



# The Portable Harlem Renaissance Reader

*David Levering Lewis (Editor)*

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From its beginnings in 1919, with soldiers returning from the Great War, to its sputtering end in 1934, with the Great Depression, the New Negro Movement in arts and letters proclaimed the experience of African American men and women. This magnificent volume features a wealth of fiction and nonfiction works by 45 writers from that exuberant era.

## The Portable Harlem Renaissance Reader Details

Date : Published June 1995 by Penguin Books (first published June 1st 1994)

ISBN : 9780140170368

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Format : Paperback 770 pages

Genre : Poetry, Fiction, Short Stories, Classics, Cultural, African American

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# From Reader Review The Portable Harlem Renaissance Reader for online ebook

## Ana says

I love this book because it has a so much poetry, short stories, essays from the most prolific writers of the Harlem Renaissance. I took a class at San Diego State called "Harlem Renaissance" because I just love the era and wanted to learn more about it. This was one of the books we read and it gave me so many authors to learn about from that time period. Certainly a must-read if you want more than just the mainstream American literature of the era.

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## Proost Davis says

Anthologies are a dangerous delight. Dangerous, because when will you ever have time to read all the authors who look interesting; delightful, because of all those interesting new directions to go in.

I think that, when presented with a list of Harlem Renaissance writers, most people will recognize W.E.B. DuBois, Langston Hughes, and Zora Neale Hurston. Most of the other authors' names would draw a blank. But there are riches here!

*The Portable Harlem Renaissance Reader* is in three parts: essays, poetry and fiction. The essay portion reminded me of Ta Nehisi Coates's discoveries as an undergraduate at Howard University. He went into the library "imagining history to be a unified narrative, free of debate, which, once uncovered, would simply verify everything I had always suspected."

Instead:

The trouble came almost immediately. I did not find a coherent tradition marching lockstep but instead factions, and factions within factions. Hurston battled Hughes, DuBois warred with Garvey, Harold Cruse fought with everyone.

The essays in the *Reader* bear this out, with all sorts of conflicting ideas about Harlem, about race, and about what negro art should be.

In any case, I found some new authors and books that look worth exploring.

Langston Hughes's memoir *The Big Sea*.

Claude McKay's sharp-tongued *A Long Way from Home*.

Jean Toomer's novel *Cane*.

Claude McKay's novel *Banana Bottom*.

Nella Larsen's novel *Quicksand*.

Langston Hughes's story collection *The Ways of White Folks*.

Wallace Thurman's novel *The Blacker the Berry*.

And there's lots more to keep you busy for a long time, if you're so inclined.

I won't say anything about the poetry, because I'm no judge, being deficient in that department. Let's just say

it's not only Langston Hughes.

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### **Lawrence says**

A useful, but occasionally factually inaccurate, introduction. Most egregiously, it prints Claude McKay's sonnet "Mulatto" in the place of Langston Hughes' much more experimental poem of the same name.

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### **Terry says**

I open this book from time to time and read selections out of it - I really enjoy it, it's an awesome collection of under-rated classics.

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### **Meghan Hawker says**

This was a required reading for class and I really enjoyed it! The only reason why I gave it three stars is because reading it for school took the joy out of it.

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### **Janessa says**

a must have on any literati's shelf-critical essays, poetry, and short stories of the Harlem Renaissance. A search for identity, heritage, and humanity in the modern era. A search that resonates still today. A must must read!

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### **Van Nyx says**

Identity matters, and this book is all about that.

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### **Yasmin says**

What is a Renaissance? What makes up a Renaissance and how is it sustained? Is it artists, musicians, inventors, and other gifted people all thinking the same way and moving the same way? Or is it similar ideas expressed in different ways? The common goal that African-American people came together and write about what they know best even if it diverges from each other. Should they all come together write at one, write in a single style or express themselves individually? Is there a spokesperson that speaks for them all as in any Renaissance, are they beholden to any one person or are they all captains of their own souls? This book keeps it altogether and altho' everyone speaks for themselves they do speak as one voice. Altho' as in any group there was diverging methods and styles and there seemed to be divisions in the camp, indeed there became two separate camps there had been unity. In this book you want to laugh out loud and so you do but

you also cry and weep aloud. I found this book purely by chance at a second hand book shop, I did not believe I would be so fortunate to find this book so easily. I am happy to say that all the parts of the stories make me wish to go and find the rest where again I shall laugh out loud and cry and weep. It was a shame that the Harlem Renaissance came to a sudden end, it should have lived on ever more with the new generations and the old working side by side even tho' they would argue and feel spite they would be working for a common goal. As with all Renaissances the world has been left richer for the experience, even tho' this one is not so widely known as the European one. We all yearn for Renaissances again and wonder when and where is the next one? When will artists and women and men of peace will hold forth as in time gone by? Before, the European Renaissance was dictated by the whims and money of rich ignorant arrogant people, we need not that again, but the next Renaissance should be available to all and be subsidised by all. No one is left out and the time of the actual Renaissance may be longer therefore than any in the past. For wars or global backruptcy won't bring about an end to the Renaissance. All the contributors in this book were of different ages, sexes and backgrounds and brought with their tears, blood and sweat something extremely beautiful even tho' many of the story lines had ugliness in them. This is the face of humanity, ugly and beautiful at the same time and in equal amounts, a child of their environment, but how different is this child to now? This book is amazing and I shall cherish it always and read it over many, many times in my life.

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### **Tammi Owens says**

FALSE

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### **Mallory says**

Perfect for the rarities referenced in more commonly used text pertaining to the Harlem Renaissance. Some of the best: Blueprint for Negro Writing, Richard Wright; Father and Son, Langston Hughes; and excerpts from Closing Doors, Angelina Grimke. The stories chosen for this anthology seem to be the perfection keystone selections to each author's body of work. I can dig it.

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### **Quiet says**

Not too sure that this collection adequately paints a picture of the Harlem Renaissance.

I've read this over the semester for my course on the Harlem Renaissance, which was taught by a rather wacky professor who didn't do much of a good job in keeping to the time-period. So for most of the semester I solely read this book, without instruction, and it didn't do it for me.

In the end I supplimented my reading with tackling some of the novels that are excerpted from in here; reading the whole of books like "Plum Bun" and "Nigger Heaven" proved infinitely more inspiring toward creating a vision of what the Harlem Renaissance was really like in my mind than this Reader did.

The first section of essays are okay, although there are some notable omissions. In particular, DuBois' "The Talented Tenth" is missing, not even an excerpt, and that was one of the, if not the most, foundational works

in regards how the Harlem Renaissance formed itself.

The poetry is a good assortment, and if you're somebody who really lightens up with poems then maybe this collection would do you better. I'm just not the sort though.

Don't skip the introduction also. David Lewis' introduction gives a good and factual map of the years of the Harlem Renaissance, and certainly helps in establishing context.

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