

African Americans in the 1920's Assignment

Marcus Garvey and the United Negro Improvement Association

*Note: this timeline focuses on Garvey and the UNIA during the years he was based in NYC. Garvey continued to be active after 1927, and the UNIA continued to exist after his death in 1940.

1914 Garvey founds UNIA in Jamaica.

1916 Garvey leaves Jamaica for New York City.

1917 Thirteen members join to form the New York branch of the UNIA.

1918 Garvey starts Negro World newspaper.

1919

- Garvey starts Black Star Line shipping company.
- FBI instructs New York and Chicago offices to begin monitoring Garvey.
- Black Star Line signs contract to purchase its first ship, which will be re-named "Frederick Douglass."

1920

- The U.N.I.A. holds its first International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World at Madison Square Garden and schedules a massive parade in Harlem.
- UNIA adopts and signs a Declaration of Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World, adopts a "nation" flag with the colors of the Red, Black, and Green, and elects officials for its government. Garvey himself is elected Provisional President of Africa.

1921 A 16-man UNIA delegation leaves for Liberia.

1922

- Garvey is arrested for mail fraud (he allegedly sent out brochures advertising a Black Star Line ship that he had not yet purchased).
- The Black Star Line is dissolved due to financial failure.
- Garvey meets with the Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, resulting in a "Garvey Must Go" campaign headed by black leaders.

1923 Second UNIA delegation heads to Liberia. Garvey arrested and sentenced to 5 years in prison for mail fraud.

1927 President Calvin Coolidge commutes Garvey's sentence. Garvey deported to Jamaica.

1940 Garvey dies

Source A: Excerpt from The Autobiography of Malcolm X, 1964, pp. 1-6. Malcolm X was a political activist who was a strong advocate for black rights. He initially advocated for black separatism but later moderated his views. He was assassinated in 1965.

When my mother was pregnant with me, she told me later, a party of hooded Ku Klux Klan riders galloped up to our home in Omaha, Nebraska, one night. Surrounding the house...the Klansmen shouted threats and warnings at her that we had better get out of town because "the good Christian white

people” were not going to stand for my father’s “spreading trouble” among the “good” Negroes of Omaha with the “back to Africa” preachings of Marcus Garvey.

My father, the Reverend Earl Little, was a Baptist minister, a dedicated organizer for Marcus Aurelius Garvey’s U.N.I.A. (Universal Negro Improvement Association). . . . Garvey, from his headquarters in New York City’s Harlem, was raising the banner of black-race purity and exhorting the Negro masses to return to their ancestral African homeland—a cause which had made Garvey the most controversial black man on earth. . .

[My father] believed, as did Marcus Garvey, that freedom, independence and self-respect could never be achieved by the Negro in America, and that therefore the Negro should leave America to the white man and return to his African land of origin. . .

I remember seeing the big, shiny photographs of Marcus Garvey. . . The pictures showed what seemed to me millions of Negroes thronged in parade behind Garvey riding in a fine car, a big black man dressed in a dazzling uniform with gold braid on it, and he was wearing a thrilling hat with tall plumes. I remember hearing that he had black followers not only in the United States but all around the world, and I remember how the meetings always closed with my father saying, several times, and the people chanting after him, “Up, you mighty race, you can accomplish what you will!”

Source B: Letter to U.S. Attorney-General (Modified)

Harry M. Daugherty, U.S. Attorney-General Jan 15, 1923
Department of Justice, Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

(1) There are in our midst certain Negro criminals and potential murderers, both foreign and American born, who are moved by intense hatred against the white race. These undesirables continually to proclaim that all white people are enemies to the Negro. They have become so fanatical that they have threatened and attempted the death of their opponents, actually assassinating in one instance.

(5) The U. N. I. A. is composed chiefly of the most primitive ignorant element of West Indian and American Negroes. The so-called respectable element of the movement are largely ministers without churches, physicians without patients, lawyers without clients and publishers without readers, who are usually in search of "easy money." In short, this organization is composed in the main of Negro sharks and ignorant Negro fanatics.

