

# REAL OLD RAP

**Grade Level:** 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
**Presented by:** Maggie Terryn, Knapp Charter Academy, Grand Rapids, MI  
**Length of Unit:** Five Lessons (about seven days)

## I. ABSTRACT

For centuries people have been expressing their problems, dilemmas, and feelings through poetry. However, many middle school students believe that widely read, or what adults call great poetry, and poetry that appears in textbooks has no relation to them. In this unit 8<sup>th</sup> graders will recall information from 7<sup>th</sup> grade Core Knowledge poetry and combine their prior knowledge with new Core Knowledge poetry to understand how displaced African Americans felt in the United States during the 1920's and 30's. They will also study current music (that they listen to ☺) that expresses many of the same ideas as Countee Cullen, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Langston Hughes. They will write poetry of their own, expressing their own individual plights, that uses alliteration and free verse. At the end of this unit students will see that many of the themes of poets are timeless and that the philosophies and song lyrics of some of their favorite artists are nearing their 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## II. OVERVIEW

### A. Concept Objectives

1. Students will understand that the poetry of the Harlem Renaissance expresses the dilemma of the African American in a prejudice country.
2. Students will understand how poetry can open up their world-view by offering them a different way to look at things; a way to understand different perspectives.
3. Students will understand that the poetry of the Harlem Renaissance expresses the dilemma of the African American in a prejudice country.

### B. Content from *Core Knowledge Sequence* to be taught

1. Review of "Heritage" by Countee Cullen from the 7<sup>th</sup> grade Core Knowledge Sequence. (Pg. 174)
2. Review of "The Negro Speaks of River" and "Harlem," by Langston Hughes. (Pg. 174)
3. "Theme for English B," by Langston Hughes. (Pg. 221)
4. "We Real Cool," by Gwendolyn Brooks. (Pg. 221)
5. Elements of poetry: alliteration. (Pg. 221)
6. Elements of poetry: free verse. (Pg. 221)

### C. Skill Objectives

1. Students will identify what alliteration sounds like.
2. Students will identify what alliteration looks like.
3. Students will write poetry of their own that utilizes alliteration.
4. Students will be able to identify free verse.
5. Students will be able to determine when free verse would make the most impact on their reader.
6. Students will apply the content of these poems to today.
7. Students will write free verse poetry.
8. Students will review what lyric poetry is by reviewing poems from 7<sup>th</sup> grade core knowledge poetry selections.
9. Students will be able to make the connection that their lives have to poetry.
10. Students will be able to identify what poetry can bring to its readers.

### III. BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

- A. For Teachers
  - 1. Where poetry appears in day to day activities.
  - 2. Basic information about the Harlem Renaissance and how it led to an African American cultural revolution.
  - 3. Biographical information on Countee Cullen, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Langston Hughes.
  - 4. How to identify and write using alliteration.
  - 5. How to identify and write using free verse.
  - 6. A general knowledge or selection of current music in which you are able to identify some of the same poetic devices used in classical poetry.
- B. For Students
  - 1. Select biographical knowledge of Countee Cullen and his poem “Heritage.”
  - 2. Some prior knowledge of “free verse.”
  - 3. Some familiarity with Langston Hughes.

### IV. RESOURCES

- A. “Black Pearls: The Poetry of Maya Angelou.”, GWP Records, 1998.
- B. *Core Knowledge Sequence*.
- C. Franklin, John Hope and Alfred A. Moss Jr. *From Slavery to Freedom; A History of African Americans*.
- D. Lown, Fredric and Judith Steinbergh. *Reading and Writing Poetry with Teenagers*.
- E. Marshall, Michael, Ed., *Realms of Gold; A Core Knowledge Reader*
- F. [www.Poets.org](http://www.Poets.org)
- G. Sterling, Mary Ellen. *The Twenties*
- H. “The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill.”, Ruffhouse Records, 1998.
- I. Timpane, John. *It Could be Verse: Anybody’s Guide to Poetry*

### V. LESSONS

#### Lesson One: Where do we find poetry and what does it do for us?

- A. *Daily Objectives*
  - 1. Concept Objectives
    - a. Students will understand how poetry can open up their world-view by offering them a different way to look at things; a way to understand different perspectives.
    - b. Students will see that poetry and music go hand in hand by examining the four elements that poetry brings to its readers.
  - 2. Lesson Content
    - a. Examination of student’s own exposure to poetry.
    - b. The four elements that poetry can bring to the reader.
  - 3. Skill Objective
    - a. Students will be able to make the connection that their lives have to poetry.
    - b. Students will be able to identify what poetry can bring to its readers.
- B. *Materials*
  - 1. Appendix A copied into packets for each student.
  - 2. Correct information for student note taking about the four things that poetry can give you.

