



Illinois Authors on the

**Illinois State Library**  
Gwendolyn Brooks Building



**Jesse White**

Secretary of State and State Librarian





One of the unique features on the Illinois State Library, Gwendolyn Brooks Building, is the 35 names of Illinois authors etched on the building's exterior fourth-floor frieze. Each of these authors has made a mark in the history of literature as well as the history of Illinois.

Jane Addams used her pen to encourage social change. Black Hawk wrote about the trials and tribulations of American Indians. Robert Herrick, Henry Blake Fuller, Theodore Dreiser, Frank Norris, Upton Sinclair and Hamlin Garland were instrumental in the literary revolution of the Chicago Renaissance. Vachel Lindsay, Gwendolyn Brooks, Carl Sandburg and Edgar Lee Masters enriched us with poetry. Paul Angle, James Jones, Elia Peattie and Abraham Lincoln provide a historical perspective. Richard Wright revealed blatant racial and social injustices. And Ray Bradbury provided an escape from reality with his science-fiction works.

These authors also serve as the foundation for the State Library's Illinois Authors Room, where a collection of works by Illinois authors are preserved and displayed. The collection grows daily as new authors donate signed copies of their books. In 1999, then-state Senator Barack Obama donated a copy of his book *Dreams from My Father* to the Illinois Authors Collection.

I encourage you to visit the Illinois State Library, Gwendolyn Brooks Building, or your local library, read a book by an Illinois author and expand your literary horizons. For more information on Illinois authors, visit [illinoiscenterforthebook.org](http://illinoiscenterforthebook.org).

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## Jane Addams (1860–1935)

Jane Addams, founder and long-time director of Hull House, Chicago's pioneering social settlement house, was the first American woman to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Her masterpiece, *Twenty Years at Hull-House* (1910), is both an autobiography and a history of Hull House. She also wrote a sequel, *The Second Twenty Years at Hull-House* (1930), and a number of other books on social themes, including *Democracy and Social Ethics* (1902) and *Newer Ideals of Peace* (1907).

*"I am sure that anything we can do to widen the circle of enlightenment and self-development is quite as rewarding to those who do it as to those for whom it is done."*

— Jane Addams —

## George Ade (1866–1944)

George Ade, one of the first American humorists, wrote a popular newspaper column, "Stories of the Streets and of the Town," for the *Chicago Record* between 1890 and 1900. These columns were the basis of his books *Artie* (1896), *Pink Marsh* (1897) and *Doc Horne* (1899). Ade's greatest success was *Fables in Slang* (1899), a collection of short sketches that satirized turn-of-the-century manners in breezy vernacular language. Eleven other collections of fables and several plays followed.

*"Life is but a basket of potatoes. When the hard jolts come, the big will rise and the small will fall. The true, honest and brave will go to the top. The small-minded and ignorant must go to the bottom. If you would be a large potato, get an education, be honest, observing and careful and you will be jolted to the top."*

— George Ade —

*A Basket of Potatoes*

# Nelson Algren (1909–1981)

Nelson Algren combined subjects drawn from street life with an eloquent, poetic style in a series of novels and short stories, many of which were set in Chicago's Polish communities. His early books include *Somebody in Boots* (1935), *Never Come Morning* (1942) and the short-story collection, *The Neon Wilderness* (1947). *The Man with a Golden Arm* (1949) won the National Book Award and became a successful Hollywood film in 1956. *A Walk on the Wild Side* (1956) also was made into a film in 1962.

*"I do know that when you have a book underway and are working well that you feel much better about your own relationship to the world, and the way to feel good all the time is to always have a good book going."*

— Nelson Algren —

*Conversations with Nelson Algren*

# Sherwood Anderson (1876–1941)

Sherwood Anderson was an important figure in the Chicago Renaissance, the movement that attracted worldwide attention to Chicago as a literary center around the time of World War I. Anderson is most notable for his short stories, a number of which draw upon his Chicago experiences. Collections include *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919), *The Triumph of the Egg* (1921) and *Horses and Men* (1923). Novels include *Poor White* (1920), *Dark Laughter* (1925) and *Beyond Desire* (1932).

