

**ЎЗБЕКИСТОН РЕСПУБЛИКАСИ ОЛИЙ ВА ЎРТА МАХСУС
ТАЪЛИМ ВАЗИРЛИГИ
АНДИЖОН ДАВЛАТ УНИВЕРСИТЕТИ
ХОРИЖИЙ ТИЛЛАР ФАКУЛЬТЕТИ
ИНГЛИЗ ТИЛИ ВА АДАБИЁТИ КАФЕДРАСИ
ИСРОИЛОВА ЗЕБОНИНГ
LANGSTON HUGHES LIFE AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY
МАВЗУСИДАГИ**

КУРС ИШИ

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Introduction

Uzbekistan has a huge potential for the establishment and successful development of foreign economic relations for an active participation in global economic relations . One of these potentials lies in the specific geo-strategic situation of our country , which can be a bridge between the West and east. Other potentials are our advanced economic , manufacturing and social infrastructure.

At present great importance is attached to the study and teaching of foreign languages . No doubt, It happens not without purpose . Today , the importance of our people's perfect knowledge of foreign languages can scarcely be exaggerated as our country aspires to win a decent place in the word community , because our people see their great future as a life in mutual accord and cooperation with their for partners .

But the principle richness of Uzbekistan is it's human potential - our highly educated and industrious people, when bear in themselves both ancient culture and modem knowledge.

It is necessary to remember always that the study of foreign languages should not be carried out at the expense of oblivion to the mothertangue.

Students should leave schools with the Uzbek language as a language of instruction experience while studying foreign languages . The Republic of Uzbekistan accomplishes the construction of a democratic legal state and open civil society, guaranteeing human right and liberties, spiritual renovation of the society , social – orientated marked economy development , integration into the world commonwealth .

The main purpose and motives for on going reforms in the Republic is a man , his harmonious development and prosperity, creation of the conditions and acting mechanisms for the implementation of personal interests , changing the stereotypes of mentality social conduct which became

obsolete . The important condition for the development of Uzbekistan is forming the perfect system of staff training on the basis of rich intellectual legacy of people and values that are common to all mankind , achievements of contemporary culture , economy science , technique and technology .

On December 10 , 2012 President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov signed a decree “ On measures to further improve foreign language learning system “ .

It is noted that in the framework of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan . “ On education “ and the National Program for Training in the country , a comprehensive foreign languages teaching system , aimed at the creating harmoniously developed , highly educated , modern – thinking young generation , further integration of the country to the world community , has been created . During the years of independence , over 51.7 thousand teachers of foreign languages graduated from universities , English, French, and German multimedia tutorials and textbooks for 5-9 grades of secondary schools , electronic resources for learning English in primary schools were created , more than 5 thousand secondary schools , professional colleges and academic lyceums were equipped with language laboratories .

THE INFLUENCE OF WORLD WAR AND DEPRESSION ON AMERICAN LITERATURE

The period of the Lost Generation's ascendancy and influence lasted barely a decade, and began to wane after the Stock Market Crash of 1929 and the Great Depression which followed in the early 1930s. Like their European counterparts, American Modernists such as Stein, Pound, and Williams had initially pursued formal literary innovation at the expense of political or historical context; as William Carlos Williams put it in *The Great American Novel*, "Clean, clean he had taken each word and made it new for himself so that at last it was new, free from the world for himself" (1923; 17). Now, though, the Depression years and the alarming growth of Fascism and Communism required public intellectuals to address the political tide, to take sides and make allegiances. Many, including George Orwell, André Gide, and Arthur Koestler, Dreiser, Steinbeck, and Dos Passos, turned to the left, and looked to the Soviet experiment in Russia for solutions to the economic and ethical crises of the 1930s.

The "Roaring Twenties" of hedonism and experiment in Paris were replaced by the chastened Depression years, and the arts reflected this change, as a new spirit of realism took hold in American (and European) fiction. This was also an era when American literature turned to face inwards again, when authors returned from their European travels and focused on alarming domestic developments. Characteristic titles from this depressing decade were Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* (1925; YA.1986.b.1522), Michael Gold's *Jews Without Money* (1930; X.808/6212), Dos Passos's *USA* (1938; 12718.cc.22), Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939; Cup.410.f.84), and the portraits of rural deprivation in James Agee and Walker Evans's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941; 1960; 10153.ff.26).

"American tragedies" of all kinds—wildcat strikes in the cities and poverty and hardship in the Dustbowl—would continue to preoccupy American writers and intellectuals at least until 1941, when the Japanese strike on Pearl Harbour forced the United States out of isolation and into international affairs once more. Again, throughout the 1940s-1950s, another wave of North Americans, many in Europe

for the altogether less hedonistic purpose of fighting Fascism, found their way to Paris. Again, following in the pioneering footsteps of Stein, Hemingway, *et al*, the list of authors who either wrote or published first in Europe reads like a who's who of the post-war era: James Baldwin, Saul Bellow, William Burroughs, Paul Bowles, Truman Capote, Leonard Cohen, J.P. Donleavy, Joseph Heller, Mary McCarthy, Norman Mailer, Bernard Malamud, Henry Miller, Vladimir Nabokov, Thomas Pynchon, Mordecai Richler, Philip Roth, J.D. Salinger, Edmund Wilson, Thomas Wolfe, and Kurt Vonnegut. Like their forebears in the inter-war years, many of these writers, once again scarred by horrific experiences of Europe at war, found dark inspiration in the surreal spectacle of the continent's descent into chaos.

