

Do some library or Internet research and find pictures of the elegantly dressed participants whom Marcus Garvey often led through the streets of Harlem in the 1920s. In small groups, discuss what you

think Garvey was trying to say or accomplish with these parades? What do you think the people felt when they paraded?

### Multiple Perspectives

In small groups, discuss the terms *nationalism* and *black nationalism*.

1. Are the two terms different? If so, in what way?
2. What did Marcus Garvey mean by “black nationalism”?

3. How was his definition of the term different from the way others used the same term?
4. Is there a “black nationalist movement” today? What is meant by “nationalism” today? Does it still have the same meaning as it did in Garvey’s time?

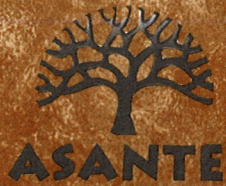
## CENTER YOUR WRITING

Marcus Garvey proclaimed himself the leader of the African people in the early 1900s. From this chapter and from further research, write a short paragraph on your feelings about this statement. Do you

think that Garvey proved himself to be such a leader? Why or why not? Would you have been willing to follow him and his ideas? Why or why not?



## 38



## AS YOU READ

- How did the Harlem Renaissance impact American society?
- Why is Alain Locke called the "Father of the Harlem Renaissance"?
- How did Langston Hughes advance the Harlem Renaissance?
- What was Zora Neale Hurston's contribution to African American literature?
- Through what art forms did African American artists show their genius?

## Chapter Outline

- Harlem
- Alain Locke: A Defining Voice
- Langston Hughes: A Cultural Icon
- Zora Neale Hurston: A People's Genius
- Harlem Flourishes in All Arts

## Vocabulary

- *The New Negro* • Harlem Renaissance • *God's Trombones*
- choreographers • bigotry

## Harlem

Alain Locke's 1925 book, *The New Negro*, defined an African American people armed with confidence, talent, and training. The African Americans that Locke described blazed a trail of artistic expression that began in the 1920s. Their goal was cultural expression and social change and Harlem was the perfect location to launch these ideas. The movement, initially called the New Negro Movement and eventually known as the **Harlem Renaissance**, lasted for 20 years.

Big, bustling, and brimming with opportunity, Harlem in the early 1920s and 1930s was the "capital of the African American world." Nestled on the northern tip of Manhattan Island in New York City, between Eighth Avenue to the West and the Harlem River to the east, Harlem was a place where the best music, art, and culture of African Americans could be experienced. There were playwrights, sculptors, musicians, poets, actors, journalists, painters, choreographers, novelists, and political activists all vying for

**1915**  
James Weldon and J. Rosamond Johnson compose "Lift Every Voice and Sing," which will become the Black National Anthem.

**1920-1930**  
The Harlem Renaissance begins a 10-year rebirth of African American artistic and cultural creativity.

**1925**  
Alain Locke edits *The New Negro*, which becomes an influential anthology.

**1937**  
Zora Neale Hurston writes one of the greatest novels of African American culture in 1937, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.



cultural space in a new era of African American culture. The Harlem Renaissance was a rebirth of African art and culture on the American side of the ocean.

Harlem drew the best of the writers, jazz and blues musicians, and singers from the Caribbean and from farflung parts of the U.S. Langston Hughes, the poet, came from Kansas. Novelist Zora Neale Hurston came from Florida. Claude McKay, the poet, came from Jamaica, and noted scholar Alain Locke came from Philadelphia. They came, like thousands before them had come, to what seemed to be a sacred gathering of the African world. Harlem streets were filled with gaiety and laughter. People from around the world paid tribute to the men and women who rewrote the African literary, musical, and dance traditions. They were to Harlem and the African American world what they became to the rest of the world: icons of creative genius and the

leaders of a new social order. The New Negro represented a new image of African Americans that would put to rest the stereotyped images of the shuffling African, and the “happy slave.”

Long considered to be the high point of African American culture in the United States, the Harlem Renaissance brought a host of names to the forefront as writers, artists, and scholars. Joining Hughes, Hurston, and McKay were Countee Cullen, Rudolph Fisher, Jean Toomer, James Weldon Johnson, and W. E. B. Du Bois. These writers did not give voice to a common school of thought or share a common objective in their work; rather, they each held to the belief that African Americans had a culture worthy of expression, which they shared as a bond. Nevertheless, they all rejected the style of Paul Laurence Dunbar, considered the most important African American writer prior to the Harlem Renaissance. In lyrics, rhythm, and



Harlem, New York, in the 1920s. This community in New York City was home to an artistic rebirth of African American culture, called the Harlem Renaissance.



utterance, Dunbar achieved a height unequalled by any other African American, but his work was mainly in Ebonics, often called the Black Dialect. The younger poets and writers wanted to demonstrate their ability in Standard English.

