its faculty members.
- Although he was the only African American in his middle and high schools, Dunbar was accepted by his classmates and served as editor of his high school paper and president of the literary club. He counted classmate Orville Wright as one of his best friends. Together, the two boys briefly published a newspaper, the *Dayton Tattler*; their money ran out after just three issues.

**Inquiry Strategy:** Who Am I?(Adapted to focus on Dunbar)

**Target Grades:** 3-8

Think about who you are and then about someone else. Consider how you have become who you are, where you belong and what that can mean in our changing world.

- **Explore:** Who was Paul Dunbar? How did his identity develop?
- **Connect:** He was connected to his parents. Who else and what else am I connected to?
- **Identify:** If he wanted others to know who he was, what would they identify him?
- **Belong:** Where do you think he belongs? Does he have a sense of belonging to more than one group, more than one place?

## PARADE GROUND AND CAMPUS, SOLDIERS' HOME, DAYTON, OHIO



### Teaching Notes:

Dunbar's parents separated when he was a child and his father lived for years at the Soldiers' Home. In 1891, Dunbar graduated from Central High School. Central was demolished in 1894 and a new school, Steele, was constructed at the southeast corner of North Main Street and Monument Avenue.

**Reference Link:** <http://www.loc.gov/item/2016802213/>

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## THE TUSKEGEE SONG

### Teaching Notes:

- In 1893, Dunbar went to Chicago with plans to write about the World's Columbian Exposition. There he met Frederick Douglass, then commissioner of the fair's Haitian Pavilion. Douglass invited Dunbar to work as his personal assistant and to share the podium, supporting the young poet's efforts. During the fair Dunbar met a number of his peers and future literary lights including James Weldon Johnson, Richard B. Harrison, and Will Marion Cook, with whom he later wrote the theatrical piece *Clorinda: The Origin of the Cake Walk*. (See the two 1903 films *Cake Walk* and *Comedy Cake Walk* documenting this dance featuring fancy strutting, named after the prize awarded in the original contests.)
- After the publication of *Majors and Minors* (1895) and *Lyrics of a Lowly Life* (1896), Dunbar's name became internationally recognized. During a trip to England, Dunbar met the African-British composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. The two men collaborated on a collection of choral pieces entitled *Seven African Romances* and the opera *Dream Lovers*.
- Returning from abroad, Dunbar settled in Washington, D.C., and accepted a position as a library assistant at the Library of Congress. He found the work tiresome, however, and it is believed that the Library's dust contributed to his worsening case of tuberculosis. He worked there for only a year before quitting to write and recite from his works full time.
- In 1902, Booker T. Washington commissioned Dunbar to write the school song for the Tuskegee Institute. Dunbar wrote lyrics to the tune of "Fair Harvard." Washington was not pleased with the "Tuskegee Song." He objected to Dunbar's emphasis on "the industrial idea," and the exclusion of biblical references. In this letter to Washington, Dunbar defends his work.

**PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR TO BOOKER T. WASHINGTON, JANUARY 23, 1902. TYPED LETTER.**

**Teaching Notes:**

- By the turn of the century, Paul Laurence Dunbar was the most celebrated Black writer in America. He wrote for the broadest possible audience, yet his reputation rested on his mastery of dialect verse which employed colloquial vocabulary and spellings that were, for the most part, African American. In his use of vernacular speech, Dunbar has been compared to Mark Twain and James Whitcomb Riley.
- Dunbar published twenty-two books and numerous articles and poems before his death in 1906—likely the result of a combination of factors including tuberculosis, exhaustion in the wake of pneumonia, and alcoholism.