(27) The Garvey organization, known as the U.N.I.A., is just as objectionable and even more dangerous as the KKK, inasmuch as it naturally attracts an even lower type of crooks, and racial bigots.

(29) The signers of this appeal have no personal ends or political interests to serve. Nor are they moved by any personal bias against Marcus Garvey. They sound this alarm only because they foresee the gathering storm of race prejudice and sense the danger of this movement, which cancer-like, is eating away at the core of peace and safety -- of civic harmony and interracial coexistence.

The signers of this letter are:

- Robert S. Abbott, Chicago, editor and publisher of the "Chicago Defender."
- Dr. Julia P. Coleman, New York City, president of the Hair-Vim Chemical Co.
- William Pickens, New York City, field secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.
- Chandler Owen, New York City, co-editor of "The Messenger" and co-executive secretary of the Friends of Negro Freedom.
- Robert W. Bagnall, New York City, director of branches of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Source C: Memo from J. Edgar Hoover (Modified)

J. Edgar Hoover to Special Agent Ridgely Washington, D.C., October 11, 1919

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. RIDGELY.

I am transmitting information that has come to my attention about the activities of Marcus Garvey. Garvey is a West-Indian negro and in addition to his activities in endeavoring to establish the Black Star Line Steamship Corporation he has also been particularly active among the radical elements in New York City in agitating the negro movement. Unfortunately, however, he has not as yet violated any federal law whereby he could be proceeded against on the grounds of being an undesirable alien, from the point of view of deportation. It occurs to me, however, from the attached clipping that there might be some proceeding against him for fraud in connection with his Black Star Line propaganda and for this reason I am transmitting the communication to you for your appropriate attention.

The following is a brief statement of Marcus Garvey and his activities:

- * Subject a native of the West Indies and one of the most prominent negro agitators in New York;
- * He is a founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League;
- * He is the promulgator of the Black Star Line and is the managing editor of the Negro World;
- * He is an exceptionally fine orator, creating much excitement among the negroes through his steamship proposition;
- * In his paper the "Negro World" the Soviet Russian Rule is upheld and there is open support of socialism.

Respectfully,

J. E. Hoover, Bureau of Investigations (FBI)

1. Why was Marcus Garvey a controversial figure? Why? Your response must be 9-15 sentences in length and must use evidence from all four sources.

The Influence of Jazz (Discovery Education)

Many historians agree that the Harlem Renaissance was one of the most profound creative movements in United States history. In the 1920s, African Americans, long victimized by racism and the aftereffects of slavery, found creative expression in poetry, music, and literature. What is the impact of this movement today?

The Birth of Jazz

The Harlem Renaissance was an African American artistic movement centered in the New York City borough of Harlem in the 1920s and 1930s. With help from the monthly magazine *The Crisis* and highly regarded authors such as Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston, the Harlem Renaissance spread worldwide, and soon African Americans found they had an outlet—and an audience—for expression and creativity. The renaissance spread throughout dance, visual art, and music. Perhaps the most widely known music of the Harlem Renaissance was jazz.

The word jazz can mean different things to different people. To some, it is the genre of improvisational music, created anew each night. For others, it is the syncopated beats, widely varying rhythms, and irregular meter of drums, horns, and saxophones. To still others, it is the style of vocals known as scat or bebop: the improvised words that sound like music. Jazz is hard to define, and that fact alone may be the best way to define jazz. What is agreed upon is that it was a musical style invented and expanded by African Americans, many of whom were drawing on African musical styles from the days of slavery or earlier. Jazz flourished during the Harlem Renaissance and soon became a part of mainstream culture. In the late 1920s, Louis Armstrong, a popular jazz musician, toured the United States and played to sold-out theaters—filled mostly with white audience members. Jazz clubs popped up in every major U.S. city.

Jazz was a significant form of expression during the Harlem Renaissance. Although jazz may be less popular today than it was during the 1920s, there is no doubt that it has left a lasting influence on the creative and cultural landscape of the United States.

