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necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material. Whether he was working in Paris or Istanbul, he never ceased to reflect on his experience as a black man in white America. In numerous essays, novels, plays and public speeches, the eloquent voice of James
Baldwin spoke of the pain and struggle of black Americans and the saving power of brotherhood. James Baldwin — the grandson of a slave — was born in Harlem in 1924. The oldest of nine children, he grew up in poverty, developing a troubled relationship with his strict, religious stepfather. As a child, he cast about for a way to escape his
circumstances. As he recalls, "I knew I was black, of course, but I also knew I was smart. I didn't know how I would use my mind, or even if I could, but that was the only thing I had to use." By the time he was fourteen, Baldwin was spending much of his time in libraries and had found his passion for writing. During this early part of his life, he
followed in his stepfather's footsteps and became a preacher. Of those teen years, Baldwin recalled, "Those three years in the pulpit - I didn't realize it then - that is what turned me into a writer, really, dealing with all that anguish and that despair and that beauty." Many have noted the strong influence of the language of the church, the language of
the Bible, on Baldwin's style: its cadences and tone. Eager to move on, Baldwin knew that if he left the pulpit he must also leave home, so at eighteen he took a job working for the New Jersey railroad. After working for a short while with the railroad, Baldwin moved to Greenwich Village, where he worked for a number of years as a freelance writer,
working primarily on book reviews. He caught the attention of the well-known novelist, Richard Wright - and though Baldwin had not yet finished a novel, Wright helped him secure a grant with which he could support himself as a writer. In 1948, at age 24, Baldwin left for Paris, where he hoped to find enough distance from the American society he
grew up in to write about it. After writing a number of pieces for various magazines, Baldwin went to a small village in Switzerland to finish his first novel. Go Tell It on the Mountain, published in 1953, was an autobiographical work about growing up in Harlem. The passion and depth with which he described the struggles of black Americans were
unlike anything that had been written. Though not instantly recognized as such, Go Tell It on the Mountain has long been considered an American classic. Over the next ten years, Baldwin moved from Paris to New York to Istanbul, writing two books of essays, Notes of a Native Son (1955) and Nobody Knows My Name (1961), as well as two novels,
Giovanni's Room (1956) and Another Country (1962). The essays explored racial tension with eloquence and unprecedented honesty; the novels dealt with taboo themes (homosexuality and interracial relationships). By describing life as he knew it, Baldwin created socially relevant, psychologically penetrating literature ... and readers responded. Both
Nobody Knows My Name and Another Country became immediate bestsellers. Being abroad gave Baldwin's travels brought him even closer to the social
concerns of contemporary America. In the early 1960s, overwhelmed by a sense of responsibility to the times, Baldwin returned to take part in the civil rights movement. Traveling throughout the South, he began work on an explosive work about black identity and the state of racial struggle, The Fire Next Time (1963). This, too, was a bestseller: so
incendiary that it put Baldwin on the cover of TIME Magazine. For many, Baldwin's clarion call for human equality - in the essays of Notes of a Native Son, Nobody Knows My Name and The Fire Next Time - became an early and essential voice in the civil rights movement. Though at times criticized for his pacifist stance, Baldwin remained an
important figure in that struggle throughout the 1960s. After the assassinations of his friends Medgar Evers, Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X, Baldwin returned to St. Paul de Vence, France, where he worked on a book about the disillusionment of the times, If Beale Street Could Talk (1974). Many responded to the harsh tone of If
Beale Street Could Talk with accusations of bitterness - but even though Baldwin had encapsulated much of the anger of the times in his book, he always remained a constant advocate for universal love and brotherhood. During the last ten years of his life, he produced a number of important works of fiction, non-fiction, and poetry. He also turned to
teaching as a new way of connecting with the young. By 1987, when he died of stomach cancer at age 63, James Baldwin had become one of the most important and vocal advocates for equality. From Go Tell It on the Mountain to The Evidence of Things Not Seen (1985), James Baldwin created works of literary beauty and depth that will remain
essential parts of the American canon. James Baldwin is an iconic author for our time, a writer who gave the world countless poignant essays, shorts stories, novels, plays, and poems during his 63 years. As a gay Black man coming to terms with his identity in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, Baldwin—who died on December 1, 1987—used his distinct
perspective and lyrical writing to shed light on issues of race, homosexuality, and religion in a way that placed him ahead of his time when it came to social commentary. From Go Tell It on the Mountain to Giovanni's Room and If Beale Street Could Talk, which was adapted for the big screen in 2019, we've gathered some of Baldwin's most popular
texts, all of which are still essential reading today. And don't worry: we've included a complete list of his life's work, too—because they're all worthy of praise. Go Tell It on the MountainGo Tell I
who struggles with self-identity as the stepson of a strict Pentecostal minister. The story mirrors the author's own life; Baldwin too was raised by a stepfather who served as a Baptist pastor. "Mountain is the book I had to write in 1985. "I had to deal with what hurt me most. I had
to deal, above all, with my father."Notes of a Native SonNotes of a Native SonNotes of a Native SonNotes of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s. Throughout his observations, Baldwin both lamented the injustices in the African American community
and showed empathy for the oppressor, establishing himself as a key voice in the movement. In a 1958 New York Times review of Notes of a Native Son, African American poet Langston Hughes said this of Baldwin's words: "America and the world might as well have a major contemporary commentator." Giovanni's Room Giovanni's Room (1956).
landmark novel in American literature, Giovanni's Room follows an American man living in Paris who struggles with understanding his sexuality as he deals with the societal pressures of masculinity—all as he begins an affair with an Italian bartender named Giovanni. The book, which is widely considered essential reading in the LGBTQ community
was a finalist for the National Book Awards' fiction category in 1957. Nobody Knows My Name: More Notes From a Native Son (1961)In another collection of 23 culturally reflective essays, Baldwin highlights the complexity of discriminatory tensions in our society with words that are still just as poignant and relevant today. A
selection of Baldwin's new and revised works, many of the titles originally appeared in publications like Esquire and The New York Times Magazine. The essays earned him another spot as a finalist in the National Book Awards in 1962—this time in the nonfiction category. Another Country Another Country (1962)Set in New York City's Greenwich
Village in the 1950s, Another Country explores themes of mental health, interracial relationships, love, and bisexuality as the story follows the lives of a group of friends in the wake of a suicide. After its release, many critics had mixed responses, with Paul Goodman for the New York Times writing that while the story was "personal, sinuous yet
definite" it was also "strained [and] sometimes journalistic or noisy." He did, however, acknowledge that his harsher review was a result of Baldwin's previous work, which caused a higher standard of criticism. The Fire Next Time (1963) Comprised of two essays that were originally published in The New Yorker—"My Dungeon
Shook: Letter to my Nephew on the One Hundredth Anniversary of Emancipation" and "Down At The Cross: Letter from a Region of My Mind"—in The Fire Next Time, Baldwin explains the place of both race and racism in society, while also examining and criticizing Christianity's role in American beliefs. At the time, critics saw this collection as a way
for white Americans to (finally) get a look inside what life was like as a Black citizen in this country. Going to Meet the Man: Stories Going to Meet the Man (1965) acollection of eight short stories, this book delves into yet another set of cultural themes through its varied characters: a struggling jazz musician, an angry father, and a racist cop to name
a few. Popular titles included are Sonny's Blues; This Morning, This Evening, So Soon; and The Man Child. Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone (1968)In this Baldwin novel, a fictional noted actor Leo Proudhammer nearly dies after suffering from a heart attack on stage. Throughout the rest of the novel,
he reflects on the events of his life—both those that led him to fame and those that revealed his weaknesses. If Beale Street Could Talk (1974)Now a Golden Globe-nominated film directed by Barry Jenkins, If Beale Street Could Talk follows young couple Fonny and Tish as they deal with the trial and jailing of Fonny, who is
falsely accused of rape. In the big-screen version, the title characters are played by up-and-comers Stephan James and Kiki Layne. When speaking to The Atlantic about what led him to take the story to the big screen, Jenkins said, "Baldwin had a few voices that he wrote in, and one of those voices was just deeply sensual, innately in touch with human
emotions... I think this book is the perfect fusion of the more essayistic protest novel and somebody who deeply believed in sensuality and love." I Am Not Your Negro (2017) In the years before his death, Baldwin envisioned a book about his friends Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and Medgar Evers—but never finished it. By
combining an unpublished manuscript called Remember This House and varied excerpts from Baldwin's book, notes, interviews, and letters, Raul Peck edited and published the story that the literary great never got to see come to life. Peck also directed the 2017 Oscar-nominated documentary of the same name. A Complete List of James Baldwin
Works Essays A Talk to Teachers Nobody Knows My Name: More Notes of a Native Son The Cross of Redemption: Uncollected Writings The Devil Finds Work The Evidence of Things Not Found The Cross of Redemption: Uncollected Writings The Devil Finds Work The Evidence of Things Not Found The Cross of Redemption: Uncollected Writings The Devil Finds Work The Evidence of Things Not Found The Cross of Redemption: Uncollected Writings The Devil Finds Work The Evidence of Things Not Found The Cross of Redemption: Uncollected Writings The Devil Finds Work The Evidence of Things Not Found The Cross of Redemption: Uncollected Writings The Devil Finds Work The Evidence of Things Not Found The Price of the Ticket Novels Another Cross of Redemption: Uncollected Writings The Devil Finds Work The Evidence of Things Not Found The Price of the Ticket Novels Another Cross of Redemption: Uncollected Writings The Devil Finds Work The Evidence of Things Not Found The Price of the Ticket Novels Another Cross of Redemption: Uncollected Writings The Devil Finds Work The Evidence of Things Not Found The Price of the Ticket Novels Another Cross of Redemption: Uncollected Writings The Devil Finds Work The Evidence of Things Novels Another Cross of Redemption: Uncollected Writings The Devil Finds Work The Evidence Of Things Novels Another Cross of Redemption The Price of Things Novels Another Cross of Redemption The Price of Things Novels Another Cross of Redemption The Price of Things Novels Another Cross of Redemption The Price of Things Novels Another Cross of Redemption The Price of Things Novels Another Cross of Redemption The Price of Things Novels Another Cross of Redemption The Price of Things Novels Another Cross of Redemption The Price of Things Novels Another Cross of Redemption The Price of Things Novels Another Cross of Redemption The Price of Things Novels Another Cross of Redemption The Price of Things Novels Another Cross of Things Novel
TalkJust Above My HeadTell Me How Long the Train's Been GonePlaysBlues for Mister CharlieThe Amen CornerPoemsJimmy's BluesThis Morning, This Evening, So SoonThe Man ChildThe OutingThe Rockpile McKenzie Jean-
Philippe Editorial Assistant McKenzie Jean-Philippe is the editorial assistant at Oprah Mag.com covering pop culture, TV, movies, celebrity, and lifestyle. She loves a great Oprah viral moment and all things Netflix—but come summertime, Big Brother has her heart. On a day off you'll find her curled up with a new juicy romance novel. American writer
and activist (1924-1987) This article is about the American writer. For other people with the same name, see James Baldwin (disambiguation). James Baldwin (disambiguation). James Baldwin in 1969BornJames Arthur Jones(1924-08-02)August 2, 1924New York City, New York, U.S.DiedDecember 1, 1987(1987-12-01) (aged 63)Saint-Paul-de-Vence, FranceResting
placeFerncliff Cemetery, Westchester County, New YorkOccupationWriteractivistEducationDeWitt Clinton High SchoolGenreUrban fictionAfrican-American literatureYears active1947-1985Notable works Go Tell It on the Mountain (1953) Notes of a Native Son (1955) Giovanni's Room (1956) James Arthur Baldwin (né Jones; August 2
1924 - December 1, 1987) was an American writer and civil rights activist who garnered acclaim for his essays, novels, plays, and poems. His 1955 essay collection Notes of a Native Son helped establish his reputation as a
voice for human equality.[2] Baldwin was an influential public figure and orator, especially during the civil rights movement in the United States.[3][4][5] Baldwin's fiction posed fundamental personal questions and dilemmas amid complex social and psychological pressures. Themes of masculinity, sexuality, race, and class intertwine to create
intricate narratives that influenced both the civil rights movement and the gay liberation movement in mid-twentieth century America. His protagonists are often but not exclusively African-American, and gay and bisexual men feature prominently in his work (as in his 1956 novel Giovanni's Room). His characters typically face internal and external
obstacles in their search for self- and social acceptance.[6] Baldwin's work continues to influence artists and writers. His unfinished manuscript Remember This House was expanded and adapted as the 2016 documentary film I Am Not Your Negro, winning the BAFTA Award for Best Documentary. His 1974 novel If Beale Street Could Talk was
adapted into a 2018 film of the same name, which earned widespread praise. Baldwin was born as James Arthur Jones to Emma Berdis Jones on August 2, 1924, at Harlem Hospital in New York City.[7] Born on Deal Island, Maryland, in 1903,[8] Emma Jones was one of many who fled racial segregation and discrimination in the South during the Great
Migration. She arrived in Harlem, New York, when she was 19 years old.[9] Jones originally undertook to care for her son as a single mother.[10] However, in 1927, Jones married David Baldwin, a laborer and Baptist preacher.[11] David Baldwin was
born in Bunkie, Louisiana, and preached in New Orleans, but left the South for Harlem in 1919.[11][a] How David and Emma met is uncertain, but in James Baldwin and David Baldwin had eight children in
sixteen years—George, Barbara, Wilmer, David Jr. (named for James's stepfather and deceased half-brother), Gloria, Ruth, Elizabeth, and Paula.[13] James rarely wrote or spoke of his mother. When he did, he made it clear that he admired and loved her, often through reference to her loving smile.[14]:20
James moved several times while young but always within Harlem.[15] At the time, Harlem was still a mixed-race area of the city in the incipient days of the Great Migration.[16] James Baldwin did not know exactly how old his stepfather was, but it is clear that he was much older than Emma; indeed, he may have been born before the Emancipation in
1863.[17] David's mother, Barbara, was born enslaved and lived with the Baldwins in New York before her death when James was seven years old.[17] David also had a light-skinned half-brother fathered by his mother's erstwhile enslaver[17] and a sister named Barbara, whom James and others in the family called "Taunty".[18] David's father was
born a slave.[9] David had been married earlier and had a daughter, who was as old as Emma and at least two sons—David, who died while in jail, and Sam, who was eight years James Baldwin referred to his stepfather simply as "father" throughout
his life,[11] but David Sr. and James had an extremely difficult relationship and nearly resorted to physical fights on several occasions.[14]:18[b] "They fought because he had white friends", all of which, David Baldwin thought, threatened James's "salvation".[20] According to one biographer, David
Baldwin also hated white people and "his devotion to God was mixed with a hope that God would take revenge on them for him."[21][c] During the 1920s and 1930s, David worked at a soft-drink bottling factory,[16] although he was eventually laid off from the job. As his anger and hatred eventually tainted his sermons, he was less in demand as a
preacher. David sometimes took out his anger on his family and the children were afraid of him, though this was to some degree balanced by the love lavished on them by their mother. [23] David Baldwin grew paranoid near the end of his life. [24] He was committed to a mental asylum in 1943 and died of tuberculosis on July 29 of that year, the same
day Emma had their last child, Paula.[25] James, at his mother's urging, visited his dying stepfather the day before[26] and came to something of a posthumous reconciliation with him in his essay "Notes of a Native Son". In the essay, he wrote: "in his outrageously demanding and protective way, he loved his children, who were black like him and
impacts of the poverty and discrimination he saw all around him. As he grew up, friends he sat next to in church turned to drugs, crime, or prostitution. In what biographer Anna Malaika Tubbs found to be a commentary on not only his own life but also the entire Black experience in America, Baldwin wrote: "I never had a childhood... I did not have
any human identity... I was born dead."[28] Baldwin wrote comparatively little about events at school.[29] At five years of age, he was enrolled at Public School 24 (P.S. 24) on 128th Street in Harlem.[29] The principal of the school was Gertrude E. Ayer, the first Black principal in the city. She and some of Baldwin's teachers recognized his brilliance
early on [30] and encouraged his research and writing pursuits. [31] Ayer stated that Baldwin derived his writing talent from his mother, whose notes to school were greatly admired by the teachers, and that her son also learned to write like an angel, albeit an avenging one. [32] By fifth grade, not yet a teenager, Baldwin had read some of Fyodor
Dostoyevsky's works, Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin, and Charles Dickens'. A Tale of Two Cities (which gave him a lifelong interest in the work of Dickens). [33] Baldwin wrote a song that earned praise from New York Mayor Fiorello La Guardia in a letter that La Guardia sent to him. [33] Baldwin also won a prize for a short story that
was published in a church newspaper. [33] His teachers recommended that he go to a public library on 135th Street in Harlem, a place that became his sanctuary. Baldwin met Orilla "Bill" Miller, a young white schoolteacher from the
Midwest whom Baldwin named as one of the reasons that he "never really managed to hate white people".[34][d] Among other outings, Miller took Baldwin's lifelong desire to succeed as a playwright.[38][e] David was reluctant to let
his stepson go to the theatre, because he saw the stage as sinful and was suspicious of Miller. However, Baldwin ever wrote. [40] After P.S. 24, Baldwin entered Harlem's Frederick Douglass Junior High School. [29][f] There,
Baldwin met two important influences.[42] The first was Herman W. "Bill" Porter, a Black Harvard graduate.[43] Porter was the faculty advisor to the school's newspaper, the Douglass Pilot, of which Baldwin would become the editor.[29] Porter took Baldwin to the library on 42nd Street to research a piece that would turn into Baldwin's first
published essay titled "Harlem—Then and Now", which appeared in the autumn 1937 issue of the Douglass Pilot.[44] The second of these influences from his time at Frederick Douglass Junior High School was Countee Cullen, the renowned poet of the Harlem Renaissance.[45] Cullen taught French and was a literary advisor in the English
department.[29] Baldwin later remarked that he "adored" Cullen's poetry, and his dream to live in France was sparked by Cullen's early impression on him.[43] Baldwin applied to and was accepted at De Witt Clinton High School in the Bronx, a predominantly white and
Jewish school, where he matriculated that fall.[47] He worked on the school's magazine, the Magpie with Richard Avedon, who went on to become a noted photographer, and Emile Capouya and Sol Stein, who would both become a noted photographer, and Emile Capouya and Sol Stein, who would both become a noted photographer.
 writing.[48] He completed his high school diploma at De Witt Clinton in 1941.[49] Baldwin's yearbook listed his career ambition as "novelist-playwright", and his motto in the yearbook was: "Fame is the spur and—ouch!"[49] Uncomfortable with his discovery during his high school years that he was attracted to men rather than women, Baldwin
sought refuge in religion.[50] He joined the later demolished Mount Calvary of the Pentecostal Faith Church on Lenox Avenue in 1937. He then followed Mount Calvary's preacher, Bishop Rose Artemis Horn (affectionately known as Mother Horn) when she left to preach at Fireside Pentecostal Assembly.[51] At the age of 14, "Brother Baldwin", as he
was called, first took to Fireside's altar, and it was at Fireside Pentecostal, during his mostly extemporaneous sermons, that Baldwin "learned that he had authority as a speaker and could do things with a crowd."[52] He delivered his final sermon at Fireside Pentecostal in 1941.[52] Baldwin wrote in the essay "Down at the Cross" that the church "was
a mask for self-hatred and despair ... salvation stopped at the church door".[53] He recalled a rare conversation with David Baldwin "in which they had really spoken to one another", during which his stepfather asked: "You'd rather write than preach, wouldn't you?"[53] Baldwin left school in 1941 in order to earn money to help support his family. He
secured a job helping to build a United States Army depot in New Jersey.[55] In Belle Mead, New Jersey.[55] In Belle Mead, New Jersey.[55] The two lived in Rocky Hill and commuted to Belle Mead, Delta Mead, Baldwin experienced prejudice that deeply frustrated and angered him
and that he cited as the partial cause of his later emigration out of America.[56] Baldwin's fellow white workmen, who mostly came from the South, derided him for what they saw as his "uppity" ways, his sharp, ironic wit and his lack of "respect".[55] In an incident that Baldwin described in his essay "Notes of a Native Son", he went to a restaurant in
Princeton called the Balt where, after a long wait, Baldwin was told that "colored boys" were not served there.[55] Then, on his last night in New Jersey, in another incident also memorialized in "Notes of a Native Son", Baldwin and a friend went to a diner after a movie, only to be told that Black people were not served there.[57] Infuriated, he went to
another restaurant, expecting to be denied service once again.[57] When that denial of service came, humiliation and he hurled the mearest object at hand—a water mug—at the waitress, missing her and shattering the mirror behind her.[58] Baldwin and his friend narrowly escaped.[58] During these years, Baldwin was
torn between his desire to write and his need to provide for his family. He took a succession of menial jobs and feared that he was becoming like his stepfather, who had been unable to provide properly for his family. [58] Fired from the track-laying job, Baldwin returned to Harlem in June 1943 to live with his family after taking a meat-packing job. [58]
He lost the meat-packing job too, after falling asleep at the plant. [22] He became listless and unstable, drifting from one odd job to the next. [60] Baldwin drank heavily and endured the first of his melancholy. [61] During the year before he left De Witt Clinton, and at Capouya's
urging, Baldwin had met Delaney, a modernist painter, in Greenwich Village. [62] Delaney would become Baldwin that a Black man could make his living in art. [62] Moreover, when World War II bore down on the United States during the winter after Baldwin left De Witt Clinton, the
Harlem that Baldwin knew was atrophying—no longer the bastion of a Renaissance, the community grew more economically isolated, and he considered him since at least the age of 15.[63] Baldwin lived in several locations in Greenwich Village, a place that had fascinated him since at least the age of 15.[63] Baldwin lived in several locations in Greenwich Village, a place that had fascinated him since at least the age of 15.[63] Baldwin lived in several locations in Greenwich Village, a place that had fascinated him since at least the age of 15.[63] Baldwin lived in several locations in Greenwich Village, a place that had fascinated him since at least the age of 15.[63] Baldwin lived in several locations in Greenwich Village, a place that had fascinated him since at least the age of 15.[63] Baldwin lived in several locations in Greenwich Village, a place that had fascinated him since at least the age of 15.[63] Baldwin lived in several locations in Greenwich Village, a place that had fascinated him since at least the age of 15.[63] Baldwin lived in several locations in Greenwich Village, a place that had fascinated him since at least the age of 15.[63] Baldwin lived in several locations in Greenwich Village, a place that had fascinated him since at least the age of 15.[63] Baldwin lived in several locations in Greenwich Village, a place that had fascinated him since at least the age of 15.[63] Baldwin lived in several locations in Greenwich Village, and the greenwich Village had been several locations in Greenwich Village had been several locat
first with Delaney, then with a scattering of other friends.[64] He took a job at the Calypso Restaurant, an unsegregated eatery where many prominent Black people dined. At the Calypso, Baldwin worked under Trinidadian restaurant, an unsegregated eatery where many prominent Black people dined. At the Calypso, Baldwin worked under Trinidadian restaurant, an unsegregated eatery where many prominent Black people dined. At the Calypso, Baldwin worked under Trinidadian restaurant, an unsegregated eatery where many prominent Black people dined. At the Calypso, Baldwin worked under Trinidadian restaurant, an unsegregated eatery where many prominent Black people dined. At the Calypso, Baldwin worked under Trinidadian restaurant, an unsegregated eatery where many prominent Black people dined. At the Calypso, Baldwin worked under Trinidadian restaurant, an unsegregated eatery where many prominent Black people dined. At the Calypso, Baldwin worked under Trinidadian restaurant, an unsegregated eatery where many prominent Black people dined. At the Calypso, Baldwin worked under Trinidadian restaurant, an unsegregated eatery where many prominent Black people dined. At the Calypso Restaurant, an unsegregated eatery where many prominent Black people dined.
friend, and to frequent Calypso guest, Stan Weir.[65] Baldwin had numerous one-night stands with men, and several relationships with women.[65] His major love during his Village years was an ostensibly straight Black man named Eugene Worth. [66] Worth introduced Baldwin to the Young People's Socialist League and Baldwin became a Trotskyist
for a brief period.[66] Baldwin never expressed his desire for Worth, and Worth died by suicide after jumping from the George Washington Bridge in 1946.[66] The two became fast friends, a friendship that endured through the Civil
Rights Movement and long after.[66] In 1945, Baldwin started a literary magazine called The Generation with Claire Burch, who was married to Brad Burch, Baldwin's relationship with the Burches soured in the 1950s but was resurrected towards the end of his life.[68] Near the end of 1945, Baldwin met
Baldwin's work, but a $500 advance from Harper & Brothers was dissipated with no book to show for the money, and Harper eventually declined to publish the book.[71] Nonetheless, Baldwin regularly sent letters to Wright in subsequent years and would reunite with Wright in Paris, France, in 1948 (though their relationship took a turn for the
worse soon after the Paris reunion).[72] During his Village years, Baldwin made a number of connections in New York's liberal literary establishment, primarily through Worth: Sol Levitas at The New Leader magazine, Randall Jarrell at The Nation, Elliot Cohen and Robert Warshow at Commentary, and Philip Rahv at Partisan Review.[73] Baldwin
wrote many reviews for The New Leader, but was published for the first time in The Nation in a 1947 review of Maxim Gorki's Best Short Stories.[73] Only one of Baldwin's reviews from this era made it into his later essay collection The New
Leader.[73] Baldwin's first essay, "The Harlem Ghetto", was published a year later in Commentary and explored anti-Semitism included.[73] His conclusion was that Harlem Ghetto", was published a year later in Commentary and explored anti-Semitism included.[73] His conclusion was that Harlem Ghetto", was published a year later in Commentary and explored anti-Semitism included.[73] His conclusion was that Harlem Ghetto", was published a year later in Commentary and explored anti-Semitism included.[73] His conclusion was that Harlem Ghetto", was published a year later in Commentary and explored anti-Semitism included.[73] His conclusion was that Harlem Ghetto", was published a year later in Commentary and explored anti-Semitism included.[73] His conclusion was that Harlem Ghetto", was published a year later in Commentary and explored anti-Semitism included.[73] His conclusion was that Harlem Ghetto", was published a year later in Commentary and explored anti-Semitism included.[73] His conclusion was that Harlem Ghetto", was published a year later in Commentary and explored anti-Semitism included.[73] His conclusion was that Harlem Ghetto", was published a year later in Commentary and explored anti-Semitism included.[73] His conclusion was that Harlem Ghetto", was published a year later in Commentary and explored anti-Semitism included.[73] His conclusion was that Harlem Ghetto", was published a year later in Commentary and explored anti-Semitism included.[73] His conclusion was that Harlem Ghetto", was published a year later in Commentary and explored anti-Semitism included.[73] His conclusion was that Harlem Ghetto", was published a year later in Commentary and explored anti-Semitism included.[73] His conclusion was that Harlem Ghetto", was published a year later in Commentary and explored anti-Semitism included.[73] His conclusion was that Harlem Ghetto and Harlem Ghetto 
dwellers met, so Jews became a kind of synecdoche for all that the Black people in Harlem Ghetto": in "Journey to Atlanta", Baldwin uses the diary recollections of his younger brother David, who had gone to Atlanta
Georgia, as part of a singing group, to unleash a lashing of irony and scorn on the South, white radicals, and ideology itself.[75] This essay, too, was well received.[76] Baldwin tried to write another novel, Ignorant Armies, plotted in the vein of Native Son with a focus on a scandalous murder, but no final product emerged.[77] Baldwin spent two
months during the summer of 1948 at Shanks Village, a writer's colony in Woodstock, New York. He published his first work of fiction, a short story called "Previous Condition", in the October 1948 issue of Commentary magazine, about a 20-something Black man who is evicted from his apartment—which was a metaphor for white society.[78] See
also: James Baldwin in France Disillusioned by the reigning prejudice against Black people in the United States, and wanting to gain external perspectives on himself and his writing, Baldwin settled in Paris, France, at the age of 24. Baldwin did not want to be read as "merely a Negro; or, even, merely a Negro writer." [79] He also hoped to come to
terms with his sexual ambivalence and escape from the hopelessness to which many young African-American men like himself succumbed.[80] In 1948, Baldwin received a $1,500 grant (equivalent to $19,631 in 2024)[81] from a Rosenwald Fellowship[82] in order to produce a book of photographs and essays that was to be both a catalog of churches
and an exploration of religiosity in Harlem. Baldwin worked with a photographer friend named Theodore Pelatowski, whom Baldwin met through Richard Avedon.[83] Although the book (titled Unto the Dying Lamb) was never finished,[83] the Rosenwald funding did allow Baldwin to realise his long-standing ambition of moving to France.[84] After
saying his goodbyes to his mother and his younger siblings, with forty dollars to his name, Baldwin would later give various explanations for leaving America—sex, Calvinism, an intense sense of hostility which he feared would
turn inward—but, above all, was the problem of race, which, throughout his life, had exposed him to a lengthy catalog of humiliations.[86] He hoped for a more peaceable existence in Paris, Baldwin was soon involved in the cultural radicalism of the Left Bank. He started to publish his work in literary anthologies, notably Zero[88] which
was edited by his friend Themistocles Hoetis and which had already published essays by Richard Wright. Baldwin spent nine years living in Paris, mostly in Saint-Germain-des-Prés, with various friends around the city and
in various hotels. Most notable of these lodgings was Hôtel Verneuil, a hotel in Saint-Germain that had collected a motley crew of struggling expatriates, mostly writers. [90] This Verneuil circle spawned numerous friendships that Baldwin relied upon in rough periods. [90] He was also extremely poor during his time in Paris, with only momentary
respites from that condition.[91] In his early years in Saint-Germain, he met Otto Friedrich, Mason Hoffenberg, Asa Benveniste, Themistocles Hoetis, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Max Ernst, Truman Capote, and Stephen Spender, among many others.[92] Baldwin also met Lucien Happersberger, a Swiss boy, 17 years old at the time of their
first meeting, who came to France in search of excitement.[93] Happersberger and Baldwin began to bond for the next few years, eventually becoming his intimate partner and he became Baldwin's near-obsession for some time afterward. Baldwin began to bond for the next few years, eventually becoming his intimate partner and he became Baldwin's near-obsession for some time afterward.
was not easy, Baldwin escaped from the aspects of American life that outraged him the most—especially the "daily indignities of racism." [87] According to one biographer: "Baldwin seemed at ease in his Paris life; Jimmy Baldwin the aesthete and lover reveled in the Saint-Germain ambiance." [95] During his early years in Paris, prior to the publication
of Go Tell It on the Mountain in 1953, Baldwin wrote several notable works. "The Negro in Paris", first published in The Reporter, explored Baldwin's perception of an incompatibility between Black Americans and Black Americans had faced a "depthless alienation from oneself and one's people" that was mostly
unknown to Parisian Africans.[96] He also wrote "The Preservation of Innocence", which traced the violence against homosexuals in American life back to the protracted adolescence of American literature, and he also published "The
Death of the Prophet", a short story that grew out of Baldwin's earlier writings of Go Tell It on The Mountain. In the latter work, Baldwin employs a character named Johnnie to trace his bouts of depression back to his inability to resolve the questions of filial intimacy raised by his relationship with his stepfather. [98] In December 1949, Baldwin was
arrested and jailed for receiving stolen goods after an American friend brought him bedsheets that the friend brought him bedsheet him bedshee
essay, he expressed his surprise and his bewilderment at how he was no longer a "despised black man", instead, he was simply an American, no different from the white American friend who stole the sheet and was arrested with him.[99] During his Paris years, Baldwin also published two of his three scathing critiques of Richard Wright—"Everybody's an American, no different from the white American friend who stole the sheet and was arrested with him.[99] During his Paris years, Baldwin also published two of his three scathing critiques of Richard Wright—"Everybody's an American, no different from the white American friend who stole the sheet and was arrested with him.[99] During his Paris years, Baldwin also published two of his three scathing critiques of Richard Wright—"Everybody's an American friend who stole the sheet and was arrested with him.[99] During his Paris years, Baldwin also published two of his three scathing critiques of Richard Wright—"Everybody scathing are scathi
Protest Novel" in 1949 and "Many Thousands Gone" in 1951. Baldwin criticizes Wright's work for being protest literature, which Baldwin despised because it is "concerned with the categorizations, they fail because they deny life." [96] Protest writing
cages humanity, but, according to Baldwin, "only within this web of ambiguity, paradox, this hunger, darkness, can we find at once ourselves and the power that will free us from ourselves and the power that will free us from ourselves and the power that will free us from ourselves." [96] Baldwin took Wright's Native Son and Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin, both erstwhile favorites of Baldwin's, as paradigmatic analysis examples of the
protest novel's problem.[96] The treatment of Wright's character Bigger Thomas by socially earnest white people "to become truly human and acceptable, [they] must first become like us. This assumption once accepted, the Negro in
America can only acquiesce in the obliteration of his own personality."[100] In these two essays, Baldwin came to articulate what would become a theme of his work: that white racism toward Black Americans was refracted through self-hatred and self-denial—"One may say that the Negro in America does not really exist except in the darkness of
[white] minds. [...] Our dehumanization of the Negro then is indivisible from our dehumanization of ourselves."[100][j] Baldwin's relationship with Wright as a mentor.[101] Meanwhile, "Everybody's Protest Novel" had earned Baldwin the label "the most
promising young Negro writer since Richard Wright."[102] Beginning in the winter of 1951, Baldwin and Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where the Loèches-Bains in Switzerland, where the Loèches-Bains in Switzerland trips to Loèches-Bains in Switzerland trips trips to Loèches-Bains in Switzerland trips trips trips to Loèches-Bains in Switzerland trips tri
 friend Baldwin and offered to take Baldwin to the Swiss village.[103] Baldwin's time in the village gave form to his essay "Stranger in the Village", published in Harper's Magazine in October 1953.[104] In that essay, Baldwin described some unintentional mistreatment and offputting experiences at the hands of Swiss villagers who possessed a racial
innocence which few Americans could attest to.[103] Baldwin explored how the bitter history which was shared by Black and white Americans had formed an indissoluble web of relations that changed the members of both races: "No road whatever will lead Americans back to the simplicity of this European village where white men still have the
luxury of looking on me as a stranger."[104] Baldwin photographed by Carl Van Vechten, 1955 Beauford Delaney's arrival in France in 1953 marked "the most important personal event in Baldwin's circle of friends shifted away from primarily white bohemians toward a coterie of Black American
expatriates: Baldwin grew close to dancer Bernard Hassell; spent significant amounts of time at Gordon Heath's club in Paris; regularly listened to Bobby Short and Inez Cavanaugh's performances at their respective haunts around the city; met Maya Angelou during her European tour of Porgy and Bess; and occasionally met with writers Richard
Gibson and Chester Himes, composer Howard Swanson, and even Richard Wright.[106] In 1954, Baldwin accepted a fellowship at the MacDowell writer's colony in New Hampshire to support the writing of a new novel and he also won a Guggenheim Fellowship.[107] Also in 1954, Baldwin published the three-act play The Amen Corner which features
the preacher Sister Margaret—a fictionalized Mother Horn from Baldwin's time at Fireside Pentecostal—who struggles with a difficult inheritance and with alienation from herself and her loved ones on account of her religious fervor.[108] Baldwin spent several weeks in Washington, D.C., and particularly around Howard University while he
collaborated with Owen Dodson for the premiere of The Amen Corner. Baldwin returned to Paris in October 1955.[109] Baldwin decided to enjoy what was to be his last year in France.[110] He became friends with Norman and Adele Mailer, was recognized by the National
Institute of Arts and Letters with a grant, and he was set to publish Giovanni's Room.[111] Nevertheless, Baldwin overdosed on sleeping pills during a
suicide attempt.[112] He regretted the attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the doctor arrived.[112] Baldwin went on to attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the doctor arrived.[112] Baldwin went on to attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the doctor arrived.[112] Baldwin went on to attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the doctor arrived.[112] Baldwin went on to attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the doctor arrived.[112] Baldwin went on to attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the doctor arrived.[112] Baldwin went on to attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the doctor arrived.[112] Baldwin went on the attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the doctor arrived.[112] Baldwin went on the attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the doctor arrived.[112] Baldwin went on the attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the attempt almost a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the attempt almost and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the attempt almost a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the attempt almost a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the attempt almost a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the attempt almost a friend who had him regurgitate the attempt almost a friend who had him regurgitate the attempt almost a friend who had him regurgitate the attempt almos
purporting to extol African originality.[113] He continued to published work, a review of the writer Maxim Gorky, appeared in The Nation in 1947.[114][115] He continued to publish there at various times in his career and was serving on its editorial board at the time of his death in 1987.[115]Café de Flore, Boulevard Saint-Germain, Paris, May 2019. In
the large upstairs heated room (SALLE AU 1er - CLIMATISÉE) in 1953, Baldwin worked on his first novel, Go Tell It on the Mountain, a semi-autobiographical bildungsroman. He began writing it when he was 17 and first published it in Paris. His first collection of essays,
Notes of a Native Son appeared two years later. He continued to experiment with literary forms throughout his career, publishing poetry and plays as well as the fiction and essays for which he was known. Baldwin's second novel, Giovanni's Room, caused great controversy when it was first published in 1956 due to its explicit homoerotic content.
[116] Baldwin again resisted labels with the publication of this work.[117] Main article: Go Tell It on the Mountain (novel) Baldwin sent the manuscript for Go Tell It on the manuscript for Go Tell It on the Mountain (novel) Baldwin sent the manuscript for Go Tell It on the Mountain (novel) Baldwin sent the manuscript for Go Tell It on the Mountain (novel) Baldwin sent the manuscript for Go Tell It on the Mountain (novel) Baldwin sent the manuscript for Go Tell It on the Mountain (novel) Baldwin sent the manuscript for Go Tell It on the Mountain (novel) Baldwin sent the manuscript for Go Tell It on the Mountain (novel) Baldwin sent the manuscript for Go Tell It on the Mountain (novel) Baldwin sent the manuscript for Go Tell It on the Mountain (novel) Baldwin sent the manuscript for Go Tell It on the Mountain (novel) Baldwin sent the manuscript for Go Tell It on the Mountain (novel) Baldwin sent the manuscript for Go Tell It on the Mountain (novel) Baldwin sent the manuscript for Go Tell It on the Mountain (novel) Baldwin sent the manuscript for Go Tell It on the Mountain (novel) Baldwin sent the manuscript for Go Tell It on the Mountain (novel) Baldwin sent the manuscript for Go Tell It on the Mountain (novel) Baldwin sent the manuscript for Go Tell It on the Mountain (novel) Baldwin sent the manuscript for Go Tell It on the Mountain (novel) Baldwin sent the manuscript for Go Tell It on the Mountain (novel) Baldwin sent the manuscript for Go Tell It on the Mountain (novel) Baldwin sent the Mountain (novel) Baldwin sent the manuscript for Go Tell It on the Mountain (novel) Baldwin sent the manuscript for Go Tell It on the Mountain (novel) Baldwin sent the manuscript for Go Tell It on the Mountain (novel) Baldwin sent the Mountain (novel) Baldwin
Mountain from Paris to New York publishing house Alfred A. Knopf on February 26, 1952, and Knopf expressed interest in the novel several months later.[118] To settle the terms of his association with Knopf, Baldwin sailed back to the United States in April 1952 on the SS Île de France, where Themistocles Hoetis and Dizzy Gillespie were
coincidentally also voyaging—his conversations with both on the ship were extensive.[118] After his arrival in New York, Baldwin grew particularly close to his younger brother, David Jr., and served as best man at David's wedding on June
27.[118] Meanwhile, Baldwin agreed to rewrite parts of Go Tell It on the Mountain in exchange for a $250 advance ($2,960 today) and a further $750 ($8,881 today) paid when the final manuscript was completed.[119] When Knopf accepted the revision in July, they sent the remainder of the advance, and Baldwin was soon to have his first published
novel.[120] In the interim, Baldwin published as "Exodus" in American Mercury and the other as "Roy's Wound" in New World Writing.[120] Go Tell It on the Mountain was published in May 1953.[120] Go Tell It on the Mountain was
the product of years of work and exploratory writing since his first attempt at a novel in 1938.[121] In rejecting the ideological manacles of protest literature and the presupposition he thought inherent to such works that "in Negro life there exists no tradition, no field of manners, no possibility of ritual or intercourse", Baldwin sought in Go Tell It on
the Mountain to emphasize that the core of the problem was "not that the Negro has no tradition but that there has as yet arrived no sensibility sufficiently profound and tough to make this tradition but that there has as yet arrived no sensibility sufficiently profound and tough to make this tradition but that there has as yet arrived no sensibility sufficiently profound and tough to make this tradition but that there has as yet arrived no sensibility sufficiently profound and tough to make this tradition but that there has as yet arrived no sensibility sufficiently profound and tough to make this tradition but that there has as yet arrived no sensibility sufficiently profound and tough to make this tradition but that there has as yet arrived no sensibility sufficiently profound and tough to make this tradition but that the Negro has no tradition but the Negro has no traditi
as a Young Man: to "encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race." [123] Baldwin himself drew parallels between Joyce's flight from his native Ireland and his own run from Harlem, and Baldwin read Joyce's tome in Paris in 1950, however, in Baldwin's Go Tell It on
the Mountain, it would be the Black American "uncreated conscience" at the heart of the project.[124] The novel is a bildungsroman that explores the inward struggles of protagonist John Grimes, the illegitimate son of Elizabeth Grimes, to claim his own soul as it lies on the "threshing floor"—a clear allusion to another John: the Baptist, born of
another Elizabeth.[121] John's struggle is a metaphor for Baldwin's own struggle between escaping the history and heritage that made him, awful though it may be, and plunging deeper into that heritage, to the bottom of his people's sorrows, before he can shrug off his psychic chains, "climb the mountain", and free himself.[121] John's family
members and most of the characters in the novel are blown north in the winds of the Great Migration in search of the American Dream and all are stifled.[125] Florence, Elizabeth, and Gabriel are denied love's reach because racism assured that they could not muster the kind of self-respect that love requires.[125] Racism drives Elizabeth's lover
Richard, to suicide—Richard will not be the last Baldwin character to die thus for that same reason.[121] Gabriel's abuse of the women in his life is downstream from his society's emasculation of him, with mealy-mouthed religiosity only a hypocritical cover.[121] The
phrase "in my father's house" and various similar formulations appear throughout Go Tell It on the Mountain and was even an early title for the novel.[122] The house is a metaphor at several levels of generality: for his own family's apartment in Harlem, for Harlem taken as a whole, for America and its history, and for the "deep heart's core".[122]
 John's departure from the agony that reigned in his father's house, particularly the historical sources of the family's privations, came through a conversion experience. [125] "Who are they?" John cries out when he sees a mass of faces as he descends to the threshing floor: 'They were the despised and rejected, the wretched and the
spat upon, the earth's offscouring; and he was in their company, and they would swallow up his soul."[126] John wants desperately to escape the threshing floor, but "[t]hen John saw the Lord" and "a sweetness" filled him.[126] The midwife of John's conversion is Elisha, the voice of love that had followed him throughout the experience, and whose
body filled John with "a wild delight".[126] Thus comes the wisdom that would define Baldwin's philosophy: per biographer David Leeming: "salvation from the chains and fetters—the self-hatred and the other effects—of historical racism could come only from love."[126] Main article: Notes of a Native Son Baldwin's philosophy: per biographer David Leeming: "salvation from the chains and fetters—the self-hatred and the other effects—of historical racism could come only from love."[126] Main article: Notes of a Native Son Baldwin's philosophy: per biographer David Leeming: "salvation from the chains and fetters—the self-hatred and the other effects—of historical racism could come only from love."[126] Main article: Notes of a Native Son Baldwin's philosophy: per biographer David Leeming: "salvation from the chains and fetters—the self-hatred and the other effects—of historical racism could come only from love."[126] Main article: Notes of a Native Son Baldwin's philosophy: per biographer David Leeming: "salvation from the chains and fetters—the self-hatred and the other effects—of historical racism could come only from love."[126] Main article: Notes of a Native Son Baldwin's philosophy: per biographer David Leeming: "salvation from the chains and fetters—the self-hatred and the other effects—of historical racism contents and the other effects—of histor
encouraged Baldwin to publish an essay collection reflecting on his work thus far.[127] Originally, Baldwin was reluctant, saying he was "too young to publish my memoirs."[127] The book contained practically all of the major themes that run through
his work: searching for self when racial myths cloud reality; accepting an inheritance ("the conundrum of color is the inheritance of every American"); the artist's loneliness; love's urgency.[128] All the essays in Notes were published between
1948 and 1955 in Commentary, The New Leader, Partisan Review, The Reporter, and Harper's Magazine. [129] The essays rely on autobiographical detail to convey Baldwin's arguments, as all of Baldwin's work does.
often asked: "Why don't you write more essays like the ones in Notes of a Native Son?"[129] The collection's title alludes to both Richard Wright's Native Son and the work of one of Baldwin's favorite writers, Henry James's Notes of a Son and Brother.[130] Notes of a Native Son and the work of one of Baldwin's favorite writers, Henry James's Notes of a Son and Brother.[130] Notes of a Native Son and the work of one of Baldwin's favorite writers, Henry James's Notes of a Son and Brother.[130] Notes of a Native Son and the work of one of Baldwin's favorite writers, Henry James's Notes of a Native Son?"[129] The collection's title alludes to both Richard Wright's Native Son and Brother.[130] Notes of a Native Son and the work of one of Baldwin's favorite writers, Henry James's Notes of a Native Son and Brother.[130] Notes of a Native Son
artist and human; the second part addresses Black life in America, including what is sometimes considered Baldwin's best essay, the titular "Notes of a Native Son"; the final part takes the expatriate's perspective, looking at American society from beyond its shores.[131] Part One of Notes features "Everybody's Protest Novel" and "Many Thousands
Gone", along with "Carmen Jones: The Dark Is Light Enough", a 1955 review of Carmen Jones written for Commentary, in which Baldwin at once extols the sight of an all-Black cast on the silver screen and laments the film's myths about Black sexuality.[132] Part Two reprints "The Harlem Ghetto" and "Journey to Atlanta" as prefaces for "Notes of a
Native Son". In "Notes of a Native Son", Baldwin attempts to come to terms with his racial and filial inheritances.[133] Part Three contains "Equal in Paris", "Stranger in the Village", "Encounter on the Seine", and "A Question of Identity". Writing from the expatriate's perspective, Part Three is the sector of Baldwin's corpus that most closely mirrors.
