

## The Harlem Renaissance

A literary and cultural awakening amongst African Americans took place during the 1920s, particularly in Harlem, a neighborhood of New York City. Regardless of the name, this renaissance was more widespread than simply Harlem and African Americans in regions such as New Orleans, the birthplace of jazz, helped inspire the movement. Members of this movement expressed themselves through poetry, literature, music, and other creative mediums. Famous writers of the time enriched African American culture and expressed the joys and sorrows of African American life to the American public.

Famous Harlem Renaissance figures included Jean Toomer, Langston Hughes, Rudolph Fisher, Wallace Thurman, Jessie Redmon Fauset, Nella Larsen, Arna Bontemps, Countee Cullen, and Zora Neale Hurston. The generation of writers and intellectuals including James Weldon Johnson, Claude McKay, Alain Locke, and Charles S. Johnson served as mentors to the renaissance.

Much of the literature of the Harlem Renaissance depicted a realistic vision of African American life. Some conservative critics feared that a realistic depiction of black ghettos would impede the cause of racial equality. However, many writers of the time did not believe the movement to be at all politically motivated, but rather about art and literature. Writer Langston Hughes defined the renaissance as being about the “expression of our individual dark-skinned selves.”



