Josephine Baker: *Image and Icon*
Education and Resource Packet

The Sheldon Art Galleries St. Louis
Josephine Baker Biography

Childhood in St. Louis
Born Freda Josephine McDonald in St. Louis, Missouri on June 3, 1906, Josephine spent her childhood in the Mill Creek Valley neighborhood, just south of Union Station. Her mother, Caroline McDonald supported herself as a laundress. Eddie Carson, the man who would raise Josephine and her siblings Richard, Margaret and Willie Mae, was a talented musician. Her first home was at 1534 Gratiot Street, directly south of the railroad yards. A plump child, Josephine was nicknamed “Tumpy,” a play on the children’s rhyme character Humpty Dumpty.

Money was scarce for the Carsons, and their apartment was small. All four children slept on one mattress in their parent's bedroom. They would walk to Soulard Market to find fruits and vegetables that had fallen on the ground. They would find coal in the train yards to bring back for heating. They would also catch fish in the Mississippi River, which they would fry in hot oil. This was one of Josephine’s favorites. Josephine helped support the family when she was young by going door to door, sweeping steps and shoveling snow. She would buy necessities and presents for the family with the 50 cents a week that she earned.

Tumpy took to music at an early age. She would arrange performances in the cellar of their apartment building, setting up a stage and seats for her family. Their home was near the music district and she often could hear ragtime music spilling out of the doorways of bars on her way home. Sometimes, when families needed to raise rent money, they held “rent” parties with music and food, charging a small amount of money to those who wanted to attend. Tumpy and her siblings went to Lincoln School, a school for African American children. Near their home, however, was the music district and the famous black vaudeville theatre, the Booker T. Washington, on 23rd and Market streets. Josephine fell in love with the theatre at an early age, and spent considerable time there. She would sometimes perform outside for coins.

When she was 13, Josephine befriended the Jones family, a group of traveling musicians. Mother Jones taught Josephine to play the trombone and she traveled with the family when they went from town to town to play. On her travels, Josephine met the famous singer Ethel Waters, who would later describe Josephine as “a mugger with a great comic sense…She could dance and she could clown joy into you.”

In 1917, East St. Louis experienced the terrible race riots, in which many African-Americans were killed. Living near the eastern edge of St. Louis City, Josephine could see the flames on the other side of the river in East St. Louis, and heard the horror stories. She would tell stories of what she had heard for the rest of her life as if she had been there herself.
Josephine’s Early Years in Show Business
In 1918, Josephine befriended a singer named Clara Smith, who sang at the Booker T. Washington Theatre. When Clara finished her run of performances at the theatre, they left for Memphis. Josephine was 13 when she joined the troupe on the road. The troupe spent months traveling the South and the East Coast, performing in Black vaudeville theatres. Josephine provided a comedy act.

In 1921 in Philadelphia, she met the railroad porter Billy Baker and was married. The Bakers owned a business and lived a comfortable life there for a time. She loved the theatre though and soon tried out for the successful musical, Shuffle Along, but was turned away because she was too young. Later that year, hearing about a traveling version of the show being organized in New York, she left Philadelphia to try out for the show. She received a part in the chorus line, and provided the comic relief, rolling and crossing her eyes, and doing funny dances. Her antics soon got her noticed and she eventually got larger roles, singing and dancing. One critic wrote “One of the chorus girls is without question the most limber lady of whatever hue the stage has yet disclosed...The knees of this phenomenon are without joints...the eyes of this gazelle also defy all known laws as they play hide and seek with the lady’s nose as a goal. I’ve seen nothing funnier.”

From her early days as a chorus girl, Baker had developed a talent for comedy and a personal sense of style, taking even the simplest of materials such as a silk scarf and using it to make herself look like she was “some kind of oriental empress” and became the inspiration to important Paris designers like Paul Poiret, who fought to design clothing for her. She loved children and animals and had many pets. At one time, she had a leopard named Chiquita, a chimpanzee named Ethel, a pig named Albert, a snake named Kiki, a goat, a parrot, parakeets, fish, three cats and seven dogs. She even kept some of these animals back stage with her in the drawers of her dresser!

