

UZBEKISTAN STATE WORLD LANGUAGES
UNIVERSITY

ENGLISH 3RD FACULTY

COURSE PAPER

Harlem Renaissance and black
community in American
literature

Group:311

Student: Xujanova Risolat

Supervisor: Jo'rayeva Z.

Tashkent-2015

Contents

Introduction.....	3
Chapter I. Black community depicted in Harlem Renaissance	
1.1 The significance of Harlem Renaissance in the development of the literature of 1st half of the 20th century.....	6
1.2 Black community problems illustrated in American Literature.....	11
Chapter II. Racial discrimination in Langston Hughes' poetry	
2.1 Langston Hughes' legacy.....	16
2.2 The problem of racism depicted in Langston Hughes' poems.....	22
Conclusion.....	28
List of used literature.....	30

Introduction

The American literature is considered to be one of the most attractive part of the world literature, having very huge amount of energetic, appealing and engaging works. Each period of American Literature has its own important features and significant representatives. Harlem Renaissance is also very essential period, which has its influence not only in literature, but also in art, especially in music, and in philosophy.

The Harlem Renaissance was a time of explosive cultural and intellectual growth in the African-American community. During this time in the 1920s and 30s, we saw not only the birth of jazz, but we also heard the voices of the African-American authors and philosophers who were taken seriously by their white contemporaries for the first time in history.

The Harlem Renaissance had a number of different names. It was also referred to as the New Negro movement, the New Negro Renaissance, and the Negro Renaissance. The movement emerged toward the end of World War I in 1918 and bloomed in the mid- to late 1920's, and then later faded in the mid-1930's. The Harlem Renaissance was a giant step for African American writers and poets. It was such an accomplishment because it marked the first time that mainstream publishers and critics took these writers seriously. Not only was it the publishers who gave recognition to African American literature and arts, but also the nation as a whole.

James Mercer Langston Hughes was one of the leaders of Harlem Renaissance period, From the 1920s on, Langston Hughes produced a huge amount of works that presented race relations to both black and white America as no writer had before, or really has since. His output was incomparable, unmatched by any of his contemporaries: 16 volumes of poetry, two novels, three short story collections, 20 plays, novels, essays, historical works, musical shows. His gift of voice and his wide appeal remain his legacy.

The aim of this course paper is to examine Harlem Renaissance period of American literature, black community problems which are depicted in the legacy of Harlem Renaissance representatives, especially in Langston Hughes' legacy.

In order to accomplish this aim we have following **tasks**:

- to analyze Harlem Renaissance period in American Literature
- to study Harlem Renaissance representatives' legacy
- to examine black community presented in Harlem Renaissance
- to get acquainted with Langston Hughes' poetry
- to investigate racial problems in Langston Hughes poems

The subject of this work is the analysis of Langston Hughes' poems: "The negro speaks of Rivers" "I, Too", " Harlem". We will investigate black community problems depicted in these poems.

The object of the course paper is poems of Langston Hughes "The negro speaks of Rivers" "I, Too", " Harlem".

The methods which we used are investigation, comparative and holistic.

The theoretical value of this work is analyses can be used in other researches in this sphere.

The practical value of the course paper is usefulness of this work in the seminars.

The structure of this course paper is standard. It contains introduction, two chapters, conclusion and list of used literature.

Introduction part includes familiarization with the general information about the topic. Moreover, it deals with the main purpose of the course paper which is investigation of black community in Harlem Renaissance period. In addition, there is main problem of the course paper, which is discussed in following two chapters.

The first chapter gives essential information about Harlem Renaissance period, representatives and illustration of black community in this period of literature.

The second chapter illustrates whole information about Langston Hughes and his poetry, analysis of his poems, illustration of racial discrimination in his poetry.

Conclusion summarizes all analytical work which is done in this course paper. In addition, there is information about significance of the topic, what we have done and learnt while doing this course paper.

List of used literature is given at the end of the course paper.

Chapter I. Black community depicted in Harlem Renaissance

1.1 The significance of Harlem Renaissance in the development of the literature of 1st half of the 20th century

Harlem Renaissance was an African American cultural movement of the 1920s and early 1930s and the centre of it was in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City. "This movement known collectively as the Harlem Renaissance developed at the end of World War I in 1918, blossomed in the mid - to late 1920s, and faded in the middle of 1930s. This movement developed along with social and intellectual disturbance in the African American community in the early 20th century".¹ It was known then as the "New Negro Movement", named after an anthology, titled *The New Negro*, of important African Americans works, published by philosopher Alain Locke in 1925.

The renaissance involved a group of writers and highbrows associated with Harlem, the district of Manhattan, during the migration of African Americans from other parts of U.S. Furthermore, Harlem Renaissance also influenced many black writers from African and Caribbean colonies who lived in Paris. This cultural movement marked the first time in American history that the white population took notice of the literature of African Americans. Even though some believe that Harlem renaissance has no influence on African America literature and community, Harlem Renaissance became the period in which a group of talented black writers produced an extensive recognizable works in the three outstanding categories of essay, poetry, and art.

