



★

**GREAT WAR, FLAWED PEACE,
AND THE LASTING LEGACY
OF WORLD WAR I**

★



THE UNITED STATES
WORLD WAR ONE
CENTENNIAL COMMISSION

PRITZKER
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NHD
NATIONAL
HISTORY DAY

JAZZ:

THE HARLEM HELLFIGHTERS' GIFT TO THE WORLD



GUIDING QUESTION: How did the Harlem Hellfighters Regimental Jazz Band's World War I experience rise from the battlefields of World War I to the popular culture in the post-war period?

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WHY?

The 15th New York Infantry Band, which later became the 369th Regimental Band, swept their audiences off their feet with their improvisation of traditional music and marching songs. Led by James Reese Europe, they gave the gift of jazz to the world. Popular music today has its roots in early jazz music, including the music of James Reese Europe. This lesson allows students to make connections between the music of the Great War and Roaring '20s and popular music of today.

OVERVIEW

Using jazz recordings from the World War I era and the 1920s, primary source analysis, and poetry, students will draw conclusions and identify the historical significance of jazz music on popular culture.

OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this activity, students will be able to

- > Write a poem to draw conclusions and make connections;
- > Analyze a primary source recording;
- > Compare and contrast music from the World War I era and modern music; and
- > Identify the historical significance of the Harlem Hellfighters' contribution to jazz.

STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

CONNECTIONS TO COMMON CORE

- > CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.9 Compare and contrast one author's presentation of events with that of another (e.g., a memoir written by and a biography on the same person).
- > CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.7.1 Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

DOCUMENTS USED

PRIMARY SOURCES

Sheet Music, "All of No Man's Land is Ours," 1918
Library of Congress (2013562508)
<https://www.loc.gov/item/2013562508/>

Sound Recording, "All of No Man's Land is Ours," Sound Recording, 1918
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qp-8vndMtVQ>

Sound Recording, James Reese Europe, "Castle Walk," February 10, 1914
Library of Congress (ihas.100010720)
<https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.100010720/>

Sound Recording, Original Dixieland Jazz Band, "Livery Stable Blues," February 26, 1917
Library of Congress (4668)
<http://www.loc.gov/jukebox/recordings/detail/id/4668/>

Sound Recording, Paul Whiteman and His Orchestra, "I'm Just Wild About Harry," 1922
Internet Archive
https://archive.org/details/78_im-just-wild-about-harry_paul-whiteman-and-his-orchestra-sissle-blake_gbia0015624b

SECONDARY SOURCES

"James Reese Europe, 1881-1919"

Library of Congress

<https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200038842/>

"Jazz Origins in New Orleans," National Historic Park Louisiana

National Park Service

https://www.nps.gov/jazz/learn/historyculture/history_early.htm

Joey Brackner, "The Excelsior Marching Band, Mobile," April 5, 1981

Alabama State Council on the Arts

http://arts.alabama.gov/Traditional_Culture/heritageaward/excelsior.aspx

"Treme Brass Band," NEA National Heritage Fellowships

National Endowment for the Arts

<https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage/fellows/treme-brass-band>

"What is Jazz?"

Smithsonian National Museum of American History

<https://americanhistory.si.edu/smithsonian-jazz/education/what-jazz>

MATERIALS

- > Jazz, The Harlem Hellfighters' Gift to the World Handout
- > Analyzing Sound Recordings Handout
- > Two-Voice Poem Handout
- > Two-Voice Poem Rubric
- > Colored pens and highlighters for students
- > Large pieces of blank paper for concept map, one per group of students
- > Jazz recordings listed in the primary/secondary sources
- > Computer with internet capability and speakers to play jazz recordings

ACTIVITY PREPARATION

- > Make one copy of the following handouts for each student:
 - » Jazz, The Harlem Hellfighters' Gift to the World
 - » Analyzing Sound Recordings
- > Make one copy of the following for each pair of students:
 - » Two-Voice Poem
 - » Two-Voice Poem Rubric
- > Gather pens, highlighters, and paper.
- > Collect recordings from the Musical Selections listed in the supplemental materials.
- > Test all online resource jazz recordings before class.

