| **Interactive**  **Notes** | **Name:Dessa Shapiro**  **Date: 4/29/21**  **Class/Period: period 4**  **Topic: Us History - Harlem Renaissance** |
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| **EQ:**  How does visual art, music, literature, and the political/intellectual voices of the Harlem Renaissance explore black identity and political empowerment?  How does visual art, music, literature, and the political/intellectual voices of the Harlem Renaissance relate to current-day events and issues? | |
| **Source**  **Charles H. Alston | Columbia Celebrates Black History and Culture. (2021). Retrieved February 16, 2022, from Columbia.edu website:** [**https://blackhistory.news.columbia.edu/people/charles-h-alston**](https://blackhistory.news.columbia.edu/people/charles-h-alston)  **Boyd, H. (2019, November 21). Charles Alston, painter, sculptor, and teacher. Retrieved February 16, 2022, from New York Amsterdam News website:** [**https://amsterdamnews.com/news/2019/11/21/charles-alston-painter-sculptor-and-teacher/**](https://amsterdamnews.com/news/2019/11/21/charles-alston-painter-sculptor-and-teacher/)  Charles Alston Brought His Love of Jazz to the Canvas - Jonathan Boos. (2019, January 30). Retrieved February 16, 2022, from Jonathan Boos website: <https://jonathanboos.com/dancers-charles-alston/#:~:text=Alston%20was%20a%20pioneer%20in,the%20hospital%2C%20including%20Beauford%20Delaney>  **Harlem Hospital WPA Murals - The WPA in Harlem. (2022). Retrieved February 16, 2022, from Columbia.edu website:** [**http://iraas.columbia.edu/wpa/modernmeds.html**](http://iraas.columbia.edu/wpa/modernmeds.html) | |
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| ***Questions/ Comments***  *2-3 pages of notes*  *Source 1:* [*https://blackhistory.news.columbia.edu/people/charles-h-alston*](https://blackhistory.news.columbia.edu/people/charles-h-alston)  *How does he take influence from his step father art, if at all?*  *Where are his works today? Are any murals still in tact.*  *What were some of the main themes in his art and how did they impact people.*  *About his artwork:*  <https://americanart.si.edu/education/oh-freedom/charles-henry-alston>  The effects and support of his art  He created his art with purpose and understood the impact of gathering and culture. And its ability to created change.  <https://thejohnsoncollection.org/charles-alston/>  <https://jonathanboos.com/dancers-charles-alston/#:~:text=Alston%20was%20a%20pioneer%20in,the%20hospital%2C%20including%20Beauford%20Delaney>.  <http://iraas.columbia.edu/wpa/modernmeds.html>  How does visual art, music, literature, and the political/intellectual voices of the Harlem Renaissance explore black identity and political empowerment?  How does visual art, music, literature, and the political/intellectual voices of the Harlem Renaissance relate to current-day events and issues? | **Details/Answers/Explanation/Analysis**  Name: Charles Henry Alston.  “His father’s life began in slavery, but through grit and determination he overcame the hardships and eventually was the founder of St. Michael’s Episcopal Church. He had died by the time Alston was three.”  During the depression his family moved to New York.  He Worked as a teacher and a painted. He taught as a professor at Columbia College in 1929, and at Teachers College 1931. He lives from 1907-1977 -lived for 70 years.  He was born in Charlton, North Carolina and his step father is **Romare Beadran**. He attended colombia university. He was the youngest of 5 children.  “After graduating he worked at the Harlem Arts Workshop, and when the program required more space, he secured an additional facility. The space, known as "306," became a center for the Harlem art community.”  “Studio 306 offered classes for children in the daytime and adults in the evening. It also became a center for black artists, writers, actors and musicians to meet and discuss current issues and their relevance to the black community specifically.”  He was an influential figure and painter during the harlem renaissance and he was **the first supervisor for the Works Progress Administration.** He supervised the WPA murals created at Harlem Hospital. also the first African American to teach at both the Museum of Modern Art and the Art Students League and, in 1969, to have been appointed the painter member of the Art Commission of the City of New York.  “influence of Mexican muralists José Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros, who all used murals to inspire people toward social activism, can be seen in Alston’s work.”  He liked to observer and let other works from different cultures influence his work, one of the main influences being mexican art, which he would often go to look at.  He also used other mediums, such as sculpture and and cartoons and illustrations- some of which were published in the New York Times and Fortune  During WWII he worked Office of War Information and Public Information and would “cartoons and posters to mobilize the black community to join in the American war effort”  “His work is in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Detroit Institute of Arts.”    One of his important paintings was “*Walking*” a colorful painting depicting a group of women walking composed of shapes and outlines made of vivid fills of colors. This art was inspired by the Montgomery bus boycott and the determined actions of the mostly unrecognized women who orchestrated it. He mostly used abstract techniques to express energy and to provoke a response. And this art helped keep the protest going for more then a year.  His painting where usually very angular and created contrast, movement and overall had a very cohesive composition in his works.  From late 1955 through 1956, people fought boycott of segregated buses in Montgomery, Alabama, people across the United States and around the world partici[ated and supported the cause. “These events brought international fame and recognition to two civil rights figures—a young reverend named Martin Luther King Jr. and a seamstress and activist named Rosa Parks—the boycott also represented a triumph of local grassroots activism on a massive scale. Organized by black women’s political groups and facilitated through churches, the boycott mobilized thousands of black workers to avoid using segregated city buses to protest the unequal and demeaning practices of segregation.”  "The idea of a march was growing," Alston recalled. "It was in the air … and this painting just came. I called it *Walking* on purpose." - quote from Alston  His art was mostly focused on abstract expressionism.  He created 17 known completed artworks.  “he continually sought to reclaim and explore racial identity and its complicated implications. Inspired by the modern idiom of Modigliani and Picasso, as well as African art, Alston’s work addresses both the personal and communal aspects of the black experience.”  Alson also loved Jazz and music very much and found inspiration in from the dancers and rhythm. Which lead him to base his painting “Dancers” on movement, color, rhythm, and joy. We can also see this influence and basic theme is many of his other piecens of art.  “Alston defines his forms by color—not color laid over form, but color that the form absorbs and then projects from within, with real volume”  Another one of Alsons painting was called *Modern Medicine”* which was created to quote  "show the different races working together on the same basis with an absolute lack of discrimination, illustrating the sheer objectivity of science."   * His art was able to give people hope and inspire change and action as we have seen earlier with the boycott in Montgomery.   He was as much as an activist as much as any author, speaker or musician, the only difference beng the medium of expression    **Summary/ my answer to the EQ:**  Charles Alson shows the impact of art and expression during the Harlem renaissance. His art was able to inspire others of the time into action, showing the importance of art within a culture. His art is mostly focused around political activism and Blakc rights, culture and sociological position. He dipits the ideal and the reality in different ways, and uses his art for more then just decoration, but to send a message and to inspire hope. Paintings and are can make people feel included and connect them to something bigger, and create unity among communities. |