The Harlem Renaissance or the New Negro Movement was inspired by Marcus Garvey, founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), Alan Locke, the author of "New Negro" and W. E. B. Du Bois, editor of *The Crisis* magazine. This movement expressed the pride in blacks and motivated many African Americans to celebrate their culture through literature and art. Harlem Renaissance helped to shape American culture, while adding its own

¹ Watson, Steven. "Harlem Renaissance" BlackHistory.com- Celebrating Black History. Web. 20.04.2011
http://www.blackhistory.com/cgi-bin/blog.cgi?blog_id=62836>

elements to the American's tradition. It offered new ways of seeing and understanding what it meant to be Black at this crucial time in history. Aberjhani, an American historian, columnist, novelist, poet, and an editor, indicate in his book "*Journey through the Power of the Rainbow*" that "The best of humanity's recorded history is a creative balance between horrors endured and victories achieved, and so it was during the Harlem Renaissance."² This shows that the movement led to new styles of literature and new philosophical ideas regarding the issues that African Americans faced in the early twentieth century America. This important change in African American mindsets has survived throughout the centuries and persists even to this day.

The Harlem Renaissance movement impacted the changes that took place in the African American community because of the expansion of communities in the north. The social base of this movement included the Great Migration of African American from South to North due to the industrialization in the city. Harlem Renaissance is among literary and artistic movements due to its connection to civil rights and reform organizations.

Harlem was described by Alain Locke (1886-1954) as "not merely the largest Negro community in the world, but the first concentration in history of so many diverse elements of Negro life."³ Locke promoted African-American artists, writers, and musicians, encouraging them to look to Africa as an inspiration for their works. His essay, *The New Negro* describes the overall awareness of the potential of black equality, he says "...no longer would blacks allow themselves to adjust themselves or comply with unreasonable white requests."⁴ A lot of writers praised Locke for writing *the New Negro*, because it marks the beginning of the Harlem Renaissance, and African American use it to boost their self- confidence. The power in Locke's essay was held in people and made them look through their

² "American Literature." *Reference & Research Book News* 18.4 (2003): 252-256.

³ Alan Locke "The new negro" (1925) <https://literarymovementsmanifesto.wordpress.com/more/alain-locke-the-new-negro-1925/> 15.03.2015

⁴ Alan Locke "The new negro" (1925) <https://literarymovementsmanifesto.wordpress.com/more/alain-locke-the-new-negro-1925/> 15.03.2015

actions and behaviors, and also view from a different perspective. Locke has a great influence on literature, and he encouraged people to illustrate African and African America subjects in their writing. It is very obvious that Harlem Renaissance gave black people a cultural differentness through literature.

Literature was a great way people use to show their motivation, pain and feelings. W.E.B. Du Bois is an American sociologist, historian, civil rights activist, author and editor, who wanted equal rights for African American. He used literature to spread motivation for the black. He was an ardent peace activist and advocate reduction of racism. Du Bois published his collection of 14 essays named, "The Souls of Black Folk", in 1903, and this essays helps showed the intellect of black race. He was a literary and cultural inspiration that helped activate the Harlem Renaissance and the powerful art about the African American experience. Du Bois used his influential role in Crisis magazine to expose and oppose racism and injustices, such as lynching and segregation. He promoted African American artistic talents in his writing called "A Negro Art Renaissance." He wanted black artist to realize their ethical assignment by being committed to showing the issue of racial equality in their work; in response to their own experience. His writings are a defining text of the New Negro Movement because of its deep effect on an entire generation that created the center of Harlem Renaissance. This movement produced work that was both initiated in modernity and an engagement with the African American culture. The Harlem Renaissance created African American literature in the United States and influence many authors throughout the twentieth century.

Although, the "New Negro Movement" has been over since, but the effects of the authors and words written are still generally known today. African American artists engaged culture to work for goals of civil rights and equality. African Americans paintings became absorbed into the mainstream culture. Visual arts made a strong statement during the Harlem Renaissance, creating images based on newly developed consciousness about heritage and culture. The art produced at that time varied greatly in theme and it ranges from the illustration of theatrical

urban lifestyles to ordinary rural landscapes; from the daily actions of individuals to the all- surrounding and meaningful themes of slavery and cultural origins in Africa. Aaron Douglas (1898-1979) was the Harlem Renaissance artists whose work best demonstrate the 'New Negro' philosophy. Aaron Douglas is known to be a "father of Afro-American Art". He painted drawings for public buildings and produced illustrations and cover designs for many black publications including *The Crisis* and *Opportunity*. Douglas was an important part of the circle of artists and writers we now call Harlem renaissance. He portrays strength in his paintings, strength that he was expressing to Black people with his artwork. He shows the young black artist that they have the possibility of achieving things that were once considered beyond them. Douglas's work is based on the African American lifestyle and it shows the hardships and heritage of the African Americans and its beauty.

The Harlem Renaissance was a rebirth of African American culture in New York City. Literature from the Harlem Renaissance inspired many modern writers such as Alice Walker, Amiri Baraka, Maya Angelou, and Toni Morrison. It also influenced Martin Luther King's "I Have A Dream" speech because the speech seems to be closely related to Langston Hughes poem "Let America be America Again". Harlem Renaissance provided a very important advancement in African American Art and Literature. Inspiration from Langston Hughes and Alain Locke are witnessed in modern culture and society. Even though the movement has been over since, the effects of the authors and words written are still generally known today. Aberjhani also said in an interview done by Kinamore Angela on "interview with the authors of the Encyclopedia of the Harlem Renaissance" that he has been influenced more by literary movements such as that of Harlem. Without Harlem Renaissance, the African America literature wouldn't be successful because the coming together of such a diverse body of artistic talents, great works of arts, and the interconnected collaboration on many face regarding diverse subject matters, together with the ability to demonstrate their gift and talent would not have been.

