



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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What does

poetry

hold within its grasp?

that makes it

magical,

transcendental,

inspirational,

sensational,

celebrational? (by Ethelwolda L Paat)

Introduction

What were the unique 'sounds and images' of the Harlem Renaissance expressed through the poetry and art of the time?

Poetry, an unparalleled art form, transcends time with its profound vision. It can perceive beyond the boundless expanse of the universe, capturing every sound and heartbeat with its attentive ear. It carries the touch of life, creation, and unwavering dedication. With the magic of imagination, it savors the taste of anything in existence and breathes in basso¹ (deep), adagio² (slow), allegro³ (fast), and sostenuto⁴ (steady) rhythms. This transformative power of poetry inspires and uplifts, making it a beacon of hope in the darkest times.

This innate ability of poetry to move human emotion in mysterious ways is synonymous with the view of Northrop Frye, a Canadian literary critic and theorist. He viewed poetry as more than irregular lines in a book. He believed that poetry embodies a physical movement resembling dance and song, with rhythms that enable us to traverse the streets, synchronizing with its cadence. This engagement with verse rhythms resonates with our bodily rhythms, establishing a sense of connection and engagement. The immersive and rhythmic nature of poetic language further enhances this connection, making us not just observers but active participants in artistic expression, deeply involved and connected.⁵

Frye's concept of poetry as a physical movement, like dance and song, can be tied to the mass migration of African Americans during the Great Migration, which led many to settle in Harlem, New York. Harlem became the focal point of the Harlem Renaissance, a vibrant period of artistic and cultural exchange within the African American community from the late 1910s to the 1930s. This was a time that not only celebrated Black identity but also asserted it, a period of artistic and cultural renaissance that filled the air with the sounds of jazz and the rhythm of the blues. The essential movements of the Harlem Renaissance were an assertion of innovation in form and structure, expressed through poetic works inspired by the blues and jazz music of the time, along with art that conveyed an awareness of Black life in America and an independent African American identity.⁶ This connection between poetry and the Harlem Renaissance is not just historical. It also brings a sense of pride and appreciation, inviting us to look deeper into the artistic expressions of the time and celebrate the rich tapestry of African American culture.⁷

The benefits and usefulness of poetry cannot be overstated. It provides a medium to explore personal and group experiences, offering a “thinking space”⁸ for reflection and self-understanding. Poetry engages all five senses, creating a “zone of imagination” that connects to cognitive and affective responses. It enhances diverse ways to engage and think critically.⁹ As Leroi Jones suggests, imagination transcends the perception of self as a physical being. It encompasses all possibilities, as any idea can originate from an initial rhythm or image, signifying the beginning of its impact on the world.¹⁰ It is the potential to ignite imagination that propels it forward.

Langston Hughes writes in his poem “Harlem,”

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up

like a raisin in the sun?¹¹

Langston Hughes's “Harlem” reflects the bold and innovative spirit of the Harlem Renaissance. It symbolizes a sense of aspiration and the importance of pursuing and realizing one’s dreams. On the other hand, a metaphorical statement by an admirer of Countee Cullen captures the daring and transformative nature of the artistic movement during that time: “Speaking of aiming for the stars, you have virtually disarranged the entire solar system.”¹² Putting these thoughts into perspective, poetry should not be intimidating or inhibiting. Instead, it should be a free form of expression, a freestyle of visualization, and a dream that should be pursued.

Furthermore, writers and artists utilize aesthetics, contemplating beauty and art. It can be compared to the

“quality of light” that illuminates one’s existence,¹³ as described in Audre Lorde’s “Sister Outsider.” Their poetry is an artistic expression and a proud representation of a rich cultural heritage. Another characteristic is improvisation, a key element in poetry and jazz music. Improvisation in poetry and jazz music involves creating written or spoken words or musical notes spontaneously and in real-time, often in response to a particular situation or emotion.¹⁴ Like poetry and jazz music, improvisation offers numerous ways to convey thoughts and feelings and usually sparks discussions about its content, generating enthusiasm and a sense of connection.¹⁵

In conclusion, “Poetry as Sound and Object” is an excellent instrument for discovering and exploring innovative ideas and techniques for utilizing historical objects and art in teaching reading, writing, social studies, and other subjects. It provides a first-hand experience and a visual understanding of how “an experience of sound” and “seeing poems as objects” can help visualize the meaning of words and the strong connection of social and historical links to cultures and backgrounds.

