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STUDENT HANDOUT

YELLOW LEVEL
GRADE LEVEL

Reading the Renaissance

Grades 5–8 · ELA

ADMIT ONE

NAME

DATE

CLASS

The Harlem Renaissance (c. 1920–1935) produced extraordinary work in music, literature, and visual art. It grew from the Great Migration, when over one million Black Americans moved north, concentrating artistic talent in Harlem in a way that had never existed before — and creating the conditions for a cultural explosion that permanently changed American identity.

ACTIVITY 1 · LITERARY ANALYSIS

OI

How Writers Build Meaning

Harlem Renaissance writers used specific techniques to make their work both beautiful and politically powerful. Analyze each technique:

TECHNIQUE	HOW IT CREATES MEANING OR EFFECT	WHY IT WAS IMPORTANT IN THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE CONTEXT
Vernacular dialect (writing in everyday speech patterns)		
Jazz/blues rhythms in poetry (irregular meter, repetition)		
Specific place names (125th Street, the Savoy)		

02

ACTIVITY 2 · YOUR OWN VOICE

Write in YOUR Vernacular

The Harlem Renaissance writers made a radical choice: they wrote in their own voices, not the “correct” formal English they were taught. Write a short paragraph (4–6 sentences) about something that matters to you, deliberately written in your own natural voice — the way you actually think and speak:

03

ACTIVITY 3 · THE HARLEM IN WORDS WORKSHOP

Craft a Renaissance Poem

Using the exhibition’s word bank, write a poem of at least 8 lines that uses: at least one metaphor, at least one image appealing to a sense other than sight, and deliberate line breaks to create rhythm or emphasis.

Write your poem here

Brief artist statement (2–3 sentences): What is your poem about, and what technique choices did you make?

MINI MUSEUM CONNECTION

Option 1 — Visit the exhibition: If the Harlem Renaissance exhibition is available at your school, visit the Mini Museum to experience the phonograph, Jazz Lab, Great Migration Map, and more. Ask your librarian to arrange a class visit.

Option 2 — Virtual visit: Explore the full exhibition at minimuseumproject.org/exhibitions/harlem-renaissance

SHARE WITH YOUR FAMILY

Share your poem and your artist statement. Ask: *“Can you tell what choices I made and why? Does the poem sound like me?”*