Harlem Renaissance brought new visionary insights and the concept of excelling inner consciousness to the literature of African-Americans.

In conclusion, the legacy of the Harlem Renaissance has opened doors for today's African- American writers. The Harlem Renaissance was the internal spring for African-Americans branching out into the world on their own desire. The renaissance opened a new dimension for African-Americans and brought about the realization of "I can do it, and do it with dignity, grace, and style." This time period in history was not just a national movement, but an impact creating a revolution of sorts. Harlem saw a never-seen-before work per excellence, in various fields, which gave African-Americans a renewed image and a fresh outlook. Harlem Renaissance has been the breeding ground for creative endeavors by authors, poets, and artists. Harlem, in itself, was an idea of cultural excitement that progressed throughout the twentieth century. Black visual artists experienced an explosion in ideas and energy during Harlem Renaissance. The Harlem Renaissance produced novelists, poets, artists and musicians who are today considered some of the finest that America ever produced, regardless of race.

1.2 Black community problems illustrated in American Literature

African American literature has generally focused on themes of particular interest to Black people in the United States, such as the role of African Americans within the larger American society and what it means to be an American. Other characteristics of American literature include the position of the black Americans on the matter of freedom, as propagated by the American nation, equality that the black people lacked in the United States, and also the themes of culture of black American religion, racism, slavery and nostalgia. The Black American literature forms a good arm of the literature being both influenced by the great African heritage and equally having an influence on African writings on many countries.

Lucy Terry who wrote “Bars Fight”, published in 1746 is referred to as the author of the oldest piece of African American literature. Terry's poem was not published until 1885, when it was published in Josiah Holland's “History of Western Massachusetts”.⁵ In 1761, Jupiter Hammon published his poem "An Evening Thought: Salvation by Christ with Penitential Cries" This was followed by the poet Phyllis Wheatley's Poems on Various Subjects published in 1773, three years before American independence. Wheatley (1753 – 1784) was born in Senegal, Africa. She was captured and sold into slavery at the age of seven, and subsequently brought to America and purchased by a Boston merchant. Through her fast mastery of the English Language she wrote well acknowledged poetry that received the acclaim of the leading figures of the African Revolution, including George Washington, who was reported to have “personally thanked her for a poem she wrote in his honour.”⁶ William Wells Brown (1814 – 1884) and Victor Sejour (1817 – 1874) are said to have produced the earliest works of fiction by African American writers. Sejour was born free in New Orleans and moved to France at the age of nineteen.

⁵ Adams, Catherine; Pleck, Elizabeth. *Love of Freedom*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2010.

⁶ Gates, Henry Louis. *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*. New York: W.W. Norton. 1997.

There he published his short story “Le Mulatre” (“The Mulatto”) in 1837. The story is said to represent the first known fiction by an African American, but written in French and published in a French journal. Brown on the other hand was a prominent abolitionist, lecturer, novelist, playwright, and historian. Born into slavery in the Southern United States, Brown escaped to the North, where he worked for abolitionist causes and was as well a prolific writer. He wrote what is considered to be the first novel by an African American, entitled *Clotel, or, The President’s Daughter* (1853). The novel is based on what was at that time considered to be a rumor about Thomas Jefferson fathering a daughter with his slave, Sally Hemmings. The book is however not considered the first African novel published in the United States because it was published in England. Harriet Wilson is however acclaimed because of the novel *Our Nig* (1859) which details the difficulties in the lives of Northern free Blacks. After the end of slavery and the American Civil War, a number of African American authors continued to write nonfiction works about the condition of African Americans in the country. Notable among them are W.E.B. Du Bois (1868 –1963) who published *The Souls of Black Folk*. Another prominent author of this period, Booker T. Washington however differed with Du Bois. Washington (1856 – 1915) published *Up from Slavery* (1901), *The Future of the American Negro* (1899), *Tuskegee and its People* (1905), and *My Larger Education* (1911).

The post initial black narratives started with *The Heroic Slave* (1853), *My Bondage and Freedom* (1855) both by Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington’s *Up From Slavery* (1904). They formed the literary canon for the second phase. This phase opened a new chapter in the struggle of aliens in America. Forming major characteristics in this new phase was the acknowledgment and appreciation of the slaves who risked their lives to revolt against slavery.

In 1841, the effect of this was soon realized as the slaves aboard, the ship revolted and were subsequently fed by the British authority. This freedom became

a big tragedy to the American society. Fredrick Douglass *The Heroic Slave* (1853) had the focus of an open and violent request for the abolition of slavery. This narrative in particular emphasizes that slavery entails savory and glory tales and it should be abolished. It strongly dwells on the ills of slavery. A compliment of this development was the activities of a group called “The escape slaves” technically referred to as the ‘maroons’ out of the tribulation and desperation, they escape the plantation. Prominent among their struggle strategies was the use of Guerrilla warfare, ambush, cross fire, networking strike, withdrawal and other revolutionary approaches unimaginable by the Americans. The reality of the abolition of slavery was inevitably productive in these strategic plans embarked upon by the maroons.

The central theme of this thesis is no longer the struggle of the blacks for survival and rights to meaningful living, but also a more philosophical approach to the struggle for emancipation, self determinism and cultural self identity. This led to the emergence of modernism in black American literature.

