



Essential Question

How does artists' work affect society's view of their subject matter?

VOCABULARY

Harlem Renaissance

Materials List

- access to computers
- headphones (optional) or speakers

[Access all digital resources within the lesson here](#)

Pacing

3-5 sessions

Assessment

SUMMATIVE

Students will analyze poetry through a music lens.

Elements of MUSIC

- **Dynamics**
- **Form**
- **Texture**

CONTENT Standard

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6

Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

ARTS Standard

DA:Re8.1.6a

Develop interpretations of works based on an understanding of the use of elements of music (including form), compositional techniques, style, function, and context, explaining and justifying how the interpretive choices reflect the creators' intent.

21st Century Skills

- Critical Thinking
- Communicating
- Collaborating
- Initiative
- Social Skills

Lesson Objective

Students will develop interpretations of music and poetry speaking to social justice issues and assess how these issues have changed or remained the same over time.

Lesson Overview

Students often carry a background knowledge of hip hop culture, larger than many educators. Research shows that the impact of rap music on students living in urban environments has increased in strength and influence over the past decade. In this lesson, students will be examining a poem from the Harlem Renaissance, as well as diving into the analysis of a rap song, to compare society in the 1920s to society in the 1990s through the lens of Black artists.



Artful Thinking Routine

Colors / Shapes / Lines routine

Have students observe [Out Chorus](#), by Romare Bearden.

- What colors do you see?
- What shapes do you see?
- What lines do you see?

STEP

1

Introduction

To engage student interest and build a quick background knowledge of the journey of black music in over the past half a decade, ask students to view this [five minute video showcasing chart toppers by black artists](#) in the past 50 years.

Explain to students that today they will be exploring connections between rap music and the Harlem Renaissance.

STEP

2

Harlem Renaissance and Langston Hughes

The Harlem Renaissance was an important moment in history for Black American arts and culture, and for American history, as this was when the feelings and ideas of African Americans first surfaced into mainstream culture and were recognized. Access to media gave people the voice to express themselves, as well as their needs and wants. Visual and Theatrical artists of the Harlem Renaissance attempted to reclaim their self image from white artists who had reduced black people in art media to caricatures.

Prior to WWI, black painters and sculptors had rarely focused on black people as subjects. However, by the end of the 1920's, black artists had begun developing styles related to their African heritage, such as the folk art work viewed in the Artful Thinking activity. Explain to students that Langston Hughes was born in Missouri and grew up to become an American poet, social activist, novelist, playwright, and columnist. He moved to NYC in his twenties where he became known as one of the earliest innovators of jazz poetry, and eventually as the leader of the Harlem Renaissance in NYC.

Ask students to watch this [Crash Course](#) video by John Green examining the poetry of Langston Hughes.



Teacher to Teacher

Teacher Tip

Music has always been an essential part of black culture by sharing this information found on the [Smithsonian's website](#).

Discuss with students the idea that the Harlem Renaissance blurred the lines between poor and wealthy African Americans as well as the lines between white and black Americans through the development of jazz music. Jazz was composed primarily of brass instruments (which were considered symbols of the south and of poverty) but it also included piano (which was considered an instrument of the wealthy). At times, white composers used the growing popularity of jazz music to exploit black musicians' work. White composers began using poems written by African-American poets as the basis of songs, and also implemented rhythms, harmonies, and melodies of African music into their concert pieces.



Hip Hop and Tupac

Help students build some background knowledge of Tupac Amaru Shakur. Tupac Shakur was an American rapper and actor who rose to fame in the 1980s and 90s. Shakur is one of the unique artists who was known for both his authentic street persona and his activism in the face of injustice. In his life, he had a career as both a rapper and an actor, and his style as a songwriter never truly deviated from poetic form.

Explain to students that Shakur was born in NYC but that he moved to LA in 1988. In 1991, Tupac released his debut album "2Pacalypse Now" and became a central figure in West Coast hip hop, bringing attention to social issues during a time when "gansta rap", that is, rap music that specifically reflects the violent lifestyle of inner city youth, was dominant in the mainstream.

In 1996, Tupac became heavily involved in an escalating East Coast/West Coast hip hop rivalry and in September of that year he was shot four times by an unknown gunman in a drive-by shooting in Las Vegas. Tupac died six days later and his assassin was never discovered.

