

Voices of Harlem

Identify themes, genres, and verbal styles of the Harlem Renaissance.

11.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 words or phrases that name themes. Circle each genre, and write 1, 2, or 3 beside a style example: 1 for musical rhythm, 2 for conversational or regional speech, and 3 for formal, satirical, or argumentative language.

Literature in the Harlem Renaissance

- ① During the 1920s and early 1930s, the Harlem Renaissance made New York City's Harlem neighborhood a major center of Black artistic life. The movement grew as the Great Migration brought many African Americans from the rural South to northern cities. Writers explored racial pride, migration, work, love, and the pressure of segregation. They also challenged stereotypes by presenting Black people as complex individuals with distinct ambitions and voices. Although Harlem was its best-known hub, the movement connected magazines, publishers, clubs, and readers across the United States. Its literature often joined personal experience to public argument.
- ② Poetry was the movement's most visible literary genre. Langston Hughes used blues and jazz rhythms in poems such as "The Weary Blues," bringing music associated with Black communities onto the printed page. His lines could sound like speech overheard on a street or in a club, using plain diction, repetition, and strong beat. Other poets, including Countee Cullen, often used more formal patterns, such as the sonnet, while questioning racism and seeking beauty. This range shows that Harlem Renaissance writers did not share one voice. They used both popular music and inherited literary forms to claim artistic authority.
- ③ Prose writers expanded the movement's genres through short stories, novels, and essays. In "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," Hughes argued that Black artists should value their own cultural expression rather than imitate white expectations. Zora Neale Hurston's fiction recorded dialogue shaped by regional speech and portrayed communities with humor, conflict, and dignity. Writers also used journals such as *The Crisis* and *Opportunity* to publish work and debate politics. Across these forms, verbal style could shift from lyrical and musical to conversational, satirical, or argumentative. That flexibility helped the movement address both individual identity and collective struggle.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 Name two dominant themes of Harlem Renaissance literature. What historical change mentioned in the passage helped shape these themes?

2 What genre was most visible during the Harlem Renaissance? Identify two features of Langston Hughes's verbal style in that genre.

3 How did Countee Cullen's poetic style differ from Zora Neale Hurston's fictional style?

4 How did prose genres and literary journals help Harlem Renaissance writers reach beyond poetry?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Imagine you are adding a new work to a Harlem Renaissance magazine. In exactly three sentences, describe its genre, central theme, and intended verbal style, using at least two style features named in the passage and explaining how they serve the theme.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline words or phrases that name themes. Circle each genre, and write 1, 2, or 3 beside a style example: 1 for musical rhythm, 2 for conversational or regional speech, and 3 for formal, satirical, or argumentative language. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Name two dominant themes of Harlem Renaissance literature. What historical change mentioned in the passage helped shape these themes?	Themes include racial pride, migration, work, love, segregation, identity, and collective struggle. The Great Migration brought many African Americans from the rural South to northern cities.
2	What genre was most visible during the Harlem Renaissance? Identify two features of Langston Hughes's verbal style in that genre.	Poetry was the most visible genre. Hughes used blues and jazz rhythms, plain diction, repetition, a strong beat, and speechlike language.
3	How did Countee Cullen's poetic style differ from Zora Neale Hurston's fictional style?	Cullen often used formal patterns such as the sonnet, while Hurston used dialogue shaped by regional speech and portrayed communities with humor, conflict, and dignity.
4	How did prose genres and literary journals help Harlem Renaissance writers reach beyond poetry?	Short stories, novels, and essays gave writers additional forms for exploring ideas, while journals such as <i>The Crisis</i> and <i>Opportunity</i> published work and provided spaces to debate politics.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would submit a short story about a young woman who has moved from Georgia to Harlem and is deciding whether to send money home or save for art school. Its central theme would be migration's mix of opportunity and responsibility, and its dialogue would use conversational regional speech to show the pull of two communities. Repetition and a musical rhythm in key scenes would turn her private decision into a wider claim about Black ambition.

Accept equivalent themes, genres, and descriptions of verbal style when they are supported by the passage. For Part 3, accept any original three-sentence response that identifies a genre and theme, uses at least two named style features, and explains their purpose.