

# Harlem Renaissance Lesson Plan

Pamela Carter | High School Teacher, Social Studies | Windham High School | Windham, Maine

<b>Subject:</b> U.S. History	<b>Time:</b> 1-2 class periods	<b>Grade:</b> High School Level
<b>Objective:</b> Students will read and analyze poetry from the Harlem Renaissance and reflect on issues related to race in today's society.		<b>Materials Needed:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A selection of Harlem Renaissance poetry</li><li>• Analysis Worksheet (page 3)</li><li>• Assessment: Reflection Worksheet (page 4)</li><li>• 1920s music (optional - I like to have it playing in the background while students work independently)</li></ul>
<b>Standards:</b> <b>Maine Learning Results</b> <b>Civics and Government</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students draw on concepts from civics and government to understand political systems, power, authority, governance, civic ideals and practices, and the role of citizens in the community, Maine, the United States, and the world.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• (F1) Explaining basic civic aspects of historical and/or current issues that involve unity and diversity in Maine, the United States, and other nations.</li></ul></li></ul> <b>History</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students draw on concepts and processes using primary and secondary sources from history to develop historical perspective and understand issues of continuity and change in the community, Maine, the United States, and world.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• (D1) Identifying and critiquing issues characterized by unity and diversity in the history of other nations, and describing their effects, using primary and secondary sources.</li></ul></li></ul>		

### Procedure:

1. Background information: Students will have an understanding of the racial tensions created by the migration of African Americans to work in northern cities during and after the First World War. Students will have studied the second rise of the Ku Klux Klan in the period just prior to and during the early 1920s.
2. Optional prior homework assignment: Have students bring in the lyrics to their favorite (clean version) song.
  - Spend a few minutes having the students pick out words that resonate with their views and experiences. Discuss how songs and poetry reflect the time in which they were written.
3. Distribute the poetry in hard copy or use links to online versions of the poems in Google Classroom or similar LMS. Teachers can decide how many poems to use or whether to give students a choice of poems.
4. Students should read the poems and note powerful vocabulary and phrases that reflect the tensions related to the Great Migration and KKK activity in the time. (This can be done individually or pairs or small groups)
5. Distribute the Analysis worksheet and ask students to complete it.
6. Regroup and have a class discussion with students to share some of their findings.
7. Distribute and have students complete the Reflection Worksheet in class or as homework.

### Possible poets and poems:

Langston Hughes: *Dream Deferred*, *Cross*

Countee Cullen: *Incident*, *Yet Do I Marvel*

Claude McKay: *If We Must Die*, *White Houses*

Jean Toomer: *Reapers*, *Storm Ending*

## **Analysis of Harlem Renaissance Poetry:**

**Poem Title:**

**Author:**

**Powerful words & phrases:**

**Connection with history of the 1920s:**

**Poem Title:**

**Author:**

**Powerful words & phrases:**

**Connection with history of the 1920s:**

**Poem Title:**

**Author:**

**Powerful words & phrases:**

**Connection with history of the 1920s:**

### Reflection on Harlem Renaissance Poetry:

Consider the poems you examined and their historical context. Using evidence from the poems, discuss how the poems reflect the issues facing African Americans in the 1920s and 1930s. Think about the racial issues facing the United States today. Write a paragraph or two comparing and contrasting the issues today with the Harlem Renaissance era.