

PIGFOOT MARY'S HARLEM RENAISSANCE

By Daniel Carlton

Produced by First Woman LLC



Welcome

Welcome to Daniel Carlton's *PIGFOOT MARY'S HARLEM RENAISSANCE*. This guide is designed to help students comprehend and unpack the events of the play through discussion questions, activities, and lessons for use in the classroom both before and after the performance. We hope it enriches their (and your) experience!

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The Story of *PigFoot Mary's Harlem Renaissance*

PigFoot Mary, secretly wealthy from her popular food stand, awaits news on a property sale that could mark her departure from Harlem. She shares stories about her life and the customers who left a lasting impact on her. Who are Hot Fingers The Piano Player, The Garveyite, Crispus The Number's Runner, and WWI Veteran General Wilson? What do they have in common with Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Marcus Garvey, and Zora Neale Hurston? Inspired by Lillian Harris Dean, one of Harlem's most successful early entrepreneurs in the 1920s, this lively play with only two actors bursts with jazz, vibrant characters, and dances of the Harlem Renaissance, connecting the past to today in a fun, poignant, and educational way.

Production History

In 2011, The Metropolitan Playhouse In NYC, commissioned the playwright Daniel Carlton to write a short play about a person or event set during the 1920's for their Harlem Renaissance Festival. Landing on PigFoot Mary, he was surprised to find out that not much information about her existed. There were exactly 2 paragraphs by James Weldon Johnson written on her. He expanded the story by using his imagination to connect this information to fictional characters. After It's initial run at The Metropolitan Playhouse, the show was been presented at The Schomburg Center For Research And Black Culture, Community Works High School Tours, Riverside Church, Blackberry Productions, and a touring show for The Negro Ensemble Company Inc. Over a decade later, TYA Tour Development Collective commissioned a new production of Mr. Carlton's original script - we are so excited to share with you this new version, evolved with love and care as Pigfoot Mary takes us through the Harlem Renaissance on her last day in the neighborhood.



About the Director / Playwright



Daniel Carlton is a multiple award winning Harlem based Actor, Storyteller, Playwright, Poet, Director, and Teaching Artist who has appeared on New York, national, and international stages. His work has also been created/presented in schools, jails, homeless shelters, museums, libraries, and every imaginable place to create and perform. **RECENT PROJECTS :** *Freedom Flight*, *Keep Marching* (Madrivier Theater Works),

Hero, *The Boy From Troy* (First Woman), *Jabari Dreams Of Freedom* (New Victory Theater), *March On* (Apollo Theater, National Black Theater Festival), *48 Hours In Harlem* (Harlem 9 Theater Co), *What If* (Negro Ensemble Company, Cherry Lane Theater), *Pigfoot Mary Says Goodbye To The Harlem Renaissance* (Metropolitan Playhouse), *Night Train 57* (Kennedy Center), *Freedom Riders* (National tour)

Shelter: Refugees of the American Dream (Blackberry Productions), *Hidden Inside* (Keen Theater), *This Ability* (Chicago Children's Theater), *So Journey To The Truth* (Syracuse Stage). **Teaching Artist** for companies including Yaffa Arts, Apollo Theatre, Community Works, Mindbuilders, Blackberry Productions. **Director's Mentor Negro Ensemble Company. Guest Lecturer/Director:** NYU, University Of Iowa, Syracuse University, Western Carolina University, University of Georgia. **Current Faculty:** HB Studios, Alvin Ailey Dance Camp.

The Harlem Renaissance Timeline

Beginning in 1916, The Great Migration of African Americans from the South to Northern cities created a concentration of ambitious people seeking new opportunities and a better life away from oppressive Jim Crow laws. This influx of African Americans into Harlem led to the development of a vibrant cultural landscape with a flourishing of literature, music, art, and intellectual thought. The Harlem Renaissance established and celebrated the unique culture of African Americans and redefined African American expression, encouraging them to celebrate their heritage, helping create a more powerful view of Black agency and rights in American society. Although Lillian Dean is the only historical person in the play, all of the characters are based on the actual types of people who moved to Harlem as members of The Great Migration. Here is a timeline of the characters in *Pigfoot Mary's Harlem Renaissance*!



1901

Lillian Dean, aka PigFoot Mary, moves to New York City from Mississippi. She lives in an African American section of Manhattan known as San Juan Hill. This is where she sets up her first food stand.