One reason for the Harlem Renaissance's creative energy was the migration of African Americans from the South to the northern urban cities. In *The New Negro*, Locke described the northward migration of African Americans from the agrarian (agricultural) South as "something like a spiritual emancipation." The people who came North were bursting with creative energy. The freedom of the North gave them an opportunity to express the emotions and talents that they had held inside for so many years.

### Alain Locke: A Defining Voice

Alain Leroy Locke was born into a well-to-do Philadelphia family in 1886, during the post-Reconstruction era. Locke was a first-rate intellectual who examined all aspects of African American culture. He was the first African American Rhodes Scholar, an honor awarded by Oxford University of England. He was known for his work during the Harlem Renaissance as well as his work in adult education. He also published an annual review of literature and scholarship on African Americans from 1928 until 1953.

Locke served as visiting professor at several universities, including the Universities of Wisconsin and California, the City College of New York, and the New School of Social Science in New York, and as guest professor at the Harvard Academic Festival in Salzburg. He lectured in Latin America, in Haiti, and throughout the United States, and made frequent visits to Dakar, Paris, and Rome. He wrote for *The Crisis*, *Opportunity*, and *Phylon*, and served on the editorial boards for *The American Scholar* and *Progressive Education*. He was a member of the American Philosophical Association and the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures.



Alain Leroy Locke, the first African American Rhodes Scholar, captured the mood of the Harlem Renaissance in his 1925 book, *The New Negro*.

Locke's philosophy had a profound effect on African American thought and behavior. He believed that with greater numbers of African Americans living in the urban North there would be more opportunity for personal growth. He also believed that the liberal policies of the North would allow African Americans the freedom to develop their true potential and break away from the southern stereotypes that some whites refused to let die. Locke was prompted to write that for generations,

"in the mind of America, the Negro has been a formula rather than a human being—a something to be argued about, condemned or defended, to be 'kept down,' or 'in his place,' or 'helped up,' to be worried with or worried over, harassed or patronized, a social bogey or a social burden."

In the 1920s, this view of African Americans was changing rapidly because African Americans had more pride, self-respect, and dignity about their place in the world. In Alain Locke's words, the New Negro was coming of age. He wrote:

"Separate as it may be in color and substance, the culture of the Negro is of a



pattern integral with the times and with its cultural settings."

Locke died in 1954 in New York City a month before the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision integrating public schools.

## Langston Hughes: A Cultural Icon

Langston Hughes became the best-known poet of the Harlem Renaissance. After graduating from high school in Cleveland, Ohio, Hughes took the train to Toluca, Mexico, to visit his father before going to college. His mother had wanted him to get a job to help her pay the bills because his father had left the family. Hughes' father, filled with bitterness and rage against racism and prejudice in the United States, had packed his bags and moved to Mexico. With his mother's blessing, young Hughes went to see his father. On his way to Mexico in 1920, while crossing the Mississippi River on the train at dusk, the teenager jotted down on an envelope his thoughts about the whole history of Africans

### The Negro Speaks of Rivers

I've known rivers:  
I've known rivers ancient as the world  
and older than the flow  
of human blood in human veins.  
My soul has grown deep like the rivers.  
I bathed in the Euphrates when  
dawns were young.  
I built my hut near the Congo and it  
lulled me to sleep.  
I looked upon the Nile and raised the  
pyramids above it.  
I heard the singing of the Mississippi  
when Abe Lincoln went  
down to New Orleans and I've seen its  
muddy bosom  
Turn all golden in the sunset.  
I've known rivers:  
Ancient, dusky rivers.  
My soul has grown deep like the rivers.



Langston Hughes, one of the best-known poets of the Harlem Renaissance, also wrote plays, novels, and memoirs about African American life.

and rivers in a poem entitled "The Negro Speaks of Rivers."

