

Harlem Renaissance Music

Jazz

Jazz is an American musical art form which originated at the beginning of the 20th century in African American communities in the Southern United States from a confluence of African and European music traditions. In Harlem in the time of the Renaissance, Big Band Jazz was the most popular style. Leaders of this movement included Dizzy Gillespie, Duke Ellington, and Ella Fitzgerald.

Duke Ellington's signature songs included "Take the A Train" and "It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)". Dizzy Gillespie's hits were "A Night in Tunisia" and "52nd Street Theme". Ella Fitzgerald was well known for classics such as "Mack the Knife".

Swing

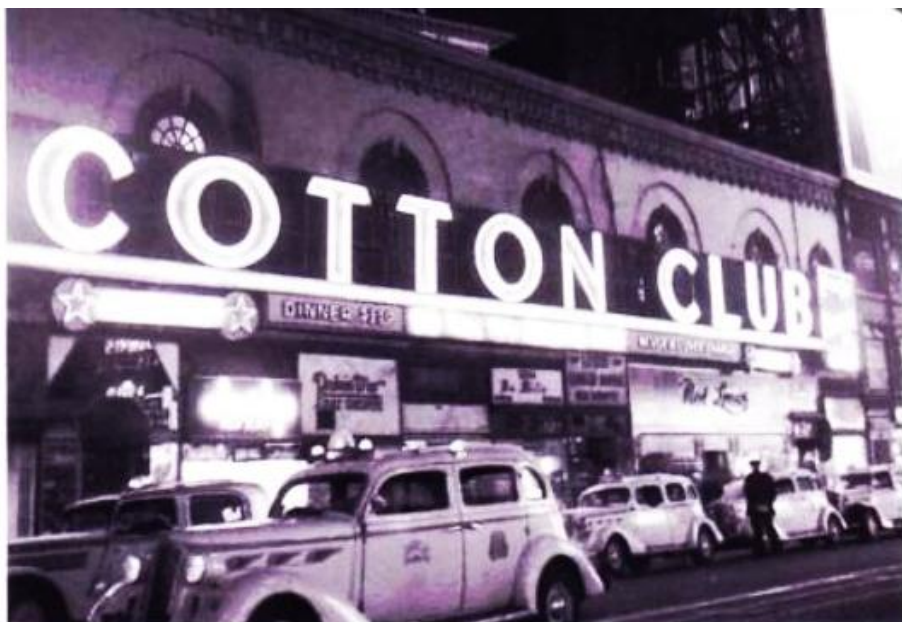
Swing music developed in the early 1930s from an earlier ragtime style. Swing uses a strong rhythm section that includes brass instruments, including trumpets and trombones, woodwinds including saxophones and clarinets or stringed instruments including violin and guitar.

One of the earliest swing band leaders was Jelly Roll Morton. Later swing band leaders became very famous in the 1930's-1940's. African-Americans such as Count Basie and Cab Calloway were headliners at the Cotton Club and Savoy as well as appearing on radio and later television.

Blues

Blues is a vocal and instrumental form of music based on the use of the blue notes-- notes sung or played at a slightly lower pitch than that of the major scale for expressive purposes. It emerged as a form of self-expression in African-American communities of the United States from spirituals, work songs, and rhymed simple narrative ballads.

One of the earliest Blues musicians was Robert Johnson who played and recorded across the South. In the clubs in Harlem, Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey were the two most popular and well-known Blues singers. Another, Lucille Bogan, was infamous for her raunchy songs of drinking and prostitution.



JAZZ

WHAT

Jazz is an American musical art form which originated at the beginning of the 20th century in African American communities in the Southern United States from a confluence of African and European music traditions. The style is defined as the use of improvisation, many rhythms, and swinging notes.

