



The Harlem Renaissance Summer Reading 2022-2023

The Harlem Renaissance (c. 1918-1937) was an explosion of African American culture, particularly in the creative arts, and is considered the most influential movement in African American literary history. Emboldened by Alain Locke and the New Negro Movement, participants sought to re-conceptualize “the Negro” apart from the white stereotypes that had influenced black peoples’ relationship to their heritage and to each other.

Please read ONE of the following titles by the first day of school:

Baldwin, James. *If Beale Street Could Talk*. (1974). Vintage Books, 2006. (ISBN 9780307275936)

Hughes, Langston. *Not Without Laughter*. (1930). Penguin Classics, 2021. (ISBN 9780143131861)

James Baldwin was born in Harlem in 1924. By the age of 13, he had discovered his passion for writing, and he published his first article, entitled “Harlem—Then and Now,” in his school’s magazine. *If Beale Street Could Talk* (1974) is a tender love story between Tish and Fonny set in Harlem in the 1970s.

Langston Hughes is best known for his poetry, and his works played a defining role in the Harlem Renaissance. *Not Without Laughter* is his debut novel about an African American family struggling in a poor town in Kansas.

As you read, think about the author’s purpose in writing the novel. Also, both novels demonstrate the importance of music to the movement. Pay particular attention to allusions the author makes to song titles and lyrics. I recommend that you annotate as you read. Having notes to draw from will help you remember what you read so that you may participate in discussion and write an essay about these works in the opening weeks of school.

In the course, we will be reading *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, *Passing*, *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom*, and other essays, poems, and selections from the movement. Please be sure your copies of these texts have the correct ISBNs.

Questions? Please contact Ms. Hogate: ahogate@episcopalcollegiate.org