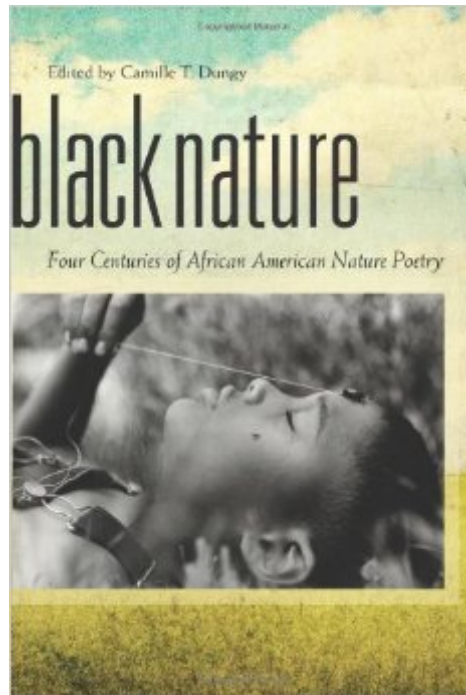


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# Black Nature: Four Centuries Of African American Nature Poetry



## Synopsis

Black Nature is the first anthology to focus on nature writing by African American poets, a genre that until now has not commonly been counted as one in which African American poets have participated. Black poets have a long tradition of incorporating treatments of the natural world into their work, but it is often read as political, historical, or protest poetry—anything but nature poetry. This is particularly true when the definition of what constitutes nature writing is limited to work about the pastoral or the wild. Camille T. Dungy has selected 180 poems from 93 poets that provide unique perspectives on American social and literary history to broaden our concept of nature poetry and African American poetics. This collection features major writers such as Phillis Wheatley, Rita Dove, Yusef Komunyakaa, Gwendolyn Brooks, Sterling Brown, Robert Hayden, Wanda Coleman, Natasha Trethewey, and Melvin B. Tolson as well as newer talents such as Douglas Kearney, Major Jackson, and Janice Harrington. Included are poets writing out of slavery, Reconstruction, the Harlem Renaissance, the Black Arts Movement, and late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century African American poetic movements. Black Nature brings to the fore a neglected and vital means of considering poetry by African Americans and nature-related poetry as a whole. A Friends Fund Publication.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In Black Nature, editor Camille T. Dungy has compiled 180 poems reflecting on the natural world, and that are "expressed through the African American perspective". Ninety three voices are included here and the poems themselves are grouped into ten "cycles" that "highlight recurrent

concerns"; for example, natural disaster is the theme for cycle six while cycle seven explores fauna and human/animal relationships. Each cycle is introduced with an essay usually from one of the featured poets (not always written for this anthology, sometimes pulled from another work) to emphasize the theme for the group of poems that follow it. *Black Nature* is full of Black American history, stretching from Phillis Wheatley, the first published African American poet, to modern 21st century writers. This is not just an anthology of poetry, this is the history of a people brought unwillingly to a foreign land and the story of their growing bond throughout the centuries with the land itself.

A superb anthology with amazing scope. It spans over 400 years of African poetry, frequently revisiting subjects of history and ecology. It's great for the classroom or as a resource for your daily poem. The perspectives and styles are unique from one poem to the next, which made it an enjoyable read throughout.

This is an extremely worthwhile collection of nature poetry from the perspective of African American poets spanning 400 years. So there's tons of history here, human history, connected in with the poetry of the land, of place, of critters, of the farm, field, forest, sky, and soil...and yes, city nature, too... and fabulous garden poems. I read the book from cover to cover over a series of evenings this fall, and found so many wonderful delights here, it really was a revelation. Highly recommend.

I heard excerpts of this book on NPR. It is fresh and unusual. Take a moment and look at the world in a new way. There are poems written like newspaper ads, and one about the mosquito that almost becomes a mini cartoon in your head with this Rastafarian blood sucker.

I find this anthology to be filled with poetry that I have loved, but never considered in the context of nature. My poetry uses nature and I now know I am responding to a tradition that is purely American and Black.

This anthology is simply brilliant. Elegant and necessary. The combination of scholarship and heart that Camille Dungy brings to this volume is evident throughout.

A beautiful collection of poetry

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