

Lesson Plan: The Harlem Renaissance

Grade Level: High School (Grades 9-12)

Subject: U.S. History

Duration: 1 class period (60 minutes)

Lesson Objectives: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Define the Harlem Renaissance and explain its historical context.
 2. Identify key figures and their contributions to art, literature, and music.
 3. Analyze the social, cultural, and political impact of the Harlem Renaissance on American society.
 4. Connect the Harlem Renaissance to broader themes in U.S. history, such as civil rights and cultural identity.
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Standards:

- Analyze the cultural, political, and economic developments of the 20th century (Common Core State Standards for History/Social Studies).
 - Assess the role of significant individuals and movements in shaping the nation's cultural landscape.
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Materials Needed:

- Projector or smartboard
 - Handouts with excerpts of poetry, art, and music
 - Access to video/audio clips (e.g., jazz performances, spoken word poetry)
 - Whiteboard and markers
 - Student notebooks
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Lesson Outline:

1. Introduction (10 minutes)

- **Warm-Up Activity:** Ask students to think about and discuss in pairs: "What does art say about a society?" After a brief discussion, introduce the Harlem Renaissance as a cultural movement that transformed American society in the 1920s and 1930s.
- **Mini-Lecture:** Provide background on the Great Migration and how it led to the flourishing of African American culture in Harlem. Emphasize the historical context of systemic racism and segregation.

2. Main Activity (30 minutes)

Part A: Key Figures and Contributions (15 minutes)

- Divide students into small groups and assign each group a key figure from the Harlem Renaissance (e.g., Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Duke Ellington, Bessie Smith, Jacob Lawrence, Alain Locke).
- Provide handouts or digital resources for each figure.
- Groups will research their figure and create a quick presentation (3 minutes) on their contributions to the Harlem Renaissance and U.S. culture.

Part B: Exploring Art and Music (15 minutes)

- Play a short jazz clip (e.g., Duke Ellington's "Take the A Train") and show artwork by Jacob Lawrence.
- Read aloud Langston Hughes's poem "The Negro Speaks of Rivers."
- Facilitate a discussion on how these works reflect the experiences and aspirations of African Americans during the Harlem Renaissance.

3. Closing Activity (15 minutes)

- **Class Discussion:** Pose the question, "How did the Harlem Renaissance challenge stereotypes and contribute to the fight for civil rights?" Encourage students to connect the movement to later developments in the Civil Rights Movement.
- **Exit Ticket:** Have students write a brief response to: "Which aspect of the Harlem Renaissance (art, literature, or music) do you think had the most lasting impact on American culture and why?"

Assessment:

- Participation in group research and presentations.
- Contributions to class discussions.
- Quality of exit ticket responses.

Homework (Optional): Assign students to write a short essay analyzing a specific work from the Harlem Renaissance (e.g., a poem, painting, or song) and its historical significance.

Extension Activity: Encourage students to create their own artistic piece (poem, short story, song, or visual art) inspired by themes from the Harlem Renaissance, and share with the class in a future lesson.