



“Nikki Giovanni”
(Assessment Text)

NIKKI GIOVANNI

(June 7, 1943 – present)

Nikki Giovanni is an award-winning poet and author. She is also a college professor, cancer survivor, and mother. She was born in Knoxville, Tennessee in 1943. Giovanni’s family then moved to Cincinnati, Ohio. She grew up in an all-black neighborhood and experienced racism and inequality first-hand. She later became a powerful voice in the Civil Rights Movement.

Giovanni went to Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. She took writing classes and edited a student magazine. She also led the school’s student civil rights group. She graduated with honors in 1967 and moved back to Cincinnati. When her grandmother died just a few days later, Giovanni found comfort in writing poetry. She borrowed money in 1968 to self-publish her first book, *Black Feeling Black Talk*. People liked her poetry for its strong voice and anger at inequality. Giovanni’s poetry is written in an informal style and celebrates African-American history and culture. She has said that much of her poetry is inspired by an interest in people.

Giovanni is the daughter and granddaughter of teachers. She has been a reader all her life. She has written over 30 books for adults and children. She has appeared on television, written for magazines, and recorded albums of her spoken-word poetry. Early in her career, Giovanni was named the “Princess of Black Poetry.” She has also been called a “Living Legend” and a “National Treasure.” She has received many awards, including the first Rosa Parks Woman of Courage Award. She was also named Woman of the Year by three different magazines. Giovanni currently teaches at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia.



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