



THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE & *INVISIBLE MAN*

Advanced Placement English Literature & Composition

“ HARLEM IS VICIOUS
MODERNISM. BANGCLASH.
VICIOUS THE WAY IT'S MADE,
CAN YOU STAND SUCH BEAUTY.
SO VIOLENT AND TRANSFORMING. ”

– Amiri Baraka, “Return of the Native”





CULTURAL CONTEXT FOR THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

ABOLITION OF SLAVERY

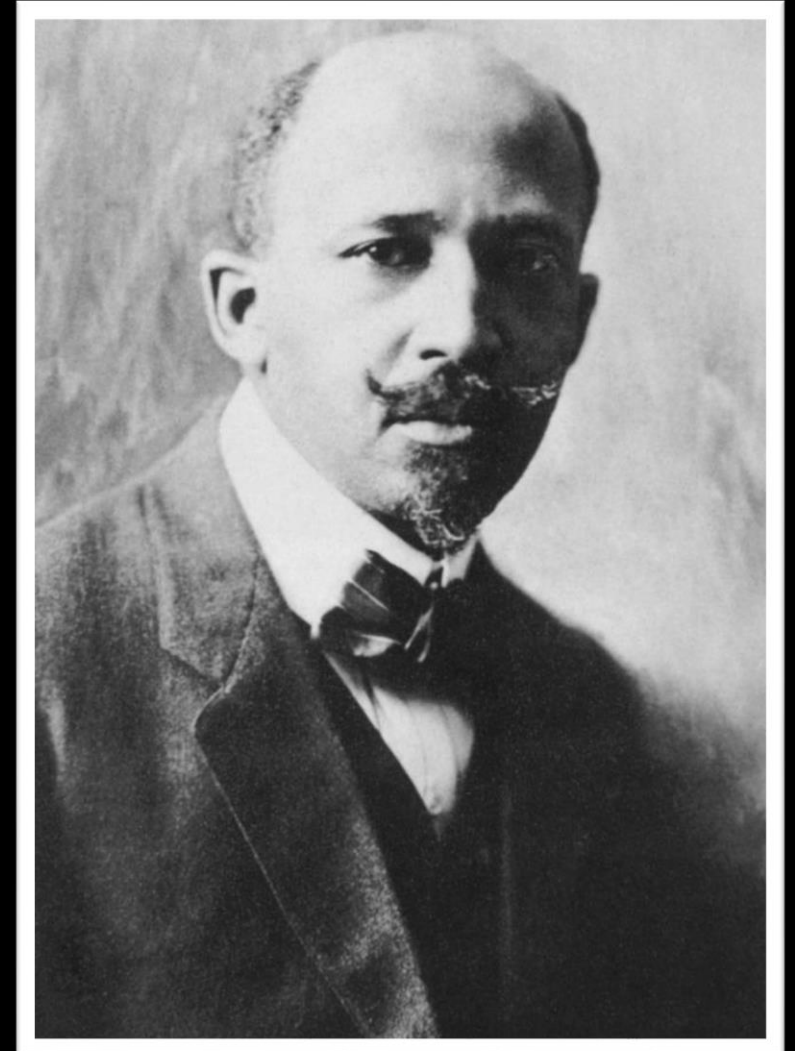
- Following the American Civil War (1860-1865), significant changes began to take place in the black community, particularly in the form of social and intellectual transformation.
- Black middle class developed by the turn of the century, fostered by increased education and employment opportunities.

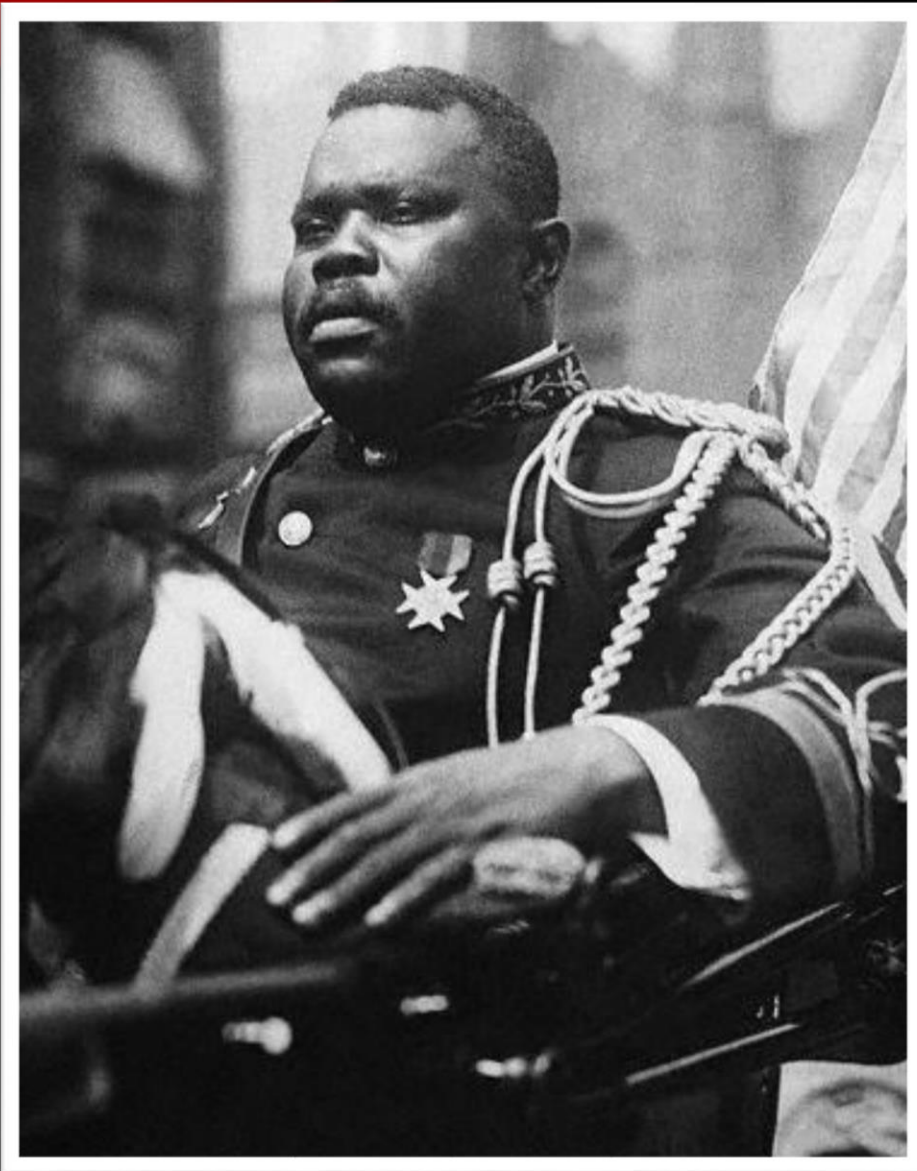
WORLD WAR I

- WWI accelerated the changes within the black community. In particular, the war contributed to the expansion of industrialization and the emergence of a new mass culture.
- The spirit of “self-determination” was alive and well following the war, and the Harlem Renaissance partook in this heavily.

BLACK POLITICAL MOVEMENTS

- During the 1910s, a new political agenda advocating racial equality arose in the African American community, particularly in its growing middle class.
 - W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963)
 - **National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)** founded in 1909 in collaboration with Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Mary White Ovington, and others.
 - Interracial American organization created to work for the abolition of segregation and discrimination in housing, education, employment, voting, and transportation; oppose racism; and to ensure African Americans their constitutional rights.
 - *Crisis* newspaper





- Marcus Garvey (1887-1940)
 - Jamaican-born black
 - **Universal Negro Improvement Association** was dedicated to racial pride, economic self-sufficiency, and the formation of an independent black nation in Africa (Jamaican chapter; 1914 & American chapter; 1916)
 - *Negro World* newspaper
 - The “Back to Africa” movement/Garveyism

THE GREAT MIGRATION

- Between 1916-1930, 6 million African Americans relocated from an economically depressed rural South to industrial cities of the North to take advantage of the employment opportunities created by World War I. (Remember Toni Morrison's parents? =D)
- As these individuals began to migrate to Northern states, they began to populate certain city districts.

HARLEM

- “The Black Mecca” and “The Black Capital of the World”
- Located in the Manhattan borough of New York City
- Covers about three square miles; drew about 175,000 African Americans.
- Originally designed specifically for white workers who wanted to commute to the city, but the plans were too extravagant for the demands and fell short.
- Redevelopment and gentrification (lit. the restoration of run-down urban areas by the middle class; resulting in the displacement of low-income residents) pushed blacks out of the downtown area and into Harlem.
- This area became popular for African Americans because it was where 2 of the largest civil rights groups were located.
- City became the hub of many of the country’s best and brightest black advocates, artists, entrepreneurs, and intellectuals.

THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE: THE CULTURAL MOVEMENT

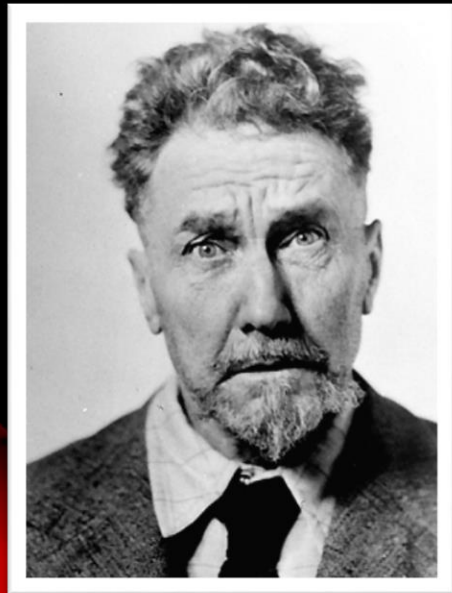
- Blossoming of African-American culture in European-American society, particularly in art and music between 1919-1948.
- Author, James Weldon described it as “a flowering of Negro literature”
 - Explosion of creativity in literature where art and music “uplifted” African Americans.
 - Artistic creations were used to make the black voice “heard” by all and to make a demand for racial equality.
- Provided rare opportunity for whites to collaborate with black intellectuals, social activists, educators, and artists in an attempt to transform a largely segregated and racist American society.
 - Night life integration; fearless and ready to MINGLE!
 - Jazz music exposure
- The foundation of the Civil Rights Movement

“

THE FIRST STEP OF A RENAISSANCE, OR
AWAKENING, IS THE IMPORTATION OF MODELS FOR
PAINTING, SCULPTURE, OR WRITING.

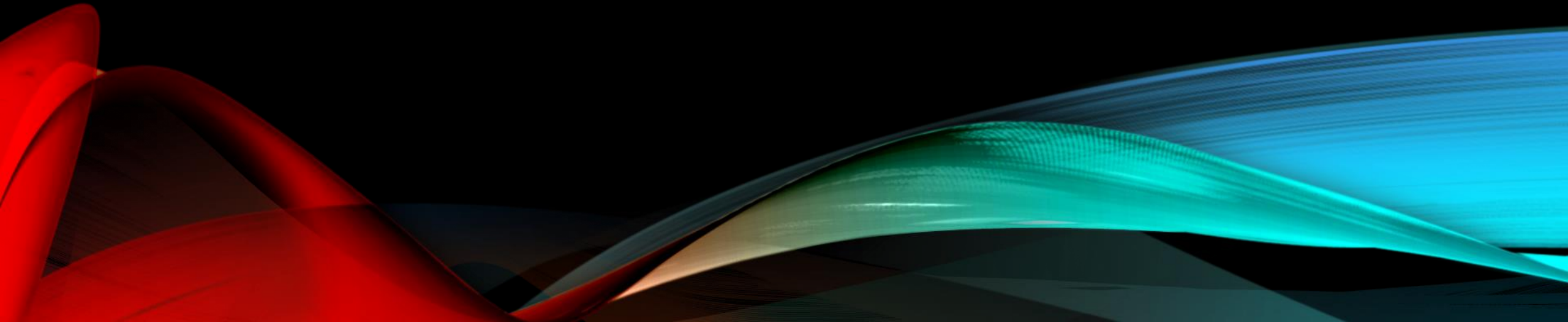
”

– Ezra Pound, “The Renaissance”



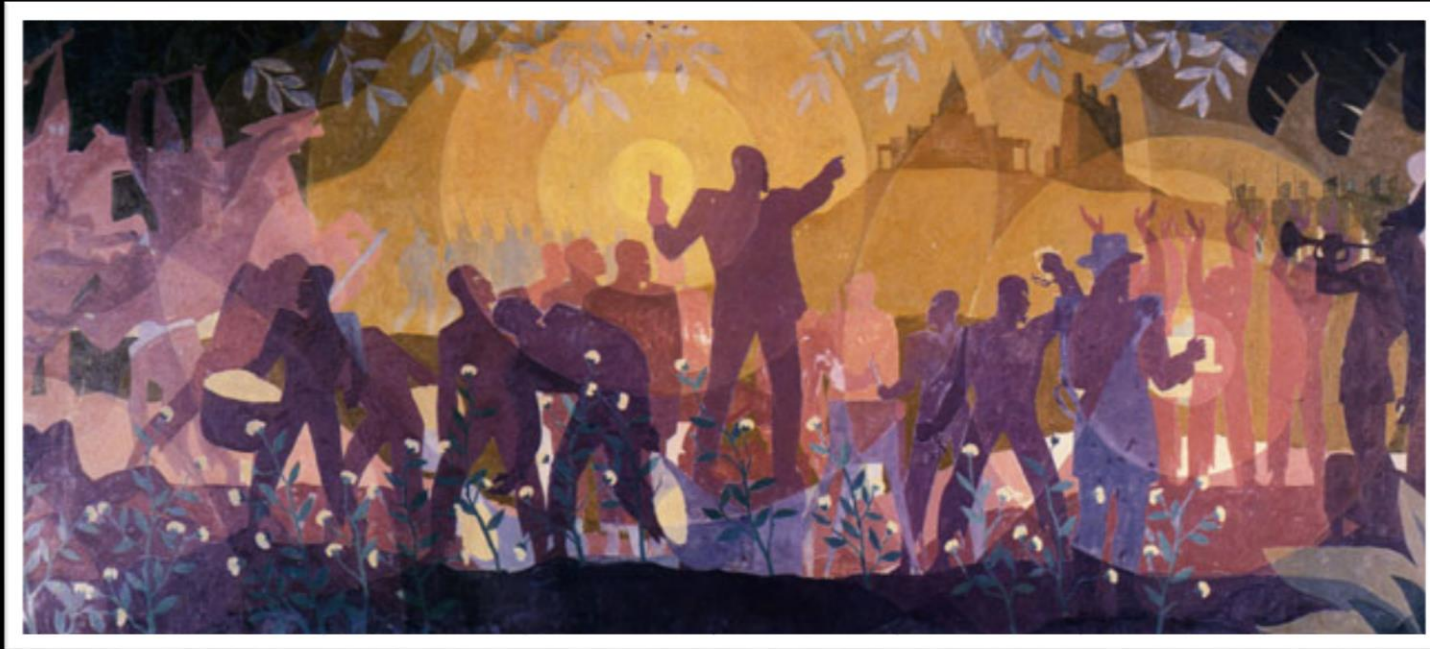
THE MOVERS & SHAKERS OF THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

Artists



AARON DOUGLAS (1898-1979)

- Powerful images of African American life and struggles
 - *Aspects of Negro Life: From Slavery to Reconstruction*
- Illustrated *the Crisis* (NAACP) & *the Opportunity* (National Urban League)
- Also illustrated an anthology of philosopher, Alain LeRoy Locke's works



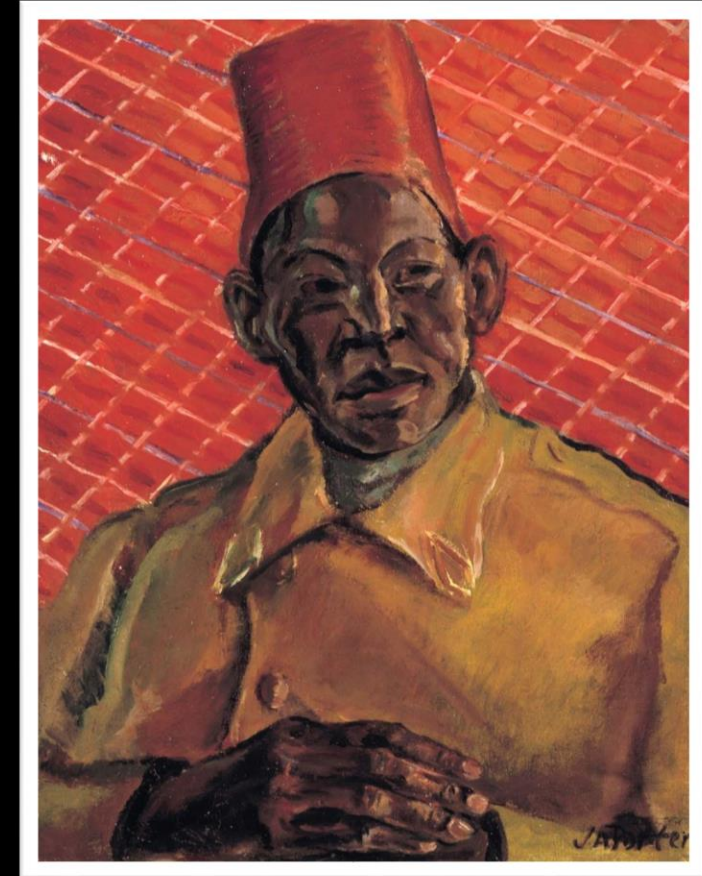
AUGUSTA CHRISTINE SAVAGE (1892-1962)

- Rejected to study in France due to race; obstacle became her call to action.
- Sent letters to the media and made headlines, but was still denied admission.
- Famous for portrait sculpting; W.E.B. Du Bois & Marcus Garvey.



