Voices of Harlem

Trace authors, works, themes, and styles in the Harlem Renaissance.

9.T.PM.1.b "Identify and discuss major authors and works of one period of English or American literary history, including key themes and stylistic features. (I)"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each author's name and the title of a work connected to that author. Circle words or phrases that describe a theme or a stylistic feature, so you can compare how writers shaped the Harlem Renaissance.

A Renaissance in Harlem

1. The Harlem Renaissance was a flowering of African American art and writing centered in Harlem, New York, during the 1920s and early 1930s. The Great Migration brought many Black families from the South to northern cities, creating new communities, audiences, and publishing opportunities. Writers, musicians, and visual artists explored what it meant to claim Black identity in a nation shaped by racism. Their work did not follow one single style. Some artists celebrated city life and modern culture, while others drew on Southern speech, folklore, and memories. Together, they challenged readers who expected narrow or stereotyped portraits of Black Americans.

2. Poet Langston Hughes listened to jazz and blues in Harlem clubs and brought their rhythms into poems. In "The Weary Blues," a speaker hears a pianist play and sing late at night. Repeated sounds, musical phrasing, and spoken language make the poem feel close to a performance. Hughes wrote about ordinary people, work, dreams, and racial injustice. His poems often honor Black life without pretending that life is free from pain. By placing blues music on the printed page, he showed that a form created in Black communities belonged in American literature.

3. Zora Neale Hurston used her training in anthropology to record stories, songs, and speech from Black communities. Her novel Their Eyes Were Watching God follows Janie Crawford as she seeks love, independence, and a voice of her own. Hurston combines standard narration with dialogue shaped by Southern dialect, allowing characters' voices to carry the story. Claude McKay, a Jamaican-born writer, used a different approach. In his sonnet "If We Must Die," tightly patterned rhyme and a forceful, formal voice turn resistance to racist violence into a call for courage. Hurston and McKay show that Harlem Renaissance writers could use very different forms while examining identity, power, and self-definition.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Name two Harlem Renaissance authors from the passage and give one work connected to each author.

2. How does Hughes make "The Weary Blues" feel like a musical performance? Name one theme or concern in his writing.

3. Compare Hurston's style with McKay's style. Give one stylistic feature for each writer.

4. What shared ideas do Hurston and McKay examine, even though they use different forms?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose one author and work named in the passage. Write a four-sentence museum label that identifies the author and work, explains one theme, names one stylistic feature, and explains how that feature helps express the theme.

Voices of Harlem

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each author's name and the title of a work connected to that author. Circle words or phrases that describe a theme or a stylistic feature, so you can compare how writers shaped the Harlem Renaissance. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Name two Harlem Renaissance authors from the passage and give one work connected to each author.	**Answers may include Langston Hughes, "The Weary Blues"; Zora Neale Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God; or Claude McKay, "If We Must Die."**
2	How does Hughes make "The Weary Blues" feel like a musical performance? Name one theme or concern in his writing.	**He uses repeated sounds, musical phrasing, and spoken language. His concerns include ordinary people, work, dreams, racial injustice, Black life, and pain.**
3	Compare Hurston's style with McKay's style. Give one stylistic feature for each writer.	**Hurston combines standard narration with dialogue shaped by Southern dialect. McKay uses tightly patterned rhyme and a forceful, formal voice in a sonnet.**
4	What shared ideas do Hurston and McKay examine, even though they use different forms?	**They examine identity, power, and self-definition.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Zora Neale Hurston's novel Their Eyes Were Watching God follows Janie Crawford as she searches for love, independence, and her own voice. A central theme is self-definition. Hurston uses dialogue shaped by Southern dialect alongside standard narration. This contrast lets characters' own speech show their lives and supports Janie's effort to claim a voice.

Accept equivalent author-work pairings, themes, and stylistic descriptions that are supported by the passage. For the museum label, check for exactly four sentences that include all required parts and an accurate explanation of the connection between style and theme.