One of these writers, Henry Miller, had, in fact, been in Europe for longer than most, and his time in Paris spanned the 1930s, that anxious decade after most of the expatriates left, and the forces of Fascism mustered across Western Europe. Sometimes threatening to overshadow his literary achievements, Miller's influence as a social libertine and radical cannot be underestimated. In often ill-tempered partnership with Jack Kahane, head of the Paris-based Obelisk Press and another pioneer of "free expression", Miller eventually brought forth his rancorous reflections on exile and debauchery in *Tropic of Cancer* (1935). Paradoxically, this was an era both of literary experiment and unprecedented censorship, when controversies around their work forced Joyce and Lawrence, Louis-Ferdinand Céline, Anais Nin, Lawrence Durrell, and Radclyffe Hall, among others, to seek the support of courageous small presses, often in comparatively liberal Paris as opposed to London or New York.

Cultures of the Great Depression:

Stock Market Crash, 1929: 25% unemployment. A period of great questioning—the 20s had seen a questioning of traditional morality, but the despair of everyday life led people globally to question the validity of systems like capitalism, democracy, and individualism.

Dust Bowl—rapid Westward expansion occurred without check. Deep plowing of the virgin topsoil of the Great Plains—the grasses prevented erosion—

without crop rotation or cover crops “unanchored” the topsoil, especially during the intense droughts of the early Thirties. It dried up and turned to dust without anything to hold it down: massive billowing clouds or “black blizzards.” Millions of acres of farmland became useless and hundreds of thousands—often called “Okies” since many were from Oklahoma—had to migrate West to find work.

Hobo Culture—250,000 some young men riding the rails in search of work as well as adventure (the newest wandering emblems of the American pioneer spirit or a blight and disgrace). Riding the Rails.

Political Life:

FDR assumes presidency in 1932: **New Deal**—didn’t solve the financial crisis or end the Depression but it represented a governmental/state commitment to the security of everyday American life never known before making the government for the first real time responsible for the economic life of the nation and the well-being of its citizens.

New Deal: liberalism shifts from laissez-faire to massive state reorganization

Installed numerous “relief programs”:

Repealed Prohibition, set up Farm Relief Programs

Wagner Act 1935—gave workers right to unionize.

Social Security Act of 1935—ensured income for the elderly

Civilian Conservation Corps—put 3 million unemployed men (many veterans) to work conserving natural resources: roads, national parks,

But individualism, democracy, and capitalism losing their glow...many looking to collectivist solutions.

Right: rise of fascist totalitarian dictatorships in Germany, Italy, Spain. Nation an organic, racial community in need of powerful authoritarian leadership to preserve itself. Violence and war in preservation of “the people” considered therapeutic and restorative—a “vitalist” regeneration. Only a unified, shared culture and a single-party state gives people identity—an utter

rejection of individualism, liberalism, capitalism. No class conflict, only total allegiance to the leader and the state.

Left/ Progressivism: Rise of the Communist Party USA, Fellow Traveling (pinkos), Socialists eventuating in the convergence of **the Popular Front**: a major coalition of left-leaning liberals and radicals seeking economic and social restructuring, not just “relief.” But mostly a force devoted to “antifascism.” Franco’s coup in 1936 in Spain unites this coalition, thousands of Americans—many intellectuals, women, people of color—formed the Abraham Lincoln Brigades: Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms*.

–sequence of events in late 1930s would lead to the demise of the left: Hitler-Stalin Pact, revelations of the Stalinist purges known as the “Moscow Show Trials” or Stalin’s “Great Purge”: somewhere around 1 million executed.

Cultural Life: Morris Dickstein rightly describes the culture of the depression as the victim of a “split personality.” On one hand, there was a concerted effort to explain what was happening, to interpret and describe an unprecedented economic disaster. On the other, the need to escape, to create art and entertainment that would distract people from their trouble. Tension: radical confrontation and aesthetic escape/flight.

A great deal of artistic and cultural expression was government funded through the New Deal’s Public Works of Art program and later Federal Art Project. Many public buildings and train stations commissioned large mural painted by American artists and focusing on American cultural and historical themes.

New Focus on Regionalism and the “American Way of Life”—could be a positively or negatively rendered subject (Grant Wood’s *American Gothic* satirizes American dumpiness while Thomas Hart Benton celebrates the spirit of the hard working American worker). “The Star Spangled Banner” designated the national anthem in 1931.

–Edward Hopper as urban regionalism, Georgia O’Keeffe as Western Regionalism

–return to folk culture

–numerous cultural anthropologists set out to record the fading folk traditions of American life. Alan Lomax and Charles Seeger took tape recorders into prisons and on chain gangs to capture a fading music culture. Zora Neal Hurston set out to record the lives of backwater communities being threatened by modernity.

LEFT WING folk culture develops: Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger used folk music to enliven a spirit of protest.

RIGHT WING folk culture develops: plantation nostalgia of *Gone With Wind*, remembrance of times of “plenty” as a resource for future hope. *I’ll Take My Stand*, a major manifesto of white Southern writers urging a return to agrarian traditions.

Film: provided hope for a demoralized nation...despite poverty, millions of people continued to flock to theaters each week.

–it’s during the 30s that we really begin to get many of our film “genres”—the Western, the Mobster Movie, the Cartoon, the “Screwball” Comedy.

–provided despairing audiences with new images—Tommy-gun toting gangsters, sleazy politicians, haggard prostitutes. Mobsters and Bank Robbers became popular not as villains but as HEROS—a kind of populist antidote to the “legal” swindling of Wall Street and Banks (now seen by many as the REAL villains).

–a spirit of irreverence for traditional institutions and family values.

