

Mound Writes



Poems Inspired by the Harlem Renaissance

Mound Elementary School 2024

 Lake Erie Ink
A writing space for youth

INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work in this anthology comes from a Lake Erie Ink residency at Mound Elementary School in Kyle Pearce’s seventh grade language arts classes, funded by the George Gund Foundation. During this residency, Lake Erie Ink staff facilitated writing workshops designed to help students explore the art, literature, and music of the Harlem Renaissance. Students used works by Harlem Renaissance figures to inspire their own writing and creative expression as they learned about this important cultural movement.

At Mound Elementary School, students explored the history of the Great Migration and its influence on the Harlem Renaissance. They learned about golden shovel poems and wrote their own golden shovels inspired by poems and songs from the Harlem Renaissance. Students also explored art from this period and wrote ekphrastic poems inspired by artwork.

As a culminating activity, students worked in groups to create digital museum exhibits that showcased some of their creative work alongside art and writing from the Harlem Renaissance. Students presented these exhibits in the classroom, sharing insights and discussing themes of the work they selected.

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**THE
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Aalijah I.

Work Tirelessly

After "No Images" by Waring Cuney

My mother knows hard work. She
works tirelessly for a dime in her purse. Does
she know her worth? Not
everyone gets it, but I know
she tries her best and her
eyes hold hints of exhaustion, so I hope she knows beauty
is her, and she is beautiful.

Amar'e D.

Everybody You Call Your Friends Is Not Always Your Friends

After "Mother to Son" by Langston Hughes

Friends is sometimes good to have around but when life
hits you, then you think about all they asked for
and they would never invite you anywhere so me
myself and I have to sit at home and it ain't
been fun being by myself at home by myself being
sad, so even when they're laughing in your face, no
matter what, don't get too attached because things break like a crystal,
so remember the next time you meet somebody keep a stair
on them.

Amari G.

My Voice Can

If my voice can sing,

what else can it do?

My voice can be loud.

My voice can make noises.

My voice can be quiet.

My voice can command things.

Aniyah T.

A Letter to my Friend

After "BLK History Month" by Nikki Giovanni

I love the fact you're
a nice person. You're as
wonderful as a person and love lift good
people to make them feel as
powerful as anybody
else in this world and care for anybody else.
You have always been a sweet person.

We Wear the Mask

After "We Wear the Mask" by Paul Laurence Dunbar

In elementary school, we
had to wear
uniforms every day of the
week. We also had to wear masks
due to the virus that
could kill people. She grins
just to seem positive around others and
make them feel better. Everyone lies,
it's not okay, but don't do it
over things that are not that deep to hide
from others. We don't have to show our
face to others or our true cheeks
because everyone comes and
leaves. Most people hide their true shade
in fear of racism, our
personality shows in our eyes.

Anonymous

Golden Shovel

After "Storm Ending" by Jean Toomer

I wake up from a nap to something dripping.

I go outside to see rain.

It was raining like

no other. The sun then came out all golden.

The sun look like a big, big bright pot of honey.

Anotheny J.

After “Storm Ending” by Jean Toomer

It was raining one day and thunder.

One day, I see a blossom.

One day I saw a girl that gorgeously.

I was a boy that was above.

We have our school at our

heads.

Go to School

After “BLK History Month” by Nikki Giovanni

I can go to school with your
mom and dad today, and as
you go to school we will be good,
and after school I will be as
good as I was in the class, as anybody
else,
and we will play like everybody else.

Archie F.

It Don't Mean a Thing (Remix)

What good is practicing, what good is training
if it ain't possessing something encouraging
nah, it ain't the practicing and it ain't the training.
There's something else that makes this game complete.
Yes, it don't mean a thing, if you're not going to swing that thing.
Well, it don't mean nothing if it don't push your buttons.
It makes no difference if the ball gets stolen or if you get blocked,
just give that play everything you got.