Henry James's methods: hewing out of one's distance and detachment from the homeland a coherent idea of what it means to be Americans. For example, in "The Harlem Ghetto", Baldwin writes: "what it means to be a Negro in Americans. For example, in "The Harlem Ghetto", Baldwin writes: "what it means to be Americans. For example, in "The Harlem Ghetto", Baldwin writes: "what it means to be a Negro in Americans."
can perhaps be suggested by the myths we perpetuate about him."[130] This earned some quantity of scorn from reviewers: in a review for The New York Times Book Review, Langston Hughes lamented that "Baldwin's viewpoints are half American, incompletely fused."[130] Others were nonplussed by the handholding of white
audiences, which Baldwin himself would criticize in later works. [130] Nonetheless, most acutely in this stage in his career, Baldwin wanted to escape the rigid categories of protest literature and he viewed adopting a white point-of-view as a good method of doing so. [130] Main article: Giovanni's Room Shortly after returning to Paris in 1956, Baldwin
got word from Dial Press that Giovanni's Room had been accepted for publication. [134] The book was published that autumn. [135] In the novel, the protagonist David meets the titular Giovanni at a bar; the two grow increasingly intimate and David eventually finds his way to Giovanni's room. David
is confused by his intense feelings for Giovanni and has sex with a woman in the spur of the moment to reaffirm his heterosexuality. Meanwhile, Giovanni begins to prostitute himself and finally commits a murder for which he is guillotined.[136] David's tale is one of love's inhibition: he cannot "face love when he finds it", writes biographer James
Campbell.[137] The novel features a traditional theme: the clash between the constraints of puritanism and the impulse for adventure and the subsequent loss of innocence that results.[137] The inspiration for the murder in the novel's plot is an event dating from 1943 to 1944. A Columbia University undergraduate named Lucien Carr murdered an
older, homosexual man, David Kammerer, who made sexual advances on Carr. [138] The two were walking near the banks of the Hudson River when Kammerer and dump Kammerer and dum
criticize the subject matter.[140] Even from Paris, Baldwin was able to follow the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement in his homeland. In May 1954, the United States Supreme Court ordered schools to desegregate "with all deliberate speed"; in August 1955 the racist murder of Emmett Till in Money, Mississippi, and the subsequent acquittal of
his killers were etched in Baldwin's mind until he wrote Blues for Mister Charlie; in December 1955, Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus; and in February 1956 Autherine Lucy was admitted to the University of Alabama before being expelled when whites rioted.[141] Meanwhile, Baldwin was increasingly
burdened by the sense that he was wasting time in Paris.[134] Baldwin began planning a return to the United States in hopes of writing a biography of Booker T. Washington, which he then called Talking at the Gates. Baldwin also received commissions to write a review of Daniel Guérin's Negroes on the March and J. C. Furnas's Goodbye to Uncle
Tom for The Nation, as well as to write about William Faulkner and American racism for the Partisan Review.[142] The first project became "The Crusade of Indignation",[142] published in July 1956.[143] In it, Baldwin suggests that the portrait of Black life in Uncle Tom's Cabin "has set the tone for the attitude of American whites towards Negroes
for the last one hundred years", and that, given the novel's popularity, this portrait has led to a unidimensional characterization of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black A
during an interview that he was sure to enlist himself with his fellow white Mississippians in a war over desegregation "even if it meant going out into the streets and shooting Negroes".[142] For Baldwin, Faulkner represented the "go slow" mentality on desegregation that tries to wrestle with the Southerner's peculiar dilemma: the South "clings to
two entirely antithetical doctrines, two legends, two histories"; the southerner is "the proud citizen of a free society and, on the other hand, committed to a society that has not yet dared to free itself of the necessity of naked and brutal oppression."[142] Faulkner asks for more time but "the time [...] There is never time in the future
in which we will work out our salvation."[142] Baldwin initially intended to complete Another Country before returning to New York in the fall of 1957, but progress on the novel was slow, so he decided to go back to the United States sooner.[144][145] Beauford Delaney was particularly upset by Baldwin initially intended to complete Another Country before returning to New York in the fall of 1957, but progress on the novel was slow, so he decided to go back to the United States sooner.
heavily and entered the incipient stages of mental deterioration, including complaining about hearing voices.[144][1] Nonetheless, after a brief visit with Édith Piaf, Baldwin photographed by Allan Warren Baldwin's third and fourth novels, Another Country (1962) and Tell Me How Long the Train's Been
Gone (1968), are sprawling, experimental works[146] dealing with Black and white characters, as well as with heterosexual, gay, and bisexual characters, as well as with heterosexual, gay, and bisexual characters to Turkey. [148] Baldwin completed Another Country during his first, two-month stay in
Istanbul (which ends with the note, Istanbul, December 10, 1961). This was to be the first of many stays in Istanbul during the 1960s.[149] In 1962, when Baldwin had already spent fourteen years as an expatriate living in France, he published his essay Letter from a Region in My Mind in The New Yorker. "Letter transitions deftly between episodic
anecdotes, assessments of Baldwin's own life-phases, and systemic analyses of the social-cultural factors behind racism."[150] Baldwin's lengthy essay "Down at the Cross" (frequently called The Fire Next Time after the title of the 1960s in novel form. The essay
was originally published in two oversized issues of The New Yorker and landed Baldwin on the cover of Time magazine in 1963 while he was touring the South speaking about the restive Civil Rights Movement. Around the time of publication of The Fire Next Time, Baldwin became a known spokesperson for civil rights and a celebrity noted for
championing the cause of Black Americans. He frequently appeared on television and delivered speeches on college campuses. [152] The essay talked about the uneasy relationship between Christianity and the burgeoning Black Muslim movement. After publication, several Black nationalists criticized Baldwin for his conciliatory attitude. They
questioned whether his message of love and understanding would do much to change race relations in Americans really want? Baldwin's essays never stopped articulating the anger and frustration felt by real-life Black Americans with more clarity
and style than any other writer of his generation.[153] In 1965, Baldwin participated in a much publicized debate with William F. Buckley, on the topic of whether the American dream had been achieved at the expense of African Americans. The debate took place in the UK at the Cambridge Union, historic debating society of the University of
Cambridge. The spectating student body voted overwhelmingly in Baldwin's favor.[154][155] Baldwin's next book-length essay, No Name in the Street (1972), also discussed his own experience in the context of the later 1960s, specifically the assassinations of three of his personal friends: Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King Jr.
Baldwin's writings of the 1970s and 1980s were largely overlooked by critics, although they have received increasing attention in recent years.[156] Several of his essays and interviews of the 1980s discuss homosexuality and homophobia with fervor and forthrightness.[152] Eldridge Cleaver's harsh criticism of Baldwin in Soul on Ice and
elsewhere [157] and Baldwin's return to southern France contributed to the perception by critics that he was not in touch with his readership. [158] [159] [160] As he had been the leading literary voice of the civil rights movement.
Beale Street Could Talk (1974) and Just Above My Head (1979), stressed the importance of Black American families. He concluded his career by publishing a volume of poetry, Jimmy's Blues (1983), as well as another book-length essay, The Evidence of Things Not Seen (1985), an extended reflection on race inspired by the Atlanta murders of 1979-
1981. Baldwin at home in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France The house where Baldwin lived in France for most of his later life, using it as a base of operations for extensive international travel.[149][161][162] Baldwin settled in Saint-Paul-de-Vence in the south of France in 1970, in an old Provençal
house beneath the ramparts of the village. [163] His house was always open to his friends, who frequently visited him while on trips to the French Riviera. American painter Beauford Delaney made Baldwin's house in Saint-Paul-de-Vence his second home, often setting up his easel in the garden. Delaney painted several colorful portraits of Baldwin.
Fred Nall Hollis also befriended Baldwin during this time. Actors Harry Belafonte and Sidney Poitier were also regular guests. He wrote several of his last works in his house in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, including Just Above My Head in 1979 and Evidence of Things Not Seen in 1985. It was also in Saint-Paul-de-Vence that Baldwin wrote his "Open Letter
to My Sister, Angela Y. Davis" in November 1970. [164] [165] Many of Baldwin's musician friends dropped in during the Jazz à Juan and Nice Jazz Festivals. They included Nina Simone, Josephine Baker, Miles Davis, and Ray Charles. [166] In his autobiography, Miles Davis wrote: [167] I'd read his books and I liked and respected what he had to say. As I
got to know Jimmy we opened up to each other and became real great friends. Every time I went to southern France to play Antibes, I would always spend a day or two out at Jimmy's house in St. Paul de Vence. We'd just sit there in that great big beautiful house of his telling us all kinds of stories, lying our asses off.... He was a great man. Baldwin
learned to speak French fluently and developed friendships with French actor Yves Montand and French writer Marguerite Yourcenar, who translated Baldwin was openly gay, [169] though he considered sexuality a private matter and did not
apply the label - which he felt was too narrow and limiting - to himself.[170] According to Dwight A. McBride, Baldwin saw the world in such terms that made him not "exclusively gay, black, expatriate, activist, or the like", but rather "an intricately negotiated amalgam of all of those things, which had to be constantly tailored to fit the circumstances
in which he was compelled to articulate himself".[171] Tombstone of James Baldwin and his mother Berdis at Ferncliff Cemetery and Mausoleum, Hartsdale, New York On December 1, 1987,[172][173][174][contradictory][175] Baldwin died from stomach cancer in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France.[176][177][178] He was buried at the Ferncliff Cemetery
in Hartsdale, near New York City, [179] Fred Nall Hollis took care of Baldwin on his deathbed. Nall had been friends with Baldwin since the early 1970s, when Baldwin shortly before his death about racism in Alabama. In one conversation, Nall told Baldwin "Through your
books you liberated me from my guilt about being so bigoted coming from Alabama and because of my homosexuality." Baldwin insisted: "No, you liberated me in revealing this to me."[180] A few hours after his death, his novel Harlem Quartet, published earlier in the year, won the French-American Friendship Prize (having a week earlier lost by one
vote in Paris the Prix Femina, awarded to the "best foreign novel of the year").[168] At the time of Baldwin's death, he was working on a memoir, Remember This House, focused on his recollections of personal interactions with civil rights leaders Medgar Evers, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr.[181] Following his death, the publishing company
McGraw-Hill took the unprecedented step of suing his estate to recover the $200,000 advance they had paid him for the book, but by 1990, the lawsuit had been dropped.[181] The unfinished manuscript is the basis of Raoul Peck's 2016 documentary film I Am Not Your Negro.[182] Following Baldwin's death, a court battle was waged over the
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ownership of his home in France. Baldwin had been in the process of purchasing his house from his landlady, Jeanne Faure. [183] At the time of his death, Baldwin had been in the process of purchasing his house from his landlady, Jeanne Faure. [183] At the time of his death, Baldwin had been in the process of purchasing his house from his landlady, Jeanne Faure. [183] At the time of his death, Baldwin had been in the process of purchasing his house from his landlady, Jeanne Faure. [183] At the time of his death, Baldwin had been in the process of purchasing his house from his landlady, Jeanne Faure. [183] At the time of his death, Baldwin had been in the process of purchasing his house from his landlady, Jeanne Faure. [183] At the time of his death, Baldwin had been in the process of purchasing his house from his landlady, Jeanne Faure. [183] At the time of his death, Baldwin had been in the process of purchasing his house from his landlady, Jeanne Faure. [183] At the time of his death, Baldwin had been in the house from his landlady, Jeanne Faure. [183] At the time of his death, Baldwin had been in the house from his landlady, Jeanne Faure. [183] At the time of his death, Baldwin had been in the house from his landlady, Jeanne Faure. [183] At the time of his death, Baldwin had been in the house from his landlady, Jeanne Faure. [183] At the time of his death, Baldwin had been in the house from his landlady, Jeanne Faure. [183] At the time of his death, Baldwin had been in the house from his landlady, Jeanne Faure. [183] At the time of his landlady, Jeanne Faure. [183] At the time of his landlady in the house from his landlady. [185] At the time of his landlady. [185] A

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contemporary Black American expatriate writer in France, which spurred a group of activists to come together in Paris.[187] In June 2016, American writer and activist Shannon Cain squatted at the house for 10 days as an act of political and artistic protest.[188][189] Les Amis de la Maison Baldwin,[190] a French organization whose initial goal was
to purchase the house by launching a capital campaign funded by the U.S. philanthropic sector, grew out of this effort.[191] This campaign was unsuccessful without the support of Baldwin's estate. Attempts to engage the French government in conservation of the property were dismissed by the mayor of Saint-Paul-de-Vence, Joseph Le Chapelain,
whose statement to the local press, claiming "nobody's ever heard of James Baldwin," mirrored that of Henri Chambon, the owner of the corporation that razed the house.[192][193] in 2019, construction was completed on an apartment complex that now stands where Chez Baldwin once stood. In all of Baldwin's works, but particularly in his novels,
the main characters are twined up in a "cage of reality" that sees them fighting for their soul against the limitations of the human condition or against their place at the margins of a society consumed by various prejudices.[194] Baldwin connects many of his main characters—John in Go Tell It On The Mountain, Rufus in Another Country, Richard in
Blues for Mister Charlie, and Giovanni in Giovanni in Giovanni's Room—as sharing a reality of restriction: per biographer David Leeming, each is "a symbolic cadaver in the center of the world depicted in the given novel and the larger society symbolized by that world".[195] Each reaches for an identity within their own social environment, and sometimes—as in
If Beale Street Could Talk's Fonny and Tell me How Long The Train's Been Gone's Leo—they find such an identity, imperfect but sufficient to bear the world.[195] The singular theme in the attempts of Baldwin's characters to resolve their struggle for themselves is that such resolution only comes through love.[195] Here is Leeming at some length:
Love is at the heart of the Baldwin philosophy. Love for Baldwin cannot be safe; it involves the risk of commitment, the risk of removing the masks and taboos placed on us by society. The philosophy applies to individual relationships as well as politics, economics, and race relations. And it
emphasizes the dire consequences, for individuals and racial groups, of the refusal to love.—David Adams Leeming, James Baldwin (right of center) with Hollywood actors Charlton Heston (left) and Marlon Brando (right) at the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Sidney Poitier (rear) and Harry Belafonte
(right of Brando) can also be seen in the crowd. Baldwin returned to the United States in the summer of 1957, while the civil rights legislation of that year was being debated in Congress. He had been powerfully moved by the image of a young girl, Dorothy Counts, braving a mob in an attempt to desegregate schools in Charlotte, North Carolina, and
Partisan Review editor Philip Rahy had suggested he report on what was happening in the American South. Baldwin was nervous about the trip but he made it, interviewing people in Charlotte (where he met Martin Luther King Ir.), and Montgomery, Alabama. The result was two essays, one published in Harper's magazine ("The Hard Kind of
Courage"), the other in Partisan Review ("Nobody Knows My Name"). Subsequent Baldwin articles on the movement appeared in Mademoiselle, Harper's, The New Yorker called "Letter from a Region of My Mind". Along
with a shorter essay from The Progressive, the essay became The Fire Next Time.[197]:94-99,155-56 External audio National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin Alberta Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin Baldw
Equality (CORE) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Joining CORE allowed him to travel across the South for CORE, and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Joining CORE allowed him to travel across the South for CORE, and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Joining CORE allowed him to travel across the South for CORE, and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Joining CORE allowed him to travel across the South for CORE, and the South for CORE, and the South for CORE, and the South for CORE allowed him to travel across the South for CORE, and the South for CORE, and the South for CORE allowed him to travel across the South for CORE, and the South for CORE, and the South for CORE allowed him to travel across the South for CORE, and the South 
traveling to Durham and Greensboro in North Carolina, and New Orleans. During the tour, he lectured to students, white liberals, and anyone else listening about his racial ideology, an ideology, an ideology, an ideology, an ideology, an ideology, and ideology are ideology and ideology and ideology and ideology are ideology are ideology and ideology are ideology are ideology are ideology and ideology are i
socialism would take root in the United States: [199] It is certain, in any case, that ignorance, allied with power, is the most ferocious enemy justice can have. —James Baldwin's incisive analysis of white racism and his eloquent descriptions of the Negro's pain and frustration. In
fact, Time featured Baldwin on the cover of its May 17, 1963, issue. "There is not another writer", said Time, "who expresses with such poignancy and abrasiveness the dark realities of the racial ferment in North and South."[200][197]:175 In a cable Baldwin sent to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy during the Birmingham riot of 1963, Baldwin
blamed the violence in Birmingham on the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover, Mississippi Senator James Eastland, and President Kennedy invited Baldwin to meet with him over breakfast, and that meeting was followed up with a second, when Kennedy invited Baldwin to meet with him over breakfast, and that meeting was followed up with a second, when Kennedy invited Baldwin to meet with him over breakfast, and that meeting was followed up with a second, when Kennedy invited Baldwin to meet with him over breakfast, and that meeting was followed up with a second, when Kennedy invited Baldwin to meet with him over breakfast, and that meeting was followed up with a second, when Kennedy invited Baldwin to meet with him over breakfast, and that meeting was followed up with a second, when Kennedy invited Baldwin to meet with him over breakfast, and that meeting was followed up with a second with a 
met with Baldwin and others Baldwin had invited to Kennedy's Manhattan apartment. This meeting is discussed in Howard Simon's 1999 play, James Baldwin: A Soul on Fire. The delegation included Kenneth B. Clark, a psychologist who had played a key role in the Brown v. Board of Education decision; actor Harry Belafonte, singer Lena Horne
writer Lorraine Hansberry, and activists from civil rights organizations. [197]: 176-80 Although most of the civil rights movement, and it provided exposure of the civil rights issue not just as a political issue but also as a moral issue.
[201] James Baldwin's FBI file contains 1,884 pages, collected from 1960 until the early 1970s. [202] During that era of surveillance of American writers, the FBI accumulated 276 pages on Richard Wright, 110 pages on Truman Capote, and just nine pages on Henry Miller. Baldwin also made a prominent appearance at the March on Washington for
Jobs and Freedom on August 28, 1963, with Belafonte and long-time friends Sidney Poitier and Marlon Brando.[203] Baldwin's sexuality clashed with his activism. The civil rights movement was hostile to homosexuals. [204][205] The only overtly gay men in the movement were Baldwin and Bayard Rustin. Rustin and King were very close, as Rustin
received credit for the success of the March on Washington. Many were bothered by Rustin's sexual orientation. King himself spoke on the topic of sexual orientation in a school editorial column during his college years, and in reply to a letter during the 1950s, where he treated it as a mental illness which an individual could overcome. King's key
advisor, Stanley Levison, also stated that Baldwin and Rustin were "better qualified to lead a homo-sexual movement than a civil rights movement than a civil rights movement. [206] The pressure later resulted in King distancing himself from both men. Despite his enormous efforts within the movement, Baldwin was excluded from the inner circles of the civil rights movement.
because of his sexuality and was conspicuously not invited to speak at the March on Washington. [207] At the time, Baldwin was neither in the closet nor open to the public about his sexual orientation. Although his novels, specifically Giovanni's Room and Just Above My Head, had openly gay characters and relationships, Baldwin himself never openly
described his sexuality. In his book, Kevin Mumford points out how Baldwin went his life "passing as straight rather than confronting homophobes with whom he mobilized against racism".[208] When the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing happened in Birmingham three weeks after the March on Washington, Baldwin called for a nationwide
campaign of civil disobedience in response to this "terrifying crisis". He traveled to Selma, Alabama, where SNCC had organized a voter registration drive; he watched mothers with babies and elderly men and women standing in long lines for hours, as armed deputies and state troopers stood by—or intervened to smash a reporter's camera or use
cattle prods on SNCC workers. After his day of watching, he spoke in a crowded church, blaming Washington, he told a New York Post reporter the federal government could protect Negroes—it could send federal troops into the South. He blamed the Kennedys for not acting [197]: 191,
195-98 In March 1965, Baldwin joined marchers who walked 50 miles from Selma, Alabama (Selma to Montgomery under the protection of federal troops.[197]:236 Nonetheless, he rejected the label "civil rights activist", or that he had participated in a civil rights movement, instead agreeing with Malcolm X's
assertion that if one is a citizen, one should not have to fight for one's civil rights. In a 1964 interview with Robert Penn Warren for the book Who Speaks for the Negro?, Baldwin rejected the idea that the civil rights movement was an outright revolution, instead calling it "a very peculiar revolution because it has to... have its aims the establishment of
a union, and a... radical shift in the American mores, the American mores, the American way of life... not only as it applies to the Negro obviously, but as it applies to every citizen of the country."[209] In a 1979 speech at UC Berkeley, Baldwin called it, instead, "the latest slave rebellion".[210] In 1968, Baldwin signed the "Writers and Editors War Tax Protest" pledge,
vowing to refuse to make income tax payments in protest against the Vietnam War.[211] He was also a supporter of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, which prompted the FBI to create a file on Baldwin was the painter Beauford Delaney. In
The Price of the Ticket (1985), Baldwin describes Delaney as: ... the first living proof, for me, that a black man could be an artist. In a warmer time, a less blasphemous place, he would have been recognized as my teacher and I as his pupil. He became, for me, an example of courage and integrity, humility and passion. An absolute integrity: I saw him
shaken many times and I lived to see him broken but I never saw him bow. Later support came from Richard Wright, whom Baldwin called "the greatest black writer in the world". Wright and Baldwin's essay "Notes of a
Native Son" and his collection Notes of a Native Son, like Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852), lacked credible characters and psychological complexity, and the friendship between the two authors
ended.[214] Interviewed by Julius Lester,[215] however, Baldwin explained: "I knew Richard and I loved him. I was not attacking him; I was trying to clarify something for myself." In 1949, Baldwin distraught. When the
marriage ended, they later reconciled, with Happersberger staying by Baldwin's deathbed at his house in Saint-Paul-de-Vence. [216] Happersberger died on August 21, 2010, in Switzerland. Baldwin was a close friend of the singer, pianist, and civil rights activist Nina Simone. Langston Hughes, Lorraine Hansberry, and Baldwin helped Simone learn
about the Civil Rights Movement. Baldwin also provided her with literary references influential on her later work. Baldwin influenced the work of French
painter Philippe Derome, whom he met in Paris in the early 1960s. Baldwin also knew Marlon Brando, Charlton Heston, Billy Dee Williams, Huey P. Newton, Nikki Giovanni, Jean-Paul Sartre, Jean Genet (with whom he campaigned on behalf of the Black Panther Party), Lee Strasberg, Elia Kazan, Rip Torn, Alex Haley, Miles Davis, Amiri Baraka, Martin
 Luther King Jr., Dorothea Tanning, Leonor Fini, Margaret Mead, Josephine Baker, Allen Ginsberg, Chinua Achebe, and Maya Angelou. He wrote at length about his "political relationship" with Malcolm X. He collaborated with childhood friend Richard Avedon on the 1964 book Nothing Personal.[218] Baldwin was fictionalized as the character Marion
Dawes in the 1967 novel The Man Who Cried I Am by John A. Williams.[219] Maya Angelou called Baldwin her "friend and brother" and credited him for "setting the stage" for her 1969 autobiography I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings. Baldwin was made a Commandeur de la Légion d'Honneur by the French government in 1986.[220][221] Baldwin
was also a close friend of Nobel Prize-winning novelist Toni Morrison, who lived for a time in same apartment building in New York. [222] Upon his death, Morrison credits Baldwin as being her literary inspiration and the person
who showed her the true potential of writing. She writes: You knew, didn't you, how I needed your language and the mind that formed it? How I relied on your fierce courage to tame wildernesses for me? How strengthened I was by the certainty that came from knowing you would never hurt me? You knew, didn't you, how I loved your love? You
knew. This then is no calamity. No. This is jubilee. "Our crown," you said, "is wear it"[223] Following Baldwin's death, the failure to have awarded him either a National Book Award or the Pulitzer Prize prompted 48 African-American writers and critics - among them Maya Angelou
Amiri Baraka, Henry Louis Gates, Jr, John Edgar Wideman, and John A. Williams - to sign a statement published in the New York Times Book Review deploring the fact that Morrison had not been given either award for her celebrated novel Beloved, with signatories June Jordan and Houston A. Baker further stating: "... even as we mourn the passing
of so legendary a writer as James Baldwin, and even as we may revel in the posthumous acclamations of his impact and his public glory, how shall we yet grieve, relieve or altogether satisfy? ...We grieve because we cannot yet assure that such shame, such national neglect, will not occur again, and then, again."[224][225] Although Baldwin and
Truman Capote were acquaintances, they were not friends. In fact, Capote berated him several times.[226] Literary critic Harold Bloom characterized Baldwin's influence on other writers has been profound: Toni Morrison edited the Library of America's first
two volumes of Baldwin's fiction and essays: Early Novels & Stories (1998) and Collected Essays (1998). A third volume, Later Novels (2015), was edited by Darryl Pinckney, who delivered a talk on Baldwin in February 2013 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of The New York Review of Books, during which Pinckney, who delivered a talk on Baldwin in February 2013 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of The New York Review of Books, during which Pinckney, who delivered a talk on Baldwin in February 2013 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of The New York Review of Books, during which Pinckney, who delivered a talk on Baldwin in February 2013 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of The New York Review of Books, during which Pinckney, who delivered a talk on Baldwin in February 2013 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of The New York Review of Books, during which Pinckney, who delivered a talk on Baldwin in February 2013 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of The New York Review of Books, during which Pinckney, who delivered a talk on Baldwin in February 2013 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of The New York Review of Books, during which Pinckney and Pinckney 2013 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of The New York Review of Books, during which Pinckney 2013 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of The New York Review of Books, during which Pinckney 2013 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of The New York Review of Books, during which Pinckney 2013 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of The New York Review of Books, during which Pinckney 2013 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of The New York Review of Books, during which Pinckney 2013 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Pinckney 2013 to celebrate the Pinck
read was as literary as Baldwin in his early essays, not even Ralph Ellison. There is something wild in the beauty of Baldwin's richest short stories, "Sonny's Blues", appears in many anthologies of short fiction
used in introductory college literature classes. A Baldwin quotation (ultimately misquoted) used in graffiti during 2020's George Floyd protests in Indianapolis A street in San Francisco, Baldwin quotation (ultimately misquoted) used in graffiti during 2020's George Floyd protests in Indianapolis A street in San Francisco, Baldwin quotation (ultimately misquoted) used in graffiti during 2020's George Floyd protests in Indianapolis A street in San Francisco, Baldwin quotation (ultimately misquoted) used in graffiti during 2020's George Floyd protests in Indianapolis A street in San Francisco, Baldwin quotation (ultimately misquoted) used in graffiti during 2020's George Floyd protests in Indianapolis A street in San Francisco, Baldwin quotation (ultimately misquoted) used in graffiti during 2020's George Floyd protests in Indianapolis A street in San Francisco, Baldwin quotation (ultimately misquoted) used in graffiti during 2020's George Floyd protests in Indianapolis A street in San Francisco, Baldwin quotation (ultimately misquoted) used in graffiti during 2020's George Floyd protests in Indianapolis A street in San Francisco, Baldwin quotation (ultimately misquoted) used in graffiti during 2020's George Floyd protests in Indianapolis A street in San Francisco, Baldwin quotation (ultimately misquoted) used in graffiti during 2020's George Floyd protests in Indianapolis A street in San Francisco, Baldwin quotation (ultimately misquoted) used in graffiti during 2020's George Floyd protests in Indianapolis A street in San Francisco, Baldwin quotation (ultimately misquoted) used in graffiti during 2020's George Floyd protests in Indianapolis A street in San Francisco, Baldwin quotation (ultimately misquoted) used in graffiti during 2020's George Floyd protests in Indianapolis A street in San Francisco, Baldwin quotation (ultimately misquoted) used in graffiti during 2020's George Floyd protests in graffiti during 2020's George Floyd protests in graffiti during 2020's George Floyd protests in graffiti during 2020'
Literary Society. The group organizes free public events celebrating Baldwin's life and legacy. In 1992, Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts, established the James Baldwin Scholars program, an urban outreach initiative, in honor of Baldwin, who taught at Hampshire in the early 1980s. The JBS Program provides talented students of color
from under-served communities an opportunity to develop and improve the skills necessary for college success through coursework and tutorial support for one transitional year, after which Baldwin scholars may apply for full matriculation to Hampshire or any other four-year college program. Spike Lee's 1996 film Get on the Bus includes a Black gay
character, played by Isaiah Washington, who punches a homophobic character, saying: "This is for James Baldwin on his list of 100 Greatest African Americans. [231] Baldwin votive
candle, 2022 In 2005, the United States Postal Service created a first-class postage stamp dedicated to Baldwin, which featured him on the front with a short biography on the back of the peeling paper. In 2014, East 128th
Street between Fifth and Madison Avenues was named "James Baldwin's writing were held at The National Black Theatre and a month-long art exhibition featuring works by New York Live Arts and artist Maureen
Kelleher. The events were attended by Council Member Inez Dickens, who led the campaign to honor Harlem native's son; also taking part were Baldwin's family, theatre and film notables, and members of the community. [233][234] Also in 2014, Baldwin was one of the inaugural honorees in the Rainbow Honor Walk, a walk of fame in San Francisco's
Castro neighborhood celebrating LGBTQ people who have "made significant contributions in their fields."[235][236][237] In 2014, The Social Justice Hub at The New School's newly opened University Center was named the Baldwin Rivera Boggs Center after activists Baldwin, Sylvia Rivera, and Grace Lee Boggs.[238] In 2016, Raoul Peck released his
documentary film I Am Not Your Negro. It is based on James Baldwin's unfinished manuscript, Remember This House. It is a 93-minute journey into Black Lives Matter. It is a film that questions Black representation in Hollywood and beyond. In 2017, Scott Timberg
wrote an essay for the Los Angeles Times ("30 years after his death, James Baldwin is having a new pop culture moment") in which he noted existing cultural references to Baldwin is having a new pop culture moment") in which he noted existing cultural references to Baldwin is having a new pop culture moment.
[239] In June 2019, Baldwin's residence on the Upper West Side was given landmark designation by New York City's Landmarks Preservation Commission, [240][241] and it was added to the National Register of Historic Places the same year. [222] In June 2019, Baldwin was one of the inaugural fifty American "pioneers, trailblazers, and heroes"
inducted on the National LGBTQ Wall of Honor within the Stonewall National Monument (SNM) in New York City's Stonewall Inn.[242][243] The SNM is the first U.S. national monument dedicated to LGBTQ rights and history,[244] and the wall's unveiling was timed to take place during the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots.[245] At the Paris
Council of June 2019, the city of Paris voted unanimously by all political groups to name a place in the capital in honor of James Baldwin. The project was confirmed on June 19, 2019, and announced for the year 2020. In 2021, Paris City Hall announced that the writer's name would be given to the first media library in the 19th arrondissement, which
is scheduled to open in 2024.[246] On February 1, 2024, Google celebrated James Baldwin with a Google Doodle. In 2024, he appeared as a character in the television series Feud: Capote vs. The Swans, played by Chris Chalk. On May 17, 2024, a blue plaque was unveiled by Nubian Jak Community Trust/Black History Walks to honour Baldwin at the
site where in 1985 he visited the C. L. R. James Library in the London Borough of Hackney. [247][248] On August 2, 2024, The New York Public Library's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture opened an exhibition, "JIMMY! God's Black Revolutionary Mouth" in honor of the centennial of Baldwin's birth. [249][250] Scheduled to run until
February 28, 2025, it is accompanied by a series of public events and an exhibition of some of his manuscripts in a related exhibition "James Baldwin: Mountain to Fire" as part of the Polonsky Exhibition of Some of his manuscripts in a related exhibition "James Baldwin: Mountain to Fire" as part of the Polonsky Exhibition of The New York Public Library's Treasures. [251] Guggenheim Fellowship, 1954. Eugene F. Saxton Memorial Trust Award Foreign Drama Critics
Award George Polk Memorial Award, 1963 MacDowell fellowships: 1954, 1958, 1960[252] Langston Hughes Medal, 1978 Commandeur de la Légion d'honneur, 1986 1953. Go Tell It on the Mountain 1956. Giovanni's Room 1962. Another Country 1968. Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone 1974. If Beale Street Could Talk 1979. Just Above My
Head Baldwin published six short stories in various magazines between 1948 and 1960: 1948. "Previous Condition". Commentary 1951. "The Death of the Prophet". Commentary 1951. "The Death of the Prophet". Commentary 1950. "The Death of the Prophet". Commentary 1951. "The Death of the Prophet". Commentary 1950. "The Death of the Prophet"
Atlantic Monthly Five of these stories were collected in his 1965 collection, Going to Meet the Man, along with three other stories: "The Rockpile" "The Man Child" "Going to Meet the Man, along with three other stories: "The Rockpile" "The Man Child" "Going to Meet the Man, along with three other stories were collected in The Cross of Redemption. Many essays by Baldwin were published for the first time
as part of collections, which also included older, individually-published works (such as above) of Baldwin's as well. These collections include: 1955. Notes of a Native Son[253] "Autobiographical Notes" 1949. "Everybody's Protest Novel". Partisan Review (June issue) 1952. "Many Thousands Gone". Partisan Review 1955. "Life Straight in De Eye" (later
retitled "Carmen Jones: The Dark Is Light Enough"). Commentary 1948. "The Harlem Ghetto". Commentary 1948. "Journey to Atlanta". New Leader 1955. "Me and My House" (later retitled "Encounter on the Seine: Black Meets Brown"). Reporter 1954. "A Question of
Identity". PR 1949. "Equal in Paris". PR 1953. "Stranger in the Village". Harper's Magazine [254] [255] 1961. Nobody Knows My Name: More Notes of a Native Son 1959. "Princes and Powers". Encounter 1960. "Fifth Avenue, Uptown: A Letter from Harlem"
Esquire 1961. "A Negro Assays the Negro Mood". New York Times Magazine 1958. "The Hard Kind of Courage". Harper's Magazine 1959. "Nobody Knows My Name: A Letter from the South". Partisan Review 1956. "Faulkner and Desegregation". Partisan Review 1956. "Faulkner and Desegregation". Partisan Review "In Search of a Majority" (based on a 1960 address delivered at Kalamazoo College)
1954. "Gide as Husband and Homosexual" (later retitled "The Male Prison"). The New Leader 1960. "Notes for a Hypothetical Novel" (based on a 1960 address delivered at an Esquire Magazine symposium) 1960. "The Precarious Voque of Ingmar Bergman" (later retitled "The Northern Protestant"). Esquire "Alas, Poor Richard" (two of the three parts
appeared in earlier form" 1961. "The Survival of Richard Wright". (Later retitled "Eight Men"). Reporter 1961. "Reporter 1963. The Fire Next Time 1962. "Down at the Cross: Letter from a Region of My Mind". The New
Yorker[257] 1962. "My Dungeon Shook: A Letter to My Nephew". The Progressive[258] 1972. No Name in the Street 1976. The Devil Finds Work — a book-length essay published by Dial Press 1985. The Evidence of Things Not Seen 1985. The Evidence of Things Not Seen 1985. The Price of the Ticket (This book is a collection of Baldwin's writings on race. Many of the items included are
reprinted from Baldwin's first five books of nonfiction, but several are collected here for the First time: "The Price of the Ticket" 1948. "Lockridge: The American Myth". New Leader 1956. "The Crusade of Indignation". The Nation 1959. "On Catfish Row: Porgy and Bess in the Movies". Commentary 1960. "They Can't Turn Back". Mademoiselle 1961
"The Dangerous Road before Martin Luther King". Harper's 1961. "The New Lost Generation". Esquire 1962. "The Creative Process". Creative America 1962. "Color". [Esquire 1963. "A Talk to Teachers" [259] 1964. "Nothing Personal" (originally text for a book of photographs by Richard Avedon) 1964. "Words of a Native Son". Playboy 1965. "The
American Dream and the American Negro" (based on remarks by Baldwin made in his debate with William F. Buckley) 1965. "The White Racism or World Community?" The Nation 1967. "Negroes Are Anti-Semitic Because They're Anti-White". New York Times Magazine [260] 1968. "White Racism or World Community?"
Ecumenical Review 1969. "Sweet Lorraine". Esquire 1976. "How One Black Man Came To Be an American: A Review of Roots". The New York Times 1977. "Every Good-Bye Ain't Gone". New York. 1979. "If Black English Isn't a Language, Then Tell Me, What Is?" The New York Times 1977. "Every Good-Bye Ain't Gone". New York Times Book Review 1977. "An Open Letter to Mr. Carter". The New York Times 1977. "Every Good-Bye Ain't Gone". New York Times 1977. "Ev
Times 1979. "An Open Letter to the Born Again". The Nation 1980. "Dark Days". Esquire 1980. "Notes on the House of Bondage". The Nation 1985. "Here Be Dragons" (also titled "Freaks and the American Ideal of Manhood"). Playboy 1998. Collected Essays: Notes of a Native Son, Nobody Knows My Name, The Fire Next Time, No Name in the Street.
The Devil Finds Work, Other Essays, edited by Toni Morrison. [261] 1947. "Smaller than Life". The Negro at Home and Abroad". Reporter 1959. "Sermons and Blues". The New York Times Book Review
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documentary by Sedat Pakay following the activist in Istanbul. 1974. James Baldwin talks about race, political struggle, and the human condition at the Wheeler Hall in Berkeley, California. [270] 1975. "Assignment America; 119; Conversation with a Native Son", from WNET features a television conversation between Baldwin and Maya Angelou. [271]
List of LGBT writers No More Water: The Gospel of James Baldwin ^ In his early writing, Baldwin said his father left the South because he reviled the crude vaudeville culture in New Orleans and found it difficult to express his inner strivings. However, Baldwin later said his father departed because "lynching had become a national sport."[11] ^
Baldwin learned that he was not his father's biological son through overhearing a comment to that effect during one of his parents' conversations late in 1940.[19] At is in describing his father's searing hatred of white people that comes one of Baldwin's most noted
quotes: "Hatred, which could destroy so much, never failed to destroy the man who hated and this was an immutable law."[22] ^ It was from Bill Miller, her sister Henrietta, and Miller's husband Evan Winfield that the young Baldwin started to suspect that "white people did not act as they did because they were white, but for some other reason."[35]
Miller's openness did not have a similar effect on Baldwin's father.[36] Emma Baldwin was pleased with Miller's interest in her son, but David agreed only reluctantly—not daring to refuse the invitation of a white woman, in Baldwin's biographer and friend David
Leeming tells it: "Like Henry James, the writer he most admired, [Baldwin] would have given up almost anything for sustained success as a playwright." [38] A Baldwin's biographers give different years for his entry into Frederick Douglass Junior High
School: 1935 and 1936.[41] ^ In the summer following his graduation from Frederick Douglass Junior High, the 13-year-old Baldwin experienced what he would call his "violation": he was running an errand for his mother when a tall man in his mid-30s lured him onto the second floor of a store, where the man touched Baldwin sexually. Alarmed by a
noise, the man gave Baldwin money and disappeared. Baldwin ran home and threw the money out of his bathroom window.[46] Aldwin named this as his first confrontation with homosexuality, an experience he said both scared and aroused him.[46] Eugene Worth's story would give form to the character Rufus in Another Country.[66]
Happersberger gave form to Giovanni in Baldwin's 1956 novel Giovanni's Room. A Baldwin reflected on "Everybody's Protest Novel" in a 1984 interview for The Paris Review, saying that the essay was a "discharge" of the "be kind to niggers, be kind to niggers, be kind to niggers, be kind to niggers, be kind to niggers.
that those sort of books do nothing but bolster up an image. ... [I]t seemed to me that if I took the role of a victim then I was simply reassuring the defenders of the status quo; as long as I was a victim they could pity me and add a few more pennies to my home relief check."[100] ^ This is particularly true of "A Question of Identity". Indeed, Baldwin
reread The Ambassadors around the same time he was writing "A Question of Identity" and the two works share some thematic congeniality.[133] ^ Also around this time, Delaney had become obsessed with a portrait he had painted of Baldwin that disappeared. In fact, Baldwin had managed to leave the portrait in Owen Dodson's home when working
 with Dodson on the Washington, D.C., premiere of Another Country. Biographer David Leeming described the missing painting as a "clause célèbre" among friends of podson, Delaney, and Baldwin. When Baldwin and Dodson had a falling-out some years later, hopes of retrieving the painting were dashed. The painting eventually reappeared in
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p. 16; Campbell 2021, p. 8 ^ a b c Leeming 1994, p. 28. ^ Tubbs 2021, pp. 358-359. ^ Leeming 1994, p. 36. ^ Leeming 1994, p. 36. ^ Leeming 1994, p. 32; Campbell 2021, pp. 14-15. ^ Leeming 1994, pp. 32-33. ^ a b Leeming 1994, p. 34. ^ a b Leeming 1994, p. 37. ^ Campbell 2021, pp. 15-20.
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by socialism. When I use the word I'm not thinking about Lenin for example ... Bobby Seale talks about a Yankee Doodle-type socialism or the Cuban socialism. Walker: What unique form do you envision socialism in the U.S.A. taking?
 Baldwin: I don't know, but the price of any real socialism here is the eradication of what we call the race problem ... Racism is crucial to the system to keep Black[s] and whites at a division so both were and are a source of cheap labor." ^{\circ} "The Negro's Push for Equality (cover title); Races: Freedom—Now (page title)". The Nation. Time. Vol. 81,
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Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles. Portrait of James Baldwin, 1985. Los Angeles Times Photographic Archive (Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles. Retrieved from "James Baldwin (1924-1987) was a writer and
civil rights activist who is best known for his semi-autobiographical novels and plays that center on race, politics, and sexuality. James Baldwin, a Baptist preacher, originally from New Orleans, Louisiana. During his early teen years, Baldwin attended
Frederick Douglass Junior High School, where he met his French teacher and mentor Countee Cullen, who achieved prominence as a poet of the Harlem Renaissance, Baldwin went on to DeWitt Clinton High School, where he edited the school newspaper Magnie and participated in the literary club. In 1948, feeling stifled creatively because of the
racial discrimination in America, Baldwin traveled to Europe to create what were later acclaimed as masterpieces to the American segregated society and better write about his experience in the culture that was prevalent in America. Baldwin took part in the
Civil Rights Movement, becoming close friends with Medgar Evers, Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Maya Angelou, Nina Simone, and Lorraine Hansberry. The deaths of many of these friends influenced his novels and plays and his writing about race relations in America. Baldwin's works helped to raise public awareness of racial and
sexual oppression. His honest portrayal of his personal experiences in a national context challenged America to uphold the values it promised on equality and justice. He explored these topics in such works as Go Tell It on the Mountain, Notes of a Native Son, The Fire Next Time, Giovanni's Room, If Beale Street Could Talk, and Another Country.
Baldwin firmly believed sexuality was fluid and should not be divided into strict categories, an idea that would not be acceptable until modern day. Through his popularity and writings produced at home and abroad, Baldwin remained an outspoken
observer of race relations in American culture. He would branch out into other forms of creative expression, writing poetry and screenplays, including treatments for the Autobiography of Malcolm X that later inspired Spike Lee's feature film, Malcolm X. He also spent years as a college professor at University of Massachusetts at Amherst and
Hampshire College. Baldwin died at this home in St. Paul de Vence, France, on December 1, 1987, of stomach cancer at age 63. Baldwin Your Negro. View objects relating to James Baldwin Top image: James Baldwin by His
Typewriter, Istanbul 1966 by Sedat Pakay, © Sedat Pakay, 1966. 2011.20.2 Share this page American writer and activist (1924-1987) This article is about the American writer. For other people with the same name, see James Baldwin (disambiguation). James Baldwin in 1969Born are this page American writer.