Paul Lawrence Dunbar (1872 – 1906). Dunbar is categorized under the Post slavery era writers of the Black American literature. He often wrote in the rural, “black dialect” of the day. For most of his career, Dunbar wrote for a white audience and he generally avoided racial issues as his subject. *The Sport of the Gods* is referred to as Dunbar's best known novel (Encarta). Published first in 1902 by Dodd, Mead & Co., New York, the novel tells a story of a black family in a Northern city in the United States of America. This family apparently suffered from racism, slavery and oppression, although this looks very passive in the plot of the novel.

To Harlem Renaissance period we can include everything from political writings to jazz poetry, and it is especially remembered for poets such as Countee Cullen, James Weldon Johnson, and Claude McKay. Langston Hughes was perhaps the best-known Harlem Renaissance poet. The *Crisis magazine*, an official magazine of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) that was mainly subscribed to by blacks; and *Negro World*, the newspaper of Marcus Garvey’s helped immensely in publishing the African

American writing. Harlem renaissance gave African American visibility and opportunity for publications. With the help of this published poetry, short stories, and essays sent in by black writers, and it encouraged them to do more, such as write, and make all forms of art, because expression was one way to freedom.

The Harlem Renaissance was a transformable period in time when poetry changed a nation of African-Americans to an incredible level. Langston Hughes was one of the leading black writers in that time period, and wrote many different types of literature. He wrote, and created a new literary art form called jazz poetry. His poem "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," provides solid unity for the African American history. His poetry covered the issues faced by African-Americans with a combination of music, cheerfulness, and culture. Hughes essay spoke to the concerns of the Harlem Renaissance as it celebrated African American creative innovations such as blues, spirituals, jazz, and literary work that engaged African American life. For most of the writers and artists when he wrote in his essay "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (1926) that black artists should be able to express themselves freely as an individual, i.e. an artist work should be looked at not by what color the skin of the artist is, but by the meaning and the quality of the work. He wants the African American artists to realize who they are as an individual artist and person, not just color in the background of life. Another African American poet who was a leading figure in Harlem Renaissance is Countee Cullen (1903-1946). He also dealt powerfully with racial themes in poems like "Black Christ," the story of a lynching victim who returns to life to speak of his ordeal. Through his poetry and books, he promoted equality, condemned racism and injustice, and celebrated African American culture and spirituality.

The first stage of the Harlem Renaissance started in the late 1910s. 1917 saw the premiere of *Three Plays for a Negro Theatre*. These plays, written by white playwright Ridgely Torrence, featured negro 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 Theatre." ⁷ Another landmark came in 1919, when Claude McKay published his militant sonnet "If We Must Die". Although the poem never alluded to race, to negro readers it sounded a note of defiance in the face of racism and the nationwide race riots and lynching then taking place. By the end of the First World War, the fiction of James Weldon Johnson and the poetry of Claude McKay was describing the reality of contemporary negro life in America.

Some common themes represented during the Harlem Renaissance were the influence of the experience of slavery and emerging African-American folk traditions on black identity, the effects of institutional racism, the dilemmas inherent in performing and writing for elite white audiences, and the question of how to convey the experience of modern black life in the urban North.

⁷ *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, New York: Norton, 1997, p. 931.

Chapter II. Racial discrimination in Langston Hughes' poetry

2.1 Langston Hughes' legacy.

James Mercer Langston Hughes was born in Joplin, Missouri, on February 1, 1902. The big name was emblematic of a family history. His maternal grandmother, Mary Langston, was the first black woman to graduate from Oberlin College in Ohio. She married two abolitionists: first Sheridan Leary, who was killed in the raid at Harper's Ferry; and then Charles Langston (Langston Hughes's grandfather), a "conductor" on the Underground Railroad and the founder of several Midwestern schools for African American children. (Charles Langston's brother was John Mercer Langston, who in 1855 won a local Ohio election and became the first African American elected to public office in the United States. In 1888 he became the first black U.S. Congressman elected from Virginia).

Hughes's parents divorced when he was very young, and his grandmother reared him. Mary Patterson Langston instilled in her grandson a sense of racial pride and a love for activism. By the time Langston was 14, he had lived in nine places, mostly around the Midwest. His grandmother had first exposed the young boy to the Bible and to *The Crisis*, the magazine of the recently formed National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Hughes never took to religion, but writing was another story. Hughes entered Columbia University and, at his father's insistence, studied engineering instead of writing. A businessman and lawyer, James Hughes had left America for Mexico City when Langston was very young. He was an outspoken critic of American racism although he believed the sad plight of American blacks was self-inflicted. In his autobiography, *The Big Sea*, Langston Hughes bluntly wrote, "My father hated Negroes." In spite of their troubled relationship, James Hughes consented to pay for Langston's education at Columbia, provided that his son study engineering. His son, however, had already discovered poetry. Hughes dropped out after two semesters, in 1922 citing racial prejudice there – but while in New York he did learn something that would perhaps serve him even better – he discovered Harlem.

Though Columbia wasn't right for Hughes, he did earn a bachelor's degree. After spending several years in Europe, Hughes enrolled in the historically black Lincoln University, where he completed his education.

After college, Hughes returned to New York, where he would remain a resident of Harlem for most of his life. He became part of the vibrant community of black artists who drove the Harlem Renaissance – his contemporaries included Zora Neale Hurston, Countee Cullen, Wallace Thurman, and more.