Jazz spawned a variety of subgenres, from New Orleans Dixieland dating from the early 1910s, big band-style swing from the 1930s and 1940s, bebop from the mid-1940s, a variety of Latin jazz fusions such as Afro-Cuban and Brazilian jazz from the 1950s and 1960s, jazz-rock fusion from the 1970s and late 1980s developments such as acid jazz, which blended jazz influences into funk and hip-hop.

WHO

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EXAMPLES

Duke Ellington's signature songs included "Take the A Train" and "It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)". Dizzy Gillespie's hits were "A Night in Tunisia" and "52nd Street Theme". Ella Fitzgerald was well known for classics such as "Mack the Knife" and "Stompin' at the Savoy".



SWING / JIVE

WHAT

Swing music, also known as swing jazz, is a form of jazz music that developed in the early 1930s from an earlier ragtime style. Swing uses a strong rhythm section that includes brass instruments, including trumpets and trombones, woodwinds including saxophones and clarinets or stringed instruments including violin and guitar. It usually has medium to fast tempos and a swing time rhythm. Swing bands usually featured soloists who would improvise a new melody over the arrangement.

WHO

One of the earliest swing band leaders was Jelly Roll Morton. Later swing band leaders became very famous in the 1930's-1940's. African-Americans such as Count Basie and Cab Calloway were headliners at the Cotton Club and Savoy as well as appearing on radio and later television. White band leaders included Bennie Goodman, Louis Prima, and Tommy Dorsey.

EXAMPLES

Cab Calloway's most famous song was "Minnie the Moocher". Basie's theme song was "One O'clock Jump". Other classics include "Sing, Sing, Sing" by Louis Prima and "In the Mood" by Glen Miller.



BLUES

WHAT

Blues is a vocal and instrumental form of music based on the use of the blue notes-- notes sung or played at a slightly lower pitch than that of the major scale for expressive purposes. When sung, the singer will repeat 2 lines, then end with a 3rd. It emerged as a form of self-expression in African-American communities of the United States from spirituals, work songs, and rhymed simple narrative ballads. The blues influenced later American and Western popular music, as it became the roots of jazz, rhythm and blues, bluegrass and rock and roll.

WHO

One of the earliest Blues musicians was Robert Johnson who played and recorded across the South. In the clubs in Harlem, Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey were the two most popular and well-known Blues singers. Another, Lucille Bogan, was infamous for her raunchy songs of drinking and prostitution.

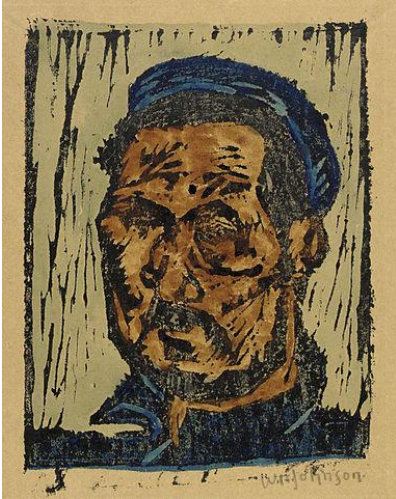
EXAMPLES

Ma Rainey's most famous song, "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom" later became the title of an August Wilson play. Bessie Smith's famous songs include "St. Louis Blues", "Trouble So Hard", and "Need a Little Sugar in My Bowl". Other classic blues songs of the time include "Sweet Home Chicago", and "Kind-Hearted Woman Blues".



Harlem Renaissance Art

Artists of the Harlem Renaissance used their photographs, paintings, and other art pieces to explore the African American experience in this era. Artists used a variety of styles such as abstractism, realism, and postmodern assemblage to address a diverse array of subjects.



WILLIAM H. JOHNSON

William Henry Johnson was an African-American painter born in Florence, South Carolina. He moved to New York to enroll in the National Academy of Design in New York. His style evolved from realism to expressionism to a powerful folk style for which he is best known.

William Johnson spent the late 1920's in France, where he learned about modernism and earned considerable awards.