–Frank Capra’s comedies portrayed the “little man” standing up against institutional corruption and restoring America to its most wholesome version of itself.

–in general, though, a HUNGER FOR HEROES: immense popularity of Yankees games on the radio with a cult of appreciation for greats like Lou Gehrig and Joe Dimaggio

–Frenzy over Seabiscuit (a beat up, broken down horse that beat all the odds to win races),

—a whole RADIO culture of Superheroes emerges—Superman, Batman, The Green Lantern, The Shadow as well as the Lone Ranger—and a number of “hard-boiled” detectives heroes who modeled the hard-living masculine virtues of “toughness” and “endurance.”

Literary Culture: experimentalism continues unabated, particularly in the form of the “stream of consciousness” novel.

—but a new trend toward DOCUMENTARY REALISM emerges as a means to portray the reality of the hardships people experience.

—a whole slew of novels that take up the theme of the “common man” [or woman!], most notably John Steinbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath*.

NOVELS:

Steinbeck, *Grapes of Wrath*

Steinbeck, *In Dubious Battle*

Clifford Odets, *Waiting for Lefty* (play)

James T. Farrell, *Studs Lonigan Trilogy*

Caldwell’s *Tobacco Road*

Caldwell’s *God’s Little Acre*

Agee/Walker’s *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*

Jack Conroy’s *A World to Win*

Jack Conroy, *The Disinherited* (1933)

Meridel le Sueur, *The Girl* (1939/78)

Tillie Olsen, *Yonnondio*

Grace Lumpkin, *To Make My Bread*

Robert Cantwell, *The Land of Plenty* (1935)*

Howard Fast

Albert Halper, *Union Square* [but check out his memoir of the 1930s *Goodbye Union Square*]

Albert Maltz [number of novels, blacklisted]

Henry Roth, *Call it Sleep*

John G. Niehardt, *Black Elk Speaks*

D'Arcy McNickel, *The Surrounded* (great recovered Native American 1936)

Yeziarska's *The Bread Givers*

Josephine Herbst, *Trexler Trilogy*

Barbara Foley's book leads way here

Mike Gold, *Jews Without Money* (1930)

Jack Conroy, *The Disinherited* (1933)

Tillie Olsen, *Yonnandio: From the Thirties* (1930s)

Ellen Glasgow, *Vein of Iron* (1935)

Sinclair Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here* (1935)

John Dos Passos, *The Big Money* (1936)

Margaret Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind* (1936)

Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937)

Meridel le Sueur, *The Girl* (1939/1978)

Nathanael West, *The Day of the Locust* (1939)

Ernest Hemingway, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940)

William Attaway, *Blood on the Forge* (1941)

I'll Take My Stand

[whole series subtitled "Radical Novel Reconsidered"]

Pietro Di Donato, *Christ in Concrete*

NOTES on MERIDEL le SUEUR's *The Girl* (1939)

Written and submitted for publication in 1939, contemporaneous with the huge popularity of *The Wizard of Oz* and Judy Garland's famous song from the era: "Somewhere Over the Rainbow." A longing for "somewhere" far away from the colorless, dismal lives of depression-ruined America. But many embraced the midWest as a source of inspiration where factory and farm workers constituted a culture of renewal and dissent.

Women writing in the 1930s had come of age with suffrage, understanding its limitations but benefiting from widened opportunities; the Depression, which severely contracted men's economic and social mobility, paradoxically contributed to these writers' sense of possibility, opening another world of experience to

literary scrutiny—the inner lives of poor and working-class people coming to collective consciousness.

Dubbed “Lady Lazarus” in the 70s and 80s after 30 years of repression during the Cold War when she was blacklisted during the McCarthy administration and her family shadowed by the FBI. She still worked as a socialist activist,

–b. 1900 in Murray, Iowa: daughter of a women’s suffragist (mother) and a Church of Christ minister (father) from whom her mother separated and she traveled with her on the “Chatauqua network” lecturing on Birth Control, Education, and Voting Rights.

–mother moved to Fort Scott, Kansas to helm the Dept. of English at an upstart Socialist university, the People’s College...burned down by antisocialists.

–moved to St. Paul to organize with IWW, “Wobblies” and worked with local anarchists, socialists, and union organizers.

–their house was frequented by leading figures on the Left of that time: Eugene Debs and Emma Goldman.

She left home before graduating high school to attend the McFadden’s Physical Culture School in Chicago, Illinois. After a year in Chicago, she studied acting at the American Academy of Dramatic Art in New York and lived in a commune that counted Goldman and Alexander Berkman among its members. After acting in New York and then in Hollywood as a stuntwoman, she joined the Communist Party in 1924 and began to write articles for the Daily Worker and The New Masses on the subjects of breadlines, labor strikes, unemployment, and the rights of farmers. In 1926 she married Harry Rice (Yasha Rubonoff), an organizer she met in St. Paul, and had two daughters with him, Rachel (born in 1928) and Deborah (born in 1930), before they divorced in the early 1930s. In 1927 she was jailed during a protest against the executions of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, and she published her first short story, “Persephone,” in the May issue of The Dial (republished in The Best Short Stories of 1927), a sign of her promising public literary career. In the late 1920s she became involved with Robert Brown, an artist.

During the 1930s Le Sueur began working for the New Deal Federal Workers' Project; became involved in the Worker's Alliance, whose artist and writer members found work in the arts for the unemployed; and founded, with Dale Kramer, Midwest Magazine. She was also involved in the John Reed Clubs and through that involvement met individuals such as Richard Wright and Jack Conroy. In addition to these writer-activist efforts, Le Sueur's contributions to the literary arts gained recognition throughout the 1930s.