New York, U.S.DiedDecember 1, 1987(1987-12-01) (aged 63)Saint-Paul-de-Vence, FranceResting placeFerncliff Cemetery, Westchester County, New YorkOccupationWriteractivistEducationDeWitt Clinton High SchoolGenreUrban fictionAfrican-American literatureGay literatureYears active1947-1985Notable works Go Tell It on the Mountain (1953)
Notes of a Native Son (1955) Giovanni's Room (1956) James Arthur Baldwin (né Jones; August 2, 1924 - December 1, 1987) was an American writer and civil rights activist who garnered acclaim for his essays, novels, plays, and poems. His 1953 novel Go Tell It on the Mountain has been ranked by Time magazine as one of the top 100 English-
language novels.[1] His 1955 essay collection Notes of a Native Son helped establish his reputation as a voice for human equality.[2] Baldwin was an influential public figure and orator, especially during the civil rights movement in the United States.[3][4][5] Baldwin's fiction posed fundamental personal questions and dilemmas amid complex social
and psychological pressures. Themes of masculinity, race, and class intertwine to create intricate narratives that influenced both the civil rights movement and the gay liberation movement in mid-twentieth century America. His protagonists are often but not exclusively African-American, and gay and bisexual men feature prominently in his
work (as in his 1956 novel Giovanni's Room). His characters typically face internal and external obstacles in their search for self- and social acceptance.[6] Baldwin's work continues to influence artists and writers. His unfinished manuscript Remember This House was expanded and adapted as the 2016 documentary film I Am Not Your Negro, winning
the BAFTA Award for Best Documentary. His 1974 novel If Beale Street Could Talk was adapted into a 2018 film of the same name, which earned widespread praise. Baldwin was born as James Arthur Jones to Emma Berdis Jones was
one of many who fled racial segregation and discrimination in the South during the Great Migration. She arrived in Harlem, New York, when she was 19 years old. [9] Baldwin was born out of wedlock there. Jones never revealed to him who his biological father was [9] Jones originally undertook to care for her son as a single mother. [10] However, in
1927, Jones married David Baldwin, a laborer and Baptist preacher.[11] David Baldwin was born in Bunkie, Louisiana, and preached in New Orleans, but left the South for Harlem in 1919.[11][a] How David and Emma met is uncertain, but in James Baldwin's semi-autobiographical Go Tell It on the Mountain, the characters based on the two are
introduced by the man's sister.[12] Emma Baldwin and David Baldwin had eight children in sixteen years—George, Barbara, Wilmer, David Jr. (named for James's stepfather and deceased half-brother), Gloria, Ruth, Elizabeth, and Paula.[13] James took his stepfather and deceased half-brother).
clear that he admired and loved her, often through reference to her loving smile.[14]:20 James moved several times while young but always within Harlem.[15] At the time, Harlem was still a mixed-race area of the city in the incipient days of the Great Migration.[16] James Baldwin did not know exactly how old his stepfather was, but it is clear that
he was much older than Emma; indeed, he may have been born before the Emancipation in 1863.[17] David's mother, Barbara, was born enslaved and lived with the Baldwins in New York before the Emancipation in 1863.[17] and a sister
named Barbara, whom James and others in the family called "Taunty".[18] David's father was born a slave.[9] David had been married earlier and had a daughter, who was eight years James's senior. Sam lived with the Baldwins for a time and once saved James
from drowning.[14]:7[17] James Baldwin referred to his stepfather simply as "father" throughout his life,[11] but David Sr. and James had an extremely difficult relationship and nearly resorted to physical fights on several occasions.[14]: 18[b] "They fought because James read books, because he liked movies, because he had white friends", all of
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which, David Baldwin thought, threatened James's "salvation".[20] According to one biographer, David Baldwin also hated white people and "his devotion to God was mixed with a hope that God would take revenge on them for him."[21][c] During the 1920s and 1930s, David worked at a soft-drink bottling factory,[16] although he was eventually laid
off from the job. As his anger and hatred eventually tainted his sermons, he was less in demand as a preacher. David sometimes took out his anger on his family and the children were afraid of him, though this was to some degree balanced by the love lavished on them by their mother. [23] David Baldwin grew paranoid near the end of his life. [24] He
was committed to a mental asylum in 1943 and died of tuberculosis on July 29 of that year, the same day Emma had their last child, Paula.[25] James, at his mother's urging, visited his dying stepfather the day before[26] and came to something of a posthumous reconciliation with him in his essay "Notes of a Native Son". In the essay, he wrote: "in his mother's urging, visited his dying stepfather the day before[26] and came to something of a posthumous reconciliation with him in his essay "Notes of a Native Son". In the essay, he wrote: "in his mother's urging, visited his dying stepfather the day before[26] and came to something of a posthumous reconciliation with him in his essay "Notes of a Native Son". In the essay, he wrote: "in his mother's urging, visited his dying stepfather the day before[26] and came to something of a posthumous reconciliation with him in his essay "Notes of a Native Son".
outrageously demanding and protective way, he loved his children, who were black like him and menaced like him."[27] David Baldwin in Los Angeles, 1964 As the oldest child, James Baldwin worked part-time from an early age to help support
his family. He was molded not only by the difficult relationships in his household but also by the impacts of the poverty and discrimination he saw all around him. As he grew up, friends he sat next to in church turned to drugs, crime, or prostitution. In what biographer Anna Malaika Tubbs found to be a commentary on not only his own life but also the
entire Black experience in America, Baldwin wrote: "I never had a childhood... I did not have any human identity... I was born dead."[28] Baldwin wrote comparatively little about events at school.[29] At five years of age, he was enrolled at Public School 24 (P.S. 24) on 128th Street in Harlem.[29] The principal of the school was Gertrude E. Ayer, the
first Black principal in the city. She and some of Baldwin's teachers recognized his brilliance early on [30] and encouraged his research and writing pursuits. [31] Ayer stated that Baldwin derived his writing talent from his mother, whose notes to school were greatly admired by the teachers, and that her son also learned to write like an angel, albeit an
avenging one.[32] By fifth grade, not yet a teenager, Baldwin had read some of Fyodor Dostoyevsky's works, Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin, and Charles Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities (which gave him a lifelong interest in the work of Dickens).[33][21] Baldwin wrote a song that earned praise from New York Mayor Fiorello La Guardia in a
letter that La Guardia sent to him.[33] Baldwin also won a prize for a short story that was published in a church newspaper.[33] His teachers recommended that he go to a public library on 135th Street in Harlem, a place that became his sanctuary. Baldwin would request on his deathbed that his papers and effects be deposited there.[33] It was at
P.S. 24 that Baldwin met Orilla "Bill" Miller, a young white schoolteacher from the Midwest whom Baldwin named as one of the reasons that he "never really managed to hate white people". [34][d] Among other outings, Miller took Baldwin to see an all-Black rendition of Orson Welles's take on Macbeth at the Lafayette Theatre, from which flowed
Baldwin's lifelong desire to succeed as a playwright. [38][e] David was reluctant to let his stepson go to the theatre, because he saw the stage as sinful and was suspicious of Miller. However, Baldwin's mother insisted, reminding his father of the importance of education. [39] Miller later directed the first play that Baldwin ever wrote. [40] After P.S. 24
Baldwin entered Harlem's Frederick Douglass Junior High School. [29][f] There, Baldwin met two important influences. [42] The first was Herman W. "Bill" Porter, a Black Harvard graduate. [43] Porter took Baldwin to the library
on 42nd Street to research a piece that would turn into Baldwin's first published essay titled "Harlem—Then and Now", which appeared in the autumn 1937 issue of the Douglass Pilot.[44] The second of these influences from his time at Frederick Douglass Pilot.[44] The second of these influences from his time at Frederick Douglass Pilot.[45]
Cullen taught French and was a literary advisor in the English department. [29] Baldwin later remarked that he "adored" Cullen's poetry, and his dream to live in France was sparked by Cullen's early impression on him. [43] Baldwin applied to and was accepted at De
Witt Clinton High School in the Bronx, a predominantly white and Jewish school, where he matriculated that fall.[47] He worked on the school's magazine, the Magpie with Richard Avedon, who went on to become a noted photographer, and Emile Capouya and Sol Stein, who would both become renowned publishers.[47] Baldwin did interviews and
editing at the magazine and published a number of poems and other writing.[48] He completed his high school diploma at De Witt Clinton in 1941.[49] Uncomfortable with his discovery during his high school
years that he was attracted to men rather than women, Baldwin sought refuge in religion.[50] He joined the later demolished Mount Calvary of the Pentecostal Faith Church on Lenox Avenue in 1937. He then followed Mount Calvary of the Pentecostal Faith Church on Lenox Avenue in 1937. He then followed Mount Calvary of the Pentecostal Faith Church on Lenox Avenue in 1937. He then followed Mount Calvary of the Pentecostal Faith Church on Lenox Avenue in 1937.
Pentecostal Assembly [51] At the age of 14, "Brother Baldwin", as he was called, first took to Fireside Pentecostal, during his mostly extemporaneous sermons, that Baldwin "learned that he had authority as a speaker and could do things with a crowd." [52] He delivered his final sermon at Fireside Pentecostal in 1941. [52]
Baldwin wrote in the essay "Down at the Cross" that the church "was a mask for self-hatred and despair ... salvation stopped at the church door".[53] He recalled a rare conversation with David Baldwin "in which they had really spoken to one another", during which his stepfather asked: "You'd rather write than preach, wouldn't you?"[53] Baldwin left
school in 1941 in order to earn money to help support his family. He secured a job helping to build a United States Army depot in New Jersey.[55] The two lived in Rocky Hill and commuted to Belle Mead.[55] In Belle Mead,
Baldwin experienced prejudice that deeply frustrated and angered him and that he cited as the partial cause of his later emigration out of America.[56] Baldwin's fellow white workmen, who mostly came from the South, derided him for what they saw as his "uppity" ways, his sharp, ironic wit and his lack of "respect".[55] In an incident that Baldwin
described in his essay "Notes of a Native Son", he went to a restaurant in Princeton called the Balt where, after a long wait, Baldwin was told that "colored boys" were not served there. [55] Then, on his last night in New Jersey, in another incident also memorialized in "Notes of a Native Son", Baldwin and a friend went to a diner after a movie, only to
be told that Black people were not served there.[57] Infuriated, he went to another restaurant, expecting to be denied service once again.[57] When that denial of service came, humiliation and rage overcame Baldwin and he hurled the nearest object at hand—a water mug—at the waitress, missing her and shattering the mirror behind her.[58]
Baldwin and his friend narrowly escaped. [58] During these years, Baldwin was torn between his desire to write and his need to provide for his family. He took a succession of menial jobs and feared that he was becoming like his stepfather, who had been unable to provide properly for his family. [59] Fired from the track-laying job, Baldwin returned to
Harlem in June 1943 to live with his family after taking a meat-packing job too, after falling asleep at the plant. [22] He became listless and unstable, drifting from one odd job to the next. [60] Baldwin drank heavily and endured the first of his nervous breakdowns. [61] Beauford Delaney helped Baldwin cast off his
melancholy.[61] During the year before he left De Witt Clinton, and at Capouya's urging, Baldwin had met Delaney would become Baldwin had met Delaney would be be be beton had be believed by the baldwin had be believed by the baldwin had be believed by the baldwin had believed by the bal
down on the United States during the winter after Baldwin left De Witt Clinton, the Harlem that Baldwin knew was atrophying—no longer the bastion of a Renaissance, the community grew more economically isolated, and he considered him to move to Greenwich Village, a place that had fascinated him
since at least the age of 15.[63] Baldwin lived in several locations in Greenwich Village, first with Delaney, then with a scattering of other friends.[64] He took a job at the Calypso, Baldwin worked under Trinidadian restaurateur Connie Williams. During
this time, Baldwin continued to explore his sexuality, coming out to Capouya and another friend, and to frequent Calypso guest, Stan Weir.[65] His major love during his Village years was an ostensibly straight Black man named Eugene Worth.[66] Worth
introduced Baldwin to the Young People's Socialist League and Baldwin became a Trotskyist for a brief period.[66] Baldwin never expressed his desire for Worth, and Worth died by suicide after jumping from the George Washington Bridge in 1946.[66] In 1944, Baldwin met Marlon Brando, to whom he was also attracted, at a theater class at The
New School.[66] The two became fast friends, a friendship that endured through the Civil Rights Movement and long after.[66] In 1945, Baldwin's classmate from De Witt Clinton.[67] Baldwin's relationship with the Burches soured in the
1950s but was resurrected towards the end of his life.[68] Near the end of 1945, Baldwin met Richard Wright, who had published the novel Native Son several years earlier.[69] Baldwin's main objective for their initial meeting was to interest Wright in an early manuscript of what would become Go Tell It On The Mountain, but was at the time titled
 "Crying Holy".[70] Wright liked the manuscript and encouraged his editors to consider Baldwin's work, but a $500 advance from Harper eventually declined to publish the book.[71] Nonetheless, Baldwin regularly sent letters to Wright in subsequent years and would reunite
with Wright in Paris, France, in 1948 (though their relationship took a turn for the worse soon after the Paris reunion).[72] During his Village years, Baldwin made a number of connections in New York's liberal literary establishment, primarily through Worth: Sol Levitas at The New Leader magazine, Randall Jarrell at The Nation, Elliot Cohen and
Robert Warshow at Commentary, and Philip Rahv at Partisan Reviews for The New Leader, but was published for the first time in The Nation in a 1947 review of Maxim Gorki's Best Short Stories.[73] Only one of Baldwin's reviews from this era made it into his later essay collection The Price of the Ticket: a sharply
ironic assay of Ross Lockridge's Raintree Countree that Baldwin wrote for The New Leader.[73] Baldwin's first essay, "The Harlem Ghetto", was published a year later in Commentary and explored anti-Semitism included
[73] Jewish people were also the main group of white people in Harlem dwellers met, so Jews became a kind of synecdoche for all that the Black people in Harlem Ghetto": in "Journey to Atlanta", Baldwin uses
the diary recollections of his younger brother David, who had gone to Atlanta, Georgia, as part of a singing group, to unleash a lashing of irony and scorn on the South, white radicals, and ideology itself.[75] This essay, too, was well received.[76] Baldwin tried to write another novel, Ignorant Armies, plotted in the vein of Native Son with a focus on a
scandalous murder, but no final product emerged. [77] Baldwin spent two months during the summer of 1948 at Shanks Village, a writer's colony in Woodstock, New York. He published his first work of fiction, a short story called "Previous Condition", in the October 1948 issue of Commentary magazine, about a 20-something Black man who is evicted
from his apartment—which was a metaphor for white society. [78] See also: James Baldwin in France Disillusioned by the reigning prejudice against Black people in the United States, and wanting to gain external perspectives on himself and his writing, Baldwin settled in Paris, France, at the age of 24. Baldwin did not want to be read as "merely a
Negro; or, even, merely a Negro writer."[79] He also hoped to come to terms with his sexual ambivalence and escape from the hopelessness to which many young African-American men like himself succumbed.[80] In 1948, Baldwin received a $1,500 grant (equivalent to $19,631 in 2024)[81] from a Rosenwald Fellowship[82] in order to produce a
book of photographs and essays that was to be both a catalog of churches and an exploration of religiosity in Harlem. Baldwin met through Richard Avedon.[83] Although the book (titled Unto the Dying Lamb) was never finished, [83] the Rosenwald funding did allow
Baldwin to realise his long-standing ambition of moving to France.[84] After saying his goodbyes to his mother and his younger siblings, with forty dollars to his mother.[85] Baldwin would later give various explanations for leaving his goodbyes to his mother.
America—sex, Calvinism, an intense sense of hostility which he feared would turn inward—but, above all, was the problem of race, which, throughout his life, had exposed him to a lengthy catalog of humiliations. [86] He hoped for a more peaceable existence in Paris. [87] In Paris, Baldwin was soon involved in the cultural radicalism of the Left Bank
He started to publish his work in literary anthologies, notably Zero[88] which was edited by his friend Themistocles Hoetis and which had already published essays by Richard Wright. Baldwin spent nine years living in Paris, mostly in Saint-Germain-des-Prés, with various excursions to Switzerland, Spain, and back to the United States.[89] Baldwin spent nine years living in Paris, mostly in Saint-Germain-des-Prés, with various excursions to Switzerland, Spain, and back to the United States.[89] Baldwin spent nine years living in Paris, mostly in Saint-Germain-des-Prés, with various excursions to Switzerland, Spain, and back to the United States.[89] Baldwin spent nine years living in Paris, mostly in Saint-Germain-des-Prés, with various excursions to Switzerland, Spain, and back to the United States.[89] Baldwin spent nine years living in Paris, mostly in Saint-Germain-des-Prés, with various excursions to Switzerland, Spain, and back to the United States.
time in Paris was itinerant: he stayed with various friends around the city and in various hotels. Most notable of these lodgings was Hôtel Verneuil, a hotel in Saint-Germain that had collected a motley crew of struggling expatriates, mostly writers.[90] This Verneuil circle spawned numerous friendships that Baldwin relied upon in rough periods.[90]
He was also extremely poor during his time in Paris, with only momentary respites from that condition. [91] In his early years in Saint-Germain, he met Otto Friedrich, Mason Hoffenberg, Asa Benveniste, Themistocles Hoetis, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Max Ernst, Truman Capote, and Stephen Spender, among many others. [92] Baldwin also
met Lucien Happersberger, a Swiss boy, 17 years old at the time of their first meeting, who came to France in search of excitement. [93] Happersberger and Baldwin began to bond for the next few years, eventually becoming his intimate partner and he became Baldwin began to bond for the next few years, eventually becoming his intimate partner and he became Baldwin began to bond for the next few years, eventually becoming his intimate partner and he became Baldwin began to bond for the next few years, eventually becoming his intimate partner and he became Baldwin began to bond for the next few years, eventually becoming his intimate partner and he became Baldwin began to bond for the next few years, eventually becoming his intimate partner and he became Baldwin began to bond for the next few years, eventually becoming his intimate partner and he became Baldwin began to bond for the next few years, eventually becoming his intimate partner and he became Baldwin began to bond for the next few years, eventually becoming his intimate partner and he became Baldwin began to bond for the next few years, eventually becoming his intimate partner and he became Baldwin began to bond for the next few years, eventually becoming his intimate partner and he became Baldwin began to bond for the next few years, eventually becoming his intimate partner and he became baldwin began to bond for the next few years.
friends for the next thirty-nine years.[94][i] Even though his time in Paris was not easy, Baldwin escaped from the aspects of American life that outraged him the most—especially the "daily indignities of racism."[87] According to one biographer: "Baldwin seemed at ease in his Paris life; Jimmy Baldwin the aesthete and lover reveled in the Saint-
Germain ambiance."[95] During his early years in Paris, prior to the publication of Go Tell It on the Mountain in 1953, Baldwin wrote several notable works. "The Negro in Paris, prior to the publication of Go Tell It on the Mountain in 1953, Baldwin wrote several notable works."
faced a "depthless alienation from oneself and one's people" that was mostly unknown to Parisian Africans. [96] He also wrote "The Preservation of Innocence", which traced the violence against homosexuals in American life back to the protracted adolescence of America as a society. [97] In the magazine Commentary, he published "Too Little, Too
Late", an essay about Black American literature, and he also published "The Death of the Prophet", a short story that grew out of Baldwin's earlier writings of Go Tell It on The Mountain. In the latter work, Baldwin employs a character named Johnnie to trace his bouts of depression back to his inability to resolve the questions of filial intimacy raised
by his relationship with his stepfather. [98] In December 1949, Baldwin was arrested and jailed for receiving stolen goods after an American friend brought him bedsheets that the friend had taken from another Paris hotel. [99] When the charges were dismissed several days later, to the laughter of the courtroom, Baldwin wrote of the experience in his
essay "Equal in Paris", also published in Commentary in 1950.[99] In the essay, he expressed his surprise and his bewilderment at how he was no longer a "despised black man", instead, he was simply an American, no different from the white American friend who stole the sheet and was arrested with him.[99] During his Paris years, Baldwin also
published two of his three scathing critiques of Richard Wright—"Everybody's Protest Novel" in 1949 and "Many Thousands Gone" in 1951. Baldwin despised because it is "concerned with the categorization of human beings, and however brilliant the theories or
 accurate the categorizations, they fail because they deny life."[96] Protest writing cages humanity, but, according to Baldwin, "only within this web of ambiguity, paradox, this hunger, darkness, can we find at once ourselves and the power that will free us from ourselves."[96] Baldwin took Wright's Native Son and Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin
both erstwhile favorities of Baldwin's, as paradigmatic analysis examples of the protest novel's problem. [96] The treatment of Wright's character Bigger Thomas by socially earnest white people "to become truly human and acceptable,
[they] must first become like us. This assumption once accepted, the Negro in America can only acquiesce in the obliteration of his own personality."[100] In these two essays, Baldwin came to articulate what would become a theme of his work: that white racism toward Black Americans was refracted through self-hatred and self-denial—"One may say
that the Negro in America does not really exist except in the darkness of [white] minds. [...] Our dehumanization of the Negro then is indivisible from our dehumanization of ourselves. "[100][j] Baldwin's relationship with Wright was tense but cordial after the essays, although Baldwin eventually ceased to regard Wright as a mentor. [101] Meanwhile,
"Everybody's Protest Novel" had earned Baldwin the label "the most promising young Negro writer since Richard Wright."[102] Beginning in the winter of 1951, Baldwin and Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger's family owned a small chateau.[103] By the time of the first trip, Happersberger
had then entered a heterosexual relationship but grew worried for his friend Baldwin and offered to take Baldwin to the Swiss village, [103] Baldwin's time in the village gave form to his essay, Baldwin described some unintentional mistreatment and
 offputting experiences at the hands of Swiss villagers who possessed a racial innocence which few Americans could attest to.[103] Baldwin explored how the bitter history which was shared by Black and whatever will lead Americans back
to the simplicity of this European village where white men still have the luxury of looking on me as a stranger."[104] Baldwin photographed by Carl Van Vechten, 1955 Beauford Delaney's arrival in France in 1953 marked "the most important personal event in Baldwin's life" that year.[105] Around the same time, Baldwin's circle of friends shifted
away from primarily white bohemians toward a coterie of Black American expatriates: Baldwin grew close to dancer Bernard Hassell; spent significant amounts of time at Gordon Heath's club in Paris; regularly listened to Bobby Short and Inez Cavanaugh's performances at their respective haunts around the city; met Maya Angelou during her
European tour of Porgy and Bess; and occasionally met with writers Richard Gibson and Chester Himes, composer Howard Swanson, and even Richard Wright.[106] In 1954, Baldwin accepted a fellowship at the MacDowell writer's colony in New Hampshire to support the writing of a new novel and he also won a Guggenheim Fellowship.[107] Also irrepresent to support the writing of a new novel and he also won a Guggenheim Fellowship.
1954, Baldwin published the three-act play The Amen Corner which features the preacher Sister Margaret—a fictionalized Mother Horn from Baldwin's time at Fireside Pentecostal—who struggles with a difficult inheritance and with alienation from herself and her loved ones on account of her religious fervor.[108] Baldwin spent several weeks in
Washington, D.C., and particularly around Howard University while he collaborated with Owen Dodson for the premiere of The Amen Corner. Baldwin returned to Paris in October 1955.[109] Baldwin decided that he would return to the United States in 1957, so in early 1956, he decided to enjoy what was to be his last year in France.[110] He became
friends with Norman and Adele Mailer, was recognized by the National Institute of Arts and Letters with a grant, and he was set to publish Giovanni's Room.[111] Nevertheless, Baldwin sank deeper into an emotional wreckage. In the summer of 1956—after a seemingly failed affair with a Black musician named Arnold, Baldwin's first serious
relationship since Happersberger—Baldwin overdosed on sleeping pills during a suicide attempt.[112] He regretted the attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the doctor arrived.[112] Baldwin went on to attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the doctor arrived.[112] Baldwin went on to attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the doctor arrived.[112] Baldwin went on to attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills during a suicide attempt.[112] Baldwin went on to attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the doctor arrived.[112] Baldwin went on to attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the doctor arrived.[112] Baldwin went on to attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the doctor arrived.[112] Baldwin went on to attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the doctor arrived.[112] Baldwin went on to attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the doctor arrived.[112] Baldwin went on the attempt almost instantly are always a subject to the attempt almost instantly are always and the attempt always are always are always are always are always and the attempt always are always are always are always are always and always are alway
disappointing in its perverse reliance on European themes while nonetheless purporting to extol African originality.[113] He continued to publish there at various times in his career and was serving on its editorial board at the time of his
death in 1987.[115]Café de Flore, Boulevard Saint-Germain, Paris, May 2019. In the large upstairs heated room (SALLE AU 1er - CLIMATISÉE) in 1953, Baldwin published his first novel, Go Tell It on the Mountain, a semi-autobiographical bildungsroman. He began writing it
when he was 17 and first published it in Paris. His first collection of essays, Notes of a Native Son appeared two years later. He continued to experiment with literary forms throughout his career, publishing poetry and plays as well as the fiction and essays for which he was known. Baldwin's second novel, Giovanni's Room, caused great controversy
when it was first published in 1956 due to its explicit homoerotic content.[116] Baldwin again resisted labels with the publication of this work.[117] Despite the reading public's expectations that he would publish works dealing with African-American experiences, Giovanni's Room is predominantly about white characters.[117] Main article: Go Tell It
on the Mountain (novel) Baldwin sent the manuscript for Go Tell It on the Mountain from Paris to New York publishing house Alfred A. Knopf on February 26, 1952, and Knopf, Baldwin sailed back to the United States in April 1952 on the SS Ile
de France, where Themistocles Hoetis and Dizzy Gillespie were coincidentally also voyaging—his conversations with both on the ship were extensive.[118] After his arrival in New York, Baldwin grew particularly close to his younger
brother, David Jr., and served as best man at David's wedding on June 27.[118] Meanwhile, Baldwin agreed to rewrite parts of Go Tell It on the Mountain in exchange for a $250 advance ($2,960 today) and a further $750 ($8,881 today) paid when the final manuscript was completed.[119] When Knopf accepted the revision in July, they sent the
remainder of the advance, and Baldwin was soon to have his first published as "Exodus" in American Mercury and the other as "Roy's Wound" in New World Writing.[120] Baldwin set sail back to Europe on August 28 and Go Tell It on the
Mountain was published in May 1953.[120] Go Tell It on the Mountain was the product of years of work and exploratory writing since his first attempt at a novel in 1938.[121] In rejecting the ideological manacles of protest literature and the presupposition he thought inherent to such works that "in Negro life there exists no tradition, no field of
manners, no possibility of ritual or intercourse", Baldwin sought in Go Tell It on the Mountain to emphasize that the core of the problem was "not that the Negro has no tradition articulate." [122] Baldwin biographer David Leeming draws parallels
between Go Tell It on the Mountain and James Joyce's 1916 A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: to "encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race." [123] Baldwin himself drew parallels between Joyce's flight from his native Ireland and his own run from Harlem
and Baldwin read Joyce's tome in Paris in 1950, however, in Baldwin's Go Tell It on the Mountain, it would be the Black American "uncreated conscience" at the heart of the project. [124] The novel is a bildungsroman that explores the inward struggles of protagonist John Grimes, the illegitimate son of Elizabeth Grimes, to claim his own soul as it lies
psychic chains, "climb the mountain", and free himself.[121] John's family members and most of the characters in the novel are blown north in the winds of the Great Migration in search of the American Dream and all are stifled.[125] Florence, Elizabeth, and Gabriel are denied love's reach because racism assured that they could not muster the kind
of self-respect that love requires.[125] Racism drives Elizabeth's lover, Richard, to suicide—Richard will not be the last Baldwin character to die thus for that same reason.[121] Gabriel's abuse of the women in his life is downstream from his society's emasculation of
him, with mealy-mouthed religiosity only a hypocritical cover.[121] The phrase "in my father's house" and various similar formulations appear throughout Go Tell It on the Mountain and was even an early title for the novel.[122] The house is a metaphor at several levels of generality: for his own family's apartment in Harlem, for Harlem taken as a
whole, for America and its history, and for the "deep heart's core".[122] John's departure from the agony that reigned in his father's house, particularly the historical sources of the family's privations, came through a conversion experience.[125] "Who are they?" John cries out when he sees a mass of faces as he descends to the
threshing floor: 'They were the despised and rejected, the wretched and the spat upon, the earth's offscouring; and he was in their company, and they would swallow up his soul."[126] John wants desperately to escape the threshing floor, but "[t]hen John saw the Lord" and "a sweetness" filled him. [126] The midwife of John's conversion is Elisha, the
voice of love that had followed him throughout the experience, and whose body filled John with "a wild delight". [126] Thus comes the wisdom that would define Baldwin's philosophy: per biographer David Leeming: "salvation from the chains and fetters—the self-hatred and the other effects—of historical racism could come only from love."
article: Notes of a Native Son Baldwin's friend from high school, Sol Stein, encouraged Baldwin to publish an essay collection reflecting on his work thus far.[127] but he nevertheless produced a collection, Notes of a Native Son, that was published in 1955
[127] The book contained practically all of the major themes that run through his work: searching for self when racial myths cloud reality; accepting an inheritance ("the conundrum of color is the inheritance of every American"); the artist's
loneliness; love's urgency. [128] All the essays in Notes were published between 1948 and 1955 in Commentary, The New Leader, Partisan Review, The Reporter, and Harper's Magazine. [129] The essays rely on autobiographical detail to convey Baldwin's arguments, as all of Baldwin's work does. [129] Notes was Baldwin's first introduction to many
white Americans and it became their reference point for his work: Baldwin was often asked: "Why don't you write more essays like the ones in Notes of a Native Son and the work of one of Baldwin's favorite writers, Henry James's Notes of a Son and Brother.[130] Notes of a
Native Son is divided into three parts: the first part deals with Black identity as artist and human; the second part addresses Black life in America, including what is sometimes considered Baldwin's best essay, the titular "Notes of a Native Son"; the final part takes the expatriate's perspective, looking at American society from beyond its shores.[131]
Part One of Notes features "Everybody's Protest Novel" and "Many Thousands Gone", along with "Carmen Jones written for Commentary, in which Baldwin at once extols the sight of an all-Black cast on the silver screen and laments the film's myths about Black sexuality.[132] Part Two
reprints "The Harlem Ghetto" and "Journey to Atlanta" as prefaces for "Notes of a Native Son". In "Notes of a Nati
perspective, Part Three is the sector of Baldwin's corpus that most closely mirrors Henry James's methods: hewing out of one's distance and detachment from the homeland a coherent idea of what it means to be Americans. For
example, in "The Harlem Ghetto", Baldwin writes: "what it means to be a Negro in America can perhaps be suggested by the myths we perpetuate about him."[130] This earned some quantity of scorn from reviewers: in a review for The New York Times Book Review, Langston Hughes lamented that "Baldwin's viewpoints are half American, half Afron Program of Scorn from Program of Sc
American, incompletely fused."[130] Others were nonplussed by the handholding of white audiences, which Baldwin himself would criticize in later works.[130] Nonetheless, most acutely in this stage in his career, Baldwin wanted to escape the rigid categories of protest literature and he viewed adopting a white point-of-view as a good method of
two grow increasingly intimate and David eventually finds his way to Giovanni begins to prostitute himself and finally commits a murder for which he is guillotined.[136] David's tale is
one of love's inhibition: he cannot "face love when he finds it", writes biographer James Campbell.[137] The novel features a traditional theme: the clash between the constraints of puritanism and the impulse for adventure and the subsequent loss of innocence that results.[137] The inspiration for the murder in the novel's plot is an event dating from
1943 to 1944. A Columbia University undergraduate named Lucien Carr murdered an older, homosexual man, David Kammerer, who made sexual advances on Carr.[138] The two were walking near the banks of the Hudson River when Kammerer made a pass at Carr, leading Carr to stab Kammerer and dump Kammerer's body in the river.[139] To
Baldwin's relief, the reviews of Giovanni's Room were positive, and his family did not criticize the subject matter.[140] Even from Paris, Baldwin was able to follow the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement in his homeland. In May 1954, the United States Supreme Court ordered schools to desegregate "with all deliberate speed"; in August 1955 these subject matter.
racist murder of Emmett Till in Money, Mississippi, and the subsequent acquittal of his killers were etched in Baldwin's mind until he wrote Blues for Mister Charlie; in December 1955, Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus; and in February 1956 Autherine Lucy was admitted to the University of Alabama
before being expelled when whites rioted.[141] Meanwhile, Baldwin was increasingly burdened by the sense that he was wasting time in Paris.[134] Baldwin began planning a return to the United States in hopes of writing a biography of Booker T. Washington, which he then called Talking at the Gates. Baldwin also received commissions to write a
review of Daniel Guérin's Negroes on the March and J. C. Furnas's Goodbye to Uncle Tom for The Nation, as well as to write about William Faulkner and American racism for the Partisan Review.[142] The first project became "The Crusade of Indignation",[142] published in July 1956.[143] In it, Baldwin suggests that the portrait of Black life in Uncle
Tom's Cabin "has set the tone for the attitude of American whites towards Negroes for the last one hundred years", and that, given the novel's popularity, this portrait has led to a unidimensional characterization of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black humanity.[142] The second project turned into the essay "William Faulkner and the capture the full scope of Black humanity.
and Desegregation". The essay was inspired by Faulkner's March 1956 comment during an interview that he was sure to enlist himself with his fellow white Mississippians in a war over desegregation "even if it meant going out into the streets and shooting Negroes".[142] For Baldwin, Faulkner represented the "go slow" mentality on desegregation
that tries to wrestle with the Southerner's peculiar dilemma: the South "clings to two entirely antithetical doctrines, two legends, two histories"; the southerner is "the proud citizen of a free society and, on the other hand, committed to a society that has not yet dared to free itself of the necessity of naked and brutal oppression."[142] Faulkner asks
for more time but "the time [...] does not exist. [...] There is never time in the future in which we will work out our salvation."[142] Baldwin initially intended to complete Another Country before returning to New York in the fall of 1957, but progress on the novel was slow, so he decided to go back to the United States sooner.[144][145] Beauford
Delaney was particularly upset by Baldwin's departure. Delaney had started to drink heavily and entered the incipient stages of mental deterioration, including complaining about hearing voices.[144][1] Nonetheless, after a brief visit with Edith Piaf, Baldwin set sail for New York in July 1957.[144]Baldwin photographed by Allan Warren Baldwin's third
and fourth novels, Another Country (1962) and Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone (1968), are sprawling, experimental works[146] dealing with Black and white characters, as well as with heterosexual, gay, and bisexual characters.[147] He briefly traveled to Israel in 1961, planning to continue on to Africa, but opting instead to travel to
Turkey.[148] Baldwin completed Another Country during his first, two-month stay in Istanbul (which ends with the note, Istanbul during the 1960s.[149] In 1962, when Baldwin had already spent fourteen years as an expatriate living in France, he published his essay Letter from a stay in Istanbul (which ends with the note).
Region in My Mind in The New Yorker. "Letter transitions deftly between episodic anecdotes, assessments of Baldwin's own life-phases, and systemic analyses of the social-cultural factors behind racism."[150] Baldwin's lengthy essay "Down at the Cross" (frequently called The Fire Next Time after the title of the 1963 book in which it was published)
[151] similarly showed the seething discontent of the 1960s in novel form. The essay was originally published in two oversized issues of The New Yorker and landed Baldwin on the cover of Time magazine in 1963 while he was touring the South speaking about the restive Civil Rights Movement. Around the time of publication of The Fire Next Time
 Baldwin became a known spokesperson for civil rights and a celebrity noted for championing the cause of Black Americans. He frequently appeared on television and delivered speeches on college campuses.[152] The essay talked about the uneasy relationship between Christianity and the burgeoning Black Muslim movement. After publication
several Black nationalists criticized Baldwin for his conciliatory attitude. They questioned whether his message of love and understanding would do much to change race relations in America. [152] The book was consumed by whites looking for answers to the question: What do Black Americans really want? Baldwin's essays never stopped articulating
the anger and frustration felt by real-life Black Americans with more clarity and style than any other writer of his generation.[153] In 1965, Baldwin participated in a much publicized debate with William F. Buckley, on the topic of whether the American dream had been achieved at the expense of African Americans. The debate took place in the UK at
the Cambridge Union, historic debating society of the University of Cambridge. The spectating student body voted overwhelmingly in Baldwin's favor.[154][155] Baldwin's next book-length essay, No Name in the Street (1972), also discussed his own experience in the context of the later 1960s, specifically the assassinations of three of his personal
friends: Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King Jr. Baldwin's writings of the 1980s discuss homosexuality and homophobia with fervor and forthrightness.[152] Eldridge
Cleaver's harsh criticism of Baldwin in Soul on Ice and elsewhere [157] and Baldwin's return to southern France contributed to the perception by critics that he was not in touch with his readership. [158] [159] [160] As he had been the leading literary voice of the civil rights movement, he became an inspirational figure for the emerging gay rights
movement.[152] His two novels written in the 1970s, If Beale Street Could Talk (1974) and Just Above My Head (1979), stressed the importance of Black American families. He concluded his career by publishing a volume of poetry, Jimmy's Blues (1983), as well as another book-length essay, The Evidence of Things Not Seen (1985), an extended
reflection on race inspired by the Atlanta murders of 1979-1981. Baldwin at home in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France Baldwin lived in France for most of his later life, using it as a base of operations for extensive international travel.[149][162] Baldwin settled in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France Baldwin lived and died in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France Baldwin lived in France for most of his later life, using it as a base of operations for extensive international travel.[149][162] Baldwin settled in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France Baldwin lived and died in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France Baldwin live
Vence in the south of France in 1970, in an old Provençal house beneath the ramparts of the village. [163] His house was always open to his friends, who frequently visited him while on trips to the French Riviera. American painter Beauford Delaney made Baldwin's house in Saint-Paul-de-Vence his second home, often setting up his easel in the garden.
Delaney painted several colorful portraits of Baldwin. Fred Nall Hollis also befriended Baldwin during this time. Actors Harry Belafonte and Sidney Poitier were also regular guests. He wrote several of his last works in his house in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, including Just Above My Head in 1979 and Evidence of Things Not Seen in 1985. It was also in
Saint-Paul-de-Vence that Baldwin wrote his "Open Letter to My Sister, Angela Y. Davis" in November 1970.[164][165] Many of Baldwin's musician friends dropped in during the Jazz à Juan and Nice Jazz Festivals. They included Nina Simone, Josephine Baker, Miles Davis, and Ray Charles.[166] In his autobiography, Miles Davis wrote:[167] I'd read his
books and I liked and respected what he had to say. As I got to know Jimmy we opened up to each other and became real great friends. Every time I went to southern France to play Antibes, I would always spend a day or two out at Jimmy's house in St. Paul de Vence. We'd just sit there in that great big beautiful house of his telling us all kinds of
stories, lying our asses off.... He was a great man. Baldwin learned to speak French fluently and developed friendships with French actor Yves Montand and French writer Marguerite Yourcenar, who translated Baldwin was openly gay, [169]
though he considered sexuality a private matter and did not apply the label - which he felt was too narrow and limiting - to himself.[170] According to Dwight A. McBride, Baldwin saw the world in such terms that made him not "exclusively gay, black, expatriate, activist, or the like", but rather "an intricately negotiated amalgam of all of those things
which had to be constantly tailored to fit the circumstances in which he was compelled to articulate himself".[171] Tombstone of James Baldwin and his mother Berdis at Ferncliff Cemetery and Mausoleum, Hartsdale, New York On December 1, 1987,[172][173][174][contradictory][175] Baldwin died from stomach cancer in Saint-Paul-de-Vence,
France.[176][177][178] He was buried at the Ferncliff Cemetery in Hartsdale, near New York City.[179] Fred Nall Hollis took care of Baldwin since the early 1970s, when Baldwin sout racism in
Alabama. In one conversation, Nall told Baldwin "Through your books you liberated me in revealing this to me." [180] A few hours after his death, his novel Harlem Quartet, published earlier in the year, won the
French-American Friendship Prize (having a week earlier lost by one vote in Paris the Prix Femina, awarded to the "best foreign novel of the year").[168] At the time of Baldwin's death, he was working on a memoir, Remember This House, focused on his recollections of personal interactions with civil rights leaders Medgar Evers, Malcolm X and
Martin Luther King Jr.[181] Following his death, the publishing company McGraw-Hill took the unprecedented step of suing his estate to recover the $200,000 advance they had paid him for the book, but by 1990, the lawsuit had been dropped.[181] The unfinished manuscript is the basis of Raoul Peck's 2016 documentary film I Am Not Your Negro
[182] Following Baldwin's death, a court battle was waged over the ownership of his home in France. Baldwin had been in the process of purchasing his house from his landlady, Jeanne Faure [183] At the time of his death, Baldwin did not have full ownership of the home, and it was Mlle. Faure's intention that the home would stay in her family. His
home, nicknamed "Chez Baldwin",[184] has been the center of scholarly work and artistic and political activism. The National Museum of African American History and Culture has an online exhibit titled "Chez Baldwin", which uses his historic French home as a lens to explore his life and legacy.[185] Magdalena J. Zaborowska's 2018 book, Me and
My House: James Baldwin's Last Decade in France, uses photographs of his home and his collections to discuss politics, race, being gay, and domesticity. [186] Over the years, several efforts were initiated to save the house and convert it into an artists' residency, but none had the endorsement of the Baldwin estate. In February 2016, Le Monde
published an opinion piece by Thomas Chatterton Williams, a contemporary Black American expatriate writer in France, which spurred a group of activists to come together in Paris.[187] In June 2016, American writer and activists to come together in Paris.[187] In June 2016, American writer and activists to come together in Paris.[187] In June 2016, American writer and activists to come together in Paris.[187] In June 2016, American writer and activists to come together in Paris.[187] In June 2016, American writer and activists to come together in Paris.[187] In June 2016, American writer and activists to come together in Paris.[187] In June 2016, American writer and activists to come together in Paris.[187] In June 2016, American writer and activists to come together in Paris.[188] In June 2016, American writer and activists to come together in Paris.[188] In June 2016, American writer and activists to come together in Paris.[188] In June 2016, American writer and activists to come together in Paris.[188] In June 2016, American writer and activists to come together in Paris.[188] In June 2016, American writer and activists to come together in Paris.[188] In June 2016, American writer and activists to come together in Paris.[188] In June 2016, American writer and activists to come together and activists to come to
Maison Baldwin,[190] a French organization whose initial goal was to purchase the house by launching a capital campaign funded by the U.S. philanthropic sector, grew out of this effort.[191] This campaign was unsuccessful without the support of Baldwin's estate. Attempts to engage the French government in conservation of the property were
dismissed by the mayor of Saint-Paul-de-Vence, Joseph Le Chapelain, whose statement to the local press, claiming "nobody's ever heard of James Baldwin," mirrored that of Henri Chambon, the owner of the corporation that razed the house.[192][193] in 2019, construction was completed on an apartment complex that now stands where Chapelain, whose statement to the local press, claiming "nobody's ever heard of James Baldwin," mirrored that of Henri Chambon, the owner of the corporation that razed the house.[192][193] in 2019, construction was completed on an apartment to the local press, claiming "nobody's ever heard of James Baldwin," mirrored that of Henri Chambon, the owner of the corporation that razed the house.[192][193] in 2019, construction was completed on an apartment complex that now stands where Chapelain, whose statement to the local press, claiming "nobody's ever heard of James Baldwin," mirrored that of Henri Chambon, the owner of the corporation that razed the house.[192][193] in 2019, construction was completed on an apartment complex that now stands where the complex that the house of the corporation that razed the house.[192][193] in 2019, construction was completed on an apartment complex that now stands where the complex that now stands where the complex that the
once stood. In all of Baldwin's works, but particularly in his novels, the main characters are twined up in a "cage of reality" that sees them fighting for their soul against the limitations of the human condition or against their place at the margins of a society consumed by various prejudices.[194] Baldwin connects many of his main characters—John in
Go Tell It On The Mountain, Rufus in Another Country, Richard in Blues for Mister Charlie, and Giovanni in Giovanni's Room—as sharing a reality of restriction: per biographer David Leeming, each is "a symbolic cadaver in the center of the world depicted in the given novel and the larger society symbolized by that world".[195] Each reaches for an
identity within their own social environment, and sometimes—as in If Beale Street Could Talk's Fonny and Tell me How Long The singular theme in the attempts of Baldwin's characters to resolve their struggle for themselves is that such
resolution only comes through love. [195] Here is Leeming at some length: Love for Baldwin philosophy. Love for Baldwin cannot be safe; it involves the risk of removing the masks and taboos placed on us by society. The philosophy applies to individual relationships as well as to more general ones. It
encompasses sexuality as well as politics, economics, and race relations. And it emphasizes the dire consequences, for individuals and racial groups, of the refusal to love.—David Adams Leeming, James Baldwin: A Biography[196] Baldwin (right of center) with Hollywood actors Charlton Heston (left) and Marlon Brando (right) at the 1963 March on
Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Sidney Poitier (rear) and Harry Belafonte (right of Brando) can also be seen in the crowd. Baldwin returned to the United States in the summer of 1957, while the civil rights legislation of that year was being debated in Congress. He had been powerfully moved by the image of a young girl, Dorothy Counts, braving a
mob in an attempt to desegregate schools in Charlotte, North Carolina, and Partisan Review editor Philip Rahv had suggested he report on what was happening in the American South. Baldwin was nervous about the trip but he made it, interviewing people in Charlotte (where he met Martin Luther King Jr.), and Montgomery, Alabama. The result was
two essays, one published in Harper's magazine ("The Hard Kind of Courage"), the other in Partisan Review ("Nobody Knows My Name"). Subsequent Baldwin articles on the movement appeared in Mademoiselle, Harper's, The New York Times Magazine, and The New Yorker, where in 1962 he published the essay that he called "Down at the Cross".
and the New Yorker called "Letter from a Region of My Mind". Along with a shorter essay became The Fire Next Time.[197]:94-99,155-56 External audio National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Lun
Baldwin aligned himself with the ideals of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Joining CORE allowed him to travel across the South, lecturing on racial inequality. His insights into both the North and South gave him a unique perspective on the racial problems the United States was
facing. In 1963 he conducted a lecture tour of the South for CORE, traveling to Durham and Greensboro in North Carolina, and New Orleans. During the tour, he lectured to students, white liberals, and anyone else listening about his racial ideology, an ideological position between the "muscular approach" of Malcolm X and the nonviolent program of
Martin Luther King Jr.[140] Baldwin expressed the hope that socialism would take root in the United States:[199] It is certain, in any case, that ignorance, allied with power, is the most ferocious enemy justice can have. —James Baldwin expressed the hope that socialism would take root in the United States:[199] It is certain, in any case, that ignorance, allied with power, is the most ferocious enemy justice can have.
eloquent descriptions of the Negro's pain and frustration. In fact, Time featured Baldwin on the cover of its May 17, 1963, issue. "There is not another writer", said Time, "who expresses with such poignancy and abrasiveness the dark realities of the racial ferment in North and South." [200] [197]:175 In a cable Baldwin sent to Attorney General Robert
F. Kennedy during the Birmingham riot of 1963, Baldwin blamed the violence in Birmingham on the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover, Mississippi Senator James Eastland, and President Kennedy invited Baldwin to meet with him over breakfast, and
that meeting was followed up with a second, when Kennedy met with Baldwin and others Baldwin had invited to Kennedy's Manhattan apartment. This meeting is discussed in Howard Simon's 1999 play, James Baldwin: A Soul on Fire. The delegation included Kenneth B. Clark, a psychologist who had played a key role in the Brown v. Board of
Education decision; actor Harry Belafonte, singer Lena Horne, writer Lorraine Hansberry, and activists from civil rights organizations.[197]: 176-80 Although most of the civil rights movement, and it provided exposure of the civil rights organizations.
issue not just as a political issue but also as a moral issue. [201] James Baldwin's FBI file contains 1,884 pages, collected from 1960 until the early 1970s. [202] During that era of surveillance of American writers, the FBI accumulated 276 pages on Richard Wright, 110 pages on Truman Capote, and just nine pages on Henry Miller. Baldwin also made a
prominent appearance at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom on August 28, 1963, with Belafonte and long-time friends Sidney Poitier and Marlon Brando. [203] Baldwin's sexuality clashed with his activism. The civil rights movement was hostile to homosexuals. [204] [205] The only overtly gay men in the movement were Baldwin and
 Bayard Rustin. Rustin and King were very close, as Rustin received credit for the success of the March on Washington. Many were bothered by Rustin's sexual orientation in a school editorial column during the 1950s, where he treated it as a mental orientation in a school editorial column during the 1950s, where he treated it as a mental orientation in a school editorial column during the 1950s, where he treated it as a mental orientation in a school editorial column during the 1950s, where he treated it as a mental orientation in a school editorial column during the 1950s, where he treated it as a mental orientation in a school editorial column during the 1950s, where he treated it as a mental orientation in a school editorial column during the 1950s, where he treated it as a mental orientation in a school editorial column during the 1950s, where he treated it as a mental orientation in a school editorial column during the 1950s, where he treated it as a mental orientation in a school editorial column during the 1950s, where he treated it as a mental orientation in a school editorial column during the 1950s, where he treated it as a mental orientation in a school editorial column during the 1950s, where he treated it as a mental orientation in a school editorial column during the 1950s and 1950s are a school editorial column during the 1950s are a school editorial co
illness which an individual could overcome. King's key advisor, Stanley Levison, also stated that Baldwin and Rustin were "better qualified to lead a homo-sexual movement than a civil rights movement, Baldwin was
excluded from the inner circles of the civil rights movement because of his sexuality and was conspicuously not invited to speak at the March on Washington. [207] At the time, Baldwin was neither in the closet nor open to the public about his sexual orientation. Although his novels, specifically Giovanni's Room and Just Above My Head, had openly gay
characters and relationships, Baldwin himself never openly described his sexuality. In his book, Kevin Mumford points out how Baldwin went his life "passing as straight rather than confronting homophobes with whom he mobilized against racism".[208] When the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing happened in Birmingham three weeks after the
March on Washington, Baldwin called for a nationwide campaign of civil disobedience in response to this "terrifying crisis". He traveled to Selma, Alabama, where SNCC had organized a voter registration drive; he watched mothers with babies and elderly men and women standing in long lines for hours, as armed deputies and state troopers stood by
 or intervened to smash a reporter's camera or use cattle prods on SNCC workers. After his day of watching, he spoke in a crowded church, blaming Washington, he told a New York Post reporter the federal government could protect Negroes—it could send federal troops into the South
He blamed the Kennedys for not acting.[197]: 191,195-98 In March 1965, Baldwin joined marchers who walked 50 miles from Selma, Alabama (Selma to Montgomery under the protection of federal troops.[197]: 236 Nonetheless, he rejected the label "civil rights activist", or that he had participated in a civil
rights movement, instead agreeing with Malcolm X's assertion that if one is a citizen, one should not have to fight for one's civil rights. In a 1964 interview with Robert Penn Warren for the book Who Speaks for the Negro?, Baldwin rejected the idea that the civil rights movement was an outright revolution, instead calling it "a very peculiar revolution
because it has to... have its aims the establishment of a union, and a... radical shift in the American mores, the American way of life... not only as it applies to every citizen of the country."[209] In a 1979 speech at UC Berkeley, Baldwin called it, instead, "the latest slave rebellion".[210] In 1968, Baldwin signed
the "Writers and Editors War Tax Protest" pledge, vowing to refuse to make income tax payments in protest against the Vietnam War.[211] He was also a supporter of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, which prompted the FBI to create a file on Baldwin.[212] Richard Wright (1908–1960) photographed in 1939 by Carl Van Vechten A great influence
on Baldwin was the painter Beauford Delaney. In The Price of the Ticket (1985), Baldwin describes Delaney as: ... the first living proof, for me, that a black man could be an artist. In a warmer time, a less blasphemous place, he would have been recognized as my teacher and I as his pupil. He became, for me, an example of courage and integrity,
humility and passion. An absolute integrity: I saw him shaken many times and I lived to see him broken but I never saw him bow. Later support came friends, and Wright helped Baldwin to secure the Eugene F. Saxton Memorial
Foundation $500 fellowship.[213] Baldwin's essay "Notes of a Native Son. In Baldwin's essay "Everybody's Protest Novel", however, he indicated that Native Son. In Baldwin's essay "Everybody's Protest Novel", however, he indicated that Native Son. In Baldwin's essay "Everybody's Protest Novel", however, he indicated that Native Son. In Baldwin's essay "Everybody's Protest Novel", however, he indicated that Native Son. In Baldwin's essay "Everybody's Protest Novel", however, he indicated that Native Son. In Baldwin's essay "Everybody's Protest Novel", however, he indicated that Native Son. In Baldwin's essay "Everybody's Protest Novel", however, he indicated that Native Son. In Baldwin's essay "Everybody's Protest Novel", however, he indicated that Native Son. In Baldwin's essay "Everybody's Protest Novel", however, he indicated that Native Son. In Baldwin's essay "Everybody's Protest Novel", however, he indicated that Native Son. In Baldwin's essay "Everybody's Protest Novel", however, he indicated that Native Son. In Baldwin's essay "Everybody's Protest Novel", however, he indicated that Native Son. In Baldwin's essay "Everybody's Protest Novel", however, he indicated that Native Son. In Baldwin's essay "Everybody's Protest Novel", however, he indicated that Native Son. In Baldwin's essay "Everybody's Protest Novel", he indicated that Native Son. In Baldwin's essay "Everybody's Protest Novel", he indicated that Native Son. In Baldwin's essay "Everybody's Protest Novel", he indicated that Native Son. In Baldwin's essay "Everybody's Protest Novel", he indicated that Native Son. In Baldwin's essay "Everybody's Protest Novel", he indicated that Native Son. In Baldwin's essay "Everybody's Protest Novel", he indicated that Native Son. In Baldwin's essay "Everybody's Protest Novel", he indicated that Native Son. In Baldwin's essay "Everybody's Protest Novel", he indicated that Native Son. In Baldwin's essay "Everybody's Protest Novel", he indicated that Native Son. In Baldwin's essay "Everybody's Protest Novel", he in
psychological complexity, and the friendship between the two authors ended.[214] Interviewed by Julius Lester,[215] however, Baldwin explained: "I knew Richard and I loved him. I was not attacking him; I was trying to clarify something for myself." In 1949, Baldwin met and fell in love with Lucien Happersberger, a boy aged 17, though
Happersberger's marriage three years later left Baldwin distraught. When the marriage ended, they later reconciled, with Happersberger staying by Baldwin's deathbed at his house in Saint-Paul-de-Vence. [216] Happersberger staying by Baldwin's deathbed at his house in Saint-Paul-de-Vence.
