

## Lesson 26

History of the Harlem Renaissance

**Museum Connection:** Art and Intellect

**Purpose:** In this lesson students will be introduced to the Harlem Renaissance. They will read about this historical period, use text features as they read, and write a brief constructed response identifying the Harlem Renaissance and the factors that contributed to its development.

**Grade Level and Content Area:** Elementary, Reading

**Time:** 1-2 class periods

### **Correlation to Social Studies Standards:**

GEO 4.1.5.3	Identify and locate physical and human characteristics of places and explain how those characteristics have affected people living there.
PNW 7.1.5.2	Describe how cultures have developed and changed.
PNW 7.2.5.2	Describe how individuals and groups have contributed to the development of cultures.
PNW 7.2.5.3	Describe the interactions, contributions, and results of the migration of various peoples and cultures.

### **Social Studies:**

3.A.1 (Grade 4)

### **Maryland College and Career Ready Standards**

Locate places and describe human and physical characteristics of those places using geographic tools.

3.A.1 (Grade 5)

Locate places and describe human and physical characteristics of those places using geographic tools.

2.B.2 (Grade 4)

Describe and compare cultural characteristics of various groups of people in the American experience.

### **Correlation to Reading and English Language Arts Standards:**

2.A.1 (Grade 4)

Develop comprehension skills by reading a variety of self-selected and assigned print and electronic information texts.

2.A.2 (Grade 4)

Identify and use text features to facilitate understanding of informational texts.

2.A.4 (Grade 4)	Determine important ideas and messages in informational texts.
1.E.1 (Grade 5)	Develop and apply comprehension skills through exposure through a variety of texts including traditional print and electronic texts.
2.A.1 (Grade 5)	Develop and apply comprehension skills by reading a variety of self-selected and assigned print and electronic information texts.
2.A.2 (Grade 5)	Identify and use text features to facilitate understanding of informational texts.
2.A.4 (Grade 5)	Determine and analyze important ideas and messages in informational texts.

**Objectives:**

- Students will read to be informed about the Harlem Renaissance.
- Students will identify and use text features to comprehend expository text.
- Students will describe the factors that contributed to the emergence of the Harlem Renaissance in New York City.

**Vocabulary and Concepts**

**Culture** – Culture is the learned behavior of people, which includes their belief systems and languages, their social relationships, their institutions and organizations, and their material goods—food, clothing, buildings, tools, and machines.

**Migrate** – To migrate is to move from one place to another.

**Renaissance** – Renaissance means, literally, a rebirth. The Italian Renaissance is that period from the 14th to the 16th century when the arts and humanities flourished in Italian city-states. The term also refers to the abundant art forms and literature found in Harlem during the 1920s and 1930s.

**Patron** – A patron is a person who supports, protects, or champions someone or something such as an institution, event, or cause.

**Legacy** – A legacy is something handed down from the past.

**Stock market** – The stock market is a place where stocks, bonds, or other securities are bought or sold.

**Materials**

**For the Teacher:**

Schaefer, Adam. *The Harlem Renaissance*. Chicago: Heinemann Library, 2003.

**For the Student:**

Schaefer, Adam. *The Harlem Renaissance*. Chicago: Heinemann Library, 2003.

Student Resource Sheet 1 Backpack

Student Resource Sheet 2 Feature Strips for Backpack

Student Resource Sheet 3 Brief Constructed Response

Scissors

Glue

**Resources**

Hudson, Cheryl Willis. *The Harlem Renaissance: Profiles in Creativity*. New York: Newbridge Educational Publishers, 2002.

“Langston Hughes and the Harlem Renaissance.” *Footsteps* March/April, 2004.

Schaefer, Adam. *The Harlem Renaissance*. Chicago: Heinemann Library, 2003.

*The Great Migration: African Americans Journey North*. New Jersey: Globe Fearon, 1998.

“The Harlem Renaissance.” *Cobblestone*. February. 1991.