Little did he know that this poem would make him famous. It was highly praised by literary critics and magazine editors and sung from the pulpits of Baptist churches. Hughes' poem became one of the most quoted pieces of African American literature. When he arrived in Harlem to attend Columbia University in 1921, he was only 19 years old but already an accomplished writer. He would later compose and excel in every known genre of literature—journalism, short stories, novels, poetry, plays, essays, travel journals, and satire.

In June 1926, at 24 years of age, Hughes wrote an African American Declaration of Independence for African American artists, which was published in *The Nation*, a popular national magazine. Hughes' essay, "The Negro Artist and Racial Mountain," stated boldly that the contributions of African American writers were as much a part of literature as European American writing. Hughes announced:

"We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned



selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. . . . We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves."

This declaration would serve as a cultural yardstick for future African American writers. His own success was a powerful example of what African Americans could do if they believed in themselves. Since that time, hundreds of composers, musicians, playwrights, and artists have flourished in the African American community.

Hughes' Declaration struck at the heart of the psychological dislocation among some African Americans. It was dislocation that made them resent his poetry for its emphasis on African themes and subjects. It was as if these lost Africans believed that African Americans were not worthy of poetic consideration. Hughes spoke most directly to those African Americans who were denying their own cultural expression and heritage. To emphasize this point, he wrote a short profile of the "Philadelphia Clubwoman." This elite woman of the 1920s represented a class of wealthy urban African American women who were trying desperately to distance themselves from things African.

Hughes wrote:

"The old sub-conscious 'white is best' runs through her mind. Years of study under white teachers, a lifetime of white books, pictures, and papers, and white manners, morals, and Puritan standards made her dislike the Spirituals. And now she turns up her nose at jazz and all its manifestations—likewise almost everything else distinctively racial. She does not want a true picture of herself from anybody."

Hughes' insights into the problems that African Americans would have to overcome in order to express and promote their culture were remarkable for a young man of his age.

## Zora Neale Hurston: A People's Genius

Zora Neale Hurston was born in Alabama sometime between 1891 and 1901. Her exact age was never known. She and her family resettled in Eatonville, Florida, the first incorporated African American community in America. She traveled north to attend Howard University and Columbia University and emerged during the 1930s as one of the most authentic African American voices in literature. Hurston's approach was authentic because she used all of her knowledge of the language, music, and folklore of the southern African American to create a genuine people's literature. She was a gifted writer and anthropologist (a scientist who studies humankind) and was consulted on various aspects of African American culture. She combined common sense, literary style, and passion to produce one of the greatest novels of African American culture in 1937, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Hurston recalled:

"I wrote *Their Eyes Were Watching God* in Haiti. It was dammed up in me, and I wrote it under internal pressure in seven weeks."

Never satisfied with her work, even such an artistic triumph as this novel, Hurston was ever trying to perfect her craft. Hurston's novels were heavily based on the folklore she gathered. After obtaining a research fellowship from Carter Woodson's Association for the Study of Negro



Zora Neale Hurston, best known for her 1937 novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, used her knowledge of the language, music, and folklore of African Americans in the South in her work.



Life and History, she returned to her hometown in the South. While thousands of African Americans were migrating to the North seeking better opportunities, Hurston was moving in the opposite direction, a tendency that often characterized her life.

Within an eight-year period, Hurston wrote six books, including an autobiography, *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942). Most of her best-known books were published after the storied Harlem Renaissance was over. She spent a lot of time at A'lelia Walker's Dark Tower salon, where she collaborated with other writers. Walker was the wealthy daughter of Madame C. J. Walker, the founder of an African American beauty-care products company. She often used her wealth to support African American artists. Hurston's association with A'lelia led to a brief partnership with Langston Hughes. The partnership ended in dispute, with each claiming to be the principal author of "Mule Bone," a three-act folk play. (The play was finally performed in 1991.) Their collaborative effort makes her as much a part of the Harlem Renaissance era as any of the other famous artists. Hurston was as complex as she was flamboyant. One of her associates said:

**"when she walked into a room she dominated it."**

And for the several decades following the Renaissance, her literary talent and production dominated the industry.