PALMER HAYDEN

Palmer C. Hayden grew up in Virginia and Washington, Dc before studied at the Cooper Union in New York City. He painted in both oils and watercolors, and was a prolific artist of his era. Much of his influences came from the environment around him. Most art historians agree that his most influential or well-known works would be the ones which reflect African-American folklore. He tried to capture rural life as well as urban backgrounds in New York City. Many of these urban paintings were centered in Harlem.



ARCHIBALD MOTLEY

Unlike many other Harlem Renaissance artists, Archibald Motley, Jr. never lived in Harlem. He was born in New Orleans and spent the majority of his life in Chicago, although he had several popular exhibits of his art in New York City. He studied painting at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He is most famous for his colorful chronicling of the African-American experience during the 1920s and 1930s, and is considered one of the major contributors to the Harlem Renaissance. He specialized in portraiture and saw it “as a means of affirming racial respect and race pride.”

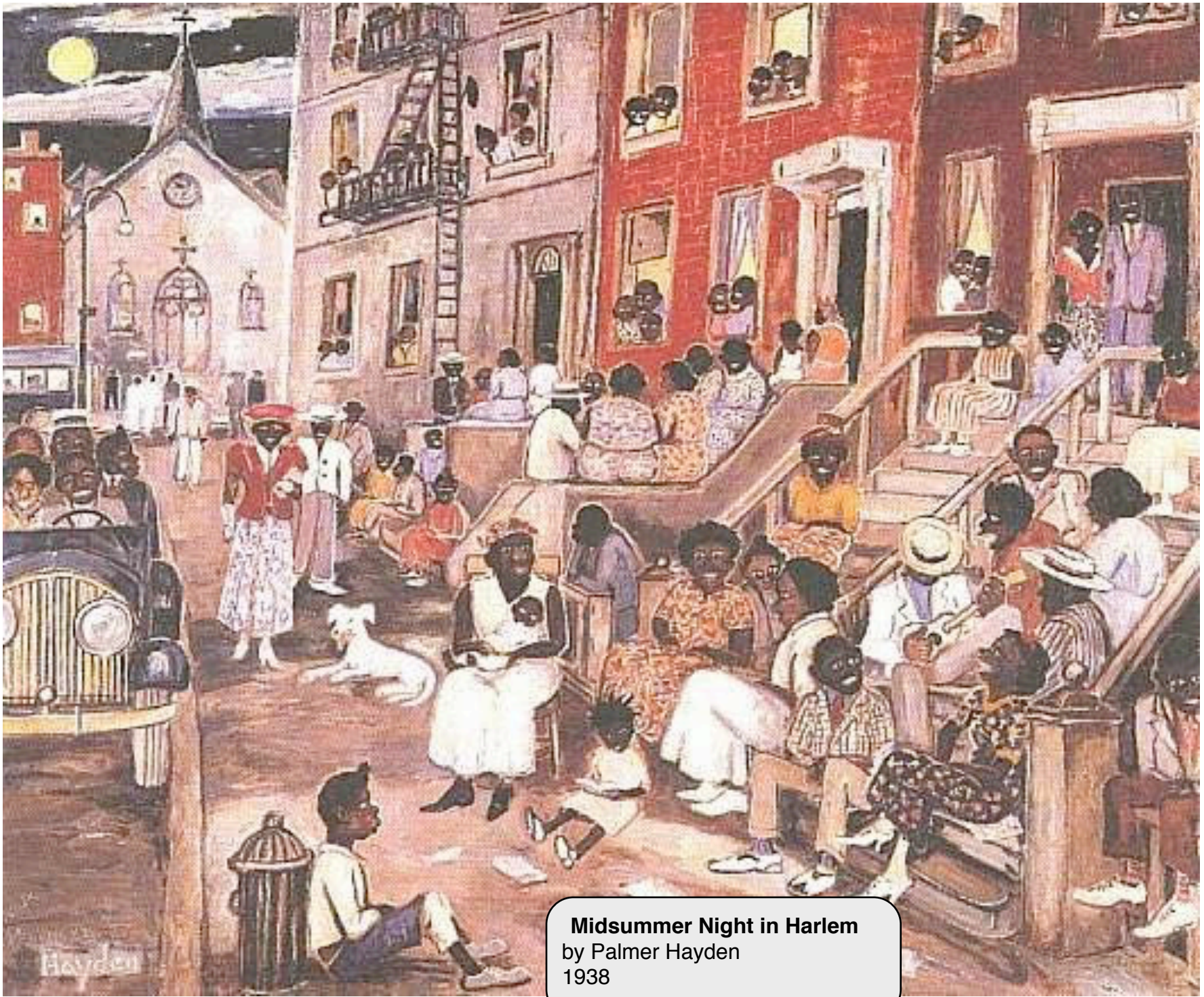




Street Life
by William H. Johnson
1939



Dancer With Soldier Boy
by William H. Johnson
1942



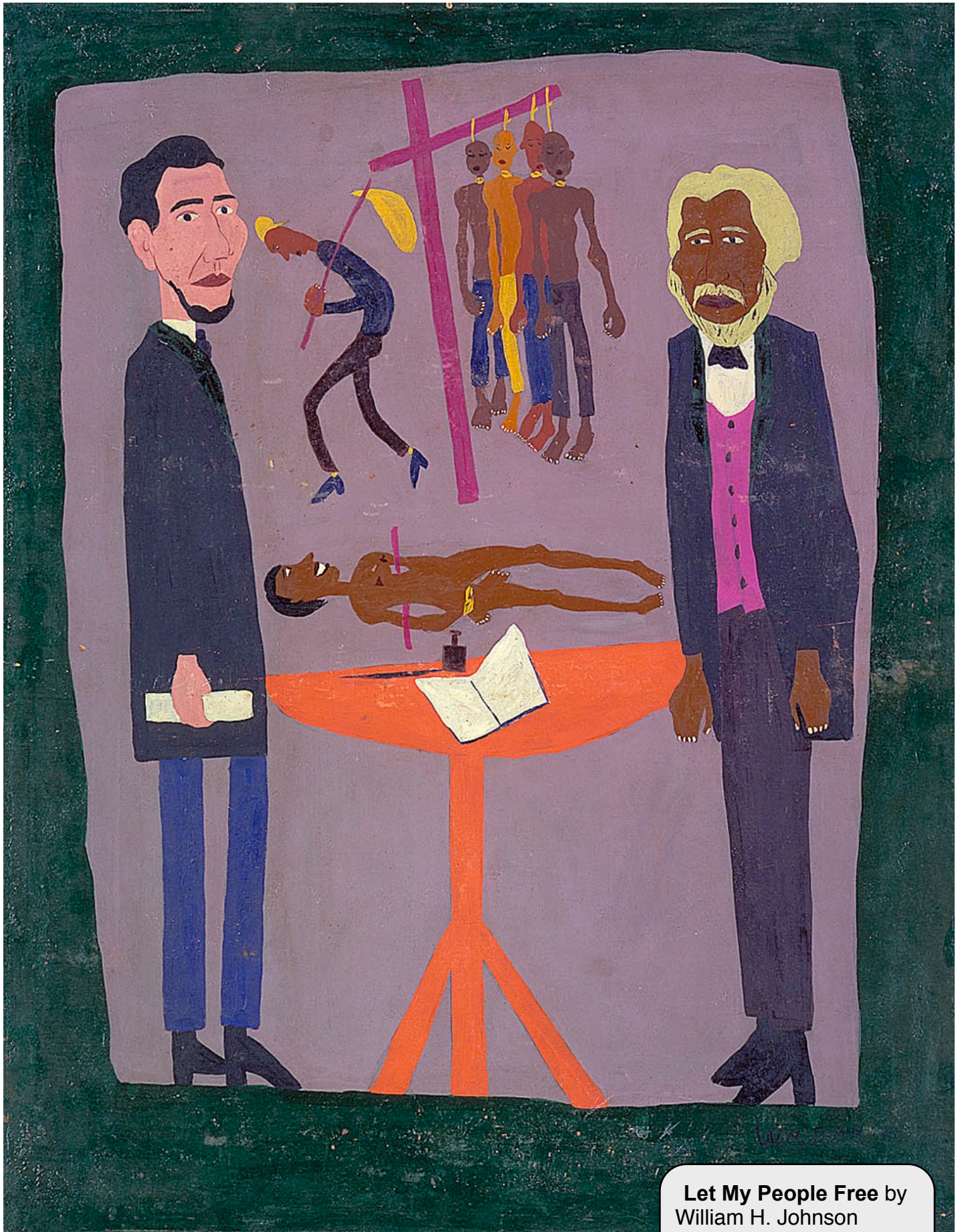
Midsummer Night in Harlem
by Palmer Hayden
1938



