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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2024 Volume III: Poetry as Sound and Object

The Harlem Renaissance in Sounds and Image

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This unit is designed to immerse fifth-grade students in the world of Harlem Renaissance poetry. It offers a rare opportunity to study and dissect works by Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, and Jacob Lawrence, focusing on profound themes including identity, social justice, and cultural heritage. The unit is meticulously crafted to educate students about the impact of literature and art created in the early 1900s.

Students will delve deeply into the works of Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, and Jacob Lawrence, carefully analyzing literary devices and underlying meanings. They will engage in creative writing exercises, such as crafting narrative poetry, creating ekphrastic poetry, and erasure poems. They will also thoroughly research the lives, impacts of Harlem Renaissance poets, and present their findings to their peers.

The overarching ambition of this unit is to provide students with a profound understanding of how literature reflects society. Moreover, it aims to convincingly demonstrate that the themes of the Harlem Renaissance, such as identity, social justice, and cultural heritage, remain pertinent even in our contemporary society. By engaging students in the material and the learning process, this unit equips them with the tools to analyze and understand the world around them critically.

(Developed for Reading and Social Studies, grade 5; recommended for Arts and Drama, grade 5)

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