

### Harlem Renaissance: Five Novels of the 1920s (Library of America)



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HARLEM RENAISSANCE: Five Novels of the 1920s leads off with Jean Toomer's *Cane* (1923), a unique fusion of fiction, poetry, and drama rooted in Toomer's experiences as a teacher in Georgia. Toomer's masterpiece was followed within a few years by a cluster of novels exploring black experience and the dilemmas of black identity in a variety of modes and from different angles. Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem* (1928), whose freewheeling, impressionistic, bawdy kaleidoscope of Jazz Age nightlife made it a best seller, traces the picaresque adventures of Jake, a World War I veteran, within and beyond Harlem. Nella Larsen's *Quicksand* (1928), the poignant, nuanced psychological portrait of a woman caught between the two worlds of her mixed Scandinavian and African American heritage; Jessie Redmon Fauset's *Plum Bun* (1928), the richly detailed account of a young art student's struggles to advance her career in a society full of obstacles both overt and insidiously concealed; and Wallace Thurman's *The Blacker the Berry* (1929), with its anguished, provocative look at prejudice and exclusion as it tells of a new arrival in Harlem searching for love, each in its distinct way testifies to the enduring power of the Harlem ferment.

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