Simone. Langston Hughes, Lorraine Hansberry, and Baldwin helped Simone learn about the Civil Rights Movement. Baldwin also provided her with literary references influential on her later work. Baldwin helped Simone learn about the Civil Rights Movement. Baldwin and Hansberry met with Robert F. Kennedy, along with Kenneth Clark and Lena Horne and others in an attempt to persuade Kennedy of the
importance of civil rights legislation. [217] Baldwin influenced the work of French painter Philippe Derome, whom he met in Paris in the early 1960s. Baldwin also knew Marlon Brando, Charlton Heston, Billy Dee Williams, Huey P. Newton, Nikki Giovanni, Jean-Paul Sartre, Jean Genet (with whom he campaigned on behalf of the Black Panther Party),
Lee Strasberg, Elia Kazan, Rip Torn, Alex Haley, Miles Davis, Amiri Baraka, Martin Luther King Jr., Dorothea Tanning, Leonor Fini, Margaret Mead, Josephine Baker, Allen Ginsberg, Chinua Achebe, and Maya Angelou. He wrote at length about his "political relationship" with Malcolm X. He collaborated with childhood friend Richard Avedon on the
1964 book Nothing Personal. [218] Baldwin was fictionalized as the character Marion Dawes in the 1967 novel The Man Who Cried I Am by John A. Williams. [219] Maya Angelou called Baldwin was fictionalized as the character Marion Dawes in the 1967 novel The Man Who Cried I Am by John A. Williams. [218] Baldwin was fictionalized as the character Marion Dawes in the 1967 novel The Man Who Cried I Am by John A. Williams. [219] Maya Angelou called Baldwin was fictionalized as the character Marion Dawes in the 1967 novel The Man Who Cried I Am by John A. Williams. [219] Maya Angelou called Baldwin was fictionalized as the character Marion Dawes in the 1967 novel The Man Who Cried I Am by John A. Williams. [219] Maya Angelou called Baldwin was fictionalized as the character Marion Dawes in the 1967 novel The Man Who Cried I Am by John A. Williams. [219] Maya Angelou called Baldwin was fictionalized as the character Marion Dawes in the 1967 novel The Man Who Cried I Am by John A. Williams. [219] Maya Angelou called Baldwin was fictional formation of the character Marion Dawes in the 1967 novel The Man Who Cried I Am by John A. Williams. [219] Maya Angelou called Baldwin was fictional formation of the character Marion Dawes in the 1967 novel The Man Who Cried I Am by John A. Williams. [219] Maya Angelou called Baldwin was first the character Marion Dawes in the 1967 novel The Man Who Cried I Am by John A. Williams. [219] Maya Angelou called Baldwin Who Cried I Am by John A. Williams. [219] Maya Angelou called Baldwin Who Cried I Am by John A. Williams. [219] Maya Angelou called Baldwin Who Cried I Am by John A. Williams. [219] Maya Angelou called Baldwin Who Cried I Am by John A. Williams. [219] Maya Angelou called Baldwin Who Cried I Am by John A. Williams. [219] Maya Angelou called Baldwin Who Cried I Am by John A. Williams. [219] Maya Angelou called Baldwin Who Cried I Am by John A. Williams. [219] Maya Angelou called Baldwin Maya Angelou called Baldwin Maya Angelou called Baldwin Maya Angelou called Baldwin Maya Ange
Commandeur de la Légion d'Honneur by the French government in 1986.[220][221] Baldwin was also a close friend of Nobel Prize-winning novelist Toni Morrison, who lived for a time in same apartment building in New York. [222] Upon his death, Morrison wrote a eulogy for Baldwin that appeared in The New York Times. In the eulogy, entitled "Life"
in His Language", Morrison credits Baldwin as being her literary inspiration and the person who showed her the true potential of writing. She writes: You knew, didn't you, how I needed your language and the mind that formed it? How I relied on your fierce courage to tame wildernesses for me? How strengthened I was by the certainty that came
from knowing you would never hurt me? You knew, didn't you, how I loved your love? You knew, didn't you, how I loved your love? You knew, didn't you, how I loved your love? You knew, didn't you, how I loved your love? You knew, didn't you, how I loved your love? You knew, didn't you, how I loved your love? You knew, didn't you, how I loved your love? You knew, didn't you, how I loved your love? You knew, didn't you, how I loved your love? You knew, didn't you, how I loved your love? You knew, didn't you, how I loved your love? You knew, didn't you, how I loved your love? You knew, didn't you, how I loved your love? You knew, didn't you, how I loved your love? You knew, didn't you, how I loved your love? You knew, didn't you, how I loved your love? You knew, didn't you, how I loved your love? You knew, didn't you, how I loved your love? You knew, didn't you, how I loved your love? You knew, didn't you, how I loved your love? You knew, didn't you, how I loved your love? You knew, didn't you knew,
Pulitzer Prize prompted 48 African-American writers and critics - among them Maya Angelou, Amiri Baraka, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., John Edgar Wideman, and John A. Williams - to sign a statement published in the New York Times Book Review deploring the fact that Morrison had not been given either award for her celebrated novel Beloved, with
signatories June Jordan and Houston A. Baker further stating: "... even as we mourn the passing of so legendary a writer as James Baldwin, and even as we may revel in the posthumous acclamations of his impact and his public glory, how shall we yet grieve, relieve or altogether satisfy? ... We grieve because we cannot yet assure that such shame, such
national neglect, will not occur again, and then, again."[224][225] Although Baldwin and Truman Capote were acquaintances, they were not friends. In fact, Capote berated him several times.[226] Literary critic Harold Bloom characterized Baldwin as being "among the most considerable moral essayists in the United States".[227] Baldwin's influence
on other writers has been profound: Toni Morrison edited the Library of America's first two volumes of Baldwin's fiction and essays: Early Novels & Stories (1998) and Collected Essays (1998). A third volume, Later Novels (2015), was edited by Darryl Pinckney, who delivered a talk on Baldwin in February 2013 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of
The New York Review of Books, during which Pinckney said, "No other black writer I'd read was as literary as Baldwin in his early essays, not even Ralph Ellison. There is something wild in the beauty of Baldwin's sentences and the cool of his tone, something improbable, too, this meeting of Henry James, the Bible, and Harlem."[228] One of Baldwin's
richest short stories, "Sonny's Blues", appears in many anthologies of short fiction used in introductory college literature classes. A Baldwin quotation (ultimately misquoted) used in graffiti during 2020's George Floyd protests in Indianapolis A street in San Francisco, Baldwin Court in the Bayview neighborhood, is named after him.[229] In 1987,
Kevin Brown, a photojournalist from Baltimore, founded the National James Baldwin Literary Society. The group organizes free public events celebrating Baldwin Scholars program, an urban outreach initiative, in honor of Baldwin, who taught at
Hampshire in the early 1980s. The JBS Program provides talented students of color from under-served communities an opportunity to develop and improve the skills necessary for college success through coursework and tutorial support for one transitional year, after which Baldwin scholars may apply for full matriculation to Hampshire or any other
four-year college program. Spike Lee's 1996 film Get on the Bus includes a Black gay character, played by Isaiah Washington, who punches a homophobic character, saying: "This is for James Baldwin and Langston Hughes." His name appears in the lyrics of the Le Tigre song "Hot Topic", released in 1999.[230] In 2002, scholar Molefi Kete Asante
included James Baldwin on his list of 100 Greatest African Americans. [231] Baldwin votive candle, 2022 In 2005, the United States Postal Service created a first-class postage stamp dedicated to Baldwin, which featured him on the front with a short biography on the back of the peeling paper. In 2012, Baldwin was inducted into the Legacy Walk, an
outdoor public display that celebrates LGBT history and people. [232] In 2014, East 128th Street between Fifth and Madison Avenues was named "James Baldwin's birth. He lived in the neighborhood and attended P.S. 24. Readings of Baldwin's writing were held at The National Black Theatre and a
month-long art exhibition featuring works by New York Live Arts and artist Maureen Kelleher. The events were attended by Council Member Inez Dickens, who led the campaign to honor Harlem native's son; also taking part were Baldwin's family, theatre and film notables, and members of the community. [233][234] Also in 2014, Baldwin was one of
the inaugural honorees in the Rainbow Honor Walk, a walk of fame in San Francisco's Castro neighborhood celebrating LGBTQ people who have "made significant contributions in their fields." [235][236][237] In 2014, The Social Justice Hub at The New School's newly opened University Center was named the Baldwin Rivera Boggs Center after
activists Baldwin, Sylvia Rivera, and Grace Lee Boggs. [238] In 2016, Raoul Peck released his documentary film I Am Not Your Negro. It is a 93-minute journey into Black history that connects the past of the Civil Rights Movement to the present of Black Lives Matter. It is a
film that guestions Black representation in Hollywood and beyond. In 2017, Scott Timberg wrote an essay for the Los Angeles Times ("30 years after his death, and concluded: "So Baldwin is not just a writer for the
ages, but a scribe whose work—as squarely as George Orwell's—speaks directly to ours."[239] In June 2019, Baldwin's residence on the Upper West Side was given landmark designation by New York City's Landmarks Preservation Commission,[240][241] and it was added to the National Register of Historic Places the same year.[222] In June 2019,
Baldwin was one of the inaugural fifty American "pioneers, trailblazers, and heroes" inducted on the National Monument (SNM) in New York City's Stonewall Inn. [242][243] The SNM is the first U.S. national monument dedicated to LGBTQ rights and history, [244] and the wall's unveiling was timed
to take place during the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots. [245] At the Paris Council of June 2019, the city of Paris voted unanimously by all political groups to name a place in the capital in honor of James Baldwin. The project was confirmed on June 19, 2019, and announced for the year 2020. In 2021, Paris City Hall announced that the writer's
name would be given to the first media library in the 19th arrondissement, which is scheduled to open in 2024, [246] On February 1, 2024, Google celebrated James Baldwin with a Google Doodle. In 2024, he appeared as a character in the television series Feud: Capote vs. The Swans, played by Chris Chalk. On May 17, 2024, a blue plaque was
unveiled by Nubian Jak Community Trust/Black History Walks to honour Baldwin at the site where in 1985 he visited the C. L. R. James Library in the London Borough of Hackney. [247][248] On August 2, 2024, The New York Public Library in the London Borough of Hackney.
Mouth" in honor of the centennial of Baldwin's birth. [249][250] Scheduled to run until February 28, 2025, it is accompanied by a series of public events and an exhibition of The New York Public Library's Treasures. [251] Guggenheim
Fellowship, 1954. Eugene F. Saxton Memorial Trust Award Foreign Drama Critics Award George Polk Memorial Award, 1968. Tell Me How
Long the Train's Been Gone 1974. If Beale Street Could Talk 1979. Just Above My Head Baldwin published six short stories in various magazines between 1948 and 1960: 1948. "Previous Condition". Commentary 1950. "The Death of the Prophet". Commentary 1951. "The Outing". New Story 1957. "Sonny's Blues". Partisan Review 1958. "Come Out
the Wilderness". Mademoiselle 1960. "This Morning, This Evening, So Soon". The Atlantic Monthly Five of these stories were collected in his 1965 collected in his 1965 collected story, "The Death of the Prophet", was eventually collected in
The Cross of Redemption. Many essays by Baldwin were published for the first time as part of collections, which also included older, individually-published works (such as above) of Baldwin were published for the first time as part of collections, which also included older, individually-published works (such as above) of Baldwin were published works (such as above) of Baldwin's as well. These collections included older, individually-published works (such as above) of Baldwin's as well.
1952. "Many Thousands Gone". Partisan Review 1955. "Life Straight in De Eye" (later retitled "Carmen Jones: The Dark Is Light Enough"). Commentary 1948. "Journey to Atlanta". New Leader 1955. "Me and My House" (later retitled "Notes of a Native Son"). Harper's 1950. "The Negro in Paris" (later retitled "Carmen Jones: The Dark Is Light Enough").
 "Encounter on the Seine: Black Meets Brown"). Reporter 1954. "A Question of Identity". PR 1949. "Equal in Paris". PR 1953. "Stranger in the Village". Harper's Magazine[254][255] 1961. Nobody Knows My Name: More Notes of a Native Son 1959. "The Discovery of What It Means to Be an American". The New York Times Book Review 1957. "Princes
and Powers". Encounter 1960. "Fifth Avenue, Uptown: A Letter from Harlem". Esquire 1961. "A Negro Assays the Negro Mood". New York Times Magazine 1958. "The Hard Kind of Courage". Harper's Magazine 1959. "Nobody Knows My Name: A Letter from the South". Partisan Review 1956. "Faulkner and Desegregation". Partisan Review "In
Search of a Majority" (based on a 1960 address delivered at Kalamazoo College) 1954. "Gide as Husband and Homosexual" (later retitled "The Male Prison"). The New Leader 1960. "Notes for a Hypothetical Novel" (based on a 1960 address delivered at an Esquire Magazine symposium) 1960. "The Precarious Vogue of Ingmar Bergman" (later retitled
"The Northern Protestant"). Esquire "Alas, Poor Richard" (two of the three parts appeared in earlier form 1961. "The Survival of Richard Wright". (Later retitled "Eight Men"). Reporter 1961. "Reporter 1961. "The Black Boy Looks at the White Boy Norman Mailer". Esquire 1963. The Fire Next Time
1962. "Down at the Cross: Letter from a Region of My Mind". The New Yorker[257] 1962. "My Dungeon Shook: A Letter to My Nephew". The Progressive[258] 1972. No Name in the Street 1976. The Devil Finds Work — a book-length essay published by Dial Press 1985. The Evidence of Things Not Seen 1985. The Price of the Ticket (This book is a
collection of Baldwin's writings on race. Many of the items included are reprinted from Baldwin's first five books of nonfiction, but several are collected here for the Frice of the Ticket" 1948. "Lockridge: The American Myth". New Leader 1956. "The Crusade of Indignation". The Nation 1959. "On Catfish Row: Porgy and Bess in the
Movies". Commentary 1960. "They Can't Turn Back". Mademoiselle 1961. "The Dangerous Road before Martin Luther King". Harper's 1961. "The New Lost Generation". Esquire 1963. "A Talk to Teachers" [259] 1964. "Nothing Personal" (originally text for a book of photographs).
by Richard Avedon) 1964. "Words of a Native Son". Playboy 1965. "The American Dream and the American Dream and the
York Times Magazine[260] 1968. "White Racism or World Community?" Ecumenical Review 1969. "Sweet Lorraine". Esquire 1976. "How One Black Man Came To Be an American: A Review of Roots". The New York Times Book Review 1977. "An Open Letter to Mr. Carter". The New York Times 1977. "Every Good-Bye Ain't Gone". New York. 1979. "If
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following the Baldwin-Kennedy meeting in 1963-06-24. "A Conversation With James Baldwin" is a television interview recorded by WGBH following the Baldwin-Kennedy meeting [265] 1963-02-04. Take This Hammer is a television documentary made with Richard O. Moore on KQED about Blacks in San Francisco in the late 1950s. [266] 1965-06
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television conversation between Baldwin and Maya Angelou.[271] 1976. "Pantechnicon; James Baldwin" is a radio program recorded by WGBH. Baldwin discusses his new book, The Devil Finds Work, which is representative of the way he takes a look at the American films and myth.[272] LGBTQ culture in New York City List of American novelists List
of civil rights leaders List of LGBTQ people from New York City List of LGBT writers No More Water: The Gospel of James Baldwin ^ In his early writing, Baldwin said his father left the South because he reviled the crude vaudeville culture in New Orleans and found it difficult to express his inner strivings. However, Baldwin later said his father
departed because "lynching had become a national sport."[11] A Baldwin learned that he was not his father's biological son through overhearing a comment to that effect during one of his parents' conversations late in 1940.[19] He tearfully recounted this fact to Emile Capouya, with whom he went to school.[19] It is in describing his father's
searing hatred of white people that comes one of Baldwin's most noted quotes: "Hatred, which could destroy so much, never failed to destroy the man who hated and this was an immutable law."[22] ^ It was from Bill Miller, her sister Henrietta, and Miller's husband Evan Winfield that the young Baldwin started to suspect that "white people did not
act as they did because they were white, but for some other reason."[35] Miller's openness did not have a similar effect on Baldwin's father.[36] Emma Baldw
came to despise.[37] ^ As Baldwin's biographer and friend David Leeming tells it: "Like Henry James, the writing Baldwin did before his death was on a play called The Welcome Table.[38] ^ Baldwin's biographers give
different years for his entry into Frederick Douglass Junior High, the 13-year-old Baldwin experienced what he would call his "violation": he was running an errand for his mother when a tall man in his mid-30s lured him onto the second floor of
a store, where the man touched Baldwin sexually. Alarmed by a noise, the man gave Baldwin money and disappeared. Baldwin ran home and threw the money out of his bathroom window.[46] Alarmed by a noise, the man gave Baldwin money and disappeared. Baldwin ran home and threw the money out of his bathroom window.[46] The man gave Baldwin money and disappeared. Baldwin ran home and threw the money out of his bathroom window.[46] Alarmed by a noise, the man gave Baldwin money and disappeared. Baldwin ran home and threw the money out of his bathroom window.[46] Alarmed by a noise, the man gave Baldwin money and disappeared. Baldwin ran home and threw the money out of his bathroom window.[46] Alarmed by a noise, the man gave Baldwin money and disappeared. Baldwin money and disappeared by a noise, the man gave Baldwin money and disappeared by a noise, the man gave Baldwin money and disappeared by a noise, the man gave Baldwin money and disappeared by a noise, the man gave Baldwin money and disappeared by a noise, the man gave Baldwin money and disappeared by a noise, the man gave Baldwin money and disappeared by a noise, the man gave Baldwin money and disappeared by a noise, the man gave Baldwin money and disappeared by a noise, the man gave Baldwin money and disappeared by a noise, the man gave Baldwin money and disappeared by a noise, the man gave Baldwin money and disappeared by a noise, the man gave Baldwin money and disappeared by a noise, the man gave Baldwin money and disappeared by a noise, the man gave Baldwin money and disappeared by a noise, the man gave Baldwin money and disappeared by a noise, the man gave Baldwin money and disappeared by a noise, the man gave Baldwin money and disappeared by a noise, the man gave Baldwin money and disappeared by a noise by a noise and disappeared by a noise and
form to the character Rufus in Another Country.[66] ^ Happersberger gave form to Giovanni in Baldwin's 1956 novel Giovanni in Baldwin's Room. ^ Baldwin reflected on "Everybody's Protest Novel" in a 1984 interview for The Paris Review, saying that the essay was a "discharge" of the "be kind to Jews"-type of book he constantly reviewed in
his Paris era: "I was convinced then—and I still am—that those sort of books do nothing but bolster up an image. ... [I]t seemed to me that if I took the role of a victim they could pity me and add a few more pennies to my home relief check."[100] ^ This is
particularly true of "A Question of Identity". Indeed, Baldwin reread The Ambassadors around the same time, Delaney had become obsessed with a portrait he had painted of Baldwin that disappeared. In fact, Baldwin had
managed to leave the portrait in Owen Dodson's home when working with Dodson on the Washington, D.C., premiere of Another Country. Biographer David Leeming described the missing painting as a "clause célèbre" among friends of Dodson, Delaney, and Baldwin and Dodson had a falling-out some years later, hopes of retrieving
the painting were dashed. The painting eventually reappeared in Dodson's effects after his death.[144] ^ "All-Time 100 Novels". Time. October 21, 2005. Archived from the original on October 29, 2006. Retrieved June 14, 2020. ^ Held,
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pp. 351-356. ^ Campbell 2021, p. 7. ^ Leeming 1994, pp. 19, 51. ^ Tubbs 2021, pp. 457-458. ^ Kenan 1994, pp. 27-28. ^ Tubbs 2021, p. 14; Leeming 1994, pp. 23-24 ^ Tubbs 2021, pp. 519-520. ^ a b c d Leeming 1994, pp. 24. ^ Leeming 1994, pp. 25. ^ Leeming 1994, pp. 25. ^ Leeming 1994, pp. 27-28. ^ Tubbs 2021, pp. 519-520. ^ a b c d Leeming 1994, pp. 27-28. ^ Tubbs 2021, pp. 519-520. ^ Tu
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American writer and activist (1924-1987) This article is about the American writer. For other people with the same name, see James Baldwin (disambiguation). J
FranceResting placeFerncliff Cemetery, Westchester County, New YorkOccupationWriteractivistEducationDeWitt Clinton High SchoolGenreUrban fictionAfrican-American literatureGay literatureYears active1947-1985Notable works Go Tell It on the Mountain (1953) Notes of a Native Son (1955) Giovanni's Room (1956) James Arthur Baldwin (németery, Westchester County, New YorkOccupationWriteractivistEducationDeWitt Clinton High SchoolGenreUrban fictionAfrican-American literatureGay lite
Jones; August 2, 1924 - December 1, 1987) was an American writer and civil rights activist who garnered acclaim for his essays, novels, plays, and poems. His 1955 essay collection Notes of a Native Son helped establish his
reputation as a voice for human equality.[2] Baldwin was an influential public figure and orator, especially during the civil rights movement in the United States.[3][4][5] Baldwin's fiction posed fundamental personal questions and dilemmas amid complex social and psychological pressures. Themes of masculinity, race, and class intertwine
to create intricate narratives that influenced both the civil rights movement and the gay liberation movement in mid-twentieth century America. His protagonists are often but not exclusively African-American, and gay and bisexual men feature prominently in his work (as in his 1956 novel Giovanni's Room). His characters typically face internal and
external obstacles in their search for self- and social acceptance.[6] Baldwin's work continues to influence artists and writers. His unfinished manuscript Remember This House was expanded as the 2016 documentary film I Am Not Your Negro, winning the BAFTA Award for Best Documentary. His 1974 novel If Beale Street Could Talk
was adapted into a 2018 film of the same name, which earned widespread praise. Baldwin was born as James Arthur Jones to Emma Berdis Jones on August 2, 1924, at Harlem Hospital in New York City.[7] Born on Deal Island, Maryland, in 1903,[8] Emma Jones was one of many who fled racial segregation and discrimination in the South during the
Great Migration. She arrived in Harlem, New York, when she was 19 years old.[9] Baldwin was born out of wedlock there. Jones never revealed to him who his biological father was.[9] Jones originally undertook to care for her son as a single mother.[10] However, in 1927, Jones married David Baldwin, a laborer and Baptist preacher.[11] David
Baldwin was born in Bunkie, Louisiana, and preached in New Orleans, but left the South for Harlem in 1919.[11][a] How David and Emma met is uncertain, but in James Baldwin and David Baldwin had eight to the Mountain, the characters based on the two are introduced by the man's sister.[12] Emma Baldwin and David Baldwin had eight to the Mountain, the characters based on the two are introduced by the man's sister.[12] Emma Baldwin and David Baldwin had eight to the Mountain, the characters based on the two are introduced by the man's sister.[12] Emma Baldwin had eight to the Mountain, the characters based on the two are introduced by the man's sister.[12] Emma Baldwin had eight to the Mountain, the characters based on the two are introduced by the man's sister.[12] Emma Baldwin had eight to the Mountain, the characters based on the two are introduced by the man's sister.[13] Emma Baldwin had eight to the man's sister.[13] Emma Baldwin had eight to the man's sister.[14] Emma Baldwin had eight to the man's sister.[15] Emma Bald
children in sixteen years—George, Barbara, Wilmer, David Jr. (named for James's stepfather and deceased half-brother), Gloria, Ruth, Elizabeth, and Paula.[13] James took his stepfather and loved her, often through reference to her loving smile
[14]: 20 James moved several times while young but always within Harlem.[15] At the time, Harlem was still a mixed-race area of the city in the incipient days of the Great Migration.[16] James Baldwin did not know exactly how old his stepfather was, but it is clear that he was much older than Emma; indeed, he may have been born before the
Emancipation in 1863.[17] David's mother, Barbara, was born enslaved and lived with the Baldwins in New York before her death when James was seven years old.[17] David also had a light-skinned half-brother fathered by his mother's erstwhile enslaver[17] and a sister named Barbara, whom James and others in the family called "Taunty".[18]
David's father was born a slave.[9] David had been married earlier and had a daughter, who was eight years James senior. Sam lived with the Baldwins for a time and once saved James from drowning.[14]:7[17] James Baldwin referred to his stepfather simply as
"father" throughout his life,[11] but David Sr. and James had an extremely difficult relationship and nearly resorted to physical fights on several occasions.[14]:18[b] "They fought because James's "salvation".[20] According to
one biographer, David Baldwin also hated white people and "his devotion to God was mixed with a hope that God would take revenge on them for him."[21][c] During the 1920s and 1930s, David worked at a soft-drink bottling factory, [16] although he was eventually laid off from the job. As his anger and hatred eventually tainted his sermons, he was
less in demand as a preacher. David sometimes took out his anger on his family and the children were afraid of him, though this was to some degree balanced by the love lavished on them by their mother. [23] David Baldwin grew paranoid near the end of his life. [24] He was committed to a mental asylum in 1943 and died of tuberculosis on July 29 of
that year, the same day Emma had their last child, Paula.[25] James, at his mother's urging, visited his dying stepfather the day before[26] and came to something of a posthumous reconciliation with him in his essay "Notes of a Native Son". In the essay, he wrote: "in his outrageously demanding and protective way, he loved his children, who were
black like him and menaced like him."[27] David Baldwin in Los Angeles, 1964 As the oldest child, James Baldwin worked part-time from an early age to help support his family. He was molded not only by the difficult relationships in his
household but also by the impacts of the poverty and discrimination he saw all around him. As he grew up, friends he sat next to in church turned to drugs, crime, or prostitution. In what biographer Anna Malaika Tubbs found to be a commentary on not only his own life but also the entire Black experience in America, Baldwin wrote: "I never had a
childhood... I did not have any human identity... I was born dead."[28] Baldwin wrote comparatively little about events at school.[29] At five years of age, he was enrolled at Public School 24 (P.S. 24) on 128th Street in Harlem.[29] The principal of the school was Gertrude E. Ayer, the first Black principal in the city. She and some of Baldwin's teachers
recognized his brilliance early on [30] and encouraged his research and writing pursuits. [31] Ayer stated that Baldwin derived his writing talent from his mother, whose notes to school were greatly admired by the teachers, and that her son also learned to write like an angel, albeit an avenging one. [32] By fifth grade, not yet a teenager, Baldwin had
read some of Fyodor Dostoyevsky's works, Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin, and Charles Dickens'. [33][21] Baldwin wrote a song that earned praise from New York Mayor Fiorello La Guardia in a letter that La Guardia sent to him. [33] Baldwin also won a prize
for a short story that was published in a church newspaper.[33] His teachers recommended that he go to a public library on 135th Street in Harlem, a place that became his sanctuary. Baldwin met Orilla "Bill" Miller, a young white
schoolteacher from the Midwest whom Baldwin named as one of the reasons that he "never really managed to hate white people".[34][d] Among other outings, Miller took Baldwin's lifelong desire to succeed as a playwright.[38][e
David was reluctant to let his stepson go to the theatre, because he saw the stage as sinful and was suspicious of Miller. However, Baldwin ever wrote. [40] After P.S. 24, Baldwin entered Harlem's Frederick Douglass Junior High
School.[29][f] There, Baldwin met two important influences.[42] The first was Herman W. "Bill" Porter, a Black Harvard graduate.[43] Porter was the faculty advisor to the school's newspaper, the Douglass Pilot, of which Baldwin would become the editor.[29] Porter took Baldwin to the library on 42nd Street to research a piece that would turn into
Baldwin's first published essay titled "Harlem—Then and Now", which appeared in the autumn 1937 issue of the Douglass Pilot.[44] The second of these influences from his time at Frederick Douglass Junior High School was Countee Cullen, the renowned poet of the Harlem Renaissance.[45] Cullen taught French and was a literary advisor in the
English department.[29] Baldwin later remarked that he "adored" Cullen's poetry, and his dream to live in France was sparked by Cullen's early impression on him.[43] Baldwin later remarked that he "adored" Cullen's poetry, and his dream to live in France was sparked by Cullen's early impression on him.[43] Baldwin later remarked that he "adored" Cullen's poetry, and his dream to live in France was sparked by Cullen's early impression on him.[43] Baldwin later remarked that he "adored" Cullen's poetry, and his dream to live in France was sparked by Cullen's early impression on him.[43] Baldwin later remarked that he "adored" Cullen's poetry, and his dream to live in France was sparked by Cullen's early impression on him.[43] Baldwin later remarked that he "adored" Cullen's early impression on him.[43] Baldwin later remarked that he "adored" Cullen's early impression on him.[43] Baldwin later remarked that he "adored" Cullen's early impression on him.[43] Baldwin later remarked that he "adored" Cullen's early impression on him.[43] Baldwin later remarked that he "adored" Cullen's early impression on him.[43] Baldwin later remarked that he "adored" Cullen's early impression on him.[43] Baldwin later remarked that he "adored" Cullen's early impression on him.[43] Baldwin later remarked that he "adored" Cullen's early impression on him.[43] Baldwin later remarked that he "adored" Cullen's early impression on him.[43] Baldwin later remarked that he "adored" Cullen's early impression on him.[43] Baldwin later remarked that he "adored" Cullen's early impression on him.[43] Baldwin later remarked that he "adored" Cullen's early impression on him.[43] Baldwin later remarked that he "adored" Cullen's early impression on him.[43] Baldwin later remarked that he "adored" Cullen's early impression on him.[43] Baldwin later remarked that he "adored" Cullen's early impression on him.[43] Baldwin later remarked that he "adored" Cullen's early impression on him.[43] Baldwin later remarked that he "adored" cullen's early impressio
white and Jewish school, where he matriculated that fall.[47] He worked on the school's magazine, the Magpie with Richard Avedon, who went on to become a noted photographer, and Emile Capouya and Sol Stein, who would both become renowned publishers.[47] Baldwin did interviews and editing at the magazine and published a number of poems
and other writing.[48] He completed his high school diploma at De Witt Clinton in 1941.[49] Baldwin's yearbook was: "Fame is the spur and—ouch!"[49] Uncomfortable with his discovery during his high school years that he was attracted to men rather than women
Baldwin sought refuge in religion.[50] He joined the later demolished Mount Calvary of the Pentecostal Faith Church on Lenox Avenue in 1937. He then followed Mount Calvary's preacher, Bishop Rose Artemis Horn (affectionately known as Mother Horn) when she left to preach at Fireside Pentecostal Assembly.[51] At the age of 14, "Brother
Baldwin", as he was called, first took to Fireside's altar, and it was at Fireside Pentecostal, during his mostly extemporaneous sermons, that Baldwin "learned that he had authority as a speaker and could do things with a crowd." [52] He delivered his final sermon at Fireside Pentecostal in 1941. [52] Baldwin wrote in the essay "Down at the Cross" that
the church "was a mask for self-hatred and despair ... salvation stopped at the church door".[53] He recalled a rare conversation with David Baldwin left school in 1941 in order to earn money to help
support his family. He secured a job helping to build a United States Army depot in New Jersey.[54] In the middle of 1942, Emile Capouya helped Baldwin get a job laying tracks for the military in Belle Mead, New Jersey.[55] The two lived in Rocky Hill and commuted to Belle Mead, Isaldwin experienced prejudice that deeply
frustrated and angered him and that he cited as the partial cause of his later emigration out of America.[56] Baldwin's fellow white workmen, who mostly came from the South, derided him for what they saw as his "uppity" ways, his sharp, ironic wit and his lack of "respect".[55] In an incident that Baldwin described in his essay "Notes of a Native
Son", he went to a restaurant in Princeton called the Balt where, after a long wait, Baldwin was told that "colored boys" were not served there.[55] Then, on his last night in New Jersey, in another incident also memorialized in "Notes of a Native Son", Baldwin and a friend went to a diner after a movie, only to be told that Black people were not served
there.[57] Infuriated, he went to another restaurant, expecting to be denied service once again.[57] When that denial of service came, humiliation and he hurled the marrowly escaped.[58]
During these years, Baldwin was torn between his desire to write and his need to provide for his family. He took a succession of menial jobs and feared that he was becoming like his stepfather, who had been unable to provide properly for his family. [59] Fired from the track-laying job, Baldwin returned to Harlem in June 1943 to live with his family.
after taking a meat-packing job. [58] He lost the meat-packing job too, after falling asleep at the plant. [22] He became listless and unstable, drifting from one odd job to the next. [60] Baldwin drank heavily and endured the first of his nervous breakdowns. [61] Beauford Delaney helped Baldwin cast off his melancholy. [61] During the year before he left
De Witt Clinton, and at Capouya's urging, Baldwin had met Delaney, a modernist painter, in Greenwich Village. [62] Delaney would become Baldwin that a Black man could make his living in art. [62] Moreover, when World War II bore down on the United States during the winter after
Baldwin left De Witt Clinton, the Harlem that Baldwin knew was atrophying—no longer the bastion of a Renaissance, the community grew more economically isolated, and he considered his prospects there to be bleak. [63] This led him to move to Greenwich Village, a place that had fascinated him since at least the age of 15. [63] Baldwin lived in
several locations in Greenwich Village, first with Delaney, then with a scattering of other friends. [64] He took a job at the Calypso, Baldwin worked under Trinidadian restaurateur Connie Williams. During this time, Baldwin continued to explore his
sexuality, coming out to Capouya and another friend, and to frequent Calypso guest, Stan Weir.[65] His major love during his Village years was an ostensibly straight Black man named Eugene Worth introduced Baldwin to the Young People's
 Socialist League and Baldwin became a Trotskyist for a brief period. [66] Baldwin never expressed his desire for Worth, and Worth died by suicide after jumping from the George Washington Bridge in 1946. [66] The two became fast
friends, a friendship that endured through the Civil Rights Movement and long after. [66] In 1945, Baldwin's relationship with the Burches soured in the 1950s but was resurrected towards the
end of his life, [68] Near the end of 1945, Baldwin met Richard Wright, who had published the novel Native Son several years earlier, [69] Baldwin's main objective for their initial meeting was to interest Wright in an early manuscript of what would become Go Tell It On The Mountain, but was at the time titled "Crying Holy", [70] Wright liked the
manuscript and encouraged his editors to consider Baldwin's work, but a $500 advance from Harper & Brothers was dissipated with no book to show for the money, and Harper eventually declined to publish the book.[71] Nonetheless, Baldwin regularly sent letters to Wright in subsequent years and would reunite with Wright in Paris, France, in 1948
(though their relationship took a turn for the worse soon after the Paris reunion).[72] During his Village years, Baldwin made a number of connections in New York's liberal literary establishment, primarily through Worth: Sol Levitas at The New Leader magazine, Randall Jarrell at The Nation, Elliot Cohen and Robert Warshow at Commentary, and
Philip Rahv at Partisan Review.[73] Baldwin wrote many reviews for The New Leader, but was published for the first time in The Nation in a 1947 review of Maxim Gorki's Best Short Stories.[73] Only one of Baldwin's reviews from this era made it into his later essay collection The Price of the Ticket: a sharply ironic assay of Ross Lockridge's Raintree
Countree that Baldwin wrote for The New Leader.[73] Baldwin's first essay, "The Harlem Ghetto", was published a year later in Commentary and explored anti-Semitism included.[73] Jewish people were also the main
group of white people that Black Harlem dwellers met, so Jews became a kind of synecdoche for all that the Black people in Harlem thought of white people. [74] Baldwin published his second essay in The New Leader, riding a mild wave of excitement over "Harlem Ghetto": in "Journey to Atlanta", Baldwin uses the diary recollections of his younger
brother David, who had gone to Atlanta, Georgia, as part of a singing group, to unleash a lashing of irony and scorn on the South, white radicals, and ideology itself. [75] This essay, too, was well received. [76] Baldwin tried to write another novel, Ignorant Armies, plotted in the vein of Native Son with a focus on a scandalous murder, but no final
product emerged.[77] Baldwin spent two months during the summer of 1948 at Shanks Village, a writer's colony in Woodstock, New York. He published his first work of fiction, a short story called "Previous Condition", in the October 1948 issue of Commentary magazine, about a 20-something Black man who is evicted from his apartment—which was
a metaphor for white society.[78] See also: James Baldwin in France Disillusioned by the reigning prejudice against Black people in the United States, and wanting to gain external perspectives on himself and his writing, Baldwin settled in Paris, France, at the age of 24. Baldwin did not want to be read as "merely a Negro; or, even, merely a Negro
writer."[79] He also hoped to come to terms with his sexual ambivalence and escape from the hopelessness to which many young African-American men like himself succumbed.[80] In 1948, Baldwin received a $1,500 grant (equivalent to $19,631 in 2024)[81] from a Rosenwald Fellowship[82] in order to produce a book of photographs and essays that
was to be both a catalog of churches and an exploration of religiosity in Harlem. Baldwin worked with a photographer friend named Theodore Pelatowski, whom Baldwin met through Richard Avedon.[83] Although the book (titled Unto the Dying Lamb) was never finished, [83] the Rosenwald funding did allow Baldwin to realise his long-standing
ambition of moving to France.[84] After saying his goodbyes to his mother and his younger siblings, with forty dollars to his mother.[85] Baldwin would later give various explanations for leaving America—sex, Calvinism, an intense
sense of hostility which he feared would turn inward—but, above all, was the problem of race, which, throughout his life, had exposed him to a lengthy catalog of humiliations.[86] He hoped for a more peaceable existence in Paris. [87] In Paris, Baldwin was soon involved in the cultural radicalism of the Left Bank. He started to publish his work in
literary anthologies, notably Zero[88] which was edited by his friend Themistocles Hoetis and which had already published essays by Richard Wright. Baldwin spent nine years living in Paris, mostly in Saint-Germain-des-Prés, with various excursions to Switzerland, Spain, and back to the United States.[89] Baldwin's time in Paris was itinerant: he
stayed with various friends around the city and in various hotels. Most notable of these lodgings was Hôtel Verneuil, a hotel in Saint-Germain that had collected a motley crew of struggling expatriates, mostly writers.[90] This Verneuil circle spawned numerous friendships that Baldwin relied upon in rough periods.[90] He was also extremely poor
during his time in Paris, with only momentary respites from that condition.[91] In his early years in Saint-Germain, he met Otto Friedrich, Mason Hoffenberg, Asa Benveniste, Themistocles Hoetis, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Max Ernst, Truman Capote, and Stephen Spender, among many others.[92] Baldwin also met Lucien Happersberger,
a Swiss boy, 17 years old at the time of their first meeting, who came to France in search of excitement. [93] Happersberger and Baldwin began to bond for the next few years, eventually becoming his intimate partner and he became Baldwin began to bond for the next thirty-
nine years.[94][i] Even though his time in Paris was not easy, Baldwin escaped from the aspects of American life that outraged him the most—especially the "daily indignities of racism." [87] According to one biographer: "Baldwin seemed at ease in his Paris life; Jimmy Baldwin the aesthete and lover reveled in the Saint-Germain ambiance." [95] During
his early years in Paris, prior to the publication of Go Tell It on the Mountain in 1953, Baldwin wrote several notable works. "The Negro in Paris", first published in The Reporter, explored Baldwin's perception of an incompatibility between Black Americans and Black Americans in Paris, because Black Americans had faced a "depthless alienation from
oneself and one's people" that was mostly unknown to Parisian Africans.[96] He also wrote "The Preservation of Innocence", which traced the violence against homosexuals in American life back to the protracted adolescence of American sacrated adolescence of American sacrated adolescence against homosexuals in American life back to the protracted adolescence of American sacrated adolescence of American sacrated adolescence against homosexuals in American life back to the protracted adolescence of American sacrated adolescence against homosexuals in American sacrated adolescence of American sacrated adolescence against homosexuals in American life back to the protracted adolescence of American sacrated adolescence against homosexuals in American sacrated adolescence against homosexuals and sacrated adolescence against h
literature, and he also published "The Death of the Prophet", a short story that grew out of Baldwin's earlier writings of Go Tell It on The Mountain. In the latter work, Baldwin employs a character named Johnnie to trace his bouts of depression back to his inability to resolve the questions of filial intimacy raised by his relationship with his stepfather.
