

PREVIEW
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THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE



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THE GREAT MIGRATION

- The Civil War in the United States ends in 1865, and several months later, slavery is abolished.
- African Americans were still treated as second-class citizens however, and were regularly faced with the violence of white supremacy.
- Opportunities in the Northern and Midwestern states arose as many industrial jobs did not discriminate against race.
- In 1914, hundreds of thousands of African Americans relocated to these urban cities to seek better economic, social, political, and civil opportunities—known as the Great Migration.



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HARLEM RENAISSANCE



- The Great Migration led many African American families to Harlem, New York.
- Black Americans from all walks of life came together and shared their experiences of racial oppression and determination of living freely.
- This era of cultural opportunity and awakening, blossoming in the 1920s, is known as the Harlem Renaissance.
- Black singers, dancers, actors, musicians, comedians, painters, sculptors, and other artists found success.
- The Harlem Renaissance embodied a more racially tolerable scene for African Americans to express the harsh reality of what life was really like for Black Americans outside of white stereotypes.

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PROHIBITION

- In January 1920, all sales, transportation, and consumption of alcohol was banned in the United States.
- Bootlegging—or the illegal production of alcohol during this time—emerged.
- Both local and federal governments struggled with enforcing the laws of prohibition.
- Speakeasies derived as a result. A speakeasy was an establishment, such as a store or nightclub, that secretly sold alcohol.
- At one time, there were thought to be over 100,000 speakeasies in New York City alone.
- Prohibition was a contributing factor in the arising popular nightlife of urban cities.



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THE COTTON CLUB

- Although, African American culture was taking off in a positive way, racism was still heavily prominent during this decade.
- In 1923, a white gangster opened a nightclub called “The Cotton Club” in Harlem.
- Only white guests were allowed in and he only hired African American help.
- His vision was to recreate an environment that embodied a slave plantation. (Plantations were large farms in the Southern colonies that enforced the harsh labor of African American slaves, as they were treated brutally and under atrocious conditions.)
- The Cotton Club was very controversial. African American staff members were highly criticized by others within their community for working at The Cotton Club.
- The nightclub continuously reinforced racist black stereotypes and attracted white racists into Harlem. On the other hand, many African Americans used it as an opportunity to make a name for themselves and earn a fair living.
- Some viewed the club as a step toward white acceptance and others viewed it as a way for white people to be entertained by Black Americans like zoo animals.



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LEGENDARY ARTISTS

- James Weldon Johnson (writer)
- Langston Hughes (writer)
- Claude McKay (writer)
- Georgia Douglas Johnson (writer)
- Countee Cullen (writer)
- W.E.B. DuBois (writer)
- Zora Neale Hurston (writer and filmmaker)
- Josephine Baker (dancer and singer)
- Louis Armstrong (musician)
- Aaron Douglas (artist)



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THE END OF AN ERA

- In 1929, the Stock Market crashes leaving Americans in financial turmoil.
- In 1933, prohibition ends which meant people no longer had to seek out alcohol in night clubs.
- In 1935, race riots broke out in Harlem after a Black/Puerto Rican teenager was caught stealing at a local store. Although police let him go and the owner didn't press charges, rumors spread that the boy was killed by police. The resulting riots left hundreds injured and arrested, three dead, and the city in complete disarray.
- The Harlem Renaissance has had long lasting positive impacts on society.
- It inspired the Black Arts movement of the 1960s and 1970s.
- It also gave African Americans confidence and control over their own narrative in America for the first time.



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RESOURCES



- <https://www.history.com/topics/roaring-twenties/prohibition>
- <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/cotton-club-harlem-1923/>
- <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/145704/an-introduction-to-the-harlem-renaissance>
- <https://www.nga.gov/education/teachers/lessons-activities/uncovering-america/harlem-renaissance.html>
- https://www.history.com/topics/roaring-twenties/harlem-renaissance#section_12

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