## Harlem Flourishes in All Arts

The Harlem Renaissance revived, defined, and uplifted the best of African American traditions. The works of the cultural giants of the era are forever recorded in history. James Weldon Johnson, the author of what became known as "The Negro National Anthem" or "Lift Every Voice and Sing," was a major influence. He



Augusta Savage, right, works in her studio on a section of the sculpture, "The Harp," which was created for the 1939 New York World's Fair.

wrote the words and his brother, J. Rosamond Johnson, wrote the music in 1915 to honor the 50th anniversary of the death of Abraham Lincoln. Johnson was not alone in his recognition of whites who had worked for national unity and human rights. Both Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston paid tribute to Carl Van Vechten, a white financier, writer, photographer, and avid supporter of African American literature in the 1930s and '40s.

James Weldon Johnson worked with the NAACP and used his position to teach the community about history and art. He was a gifted poet and his collection of sermons, called ***God's Trombones***, made him famous as a leader of the Harlem Renaissance. Young people memorized his works, "The Crucifixion" and "The Creation," and recited them at oral contests.

The Harlem Renaissance was not just about literature. Along with the literary greats were the musical geniuses. None stood so tall at the time as Duke Ellington, whose band played to full houses in the Harlem nightclubs. Whites came from downtown Manhattan and the outlying communities of New Jersey to hear the





1. Louis Armstrong (trumpeter) 2. Ferdinand "Jellyroll" Morton (pianist-composer)  
3. Sidney Bechet (clarinetist) 4. (from L to R) poet Langston Hughes, sociologist Charles S. Johnson, sociologist E. Franklin Frazier, novelist Rudolph Fisher, and Hubert Delany.

dynamic jazz of Ellington's band. Among his famous tunes were "Mood Indigo" and "Take the A Train." It is believed that Ellington co-wrote more than 1,000 musical compositions—more than any other American composer.

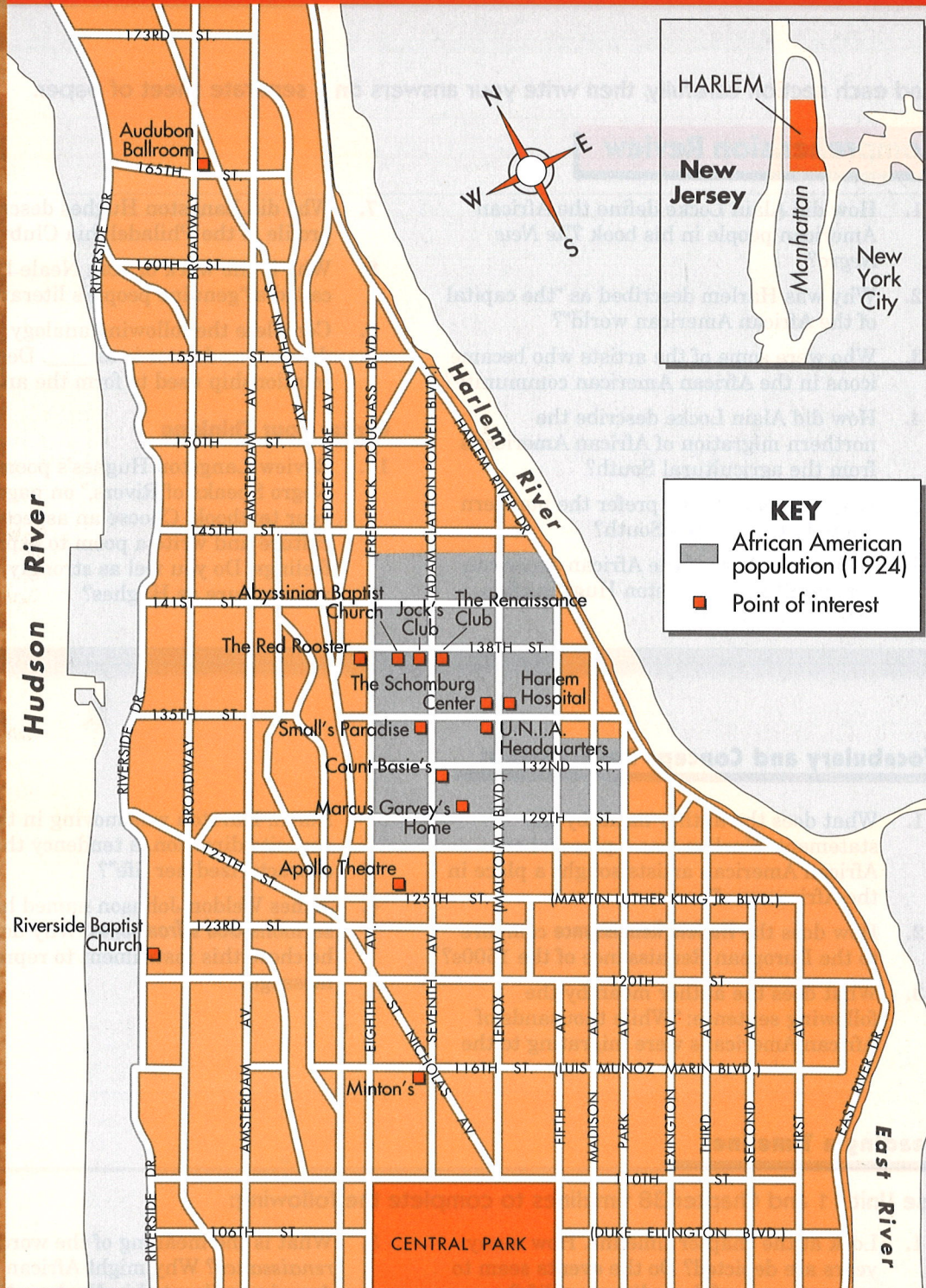
Like the musicians, the **choreographers** and dancers led the way to the Renaissance. Choreographers design and interpret dance performances. They are to dancers what directors are to actors. Pearl Primus, who migrated from Barbados to New York, became one of the pioneers in interpreting traditional African dance for the American audience. Her rendering of Funga, a traditional West African welcome dance from Liberia, has become the most popular and widely imitated African dance in modern times. By the time Primus died in