A Success in Paris and Europe
Baker’s big break came after her role in The Chocolate Dandies, another musical production by the African American team Sissle and Blake. Discovered by a woman who wanted to bring a troupe of black entertainers to Paris, Baker left the United States for Paris in 1925 to star in a new musical review called La Revue Nègre. There she dazzled the audience with her wild jazz dancing. She quickly rose to stardom in Paris, and toured Europe and South America with her act. In Paris, she also opened her own nightclub, Chez Josephine. Baker was popular in Europe for many decades, and performed with lavish costumes and sets in dazzling musical performances.

For African Americans, Paris was a welcoming city. Paris embraced African-Americans and a new kind of American music called jazz, first introduced by the
Captain James Reese Europe in 1917. In the teens and 1920s, many African-American artists moved to Paris or spent considerable time there rather than endure the racism and segregation in America. In Paris they could be free to eat in any restaurant they chose, and were treated well. After fleeing segregation in America where African Americans couldn’t stay in the same hotels or eat in the same restaurants as whites, Josephine felt well at home in this vibrant city.

World War II Hero
During World War II, Josephine served with the French Red Cross and was an active member of the French resistance movement. The French Resistance was a group of individuals who helped to win the war against the German Nazis enemy with undercover work. Using her career as a cover Baker became an intelligence agent, carrying secret messages written in invisible ink on her sheet music. She was awarded honor of the Croix de Guerre, and received a Medal of the Resistance in 1946. In 1961 she received the highest French honor, the Legion d'Honneur from French president Charles deGaulle.

A Force in the Civil Rights Movement
When Josephine later returned to America to perform, she always insisted that the theatres not be segregated. At that time, African-Americans were told that they could only sit in certain sections of the theatre, away from whites. They also had to sit in the back seats of public transportation, could not eat in the same restaurants, or frequent the same stores and other public venues. In the 1950s, Baker traveled around the United States giving speeches in support of the civil rights movement, which was campaigning for equal rights for African Americans. After World War II, Josephine began to adopt children from all over the world, calling them her “Rainbow Tribe.” She saw her Rainbow Tribe as evidence that people of all colors and races could live together in peace and harmony. She adopted 12 children in all. Josephine and the Rainbow Tribe lived in a large castle in southwestern France.

Josephine Baker made several movies, numerous recordings, and performed on stage until she was in her late 60s.
Images of Josephine

Josephine Baker as a baby.
From Jean Claude-Baker and Chris Chase,
Josephine Baker: The Hungry Heart, Cooper Square Press, 2001
Josephine Baker at age 16, on her way to being one of the highest paid chorus girls in the world. In 1923, when this photo was made of Baker, she was performing in *Shuffle Along*, the popular musical by Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle. Picture from Bryan Hammond and Patrick O’Connor, *Josephine Baker*, Bullfinch Press, Little Brown and Company, 1988.
Photo by Murray Korman (American, b. Russia, 1902-1961)
Collection of the Photographs and Prints Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations
Josephine Baker on the cover of AZ Magazine, October 1933
Private Collection, St. Louis
Josephine Baker modeling fashions, 1940s
Resources and Projects:

Project 1

The Harlem Renaissance

Some of Josephine Baker’s early career on the stage was spent in Harlem, a neighborhood on the northern end of Central Park in Manhattan. She lived with a family on 129th street while she performed on stage in the musical *Shuffle Along*, written by Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle. Josephine performed in several musicals written by the great African American musicians and composers Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake, including *Shuffle Along*, *Plantation Days*, *In Bamville* and the *Chocolate Dandies*. During *Chocolate Dandies* she lived on 137th Street in Harlem. Jean Claude-Baker and Chris Chase describe the Harlem of Baker’s days in their book *Josephine Baker: The Hungry Heart*:

“All night long in Harlem, people danced. Even on the street corners, where pedestrians threw nickels to kids demonstrating the Charleston. You saw throngs on Lenox and 7th Avenue… the legend of Harlem by night – …exhilarating…throbbling to the beat of drums and the wailing of saxophones, cosmopolitan in its peculiar sophistications— crossed the continent and the ocean.”

Sissle and Blake wrote many musicals and musical numbers, including the famous song *I’m Just Wild About Harry*, which was featured in *Shuffle Along*, the groundbreaking musical that opened at the Cort theatre on 63rd street, right off Broadway in the spring of 1921, bringing African American themes into the mainstream. The song *I’m Just Wild About Harry* remained so popular in the mainstream that President Harry S. Truman adopted it as his campaign song during his 1948 bid for re-election.

