

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Walter Dean Myers

PERSON

Myers, Walter Dean, 1937-

Alternative Names: Walter Dean Myers; Walter Milton Myers

Life Dates: August 12, 1937-July 1, 2014

Place of Birth: Martinsburg, West Virginia, USA

Work: Red Hook, NY

Occupations: Fiction Writer

Biographical Note

Author of over seventy children's and young adult books, Walter Dean Myers was born Walter Milton Myers on August 12, 1937, in Martinsburg, West Virginia. At age two, Myers's mother, Mary Green, died, and Florence Brown Dean, his father's ex-wife and her husband, Herbert Dean, raised him. Growing up on 121st and Morningside in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City, Myers, a troubled youth, struggled with a speech impediment but loved

to read. Myers attended P.S. 125 and JHS 143, but dropped out of Stuyvesant High School twice; once in 1952, and again in 1954. After serving in the United States Army from 1957 to 1960, Myers worked at the Harlem Post Office and the New York State Department of Labor; he also attended classes at City College of New York, Columbia University, and at SUNY Empire State College, where he graduated in 1984.

Encouraged by John Oliver Killens, Myers published his first poem in the *Delta Review* in 1962. Myers wrote for men's adventure magazines, then won a *Writers Digest* contest sponsored by the Council for Interracial Books for Children with his story *Where Does The Day Go?*, in 1969. Writing first for small children, and then for young adults, Myers's themes ranged from sports, to science fiction, to biography, to African and African American history, to fantasy, to adventure and even to mystery. Highlights of Myers's prolific and award winning career include: *The Young Landlords* (1979), *Hoops* (1981), *The Legend of Tarik* (ALA Best Books for Children, 1981), *Motown and Didi: A Love Story* (Coretta Scott King Award, 1984), *The Outside Shot* (1984), *Fallen Angels* (Coretta Scott King Award, 1988), *Now Is Your Time! The African American Struggle for Freedom* (Coretta Scott King Award, ALA Best Books, Notable Books for Children, 1992), *Malcolm X: By Any Means Necessary* (Best Books for Young Adults Award, ALA, 1993), *Somewhere In Darkness* (Newberry Honor Book, 1993), *Monster* (Michael L. Printz Award, 2000), *Bad Boy: A Memoir* (2001), *Shooter* (2004) and *Autobiography of My Dead Brother* (2005) about his brother's death in Vietnam. Myers also wrote a biography of John Robinson entitled *The Brown Condor*; Robinson was an African American pilot and a hero of the Italo Ethiopian War.

Myers religiously wrote ten pages a day, after his morning walk. Myers lived with his wife, Constance, and son Christopher, the youngest of three children, in

Jersey City, New Jersey.

Myers passed away on July 1, 2014.

Related Entries

Stuyvesant High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

P.S. 125 [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Junior High School 143 [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

City College of New York [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

State University of New York / Empire State College
[STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Bobbs-Merrill Company [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to 1977]

acquisitions editor