[98] In December 1949, Baldwin was arrested and jailed for receiving stolen goods after an American friend brought him bedsheets that the friend brought him bedsheet 
in Commentary in 1950.[99] In the essay, he expressed his surprise and his bewilderment at how he was no longer a "despised black man", instead, he was simply an American, no different from the white American friend who stole the sheet and was arrested with him.[99] During his Paris years, Baldwin also published two of his three scathing
critiques of Richard Wright—"Everybody's Protest Novel" in 1949 and "Many Thousands Gone" in 1951. Baldwin criticizes Wright's work for being protest literature, which Baldwin despised because it is "concerned with the categorizations, they fail
because they deny life."[96] Protest writing cages humanity, but, according to Baldwin, "only within this web of ambiguity, paradox, this hunger, darkness, can we find at once ourselves and the power that will free us from ourselves."[96] Baldwin took Wright's Native Son and Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin, both erstwhile favorities of Baldwin's,
as paradigmatic analysis examples of the protest novel's problem. [96] The treatment of Wright's character Bigger Thomas by socially earnest white people "to become truly human and acceptable, [they] must first become like us. This
assumption once accepted, the Negro in America can only acquiesce in the obliteration of his own personality."[100] In these two essays, Baldwin came to articulate what would become a theme of his work; that white racism toward Black Americans was refracted through self-hatred and self-denial—"One may say that the Negro in America does not
really exist except in the darkness of [white] minds. [...] Our dehumanization of the Negro then is indivisible from our dehumanization of ourselves. "[100][j] Baldwin's relationship with Wright was tense but cordial after the essays, although Baldwin eventually ceased to regard Wright as a mentor. [101] Meanwhile, "Everybody's Protest Novel" had
earned Baldwin the label "the most promising young Negro writer since Richard Wright."[102] Beginning in the winter of 1951, Baldwin and Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger's family owned a small chateau.[103] By the time of the first trip, Happersberger had then entered a heterosexual
relationship but grew worried for his friend Baldwin and offered to take Baldwin to the Swiss village.[103] Baldwin's time in the Village gave form to his essay "Stranger in the Village", published in Harper's Magazine in October 1953.[104] In that essay, Baldwin described some unintentional mistreatment and offputting experiences at the hands of
Swiss villagers who possessed a racial innocence which few Americans could attest to.[103] Baldwin explored how the bitter history which was shared by Black and white Americans back to the simplicity of this European
village where white men still have the luxury of looking on me as a stranger."[104] Baldwin photographed by Carl Van Vechten, 1955 Beauford Delaney's arrival in France in 1953 marked "the most important personal event in Baldwin's circle of friends shifted away from primarily white bohemians
toward a coterie of Black American expatriates: Baldwin grew close to dancer Bernard Hassell; spent significant amounts of time at Gordon Heath's club in Paris; regularly listened to Bobby Short and Inez Cavanaugh's performances at their respective haunts around the city; met Maya Angelou during her European tour of Porgy and Bess; and
occasionally met with writers Richard Gibson and Chester Himes, composer Howard Swanson, and even Richard Wright. [106] In 1954, Baldwin accepted a fellowship at the MacDowell writer's colony in New Hampshire to support the writing of a new novel and he also won a Guggenheim Fellowship. [107] Also in 1954, Baldwin published the three-active to support the writing of a new novel and he also won a Guggenheim Fellowship at the MacDowell writer's colony in New Hampshire to support the writing of a new novel and he also won a Guggenheim Fellowship.
play The Amen Corner which features the preacher Sister Margaret—a fictionalized Mother Horn from Baldwin's time at Fireside Pentecostal—who struggles with a difficult inheritance and with alienation from herself and her loved ones on account of her religious fervor.[108] Baldwin spent several weeks in Washington, D.C., and particularly around
Howard University while he collaborated with Owen Dodson for the premiere of The Amen Corner. Baldwin returned to Paris in October 1955, so in early 1956, he decided to enjoy what was to be his last year in France.[110] He became friends with Norman and Adele Mailer,
was recognized by the National Institute of Arts and Letters with a grant, and he was set to publish Giovanni's Room.[111] Nevertheless, Baldwin sank deeper into an emotional wreckage. In the summer of 1956—after a seemingly failed affair with a Black musician named Arnold, Baldwin's first serious relationship since Happersberger—Baldwin
overdosed on sleeping pills during a suicide attempt. [112] He regretted the attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the doctor arrived. [112] Baldwin went on to attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the doctor arrived.
European themes while nonetheless purporting to extol African originality.[113] Baldwin's first published work, a review of the writer Maxim Gorky, appeared in The Nation in 1947.[114][115] He continued to publish there at various times in his career and was serving on its editorial board at the time of his death in 1987.[115]Café de Flore,
Boulevard Saint-Germain, Paris, May 2019. In the large upstairs heated room (SALLE AU 1er - CLIMATISÉE) in 1953, Baldwin worked on his first novel, Go Tell It on the Mountain, a semi-autobiographical bildungsroman. He began writing it when he was 17 and first
published it in Paris. His first collection of essays, Notes of a Native Son appeared two years later. He continued to experiment with literary forms throughout his career, publishing poetry and plays as well as the fiction and essays for which he was known. Baldwin's second novel, Giovanni's Room, caused great controversy when it was first published
in 1956 due to its explicit homoerotic content. [117] Main article: Go Tell It on the Mountain (novel)
Baldwin sent the manuscript for Go Tell It on the Mountain from Paris to New York publishing house Alfred A. Knopf on February 26, 1952, and Knopf expressed interest in the novel several months later.[118] To settle the terms of his association with Knopf, Baldwin sailed back to the United States in April 1952 on the SS Île de France, where
Themistocles Hoetis and Dizzy Gillespie were coincidentally also voyaging—his conversations with both on the ship were extensive [118] After his arrival in New York, Baldwin grew particularly close to his younger brother. David Ir., and
served as best man at David's wedding on June 27.[118] Meanwhile, Baldwin agreed to rewrite parts of Go Tell It on the Mountain in exchange for a $250 advance ($2,960 today) and a further $750 ($8,881 today) paid when the final manuscript was completed.[119] When Knopf accepted the revision in July, they sent the remainder of the advance,
and Baldwin was soon to have his first published novel.[120] In the interim, Baldwin published excerpts of the novel in two publications: one excerpt was published as "Exodus" in American Mercury and the other as "Roy's Wound" in New World Writing.[120] Baldwin set sail back to Europe on August 28 and Go Tell It on the Mountain was published
in May 1953.[120] Go Tell It on the Mountain was the product of years of work and exploratory writing since his first attempt at a novel in 1938.[121] In rejecting the ideological manacles of protest literature and the presupposition he thought inherent to such works that "in Negro life there exists no tradition, no field of manners, no possibility of
ritual or intercourse", Baldwin sought in Go Tell It on the Mountain to emphasize that the core of the problem was "not that the Negro has no tradition but that there has as yet arrived no sensibility sufficiently profound and tough to make this tradition but that there has as yet arrived no sensibility sufficiently profound and tough to make this tradition but that there has as yet arrived no sensibility sufficiently profound and tough to make this tradition but that there has as yet arrived no sensibility sufficiently profound and tough to make this tradition but that the Negro has no tradition but that there has as yet arrived no sensibility sufficiently profound and tough to make this tradition but that there has as yet arrived no sensibility sufficiently profound and tough to make this tradition but that there has an experience of the problem was "not that the Negro has no tradition but that there has an experience of the problem was "not that the Negro has no tradition but the Negro has no tradit
Mountain and James Joyce's 1916 A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: to "encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race." [123] Baldwin himself drew parallels between Joyce's flight from his native Ireland and his own run from Harlem, and Baldwin read Joyce's
tome in Paris in 1950, however, in Baldwin's Go Tell It on the Mountain, it would be the Black American "uncreated conscience" at the heart of the project. [124] The novel is a bildungsroman that explores the inward struggles of protagonist John Grimes, the illegitimate son of Elizabeth Grimes, to claim his own soul as it lies on the "threshing floor"—a
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clear allusion to another John: the Baptist, born of another Elizabeth.[121] John's struggle is a metaphor for Baldwin's own struggle between escaping the history and heritage, to the bottom of his people's sorrows, before he can shrug off his psychic chains, "climb them of his people is a metaphor for Baldwin's own struggle between escaping the history and heritage, to the bottom of his people's sorrows, before he can shrug off his psychic chains, "climb them of his people is a metaphor for Baldwin's own struggle between escaping the history and heritage, to the bottom of his people's sorrows, before he can shrug off his psychic chains, "climb them of his people is a metaphor for Baldwin's own struggle between escaping the history and heritage, to the bottom of his people's sorrows, before he can shrug off his psychic chains, "climb them of his people is a metaphor for Baldwin's own struggle between escaping the history and heritage, the history and heritage is a metaphor for Baldwin's own struggle between escaping the history and heritage is a metaphor for Baldwin's own struggle between escaping the history and heritage is a metaphor for Baldwin's own struggle between escaping the history and heritage is a metaphor for Baldwin's own struggle between escaping the history and heritage is a metaphor for Baldwin's own struggle between escaping the history and heritage is a metaphor for Baldwin's own struggle between escaping the history and heritage is a metaphor for Baldwin's own struggle between escaping the history and heritage is a metaphor for Baldwin's own struggle between escaping the history and heritage is a metaphor for Baldwin's own struggle between escaping the history and heritage is a metaphor for Baldwin's own struggle between escaping the history and heritage is a metaphor for Baldwin's own struggle between escaping the history and heritage is a metaphor for baldwin and heritage is 
mountain", and free himself.[121] John's family members and most of the characters in the novel are blown north in the winds of the Great Migration in search of the American Dream and all are stifled.[125] Florence, Elizabeth, and Gabriel are denied love's reach because racism assured that they could not muster the kind of self-respect that love
requires.[125] Racism drives Elizabeth's lover, Richard, to suicide—Richard will not be the last Baldwin character to die thus for that same reason.[121] Florence's lover Frank is destroyed by searing self-hatred of his own Blackness.[121] Florence's lover Frank is destroyed by searing self-hatred of his own Blackness.[121] Florence's lover Frank is destroyed by searing self-hatred of his own Blackness.[121] Florence's lover Frank is destroyed by searing self-hatred of his own Blackness.[121] Florence's lover Frank is destroyed by searing self-hatred of his own Blackness.[121] Florence's lover Frank is destroyed by searing self-hatred of his own Blackness.[121] Florence's lover Frank is destroyed by searing self-hatred of his own Blackness.[121] Florence's lover Frank is destroyed by searing self-hatred of his own Blackness.[121] Florence's lover Frank is destroyed by searing self-hatred of his own Blackness.[121] Florence's lover Frank is destroyed by searing self-hatred of his own Blackness.[121] Florence's lover Frank is destroyed by searing self-hatred of his own Blackness.[121] Florence's lover Frank is destroyed by searing self-hatred of his own Blackness.[121] Florence's lover Frank is destroyed by searing self-hatred of his own Blackness.[121] Florence's lover Frank is destroyed by searing self-hatred of his own Blackness.[121] Florence's lover Frank is destroyed by searing self-hatred of his own Blackness.[121] Florence's lover Frank is destroyed by searing self-hatred of his own Blackness.[121] Florence's lover Frank is destroyed by searing self-hatred of his own Blackness.[121] Florence's lover Frank is destroyed by searing self-hatred of his own Blackness.[121] Florence's lover Frank is destroyed by searing self-hatred of his own Blackness.[121] Florence's lover Frank is destroyed by searing self-hatred of his own Blackness.[121] Florence's lover Frank is destroyed by searing self-hatred of his own Blackness.[121] Florence's lover Frank is destroyed by searing self-hatred of his own Blackness.[121] 
mouthed religiosity only a hypocritical cover.[121] The phrase "in my father's house" and various similar formulations appear throughout Go Tell It on the Mountain and was even an early title for the novel.[122] The house is a metaphor at several levels of generality: for his own family's apartment in Harlem, for Harlem taken as a whole, for America
and its history, and for the "deep heart's core".[122] John's departure from the agony that reigned in his father's house, particularly the historical sources of the family's privations, came through a conversion experience.[125] "Who are they?" John cries out when he sees a mass of faces as he descends to the threshing floor: 'They were
the despised and rejected, the wretched and the spat upon, the earth's offscouring; and he was in their company, and they would swallow up his soul."[126] John wants desperately to escape the threshing floor, but "[t]hen John saw the Lord" and "a sweetness" filled him.[126] The midwife of John's conversion is Elisha, the voice of love that had
followed him throughout the experience, and whose body filled John with "a wild delight".[126] Thus comes the wisdom that would define Baldwin's philosophy: per biographer David Leeming: "salvation from the chains and fetters—the self-hatred and the other effects—of historical racism could come only from love."[126] Main article: Notes of a
Native Son Baldwin's friend from high school, Sol Stein, encouraged Baldwin to publish an essay collection reflecting on his work thus far.[127] but he nevertheless produced a collection, Notes of a Native Son, that was published in 1955.[127] The book
contained practically all of the major themes that run through his work: searching for self when racial myths cloud reality; accepting an inheritance ("the conundrum of color is the inheritance of every American"); claiming a birthright ("my birthright was vast, connecting me to all that lives, and to everyone, forever"); the artist's loneliness; love's
urgency.[128] All the essays in Notes were published between 1948 and 1955 in Commentary, The New Leader, Partisan Review, The Reporter, and Harper's Magazine.[129] The essays rely on autobiographical detail to convey Baldwin's arguments, as all of Baldwin's work does.[129] Notes was Baldwin's first introduction to many white Americans
and it became their reference point for his work: Baldwin was often asked: "Why don't you write more essays like the ones in Notes of a Native Son and the work of one of Baldwin's favorite writers, Henry James's Notes of a Son and Brother [130] Notes of a Native Son is divided
into three parts: the first part deals with Black identity as artist and human; the second part addresses Black life in America, including what is sometimes considered Baldwin's best essay, the titular "Notes of a Native Son"; the final part takes the expatriate's perspective, looking at American society from beyond its shores.[131] Part One of Notes
features "Everybody's Protest Novel" and "Many Thousands Gone", along with "Carmen Jones written for Commentary, in which Baldwin at once extols the sight of an all-Black cast on the silver screen and laments the film's myths about Black sexuality.[132] Part Two reprints "The Harlem
Ghetto" and "Journey to Atlanta" as prefaces for "Notes of a Native Son". In "Notes of a Native Son". Baldwin attempts to come to terms with his racial and filial inheritances. [133] Part Three contains "Equal in Paris", "Stranger in the Village", "Encounter on the Seine", and "A Question of Identity". Writing from the expatriate's perspective, Part Three
is the sector of Baldwin's corpus that most closely mirrors Henry James's methods: hewing out of one's distance and detachment from the homeland a coherent idea of what it means to be Americans. For example, in "The Harlem
Ghetto", Baldwin writes: "what it means to be a Negro in America can perhaps be suggested by the myths we perpetuate about him."[130] This earned some quantity of scorn from reviewers: in a review for The New York Times Book Review, Langston Hughes lamented that "Baldwin's viewpoints are half American, half Afro-American, incompletely
fused."[130] Others were nonplussed by the handholding of white audiences, which Baldwin himself would criticize in later works.[130] Main article
Giovanni's Room Shortly after returning to Paris in 1956, Baldwin got word from Dial Press that Giovanni at a bar; the two grow increasingly
intimate and David eventually finds his way to Giovanni's room. David is confused by his intense feelings for Giovanni begins to prostitute himself and finally commits a murder for which he is guillotined.[136] David's tale is one of love's
inhibition: he cannot "face love when he finds it", writes biographer James Campbell.[137] The novel features a traditional theme: the clash between the subsequent loss of innocence that results.[137] The inspiration for the murder in the novel's plot is an event dating from 1943 to 1944
A Columbia University undergraduate named Lucien Carr murdered an older, homosexual man, David Kammerer, who made sexual advances on Carr, leading Carr to stab Kammerer and dump Kammerer and dump Kammerer, who made sexual advances on Carr, 1381 The two were walking near the banks of the Hudson River when Kammerer made a pass at Carr, leading Carr to stab Kammerer and dump Kammerer, who made sexual advances on Carr, 1381 The two were walking near the banks of the Hudson River when Kammerer made a pass at Carr, leading Carr to stab Kammerer and dump Kammerer and dump Kammerer, who made sexual advances on Carr, 1381 The two were walking near the banks of the Hudson River when Kammerer made a pass at Carr, leading Carr to stab Kammerer and dump Kammerer and dump
the reviews of Giovanni's Room were positive, and his family did not criticize the subject matter. [140] Even from Paris, Baldwin was able to follow the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement in his homeland. In May 1954, the United States Supreme Court ordered schools to desegregate "with all deliberate speed"; in August 1955 the racist murder of
Emmett Till in Money, Mississippi, and the subsequent acquittal of his killers were etched in Baldwin's mind until he wrote Blues for Mister Charlie; in December 1955, Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus; and in February 1956 Autherine Lucy was admitted to the University of Alabama before being expelled
when whites rioted.[141] Meanwhile, Baldwin was increasingly burdened by the sense that he was wasting time in Paris.[134] Baldwin began planning a return to the United States in hopes of writing a biography of Booker T. Washington, which he then called Talking at the Gates. Baldwin also received commissions to write a review of Daniel
set the tone for the attitude of American whites towards Negroes for the last one hundred years", and that, given the novel's popularity, this portrait has led to a unidimensional characterization of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black humanity.[142] The second project turned into the essay "William Faulkner and
Desegregation". The essay was inspired by Faulkner's March 1956 comment during an interview that he was sure to enlist himself with his fellow white Mississippians in a war over desegregation "even if it meant going out into the streets and shooting Negroes".[142] For Baldwin, Faulkner represented the "go slow" mentality on desegregation that
tries to wrestle with the Southerner's peculiar dilemma: the South "clings to two entirely antithetical doctrines, two legends, two histories"; the southerner is "the proud citizen of a free society and, on the other hand, committed to a society that has not yet dared to free itself of the necessity of naked and brutal oppression."[142] Faulkner asks for
more time but "the time [...] does not exist. [...] There is never time in the future in which we will work out our salvation."[142] Baldwin initially intended to complete Another Country before returning to New York in the fall of 1957, but progress on the novel was slow, so he decided to go back to the United States sooner.[144][145] Beauford Delaney
was particularly upset by Baldwin's departure. Delaney had started to drink heavily and entered the incipient stages of mental deterioration, including complaining about hearing voices.[144][1] Nonetheless, after a brief visit with Edith Piaf, Baldwin set sail for New York in July 1957.[144]Baldwin photographed by Allan Warren Baldwin's third and
fourth novels, Another Country (1962) and Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone (1968), are sprawling, experimental works[147] He briefly traveled to Israel in 1961, planning to continue on to Africa, but opting instead to travel to Turkey.
[148] Baldwin completed Another Country during his first, two-month stay in Istanbul (which ends with the note, Istanbul during the 1960s.[149] In 1962, when Baldwin had already spent fourteen years as an expatriate living in France, he published his essay Letter from a Region
in My Mind in The New Yorker. "Letter transitions deftly between episodic anecdotes, assessments of Baldwin's own life-phases, and systemic analyses of the Social-cultural factors behind racism." [150] Baldwin's lengthy essay "Down at the Cross" (frequently called The Fire Next Time after the title of the 1963 book in which it was published) [151]
similarly showed the seething discontent of the 1960s in novel form. The essay was originally published in two oversized issues of The New Yorker and landed Baldwin on the cover of Time magazine in 1963 while he was touring the South speaking about the restive Civil Rights Movement. Around the time of publication of The Fire Next Time, Baldwin
became a known spokesperson for civil rights and a celebrity noted for championing the cause of Black Americans. He frequently appeared on television and delivered speeches on college campuses.[152] The essay talked about the uneasy relationship between Christianity and the burgeoning Black Muslim movement. After publication, several Black
nationalists criticized Baldwin for his conciliatory attitude. They questioned whether his message of love and understanding would do much to change race relations in America.[152] The book was consumed by whites looking for answers to the question: What do Black Americans really want? Baldwin's essays never stopped articulating the anger and
frustration felt by real-life Black Americans with more clarity and style than any other writer of his generation.[153] In 1965, Baldwin participated in a much publicized debate with William F. Buckley, on the topic of whether the American dream had been achieved at the expense of African Americans. The debate took place in the UK at the Cambridge
Union, historic debating society of the University of Cambridge. The spectating student body voted overwhelmingly in Baldwin's favor.[154][155] Baldwin's next book-length essay, No Name in the Street (1972), also discussed his own experience in the context of the later 1960s, specifically the assassinations of three of his personal friends: Medgar
Evers, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King Jr. Baldwin's writings of the 1970s and 1980s were largely overlooked by critics, although they have received increasing attention in recent years. [152] Eldridge Cleaver's harsh
criticism of Baldwin in Soul on Ice and elsewhere [157] and Baldwin's return to southern France contributed to the perception by critics that he was not in touch with his readership. [158] [159] [160] As he had been the leading literary voice of the civil rights movement, he became an inspirational figure for the emerging gay rights movement. [152] His
two novels written in the 1970s, If Beale Street Could Talk (1974) and Just Above My Head (1979), stressed the importance of Black American families. He concluded his career by publishing a volume of poetry, Jimmy's Blues (1983), as well as another book-length essay, The Evidence of Things Not Seen (1985), an extended reflection on race inspired
by the Atlanta murders of 1979-1981. Baldwin at home in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France The house where Baldwin lived in France for most of his later life, using it as a base of operations for extensive international travel.[149][162] Baldwin settled in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France The house where Baldwin lived and died in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France The house where Baldwin lived in France for most of his later life, using it as a base of operations for extensive international travel.[149][162] Baldwin settled in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France The house where Baldwin lived and died in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France The house where Baldwin lived in France The house where Baldwin lived in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France The house where Baldwin lived in France The house where Baldwin lived in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France The house wh
in 1970, in an old Provençal house beneath the ramparts of the village.[163] His house was always open to his friends, who frequently visited him while on trips to the French Riviera. American painter Beauford Delaney made Baldwin's house in Saint-Paul-de-Vence his second home, often setting up his easel in the garden. Delaney painted several
colorful portraits of Baldwin. Fred Nall Hollis also befriended Baldwin during this time. Actors Harry Belafonte and Sidney Poitier were also regular guests. He wrote several of his last works in his house in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, including Just Above My Head in 1979 and Evidence of Things Not Seen in 1985. It was also in Saint-Paul-de-Vence that
Baldwin wrote his "Open Letter to My Sister, Angela Y. Davis" in November 1970.[164][165] Many of Baldwin's musician friends dropped in during the Jazz à Juan and Nice Jazz Festivals. They included Nina Simone, Josephine Baker, Miles Davis wrote:[167] I'd read his books and I liked and Nice Jazz Festivals.
respected what he had to say. As I got to know Jimmy we opened up to each other and became real great friends. Every time I went to southern France to play Antibes, I would always spend a day or two out at Jimmy's house in St. Paul de Vence. We'd just sit there in that great big beautiful house of his telling us all kinds of stories, lying our asses
off.... He was a great man. Baldwin learned to speak French fluently and developed friendships with French actor Yves Montand and French writer Marguerite Yourcenar, who translated Baldwin was openly gay, [169] though he considered
sexuality a private matter and did not apply the label - which he felt was too narrow and limiting - to himself.[170] According to Dwight A. McBride, Baldwin saw the world in such terms that made him not "exclusively gay, black, expatriate, activist, or the like", but rather "an intricately negotiated amalgam of all of those things, which had to be
constantly tailored to fit the circumstances in which he was compelled to articulate himself".[171] Tombstone of James Baldwin and his mother Berdis at Ferncliff Cemetery and Mausoleum, Hartsdale, New York On December 1, 1987,[172][173][173][174][contradictory][175] Baldwin died from stomach cancer in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France,[176][177]
[178] He was buried at the Ferncliff Cemetery in Hartsdale, near New York City.[179] Fred Nall Hollis took care of Baldwin on his deathbed. Nall had been friends with Baldwin shortly before his death about racism in Alabama. In one
conversation, Nall told Baldwin "Through your books you liberated me from my guilt about being so bigoted coming from Alabama and because of my homosexuality." Baldwin insisted: "No, you liberated me in revealing this to me."[180] A few hours after his death, his novel Harlem Quartet, published earlier in the year, won the French-American
Friendship Prize (having a week earlier lost by one vote in Paris the Prix Femina, awarded to the "best foreign novel of the year").[168] At the time of Baldwin's death, he was working on a memoir, Remember This House, focused on his recollections of personal interactions with civil rights leaders Medgar Evers, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr
[181] Following his death, the publishing company McGraw-Hill took the unprecedented step of suing his estate to recover the $200,000 advance they had paid him for the book, but by 1990, the lawsuit had been dropped.[181] The unfinished manuscript is the basis of Raoul Peck's 2016 documentary film I Am Not Your Negro.[182] Following
Baldwin's death, a court battle was waged over the ownership of his home in France. Baldwin had been in the process of purchasing his house from his landlady, Jeanne Faure [183] At the time of his death, Baldwin did not have full ownership of the home, and it was Mlle. Faure's intention that the home would stay in her family. His home, nicknamed
"Chez Baldwin",[184] has been the center of scholarly work and artistic and political activism. The National Museum of African American History and Culture has an online exhibit titled "Chez Baldwin", which uses his historic French home as a lens to explore his life and legacy.[185] Magdalena J. Zaborowska's 2018 book, Me and My House: James
Baldwin's Last Decade in France, uses photographs of his home and his collections to discuss politics, race, being gay, and domesticity. [186] Over the years, several efforts were initiated to save the house and convert it into an artists' residency, but none had the endorsement of the Baldwin estate. In February 2016, Le Monde published an opinion
piece by Thomas Chatterton Williams, a contemporary Black American expatriate writer in France, which spurred a group of activists to come together in Paris.[187] In June 2016, American expatriate writer and activist shannon Cain squatted at the house for 10 days as an act of political and artistic protest.[188][189] Les Amis de la Maison Baldwin,[190] a
French organization whose initial goal was to purchase the house by launching a capital campaign funded by the U.S. philanthropic sector, grew out of this effort.[191] This campaign was unsuccessful without the support of Baldwin's estate. Attempts to engage the French government in conservation of the property were dismissed by the mayor of
Saint-Paul-de-Vence, Joseph Le Chapelain, whose statement to the local press, claiming "nobody's ever heard of James Baldwin," mirrored that of Henri Chambon, the owner of the corporation that razed the house.[192][193] in 2019, construction was completed on an apartment complex that now stands where Chez Baldwin once stood. In all of
Baldwin's works, but particularly in his novels, the main characters are twined up in a "cage of reality" that sees them fighting for their soul against the limitations of the human condition or against their place at the margins of a society consumed by various prejudices. [194] Baldwin connects many of his main characters—John in Go Tell It On The
Mountain, Rufus in Another Country, Richard in Blues for Mister Charlie, and Giovanni in G
own social environment, and sometimes—as in If Beale Street Could Talk's Fonny and Tell me How Long The singular theme in the attempts of Baldwin's characters to resolve their struggle for themselves is that such resolution only comes through
love.[195] Here is Leeming at some length: Love is at the heart of the Baldwin philosophy. Love for Baldwin cannot be safe; it involves the risk of commitment, the risk of removing the masks and taboos placed on us by society. The philosophy applies to individual relationships as well as to more general ones. It encompasses sexuality as well as
politics, economics, and race relations. And it emphasizes the dire consequences, for individuals and racial groups, of the refusal to love.—David Adams Leeming, James Baldwin: A Biography[196] Baldwin (right of center) with Hollywood actors Charlton Heston (left) and Marlon Brando (right) at the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom
Sidney Poitier (rear) and Harry Belafonte (right of Brando) can also be seen in the crowd. Baldwin returned to the United States in the summer of 1957, while the civil rights legislation of that year was being debated in Congress. He had been powerfully moved by the image of a young girl, Dorothy Counts, braving a mob in an attempt to desegregate
schools in Charlotte, North Carolina, and Partisan Review editor Philip Rahv had suggested he report on what was happening in the American South. Baldwin was nervous about the trip but he made it, interviewing people in Charlotte (where he met Martin Luther King Jr.), and Montgomery, Alabama. The result was two essays, one published in
Harper's magazine ("The Hard Kind of Courage"), the other in Partisan Review ("Nobody Knows My Name"). Subsequent Baldwin articles on the movement appeared in Mademoiselle, Harper's, The New Yorker called
"Letter from a Region of My Mind". Along with a shorter essay from The Progressive, the essay became The Fire Next Time.[197]: 94-99, 155-56 External audio National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin aligned himself with
the ideals of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Joining CORE allowed him to travel across the South, lecturing on racial inequality. His insights into both the North and South gave him a unique perspective on the racial problems the United States was facing. In 1963 he conducted a
lecture tour of the South for CORE, traveling to Durham and Greensboro in North Carolina, and New Orleans. During the tour, he lectured to students, white liberals, and anyone else listening about his racial ideology, an ideological position between the "muscular approach" of Malcolm X and the nonviolent program of Martin Luther King Jr.[140]
Baldwin expressed the hope that socialism would take root in the United States:[199] It is certain, in any case, that ignorance, allied with power, is the most ferocious enemy justice can have. —James Baldwin's incisive analysis of white racism and his eloquent descriptions of them.
Negro's pain and frustration. In fact, Time featured Baldwin on the cover of its May 17, 1963, issue. "There is not another writer", said Time, "who expresses with such poignancy and abrasiveness the dark realities of the racial ferment in North and South." [200][197]: 175 In a cable Baldwin sent to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy during the
Birmingham riot of 1963, Baldwin blamed the violence in Birmingham on the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover, Mississippi Senator James Eastland, and President Kennedy invited Baldwin to meet with him over breakfast, and that meeting was
followed up with a second, when Kennedy met with Baldwin and others Baldwin had invited to Kennedy's Manhattan apartment. This meeting is discussed in Howard Simon's 1999 play, James Baldwin and others Baldwin had invited to Kennedy's Manhattan apartment. This meeting is discussed in Howard Simon's 1999 play, James Baldwin and others Baldwin had invited to Kennedy's Manhattan apartment. This meeting is discussed in Howard Simon's 1999 play, James Baldwin had invited to Kennedy's Manhattan apartment. This meeting is discussed in Howard Simon's 1999 play, James Baldwin had invited to Kennedy's Manhattan apartment.
Harry Belafonte, singer Lena Horne, writer Lorraine Hansberry, and activists from civil rights organizations.[197]:176-80 Although most of the civil rights movement, and it provided exposure of the civil rights issue not just as a
political issue but also as a moral issue. [201] James Baldwin's FBI file contains 1,884 pages, collected from 1960 until the early 1970s. [202] During that era of surveillance of American writers, the FBI accumulated 276 pages on Richard Wright, 110 pages on Truman Capote, and just nine pages on Henry Miller. Baldwin also made a prominent
appearance at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom on August 28, 1963, with Belafonte and long-time friends Sidney Poitier and Marlon Brando. [203] Baldwin's sexuality clashed with his activism. The civil rights movement was hostile to homosexuals. [204] [205] The only overtly gay men in the movement were Baldwin and Bayard Rustin
Rustin and King were very close, as Rustin received credit for the success of the March on Washington. Many were bothered by Rustin's sexual orientation in a school editorial column during his college years, and in reply to a letter during the 1950s, where he treated it as a mental illness which an
individual could overcome. King's key advisor, Stanley Levison, also stated that Baldwin and Rustin were "better qualified to lead a homo-sexual movement than a civil rights movement, Baldwin was excluded from the inner
circles of the civil rights movement because of his sexuality and was conspicuously not invited to speak at the March on Washington. [207] At the time, Baldwin was neither in the closet nor open to the public about his sexual orientation. Although his novels, specifically Giovanni's Room and Just Above My Head, had openly gay characters and
relationships, Baldwin himself never openly described his sexuality. In his book, Kevin Mumford points out how Baldwin went his life "passing as straight rather than confronting homophobes with whom he mobilized against racism".[208] When the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing happened in Birmingham three weeks after the March on
intervened to smash a reporter's camera or use cattle prods on SNCC workers. After his day of watching, he spoke in a crowded church, blaming Washington, he told a New York Post reporter the federal government could protect Negroes—it could send federal troops into the South. He
blamed the Kennedys for not acting.[197]: 191,195-98 In March 1965, Baldwin joined marchers who walked 50 miles from Selma, Alabama (Selma to Montgomery Marches), to the capitol in Montgomery under the protection of federal troops.[197]: 236 Nonetheless, he rejected the label "civil rights activist", or that he had participated in a civil rights activist.
                  instead agreeing with Malcolm X's assertion that if one is a citizen, one should not have to fight for one's civil rights. In a 1964 interview with Robert Penn Warren for the book Who Speaks for the Negro?, Baldwin rejected the idea that the civil rights movement was an outright revolution, instead calling it "a very peculiar revolution
because it has to... have its aims the establishment of a union, and a... radical shift in the American mores, the American mores, the American way of life... not only as it applies to every citizen of the country."[209] In a 1979 speech at UC Berkeley, Baldwin called it, instead, "the latest slave rebellion".[210] In 1968, Baldwin signed
the "Writers and Editors War Tax Protest" pledge, vowing to refuse to make income tax payments in protest against the Vietnam War.[211] He was also a supporter of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, which prompted the FBI to create a file on Baldwin.[212] Richard Wright (1908-1960) photographed in 1939 by Carl Van Vechten A great influence
on Baldwin was the painter Beauford Delaney. In The Price of the Ticket (1985), Baldwin describes Delaney as: ... the first living proof, for me, that a black man could be an artist. In a warmer time, a less blasphemous place, he would have been recognized as my teacher and I as his pupil. He became, for me, an example of courage and integrity,
humility and passion. An absolute integrity: I saw him shaken many times and I lived to see him broken but I never saw him bow. Later support came friends, and Wright helped Baldwin to secure the Eugene F. Saxton Memorial
Foundation $500 fellowship, [213] Baldwin's essay "Notes of a Native Son. In Baldwin's 1949 essay "Everybody's Protest Novel", however, he indicated that Native Son, like Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852), lacked credible characters and
psychological complexity, and the friendship between the two authors ended. [214] Interviewed by Julius Lester, [215] however, Baldwin met and fell in love with Lucien Happersberger, a boy aged 17, though
Happersberger's marriage three years later left Baldwin distraught. When the marriage ended, they later reconciled, with Happersberger staying by Baldwin's deathbed at his house in Saint-Paul-de-Vence. [216] Happersberger staying by Baldwin's deathbed at his house in Saint-Paul-de-Vence.
Simone. Langston Hughes, Lorraine Hansberry, and Baldwin helped Simone learn about the Civil Rights Movement. Baldwin and Hansberry met with Robert F. Kennedy, along with Kenneth Clark and Lena Horne and others in an attempt to persuade Kennedy of the
importance of civil rights legislation.[217] Baldwin influenced the work of French painter Philippe Derome, whom he met in Paris in the early 1960s. Baldwin also knew Marlon Brando, Charlton Heston, Billy Dee Williams, Huey P. Newton, Nikki Giovanni, Jean-Paul Sartre, Jean Genet (with whom he campaigned on behalf of the Black Panther Party)
Lee Strasberg, Elia Kazan, Rip Torn, Alex Haley, Miles Davis, Amiri Baraka, Martin Luther King Jr., Dorothea Tanning, Leonor Fini, Margaret Mead, Josephine Baker, Allen Ginsberg, Chinua Achebe, and Maya Angelou. He wrote at length about his "political relationship" with Malcolm X. He collaborated with childhood friend Richard Avedon on thee
 1964 book Nothing Personal.[218] Baldwin was fictionalized as the character Marion Dawes in the 1967 novel The Man Who Cried I Am by John A. Williams.[219] Maya Angelou called Baldwin her "friend and brother" and credited him for "setting the stage" for her 1969 autobiography I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings. Baldwin was made a
Commandeur de la Légion d'Honneur by the French government in 1986.[220][221] Baldwin was also a close friend of Nobel Prize-winning novelist Toni Morrison, who lived for a time in same apartment building in New York Times. In the eulogy, entitled "Life"
in His Language", Morrison credits Baldwin as being her literary inspiration and the person who showed her the true potential of writing. She writes: You knew, didn't you, how I needed your language and the mind that formed it? How I relied on your fierce courage to tame wildernesses for me? How strengthened I was by the certainty that came
from knowing you would never hurt me? You knew, didn't you, how I loved your love? You knew. This is jubilee. "Our crown," you said, "is wear it"[223] Following Baldwin's death, the failure to have awarded him either a National Book Award or the
Pulitzer Prize prompted 48 African-American writers and critics - among them Maya Angelou, Amiri Baraka, Henry Louis Gates, Jr, John Edgar Wideman, and John A. Williams - to sign a statement published in the New York Times Book Review deploring the fact that Morrison had not been given either award for her celebrated novel Beloved, with
signatories June Jordan and Houston A. Baker further stating: "... even as we mourn the passing of so legendary a writer as James Baldwin, and even as we may revel in the posthumous acclamations of his impact and his public glory, how shall we yet grieve, relieve or altogether satisfy? ... We grieve because we cannot yet assure that such shame, such
national neglect, will not occur again, and then, again."[224][225] Although Baldwin and Truman Capote were acquaintances, they were not friends. In fact, Capote berated him several times. [227] Baldwin's influence.
on other writers has been profound: Toni Morrison edited the Library of America's first two volumes of Baldwin's fiction and essays: Early Novels & Stories (1998) and Collected Essays (1998). A third volume, Later Novels (2015), was edited by Darryl Pinckney, who delivered a talk on Baldwin in February 2013 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of
The New York Review of Books, during which Pinckney said, "No other black writer I'd read was as literary as Baldwin in his early essays, not even Ralph Ellison. There is something wild in the beauty of Baldwin's sentences and the cool of his tone, something improbable, too, this meeting of Henry James, the Bible, and Harlem."[228] One of Baldwin's sentences and the cool of his tone, something improbable, too, this meeting of Henry James, the Bible, and Harlem."[228] One of Baldwin's sentences and the cool of his tone, something improbable, too, this meeting of Henry James, the Bible, and Harlem."[228] One of Baldwin's sentences and the cool of his tone, something improbable, too, this meeting of Henry James, the Bible, and Harlem."[228] One of Baldwin's sentences and the cool of his tone, something improbable, too, this meeting of Henry James, the Bible, and Harlem."[228] One of Baldwin's sentences and the cool of his tone, something improbable, too, this meeting of Henry James, the Bible, and Harlem."[228] One of Baldwin's sentences and the cool of his tone, something improbable, too, this meeting of Henry James, the Bible, and Harlem."[228] One of Baldwin's sentences and the cool of his tone, something improbable, too, this meeting of Henry James, the Bible, and Harlem."[228] One of Baldwin's sentences and the cool of his tone, something improbable, too, this meeting of Henry James, the Bible, and Harlem."[228] One of Baldwin's sentences and the cool of his tone, something improbable, too, this meeting of Henry James, the Bible, and Harlem."[228] One of Baldwin's sentences and the cool of his tone, something improbable, too, this meeting of Henry James, the Bible, and Harlem."[228] One of Baldwin's sentences and the cool of his tone, something improbable, too, this meeting of Henry James, the Bible, and the Baldwin's sentences and the cool of his tone, something improbable, the baldwin's sentences and the cool of his tone, something improbable, the cool of his tone, something improbable, the baldwin's senten
richest short stories, "Sonny's Blues", appears in many anthologies of short fiction used in introductory college literature classes. A Baldwin quotation (ultimately misquoted) used in graffiti during 2020's George Floyd protests in Indianapolis A street in San Francisco, Baldwin Court in the Bayview neighborhood, is named after him.[229] In 1987,
Kevin Brown, a photojournalist from Baldwin Scholars program, an urban outreach initiative, in honor of Baldwin, who taught at
Hampshire in the early 1980s. The JBS Program provides talented students of color from under-served communities an opportunity to develop and improve the skills necessary for college success through coursework and tutorial support for one transitional year, after which Baldwin scholars may apply for full matriculation to Hampshire or any other
four-year college program. Spike Lee's 1996 film Get on the Bus includes a Black gay character, played by Isaiah Washington, who punches a homophobic character, saying: "This is for James Baldwin and Langston Hughes." His name appears in the lyrics of the Le Tigre song "Hot Topic", released in 1999.[230] In 2002, scholar Molefi Kete Asante
included James Baldwin on his list of 100 Greatest African Americans. [231] Baldwin votive candle, 2022 In 2005, the United States Postal Service created a first-class postage stamp dedicated to Baldwin, which featured him on the front with a short biography on the back of the peeling paper. In 2012, Baldwin was inducted into the Legacy Walk, an
outdoor public display that celebrates LGBT history and people. [232] In 2014, East 128th Street between Fifth and Madison Avenues was named "James Baldwin's birth. He lived in the neighborhood and attended P.S. 24. Readings of Baldwin's writing were held at The National Black Theatre and a tended P.S. 24. Readings of Baldwin's birth.
month-long art exhibition featuring works by New York Live Arts and artist Maureen Kelleher. The events were attended by Council Member Inez Dickens, who led the campaign to honor Harlem native's son; also taking part were Baldwin's family, theatre and film notables, and members of the community.[233][234] Also in 2014, Baldwin was one of
the inaugural honorees in the Rainbow Honor Walk, a walk of fame in San Francisco's Castro neighborhood celebrating LGBTQ people who have "made significant contributions in their fields." [235][236][237] In 2014, The Social Justice Hub at The New School's newly opened University Center was named the Baldwin Rivera Boggs Center after
activists Baldwin, Sylvia Rivera, and Grace Lee Boggs. [238] In 2016, Raoul Peck released his documentary film I Am Not Your Negro. It is a 93-minute journey into Black history that connects the past of the Civil Rights Movement to the present of Black Lives Matter. It is a
film that questions Black representation in Hollywood and beyond. In 2017, Scott Timberg wrote an essay for the Los Angeles Times ("30 years after his death, and concluded: "So Baldwin is not just a writer for the
ages, but a scribe whose work—as squarely as George Orwell's—speaks directly to ours."[239] In June 2019, Baldwin's residence on the Upper West Side was given landmark designation by New York City's Landmarks Preservation Commission, [240][241] and it was added to the National Register of Historic Places the same year. [222] In June 2019,
Baldwin was one of the inaugural fifty American "pioneers, trailblazers, and heroes" inducted on the National Inn.[242][243] The SNM is the first U.S. national monument dedicated to LGBTQ rights and history,[244] and the wall's unveiling was timed
to take place during the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots. [245] At the Paris Council of June 2019, the city of Paris voted unanimously by all political groups to name a place in the capital in honor of James Baldwin. The project was confirmed on June 19, 2019, and announced for the year 2020. In 2021, Paris City Hall announced that the writer's
name would be given to the first media library in the 19th arrondissement, which is scheduled to open in 2024. [246] On February 1, 2024, Google celebrated James Baldwin with a Google Doodle. In 2024, he appeared as a character in the television series Feud: Capote vs. The Swans, played by Chris Chalk. On May 17, 2024, a blue plaque was
unveiled by Nubian Jak Community Trust/Black History Walks to honour Baldwin at the site where in 1985 he visited the C. L. R. James Library in the London Borough of Hackney. [247] [248] On August 2, 2024, The New York Public Library in the London Borough of Hackney.