Hughes found the idea of Communism interesting as an alternative to segregation. Though his interest led him to visit the Soviet Union and travel throughout the country, he never officially joined the Communist Party. This saved him during the 1950s, when he was called before Senator Joseph McCarthy's Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations to answer to allegations of Communism. His interest wasn't deemed deep enough for any serious consequences.

Hughes had already taken the black literary community by storm in 1921 with the publication of the poem "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," and on his return to America, he was taken under the wing of such luminaries as W.E.B. Du Bois; novelist and *Crisis* editor Jessie Fauset; and scholar Alain Locke, whose *The New Negro* (1925) became the definitive artistic anthology of the period.

In 1926, Hughes wrote the essay that some considered a manifesto for the Renaissance, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain." Published in *The Nation*, the essay called for the coexistence of racial pride and artistic integrity. "We younger Negro artists now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame," the 24-year-old wrote. "We know we are beautiful. And ugly too." In 1926 Hughes published his first volume of poetry, *The Weary Blues*, which was infused with rhythms of blues and jazz. Both the black and white press (even the white southern press) hailed it as a masterpiece.

Hughes considered his follow-up collection, *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (1927), superior to *The Weary Blues* -- more experimental, more representative of black America. But nobody else seemed to think so at the time. The white press found

the title offensive (a title Hughes said he regretted and would have changed, had his publisher asked) and the black press was offended by everything else. Hughes's predilection for dialect and his focus on poor blacks was lambasted as a "disgrace to the race." Headlines trumpeted Hughes's transgressions: "Langston Hughes's Book of Poems Trash" and "Langston Hughes -- The Sewer Dweller." The once-dubbed "Negro poet laureate" had become the "poet low rate of Harlem."

Hughes was charged with parading negative images of blacks in front of white readers. But polished, educated blacks, he felt, were not the only blacks worth putting on paper. The people who captured his imagination and populated his work, he said in *The Big Sea*, were "the ordinary Negroes [who] hadn't heard of the Negro Renaissance." Early on, a critic had called Hughes's poetry "proletarian" because of his closeness to everyday people in everyday situations. His trademark became his fusion of black speech and music, primarily jazz and blues (though later in his career he would incorporate gospel, with less success), with verse and stories about the urban North and the rural South.

The traveling bug bit again in the '30s. Hughes's tours of the American South and the Soviet Union had a tremendous impact on his poetry of the next decade. In the '30s it took on a left-leaning bent; in the '40s seething condemnation of racism in America. Despite his travels, he would make his home in Harlem until the end of his life.

In 1951 Hughes published his most important volume of poetry in years. *Montage of a Dream Deferred* hearkened back to those early volumes in which the form and sound of the poetry are integrally related to its meaning. Early jazz had given way to a new form, bebop, and bebop's discordant rhythms suffused *Montage*, mirroring the growing unrest and unease in urban black communities.

Hughes would never again be so socially relevant. The Black Power movement of the '60s, which was gaining momentum, especially among urban blacks, criticized Hughes for being too conciliatory toward whites. Hughes

responded with a book of poetry about the civil rights movement, *The Panther and the Lash*, which was published posthumously.

By the time of his death from cancer on May 22, 1967, Langston Hughes had been in the public eye for more than 40 years. Unlike his famous ancestors, the grandson and nephew stayed out of the political arena -- at least officially.

Though he may be best known as a poet, Hughes was prolific in a wide variety of writing styles. He wrote 16 volumes of poetry, two novels, three short story collections, 20 plays, novels, essays, historical works, musical shows. In addition, nonfiction books such as *A Pictorial History of the Negro in America*, children's books. He edited the literary magazine *Common Ground*, co-wrote the screenplay for *Way Down South*, and wrote two autobiographies.

Awards:

- 1926: Hughes won the Witter Bynner Undergraduate Poetry Prize.
- 1935: Hughes was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship, which allowed him to travel to Spain and Russia.
- 1941: Hughes was awarded a fellowship from the Rosenwald Fund.
- 1943: Lincoln University awarded Hughes an honorary Litt.D.
- 1954: Hughes won the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award.
- 1960: the NAACP awarded Hughes the Spingarn Medal for distinguished achievements by an African American.
- 1961: National Institute of Arts and Letters.
- 1963: Howard University awarded Hughes an honorary doctorate.
- 1964: Western Reserve University awarded Hughes an honorary Litt.D.
- 1973: the first Langston Hughes Medal was awarded by the City College of New York.
- 1979: Langston Hughes Middle School was created in Reston, Virginia.
- 1981: New York City Landmark status was given to the Harlem home of Langston Hughes at 20 East 127th Street (40°48'26.32"N 73°56'25.54"W) by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission and 127th Street was

renamed *Langston Hughes Place*.^[78] The Langston Hughes House was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

- 2002: The United States Postal Service added the image of Langston Hughes to its Black Heritage series of postage stamps.
- 2002: scholar Molefi Kete Asante listed Langston Hughes on his list of *100 Greatest African Americans*.
- 2015: Google Doodle commemorated his 113th birthday.

After his death, the City College of New York began awarding an annual Langston Hughes Medal to an influential and engaging African-American writer.