*Shuffle Along* was the first musical to be written, produced and performed by African-Americans. Also groundbreaking was the fact that the theatre did not segregate its audiences. The show was an instant success and both African Americans and whites attended in masses. It was the longest running African-American production with 504 performances.

Josephine Baker dreamed of appearing in *Shuffle Along*, which she heard about while performing in Philadelphia. She had heard about auditions for a touring version of the show, and dropped everything to audition. She was hired for the chorus and started in the production that opened in New Haven, Connecticut. Baker went on to acquire larger and larger roles in subsequent Sissle and Blake musicals until she was discovered for a starring role in the Paris production *La Revue Nègre*. 
Although not technically in Harlem, the musical productions by Sissle and Blake were part of a larger movement in African American art, literature and music, now called the Harlem Renaissance, which took the world by storm in the 1920s.

The Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s – 40s was a very important period in the history of African Americans. There was a flowering of African American literature, dance, art and democracy. The Harlem Renaissance provided a prelude to the Civil Rights movement and offered freedoms and opportunities that before had not been available. In the early part of the 20th century, there was a shortage of laborers in the North, so African Americans moved from the South to find a better life. The move has been called “The Great Migration,” and many who moved settled in Harlem, which became a hot spot for African American culture. Today, Harlem is still considered one of the most important hubs for African American people.

Renaissance means “rebirth”. African Americans engaged in a “rebirth” of their culture during the Harlem Renaissance. They changed the way they thought about their culture by using their voices in art and literature to complain about the social problems and racism. They wanted opportunities for education, housing and employment and used their energetic spirit to become prominent in the field of art, literature, music (especially jazz), and dance to pursue that which was written in the US constitution: life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Project Objectives

Students will:
- learn about important events in the United States at the time of the Harlem Renaissance.
- use the internet to research the important events of the 1920s, 30s and 40s.
- learn the heritage of African Americans.
- learn about the literature of the period.
- experience student-collaboration in creating art, music, literature (especially poetry) and dance presentations.
- learn new vocabulary words from the 1920s to 1940s
- understand the meaning and significance of jazz in the Harlem Renaissance.
- gain knowledge of Civil Rights issues and important events in African American history
Project Ideas for The Harlem Renaissance

Use the internet to research topics related to the Harlem Renaissance. Write a short biographical essay about a chosen author, painter or poet of the Harlem Renaissance.

Create a timeline of important events during the 1920s-40s. Make sure to add African-American events and innovations to the timeline.

Create a quilt or wall mural to illustrate events from the Harlem Renaissance.

Create musical instruments that can be used to make your own kind of jazz music. Hold a student performance with music and dances of the period, like the Charleston while wearing home-made costumes of the period.

Create a character and write a short story about the 1920s to 1940s. Discuss the writings in groups.

Materials
Fabric scraps for quilt
Paper (roll of mural paper for mural)
Colored Pencils and Pens
Colored Markers
CDs of Jazz Music and of Josephine Baker
Beads
CD Player
Harlem Renaissance Resources

Events of the 1920s

At the time of the Harlem Renaissance there were many other things going on in the United States and in the world. The Harlem Renaissance happened in the 1920's, often known as the "Roaring Twenties" because the economy was doing so well at the time.

Here is a summary of some of the important events going on in the African American community during this time:

1919

- 369th Regiment marched up Fifth Avenue to Harlem, February 17.
- Race riots in Washington, D.C., Chicago, Charleston, Knoxville, Omaha, and elsewhere, June to September.
- Race Relations Commission founded, September.
- Marcus Garvey founded the Black Star Shipping Line.
- Benjamin Brawley published The Negro in Literature and Art in the United States.

1920

- Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) Convention held at Madison Square Garden, August.
- James Weldon Johnson, first black officer (secretary) of NAACP appointed.
- Claude McKay published Spring in New Hampshire.
- Du Bois's Darkwater is published.
- O'Neill's The Emperor Jones, starring Charles Gilpin, opens at the Provincetown Playhouse.

