

Jazz Culture: From Steeltown to Our Town
Lit. 450/ARTJ 301
Spring 2006
Professors Ganis and Stephens
Final Examination

Answer questions one and two, then choose between either questions three or four.

Answer with thoughtful essays that have an introduction and a conclusion. The work covered on this exam is on the website, has been handed-out or should be owned by you. You may seek assistance from libraries or the internet, but you must not plagiarize. An answer has to be your own essay, not a pastiche of ideas pasted together from different places. If you use someone else's idea in getting to a full answer to a question, that is appropriate as long as you mention the person who is the source and make clear what is his/her idea. This exam is due to us on email or in hard copy by 12 noon on Wednesday, May 10th. Rise to the challenge, and enjoy.

1. What are the essential qualities and the artistic shape of the blues? Explain how three of the following works exhibit, work with, or develop the idea of the blues? Yusef Komunyakaa's "Black String of Days," Bessie Smith's "Lonely" or "Empty Bed" Blues, Powerhouse's telegram story in Eudora Welty's "Powerhouse", John Edgar Wideman's "Bubba Riff" or "All Stories are True", Section III of William Matthews' "Straight Life", Langston Hughes' "The Weary Blues".

2. In August Wilson's "The Piano Lesson" Doaker is a railroad man and he talks about people's use of the railroad in a meditation on that subject in Act I, scene 1, pages 18-19. When Doaker, Boy Willy, Lyman and Wining Boy sing "O Lord, Berta in Act 1, scene 2, pages 39-40 they end up recommending that you "marry a railroad man." The railroad is mentioned throughout the play and has importance in a number of ways. The struggle with Sutter's ghost in the climactic scene concludes with the sound of a train. So explain the meaning of trains in "The Piano Lesson."

(And, either)

3. Discuss how the visual arts illustrate themes and concerns in jazz music. Use examples from five different visual artists.

(or)

4. One of the ideas coming out of the Harlem Renaissance, coincident with the rise of jazz as America's prominent music, was the need to develop a new image of the African-American to counter negative stereotypes. This impulse continued on through the civil rights movement. But in the works which we have studied, there is a tension between new, positive, unique images, and conservative, negative, stereotyped images. Discuss this tension as exhibited in a work of jazz music, a work of literature, and a work of visual art which we have studied.