Jazz Opens Doors

During the Harlem Renaissance, many musicians grew rich and famous playing jazz music. In some ways, jazz music allowed African American musicians to become part of mainstream American culture. At a time when many African Americans faced discrimination, many African American jazz musicians enjoyed a lifestyle with more opportunities. Duke Ellington, a famous jazz pianist and composer, formed a band that toured the world with great success. The jazz vocalist Billie Holiday landed a record deal at the age of 18 and continued to record throughout her life. Although her personal life had hardships, Holiday reached star status, even appearing in movies.

The jazz musicians of the 1920s paved the way for African Americans to find success in the music industry. As more and more opportunities existed for jazz musicians, other doors in the entertainment industry began opening. One jazz musician, Ethel Waters, successfully transitioned from a career on the music stage to one in film. In 1949, Waters earned an Oscar nomination for her role as a supporting actress. As African Americans became more prominent in music and acting, cultural prejudices against African Americans slowly changed as well. Today, there are innumerable famous African Americans, from musicians like Kanye West, to actors like Denzel Washington, to politicians like Barack Obama.

The Jazz–Hip-Hop Connection

Many people believe that jazz music gradually evolved into the music genre of hip-hop, and in that way, jazz is still significant today. There are several ideas that suggest a link between jazz and hip-hop. For one, the improvised lyrics of jazz show a direct connection to the improvised rhymes of hip-hop and rap. Like jazz musicians, early hip-hop artists were known for creating on-the-spot rhymes, often taking turns in the spotlight, much like early jazz artists who traded turns with solos during songs. The vocal style of hip-hop may also be linked to jazz: the fast, spoken-word rhymes can evoke a pattern similar to the vocal scat style of jazz.

Jazz and hip-hop share another connection: both forms of music allowed African Americans a chance to shape and create their own unique culture. For jazz musicians, jazz was more than a type of music, it was a lifestyle. Jazz was different from the other popular music sounds of the day, and for a time, it was a nearly underground musical style, played and enjoyed by African Americans. Hip-hop, too, was at first almost exclusively created by African Americans. Like jazz, hip-hop allowed black youth a chance to create their own culture, separate from the mainstream white culture.

The Poetry of Jazz

From the earliest days of the Harlem Renaissance, there has been a link between the musical styles of jazz and the written word of poetry. The poet Langston Hughes is known for being closely linked to the world of jazz music. Hughes was inspired by jazz. He wrote about jazz musicians, and he mimicked the music in his words. In his poem, “Trumpet Player: 52nd Street,” Hughes writes about the music of jazz and uses vivid images to show why the musician plays music.

*The music
From the trumpet at his lips
Is honey
Mixed with liquid fire
The rhythm
From the trumpet at his lips
Is ecstasy
Distilled from old desire—

Desire
That is longing for the moon
Where the moonlight's but a spotlight
In his eyes*

Jazz music has continued to influence poets, long after the end of the Harlem Renaissance. Modern writers draw inspiration from jazz in several ways. It reminds writers of the importance of expression, creativity, and spontaneity. Some writers, such as Gwendolyn Brooks, use poetry to comment on racial injustice, much like jazz musicians used music to create their own identity. Poets are also inspired by jazz's lack of rules. Many modern poets shun the use of standard grammar and punctuation, a style that can be traced back to the rule breaking style of jazz.

The Music Plays On

Jazz has been influential in many ways. It has helped expand opportunities for African Americans, and it has shaped modern music and poetry. However, there is one more way that jazz influences modern society: jazz music itself! Modern jazz musicians are still creating—and selling—records. Wynton Marsalis and Steve Lacy are two well-known contemporary jazz musicians who play to sold-out crowds.

It is true that the times—and musical tastes—have changed. Jazz is not as popular as it once was, and jazz musicians sell fewer records than other recording artists. But for many music lovers, jazz still holds an important place in music. The music captures an important time in history—the Harlem Renaissance—and in the spirit of the music itself, continues to evolve.