1921

- Shuffle Along by Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake, the first musical revue written and performed by African Americans (cast members include Josephine Baker and Florence Mills), opened, May 22, at Broadway's David Belasco Theater.
- Marcus Garvey founded African Orthodox Church, September.
- Second Pan African Congress.
- Colored Players Guild of New York founded.
- Benjamin Brawley published Social History of the American Negro.

1922
- First Anti-Lynching legislation approved by House of Representatives.
- Claude McKay, Harlem Shadows.

1923
- Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life is founded by the National Urban League, with Charles S. Johnson as its editor.
- National Ethiopian Art Players staged The Chip Woman's Fortune by Willis Richardson, first serious play by a black writer on Broadway, May.
- Claude McKay spoke at the Fourth Congress of the Third International in Moscow, June.
- The Cotton Club opened, Fall.
- Marcus Garvey arrested for mail fraud and sentenced to five years in prison.
- Third Pan African Congress.
- Publications of Jean Toomer, Cane; Marcus Garvey, Philosophy and Opinion of Marcus Garvey. 2 vols.

1924
- Civic Club Dinner, sponsored by Opportunity, bringing black writers and white publishers together, March 21. This event is considered the formal launching of the New Negro movement.
- Paul Robeson starred in O'Neill's All God's Chillun Got Wings, May 15.
- Countee Cullen won first prize in the Witter Bynner Poetry Competition.
- Publications of Du Bois, The Gift of Black Folk; Jessie Fauset, There is Confusion; Marcus Garvey,
- Aims and Objects for a Solution of the Negro Problem Outlined; Walter White, The Fire in the Flint.
1925


- American Negro Labor Congress held in Chicago, October.

- Opportunity holds its first literary awards dinner; winners include Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, and Zora Neale Hurston.

- The first Crisis awards ceremony is held at the Renaissance Casino; Countee Cullen wins first prize.


1926

- Countee Cullen becomes Assistant Editor of Opportunity; begins to write a regular column "The Dark Tower."

- Savoy Ballroom opened in Harlem, March.


1927

- In Abraham's Bosom by Paul Green, with an all-black cast, won the Pulitzer Prize, May.

- Ethel Waters first appeared on Broadway, July.

- Marcus Garvey deported.

- Louis Armstrong in Chicago and Duke Ellington in New York began their careers.

- Harlem Globetrotters established.

- Charlotte Mason decides to become a patron of the New Negro.

- A'Lelia Walker opens a tearoom salon called "The Dark Tower."

- Publications of Miguel Covarrubias, Negro Drawings; Cullen, Ballad of the Brown Girl, Copper Sun, and Caroling Dusk; Arthur Fauset, For Freedom: A Biographical Story of the American Negro; Hughes, Fine Clothes to the Jew; James Weldon Johnson, God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse and The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man (reprint of the
1912 edition); Alain Locke and Montgomery T. Gregory, eds. Plays of Negro Life.

1928
- Countee Cullen marries Nina Yolande, daughter of W.E.B. Du Bois, April 9; described as the social event of the decade.
- Publications of Wallace Thurman, Harlem: A Forum of Negro Life; Du Bois, The Dark Princess; Rudolph Fisher, The Walls of Jericho; Nella Larsen, Quicksand; Jessie Fauset, Plum Bun; Claude McKay, Home to Harlem.

1929
- Negro Experimental Theatre founded, February; Negro art Theatre founded, June; National Colored Players founded, September.
- Wallace Thurman's play Harlem, written with William Jourdan Rapp, opens at the Apollo Theater on Broadway and becomes hugely successful.
- Black Thursday, October 29, Stock Exchange crash.
- Publications of Cullen, The Black Christ and Other Poems; Claude McKay, Banjo; Nella Larsen, Passing; Wallace Thurman, The Blacker the Berry;

Timeline Source: http://www.fatherryan.org/harlemrenaissance/

Selected Children’s Books on the Harlem Renaissance


**Web resources for the Harlem Renaissance**

**General Information**
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harlem_Renaissance

**Good Curriculum on the Harlem Renaissance**
http://www.fatherryan.org/harlemrenaissance


**More can be found on the Yale site at:**
http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/indexes/h.x.html

**Web resources for Sissle and Blake**
http://www.redhotjazz.com/sissleandblake.html

**Biographies on Eubie Blake**
http://www.hometoharlem.com/Harlem/hthcult.nsf/notables/07bbaf6762b20280852565cf001d6c9b

http://www.nathanieltturner.com/eubieblake.htm

**Biographies for Noble Sissle**
http://www.aaregistry.com/african_american_history/1000/A_musical_legend_Noble_Sissle

**Other artists of the Harlem Renaissance**

Alain Locke (Activist and Sociologist)
http://www.africawithin.com/bios/alain_locke.htm

