

The Evolution of the Black Female Character in  
the Fiction of Claude McKay

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This study examines Claude McKay's presentation of Black female characters in his three novels Home To Harlem, Banjo, Banana Bottom, and his collection of short stories, Gingertown. The study traces the evolution of the characters in a chronological sequence and uses McKay's poetry and autobiographical writings as points of reference. His autobiographical works, My Green Hills of Jamaica and A Long Way From Home are used to give insight into his perception of his female relatives and friends.

This perception influences his sympathetic portrayal of the female characters in Home to Harlem, Banjo, Gingertown and Banana Bottom. The women in McKay's poetry are shown to parallel these characters. The central character in McKay's last novel, Banana Bottom, is seen as the epitome of the beauty, warmth, energy and intelligence of the Black woman.