

Harlem Voices

Analyze how a literary movement shaped theme, genre, and style.

8.T.PM.1 “Periods & Movements: 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 As you read, underline at least four words or phrases that name genres or forms, circle three phrases that reveal dominant themes, and put a star beside three phrases that describe verbal style.

Writing the Harlem Renaissance

- ① During the 1920s and early 1930s, Harlem in New York City became a major center of Black artistic life. This period, called the Harlem Renaissance, grew as many African Americans moved from the rural South to Northern cities during the Great Migration. Writers, musicians, visual artists, and performers shared ideas in neighborhood homes, theaters, magazines, and clubs. Their work challenged racist stereotypes and presented Black life as varied, creative, modern, and worthy of respect. Harlem was important, but artists connected to the movement lived and published in other places too.
- ② Poetry was one influential genre. Langston Hughes often used the rhythms and repeated phrases of blues and jazz, musical forms heard in Black communities. In poems such as “The Weary Blues,” his speaker observes a musician, and the language echoes song through sound and repetition. Other writers used novels, essays, and drama. Their subjects included migration, work, family, racial injustice, beauty, and the search for self-definition. Rather than using only formal, distant language, many artists mixed everyday speech with musical patterns and bold, direct voices.
- ③ The movement did not have one single message or style. Claude McKay wrote poems that could use traditional forms, including the sonnet, to speak forcefully about racism and resistance. Zora Neale Hurston drew on Black Southern storytelling traditions in fiction, using dialect, dialogue, and vivid details. Writers disagreed about how art should represent Black life, yet they shared a desire for fuller self-expression. By joining inherited literary forms with new voices and cultural influences, Harlem Renaissance literature reshaped American writing and influenced later authors.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What dominant theme of Harlem Renaissance literature is shown in the first paragraph? Use two details from the passage to support your answer.

2 How did Langston Hughes connect poetry to Black musical traditions? Identify one verbal style choice from the passage.

3 Compare Claude McKay's and Zora Neale Hurston's literary choices. What genre or form did each use, and how did their styles differ?

4 Why does the passage say that the Harlem Renaissance did not have one single message or style? Give two examples from the passage.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a 90 to 110 word museum label for an imaginary 1920s Harlem Renaissance work. Name its genre, state a dominant theme, describe at least two verbal style choices, and explain how these choices fit the movement.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

As you read, underline at least four words or phrases that name genres or forms, circle three phrases that reveal dominant themes, and put a star beside three phrases that describe verbal style. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What dominant theme of Harlem Renaissance literature is shown in the first paragraph? Use two details from the passage to support your answer.	A dominant theme is Black self-expression and dignity. Artists challenged racist stereotypes and portrayed Black life as varied, creative, modern, and worthy of respect.
2	How did Langston Hughes connect poetry to Black musical traditions? Identify one verbal style choice from the passage.	He used the rhythms and repeated phrases of blues and jazz. Sound and repetition made the language echo a song.
3	Compare Claude McKay's and Zora Neale Hurston's literary choices. What genre or form did each use, and how did their styles differ?	McKay wrote poems and could use the traditional sonnet form to address racism and resistance. Hurston wrote fiction using Black Southern storytelling, dialect, dialogue, and vivid details.
4	Why does the passage say that the Harlem Renaissance did not have one single message or style? Give two examples from the passage.	Writers used different forms and approaches. For example, McKay used traditional sonnets, while Hurston used dialect and dialogue in fiction; writers also disagreed about how art should represent Black life.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

"Night Train North" is a fictional 1927 poem set in Harlem. Its dominant theme is hope during migration, as a young worker imagines building a new life after leaving the South. The poem uses short, repeated lines and a steady beat modeled on train wheels. It also includes everyday dialogue from people waiting at a station. These style choices echo the Harlem Renaissance because they connect poetry to blues and jazz rhythms, represent ordinary Black voices, and focus on movement, self-definition, and modern city life. It would suit a magazine read by young city readers.

Accept equivalent descriptions of major Harlem Renaissance themes, genres, and styles when students support them with accurate passage details. For Part 3, look for a clear genre, a plausible dominant theme, two style choices, and an explanation connecting those choices to the movement.