JAMES A. PORTER (1905-1970)

- Father of African-American art history
- Author of *Modern Negro Art*
- Recipient of Schomburg portrait prize
- Known for elegant portraiture of notable African Americans
 - *Soldado Senegales*



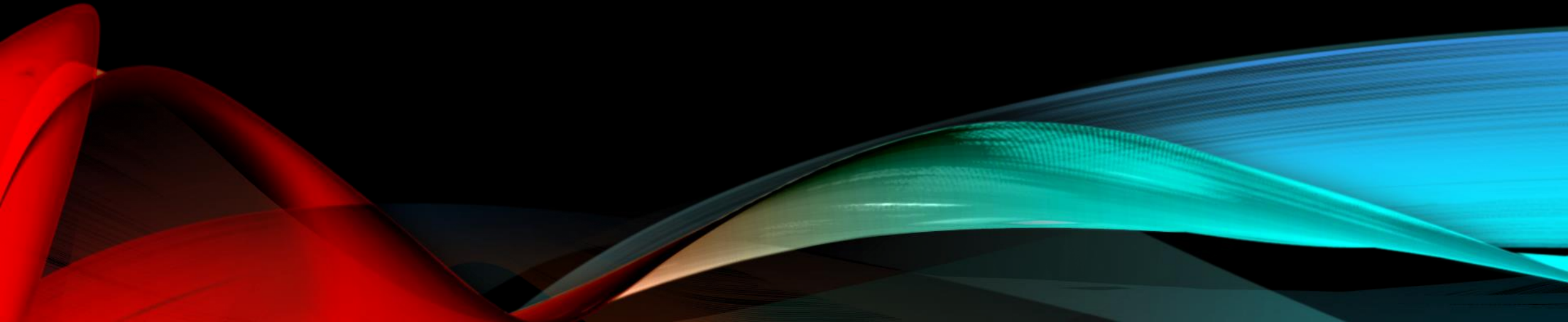
CHARLES HENRY ALSTON (1907-1977)



- Directed art programs and community centers in the New York area; including the Harlem Workshop
- Several works published in the *New Yorker*, *Fortune*, and *Collier's* magazine
- Became the first black instructor at the Art Students League

THE MOVERS & SHAKERS OF THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

Musicians



EDWARD KENNEDY “DUKE” ELLINGTON (1899-1974)

- Nickname earned during high school years while playing for local, social affairs.
- Band played at the whites-only, exclusive Cotton Club
- Band recorded under several names including the Jungle Band, the Whoopee Makers, and the Harlem Footwarmers



BESSIE SMITH (1894-1937)



- “Empress of the Blues” was known for her magnificent voice, sense of the dramatic, clarity of diction, incomparable time and phrasing.
- Columbia Records; 160 songs.
- Purchased a custom-designed railroad car for herself and her troupe in 1925.
- Weekly salary for tent shows was as high as \$2000.
- Influenced the legendary Billie Holiday and Janis Joplin.



“NOBODY KNOWS WHEN YOU’RE DOWN AND OUT”

CAB CALLOWAY (1907-1994)

- Known for perfecting the art of “scat singing”
- “Minnie the Moocher”
- Stage and film actor





LOUIS ARMSTRONG (1901-1971)



- Considered one of the greatest jazz artists of all time.
- Musical training began at a reform school after he was caught “fooling around” and shot a pistol in the air at the age of 12.
- Often credited with being the first “scat singer” with recording of “Heebie Jeebies.”
- Had a very broad grin; hence, the nickname “Satchmo” (satchel mouth).
- Alluded to in *Invisible Man*

“BLACK & BLUE”

Old empty bed...springs hard as lead
Feel like ol' Ned...wished I was dead
What did I do...to be so black and blue?

Even the mouse...ran from my house
They laugh at you...and scorn you too
What did I do...to be so black and blue?

I'm white...inside...but that don't help my
case
'Cause I...can't hide...what is in my face

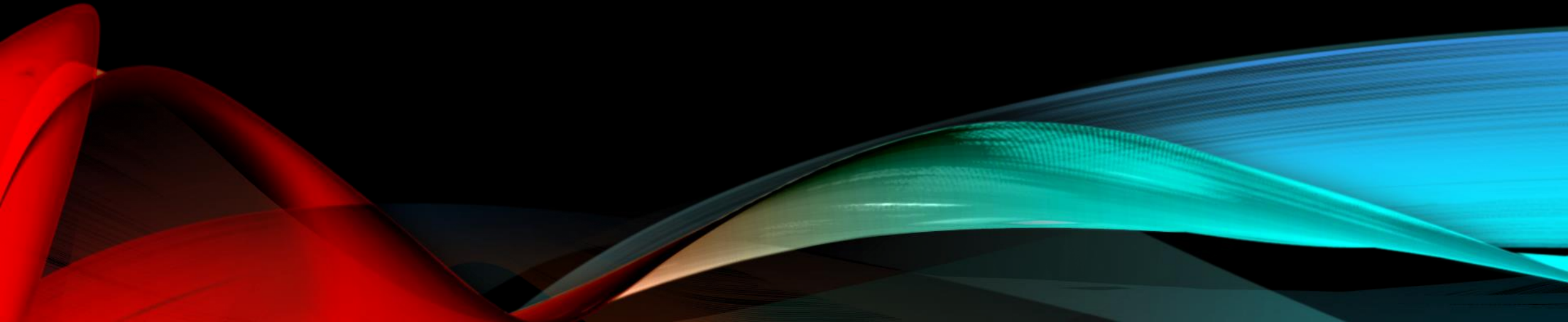
How would it end?...Ain't got a friend
My only sin...is in my skin
What did I do...to be so black and blue?

How would it end?...Ain't got a friend
My only sin...is in my skin
What did I do...to be so black and blue?



THE MOVERS & SHAKERS OF THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

Dancers



THE NICHOLAS BROTHERS

- Fayard Nicholas (1914-2006) and Harold Nicholas (1921-2000) were a tremendously acrobatic tap dancing team of the mid-20th century.
- Played at the Cotton Club alongside Duke Ellington and even performed on Broadway.
- In Hollywood, they were featured in films like *Kid Millions* (1934) and *Sun Valley Serenade*.
- In 1991, they were honored at the Kennedy Center for their achievements.





STORMY WEATHER ROUTINE

JOSEPHINE BAKER (1906-1975)

- African American diva known as “La Baker” in her adopted France, worldwide celebrity, and devoted civil rights activist.
- Rise to fame came after dancing in a “skirt” of artificial bananas and very little else (performance later imitated by Beyoncé Knowles in 2006).
- During WWII, she worked as a spy for France.
- Hungarian Cavalry Captain and Baker’s manager had a sword fight over her.
- Adopted 12 children from multicultural, underprivileged backgrounds.
- Collected animals; including Chiquita the cheetah.

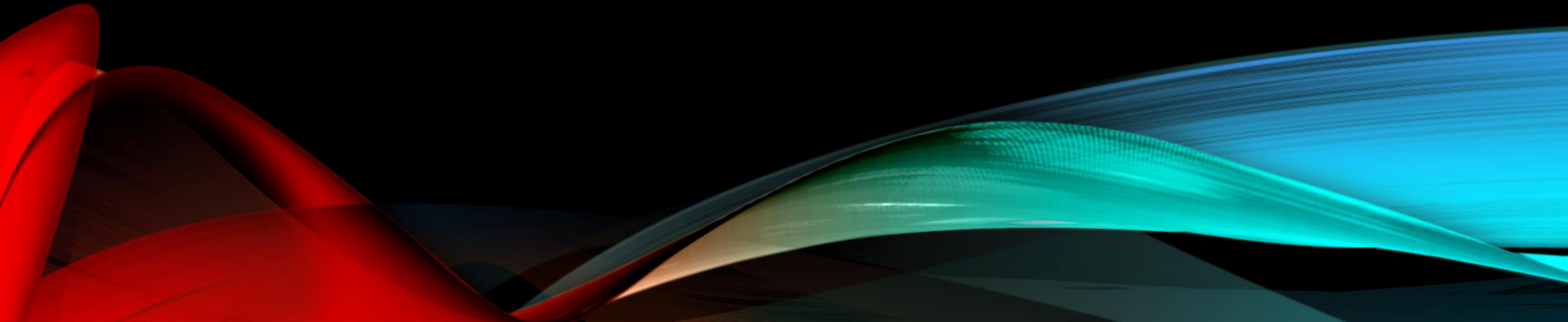




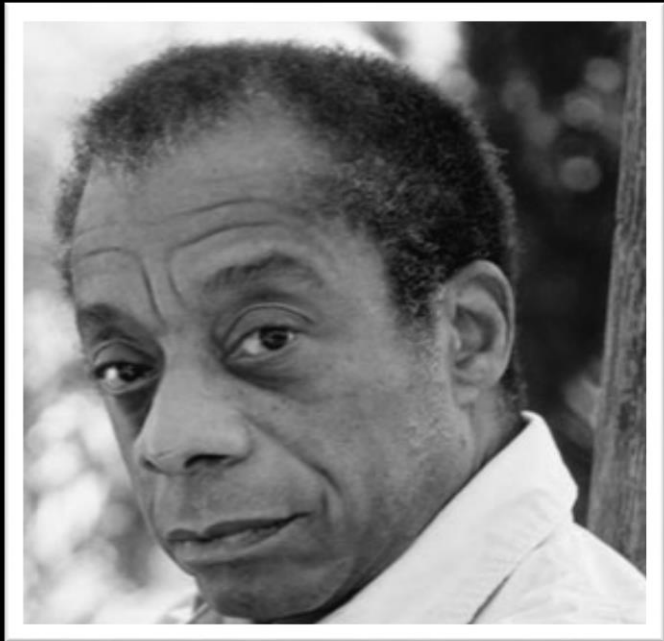
BAKER'S INFAMOUS "BANANA DANCE"