Le Sueur believed that "political action is an expression of one's belief in humanity, and that the body's desires, the earth's cycles, and the life of the community are all part of the living whole. Since sexual repression and class conflict pit the individual against the group and reduce the life force to a commodity, she portrays the oppression of sexual relations as part of the pattern of corruption of human relations under capitalism."

Despite the dark subject matter of much of her writing, critics are always quick to note that Le Sueur imbues her characters with grace and lyricism. Her works suggest that life is struggle but that conditions of oppression may be overcome, since, as she once commented, "Survival is a form of resistance." Le Sueur's contributions to socialist radical literature tend to be described in one of two ways: as giving voice either to a resistance to the sexist nature of the Communist Party or to a persistent sense that women, immigrants, ethnic minorities, and certain regions of the United States were outside of socialist politics. In this regard, her work is considered a vital part of the movement in the Communist Party from the late 1930s that became known as the People's Front, which encouraged writers to subordinate themselves to the proletariat.

After 1947

During the Cold War, particularly after 1947, socialists such as Le Sueur were harassed, blacklisted, and subjected to the scrutiny of the House Committee on Un-American Activities. With the Soviet Union and thus Communism and socialism perceived by the government and certain politicians as a tangible threat, Le Sueur and her family were hounded by the FBI and, as she reported in a journal,

under constant surveillance. In 1954 Le Sueur and her daughters were implicated by a witness for the Senate Select Internal Committee, and their names were in newspaper headlines the same week that Le Sueur was mourning the loss of her mother, Marian. In response to both of her parents' recent deaths and the death of Brown, her longtime companion, she was led to write *Crusaders*, a testimonial about her parents' endurance and, as the dust jacket explains, an "antidote to fear." As a further testament to the legacy of these loved ones, Le Sueur remained steadfast in her involvement with the Communist Party, in an era when Party membership shrank from twenty thousand in 1956 to three thousand in 1958. Le Sueur also published a provocative piece of reportage in 1956 in *Masses and Mainstream*, an essay titled "The Dark of the Time." Ostensibly, "The Dark of the Time" chronicles the author's journey to find the place where Nancy Hanks gave birth to Abraham Lincoln, but it becomes both a meditation on the sublimation of women's roles within public history as well as a plaintive call to reconnect and return to cultural origins, represented by the forebears who "by their labors create all material and spiritual values" that can restore American national vision and hope for the future.

From the mid 1950s until the 1970s Le Sueur intermittently lived among the Oglala Sioux in South Dakota and the Hopi in Arizona. She held odd jobs, waitressing and working in garment shops and, from time to time, as a teacher of writing in venues such as the YMCA. She also supplemented her income by publishing children's books with Knopf, including *Little Brother of the Wilderness: The Story of Johnny Appleseed* (1947) and *Sparrow Hawk* (1950), a story of two friends, one who is white and one who is American Indian. Henry Knopf informed Le Sueur of her blacklist status yet supported her endeavors because of his political sympathies. Even these writings did not escape censure: *The River Road: A Story of Abraham Lincoln* (1954) was described by a reviewer for the *Milwaukee Sentinel* (28 November 1954) as having "pink-tinged pages." While some readers have dismissed these works as apolitical and written out of economic necessity, it is impossible to overlook the way Le Sueur's children's

books stress the importance of communal identity, the relationship between humanity and the natural world, and the racial and economic strife that accompanied the so-called settling of the frontier.

The Girl:

–taken from “found” speech, a patchwork of stitched together stories

–a “conversion” novel classified under the “proletarian realism,” “social realism,” or “documentary realism.”

–narrator unnamed: 1. a testament to the *anonymity* of life under industrial capitalism. 2. but also a testament to the *universality* of her experience.

Subverts the traditional Victorian emphasis on wholesome values: hard work, delayed gratification, sexual repression, self-improvement, sobriety

Read against masculinity of communist ideal: the “manly” nature of the proletarian ideal. The party actually disappointed in her “lyricism” wanting literature that would be more directly propagandistic, committed exclusively to organizing rather than aesthetics.

Typical communist novel about men organizing against unemployment and hunger; *Le Sueur* uses a feminist perspective to emphasize women’s bodies and desire as sites of struggle, using maternity and heterosexuality to forge the consciousness of the working-class woman.

Read against party’s propaganda of the virtuous, steadfast communist woman and the CPs insistence on the first priority of family life (they outlawed abortion in 1936).

THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

The Harlem Renaissance, a cultural, social, and artistic explosion that took place in Harlem, New York, spanned the 1920s. During the time, it was known as the "New Negro Movement," named after the 1925 anthology by Alain Locke. The Movement also included the new African-American cultural expressions across the urban areas in the Northeast and Midwest United States affected by the Great Migration (African American), of which Harlem was the largest. The Harlem Renaissance was considered to be a rebirth of African-American arts. Though it was centered in the Harlem neighborhood of the borough of Manhattan in New York City, many francophone black writers from African and Caribbean colonies who lived in Paris were also influenced by the Harlem Renaissance.

The Harlem Renaissance is generally considered to have spanned from about 1918 until the mid-1930s.^[7] Many of its ideas lived on much longer. The zenith of this "flowering of Negro literature", as James Weldon Johnson preferred to call the Harlem Renaissance, took place between 1924 (when *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life* hosted a party for black writers where many white publishers were in attendance) and 1929 (the year of the stock market crash and the beginning of the Great Depression).

