

CHAPTER
13

GUIDED READING *The Harlem Renaissance*

Section 4

A. Name the organization with which each leader was associated. Then note their beliefs and goals as well as the tactics they believed necessary to achieve them.

<p>1. W. E. B. Du Bois and James Weldon Johnson</p> <p>Organization: _____</p> <p>Beliefs, goals, and tactics: _____</p>	<p>2. Marcus Garvey</p> <p>Organization: _____</p> <p>Beliefs, goals, and tactics: _____</p>
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

B. Describe briefly what each of the following artists was known for.

African-American Writers
1. Claude McKay
2. Langston Hughes
3. Zora Neale Hurston

African-American Performers
4. Paul Robeson
5. Louis Armstrong
6. Duke Ellington
7. Bessie Smith

CHAPTER
13

RETEACHING ACTIVITY *The Harlem Renaissance*

Section 4

Matching

A. Complete each sentence with the appropriate term or name.

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------|
| Great Migration | Marcus Garvey |
| James Weldon Johnson | anti-lynching |

- Between 1910 and 1920, million of blacks moved from the South to the North in search of jobs in what became known as the _____.
- In 1914 _____ founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association, whose goal was to help blacks advance economically and socially.
- During the early 1900s, the NAACP made _____ laws one of its main priorities.

Summarizing

B. Complete the chart below by listing various artists and their contributions regarding each aspect of the Harlem Renaissance.

Literature	Performance	Music

CHAPTER
13

Section 4

PRIMARY SOURCE *from* “When the Negro Was in Vogue”
by Langston Hughes

Poet Langston Hughes was one of the leading voices of the Harlem Renaissance. What different aspects of life in Harlem does Hughes capture in this excerpt from his autobiography?

The 1920s were the years of Manhattan’s black Renaissance. . . .

White people began to come to Harlem in droves. For several years they packed the expensive Cotton Club on Lenox Avenue. But I was never there, because the Cotton Club was a Jim Crow club for gangsters and monied whites. They were not cordial to Negro patronage, unless you were a celebrity like Bojangles. So Harlem Negroes did not like the Cotton Club and never appreciated its Jim Crow policy in the very heart of their dark community. Nor did ordinary Negroes like the growing influx of whites toward Harlem after sundown, flooding the little cabarets and bars where formerly only colored people laughed and sang, and where now the strangers were given the best ringside tables to sit and stare at the Negro customers—like amusing animals in a zoo.

The Negroes said: “We can’t go downtown and sit and stare at you in your clubs. You won’t even let us in your clubs.” But they didn’t say it out loud—for Negroes are practically never rude to white people. So thousands of whites came to Harlem night after night, thinking the Negroes loved to have them there, and firmly believing that all Harlemites left their houses at sundown to sing and dance in cabarets, because most of the whites saw nothing but the cabarets, not the houses. . . .

It was a period when, at almost every Harlem upper-crust dance or party, one would be introduced to various distinguished white celebrities there as guests. It was a period when almost any Harlem Negro of any social importance at all would be likely to say casually: “As I was remarking the other day to Heywood—,” meaning Heywood Brown. Or: “As I said to George—,” referring to George Gershwin. It was a period when local and visiting royalty were not at all uncommon in

Harlem. And when the parties of A’Lelia Walker, the Negro heiress, were filled with guests whose names would turn any Nordic social climber green with envy. It was a period when Harold Jackman, a handsome young Harlem schoolteacher of modest means, calmly announced one day that he was sailing for the Riviera for a fortnight, to attend Princess Murat’s yachting party. It was a period when Charleston preachers opened up shouting churches as sideshows for white tourists. It was a period when at least one charming colored chorus girl, amber enough to pass for a Latin American, was living in a penthouse, with all her bills paid by a gentleman whose name was banker’s magic on Wall Street. It was a period when every season there was at least one hit play on Broadway acted by a Negro cast. And when books by Negro authors were being published with much greater frequency and much more publicity than ever before or since in history. It was a period when white writers wrote about Negroes more successfully (commercially speaking) than Negroes did about themselves. It was the period (God help us!) when Ethel Barrymore appeared in blackface in *Scarlet Sister Mary!* It was the period when the Negro was in vogue.

from Langston Hughes, *The Big Sea: An Autobiography* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1940).