Langston Hughes (Writer)
Gwendolyn Bennett (Writer)

W.E.B. DuBois (Activist and Writer)

Zora Neale Hurston (Writer)

Carl van Vechten (Photographer)

James Van der Zee (Photographer)

William Henry Johnson (Artist)
http://www.usca.edu/aasc/johnson.htm
http://americanart.si.edu/education/guides/whj/index.cfm

Teaching packets for William Henry Johnson can be ordered from
http://americanart.si.edu/education/teach_resources.cfm#resources

Romare Bearden (Artist)
http://www.beardenfoundation.org/artlife/biography/biography.html

Ethel Waters (Singer)
http://www.jazzateria.com/roots/ewaters.html

Bessie Smith (Singer)
http://mathrisc1.lunet.edu/blues/Bessie_Smith.html
Project 2
African Americans in Paris in the 1920s
History, Communication Arts, Social Studies
Can be modified for Grades 5 – 12

Objectives and Goals; The projects will enable students to complete research and writing project; analyze information; make comparisons and draw conclusions about texts based on experiences in everyday life today;

Parisians in the 1920s embraced African-Americans and the radical new musical language called jazz that was first introduced by the touring Captain James Europe in 1917. Many African American artists moved to Paris or spent considerable time there rather than endure the racism and segregation in America. The musical and artistic rebellion of the 1920s made Paris a hotbed for the arts, fueling the visual artistic movement that erupted after World War I and embodied modernity and change. In Paris, African Americans could move freely in society without segregation, eat with whites in the same restaurants and have open interracial relationships. It was in this heady climate of artistic and racial freedom that Baker found her voice. This was a time of “la tumulte noir,” the love of all things African and African-American.

Student Writing and Research Project:
Research Paris in the 1920s. Describe what it was like. Imagine yourself in Paris in the 1920s and describe your life and imaginary character. Where would you live? What do you do for a living?

Web Resources:
Comprehensive educational information on Paris in the 1920s
From BBC London
http://www.bbc.co.uk/music/features/paris/

Smithsonian Institution’s Jazz Age in Paris page
http://www.si.edu/ajazzh/jazzage.htm

Map of Paris
http://www.parisnet.net/parismap.html

Bibliography for this project included at end of packet
Project 3
Josephine Baker Biography
Contemporary Society, Social Studies, History, Language Arts
Can be modified for grades 5 – 12

Objectives and Goals: The projects will enable students to complete research and writing project; analyze information; make comparisons and draw conclusions about texts based on experiences in everyday life today;

Student Writing and Research Project:
Read about Josephine Baker’s life. Research an African-American star (from the film or music industry) of today and write a comparative essay about how their life is similar or how different from that of Josephine Baker.

Unknown Photographer, *Josephine Baker in Havana, Cuba*, 1951
gelatin silver print, 9 ¾ x 7 ¾ inches, Collection of Mary Strauss, St. Louis
Project 4
Modern Art of the 1920s and 30s
Fine Art, Social Studies, History
Can be modified for grades 5 – 12

Objective: Students will discuss ways artists express points of view in their creations, analyze the artistic elements and principles that contributed to the mood of artistic work, demonstrate that expresses a current social concern and conveys a mood, and use technology as a media resource.

Background Information
In the 1920s, following World War II, the dream and idealism of the machine age and the streamlined form came with the exuberance that followed the end of World War I. In the aftermath the war, a new modernity was sought – one that celebrated the new technologies. Beginning in the 1920s, sleek, aerodynamic forms and industrial materials like stainless steel and aluminum were to be found in the designs of automobiles, airplanes, trains, and in a wide range of everyday household items from toasters, cameras, staplers and vacuum cleaners to furniture and toys. Painters and photographers too celebrated this “New Vision” with a focus on new ways of seeing the world that embraced modernity.