Mouth" in honor of the centennial of Baldwin's birth. [249][250] Scheduled to run until February 28, 2025, it is accompanied by a series of public events and an exhibition of Some of his manuscripts in a related exhibition of Some of his manuscripts in a related exhibition of The New York Public Library's Treasures. [251] Guggenheim
Fellowship, 1954. Eugene F. Saxton Memorial Trust Award Foreign Drama Critics Award George Polk Memorial Award, 1968. Tell Me How
Long the Train's Been Gone 1974. If Beale Street Could Talk 1979. Just Above My Head Baldwin published six short stories in various magazines between 1948 and 1960: 1948. "Previous Condition". Commentary 1950. "The Death of the Prophet". Commentary 1951. "The Outing". New Story 1957. "Sonny's Blues". Partisan Review 1958. "Come Out
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following the Baldwin-Kennedy meeting in 1963-1963-06-24. "A Conversation With James Baldwin" is a television documentary made with Richard O. Moore on KQED about Blacks in San Francisco in the late 1950s. [266] 1965-06
14. "Debate: Baldwin vs. Buckley", recorded by the BBC is a one-hour television special program featuring a debate between Baldwin and leading American conservative William F. Buckley Jr. at the Cambridge Union, Cambridge Union
Dixon[269] 1973. James Baldwin: From Another Place. Short documentary by Sedat Pakay following the activist in Istanbul. 1974. James Baldwin talks about race, political struggle, and the human condition at the Wheeler Hall in Berkeley, California.[270] 1975. "Assignment America; 119; Conversation with a Native Son", from WNET features a
television conversation between Baldwin and Maya Angelou.[271] 1976. "Pantechnicon; James Baldwin" is a radio program recorded by WGBH. Baldwin discusses his new book, The Devil Finds Work, which is representative of the way he takes a look at the American films and myth.[272] LGBTQ culture in New York City List of American novelists List
of civil rights leaders List of LGBTQ people from New York City List of LGBT writers No More Water: The Gospel of James Baldwin ^ In his early writing, Baldwin said his father left the South because he reviled the crude vaudeville culture in New Orleans and found it difficult to express his inner strivings. However, Baldwin later said his father
departed because "lynching had become a national sport."[11] ^ Baldwin learned that he was not his father's biological son through overhearing a comment to that effect during one of his parents' conversations late in 1940.[19] He tearfully recounted this fact to Emile Capouya, with whom he went to school.[19] ^ It is in describing his father's
searing hatred of white people that comes one of Baldwin's most noted quotes: "Hatred, which could destroy so much, never failed to destroy the man who hated and this was an immutable law."[22] ^ It was from Bill Miller, her sister Henrietta, and Miller's husband Evan Winfield that the young Baldwin started to suspect that "white people did not
act as they did because they were white, but for some other reason."[35] Miller's openness did not have a similar effect on Baldwin's father.[36] Emma Baldwin was pleased with Miller's interest in her son, but David agreed only reluctantly—not daring to refuse the invitation of a white woman, in Baldwin's father.[36] Emma Baldwin's father.[36]
came to despise.[37] ^ As Baldwin's biographer and friend David Leeming tells it: "Like Henry James, the writing Baldwin did before his death was on a play called The Welcome Table.[38] ^ Baldwin's biographers give
different years for his entry into Frederick Douglass Junior High School: 1935 and 1936.[41] ^ In the summer following his graduation from Frederick Douglass Junior High, the 13-year-old Baldwin experienced what he would call his "violation": he was running an errand for his mother when a tall man in his mid-30s lured him onto the second floor of
a store, where the man touched Baldwin sexually. Alarmed by a noise, the man gave Baldwin money and disappeared. Baldwin named this as his first confrontation with homosexuality, an experience he said both scared and aroused him.[46] ^ Eugene Worth's story would give
form to the character Rufus in Another Country.[66] A Happersberger gave form to Giovanni in Baldwin's 1956 novel Giovanni's Room. Baldwin reflected on "Everybody's Protest Novel" in a 1984 interview for The Paris Review, saying that the essay was a "discharge" of the "be kind to niggers, be kind to Jews"-type of book he constantly reviewed in
his Paris era: "I was convinced then—and I still am—that those sort of books do nothing but bolster up an image. ... [I]t seemed to me that if I took the role of a victim then I was simply reassuring the defenders of the status quo; as long as I was a victim they could pity me and add a few more pennies to my home relief check."[100] ^ This is
particularly true of "A Question of Identity". Indeed, Baldwin reread The Ambassadors around the same time he was writing "A Question of Identity" and the two works share some thematic congeniality.[133] ^ Also around this time, Delaney had become obsessed with a portrait he had painted of Baldwin that disappeared. In fact, Baldwin had
managed to leave the portrait in Owen Dodson's home when working with Dodson on the Washington, D.C., premiere of Another Country. Biographer David Leeming described the missing painting as a "clause célèbre" among friends of Dodson, Delaney, and Baldwin. When Baldwin and Dodson had a falling-out some years later, hopes of retrieving
the painting were dashed. The painting eventually reappeared in Dodson's effects after his death. [144] ^ "All-Time 100 Novels". Time. October 21, 2005. ^ "About the Author". Take This Hammer (American Masters). US: Channel Thirteen-PBS. November 29, 2006. Retrieved June 14, 2020. ^ Held,
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Take This Hammer, made with Richard O. Moore, about Blacks in San Francisco in the late 1950s. Video: Baldwin debate with William F. Buckley (via UC Berkeley Media Resources Center) Discussion with Afro-American Studies Dept. at UC Berkeley Media Resources Center) Discussion with Afro-American Studies Dept. at UC Berkeley Media Resources Center) Discussion with Afro-American Studies Dept. at UC Berkeley Media Resources Center) Discussion with Afro-American Studies Dept. at UC Berkeley Media Resources Center) Discussion with Afro-American Studies Dept. at UC Berkeley Media Resources Center) Discussion with Afro-American Studies Dept. at UC Berkeley Media Resources Center) Discussion with Afro-American Studies Dept. at UC Berkeley Media Resources Center) Discussion with Afro-American Studies Dept. at UC Berkeley Media Resources Center) Discussion with Afro-American Studies Dept. at UC Berkeley Media Resources Center) Discussion with Afro-American Studies Dept. at UC Berkeley Media Resources Center) Discussion with Afro-American Studies Dept. at UC Berkeley Media Resources Center) Discussion with Afro-American Studies Dept. at UC Berkeley Media Resources Center) Discussion with Afro-American Studies Dept. at UC Berkeley Media Resources Center Discussion with Afro-American Studies Dept. at UC Berkeley Media Resources Dept. at
Baldwin Collective Archived August 30, 2018, at the Wayback Machine in Paris, France FBI files and FBI files about him held by the National Archives A Look Inside James Baldwin's 1,884 Page FBI File James Baldwin at Biography.com Portrait of James
Baldwin, 1964. Los Angeles Times Photographic Archive (Collection 1429). UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles Times Photographic Archive (Collection 1429). UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library
University of California, Los Angeles. Retrieved from " American writer James Baldwin's books didn't just capture the American moment; they exposed it with a clarity that made the literary establishment flinch. Baldwin
didn't compromise. Ever. That may be why America hesitated to fully embrace him. He refused the safe confines of literary convention, transforming every that preached in secular tones. His writing style fused biblical cadence with surgical
clarity: at once prophetic and forensic, lush and spare. Baldwin's prose carried the conviction of a heretic who still remembered the heat of belief. At 14, he was Harlem's boy preacher, delivering fire-and-brimstone sermons at the Fireside Pentecostal Assembly. By twenty-four, he had walked away from the church—and from America—haunted by the
sting of spiritual exile. That estrangement deepened as a gay Black man in a nation that demanded his silence and a literary world that preferred him sanitized. Baldwin refused both. He turned that rejection into agency, repurposing the sermons that once offered salvation into blistering literature that forced America to reckon with its own
damnation. American novelist and activist James Baldwin addresses an audience in a church. Getty Images Baldwin is most remembered for The Fire Next Time, Giovanni's Room and Go Tell It on the Mountain, works that didn't just challenge American complacency but shattered it with language as bruising as it was redemptive. His Malcolm X
screenplay became the clearest metaphor for Baldwin's relationship with American institutions: praised for his vision, then discarded for its truth. When Hollywood altered his script into an unreleased documentary, Baldwin fled to Paris not as an expatriate
seeking adventure, but as a refugee from a country that demanded his silence in exchange for his survival. Yet exile became his greatest strategic advantage. From the safety of Parisian cafés, he could see America with the clarity that only distance provides and the intimacy that only love makes possible. He returned not as a foreign correspondent
but as a native son armed with uncomfortable truths, speaking with the authority of someone who had loved America enough to come back and tell it the truth about itself. To know Baldwin is to read him in order and trace the evolution of a writer who never stopped sharpening his pen or holding up the mirror. Go Tell It
On The Mountain (1953) Giovanni's Room (1956) Another Country (1962) Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone (1978) James Baldwin wrote six novels, seven essay collections, one short story collection, two plays and a screenplay
Ranking his work is inherently subjective because Baldwin wrote to disrupt, not to be categorized. But some works have proven more essential than others for understanding both the man and the nation he never stopped diagnosing. Below, I rank Baldwin's most impactful works, not by literary prestige, but by how urgently they speak to America's
unresolved wounds. 1. The Fire Next Time (1963) Baldwin's "The Fire Next Time" is a non-fiction book composed of two essays written at the height of American literature. The first, "My Dungeon Shook: Letter to My Nephew on the One Hundredth Anniversary of
the Emancipation," is Baldwin at his most intimate and searing. Addressed to his 14-year-old namesake nephew, it reads like a father's urgent whisper: survive this country that was built to break you. Baldwin exposes the psychological foundation of American racism: White Americans require Black inferiority to sustain their own sense of superiority.
But even when he exposes that violence, he refuses to abandon hope. In the second essay, "Down at the Cross: Letter from a Region in My Mind," Baldwin turns inward. The boy preacher from Harlem who once fled to Paris has returned as a reluctant prophet, confronting a nation that has not changed and a self that has. His conversation with Nation
of Islam leader Elijah Muhammad becomes a turning point. Baldwin is offered a clear path: Black separatism, but instead, he chooses something far more radical—the agony of hope. He demands that America become worthy of the love he refuses to withdraw. He loved America the way a parent loves a wayward child: with rage, yet tenderness.
Baldwin delivered the moral blueprint for a Civil Rights Movement, one that demanded change, not reform. 62 years later, that challenge remains. Who should read this: Readers struggling to understand racial injustice will find Baldwin's clarity as necessary now as it was in 1963. Where to read this: Penguin Random House 2. Notes of a Native Son
(1955) Baldwin's first essay collection established him as one of the most important Black intellectuals of his generation, one who was honest and refused to offer blind allegiance. Across 10 essays that blend memoir, cultural critique and social commentary, Notes of a Native Son introduced the style that became his signature: using personal
 experience to interrogate national failure. The title essay draws a line between the death of Baldwin's stepfather and the 1943 Harlem riot, bridging the gap between private grief and public rage. In "Stranger in the Village," Baldwin reflects on his time in a remote Swiss village, where the locals had never seen a Black man. The piece contrasts
European racial innocence with America's violent history, showing that Black identity in the U.S. is shaped by intention and confrontation, not detachment. The collection that reduces Black life to suffering or symbolism. In "Many Thousands
Gone," he revisits Wright's Native Son, arguing that Bigger Thomas, as a character, risks reinforcing stereotypes rather than dismantling them. Baldwin respected Wright's courage but resisted the idea that rage alone could define Black life. The Modern Library ranked Notes of a Native Son among the top 20 nonfiction works of the 20th century.
Who should read this: Writers learning how to transform personal experience into universal insight or readers interested in the relationship between individual psychology and social systems. Where to read this: Beacon PressJames Baldwin's debut novel redefined the coming-of-age story
by grounding it in Black Pentecostal Christianity in 1930s Harlem. The semi-autobiography follows 14-year-old John Grimes, who is struggling with his identity as the stepson of Gabriel, an abusive Baptist preacher whose checkered past affects how he treats John and his mother, Elizabeth. Though the novel itself happens over the course of 24 hours,
Baldwin employs sophisticated flashbacks that span 70 years to show how slavery's trauma has scarred successive generations of the Grimes family. There is a lot of emphasis on the American South, showing how the family's migration north carried their wounds with them and how geographic escape couldn't heal generational damage. Baldwinners are successive generations of the Grimes family.
understood that trauma doesn't respect geography; it travels in the blood. The novel's religious framework allows Baldwin to examine questions that secular language couldn't address, and John's conversion experience on the church's "threshing floor" functions as both religious awakening and psychological breakthrough—spiritual transformation
and self-acceptance become inseparable. The biblical allusion to Matthew 3:12, where John Grimes's own sorting of salvation from eternal condemnation. Baldwin drew heavily from his own childhood while avoiding mere autobiography to create
multifaceted characters. Who should read this: Anyone who grew up in strict religious households and struggled with identity or readers interested in how historical racial trauma can affect Black families. Where to read this: Penguin Random House 4. Giovanni's Room (1956) Baldwin's Giovanni's Room is one of his most discussed novels because it
represented his most daring departure, not from American soil, but from its expectations. Set in postwar Paris, the novel centers on David, a young American torn between the life he promised Hella and the ill-fated love he finds with Giovanni, an Italian bartender. The room at the novel's center is Baldwin's most loaded metaphor. Cramped, dark and
steadily decaying, Giovanni's room, where the two men have their affair, traps David and Giovanni in a love that cannot speak its name and a shame that clings to the walls like rot. Dim, airless and increasingly filthy, the space becomes the physical embodiment of David's repression and Giovanni's despair. The novel is narrated in retrospect on the
eve of Giovanni's execution and traces David's psychological unraveling as he fails to reconcile his desire with the expectations of masculinity. There are no Black characters in Giovanni's Room, which is a decision that stunned critics at the time and distanced Baldwin from the literary establishment that had already begun boxing him into the role of a
"race writer." At the time the book was published, scholars believed that whiteness inherently meant heterosexuality. But Baldwin's point was clear: the act of repression, which is the cost of denying one's identity, goes beyond color. After the book was published, Baldwin's author photo was removed to obscure
the fact that this bold, intimate, and unsparing novel about white gay men had been written by a Black man. It remains one of the most important novels ever written about sexual identity, exile and the high cost of emotional cowardice. Who Should Read This: LGBTQ+ readers seeking a serious literary treatment of same-sex relationships from the
pre-liberation era and readers who are interested in how internal conflict drives narrative. Where to read this: Penguin Random House. 5. If Beale Street Could Talk (1974) James Baldwin knew exactly what he was doing when he titled his 1974 novel after a blues song. The story is simple enough to fit on a police report: Fonny Hunt, 22, a Black
sculptor, is wrongly charged with rape while his pregnant fiancée, Tish Rivers, fights to prove his innocence. But Baldwin decided that simple stories expose the most complex truths about institutional power and bias. Baldwin decided that simple stories expose the most complex truths about institutional power and bias.
injustice. She moves between the present crisis while remembering the past joy and showing how love develops, even when there is surveillance. Yet Baldwin refuses to let racism eclipse the love story at the novel's center. Tish and Fonny's relationship develops from childhood friendship into intimacy, and their physical connection is considered
beautiful rather than shameful. If Beale Street Could Talk concludes without resolution; Fonny remains in prison as Tish prepares for motherhood, though their child represents proof that Black love creates futures despite every effort to prevent them. The novel's contemporary relevance became undeniable after Barry Jenkins' 2018 film adaptation.
and audiences recognized the same patterns of institutional misconduct. This may be Baldwin's most direct political novel, one that uses intimate storytelling to expose systemic violence. Who Should Read This: Barnes & Noble 6. Another
Country (1962) Baldwin's Another Country is a train wreck, overstuffed with ideas like a jazz improvisation spiraling off-key. The novel follows a group of Black and white, gay and straight, men and women—artists, lovers, misfits—trying and failing to love each other cleanly in a country that has never been honest about what love costs. The novel
opens with the suicide of Rufus Scott, a gifted Black jazz drummer tormented by racism, poverty and shame. His tragic death pushes the story outward, tracing the impact of Rufus's absence on the lovers and friends he left behind, and Baldwin makes it clear that trauma does not stay contained. Instead, it spreads and affects outward. Every
interaction in Another Country is charged with the awareness that something important has already been lost and maybe was never possible to begin with. What follows, subjectively, is Baldwin's most ambitious storyline—formally messy, emotionally volcanic and at times maddeningly undisciplined. James Baldwin in Paris with friends. Sophie Bassouls
At some points, the plot sprawls, but this formal messiness serves Baldwin's purpose. The novel's emotional register shifts constantly—from tender to savage, from lyrical to clinical. Baldwin captures the exhaustion of people trying to love across lines that America has drawn in blood. When Ida says to Vivaldo, "You don't know, and there's no way in
the world for you to find out, what it's like to be a Black girl in this world, and the way white men, and Black men, too, baby, treat you," the statement carries the weight of centuries, but Baldwin doesn't let it end the conversation—it begins one. Baldwin was trying to write the Great American Novel at a time when no one believed a Black, queer
writer could do so, and he nearly pulled it off. The book is replete with interracial desire, bisexual longing, friendships strained by race, gender and class and the righteous anger of a generation trying to invent new ways of being human. To put it in perspective, Baldwin wrote about the price of denial in this book because every character in the story
is running from something, whether it's their history, identity or accountability, and no one goes away scot-free. The novel is imperfect, but its imperfect, but its
no one believed a Black, queer writer could claim that territory. Every character pays the price of denial—whether denying their sexuality, their racism, their complicity, or their pain. Decades later, Another Country stands as Baldwin's most ambitious gamble: forcing American fiction to confront the messy, painful, necessary work of learning how to
love across the chasms this country has created. Who Should Read This: Readers who want to understand how Baldwin wrote about gueerness and interracial relationships in 1962, when both were largely unrepresented in American literature. Where to read this: Barnes & Noble 7, Nobody Knows My Name (1961) If Baldwin's first essay collection,
 "Notes of a Native Son," introduced him as a sharp observer of American life, "Nobody Knows My Name" is where he starts aiming straight for the jugular. These 13 essays were written at the cusp of the civil rights movement, and they all show Baldwin testing and trusting his voice both as a keen observer and a truth teller. The writing is tighter,
colder and more overt because he is no longer just describing the wound but also tracing it back to the hand that made it. The centerpiece is "The Black Boy Looks at the White Boy," Baldwin doesn't cancel Mailer, he expresses his
disappointment all while asserting that Mailer didn't mean any harm, because we know what comes next: good intentions that still manage to distort Black pain into aesthetic currency. His warnings about performative allyship feel eerily prescient, especially in a post-DEI era. Writer James Baldwin candid portrait session circa 1965. getty In "Fifth
bohemians of Greenwich Village, people who believe they've opted out of America's racial hierarchy. Baldwin's response? Not quite. His analysis also calls out how these well-meaning liberals construct theories about racial superiority while remaining trapped by the very systems they claim to reject. Even at his most scathing, Baldwin never pretends about racial superiority while remaining trapped by the very systems they claim to reject. Even at his most scathing, Baldwin never pretends about racial superiority while remaining liberals construct theories about racial superiority while remaining trapped by the very systems they claim to reject.
he's above the system he's critiquing. In "Notes for a Hypothetical Novel," he admits to the temptation of escape—of leaving the whole mess behind—but concludes that there's nowhere to go. The honesty costs him something. And he knows it. Some of the essays feel like sketches for The Fire Next Time—a few ideas half-formed, a few punches not
fully landed. By the end, it becomes clear that Baldwin is not writing solely for readers, but rather because silence is no longer an option. Whose to read this: Penguin Random House 8. Sonny's Blues (1957) James Baldwin's Sonny's Blues
weaves together addiction, jazz, pain and estrangement to tell a story that is ultimately about how fragile, yet resilient, complicated family relationships can be. What keeps the storyline engaging is the conflict and silence between two Black brothers who love each other deeply but have never learned how to say it. But Sonny's arrest is just a trigger
for the unnamed narrator because the real short story unfolds in pulses of memory, confession and sound. As the older brother tries to make sense of Sonny's life, he is forced to confront the pain in his own: the death of his daughter, Grace, the trauma of their childhood and the rage of watching your people suffer while the world moves on. The story
spans just a few conversations, a walk through Harlem, and one unforgettable live performance—but in that small space, Baldwin discusses grief, race, masculinity, generational guilt and the high cost of survival. Sonny, a musician and recovering addict, becomes what Baldwin once described as "the artist as disturber of the peace." His drug use,
volatility and music are all expressions of resistance, misunderstood by a society and a brother that values control and respectability over emotional depth. Readers soon learn that what makes Sonny's Blues so haunting is that the narrator isn't cruel—he's simply been taught not to feel anything and does not listen until it's too late. In the final scene
as Sonny plays jazz in a Harlem nightclub, his brother finally hears the music not as noise, but as testimony. The performance is chaotic, mournful and defiant. In it, the narrator doesn't just recognize Sonny's pain—he recognizes his own. At the very least, Sonny's Blues is about the lives we live beneath the surface, the stories our bodies carry, and
the reality that sometimes, the only way to speak is to play. Who Should Read This: Readers trying to understand or relate to estranged family members they love, or anyone navigating a complicated relationship. Where to read this: Oxford University Press 9. Going to Meet the Man (1965) Baldwin's most unforgiving collection yet is eight stories that
read like psychological autopsies of American racism. If you think you understand how hatred works, think again. In this collection, Baldwin maps out the exact neural pathways that turn children into monsters. The centerpiece, "Sonny's Blues," might be the greatest short story ever written about art as survival. A Harlem teacher watches his jazz-
pianist brother battle heroin addiction and finally understands that some people don't use drugs to escape reality but to help them face it. When Sonny finally plays, pouring his pain into bebop, it feels like catharsis. But the real gut punch is the title story, told from the perspective of Jesse, a white Southern deputy who can't get aroused until he
remembers the lynching his parents took him to as a child. Baldwin forces you inside the mind of a torturer and shows how racism doesn't just destroy its victims but creates monsters out of its perpetrators. The story ends with Jesse lost in a violent fantasy, his pleasure inseparable from Black pain. There's a rawness about this collection that makes
readers understand that this isn't literature as therapy or politics as entertainment, but rather, it's Baldwin performing surgery on the American soul without anesthesia. Every story here is a map of desperation—heroin, music, violence, sex or God. Some paths offer release and others leave ruin in their wake. Who Should Read This: Readers who are
ready to confront the psychological cost of racism, not just for its victims, but for the people who enforce it. Where to read this: Penguin Random House Bottom Line James Baldwin didn't just write about America—he performed emergency surgery on it. His prose cut through decades of self-deception to expose what lay beneath, and he forced a
nation to see itself clearly, and what he showed us was so disturbing, we're still trying to look away. His work remains one of the most important of the 20th century, not because it's beautiful, but because it's true—and the truth, as Baldwin? Read First For James Baldwin?
For newcomers, "Notes of a Native Son" (1955) is a great starting point. This seminal collection of essays has a personal twist to it that is complete with intelligent social commentary, laying bare the difficulties of race, identity, and belonging. Baldwin's reflections on his father's death, the Harlem riots and his experiences in a racially divided America
provide a visceral understanding of the Black experience. Following this, "Giovanni's Room" (1956) offers a daring exploration of love, sexuality, and isolation. Set in postwar Paris, the novel follows the life of an American man grappling with his sexual identity, challenging societal norms and expectations. Baldwin's eloquent prose and unflinching
 honesty make this work a poignant examination of the human condition. What Are Famous Quotes By James Baldwin? "Neither love nor terror makes one blind: indifference makes one blind." - James Baldwin (Notes of a Native
Son) "The victim who is able to articulate the situation of the victim has ceased to be a victim: he or she has become a threat." — James Baldwin (The Devil Finds Work) Was James Baldwin to be constrained by labels, yet his identity as a Black queer man shaped everything he wrote—and how he moved through
the world. In novels like Giovanni's Room, Baldwin wrote openly about queer love and longing, long before such stories were welcomed in the American literary canon. In 2021, he was inducted into the LGBTQ Victory Institute Hall of Fame. (1924-1987)Who Was James Baldwin?Writer and playwright James Baldwin published the 1953 novel Go Tell It
on the Mountain, receiving acclaim for his insights on race, spirituality and humanity. Other novels included Giovanni's Room, Another Country and Just Above My Head, as well as essays like Notes of a Native Son and The Fire Next Time. Early LifeWriter and playwright James Baldwin was born on August 2, 1924, in Harlem, New York. One of the
20th century's greatest writers, Baldwin broke new literary ground with the exploration of racial and social issues in his many works. He was especially known for his essays on the Black experience in America. Baldwin was born to a young single mother, Emma Jones, at Harlem Hospital. She reportedly never told him the name of his biological father
Jones married a Baptist minister named David Baldwin when James was about three years old. Despite their strained relationship, Baldwin followed in his stepfather's footsteps — who he always referred to as his father — during his early teen years. He served as a youth minister in a Harlem Pentecostal church from the ages of 14 to 16.Baldwin
developed a passion for reading at an early age and demonstrated a gift for writing during his school years. He attended DeWitt Clinton High School in the Bronx, where he worked on the school's magazine with future famous photographer Richard Avedon. Baldwin published numerous poems, short stories and plays in the magazine, and his early
 work showed an understanding for sophisticated literary devices in a writer of such a young age. After graduating from high school in 1942, he had to put his plans for college on hold to help support his family, which included seven younger children. He took whatever work he could find, including laying railroad tracks for the U.S. Army in News
 Jersey. During this time, Baldwin frequently encountered discrimination, being turned away from restaurants, bars and other establishments because he was African American. After being fired from the New Jersey job, Baldwin sought other establishments because he was African American. After being fired from the New Jersey job, Baldwin sought other establishments because he was African American. After being fired from the New Jersey job, Baldwin sought other work and struggled to make ends meet. Aspiring WriterOn July 29, 1943, Baldwin lost his father — and gained
 his eighth sibling the same day. He soon moved to Greenwich Village, a New York City neighborhood popular with artists and writers. Devoting himself to writing a novel, Baldwin took odd jobs to support himself. He befriended writers. Devoting himself to writing a novel, Baldwin took odd jobs to support himself to writing a novel, Baldwin took odd jobs to support himself. He befriended writers.
getting essays and short stories published in such national periodicals as The Nation, Partisan Review and Commentary. Three years later, Baldwin made a dramatic change in his life and moved to Paris on another fellowship. The shift in location freed Baldwin to write more about his personal and racial background. "Once I found myself on the other
side of the ocean, I see where I came from very clearly...I am the grandson of a slave, and I am a writer. I must deal with both," Baldwin once told The New York Times. The move marked the beginning of his life as a "transatlantic commuter," dividing his time between France and the United States. 'Go Tell It on the Mountain' Baldwin had his first
novel, Go Tell It on the Mountain, published in 1953. The loosely autobiographical tale focused on the life of a young man growing up in Harlem grappling with father issues and his religion. "Mountain is the book I had to write if I was ever going to write anything else. I had to deal with what hurt me most. I had to deal, above all, with my father," he
later said. Gay Literature In 1954, Baldwin received a Guggenheim Fellowship. He published his next novel, Giovanni's Room, the following year. The work told the story of an American living in Paris and broke new ground for its complex depiction of homosexuality, a then-taboo subject. Love between men was also explored in a later Baldwin novel
Just Above My Head (1978). The author would also use his work to explore interracial relationships, another controversial topic for the times, as seen in the 1962 novel Another Country. Baldwin was open about his homosexuality and relationships with both men and women. Yet he believed that the focus on rigid categories was just a way of limiting
freedom and that human sexuality is more fluid and less binary than often expressed in the U.S. "If you fall in love with a boy, you fall in love with a boy, "the writer said in a 1969 interview when asked if being gay was an aberration, asserting that such views were an indication of narrowness and stagnation. 'Nobody Knows My Name' Baldwin explored
writing for the stage a well. He wrote The Amen Corner, which looked at the phenomenon of storefront Pentecostal religion. The play was produced at Howard University in 1955, and later on Broadway in the mid-1960s. It was his essays, however, that helped establish Baldwin as one of the top writers of the times. Delving into his own life, he
provided an unflinching look at the Black experience in America through such works as Notes of a Native Son (1955) and Nobody Knows My Name hit the bestsellers list, selling more than a million copies. While not a marching or sit-in style activist, Baldwin emerged as one of the leading
 voices in the Civil Rights Movement for his compelling work on race. 'The Fire Next Time'In 1963, there was a noted change in Baldwin's work with The Fire Next Time. This collection of essays was meant to educate white Americans on what it meant to be Black. It also offered white readers a view of themselves through the eyes of the African
same year, Baldwin was featured on the cover of Time magazine. "There is not another writer — white or Black — who expresses with such poignancy and abrasiveness the dark realities of the racial ferment in North and South," Time said in the feature. Baldwin wrote another play, Blues for Mister Charlie, which debuted on Broadway in 1964. The
drama was loosely based on the 1955 racially motivated murder of a young African American boy named Emmett Till. This same year, his book with friend Avedon entitled Nothing Personal, hit bookstore shelves. The work was a tribute to slain civil rights movement leader Medgar Evers. Baldwin also published a collection of short stories, Going to
Meet the Man, around this time. In his 1968 novel Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone, Baldwin returned to popular themes — sexuality, family and the Black experience. Some critics panned the novel, calling it a polemic rather than a novel. He was also criticized for using the first-person singular, the "I," for the book's narration. Later Works
and DeathBy the early 1970s, Baldwin seemed to despair over the racial situation. He had witnessed so much violence in the previous decade — especially the assassinations of Evers, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. — caused by racial hatred. This disillusionment became apparent in his work, which employed a more strident tone than in earlier
works. Many critics point to No Name in the Street, a 1972 collection of essays, as the beginning of the change in Baldwin's work. He also worked on a screenplay around this time, trying to adapt The Autobiography of Malcolm X by Alex Haley for the big screen. While his literary fame faded somewhat in his later years, Baldwin continued to produce
new works in a variety of forms. He published a collection of poems, Jimmy's Blues: Selected Poems, in 1983 as well as the 1987 novel Harlem Quartet. Baldwin also remained an astute observer of race and American culture. In 1985, he wrote The Evidence of Things Not Seen about the Atlanta child murders. Baldwin also spent years sharing his
experiences and views as a college professor. In the years before his death, he taught at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and Hampshire College. Baldwin died on December 1, 1987, at his home in St. Paul de Vence, France. Never wanting to be a spokesperson or a leader, Baldwin saw his personal mission as bearing "witness to the truth."
He accomplished this mission through his extensive, rapturous literary legacy. QUICK FACTSName: James Baldwin Birth Country: United StatesGender: MaleBest Known For: James Baldwin was an essayist, playwright, novelist and voice of the American civil rights
movement known for works including 'Notes of a Native Son,' 'The Fire Next Time' and 'Go Tell It on the Mountain.'IndustriesPolitics and GovernmentJournalism and NonfictionWriting and PublishingFiction and PoetryEducation and AcademiaTheater and DanceArtCivil RightsAstrological Sign: LeoSchoolsDeWitt Clinton High SchoolThe New
SchoolDeath Year: 1987Death date: December 1, 1987Death City: Saint-Paul de VenceDeath Country: FranceWe strive for accuracy and fairness. If you see something that doesn't look right, contact us! QUOTESI am what time, circumstance, history, have made of me, certainly, but I am also, much more than that. So are we all. When one begins to
live by habit and by quotation, one has begun to stop living. views updated May 18 2018WriterAt a Glance...Literary Prowess Blossomed in EuropeThe Fire Next Time Predicts 1960s' Racial UnrestInspired a Generation of ArtistsSelected writingsSourcesThe American Civil Rights Movement had many eloquent spokesmen, but few were better known
than James Baldwin. A novelist and essayist of considerable renown, Baldwin found readers of every race and nationality, though his message reflected bitter disappointment in his native land and its white majority. Throughout his distinguished career Baldwin called himself a "disturber of the peace"—one who revealed uncomfortable truths to a
society mired in complacency. As early as 1960 he was recognized as an articulate speaker and passionate writer on racial matters, and at his death in 1987 he was lauded as one of the most respected voices—of any race—in modern American letters. Baldwin's greatest achievement as a writer was his ability to address American race relations from a
psychological perspective. In his essays and fiction the author explored the implications of racism for both the oppressor, suggesting repeatedly that whites as well as blacks suffer in a racist climate. In The Block American Writer: Poetry and Drama, Walter Meserve noted: "People are important to Baldwin, and their problems
generally embedded in their agonizing souls, stimulate him to write. ... A humanitarian, sensitive to the needs and struggles of man, he writes of inner turmoil, spiritual disruption, the consequence upon people of the burdens of the world, both White and Black." James Arthur Baldwin was born and raised in Harlem under extremely trying
circumstances. The oldest of nine children, he grew up in an environment of rigorous religious observance and dire poverty. His stepfather, an evangelical preacher, was a strict disciplinarian who showed James little love. As John W. Roberts put it in the Dictionary of Literary Biography, the relationship between the youngster and his stepfather
 "served as a constant source of tension during [Baldwin's] formative years and informs some of his best mature writings.... The demands of caring for younger siblings and his stepfather's religious convictions in large part shielded the boy from the harsh realities of Harlem street life during the 1930s." During his youth Baldwin read constantly and
slipped away as often as he dared to the movies and even to plays. Although perhaps somewhat sheltered from the perils of the streets, Baldwin knew he wanted to be a writer and thus observed his environment very closely. He was an excellent student who earnedAt a Glance...Born August 2, 1924, in New York, NY; died of stomach cancer December
1, 1987, in St. Paul de Vence, France; son of David (a clergyman and factory worker) and Berdis (Jones) Baldwin. Education: Graduate of De Witt Clinton High School, New York, NY.Writer, 1944-87. Youth minister at Fireside Pentecostal Assembly, New York, NY.Writer, 1944-87. Youth minister at Fireside Pentecostal Assembly, New York, NY.Writer, 1944-87. Youth minister at Fireside Pentecostal Assembly, New York City, 1938-42; variously employed as a handyman, dishwasher, waiter, and office boy in New York City, 1938-42; variously employed as a handyman, dishwasher, waiter, and office boy in New York City, 1938-42; variously employed as a handyman, dishwasher, waiter, and office boy in New York City, 1938-42; variously employed as a handyman, dishwasher, waiter, and office boy in New York City, 1938-42; variously employed as a handyman, dishwasher, waiter, and office boy in New York City, 1938-42; variously employed as a handyman, dishwasher, waiter, and office boy in New York City, 1938-42; variously employed as a handyman, dishwasher, waiter, and office boy in New York City, 1938-42; variously employed as a handyman, dishwasher, waiter, and office boy in New York City, 1938-42; variously employed as a handyman, dishwasher, waiter, and office boy in New York City, 1938-42; variously employed as a handyman and factory waiter, and office boy in New York City, 1938-42; variously employed as a handyman and factory waiter, and office boy in New York City, 1938-42; variously employed as a handyman and factory waiter, and office boy in New York City, 1938-42; variously employed as a handyman and factory waiter, and office boy in New York City, 1938-42; variously employed as a handyman and factory waiter, and office boy in New York City, 1938-42; variously employed as a handyman and factory waiter, and office boy in New York City, 1938-42; variously employed as a handyman and factory waiter, and office boy in New York City, 1938-42; variously employed as a handyman and factory waiter, and office boy in New York City, 1938-
York City, and in defense work in Belle Meade, NJ, 1942-46. Lecturer on racial issues in the United States and Europe, 1955-87. Director of play Fortune and Men's Eyes, Istanbul, Turkey, 1948; Guggenheim fellowship, 1954; National Institute of
Arts and Letters grant for literature, 1956; Ford Foundation grant, 1959; George Polk Memorial Award, 1963; American Book Award nomination, 1980, for lust above My Head; named Commander of the Legion of Honor (France), 1986. Member: Congress of Racial Equality (member of national advisory board), American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters grant for literature, 1956; Ford Foundation grant, 1959; George Polk Memorial Award, 1963; American Book Award nomination, 1980, for lust above My Head; named Commander of the Legion of Honor (France), 1986. Member: Congress of Racial Equality (member of national advisory board), American Book Award nomination, 1980, for lust above My Head; named Commander of the Legion of Honor (France), 1986. Member: Congress of Racial Equality (member of national advisory board), American Academy and Institute of Arts and Institute of Institute of Arts and Institute of Arts and Institute of Institute o
and Letters, International PEN.special attention from many of his teachers. In the summer of his fourteenth birthday Baldwin underwent a dramatic religious conversion during a service at his father's church. The experience tied him to the Pentecostal faith even more closely; he became a popular junior minister, preaching full sermons while still in
his teens. Students of Baldwin's writings see this period as an essential one in his development. The structure of an evangelical sermon, with its fiery language and dire warnings, would translate well onto the page when the young man began to write. As he grew older, however, Baldwin began to question his involvement in Christianity. His outside
readings led him to the conclusion that blacks should have little to do with a faith that had been used to enslave them. Shortly after he graduated from high school in 1942, Baldwin was compelled to find work in order to help support his brothers and the family
was desperate. Eventually Baldwin secured a wartime job with the defense industry, working in a factory in Belle Meade, New Jersey. There he was confronted daily by the humiliating regulations of segregation and hostile white workers who taunted him. When his stepfather died Baldwin rebelled against family responsibilities and moved to
Greenwich Village, absolutely determined to be a writer. He supported himself doing odd jobs and began writing both a novel and shorter pieces of journalism. Literary Prowess Blossomed in EuropeIn 1944 Baldwin met one of his heroes, Richard Wright. A respected novelist and lecturer, Wright helped Baldwin win a fellowship that would allow him
the financial freedom to work on his writing. The years immediately following World War II saw Baldwin's first minor successes in his chosen field. His pieces appeared in such prestigious publications as the Nation, the New Leader, and Commentary, and he became acquainted with other young would-be writers in New York. Still, Baldwin struggled
with his fiction. By 1948 he concluded that the social tenor of the United States was stifling his creativity. Using the funds from yet another fellowship, he embarked for Paris and commenced the most important phase of his career. "Once I found myself on the other side of the ocean," Baldwin told the New York Times, "I could see where I came from
very clearly, and I could see that I carried myself, which is my home, with me. You can never escape that. I am the grandson of a slave, and I am a writer. I must deal with both." Through some difficult financial and emotional periods, Baldwin undertook a process of self-discovery that included both an acceptance of his heritage and an admittance of
his bisexuality. In Tri-Quarterly Robert A. Bone concluded that Europe gave the young author many things: "It gave him a tender love affair which would dominate the pages of his later fiction. But above all, Europe gave him back himself. The immediate fruit of
self-recovery was a great creative outburst." In short order Baldwin completed his first novel, Go Tell It on the Mountain, and a play, The America's most important periodicals and worked occasionally as a journalist. Most critics view Baldwin's essays as his best
contribution to Amer can literature. Works like Notes of a Native Son and Nobody Knows My Name served to illuminate the condition of the black man in American society on the eve of the civil rights era. Baldwin probed the issues of race with emphasis on self-determination, identity, and reality. In The Fifties: Fiction, Poetry, Drama, C. W. E. Bigsby
wrote that Baldwin's central theme in his essays was "the need to accept reality as a necessary foundation for individual identity and thus a logical prerequisite for the kind of saving love in which he places his whole faith.... Baldwin sees this simple progression as an urgent formula not only for the redemption of individual men but for the survival of
mankind. In this at least black and white are as one and the Negro's much-vaunted search for identity can be seen as part and parcel of the American's long-standing need for self-definition."The Fire Next Time Predicts 1960s' Racial UnrestBaldwin's essays tackled complex psychological issues but remained understandable. His achievements
enhanced his reputation both among America's intellectuals and with the general public. In the mid-1950s he returned to America and became a popular speaker on the lecture circuit. The author quickly discovered, however, that social conditions for America and became a popular speaker on the lecture circuit. The author quickly discovered, however, that social conditions for America and became a popular speaker on the lecture circuit.
escalated—he became increasingly outraged. Baldwin realized that his essays were reaching a white audience and as the Civil Rights Movement gained momentum he sought to warn whites about the potential destruction their behavior patterns might wreak. In 1963 he published a long essay, The Fire Next Time, in which he all but predicted the
Completely disillusioned with the United States, he returned to France in the early 1970s and made his home there until his death in 1987. Baldwin's fiction and plays also explored the burdens a callous society can impose on a sensitive individual. Two of his best-known works, the novel Go Tell It on the Mountain and the play The Amen Corner were
inspired by his years with the Pentecostal church in Harlem. In Go Tell It on the Mountain, for instance, a teenaged boy struggles with a repressive stepfather and experiences a charismatic spiritual awakening. Later Baldwin novels dealt frankly with homosexuality and interracial love affairs—love in both its sexual and spiritual forms became an
essential component of the quest for self-realization for both the author and his characters. Fred L. Standley noted in the Dictionary of Literary Biography that Baldwin's concerns as a fiction writer and a dramatist included "the historical significance and the potential explosiveness in black-white relations; the necessity for developing a sexual and
psychological consciousness and identity; the intertwining of love and power in the universal scheme of existence as well as in the structures of society; the misplaced priorities in the value systems in America; and the responsibility of the artist to promote the evolution of the individual and the society."Inspired a Generation of ArtistsBaldwin spent
much of the last fifteen years of his life in France, but he never gave up his American citizenship. He once commented that he preferred to think of himself as a "commuter" between country's highest accolades when
he was named Commander of the Legion of Honor. Baldwin died of stomach cancer in 1987, leaving several projects unfinished. Those who paid tribute to him on both sides of the Atlantic noted that he had experienced success in theater, fiction, and nonfiction alike—a staggering achievement. One of his last works to see print during his lifetime was
a well-regarded anthology of essays, The Pnce of the Ticket: Collected Nonfiction 1948-1985. In her book James Baldwin, Carolyn Wedin Sylvander concluded that what emerges from the whole of Baldwin has shared his struggle with his
 readers for a purpose—to demonstrate that our suffering is our bridge to one another. Baldwin was laid to rest in a Harlem cemetery. A funeral service in his nonor drew scores of black writers, politicians, entertainers, and other celebrities, many of whom offered fond eulogies for the ploneering author. The New York Times quoted writer Orden writers, and other celebrities, many of whom offered fond eulogies for the ploneering author. The New York Times quoted writer Orden writers, and other celebrities, many of whom offered fond eulogies for the ploneering author. The New York Times quoted writer Orden writers are considered for the ploneering author.
Coombs, for one, who said: "Because [Baldwin] existed we felt that the racial miasma that swirled around us would not consume us, and it is not too much to say that this man saved our lives, or at least, gave us the necessary ammunition to face what we knew would continue to be a hostile and condescending world." Poet and playwright Amiri Baraka
likewise commented: "This man traveled the earth like its history and its biographer. He reported, criticized, made us think, made us feel... that we could defend ourselves, that we were in the world not merely as animate
slaves, but as terrifyingly sensitive measurers of what is good or evil, beautiful or ugly. This is the power of his spirit. This is the bond which created our love for him/'Perhaps the most touching tribute to Baldwin's effort as the witness is
evidenced time and again by the people, black and white, gay and straight, famous and anonymous, whose humanity he unveiled in his writings. America and the literary world are far richer for his witness. The proof of a shared humanity he unveiled in his writings. America and the literary world are far richer for his witness. The proof of a shared humanity across the divides of race, class and more is the testament that the preacher's son, James Arthur Baldwin, has left
us."Selected writingsFictionGo Tell It on the Mountain, Knopf, 1953. Giovanni's Room, Dial, 1965. Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone, Dial, 1965. Tell Me How Long the Tra
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G. K. Hall, 1981.Dictionary of Literary Biography, Gale, Volume 2: American Novelists Since World War II, 1978, Volume 8: Twentieth-Century American Dramatists, 1981, Volume 33: Afro-American Fiction Writers after 1955, 1984. The Fifties: Fiction, Poetry, Drama, edited by Warren French, Everett/Edwards, 1970. James Baldwin: A Collection of
Critical Essays, edited by Kenneth Kinnamon, Prentice-Hall, 1974. Pratt, Louis Hill, James Baldwin, Twayne, 1978. Sylvander, Carolyn Wedin, James Baldwin, Frederick Ungar, 1980. February 2, 1969; May 21, 1971; May 17, 1974; June 4, 1976; September 4, 1977; September 21, 1974; May 17, 1974; June 4, 1976; September 4, 1977; September 21, 1978.
1979: September 23, 1979: November 11, 1983: January 10, 1985: January 14, 1985: January 14, 1985: December 2, 1987; December 9, 1987, Tri-Ouarterly, Winter, 1965, Washington Post, December 2, 1987; December 3, 1987, Tri-Ouarterly, Winter, 1965, Washington Post, December 3, 1987, Washington Post, December 3, 1
in New York City's Harlem in 1924. He started out as a writer during the late 1940s and rose to international fame after the publication, he had already capture the attention of an assortment of writers, literary critics, and intellectuals in the
United States and abroad. Writing to Langston Hughes in 1948, Arna Bontemps commented on Baldwin's "The Harlem Ghetto," which was published in the February 1948 issue of Commentary magazine. Referring to "that remarkable piece by that 24-year old colored kid," Bontemps wrote, "What a kid! He has zoomed high among our writers with his
first effort." Thus, from the beginning of his professional career, Baldwin was highly regarded and he began publishing in magazines and journals such as The Nation, New Leader, Commentary, and Partisan Review.OverviewMuch of Baldwin's writing, both fiction and nonfiction, is autobiographical. The story of John Grimes, the traumatized son of a
tyrannical, fundamentalist father in Go Tell It on the Mountain (1953), closely resembles Baldwin's own childhood. His celebrated essay "Notes of a Native Son" (1955) describes his painful relationship with his stepfather. Born out of wedlock before his mother met and married David Baldwin, young Jimmy never fully gained his stern patriarch's
approval. Raised in a strict Pentecostal household, Baldwin became a preacher at age fourteen, and his father was exacerbated, and, as "Notes of a Native Son" reveals, even the impending death of David Baldwin in 1943 did not
reconcile the two. In various forms, the father-son conflict, with all of its Old Testament connotations, became a central preoccupation of Baldwin's writing. Baldwin writing. Baldwin
In 1948 and 1949, respectively, he wrote "Everybody's Protest Novel" and "Many Thousands Gone," which were published in Partisan Review. These two essays served as a forum from which he made pronouncements about the limitations of the protest tradition in American literature. He scathingly criticized Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's
Cabin and Richard Wright's Native Son for being firmly rooted in the protest tradition. Each writer failed, in Baldwin's judgment, because the "power of revelation...is the business of the novelist, that journey toward a more vast reality which must take precedence over all other claims." He abhorred the idea of the writer as a kind of "congressman,"
embracing Jamesian ideas about the art of fiction. The writer, as Baldwin envisioned himself during this early period, should self-consciously seek a distance between himself and his subject. Baldwin's criticisms of Native Son and the protest novel tradition precipitated a rift with his mentor, Richard Wright. Ironically, Wright had supported Baldwin's
candidacy for the Rosenwald Fellowship in 1948, which allowed Baldwin to move to Paris, where he completed Go Tell It on the Mountain. Baldwin explored his conflicted relationship with Wright in a series of moving essays, including "Alas, Poor Richard," published in Nobody Knows My Name (1961). Baldwin left Harlem for Paris when he was
twentyfour. Although he spoke little French at the time, he purchased a one-way ticket and later achieved success and fame as an expatriate. Writing about race and sexuality, he published twentytwo books, among them six novels, a collection of short stories, two plays, several collections of essays, a children's book, a movie
scenario, and Jimmy's Blues (1985), a chapbook of poems. Starting with his controversial Another Country (1962), many of his books, including The Fire Next Time, If Beale Street Could Talk (1974), and Just above My Head (1979), were best sellers. His play Blues for Mr. Charlie (1964) was produced on Broadway, and his scenario "One Day When I
Was Lost: A Scenario Based on Alex Haley's The Autobiography of Malcolm X. " was used by the movie director Spike Lee in the production of his feature film on Malcolm X. The Discovery of What It Means to Be an American," he
writes about his experience of living and writing in Switzerland: "There, in that alabaster landscape, armed with two Bessie Smith, through her tone and cadence...helped me dig back to the way I
myself must have spoken when I was a pickaninny, and to remember the things I had heard and seen and felt. I had buried them very deep. "Go Tell It on the Mountain recaptures in some definitive ways the spirit and circumstances of Baldwin's own boyhood and adolescence. John Grimes, the shy and intelligent protagonist of the novel, is reminiscent
of Baldwin. Moreover, Baldwin succeeds at creating a web of relationships that reveals how a particular character has arrived at his or her situation. He had, after all, harshly criticized Stowe and Wright for what he considered their stereotypical depiction of characters and their circumstances. His belief that "revelation" was the novelist's ultimate
goal persisted throughout his career. In his second and third novels—Giovanni's Room (1956) and Another Country—he explores the theme of a varying, if consistent, American search for identity. In Giovanni's Room the theme of a varying, if consistent, American search for identity. In Giovanni's Room the theme of a varying if consistent, American search for identity. In Giovanni's Room the theme is complicated by international and sexual dimensions.
culture and country as he wrestles with his ambivalent sexuality. Similarly, in Another Country Baldwin sensationally calls into question many American taboos about race, sexuality, marriage, and infidelity. By presenting a stunning series of relationships—heterosexual, homosexual, interracial, bisexual—he creates a tableau vivant of American mores.
