**Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ American Literature**

**Thomas – 2016**

Directions: Listen to the poem Harlem by Walter Dean Myers while viewing the slide show of Christopher Myers’ illustrations of the poem. Next, read it again and underline all of the places and locations mentioned in the poem. Finally, read it a third time and circle all the people mentioned.

**Harlem:  A Poem**

**By Walter Dean Myers**

They took the road in Waycross, Georgia

Skipped over the tracks in East St. Louis

Took the bus from Holly Springs

Hitched a ride from Gee’s Bend

Took the long way through Memphis

The third deck down from [Trinidad](http://www.cnn.com/TRAVEL/CITY.GUIDES/WORLD/Americas/trinidad/bigmap.html)

A wrench of heart from [Goree Island](http://webster.commnet.edu/stuweb/~diop3212/negre.htm%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

A wrench of heart from Goree Island

To a place called

Harlem

Harlem was a promise

Of a better life,

of a place where a man

Didn’t have to know his place

Simply because

He was Black

They brought a call

A song

First heard in the villages of

[Ghana/Mali/Senegal](http://www.library.northwestern.edu/africana/map/)

Calls and songs and shouts

Heavy hearted tambourine rhythms

Loosed in the hard city

Like a scream torn from the throat

Of an ancient clarinet

A new sound, raucous and sassy

Cascading over the asphalt village

Breaking against the black sky over

[1-2-5 Street](http://harlemdiscover.com/harlemweek/map.htm)

Announcing Hallelujah

Riffing past resolution

Yellow, tan, brown, black, red

Green, gray, bright

Colors loud enough to be heard

Light on asphalt streets

Sun yellow shirts on burnt umber

Bodies

Demanding to be heard

Seen

Sending out warriors

From streets known to be

Mourning still as a lone radio tells us how

[Jack Johnson](http://www.si.umich.edu/CHICO/Harlem/text/jajohnson.html)

[Joe Louis](http://www.cmgww.com/sports/louis/louis.html)

[Sugar Ray](http://www.cmgww.com/sports/robinson/biography.html)

Is doing with our hopes.

We hope

We pray

Our black skins

Reflecting the face of God

In storefront temples

Jive and Jehovah artists

Lay out the human canvas

The [mood indigo](http://www.purplelion.com/anouk/song11.shtml)

A chorus of summer herbs

Of mangoes and bar-b-que

Of perfumed sisters

Hip strutting past

Fried fish joints

On [Lenox Avenue](http://harlemdiscover.com/harlemweek/map.htm) in steamy August

A carnival of children

People in the daytime streets

[Ring-a-levio](http://www.czbrats.com/Facts/ring-a-levio.htm) warriors

[Stickball](http://www.streetplay.com/stickball/) heroes

Hide-and-seek knights and ladies

Waiting to sing their own sweet songs

Living out their own slam-dunk dreams

Listening

For the coming of the blues

A weary blues that [Langston](http://www.galegroup.com/free_resources/bhm/bio/hughes_l.htm) knew

And [Countee](http://www.poets.org/poets/poets.cfm?45442B7C000C0303" \t "_blank) sung

A river of blues

Where [Du Bois](http://www.si.umich.edu/CHICO/Harlem/text/dubois.html) waded

And [Baldwin](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/database/baldwin_j.html) preached

There is lilt

Tempo

Cadence

A language of darkness

Darkness known

Darkness sharpened at [Mintons](http://www.streetplay.com/stickball/halloffame/mintons.shtml%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

Darkness lightened at the [Cotton Club](http://www.retroswingusa.com/cotton.htm)

Sent flying from [Abyssinian Baptist](http://www.nyc.worldweb.com/NewYorkCity/SightsAttractions/ChurchesTemples/)

To the [Apollo](http://www.apollotheater.com/about.shtm).

The [uptown A](http://www.mta.nyc.ny.us/nyct/maps/submap.htm)

Rattles past [110th Street](http://harlemdiscover.com/harlemweek/map.htm)

Unreal to real

Relaxing the soul

Shango and Jesus

[Asante](http://www.uiowa.edu/~africart/toc/people/Asante.html) and [Mende](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=MFY" \t "_blank)

One people

A hundred different people

Huddled masses

And crowded dreams

Squares

Blocks, bricks

Fat, round woman in a rectangle

Sunday night gospel

“Precious Lord…take my hand,

Lead me on, let me stand…”

Caught by a full lipped

Full hipped Saint

Washing [collard greens](http://www.aboutproduce.com/produce/commodity.asp?C=Greens,+Collard)

In a cracked porcelain sink

Backing up [Lady Day](http://www.cmgww.com/music/holiday/bio.html) on the radio

Brother so black and blue

Patting a wide foot outside the

Too hot Walk-up

“Boy,

You ought to find the guys who told you

you could play some [checkers](http://www.darkfish.com/checkers/Checkers.html)

‘cause he done lied to you!”

Cracked reed and soprano sax laughter

Floats over

a fleet of funeral cars

In Harlem

Sparrows sit on fire escapes

Outside [rent parties](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/features/timeline/progress/prohib/rent.html)

To learn the tunes.

In Harlem

The wind doesn’t blow past [Smalls](http://web.ukonline.co.uk/tc/hoofersclub/smalls.html)

It stops to listen to the sounds

Serious business

A poem, rhapsody tripping along

[Striver’s Row](http://www.mediaworkshop.org/kidsinstitute/weirdos/html/striversrow.html)

Not getting it’s metric feel soiled

On the well-swept walks

Hustling through the hard rain at two o’clock

In the morning to its next gig.

A huddle of horns

And a tinkle of glass

A note

Handed down from [Marcus](http://www.expo98.msu.edu/bios/garvey.html) to [Malcolm](http://www.cmgww.com/historic/malcolm/bio.html)

To a brother

Too bad and too cool to give his name.

Sometimes despair

Makes the stoops shudder

Sometimes there are endless depths of pain

Singing a capella on street corners

And sometimes not.

Sometimes it is the artist

looking into the mirror

Painting a portrait of his own heart.

Place

Sound

Celebration

Memories of feelings

Of place

A journey on the A train

That started on the banks of the [Niger](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/mapshells/africa/nigeria/nigeria.htm)

And has not ended

Harlem.

1. In the margin, annotate the poem to identify the places and people.

2. Why do you think that Harlem became a social and cultural center for African-Americans in the 1920s and 1930s?