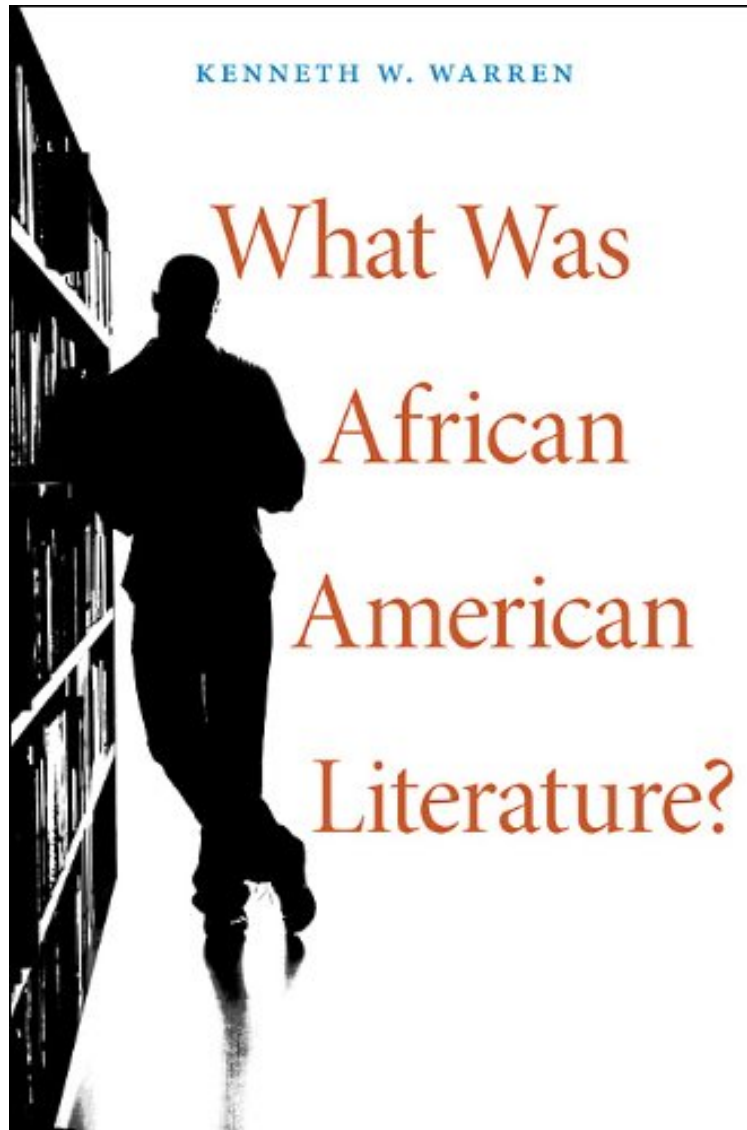


(Mobile library) What Was African American Literature? (The W. E. B. Du Bois Lectures)

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Kenneth W. Warren

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Kenneth W. Warren : What Was African American Literature? (The W. E. B. Du Bois Lectures) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised What Was African American Literature? (The W. E. B. Du Bois Lectures):

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Provocative work! By Sam White Provocative argument. I don't agree with the conclusions but it highlights a number of challenges facing the construction of the African American canon.

One problem with Warren's analysis is that he seems to want to reduce the complex conversations and debates within the critical community to a simple debate about the instrumental purpose of African American literature. A must read for scholars of African American literature. 0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Paradigm-shifting study By Rebecca S. Nisetich Seems controversial at first glance, but is actually a well-crafted response that pushes the field of American Literature out of its outdated racialized focus and into newer, more productive ground. For academic writing, easy to read and easy to teach. 0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Great book. By Cassie Zeiner Shipment wasn't as quick as I had hoped but it was inside of the dates I was given. Great book.

African American literature is over. With this provocative claim Kenneth Warren sets out to identify a distinctly African American literature and to change the terms with which we discuss it. Rather than contest other definitions, Warren makes a clear and compelling case for understanding African American literature as creative and critical work written by black Americans within and against the strictures of Jim Crow America. Within these parameters, his book outlines protocols of reading that best make sense of the literary works produced by African American writers and critics over the first two-thirds of the twentieth century. In Warren's view, African American literature begged the question: what would happen to this literature if and when Jim Crow was finally overthrown? Thus, imagining a world without African American literature was essential to that literature. In support of this point, Warren focuses on three moments in the history of *Phylon*, an important journal of African American culture. In the dialogues *Phylon* documents, the question of whether race would disappear as an organizing literary category emerges as shared ground for critical and literary practice. Warren also points out that while scholarship by black Americans has always been the province of a petit bourgeois elite, the strictures of Jim Crow enlisted these writers in a politics that served the race as a whole. Finally, Warren's work sheds light on the current moment in which advocates of African American solidarity insist on a past that is more productively put behind us.

From Publishers Weekly Warren, professor of English at the University of Chicago, expands on his 2007 W.E.B. Du Bois Lectures at Harvard University to provocatively claim that African-American literature ended with the "legal demise" of Jim Crow. "Absent white suspicions of, or commitment to imposing, black inferiority, African American literature would not have existed as a literature," he writes, presenting the tradition as more of a historical entity than an "ongoing expression of a distinct people." He offers a fresh assessment of George Schuyler's *Black No More* ("which treats with irreverence what other novels regard as tragedy"); he's instructive in his consideration of the differences in editorial expectations and content in black journals between 1925 and 1950, as well as opinionated but fair as he reviews assorted critical arguments (e.g., Addison Gayle vs. Herbert Hill, Gerald Early vs. Nick Chiles), and informative in his attention to current writers, both the conventionally literary (e.g., David Bradley, Edward P. Jones) and pulp. A slight but forceful text with a pugnacious and elegantly presented thesis. (Jan.) (c) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. Is the idea that sustains the possibility of an African American literature today the belief that the welfare of the race as a whole depends on the success of black writers and those who are depicted in their texts, as Ken Warren suggests in this provocative new book? In compelling close readings of novels from George Schuyler's *Black No More* to Michael Thomas's *Man Gone Down* and in comprehensive engagements with major tendencies in literary criticism, *What Was African American Literature?* punctures contemporary assumptions about the role of black literature since the end of the Jim Crow regime that, Warren argues, provoked the literature's emergence in the first place. (Werner Sollors, Harvard University) *What Was African American Literature?* is undoubtedly one of the most provocative books on the texts and criticism of African American literature to appear within the past several years. The sophistication and range of its arguments further cement Warren's stature as one of the leading thinkers of our time. (Gene Jarrett, Boston University) A slight but forceful text with a pugnacious and elegantly presented thesis. (Publishers Weekly 2010-09-20) Most literary criticism today, under the sign of theory, is obscure and incomprehensible, and shies from presenting daring new ways to look at literature--when it engages with contemporary literature at all. Kenneth W. Warren's book is an example of a book of literary criticism in elegant prose, completely accessible and jargon-free, yet making a sophisticated argument about a whole branch of literature, connecting politics and literature in a most exciting way. (Anis Shivani Huffington Post 2011-07-02) About the Author Kenneth W. Warren is Fairfax M. Cone Distinguished Service Professor of English at the University of Chicago.