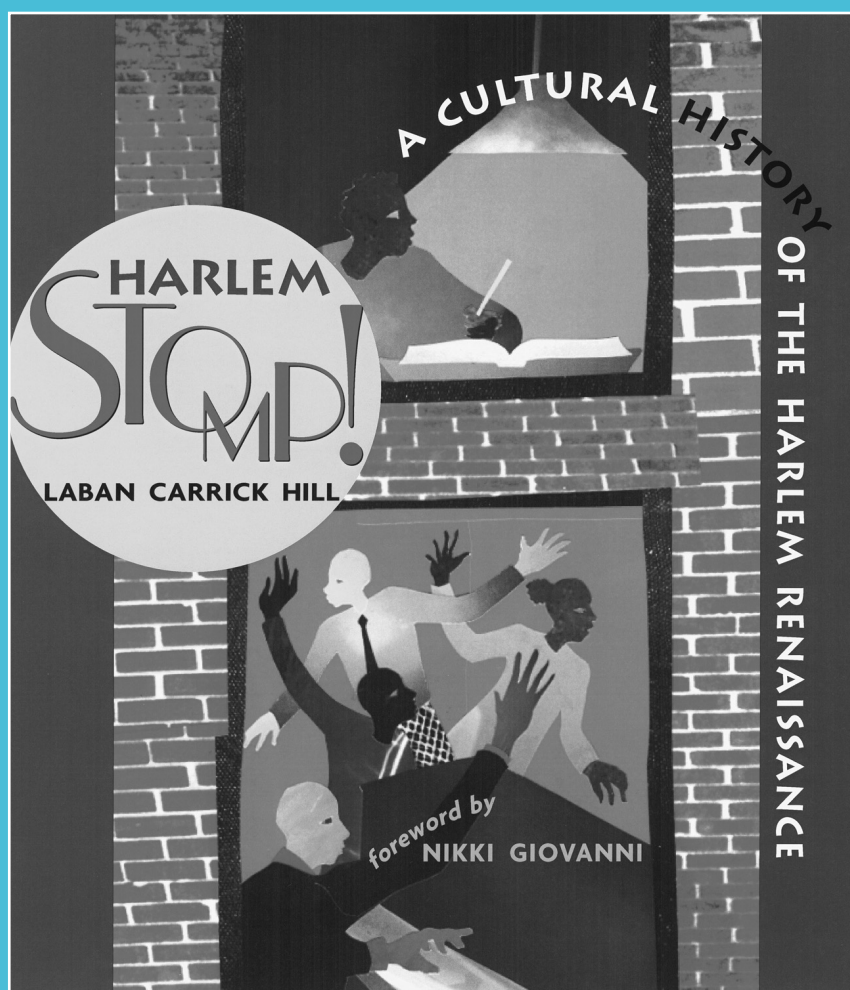


# HARLEM STOMP!



## curriculum connections

- ❖ African-American History
- ❖ Multi-culturalism
- ❖ Art and Literature
- ❖ Music

By Laban Carrick Hill,  
foreword by Nikki Giovanni

## Pre-reading

Ask students to use current reference works in the library or sites on the Internet to research African American life in the years before 1900. Ask them to write a short report on one aspect of this life—lynching, the grandfather clause, slavery, the Emancipation Proclamation, Jim Crow laws, black contribution to the arts, etc.

## CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

- Booker T. Washington was part of the last generation to be born into slavery. W. E. B. DuBois was among the first generation born after slavery was abolished. How do Washington's and DuBois's views on race in America differ, and how are their opinions related to the historical period in which they were born, respectively? Why is DuBois impatient with Washington's approach to Civil Rights? What do you admire most about Washington? About DuBois? Is this conflict of opinion common in African American culture?
- For African Americans, Harlem became the center of the universe. It was their own "Black Metropolis." How did Harlem become a magnet for African Americans? Why was this so important to them? What are some of the possible dangers of such a segregated community?
- Discuss how the portrayal of African Americans in literature changed in the 1920s. What did the publication of Jean Toomer's novel *Cane* do to effect change in the way blacks were represented? How did Claude McKay's poem "If We Must Die" challenge readers to think differently about blacks? In what ways did the representation of African Americans stay the same?
- What did W. E. B. DuBois and Charles Spurgeon Johnson do to promote African American artists? Why was the Civic Club Dinner so important to black writers?
- Why do you think there were so many African American publications like *Fire!!* and *Crisis* during the Harlem Renaissance? Do you think they were well named? Were they effective tools for changing perceptions of black art and life?
- Discuss how Langston Hughes's poem "The Weary Blues" came to be emblematic of black experience in America. Who is the speaker of the poem? How is he or she different from the blues singer described in the poem? What is the blues singer saying to the speaker of the poem?
- How did Harlem blacks celebrate their race? What kinds of organizations and events were present there? How did the Dark Tower become emblematic of all of Harlem?
- Comedian Burt Williams said, "It is no disgrace to be a Negro, but it is very inconvenient." How was that the case, especially once the Depression began?
- What was so offensive to African Americans about minstrel shows? How did performances by Paul Robeson and other African American actors liberate blacks from stereotypes in the theater? In what ways did the stereotypes still exist?
- What was James VanDerZee trying to do with his photographs? Why was it so important that the people in his portraits look respectable? What did he do to ensure this? Why were VanDerZee and many others concerned with representing their fellow African Americans with dignity?
- What was the role of women in the Harlem Renaissance? In which ways was this similar to the role of women in the rest of America at that time? In which ways was it different?

