

Special points of interest:

- The *Harlem Renaissance* was also known as the *New Negro Movement*.
- This captivating period of African American history began after WWI and lasted until about 1935, in the middle of the *Great Depression*.
- This great outflux of creativity, artistic expression, and intellectualism represented a marked concentration of protest, ideological advancement, and the furthering of *civil rights* for African Americans.
- The goal of the movement was to create a disconnect between peoples' perception of African Americans and those perpetuated by mainstream American culture and its institutions.



Zora Neale Hurston was among the most well-known Harlem Renaissance authors. Hurston had an influence on many future authors, including Ralph Ellison, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Gayle Jones, and Toni Cade Bambara.

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Harlem Renaissance

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Harlem Renaissance

Do you have a special project for **Black History Month** involving **The Harlem Renaissance**? Perhaps you are working on a college paper and are currently studying this very interesting and creative period of American arts and letters. If you are starting a book club at home, and would like to begin it investing some time in this period of African American writing, **The Plainfield Public Library** can help you find the materials you need to form an outline for a discussion group. Or perhaps you saw a film or documentary on a title or author in this time period, and you would like to simply find the printed version for your reading enjoyment.



Romare Bearden doubled throughout his life as a social worker by day and a visual artist by night and weekends. The prolific artist was a part of the **Harlem Artists Guild** after studying art in **NYC** and the **Sorbonne** in Paris. Two years after his death in 1988, a non-profit arts foundation was established by his estate. See the web site at: www.beardenfoundation.org/index2.shtml.

The **Reference Department** staff can help you find printed and electronic resources/items to enlighten you about this time in American history, and the personalities and talents that contributed to the flowering of African American arts and literature in the 1920s and 1930s. Discover the works of Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston, Marcus Garvey, W.E.B. Du Bois, the creativity of Paul Robeson, Arna Bontemps, Countee Cullen, Romare Bearden, Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, Thelonius Monk, and many others.

The Many Faces of the Harlem Renaissance

This unique movement in American history had many forms of expression. The following pages will highlight some of the major personalities in this cultural and political movement, otherwise known as the **New Negro Movement**.

Artists and intellectuals from several spheres came together from visual, musical, journalistic, writing, dancing, and other fields to contribute their input. Perhaps you are familiar with some of the people associated with the movement such as Zora Neale Hurston or Langston Hughes. You will find a wealth of information in the Library on both familiar personalities in this movement and those you may never have heard of before. Enjoy learning more!



Alain Locke was an editor and educator educated at both Harvard University and Oxford University. He was a Rhodes scholar at Oxford. He also completed graduate work at the University of Berlin. Locke put forth the idea of cultural pluralism expressed in democratic societies. Related to this idea is the appreciation of different styles and values of thought and expression

“I swear to the Lord, I still can't see, why Democracy means, everybody but me.”



Langston Hughes



Writers, Editors, Journalists, and Essayists

Some of the editors, writers, journalists and essayists of the movement who you may wish to research further include: Alain Locke, Charles Spurgeon Johnson, Marcus Garvey, W.E.B. Du Bois, Jessie Redmon Fauset, Zora Neale Hurston, and Claude McKay. Some titles that you may want to read from this group of contributors are:

- ***Their Eyes Were Watching God, Jonah's Gourd Vine, and Moses, Man of the Mountain*** all by Zora Neale Hurston
- ***Cane*** by Jean Toomer
- ***Not Without Laughter*** by Langston Hughes
- ***The Chinaberry Tree*** by Jesse Redmon Fauset
- ***The Walls of Jericho*** by Rudolph Fisher
- ***The Blacker the Berry*** by Wallace Thurman
- ***Quicksand*** and ***Passing*** both by Nella Larsen

Musicians

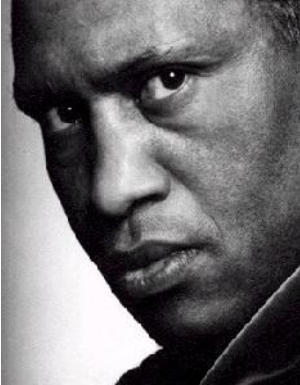
There are many Harlem Renaissance musicians whose names are mainstays in American music, particularly jazz. Other performers specialized in blues, vaudeville, or ragtime. There are several songwriters, composers, and lyrics of note as well. Some musically inclined Harlem Renaissance participants specialized in one area, while others multitasked. Some examples of these individuals and their works are:

- Fletcher Henderson wrote ***Gin House Blues*** and ***Soft Winds***
- Bessie Smith sang ***Gulf Coast Blues*** and ***Down Hearted Blues***
- Duke Ellington was a composer, pianist, and bandleader and some examples of his work include ***Mood Indigo, Satin Doll, Sophisticated Lady, Caravan, Take the A Train, Prelude to a Kiss***, among many others

Visual Artists

You may have heard of Romare Bearden, a visual artist of the Harlem Renaissance. After his death in 1988, a non-profit arts foundation was established by his estate. Bearden had many other contemporaries within the movement. The following co-participants in the visual arts are examples of some of these contemporaries:

- Augusta Savage sculpted ***Gamin, La Citadelle Freedom, and The Harp***
- Prentiss Taylor printed ***Louisburg Square*** and ***Assembly Church***
- Palmer Hayden painted ***The Janitor Who Paints***
- Aaron Douglas painted ***The Prodigal Son*** and ***The Creation***
- Sargent Claude Johnson sculpted ***Forever Free*** and ***Chester***
- Archibald J. Motley, Jr. painted ***Blues, Brown Girl, Cocktails, Mending Socks, Old Snuff Dipper, The Picnic, and Jockey Club***



Paul Robeson a multitalented, magnetic artist, athlete, and political activist was born in Princeton, New Jersey and graduated from Rutgers University in 1919. This dynamic man accomplished an astounding array of accolades during his busy lifetime. He was accomplished in sports, acting, law, writing, and singing.

“It was a weak spot in any nation to have a large body of disaffected people within its confusion.”



Zora Neale Hurston



Duke Ellington

Playwrights & Actors

No discussion of famous New Jerseyans should leave out Paul Robeson. Born in Princeton, New Jersey, he graduated from Rutgers University in 1919. However, he had many other talented contemporaries during the Harlem Renaissance.

- Paul Robeson, a multi-talented New Jerseyan, acted in *The Emperor Jones* and *Show Boat*, wrote *Here I Stand*, performed *Ballad for Americans*, and sang *We Are Climbing Jacob's Ladder*
- Angelina Weld Grimké wrote the play *Rachel*
- Zora Neale Hurston wrote the play *Color Struck*
- Charles Sidney Gilpin acted in *Abraham Lincoln* (on Broadway) and another version of *The Emperor Jones*
- Georgia Douglas Johnson wrote the plays *Blue Blood* and *Plumes*
- Eulalie Spence wrote the play *Fool's Errand*

Poets

The list of African-American poets in the movement is quite long. Some of the more widely known poets of the era include Arna Bontemps, Countee Cullen, and Langston Hughes. Others include:

- Gwendolyn B. Bennett wrote *Nocturne*, *On a Birthday*, *Street Lamps in Early Spring*, and *Epitaph*, among others
- James Weldon Johnson wrote *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse*
- Anne Spencer wrote *At the Carnival*, *Lines to a Nasturtium*, *Substitution*, and *Requiem*
- Claude McKay wrote the poetry collections *Harlem Shadows* and *Selected Poems*

Dancers

The dancers of the Harlem Renaissance performed in the tap, swing, jitterbug, lindy-hop, and boogie-woogie styles. Perhaps the best-known dancer was Josephine Baker, an early Broadway star, who subsequently emigrated to and became naturalized in France. She later was awarded the Legion of Honor for her participation in the French Resistance. Her Harlem Renaissance contemporaries were:

- Cab Calloway's skills as a dancing, scatting, and vaudevillian performer, expressed with verve and humor led to such hits as *Minnie the Moocher* and roles such as "Sportin' Life" in the Broadway production of *Porgy and Bess*
- Ma Rainey began at the early age of fourteen in *minstrel and vaudeville shows* in which she danced and sang



Rudolph Fisher, in addition to being an accomplished novelist and short story writer, was also a roentgenologist, a doctor specializing in the application of radiant energy (such as x-rays) for therapeutic and diagnostic purposes.

“There is in this world no such force as the force of a person determined to rise. The human soul cannot be permanently chained.”



W.E.B. Du Bois



The Apollo Theater in Harlem, NY

Books

- ***On the Shoulders of Giants: My Journey Through the Harlem Renaissance***, by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, call # 796.323 ABD
- ***Beloved Harlem: A Literary Tribute to Black America's Most Famous Neighborhood: From the Classics to Contemporary***, by William Banks, call # 810.809 BEL
- ***African-American Concert Dance: The Harlem Renaissance and Beyond***, by John O. Perpener, call # 792.808 PER
- ***The Messenger Reader: Stories, Poetry, and Essays From The Messenger Magazine***, by Sondra K. Wilson, call # 810.808 MES

Articles

- ***Rhapsody in Black***. Advocate; Mar2010, Issue 1036, p14-14, 1p.
- ***Writer Finds Zora Neale Hurston's Florida***. Martin, Michael. Tell Me More (NPR); 04/19/2010.
- ***The Harlem of Inspired Hearts and Minds***. Kourlas, Gia. New York Times; 12/11/2009, Section C, page 26.
- ***The Harlem Renaissance***. Stevenson, Keira. Harlem Renaissance, 2009, p1-2, 2p.

Online Resources

There are countless resources on the World Wide Web/Internet to inform you about the Harlem Renaissance. Here are a few examples to begin with:

- ***Paul Robeson*** (www2.scc.rutgers.edu/njh/PaulRobeson)
- ***Romare Bearden Foundation*** (www.beardenfoundation.org/index2.shtml)
- ***Harlem Renaissance Multimedia Resource*** (www.jcu.edu/harlem/index.htm)
- ***Harlem Renaissance*** (www.pbs.org/newshour/forum/february98/harlem2.html)