C. *Key Vocabulary*

1. Pleasure: It can make you happy when you read something funny, fun to recite, true, eye opening, etc.
2. Truth: Through poetry you can learn the truth about other peoples lives
3. Helpful: Poetry can help you see your own life more clearly and compare what you think to what other people think. Many people turn to poetry for comfort. ....think of one of your favorite songs.....do you listen to it at certain times? Has a song ever helped you get through a tough time?
4. Involved: You start reading poetry on your own, but as you read it you find that it connects you with the rest of the world and makes you pay attention

D. *Procedures/ Activities*

1. Hand out student packets that were copied from Appendix A. Instruct students that they must bring these packets to class with them everyday. It is imperative to their doing well for this unit. Packets will be turned in and graded at the end of the unit for a grade. Grading criteria can be determined by the teacher but should have something to do with completeness and neat and organized work.
2. Ask students to answer the question: "Jot down a few thoughts on poetry. Make sure that you are completely honest. How much exposure or contact do you have with poetry on a day-to-day basis?"
3. Ask students what kinds of poems they think of when they hear the word poetry. Responses might be along the lines of Shakespeare, Maya Angelou, etc. If they can't think of anything remind them of the poetry that they have studied up to this point from 7<sup>th</sup> grade or the current 8<sup>th</sup> grade year.
4. Ask students to write down a few lines from one of their favorite songs. Make sure you clarify that lyrics need to be appropriate to be shared in a school setting.
5. Ask students to write down a few lines from a nursery rhyme.
6. Have students share the above information with the class.
7. Have students answer the following question to close your opening discussion: "Again, how much exposure or contact do you have with poetry on a day to day basis? Is your answer different from question #1? Why?"
8. Have students take notes in their packets on the four things that poetry can give you. The teacher needs to fill in the notes with the students. One great way to do this may be to ask the students what they would fill in for each of the categories below. If answers are off base redirect them to the correct ones.
  - a. PLEASURE: It can make you happy when you read something funny, fun to recite, true, eye opening, etc.
  - b. TRUTH: Through poetry you can learn the truth about other peoples lives
  - c. HELPFUL: Poetry can help you see your own life more clearly and compare what you think to what other people think. Many people turn to poetry for comfort. ....think of one of your favorite songs.....do you listen to it at certain times? Has a song ever helped you get through a tough time?
  - d. INVOLVED: You start reading poetry on your own, but as you read it you find that it connects you with the rest of the world and makes you pay attention.

E. *Assessment/Evaluation*

1. Have students journal in their packet under journal #1: “What does current music have to do with famous/classical/ poetry?” Check for understanding by having students share their answers or spot check their journals.

## **Lesson Two: The Harlem Renaissance.**

### **A. Daily Objectives**

1. Concept Objectives Students will understand that the poetry of the Harlem Renaissance expresses the dilemma of the African American in a prejudice country.
  - a. Students will apply the content of these poems to today.
2. Lesson Content
  - a. Background information on the Harlem Renaissance.
  - b. Comparison and Contrast of Harlem Renaissance to our world today.
3. Skill Objective
  - a. Students will be able to make the connection that their lives have to poetry.
  - b. Students will be able to identify what poetry can bring to its readers.

### **B. Materials**

1. Student packets from Appendix A.
2. Appendix B copied onto a transparency for student note taking.

### **C. Key Vocabulary:**

1. Harlem: A neighborhood in New York City that became a center for African American arts, music, and literature in the 1920’s.
2. Renaissance: rebirth
3. Jazz Age: another term to define the 1920’s.
4. Great Migration: beginning in 1916, the first mass movement of African American southerners to northern and western cities to escape racial injustice and find employment and better educational opportunities.
5. Stereotype: a preconceived idea about an individual or a group of people based on previous experience that you may have had with an individual or group of people that represents the one at hand.

