

Name _____

Date _____



Harlem Renaissance

“We Born Again”

The rebirth, yeah, we born again,
That’s what the Harlem Renaissance is.
African Americans found a spotlight,
And we used it to highlight
Culture, art, joy, pain,
Music, dance, everything.
Harlem was the place—go New York!
That it started taking shape—renaissance!

When slavery ended, blacks in the south
Started heading north, like peace, we out!
This is what you call the Great Migration,
From fields to big cities in hopes of escaping
Racial terrorism and seeking opportunities.
Harlem, New York was a welcoming community,
Full of free thinkers and liberal minds,
They spent money on art and had a good time.
From this, new ideas began to arise
About blackness in America, with thinkers like
W.E.B. Du Bois and his
Theory of double consciousness,
Which said black people feel that their identity splits
Between being African and being American.
And Marcus Garvey encouraged pride
In that African heritage and tried to unite
Black Americans with the idea of going

Back to Africa, AKA the homeland.

These movements were at the start

Of what we call the Harlem Renaissance.

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That it started taking shape.

A renaissance is a rebirth of sorts,

And blacks redefined their worth through art.

A musical named Shuffle Along, in fact,

Was written, produced and performed by blacks.

The first of its kind, a blockbuster

That white and black showgoers went nuts over.

Jazz and the blues made their way to Harlem, too,

And people were amazed at the crowds they drew.

Musicians like Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong

Packed out the house every night they performed songs.

Singers like Bessie Smith and Billie Holiday

Sang so beautifully, it blew the crowd away.

It was also time to shine for writers and poets,

Black authors really saw their work flourish.

Like Zora Neale Hurston and Claude McKay used

Their mighty pens to express their views,

And explored themes like race and racism.

The work proved timeless, it's full of wisdom.

Some even sound great over rap beats, too,

For instance, “Dreams” by Langston Hughes:

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.

Harlem is the spot we locked.
We made a renaissance:
Our response.
Discrimination got my people low,
But we used brilliance to show you our souls.
Music, art, poetry, intellectuals:
Harlem Renaissance is our response,
Harlem Renaissance is our response.