

Unit 6: The Jazz Age The 1920's Culture & Influential African Americans

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SS5H4: The student will describe U.S. involvement in World War I and post- World War I America.

b. Describe the cultural developments and individual contributions in the 1920s of the Jazz Age (Louis Armstrong), the Harlem Renaissance (Langston Hughes), baseball (Babe Ruth), the automobile (Henry Ford), and the airplane (Charles Lindbergh).

The Jazz Age

- The first years of the 1920s were called the Jazz Age.
- **Jazz:** a new form of music that made its way from New Orleans to northern cities in the early 1900s
- History of Jazz Music: Timeline (1700-1960)
<http://pbskids.org/jazz/time/index.html>
- It was created by African American musicians.

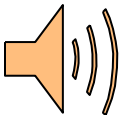




Music

- They used brass, woodwind, and percussion instruments to improvise rather than rely on sheet music.
- It had a fast and spirited beat that was popular with both blacks and whites.
- It led to several new dances during the 1920s.
- It allowed African Americans to gain respect for their musical talents.

Let's learn more about Jazz music from a Jazz musician:



http://pbskids.org/jazz/meet_a_musician_flash.html

Louis Armstrong



- Born and raised in New Orleans
- He was born into poverty and was raised by his mother.
- His formal education, or schooling, was neglected so he could help support his family.
- Louis Armstrong was, “street wise” and knew how to hustle people for money.

Louis Armstrong

- Louis was placed in a home for teens in 1912 where he learned to play several instruments and sing in a band.
- His favorite instrument was the cornet.
 - The cornet is a brass instrument similar to a trumpet.
- Louis' natural ability and talent was envied by many; but, he could not afford his own cornet.
- He joined a Jazz band and was noticed by many popular musicians.
- His career took off thanks to his unique voice and style.



Louis Armstrong

- Over his 50+ year career, he released many albums and had a lot of popular songs.
- His style and fun additions to songs' lyrics were two reasons he was so successful.

Let's Listen:  "It's a Wonderful World"

- http://www.songarea.com/mc/2/louis_armstrong.html



Harlem Renaissance

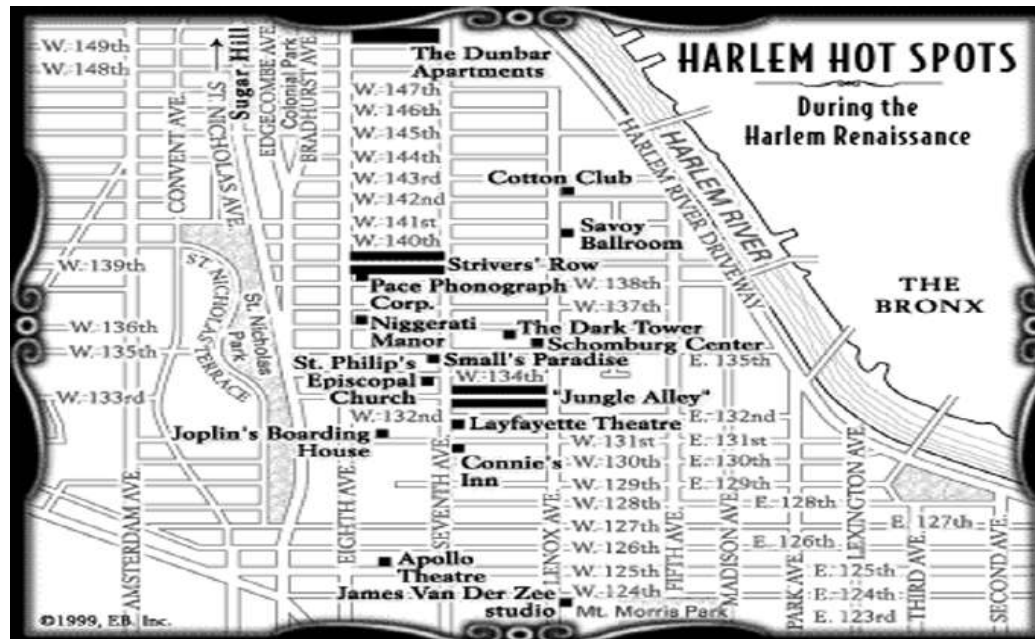
- The Harlem Renaissance was an important movement among the African American community.
- It involved black writers, artists, and musicians.
- It was named for Harlem, New York, the prominently black community where it began.

Harlem Renaissance: In Pictures and Artwork



Jeunesse by
Palmer Hayden

William H.
Johnson
*Street-life
Harlem*



Langston Hughes

1902-1967

- Langston Hughes was a poet whose popularity grew during the 1920s and 1930s. He wrote "Jazz Poetry."
- **Jazz poetry** is poetry that "demonstrates jazz like rhythm or the feel of improvisation."

Improvisation – not following a script or set pattern; "playing it by ear"



- Poets like Langston Hughes incorporated the rhythms and repetitive phrases of blues and jazz music into their writing.
- Many Harlem Renaissance writers were deeply concerned with African Americans maintaining pride in their race and wanted to create purely African-American poetry.

Langston Hughes

- Since Jazz music was an important part of African-American culture at the time, Hughes and others like him adapted the musical genre to create their own, African-American voices that could easily be distinguished from the work of white poets.
- Many of Hughes' poems sounded similar to the popular jazz and blues songs of the period.



Langston Hughes

- Therefore, in his work he confronted racial stereotypes, protested social conditions, and expanded how African American's viewed themselves.
- He was considered a "people's poet" who tried to reeducate his readers by proving the theory of black people having many artistic talents was actually a reality.

An example of this is the poem: "My People"

**The night is beautiful,
So the faces of my people.**

**The stars are beautiful,
So the eyes of my people**

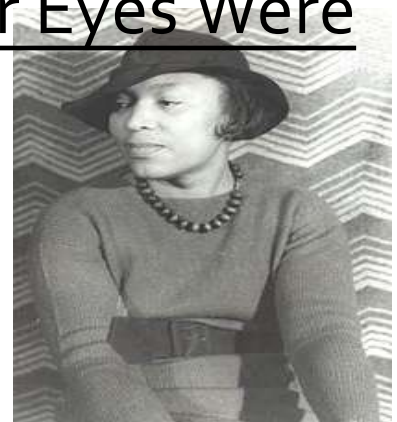
**Beautiful, also, is the sun.
Beautiful, also, are the souls of my people.**

Zora Neal Hurston

1891-1960

- Zora Neal Hurston was an African American folklorist, anthropologist, and an author during the Harlem Renaissance.
- Folklorist – a person who studies folklore; folklore is based on legends and myths
- Anthropologist – a person who studies humanity and society;
- She published 4 novels and 50 short stories, plays and essays.

She is best known for her 1937 novel, Their Eyes Were Watching God.



Zora Neal Hurston



- Hurston's writing focused on African American culture and experiences.
- She was paid so little for her writing that when she died, there was not enough money to bury her and purchase a tombstone.
- However, she inspired so many writers that many years after she died, a young writer purchased a tombstone for her grave.