Discussion Questions

1. How would you describe Harlem of the 1920s based on your reading of this excerpt?
2. Why do you think white America suddenly became fascinated by Harlem?
3. What is ironic about the situations described in this excerpt?

CHAPTER
13

AMERICAN LIVES **Louis Armstrong**
Jazz Master, Entertainment Superstar

Section 4

"[Louis] Armstrong's story on records between 1923 and 1932 is one of almost continuous seeping growth—and after that is frequently one of entrenched excellence."—Martin Williams, The Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz (1973)

Louis Armstrong—known everywhere as Satchmo—was born in the poorest section of New Orleans and had a difficult early life. When he died, he was loved by millions as a popular entertainer. In between, he revolutionized jazz.

Armstrong (c. 1900–1971) grew up in Storyville, a part of New Orleans set aside for dance halls and other entertainment. In his early teens, he ran afoul of the law and was placed in a home for juveniles. The experience changed his life. There he began to learn to play the cornet and decided to become a musician. After leaving the home, he played in countless local bands. Soon his talent was noticed, and in his late teens he played with Joe “King” Oliver, the most admired cornet player in the city.

Oliver left for Chicago—recommending Armstrong to replace him in the band he left. A few years later, he invited Armstrong to join his Creole Jazz Band in the north. The band was famous in the world of jazz, and musicians flocked to hear Oliver’s and Armstrong’s duets on the cornet. Armstrong became known for the imagination and technical skill of his solo playing.

Armstrong traveled to New York to join the famous dance band of Fletcher Henderson. He perfected his ability to sight-read music and learned to appreciate ensemble playing. At the same time, he took the town by storm with dazzling solos. He returned to Chicago in 1925, switched to trumpet, and made jazz history.

Over the next few years, Armstrong made a series of records with a group of musicians called the “Hot Five” and the “Hot Seven.” One music historian says that the cuts “transformed jazz,” adding that “few performers [who came later]. . . escaped their influence.” Jazz trumpeter Miles Davis put it differently: “You can’t play a note on the horn that Louis hasn’t already played.” In these recordings, Armstrong manipulated complex rhythms. He showed range of feeling in his music, bringing greater emotion to jazz than had previous-

ly been the case. He also added his distinctive singing style to the group’s work. He started scat singing—using the voice as an instrument by singing nonsense syllables. Most of all, he combined tight combo playing with spectacular solos. Through him, jazz became dominated by adventurous, masterful soloists.

In the early 1930s, he acquired his famous nickname “Satchmo.” His importance as a jazz innovator peaked around 1937, and thereafter he became known more as an entertainer. He began to play more commercial music, and he did it with a winning style. His band became one of the popular big bands of the swing era. He became the first African American to appear regularly in movies and to have his own radio show. He toured the country—and the world—constantly. After World War II, the big-band sound lost popularity. So Armstrong formed a small jazz combo called “Louis Armstrong and His All Stars.” He continued to delight audiences with his warm, joyful sound. As time passed, his lips became injured, so he played trumpet less and sang more. Even then, he could still thrill an audience with his playing. As one critic said, he “frequently created more pure jazz from straightforward statements of mediocre tunes than lesser players could produce from much better material.”

Armstrong continued to be an entertainer through his sixties. In 1964, his version of “Hello, Dolly” even knocked the Beatles off the top of the pop-music charts for a while. While he closed his career as a popular musician, Satchmo’s lasting achievement was the impact he had on jazz.

Questions

1. How did his experience with the Fletcher Henderson band help Armstrong musically?
2. What made Armstrong’s jazz style special and influential?
3. Why was Armstrong’s wide popularity unusual?