Poetry collections

- *The Weary Blues*, Knopf, 1926
- *Fine Clothes to the Jew*, Knopf, 1927
- *The Negro Mother and Other Dramatic Recitations*, 1931
- *Dear Lovely Death*, 1931
- *The Dream Keeper and Other Poems*, Knopf, 1932
- *Scottsboro Limited: Four Poems and a Play*, Golden Stair Press, N.Y., 1932
- *Let America Be America Again*, 1938
- *Shakespeare in Harlem*, Knopf, 1942
- *Freedom's Plow*, 1943
- *Fields of Wonder*, Knopf, 1947
- *One-Way Ticket*, 1949
- *Montage of a Dream Deferred*, Holt, 1951
- *Selected Poems of Langston Hughes*, 1958
- *Ask Your Mama: 12 Moods for Jazz*, Hill & Wang, 1961
- *The Panther and the Lash: Poems of Our Times*, 1967
- *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*, Knopf, 1994

Novels and short story collections

- *Not Without Laughter*. Knopf, 1930
- *The Ways of White Folks*. Knopf, 1934
- *Simple Speaks His Mind*. 1950
- *Laughing to Keep from Crying*, Holt, 1952
- *Simple Takes a Wife*. 1953
- *Sweet Flypaper of Life*, photographs by Roy DeCarava. 1955
- *Simple Stakes a Claim*. 1957

- *Tambourines to Glory* 1958
- *The Best of Simple*. 1961
- *Simple's Uncle Sam*. 1965
- *Something in Common and Other Stories*. Hill & Wang, 1963
- *Short Stories of Langston Hughes*. Hill & Wang, 1996

Non-fiction books

- *The Big Sea*. New York: Knopf, 1940
- *Famous American Negroes*. 1954
- *Famous Negro Music Makers*, published by Dodd, Mead, New York 1955
- *I Wonder as I Wander*. New York: Rinehart & Co., 1956
- *A Pictorial History of the Negro in America*, with Milton Meltzer. 1956
- *Famous Negro Heroes of America*. 1958
- *Fight for Freedom: The Story of the NAACP*. 1962

Major plays

- *Mule Bone*, with Zora Neale Hurston. 1931
- *Mulatto*. 1935 (renamed *The Barrier*, an opera, in 1950)
- *Troubled Island*, with William Grant Still. 1936
- *Little Ham*. 1936
- *Emperor of Haiti*. 1936
- *Don't You Want to be Free?* 1938
- *Street Scene*, contributed lyrics. 1947
- *Tambourines to Glory*. 1956
- *Simply Heavenly*. 1957
- *Black Nativity*. 1961
- *Five Plays by Langston Hughes*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963.
- *Jerico-Jim Crow*. 1964

Books for children

- *Popo and Fifina, with Arna Bontemps*. 1932
- *The First Book of the Negroes*. 1952
- *The First Book of Jazz*. 1954
- *Marian Anderson: Famous Concert Singer*, with Steven C. Tracy. 1954
- *The First Book of Rhythms*. 1954
- *The First Book of the West Indies*. 1956
- *First Book of Africa*. 1964
- *Black Misery*. Illustrated by Arouni. 1969; reprinted 1994, Oxford University Press.

2.2 The problem of racism depicted in Langston Hughes' poems

Hughes poetry was a reflection of the African-American culture and Harlem. He wrote many poems, and continued to write even after the Harlem Renaissance. He loved Harlem that was his home. He watched it decline with the onset of the Great Depression. He saw Harlem turn into a place to be feared by many. It was a sad and dangerous place to be, after the depression. Hughes described the impact of the Great Depression among African Americans, “The depression brought everyone down a peg or two. And the Negro had but a few pegs to fall.”⁸

Much of his poetry talks of the hardships, poverty, inequality, etc. of the African-American people. His work has inspired many people, and is read by many students and scholars. He is a great positive role model. I personally love his poetry. It describes these problems within our society that still have yet to be resolved. It opens the reader's eyes to the many disadvantages that many people have suffered through and are still trying to overcome.

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.

⁸ Hughes, Langston, Arnold Rampersad, David E. Roessel, and Benny Andrews. *Langston Hughes*. New York: Sterling Pub., 2006.

I've known rivers

Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

Langston Hughes is probably the most influential and remembered poet of the Harlem Renaissance. Hughes writes about how the African-American people have been all over the world. In "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" he talks about them bathing in the Euphrates, building huts by the Congo, and singing of the Mississippi. I think that this poem is showing how these people are everywhere. In America people act as if they are lesser, but he is saying to the white people, look at all my race has accomplished. For example, "We" built the pyramids, and we have been around as long as these rivers. This poem is meant to be positive. It does not talk directly about racism or puts down the white race for being prejudiced.

I, Too

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.

They send me to eat in the kitchen

When company comes,

But I laugh,

And eat well,

And grow strong.

Tomorrow,

I'll be at the table

When company comes.

Nobody'll dare

Say to me,

"Eat in the kitchen,"

Then.

Besides,

They'll see how beautiful I am

And be ashamed—

I, too, am America.

The poem “I, Too” is also known as “I, Too, Sing America,” and was initially titled “Epilogue” when it appeared in *The Weary Blues*, the 1926 volume of Langston Hughes' poetry. It has been anthologized repeatedly and scholars have written about it many times. It is written in free verse and features short lines and simple language.