PROCEDURE

ACTIVITY ONE: JAZZ IN AMERICA (20 MINUTES)

- > Play musical selections from jazz recordings as students enter the classroom.
- > Distribute the Jazz, The Harlem Hellfighters' Gift to the World handout.
 - » Instruct students to identify the following details as they read: people, places, connections to African American experiences.
 - » Divide students into groups of three to four students each and have them create a timeline to show the progression of jazz.
 - » With the whole class, have each group summarize their findings with the class.
- > Distribute one copy of the Analyzing Sound Recordings handout to each student.
 - » Explain to students that they will listen to a sound recording and respond according to the prompts on the Analyzing Sound Recordings handout. Students may go back and forth between the columns. There is no correct order, and they do not need to answer all of the prompts.
- > Play "Castle Walk" by James Reese Europe. Play the recording a second time for a deeper analysis. Allow students time to analyze.
- > Discuss responses. To further the discussion, ask:
 - » *How does the music reflect the period in which it was produced?*
 - » *What does the music say about the culture of the time period?*
 - » *How is the music similar to or different from the music you listen to today?*
 - » *What makes music popular today?*
 - » *Do you think current events have an impact on music today?*

ASSESSMENT: TWO-VOICE POETRY (30 MINUTES)

- > Explain to students that they will write a poem with two voices. One voice will be from the World War I era (during the war and the 1920s) and the other voice will be from any time after the war, including the present time.
- > To guide students with a selection for the post-war voice, they may select from the list on the assignment sheet. If they chose to select a voice from outside of the list, they should justify why they want to include that voice.
 - » Ask students: *What do you think people thought of the music during the World War I era? What would they say about it to each other?*
 - » Suggest that students consider perspective when writing the lines. Look for similarities between the two voices. Those are the lines that go in the middle.
 - » Pair students. If there is an odd number, a group can write a Three-Voice Poem.
 - » **Teacher Tip:** Play jazz music from the recordings and musical selections collected for classroom ambiance while writing poetry.
- > The poem can be evaluated using the Two-Voice Poem Rubric.

METHODS FOR EXTENSION

- > Older or more advanced students interested in the history of jazz can trace its development from its roots in New Orleans to the modern jazz movement and can prepare a presentation for the class to demonstrate how jazz changed over time.
- > Students interested in how the experiences of the 15th New York Infantry Band impacted individual lives can research individual band members.
- > Students interested in the story of the Harlem Hellfighters can read the book, *Harlem Hellfighters: When Pride Met Courage* by Walter Dean Myers.
- > If time allows, conduct a Poetry Slam when the poems are finished. Instruct the students that they are to each read their own lines and when the lines are in the Both Voices column, the lines are to be read in unison.

ANALYZING SOUND RECORDINGS HANDOUT

Directions: Listen and respond to the primary source. You may go back and forth between the columns; there is no correct order.

Name of Recording: _____

OBSERVE	REFLECT	QUESTION
<p>Describe what you hear.</p> <p>What do you notice first?</p> <p>Do you recognize any instruments?</p> <p>What other details can you hear?</p>	<p>What was the purpose of this recording?</p> <p>Who would be interested in hearing this?</p> <p>Do you think events at the time it was recorded had any impact on the music?</p> <p>Do you like what you hear?</p> <p>What can you learn from listening to this recording?</p>	<p>What do you wonder about...</p> <p>who? • what? • when? • where? • why? • how?</p>

JAZZ, THE HARLEM HELLFIGHTERS' GIFT TO THE WORLD

New Orleans, the Birthplace of Jazz

Jazz emerged from the streets of New Orleans at the turn of the twentieth century. Leaving the South during the Great Migration, African American musicians took their music with them. New Orleans style jazz became America's gift of music to the world.

