ENG255
Week #4 Reading/Discussion/Writing

READ
- Cultural Portfolio: The Harlem Renaissance, page 2079 – 2091
- Langston Hughes, The Big Sea, page 2111 – 2117; Hughes and his poetry: pages 2223 – 2229
- Zora Neale Hurston, 2055, Sweat, page 2092, and The Gilded Six-Bits, 2057

“The Negroes greatest experience is the finding of one another.”
Alaine Locke

WRITING
- Harlem Renaissance: Do some research on the Harlem Renaissance. You’ll find great resources in our library. Browse by subject and authors and consider painting as well as music (Ken Burns jazz documentary). There’s a fine VHS video that provides an overview of the artists and the movement, Against All Odds. Draw from the many art forms as you explain the Renaissance. We’ll focus on two writers from this period: Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston, but feel free to explore and write about some of the other writers in our text: Sterling Brown, Countee Cullen, Helene Johnson, as well as others that you’re familiar with. How you should frame this response: Explain the Harlem Renaissance to someone who is familiar with the literary time period of the Modernist movement but is unfamiliar with the Harlem Renaissance.
- Harlem Renaissance writers within the Modernist Period: Think about the ways in which we have come to understand and portray the Modernists. In what ways are the artists and writers of the Harlem Renaissance very much a part of this Modernist Movement? Hold that thought, then consider in what ways the writers and artists of the Harlem Renaissance are creating subjects and styles of their own making. Use a few specific writers/artists (Hughes and Hurston would be natural) to illustrate the points you make.
- Hughes: He’s considered one of the pre- eminent American modernists. Why? Listen (link on our website) to Hughes read “The Weary Blues.” Consider the following quotes and write about the ways in which jazz and blues not only made his poetry possible, but took American poetry in new directions as you make connections between Hughes and the Modernist Movement.
  - “Jazz – the eternal tom-tom beating in the Negro soul.”
  - “Like the waves of the sea coming one after another, always one after another, like the earth moving around the sun – night, day, night, day, night, day – forever, so is the soul of black music with its rhythm that never betrays you, its strength like the beat of the human heart, its humor and its rooted power.”
- Hurston: She’s one of the most prolific writers of the Harlem Renaissance; she dubbed herself “Queen of the Niggerati.” A Northerner only by schooling and profession – her early life, her heart, and the subject of her work remained in the South. How do the codes and customs of the South figure into her stories? Let that driving question of place direct your attention as you compare the two stories, The Gilded Six-Bits and Sweat, considering representations of black married life in the rural South. Finally, in what ways would you consider this modernist writing?