1994, she had become one of the most celebrated dancer-choreographer-teachers in U.S. history. Only Katherine Dunham, inspired by Haitian and Jamaican dances, rivaled Primus' work on the dance stage during the late 1930s and '40s.

Despite the great outpouring of cultural creations, the artists and intellectuals knew that they remained tied to the American reality of segregation, injustice, and **bigotry**. African American genius could illuminate the stage of the Cotton Club and other nightspots, yet African American patrons could not enter the club's front door because of racism. The African Americans in Harlem knew that it would take more than art to transform a racist society, so the journey toward liberation could not stop.



## HARLEM, NEW YORK (1924-PRESENT)



### INTERPRETING A MAP

Does the grey-shaded area, with the points of interest, seem like a densely populated area? Do you think there was

a benefit to how culture flourished here, provided by the way Harlem was situated within Manhattan?





## Chapter 38 After You Read

Read each section carefully, then write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

### Comprehension Review

1. How did Alain Locke define the African American people in his book *The New Negro*?
2. Why was Harlem described as “the capital of the African American world”?
3. Who were some of the artists who became icons in the African American community?
4. How did Alain Locke describe the northern migration of African Americans from the agricultural South?
5. Why did Alain Locke prefer the northern United States to the South?
6. Which members of the African American community did Langston Hughes often direct his words to?
7. Who did Langston Hughes describe in his profile of the Philadelphia Clubwoman?
8. Why is the work of Zora Neale Hurston called a “genuine people’s literature”?
9. Complete the following analogy: Actor is to director as dancer is to \_\_\_\_\_. Describe the relationship used to form the analogy.

### Center Your Thinking

10. Review Langston Hughes’s poem, “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” on page 355 of your textbook. Choose an aspect of your culture and write a poem to express your feelings. Do you feel as strongly about your culture as Hughes?

### Vocabulary and Concept Development

1. What does the author mean by the statement “Harlem was a place where African American artists sought a place in the African sun”?
2. How does the **Harlem Renaissance** compare to the European Renaissance of the 1500s?
3. What does the author mean by the following sentence: “While thousands of African Americans were migrating to the North, Hurston was moving in the opposite direction, a tendency that often characterized her life”?
4. James Weldon Johnson named his sermons **God’s Trombones**. Why do you think he chose this instrument to represent his message?

### Reading a Timeline

Use Unit 11 and Chapter 38 timelines to complete the following:

1. Look at the chapter timeline. How many years are depicted? Do the events seem to suggest successful conditions of life?
2. What kind of period would you call this for African Americans? Was it successful for some African Americans and not others? Explain your answer.
3. What is the meaning of the word *renaissance*? Why might African Americans (located in Harlem, N.Y.) have experienced a renaissance? Why might this period have ended? You may look at the unit timeline to help you form an answer.