THE MOVERS & SHAKERS OF THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

Writers



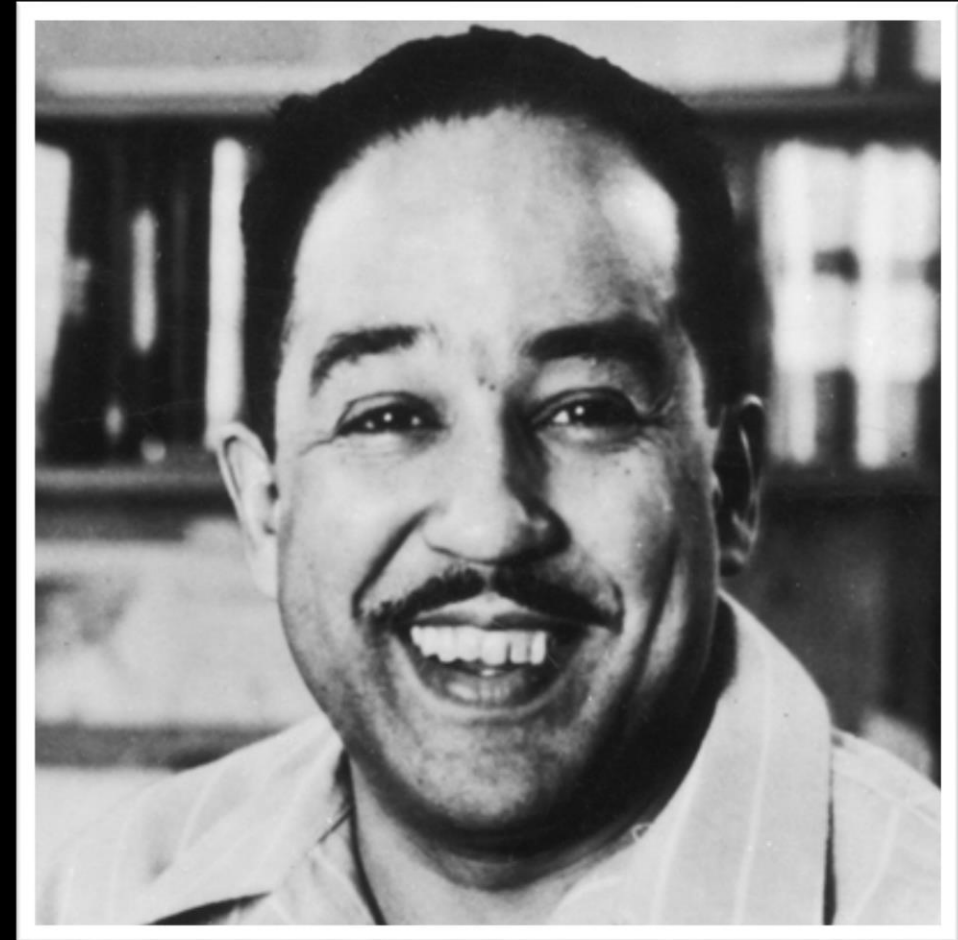
JAMES BALDWIN (1924-1987)



- Born in Harlem, grew up in poverty, developed a troubled relationship with his strict, religious stepfather.
- Followed stepfather's footsteps and became a preacher at 15.
- Later worked for the New Jersey railroad & a freelance writer.
- Left for Switzerland; first novel, *Go Tell It on the Mountain*.
- *Giovanni's Room*
- Homosexuality
- Following the assassinations of MLK Jr. and Malcolm X, Baldwin left the U.S. and went to St. Paul de Vence, France where he wrote *If Beale Street Could Talk*.
 - Known for harsh tone, but advocated for universal love and brotherhood.

LANGSTON HUGHES (1920-1967)

- Significant figure in the development of African American literature
 - Work encompasses both popular lyrical poems and controversial political work
 - His poetry is known for its “simplicity, directness, and musicality”
 - Expresses a direct and sometimes even pessimistic approach to race relations
- “Theme for English B”
- “I, too, Sing America”



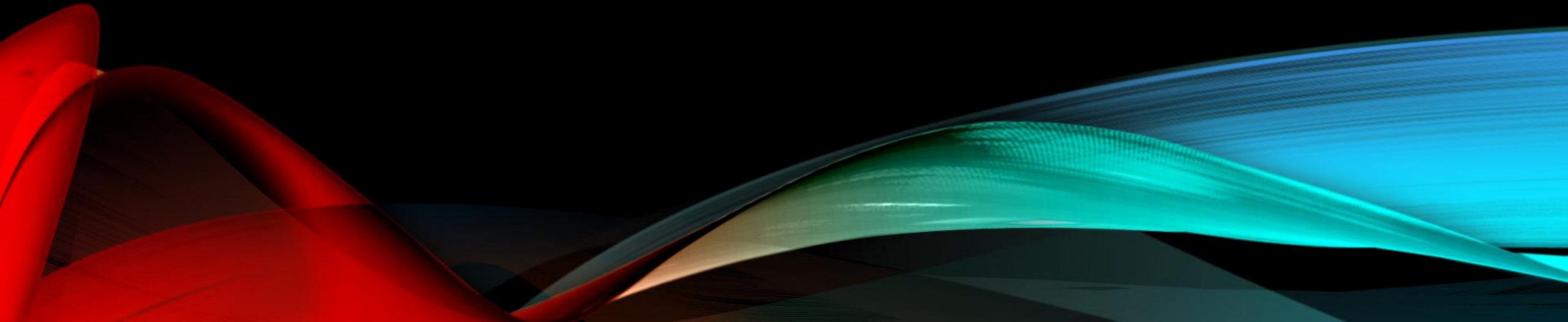
RICHARD WRIGHT (1908-1960)



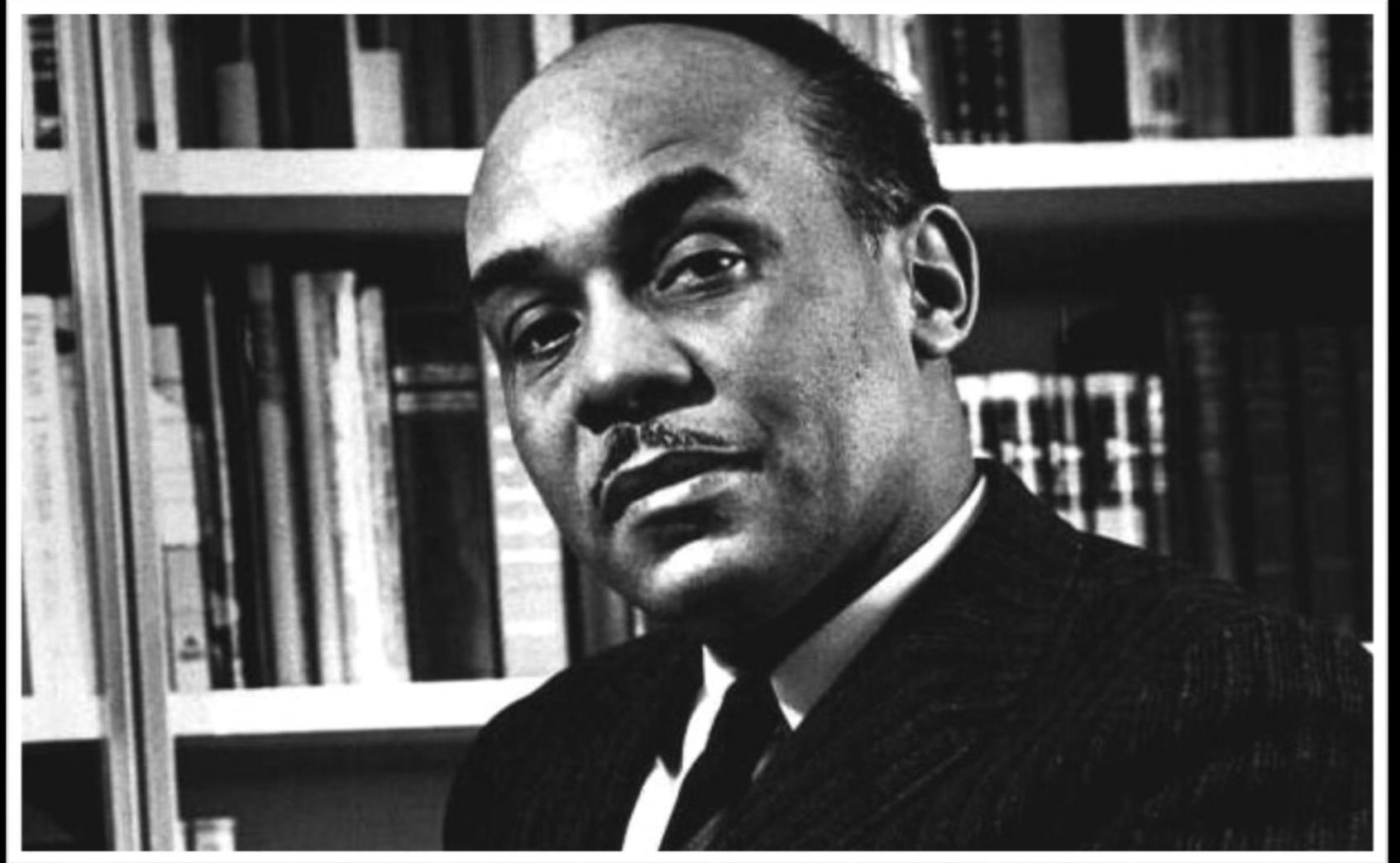
- Sent to orphanage in Jackson, Mississippi after parents fell ill.
- Wrote and published "The Voodoo of Hell's Half-Acre" at the age of 15.
- Controversial; wrote from the communist black perspective in the late 1930s.
- Known member of the Communist party, but was not truly accepted among white communists or black communists.
- Novel *Native Son* about a man named Bigger Thomas who used physical combat against racism.
- Sick of the racism in the U.S. and the treatment of he and his white wife, he moved to Paris and never returned to the country.