The playbook of poetry is about unleashing the power of words and absorbing the energy of emotions. Poetry is like opening the gateways of the heavens and connecting every primal zone of the five senses. As Langston Hughes says, “There are words like freedom, sweet and wonderful to say. On my heartstrings, freedom sings, all day, every day.”¹⁶ This makes the “sounds and image” of the Harlem Renaissance beautiful, distinguished, unique, powerful, resonant, and inspirational.

Rationale

For over two decades, I have dedicated myself to teaching the art of reading and writing to diverse groups of children, spanning from kindergarten to fifth grade. Throughout my experience, I have encountered students with varying degrees of ability in reading and writing. However, what stands out most prominently in my memory are the countless students who exhibit hesitancy to engage with these fundamental skills. Many are apprehensive about expressing their thoughts in writing, intimidated by the act of writing, and lack a genuine passion for reading. Hence, as an educator, I can change this narrative, instill a love for reading and writing in my students, and empower them with the skills they need to succeed.

As I began brainstorming ideas for my curriculum unit, I reflected on my journey as an educator. My focus gravitated toward my experiences with teaching reading and writing. I pondered the depths of my past, reminiscing about the moments when I observed the transformation of students as they blossomed into confident and enthusiastic readers and writers, thanks to the world of poetry. These moments of transformation, where students overcame intimidation, hesitancy, and fear, are the most rewarding and inspiring part of my journey. I carefully reflected on the various strategies and techniques I have utilized to cultivate successful readers and writers and enable them to exceed the typical expectations for their respective grade levels. And the “sound and image” of poetry made it possible!

It was a moment of inspiration. I realized poetry is a powerful tool for teaching and learning because I used it, and I am living proof of its power in students’ reading and writing. Over the years, I have found that it is one of the most effective methods for helping students understand language and express themselves through writing. Poetry’s “sound and image” qualities captivate students, sparking curiosity, pure joy, innocence, genuine fun, and creativity. The rhythmic patterns in poetry allow students to connect with their emotions

symbolically. Using rhyme helps them appreciate the beauty of language sounds, understand how sounds form words, and see how words combine to create sentences from the simplest to the most complex. The structure and form of poems bring them to life, making them more relatable, transformative, and artistic for students. This delight and excitement that poetry brings to the learning process is an excellent source of inspiration and motivation for educators.

In the evolving landscape of education, as society embraces modernization and technological advancements, certain fundamental elements, such as poetry, which were once crucial in fostering literacy skills (especially language skills), have been overlooked and undervalued. Unfortunately, this shift has led to the neglect of exposure to poetry, creating a lack of background knowledge, appreciation, and interest. Present-day education, particularly in elementary settings, heavily emphasizes informational texts and explanatory essays, neglecting the rich tradition of poetry and its valuable contributions to literacy development. This neglect concerns me and motivates me to advocate for the reintroduction of poetry into the classroom.

It is imperative to seamlessly integrate poetry to address this disparity and infuse vitality into the role of poetry within the reading curriculum, particularly at the fifth-grade level. While acknowledging the importance of informational texts in shaping students' readiness for future careers and academic pursuits, it is crucial to underscore the indispensable value of poetry in offering a well-rounded literary education.

Poetry serves as an invaluable conduit for students to immerse themselves in a unique form of language, grapple with the nuances of figurative language, nurture their creative instincts, and articulate a rich array of emotions, thoughts, and ideas through the written word and visual art forms.

In an exciting renaissance, I am reinstating the rich world of poetry to my students, focusing on the works of celebrated poets and artists from the Harlem Renaissance that they can relate to, such as Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, and Jacob Lawrence. By immersing students in the "sounds and images" created by these talented individuals, I aim to reignite their interest in learning and appreciating their cultural heritage and sense of identity and pride, with an end goal for students to understand their community and its literary traditions better as they engage with these influential figures' captivating and accessible poems.