In his remaining novels, Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone (1968), If Beale Street Could Talk, and Just above My Head, he also focuses on issues related to race and sexuality. Furthermore, he tries to reveal how racism and sexism are inextricably linked to deep-seated American assumptions. In Baldwin's view, race and sex are hopelessly
entangled in America's collective psyche. Essays and Political InvolvementAround the time of The Fire Next Time 's publication and after the Broadway production of Blues for Mr. Charlie, Baldwin became known as a spokesperson for civil rights and a celebrity noted for championing the cause of black Americans. He was a prominent participant in
the March on Washington at which the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. He frequently appeared on television and Nobody Knows My Name —before The Fire Next Time. In fact, various
critics and reviewers already considered him in a class of his own. However, it was his exhortative rhetoric in The Fire Next Time, which was published on the one hundredth anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation and anticipated the urban riots of the 1960s, that landed him on the cover of Time magazine. He concluded: "If we—and now I
mean the relatively conscious whites and the relatively conscious blacks who must, like lovers, insist on or create the consciousness of the others—do not falter in our duty now, we may be able... to end the racial nightmare, and achieve our country, and change the history of the world. "After the publication of The Fire Next Time, several black
nationalists criticized Baldwin for his conciliatory attitude. They questioned whether his message of love and understanding would do much to change race relations in America. Eldridge Cleaver, in his book Soul on Ice, was one of Baldwin's more outspoken critics. But Baldwin continued writing, becoming increasingly dependent on his early life as a
source of inspiration, accepting eagerly the role of the writer as a "poet" whose "assignment" was to accept the "energy" of the folk and transform it into art. It is as though he was following the wisdom of his own words in his story "Sonny's Blues." Like Sonny and his band, Baldwin saw clearly as he matured that he was telling a tale based on the
blues of his own life as a writer and a man in America and abroad: "Creole began to tell us what the blues were all about. They were not about anything very new. He and his boys up there were keeping it new at the risk of ruin, destruction, madness, and death, in order to find new ways to make us listen. For, while the tale of how we suffer, and how
we are delighted, and how we may triumph is never new, it always must be heard. There isn't any other tale to tell, it's the only light we've got in all this darkness." Several of his essays and interviews of the 1980s discuss homosexuality and homophobia with fervor and forthrightness, most notably "Here Be Dragons." Thus, just as he had been the
leading literary voice of the civil rights movement, he became an inspirational figure for the emerging gay rights movement. Baldwin taught at a number of American colleges and universities, including the University of Massachusetts at Amherst
and Hampshire College, frequently commuting back and forth between the United States and his home in Saint Paul de Vence in the south of France. After his death in France on November 30, 1987, the New York Times reported on its front page for the following day: "James Baldwin, Eloquent Essayist in Behalf of Civil Rights, Is Dead."See also
Autobiography, U.S.; Literature of the United StatesBibliography (Los.; Literature of the United StatesBibli
Stealing the Fire: The Art of Protest and James Baldwin. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1989.horace porter (1996)Updated bibliography views updated May 21 2018Born: August 2, 1924New York, New YorkDied: November 30, 1987Saint-Paul-de-Vance, France African American author and playwrightThe author James Baldwin.
achieved international recognition for his expressions of African American life in the United States. During the 1960s he was one of the most outspoken leaders of the civil rights movement. Early life James Arthur Baldwin, the son of Berdis Jones Baldwin and the stepson of David Baldwin, was born in Harlem, New York City, on August 2, 1924. He was
the oldest of nine children and from an early age loved to read. His father was a preacher in the Pentecostal church, and at the age of fourteen Baldwin also became a preacher. At eighteen he graduated from DeWitt Clinton High School, where he had written for a magazine put out by the school. Baldwin then realized that he wanted to write for a
living. In 1944 Baldwin met another writer named Richard Wright (1908-1960), who helped Baldwin secure a fellowship (a writing award) that provided him with enough money to devote all of his time to live and
work in Europe with money from another fellowship. While overseas Baldwin completed the books Go Tell It on the Mountain (1953), Notes of a Native Son (1955), and Giovanni's Room (1956). Spokesperson for civil rights movement.
writers for the civil rights of African Americans. He gave popular lectures on the subject, and he quickly discovered that social conditions for African Americans had become even worse while he was abroad. As the 1960s began—and violence in the South increased—Baldwin grew increasingly angry. He responded with three powerful books of essays:
Nobody Knows My Name (1961); The Fire Next Time (1963), in which he predicts future outbursts of black anger; and More Notes of a Native Son. These works were accompanied by Another Country (1962), his third novel. Going to Meet the Man (1965) is a group of short stories from the same period. During this time Baldwin's descriptions of
Richard Avedon's photography were published under the title Nothing Personal (1964). Four years later came another novel, Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone. In addition, the mid-1960s saw Baldwin's two published plays produced on Broadway. The Amen Corner, first staged in Washington, D.C., in 1955, was presented at New York City's
Ethel Barrymore Theatre in April 1965. Similar in tone to Go Tell It on the Mountain, it describes the strong religious feeling of the Pentecostal church. Blues for Mr. Charlie, which premiered at Broadway's ANTA Theatre in April 1964, is based on the case of Emmett Till, a fourteen-year-old African American from Chicago who was murdered by white
people in Mississippi in 1955. The assassinations of three of Baldwin's friends—civil rights marcher Medgar Evers (1926-1963), the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968), and the black Muslim leader Malcolm X (1925-1965)—destroyed any hopes Baldwin had that problems between the races would be solved in the United States, and he
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returned to France in the early 1970s. His later works of fiction include: No Name in the Street (1972); The Devil Finds Work (1976), an examination of African Americans in the movie industry; and The Evidence of Things Not Seen (1985), and Evidence of Things Not Seen (1985), and Evidence of Things Not Seen (1985), and Evidence of Things Not Seen (1985).
discussion of issues of race surrounding the child murders in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1979 and 1980. A volume of poetry, Jimmy's Blues, was issued in 1985. Literary achievement as a writer was his ability to address American race relations by discussing the effects of racism (unequal treatment based on race) on the mind.
In his essays and fiction he considered the point of view of both the offender and the victim. He suggested that all people, not just one group of people, suffer in a racist climate. Baldwin's fiction and plays also explore the burdens society places on individuals. Two of his best-known works, the novel Go Tell It on the Mountain and the play The Amen
Corner, were inspired by his years with the Pentecostal church in Harlem. In Go Tell It on the Mountain, for instance, a teenage boy struggles with a strict stepfather and experiences a religious awakening. Love in all of its forms became a key ingredient in Baldwin's writing. Later Baldwin novels deal honestly with homosexuality (sexual desire for
members of the same sex) and love affairs between members of different races. Baldwin's writing is noted for its beauty and power. His language seems purposely chosen to shock and white Americans; the conflicts
between guilt or shame and sexual freedom; the gift of sharing and extending love; and the charm of goodness versus evil. He describes the rewards of artistic achievement among the problems of modern life, including racism, industrialism (the influence of large corporations on everyday life), materialism (the pursuit of material wealth above all
else), and a global power struggle. Everything that lessens or harms the human spirit is strongly attacked. Final years and in 1986 he was given one of the country's
highest honors when he was named Commander of the Legion of Honor. He died of stomach cancer on November 30, 1987, in Saint-Paul-de-Vance, France, but he was buried in Harlem. One of his last works to see publication during his lifetime was a collection of essays called The Price of the Ticket: Collected Nonfiction, 1948–1985. For More
InformationLeeming, David Adams. James Baldwin: A Biography. New York: Knopf, 1994. Washington, Bryan R. The Politics of Exile: Ideology in Henry James, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and James Baldwin: Artist on Fire. New York: D. I. Fine, 1989. views updated May 23
2018 James Baldwin was a novelist, essayist, playwright, poet, scriptwriter, and filmmaker. Born in Harlem, New York, on August 2, 1924, he understood poverty, injustice, and the parasitic nature of city streets. Some of his teenage experiences with bigoted police and sexual predators are recounted in the well-known volume, The Fire Next Time
(1963). Also in that volume, in the section titled "Letter to My Nephew on the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Emancipation," Baldwin articulates his position on race: "You must accept them with love." He considered racism a matter of morality and human dignity, and it was blacks' responsibility to save
whites from their own ignorance, fear, and loss of identity. His ideas about racism were not the most popular, but they clearly distinguished him as an eloquent visionary. The oldest of nine children, Baldwin was the son of a domestic worker mother and a hostile and hateful stepfather, who thought his son was ugly and disavowed his intelligence.
Baldwin was raised in a Pentecostal church, dominated by the theology of "sinners in the hand of an angry God." He followed his preacher-father to the pulpit, and by the age of fourteen he was preaching that the church provided
no sanctuary from social, economic, and political injustices. Baldwin found his refuge in reading and writing when he attended DeWitt Clinton High School. Realizing he was black and smart, and that his mind belonged solely to him, he declared he would take advantage of his intelligence. He wrote for the school paper and published several short
stories that often reflected his religious background. This beginning led to an international reputation as one of the world's most gifted writers. When Baldwin finished high school in 1942, he did freelance writing and worked for the railroad in New Jersey. After a succession of jobs, he moved to Greenwich Village. It was there that he met the writers
Richard Wright, who helped him secure a fellowship, after which Baldwin expatriated himself to Paris in 1948. Some of his essays indicate that he left America to escape racial discrimination only to discover that his adopted country, France, was no panacea for social justice and equality. Baldwin's treatment of racism, though engaging and thoughtful
is comparatively restrained in much of his work. While the scope of his most critically acclaimed novel, Go Tell It on the Mountain (1953), covers religion and personal identity, the second part of the Jim Crow South, as well as the social and economic inequality
of the urban North. Some of his other work, notably the 1964 play, Blues for Mister Charlie, and the short story collection, Going to Meet the Man," from the point of view of the racist. Baldwin's essays are more fervent in the exploration of race. Notes of a Native Son (1955),
offers a view of expatriation that contradicts the notion of Paris as the promised land, while Nobody Knows My Name (1961), leals, in part, with race relations in the United States. Some of his fiction, including Another Country (1962), If Beale Street Could Talk (1974), and Just Above My Head (1979), present characters who suffer deliberate racism
as they negotiate other problems in their lives. With graceful eloquence, James Baldwin stirred the moral consciousness of a nation bogged down in matters of race. SEE ALSO Gay Men. BIBLIOGRAPHYPRIMARY WORKSGo Tell It on the Mountain. 1953. New York: Knopf. Notes of a Native Son. 1955. New York: Dial Press. Nobody Knows My Name:
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Chicago: Nelson Hall. Angelene Jamison-Hall views updated May 29 2018 Baldwin, James (1924-87) US novelist and essayist. Baldwin's work explores social prejudice experienced by African-American and gay communities. His prose is inflected with blues and gospel rhythms. His first novel, Go Tell It on the Mountain (1953), was semi-
autobiographical and has become an American classic. In the novel Giovanni's Room (1956), he explored issues of gay love. His most celebrated novel is Another Country (1962). Essay collections include Notes of a Native Son (1955), Nobody Knows My Name (1961), and The Fire Next Time (1963). Baldwin was prominent in the US civil rights
movement. James B. Morris Scholarship Fund James A. Rhodes State College: Tabular Data James A. Rhodes State College: Narrative Description James A. Rhodes State College: Distance Learning Programs James A. Rhodes State College: Tabular Data James A. Rhodes State College: Distance Learning Programs James A. Rhodes State College: Tabular Data James A. Rhodes State College: Distance Learning Programs James A. Rhodes Stat
Garfield National Historic Site James A. Garfield and Chester A. Arthur James (Son of Zebedee), St. James Barron Court-Martial: 1808 James Bay Hydropower Project James Cinti de Cerqueto, Bl. James Clark Ross and the Discovery of the Magnetic North Pole James Dean: Live Fast, Die
Young James Edward Francis Stuart James Baldwin was an American writer and activist known for his passions about race, sexuality, and class in America. A key voice in the Civil Rights and gay liberation movements, Baldwin's work reveals criticisms of racism that prevailed in nearly all facets of society, from relationships to politics to cinema. No
matter the medium, his work is regarded as honest, insightful, and passionate. We used Goodreads members can rate and review their favorite works. Whether you're looking to read Baldwin's searing essay collections and powerful novels or
explore his insightful plays and poetry, here are some of his best works. Amazon Available on Amazon and Bookshop "Nothing Personal" is a Baldwin questions society sracial fixations, recounts a disturbing police encounter, and
ponders upon race in America — highlighting issues that share stark similarities to the current Black Lives Matter movement. Bookshop Available on Amazon and Bookshop This children's picture book is about a four-year-old boy named TJ who grows up in Harlem and becomes a "little man" as he discovers the realities of the adult world. With a
 foreward from Baldwin's nephew, TJ, this childrens' book celebrates Black childhood while also highlighting the challenging realities that sometimes accompany it. Bookshop Available on Amazon and Bookshop Highlighting the importance of religion and the effects of poverty on one African American family, "The Amen Corner" is a play about
Margaret Alexander, a church pastor in Harlem, whose dying husband returns after a long absence. As the truth of their pasts come to light, Margaret risks losing her congregation and her family. Amazon Available on Amazon and Bookshop This is the most prominent collection of James Baldwin's poetry, from his earliest writing to the words written
just before his passing. Enlightened and honest, Baldwin's lyrical and dramatic poetry is just as profound as his fiction and essays. Amazon Available on Amazon and Bookshop "The Devil Finds Work" is a critical essay collection on racism in cinema, from the movies Baldwin saw as a child to the underlying racist messages in the most popular films of
the 1970s. Intertwining personal history with cinematic interpretations, these essays are a crucial commentary and analysis of subliminal messaging, racial disconnect, and racial weaponization in film. Bookshop Available on Amazon and Bookshop Available on Amazon 
man who is murdered by a white man in a small town, launching a complex weave of consequences that reveal the lasting wounds of racism and a demonstration of its violence. Bookshop Available on Amazon and Bookshop "Just Above My Head"
was the last novel James Baldwin published before his passing in 1987. The story centers on Arthur Hall, a gospel singer, but is about a group of friends who begin preaching and singing in Harlem churches and spans 30 years as they travel, fall in love, and experience the Civil Rights movement. Amazon Available on Amazon This essay collection
features three prominent Baldwin essays where he draws upon personal experience to critique racist institutions and how they dismantle equal opportunities for education and democracy. With a firm voice that is still relevant today, Baldwin highlights the effects from all systems on what it means to be Black in America. Bookshop Available on
Amazon and Bookshop Published in 1972, "No Name in the Street" is an essay collection in which Baldwin's reaction to the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. to his experience of the 1963 March on Washington, his essays are an eloquent but
powerful prophetic account of history. Bookshop Available on Amazon and Bookshop This Baldwin novel is about an actor named Leo's childhood in Harlem and his acting career, the novel traverses each of Leo's relationships while examining the effects of
trauma on individuals. Bookshop Available on Amazon and Bookshop "Nobody Knows My Name" is James Baldwin's experiences. This collection was a nonfiction finalist for the National Book Awards in 1962, admired for Baldwin's
"unflinching honesty." Bookshop Available on Amazon and Bookshop "I Am Not Your Negro" is a posthumous collection of James Baldwin's notes, essays, and letters edited by Raoul Peck that were first used to create the 2016 documentary of the same name. Based on an unfinished manuscript from James Baldwin about the assassinations of Medgan
Evers, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King Jr., this book is a short story collection featuring men and women who struggle through the lasting effects of racism in their lives. A demonstration of Baldwin's mastery of prose, these stories are
passionate as the characters use art, religion, and sexuality to celebrate life and find peace through suffering. Bookshop "Notes of a Native Son" is James Baldwin's first essay collection, a revered classic featuring 10 essays on the topic of race in America and Europe. From critiques of popular books and movies to
examinations of race in Harlem, this collection is loved for Baldwin's astute and eloquent insights into the world and how his experiences fit into a larger picture. Bookshop Available on Amazon and Bookshop Controversial at the time of publication for depictions of bisexuality and interracial couples, this 1962 classic centers on Rufus Scott, a Black
man living in 1950s Greenwich Village. When Rufus meets a white woman and falls in love, society openly condemns their relationship, which deeply affects both of them. Bookshop Available on Amazon and Bookshop This classic follows Tish, a 19-year-old woman, who is in love with a young sculptor named Fonny. When Fonny is wrongly accused of a
crime and sent to prison, both of their families set out on an emotional journey to prove his innocence. Bookshop Available on Amazon and Bookshop are lit on the Mountain is James Baldwin's first publication, a semi-autobiographical novel about John, a teenager in 1930s Harlem. With themes of self-identity and realization, holiness, and
mortality, this book is about John's self-invention and understanding his identity in the context of his family and community. Bookshop Available on Amazon and Bookshop With over 80,000 ratings on Goodreads, "Giovanni's Room" is the most-rated James Baldwin book amongst Goodreads members. Baldwin's second novel is considered a gay
literature classic, the story of an American man in Paris who is caught between morality and desire when he meets an alluring man named Giovanni. Amazon Available on Amazon and Bookshop Both a call to action and a searing attack on racism, "The Fire Next Time" is an essay collection featuring two letters — one to Americans and the other two
his nephew — as a call to end racism 100 years after the Emancipation Proclamation. These letters are more direct than his fictional writing, making it a compelling classic of thoughtful and persistent reflections, and the most popular James Baldwin book on Goodreads. American writer and activist (1924-1987) This article is about the American
writer. For other people with the same name, see James Baldwin (disambiguation). James Baldwin Baldwin in 1969BornJames Arthur Jones(1924-08-02) (aged 63) Saint-Paul-de-Vence, FranceResting placeFerncliff Cemetery, Westchester County, New
YorkOccupationWriteractivistEducationDeWitt Clinton High SchoolGenreUrban fictionAfrican-American literatureYears active1947-1985Notable works Go Tell It on the Mountain (1953) Notes of a Native Son (1955) Giovanni's Room (1956) James Arthur Baldwin (né Jones; August 2, 1924 - December 1, 1987) was an American writer
and civil rights activist who garnered acclaim for his essays, novels, plays, and poems. His 1953 novel Go Tell It on the Mountain has been ranked by Time magazine as one of the top 100 English-language novels.[1] His 1955 essay collection Notes of a Native Son helped establish his reputation as a voice for human equality.[2] Baldwin was an
influential public figure and orator, especially during the civil rights movement in the United States.[3][4][5] Baldwin's fiction posed fundamental personal questions and dilemmas amid complex social and psychological pressures. Themes of masculinity, race, and class intertwine to create intricate narratives that influenced both the civil
rights movement and the gay liberation movement in mid-twentieth century America. His protagonists are often but not exclusively African-American, and gay and bisexual men feature prominently in his work (as in his 1956 novel Giovanni's Room). His characters typically face internal and external obstacles in their search for self- and social
acceptance.[6] Baldwin's work continues to influence artists and writers. His unfinished manuscript Remember This House was expanded and adapted as the 2016 documentary film I Am Not Your Negro, winning the BAFTA Award for Best Documentary. His 1974 novel If Beale Street Could Talk was adapted into a 2018 film of the same name, which
earned widespread praise. Baldwin was born as James Arthur Jones to Emma Berdis Jones on August 2, 1924, at Harlem Hospital in New York City.[7] Born on Deal Island, Maryland, in 1903,[8] Emma Jones was one of many who fled racial segregation and discrimination in the South during the Great Migration. She arrived in Harlem, New York,
when she was 19 years old.[9] Baldwin was born out of wedlock there. Jones never revealed to him who his biological father was.[9] Jones originally undertook to care for her son as a single mother.[10] However, in 1927, Jones married David Baldwin, a laborer and Baptist preacher.[11] David Baldwin was born in Bunkie, Louisiana, and preached in
New Orleans, but left the South for Harlem in 1919.[11][a] How David and Emma met is uncertain, but in James Baldwin's semi-autobiographical Go Tell It on the Mountain, the characters based on the two are introduced by the man's sister.[12] Emma Baldwin and David Baldwin had eight children in sixteen years—George, Barbara, Wilmer, David Jr.
(named for James's stepfather and deceased half-brother), Gloria, Ruth, Elizabeth, and Paula.[13] James rarely wrote or spoke of his mother. When he did, he made it clear that he admired and loved her, often through reference to her loving smile.[14]:20 James moved several times while young but always
within Harlem.[15] At the time, Harlem was still a mixed-race area of the city in the incipient days of the Great Migration.[16] James Baldwin did not know exactly how old his stepfather was, but it is clear that he was much older than Emma; indeed, he may have been born before the Emancipation in 1863.[17] David's mother, Barbara, was born
enslaved and lived with the Baldwins in New York before her death when James was seven years old.[17] David also had a light-skinned half-brother fathered by his mother's erstwhile enslaver[17] and a sister named Barbara, whom James and others in the family called "Taunty".[18] David's father was born a slave.[9] David had been married earlier
and had a daughter, who was as old as Emma and at least two sons—David, who died while in jail, and Sam, who was eight years James's senior. Sam lived with the Baldwins for a time and once saved James from drowning.[14]:7[17] James Baldwin referred to his stepfather simply as "father" throughout his life,[11] but David Sr. and James had an
extremely difficult relationship and nearly resorted to physical fights on several occasions.[14]:18[b] "They fought because he liked movies, because he liked movies, because he had white friends", all of which, David Baldwin also hated white people and "his
devotion to God was mixed with a hope that God would take revenge on them for him."[21][c] During the 1920s and 1930s, David worked at a soft-drink bottling factory,[16] although he was eventually laid off from the job. As his anger and hatred eventually tainted his sermons, he was less in demand as a preacher. David sometimes took out his anger
on his family and the children were afraid of him, though this was to some degree balanced by the love lavished on them by their mother. [23] David Baldwin grew paranoid near the end of his life. [24] He was committed to a mental asylum in 1943 and died of tuberculosis on July 29 of that year, the same day Emma had their last child, Paula. [25]
James, at his mother's urging, visited his dying stepfather the day before[26] and came to something of a posthumous reconciliation with him in his essay "Notes of a Native Son". In the essay, he wrote: "in his outrageously demanding and protective way, he loved his children, who were black like him and menaced like him."[27] David Baldwin's
funeral was held on James's 19th birthday, around the same time that the Harlem riot began.[22] Baldwin in Los Angeles, 1964 As the oldest child, James Baldwin worked part-time from an early age to help support his family. He was molded not only by the difficult relationships in his household but also by the impacts of the poverty and
discrimination he saw all around him. As he grew up, friends he sat next to in church turned to drugs, crime, or prostitution. In what biographer Anna Malaika Tubbs found to be a commentary on not only his own life but also the entire Black experience in America, Baldwin wrote: "I never had a childhood... I did not have any human identity... I was
born dead."[28] Baldwin wrote comparatively little about events at school.[29] The principal of the school was Gertrude E. Ayer, the first Black principal in the city. She and some of Baldwin's teachers recognized his brilliance early on [30] and encouraged
his research and writing pursuits.[31] Aver stated that Baldwin derived his writing talent from his mother, whose notes to school were greatly admired by the teachers, and that her son also learned to write like an angel, albeit an avenging one.[32] By fifth grade, not yet a teenager, Baldwin had read some of Fyodor Dostoyevsky's works, Harriet
Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin, and Charles Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities (which gave him a lifelong interest in the work of Dickens).[33][21] Baldwin wrote a song that earned praise from New York Mayor Fiorello La Guardia in a letter that La Guardia sent to him.[33] Baldwin also won a prize for a short story that was published in a church
newspaper.[33] His teachers recommended that he go to a public library on 135th Street in Harlem, a place that became his sanctuary. Baldwin met Orilla "Bill" Miller, a young white schoolteacher from the Midwest whom Baldwin named
as one of the reasons that he "never really managed to hate white people".[34][d] Among other outings, Miller took Baldwin to see an all-Black rendition of Orson Welles's take on Macbeth at the Lafayette Theatre, from which flowed Baldwin's lifelong desire to succeed as a playwright.[38][e] David was reluctant to let his stepson go to the theatre,
because he saw the stage as sinful and was suspicious of Miller. However, Baldwin's mother insisted, reminding his father of the importance of education. [39] Miller later directed the first play that Baldwin ever wrote. [40] After P.S. 24, Baldwin entered Harlem's Frederick Douglass Junior High School. [29] [7] There, Baldwin met two important
influences.[42] The first was Herman W. "Bill" Porter, a Black Harvard graduate.[43] Porter was the faculty advisor to the library on 42nd Street to research a piece that would turn into Baldwin's first published essay titled "Harlem—
Then and Now", which appeared in the autumn 1937 issue of the Douglass Pilot. [44] The second of these influences from his time at Frederick Douglass Junior High School was Countee Cullen, the renowned poet of the Harlem Renaissance. [45] Cullen taught French and was a literary advisor in the English department. [29] Baldwin later remarked
that he "adored" Cullen's poetry, and his dream to live in France was sparked by Cullen's early impression on him.[43] Baldwin applied to and was accepted at De Witt Clinton High School in the Bronx, a predominantly white and Jewish school, where he matriculated
that fall.[47] He worked on the school's magazine, the Magpie with Richard Avedon, who went on to become a noted photographer, and Emile Capouya and Sol Stein, who would both become renowned publisher and other writing.[48] He completed his high
school diploma at De Witt Clinton in 1941.[49] Baldwin's yearbook listed his career ambition as "novelist-playwright", and his motto in the yearbook was: "Fame is the spur and—ouch!"[49] Uncomfortable with his discovery during his high school years that he was attracted to men rather than women, Baldwin sought refuge in religion.[50] He joined
and it was at Fireside Pentecostal, during his mostly extemporaneous sermons, that Baldwin "learned that he had authority as a speaker and could do things with a crowd."[52] He delivered his final sermon at Fireside Pentecostal in 1941.[52] He delivered his final sermon at Fireside Pentecostal in 1941.[52] He delivered his final sermon at Fireside Pentecostal in 1941.[52] He delivered his final sermon at Fireside Pentecostal in 1941.[52] He delivered his final sermon at Fireside Pentecostal in 1941.[52] He delivered his final sermon at Fireside Pentecostal in 1941.[52] He delivered his final sermon at Fireside Pentecostal in 1941.[52] He delivered his final sermon at Fireside Pentecostal in 1941.[52] He delivered his final sermon at Fireside Pentecostal in 1941.[52] He delivered his final sermon at Fireside Pentecostal in 1941.[52] He delivered his final sermon at Fireside Pentecostal in 1941.[52] He delivered his final sermon at Fireside Pentecostal in 1941.[52] He delivered his final sermon at Fireside Pentecostal in 1941.[52] He delivered his final sermon at Fireside Pentecostal in 1941.[52] He delivered his final sermon at Fireside Pentecostal in 1941.[52] He delivered his final sermon at Fireside Pentecostal in 1941.[52] He delivered his final sermon at Fireside Pentecostal in 1941.[52] He delivered his final sermon at Fireside Pentecostal in 1941.[52] He delivered his final sermon at Fireside Pentecostal in 1941.[52] He delivered his final sermon at Fireside Pentecostal in 1941.[52] He delivered his final sermon at Fireside Pentecostal in 1941.[52] He delivered his final sermon at Fireside Pentecostal in 1941.[52] He delivered his final sermon at Fireside Pentecostal in 1941.[52] He delivered his final sermon at Fireside Pentecostal in 1941.[52] He delivered his final sermon at Fireside Pentecostal in 1941.[52] He delivered his final sermon at Fireside Pentecostal in 1941.[52] He delivered his final sermon at Fireside Pentecostal in 1941.[52] He delivered his final sermon at Fireside Pentecostal in 1941.[
salvation stopped at the church door".[53] He recalled a rare conversation with David Baldwin "in which they had really spoken to one another", during which his stepfather asked: "You'd rather write than preach, wouldn't you?"[53] Baldwin left school in 1941 in order to earn money to help support his family. He secured a job helping to build a
United States Army depot in New Jersey.[54] In the middle of 1942, Emile Capouya helped Baldwin get a job laying tracks for the military in Belle Mead, Baldwin experienced prejudice that deeply frustrated and angered him and that he cited as the partial
cause of his later emigration out of America.[56] Baldwin's fellow white workmen, who mostly came from the South, derided him for what they saw as his "uppity" ways, his sharp, ironic wit and his lack of "respect".[55] In an incident that Baldwin described in his essay "Notes of a Native Son", he went to a restaurant in Princeton called the Balt
where, after a long wait, Baldwin was told that "colored boys" were not served there.[55] Then, on his last night in New Jersey, in another incident also memorialized in "Notes of a Native Son", Baldwin and a friend went to a diner after a movie, only to be told that Black people were not served there.[57] Infuriated, he went to another restaurant
 expecting to be denied service once again.[57] When that denial of service came, humiliation and rage overcame Baldwin and he hurled the nearest object at hand—a water mug—at the waitress, missing her and shattering the mirror behind her.[58] Baldwin and his friend narrowly escaped.[58] During these years, Baldwin was torn between his
desire to write and his need to provide for his family. He took a succession of menial jobs and feared that he was becoming like his stepfather, who had been unable to provide for his family. [59] Fired from the track-laying job. [58] He lost the
meat-packing job too, after falling asleep at the plant. [22] He became listless and unstable, drifting from one odd job to the next. [60] Baldwin drank heavily and endured the first of his melancholy. [61] During the year before he left De Witt Clinton, and at Capouya's urging,
Baldwin had met Delaney, a modernist painter, in Greenwich Village. [62] Delaney would become Baldwin that a Black man could make his living in art. [62] Moreover, when World War II bore down on the United States during the winter after Baldwin left De Witt Clinton, the Harlem
that Baldwin knew was atrophying—no longer the bastion of a Renaissance, the community grew more economically isolated, and he considered him since at least the age of 15.[63] Baldwin lived in several locations in Greenwich Village, first
with Delaney, then with a scattering of other friends. [64] He took a job at the Calypso Restaurant, an unsegregated eatery where many prominent Black people dined. At the Calypso, Baldwin worked under Trinidadian restaurateur Connie Williams. During this time, Baldwin continued to explore his sexuality, coming out to Capouya and another
friend, and to frequent Calypso guest, Stan Weir.[65] Baldwin had numerous one-night stands with men, and several relationships with women.[65] His major love during his Village years was an ostensibly straight black man named Eugene Worth.[66] Worth introduced Baldwin to the Young People's Socialist League and Baldwin became a Trotskyist
for a brief period.[66] Baldwin never expressed his desire for Worth, and Worth died by suicide after jumping from the George Washington Bridge in 1946.[66] The two became fast friends, a friendship that endured through the Civil
Richard Wright, who had published the novel Native Son several years earlier.[69] Baldwin's main objective for their initial meeting was to interest Wright in an early manuscript and encouraged his editors to consider
Baldwin's work, but a $500 advance from Harper & Brothers was dissipated with no book to show for the money, and Harper eventually declined to publish the book.[71] Nonetheless, Baldwin regularly sent letters to Wright in subsequent years and would reunite with Wright in Paris, France, in 1948 (though their relationship took a turn for the
wrote many reviews for The New Leader, but was published for the first time in The Nation in a 1947 review of Maxim Gorki's Best Short Stories.[73] Only one of Baldwin's reviews from this era made it into his later essay collection The New
Leader.[73] Baldwin's first essay, "The Harlem Ghetto", was published a year later in Commentary and explored anti-Semitism included.[73] His conclusion was that Harlem Ghetto", was published a year later in Commentary and explored anti-Semitism included.[73] Jewish people were also the main group of white people that Black Harlem
dwellers met, so Jews became a kind of synecdoche for all that the Black people in Harlem Chetto": in "Journey to Atlanta", Baldwin uses the diary recollections of his younger brother David, who had gone to Atlanta
Georgia, as part of a singing group, to unleash a lashing of irony and scorn on the South, white radicals, and ideology itself.[75] This essay, too, was well received.[76] Baldwin tried to write another novel, Ignorant Armies, plotted in the vein of Native Son with a focus on a scandalous murder, but no final product emerged.[77] Baldwin spent two
months during the summer of 1948 at Shanks Village, a writer's colony in Woodstock, New York. He published his first work of fiction, a short story called "Previous Condition", in the October 1948 issue of Commentary magazine, about a 20-something Black man who is evicted from his apartment—which was a metaphor for white society. [78] See
also: James Baldwin in France Disillusioned by the reigning prejudice against Black people in the United States, and wanting to gain external perspectives on himself and his writing, Baldwin settled in Paris, France, at the age of 24. Baldwin did not want to be read as "merely a Negro; or, even, merely a Negro writer."[79] He also hoped to come to
terms with his sexual ambivalence and escape from the hopelessness to which many young African-American men like himself succumbed. [80] In 1948, Baldwin received a $1,500 grant (equivalent to $19,631 in 2024) [81] from a Rosenwald Fellowship [82] in order to produce a book of photographs and escape from the hopelessness to which many young African-American men like himself succumbed.
and an exploration of religiosity in Harlem. Baldwin worked with a photographer friend named Theodore Pelatowski, whom Baldwin met through Richard Avedon.[83] Although the book (titled Unto the Dying Lamb) was never finished,[83] the Rosenwald funding did allow Baldwin to realise his long-standing ambition of moving to France.[84] After
saying his goodbyes to his mother and his younger siblings, with forty dollars to his name, Baldwin flew from New York to Paris on November 11, 1948.[84] He gave most of the scholarship funds to his mother.[85] Baldwin would later give various explanations for leaving America—sex, Calvinism, an intense sense of hostility which he feared would
turn inward—but, above all, was the problem of race, which, throughout his life, had exposed him to a lengthy catalog of humiliations.[86] He hoped for a more peaceable existence in Paris, Baldwin was soon involved in the cultural radicalism of the Left Bank. He started to publish his work in literary anthologies, notably Zero[88] which
was edited by his friend Themistocles Hoetis and which had already published essays by Richard Wright. Baldwin spent nine years living in Paris, mostly in Saint-Germain-des-Prés, with various friends around the city and
in various hotels. Most notable of these lodgings was Hôtel Verneuil, a hotel in Saint-Germain that had collected a motley crew of struggling expatriates, mostly writers. [90] This Verneuil circle spawned numerous friendships that Baldwin relied upon in rough periods. [90] He was also extremely poor during his time in Paris, with only momentary
respites from that condition.[91] In his early years in Saint-Germain, he met Otto Friedrich, Mason Hoffenberg, Asa Benveniste, Themistocles Hoetis, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Max Ernst, Truman Capote, and Stephen Spender, among many others.[92] Baldwin also met Lucien Happersberger, a Swiss boy, 17 years old at the time of their
first meeting, who came to France in search of excitement.[93] Happersberger and Baldwin began to bond for the next few years, eventually becoming his intimate partner and he became Baldwin's near-obsession for some time afterward. Baldwin and Happersberger remained friends for the next thirty-nine years.[94][i] Even though his time in Paris
was not easy, Baldwin escaped from the aspects of American life that outraged him the most—especially the "daily indignities of racism." [87] According to one biographer: "Baldwin seemed at ease in his Paris life; Jimmy Baldwin the aesthete and lover reveled in the Saint-Germain ambiance." [95] During his early years in Paris, prior to the publication
of Go Tell It on the Mountain in 1953, Baldwin wrote several notable works. "The Negro in Paris", first published in The Reporter, explored Baldwin's perception of an incompatibility between Black Americans and Black Americans had faced a "depthless alienation from oneself and one's people" that was mostly
unknown to Parisian Africans.[96] He also wrote "The Preservation of Innocence", which traced the violence against homosexuals in American life back to the protracted adolescence of American literature, and he also published "The
Death of the Prophet", a short story that grew out of Baldwin's earlier writings of Go Tell It on The Mountain. In the latter work, Baldwin employs a character named Johnnie to trace his bouts of depression back to his inability to resolve the questions of filial intimacy raised by his relationship with his stepfather. [98] In December 1949, Baldwin was
arrested and jailed for receiving stolen goods after an American friend brought him bedsheets that the friend brought him bedsheet hi
essay, he expressed his surprise and his bewilderment at how he was no longer a "despised black man", instead, he was simply an American, no different from the white American friend who stole the sheet and was arrested with him. [99] During his Paris years, Baldwin also published two of his three scathing critiques of Richard Wright—"Everybody stole the sheet and was arrested with him. [99] During his Paris years, Baldwin also published two of his three scathing critiques of Richard Wright—"Everybody stole the sheet and was arrested with him. [99] During his Paris years, Baldwin also published two of his three scathing critiques of Richard Wright—"Everybody stole the sheet and was arrested with him. [99] During his Paris years, Baldwin also published two of his three scathing critiques of Richard Wright—"Everybody stole the sheet and was arrested with him. [99] During his Paris years, Baldwin also published two of his three scathing critiques of Richard Wright—"Everybody stole the sheet and was arrested with him. [99] During his Paris years, Baldwin also published two of his three scathing critiques of Richard Wright—"Everybody stole the sheet and was arrested with him. [99] During his Paris years, Baldwin also published two of his three scathing critiques of Richard Wright—"Everybody stole the sheet and was arrested with him. [99] During his Paris years, Baldwin also published two of his three scathing three scathing critiques are scathing to the scathing three scat
Protest Novel" in 1949 and "Many Thousands Gone" in 1951. Baldwin criticizes Wright's work for being protest literature, which Baldwin despised because it is "concerned with the categorizations, they fail because they deny life." [96] Protest writing
cages humanity, but, according to Baldwin, "only within this web of ambiguity, paradox, this hunger, darkness, can we find at once ourselves and the power that will free us from ourselves and the power that will free us from ourselves and the power that will free us from ourselves." [96] Baldwin took Wright's Native Son and Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin, both erstwhile favorites of Baldwin's, as paradigmatic analysis examples of the
protest novel's problem.[96] The treatment of Wright's character Bigger Thomas by socially earnest white people "to become truly human and acceptable, [they] must first become like us. This assumption once accepted, the Negro in
America can only acquiesce in the obliteration of his own personality."[100] In these two essays, Baldwin came to articulate what would become a theme of his work: that white racism toward Black Americans was refracted through self-hatred and self-denial—"One may say that the Negro in America does not really exist except in the darkness of
[white] minds. [...] Our dehumanization of the Negro then is indivisible from our dehumanization of ourselves."[100][j] Baldwin's relationship with Wright as a mentor.[101] Meanwhile, "Everybody's Protest Novel" had earned Baldwin the label "the most
promising young Negro writer since Richard Wright."[102] Beginning in the winter of 1951, Baldwin and Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger took several trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger trips trips to Loèches-les-Bains in Switzerland, where Happersberger trips tri
friend Baldwin and offered to take Baldwin to the Swiss village. [103] Baldwin's time in the village gave form to his essay "Stranger in the Village", published in Harper's Magazine in October 1953. [104] In that essay, Baldwin described some unintentional mistreatment and offputting experiences at the hands of Swiss villagers who possessed a racial
innocence which few Americans could attest to.[103] Baldwin explored how the bitter history which was shared by Black and white Americans back to the simplicity of this European village where white men still have the
luxury of looking on me as a stranger."[104] Baldwin photographed by Carl Van Vechten, 1955 Beauford Delaney's arrival in France in 1953 marked "the most important personal event in Baldwin's circle of friends shifted away from primarily white bohemians toward a coterie of Black American
expatriates: Baldwin grew close to dancer Bernard Hassell; spent significant amounts of time at Gordon Heath's club in Paris; regularly listened to Bobby Short and Inez Cavanaugh's performances at their respective haunts around the city; met Maya Angelou during her European tour of Porgy and Bess; and occasionally met with writers Richard
Gibson and Chester Himes, composer Howard Swanson, and even Richard Wright.[106] In 1954, Baldwin accepted a fellowship at the MacDowell writer's colony in New Hampshire to support the writing of a new novel and he also won a Guggenheim Fellowship.[107] Also in 1954, Baldwin published the three-act play The Amen Corner which features
the preacher Sister Margaret—a fictionalized Mother Horn from Baldwin's time at Fireside Pentecostal—who struggles with a difficult inheritance and with alienation from herself and her loved ones on account of her religious fervor.[108] Baldwin spent several weeks in Washington, D.C., and particularly around Howard University while he
collaborated with Owen Dodson for the premiere of The Amen Corner. Baldwin returned to Paris in October 1955.[109] Baldwin decided to enjoy what was to be his last year in France.[110] He became friends with Norman and Adele Mailer, was recognized by the National
suicide attempt.[112] He regretted the attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the doctor arrived.[112] Baldwin went on to attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the doctor arrived.[112] He regretted the attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the doctor arrived.[112] He regretted the attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the doctor arrived.[112] He regretted the attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the doctor arrived.[112] He regretted the attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the doctor arrived.[112] He regretted the attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the doctor arrived.[112] He regretted the attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the doctor arrived.[112] He regretted the attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the doctor arrived.[112] He regretted the attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the doctor arrived.[112] He regretted the attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the doctor arrived.[112] He regretted the attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the attempt almost instantly and he called a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the attempt almost a friend who had him regurgitate the pills before the attempt almost a friend who had him regurgitate the attempt almost a friend who had him regurgitate the attempt and he atte
purporting to extol African originality.[113] He continued to published work, a review of the writer Maxim Gorky, appeared in The Nation in 1947.[114][115] He continued to publish there at various times in his career and was serving on its editorial board at the time of his death in 1987.[115]Café de Flore, Boulevard Saint-Germain, Paris, May 2019. In
the large upstairs heated room (SALLE AU 1er - CLIMATISEE) in 1952, Baldwin worked on his first novel, Go Tell It on the Mountain, a semi-autobiographical bildungsroman. He began writing it when he was 17 and first published it in Paris. His first collection of essays,
Notes of a Native Son appeared two years later. He continued to experiment with literary forms throughout his career, published in 1956 due to its explicit homoerotic content.
[116] Baldwin again resisted labels with the publication of this work. [117] Despite the reading public's expectations that he would publish works dealing with African-American experiences, Giovanni's Room is predominantly about white characters. [117] Main article: Go Tell It on the Mountain (novel) Baldwin sent the manuscript for Go Tell It on the
 Mountain from Paris to New York publishing house Alfred A. Knopf on February 26, 1952, and Knopf expressed interest in the novel several months later.[118] To settle the terms of his association with Knopf, Baldwin sailed back to the United States in April 1952 on the SS Île de France, where Themistocles Hoetis and Dizzy Gillespie were
coincidentally also voyaging—his conversations with both on the ship were extensive.[118] After his arrival in New York, Baldwin grew particularly close to his younger brother, David Jr., and served as best man at David's wedding on June
27.[118] Meanwhile, Baldwin agreed to rewrite parts of Go Tell It on the Mountain in exchange for a $250 advance ($2,960 today) and a further $750 ($8,881 today) paid when the final manuscript was completed.[119] When Knopf accepted the revision in July, they sent the remainder of the advance, and Baldwin was soon to have his first published
novel.[120] In the interim, Baldwin published as "Exodus" in American Mercury and the other as "Roy's Wound" in New World Writing.[120] Go Tell It on the Mountain was published in May 1953.[120] Go Tell It on the Mountain was
the product of years of work and exploratory writing since his first attempt at a novel in 1938.[121] In rejecting the ideological manacles of protest literature and the presupposition he thought inherent to such works that "in Negro life there exists no tradition, no field of manners, no possibility of ritual or intercourse", Baldwin sought in Go Tell It on
the Mountain to emphasize that the core of the problem was "not that the Negro has no tradition but that there has as yet arrived no sensibility sufficiently profound and tough to make this tradition articulate."[122] Baldwin biographer David Leeming draws parallels between Go Tell It on the Mountain and James Joyce's 1916 A Portrait of the Artist
as a Young Man: to "encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race." [123] Baldwin himself drew parallels between Joyce's flight from his native Ireland and his own run from Harlem, and Baldwin read Joyce's tome in Paris in 1950, however, in Baldwin's Go Tell It on
the Mountain, it would be the Black American "uncreated conscience" at the heart of the project.[124] The novel is a bildungsroman that explores the inward struggles of protagonist John Grimes, the illegitimate son of Elizabeth Grimes, to claim his own soul as it lies on the "threshing floor"—a clear allusion to another John: the Baptist, born of
another Elizabeth.[121] John's struggle is a metaphor for Baldwin's own struggle between escaping the history and heritage that made him, awful though it may be, and plunging deeper into that heritage, to the bottom of his people's sorrows, before he can shrug off his psychic chains, "climb the mountain", and free himself.[121] John's family
members and most of the characters in the novel are blown north in the winds of the Great Migration in search of the American Dream and all are stifled.[125] Florence, Elizabeth, and Gabriel are denied love's reach because racism assured that they could not muster the kind of self-respect that love requires.[125] Racism drives Elizabeth's lover
Richard, to suicide—Richard will not be the last Baldwin character to die thus for that same reason.[121] Florence's lover Frank is destroyed by searing self-hatred of his own Blackness.[121] The
phrase "in my father's house" and various similar formulations appear throughout Go Tell It on the Mountain and was even an early title for the novel.[122] The house is a metaphor at several levels of generality: for his own family's apartment in Harlem, for Harlem taken as a whole, for America and its history, and for the "deep heart's core".[122]
John's departure from the agony that reigned in his father's house, particularly the historical sources of the family's privations, came through a conversion experience. [125] "Who are these? Who are they?" John cries out when he sees a mass of faces as he descends to the threshing floor: 'They were the despised and rejected, the wretched and the
spat upon, the earth's offscouring; and he was in their company, and they would swallow up his soul."[126] The midwife of John's conversion is Elisha, the voice of love that had followed him throughout the experience, and whose
body filled John with "a wild delight".[126] Thus comes the wisdom that would define Baldwin's philosophy: per biographer David Leeming: "salvation from the chains and fetters—the self-hatred and the other effects—of historical racism could come only from love."[126] Main article: Notes of a Native Son Baldwin's friend from high school, Sol Stein
encouraged Baldwin to publish an essay collection reflecting on his work thus far.[127] Originally, Baldwin was reluctant, saying he was "too young to publish my memoirs."[127] but he nevertheless produced a collection, Notes of a Native Son, that was published in 1955.[127] The book contained practically all of the major themes that run through
his work: searching for self when racial myths cloud reality; accepting an inheritance ("the conundrum of color is the inheritance of every American"); the artist's loneliness; love's urgency.[128] All the essays in Notes were published between
often asked: "Why don't you write more essays like the ones in Notes of a Native Son?"[129] The collection's title alludes to both Richard Wright's Native Son and the work of one of Baldwin's favorite writers, Henry James's Notes of a Son and Brother.[130] Notes of a Native Son is divided into three parts: the first part deals with Black identity as
artist and human; the second part addresses Black life in America, including what is sometimes considered Baldwin's best essay, the titular "Notes of a Native Son"; the final part takes the expatriate's perspective, looking at American society from beyond its shores.[131] Part One of Notes features "Everybody's Protest Novel" and "Many Thousands at American society from beyond its shores.