### **D. Procedures/ Activities**

1. Have students fill out the K-W-L chart in their packets from Appendix A. They may not have a lot to write for the “K” section, but they should have plenty to write for the “W” section.
2. Ask for student responses after they have had about 10 or 15 minutes to fill in their charts. Fill in a K-W-L chart on an overhead or on the board with what the students tell you. Instruct students to add any additional information given in class to their own K-W-L chart.
3. Have students define the vocabulary words in their packets on their own or with a partner. They can find the definitions to these words in a regular classroom dictionary.
4. Discuss with students what Harlem, New York was known for in the 1920’s. This discussion can be done in a manner that students write down the information in Appendix C; “Harlem Renaissance” notes. An easy way for students to copy down these notes is if they are copied onto an overhead transparency.

- E. *Assessment/Evaluation*
1. Have students write an answer to the following question in essay form. Space is provided for them to do this in their packets.
  2. “Describe the areas in our society where you think there may still be a little bit or a lot of racism involved. How do the problems that surrounded the African Americans during the Harlem Renaissance compare to the problems between different races of people today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?”
  3. After students have finished answering this question hold a short class discussion to hear their ideas.

### **Lesson Three: Remembering Countee Cullen**

- A. *Daily Objectives*
1. Concept Objectives
    - a. Students will understand that the poetry of the Harlem Renaissance expresses the dilemma of the African American in a prejudice country.
  2. Lesson Content
    - a. Review of “Heritage” by Countee Cullen from the 7<sup>th</sup> grade Core Knowledge Sequence. (Pg. 174)
    - b. Students will review what lyric poetry is by reviewing poems from 7<sup>th</sup> grade core knowledge poetry selections.
  3. Skill Objective
    - a. Students will review what lyric poetry is by reviewing poems from 7<sup>th</sup> grade core knowledge poetry selections.
    - b. Students will be able to make the connection that their lives have to poetry.
    - c. Students will be able to identify what poetry can bring to its readers.
- B. *Materials*
1. A biography of Countee Cullen from the [www.poets.org](http://www.poets.org) website.
  2. Student packets.
  3. A copy of the poem “Heritage” by Countee Cullen or copies of “Realms of Gold, #2” for each student.
- C. *Key Vocabulary:*
1. Goading: pointed rod that is used to urge an animal on; anything used for urging someone to do something
  2. Juggernauts: a massive force that crushes whatever is in its path
  3. scabbards: a sheath for a sword
  4. quaint: unusual or different in character; pleasingly old-fashioned
  5. outlandish: ridiculous or absurd
  6. lyric poetry: resembling a song in mood or expression
- D. *Procedures/ Activities*
1. Upon entering class have students look up and write down the definitions for the Countee Cullen vocabulary words.
  2. Have students read the poem silently to themselves. When they are done with that have them write down initial impressions of the poem in the space provided in their packets.
  3. Read the poem together as a class, calling on volunteers to read each stanza.
  4. Ask students to share what they wrote down in the section of their packets that dealt with any initial impressions they have of this poem.

5. Have students read the short biography of Countee Cullen from the poets.org website.
6. Ask students the following questions and facilitate a class discussion over the questions if one ensues:
  - a. Do you think that you could write a complete and accurate story of what it is like to be starving to death?
  - b. Who could write a better story about this topic than you?
  - c. Why did many people think that Countee Cullen was not prepared to comment on the lives of African Americans?
  - d. Do you think this would be an accurate complaint?
  - e. Do you have to have lived through an experience to be able to write about it?
  - f. Do you think that Countee Cullen was able to accurately comment on the lives of African Americans even though he may not have grown up in the same environment that many of them did?
7. Have students split into groups of two or three and let them begin working on a translation of the poem into more modern day language and sentence patterns. Remind them that it is okay if they end up having more or less words than are in the actual poem. Space has been provided for them to do this in the student packet pages in Appendix A. A good way to do this so it is not such an overwhelming task to students would be for half of the class to do the first 4 or 5 stanzas and the rest of the class would translate the remaining 4 or 5 stanzas. Give students about 15 minutes to do this with their partner and then assign the rest of their given stanza's for homework.

E. *Assessment/Evaluation*

1. Students will answer poetry journal #2 in their packets and be able to share their answers with the class on the following day.