Hughes wrote "I, Too" from the perspective of an African American man - either a slave, a free man in the Jim Crow South, or even a domestic servant. The lack of a concrete identity or historical context does not mitigate the poem's message; in fact, it confers on it a high degree of universality, for the situation Hughes describes in the poem reflects a common experience for many African Americans during his time.

The speaker begins by declaring that he too can “sing America,” meaning that he is claiming his right to feel patriotic towards America, even though he is the “darker” brother who cannot sit at the table and must eat in the kitchen. This alludes to the common practice of racial segregation during the early 20th century, when African Americans faced discrimination in nearly every aspect of their lives. They were forced to live, work, eat and travel separately from their white counterparts, had few civil or legal rights, were often victims of racial violence, and faced economic marginalization in both the North and the South. The speaker does not languish in despair, however. He proclaims that "tomorrow" he will join the others at the table and no one will dare send him back to the kitchen. Not only that, but the "others" will see “how beautiful” the speaker is and will therefore feel ashamed. This statement is extremely hopeful and optimistic. The speaker demonstrates a heightened sense of self and proclaims his ambition to assert his legitimacy as a an American citizen and as a man.

The invocation of America is important, for Hughes is expressing his belief that African Americans are a valuable part of the country's population and that he foresees a racially equal society in the near future. Many critics believe that "I,

Too" is an unofficial response to the great poet Walt Whitman's poem, "I Hear America Singing." This is likely given Hughes's expressed affinity for Whitman's work, as well as the similarity between the titles and choice of words. In Whitman's poem, a variety of Americans - including a mechanic, carpenter, boatman, and mother - sing joyfully about America. Hughes suggests that even though the circumstances are different for African Americans, they also deserve to experience patriotism.

Harlem

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
like a syrupy sweet?
Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.
Or does it explode?

This short poem is one of Hughes's most famous works; it is likely the most common Langston Hughes poem taught in American schools. Hughes wrote "Harlem" in 1951, and it addresses one of his most common themes - the limitations of the American Dream for African Americans. The poem has eleven short lines in four stanzas, and all but one line are questions.

Playwright Lorraine Hansbury references "Harlem" in the title of *A Raisin in the Sun*, her famous play about an African American family facing prejudice and economic hardship. The production debuted on Broadway in 1959, only 8 years after Hughes published "Harlem."

In the early 1950s, America was still racially segregated. African Americans were saddled with the legacy of slavery, which essentially rendered

them second-class citizens in the eyes of the law, particularly in the South. Change was bubbling up, however. Hughes wrote "Harlem" only three years before the seminal Supreme Court decision in the 1954 case *Brown vs. Board of Education* that declared state laws establishing separate public schools for black and white students to be unconstitutional. Thus, Hughes was intimately aware of the challenges he faced as a black man in America, and the tone of his work reflects his complicated experience: he can come across as sympathetic, enraged, hopeful, melancholy, or resigned.

Hughes titled this poem "Harlem" after the New York neighborhood that became the center of the Harlem Renaissance, a major creative explosion in music, literature, and art that occurred during the 1910s and 1920s. Many African American families saw Harlem as a sanctuary from the frequent discrimination they faced in other parts of the country. Unfortunately, Harlem's glamour faded at the beginning of the 1930s when the Great Depression set in - leaving many of the African American families who had prospered in Harlem destitute once more.

The speaker muses about the fate of a "dream deferred." It is not entirely clear who the speaker is - perhaps the poet, perhaps a professor, perhaps an undefined black man or woman. The question is a powerful one, and there is a sense of silence after it. Hughes then uses vivid analogies to evoke the image of a postponed dream. He imagines it drying up, festering, stinking, crusting over, or, finally, exploding. All of these images, while not outright violent, have a slightly dark tone to them. Each image is potent enough to make the reader smell, feel, and taste these discarded dreams. According to Langston Hughes, a discarded dream does not simply vanish, rather, it undergoes an evolution, approaching a physical state of decay.

The speaker does not refer to a specific dream. Rather, he (or she) suggests that African Americans cannot dream or aspire to great things because of the environment of oppression that surrounds them. Even if they do dare to dream - their grand plans will fester for so long that they end up rotting or even exploding. As critic Arthur P. Davis writes, "When [Hughes] depicts the hopes, the

aspirations, the frustrations, and the deep-seated discontent of the New York ghetto, he is expressing the feelings of Negroes in black ghettos throughout America."

Langston Hughes will always be known as a great poet who did so much to make his race move toward equality. He wrote many inspirational poems. He wanted to reach a younger generation and show them that they can be successful. He wanted the children to be proud of who they are, and to excel in literature. He was part of something great. That something great was the Harlem Renaissance. It was a time of change, a time of happiness for the most part. It was a time when many people realized that there were many talented African Americans. Also it was a time for new things and a new way of doing things.

Conclusion

In this course paper we have analyzed Harlem Renaissance period in American Literature. We studied about significance of this period, the main representatives. Moreover, we have got acquainted with Langston Hughes' legacy and analyzed his poems such as "The negro speaks of Rivers" "I, Too", "Harlem" and investigated the problem of racism in his poetry.

As Presidential decree №1875 (December 10, 2012) "About Measures due to Further Developing System of Teaching Foreign Languages" released, every learner of English should take into consideration the fact that language is closely connected with literature. Only in literature we can observe the real language of one nation. As literature is one of the most important features of language, as a future teacher we should learn the literature deeper.

