

Poets of the Harlem Renaissance and Students' Poetic Perceptions of Contemporary Issues

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Overview

My goal is to have the eighth grade students of Shaw Middle School reflect and discuss social themes that were prevalent during the Harlem Renaissance period, then compare and contrast them to social themes of today. I will go over the purpose of poetry, several short poetry readings and discussions to introduce students for poetry appreciation. This will take place during reading and writing classes for four to five weeks in the months of April and May.

Using their prior knowledge students will visualize what the Harlem Renaissance poets were describing from books and every day life experiences. Dr. Anna H. Shaw Middle School EMO is in the Southwest Philadelphia serving students in seventh and eighth grades with enrollment of 400 students.

The Harlem Renaissance was an African-American cultural movement that emerged in the 1920s, continued through the early years of the Great Depression, and faded during the build up to World War II. It was the first concentrated involvement of African American artist, writers, musicians, singers, and intellectuals in an artistic and cultural movement that spoke to the realities of the color line. The Renaissance took place in Harlem, which was the focal point of the intellectual, cultural and artistic life in the African American community. Cities that were also important to blacks than Harlem were Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Atlanta, and Boston because of the black political, social, cultural life and the arts.

The recently migrated sought and found new opportunities, both economic and artistic. African Americans were encouraged to celebrate their heritage and to become “The New Negro,” a term coined in 1925 by sociologist and critic Alain LeRoy Locke in his influential book of the same name (Locke 129-144). No place embodied this new aesthetic more than Harlem, home to a thriving artistic scene of magazines like *The Crisis*, cafes, jazz clubs, and scores of reading venues. The major figures of this movement were enlightened by education and nourished by folk sources such as black music and the black church. More than a literary revolution or social activism, the Harlem Renaissance extolled African American culture and celebrated its singular, unique expression. By 1925, New York Harlem emerged as the black metropolis, the capital of African American (Wintz 5-25). The students will read selections from Countee Cullen, Anne Spencer, Angelina Grimke, Claude McKay, Jean Toomer and Langston Hughes. Students will learn more about African-American writers of the Harlem Renaissance.

Rationale

The theme unit will coordinate with the Core Curriculum standards based on the Edison Scope and Sequence chart, and the Teacher’s Reading Companion Guide. The Scope and Sequence Chart will implement the reading of African-American literature to take place in April and May.

Students will hear the Harlem Renaissance music, literature, interviews, and speeches on the integrated audio CD that brings the Harlem Renaissance voices, including WEB DuBois and Langston Hughes to vibrant life once again. Students will listen to Countee Cullen as he reads an excerpt from “Heritage.” Although Cullen did not travel to Africa, he still explored the question of African heritage in this, his best-known poem. I want the students to analyze this poem and what heritage means to them. “Harlem Wine,” “Tableau,” “To a Brown Girl,” “To a Brown Boy,” “She of the Dancing Feet Sings,” “In Memory of Col. Charles Young and A Brown Girl Dead.” (Wintz –CD)

It is very important for the students to evaluate and describe the characters in Anne Spencer’s poem “Lady, Lady.”

Students have to identify the significance of Angelina Grimke poem “The Black Finger.” I want the students to analyze, interpret and draw conclusions based on the evidence in the poem.

Claude McKay’s radical activities in the revolutionary IWW (Industrial Workers of the World), and the African Blood Brotherhood, and his poem “If We Must Die,” to encourage blacks in the Negro World to embrace Bolshevism brought him some unwelcome attention from the United States Justice Department (Wintz 108-110).

Claude McKay's use of personification in which he gives human qualities to a tree, cathedral and house in his poems "Like a Strong Tree," "Russian Cathedral," and "White House." (101 Great American Poems 70-71).

Langston Hughes, often referred to as the "unofficial Poet Laureate of the race," remains the central figure of the Harlem Renaissance. In his essay, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," he proclaimed his lifelong calling: "to explain and illuminate the Negro condition in America." His achievements in collections of African American literature produced a body of work that endures and offers a powerful portrait of the twentieth century artist.