## Lesson Four: Gwendolyn Brooks & Alliteration ~ Real old Rap

### A. *Daily Objectives*

1. Concept Objectives
  - a. Students will see how themes of classic poetry transcend time and end up in 21<sup>st</sup> century songs
  - b. Students will understand that the poetry of the Harlem Renaissance expresses the dilemma of the African American in a prejudice country.
2. Lesson Content
  - a. Nikki Giovanni's poem "Nikki-Rosa."
3. Skill Objective revise (see comments from overview)
  - a. Students will understand and use alliteration.
  - b. Practice identifying alliterative words and phrases
  - c. Translating lines of poetry
  - d. Reciting poetry
  - e. Listening to current music to identify alliteration and theme

### B. *Materials*

1. Appendix D made into an overhead.
2. Student Packets
3. C.D recording of Maya Angelou's "Harlem Hopscotch."
4. "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill" C.D: track 11 (Every Ghetto, Every City).
5. A copy of Nikki Giovanni's poem "Nikki-Rosa."
6. A copy of Gwendolyn Brooks' "We Real Cool."

### C. *Key Vocabulary:*

1. alliteration: the repetition of a sound at the beginning of two or more neighboring words
2. free verse: poetry that does not follow a particular rhyme scheme or pattern

### D. *Procedures/ Activities:*

#### 1. Day One

- a. As students enter the room, have Appendix D (made into an overhead) projected on the wall. Everything should be covered up except for the first tongue twister.
- b. In their packets, have students write down things that they notice about the tongue twister.
- c. Have students share their answers with the class.
- d. Explain to students that what this tongue twister has in common is "alliteration." Explain to them the definition of this poetic device and give them time to write the answer in their packets in the space provided.
- e. Uncover the next three sentences on the overhead and let individual students come up and underline the alliteration in the sentences.
- f. Let students roam around the classroom and find at least three more examples of alliteration from posters on the walls, bulletin boards, book titles, etc. Students need to be able to explain why the things they have written down demonstrate alliteration.
- g. Have students share their examples from around the classroom.
- h. Uncover the remaining tongue twisters on the overhead and have students fill in the blanks.

#### 2. Day Two

- a. Have students read Gwendolyn Brooks poem “We Real Cool” silently to themselves. After they have read the poem have them look at the section in their packets where the words are written out from the poem. Have them write on the lines provided what they think each alliterative phrase means.
- b. Ask students for their responses.
- c. After you think you have spent enough time discussing what each phrase means make sure that students have the real meaning of what each phrase means:
  - a. left school: dropouts
  - b. lurk late: stay out until all hours
  - c. strike straight: good fighters
  - d. sing sin: talk trash, bad language
  - e. thin gin: drink
  - f. Jazz June: sleep around
  - g. die soon: a used up, hard life = death
- d. Ask students to explain the difference between the opening line of the poem and the closing line of the poem. Why is there such a difference. Make sure that they understand that living a crazy lifestyle often starts out with the mentality of it being “cool” but winds up in death because while you are living crazy you do not think of the consequences.
- e. Read the poem aloud as a class a couple of times. Ask individual students to read the poem aloud also. Ask them what kind of music they think should be behind the words of the poem if it was made into a song.
- f. Ask students why they think that many poets of the Harlem Renaissance (and even African Americans today) believe they have less opportunity or that their lives are lived harder than a white suburban world. (Responses to be looked for are that many African Americans believe that because the world is racist in many ways they have to work harder to come by things than white people do. They are given less chances and have to fight harder to get ahead. Because many of them don’t have the access to institutions of higher learning or proper primary schools due to various family problems their lives are more difficult.
- g. Play Maya Angelou’s “Harlem Hopscotch” out loud and have students answer the corresponding question in their packets.
- h. Have students answer the question about rhythm in their packets as well. Discuss both answers as a class.
- i. Play “Every Ghetto, Every City” by Lauryn Hill for the class. As they listen have them fill out the questions about the song in their packets. Be aware that at the end of the song Lauryn Hill uses the word ‘nigger.’ Explain to the class the cultural context of the word in the song and why she would be using it for this instance. It might be helpful to print out a set of the lyrics for students to use in class.
- j. Have students read “Nikki-Rosa” and lead the class in the following discussion questions:
  1. How does the poet think a white writer might see her childhood experiences?
  2. What values and event were important to her from her childhood?

3. When poets of the Harlem Renaissance and today write about the African American experience do you think that they are only writing to complain about their situation.

E. *Assessment/Evaluation*

1. Day 1 - Have students complete the alliteration homework in their packets. This will be checked on the next school day
2. Day 2 - Have students turn to the section in their packets where it is explained for them. Assignment criteria is explained in depth for students and teachers. Poems should be due the next class period and can be read out loud for extra credit or as the teacher deems appropriate.

