

M

art, Theater, and Beyond

STUDENT HANDOUT

YELLOW LEVEL
GRADE LEVEL

Seeing in Silhouette

Grades 5–8 • Art



ADMIT ONE

NAME	DATE	CLASS

Context: Aaron Douglas trained in European art traditions but deliberately created a new visual language rooted in African design, Black experience, and the energy of Harlem. Every formal choice — silhouette, color, circle, geometry — carries meaning and argument.

ACTIVITY 1 • COMPARE TWO WORKS

Same Artist, Different Story



ON THE SCREEN

Song of the Towers

Aaron Douglas, 1934



ON THE SCREEN

Aspects of Negro Life: From Slavery Through Reconstruction

Aaron Douglas, 1934

TECHNIQUE	SONG OF THE TOWERS	SLAVERY THROUGH RECONSTRUCTION
Mood / emotion		
Use of color		
Role of figures		
What the circles suggest		
The narrative / story told		
What do both paintings share, despite their different subjects?		

Douglas removed facial features from all his figures. What argument does this make about Black identity?

ACTIVITY 2 · STUDIO — SILHOUETTE COMPOSITION

Create Your Own in Douglas's Style

Create a silhouette composition with at least three figures. Include: a radiating circle or light source, a symbolic background element, and a deliberately chosen color palette (3–4 colors maximum). Use the box below to sketch your composition first.

SKETCH YOUR COMPOSITION HERE — PLAN FIGURE PLACEMENT, LIGHT SOURCE, AND COLOR

ARTIST STATEMENT

Write 3 sentences: what story are you telling, what techniques did you use, and what does the viewer need to understand about your choices?

MINI MUSEUM CONNECTION

In the exhibition, the Aaron Douglas prints show his full visual range — from spiritual to political to celebratory. Look at how the color palette shifts between works. What does each palette tell you about the mood before you read any label?

minimuseumproject.org/exhibitions/harlem-renaissance