School Setting Background and Demographics

Smothers Elementary School is dedicated to empowering students to achieve their full potential and develop into their best selves through challenging and engaging learning opportunities within a secure and supportive setting. Its vision is to serve as a beacon of hope for families, laying a sturdy groundwork that will provide them with a range of choices and core values of readiness, responsiveness, respect, resiliency, and opportunities in life.¹⁷

I am the fifth-grade teacher at Smothers Elementary School in Cluster 3, Ward 7, a Title 1 school in the District of Columbia. My school is dedicated to helping disadvantaged students meet state academic content and performance standards. As a federally funded program authorized under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965,¹⁸ my school serves a diverse student population: ninety-one percent African American, eight percent Hispanic/Latino, one percent Caucasian, and one percent Native/Alaska students. My school also has seven percent English Language Learners, seventy-six percent At Risk, twenty-four percent

Special Education, and sixty-one percent In-Boundary students.¹⁹

As the sole fifth-grade teacher at my school, I oversee a class size that fluctuates between twenty-one and twenty-eight students. My responsibilities encompass teaching various subjects, including reading, math, science, and social studies. The students have a diverse spectrum of reading abilities within my classroom. I prioritize the importance of accommodating each student's needs and tailoring lessons to align with their interests and readiness levels, all while emphasizing metacognition to foster critical thinking and encouraging productive struggle to bolster their stamina and resilience.

This curriculum unit, "The Harlem Renaissance in Sounds and Image," has been thoughtfully crafted to resonate with my African American students. It gives them a unique opportunity to navigate into and appreciate their heritage and the remarkable contributions of the most influential writers, singers, artists, and poets in literature, music, and art, notably Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, and Jacob Lawrence, during the Harlem Renaissance. To help them understand the significance of studying this topic, I propose a direct learning experience through a field trip to the National Museum of African American History and Culture, the National Art Gallery in Washington, District of Columbia, and the Phillips Collection of Lawrence's Migration Series. This visit will allow them to interact with and observe artifacts, exhibitions, and historical documents firsthand.

This curriculum is not only limited to a fifth-grade audience but is equally valuable for other grade levels. It provides a unique opportunity to explore history, poetry, and art in a way that resonates with students of all backgrounds.

Teaching Philosophy

Just American kids together

The kids in school with me.²⁰

As an educator, I believe in creating an engaging and inclusive learning environment accommodating every student's unique needs and interests. I am dedicated to promoting a passion for learning and providing a comprehensive education beyond the classroom's confines. Equity and diversity are fundamental aspects of this approach.

I strongly support differentiated instruction, acknowledging that each student learns at their own pace and in their way. By using various teaching methods and strategies, I aim to create an inclusive environment that caters to diverse learning styles and abilities, ensuring the success of all students. In my classroom, I prioritize the development of critical thinking, creativity, and open discussion. I encourage students to ask questions, explore the latest ideas, and confidently express themselves. By nurturing these skills, I aim to prepare students for success in their academic pursuits and future endeavors. Moreover, I believe in fostering a safe, supportive, and respectful community within the classroom, where students feel valued, heard, and part of a family. I also stress the importance of accountability, empathy, teamwork, and open communication.

As a proponent of holistic education, I understand the importance of incorporating arts, literature, and cultural awareness into the curriculum. Exposure to diverse perspectives and experiences is essential in shaping well-informed and empathetic individuals. My teaching philosophy revolves around the belief that every student has the potential to succeed with the proper guidance, support, and motivation. I am committed to creating an environment that inspires students to unleash their full potential and become lifelong learners, valuing equity and embracing diversity.

Content Objectives

In this curriculum, fifth-grade students will thoroughly explore the works of three influential figures from the Harlem Renaissance: Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, and Jacob Lawrence.

This unit has been carefully designed to meet the District of Columbia's Common Core State Standards, ensuring it caters to students' diverse needs and interests. It is also aligned with the district's reading and social studies curriculum and customized to accommodate different reading abilities. Various learning tools and strategies have been incorporated to make the content engaging and meaningful for students.

Structured around reading literature and informational objectives, writing objectives, listening, and speaking objectives, this unit seeks to foster an appreciation of the "sounds of poetry" and the "object of art" and understand the connections between historical events and contemporary issues.

Students will use the artwork or illustration from Langston Hughes's *Black Misery* to notice and wonder about the writer's feelings and thoughts. Then, they will closely read and annotate the poem to determine how the speaker reflects upon racism (R.L. 5.1). Also, they will figure out the meanings of words and phrases in *Black Misery*, including figurative language such as metaphors (R.L. 5.4). Moreover, they describe how a narrator's point of view influences the tone of his poem (L.5.6). Lastly, students write a narrative to develop accurate, relatable, or imagined experiences based on the concrete words, phrases, and sensory details from the poem, *Black Misery* (W.5.3.d).

