

The Harlem Renaissance



- 1 Today it seems quite normal for high school English students to read poems, stories, and novels by African American authors, but that was not always the case. A hundred years ago readers, critics, and publishers across the United States paid little or no attention to African American authors. Then a group of African American authors in New York City changed American literature forever. Reaching readers of all races, their literary movement became known as the Harlem Renaissance.
- 2 Harlem, a section of New York City, became a center for African American culture, music, theater, and art in the 1920s. Hundreds of thousands of African Americans had recently moved from the South to northern cities for better jobs, and many of them had settled in Harlem. African American musicians, artists, actors, and writers congregated there, encouraging one another's creativity. African American owned magazines featured prose and verse about the everyday experiences of African Americans in the rural South and the cities of the North.
- 3 The reputation of Harlem spread beyond the immediate community. Jazz and blues performances attracted visitors from other parts of New York City. Through dinners and special events, Harlem authors were introduced to other New Yorkers who published magazines and books. Editors at major publishing companies began to show new interest in African American authors. Between the mid-1920s and the mid-1930s, more than fifty books by sixteen Harlem Renaissance authors were published.
- 4 African American authors expressed their lives with pride in their poetry and fiction. Langston Hughes, who spoke out against social injustice in his novels, essays, plays, and poems, was one of the most famous African American authors during the Harlem Renaissance. The rhythms of his poetry reflect the rhythm of African American music. The poems of his friend Countee Cullen drew on both European and African traditions. A third important author was Zora Neale Hurston. She studied anthropology in college and collected African American folklore, which strongly influenced her fiction.
- 5 The Harlem Renaissance did not last long. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, hard economic times meant less financial support for authors and artists. Some African American leaders turned their attention from literature to politics and social issues. Several leading Harlem authors moved away from New York City.
- 6 Although Harlem ceased to be the thriving cultural center it had become in the 1920s, its legacy lives on. The large number of well-known authors with published books inspired later African Americans to consider literary careers. The Harlem Renaissance opened the door of mainstream American literature to African American authors, who have been significant and recognized contributors to American literature ever since.

Tuesday – Multiple Choice

1. The reader can conclude from the information in the passage that

- A African American writers wrote primarily for a younger audience.
- B African American musicians, actors, writers, and artists wanted to work only in Harlem.
- C American literature is better because of the work of African American authors.
- D African American artists in the 1920s and 1930s were more talented than artists of earlier periods

2. According to information in Paragraph 2, the success of African American authors in Harlem can best be attributed to which factor?

- A jazz and blues performances
- B encouragement from other artists
- C dinners and special events
- D major publishing companies

3. Which statement best supports the idea that Harlem Renaissance authors influenced successive generations of African American authors?

- A African American authors of the 1920s documented their own personal experiences.
- B After the Great Depression, many African American authors wrote about important social issues.
- C Most successful African American authors in the 1920s influenced young African Americans living in the South.
- D African American authors in the 1920s, like Langston Hughes, served as role models and encouraged young African American writers

4. To learn more about the friendship of Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen, the most reliable source to consult would be

- A biographies of the two authors.
- B literary works by similar authors.
- C an article on the Harlem Renaissance.
- D a novel set during the Harlem Renaissance.

5. How does the author support the idea that the Harlem Renaissance benefited the African-American community?

- A by referring to economic opportunities that brought African Americans to Harlem
- B by describing the impact of the Harlem Renaissance on African-American authors
- C by giving examples of African-American authors who eventually left Harlem
- D by stating the number of African-American works written in the Harlem Renaissance

6. Which factor assured the continued influence of the literary movement known as the Harlem Renaissance?

- A the growing population of African Americans in Harlem
- B the availability of better jobs and social activities in Harlem
- C the publication of many works by Harlem Renaissance authors
- D the work of the musicians, artists, and actors of the Harlem Renaissance

7. The author's tone in the passage can be described as

- A concerned.
- B admiring.
- C expectant.
- D skeptical.

8. As it is used in Paragraph 6, a legacy means

- A mystery.
- B warning.
- C challenge.
- D tradition

9. What does the author use to show how the Harlem Renaissance changed over time?

- A flashback
- B foreshadowing
- C chronological order
- D comparison and contrast

10. From the author's perspective, what is one reason the Harlem Renaissance ended?

- A The literary tastes of the American public shifted.
- B Significant African American literary figures died.
- C Most Americans grew too familiar with its literature.
- D The African American community changed much of its focus.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Period: _____

Week1 Anchor – Writing Focus

Title: _____

Monday:

Summarize the reading passage in the box below. What is the main idea? What are important supporting details? If it is fictional, consider important characters, setting, plot points, etc.

Summary:

Tuesday:

Multiple Choice Questions

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

- 6. _____
- 7. _____
- 8. _____
- 9. _____
- 10. _____

Vocabulary

Choose 4 words from the passage:

Word: _____ Part of Speech: _____ Connotation: _____

Definition: _____

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Definition: _____

Word: _____ Part of Speech: _____ Connotation: _____

Definition: _____

Word: _____ Part of Speech: _____ Connotation: _____

Definition: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Period: _____

Wednesday:

Constructed Response Question:

Thesis Statement:

Evidence/Quotes:

1.

2.

Thursday:

Explain how your evidence or quotes relate to and support your thesis statement:

Evidence/Quote #1:

Evidence/Quote #2:

Friday: Compose a well-developed paragraph (t.s., details, evidence, analysis...) responding to the prompt provided.