Jazz Goes to War: James Reese Europe and The Harlem Hellfighters

James Reese Europe was a successful African American band conductor. Europe believed that black musicians could play their own music and people of all races would want to hear it. When the United States entered World War I in 1917, Reese received a commission as a lieutenant with the 15th New York Regiment. This unit was integrated into the 369th Infantry Regiment - the Harlem Hellfighters - the first segregated regiment to serve with the American Expeditionary Forces. The men of the 369th Infantry Regiment spent 191 days on the front lines - longer than any other unit - and incurred the highest number of losses of any American unit, with over 1,500 war casualties by 1918. While a part of the 369th Infantry Regiment, James Reese Europe, along with fellow musician Noble Sissle, sought to assemble the best military band possible.

The band, known as the Harlem Hellfighters Regimental Jazz Band or the 369th Regimental Band, introduced the sounds of jazz to Europe while entertaining soldiers in France. They played in military camps and hospitals, and the music spilled into opera houses and town centers. The band even performed for dignitaries and crowds of 50,000, playing a French march followed by an American march to the group. The band played as though they were performing in a Harlem jazz club. When this happened, Sergeant Noble Sissle reported, "...and then came the fireworks."¹ The Harlem Hellfighters Regimental Band ushered in the soundtrack of the Great War.



Newspapers like the *Evening Public Ledger* from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, reported on the impact of the band's performances, March 21, 1919. *Chronicling America*.



Left: Physicians, soldiers, and patients forming a semi-circle around the African American band members at an American Red Cross Hospital in Paris. National Library of Medicine (101405087).



Right: Members of the 369th Regimental Band playing jazz for patients at a Paris hospital, 1918. Library of Congress (2016651602).

¹Colonel Richard Goldenberg, "Fighters Proved their Mettle, Patriotism in Combat," U.S. Army, last modified February 1, 2018, accessed September 17, 2019, https://www.army.mil/article/199913/african_american_wwi_harlem_hell_fighters_proved_their_mettle_patriotism_in_combat.

JAZZ, THE HARLEM HELLFIGHTERS' GIFT TO THE WORLD (CON'T)

Europe was welcomed home as a hero in 1919 by over a million spectators when the Harlem Hellfighters paraded up Fifth Avenue in New York City. He stated, "I have come from France more firmly convinced than ever that Negroes should write Negro music. We have our own racial feeling...We won France by playing music which was ours and not a pale imitation of others, and if we are to develop in America we must develop along our own lines."²

On May 9, 1919, shortly after his return, he was involved in an altercation with a band member during the intermission of a performance. The drummer stabbed Europe in the neck with a small knife. The wound, which appeared superficial, caused bleeding that could not be stopped, and Europe died.

Noble Sissle Bridges World War I and the Harlem Renaissance

Following the war, Noble Sissle continued his musical career with Eubie Blake, infusing their musical, *Shuffle Along*, with the sounds of jazz. The show included Josephine Baker, a rising jazz star. Following the success of *Shuffle Along*, African American music contributed to the start of the Harlem Renaissance.

Jazz gained in popularity throughout the United States in the 1920s. The sounds of King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band, with Louis Armstrong, spread quickly through Chicago's music scene. Jazz artist Duke Ellington had a hit with "Black, Brown, and Beige," celebrating racial pride of the African American experience.

Harlem continued to push the boundaries as jazz evolved into big band swing music. Sissle spoke of the Harlem Renaissance and jazz's contributions to post-World War I society, asking "Who would have thought that little U.S.A. would give to the world a rhythm and melodies that, in the midst of such universal sorrow, would cause all students of music to yearn to learn how to play it?"³



A cover of sheet music for one of the most popular numbers, "I'm Just Wild About Harry," from the 1921 musical *Shuffle Along*, written by Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle. Indiana Historical Society.

² Quoted in Maurice Peress, *Dvořák to Duke Ellington: A Conductor Explores America's Music and Its African American Roots*, Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 2004.

³ Wendi Maloney, "World War I: American Jazz Delights the World," Library of Congress Blog, updated January 24, 2018, accessed September 17, 2019, <https://blogs.loc.gov/loc/2018/01/world-war-i-american-jazz-delights-the-world/>.

