

## HARLEM RENAISSANCE IN AMERICAN LITERATURE AND LONGSTON HUGHES

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**Abstract:** This article contains information about the Harlem Renaissance, a literary movement in America. It also contains information about, Longston Hughes who is regarded as the literary representative of the Harlem Renaissance.

**Key words:** harlem renaissance, New York, Negro,anthology,rasicm, sterytypes, socila integration

During the 1920s and 1930s, the Harlem Renaissance was an intellectual and cultural resurgence of African American music, dance, art, fashion, literature, drama, politics, and scholarship centered on Harlem, Manhattan, New York City. It was dubbed the "New Negro Movement" at the time, after *The New Negro*, a 1925 anthology produced by Alain Locke. The movement also included new African American cultural expressions across urban areas in the Northeast and Midwest United States affected by renewed militancy in the general civil rights struggle, combined with the Great Migration of African American workers fleeing the racist conditions of the Jim Crow Deep South, with Harlem serving as the final destination for the majority of those who migrated north. During the early twentieth century, Harlem was a popular destination for migrants from all over the country, attracting both those from the South looking for work and an educated class who helped to make the neighborhood a cultural center, as well as a burgeoning "Negro" middle class. These people were searching for a new beginning in their lives, and here was an excellent place to start. The district was founded in the nineteenth century as an elite suburb for the white middle and upper middle classes; its prosperous beginnings resulted in the construction of stately homes, grand streets, and world-class attractions such as the Polo Grounds and the Harlem Opera House.

The once prestigious district was abandoned by the white middle class, who migrated further north during the massive inflow of European immigrants in the late nineteenth century.

In the early 1900s, Harlem became an African-American community. A big block along 135th Street and Fifth Avenue was purchased in 1910 by a group of African-American realtors and a church group. Characterizing the Harlem Renaissance was an overt racial pride that came to be represented in the idea of the New Negro, who through intellect and production of literature, art, and music could challenge the

pervading racism and stereotypes to promote progressive or socialist politics, and racial and social integration. The creation of art and literature would serve to "uplift" the race.

Many more African Americans arrived during the First World War. Due to the war, the migration of laborers from Europe virtually ceased, while the war effort resulted in a massive demand for unskilled industrial labor. The Great Migration brought hundreds of thousands of African Americans to cities such as Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, and New York. Despite the increasing popularity of Negro culture, virulent white racism, often by more recent ethnic immigrants, continued to affect African-American communities, even in the North.

After the end of World War I, many African-American soldiers—who fought in segregated units such as the Harlem Hellfighters—came home to a nation whose citizens often did not respect their accomplishments. Race riots and other civil uprisings occurred throughout the US during the Red Summer of 1919, reflecting economic competition over jobs and housing in many cities, as well as tensions over social territories.

The first stage of the Harlem Renaissance started in the late 1910s. In 1917, the premiere of *Granny Maumee*, *The Rider of Dreams*, *Simon the Cyrenian: Plays for a Negro Theater* took place. These plays, written by white playwright Ridgely Torrence, featured African-American actors conveying complex human emotions and yearnings. They rejected the stereotypes of the blackface and minstrel show traditions. James Weldon Johnson in 1917 called the premieres of these plays "the most important single event in the entire history of the Negro in the American Theater".

One of the representative of this period is Langston Hughes. James Mercer Langston Hughes was an American poet, social activist, novelist, playwright, and columnist from Joplin, Missouri. One of the earliest innovators of the literary art form called jazz poetry, Hughes is best known as a leader of the Harlem Renaissance. He famously wrote about the period that "the Negro was in vogue", which was later paraphrased as "when Harlem was in vogue." The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University holds the Langston Hughes papers (1862–1980) and the Langston Hughes collection (1924–1969) containing letters, manuscripts, personal items, photographs, clippings, artworks, and objects that document the life of Hughes. The Langston Hughes Memorial Library on the campus of Lincoln University, as well as at the James Weldon Johnson Collection within the Yale University also hold archives of Hughes' work. The Moorland-Spangarn Research Center at Howard University includes materials acquired from his travels and contacts through the work of Dorothy B. Porter.

**LIST OF USED LITERATURE:**

1. History of American Literature
2. [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harlem\\_Renaissance](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harlem_Renaissance)
3. <https://poets.org/poet/langston-hughes>