RALPH ELLISON'S *INVISIBLE MAN*

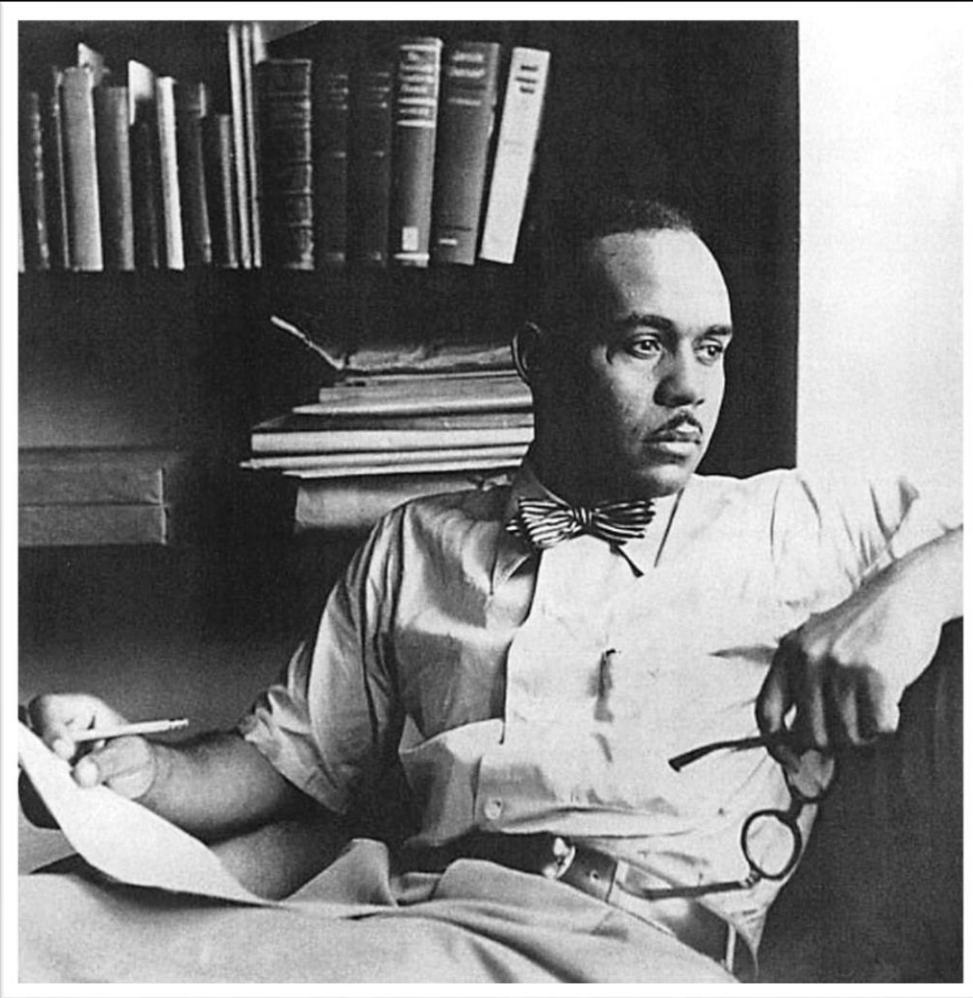
Author & Novel Study



RALPH ELLISON (1914-1994)



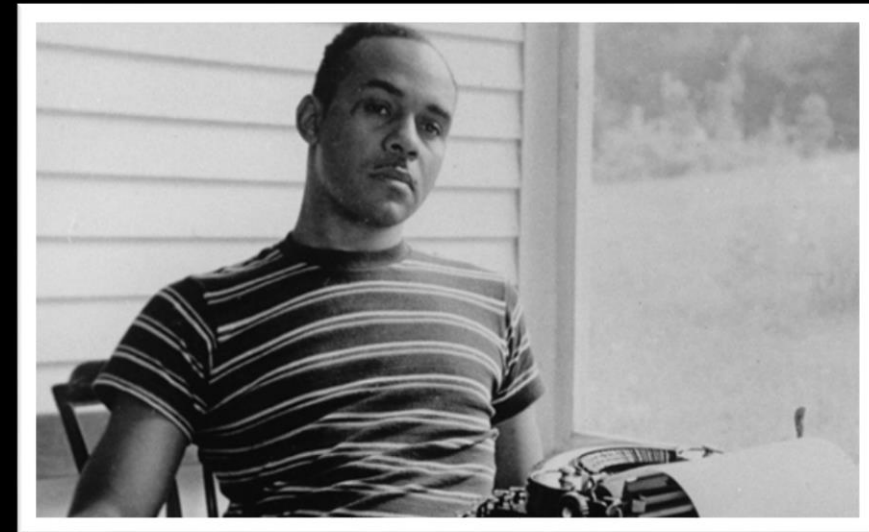
CHILDHOOD



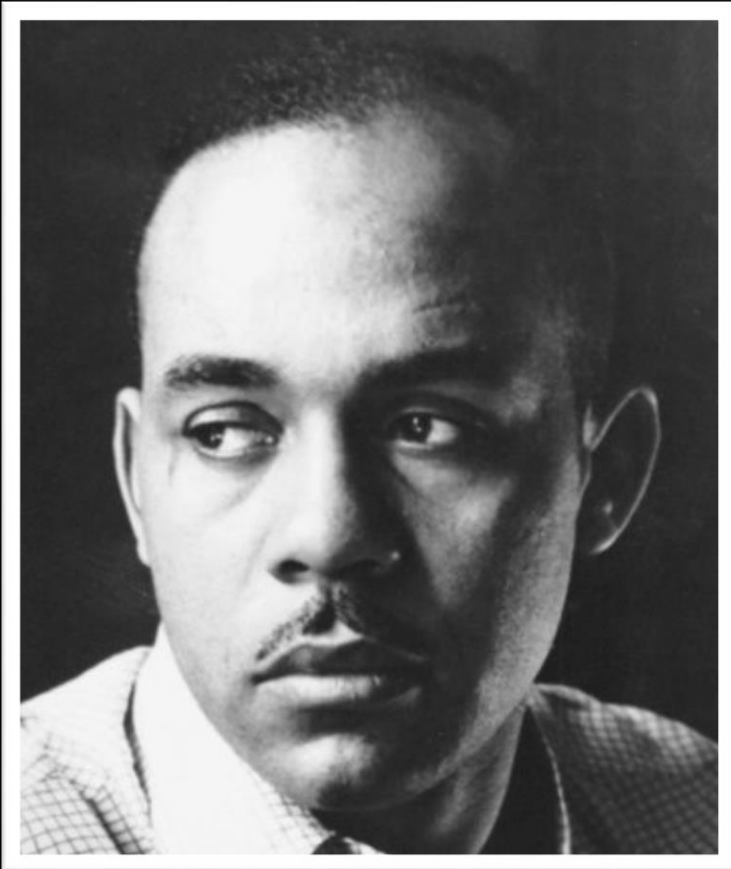
- Born in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma on March 1, 1914 to Ida Millsap and Lewis Alfred Ellison.
- Lost his father in the year 1917 in an accident at the age of 3; caused the family to struggle financially.
- Habit of reading encouraged by mother and a black priest who succeeded in giving African American people the opportunity to use the public library.

YOUNG ADULTHOOD

- Studied music at Alabama's Tuskegee Institute in 1933 on a scholarship.
 - Department was led by William L. Dawson at the time; black composer famous for the *Negro Folk Symphony* (1934).
 - Ellison excelled in his music classes; also continued reading – T.S. Elliot's "The Wasteland" was one work.
- Relocation to NYC
 - Studied photography & sculpture
 - Met Richard Wright
 - Encouraged Ellison to write
 - Ellison's stories, reviews, and essays appeared in various publications including the *Antioch Review*, *New Challenge*, and *New Masses*.