Harlem Renaissance, a blossoming (c. 1918–37) of African American culture, particularly in the creative arts, and the most influential movement in African American literary history. Embracing literary, musical, theatrical, and visual arts, participants sought to reconceptualize "the Negro" apart from the white stereotypes that had influenced black peoples' relationship to their heritage and to each other. They also sought to break free of Victorian moral values and bourgeois shame about aspects of their lives that might, as seen by whites, reinforce racist beliefs. Never dominated by a particular school of thought but rather characterized by intense debate, the movement laid the groundwork for all later African American literature and had an enormous impact on subsequent black literature and consciousness worldwide. While the renaissance was not confined to the

Harlem district of New York City, Harlem attracted a remarkable concentration of intellect and talent and served as the symbolic capital of this cultural awakening.

The nucleus of the movement included Jean Toomer, Langston Hughes, Rudolf Fisher, Wallace Thurman, Jessie Redmon Fauset, Nella Larsen, Arna Bontemps, Countee Cullen, and Zora Neale Hurston. An older generation of writers and intellectuals—James Weldon Johnson, Claude McKay, Alain Locke, and Charles S. Johnson—served as mentors.

The publishing industry, fueled by whites' fascination with the exotic world of Harlem, sought out and published black writers. With much of the literature focusing on a realistic portrayal of black life, conservative black critics feared that the depiction of ghetto realism would impede the cause of racial equality. The intent of the movement, however, was not political but aesthetic. Any benefit a burgeoning black contribution to literature might have in defraying racial prejudice was secondary to, as Langston Hughes put it, the “expression of our individual dark-skinned selves.”

The Harlem Renaissance influenced future generations of black writers, but it was largely ignored by the literary establishment after it waned in the 1930s. With the advent of the civil rights movement, it again acquired wider recognition.

Until the end of the Civil War, the majority of African Americans had been enslaved and lived in the South. During the Reconstruction Era, the emancipated African Americans, freedmen, began to strive for civic participation, political equality and economic and cultural self-determination. Soon after the end of the Civil War the Ku Klux Klan Act of 1871 gave rise to speeches by African-American Congressmen addressing this Bill.^[8] By 1875 sixteen blacks had been elected and served in Congress and gave numerous speeches with their newfound civil empowerment. The Ku Klux Klan Act of 1871 was denounced by black Congressmen^l and resulted in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1875, part of Reconstruction legislation by Republicans. By the late 1870s, Democratic whites managed to regain power in the South. From 1890 to 1908 they proceeded to pass legislation that disenfranchised most Negroes and many poor whites, trapping them

without representation. They established white supremacist regimes of Jim Crow segregation in the South and one-party block voting behind southern Democrats. The Democratic whites denied African Americans their exercise of civil and political rights by terrorizing black communities with lynch mobs and other forms of vigilante violence as well as by instituting a convict labor system that forced many thousands of African Americans back into unpaid labor in mines, on plantations, and on public works projects such as roads and levees. Convict laborers were typically subject to brutal forms of corporal punishment, overwork, and disease from unsanitary conditions. Death rates were extraordinarily high.^[11] While a small number of blacks were able to acquire land shortly after the Civil War, most were exploited as sharecroppers.^[12] As life in the South became increasingly difficult, African Americans began to migrate north in great numbers.

Most of the African-American literary movement arose from a generation that had memories of the gains and losses of Reconstruction after the Civil War. Sometimes their parents or grandparents had been slaves. Their ancestors had sometimes benefited by paternal investment in cultural capital, including better-than-average education. Many in the Harlem Renaissance were part of the early 20th century Great Migration out of the South into the Negro neighborhoods of the North and Midwest. African Americans sought a better standard of living and relief from the institutionalized racism in the South. Others were people of African descent from racially stratified communities in the Caribbean who came to the United States hoping for a better life. Uniting most of them was their convergence in Harlem.

During the early portion of the 20th century, Harlem was the destination for migrants from around the country, attracting both people seeking work from the South, and an educated class who made the area a center of culture, as well as a growing "Negro" middle class. The district had originally been developed in the 19th century as an exclusive suburb for the white middle and upper middle classes; its affluent beginnings led to the development of stately houses, grand avenues, and world-class amenities such as the Polo Grounds and the Harlem Opera House.

During the enormous influx of European immigrants in the late 19th century, the once exclusive district was abandoned by the white middle class, who moved further north.

Harlem became an African-American neighborhood in the early 1900s. In 1910, a large block along 135th Street and Fifth Avenue was bought by various African-American realtors and a church group. Many more African Americans arrived during the First World War. Due to the war, the migration of laborers from Europe virtually ceased, while the war effort resulted in a massive demand for unskilled industrial labor. The Great Migration brought hundreds of thousands of African Americans to cities such as Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, and New York.

Despite the increasing popularity of Negro culture, virulent white racism, often by more recent ethnic immigrants, continued to affect African-American communities, even in the North. After the end of World War I, many African-American soldiers—who fought in segregated units such as the Harlem Hellfighters—came home to a nation whose citizens often did not respect their accomplishments. Race riots and other civil uprisings occurred throughout the US during the Red Summer of 1919, reflecting economic competition over jobs and housing in many cities, as well as tensions over social territories.