**Lesson Five:**

A. *Daily Objectives*

1. Concept Objectives
  - a. Students will understand that the poetry of the Harlem Renaissance expresses the dilemma of the African American in a prejudice country
2. Lesson Content
  - a. Langston Hughes' "The Negro Speaks of Rivers"
  - b. "Harlem" by Countee Cullen
  - c. "For My People" by Margaret Walker
3. Skill Objective
  - a. Students will Venn diagram to understand the difference between poets even through they expressed some of the same ideas.
  - b. Students will make further connections between current musicians/poets and the Harlem Renaissance poets.

B. *Materials*

1. A copy of "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" for each student.
2. A copy of "Harlem" for each student.
3. A copy of "Theme for English B" for each student.
4. Student Packets.
5. Biography of Langston Hughes from the poets.org website.
6. An overhead of a blank Venn diagram.
7. A copy of the poem, "For My People" by Margaret Walker.
8. "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill" C.D, track 13 ("Everything is Everything").

C. *Key Vocabulary:*

1. ode: a lyric poem characterized usually by elevated feeling and style; varied length of style and line

D. *Procedures/ Activities*

1. Read "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" together as a class and then have students answer poetry journal #3 in their packets.
2. Have students share their answers.
3. As a class read the biographical information on Langston Hughes. Have students complete the Venn diagram in their packets on Hughes and Cullen. Make sure that they are filling the diagram with information on their biographies and poem content that they are familiar with so far.

4. When students are done doing that fill in the Venn diagram together on the board using class answers.
5. As a class read the remaining poems in this unit by Langston Hughes: “Harlem” and Theme for “English B.”
6. Discuss the themes of these poems in relation to the other poems that have been studied so far. Make sure to point out the common thread of each one by discussing the fact that they all deal with the plights of the African American in society during the Harlem Renaissance.
7. Have students answer poetry journal #4 in their packets and then discuss their answers as a class.
8. Have students read “For My People,” by Margaret Walker. Explain to them what an ‘ode’ is before they read this poem. As they read instruct students to highlight or underline lines in this poem (on their own copies) that strike them as very different from the poems before these.
9. Play “Everything is Everything” by Lauryn Hill for the students. It might be helpful to pass out a lyric sheet to each student.
10. After listening ask students to tell you the differences between the poems by Countee Cullen, Gwendolyn Brooks, Langston Hughes, and Nikki Giovanni and the poem by Margaret Walker and Lauryn Hill’s “Everything is Everything.” Responses should hopefully include the fact that the first poems dealt with exposing problems and the last ones and the song dealt with a way to fix them; they were more hopeful.

E. *Assessment/Evaluation*

1. Have students fill in the brainstorm that follows poetry journal #4 in their packets. This brainstorm will be checked in class the next school day and will act as a starting point to their culminating project for the unit.

## VI. CULMINATING ACTIVITY

(all choices will be based off of the brainstorming activity that students did last in their packets)

1. Have students write a formal essay on a problem that they see in their own lives. Make sure that the students write about that problem in detail and how it affects their life. Don’t stop there however, have students offer/write about a way that they can take responsibility for fixing that problem.
2. Have students write a critical 5 point essay on the poets of the Harlem Renaissance era. Did they do enough to try and fix their dilemmas? Students will need to conduct research on a few or one poet/artist of the time period.
3. Have students put one of the poems studied in the unit to music. Their song will need to be accompanied with an explanation of why an artist would want to put that poem to music.
4. Have students write a poem using their own problem either by utilizing alliteration, free verse or the ode style. Poems can be put to music or presented to the class.

## VII. HANDOUTS/STUDENT WORKSHEETS

Appendices A-C

## VIII. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- A. “Black Pearls: The Poetry of Maya Angelou.”, GWP Records, 1998.
- B. *Core Knowledge Sequence*. Charlottesville, Virginia: Core Knowledge Foundation, 2001.

