

7th grade Modules - Click on links for access to all module materials. Pacing is at top and denoted by the following symbol.



[TheLost Children of Sudan](#)

[Epidemics](#)

[The Harlem Renaissance](#)

[Plastic Pollution](#)

The Harlem Renaissance

Can we “find fuel for the future in the past”? Poet Nikki Grimes asks this question in her poem “Emergency Measures,” the first in her collection *One Last Word: Wisdom from the Harlem Renaissance*. As Grimes does in her book, students will spend the module pondering the wisdom from works created during the Harlem Renaissance. First students will explore scenes and songs from a play, poems, and artwork to experience the explosion of creativity and ideas of collaboration and innovation. Then students examine political artwork and cartoons, informative articles, and short stories to explore the social and political context of the Harlem Renaissance. Finally, students explore the legacy of the Harlem Renaissance, turning back to Nikki Grimes and her collection of poems crafted with lines from Harlem Renaissance poets. Students consider whether they and contemporary writers, singers, and musicians truly can “find fuel for the future in the past.”

In Unit 1, students explore collaboration in the Harlem Renaissance, noting how the Harlem Renaissance was an explosion and confluence of art, music, and literature. Students first examine scenes and songs from the Broadway musical *Shuffle Along*, experiencing this celebratory text that transformed American musical theater and was created through the collaboration of Eubie Blake, Noble Sissle, F. E. Miller, and Aubrey Lyles. Students analyze how the musical and textual techniques in the play affect meaning and develop themes such as love persevering through tough times. Similarly, students explore the thematic connections of triumph over hardships in the poem “Lift Every Voice and Sing” by James Weldon Johnson and the song and sculpture inspired by the text. Students then analyze iconic poems such as “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” by Langston Hughes, “Calling Dreams” and “Hope” by Georgia Douglas Johnson, and Claude McKay’s “I Shall Return.” In each of these poems, students analyze the structure, figurative language, and themes such as drawing strength from the past and overcoming adversity to fulfill one’s dreams. Students conclude their exploration of collaboration and cultural confluence in a collaborative discussion comparing McKay’s poem to artwork by Meta Warrick Fuller and Winold Reiss for thematic connections around drawing strength from and longing for home or Africa.

In Unit 2, students explore the social and political context of the Harlem Renaissance by reading short informational texts and examining visual art. Students learn how the Harlem Renaissance occurred during the era of the Great Migration, Jim Crow laws, and the racial violence of post-Civil War America. They then

read two short stories, “His Motto” by Lottie Burrell Dixon and “The Boy and the Bayonet” by Paul Laurence Dunbar, analyzing point of view and the interactions between story elements, such as character, plot, and setting. Additionally, students discuss how both stories develop themes about working hard to achieve dreams and how community helps to bring out our best selves. Students continue their exploration of the Harlem Renaissance context by engaging with literary argument writing. Students examine a model literary argument essay then write pair and independent essays, discussing how three pieces of work from the Harlem Renaissance are connected by themes such as looking to the past for strength, collaboration and community to bring out one’s best self, and dreams giving life meaning and purpose.

In Unit 3, students explore the contemporary legacy of the Harlem Renaissance by examining short informational and literary texts, visual art, and performances to further develop their sense of how the Harlem Renaissance continues to impact us today. To develop their background knowledge about this legacy, students analyze Nikki Grimes’ poem “Emergency Measures,” original artwork associated with the poem, and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater’s ballet, “Uptown,” which was inspired by the people, places, art, music, and writing of the Harlem Renaissance. Then students study several of Nikki Grimes’ poems in conjunction with the poetry of the Harlem Renaissance, learning how Grimes uses lines from poets such as Langston Hughes and Georgia Douglas Johnson to create her own poems which develop themes similar to those of the Harlem Renaissance but in a contemporary context. Students continue their exploration of the legacy of the Harlem Renaissance by creating a museum exhibit, which includes three pieces from the Harlem Renaissance and one contemporary piece that they have studied or created themselves. Students write a curator’s statement explaining how the works are connected by theme and create labels discussing the details of structure, language, and theme in each piece. Students practice and revise the presentation of their curator’s statements and labels preparing for the Harlem Renaissance museum, in which students contribute to making a better world by sharing these important works with their community.

Guiding Questions and Big Ideas

How does collaboration influence an artistic renaissance?

- *Innovation occurs through collaboration and community.*
- *The academic mindset of belonging is a critical aspect to creating a common identity and strong community during the Harlem Renaissance.*
- *There are common themes, practices, and structures across the art, music, and literature of the Harlem Renaissance.*

What are some of the historical factors surrounding and contributing to the Harlem Renaissance?

- *Some societal factors that contributed to the movement and its art are the Great Migration, Jim Crow laws, and the racial violence of post-Civil War America. This migration, struggle, and oppression create urgency and frustration, out of which comes an expression of culture and identity. Out of the migration came a new freedom to create.*

- *What are some of the lasting legacies of the Harlem Renaissance?*
- *The Harlem Renaissance has contributed to contemporary art, music, literature, and politics.*

Module Performance Task - Harlem Renaissance Museum Collection

Throughout the module, students have read poems and stories, listened to songs, and viewed visual and performing art from the Harlem Renaissance. Students will now share these works with an audience beyond their classroom in a Harlem Renaissance Museum. Sharing this museum with others is important because these are seminal works and yet there are so few middle school resources on the Harlem Renaissance. In Unit 3, students have curated a set of texts, songs, and artwork connected by a theme from the Harlem Renaissance. Additionally, they have curated a contemporary piece that they either found or made themselves. Together with their classmates, students will present their set to a wider audience in a Harlem Renaissance Museum. Both their written and oral presentation of their curator's statement, labels, and the works themselves are part of their museum exhibit.

Format - Museum Collection Presentation with invited guests

Below are key criteria students need to address when completing this task. Specific lessons during the module build in opportunities for students to understand the criteria, offer additional criteria, and work with their teacher to construct a criteria list by which their work will be critiqued and formally assessed.

Your Museum Exhibit will include the following:

- At least three pieces from the Harlem Renaissance:
 - Two texts (story, poem, essay)
 - A song, dance, or work of art
- A related contemporary work that you found or made. This can be a story, poem, essay, song, dance, or piece of art.
- A curator's statement about how the pieces you selected are important and connected by theme. Your curator's statement will include the following:
 - A title that explains the gist of the exhibit,
 - Context for the subject of the Harlem Renaissance,
 - The unifying theme between the works in the exhibit,
 - A hook that entices the viewer to explore the exhibit,
 - Titles of the works in the exhibit, and
 - Evidence of an appreciative and enthusiastic tone.
- Labels explaining each piece and how it connects to the other pieces. Your labels about each piece will include the following:
 - The title, author, and medium of each piece,
 - A more detailed explanation of how a work develops a theme (including the use of language or structure if applicable), and

- Engaging description of the work.

For your presentation:

- Present your exhibit, explaining each piece and how the pieces are connected in a focused, coherent manner using pertinent descriptions, facts, details, and examples.
- Use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.
- Include multimedia components and visual displays in your presentation to clarify claims and emphasize salient points.
- Use formal English throughout your presentation.
- Respond to visitors' questions.

Social Studies Connections

This module is designed to address English Language Arts standards and to be taught during the literacy block. But the module intentionally incorporates Science and Social Studies content that may align to additional teaching during other parts of the day. These intentional connections are described below.

College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards

- D2.Civ.14.6-8. Compare historical and contemporary means of changing societies, and promoting the common good.
- D2.His.4.6-8. Analyze multiple factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.
- D2.His.14.6-8. Explain multiple causes and effects of events and developments in the past.