Tupac Shakur is one of the best-selling music artists of all time, and has sold over 75 million records worldwide. Because much of his work addressed contemporary social issues that plagued inner cities, he has been revered and considered an activist symbol against inequality in society, specifically regarding black Americans and the socio-economic divide.

Ask students to apply the elements of music to Tupac's work and specifically consider his rhythm, dynamics, melody, and harmony in his song [Changes](#).

STEP

4

Main Activity

Explain to students that there are many parallels between the Harlem Renaissance and the contemporary Hip Hop movement which are informative regarding what elements of society remain constant through time. The differences between the two art forms point to what has changed over the past century.

In the 1920s, Harlem cultivated a thriving environment for black culture, which brought a treasure of influential artifacts. Likewise, hip hop has become a dominant power that will shape the future of the world of music. Both instances are evidence that people will work for improved conditions no matter what societal limitations are being enforced.

In the early 1920s, jazz was, in many ways hated and feared by some members of the public, but loved by others. Perhaps in time hip hop, too, will gain similar approval.

Explain that students will be reading a poem by Langston Hughes and listening to "Changes", written by Tupac. Students will analyze each work individually and will then compare the two using the graphic organizer included in the resource pages. Allow students time to independently read and compare. After students finish working ask student volunteers to share responses and thoughts as part of a class discussion.

Estimated Time: 45 minutes

CLOSURE

Ask students to look at the resource page titled "The Rose" and read and annotate the lyrics included. Then ask students whether they think that the lyrics were written by Tupac or by Hughes. Request that students support their thoughts with evidence from the text. When students have shared responses let them know that it was in fact written by Tupac and was autobiographical.

THE ELEMENTS OF MUSIC

Pt

PITCH

Moving from one distance of sound to another. High to low.

DURATION

The amount of time a sound occurs.

- ▷ Long (whole notes, half notes) or
- ▷ Short (quarter notes, eighth notes, sixteenth notes).

Du

Dy

DYNAMICS

The sound level at which music is played.

- ▷ Loud (forte, fortissimo) or
- ▷ Soft (piano, pianissimo).
- ▷ Medium is often called mezzo-piano (pronounced "met-so pi-ahno") or mezzoforte (pronounced "met-so four-tay").

TONE COLOR

The quality of sound, what the voice or instrument sounds like. This is also referred to as "Timbre" (pronounced tam-ber).
Examples include: light, airy, dark, mystical, rich, full, dancing, excited.

Tc

Fo

FORM

The organization of music. Examples include:

- ▷ ABA (first section, second section, first section repeats)
- ▷ AB (first section, followed by second section)
- ▷ Rondo (ABACA - The A section always comes after each new section).

TEXTURE

The layers of sound within a piece of music. Examples :

- ▷ Just melody (monophony) or
- ▷ Melody and harmony (polyphony).
- ▷ Chords (3 or more notes played at the same time).

Instruments can add to the texture of music: blaring, rough, smooth, choppy, disjointed, tight, rich.

Tx

Let America be America again.
Let it be the dream it used to be.
Let it be the pioneer on the plain
Seeking a home where he himself is free.

(America never was America to me.)

Let America be the dream the dreamers dreamed—
Let it be that great strong land of love
Where never kings connive nor tyrants scheme
That any man be crushed by one above.

(It never was America to me.)

O, let my land be a land where Liberty
Is crowned with no false patriotic wreath,
But opportunity is real, and life is free,
Equality is in the air we breathe.

(There's never been equality for me,
Nor freedom in this "homeland of the free.")

*Say, who are you that mumbles in the dark?
And who are you that draws your veil across the stars?*

I am the poor white, fooled and pushed apart,
I am the Negro bearing slavery's scars.
I am the red man driven from the land,
I am the immigrant clutching the hope I seek—
And finding only the same old stupid plan
Of dog eat dog, of mighty crush the weak.

I am the young man, full of strength and hope,
Tangled in that ancient endless chain
Of profit, power, gain, of grab the land!
Of grab the gold! Of grab the ways of satisfying need!
Of work the men! Of take the pay!
Of owning everything for one's own greed!