- C. Franklin, John Hope and Alfred A. Moss Jr. *From Slavery to Freedom; A History of African Americans*. New York: McGraw-Hill Inc, 1994.
- D. Lown, Fredric and Judith Steinbergh. *Reading and Writing Poetry with Teenagers*. Portland: J. Weston Walch Publisher, 1996.
- E. Marshall, Michael, Ed., *Realms of Gold; A Core Knowledge Reader*. Charlottesville, Virginia: Core Knowledge Foundation, 2000 ISBN 1-89-0517-24-0
- F. Poets.org
- G. Sterling, Mary Ellen. *The Twenties*. Teacher Created Materials, INC., 1996.
- H. "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill.", Ruffhouse Records, 1998.
- I. Timpane, John. *It Could be Verse: Anybody's Guide to Poetry*. Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 1995.

Appendix A: Student Packet Sheets

## "Real Old Rap"

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. Jot down a few thoughts on poetry. Make sure that you are completely honest. How much exposure or contact do you have with poetry on a day to day basis?
2. Write down a few lines from one of your favorite songs. Make sure that lyrics are appropriate to be shared in a school setting.
3. Write down a few lines from a nursery rhyme.
4. Again, how much exposure or contact do you have with poetry on a day to day basis? Is your answer different from question #1? Why?

Poetry Notes: What can poetry do for you?

A. Pleasure:

B. Truth:

C. Helpful:

D. Involved:

**POETRY JOURNAL #1:** : “What does current music have to do with famous/classical/poetry?”

K-W-L Chart for the “Harlem Renaissance”

What I <u>KNOW</u>	What I <u>WANT</u> to know	What I <u>LEARNED</u>

Vocabulary Words of the Harlem Renaissance:

1. Harlem:
2. Renaissance:
3. The Jazz Age:
4. The Great Migration:
5. Stereotype:

## **Harlem Renaissance Notes:**

### **Answer the following question in essay form.**

“Describe the areas in our society where you think there may still be a little bit or a lot of racism involved. How do the problems that surrounded the African Americans during the Harlem Renaissance compare to the problems between different races of people today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?” What do different groups of people try to do to overcome the stereotypes that are placed on them?

Vocabulary Words for Countee Cullen's "Heritage":

1. Goadings:
2. Juggernauts:
3. scabbards:
4. quaint:
5. outlandish:
6. Lyric Poetry:

What are your initial impressions of "Heritage" by Countee Cullen? What do you think this poem is talking about?

**Translation of “Heritage” by Countee Cullen:**

**POETRY JOURNAL #2:** How is the poem “Heritage” a lyric poem? How does this poem relate to the African American experience in America today? If you don’t think it does describe why.

## TOUNGE TWISTERS: ALLITERATION

Look at the tongue twister projected on the board. What are some things that you notice about the tongue twister?

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

Alliteration:

Alliteration Around the Room:

Alliteration Homework:

Write five of your own sentences that demonstrate alliteration.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Fill in the blanks to these already started alliterative tongue twisters.

1. Studious students \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Helping hands \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Bad bandits \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Purple peacocks \_\_\_\_\_.

“We Real Cool”

After each of the phrases below write what you think they mean. If you are completely stuck on one go on to the next one.

1. We real cool
2. We left school
3. We lurk late
4. We strike straight
5. We sing sin
6. We thin gin
7. We jazz June
8. We die soon

How does Maya Angelou’s poem “Harlem Hopscotch” relate to the thoughts expressed in “We Real Cool?”

What do you notice about the rhythm of the way Maya Angelou’s poem is read and the rhythm of which you naturally read “We Real Cool?”

“Every Ghetto, Every City.”

What makes sure that Lauryn Hill won't go too far?

Why would she, and possibly, other African Americans feel this way?

Does this mentality mirror that of the words in “We Real Cool?” YES NO

Why?

How does this song compare to the feelings and experiences of African Americans during the Harlem Renaissance?

Do you think that Lauryn Hill is more qualified to write about her experiences in the urban ghettos than Countee Cullen was to write about the African American experience during the Harlem Renaissance?