JAZZ, THE HARLEM HELLFIGHTERS' GIFT TO THE WORLD (CON'T)

Jazz Returns to War and Ushers in a New Soundtrack

When America entered World War II, jazz once again dominated the music scene. Jazz musicians such as Glenn Miller, Bing Crosby, and the Andrew Sisters performed on military bases with the USO. Many musicians were drafted. Edward Geraci, a trombone player, recalls, "I arrived in France in December of 1944 with a group of musicians. Our instruments were kept in a truck. When the war ended, we became a USO band and performed throughout France and Germany."⁴

Over the remaining decades of the twentieth century, the influence of jazz can be found across all genres. Big band musicians became rhythm and blues musicians who in turn influenced pioneering rock and roll musicians. Young musicians listened to their parents' jazz and rhythm and blues growing up in the decades following the war. When they became musicians in the last decades of the twentieth century, they infused their hip-hop music with elements of jazz.

The Legacy of James Reese Europe

The Harlem Hellfighters' gift of jazz to the world shaped music throughout the twentieth century and into modern times. Musicians use the original elements of jazz developed by James Reese Europe to blur the historical lines while creating a new sound for the modern musical enthusiast.

⁴Edward Geraci served in World War II. He is the father of the author, Stephanie Hammer.

TWO-VOICE POEM ASSIGNMENT

What is a two-voice poem? Two-voice poetry is written for two people to perform. The poem has two columns – one for each person who is reading the poem. Sometimes the poet wants the readers to say something at the same time, so the poet writes the words in the middle column. These poems often sound like dialogue for two people.

Preparing to write the poem

- > Decide on the two voices for your poem. You should include one person from the World War I era and a modern musician. A list is included to get you started. You may choose someone who is not on the list, but you will need to justify your choice.
- > At the top of the poem page, identify each voice above the poetry box.
- > On the blank side of your paper, brainstorm ideas about what each person would say. Consider what their life was/is like, what they think about the music and the influences of jazz. Think about the two voices together and what they might say to one another.

JAZZ MUSICIANS	JAZZ INFLUENCED SONGS
Louis Armstrong	John Legend, "Glory" (Ragtime, 1900s)
Duke Ellington	Meghan Trainor, "All About That Bass" (Swing, 1930s)
Benny Goodman	Amy Winehouse, "Stronger Than Me" (BeBop, 1940s)
Dizzy Gillespie	John Mayer, "I Don't Trust Myself" (Free Jazz, 1960s)
Ella Fitzgerald	Danny DeVito, "Taxi Theme Song" (Fusion Music, 1970s)
Miles Davis	A Tribe Called Quest, "Jazz (We've Got) Buggin' Out" (Synthesizers, Conscious Rap, 1980s, 1990s)
John Coltrane	Digable Planets, "Rebirth of Slick (Cool Like Dat)" (Hip Hop, 1993)
Billie Holiday	Courtney Pine & Lynden David Hall, "Lady Day and John Coltrane" (Hip Hop to Jazz, 2000)
Wynton Marsalis	Common, "Common Free Style" (Soul, Jazz, 2003)
Herbie Hancock	Kamasi Washington, "Change of the Guard" (Jazz musician raised with hip-hop, 2017)
Quincy Jones	
Norah Jones	

Writing the poem

- > Identify each voice for the audience by completing the first line: I am _____.
- > Turn your brainstorming ideas into a poem by writing the dialogue for each voice. Use strong, active verbs!
- > The individuals will speak most lines.
- > The lines should go back and forth between each person.
- > Some lines should be spoken by both voices at the same time.

Presenting the poem

- > A two-voice poem is meant to be read aloud. Practice reading your two-voice poem aloud.
- > Present your two-voice poem to the class.

JAZZ, THE HARLEM HELLFIGHTERS' GIFT TO THE WORLD: TWO-VOICE POEM

VOICE ONE	BOTH VOICES	VOICE TWO
I am		
		I am

JAZZ, THE HARLEM HELLFIGHTERS' GIFT TO THE WORLD: THREE-VOICE POEM

VOICE ONE	VOICE TWO	ALL VOICES	VOICE THREE
I am			
	I am		
			I am



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