Harlem's Literary Network

Tracing how connected writers formed a cultural movement

11.T.PM.1.a "Explain how a group of writers in a particular time and place came together to constitute a social/cultural/political movement. (I)"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details that show writers shared ideas or purposes. Circle places, publications, or organizations that connected them, then number three details that explain how their work became a movement.

How the Harlem Renaissance Took Shape

1. After World War I, Harlem became a major Black neighborhood in New York City as people arrived during the Great Migration. Its streets held churches, apartment buildings, theaters, and businesses where artists could meet. Writers such as Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Claude McKay, and Countee Cullen did not all write alike, but many rejected stereotypes that had long limited Black characters in American literature. They explored Black history, daily life, music, faith, migration, and racial injustice. Their work helped readers see Black culture as varied, modern, and worthy of serious art.

2. The movement was strengthened by editors, patrons, and gathering places. W. E. B. Du Bois published poems and essays in The Crisis, the magazine of the NAACP. Charles S. Johnson, editor of Opportunity, sponsored literary contests connected to the National Urban League. These publications gave emerging writers national audiences and introduced them to one another. In Harlem, salons hosted by A'Lelia Walker and events at the 135th Street Branch of the New York Public Library created spaces for debate and performance. Alain Locke's 1925 anthology The New Negro gathered many voices under a shared public identity.

3. Calling this network the Harlem Renaissance does not mean every participant agreed or belonged to a formal club. Some writers emphasized folk traditions, while others experimented with modernist styles or focused on protest. Yet they worked in a period when segregation, violence, and unequal opportunity shaped Black life, and they used print, performance, and criticism to challenge narrow public images. The label became more durable because readers, editors, and later scholars treated these linked efforts as a cultural movement. By the late 1920s, economic pressures and changing artistic circles altered the network, but its writing influenced later Black artists and activists.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What shared purpose connected many Harlem Renaissance writers? Use two subjects from their writing as evidence.

2. Explain how magazines, contests, and the anthology helped separate writers become a movement.

3. How does the passage show that the Harlem Renaissance was a movement even though its writers did not all write in the same style?

4. How did the social conditions of the period and the response of readers and editors help define the Harlem Renaissance?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a different literary movement and write four sentences explaining how a group of writers came together in a particular time and place. Name the writers, identify a connecting place or publication, describe a shared purpose or context, and explain why the group became a movement.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 11 · 11.T.PM.1.a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline details that show writers shared ideas or purposes. Circle places, publications, or organizations that connected them, then number three details that explain how their work became a movement. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What shared purpose connected many Harlem Renaissance writers? Use two subjects from their writing as evidence.	**Many writers challenged limiting stereotypes and presented Black culture as complex and worthy of serious art. Evidence may include their attention to Black history, daily life, music, faith, migration, or racial injustice.**
2	Explain how magazines, contests, and the anthology helped separate writers become a movement.	**The Crisis and Opportunity gave writers audiences and introduced writers to one another, while contests supported emerging writers. The New Negro collected many writers under a shared public identity.**
3	How does the passage show that the Harlem Renaissance was a movement even though its writers did not all write in the same style?	**Writers differed in style and focus, including folk traditions, modernism, and protest, but they were connected through shared concerns, Harlem institutions, publications, and a public identity.**
4	How did the social conditions of the period and the response of readers and editors help define the Harlem Renaissance?	**Segregation, violence, and unequal opportunity shaped the writers' concerns and led them to challenge narrow images of Black life. Readers, editors, and later scholars recognized their linked efforts as a cultural movement.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In 1950s San Francisco, Beat writers including Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and Lawrence Ferlinghetti formed a visible literary network. Readings at the Six Gallery and conversations around City Lights Books connected writers with audiences and publishers. They challenged postwar conformity through spontaneous, experimental writing that addressed sexuality, spirituality, travel, and dissent. When City Lights published Ginsberg's Howl in 1956 and defended it in an obscenity trial, the publicity helped define their linked work as the Beat movement.

Accept accurate paraphrases that explain relationships among writers, institutions, audiences, and historical conditions, rather than lists of names alone. For the open response, accept another accurately described literary movement if all four required elements are present.