Our exploration of the Harlem Renaissance would not be complete without exposing the students to the writings of Langston Hughes' poems, "Song," "Poems," "Dream Variation," "The Dream Keeper," "Sea Charms," and "Earth Song." Hughes reads his poem "Mother to Son," which he first published in *The Crisis* in 1922 when he was 20 years old. Hughes was a world traveler whose heart never left Harlem. It became one of his most popular poems. Hughes reads his poem, "Dream Variation," which he wrote in 1923 during his first visit to the West Africa coast. On this trip Hughes discovered both his connection and the disconnection with the continent of his ancestors. He was one of the first black writers to earn a living by the pen in the twentieth century. He was known for his poems about the black experience in the United States. A well-known line from one of his poems is "What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun?" Another one of his famous poems is "The Negro Speaks of Rivers." He was a leading figure in the Harlem Renaissance (Gates and McKay 1288-1290).

This newly created unit will help students understand and appreciate poetry. Because poetry creates mental pictures students will be able to visualize much better because of the poems' specific words and images. We all have images of something in our minds but poetry expresses a story, description or impression with a distinct voice and style. Students must understand that poetry can take many different forms: narrative, ballads, lyric poetry, an elegy, sonnet or couplet. Students will have numerous opportunities to identify and write the many different forms of poetry.

I believe the poetry readings and discussions will introduce students to the appreciation of poetry. I want students to try to visualize what Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes and Jean Toomer was describing using their background knowledge of the poets. Students will be exposed to a wide variety of published Harlem Renaissance poetry within the classroom. I therefore will give students a variety of activities to begin writing their own poetry. Poetry is the essence of language and will help the students to be creative.

Narrative poetry tells a personal story and it contains many of the same elements as stories: plot, characters, setting, dialogue, conflict, and a narrator or speaker. Ballads are

stories in the form of a song and they often tell stories about love and adventure. Lyric poetry is written mainly to describe the poet's feelings and emotions. An elegy is a poem of mourning and with so many murders taking place in the City of Brotherly Love could be a constructive form through which students can express their feeling concerning a loved one that was murdered. This type of poem may express sadness for the death of a family member, relative, and or friend. It may also express sadness for the death of an animal or a way of life. A sonnet is a poem of fourteen lines and usually expresses a single theme or idea. Students need to identify the theme or idea of Countee Cullen's sonnets and then write their own sonnets.

Students will analyze and interpret just a few of the many Harlem Renaissance poems that will give them the opportunity to produce their own poetry. I will encourage students to really try different avenues and search for appropriate words that will develop their vocabulary. Students will have many opportunities to read their poetry aloud within assigned groups and eliminate any words that are not necessary to the meaning of the poems. Students will write their poems and the readers will be able to visualize by using the five different senses: sight, taste, feel, hearing and smell, as if students themselves were actually present when the poem was written.

Published works are placed on two different bulletin boards located on the third floor of Shaw Middle School in Arts & Music Academy. Also, the 21st Century Community Learning Center for extended school days has a tutorial class that supports the school newspaper, the Southwest School District of Philadelphia newspaper, and the Philadelphia Inquirer.

Countee Cullen was orphaned when he was a child and adopted by Frederick Asbury Cullen. Cullen in his poems ponders about his own and collective African-American identities. Some of his strongest poems question the benevolence of a Creator who has bestowed a race with such mixed blessings. Countee Cullen's was interested especially in France and he wrote a few poems about Paris. Countee Cullen was determined that he be regarded primarily as a poet, not a black poet. His language, themes and forms were based upon the major traditions of European literature. He resented the parochialism, which encouraged Negro poets to limit their interest to subjects reflecting black experiences. Hopefully the students will want to read his poems because his greatest were written when he was in his twenties and the age difference for some students is 6-7 years.