The first stage of the Harlem Renaissance started in the late 1910s. In 1917, the premiere of *Three Plays for a Negro Theatre* took place. These plays, written by white playwright Ridgely Torrence, featured African-American actors conveying complex human emotions and yearnings. They rejected the stereotypes of the blackface and minstrel show traditions. James Weldon Johnson in 1917 called the premieres of these plays "the most important single event in the entire history of the Negro in the American Theater". Another landmark came in 1919, when the poet Claude McKay published his militant sonnet, "If We Must Die," which introduced a dramatically political dimension to the themes of African cultural inheritance and modern urban experience featured in his 1917 poems "Invocation" and "Harlem Dancer" (published under the pseudonym Eli Edwards, these were his first appearance in print in the United States after immigrating from

Jamaica).^[14] Although "If We Must Die" never alluded to race, African-American readers heard its note of defiance in the face of racism and the nationwide race riots and lynchings then taking place. By the end of the First World War, the fiction of James Weldon Johnson and the poetry of Claude McKay were describing the reality of contemporary African-American life in America.

In 1917 Hubert Harrison, "The Father of Harlem Radicalism", founded the Liberty League and *The Voice*, the first organization and the first newspaper, respectively, of the "New Negro Movement". Harrison's organization and newspaper were political, but also emphasized the arts (his newspaper had "Poetry for the People" and book review sections). In 1927, in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, Harrison challenged the notion of the renaissance. He argued that the "Negro Literary Renaissance" notion overlooked "the stream of literary and artistic products which had flowed uninterruptedly from Negro writers from 1850 to the present", and said the so-called "renaissance" was largely a white invention.

The Harlem Renaissance grew out of the changes that had taken place in the African-American community since the abolition of slavery, as the expansion of communities in the North. These accelerated as a consequence of World War I and the great social and cultural changes in early 20th-century United States. Industrialization was attracting people to cities from rural areas and gave rise to a new mass culture. Contributing factors leading to the Harlem Renaissance were the Great Migration of African Americans to northern cities, which concentrated ambitious people in places where they could encourage each other, and the First World War, which had created new industrial work opportunities for tens of thousands of people. Factors leading to the decline of this era include the Great Depression.

Christianity played a major role in the Harlem Renaissance. Many of the writers and social critics discussed the role of Christianity in African-American lives. For example, a famous poem by Langston Hughes, "Madam and the Minister", reflects the temperature and mood towards religion in the Harlem Renaissance.^[15] The cover story for *The Crisis* magazine's publication in May 1936

explains how important Christianity was regarding the proposed union of the three largest Methodist churches of 1936. This article shows the controversial question about the formation of a Union for these churches. The article "The Catholic Church and the Negro Priest", also published in *The Crisis*, January 1920, demonstrates the obstacles African-American priests faced in the Catholic Church. The article confronts what it saw as policies based on race that excluded African Americans from higher positions in the church.

Discourse

Religion and Evolution Ad

Various forms of religious worship existed during this time of African-American intellectual reawakening. Although there were racist attitudes within the current Abrahamic religious arenas many African Americans continued to push towards the practice of a more inclusive doctrine. For example, George Joseph MacWilliam presents various experiences, during his pursuit towards priesthood, of rejection on the basis of his color and race yet he shares his frustration in attempts to incite action on the part of *The Crisis* magazine community.

There were other forms of spiritualism practiced among African Americans during the Harlem Renaissance. Some of these religions and philosophies were inherited from African ancestry.

For example, the religion of Islam was present in Africa as early as the 8th century through the Trans-Saharan trade. Islam came to Harlem likely through the migration of members of the Moorish Science Temple of America, which was established in 1913 in New Jersey.

Various forms of Judaism were practiced, including Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Judaism, but it was Black Hebrew Israelites that founded their religious belief system during the late 20th century in the Harlem Renaissance.

Traditional forms of religion acquired from various parts of Africa were inherited and practiced during this era. Some common examples were Voodoo and Santeria.

Criticism

"An' the stars began to fall." by Aaron Douglas

Religious critique during this era was found in literature, art, and poetry. The Harlem Renaissance encouraged analytic dialogue that included the open critique and the adjustment of current religious ideas.

One of the major contributors to the discussion of African-American renaissance culture was Aaron Douglas who, with his artwork, also reflected the revisions African Americans were making to the Christian dogma. Douglas uses biblical imagery as inspiration to various pieces of art work but with the rebellious twist of an African influence.

Countee Cullen's poem "Heritage" expresses the inner struggle of an African American between his past African heritage and the new Christian culture.^[19] A more severe criticism of the Christian religion can be found in Langston Hughes' poem "Merry Christmas", where he exposes the irony of religion as a symbol for good and yet a force for oppression and injustice.

Music

A new way of playing the piano called the Harlem Stride style was created during the Harlem Renaissance, and helped blur the lines between the poor Negroes and socially elite Negroes. The traditional jazz band was composed primarily of brass instruments and was considered a symbol of the south, but the piano was considered an instrument of the wealthy. With this instrumental modification to the existing genre, the wealthy blacks now had more access to jazz music. Its popularity soon spread throughout the country and was consequently at an all-time high. Innovation and liveliness were important characteristics of performers in the beginnings of jazz. Jazz musicians at the time such as Fats Waller, Duke Ellington, Jelly Roll Morton, and Willie "The Lion" Smith were very talented and competitive, and were considered to have laid the foundation for future musicians of their genre. Duke Ellington gained popularity during the Harlem Renaissance. According to Charles Garrett, "The resulting portrait of Ellington reveals him to be not only the gifted composer, bandleader, and musician

we have come to know, but also an earthly person with basic desires, weaknesses, and eccentricities." Ellington did not let his popularity get to him. He remained calm and focused on his music.

