

# Module 10: Conflicting Ideologies

## Topic 2 Content: The Harlem Renaissance


### Introduction

#### The Harlem Renaissance

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The Harlem Renaissance was named after the Harlem district of New York City and began in 1921 with the publication of Countee Cullen's first poems. The release of poems from Langston Hughes followed six months later. Claude McKay added to the growing list of published Harlem poets shortly afterwards. This movement continued through the 1930s.

Use the ***NEXT*** button or the numbered tabs at the bottom to explore this celebrated artistic movement.



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## Topic 2 Content: The Harlem Renaissance

### What was the Harlem Renaissance?

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So, what was the Harlem Renaissance? It was a burst of creativity led by African-American writers who were mostly from the south but who had settled in Harlem and fed off of each other's ideas. Just as the Transcendentalist writers had shared ideas and grown a unique brand of creativity in New England more than a century before, like-minded artists gathered in Harlem to exchange ideas and create their own brand of literature. These writers sought to open the door for African-American writers, vividly portraying and popularizing their unique perspectives.



*Image Caption: The Harlem neighborhood to the left of the Harlem River*

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## Topic 2 Content: The Harlem Renaissance

### Theme

#### The Harlem Renaissance

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The artists of the Harlem Renaissance did not share a style, but they shared a theme: the documentation of their people and culture. The Harlem Renaissance was one of the most remarkable literary movements in the world. African-Americans had finally built a stage upon which they could honor their heritage and be taken seriously by the world. Rather than trying to copy Caucasian writers in America and Europe, they celebrated their differences and their racial identity by building a body of unique and moving music, art, and literature.



*Image Caption: Musicians during the Harlem Renaissance made great contributions to blues and jazz music.*

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### Literary Contributions

#### The Harlem Renaissance

##### Literary Contributions

Aside from an explosion of music and art, the writers of the Harlem Renaissance published more than fifty volumes of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction within a fifteen-year period. Harlem newspapers, journals, and magazines published new and accomplished African-American writers and sponsored literary contests to promote, support, and inspire creative writing among the gifted young writers. Their work addressed a variety of topics like race, class, religion, gender, and relationships from a variety of settings including Harlem, the South, the Caribbean, Europe, and Asia.



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### Topic 2 Content: The Harlem Renaissance

#### Legacy

##### The Harlem Renaissance

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These creative writers and progressive thinkers paved the way for thousands of other African-American writers, painters, composers, singers, performers, and artists. Unfortunately, the Great Depression took a toll on the Harlem Renaissance cultural movement as well as the rest of the country. The funds that had been so plentiful and had provided financial support for institutions, organizations, and publications of African-American artists eventually dried up. Although the entire country plunged into the depths of an economic depression, the influence of the Harlem Renaissance would have a lasting impact on American culture.



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