Some artists to look at:
Painters: Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Paul Colin, William H. Johnson

Look at the works of some artists from the 1920s and 30s and how they depicted their world back then. How would you depict your world today? Communicate something special about the time that you live in, in a drawing, painting or photograph. In the 1920s, people were excited about machines and the new industrial technology. Think about what new technologies exist today (computers, internet, television, phone cameras) and use those ideas and media in a painting, drawing, or photograph that tells about your world today.
Project 5
Racism and Stereotyping
Social Studies, History
Grades 6 – High School

Objectives:
To engage in critical thinking about what might be considered stereotyping. To learn about racism

Background Information:
Stereotypes were used in early images of African-Americans, which provided negative and false racial views.

Paul Colin’s poster for La Revue Nègre, which depicts the three simplified, stereotyped African American figures, two in "blackface," heralded the American stage production that would change the way Parisians thought about jazz, dance and their own skin color. La Revue Nègre would help to catapult Paris into "la tumulte noir," the love of all things African and African American. While in America, African-Americans were segregated from whites and relationships between blacks and whites were unheard of, in Paris, African Americans were venerated and enjoyed freedom on the streets, in shops, cafés and entertainment venues.

Paul Colin’s representations of African Americans in the poster and his portfolio La Tumulte Noir are, for the most part, exaggerated caricatures cast in familiar racist stereotypes. Some of these stereotypes come from representations of African Americans, seen worldwide in the popular press, which depicted blacks in exaggerated form. Some were also drawn from life. Colin's portfolio depicts a number of the most important black entertainers in Paris at the time, some of whom wore blackface in their performances.

Blackface was a racist standard in American white vaudeville, but was also used in black vaudeville. In black vaudeville, entertainers often performed in the makeup to enable them to play before and be accepted by white audiences. In La Revue Nègre, several of the characters, including one performed by Louis Douglas, wore blackface. In Colin's portfolio La Tumulte Noir, there are also several images of Josephine Baker, along with caricatures of many of the most important performers of the day, many of them white - who are all rendered as black. The white personalities that Colin portrays succumbing to 'la tumulte noir' are Maurice Chevalier, Ida Rubinstein, the film star Spinelli (Andrée Faurier), the Dolly Sisters and others.

Josephine too turned the tables on stereotypes, making fun of the Parisian rage for all things African-American when she sang the Si J'étais Blanche! (If I Were White!) in the 1932 production at the Casino de Paris, La Joie de Paris:
Si J'étais Blanche! (If I Were White!)

Moi si j'étais blanche
Sachez qu'mon bonheur
Qui près de vous s'épanche
Gardr' ait sa couleur
Au soleil, c'est par l'extérieur
Que l'on de dore
Moi c'est la flamme de mon Coeur
Qui me colore.

Translation:
If I were white
know that my happiness
which when close to you spills over
would keep it's color
In the sunshine, it's our exterior
which becomes golden
But it's the flame in my heart
that gives me my color

The song has been described as a satirization of the French fashion for sunbathing, which rose in popularity with the country's newfound passion for all things black and African. In Paris during the height of her career, Josephine Baker's manager Pepito Abatino promoted Baker's image through a variety of promotions and products. One of the most successful was a line of hair and skin products which bore her name. With Bakerfix hair pomade and skin darkening lotion, the women of Paris could be like Baker. Fuelled both with the success of La Revue Negre and Josephine Baker's meteoric rise, this love of blackness was also inspired by exhibitions of African Art embraced by avant-garde artists like Picasso, Matisse, Derain and Braque in their works.

Discussion Project

In class, discuss the meaning of stereotypes. Ask students to give examples of stereotypes. Discuss why stereotypes are bad and wrong. Think of images in the media today that you might find are stereotyped. Have students find an example in products, film, television or music and bring it to class to discuss.
Paul Colin (French, 1892-1986)
Poster for the Show La Revue Nègre, Paris, 1925
Color Lithograph
Courtesy of the Rennert Collection, New York
© 2005 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris
Project 6
Visual Arts
Design a Costume for Josephine Baker
Appropriate for Grades 3 – 5

Background Information
The costumes of the Folies Bergère one of biggest theaters in Paris where Josephine Baker performed, were very elaborate and included sparkles, feathers and even electric light bulbs! Both the French and tourists flocked to see the spectacular shows there, which had hundreds of performers, dancers and chorus girls and boys. In one musical in the 1930 called Paris qui remue Baker had over 50 costume changes! The most spectacular in that production was her costume in the last number called Love and Electricity, where she appeared as a firefly with huge wings that were decorated with electric light bulbs. Josephine Baker performed all the way up until her death at age 69. In her later years, famous fashion designers like Dior, Balmain and others designed her costumes, which were large elaborate dresses with feathered headdresses.

