

ACTIVITY 2 · WHAT DID “SUCCESS” LOOK LIKE?

02

Evaluating the Movement

The Great Migration is sometimes described as a success — migrants found better wages, more freedom, and the opportunity for cultural flourishing. It is also described as a partial failure — Northern racism persisted, housing discrimination was widespread, and many migrants found themselves trapped in poor urban neighborhoods.

Write a structured argument: on balance, was the Great Migration successful for the people who made it?

ACTIVITY 3 · THE GEOGRAPHY OF POWER

03

Why Did the Renaissance Happen in Harlem Specifically?

By 1930, Harlem had become the largest Black urban community in America — 175,000 people in a few square miles. Analyze the geographic, economic, and social factors that made Harlem — rather than Chicago’s South Side, or Detroit’s Paradise Valley — the epicenter of the Renaissance:

Critical question: Jacob Lawrence’s *Migration Series* (1941) depicted the Great Migration in 60 paintings. In 1942 the Museum of Modern Art and the Phillips Collection each acquired half of the series — splitting a single work between two institutions. What does it mean that a work about the Black experience entered two of America’s leading museums so early in Lawrence’s career?

Research extension: The Reverse Migration began in the 1970s and continues today — Black Americans moving back to the South. Research this movement. What does it tell us about how the push/pull dynamics of the original Great Migration have changed? What does it mean for cities like Atlanta, Charlotte, and Houston?

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:
minimuseumproject.org/exhibitions/harlem-renaissance