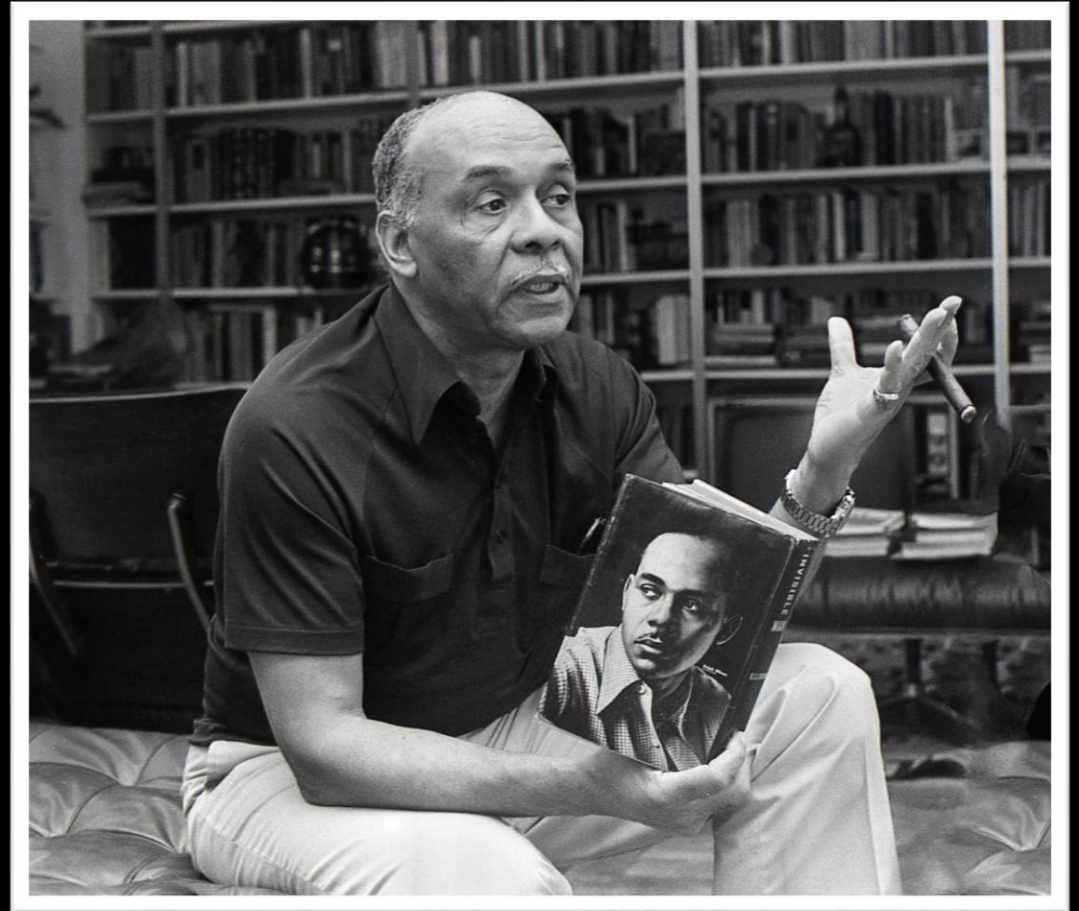
ADULTHOOD



- Worked as a cook in the Merchant Marine during the outbreak of WWII between 1943-45.
 - Started writing what would become his masterpiece, *Invisible Man*.
- While writing *Invisible Man*, Ellison's wife (Fanny McConnell) supported him financially by working as a photographer and even helped to edit his work and type his text.
- *Invisible Man* was published in 1952 by Random House Publishing.
 - Won the National Book Award the following year.

POST-INVISIBLE MAN

- American and Russian literature instructor at Bard College.
- Began working on *Juneteenth*.
- Released a collection of essays entitled, "Shadow & Act" in 1964.
- Began teaching at Yale University and Rutgers University while still working on *Juneteenth*.
- Received the honor of *Invisible Man* being declared "the most important novel since the end of World War II" by a survey of 200 prominent literary figures in 1965.
- Received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1969.
- Taught at New York University from 1970-79.

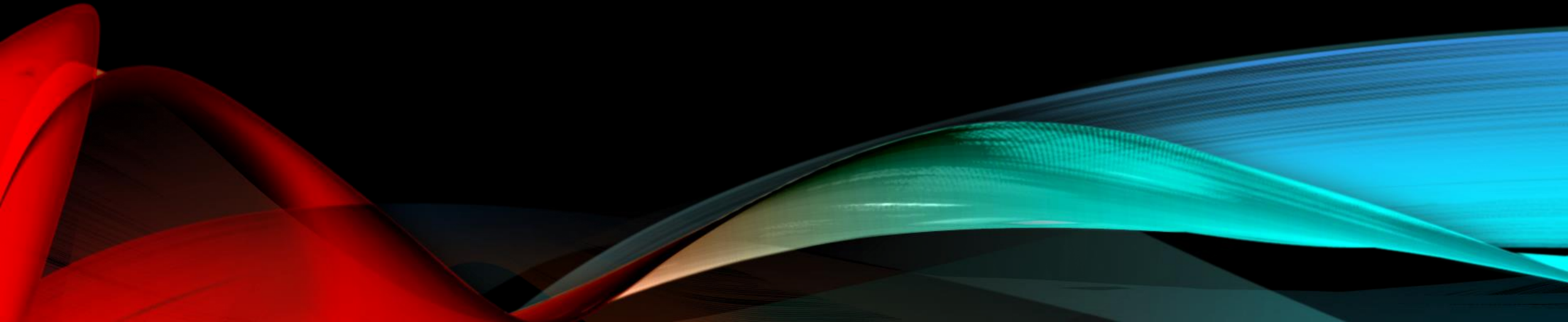


DEATH & LEGACY

- In 1994, Ellison died of pancreatic cancer.
- Scripts found in his home were published in *Other Stories* and *Flying Home* in 1996.
- *Juneteenth* was finally published under the leadership of John F. Callahan, a professor at Lewis and Clark College. The book was compressed from original 2000+ pages to 368.
- On January 26, 2010, Modern Library publishing made the remaining manuscripts of *Juneteenth* available in print; naming it *Three Days Before the Shooting*.



LITERARY MOVEMENTS OF *INVISIBLE MAN*



THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE (OBVIOUSLY...)

- Literature represented the flowering of a distinctive, African American expression between 1919-1950.
- Along with the artists, political leaders such as Marcus Garvey founded potent philosophies of black self-determination and unity among black communities in the United States, the Caribbean, and Africa.
- Common themes include:
 - Racial pride
 - Influence of slavery
 - Black identity
 - Effects of “institutional” racism
 - Conveyance of the modern black life experience in the urban North
 - Desire for social and political equality
 - Diversity of expression
 - Visual arts, literature (Langston Hughes V.S. Claude McKay), music

POSTMODERNISM (1950s – PRESENT)

- An emphasis on impressionism and subjectivity in writing (and visual arts); emphasis on HOW seeing (or reading, or perception) takes place rather than on WHAT is perceived
 - Stream of consciousness
- Topics dealing with the complex absurdity of contemporary life – moral and philosophical relativism, loss of faith in political and moral authority, and alienation
- Movement away from the apparent objectivity provided by omniscient third-person narrators, fixed narrative points of view, and clear-cut moral positions.
- Blurring of distinctions between genres, so that poetry seems more documentary and prose seems more poetic

POSTMODERNISM (CONT.)

- Emphasis on fragmented forms, discontinuous narratives, and random-seeming collages of different materials
- Tendency toward self-consciousness about the production of the work of art
- Rejection of the distinction between “high” and “low” or popular culture
 - Art is art; so what!
- Irony and paradox also emphasized.
- Avoidance of traditional closure of themes or situation.
- Condemns commercialism, hedonism, mass production, and economic globalism.

MODERNISM

- Faith in social & cultural unity
- Sense of unified, centered self; individualism; unified identity
- Family = central unit of social order
- Hierarchy, order, centralized control
- Dichotomy of high/low culture

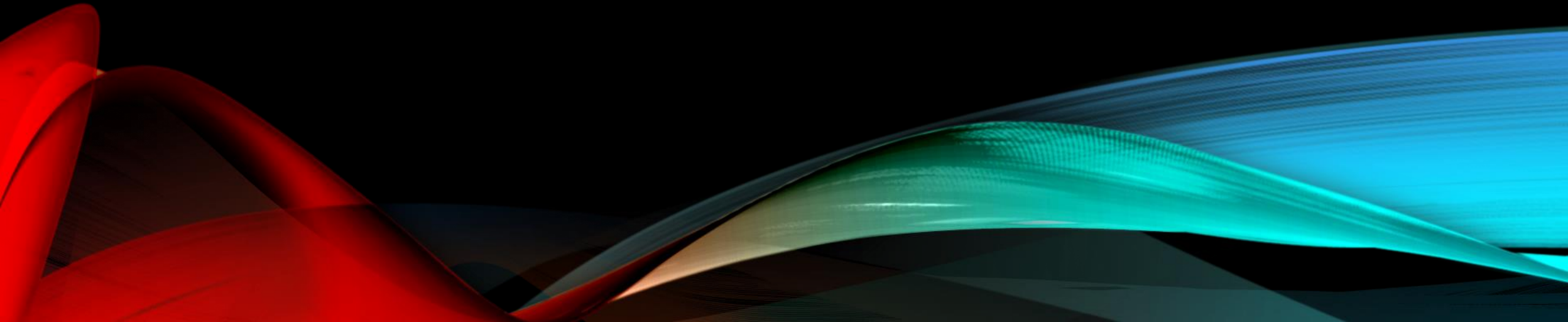
POSTMODERNISM

- Social & cultural pluralism, disunity, unclear bases for social/national/ethnic unity
- Sense of fragmentation and decentered self; multiple, conflicting identities
- Alternative family units, alternatives to middle-class marriage model; multiple identities for couplings and child raising
- Subverted order, loss of centralized control, fragmentation
- Disruption of the dominance of high culture by popular culture; mixture of culture

