

Harlem Renaissance Lenses

Compare how writers and visual artists shaped shared ideas in different forms.

12.T.PM.1.a “Compare and contrast the works of writers and artists who are part of a specific movement during a particular time period. (I)”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details, one about a writer’s work and one about an artist’s work, that show a similarity or contrast. Number the two details 1 and 2 so you can use them as a comparison pair.

Many Forms, Shared Movement

- ① During the Harlem Renaissance, a cultural movement centered in Black communities during the 1920s and 1930s, writers and visual artists drew on Black life, history, and artistic forms. Langston Hughes published “The Weary Blues” in 1925. The poem’s speaker listens to a musician play the blues on Lenox Avenue in Harlem. Hughes shapes some lines with repeated sounds and rhythms that echo music. His focus on one performer’s weary song gives the poem an intimate, street-level view of Harlem nightlife. Rather than presenting the blues as background decoration, the poem makes the music carry emotion and tell part of the scene’s story.
- ② Painter Aaron Douglas used a different medium to examine related concerns. In his 1934 mural series *Aspects of Negro Life*, especially the panel *From Slavery Through Reconstruction*, he arranged silhouetted figures, circles, and radiating beams in a flattened, geometric style. The panel connects enslavement, emancipation, migration, labor, and music within a broad historical design. Douglas does not follow a single character through one evening. Instead, overlapping figures and symbols compress many generations into one visual field. Like Hughes, he treats music as meaningful, but Douglas links it to collective history and to the movement of Black people across time and place.
- ③ Other Renaissance artists made choices that further show how movement members could share purposes without producing the same kind of work. In *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), Zora Neale Hurston tells Janie Crawford’s life through a novel that includes dialogue shaped by Southern Black speech. The novel follows Janie’s changing ideas about love, work, and independence. Sculptor Augusta Savage created *The Harp* for the 1939 New York World’s Fair. Its figures form the shape of a harp, with singing children as strings and a kneeling figure suggesting the instrument’s soundboard. Hurston develops an individual voice over time, while Savage turns a group of figures into a symbolic public image.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 Compare Hughes's and Douglas's artistic forms and scale of focus. How does each artist present Black experience?

2 What idea about music do Hughes and Douglas share, and how does each work use music differently?

3 Compare the time scale of "The Weary Blues" and From Slavery Through Reconstruction. What effect does each choice create?

4 How do Hurston's novel and Savage's sculpture differ in the way they represent people's experiences?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Choose one writer's work and one visual artist's work from the passage. Write exactly three sentences that compare the works: state one shared concern in the first sentence, then use one accurate detail from each work to explain an important difference.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline two details, one about a writer's work and one about an artist's work, that show a similarity or contrast. Number the two details 1 and 2 so you can use them as a comparison pair. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Compare Hughes's and Douglas's artistic forms and scale of focus. How does each artist present Black experience?	Hughes uses a poem about one musician's performance in Harlem, creating an intimate scene. Douglas uses a mural panel with figures and symbols to present Black history across many generations.
2	What idea about music do Hughes and Douglas share, and how does each work use music differently?	Both treat music as meaningful. Hughes uses blues music to carry emotion in one scene, while Douglas connects music to collective history, migration, and Black life across time.
3	Compare the time scale of "The Weary Blues" and From Slavery Through Reconstruction. What effect does each choice create?	Hughes focuses on one evening and one performer, creating a close view of Harlem nightlife. Douglas compresses many generations into one image, creating a broad historical view.
4	How do Hurston's novel and Savage's sculpture differ in the way they represent people's experiences?	Hurston follows Janie's individual life and changing ideas through a novel. Savage uses a group of figures in a symbolic sculpture to create a public image.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Hughes's "The Weary Blues" and Douglas's From Slavery Through Reconstruction both show music as meaningful in Black life during the Harlem Renaissance. Hughes centers one musician's weary performance on Lenox Avenue, creating an intimate scene. Douglas uses silhouetted figures and symbols to connect music with collective history across generations.

Accept paraphrased comparisons that accurately connect a writer and a visual artist from the passage. For Part 3, require exactly three sentences, a valid shared concern, and one accurate detail from each selected work that explains a difference.