During this period, the musical style of blacks was becoming more and more attractive to whites. White novelists, dramatists and composers started to exploit the musical tendencies and themes of African Americans in their works. Composers used poems written by African-American poets in their songs, and would implement the rhythms, harmonies and melodies of African-American music—such as blues, spirituals, and jazz—into their concert pieces. Negroes began to merge with Whites into the classical world of musical composition. The first Negro male to gain wide recognition as a concert artist in both his region and internationally was Roland Hayes. He trained with Arthur Calhoun in Chattanooga, and at Fisk University in Nashville. Later, he studied with Arthur Hubbard in Boston and with George Henschel and Amanda Ira Aldridge in London, England. He began singing in public as a student, and toured with the Fisk Jubilee Singers in 1911.

Fashion

During the Harlem Renaissance, Black America's clothing scene took a dramatic turn from the prim and proper. Many young women preferred extreme versions of current white fashions - from short skirts and silk stockings to drop-waisted dresses and cloche hats. The extraordinarily successful black dancer Josephine Baker, though performing in Paris during the height of the Renaissance, was a major fashion trendsetter for black and white women alike.

LIFE CREATIVE ACTIVITY AND WRITING STYLE OF LANGSTON HUGHES

Langston Hughes was an integral part of the Harlem Renaissance, a period during the 1920s and 1930s that was characterized by an artistic flowering of African-American writers, musicians, and visual artists intensely proud of their black heritage. Langston Hughes contributed to the era by bringing the rhythm of jazz, the vernacular of his people, and the social concerns of the day to his verse. “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” in his first collection, *The Weary Blues* (1926), looks at the past as a source of pride. Other poems capture the rhythm of music and beat of language, such as “Juke Box Love Song.” Still others, like “Theme for English B” and “I, Too, Sing America,” simultaneously express the desire for an integrated world and a warning to those who would try to keep the black race subservient.

Facts and Trivia

- Hughes was raised primarily by his grandmother. She told him important stories of the African-American oral tradition that would influence his work.
- Hughes’ father wanted him to become an engineer, so Hughes attended Columbia for a time. He left because of racial intolerance and because he wanted to spend more time writing in Harlem.
- He graduated from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania in 1929. Among his classmates was future Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall.
- For a number of years, Hughes was attracted to some of the political philosophies of the Communist Party. Though accused of being a member, he never actually joined.
- Hughes died of prostate cancer in 1967 at the age of 65. His ashes are buried in Harlem under a special medallion in the Arthur Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

While Hughes’s greatest achievement was his poetry, which related and celebrated the African American experience, he was also a novelist, dramatist,

short story writer, and journalist, making him one of the most versatile black American writers to grow out of the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920's and 1930's.

Early Life

James Mercer Langston Hughes was born in Joplin, Missouri, in 1902 to parents who would soon separate. His father, contemptuous of racist barriers that kept him from achieving his professional goals, settled in Mexico, where he prospered as a lawyer and landowner. His mother, refusing to accompany her husband, moved wherever work was available. She had an interest in the arts that she conveyed to her young son. She also valued a good education and, while living in Topeka, Kansas, insisted that her son be enrolled as a first grader in a white school rather than a black school. In 1909, when economic necessity demanded that she seek employment elsewhere, she took the seven-year-old child to live with his grandmother in Lawrence, Kansas.

A solitary child, Hughes spent his early years reading and listening to his grandmother's stories about the black people's heroic quest for freedom and their noble, unflinching determination to achieve liberty and justice. After her death in 1914, Hughes moved to Lincoln, Illinois, to live with his mother and stepfather. He finished elementary school and, as the elected class poet, read his first poem at his graduation ceremony. He then moved with his family to Cleveland, Ohio, where he attended high school. Hughes read voraciously, developed a keen interest in poetry, music, and art, and served as editor of the class yearbook.

In 1920, Hughes went to live with his father in Mexico where he taught English to the children of wealthy Mexicans. In spite of fact that his materialistic father had little regard for his son's artistic aptitude and wanted him to go abroad to continue his education, Hughes began to publish in National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) periodicals. When his poem "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" appeared in *The Crisis* in 1921, the young writer became more determined than ever to grow both intellectually and aesthetically. Compromising with his father, he enrolled in Columbia University in 1921, only to leave after one year because of the bigotry he experienced there.

Hughes continued to write as he worked in a series of menial jobs while living in Harlem in Manhattan to help support himself and his mother. In 1923, he shipped out on a freighter bound for West Africa as a cabin boy, a journey that also took him throughout Europe, where he met such writers as Theodore Dreiser, Zora Neale Hurston, Richard Wright, Lillian Hellman, Ernest Hemingway, and Pablo Neruda. Upon returning to the United States in 1924, Hughes lived with his mother in Washington, D.C., where he served as a research assistant for black historian Carter G. Woodson. More important, while working as a hotel bus boy, he was “discovered” by noted poet Vachel Lindsay, who publicly hailed him as the “bus boy poet.”

With his experiences abroad and in Harlem (where he would have a permanent residence from 1947 until his death in 1965), his intimate sense of the joys and agonies of his fellow African Americans, and his love for the music and mood of African American language, Hughes was primed to begin creating some of his most enduring literature.

Life's Work

Hughes began to publish poems with the same passionate language and rhythms contained in the jazz and blues music he had heard in Harlem and Paris nightclubs. He started to win literary prizes for his work, which brought him the praise of critic Carl Van Vechten, who helped him publish his first book of verse, *The Weary Blues* (1926). The poems in the collection convey the musical and heated nightlife of Harlem, as well as the agonies of racial conflict and poverty.

