

Alice Dunbar-Nelson (1875-1935)

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The Alice Dunbar-Nelson papers at the University of Delaware provide lots of opportunities for students of English and of History, so depending on your subject, there are two activities you can try to learn more about Dunbar-Nelson.

1. **English:** Read the short story, 'The Praline Woman' from *The Goodness of St Rocque and Other Stories*. Your teacher may be able to hand out printed copies. It stands out from the collection for its language, narrative voice, and style.
 - a. Can you identify moments in the story that challenge Hull's 'aracial' label for Dunbar-Nelson's writing? You could think about the word 'brune' and how it might have been read differently by readers in New Orleans or in the metropolitan Northeast. You may also want to think about the significance of the praline woman's mixture of English and Creole or the kinds of migration represented by the Native American woman and the Irishman.
 - b. If you have time, you can also find manuscript versions of this story in Dunbar-Nelson's online archive. What differences do you find? How do these change your readings?
2. **History:** Visit the Alice Dunbar-Nelson papers in the Delaware Digital Archive (<https://udspace.udel.edu/communities/ba387030-ca80-44f4-b0f6-76f4c8c0b4a4>).

Can you find sources to help answer the following questions:

- a. How was Dunbar-Nelson's work, both fiction and activism, received during her lifetime? [Hint: it may be helpful to look for reviews, copies of her columns, newspaper reports on her speeches, and articles written after her death].
- b. Based on her correspondence with Robert Nelson, editor of *The Washington Eagle*, how did Dunbar-Nelson deal with the constant struggle to make money from her writing?