1901

Mr Rudy, a tavern owner, meets Lillian in in San Juan Hill. African American men during the time period in that area of town were dock workers, skilled laborers , and tavern owners.



1912

Entirely made up, Hot Fingers represents The Blues, migrating from Louisiana where he would have met and been inspired by many of the earliest creators of Jazz.

1914

The Garveyites, followers of Marcus Garvey, arrive in Harlem to join The United Negro Improvement Association. The UNIA were known in Harlem for their elaborate parades that were designed to celebrate cultural pride.





1916

Pig Foot Mary moves to Harlem to sell her food to the thousands of African American newly migrated from the Southern states alongside a robust population of Caribbean immigrants.

1917

The USA enters World War 1, under President Woodrow Wilson. Over 350,000 African Americans served in the U.S. military during the war, primarily in segregated units. Despite their heroic efforts, African American soldiers faced significant discrimination.



1920

Though not a real person, Crispus encounters every kind of community member of Harlem through The Numbers Game - from artists, to doctors, railroad workers, dock workers, landlords, and more.

1927

Lillian Dean says goodbye to Harlem and moves to California in hopes of spending the rest of her days in the sun.



Faces of the Harlem Renaissance

The Harlem Renaissance was an artistic, cultural, and social movement that aimed to celebrate the Black experience. Some of the leaders of the time period mentioned in the play are pictured below.



Langston Hughes was a prominent figure, known for his poetry reflecting the urban African American experience and incorporating jazz rhythms.



Zora Neale Hurston was a novelist and anthropologist, celebrated for her depictions of Black culture, particularly in the rural South, and her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.



Duke Ellington was a prominent composer and pianist who helped shape the sound of jazz and popularize the blues, known for creating orchestral jazz.

How Far Have We Come?

Back in the 1920s, during the Harlem Renaissance, Black Americans were creating powerful music, poetry, and art that helped tell their stories. But outside of the arts, life was still unfair in many ways. Many Black people couldn't vote, especially in the South, because of unfair laws and violence. They faced racism when trying to buy homes, start businesses, or get good jobs. Equal rights under the law didn't truly exist, and protests for change were often met with harsh punishment. Even though leaders like Marcus Garvey spoke out for Black pride and independence, their voices weren't always taken seriously by those in power. That's why many Black families joined the Great Migration, moving north to escape discrimination and look for better opportunities.

Today, things have changed a lot—though we're still working toward full equality. All Americans now have the legal right to vote, own homes, run businesses, and speak out freely. We've seen major protest movements like the Civil Rights Movement and Black Lives Matter make big changes. There are Black mayors, governors, CEOs, and even a former President! Writers, artists, and musicians of African descent are celebrated around the world, just like during the Harlem Renaissance—but now with more opportunity and recognition. While racism and inequality haven't disappeared, the courage and creativity of the past helped open doors that were once tightly shut.



K - W - L Chart

A KWL chart helps you organize and reflect on your thoughts about The Harlem Renaissance before and after *Pigfoot Mary*.

Fill out the first two columns before the show, then fill in the third after the performance.

K – W – L Chart Topic: <i>Harlem Renaissance</i>		
What I K now	What I W onder	What I L earned

Discussion Questions

Discuss these questions with your classmates or write about them below.

1. What elements of the Great Migration appear in the script, and how do they influence the characters?
2. How does Lillian Dean's transformation into Pigfoot Mary reflect the changes of the country, and world, around her? What is the significance of Pigfoot Mary reclaiming her birth name at the end of the play?
3. How does music help express feelings, experiences, and the culture in this story?
4. What does "Don't leave your dreams on somebody else's shelf" mean in the context of Pigfoot Mary's legacy?

Who Said It?

Match the quote to the correct Harlem Renaissance Figure!

"There are years that ask questions and years that answer."

Langston Hughes

"There are 2 rules in life:
Number 1- Never quit
Number 2- Never forget rule number 1."

Zora Neale Hurston

"Hold fast to dreams, for if dreams die, life is a broken-winged bird that cannot fly."

W. E. B DuBois

"It's when you are down that you learn about your faults."

Marcus Garvey

"I got my start by giving myself a start."

Duke Ellington

"Strive for that greatness of spirit that measures life not by its disappointments but by its possibilities."

Madame C.J. Walker

"Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today."

Claude McKay

Word Search

Find words, names, and topics from *Pigfoot Mary's Harlem Renaissance*. Words can be across, down, or diagonal!



BLUES CRISPUS ELLINGTON ENTREPRENEUR GARVEY HARLEM
HERITAGE HOTFINGERS HUGHES HURSTON JAZZ LEXINGTON
MIGRATION PIGSFEET RENAISSANCE WILSON

Further Reading

Want to learn more about The Harlem Renaissance? Ask a librarian to help you find one of these books!

The Saga of Lillian Harris by Regina Abraham

The Weary Blues by Langston Hughes

I Love Myself When I'm Laughing... and Then Again When I Am Looking Mean and Impressive by and about Zora Neale Hurston, edited by Alice Walker

Harlem Summer by Walter Dean Myers

Tar Beach by Faith Ringgold

Schomburg: The Man Who Built a Library by Carole Boston Weatherford

The Great Migration: An American Story by Jacob Lawrence

As seen in the New York Times!

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/27/obituaries/lillian-harris-dean-overlooked.html>

Vocabulary

Harlem Renaissance Vocabulary

Blues: Along with **Jazz**, it is a form of music created in the South that was brought to Northern cities by musicians who were looking for a better life.

Entrepreneur: A person who organizes and operates a business or businesses, taking on greater than normal financial risks in order to do so.

Garveyite: a follower of Marcus Garvey, who was a Jamaican immigrant who arrived in NYC around the beginning of the 20th Century. He realized that Black people in America at that time needed an organization that boosted their pride, business ownership, and education of their African, and created The United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). The UNIA ultimately had chapters all over America with estimates of over 3 Million members.

The Great Migration; The mass movement of approximately six million African Americans from the rural South to the urban North, Midwest, and West of the United States between 1910 and 1970.

Jazz: A type of music of Black American origin characterized by improvisation, syncopation, and usually a regular or forceful rhythm, emerging at the beginning of the 1900s.

Jim Crow Laws: These laws mandated racial segregation in all aspects of public life, effectively institutionalizing discrimination against African Americans. These laws were mainly enacted in southern and border states of the United States between 1877 and the mid-1960s.

Lillian Dean: Cook and business owner, better known as 'Pigfoot Mary'.

The Numbers Game: An old-time street lottery that involves a payout of numbers bet as a combination of 3 numbers, based on the horse races in town, and was a very popular underground way of betting in Harlem.

Renaissance: An era of cultural and societal rebirth.

Segregation: The separation of people, often into racial or other ethnic groups in daily life.

Theatre Vocabulary

Actor: An **actor** is a person who performs onstage. They must carefully study their lines and **blocking** and work with the other actors to tell a story. Some **actors** also sing, dance, or play an instrument onstage.

Auditions: Anyone who is interested in performing in a musical or play must attend **auditions**. At auditions, an actor might sing a song or act out a scene from the musical for the **director** and **playwright**. The **director** and **playwright** will then work together to select the cast for the performance.

Blocking: Once the cast has been selected, the director will create **blocking**. **Blocking** is the path or movement the actors take onstage. Once **blocking** has been decided, the actors carefully follow it to make sure the performance is the same every time.

Director: The **director** is responsible for guiding the creation and development of a play or musical. They work closely with all members of the team, including the playwright, actors, designers, and the stage manager, to ensure the play goes smoothly.

Playwright: A **playwright** is a person who writes the story of a play. They create the characters and plot, either according to a true story or from their imagination. Daniel Carlton is the **playwright** and director of *Pigfoot Mary's Harlem Renaissance*.

Rehearsal: During **rehearsal**, the director and playwright will work together to teach the cast the entire show. During the **rehearsal** process, actors and the director might experiment with movement or delivery, but they won't stray from the **playwright's** words.

Stage Crew: The **stage crew** is responsible for working backstage during a performance. While the audience is watching the **actors**, the **stage crew** might prepare props, move scenery, or create special effects to help the **actors** tell the story.

Stage Manager: The **stage manager** is in charge of keeping track of everything related to a musical or play. They are responsible for recording the **blocking**, communicating with the **actors**, **playwright**, **director**, and **stage crew**, and making sure everything runs smoothly.