

TOUR OF HARLEM

Objectives

- Students will be transported to 1930s Harlem
- Students will learn about some of the historical people and places mentioned in the play
- Students will learn the Lindy Hop
- Students will consider ways in which they can achieve their dreams

Activity #1: Langston Hughes

The brownstone of Langston Hughes was home to some of the best parties the Harlem Renaissance had to offer.

- Divide students into groups of three or four and give them a section of the poem DREAMS by Langston Hughes.

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.

- In their groups, the students will read their section of the poem and discuss what the words mean to them and create a frozen image or tableaux representing that meaning.
- Invite each group to share their image and ask the audience: what do you see?
- Invite the group members to release their tableaux and describe their tableaux.

In the play, you will hear about some amazing characters and some historical ones, including Langston Hughes. While you watch the play, pay attention to the people mentioned and listen for Langston Hughes.

Activity #2: Cotton Club

The hottest party in Harlem always went down at the Cotton Club. Located on 125th street, the cotton club was the happening spot of the Harlem Renaissance to see the latest styles, music, and dancing.

- This activity will require a large open space for movement.
- See video for Lindy hop demonstration.

As you watch the play, listen to all the fun the characters are talking about having and imagine them going to parties and doing the Lindy hop.

Activity #3: Abyssinian Baptist Church

The Abyssinian Baptist Church was the hub of the community, pastored by the great Adam Clayton Powell Jr.

- Play the excerpt from Adam Clayton Powell Jr.'s famous sermon: "What's in your hands?" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q10H_TVA84w&t=82s
- Distribute paper and pens and ask students to write down their thoughts while listening to the sermon excerpt.
- Invite students to share their thoughts with the class.

In the play, the characters hold onto their dreams with everything they have. What do they have in their hands to use to fight for their dreams?

Activity #4: 125th Street

- Invite students to observe the two photographs of Harlem, then and now. What do you see? What questions do you have?
- The characters in *Blues for an Alabama Sky* were everyday people. What do you think were their dreams? How do they compare to the dreams you have today?
- Take a moment to hold space for the next generation of dreamers, which is you.

**CENTER
THEATRE
GROUP**

AHMANSON THEATRE
MARK TAPER FORUM
KIRK DOUGLAS THEATRE