In Claude McKay's "America," students will effectively engage in collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and clearly expressing their own (S.L 5.1). They will pose and respond to specific questions by making comments that contribute to the discussion, elaborate on the remarks of others, and cite evidence from the text (R.L.5.1/S.L 5.1C). They will determine the poem's theme and write a summary (R.L 5.2). They will also use erasure poetry to compare the original poem to theirs (R.L 5.3).

To understand the social and cultural environment of Harlem during the Harlem Renaissance, students will delve into the analysis of Panel 57 of Jacob Lawrence's Migration Series. They will be tasked with identifying the various elements within the panel that reflect the artistic and communal significance of the era, drawing connections between the past and present society. Additionally, students must interpret Jacob Lawrence's Migration Series paintings according to the standard's requirements (R.L 5.1).

Furthermore, the students will utilize the panels to examine the connections and interactions between various individuals, events, ideas, or concepts within a historical context (R.I 5.3). Specifically, they will engage in a comprehensive analysis and interpretation of Panel 1, which illustrates the departure of African Americans

from the South, signifying the commencement of the Great Migration.²¹ Additionally, they will delve into Panel 22, which portrays the problematic living conditions experienced by African Americans in the North²², and Panel 49, highlighting the importance of securing employment in the North as a pivotal factor in the African American community, linking economic opportunities to their sustenance.²³

In addition to analyzing Panel 57, students will be required to create ekphrastic poetry, a type of poetry that is inspired by a work of art. This activity is designed to help students better understand the emotions and themes in Lawrence's artwork. The objective of using this panel is to encourage students to write a summary and recall the events and experiences portrayed in the painting, fostering a more immersive and reflective approach to their study of the piece (W.5.8).

By the end of this unit, students will be able to conduct research projects to explore and appreciate the rich heritage and invaluable contributions of African American artists and writers during the Harlem Renaissance, fostering a deeper understanding of diverse voices in literature and art (W.5.7).

Background Knowledge

Poetry is an art form that uses human language for its aesthetic qualities rather than just its meaning. It includes oral and written works in which language is used in a way distinct from ordinary prose and intended to be appreciated by both the creator and the audience.²⁴

Free verse poetry frees poets from traditional structure, providing freedom in rhythm and an optional rhyme scheme. This form is ideal for beginners to poetry and is commonly used in contemporary works. Its prominence began in the 19th century, offering a more flexible alternative to structured forms.²⁵

Erasure poetry, or blackout poetry, entails concealing or removing significant portions of an existing text to create something new. The objective is to derive fresh meaning from the remaining text and establish a dialogue between the new and original texts. This form of poetry provides an avenue for creative exploration using sources such as books, magazines, and newspapers.²⁶

Ekphrastic poetry draws inspiration from visual art, such as paintings or sculptures. It is not tied to a specific form but emphasizes the connection between poetry and art. Poets often vividly describe art and convey emotional responses, creating a distinctive expression connecting visual and literary domains.²⁷

The Harlem Renaissance was a period of vibrant artistic and cultural activity among African Americans from the end of World War I (1917) to the start of the Great Depression and the lead-up to World War II (the 1930s). Artists in the movement expressed pride in Black life and identity, a growing awareness of inequality and discrimination, and an interest in the rapidly changing modern world. Many of these artists experienced newfound freedom of expression through the arts.²⁸

The Great Migration was one of the most significant movements of people in United States history. Approximately six million Black people moved from the American South to Northern, Midwestern, and Western states from the 1910s until the 1970s. The main reasons for this mass movement were to escape racial violence, seek economic and educational opportunities, and break free from the oppression of Jim Crow laws.²⁹

Langston Hughes, a poet and writer, became well-known during the Harlem Renaissance after his first poem was published in 1921. His initial poetry collection was released in 1926. As one of the first Black Americans to support himself as a writer, Hughes created numerous poems, essays, and plays that focused on the 20th-century African American experience and continue to have a significant impact today. Some of his most famous poems include "Dreams," "I, Too," and "Harlem." He also wrote a popular column for the *Chicago Defender*. Hughes passed away in May 1967 in his mid-sixties due to prostate cancer.³⁰

After publishing his first poetry books, *Claude McKay* relocated to Harlem, New York. There, he became a leading literary figure advocating for social justice during the Harlem Renaissance. His significant literary works include novels, essays, and poems like "If We Must Die" and "Harlem Shadows." Claude McKay died on May 22, 1948, in Chicago, Illinois.³¹

