

THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE



Harlem is a large neighborhood within the northern section of the New York City borough of Manhattan. Since the 1920s, Harlem has been known as a major African-American residential, cultural and business center. Originally a Dutch village, formally organized in 1658, it is named after the city of "Haarlem" in the Netherlands.

The **Harlem Renaissance** was the name given to the cultural, social, and artistic explosion that took place in Harlem between the end of World War I and the middle of the 1930s. The entry of the United States into World War I had created a boom in American industry, and as a result many blacks moved from the South to take jobs in Northern industrial plants. Blacks remained in large Northern cities, notably Chicago and New York. Harlem, a section of New York, became the cosmopolitan center of black life in America. During this period Harlem became a mecca to which black writers, artists, musicians, photographers, poets, and scholars traveled. Many had come from the South, fleeing its oppressive caste system in order to find a place where they could freely express their talents. Among those artists whose works achieved recognition were Langston Hughes and Claude McKay, Countee Cullen and Arna Bontemps. Du Bois encouraged talented artists to leave the South. Du Bois, then the editor of *THE CRISIS* magazine, was at the height of his fame and influence in the black community. *THE CRISIS* published the poems, stories, and visual works of many artists of the period. The Renaissance was more than a literary movement: It involved racial pride, fueled in part by the militancy of the "New Negro" demanding civil and political rights. The Renaissance incorporated jazz and the blues, attracting whites to Harlem speakeasies, where interracial couples danced.