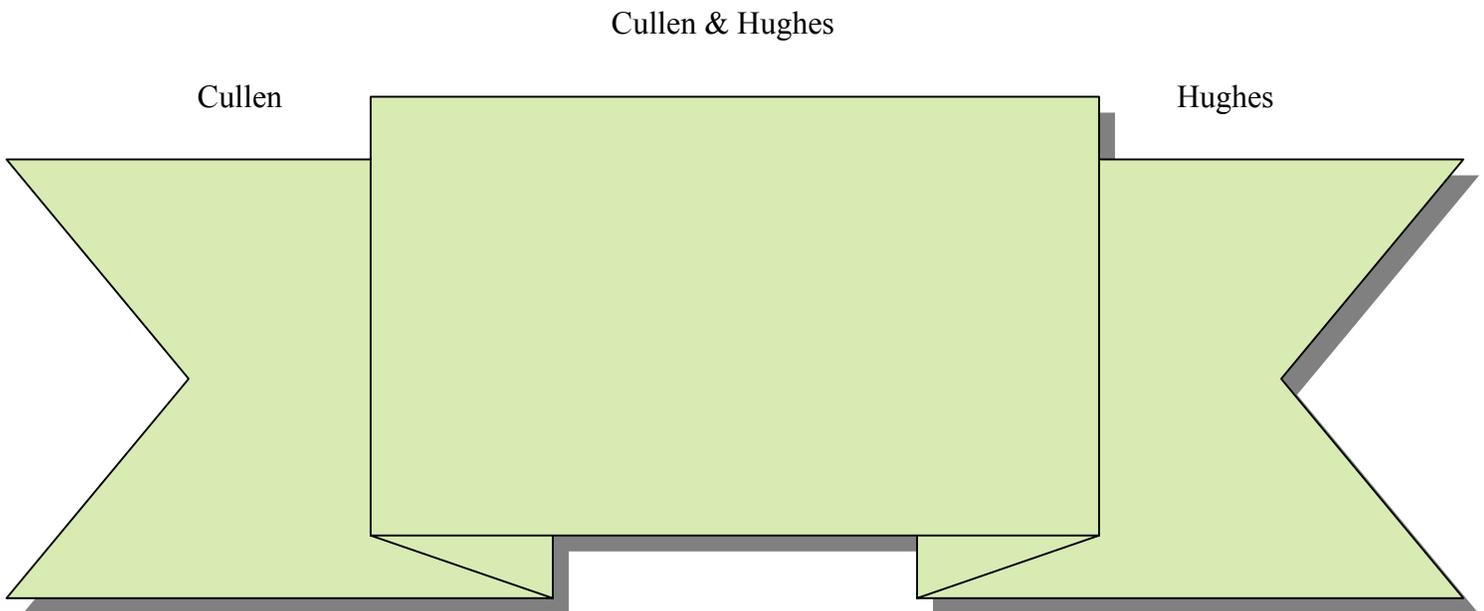
Why?

**Poem Assignment:** You have just read two poems and listened to several selections that deal with the African American experience. Some people believe that they are to be perceived as negative memories and some people say maybe not. What do you think? Are there some things in your life that have been either extremely hard or absolutely wonderful that someone on the outside might see in a different light?

Your assignment is to compose a poem about this experience.

1. What experience will you write about?
2. Is it good or bad to you?
3. How do you think other people see it? As good or bad?
4. Write your poem in free verse with at least 12 lines.
5. You must include at least 4 phrases that use alliteration.
6. Turn in on a separate piece of paper: typed.

