Poets of the Harlem Renaissance and Students’ Poetic Perceptions of Contemporary Issues

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ABSTRACT

My goal is to have the eighth grade students of Shaw Middle School reflect and discuss social themes that were prevalent during the Harlem Renaissance period, then compare and contrast them to contemporary social themes. I will go over the purpose of poetry, several short poetry readings and discussions to introduce students to poetry appreciation.

The Harlem Renaissance was an African-American cultural movement that emerged in the 1920s, continued through the early years of the Great Depression, and faded during the build up to World War II. It was the first concentrated involvement of African American artist, writers, musicians, singers, and intellectuals in an artistic and cultural movement that spoke to the realities of the color line. The students will read selections from Countee Cullen, Anne Spencer, Angelina Grimke, Claude McKay, Jean Toomer and Langston Hughes. Students will hear the Harlem Renaissance music, literature, interviews, and speeches on the integrated audio CD that brings the Harlem Renaissance voices, including WEB DuBois and Langston Hughes to vibrant life once again. Students will analyze and interpret just a few of the many Harlem Renaissance poems that will give them the opportunity to produce their own poetry. I will encourage students to really try different avenues and search for appropriate words that will develop their vocabulary. Students will have many opportunities to read their poetry aloud within assigned groups and eliminate any words that are not necessary to the meaning of the poems.