

# harlem is... THEATER ACTIVITIES

Link to site page: <https://www.harlem-is.org/theater>

## Theater Activity #1: Black Theaters

Select two theaters from different time periods to study (for example, African Grove Theatre & New Heritage Theatre Group). Find three interesting facts in each history to compare that illustrate how the theaters were similar or different in their missions, and how the social events of the time shaped the types of plays that were produced.

## Theater Activity #2: Legacy Keepers

Read the biographies of two legacy keepers and discover what inspired them to work in theater and how their personal stories as residents of Harlem shape the arts community there. These biographies were written using oral history interviews conducted by school-aged youth. What questions might you ask these legacy keepers if you had a chance to interview them today?

## Theater Activity #3: Drama as Activism

When you read the biographies of the legacy keepers, you will learn that they started their organizations as an act of social justice, a desire to make a space where people from the community could feel free to come and create theater that addressed social issues relevant to the Black community in Harlem. Make a list of the issues addressed by these pioneers and legacy keepers. Are these issues still relevant in your community today? If so, create a short play that addresses these issues from your point of view as a citizen today.

## Theater Activity #4: Study Community Theaters in Your Neighborhood

Where are the community theaters in your neighborhood and who are the legacy keepers there that contribute to arts and culture in your hometown? Create your own local exhibition by interviewing local actors and theater owners, and documenting community performance venues. For guidance, see the Making a Difference Curriculum Guide on this site. [Link to MaD Curriculum Guide]

## Theater Activity #5: Student Tributes

The youth that conducted the oral history interviews with the **harlem is...**Theater Legacy-Keepers wrote a series of poetic tributes to express, in their own voices, what theater means to the community of Harlem. Read the student tribute panel "Harlem Youth Reflect on the Power of Theater" [[download student reflections from this page](#)] to learn how these living history stories touched young people's hearts and minds. One student wrote, "Theater is something nobody can take away from us, because it is an essential element that makes us indestructible and unites us". You can write a tribute letter or poem in honor of the people and places in your neighborhood that are significant to the culture and pride of the community. See the [Making a Difference Curriculum Guide](#) for writing lessons and templates.

# harlem is...

a project of Community Works and New Heritage Theater Group