The poets Cullen chose as models for his own works were John Keats and A.E. Housman. Countee Cullen's sonnets and lyrics are fine evidence that a black poet could excel in the English poetic tradition. Although he chose to write in traditional forms, most of his best poems show his involvement with racial themes: "From the Dark Tower," "For a Lady I Know," "Yet Do I Marvel," "Tableau," and "Incident." (African American Literature 77-82).

Jean Toomer formed a strong emotional attachment to the rural people and their values, including a sense of kinship with nature. Toomer believed that rural life had an integrity missing from urban areas dominated by the corrupting, materialistic values of whites. Toomer, born in 1894, in Washington, D.C., claimed a mixed ancestry that included French, Dutch, Welsh, African American, German, Jewish, and Native American. Toomer's father abandoned the family less than a year after his birth. Toomer's mother died when he was fourteen and he went to live with his maternal grandparents. Soon after the publication of *Cane*, Toomer sought to leave racial tensions behind him and dropped out of the movement with which he would remain so closely associated. (*African American Literature* 84-86).

The legacy of the Harlem Renaissance opened doors and deeply influenced the generations of African American writers that followed, including Robert Hayden and Gwendolyn Brooks. In the forties, fifties, and sixties, Hayden taught at Fisk University and the University of Michigan and served two terms as the Consultant in Poetry at the Library of Congress. Since the publication in 1945 of her first book, *A Street in Bronzeville*, Brooks has combined a quiet life with critical success. Her second book, *Annie Allen*, won the 1950 Pulitzer Prize, the first time a book by a black poet had won that coveted distinction, and the last time until Rita Dove's *Thomas and Beulah*, almost forty years later. Brooks was a virtuoso of technique, her exquisite poems exploring, for the first time, the interior lives of African Americans individuals.

Objectives

- *Students will develop an appreciation for poetry; understand different poetic forms and poetry writing skills.
- *Students will interpret, compare, describe and analyze poetry.
- *Students will evaluate character, setting, plot, theme, action and or motive of a given poem.
- *Students will increase vocabulary through poetry writing and analytical skills through poetry reading.
- *Students will enhance and foster creativity.
- *Students will become acquainted with the works of several Harlem Renaissance poets.
- *Students will become familiar with lyric poetry and able to recognize the personal nature of the lyric.

*Students will compare and contrast identity of the structure of the Italian and English sonnets.

*Students will understand the difference between denotative and connotative meanings of the poems.

*Students will respond to the mood of a poem by summarizing the poem on paper or a story map.

*Students will complete a character profile for selected poems of the Harlem Renaissance.

*Students will appreciate and identify the imagery and metaphors used in Countee Cullen poems.

*Students will become familiar with the epigram; write an interpretation of a poem and to practice critical analysis of a poem.

*Students will identify the different forms of figurative language, including simile, personification and simile from the selected Harlem Renaissance poets.

*Students will understand how the environment plays a major role in human development and historical events have multiple effects.

*Students will recognize that literature and art reflect the inner life and culture of a people.

*Students will understand the historical and cultural significance of Harlem, New York.

Strategies

My class outcome is to have the students write their own poems dealing with a contemporary issue.

The students during block period time will compare different genres with the same theme. The students will make predictions, draw conclusions, and make inferences. They will locate facts and important details within the poem, and identify multiple meanings of a word and how it is applied to the poem. The students using different strategies of a story plot will identify the central problem within a poem. If there is a solution to the problem how would they resolve it and how is it resolved in the poem?

Know/Want/Learned strategy models the active thinking needed when reading the Harlem Renaissance poetry. It encourages the student to think about ideas and to ask

questions while reading the poems. The strategy is a five- step process that can be used across the curriculum at all grade levels, with any size group or with a whole class.

Story maps identify literary elements such as main characters, setting, problem, major events, problem solution, and a theme for the poem.

Compare/Contrast structure including Venn Diagrams and Matrices are visual organizers that compare and contrast characteristics of information or ideas.

Flowcharts, sequence chains, Timelines are diagrams that represent a sequence of events, actions, or decisions.