## praise for *Harlem Stomp!*:

- ★ “This volume is a **visual feast.**”—*School Library Journal*, starred review
- ★ “This **energetic, elegantly designed volume documents the artistic, literary, and musical surge of black culture in Harlem.**”  
—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review
- ★ “With a **beautiful open design, this illustrated history combines the politics of the black metropolis in the roaring '20s with...blazing creativity.**”—*Booklist*, starred review

## CLASSROOM CONNECTION: Activities for Students

### Language Arts

Poetry was a very important part of the Harlem Renaissance. Memorize and recite a poem by Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, or another poet of the era.

Play for students a videotape by rap artist KRS-1. Listen to his African American history raps, then have students write a rap based on the life and times of Harlem from 1900–1940.

### Social Studies

During its renaissance, Harlem was a popular destination for people outside the community. Create an illustrated travel brochure for Harlem during this era, being sure to include all the hot spots and points of interest. Present your brochure to the class, and discuss how the concept of Harlem as a destination has changed.

Research the beauty business and how it affects African Americans. Lead a class discussion on the topic. Be sure to mention American and European standards of beauty, and what these mean for blacks.

How were African Americans during the Harlem Renaissance affected by the beauty business?

Read *Black Enterprise*. Have students research the subject of an article and write a short report on how African Americans have contributed to the field.

### Math

Locate the table in Chapter 10 on the number of African American employees at major companies in New York City. Calculate the percentage of blacks within each company.

Have a lesson on how to read stock market figures.

### Visual Arts/Music

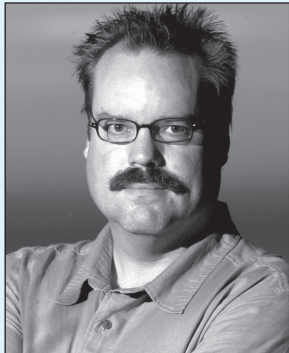
Examine the examples of Aaron Douglas’s art and identify some of the elements that visually represent jazz. Have students choose another type of music, like hip-hop, and create their own visual elements to represent the music.

Listen to one of the jazz recordings mentioned in Chapter 7 and try to identify some of the basic elements of jazz. Compare the jazz that you hear to other forms of African American-based music, like blues or hip-hop.

Ask students to bring their favorite music CD to class. Listen to the music and discuss how African Americans contributed to the music. Were any involved in the production of the recordings, i.e., songwriter, lyricist, producer, arranger, distributor?

Watch a documentary film by Marlon Riggs—*Color Adjustment* and *Ethnic Notions* are good choices—and discuss how cultural stereotypes of African Americans have changed from the Harlem Renaissance until now.

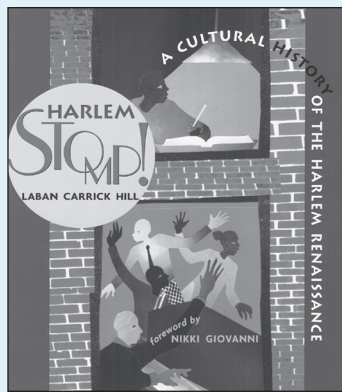
## about the author



Hill has written more than 25 books for children, young adults, and adults. A poet as well as a fiction and nonfiction writer, Hill has written critical biographies on the South African novelist J. M. Coetzee, the Southern novelist Bobbie Ann Mason, and the poet Jane Kenyon. His poems have been included in *Contemporary Poetry of New England*, an anthology edited by Jay Parini, as well as in numerous literary magazines. Hill is currently a core faculty member at Pine Manor College's MFA in

Creative Writing program and at Vermont College's Undergraduate Program. He has taught literature and writing at Columbia University, Baruch College, St. Michael's College, and the University of Vermont.

## about the book



**“Whatever else the true American is, he is also somehow black.”**

—Ralph Ellison,  
“What America Would Be Like Without Blacks” (1970)

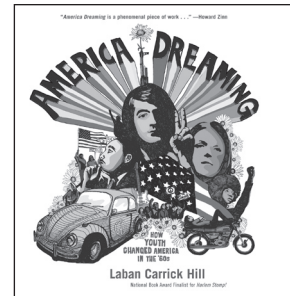
The influence of African Americans on our culture is immense. At the beginning of the 20th century, however, the recognition and acceptance of African American participation in American culture was almost nonexistent. African Americans were only 35 years from emancipation. In 1900, blacks were still excluded from participating equally in nearly

everything. America was a “Whites Only” country. By the year 2000, the previous century could not be conceived of without the contributions of African Americans. In music, try to consider the century without Ella Fitzgerald. In literature, think of the century without Toni Morrison. In politics, without Martin Luther King Jr. In theater and film, without Sidney Poitier. In sports, without Jesse Owens.

*HARLEM STOMP!* tracks the emergence of African American influence in the wider culture. In the early 1920s, something special emerged among African Americans when, for the first time, the black community began to recognize and celebrate its cultural heritage as something distinctly different from white culture. This cultural awareness was not isolated to one part of black America, but was happening all over. The nexus, however, was in Harlem, and that's why this flowering has come to be called the Harlem Renaissance.

0-316-81411-3 • 978-0-316-81411-9

## also by Laban Carrick Hill



*America Dreaming: How Youth Changed America in the 60's*  
0-316-00904-0 • 978-0-316-00904-1 hc

## praise for *America Dreaming:*

**“A wonderful book to browse...The excellent content and attractiveness of the book make it a **must-purchase** for both public and school libraries.”**

—VOYA 5Q review

## Related Internet Sites

<http://www.nku.edu/~diesmanj/harlem.html>

A brief look at the major figures and their work.

<http://www.iniva.org/harlem>  
A site on the art of the Harlem Renaissance

<http://www.si.umich.edu/CHICO/Harlem>

An online exhibition of the era from 1900–1940