

THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

During the 1920s, the New York district of Harlem was the center of a surge of creative activity with lasting effects on American culture. Originally known as the Negro Movement, the Harlem Renaissance produced writers, artists, and jazz and blues musicians.

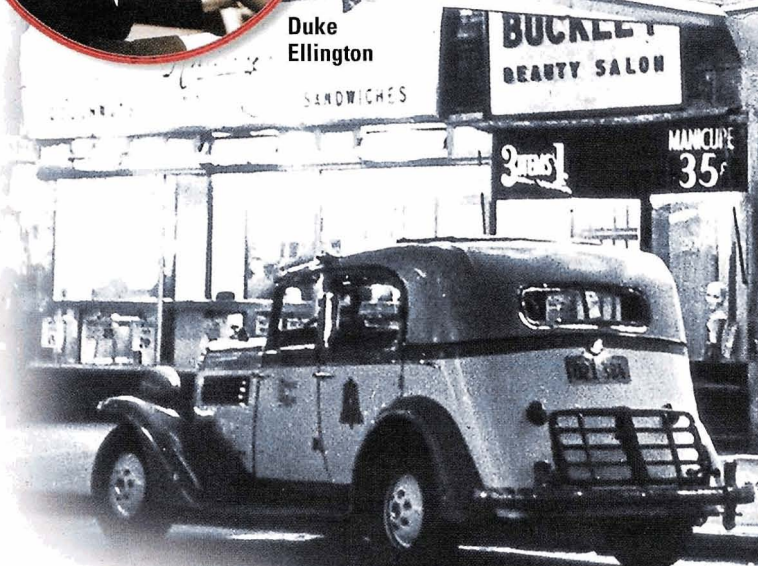


The best-known poet of the movement was Langston Hughes. Much of his poetry captures the rhythms of blues and jazz. Hughes also wove themes of the African American experience, history, and folklore into his work. Recognized as the Poet Laureate of Harlem, Hughes wrote more than 50 books.

The type of music known as the blues originated in the South in the late 1800s but reached a high point of development with the blues artists of the Harlem Renaissance. Their music contributed to the development of jazz and has influenced rock, folk, and country music. One of the most influential blues singers of the period was Bessie Smith, who became known as "Empress of the Blues." Her recordings were popular with black and white audiences alike.



Harlem was home to many popular nightclubs, where people came to dance, listen to jazz and blues musicians, and watch floorshows. The Cotton Club was one of the most well-known. Duke Ellington's band was the regular club band, later alternating with the band of Cab Calloway. Both of these musicians became legendary figures in jazz.



ACTIVITY

How would you celebrate the culture of your neighborhood? Write a poem or lyrics for a song that describes your pride in your neighborhood.