Reciprocal teaching is an interactive dialogue between the teacher and the students about content/material with summarizing, generating questions, clarifying and predicting.

Field study is a planned learning experience that involves an educational trip to places where students can observe first-hand and study directly in a real-life setting. Students will attend a Spoken Word event at a middle, high school, or university.

Continuous progress assessment can provide students with opportunities to participate in learning experiences and receive evaluate feedback.

Anecdotal records are carefully documented accounts of the student’s progress during the Harlem Renaissance unit. Recording is informal, positive, unforced, and done while actual activities are occurring.

Ms. Logan will lead the class in a reading of line-by-line explanation of Jean Toomer's poems.

Students will be encouraged to write a “heritage” poem. Heritage poem is one that praises or depicts favorably aspects of one’s ethnic/cultural life. It may focus on one’s background or it may sing the praises of a relative.

Classroom Activities

Lesson Plan 1

Title of the Lesson: Countee Cullen’s “Incident” poem point of view.

Subject: Reading, Writing, and Social Studies

Grade: Eighth

Length of lesson: 2-4 periods

Time: 40-60 minutes

Standards:

Learning to read independently
 Reading critically in all content areas
 Reading, analyzing and interpreting literature

Background Information

Countee Cullen was an African American poet who shone among the writers of the Harlem Renaissance. Born in 1903, Cullen was raised in New York City by a woman who was probably his paternal grandmother. At the age of 15 he was unofficially adopted by the minister of Harlem's Salem M.E. Church, F.A. Cullen. Countee Cullen received recognition early in his life for his poetry; he won a citywide poetry contest as a schoolboy. Through his college career at New York University and Harvard, Cullen continued to write poetry that was accepted at major American literary magazines. His first collection of poetry, *Color*, was published in 1925 to critical acclaim. Towards the end of his relatively short life, Cullen's reputation as a poet waned. From 1934 to his death in 1946, he taught in New York City's public schools.

Objectives: Students will read "Incident" by Countee Cullen. Students will identify and analyze how Countee Cullen uses literary devices to convey meanings in the "Incident." They will reflect and discuss the social themes that were prevalent during the Harlem Renaissance period and in the poem. The students will be given opportunity to recognize contrasting points of view in this lyric poem. They will understand the relationship between a poem's title and its content. Students will understand that the poetry of the Harlem Renaissance expresses the dilemma of the African American in a prejudiced country. Students will understand how poetry can open up their world-view by offering them a different way to look at things; a way to understand different perspectives.

Incident
 Countee Cullen

Once riding in old Baltimore,
 Heart-filled, head-filled with glee,
 I saw a Baltimorean
 Keep looking straight at me,

Now I was eight and very small,
 And he was no whit bigger,
 And so I smiled, but he poked out
 His tongue, and called me, "Nigger."

I saw the whole of Baltimore
 From May until December;

Of all the things that happened there
That's all that I remember.

Procedure

Begin the lesson by telling students that they will be reading a poem entitled "Incident" by Countee Cullen. Write both the title and poet's name on the board. Tell students that Cullen was an African American poet who was born in 1903 and died in 1946, and write these dates on the board.

Before reading the poem, "Incident," ask a series of questions:

When you hear or see the word "nigger," what does it mean to you? Why?
The NAACP had a funeral for the "N word" in Detroit, Michigan on July 9, 2007, what was the significance for this activity? Explain.
How was life different for African Americans than for whites in the United States during this time period? Time period 1920's - 1940's.
What is an incident?

Display the poem, make sure each child has his/her own copy, and read it aloud to students.

Give them a moment to re-read it to themselves silently.

Responding to the selection/poem:

What is the "incident?"
How did conditions that existed at that time for African Americans influence the event?
Would the same incident occur in Baltimore today? Why or why not? Would it occur anywhere? If so, where would it take place? If not, why not?
The speaker says that he was "riding" in old Baltimore. Keeping in mind the time period, what do you think happened next, if anything?
Martin Luther King lived between Countee Cullen's time and your time. How do you think he would have reacted, or how would he have wanted the situation resolved, if it had happened to him or to one of his children?