*"To the tale-teller, you must understand, the telling of the tale is the cutting of the natal cord. When the tale is told it exists outside oneself, and often it is more living than the living man from whom it came."*

— Sherwood Anderson —

*A Story Teller's Story*

## Paul Angle (1900-1975)

Paul Angle was an eloquent chronicler of Illinois history. Executive secretary of the Abraham Lincoln Association in Springfield from 1925 to 1932, Angle later served as secretary of the Illinois State Historical Society (1932-45) and as director of the Chicago Historical Society (1945-65). His books include *Here I Have Lived — A History of Lincoln's Springfield* (1935) and *Bloody Williamson* (1952). Angle also edited an important collection of travelers' accounts of Illinois titled *Prairie State* (1968).

*"...the book is the most important means — by long odds the most important means — of transmitting one generation's knowledge to all succeeding generations."*

— Paul M. Angle —

*Speech at the William L. Clements Library  
Ann Arbor, Michigan*

## L. Frank Baum (1856-1919)

Frank Baum was a Chicago newspaperman whose writings about Illinois were eclipsed by his chronicles of the Land of Oz. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* appeared in 1900, was an immediate literary and theatrical success, and was the basis of the classic film of 1939. Baum followed up his success with 13 more Oz books and other works of fantasy fiction.

*"Education is a thing to be proud of. I'm educated myself. The mess of brains given me by the Great Wizard is considered by my friends to be unexcelled."*

— L. Frank Baum —

*The Land of Oz*

# Saul Bellow (1915–2005)

Saul Bellow was one of the major 20th-century American writers. A long-time faculty member at the University of Chicago, his novels combine a serious concern for ideas with a keen, and often comic, mastery of the details of contemporary American life, including street life. Among his novels set either wholly or partially in Chicago are: *Dangling Man* (1944), *The Adventure of Augie March* (1953), *Herzog* (1964), *Humboldt's Gift* (1975) and *The Dean's December* (1982). Bellow was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1976.

*"I myself am a wide reader, a consumer of many books. I grew up that way."*

— Saul Bellow —

# Black Hawk (1767–1838)

Black Hawk led the Sauk and Fox Indians in the Black Hawk War of 1832, a revolt against government orders for Indians to vacate disputed tribal lands along the Rock River in northwestern Illinois. He earned a place in the history of Illinois literature with his eloquent autobiography, *Life of Ma-ka-tai-me-she-kiak-kiak* (1833), republished as

*Black Hawk:  
An Autobiography*  
(1955).

*"I saw my evil day at hand. The sun rose dim on us in the morning, and at night it sank in a dark cloud, and looked like a ball of fire. That was the last sun that shone on Black Hawk. His heart is dead...He is now a prisoner to the white man."*

— Black Hawk —

*Speech upon surrender,  
Prairie du Chein, Wisconsin, August 27, 1832*

# Ray Bradbury (1920-2012)

Ray Bradbury is best known as a popular and successful science-fiction writer whose works include *The Martian Chronicles* (1950), *The Illustrated Man* (1951), *Fahrenheit 451* (1951) and *The Golden Apples of the Sun* (1953). *Dandelion Wine* (1957) is a gentle memoir of his boyhood in Waukegan, Illinois. Bradbury's later novels include *Farewell Summer* (2006) and *Now and Forever* (2007).

*"Without libraries what have we? We have no past and no future."*

— Ray Bradbury —

# Gwendolyn Brooks (1917-2000)

Gwendolyn Brooks, who served as Illinois Poet Laureate from 1968 until her death in 2000, was the first African-American poet to win the Pulitzer Prize for *Annie Allen* (1949). Her early poems, collected in *A Street in Bronzeville* (1945) and *Selected Poems* (1963), combine a realistic interest in the black experience in Chicago with a sophisticated, modernist style. Later poems explore black forms as well as black experience, such as the book-length poem *In the Mecca* (1968). Brooks also is the author of a notable novel, *Maud Martha* (1953). Her last book, *Report From Part Two*, was published in 1998.

*"The written word holds, oh so much  
Of wonderful import —  
Here in these little books of mine  
Shines gold of every sort."*

— Gwendolyn Brooks —

## Cyrus Colter (1910–2002)

Cyrus Colter published his first fictional work at age 60, following a distinguished career as a Chicago attorney and a commissioner of the Illinois Commerce Commission. The collection of stories, *The Beach Umbrella* (1970), and the novels *The River of Eros* (1972), *The Hippodrome* (1973) and *Night Studies* (1979) explore black life in Chicago across a wide range of social class and circumstances. Colter's last novel, *City of Light*, was published in 1993.