Moon Over Harlem
by William H. Johnson
1943



Nightlife
Archibald Motley Jr. -- 1936



Let My People Free by
William H. Johnson
1941

Harlem Renaissance Literature

The Harlem Renaissance was the blossoming of African American intellectual life during the 1920s and 1930s. It was centered in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City. In addition to great music and art, many African-American writers found great success during this period.

Langston Hughes

Poet, novelist, playwright, short story writer, and columnist. He was one of the earliest innovators of the new literary art form “jazz poetry” and is also best known for what he wrote about the Harlem Renaissance, “Harlem was in vogue.”

His most famous works include *The Negro Speaks of Rivers*, *Not Without Laughter*, and “I, Too.”

Zora Neale Hurston

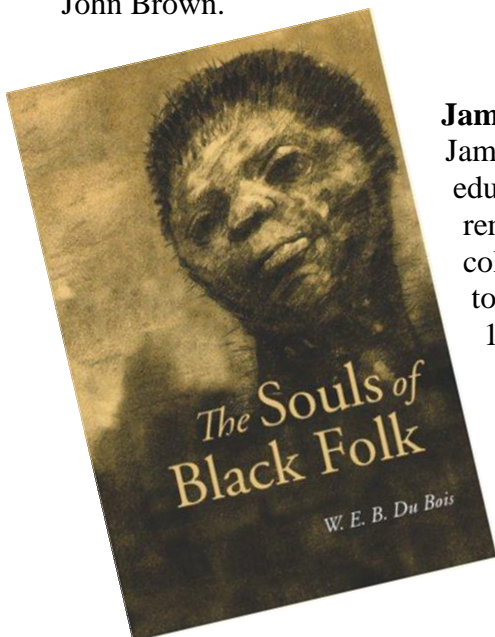
Zora Neale Hurston was an American folklorist and author during the Harlem Renaissance. Of Hurston's four novels and more than 50 published short stories, plays, and essays, she is best known for her 1937 novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

Claude McKay

Claude McKay was a Jamaican writer and poet who wrote three novels: *Home to Harlem*, a best-seller which won the Harmon Gold Award for Literature, *Banjo*, and *Banana Bottom*. His book of poetry, *Harlem Shadows* was among the first books published during the Harlem Renaissance in 1922.