This poem is full of emotional feelings. What feelings are present in the first stanza? How do these feelings change in the second stanza? What are the feelings in the third stanza?

How do you think the speaker felt about the incident as an adult?
How does he let the reader know that the incident affected him deeply?

Why is it significant that both boys are quite young?
How is the black boy affected by the experience?

How did you feel after reading the poem? Why?

Is “Incident” a good title for the poem? Why or why not? What would you rename it if you didn’t like the title “Incident?”

Day 2

Suggested Follow-up Activity

Background Information

Mildred Taylor’s novel *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* takes place during the same time period as “Incident.” In this Newberry Medal-winning book, an event takes place that is not unlike the one described in the poem. The main character, a young girl named Cassie, is forced to wait as a shopkeeper/owner helps every white person who comes in while he’s filling Cassie’s order. Cassie is confused, and like the speaker in “Incident,” assumes initially that his intentions are not racist. When she learns otherwise, she is angry, and later reflects that the events caused the day to be the cruelest in her life. As a follow-up activity to the study of “Incident,” read an excerpt of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* that includes the description of this event from page 109. After reading the excerpt, draw a large Venn Diagram on the board and have the class compare and contrast the two events.

Assessment

How do you think that Cassie would have reacted if the event described in “Incident” had occurred to her?

Think about the emotions she felt after the shopkeeper treated her so disrespectfully.

Which of these emotions do you think were also felt by the speaker in “Incident?”

Which of these two events do you think would be less likely to occur today? Why?

What would you say to the shopkeeper to convince him that his actions were wrong?

What would you say to the young boy in “Incident?”

Lesson Plan 2

Title of the Lesson: Langston Hughes’s Figurative Language in *I, Too* poem.

Subject: Reading, Writing, and Social Studies.

Grade: Eighth

Length of lesson: 1-2 periods

Time: 40-50 minutes

Standards:

Reading, analyzing and interpreting literature (read and respond to poetry).
Types of writing (write short stories, poems and plays).
Types of writing (develop a problem and solution when appropriate to the topic).

Overview of the lesson

Students will read the poem, *I, Too* by Langston Hughes. They will reflect and discuss the social themes that were prevalent during the Harlem Renaissance period and in the poem. Guide students to see that figures of speech are very much a part of their own language and to note how Langston Hughes uses figurative language.

Objectives: Students will respond to the ideas and emotions expressed in the poem, orally and in writing. Help the students understand the forms of figurative language, including metaphor, simile, personification, and symbol. Help students respond to connotative language and to distinguish denotative and connotative meanings. Students will recognize the importance of punctuation, particularly the comma, in interpreting a poem and will learn how to read a poem aloud, following clues in punctuation.

Day 1:

Teacher Preparation: the following words and their meanings on the board.

Vocabulary Words:

Symbol is anything that represents something else, often by indirect association or by the convention of an emblem, token, word, etc.

Metaphor is a figure of speech in which a comparison is implied by analogy but is not stated.

Simile is a comparison of two things that are unlike, usually using the words *like* or *as*.

The following graphic organizer will be used for all of the lesson plans. Students must give an example of each word from the selected poems

Name _____

Title of poem _____

Poet _____

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Simile: comparison between unlike things using like or as	Imagery: appeals to the senses	Metaphors: comparisons suggesting things are similar
Hyperbole: Exaggeration used to make a point	Symbol: anything that represents something else	Personification: animals, ideas, things, are represented as having human qualities.

Procedure

Poetry is meant to be read both silently and aloud. Poetry may be shared by friends. Read the poem titled “I, Too” silently to yourself. Then, re-read the poem again, this time aloud and to each other. You may also read the poem chorally. You may begin now.