1. Based upon the passage above, what is the best definition of Harlem Renaissance?
 - a. A period of creative outlet for African Americans in art, music and literature.
 - b. A time when the African American population experienced a "rebirth" and revitalized their ancestral traditions.
 - c. A phase when African Americans rebelled against American society through protests and riots.
 - d. A time when African Americans only expressed themselves through literature.
2. What is one possible link between hip-hop and jazz?
 - a. They both originated in the Bronx.
 - b. Both genres of music use improvisation.
 - c. Early hip-hop artists studied and played jazz.
 - d. Both genres of music started during the Harlem Renaissance.
3. Which fact from the passage suggests that jazz music is still significant today?
 - a. Jazz has an improvisational style.
 - b. There are still popular jazz musicians today.
 - c. Jazz opened doors to many African American musicians.
 - d. Early jazz musicians were able to become successful actors.
4. In what ways does jazz music live on in modern society? Support your answer with details and evidence from the reading passage.

Document 4: The Main Streets of Jazz

The rhythms that beat from the streets and clubs on Lenox Avenue in Harlem reflected the mood in African American communities across the country in the late 1910s and through the 1920s. Though it is usually referred to as the Harlem Renaissance, the burst of artistic and intellectual activity reached far beyond Harlem. After the Civil War, thousands of people who had been enslaved headed north. They were looking for work but also seeking freedom of expression in art, music, poetry, and literature. A new form of music dubbed “jazz” was the perfect vehicle.

The exact origin of jazz is unknown, though New Orleans, Louisiana, is often referred to as “the birthplace of jazz.” It was in New Orleans that music from the Caribbean, West Africa, and the cotton fields of the rural South may have first blended into a new sound. The music was born of hope and optimism as well as disappointment and frustration. The upbeat rhythm of this music encouraged audiences to participate by stamping their feet and clapping their hands. As people danced, the musicians absorbed the energy and reflected it back in creative rhythms and new tunes. Instruments were played in new ways.

In a simple 1-2-3-4 rhythm, the beat that comes between each of the four main beats (1 and 2 and, etc.) is the upbeat. An emphasis on the upbeat made jazz appealing to its listeners. Jazz music pulsed from city to city, from club to club. It flowed from south to north, east to west, and traveled across the oceans.

Across the country, the rhythms of jazz gathered depth as musicians blended and borrowed ideas from one another. Though early jazz was based largely on an earlier form of musical expression called blues,

jazz gathered momentum propelled by sound recordings and radio. The music spread quickly to wide audiences. Across the country, parts of big cities were transformed into centers of jazz music. People flocked to these areas to listen and dance to the new beats. Some of these main streets of jazz live now in memory only, while others have been revived and preserved.

Beale Street: Memphis, Tennessee

Beale Street may be the most famous street in Memphis. At first, Beale Street, located near the Mississippi River, was a center for trade and home to waves of Irish, Jewish, Italian and German immigrants. After the Civil War, newly prosperous African Americans opened bustling businesses along the street. Nightclubs, churches, theaters, restaurants, stores, pawnshops and music venues thrived alongside gambling and crime. Every evening, guests in fancy clothing mingled with laborers in overalls to enjoy the entertainment. Jazz, a new sound that was built on the structure of the blues, gained popularity on Beale Street. Jazz giants, like Louis Armstrong, based some of their early creations on the blues.

Music flowed freely from churches such as Beale Street Baptist and from nightclubs, including Peewees, the Republic and the King Palace Café. However, in the 1930s, the Great Depression hit Beale Street hard. Businesses closed and buildings deteriorated. Even recognition by the National Register of Historic Places in 1966 could not halt the street's downward spiral. Then, in the late 1970s, the City of Memphis bought most of the properties along a three-block stretch with the intention creating a center of entertainment. An act of Congress officially declared Beale Street "Home of the Blues" in 1977. By the mid-1980s, the street was once again ringing with music and business. The Beale Street Brass Note Walk of Fame honors more than 80 musicians, DJs, songwriters, and promoters with brass notes embedded in the sidewalk, much like Hollywood honors famous actors with stars in the sidewalk. Every May, the brass notes are polished by the footsteps of 100,000 music lovers who flock to the Beale Street Music Festival to celebrate this street's role in American musical history.