I am the farmer, bondsman to the soil.
I am the worker sold to the machine.
I am the Negro, servant to you all.
I am the people, humble, hungry, mean—
Hungry yet today despite the dream.
Beaten yet today—O, Pioneers!
I am the man who never got ahead,
The poorest worker bartered through the years.

Yet I'm the one who dreamt our basic dream
In the Old World while still a serf of kings,
Who dreamt a dream so strong, so brave, so true,
That even yet its mighty daring sings
In every brick and stone, in every furrow turned
That's made America the land it has become.
O, I'm the man who sailed those early seas
In search of what I meant to be my home—
For I'm the one who left dark Ireland's shore,
And Poland's plain, and England's grassy lea,
And torn from Black Africa's strand I came
To build a "homeland of the free."

The free?

Who said the free? Not me?
Surely not me? The millions on relief today?
The millions shot down when we strike?
The millions who have nothing for our pay?
For all the dreams we've dreamed
And all the songs we've sung
And all the hopes we've held
And all the flags we've hung,
The millions who have nothing for our pay—
Except the dream that's almost dead today.

O, let America be America again—
The land that never has been yet—
And yet must be—the land where every man is free.
The land that's mine—the poor man's, Indian's, Negro's, ME—
Who made America,
Whose sweat and blood, whose faith and pain,
Whose hand at the foundry, whose plow in the rain,
Must bring back our mighty dream again.

Sure, call me any ugly name you choose—
The steel of freedom does not stain.
From those who live like leeches on the people's lives,
We must take back our land again,
America!

O, yes,
I say it plain,
America never was America to me,
And yet I swear this oath—
America will be!

Out of the rack and ruin of our gangster death,
The rape and rot of graft, and stealth, and lies,
We, the people, must redeem
The land, the mines, the plants, the rivers.
The mountains and the endless plain—
All, all the stretch of these great green states—
And make America again!

Come on, come on
I see no changes, wake up in the morning, and I ask myself
Is life worth living, should I blast myself?
I'm tired of bein' poor, and even worse I'm black
My stomach hurts, so I'm lookin' for a purse to snatch

Cops give a damn about a negro
Pull the trigger, kill a nigga, he's a hero
Give the crack to the kids who the hell cares
One less hungry mouth on the welfare

First, ship 'em dope and let 'em deal the brothers
Give 'em guns, step back, watch 'em kill each other
It's time to fight back, that's what Huey said
Two shots in the dark, now Huey's dead

I got love for my brother, but we can never go nowhere
Unless we share with each other
We gotta start makin' changes
Learn to see me as a brother instead of two distant strangers

And that's how it's supposed to be
How can the devil take a brother, if he's close to me?
I'd love to go back to when we played as kids
But things changed, and that's the way it is

Come on, come on
That's just the way it is
Things will never be the same
That's just the way it is
Ooh, yeah

Come on, come on
That's just the way it is
Things will never be the same
That's just the way it is
Aww, yeah

I see no changes, all I see is racist faces
Misplaced hate makes disgrace to races
We under, I wonder what it takes to make this
One better place, let's erase the wasted

Take the evil out the people, they'll be acting right
'Cause mo' black and white is smokin' crack tonight
And only time we chill is when we kill each other
It takes skill to be real, time to heal each other

And although it seems heaven sent
We ain't ready, to see a black President
It ain't a secret, don't conceal the fact
The penitentiary's packed, and it's filled with blacks

But some things will never change
Try to show another way but you stayin' in the dope game
Now tell me, what's a mother to do?
Bein' real don't appeal to the brother in you

You gotta operate the easy way
(I made a G today) But you made it in a sleazy way
Sellin' crack to the kid (I gotta get paid)
Well, hey, well, that's the way it is

Come on, come on
That's just the way it is
Things will never be the same
That's just the way it is
Ooh, yeah

Come on, come on
That's just the way it is
Things will never be the same
That's just the way it is
Aww, yeah

We gotta make a change
It's time for us as a people to start makin' some changes
Let's change the way we eat
Let's change the way we live
And let's change the way we treat each other
You see, the old way wasn't working so it's on us to do
What we gotta do, to survive