I, Too

By Langston Hughes

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.
 They send me to eat in the kitchen
 When company comes,
 But I laugh,
 And eat well,
 And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
 I'll be at the table
 When company comes,
 Nobody'll dare
 Say to me,
 “Eat in the kitchen,”
 Then.
 Besides,
 They'll see how beautiful I am
 And be ashamed-

I, too, am America.

Responding to the Poem-Interpreting Meanings

1. Who is the speaker in this poem?
2. Is “the kitchen” in line 3 meant literally or figuratively? What do you think “the table” in line 9 represents?
3. Compare the opening and closing lines. What word has Hughes changed in the closing line? What do you think is the importance of this change?
4. Is this poem also about dreams? Give your interpretation of its meaning.

Writing Prompt: Writing to Persuade

Re-read this poem and decide whether a friend would enjoy reading it. Then, write a letter in which you persuade him or her to read this poem or not.

Pre-writing

Think about what was interesting or not interesting about the poem.

Think about what your friend likes or dislikes in poetry.

Decide whether or not your friend would enjoy reading “I, Too.”

As you write you may make a list, a web or diagram to organize the ideas you want to share in your letter.

Drafting

Use your ideas as you write a first draft of your letter. Students will have thirty minutes to plan and to write their first draft.

Revising

Students will take five minutes to read their first draft of a letter and think about what they have written. Imagine you are your friend reading the letter. Think about the answers to the questions below.

1. Does the letter persuade the reader to do what is best?
2. Does the letter give reasons that support that advice?
3. Does the letter make sense?

After you have thought about how well your letter answers these questions, you will get some ideas from your partner to help improve your writing. Make sure you have written your name on each page of your draft. You will have an opportunity to share your draft with your partner, and then you make a final revision.

Revised Draft

Students will write the revised draft on another sheet of lined paper or they may use the computers that are in the classroom. After students have written the revised draft, they will look over the paper to make sure it is clear and complete.

Proofreading

Students will make any corrections, edit it, and fix it on the revised draft.

Publishing

Students will share their writings by finished products place on the bulletin boards in the classroom or placed on display on the hallway bulletin board. Teacher and students will follow the following format for assessment.

PSSA Writing Rubric

	Focus	Content	Organization	Style	Conventions
4	Sharp, clear focus, one topic	Very specific content with many details, facts, reasons	Excellent organization	Excellent sentence structure, colorful word choice	Very few mistakes, if any
3	Clear focus	Specific content, some details, facts, reasons, and examples	Logical organization	Variety of word choice and sentence structure	Some mistakes, not many
2	Focus is unclear, off topic at times	Limited content, not enough details, facts, reasons	Organization is not consistent	Limited word choice and sentence structure	Repeated mistakes
1	No evidence of a topic	Content not about the topic	No organization	Poor word choice	Many mistakes, hard to understand writing
0	Scoreless	Illegible, does not	No organization	Off-Prompt	Legible, but did not write

		make sense, blank piece of paper			to the prompt
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Lesson Plan 3

Title of the lesson: Jean Toomer’s empathy with rural rhythms poem “*Beehive.*”

Subject: Reading, Writing, and Science.

Grade: Eighth

Length of lesson: 1-2 periods

Time: 45 minutes

Standards:

Speaking and Listening (participate in small and large group discussions and presentations).

Characteristics and Functions of the English Language (analyze the role and place of standard American English in speech, writing and literature).

Overview of the lesson

People living in close contact with the soil become part of that rhythm; the planting, the harvesting, and the dying. The objects of the natural world have inspired poets from earliest times. Poets respond to nature in different ways. Some poets delight in its beauty; others view nature as a symbol of the human spirit.

Objectives

Students will understand how a poet is inspired by nature and music in poetry enhances the meaning of the poem.

Day 1

Prior Knowledge Assessment- Ask the students how they are affected by nature, how they feel when they see a: sunset, sunrise, flower, wild animal, river, snowstorm, and rainstorm.

Motivation

Ask students to think about some solitary experience of their own with nature- cutting the grass, watching a deer by the roadside, and or planting flowers in the Shaw’s Science Garden.