*“She had always loved snow; it made the world look so unreal and insubstantial. Dreams had a better chance of coming true in a world of unreality.”*

— Cyrus Colter —  
*The Lookout*

## Theodore Dreiser (1871–1945)

Theodore Dreiser wrote one of the great Chicago novels, *Sister Carrie* (1900). Dreiser has been called a “folk novelist;” his work is often clumsy and yet powerful in its exploration of life on the streets of Chicago. His other Chicago fiction, *The Financier* (1912) and *The Titan* (1914), are both based on the career of Charles T. Yerkes, who built the Chicago railway system. Dreiser's autobiographical writings also are interesting for their treatment of turn-of-the-century Chicago, especially *A Book About Myself* (1922).

*“Our civilization is still in a middle stage, scarcely beast, in that it is not longer wholly guided by instinct; scarcely human, in that it is not yet wholly guided by reason.”*

— Theodore Dreiser —  
*Sister Carrie*

# Finley Peter Dunne (1867-1936)

Finley Peter Dunne was the creator of Mr. Dooley, Irish tavern-keeper and shrewd commentator on public events in Dunne's comic newspaper sketches at the turn of the 20th century. Dunne started writing his Irish dialect sketches in 1892, first for the *Chicago Evening Post* and later for the *Chicago Journal*. The sketches were syndicated nationally after 1898, and many of them were collected in books, beginning with *Mr. Dooley in Peace and in War* (1898) and ending with *Mr. Dooley on Making a Will and other Necessary Evils* (1919).

*"Ye can lead a man to the university, but ye can't make him think."*

— **Finley Peter Dunne's character,  
Mr. Dooley** —

# Eliza Farnham (1815-1864)

Eliza Farnham was a novelist, feminist and prison reformer. Her claim as an Illinois writer rests upon *Life in Prairie Land* (1846), a rich and readable account, slightly fictionalized, of her residence on the Illinois prairie near Pekin between 1836 and 1840.

*"The ultimate aim of the human mind, in all its efforts, is to become acquainted with Truth."*

— **Eliza Farnham** —  
*Woman and Her Era*

## James T. Farrell (1904-1979)

James T. Farrell was notable as a novelist for his interpretations of the Irish-American culture and experience in Chicago. Immensely prolific, he wrote 25 novels, 17 collections of short stories and many non-fiction books. Farrell's masterpiece, the *Studs Lonigan Trilogy* (1932-35), is a devastating account of the tragic life of its protagonist and one of the most powerful fictional treatments of immigrant life in America.

*"Literature is not, in itself, a means of solving problems; these can be solved only by action, by social and political action."*

— James T. Farrell —

## Edna Ferber (1887-1968)

Edna Ferber was a popular novelist and short-story writer who launched her career from Chicago. Her Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *So Big* (1924) is set in New Holland, the truck-farming area south of Chicago. Many of her early stories, collected in *One Basket* (1947), are set in Chicago during the early 20th century. Ferber also wrote *Show Boat* (1926), upon which the Jerome Kern musical was based.

*"The start of a novel always is a terrifying experience, and the months that follow are harrowing and exhausting, with just an occasional moment of exhilaration to keep one from being too suicidal."*

— Edna Ferber —  
*A Peculiar Treasure*

# Henry Blake Fuller (1857-1929)

Henry Blake Fuller was a leader in the flowering of Chicago literature in the 1890s. His novel *The Cliff-Dwellers* (1893), set among residents of a Chicago skyscraper, is often identified as the first important American urban novel. His other Chicago fiction includes: *With the Procession* (1895), *On the Stairs* (1918) and *Bertram Cope's Year* (1919), as well as the short story collection *Under the Skylights* (1901).

