

**The Roaring Twenties****Lesson 6****The Harlem Renaissance****Key Terms and People**

**National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)** Urged African Americans to protest racial violence

**James Weldon Johnson** Poet and civil rights leader

**Marcus Garvey** Black nationalist leader

**Harlem Renaissance** A literary and artistic movement of African American culture

**Claude McKay** Poet and novelist who urged African Americans to resist prejudice

**Langston Hughes** Best-known Harlem Renaissance poet; described lives of working-class African Americans

**Zora Neale Hurston** Author

**Paul Robeson** Dramatic actor who struggled with racism

**Louis Armstrong** Jazz trumpet player famous for his sense of rhythm and improvisation

**Duke Ellington** Jazz pianist and composer

**Bessie Smith** Female blues singer and outstanding vocalist of the decade

**Before You Read**

In the last lesson you read about education and popular culture in the 1920s. In this lesson you will learn about the Harlem Renaissance.

**As You Read**

Complete a chart on the achievements of the Harlem Renaissance.

**AFRICAN AMERICAN VOICES  
IN THE 1920S****How did African Americans approach  
civil rights in the 1920s?**

Between 1910 and 1920, hundreds of thousands of African Americans had moved from the South to the big cities of the North. This was called the Great Migration. It was a response to racial violence and economic discrimination against blacks in the South. By 1929, 40

percent of African Americans lived in cities. As a result, racial tensions increased in Northern cities. There were race riots.

**The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)** worked to end violence against African Americans. W.E.B. Du Bois led a peaceful protest against racial violence.

The NAACP also fought to get laws

Lesson 6, *continued*

against lynching passed by Congress. **James Weldon Johnson**, a poet and lawyer, led that fight. While no law against lynching was passed in the twenties, the number of lynchings gradually dropped.

**Marcus Garvey** voiced a message of black pride that appealed to many African Americans. Garvey thought that African Americans should build a separate society. He formed a black nationalist group called the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA).

Garvey promoted black-owned businesses. He also urged African Americans to return to Africa to set up an independent nation.

1. How did the NAACP and Marcus Garvey's followers respond to racial discrimination?

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## THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE FLOWERS IN NEW YORK

### **What was the Harlem Renaissance?**

In the 1920s many African Americans moved to Harlem, a section of New York City. So did blacks from the West Indies, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Haiti. Harlem became the world's largest black urban community as well as the birthplace of the **Harlem Renaissance**. This literary and artistic movement celebrated African-American culture.

The Harlem Renaissance was mainly a literary movement. It was led by well-educated middle-class blacks. They took pride in their African heritage and their folklore. They wrote about the problems of being black in a white culture. An important collection of works by Harlem Renaissance writers, *The New*

*Negro*, was published by Alain Locke in 1925.

The Harlem Renaissance produced many outstanding poets. **Claude McKay** wrote about the pain of prejudice. He urged African Americans to resist prejudice and discrimination.

One of the most famous Harlem Renaissance poets was **Langston Hughes**. He wrote about the daily lives of working-class blacks and the difficulties they faced. He gained international fame for his work.

**Zora Neale Hurston** collected the folklore of poor, uneducated Southern blacks and wrote about them. She celebrated the common person's art form. Hurston wrote novels, short stories, books of folklore, and poems.

Music and drama were important parts of the Harlem Renaissance, too. **Paul Robeson** became a major dramatic actor. He starred in Shakespeare's *Othello*. He experienced racism in the United States and lived for a time in England and the Soviet Union.

Jazz blended instrumental ragtime and vocal blues and was created in the early 20th century in New Orleans. Musicians from New Orleans traveled north, and they brought jazz with them. One of the most important and influential jazz musicians was trumpet player **Louis Armstrong**. He was known for his sense of rhythm and improvisation skills, and became a significant figure in jazz history.

Many whites came to Harlem to hear jazz. Edward Kennedy "**Duke**" **Ellington** led an orchestra at New York's Cotton Club. He was a jazz pianist and one of the nation's greatest composers.

Some considered **Bessie Smith** the outstanding blues singer of the decade. She was also the highest-paid black artist in the world in 1927.

**Lesson 6, *continued***

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The Harlem Renaissance inspired African Americans to take pride in their work. It represented part of the great social and cultural changes in America.

2. Describe the contributions of one artist of the Harlem Renaissance.

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

<b>AFRICAN AMERICAN WRITERS AND PERFORMERS</b>	
1. Claude McKay	
2. Langston Hughes	
3. Zora Neale Hurston	
4. Paul Robeson	
5. Louis Armstrong	
6. Duke Ellington	
7. Bessie Smith	