Students will complete the KWL chart for the poem “Beehive.”

What do I know?	What do I want to find out?	What did I learn?

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Students will read the poem “Beehive.”

Beehive

by Jean Toomer

Within this black hive tonight
There swarm a million bees;
Bees passing in and out the moon,
Bees escaping out the moon,
Bees returning through the moon,
Silver bees intently buzzing,
Silver honey dripping from the swarm of bees
Earth is a waxen cell of the world comb,
And I, a drone,
Lying on my back,
Lipping honey,
Getting drunk with silver honey,
Wish that I might fly out past the moon
And curl forever in some far-off farmyard flower.

Assessment: PSSA Writing Rubric (0-4 levels)

Students will respond to the poem by writing the answers to the following questions for discussion.

1. The poet describes a beehive by moonlight. What do you think the phrases “Silver bees” (line 6) and “Silver honey” (line 7) mean?
2. What picture does the poet want you to see in line 3-5?
3. A honeycomb is made up of beeswax cells where the insects store their honey and their eggs. What metaphor does Toomer use in line 8?

4. In line 9, the speaker extends the metaphor to himself. A drone is a male bee that has no sting and gathers no honey. How does Toomer capture these characteristics in line 9-14? What wish is expressed in these lines?
5. This poem contains no rhyme, but it is rich in musical devices. Read aloud the lines that you think contain the most effective examples of repetition.

Day 2

Many eighth grade students believe that what adults call great poetry, and poetry that appears in textbooks, has no relation to them. Middle school students will combine prior knowledge with new knowledge from this unit to understand how displaced Africans Americans felt in the United States and use that understanding to write about contemporary issues. This writing can be done in the many different forms of poetry including rap, poetry that expresses their own individual plights, that uses alliteration and free verse.

Objectives: Students will identify what alliteration sounds like and looks like. Students will be able to identify free verse. Students will be able to make the connection that their lives have to poetry.

Vocabulary: alliteration and free verse

Procedure

Students will discuss contemporary issues during character education block period time. We will have whole group discussion about a current event issue from the newspaper, radio, television and/or internet. Students will then select a group based on their personal preference with no more than five people to each group. Each group will be given thirty minutes to write the poetry or rap. Students will follow the five steps of the writing process to complete this writing exercise for display.

Assessment for each cooperative group

Cooperative Group Names:_____					
Rating/Score	0	1	2	3	4 (the highest score is 4)
Focus					
Organization					
Content					

Style
Presentation
Name of group's poetry or rap

Assessment

Students write their own poetry or rap to be presented on Literacy Night held in April, 2008.

Students will take a field trip to the Apollo Theater to reconnect the past to the present and to their future.

Annotated Bibliography

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Hirsch, Ed. Jr. and Joseph Keats. Dictionary of Cultural Literacy. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993. Very helpful in explaining proverbs and how they became part of African-American culture.

Hughes, Langston. Selected Poems of Langston Hughes. New York: Vintage Books, 1959.

The poems in this collection were chosen by Langston Hughes himself shortly before his death in 1967 and represent work from his entire career.

---. The Best Short Stories by Black Writers: The Classic Anthology from 1899 to 1967. Boston: Little, Brown, 1967.

---. The Langston Hughes Reader: The Selected Writings of Langston Hughes. New York: Braziller, 1958. Langston Hughes through his writings portrayed whites in a comical view of their interaction with African Americans.

---. The Ways of White Folks. New York: Vintage Classics, 1962. Langston Hughes recalls injustice of treatment towards the African American culture during the 1920s and 1930s in his writing. Majority of the story should be read by 9th-12th graders because of some profanity in the story but the teacher should select portions of the story to give meaningful information.

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Wintz, Cary D. ed. Harlem Speaks. Illinois: Sourcebook, inc. 2007. A living history of the Harlem Renaissance in their words, music and voices.