U Street: Washington, DC

U Street was not one street. "U Street" refers to the U Street District, organized like a loose grid with U Street running from east to west through the center. Jazz greats such as Duke Ellington, Miles Davis and Shirley Horn could be found any night of the week in one of the small clubs that crammed the street. The spotlight shone especially brightly on the Howard Theater at 7th and T Streets and Crystal Caverns on 11th, a nightclub whose performance roster included most of the jazz greats. The Howard Theater, built in 1910, was the first theater in the country open to African American musicians and patrons. Ragtime, blues, jazz and, later, big band tunes flooded the theater.

The history of early jazz owes a special debt to Jelly Roll Morton, an influential jazz pianist who briefly managed a nightclub above a U Street restaurant. Though Morton's claim that he alone invented jazz might be exaggerated, he left a valuable legacy for jazz historians. In 1938, he met with Alan Lomax, the director of the Archive of American Folklore, who recorded many hours of Jelly Roll's piano playing. Those recordings are still available at the Library of Congress.

Pennsylvania Avenue: Baltimore, Maryland

In 1917, the Baltimore paper Afro-American announced the arrival of a new kind of music and dance called jazz. People flocked to the jazz clubs along Pennsylvania Avenue in Baltimore to listen and move to the twists and turns of the music. The street was a hub of entertainment and activity. By day, shoppers crowded the department stores and specialty shops. At night, clubs along the avenue

throbbed with the sounds of jazz and blues. Theaters and dance halls shared the south end of the street with pawnshops and used furniture stores. Nightclubs, restaurants, theaters, and hotels at the north end served customers who had money to spend. Two theaters dominated the street. The Regent Theater in the 1600 block opened on Pennsylvania in 1916 and was rebuilt in 1920. With a seating capacity of up to 2,200, the Regent became one of the largest performance spaces in the East devoted to African American performers. Three blocks away, the Douglas Theater, renamed the Royal in 1926, was part of the Chitlin' Circuit, a group of theaters around the country that featured African American performers.

Entertainment on Pennsylvania Avenue was not limited to grand theaters. The street was lined with small clubs, too. Perry's Inn, Gamby's, the New Albert, Savoy, and Strand all thrived in the 1920s and 1930s. Jazz drummer Ike Dixon opened his Comedy Club in 1934 in the former Savoy Ballroom. The club attracted jazz legends such as Della Reese, Dinah Washington, and Miles Davis. Later, a young Sammy Davis Jr. came to the club and asked to sing. Performers often practiced their acts in the afternoon at the Comedy Club before appearing at the Royal in the evening.

The South Side of Chicago, Illinois

Like other cities, Chicago claims a piece of the artistic renaissance of African American arts, though this rebirth came somewhat later there. In fact, many musicians, writers, and artists left New York as the energy of the Harlem Renaissance waned. They found a renewed sense of purpose and new audiences in Chicago. They joined musicians coming north from New Orleans.

Nearly 75,000 southern immigrants, including musicians, arrived on the South Side of Chicago between 1916 and the end of the 1920s. There, they joined a thriving African American community. Restaurants, amusement parks, nightclubs, dancehalls, and movie theaters sprouted up in response.

Jazz ensembles satisfied the desire of young people to dance to "hot music." Chicago both benefited from and contributed enthusiastically to the newfound energy of the music and arts. Jelly Roll Morton began playing in Chicago in 1912 and with cornet player King Oliver gave life to the emerging Chicago jazz scene.

By the end of the 1920s, though, the jazz scene had largely faded in Chicago. The Depression also took its toll. However, the contemporary jazz scene there has since become active again. The Chicago Jazz Festival brings local and national jazz talent to town every September.

Central Avenue: Los Angeles, California

Central Avenue was a social and economic hub for African American residents of Los Angeles from the 1920s through the early 1950s. People worked on Central Avenue by day, but at night, Southern Californians flocked to the avenue to fill their ears with jazz. Some of the most well-known jazz legends were featured at the clubs on Central Avenue, including Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and Billie Holiday. Central Avenue, sometimes called "Little Harlem," is 3,000 miles from its namesake in New York City. But those who were there claim that its role was essential in spreading the spirit of the Harlem Renaissance to southern California. Central Avenue was different. It felt relaxed compared to jazz centers in the East and in Chicago. People even dressed more casually. Men loosened their ties and left their suit jackets behind.

