Harlem Voices

Trace themes, genres, and styles in the Harlem Renaissance.

10.T.PM.1 "Demonstrate knowledge of dominant themes, genres, and verbal styles of literature from a particular time period."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each phrase that names a dominant theme, circle each genre, and number 1, 2, and 3 beside three verbal-style features. These marks will show how Harlem Renaissance writers matched their ideas to different forms and voices.

Literature in the Harlem Renaissance

1 During the 1920s and early 1930s, the Harlem Renaissance made Harlem, New York, a major center of Black artistic life. Writers, musicians, and visual artists drew on the energy of a growing community shaped by the Great Migration. Their work challenged racist stereotypes and insisted on Black dignity, creativity, and history. Although Harlem gave the movement its name, its influence reached magazines, theaters, and publishing houses beyond the neighborhood. Literature from this period often joined art with a public claim for respect and equal opportunity.

2 In poetry, Langston Hughes used jazz and blues rhythms, repetition, and everyday speech to make poems that sounded close to music and conversation. Claude McKay wrote sonnets, a traditional fourteen-line form, yet his poems voiced protest against racial injustice. Other authors chose fiction, essays, and drama. Zora Neale Hurston's fiction recorded lively dialogue and regional dialects, while essays in journals such as The Crisis argued about art, politics, and racial equality. These genres and styles gave writers several ways to represent modern Black life in print.

3 A common theme across Harlem Renaissance literature was self-definition. Rather than allowing outsiders to describe Black Americans, many writers presented complex speakers and characters who claimed their own voices. The movement also explored migration, city life, love, music, and the tension between hope and discrimination. Its verbal styles ranged from formal, carefully structured language to colloquial speech shaped by Black communities. By mixing inherited forms with new rhythms and subjects, these authors showed that literature could honor tradition while speaking directly to the conditions of their own time.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which dominant theme is shown when writers let Black speakers and characters claim their own voices instead of letting outsiders describe them?

2. How did Langston Hughes's verbal style connect his poetry to music and conversation? Use two details from the passage.

3. What genre did Claude McKay use, and what issue did his poems protest?

4. How did Harlem Renaissance writers combine tradition with new ideas, according to the passage?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write 3 or 4 sentences describing how a Harlem Renaissance writer could use one genre and one verbal style to explore a theme from the movement. Name the genre, style, and theme, and explain why those choices fit.

ANSWER KEY

Harlem Voices

GRADE 10 · 10.T.PM.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each phrase that names a dominant theme, circle each genre, and number 1, 2, and 3 beside three verbal-style features. These marks will show how Harlem Renaissance writers matched their ideas to different forms and voices. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which dominant theme is shown when writers let Black speakers and characters claim their own voices instead of letting outsiders describe them?	**Self-definition.**
2	How did Langston Hughes's verbal style connect his poetry to music and conversation? Use two details from the passage.	**He used jazz and blues rhythms, repetition, and everyday speech, making poems sound close to music and conversation.**
3	What genre did Claude McKay use, and what issue did his poems protest?	**He wrote sonnets, and his poems protested racial injustice.**
4	How did Harlem Renaissance writers combine tradition with new ideas, according to the passage?	**They mixed inherited forms with new rhythms and subjects to speak to the conditions of their own time.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would write a short story about a family arriving in a northern city after leaving the South. The story would use colloquial dialogue and music-filled street sounds to explore migration and self-definition. This style would make the characters' voices central while showing the energy and challenges of city life.

Accept responses that accurately name a Harlem Renaissance genre, a verbal style, and a theme from the passage. The explanation should clearly connect the chosen form and style to the theme.