And still I see no changes, can't a brother get a little peace?
There's war in the streets and war in the Middle East
Instead of war on poverty, they got a war on drugs
So the police can bother me

And I ain't never did a crime, I ain't have to do
But now, I'm back with the facts givin' 'em back to you
Don't let 'em jack you up, back you up
Crack you up and pimps smack you up

You gotta learn to hold ya own
They get jealous when they see ya, with ya mobile phone
But tell the cops, they can't touch this
I don't trust this, when they try to rush, I bust this

That's the sound of my tool, you say it ain't cool?
But mama didn't raise no fool
And as long as I stay black, I gotta stay strapped
And I never get to lay back
'Cause I always got to worry 'bout the pay backs
Some buck that I roughed up way back
Comin' back after all these years
Rat-a-tat, tat, tat, tat, that's the way it is

That's just the way it is
Things will never be the same
That's just the way it is (Way it is)
Aww, yeah

Some things will never change

Name: _____

Langston Hughes 1902 - 1967	Compare	Tupak Shakur 1971 - 1996
<p>Let America Be America Again</p> <p>What societal obstacles at that time did he believe stood in his way? Cite specific examples.</p>	<p>What similar societal challenges are both men addressing?</p>	<p>Changes</p> <p>What societal obstacles at that time did he believe stood in his way? Cite specific examples.</p>
<p>How do you think this poem affected Black Americans?</p>	<p>Analyzing both, what is different?</p>	<p>The song was a chart topper in the 90s and continues to be popular today. What makes this song so relatable?</p>
<p>What effect do you think this poem had on white Americans?</p>	<p>How did the Harlem Renaissance and artists like Langston Hughes lay the foundation for other black artists, like Tupac?</p>	<p>What effect do you think this song had on listeners?</p>
<p>What societal issues have changed in the 70+ years since Hughes wrote this poem?</p>		<p>What societal issues have changed in the 20+ years since Tupac wrote this song?</p>
<p>What societal issues have remained the same over the 70+ years since Hughes wrote this poem?</p>	<p>What societal issues between two different eras are enduring and ongoing?</p>	<p>What societal issues have remained the same in the 20+ years since Tupac wrote this song?</p>

Did you hear about the rose that grew
from a crack in the concrete?
Proving nature's law is wrong it
learned to walk with out having feet.
Funny it seems, but by keeping its dreams,
it learned to breathe fresh air.
Long live the rose that grew from concrete
when no one else ever cared.

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think the rose symbolizes in this poem?
2. What do you think the concrete symbolizes in this poem?
3. What is the mood of this poem?
4. What do you think this poem is about?
5. Who do you think is the author of the poem, Hughes or Tupac? Explain below.

Total Score:

___ / 8

Student: _____

CRITERIA	Distinguished (4 Points)	Excelled (3 Points)	Adequate (2 Points)	Basic (1 Point)
The student is able to evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.	<input type="checkbox"/> The student is able to effectively and insightfully evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.	<input type="checkbox"/> With support, the student is able to evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.	<input type="checkbox"/> With support, the student is able to evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.	<input type="checkbox"/> The student is unable to evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.
The student is able to develop interpretations of works based on an understanding of the use of elements of music (including form), compositional techniques, style, function, and context, explaining and justifying how the interpretive choices reflect the creators' intent.	<input type="checkbox"/> The student is able to develop effective and unique interpretations of works based on an understanding of the use of elements of music (including form), compositional techniques, style, function, and context, explaining and justifying how the interpretive choices reflect the creators' intent.	<input type="checkbox"/> With support, the student is able to develop interpretations of works based on an understanding of the use of elements of music (including form), compositional techniques, style, function, and context, explaining and justifying how the interpretive choices reflect the creators' intent.	<input type="checkbox"/> With support, the student is able to develop interpretations of works based on an understanding of the use of elements of music (including form), compositional techniques, style, function, and context, explaining and justifying how the interpretive choices reflect the creators' intent.	<input type="checkbox"/> The student is unable to develop interpretations of works based on an understanding of the use of elements of music (including form), compositional techniques, style, function, and context, explaining and justifying how the interpretive choices reflect the creators' intent.

NOTES: