

## **An Introduction to Jazz**

### **Grade 5 | Lesson Plan 4: The Harlem Renaissance**

*Adapted from Jazz in America: The National Jazz Curriculum*

#### **TOPICS:**

1. The Harlem Renaissance
2. Jazz as Part of the Harlem Renaissance
3. Effects of the Harlem Renaissance on Jazz

#### **SESSION OBJECTIVES:**

The student will:

1. gain a fundamental understanding of the Harlem Renaissance
2. gain a fundamental understanding of the role of jazz in the Harlem Renaissance
3. understand the historical significance and cultural implications of the Harlem Renaissance

#### **MATERIALS**

1. Computer with internet connection
2. Speaker system

*Note: This lesson plan includes prompts to play selections from a variety of jazz recordings. Many of the suggested recordings can be found on the Instrumental History of Jazz, which is available as a YouTube playlist, as well as a variety of streaming and/or download outlets including iTunes, Apple Music and Spotify.*

#### **INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES:**

The instructor will:

1. discuss the background of the Harlem Renaissance
2. discuss the role of jazz during the Harlem Renaissance
3. play various jazz recordings

#### **STUDENT ACTIVITIES:**

The students will:

1. participate in a class discussion regarding the history of the Harlem Renaissance
2. participate in a class discussion regarding jazz in the historical context of the 1910's and 1920's
3. listen to jazz recordings

## Content Outline

### I. Harlem Renaissance

#### A. An Outburst of Creativity

1. Beginning around 1918, Harlem was home to many African American professionals, including authors, poets, artists, actors, dancers, composers, and musicians.
2. With a growing sense of racial pride and a desire for social and political equality, a large outpouring of literature, art, and music began to be produced.
3. Most of the works were based in some way on the experiences of blacks in America.

#### B. Contributing Factors

1. During the Great Migration, African Americans moved from rural areas to northern cities, including New York City's Harlem neighborhood.
2. African Americans wanted their thoughts and ideas to be heard in their own words.
3. Anger over racism.

#### C. Home to National Organizations

Harlem was home to two of the most important African American organizations:

1. **The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)** was founded in 1909 to help advance the rights of African Americans.
2. **The National Urban League** was founded in 1910 to help African Americans address the economic and social problems they encountered as they resettled in the urban North.

#### D. Important Figures

1. authors Alain Locke, W.E.B. DuBois, Marcus Garvey, James Weldon Johnson
2. poets Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Claude McKay
3. artists William H. Johnson, Aaron Douglas, Jacob Lawrence
4. actors Josephine Baker, Paul Robeson, Charles Gilpin, Ethel Waters
5. composers Duke Ellington, Eubie Blake, William Grant Still
6. musicians Cab Calloway, Ella Fitzgerald, Fats Waller, Billie Holiday, Duke Ellington

### II. Jazz during the Harlem Renaissance

#### A. Expression

The Harlem Renaissance was about giving a voice to the experiences of African Americans, and nothing gave expression to the African American experience better than jazz.

1. Jazz was born out of the Black experience in America, basically fusing African and European musical traditions.
2. Jazz evolved from slave work songs, spirituals (religious Black American folk songs), blues, brass band music, and ragtime.
3. Jazz, more than any other music, has been intimately linked with legal and social equality for all, particularly African Americans.

#### B. Harlem & Big Bands

Harlem was the place to hear the best big bands including those led by:

1. Fletcher Henderson
2. Duke Ellington
3. Cab Calloway
4. Benny Goodman

#### C. Radio Broadcasts

Some of the very first coast-to-coast radio broadcasts were from Harlem ballrooms.

1. Listeners all over America, and even some in Europe, heard the music of Duke Ellington's Orchestra as it was broadcast live from The Cotton Club, the most famous of Harlem ballrooms throughout the 1920s and '30s.
2. Live radio broadcasts from the Savoy ballroom brought big band swing into living rooms throughout the United States.

### **III. Effects of the Harlem Renaissance on Jazz**

#### **A. Spotlight on Sophistication**

As the New York elite began attending jazz clubs, jazz became viewed as a sophisticated art form.

#### **B. National Exposure**

The market for jazz was stimulated, both locally and nationally, through radio broadcasts.

#### **C. One Step Closer to Integration**

The Harlem Renaissance brought literary, dramatic, artistic, and musical works to the attention of more whites. A white market developed for these products - including jazz - during the Harlem Renaissance.

#### **D. Appreciation and Understanding**

The Harlem Renaissance brought attention to literary and artistic works by African Americans. Jazz was an important ingredient in a developing appreciation of the artistic talent of African Americans.