After enrolling in Lincoln University in Pennsylvania in 1926 and graduating in 1929, Hughes continued to write not only poetry but also short stories and essays for black publications. In 1927, he and some other black writers founded *Fire!*, a literary journal of African American culture. In that same year a second volume of poetry, *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (1927), appeared. This book contained poems depicting the harsh, often violent underside of Harlem life, and its realism brought Hughes the financial patronage that allowed him to complete his first novel, *Not Without Laughter* (1930).

In 1932, Hughes went to the Soviet Union, where he worked as a journalist. During this time he read D. H. Lawrence's stories and was inspired to write more of his own. After returning to the United States, he published *The Ways of White Folks* (1934), his first collection of stories. However, Hughes's most notable achievements in short fiction are the morality sketches dealing with the joys and sorrows of black life in the United States that also satirize the hypocrisy and foibles of all Americans and human nature in general. These stories originally appeared in the *Chicago Defender*, an African American publication. Their initial compilation into book form was, perhaps, inspired by Hughes having to testify before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, which found him apologizing for some of his own early prosocialist writings. Over the years these stories were collected and published in *Simple Speaks His Mind* (1950), *Simple Takes a Wife* (1953), *Simple Stakes a Claim* (1957), and *Simple's Uncle Sam* (1965).

Hughes was also involved in the theater. He wrote such plays as *Mulatto* (1935), *Little Ham* (1935), and *Tambourines of Glory* (1963). His dramas dealt with the economic and social difficulties inherent in modern, urban black life as well as the abiding dignity of African Americans and their tenacious will to survive. The plays also exhibited Hughes's sensitivity to and appreciation for African American culture and language and were often staged in nontraditional ways.

Hughes also wrote operas. *The Barrier* (1950) was based on some of his earlier writings, including his play *Mulatto*, and was produced on Broadway in 1950. Another opera, *Esther* (1957), was brought to the stage by Boston's New England Conservatory. His light musical, *Simply Heaven* (1957), based on the sketches in *Simple Takes a Wife*, also had a run on Broadway. However, some viewers were disappointed in the musical's popularized portrayal of Simple as an entertaining fool rather than the wily folk philosopher of the stories. During these years, Hughes also founded the Harlem Suitcase Theatre, the Skyloft Players of Chicago, and the New Negro Theatre in Los Angeles so that black playwrights and actors would have opportunities to perfect their crafts.

In addition, Hughes wrote two autobiographies. The first, *The Big Sea* (1940), recounts how he strove to overcome the racism that pushed hard to stifle his and other African Americans' creativity. Among other things, it relates how the young Hughes rejected his materialistic father's attempts, with the lure of wealth and security, to persuade his son to give up the idea of becoming a poet of his people. It also tells how Hughes again resisted the temptation of being artistically controlled when he rejected the easy financial patronage offered by a person who sought, in the bargain, to interfere with what and how Hughes wrote. He preferred to be a poor wanderer, free to live and write as he wished.

Hughes's second autobiography, *I Wonder as I Wander* (1956), further recounts his seemingly rootless, wandering life, from his trip to Africa in 1923 through his travels in Europe and his exposure to many great modern writers and artists. Like *The Big Sea*, the book was also nonconfessional in the sense that little was revealed about Hughes's very private life. Why he remained unmarried is never really discussed, and no significant intimate relationships are recounted, leaving the question of Hughes's sexuality unanswered and leading some to speculate that he was homosexual.

Hughes's greatest achievement was in poetry, and he continued to publish collections. *Montage of a Dream Deferred* (1951) pictured a Harlem life that had changed drastically from its renaissance years of jazz and vibrant life in the 1920's and 1930's to a postwar ghetto of violence and blighted poverty. Stylistically, the velvety rhythms of the blues that permeated his earlier poetry were often replaced by angular rhythms of sharp contrast like those emanating from a modern bebop jazz session. The poems in *Ask Your Mama: Or, Twelve Hoods for Jazz* (1961) explore the issue of segregation and, among other things, picture a time when Martin Luther King, Jr., is governor of Georgia and a former white segregationist governor has been relegated to the position of caretaker "mammy" for little black children.

Hughes's last collection of poetry, *The Panther and the Lash: Or, Poems of Our Times* (1967), was published posthumously and contained harsh criticisms of

the state of race relations in the United States and abroad. The works are, in part, a response to the black power movement in an era of change wherein the desirability of integration, long held essential by black people of Hughes's generation, was questioned by some African Americans.

Conclusion

During his phenomenally creative life, Langston Hughes published seventeen books of poetry, seven short story collections, twenty-six dramatic works, two novels, and two autobiographies. He also edited anthologies and translated works of other writers.

While some criticize Hughes for remaining limited by his persistent focus on the folkways, language, and basic issues surrounding lower-class African Americans and regret that his portrayals of common black life sometimes failed to present a progressive view of his race, Hughes himself always insisted that he was an honest, social poet who did not know enough about upper-class black people to write about them. He felt that while the poor black residents of Harlem may not have worn shined shoes, been to Harvard, or listened to classical music, “they seemed to me,” he said, “good people” who possessed a life force, survival instinct, and dignity worthy of his artistic efforts and personal sympathy.

Also criticized by a new, more militant generation for supposedly not successfully addressing the issues and politics of black power, Hughes’s writings, nonetheless, continue to speak to readers who value his clear, vividly rendered, and honest vision of his people. They value his celebration of their language, culture, and spirit so beautifully permeated, in his most memorable poems, by the rhythms of blues and jazz. Hughes’s rich, sensitive rendering of an authentic black voice and his fatherly role as mentor for a whole generation of aspiring African American literary artists assure his place as one of the most influential African American poets and writers of the twentieth century.

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