**Teacher Background**

The period during and after World War I was a time of change and mobility for the United States. Dissatisfied with the severe limitations of “Jim Crow” laws and the poor, often isolated, living conditions in the Deep South, many African Americans moved to large northern cities, such as Baltimore, Chicago, Detroit, New York, and Washington, D.C., hoping for better job opportunities and schools. As African American populations grew, talented artists, musicians, writers, actors, and dancers came together to develop vibrant new art forms. The resulting “New Negro Movement” was influenced by strong African traditions, the spiritual values and gospel music of the churches, and European culture in America. The artists’ work examined the society in which they lived and expressed hopes for civil liberties. From these beginnings, churches, cultural centers, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) grew to become strong forces in social reform within the civil rights movement.

New York’s Harlem offered the largest concentration of African American artists. Photographers such as James Van Der Zee captured the glamorous lives of Harlem’s entertainers, the richly evolving art forms, and the luxurious lifestyles. But some who came to New York found neither satisfying jobs nor good living conditions. Artists such as Romare Bearden, William Johnson, and Jacob Lawrence depicted scenes of the city that captured this side of life. Musicians, such as Bessie Smith, literally “sang the blues.”

## Lesson Development

1. **Motivation:** Tell the students, “Raise your hand if you have been on a camping trip.” Discuss with the students the materials that you pack to take on a camping trip (i.e. tent, sleeping bag, and food). Ask the students, “What would happen if you left your backpack with all your materials at home? Describe your experience on your camping trip without these materials.”
2. Tell the students that reading is a journey and you need to be prepared for your journey just as you would for a camping trip.
3. Give students, Student Resource Sheet 1, Backpack, and Student Resource Sheet 2, Feature Strips for Backpack.
4. Instruct students to cut Text Feature Strips and put them on their backpacks for their expository reading journey. Note: Some strips are left blank for students to add their own ideas. Not all features on strips will be evident on pages 4-5.
5. Distribute student copies of Schaefer, Adam. *The Harlem Renaissance*. Chicago: Heinemann Library, 2003. Using the text features and backpack as a model, the teacher will guide students to “unpack” the article (pgs 4-5) to gain background information about the Harlem Renaissance.
6. With a partner, students will read to be informed about the Harlem Renaissance and to answer, “What was the Harlem Renaissance?”
7. Have students discuss their response in small groups and then debrief as a class.
8. **Assessment:** Individual students should respond in writing to the following prompt.

Given what you know about the Harlem Renaissance, do you agree or disagree with this statement:

The Harlem Renaissance was a time of a cultural awakening for African American artists. Give reasons for your position.

Make sure that you address the following questions:

- What was the Harlem Renaissance?
- Why did Harlem in New York City become the center of an African American artistic, political, and social movement called the Harlem Renaissance?

9. **Closure:** Have students present their murals to the class. Ask: Why was the Harlem Renaissance important to them?

## Thoughtful Application

- Have students create a mural or write a poem depicting what they think the Harlem Renaissance looks or sounds like to them.

### **Lesson Extensions**

- The New Negro Movement and Baltimore's version of the Harlem Renaissance are expressions of social currents that formed the outlines of today's African American consciousness. Explore examples of the era's musical and cultural legacy in the "Pennsylvania Avenue" exhibit in the "Strength of the Mind" gallery of the permanent exhibition of the Reginald F. Lewis Museum. Why do you think the creativity played such an important role in the lives of African Americans? In what ways do contemporary artists build on this legacy?

**Student Resource Sheet 1**

**Backpack**



**Student Resource Sheet 2**

**Feature Strips for Backpack**

Read the title	Read the subtitles	Read the captions
Look at the pictures	Look at the graphs	Look at the maps
Large Bold Print	Italics	Read the "Big Idea Statement"
Colored Print	Quotation Marks	Underlining
Time lines	Illustrations	

## Student Resource Sheet 3

### Brief Constructed Response

Given what you know about the Harlem Renaissance, do you agree or disagree with this statement:

The Harlem Renaissance was a time of a cultural awakening for African American artists. Give reasons for your position.

Make sure that you address the following questions:

- What was the Harlem Renaissance?
- Why did Harlem in New York City become the center of an African American artistic, political, and social movement called the Harlem Renaissance?

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