



project.org

STUDENT HANDOUT

YELLOW LEVEL
GRADE LEVEL

Voice, Body, Story

Grades 5–8 · Theater

ADMIT ONE

NAME

DATE

CLASS

Context: The Harlem Renaissance had a rich oral performance tradition. Zora Neale Hurston spent years collecting its folktales, sermons and songs. Blues singers, preachers, poets, and storytellers all used voice and body to claim space, express truth, and build community. Today you will step into that tradition.

STEP 1

Choose your character: who are you?

Choose one character from the list or create your own within the historical context (1910–1935, Harlem or the journey north):

Langston Hughes, poet

Bessie Smith, blues singer

Aaron Douglas, painter

Zora Neale Hurston, writer

A teenager arriving from Georgia

A letter-writer in Harlem

A teacher on the first day of term

My own character

My character:

Year:

What does my character want in this moment?

What is my character afraid of?

STEP 2

Write your monologue (60–90 seconds)

Write your monologue below. Plan for one **held pause** (mark it *PAUSE*) and one moment of **vocal variety** — louder, quieter, faster, or slower (mark it *SLOW* or *LOUD* etc.).

STEP 3

Performance reflection

1. Where did you place your pause — and why? What does the silence do at that moment?

2. When you performed, what did your body do that surprised you?

3. Zora Neale Hurston spent years collecting Black folk stories so they would not be lost. What does your monologue add to the historical record that a textbook could not?

MINI MUSEUM CONNECTION

The **Harlem in Words** section of the exhibition uses vocabulary from real Harlem Renaissance writing. Choose 3 words from the exhibit and work them into a revised version of your monologue. Does adding authentic language from the period change how it feels to perform?

minimuseumproject.org/exhibitions/harlem-renaissance

EXTENSION

Find a recording of Langston Hughes reading “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” aloud. Listen for his pace, his pauses, his emphasis. What can you learn from how he performs his own poem?