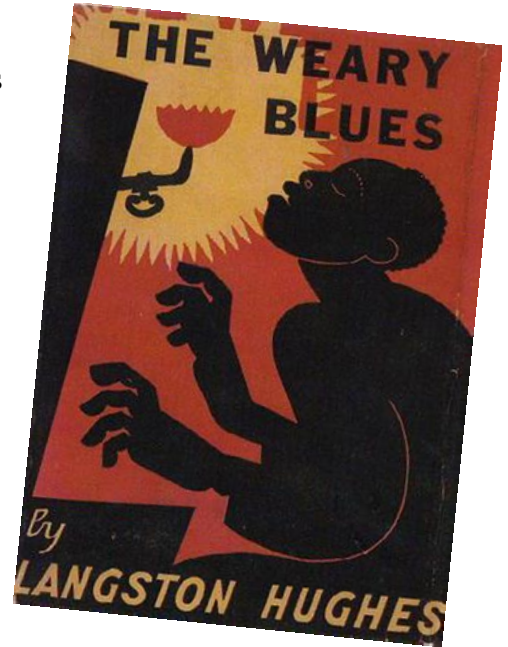
W. E. B. Du Bois

An American civil rights activist, sociologist, historian, author, and editor. In the course of his long, turbulent career, W. E. B. Du Bois attempted virtually every possible solution to the problem of twentieth-century racism— scholarship, propaganda, integration, national self-determination, human rights, cultural and economic separatism, politics, international communism, expatriation, third world solidarity. His most famous works include *The Souls of Black Folk*, *The Philadelphia Negro*, and a biography of abolitionist John Brown.



James Weldon Johnson

James Weldon Johnson was an American author, politician, journalist, poet, educator, lawyer, songwriter, and early civil rights activist. Johnson is remembered best for his writing, which includes novels, poems, and collections of folklore. One of the works for which he is best remembered today, *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse*, was published in 1927 and celebrates the tradition of the folk preacher. He was also one of the first African-American professors at New York University. Later in life he was a professor of creative literature and writing at Fisk University.



Dream Deferred

by Langston Hughes

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 just explode?

Incident

by Countee Cullen

Once riding in old Baltimore,
Heart-filled, head-filled with glee,

I saw a Baltimorean

Keep looking straight at me.

Now I was eight and very small,

And he was no whit bigger,

And so I smiled, but he poked out

His tongue, and called me, "Nigger."

I saw the whole of Baltimore

From May until December;

Of all the things that happened there

That's all that I remember.

If We Must Die

By Claude McKay

If we must die, let it not be like hogs
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,
Making their mock at our accursed lot.
If we must die, O let us nobly die,
So that our precious blood may not be shed
In vain; then even the monsters we defy
Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!
O kinsmen we must meet the common foe!
Though far outnumbered let us show us brave,
And for their thousand blows deal one deathblow!
What though before us lies the open grave?
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!

Crazy for This Democracy

by Zora Neale Hurston

I have been made to believe in this democracy thing, and I am all for tasting this democracy out. The flavor must be good. If the Occident is so intent in keeping the taste out of darker mouths that it spends all those billions and expends all those billions and expends all those millions of lives, colored ones too, to keep it among themselves, then it must be something good. I crave to sample this gorgeous thing. So I cannot say anything different from repeal of all Jim Crow laws! Not in some future generation, but repeal now and forever!!

Excerpt from "Crazy for This Democracy" an essay in The Negro Digest

The White Witch

by: James Weldon Johnson

BROTHERS mine, take care! Take care!
The great white witch rides out to-night.
Trust not your prowess nor your strength,
Your only safety lies in flight;
For in her glance there is a snare,
And in her smile there is a blight.

The great white witch you have not seen?
Then, younger brothers mine, forsooth,
Like nursery children you have looked
For ancient hag and snaggle-tooth;
But no, not so; the witch appears
In all the glowing charms of youth.

Her lips are like carnations, red,
Her face like new-born lilies, fair,
Her eyes like ocean waters, blue,
She moves with subtle grace and air,
And all about her head there floats
The golden glory of her hair.

But though she always thus appears
In form of youth and mood of mirth,
Unnumbered centuries are hers,
The infant planets saw her birth;
The child of throbbing Life is she,
Twin sister to the greedy earth.

And back behind those smiling lips,
And down within those laughing eyes,
And underneath the soft caress
Of hand and voice and purring sighs,
The shadow of the panther lurks,
The spirit of the vampire lies.

I, Too

By Langston Hughes

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.