

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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# The Harlem Renaissance - Answer Key

Use the text to answer each question below.

1. W.E.B. Du Bois was born in 1868 in western Massachusetts. His father, born in Haiti, was a descendant of enslaved Bahamians; his mother was one of a small number of free Black people whose family had long owned land in the state. From an early age, Du Bois excelled academically. He was the first person in his extended family to graduate from high school, which was racially integrated in his hometown, and contributed articles to regional newspapers in his spare time. He continued his education at Harvard, where he wrote a groundbreaking dissertation on the history of the slave trade. He would go on to become the first Black student to earn a PhD from the university. An early American sociologist, Du Bois pioneered theories, research methods, and data visualization techniques that would become the standard in the field. Across his seven-decade career, he produced influential scholarship on Black history, urban communities, and social attitudes toward race. Du Bois was also a prominent activist who believed in full civil rights and political representation for Black Americans—a controversial position at the time, even among other Black leaders. In 1909, he cofounded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the country's first civil rights organization, which is still active today. As US politics drifted right during the 1920s, Du Bois took up other leftist causes. In his later years, he fought to dismantle colonialism, oppose war, and expose the flaws of capitalism.

Which of the following is true of W.E.B. Du Bois?

- A. He was raised in the racially segregated South.
- B. He struggled in school as a young person.
- C. His work went unrecognized during his lifetime.
- ☒ D. He became more radical with age.

*The text states, "As US politics drifted right during the 1920s, Du Bois took up other leftist causes. In his later years, he fought to dismantle colonialism, oppose war, and expose the flaws of capitalism."*

2. James Mercer Langston Hughes was born in Joplin, Missouri, in 1902. His parents divorced when he was young, and he was raised by his grandmother until he was 13. He was often lonely as a child and spent a lot of time reading. As a teenager, Hughes moved to Lincoln, Illinois, and again to Cleveland, Ohio. Despite all the moving around, Hughes did well in high school and was popular with his fellow students. During his senior year, he was voted class poet and editor of the yearbook. After graduating from high school, Hughes moved to New York City. When he published his first poem, “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” in 1921, he quickly became one of the most important figures of the Harlem Renaissance. The first African American to make a living as a writer, Hughes was known for telling everyday Black stories in authentic ways, using simple but lyrical words and themes that could be understood by any reader. He also often used figurative language to emphasize the meaning of his works. In his iconic poem “Harlem,” Hughes uses similes to compare “a dream deferred” to several things. Does it dry up “like a raisin in the sun,” stink “like rotten meat,” or form a crust “like a syrupy sweet”? These comparisons create vivid images of what an unrealized dream might look like.

Which of the following best describes Hughes’s writing?

- A. Focusing on the pain and sorrow of Black Americans
- B. Emphasizing the importance of religion in the United States
- C. Imagining a world where racism and segregation no longer exist
- ✓ D. Echoing Black Americans’ daily realities

*The text states, “Hughes was known for telling everyday Black stories in authentic ways.”*

3. Louis Armstrong was born in 1901 in one of the poorest neighborhoods in New Orleans. As a child, he worked odd jobs to help support his family. When he was arrested at age 12 for firing a gun into the air during a New Year celebration, he was sent to a juvenile detention center. There, he learned to play the cornet—a brass instrument similar to the trumpet—and developed a passion for music. Armstrong learned to play throughout his teens by listening to pioneering jazz artists. He rose quickly, playing in marching and jazz bands and developing his legendary improvisational abilities. Eventually, he decided to start his own group and made the switch from cornet to trumpet. As a band leader, Armstrong’s innovative style was on full display. Early recordings captured his skills as a soloist and established the solo as a central part of jazz. He was also a groundbreaking jazz singer, turning his gravelly voice into an instrument with a style called scatting, in which a vocalist sings nonsense sounds instead of words. By 1929, Armstrong was internationally known and a driving force in introducing jazz to the world. Armstrong’s fame only grew as he appeared in movies, hosted a radio show, and toured the world. As a performer in the Jim Crow Era, Armstrong experienced racism throughout his career. While some critics believed he didn’t do enough to advocate for civil rights, others applauded him for paving the way for other Black artists. By the time he died in 1971, he was considered an icon of American music and popular culture.

Which of the following is most likely true?



A.

Before Armstrong, jazz wasn’t all that popular globally.

*The text states, “By 1929, Armstrong was internationally known and a driving force in introducing jazz to the world.”*

B. Armstrong disliked scatting, but it helped his career.

C. Though jazz was his primary focus, Armstrong’s true talent lay in acting.

D. Armstrong’s personality overshadowed his musical skill.