Gone", along with "Carmen Jones: The Dark Is Light Enough", a 1955 review of Carmen Jones written for Commentary, in which Baldwin at once extols the sight of an all-Black cast on the silver screen and laments the film's myths about Black sexuality.[132] Part Two reprints "The Harlem Ghetto" and "Journey to Atlanta" as prefaces for "Notes of a
Native Son". In "Notes of a Native Son", Baldwin attempts to come to terms with his racial and filial inheritances.[133] Part Three contains "Equal in Paris", "Stranger in the Village", "Encounter on the Seine", and "A Question of Identity". Writing from the expatriate's perspective, Part Three is the sector of Baldwin's corpus that most closely mirrors
Henry James's methods: hewing out of one's distance and detachment from the homeland a coherent idea of what it means to be American. [133][k] Throughout Notes, when Baldwin writes: "what it means to be a Negro in American.
can perhaps be suggested by the myths we perpetuate about him."[130] This earned some quantity of scorn from reviewers: in a review for The New York Times Book Review, Langston Hughes lamented that "Baldwin's viewpoints are half American, incompletely fused."[130] Others were nonplussed by the handholding of white
audiences, which Baldwin himself would criticize in later works.[130] Nonetheless, most acutely in this stage in his career, Baldwin wanted to escape the rigid categories of protest literature and he viewed adopting a white point-of-view as a good method of doing so.[130] Main article: Giovanni's Room Shortly after returning to Paris in 1956, Baldwin
 got word from Dial Press that Giovanni's Room had been accepted for publication.[134] The book was published that autumn.[135] In the novel, the protagonist David is in Paris while his fiancée Hella is in Spain. David meets the titular Giovanni at a bar; the two grow increasingly intimate and David eventually finds his way to Giovanni's room. David
is confused by his intense feelings for Giovanni and has sex with a woman in the spur of the moment to reaffirm his heterosexuality. Meanwhile, Giovanni begins to prostitute himself and finally commits a murder for which he is guillotined.[136] David's tale is one of love's inhibition: he cannot "face love when he finds it", writes biographer James
Campbell.[137] The novel features a traditional theme: the clash between the constraints of puritanism and the impulse for adventure and the subsequent loss of innocence that results.[137] The inspiration for the murder in the novel's plot is an event dating from 1943 to 1944. A Columbia University undergraduate named Lucien Carr murdered an
older, homosexual man, David Kammerer, who made sexual advances on Carr. [138] The two were walking near the banks of the Hudson River when Kammerer and dump Kammerer and dum
criticize the subject matter.[140] Even from Paris, Baldwin was able to follow the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement in his homeland. In May 1954, the United States Supreme Court ordered schools to desegregate "with all deliberate speed"; in August 1955 the racist murder of Emmett Till in Money, Mississippi, and the subsequent acquittal of
his killers were etched in Baldwin's mind until he wrote Blues for Mister Charlie; in December 1955, Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus; and in February 1956 Autherine Lucy was admitted to the University of Alabama before being expelled when whites rioted.[141] Meanwhile, Baldwin was increasingly
burdened by the sense that he was wasting time in Paris.[134] Baldwin began planning a return to the United States in hopes of writing a biography of Booker T. Washington, which he then called Talking at the Gates. Baldwin also received commissions to write a review of Daniel Guérin's Negroes on the March and J. C. Furnas's Goodbye to Uncle
Tom for The Nation, as well as to write about William Faulkner and American racism for the Partisan Review.[142] The first project became "The Crusade of Indignation",[142] published in July 1956.[143] In it, Baldwin suggests that the portrait of Black life in Uncle Tom's Cabin "has set the tone for the attitude of American whites towards Negroes
for the last one hundred years", and that, given the novel's popularity, this portrait has led to a unidimensional characterization of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black Americans that does not capture the full scope of Black A
during an interview that he was sure to enlist himself with his fellow white Mississippians in a war over desegregation "even if it meant going out into the streets and shooting Negroes".[142] For Baldwin, Faulkner represented the "go slow" mentality on desegregation that tries to wrestle with the Southerner's peculiar dilemma: the South "clings to
two entirely antithetical doctrines, two legends, two histories"; the southerner is "the proud citizen of a free society and, on the other hand, committed to a society that has not yet dared to free itself of the necessity of naked and brutal oppression."[142] Faulkner asks for more time but "the time [...] There is never time in the future
in which we will work out our salvation."[142] Baldwin initially intended to complete Another Country before returning to New York in the fall of 1957, but progress on the novel was slow, so he decided to go back to the United States sooner.[144][145] Beauford Delaney was particularly upset by Baldwin's departure. Delaney had started to drink
heavily and entered the incipient stages of mental deterioration, including complaining about hearing voices.[144][1] Nonetheless, after a brief visit with Edith Piaf, Baldwin set sail for New York in July 1957.[144]Baldwin photographed by Allan Warren Baldwin's third and fourth novels, Another Country (1962) and Tell Me How Long the Train's Been
Gone (1968), are sprawling, experimental works[146] dealing with Black and white characters, as well as with heterosexual, gay, and bisexual characters two-month stay in
Istanbul (which ends with the note, Istanbul, December 10, 1961). This was to be the first of many stays in Istanbul during the 1960s.[149] In 1962, when Baldwin had already spent fourteen years as an expatriate living in France, he published his essay Letter from a Region in My Mind in The New Yorker. "Letter transitions deftly between episodic
anecdotes, assessments of Baldwin's own life-phases, and systemic analyses of the social-cultural factors behind racism."[150] Baldwin's lengthy essay "Down at the Cross" (frequently called The Fire Next Time after the title of the 1960s in novel form. The essay
was originally published in two oversized issues of The New Yorker and landed Baldwin on the cover of Time magazine in 1963 while he was touring the South speaking about the restive Civil Rights Movement. Around the time of publication of The Fire Next Time, Baldwin became a known spokesperson for civil rights and a celebrity noted for
championing the cause of Black Americans. He frequently appeared on television and delivered speeches on college campuses. [152] The essay talked about the uneasy relationship between Christianity and the burgeoning Black Muslim movement. After publication, several Black nationalists criticized Baldwin for his conciliatory attitude. They
questioned whether his message of love and understanding would do much to change race relations in America. [152] The book was consumed by whites looking for answers to the question: What do Black Americans with more clarity
and style than any other writer of his generation.[153] In 1965, Baldwin participated in a much publicized debate with William F. Buckley, on the topic of whether the American dream had been achieved at the expense of African Americans. The debate took place in the UK at the Cambridge Union, historic debating society of the University of
Cambridge. The spectating student body voted overwhelmingly in Baldwin's favor.[154][155] Baldwin's next book-length essay, No Name in the Street (1972), also discussed his own experience in the context of the later 1960s, specifically the assassinations of three of his personal friends: Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King Jr.
Baldwin's writings of the 1970s and 1980s were largely overlooked by critics, although they have received increasing attention in recent years.[156] Several of his essays and interviews of the 1980s discuss homosexuality and homophobia with fervor and forthrightness.[152] Eldridge Cleaver's harsh criticism of Baldwin in Soul on Ice and
elsewhere [157] and Baldwin's return to southern France contributed to the perception by critics that he was not in touch with his readership. [158][159][160] As he had been the leading literary voice of the civil rights movement, he became an inspirational figure for the emerging gay rights movement. [152] His two novels written in the 1970s, If
Beale Street Could Talk (1974) and Just Above My Head (1979), stressed the importance of Black American families. He concluded his career by publishing a volume of poetry, Jimmy's Blues (1983), as well as another book-length essay, The Evidence of Things Not Seen (1985), an extended reflection on race inspired by the Atlanta murders of 1979-
1981. Baldwin at home in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France The house where Baldwin lived in France for most of his later life, using it as a base of operations for extensive international travel.[149][161][162] Baldwin settled in Saint-Paul-de-Vence in the south of France in 1970, in an old Provençal
house beneath the ramparts of the village. [163] His house was always open to his friends, who frequently visited him while on trips to the French Riviera. American painter Beauford Delaney made Baldwin's house in Saint-Paul-de-Vence his second home, often setting up his easel in the garden. Delaney painted several colorful portraits of Baldwin.
Fred Nall Hollis also befriended Baldwin during this time. Actors Harry Belafonte and Sidney Poitier were also regular guests. He wrote several of his last works in his house in Saint-Paul-de-Vence that Baldwin wrote his "Open Letter
to My Sister, Angela Y. Davis" in November 1970.[164][165] Many of Baldwin's musician friends dropped in during the Jazz à Juan and Nice Jazz Festivals. They included Nina Simone, Josephine Baker, Miles Davis, and Ray Charles.[166] In his autobiography, Miles Davis wrote: [167] I'd read his books and I liked and respected what he had to say. As I
got to know Jimmy we opened up to each other and became real great friends. Every time I went to southern France to play Antibes, I would always spend a day or two out at Jimmy's house in St. Paul de Vence. We'd just sit there in that great big beautiful house of his telling us all kinds of stories, lying our asses off.... He was a great man. Baldwin
learned to speak French fluently and developed friendships with French actor Yves Montand and French writer Marguerite Yourcenar, who translated Baldwin was openly gay,[169] though he considered sexuality a private matter and did not
apply the label - which he felt was too narrow and limiting - to himself.[170] According to Dwight A. McBride, Baldwin saw the world in such terms that made him not "exclusively gay, black, expatriate, activist, or the like", but rather "an intricately negotiated amalgam of all of those things, which had to be constantly tailored to fit the circumstances
in which he was compelled to articulate himself".[171] Tombstone of James Baldwin and his mother Berdis at Ferncliff Cemetery and Mausoleum, Hartsdale, New York On December 1, 1987.[172][173][174][contradictory][175] Baldwin died from stomach cancer in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France, [176][177][178] He was buried at the Ferncliff Cemetery
in Hartsdale, near New York City.[179] Fred Nall Hollis took care of Baldwin on his deathbed. Nall had been friends with Baldwin shortly before his death about racism in Alabama. In one conversation, Nall told Baldwin "Through your
books you liberated me from my quilt about being so bigoted coming from Alabama and because of my homosexuality." Baldwin insisted: "No, you liberated me in revealing this to me." [180] A few hours after his death, his novel Harlem Quartet, published earlier in the year, won the French-American Friendship Prize (having a week earlier lost by one
vote in Paris the Prix Femina, awarded to the "best foreign novel of the year"),[168] At the time of Baldwin's death, he was working on a memoir, Remember This House, focused on his recollections of personal interactions with civil rights leaders Medgar Evers, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Ir.[181] Following his death, the publishing company
McGraw-Hill took the unprecedented step of suing his estate to recover the $200,000 advance they had paid him for the book, but by 1990, the lawsuit had been dropped.[181] The unfinished manuscript is the basis of Raoul Peck's 2016 documentary film I Am Not Your Negro.[182] Following Baldwin's death, a court battle was waged over the
ownership of his home in France. Baldwin had been in the process of purchasing his house from his landlady, Jeanne Faure [183] At the time of his death, Baldwin had been in the process of purchasing his house from his landlady, Jeanne Faure [183] At the time of his death, Baldwin had been in the process of purchasing his house from his landlady, Jeanne Faure [183] At the time of his death, Baldwin had been in the process of purchasing his house from his landlady, Jeanne Faure [183] At the time of his death, Baldwin had been in the process of purchasing his house from his landlady, Jeanne Faure [183] At the time of his death, Baldwin had been in the process of purchasing his house from his landlady, Jeanne Faure [183] At the time of his death, Baldwin had been in the process of purchasing his house from his landlady, Jeanne Faure [183] At the time of his death, Baldwin had been in the process of purchasing his house from his landlady, Jeanne Faure [183] At the time of his death, Baldwin had been in the process of purchasing his house from his landlady, Jeanne Faure [183] At the time of his death, Baldwin had been in the process of purchasing his house from his landlady, Jeanne Faure [183] At the time of his death, Baldwin had been in the process of purchasing his house from his landlady, Jeanne Faure [183] At the time of his death, Baldwin had been his landlady, Jeanne Faure [183] At the time of his death, Baldwin had been his landlady, Jeanne Faure [183] At the time his landlady, Jeanne Faure [183] At the his landlady his land
scholarly work and artistic and political activism. The National Museum of African American History and Culture has an online exhibit titled "Chez Baldwin", which uses his historic French home as a lens to explore his life and legacy.[185] Magdalena J. Zaborowska's 2018 book, Me and My House: James Baldwin's Last Decade in France, uses
photographs of his home and his collections to discuss politics, race, being gay, and domesticity. [186] Over the years, several efforts were initiated to save the house and convert it into an artists' residency, but none had the endorsement of the Baldwin estate. In February 2016, Le Monde published an opinion piece by Thomas Chatterton Williams, a
contemporary Black American expatriate writer in France, which spurred a group of activists to come together in Paris.[187] In June 2016, American writer and activist Shannon Cain squatted at the house for 10 days as an act of political and artistic protest.[188][189] Les Amis de la Maison Baldwin,[190] a French organization whose initial goal was
to purchase the house by launching a capital campaign funded by the U.S. philanthropic sector, grew out of this effort.[191] This campaign was unsuccessful without the support of Baldwin's estate. Attempts to engage the French government in conservation of the property were dismissed by the mayor of Saint-Paul-de-Vence, Joseph Le Chapelain,
the main characters are twined up in a "cage of reality" that sees them fighting for their soul against the limitations of the human condition or against their place at the margins of a society consumed by various prejudices. [194] Baldwin connects many of his main characters—John in Go Tell It On The Mountain, Rufus in Another Country, Richard in
Blues for Mister Charlie, and Giovanni in 
If Beale Street Could Talk's Fonny and Tell me How Long The Train's Been Gone's Leo—they find such an identity, imperfect but sufficient to bear the world.[195] The singular theme in the attempts of Baldwin's characters to resolve their struggle for themselves is that such resolution only comes through love.[195] Here is Leeming at some length:
Love is at the heart of the Baldwin philosophy. Love for Baldwin cannot be safe; it involves the risk of commitment, the risk of removing the masks and taboos placed on us by society. The philosophy applies to individual relationships as well as politics, economics, and race relations. And it
emphasizes the dire consequences, for individuals and racial groups, of the refusal to love.—David Adams Leeming, James Baldwin (right of center) with Hollywood actors Charlton Heston (left) and Marlon Brando (right) at the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Sidney Poitier (rear) and Harry Belafonte
(right of Brando) can also be seen in the crowd. Baldwin returned to the United States in the summer of 1957, while the civil rights legislation of that year was being debated in Congress. He had been powerfully moved by the image of a young girl, Dorothy Counts, braving a mob in an attempt to desegregate schools in Charlotte, North Carolina, and
Partisan Review editor Philip Rahv had suggested he report on what was happening in the American South. Baldwin was nervous about the trip but he made it, interviewing people in Charlotte (where he met Martin Luther King Jr.), and Montgomery, Alabama. The result was two essays, one published in Harper's magazine ("The Hard Kind of
Courage"), the other in Partisan Review ("Nobody Knows My Name"). Subsequent Baldwin articles on the movement appeared in Mademoiselle, Harper's, The New Yorker called "Letter from a Region of My Mind". Along
with a shorter essay from The Progressive, the essay became The Fire Next Time.[197]:94-99,155-56 External audio National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, December 10, 1986, speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speech: 05:22-20:37, National Press Club Luncheon Speech: 05:22-20:37, National
Equality (CORE) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Joining CORE allowed him to travel across the South, lecturing on racial problems the United States was facing. In 1963 he conducted a lecture tour of the South for CORE,
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traveling to Durham and Greensboro in North Carolina, and New Orleans. During the tour, he lectured to students, white liberals, and anyone else listening about his racial ideology, an ideology, an ideology, an ideology, an ideology, an ideology, and ideology, and ideology, and ideology are ideology and ideology and ideology and ideology and ideology are ideology and ideology and ideology and ideology are ideology and ideology and ideology are ideology and ideology and ideology and ideology are ideology and ideology and ideology are ideology and ideology and ideology are ideology are ideology and ideology are ideology and ideology are ideology are ideology are ideology and ideology are ideology are
socialism would take root in the United States:[199] It is certain, in any case, that ignorance, allied with power, is the most ferocious enemy justice can have. —James Baldwin's incisive analysis of white racism and his eloquent descriptions of the Negro's pain and frustration. In
fact, Time featured Baldwin on the cover of its May 17, 1963, issue. "There is not another writer", said Time, "who expresses with such poignancy and abrasiveness the dark realities of the racial ferment in North and South." [200][197]: 175 In a cable Baldwin sent to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy during the Birmingham riot of 1963, Baldwin sent to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy during the Birmingham riot of 1963, Baldwin sent to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy during the Birmingham riot of 1963, Baldwin sent to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy during the Birmingham riot of 1963, Baldwin sent to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy during the Birmingham riot of 1963, Baldwin sent to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy during the Birmingham riot of 1963, Baldwin sent to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy during the Birmingham riot of 1963, Baldwin sent to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy during the Birmingham riot of 1963, Baldwin sent to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy during the Birmingham riot of 1963, Baldwin sent to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy during the Birmingham riot of 1963, Baldwin sent to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy during the Birmingham riot of 1963, Baldwin sent to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy during the Birmingham riot of 1963, Baldwin sent to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy during the Birmingham riot of 1963, Baldwin sent to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy during the Birmingham riot of 1963, Baldwin sent to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy during the Birmingham riot of 1963, Baldwin sent to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy during the Birmingham riot of 1963, Baldwin sent to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy during the Birmingham riot of 1963, Baldwin sent to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy during the Birmingham riot of 1963, Baldwin sent to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy during the Birmingham riot of 1963, Baldwin sent to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy during the Birmingham riot of 1963, Baldwin sent to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy dur
blamed the violence in Birmingham on the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover, Mississippi Senator James Eastland, and President Kennedy invited Baldwin to meet with him over breakfast, and that meeting was followed up with a second, when Kennedy invited Baldwin to meet with him over breakfast, and that meeting was followed up with a second, when Kennedy invited Baldwin to meet with him over breakfast, and that meeting was followed up with a second, when Kennedy invited Baldwin to meet with him over breakfast, and that meeting was followed up with a second, when Kennedy invited Baldwin to meet with him over breakfast, and that meeting was followed up with a second, when Kennedy invited Baldwin to meet with him over breakfast, and that meeting was followed up with a second, when Kennedy invited Baldwin to meet with him over breakfast, and that meeting was followed up with a second with a 
met with Baldwin and others Baldwin had invited to Kennedy's Manhattan apartment. This meeting is discussed in Howard Simon's 1999 play, James Baldwin: A Soul on Fire. The delegation included Kenneth B. Clark, a psychologist who had played a key role in the Brown v. Board of Education decision; actor Harry Belafonte, singer Lena Horne,
writer Lorraine Hansberry, and activists from civil rights organizations.[197]:176-80 Although most of the attendees of this meeting was an important one in voicing the concerns of the civil rights movement, and it provided exposure of the civil rights issue not just as a political issue but also as a moral issue.
[201] James Baldwin's FBI file contains 1,884 pages, collected from 1960 until the early 1970s. [202] During that era of surveillance of American writers, the FBI accumulated 276 pages on Richard Wright, 110 pages on Truman Capote, and just nine pages on Henry Miller. Baldwin also made a prominent appearance at the March on Washington for
Jobs and Freedom on August 28, 1963, with Belafonte and long-time friends Sidney Poitier and Marlon Brando.[203] Baldwin's sexuality clashed with his activism. The civil rights movement was hostile to homosexuals. [204][205] The only overtly gay men in the movement was hostile to homosexuals.
received credit for the success of the March on Washington. Many were bothered by Rustin's sexual orientation. King himself spoke on the topic of sexual orientation in a school editorial column during his college years, and in reply to a letter during the 1950s, where he treated it as a mental illness which an individual could overcome. King's key
advisor, Stanley Levison, also stated that Baldwin and Rustin were "better qualified to lead a homo-sexual movement than a civil rights movement than a civil rights movement. [206] The pressure later resulted in King distancing himself from both men. Despite his enormous efforts within the movement, Baldwin was excluded from the inner circles of the civil rights movement.
because of his sexuality and was conspicuously not invited to speak at the March on Washington. [207] At the time, Baldwin was neither in the closet nor open to the public about his sexual orientation. Although his novels, specifically Giovanni's Room and Just Above My Head, had openly gay characters and relationships, Baldwin himself never openly
described his sexuality. In his book, Kevin Mumford points out how Baldwin went his life "passing as straight rather than confronting homophobes with whom he mobilized against racism".[208] When the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing happened in Birmingham three weeks after the March on Washington, Baldwin called for a nationwide
campaign of civil disobedience in response to this "terrifying crisis". He traveled to Selma, Alabama, where SNCC had organized a voter registration drive; he watched mothers with babies and elderly men and women standing in long lines for hours, as armed deputies and state troopers stood by—or intervened to smash a reporter's camera or use
cattle prods on SNCC workers. After his day of watching, he spoke in a crowded church, blaming Washington, he told a New York Post reporter the federal government could protect Negroes—it could send federal troops into the South. He blamed the Kennedys for not acting.[197]: 191,
195-98 In March 1965, Baldwin joined marchers who walked 50 miles from Selma, Alabama (Selma to Montgomery under the protection of federal troops. [197]:236 Nonetheless, he rejected the label "civil rights activist", or that he had participated in a civil rights movement, instead agreeing with Malcolm X'snow a compared to the label "civil rights activist", or that he had participated in a civil rights movement, instead agreeing with Malcolm X'snow a compared to the label "civil rights activist", or that he had participated in a civil rights activist.
assertion that if one is a citizen, one should not have to fight for one's civil rights. In a 1964 interview with Robert Penn Warren for the book Who Speaks for the Negro?, Baldwin rejected the idea that the civil rights movement was an outright revolution, instead calling it "a very peculiar revolution because it has to... have its aims the establishment of
a union, and a... radical shift in the American mores, the American mores, the American way of life... not only as it applies to the Negro obviously, but as it applies to every citizen of the country."[209] In a 1979 speech at UC Berkeley, Baldwin called it, instead, "the latest slave rebellion".[210] In 1968, Baldwin signed the "Writers and Editors War Tax Protest" pledge,
vowing to refuse to make income tax payments in protest against the Vietnam War.[211] He was also a supporter of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, which prompted the FBI to create a file on Baldwin was the painter Beauford Delaney. In
The Price of the Ticket (1985), Baldwin describes Delaney as: ... the first living proof, for me, that a black man could be an artist. In a warmer time, a less blasphemous place, he would have been recognized as my teacher and I as his pupil. He became, for me, an example of courage and integrity, humility and passion. An absolute integrity: I saw him
shaken many times and I lived to see him broken but I never saw him bow. Later support came friends, and Wright helped Baldwin to secure the Eugene F. Saxton Memorial Foundation $500 fellowship.[213] Baldwin's essay "Notes of a
Native Son" and his collection Notes of a Native Son. In Baldwin's 1940 novel Native Son. In Baldwin Son. In B
ended.[214] Interviewed by Julius Lester,[215] however, Baldwin explained: "I knew Richard and I loved him. I was not attacking him; I was trying to clarify something for myself." In 1949, Baldwin met and fell in love with Lucien Happersberger, a boy aged 17, though Happersberger's marriage three years later left Baldwin distraught. When the
marriage ended, they later reconciled, with Happersberger staying by Baldwin's deathbed at his house in Saint-Paul-de-Vence. [216] Happersberger died on August 21, 2010, in Switzerland. Baldwin helped Simone learn
about the Civil Rights Movement. Baldwin also provided her with literary references influential on her later work. Baldwin and Hansberry met with Robert F. Kennedy, along with Kenneth Clark and Lena Horne and others in an attempt to persuade Kennedy of the importance of civil rights legislation. [217] Baldwin influenced the work of French
painter Philippe Derome, whom he met in Paris in the early 1960s. Baldwin also knew Marlon Brando, Charlton Heston, Billy Dee Williams, Huey P. Newton, Nikki Giovanni, Jean-Paul Sartre, Jean Genet (with whom he campaigned on behalf of the Black Panther Party), Lee Strasberg, Elia Kazan, Rip Torn, Alex Haley, Miles Davis, Amiri Baraka, Martin
Luther King Jr., Dorothea Tanning, Leonor Fini, Margaret Mead, Josephine Baker, Allen Ginsberg, Chinua Achebe, and Maya Angelou. He wrote at length about his "political relationship" with Malcolm X. He collaborated with childhood friend Richard Avedon on the 1964 book Nothing Personal. [218] Baldwin was fictionalized as the character Marion
Dawes in the 1967 novel The Man Who Cried I Am by John A. Williams.[219] Maya Angelou called Baldwin her "friend and brother" and credited him for "setting the stage" for her 1969 autobiography I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings. Baldwin was made a Commandeur de la Légion d'Honneur by the French government in 1986.[220][221] Baldwin
was also a close friend of Nobel Prize-winning novelist Toni Morrison, who lived for a time in same apartment building in New York.[222] Upon his death, Morrison credits Baldwin as being her literary inspiration and the person
who showed her the true potential of writing. She writes: You knew, didn't you, how I needed your language and the mind that formed it? How I relied on your fierce courage to tame wildernesses for me? You knew, didn't you, how I loved your love? You
knew. This then is no calamity. No. This is jubilee. "Our crown," you said, "has already been bought and paid for. All we have to do," you said, "is wear it"[223] Following Baldwin's death, the failure to have awarded him either a National Book Award or the Pulitzer Prize prompted 48 African-American writers and critics - among them Maya Angelou,
Amiri Baraka, Henry Louis Gates, Jr, John Edgar Wideman, and John A. Williams - to sign a statement published in the New York Times Book Review deploring the fact that Morrison had not been given either award for her celebrated novel Beloved, with signatories June Jordan and Houston A. Baker further stating: "... even as we mourn the passing
of so legendary a writer as James Baldwin, and even as we may revel in the posthumous acclamations of his impact and his public glory, how shall we yet grieve because we cannot yet assure that such shame, such national neglect, will not occur again, and then, again."[224][225] Although Baldwin and
Truman Capote were acquaintances, they were not friends. In fact, Capote berated him several times. [227] Baldwin's influence on other writers has been profound: Toni Morrison edited the Library of America's first and Bloom characterized Baldwin as being "among the most considerable moral essayists in the United States".
two volumes of Baldwin's fiction and essays: Early Novels & Stories (1998) and Collected Essays (1998). A third volume, Later Novels (2015), was edited by Darryl Pinckney, who delivered a talk on Baldwin in February 2013 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of The New York Review of Books, during which Pinckney said, "No other black writer I'd
read was as literary as Baldwin in his early essays, not even Ralph Ellison. There is something wild in the beauty of Baldwin's sentences and the cool of his tone, something improbable, too, this meeting of Henry James, the Bible, and Harlem."[228] One of Baldwin's richest short stories, "Sonny's Blues", appears in many anthologies of short fiction
used in introductory college literature classes. A Baldwin quotation (ultimately misquoted) used in graffiti during 2020's George Floyd protests in Indianapolis A street in San Francisco, Baldwin quotation (ultimately misquoted) used in graffiti during 2020's George Floyd protests in Indianapolis A street in San Francisco, Baldwin quotation (ultimately misquoted) used in graffiti during 2020's George Floyd protests in Indianapolis A street in San Francisco, Baldwin quotation (ultimately misquoted) used in graffiti during 2020's George Floyd protests in Indianapolis A street in San Francisco, Baldwin quotation (ultimately misquoted) used in graffiti during 2020's George Floyd protests in Indianapolis A street in San Francisco, Baldwin quotation (ultimately misquoted) used in graffiti during 2020's George Floyd protests in Indianapolis A street in San Francisco, Baldwin quotation (ultimately misquoted) used in graffiti during 2020's George Floyd protests in Indianapolis A street in San Francisco, Baldwin quotation (ultimately misquoted) used in graffiti during 2020's George Floyd protests in Indianapolis A street in San Francisco, Baldwin quotation (ultimately misquoted) used in graffiti during 2020's George Floyd protests in Indianapolis A street in San Francisco, Baldwin quotation (ultimately misquoted) used in graffiti during 2020's George Floyd protests in Indianapolis A street in San Francisco, Baldwin quotation (ultimately misquoted) used in graffiti during 2020's George Floyd protests in Indianapolis A street in San Francisco, Baldwin quotation (ultimately misquoted) used in graffiti during 2020's George Floyd protests in Indianapolis A street in San Francisco, Baldwin quotation (ultimately misquoted) used in graffiti during 2020's George Floyd protests in Indianapolis A street in San Francisco (ultimately misquoted) used in graffiti during 2020's George Floyd protests in Indianapolis A street in George Floyd protests in George Floyd protests and George Floyd protests in George Floyd protests in George Flo
Literary Society. The group organizes free public events celebrating Baldwin's life and legacy. In 1992, Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts, established the James Baldwin Scholars program provides talented students of color
from under-served communities an opportunity to develop and improve the skills necessary for college success through coursework and tutorial support for one transitional year, after which Baldwin scholars may apply for full matriculation to Hampshire or any other four-year college program. Spike Lee's 1996 film Get on the Bus includes a Black gay
character, played by Isaiah Washington, who punches a homophobic character, saying: "This is for James Baldwin and Langston Hughes." His name appears in the lyrics of the Le Tigre song "Hot Topic", released in 1999.[230] In 2002, scholar Molefi Kete Asante included James Baldwin on his list of 100 Greatest African Americans.[231]Baldwin votive
candle, 2022 In 2005, the United States Postal Service created a first-class postage stamp dedicated to Baldwin, which featured him on the front with a short biography on the back of the peeling paper. In 2012, Baldwin was inducted into the Legacy Walk, an outdoor public display that celebrates LGBT history and people. [232] In 2014, East 128th
Street between Fifth and Madison Avenues was named "James Baldwin Place" to celebrate the 90th anniversary of Baldwin's writing were held at The National Black Theatre and a month-long art exhibition featuring works by New York Live Arts and artist Maureen
Kelleher. The events were attended by Council Member Inez Dickens, who led the campaign to honor Harlem native's son; also taking part were Baldwin's family, theatre and film notables, and members of the community. [233][234] Also in 2014, Baldwin was one of the inaugural honorees in the Rainbow Honor Walk, a walk of fame in San Francisco's
Castro neighborhood celebrating LGBTQ people who have "made significant contributions in their fields." [235][236][237] In 2014, The Social Justice Hub at The New School's newly opened University Center was named the Baldwin Rivera Boggs Center after activists Baldwin, Sylvia Rivera, and Grace Lee Boggs. [238] In 2016, Raoul Peck released his
documentary film I Am Not Your Negro. It is based on James Baldwin's unfinished manuscript, Remember This House. It is a 93-minute journey into Black Lives Matter. It is a film that questions Black representation in Hollywood and beyond. In 2017, Scott Timberg
wrote an essay for the Los Angeles Times ("30 years after his death, James Baldwin is having a new pop culture moment") in which he noted existing cultural references to Baldwin, 30 years after his death, James Baldwin is not just a writer for the ages, but a scribe whose work—as squarely as George Orwell's—speaks directly to ours.
[239] In June 2019, Baldwin's residence on the Upper West Side was given landmark designation by New York City's Landmarks Preservation Commission, [240][241] and it was added to the National Register of Historic Places the same year. [222] In June 2019, Baldwin was one of the inaugural fifty American "pioneers, trailblazers, and heroes"
inducted on the National LGBTQ Wall of Honor within the Stonewall National Monument (SNM) in New York City's Stonewall Inn.[242][243] The SNM is the first U.S. national monument dedicated to LGBTQ rights and history, [244] and the wall's unveiling was timed to take place during the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots. [245] At the Paris
Council of June 2019, the city of Paris voted unanimously by all political groups to name a place in the capital in honor of James Baldwin. The project was confirmed on June 19, 2019, and announced for the year 2020. In 2021, Paris City Hall announced that the writer's name would be given to the first media library in the 19th arrondissement, which
is scheduled to open in 2024. [246] On February 1, 2024, Google celebrated James Baldwin with a Google Doodle. In 2024, he appeared as a character in the television series Feud: Capote vs. The Swans, played by Chris Chalk. On May 17, 2024, a blue plaque was unveiled by Nubian Jak Community Trust/Black History Walks to honour Baldwin at the
site where in 1985 he visited the C. L. R. James Library in the London Borough of Hackney. [247] [248] On August 2, 2024, The New York Public Library's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture opened an exhibition, "JIMMY! God's Black Revolutionary Mouth" in honor of the centennial of Baldwin's birth. [249] [250] Scheduled to run until
February 28, 2025, it is accompanied by a series of public events and an exhibition of The New York Public Library's Treasures. [251] Guggenheim Fellowship, 1954. Eugene F. Saxton Memorial Trust Award Foreign Drama Critics
Award George Polk Memorial Award, 1963 MacDowell fellowships: 1954, 1958, 1960[252] Langston Hughes Medal, 1978 Commandeur de la Légion d'honneur, 1986 1953. Go Tell It on the Mountain 1956. Giovanni's Room 1962. Another Country 1968. Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone 1974. If Beale Street Could Talk 1979. Just Above My
Head Baldwin published six short stories in various magazines between 1948 and 1960: 1948. "Previous Condition". Commentary 1950. "The Death of the Prophet". Commentary 1950. "The Outing". New Story 1957. "Sonny's Blues". Previous Condition". Commentary 1950. "The Death of the Prophet". Commentary 1950. "The Death of the Prophet". Commentary 1951. "The Outing". New Story 1957. "Sonny's Blues". Previous Condition "Commentary 1950." "The Death of the Prophet". Commentary 1950. "The Outing". New Story 1957. "Sonny's Blues". Previous Condition "Commentary 1950." "The Death of the Prophet". Commentary 1950. "The Death of the Prophet". Commentary 1950. "The Outing". New Story 1957. "Sonny's Blues". Previous Condition "Commentary 1950." "The Death of the Prophet". Commentary 1950. "
Atlantic Monthly Five of these stories were collected in his 1965 collection, Going to Meet the Man, along with three other stories: "The Rockpile" "The Man Child" "Going to Meet the Man, along with three other stories: "The Rockpile" "The Man Child" "Going to Meet the Man, along with three other stories were published for the first times."
as part of collections, which also included older, individually-published works (such as above) of Baldwin's as well. These collections include: 1955. Notes of a Native Son[253] "Autobiographical Notes" 1949. "Everybody's Protest Novel". Partisan Review (June issue) 1952. "Many Thousands Gone". Partisan Review 1955. "Life Straight in De Eye" (later
retitled "Carmen Jones: The Dark Is Light Enough"). Commentary 1948. "The Harlem Ghetto". Commentary 1948. "Journey to Atlanta". New Leader 1955. "Me and My House" (later retitled "Encounter on the Seine: Black Meets Brown"). Reporter 1954. "A Question of
Identity". PR 1949. "Equal in Paris". PR 1953. "Stranger in the Village". Harper's Magazine[254][255] 1961. Nobody Knows My Name: More Notes of a Native Son 1959. "The Discovery of What It Means to Be an American". The New York Times Book Review 1957. "Princes and Powers". Encounter 1960. "Fifth Avenue, Uptown: A Letter from Harlem"
Esquire 1961. "A Negro Assays the Negro Mood". New York Times Magazine 1958. "The Hard Kind of Courage". Harper's Magazine 1959. "Nobody Knows My Name: A Letter from the South". Partisan Review 1956. "Faulkner and Desegregation". Partisan Review 1956. "Faulkner and Desegregation". Partisan Review "In Search of a Majority" (based on a 1960 address delivered at Kalamazoo College)
1954. "Gide as Husband and Homosexual" (later retitled "The Male Prison"). The New Leader 1960. "Notes for a Hypothetical Novel" (based on a 1960 address delivered at an Esquire Magazine symposium) 1960. "The Precarious Vogue of Ingmar Bergman" (later retitled "The Northern Protestant"). Esquire "Alas, Poor Richard" (two of the three parts
appeared in earlier form" 1961. "The Survival of Richard Wright". (Later retitled "Eight Men"). Reporter 1961. "Richard Wright" (later retitled "The Exile"). Encounter[256] 1961. "The Black Boy Looks at the White Boy Norman Mailer". Esquire 1963. The Fire Next Time 1962. "Down at the Cross: Letter from a Region of My Mind". The New
Yorker[257] 1962. "My Dungeon Shook: A Letter to My Nephew". The Progressive[258] 1972. No Name in the Street 1976. The Devil Finds Work — a book-length essay published by Dial Press 1985. The Evidence of Things Not Seen 1985. The Evidence of Things Not Seen 1985. The Price of the Ticket (This book is a collection of Baldwin's writings on race. Many of the items included are
reprinted from Baldwin's first five books of nonfiction, but several are collected here for the first time: "The Price of the Ticket" 1948. "Lockridge: The American Myth". New Leader 1956. "They Can't Turn Back". Mademoiselle 1961
"The Dangerous Road before Martin Luther King". Harper's 1961. "The New Lost Generation". Esquire 1962. "The Creative Process". Creative America 1962. "Color". |Esquire 1963. "A Talk to Teachers" [259] 1964. "Nothing Personal" (originally text for a book of photographs by Richard Avedon) 1964. "Words of a Native Son". Playboy 1965. "The
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Times 1979. "An Open Letter to the Born Again". The Nation 1980. "Dark Days". Esquire 1980. "Notes on the House of Bondage". The Nation 1985. "Here Be Dragons" (also titled "Freaks and the American Ideal of Manhood"). Playboy 1998. Collected Essays: Notes of a Native Son, Nobody Knows My Name, The Fire Next Time, No Name in the Street
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Baldwin learned that he was not his father's biological son through overhearing a comment to that effect during one of his parents' conversations late in 1940.[19] At is in describing his father's searing hatred of white people that comes one of Baldwin's most noted
quotes: "Hatred, which could destroy so much, never failed to destroy the man who hated and this was an immutable law."[22] ^ It was from Bill Miller, her sister Henrietta, and Miller's husband Evan Winfield that the young Baldwin started to suspect that "white people did not act as they did because they were white, but for some other reason."[35]
Miller's openness did not have a similar effect on Baldwin's father.[36] Emma Baldwin was pleased with Miller's interest in her son, but David agreed only reluctantly—not daring to refuse the invitation of a white woman, in Baldwin's later estimation, a subservience that Baldwin came to despise.[37] As Baldwin's biographer and friend David
Leeming tells it: "Like Henry James, the writer he most admired, [Baldwin] would have given up almost anything for sustained success as a playwright."[38] A Baldwin's biographers give different years for his entry into Frederick Douglass Junior High
School: 1935 and 1936.[41] ^ In the summer following his graduation from Frederick Douglass Junior High, the 13-year-old Baldwin experienced what he would call his "violation": he was running an errand for his mother when a tall man in his mid-30s lured him onto the second floor of a store, where the man touched Baldwin sexually. Alarmed by a
 noise, the man gave Baldwin money and disappeared. Baldwin ran home and threw the money out of his bathroom window.[46] Baldwin named this as his first confrontation with homosexuality, an experience he said both scared and aroused him.[46] Paldwin money and disappeared. Baldwin ran home and threw the money out of his bathroom window.
Happersberger gave form to Giovanni in Baldwin's 1956 novel Giovanni's Room. A Baldwin reflected on "Everybody's Protest Novel" in a 1984 interview for The Paris Review, saying that the essay was a "discharge" of the "be kind to niggers, be kind to niggers, be kind to niggers, be kind to niggers, be kind to niggers.
that those sort of books do nothing but bolster up an image. ... [I]t seemed to me that if I took the role of a victim then I was simply reassuring the defenders of the status quo; as long as I was a victim they could pity me and add a few more pennies to my home relief check."[100] ^ This is particularly true of "A Question of Identity". Indeed, Baldwin
with Dodson on the Washington, D.C., premiere of Another Country. Biographer David Leeming described the missing painting as a "clause célèbre" among friends of Dodson, Delaney, and Baldwin. When Baldwin and Dodson had a falling-out some years later, hopes of retrieving the painting were dashed. The painting eventually reappeared in
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Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles. Portrait of James Baldwin, 1985. Los Angeles Times Photographic Archive (Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles. Retrieved from "James Baldwin was an influential American
writer and playwright, born on August 2, 1924, in Harlem, New York. Renowned for his profound insights into race, spirituality, and humanity, Baldwin made his experiences growing up in a devout household, exploring
themes of identity and familial conflict. Baldwin's body of work also includes significant novels such as "Giovanni's Room", "Another Country", and "Just Above My Head", alongside critical essays like "Notes of a Native Son" and "The Fire Next Time", which cemented his status as a pivotal voice in American literature. Baldwin's literary contributions
extended beyond novels and essays; he also ventured into playwriting, with notable works like "The Amen Corner" and "Blues for Mister Charlie". His writings addressed complex issues like race relations and sexuality, reflecting on the Black experience in America and the often-turbulent social dynamics of the era. Baldwin's candid discussions about
his identity as a Black, gay man challenged societal norms and broadened the landscape of American literature and civil rights discourse. Early Life and
Education James Baldwin was born on August 2, 1924, in Harlem, New York, to Emma Jones, a single mother never disclosed. When Baldwin was three, his mother married Baptist minister David Baldwin, whose strained relationship with James would later
influence his writing. Despite these challenges, James found solace in literature and developed a passion for reading and writing during his formative years. Attending DeWitt Clinton High School, he collaborated on the school magazine with notable individuals, including future photographer Richard Avedon, showcasing his literary talents from a
young age. After graduating high school in 1942, Baldwin faced economic hardships that forced him to delay his college aspirations and support his family, which had grown to include eight siblings. He took on various jobs, including labor for the U.S. Army, where he encountered significant racial discrimination. This period of struggle and
disenfranchisement profoundly influenced Baldwin's worldview and writing. In 1943, following the death of his father, he moved to Greenwich Village, immersing himself to writing, supporting his endeavors through odd jobs and establishing connections
with prominent figures in the literary community. Aspiring Writer: Career Beginnings James Baldwin began his journey as a writer amidst the vibrant atmosphere of Greenwich Village, where he moved to find his artistic footing after the loss of his father. Fueling his passion for storytelling, he took on a variety of odd jobs while devoting his time to
writing. His determination bore fruit as he started getting published in prominent literary magazines like "The Nation" and "Partisan Review". During this phase, Baldwin formed significant networks within the literary community, notably befriending established authors such as Richard Wright, whose mentorship helped propel him into the world of
serious writing. In 1948, Baldwin made a life-changing decision to relocate to Paris, seeking creative freedom and a space away from the racial tensions of America. This move allowed him to explore his identity and articulate his experiences in ways he had not imagined before. Reflecting on his transatlantic lifestyle, Baldwin noted, "Once I found
myself on the other side of the ocean, I see where I came from very clearly." This newfound perspective was crucial in shaping his later works, where the themes of race, identity, and humanity became intricately woven into his narratives. Baldwin's aspirations were grounded in a profound understanding of the struggles and experiences faced by
African Americans, setting the stage for his significant contributions to literature. Major Works: Exploring Race and IdentityJames Baldwin's literary legacy is marked by a profound exploration of race, identity, and the human experience. His first novel, "Go Tell It on the Mountain" (1953), laid the groundwork for his unique perspective on the African
American experience. The novel is loosely autobiographical, delving into Baldwin's own struggles with his religious upbringing and complex family dynamics. Through this narrative, Baldwin addressed the broader themes of identity and belonging, setting the stage for his later works that would further dissect the intersections of race and personal
identity. Another pivotal work in Baldwin's career is "Giovanni's Room" (1956), which broke significant ground by addressing themes of homosexuality and love between men during a time when such topics were largely considered taboo. This novel illustrates Baldwin's belief in the fluidity of human sexuality and the restrictive nature of societal labels.
Baldwin's essays, particularly "Notes of a Native Son" (1955) and "The Fire Next Time" (1963), also showcase his ability to articulate the intricacies of race relations in America, providing a heartfelt critique of societal norms while expressing hope for progress and understanding. Later Works and Cultural ImpactJames Baldwin's later works and
cultural impact reflect his evolving perspectives on race and society, articulated through a more resonant and urgent tone. The 1972 essay collection, "No Name in the Street", marked a significant shift in Baldwin's writing, capturing his disillusionment with the racial climate in America, particularly following the tragic assassinations of key civil
rights figures like Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King Jr. These events deeply influenced his narrative, infusing it with a sense of urgency and a call for awareness about racial injustice, as he probed into the psychological burdens carried by African Americans. Despite a decline in mainstream fame, Baldwin continued to produce
impactful works until his passing in 1987. His collection of poems, "Jimmy's Blues: Selected Poems", published in 1983, showcased his lyrical prowess while examining themes of grief and resilience. Additionally, his final novel, "Harlem Quartet", and the 1985 work "The Evidence of Things Not Seen", which addressed the Atlanta child murders,
underscored his commitment to shedding light on pressing social issues. Baldwin's work remains influential, celebrated for its honesty and depth, inspiring subsequent generations of writers, activists, and thinkers to confront the complexities of race and identity in America. Personal Life: Married Life | Relationships | Children James Baldwin's
personal life was as complex and profound as his literary works. Throughout his life, Baldwin had relationships with both men and women, showcasing his belief in the fluidity of love and sexuality. Although he never entered into a traditional marriage, his significant relationships included a long-term partnership with musician and actor, A. J. (Alfred)
Kahn. Baldwin's openness about his sexuality was revolutionary for his time, as he challenged rigid societal categories and emphasized the need for personal freedom in love and relationships. Despite his commitment to his craft and social issues, Baldwin yearned for personal connections. He often found solace in intimate friendships, sometimes
leading to romantic relationships. However, Baldwin also experienced considerable heartache; he struggled with the idea of fatherhood and family throughout his life. While he did not have children of his own, he frequently voiced a desire for belonging and connection, themes that resonated with the complexities of race and identity in his
writings. Net Worth and Earning: Salary Insights James Baldwin's net worth and earnings, while difficult to quantify accurately due to the nature of literary earnings, can be understood in the context of his expansive career as a writer, playwright, and social commentator. Over the years, Baldwin's works, including novels like "Go Tell It on the
Mountain" and "Giovanni's Room," have sold millions of copies, substantially contributing to his income. His essays and public speaking engagements during the Civil Rights Movement also enhanced his visibility and financial success, as he became a sought-after voice in discussions surrounding race and social justice. In addition to his literary
accomplishments, Baldwin secured various fellowships, such as the Guggenheim Fellowship, which provided financial support at critical points in his career. The royalties from his published works, combined with academic positions at institutions like the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, allowed him to maintain a comfortable lifestyle,
particularly during his years in France. While specific figures regarding Baldwin's net worth are not readily available, his enduring legacy, alongside ongoing interest in his literature, suggests that his works continue to generate income for his estate, ensuring that his voice remains influential in contemporary discussions on race and identity.
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