Websites

www.artsanctuary.org

Highlights hip hop literature to the art program and a different way for students to express themselves.

www.math.buffalo.edu/~sww/circle/harlem-ren-sites.html

Timeline of the Harlem Renaissance 1919-1929

www.world-class-poetry.com/Harlem

Harlem Renaissance poetry during 1920's and 1930's in which African-American artists emerged as popular and successful

www.readwritethink.org/lessons

Harlem Renaissance connection to art, music dance, and poetry

www.poets.org/viewmedia.php

Online exhibit from the Academy of American Poets featuring biographies and selected poems from the Harlem Renaissance

[www.encyclopedia.msn.com/encyclopedia/Harlem Renaissance](http://www.encyclopedia.msn.com/encyclopedia/Harlem_Renaissance)

Harlem Renaissance, an African American cultural movement of the 1920's writers

www.apollotheater.org

The world famous Apollo Theater started in 1914 on 125th Street the heart of Harlem. The Apollo Theater has launched the careers such as Stevie Wonder, Michael Jackson and James Brown. The Apollo Theater is the arena for emerging and established African-American and Latino performers.

Appendix/Standards

Reading 8.1.1. Identify basic facts and ideas in Harlem Renaissance text using specific strategies (recall genre characteristics, set a purpose for reading, generate essential questions as aids).

Reading 8.1.1 Expand a reading vocabulary by identifying and correctly using idioms and words with literal and figurative meanings, Use a cultural dictionary or related reference.

Reading 8.1.1. Demonstrate after reading understanding and interpretation of both fiction and nonfiction text, including public documents(compare and contrasts texts using themes, settings, characters and ideas).

Reading 8.1.1. Analyze the positions, arguments and evidence in public documents.

Reading 8.1.1. Use appropriate rhythm, flow, meter, and pronunciation.

Reading 8.1.2. Distinguish between essential and nonessential information across texts and going beyond texts to a variety of media; identify bias and propaganda where present in the Harlem Renaissance period.

Reading 8.1.2. Evaluate text organization and content to determine the author's purpose and effectiveness according to the author's theses, accuracy and thoroughness.

Reading 8.1.2. Use, design and develop a media project that expands understanding of the authors and works from the Harlem Renaissance period.

Reading 8.1.2. Produce work in at least one literary genre that follows the conventions of the genre.

Reading 8.1.3. Analyze the effect of various literary devices, figurative language: personification, simile, metaphor, hyperbole, and allusion).

Reading 8.1.3. Identify poetic forms: ballad, sonnet, lyric, or couplet.

Reading 8.1.3. Read and respond to nonfiction and fiction including poetry and drama.

Writing 8.1.4. Write short stories, poems and plays.

Writing 8.1.4. Write multi-paragraph informational pieces include cause and effect, develop a problem and solution when appropriate to the topic.

Writing 8.1.4. Write persuasive pieces to develop reader interest.

Writing 8.1.5. Write with a sharp, distinct focus: identify topic, task, and audience

Writing 8.1.5. Write with an understanding of the stylistic aspects of composition.

Writing 8.1.5. Revise writing after rethinking logic of organization and rechecking central idea, content, paragraph development, level of detail, style, tone and word choice.

Writing 8.1.5. Present and/or defend written work for publication when appropriate.

Speaking and Listening to others 8.1.6 Analyze information, ideas and opinions to determine relevancy.

Speaking and Listening 8.1.6. Listen to compact disc about Harlem renaissance, summarize events and identify the significant points.

Speaking and Listening 8.1.6. Participate in small and large group discussions and presentations.

Research 8.1.8. Locate information using appropriate sources and strategies (use traditional and electronic search tools).

Appendix B: Field Trips/Materials

The Apollo Theater Box Office
253 West 125 Street at Frederick Douglass Blvd.
Harlem, New York 10027

212.531.5305

Materials needed for the classroom

Chalkboard

Lined paper

Pens, pencils, markers

Construction paper

Compact disc player

Compact disc of the Harlem Renaissance

Literature on the Harlem Renaissance