Jacob Lawrence was a celebrated African American artist known for his vibrant series of artworks, including the Migration Series and War Series. These works depicted the African American experience using vivid colors and featuring Black and brown figures. In addition to his artistic contributions, Lawrence also taught art at the University of Washington for 15 years.³²

Teaching Strategies

The learning process is triangular, involving the teacher as a facilitator, the student as a learner, and the school as the enforcer of regulations ensuring credibility. Productive joint activity, language development, contextualization, rigorous activities, and instructional discourse are delineated to make sure that students receive a meaningful successful educational experience suited to their needs. William Bagley's essentialism theory suggests that students should learn traditional subjects to establish a solid understanding, using traditional academic knowledge to develop critical thinking. According to Gardner, individuals possess different degrees of intelligence in various areas. Therefore, a teacher should approach each student as unique, treating them holistically and recognizing multiple aspects of their personality and ability. This approach enables teachers to encourage students to identify areas they need to strengthen through formal and informal educational processes. Thus, teachers should implement diverse strategies to meet all students' academic needs, as students absorb and process knowledge differently. What is effective in teaching one lesson might not be effective for another, and what is effective for one student might not - teachers should vary their teaching methods to accommodate different learning styles. To this end, the following techniques can be suggested: presenting concise lectures followed by questions, brainstorming activities, and incorporating diverse activities to cater to different learning styles.³³

Foster their love for learning by valuing students' input and output, maximizing their potential, and recognizing their victories, little or big, and losses. Teach them that failure is a part of learning and acknowledge their role in the success of the curriculum and the learning process.

One rule of thumb to remember is knowing "who is the recipient" when planning students' activities, including their cognitive capabilities, reading skills, prior knowledge, learning behaviors, motivation, and experiences. Another consideration is the intent and complexity of the task and the line of questioning provided.

Background knowledge and experience significantly affect students' ability to access the text. Unlocking

vocabulary is crucial to interpreting the poem, as it builds students' learning and accounts for various reading levels. Frontloading the vocabulary before tackling the text.

Furthermore, explicitly teaching or modeling figurative language can immensely benefit students who struggle to understand the text. Anchor charts, concrete examples, and video clips can also aid comprehension. Additionally, offering the text to students before their initial reading and allowing extra time can be particularly advantageous for students with specific accommodations and learning needs.

This curriculum unit will focus on poems and one informational text: *Black Misery* by Langston Hughes, "America" by Claude McKay, and *Getting to Know the World's Greatest Artists* by Jacob Lawrence, written and illustrated by Mike Venezia.

Black Misery, by Langston Hughes - When planning to teach Langston Hughes's poem *Black Misery*, it is crucial to ensure that students understand the historical context in which the poem was written. Providing students with background knowledge will allow them to fully appreciate the themes and messages conveyed in the poem and relate to them personally. Despite being penned in 1969, *Black Misery* remains profoundly relevant today, capturing the poignant experiences of a Black child navigating the challenges of integration in the 1960s. The poem's gentle, humorous, and wistful words resonate with readers, shedding light on the blend of hope and disillusionment characterizing that era. Arouni's black-and-white illustrations and concise yet impactful one-sentence captions vividly capture the poem's essence and prompt deep contemplation among readers, fostering empathy and understanding.³⁴ Langston Hughes's *Black Misery* encourages readers to reflect on significant life questions, addressing prejudice and apathy with humor and compassion. Notably, *Black Misery* was Langston Hughes's final book, as he passed away in May 1967 while working on it, adding further depth and significance to the poem.³⁵

A practical approach to exploring Langston Hughes's *Black Misery* themes and nuances involves integrating close reading exercises into the instructional strategy. Begin by guiding students in closely analyzing select passages from the text, prompting them to identify literary devices such as metaphors and discuss how these elements contribute to the work's overall meaning. Encourage students to annotate the text, underline or highlight key passages, identify literary devices, and jot down their thoughts in the margins. Engaging in paired and group discussions following the close reading and annotation of a text can foster critical thinking and a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural context and human experience portrayed in the book. This approach enables students to examine the layers of meaning in Hughes's work, encouraging them to articulate their interpretations and insights, leading to a more profound appreciation of the text's significance.