EXISTENTIALISM

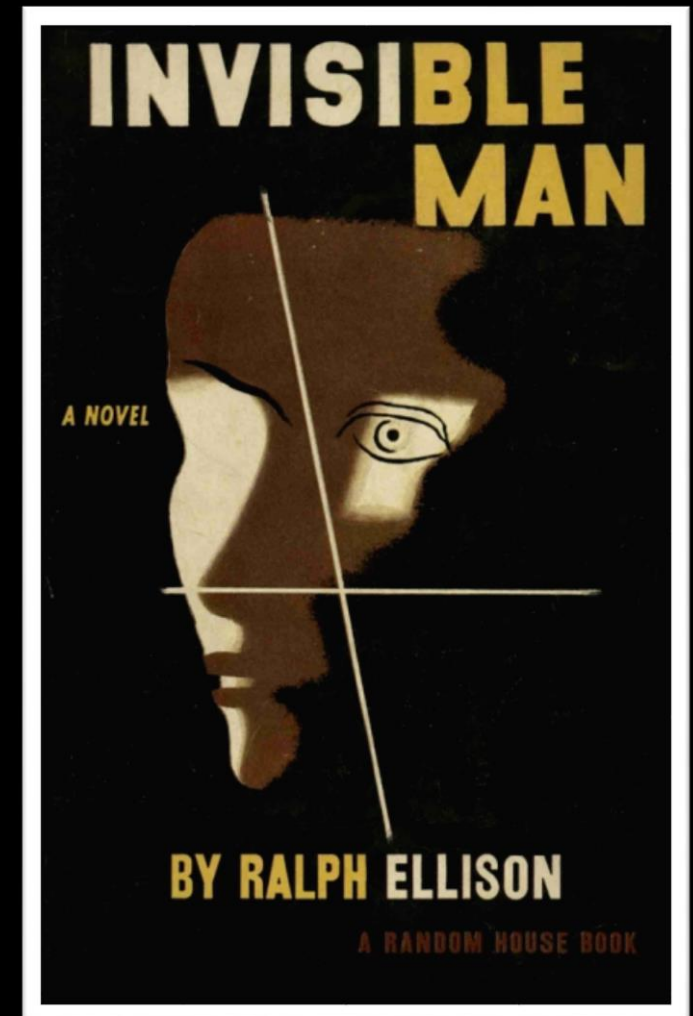
- Philosophical and literary movement that emphasizes individual existence, freedom, and choice.
- Prominent theme is choice; the choice to choose our own freedoms.
 - Ralph Waldo Emerson and Ralph Waldo Ellison both wrote of this.
- Mankind has free will.
- Life is a series of choices.
- Few decisions are without any negative consequences.
- Some events and occurrences are irrational or absurd, without explanation.
- If one makes a decision, he or she must follow through.
- Questions of personal morality and truth.
- The attempt to make rational decisions despite living in an irrational universe.

PRE-READING INFORMATION FOR *INVISIBLE MAN*



BASIC SYNOPSIS

This novel is about a nameless black man (universally dubbed “the Invisible Man” or “IM” for short); the narrator, as he searches for his own identity.



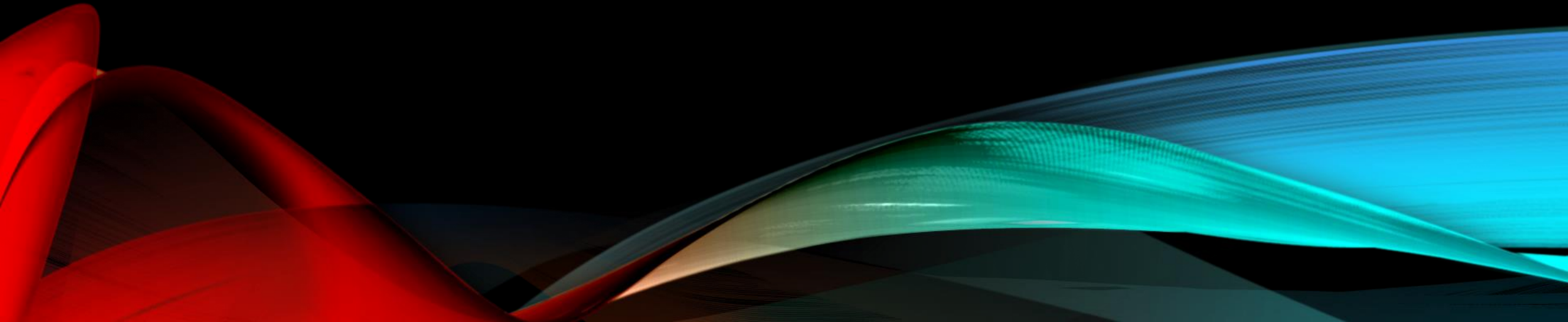
CONTROVERSY

- Was temporarily banned in Randolph County, NC after a parent sent a twelve page letter discussing dozens of passages which discuss sex, sexual abuse, and questions of human morality within the Jim Crow-era of America.
- Prompted by her complaint, the school board voted 5-2 to remove the book from school property, with one board member arguing: “I didn’t find any literary value.”
- School board later reversed the decision.

AP LITERATURE & COMPOSITION EXAM

- For the essay portion of the AP Lit & Comp exam you will have to respond to three different essay prompts.
 1. A response to short fiction prose based on a reading selection they choose.
 2. A response to poetry based on one or two poems they choose.
 3. An open-response to a prompt utilizing a novel of “literary merit.”
- *Invisible Man* is the most frequently suggested novel for the list of novels to consider for the open-response prompt. It has been suggested approximately 23 times since the first AP Lit & Comp exam in 1970.

THEMES OF *INVISIBLE MAN*



Invisibility



Racism



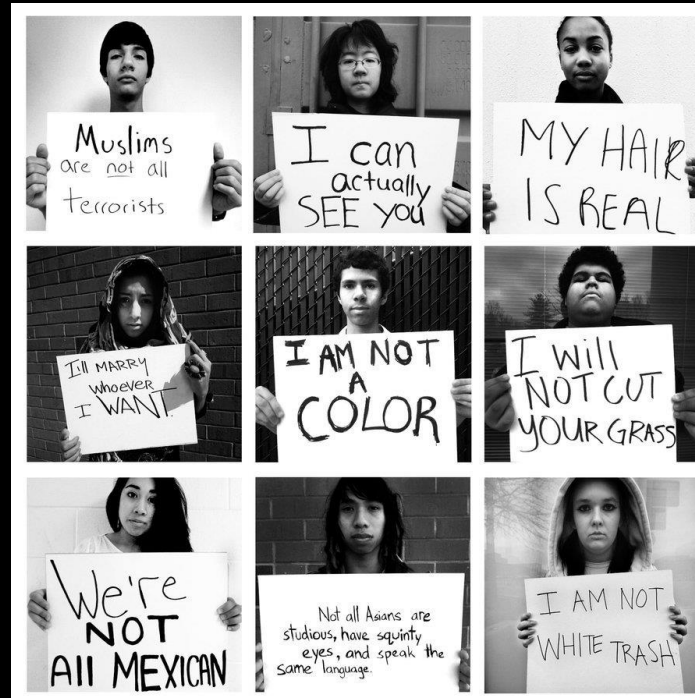
Identity



Blindness



Stereotyping



Cultural Clashing



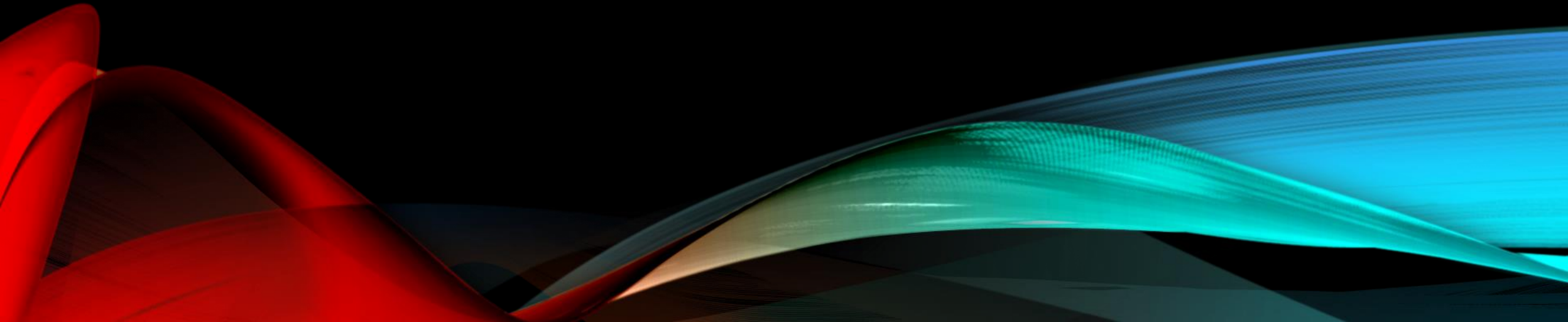
Isolation

Ideologies



Perversion of
American Ideals

SYMBOLS OF *INVISIBLE MAN*



THE INFAMOUS BRIEFCASE



BATTLE ROYAL

- Traditionally refers to a fight involving three or more combatants that is fought until only one fighter remains standing.



ORATION



OPTIC WHITE



- Visible whiteness.
- Shades of gray between the “black” and “white” of American society.