American literature cannot be whole without Harlem Renaissance period. That's why this topic is very important for us. While analyzing Harlem Renaissance period, we have understood one of the most significant issue of American History - racial discrimination. By analyzing this period we know not only about historical period, but character of the people, features of the culture and feeling of the characters.

Investigating black community problems in American literature helped us to know better about background of Harlem Renaissance period, to know more about authors' works, their style and new vocabulary. All these works helped us to imagine the whole picture of Harlem Renaissance period.

Studying Langston Hughes legacy, we had known that he was very patriotic, kind and faithful. He tried to show his "black" close people that they are also equal to white people, they also have rights, and they are also people. He was against discrimination of people, and expressed it in appealing style. He wrote his poems with simple words but they were touching. That's why he is the most famous representative of Harlem Renaissance period.

Analyzing his poems, we learnt about historical background, feelings, character of people. They are very nice, attractive and interesting.

While doing the course paper we could achieve the main goal. In order to achieve, we:

- analyzed Harlem Renaissance period in American Literature
- studied Harlem Renaissance representatives' legacy
- examined black community presented in Harlem Renaissance
- got acquainted with Langston Hughes' poetry
- investigated racial problems in Langston Hughes poems

All these tasks were done by the methods of investigation, comparison and holistic method.

While doing this course paper I have learnt how to collect the related information, how to analyze it, how to work on information and how to arrange it. In addition, I have learnt how to use research methods. I have improved my reading, writing skills.

To conclude, this period is one of the most significant periods of American Literature. As a consequence, this course paper is also very important in discovering American Literature, as this period depicts the most arguable background of history.

List of used literature

- 1) Watson, Steven. "Harlem Renaissance" *BlackHistory.com – Celebrating Black History*. 15.03.2015
<http://www.blackhistory.com/cgi-bin/blog.cgi?blog_id=62836>.
- 2) "African American World . Arts & Culture . Art Focus | PBS." *PBS: Public Broadcasting Service*. 15.03.2015 <<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/aaworld/arts/sava>>
- 3) Haskins, Jim. *The Harlem Renaissance*. Brookfield, Conn: Millbrook Press, 1996.
- 4) Hughes, Langston. "Harlem." *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*. 3rd ed. Ed.
- 5) Paul Lauter. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998. 1619.
- Huggins, Nathan Irvin. *Voices from the Harlem Renaissance*. New York: Oxford UP, 1995. Print.
- 6) "American Literature." *Reference & Research Book News* 18.4 (2003). *Academic Search Complete*.
- 7) Carroll, Anne. "Art, Literature, And The Harlem Renaissance: The Messages Of God's Trombones." *College Literature* 29.3 (2002). *Academic Search Complete*.
- 8) Chasar, Mike. "The Sounds Of Black Laughter And The Harlem Renaissance: Claude McKay, Sterling Brown, Langston Hughes." *American Literature* 80.1 (2008): *Academic Search Complete*.
- 9) Diepeveen, Leonard. "Folktales In The Harlem Renaissance." *American Literature* 58.1 (1986). *Academic Search Complete*.
- 10) "Harlem Renaissance" by Nathan Irvin Huggin Review by: Robert Sklar *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (Jun., 1972)
- 11) Hughes, Langston. "The Negro artist and the racial mountain." *The Nation*. (1926).
- 12) Kent, George E., "The Fork in the Road: Patterns of the Harlem Renaissance," in *Black Word*, Vol. 21, No. 8, June 1972.
- 13) Locke, Alain. *The New Negro*. Touchstone, 1999.
- 14) "NAACP: A Century in the Fight for Freedom", Library of Congress.

- 15) "Harlem in the Jazz Age", *New York Times*, February 8, 1987.
- 16) Holland Cotter, "ART; A 1920's Flowering That Didn't Disappear", *New York Times*, May 24, 1998
- 17) Danica Kirka, "Los Angeles Times Interview: Dorothy West : A Voice of Harlem Renaissance Talks of Past--But Values the 'Now'", *Los Angeles Times*, January 1, 1995.
- 18) George Hutchinson, "Harlem Renaissance", Encyclopædia Britannica.
- 19) Woods, Clyde (1998). *Development Arrested*. New York and London: Verso.
- 20) Blackmon, Douglas A. (2009). *Slavery By Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*. Anchor.
- 21) Foner, Eric (1988). *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*. Harper Collins.
- 22) *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, New York: Norton, 1997
- 23) McKay, Claude. "Invocation" and "Harlem Dancer," in *The Seven Arts* 2.6 (October 1917)
- 24) Hughes, Langston (1994). *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*. Vintage Classics.
- 25) Williams, Robert; Carrington, Charles (May 1936). "Methodist Union and The Negro". *Crisis* 43 (5).
- 26) Mac Williams, George (January 1920). "The Catholic Church and the Negro Priest". *Crisis Magazine* 19 (3).
- 27) George Joseph, MacWilliam. "The Catholic Church and the Negro Priest". *Crisis*. 2013.
- 28) Rampersad, Arnold (Introduction) (1997). Alain Locke, ed. *The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance* (1st Touchstone ed.). New York, NY: Simon & Schuster. ISBN 0684838311
- 29) Cullen, Countee. "Heritage". *Poetry Foundation*. Retrieved 19 December 2013.
- 30) Hughes, Langston. "Merry Christmas". *Humanities and Social Sciences Net*. New Masses. Retrieved 19 December 2013.