*“What is a man’s best age? Peter Ibbetson, entering dreamland with complete freedom to choose, chose twenty-eight, and kept there. But twenty-eight, for our present purpose, has a drawback: a man of that age, if endowed with ordinary gifts and responsive to ordinary opportunities, is undeniably — a man; whereas what we require here is something just short of that.”*

— Henry Blake Fuller —  
*Bertram Cope's Year*

# Hamlin Garland (1860-1940)

Hamlin Garland, a pioneer in American fictional realism, settled in Chicago at the time of the 1893 World's Fair and became a major figure in the artistic development of the Chicago Renaissance. *Rose of Dutcher's Coolly* (1895), about a girl from rural Wisconsin who pursues a career as a poet in Chicago, is perhaps Garland's best novel.

*“As a writer I have always been among the minority. I believe in dignity, decorum, and grace, and I decline to honor those who pander the appetites of millions...in such judgment (of salacious fiction) the voice of the people is not the voice of God. I do not accept popular judgment on wall paper. Why should I do so when a book is in question?”*

— Hamlin Garland —

# Lorraine Hansberry (1930–1965)

Lorraine Hansberry grew up in Chicago, where her father, a successful real estate broker, fought a long legal battle against codes that enforced racial segregation. Her play *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959) is a study of a black family in Chicago and was the first play by a black woman to be produced on Broadway. It won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award, and the 1961 film version was also a critical success. Before her untimely death, she also wrote a second play, *The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window* (1964).

*"I believe that one of the most sound ideas in dramatic writing is that, in order to create the universal, you must pay very great attention to the specific."*

— Lorraine Hansberry —

# Ben Hecht (1894–1964)

Ben Hecht moved from journalism to a successful career as a novelist, playwright and screenwriter. As a writer for the *Chicago Daily News*, he wrote a column that became the basis for the collection of sketches, *A Thousand and One Afternoons in Chicago* (1922). Hecht's greatest theatrical success was *The Front Page* (1928), set in a Chicago newsroom. Moving to Hollywood, Hecht wrote, co-wrote or adapted some of the most successful movies of the 1930s, including the film version of *The Front Page* (1931), *Nothing Sacred* (1937), *Gunga Din* (1938) and *Wuthering Heights* (1939). Some of Hecht's liveliest writing about his Chicago years appears in his autobiography, *Child of the Century* (1954).

*"A reader is a critic with a very fine and important job — to please himself. It is, however, his job, not mine."*

— Ben Hecht —

# Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961)

Master of the American novel and short story and winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1954, Ernest Hemingway grew up in Oak Park, Illinois. None of his works are set in Illinois, but critics have remarked that the central conflicts in his work can be traced to the contrast between Oak Park and the Michigan woods where the family spent summers. His major novels include *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940) and *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952).

*“The good and the bad, the ecstasy, the remorse and sorrow, the people and the places and how the weather was. If you can get so that you can give that to people, then you are a writer.”*

— Ernest Hemingway —  
*The Old Newsman Writes*  
*Esquire, December 1934*

# Robert Herrick (1868-1938)

Robert Herrick moved to Chicago from Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1893 to join the University of Chicago English Department. Along with Henry Blake Fuller, Herrick was an important figure in the Chicago literary scene in the years just preceding the Chicago Renaissance. His Chicago novels include *The Gospel of Freedom* (1898), *The Web of Life* (1900), *The Common Lot* (1904), *Memoirs of An American Citizen* (1905) and *Chimes* (1926).

*“I knew from the very start of my consciousness as a writer that whatever force I had in me was solely due to my tradition, my blood and the soil I was born to...that I was a medium for the expression of force not myself.”*

— Robert Herrick —

## James Jones (1921-1977)

James Jones, a native of Robinson, Illinois, won commercial success and literary fame with *From Here to Eternity* (1951), an Army novel set in Hawaii just before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The film version made in 1953 received eight Academy Awards. *Some Came Running* (1958) was the only novel in which Jones drew upon his Illinois background. It was followed by other Army novels, including *The Thin Red Line* (1963), which was adapted to film in 1998.

*“When compared to the fact that he might very well be dead by this time tomorrow, whether he was courageous or not today was pointless, empty... Whether he looked at a tree or not was pointless. It just doesn’t make any difference. It was pointless to the tree, it was pointless to every man in his outfit, pointless to everybody in the whole world. Who cared? It was not pointless only to him.”*

— James Jones —  
*The Thin Red Line*

## Ring Lardner (1885-1933)

Ring Lardner began his career as a sportswriter in Chicago and started in fiction with a series of stories about a baseball player named Jack Keefe. These stories, some of which were collected in *You Know Me Al*, demonstrate Lardner’s gift for dark satire and his sharp ear for American colloquial speech. Later collections include *How to Write Short Stories* (1924) and *The Love Nest and Other Stories* (1926). Lardner also was a successful playwright, collaborating with George M. Cohan on *Elmer the Great* (1928) and George S. Kaufman on *June Moon* (1929).