**Script**

Music\* Hello, I'm Dessa Shapiro, and Today I will be talking about Charles Alston, an influential painter and teacher during the Harlem Renaissance. - For some context, the Harlem renaissance was a time period from the 1920s to the1930s. In which African American people moved form the south to Harlem In order to escape Jim crow laws, and for new creative and economic opportunities. It was an intellectual and cultural revival of African American music, dance, art, fashion, literature, theater, politics and much more. It was also a time of recognition, revival, and expression. This period also set the stage for the civil rights movement which began in the mid 1950s. Charles Alson was one of the influential figures during this time period, in which culture and expression bloomed. Alston was born in 1907 in Charlton, North Carolina. His father died when he was three years old and his mother remarried Romare Beadran (ruh·**mehr** **beer**·dn) in 1954, who was an artist, author and songwriter. Their family moved to New York during the depression. There, Alston attended colombia university and graduated with a B.A.(bachelor of arts degree) and an M.F.A.( Master of fine arts degree).

After graduating He worked at the Harlem Arts Workshop and later acquired an additional space which became known as “Studio 306” which offered art classes for for children during the day and adults at night. This studio eventually become the center of the Harlem art community. And African American artist, writers, actors and musicians would congregate and discuss current issues and their relevance within the Black community. Through his career as an artist he gained much recognition and renown. He was the first supervisor for the Works Progress Administration (- an organization which supported the public works and gave jobs to those in need.) He was also the first African American artist to teach at the Museum of Modern art and the Art Students League. Alston primarily worked as a painter, but had works in other mediums such as sculpture and illustration. During World War two he worked in information and created cartoons and posters with efforts to mobilize the black community to join the War. Some of his cartoons where even published in the New York Times. The function of his paintings where not limited to decoration, He painted to support his community in a time of change, rebellion and social activism. One such example, is his piece “Walking” which depicts a group of women walking, composed of shapes and outlines made of vivid color. This piece was inspired by the Montgomery Bus boycott and represented the unknown women who orchestrated it. It is made using abstract techniques and expresses movement and energy. This art was made to provoke a response, and it accomplishes its goal. “Walking” united people around the country and this helped keep the protest going for more then a year; Leading to thousands of black workers mobilizing to fight against segregation in city buses. These events also brought fame and recognition to a young Martian Luther King Jr. and activist Rosa Parks. “The idea of a march was growing, It was in the air… and this painting just came. I called it Walking on purpose” Alston said. “Walking” was Alstons most famous piece of work, but he is known to have completed 17 artworks focused around Abstract expressionism and social activism. He sought to reclaim and explore racial identity using his art.

He was said to have taken inspiration from the modern idiom of artist like Modigliani and Piasso and form Mexican muralists José Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros, who used murals to inspire people toward social activism. He also loved music, and would often incorporate aspects of the performances hes sees in his art. We can see this in his painting “Dancers”. Alston explored sociological ideas in his art, in his piece “modern medicine” which was created to quote "show the different races working together on the same basis with an absolute lack of discrimination, illustrating the sheer objectivity of science." Alston was as much as an activist as any author, speaker or musician, the only difference beng the medium of expression.

People have debated weather or not a single person can make a difference,

And Alston shows that it is possible if that person is able to ban others together. The majority of the time art is overlooked as a form that holds power, but that couldn't be further from the truth. Art can inspire, unify, instigate insight and much much more. And during these times when people where segregated and oppressed due to the color of their skin, art can expose the beauty within others, despite their preconceived biases. Alstons art is especially important because it doesn't blame, criticize or insight hatred, but it shows hope, movement and community and guides peace and equality.

This kind of art and expression is important to think about it our current times of conflict and division. People are fighting and killing each other over power, wealth, Preconceived superiority, and jealousy. Which are at the end of the day, are all forms of Internal hatred directed towards others. in these times it is important to see beauty, and be able to recognize other humans as people, Not tools or objects. And a lot of the time seeing artistic expression can be the only way to empathize, and see the suffering and pain in a conceivable way.

So, I hope that next time you are in a museum or see a mural on the street you can think about how art impacts your life and community, And take a moment to think of a time that any form of art has made you feel and understand something you would not have otherwise.

Thank you for your time.

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