HOT BUTTERED YAMS



CAST IRON BANK



BALL & CHAIN



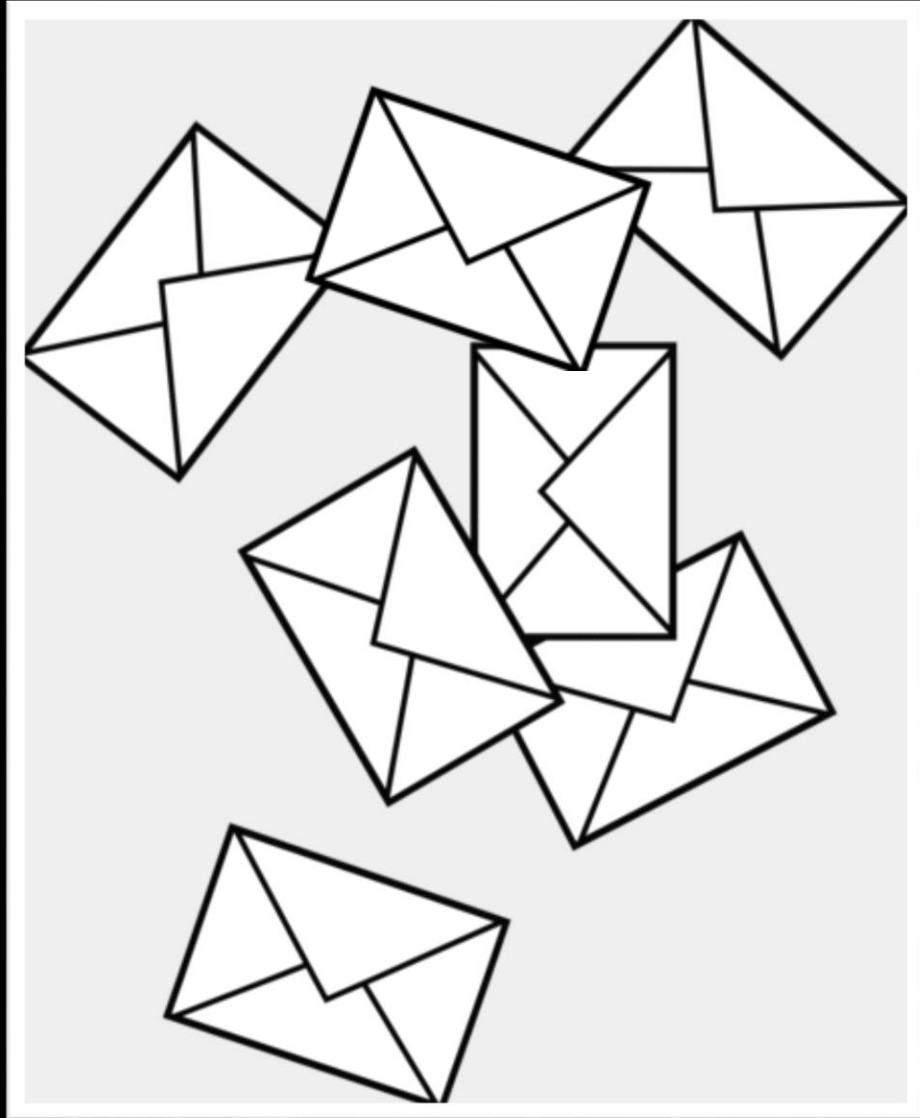
LITTLE BLACK SAMBO

- Written and illustrated by Helen Bannerman in 1899.
- The original story is of a South Indian boy who lives with his father and mother; Black Jumbo and Black Mambo. Sambo encounters four hungry tigers, and surrenders his colorful new clothes, shoes, and umbrella so they will not eat him. The tigers are vain and each thinks he is better dressed than the others. They chase each other around a tree until they are reduced to a pool of melted butter. Sambo then recovers his clothes, and his mother, makes pancakes out of the butter.

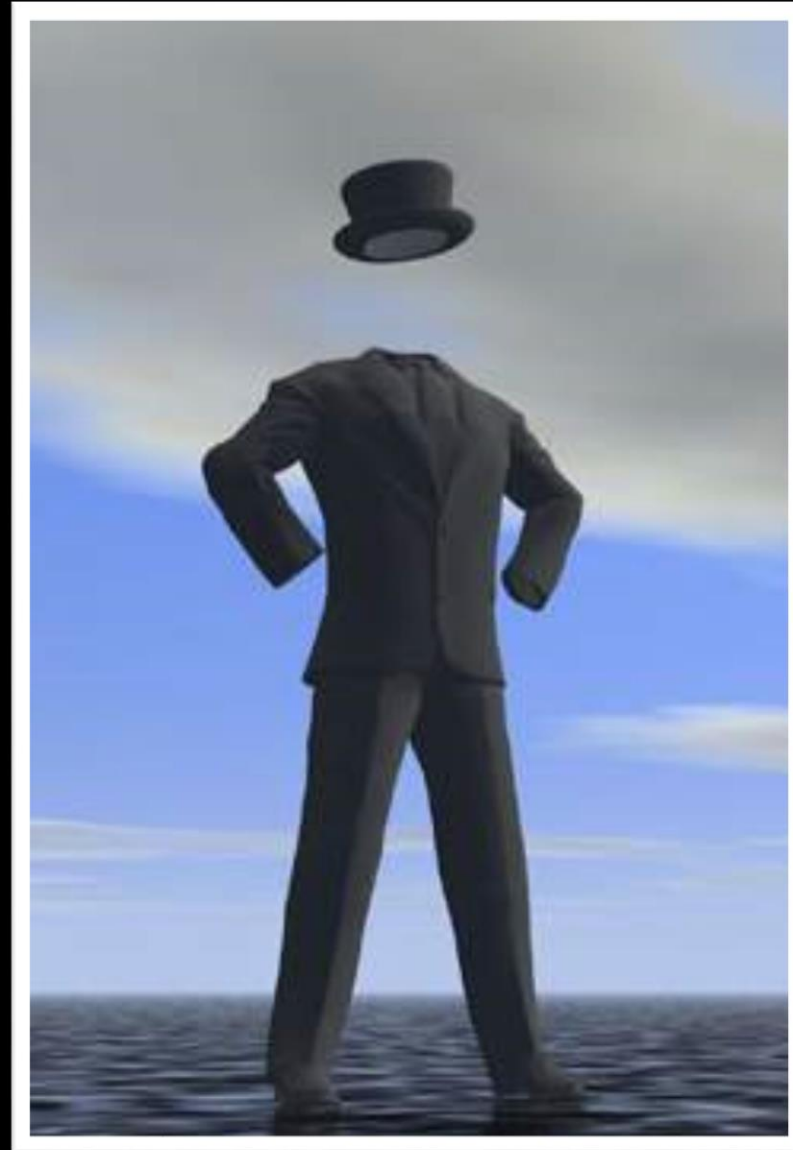


CONTROVERSY OF “SAMBO”

- Original illustrations showed a caricatured Southern Indian/Tamil child, and the story itself may have contributed to the use of the word “sambo” as a racial slur.
- Success led to many pirated, inexpensive, widely available versions that incorporated popular stereotypes of “black” peoples.
- Langston Hughes criticized *Little Black Sambo* as a typical “pickaninny” storybook which was hurtful to black children, and gradually the book disappeared from lists of recommended stories for children.
- During the mid-20th century, some American editions changed the title to the racially neutral *Little Brave Sambo*.
- Little known fact: the book is beloved in Japan and is not considered controversial there. For many years, a pirated version was mistakenly believed to be the original version, and sold over 1,000,000 copies before it was pulled off the shelves in 1988 due to copyright issues. Later brought back into publication by publishers Kodansha and Shogakukan.



SEVEN LETTERS

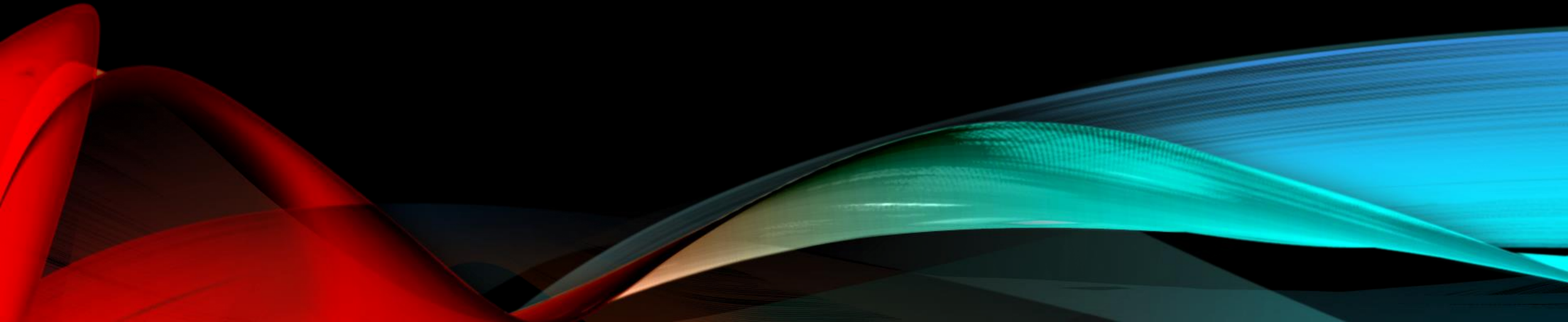


INVISIBILITY

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHILE READING

- What circumstances have created the narrator's invisibility?
- What stereotypes does the narrator encounter throughout his journey?
- Does the narrator manifest noble traits?
- Compare and contrast the geographical, demographical, and historical aspects of the North to the South.
- Does the novel answer the question of identity?
- Consider the “black and blue” connotations throughout the novel.
- What do you think Ellison's primary purpose was in writing *Invisible Man*.

CONCLUSION: THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE



DECLINE OF THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

- The Great Depression of the 1930s
 - Increased the economic pressure on all sectors of life
 - NAACP shifted their interests from the Renaissance to economic and social issues
- Departure of the greats
 - Langston Hughes, W.E.B. Du Bois, among others left NYC during the early 1930s.
- Harlem Riot (1935)
 - Set off by the growing economic hardship and tension between the black community and white-shop owners in Harlem who profited from the community
 - Shattered the idea of Harlem as a “Mecca.”
- Renaissance did not disappear overnight.

INFLUENCE & IMPACT

- The Harlem Renaissance changed the dynamics of African American arts and literature in the U.S.
 - Publishers and the public were more open to African American literature than they had been at the beginning of the century.
 - Inspired writers from the late period of the Renaissance (Wright & Ellison) to pursue literary careers.
 - Outpouring of African American literature by such writers as Alice Walker and Toni Morrison also had its roots in the movement.
 - Literature = POLYVOCAL
 - Renaissance = proof that “the white race did not hold a monopoly on literature and culture.”