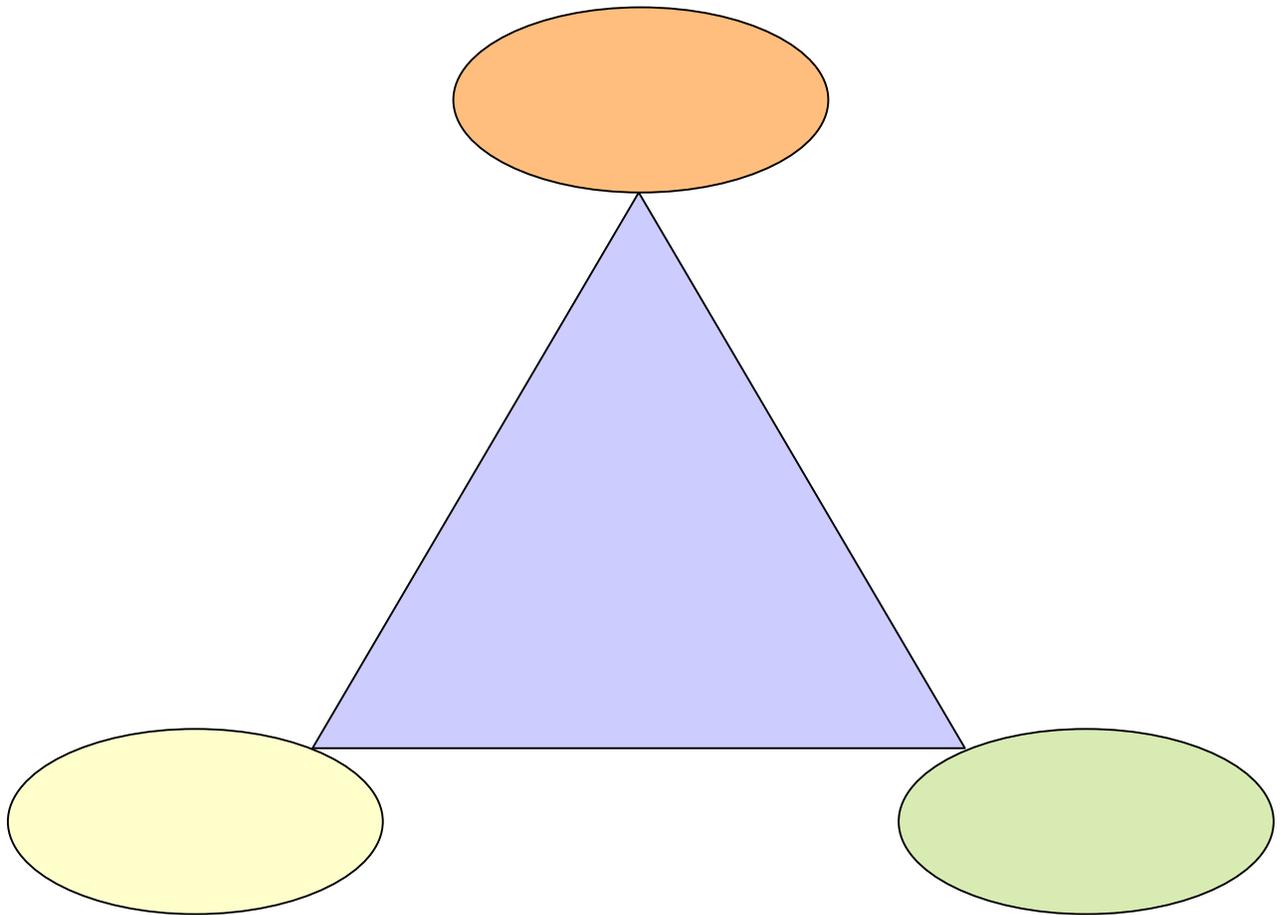
**POETRY JOURNAL #3:** How do the previous poems that we have read compare to Langston Hughes poem “The Negro Speaks of Rivers?” Why do you think that Hughes uses the image of a river in this poem? What do you think it means?



**POETRY JOURNAL #4:** Most of the poems that we have read in this unit deal with the plights and problems of African Americans living in the Harlem Renaissance. Is it beneficial to concentrate on our problems or should we take action and try to change them?

Why do you think that these poets would write about their problems as a way to solve them?

**BRAINSTORM**: Think of something that is a problem in your life; something that you struggle with on a day to day basis; something that you believe you know a lot about. Write that problem in the center of the triangle below and in the bubbles coming from it write down ways that you can solve that problem or go about making it better for yourself.



## **Appendix B: Harlem Renaissance Notes**

- I. Two different viewpoints at the end of WWI
  - A. Some people wanted to get back to life as usual.
    1. positive thoughts
    2. patriotic
    3. forget any problems we may have; we just got out of a war, it's time to relax
  - B. Some people wanted to concentrate on America's problems and try to fix them.
    1. There were many social problems that America needed fixed.
      - a. labor problems
      - b. crime
      - c. racism
    2. Many African American writers, singers, and poets exposed the problems of racism through their work.
  
- II. Harlem: a place to expose racism
  - A. Many African Americans wanted to write about racism because it was an opportunity to write about themselves and their experiences as black Americans in the United States.
  - B. African Americans wanted to be in Harlem, New York because they saw it as a place of opportunity to express their views.
  - C. They wanted to write about the plights of African Americans that they thought were unique to the black American.
    1. out of work
    2. death rate
    3. discrimination because white people thought they were uncivilized

Appendix C

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.

Puny puma pit their skills against zebras.

Pretty Polly picket pears for preserves.

Handsome Harry hired hundreds of hippos for Hanukkah.

Fearful fathers \_\_\_\_\_.

Westerly winds \_\_\_\_\_.

Sharp scissors \_\_\_\_\_.

Glistening glass \_\_\_\_\_.