In addition to close reading, incorporating creative writing as a teaching strategy can further enhance students' engagement with the themes of *Black Misery*. Introduce the concept of creative writing and its significance in expressing emotions. Engage students in a discussion and analysis of *Black Misery* to help them grasp the theme and mood of the poem. Next, provide a clear model with an anchor chart to teach a freeform style of poetry and write a narrative, emphasizing individual expression and creativity without following a specific structure or rhyme scheme. Encourage students to brainstorm their feelings and thoughts about the themes of *Black Misery* and then express these in their own words. With scaffolding and guidance as needed, students can begin crafting their freeform poetry and narrative based on the themes of *Black Misery*. Finally, encourage students to share their poems with the class, foster constructive feedback and discussions about each other's interpretations and writing styles, and display their work in the classroom to recognize their creativity and expressive language.

“America” by Claude McKay—Claude McKay’s America is a significant sonnet published in 1921 during the Harlem Renaissance, marking the flourishing of African American art, literature, and activism. The poem serves as a lens into McKay’s complex feelings towards the United States, a country he settled in following his emigration from Jamaica. While acknowledging America’s virtues, McKay also confronts the prevalent racism and violence within the nation. The poem suggests the potential for significant future challenges for this influential nation.³⁶

Various instructional strategies can engage students in teaching Claude McKay’s “America.” The instruction should commence with an in-depth exploration of the historical context of the Harlem Renaissance, emphasizing its profound impact on art, literature, and the broader societal landscape of the time. This segment should immerse students in a nuanced understanding of Claude McKay as an eminent figure of the Harlem Renaissance and provide a thorough introduction to his poem “America.”

Following this, students should be given copies of the poem “America” and guided through a detailed text analysis. This involves an immersive annotation process, zeroing in on its prevalent themes, evocative imagery, and linguistic nuances, all while encouraging critical analysis stimulated by guiding queries.

Upon completing the close reading, students should be divided into small discussion groups, each tasked with exploring specific themes or aspects of the poem. These discussions should be platforms for students to share their interpretations, dissect the implications of the poem’s themes, and establish connections to contemporary social justice movements, such as the Black Lives Matter Movement. Guiding questions can underpin these group discussions, ensuring each group can articulate and share valuable insights with the larger class.

After the group discussions, students should embark on a creative project that enables them to articulate their comprehension of the themes in “America” and their intersections with present-day social justice movements. This open-ended creative exploration could be rewriting the poem “America” through erasure poetry, crafting visual art pieces, or developing multimedia presentations. The goal is to encourage students to combine their insights from the close reading and group discussions into their creative expressions.

The lesson should culminate in a reflection period, allowing students to present and discuss their creative assignments. This phase should also emphasize the relevance of the themes in “America” to ongoing social justice issues, prompting students to consider how their learning can be transferred into real-world contexts.

The Great Migration Series, by Jacob Lawrence - To effectively engage students with Jacob Lawrence's Great Migration paintings, a multifaceted teaching approach encompassing visual analysis, in-depth discussions, and direct artistic activities is crucial.

Start by providing comprehensive historical context on the Great Migration and the Harlem Renaissance, ensuring that students deeply understand the social and cultural themes depicted in the artwork. Incorporate primary sources, personal narratives, and historical accounts (e.g., a field trip to the museum, a virtual visit to the museum, or a video clip) to provide a distinct perspective on the experiences of African Americans during this period.

To guide students through a visual analysis of the painting, it is essential to encourage them to delve into specific visual elements such as color, composition, and subject matter. These elements play a crucial role in conveying the overarching themes of social justice and racial discrimination depicted in the artwork. By delving into symbolism and visual storytelling within the artwork, students will develop a keen eye for

interpreting the artist's expressions and gaining a deeper understanding of the artwork's message. This collaborative approach with the Art teacher will provide comprehensive insights into visual elements and their significance in the painting, helping students appreciate the artwork's depth and complexity.

Following the visual analysis, it is essential to facilitate open-ended discussions, encouraging students to express their interpretations of the artwork. By encouraging students to draw connections between the painting and literary works from the Harlem Renaissance, we can foster an interdisciplinary approach that deepens their understanding of the artwork's historical and cultural significance through ekphrastic poetry. This comprehensive approach will help students to not only analyze the visual elements of the painting but also to understand its broader artistic and cultural context.

Moreover, allowing students to engage in firsthand artistic activities inspired by the themes and styles in Lawrence's painting will empower them to express their perspectives on social justice issues authentically. Encourage students to experiment with different artistic techniques and media to develop their creative voices, fostering a supportive environment for personal expression and exploration. By allowing students to directly apply their understanding of the artwork's themes and styles to their creative endeavors, they will gain a deeper appreciation for the painting's historical and cultural context and become advocates for change through their artistic expressions. Emphasize the importance of art as a powerful tool for initiating meaningful conversations and inspiring social awareness and action.