*“A good many young writers make the mistake of enclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope big enough for the manuscript to come back in. This is too much of a temptation to the editor.”*

— Ring Lardner —  
*How to Write Short Stories*

# Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865)

Abraham Lincoln is perhaps the only American president who also occupies an honored place in American literature. His ability to articulate, simply and eloquently, national goals and values played an important role not only in his own political career but in the progress of the Civil War. Among his greatest speeches are his “Farewell to Springfield,” his first and second presidential inaugural addresses, and the “Gettysburg Address.”

*“Upon the subject of education, not presuming to dictate any plan or system respecting it, I can only say that I view it as the most important subject which we, as people, can be engaged.”*

— Abraham Lincoln —

# Vachel Lindsay (1879-1931)

Vachel Lindsay used his hometown of Springfield as a base from which he launched a one-man campaign to reform American poetry and culture. His most original works were such poems as “General William Booth Enters into Heaven” and “Bryan, Bryan, Bryan, Bryan,” which were strongly rhythmic chants about American heroes couched in colorful American colloquial speech.

*“A bronzed, lank man!  
His suit of ancient black,  
A famous high-top hat  
and plain worn shawl  
Make him the quaint great figure  
that men love,  
The prairie-lawyer, master of us all.”*

— Vachel Lindsay —

*Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight*

# Edgar Lee Masters (1869-1950)

Along with Vachel Lindsay and Carl Sandburg, Edgar Lee Masters was one of the three important poets of the Chicago Renaissance. A Chicago lawyer, Masters wrote *Spoon River Anthology* (1915), a series of monologues in which residents of a small town speak from beyond the grave of the narrowness, constriction and disappointments of their lives. The book became the single-most widely read book of American poetry and had an important impact on the development of modern poetry, with its freedom of form and plain, colloquial diction. Later works include a biography of Vachel Lindsay (1935),

*Across Spoon River* (1936) and *The Sangamon* (1942).

*“Degenerate sons and daughters,  
Life is too strong for you —  
It takes life to love life.”*

— **Edgar Lee Masters** —  
*Lucinda Matlock*

# William Maxwell (1908-2000)

Throughout a long residence in New York, William Maxwell continued to explore his Illinois childhood in Lincoln and Chicago in a series of novels and short-story collections, including *Bright Center of Heaven* (1934), *They Came Like Swallows* (1937), *The Folded Leaf* (1945) and *So Long, See You Tomorrow* (1980). Maxwell also nurtured other developing writers and is best known as a long-time fiction editor for the *New Yorker* magazine.

*“Reading is rapture (or if it isn’t, I put  
the book down meaning to go on with it  
later, and escape out the side door).”*

— **William Maxwell** —  
*The Outermost Dream*

# Frank Norris (1870-1902)

Frank Norris attempted in his sweeping fiction to depict the impact of social and economic forces on individual lives. He is best known for *McTeague* (1899) and his uncompleted trilogy, *The Epic of the Wheat*. The first volume, *The Octopus* (1901), deals with the conflict between wheatgrowers and the railroads in California. *The Pit* (1903), set in Chicago, is about wheat speculation on the Board of Trade. Norris' premature death kept him from completing the trilogy with *The Wolf*, about the flow of wheat to Europe to relieve famine.

*“The Pulpit, the Press, and the Novel — these indisputably are the greatest molders of public opinion and the public morals today. But the Pulpit but speaks once a week; the Press is read with lightning haste and the morning news is waste-paper by noon. But the novel goes into the home to stay. It is read word for word; is talked about, discussed; its influence penetrates every chink and corner of the family.*

— Frank Norris —

*The Responsibilities of the Novelist*

# Donald Culross Peattie (1898-1964)

Donald Culross Peattie, a native of Chicago, was one of the most accomplished nature writers in American letters. Among his many books, of special interest to Illinois is *An Almanac for Moderns* (1935), a collection of short essays, one for each day of the year, and based on Peattie's observations at Kennicott's Grove near Chicago. Another is *A Prairie Grove* (1938), an imaginative history of a patch of Illinois prairie.