My Voice Can

My voice can help people feel better.
My voice can stand up for myself.
My voice can get me in trouble sometimes.
My voice can inspire people.
My voice can create drama.
My voice can teach people.
My voice can help my team win.

August M.

My Voice Can

My voice can change someone's actions.

My voice can change somebody's life.

My voice can stop someone
from doing the wrong thing.

Carl A.

She Does Not Know Her Beauty

After "No Images" by Waring Cuney

My girlfriend is always saying that she
is not pretty, but deep down inside she does
things or says things that is not
good and she really does not know
how that makes me feel, and her
face is amazing and she does not know her beauty.

Charlene O.

Jaymeka

After "BLK History Month" by Nikki Giovanni

Jaymeka, you are so pretty and your
mom is so nice and your sister is sweet as
sugar. You are so special and you look so good
all the time. Your personality is good as
anybody else and anybody
that tells you else
is not your friend.

Christianna J.

My Voice Can

My voice can change how my brother feels.
If my voice can change the way my mom feels,
what else can it do? I wish
my voice could bring my brother back, my voice
can stop my brother from killing himself,
my voice can encourage my mom to get up
and go on with life. I wish my voice
could change my mom's actions. I wish my voice could
help her with things. My voice can inspire her to be a better person.

Cortez A.

How my Voice Helps

If my voice can help others be happy, what else can it do?

My voice can make people's day better.

My voice can inspire others to keep pushing.

My voice can make others smile.

My voice can make me and others around me
to keep pushing; it's eventually gonna pay off.

If my voice can take me around the world, what else can it do?

My voice can take me to the NBA.

My voice can take me far in life.

My voice can help others do what I do.

My voice can take people far in life and a lot of other things.

Dreams

In Harlem streets, the jazz notes sway where dreams
take in light of day. A poet's pen, a painter's brush in
every heart, a rhythmic hush from Langston's words to
Zora's tales. The spirit of people prevails. In every stop,
a dance unbanned, in every voice, a vibrant sound. Oh,
Harlem Renaissance a golden age, where art and culture
take the stage in every soul, a spark ignites,
in every heart, new dreams takes flight.

Damarion R.

My Voice

If my voice can control people, what else can it do?

My voice can be delicious food that you eat.

My voice can be cozy clothing you can be in.

My voice can be glasses to help you see.

My voice can be ice-cold water that you drink.

If my voice can stop a crowd talking, what else can it do?

My voice can put you to sleep.

My voice can take you to college.

My voice can speak the truth.

My voice can speak facts about the earth.

My Dream

After "Calling Dreams" by Georgia Douglas Johnson

My dream is to become the
most famous boxer. Right
now I can't do boxing because I have to
wait till we make
it to a different state so my
mom can sign me up and I can achieve my dreams,
and I hope I'm good enough to make it come
true.

Deon B.

A Weird Confession

After "As the Eagle Soars" by Jean Toomer

I think you should try to let
your problems with adults be solved by your
parents, and you should be doing
your work and be
aware of what you do. And
don't forget, life is like exercise,
work for what you get, do not
wait around or think a
dinosaur will come and save you like an exhibition.

Dwayne G.

The Adventures Voice

If my voice can make people laugh, what else can it do?

My voice can help people out in the world.

My voice can rap about the world.

My voice can make a house.

My voice is a blanket.

Evonne S.

Her Beauty

After "No Images" by Waring Cuney

She thinks that about her appearance, she
thinks she's not enough, but no one else does.

She thinks she's worthless but she's not.

I just want her to believe and know

the beauty within her heart and her

soul, the beauty in her life and the beauty

in her appearance. Everything is beautiful in its own way.

Jonathan M.

Let's Talk

After "No Images" by Waring Cuney

How old is she?

What does this mean?

No, it's not.

This is a different way to say I know

I don't know her.

What is the definition of beauty?

Kenneth P.

