

## Flamboyants: The Queer Harlem Renaissance I Wish I'd Known

George M. Johnson and Charly Palmer



**Vocabulary**

renaissance	authentic
queer	intersection
liberation	movement
visibility	narrative
legacy	resilient
empower	inclusive
celebrate	

## SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & ACTIVITIES

### Building Background Knowledge

It would be helpful to support readers in building background knowledge on the following:

- An overview of the Harlem Renaissance, with attention to its key figures, artistic contributions, and cultural significance, to help students understand the flourishing of Black creativity in 1920s and 1930s Harlem.
- A discussion about intersectionality, exploring how race, gender, sexuality, and class interact in shaping an individual's experience.

#### Before Reading

- Using the glossary at the start of the text create a personal thesaurus for those words.
- Why do you think some stories or people get left out of history books? Who decides what history gets told?

#### After Reading the Introduction

- What does it mean to be your “authentic self”? Why might that be challenging for some people?
- Have you ever learned something that made you wish you’d known it sooner? did it change the way you think?

#### After Reading

- How does Johnson’s storytelling style (mixing personal narrative with history) affect how you understand the events and people in the book?
- Why is it important to learn about LGBTQ+ people in history, especially those who have been erased or forgotten?

## Identifying Cultural Behaviors

Cultural Behavior	Examples from the Text
<b>Cooperative/Collaborative (shared work/dependence on the group):</b> The value and practice of working together and sharing responsibility. Doing so can contribute to a richer overall experience as a group - "We work better together."	The Harlem Renaissance was a group of African American artists such as writers, artists, and singers/musicians who oftentimes expressed their identities in their art.
<b>Realness (frank, direct, upfront):</b> The level of truthfulness, authenticity, and directness we utilize in our communications. Different cultures value different levels of directness. How truth and authenticity are communicated to others can be culturally based.	The author presents the information in a way that is frank and upfront about each figure in their biography using the figure's own words as well as the authors thoughts as well.

## Possible Writing Prompts

### Uncovering Hidden Histories

Many of the people featured in *Flamboyants* were left out of mainstream history books. Choose one person from the book and write an essay explaining their contributions and why their story matters. Use evidence from the text to support your ideas.

### Art as Resistance

In *Flamboyants*, Johnson shows how queer artists used art to express themselves and push back against discrimination. Write an essay that explains how at least two artists used their creativity to challenge injustice. Include examples from the book to support your argument.

### Author's Purpose and Personal Voice

George M. Johnson shares personal thoughts and feelings throughout *Flamboyants* while also teaching readers about history. Write an essay analyzing why Johnson chose to include their own voice and how it affects your understanding of the book. Use evidence from the text.

## Extension Activities

### Mapping Queer Harlem

Research and map out key locations mentioned in the book or associated with queer artists of the Harlem Renaissance (clubs, salons, neighborhoods, theaters). Create a visual map and write a paragraph explaining why these places were important for queer expression and community.

### Flamboyant Soundtrack

Task: Choose 4–5 songs (from the Harlem Renaissance era or modern ones with similar themes of pride and identity) that could be a soundtrack to the book. For each, write a short explanation of why it fits the people, themes, or mood of *Flamboyants*.

**Suggested CLR Protocols**  
Educators can access all CLR protocols on CLR+

Activity	CLR Protocol
<b>Vocabulary</b>	<p><b>Bell Ringers</b></p> <p>This word acquisition strategy gives students an opportunity to work socially and collaboratively to create more exposures to high utility/Tier 2 words in order for students to own the word. It incorporates autonomous &amp; independent work to start, then shifts to social &amp; collaborative work. Begin class by showing an image, film, song, or artwork, then have students independently write connections to vocabulary words. Follow with a small group discussion using a protocol, and end with whole-class sharing through an involuntary response strategy.</p> <p><i>Validates and affirms (VA) Sociocentricism, Collaboration, Subjective</i></p>
<b>During &amp; After Reading</b>	<p><b>Call &amp; Response</b></p> <p>Teacher prompts a word or phrase, and students respond together in a pattern or rhythm. When discussing themes like "visibility," "freedom," or "truth," students can echo back:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher: "Say it loud!" → Students: "We are proud!"</li> <li>Teacher: "Flamboyant means?" → Students: "Bold and beautiful!"</li> </ul> <p><i>Validate and affirms (VA) Communalism, Conversational Patterns, Orality</i></p>
<b>Extension</b>	<p><b>Quick Write &amp; Walk and Talk</b></p> <p>Students independently respond to a prompt such as, "What would it mean to be fully seen in your school or community?" Students partner up and Walk &amp; Talk for a set amount of time to discuss (*Sole-mates and/or Silent Appointment are great protocols to create the partnerships.) Use an involuntary response protocol such as Wheel of Names for share-out.</p> <p><i>Validate and affirm (VA) Movement, Collaboration, Verbal Expressiveness, Verbal Overlap (conversational patterns) Builds &amp; Bridges: Independent, Written work (Quick write)</i></p>