African American performers and the fans that flocked to Los Angeles to see them often stayed at the Dunbar Hotel, one of the few hotels that allowed African American guests. Located at 42nd and Central, the hotel was ideally located. Jazz greats Cab Calloway, Billie Holiday, and Louis Armstrong played at the Dunbar. Ella Fitzgerald, Duke Ellington, Lena Horne, and Louis Armstrong also stayed there. The Dunbar opened in 1928.

Like many pre-Depression institutions, the Dunbar fell into hard times as clubs shut down in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The Dunbar was designated a city Historic Cultural Landmark in 1974 and placed on the National Register of Historic Places two years later. It has since been renovated, and much of its original architecture and design have been preserved. Although the Dunbar is now a housing complex for senior citizens, some people still recall its past glory. But everyone who calls the Dunbar home has a guaranteed front row seat to the annual Central Avenue Jazz Festival, which has been going on since 1995 and takes place right outside.

From Beale Street to Central Avenue, jazz spread to all corners of the United States. Jazz was more than a style of music. It represented freedom of expression, changing times, and a new voice of African Americans. Jazz changed the way Americans listened to music. The main streets of jazz remain fascinating places where the music once thrived and, in some cases, is thriving once again.

1. According to the passage, what is the best way to describe the origin of jazz?
 - a. The jazz pianist Jelly Roll Morton invented jazz in the 1920s.
 - b. Jazz blended new rhythms and tunes with music from the South.
 - c. A popular campaign song became the first jazz tune broadcast on radio.
 - d. Music from the cities combined with a 12-bar blues structure to become jazz.
2. What event helped fuel the rise of Chicago's jazz scene?
 - a. Newspapers from Harlem wrote about Chicago.
 - b. The city declared jazz the official music of Chicago.
 - c. Large numbers of people moved to Chicago from the South.
 - d. The area was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
3. How did Central Avenue reflect the fact that the renaissance had begun somewhere else?
 - a. The area was nicknamed "Little Harlem."
 - b. The area was more relaxed than other centers of jazz.
 - c. There were very few musicians from Los Angeles performing on Central Avenue.
 - d. All of the streets in the area were named for musicians from other areas.
4. What did the main streets described in the passage have in common? Provide at least two specific examples, using details and evidence from the passage to support your answer.

Harlem Renaissance Artist Profile

Prepare a PowerPoint/Google Slides presentation. You are required to make a 3-5 minute presentation on your person. The presentation must include (use these topics to organize your presentations):

1. Autobiographical facts – where they grew up, family life, education if any, how they “got started, etc.
2. General Career facts – Major works/performances. Info about their style, what the public thought, etc.
3. One specific work – You must present one specific piece in your presentation – a poem, a song, a painting, etc. You must give some background on the piece and explain its meaning (this is more difficult for a song or a painting). It does NOT have to be YOUR interpretation—consult the experts!
4. Renaissance Link – How did the artist fit into the period overall? Were they at the beginning? The end? Who influenced them? Who did they influence? How did they reflect/affect the times?
5. A visual/audio aid for the work – You may also include video/audio clips – clear with teacher first!
6. A bibliography – including ALL sources (including websites and images!) in MLA FORMAT to show where you got your information.

Writers:

Arna Bontemps
Countee Cullen
Langston Hughes
Zora Neal Hurston
James Weldon Johnson
Nella Larsen
Claude McKay
Anne Spencer
Wallace Thurman
Gene Toomer
Richard Wright

Musicians:

Louis Armstrong
Josephine Baker
Cab Calloway
Duke Ellington
Dizzy Gillespie
Billie Holiday
Fletcher Henderson
James Price Johnston
Ma Rainey
Bessie Smith
Fats Waller

Artists:

Richmond Barthe
Romare Bearden
Selma Burke
Beauford Delaney
Aaron Douglas
Palmer C Hayden
Lois Jones
Jacob Lawrence
Oscar Micheaux
Augusta Savage
James Van der Zee