After "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" by Langston Hughes

As far as I remember my
dad has called me a pain-filled soul.
I never understood but knew our family has
dwindled to just mom and us kids, I've grown
into something. You do what you have to. "David, dig deep",
is a whisper in my ear. So I stand strong like
a tree my baby brothers can lean on. I try to be the
raft that helps carry them over this life's rough rivers.

Lamiya E.

Beauty Not Known

After "No Images" by Waring Cuney

I was walking down the street and saw my friend. She
said hey to me and she walk over, little does
she know I just found \$20 and I was not
sharing. I show her and just looking like know
what, I care because you're not her.
But I look over to see this beauty
like the most beautiful girl I ever seen.
So I let her know how beautiful she
is but she don't believe me so I convince
her and get her to believe me.

Lashawn W.

Calling Dreams

After "Calling Dreams" by Gloria Douglas Johnson

I had my dreams come true. The
reason is that if they don't, wrong or right,
if I believe in myself to
have motivation, then I can make
my dreams come true. My
dreams, I had a lot of dreams
in the past, I had to come
fast or my dreams won't come true.

My Voice

If my voice can be very loud, what else can it do?
My voice can sing very good.
My voice can rap to a song.
My voice can scream very loud.
My voice can say random stuff out of my mouth.
If my voice can yell out, what else can it do?
My voice can yell out loud.
My voice can yell at my dog.
My voice can speak kindness.
My voice can speak respectfully to others.

I want to be an NBA star one day.
Will I make it to be who I really want to be in life?
Is making it going to help my life?
How would it work if I don't work?
I got to grind.
If I don't grind, how will I make it to succeed?

Leilani B.

The Flamingo

After "As the Eagle Soars" by Jean Toomer

Let your inner flamingo out.

You're unique like a flamingo.

Doing whatever you feel like.

Be free and beautiful.

An amazing flamingo.

You standing on one leg is not exercise,

not you thinking you are better,

just a flamingo being itself.

Be a leader, not an exhibition.

L.M.

I Love My

After "To a Dark Girl" by Gwendolyn Bennet

I love my mom and dad because they give me some money. I
love my mom because she lets me play my game. I love
me and my girl best friend, you
I love, maybe she got a crush for
me, she says she loves me because I send her some money. Your
love some brownness.

Nassir W.

Voices in the Dark

After "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" by Langston Hughes

Ever since I was a little kid, my
head has been bringing up dark thoughts, my soul
has not been the same, sometimes I wonder if my mom has
caught me talking to myself. The darker it gets, the more it grows.

Sometimes the voices can get too deep.

I sit in my room, nothing but silence. I like
to sit in silence even though it's lonely. The
silence is loud and the time is running the rivers.

Richard J.

The Stormy Night

After "Storm Ending" by Jean Toomer

The night of the storm, the thunder
woke me and the thunder rumbles like blossoms.
The storm lights up the night gorgeously,
the thunder booms in the sky above
my house. I thought the rain was coming in our
house. I was panicking that the water would go over our heads.

My Voice Can

If my voice can be loud, what else can it do?

My voice can be powerful.

My voice can be weak.

My voice can be meaningless.

My voice can be meaningful.

My voice can get me somewhere.

Shawn D.

My Great Dad

After "Mother to Son" by Langston Hughes

My dad can save my life.
My dad does everything for
me. My dad is just like me,
smart, kind, but he ain't
slow. Whenever I call him he's been
there. When I ask for something, no
is never the answer. My life is crystal
clear thanks to my dad.

Tito L.

My Voice

My voice can talk and got power
and my voice can control and
predict what outcome of a situation
and the race place, and my voice
can make people mad and sad.

Tremayne L.

Is She Not Beauty

After "No Images" by Waring Cuney

What is she?

What she mean does?

What you mean it's not?

What do you know?

I don't know her.

What do you see in my beauty?

Zamere D.

My Legs

After "Mother to Son" by Langston Hughes

My legs can help me in life.

My legs can do things for

me. My legs are for me.

My legs are fast ain't
my legs in sports have been.

My legs can have no.
My legs run, be like crystals.

My legs can be a stair.