Classroom Activities

It is essential to design interactive activities for students with diverse reading abilities and learning behaviors. This also encompasses most of the District of Columbia's Common Core State Standards: speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

1. Notice and Wonder - Students will be given a few minutes to observe Langston Hughes's *Black Misery* illustrations and Jacob Lawrence's *Migration Series*. As they observe, they ask themselves open-ended questions such as: What do you notice from the illustrations or paintings? What do you feel about the illustrations or paintings? What do you think or wonder about the illustrations or paintings? What can you infer from the illustrations or paintings? They will write down all their responses in a graphic organizer prepared beforehand by the teacher. Afterward, they will discuss their findings with their peers.
2. Stop and Chat - When setting up the stations around the classroom, it is essential to create distinct stations with clear prompts or questions and provide any supplies needed for each station ahead of time. Brief the students on the activity and how the stations will work. Clearly outline the expected norms and behavior during the activity. Emphasize the importance of actively listening and engaging with the content at each station. This method empowers students to take an active role in their learning. Questions about Claude McKay's poem "America" and Langston Hughes's *Black Misery* are posted across the room as students walk from one station to the next. They stop at one station, read and answer the question, and share their answer with their partner.
3. Buddy Reading - Introduce students to the poems "America" and *Black Misery*, as well as the informational text "Getting to Know the World's Greatest Artists: Jacob Lawrence." Using contextual clues, guide students in understanding the cultural and historical impact of the poems and the

informational text, both in the past and the present. Following this, students will participate in buddy reading, taking turns reading the poems and informational texts aloud to each other. They will then answer thought-provoking questions and provide evidence using the RACE Strategy. To assist them in organizing their ideas and responses, the teacher will give a graphic organizer. Students will collaborate with their partners to share insights and ask questions about the poems' emotional, social, and cultural aspects. Finally, students will compose free-form poems reflecting on their interpretations of the poems and the informational text.

4. Art Poetry—Research prominent poets of the Harlem Renaissance and their notable works to gain a foundational understanding of poetry and its historical context. Next, select one or more poets from the Harlem Renaissance period and study their poems in depth, considering the themes, style, and impact of their work. Then, create visual art inspired by poetry, which could involve painting, drawing, or any other visual medium that captures the essence of the poems. Students share their interpretations and reflections on their art poetry. Finally, the visual art created as part of the project will be displayed in the classroom.
5. Field Trip/Virtual Field Trip—Begin by exploring virtual tours and online exhibits related to these historical periods. Plan to visit some museums and historical sites such as the National Museum of African American History and Culture, The Phillips Collection, and The National Art Gallery, which provide students with an immersive encounter with the era's art, literature, and history.
6. Role-playing - Introduce the concepts of the Harlem Renaissance and the Great Migration to the students. Provide a brief overview of the historical context, key figures, and the impact of these events on African American culture and society. Assign roles to the students based on prominent figures from the Harlem Renaissance and individuals involved in the Great Migration. Students study and familiarize themselves with the characters they are portraying. Students understand their assigned figures' backgrounds, experiences, and contributions. Develop role-playing scenarios that reflect the experiences of the assigned characters during the Harlem Renaissance and the Great Migration.

Appendix of the District of Columbia Common Core State Standards

RL.5.1 Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

RL.5.2 Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

RL.5.3 Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

RL.5.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

RL.5.5 Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, or stanzas fits together to provide the overall structure of a particular story, drama, or poem.

RL.5.6 Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.

W.5.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

Notes

¹ https://www.google.com/search?gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUqBwgBEAAYgAQyBwgAEAAYgAQyBwgBEAAYgAQyBggCEEUYOTIHCAMQABiABDIHCAQQABiABDIHCAUQABiABDIHCAYQABiABDIICAcQABgWGB4yCAgIEAAYFhgeMgoICRAAG8YFhge0gEJNzl0OGowajE1qAllsAIB&ie=UTF-8&oq=basso+meani&q=basso+meaning+italian&rlz=1C1GCEA_enUS905US916&safe=active&sourceid=chrome&surl=1

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Sloan, *Give Them Poetry*, 7.

⁶ <https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/new-african-american-identity-harlem-renaissance>

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