*“A library, in the sense of a group of chosen books, is a set of windows to look out upon the world, through which, also, one can look into the mind that selected them.”*

— Donald Culross Peattie —

*Parade with Banners*

# Elia Wilkinson Peattie (1862-1935)

Elia Wilkinson Peattie was a Chicago journalist, novelist and short-story writer. She began her career as a reporter with the *Chicago Tribune* in 1884, eventually holding the influential post of literary editor from 1901 to 1917. Peattie published hundreds of short stories and 32 books, including *The Precipice* (1914), perhaps her best novel. Others include *Lotta Embury's Career* (1915), *The Newcomers* (1916) and *Sarah Brewster's Relatives* (1916). She was the mother of Illinois author Donald Culross Peattie.

*"We are all quite free to admit that the large and comprehensive novel of Chicago has not yet been written, and it may be that it is an impossibility, like the great American novel. Chicago is too diverse for any book to represent more than one phase of its life."*

— Elia Wilkinson Peattie —  
*Atlantic Monthly, December 1899*

# Carl Sandburg (1878-1967)

Born in Galesburg, Illinois, Carl Sandburg was a Chicago newspaperman who became one of America's best-loved poets, a popular folklorist and performer, and a biographer of Abraham Lincoln. Sandburg's *Chicago Poems* (1914) had a profound impact on American literature. Sandburg published a number of subsequent volumes of verse, mostly celebrations of American life in loose, free verse. His later career was dominated by the writing of his six-volume *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years and The War Years* (1926, 1939). The Lincoln biography is considered an American epic.

*"Poetry is the journal of a sea animal living on land, wanting to fly in the air. Poetry is a search for syllables to shoot at the barriers of the unknown and the unknowable. Poetry is a phantom script telling how rainbows are made and why they go away."*

— Carl Sandburg —  
*Atlantic Monthly, March 1923*

# Upton Sinclair (1878-1968)

Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906) is a devastating novel set among workers in the meat-packing industry in Chicago. Intended to highlight exploitation and bring about reform of working conditions, the novel instead created indignation over the quality of processed meat and led to the passage of food inspection laws. Sinclair was a prolific novelist with a passionate desire to right social injustice. His other works include *Oil!* (1927), *Boston* (1928) and the 11 Lanny Budd novels, which presented contemporary historical events through the eyes of the fictional protagonist.

*"I aimed at the public's heart and by accident I hit it in the stomach."*

— Upton Sinclair —

*in reference to his novel, The Jungle*

# (Louis) Studs Terkel (1912-2008)

Studs Terkel, a Chicago radio and television broadcaster, turned oral history into a fine art. Terkel transcribed tape-recorded interviews with ordinary people and shaped them into powerful accounts of modern American life — emphasizing not so much public events themselves but the way ordinary people understand and experience those events. Among his books are: *Division Street: America* (1967), *Hard Time: An Oral History of the Great Depression* (1970), *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel about What They Do* (1974), and *"The Good War": An Oral History of World War II* (1984).

*"Perhaps it is this specter that most haunts working men and women: the planned obsolescence of people that is of a piece with the planned obsolescence of their things they make. Or sell."*

— (Louis) Studs Terkel —

*Working*

# Richard Wright (1908-1960)

Richard Wright moved to Chicago from his native Mississippi and worked at a series of menial jobs until he got an opportunity to write through the Federal Writer's Project. He first attracted critical attention with *Uncle Tom's Children* (1938), a powerful collection of stories about racial injustice. *Native Son* (1940), about a Chicago black man, Bigger Thomas, who accidentally kills a white girl, was an enormous success. The novel was staged as a play in 1941 and made into a film in 1951, with Wright starring as Bigger Thomas. Wright's Chicago experience also is reflected in the novella, *The Man Who Lived Underground* (1942), and *Black Boy* (1945), Wright's account of his early life, is one of the great American autobiographies.

*"It has been my accidental reading of fiction and literary criticism that had evoked in me vague glimpses of life's possibilities."*

— Richard Wright —

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