Student Project:
Print out or Xerox enough copies of the basic photo of Josephine Baker supplied in this packet.

Materials needed:
White paper (Xerox or printer paper works fine)
Assorted markers, pens, paints or colored pencils
Optional:
Feathers
Glitter

Draw a headdress on the picture of Josephine. Students can also cut a hat design from paper or fabric, decorate and glue it to her head. Then design a dress for Josephine. Lay a piece of white paper over the picture of Josephine supplied and trace the outline of her body. Use this tracing to design dress or pant-suit for Josephine’s. When you have finished decorating with markers, paints, glitter and feathers, cut it out and paste it over Josephine’s body. Use your imaginations to come up with a bold, dramatic costume! The pictures below are just a few of the costumes that were designed for Josephine.
Project 6 ~ Draw a Costume on Josephine!
Visuals for Project 6 – Costume Examples

Josephine Baker in *Paris qui remue*, 1930, © Roger Viollet, Paris
Costume Design for Josephine Baker, 1950s
Courtesy of the Jean-Claude Baker Foundation, New York
Project 7
Visual Arts
Design a Stage Set for Josephine Baker
Appropriate for Grades 4-6

Use the “design a costume for Josephine Baker” figure as a guide for scale (you can make her larger or smaller on a Xerox copier) and make a stage design for Josephine.

Materials Needed:
Cardboard box from grocery store
Stiff posterboard
Colored papers
White paper
Glue
Scissors
Toothpicks or popsicle sticks

Instructions:
Cut flaps off box so it is open on one side.
Set box on side so opening faces you
Cut curtains from colored paper for front of box, tape or glue so that they hang down
Design a stage set for Josephine with a scene from your imagination
You can be as wild as you want!
You can cut individual props from stiff posterboard and use toothpicks or popsicle sticks to help them stand up on the floor of your stage.

Writing project:
Write a short play for Josephine Baker and perform the play with your theatre.

Resources:
Instructions for toy theatres can also be found at the following website: http://www.ruislip26.freeserve.co.uk/
Patterns can be downloaded from: http://www.ruislip26.freeserve.co.uk/pages/workpage.html
Here are some pictures of stage sets from Josephine Baker’s performances.
Background Information:

The Charleston may have its roots in an African, Ashanti dance, however other European dances like the Branle of 1520, also have similarities. The Charleston became popular in the jazz age of the 1920s. It is said to originate from a small island near Charleston, South Carolina and was performed as early as 1903 in the U.S.A. By 1913 it was used in many stage productions, including the musical by African Americans Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle called *Shuffle Along*, where Josephine Baker was in the chorus dance line. In the 1920’s, Women who did the Charleston were called "Flappers" because of the way they would flap their arms and walk like birds while doing the Charleston.

More background information on the dance can be found at:
http://www.artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/2129/

This link provides a good handout with dance steps and background information
www.homesteadmuseum.org/jtt/1920s%20charleston.pdf
General Resources Section

Other Relevant Lesson Plans Available on the Internet:

The Art of Romare Bearden

Creative Voices of Harlem Lesson Plan
http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/2248/

Harlem Renaissance Lesson Plan
http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/2302/

Jazz Music
http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/2258/

http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/2049/

Web Resources

Josephine Baker
http://www.cmgww.com/stars/baker/about/biography.html
(Notes: General, commercial site)

(Notes: General, commercial site)

http://womenshistory.about.com/od/bakerjosephine/p/josephine_baker.htm
Notes: From about.com)

http://www.stlouiswalkoffame.org/inductees/josephine-baker.html
(Notes: St. Louis Walk of Fame)

The Jazz Age in Paris
http://www.si.edu/ajazzh/jazzage.htm

The Charleston Dance
http://www.streetswing.com/histmain/z3chrlst.htm

Music Clips
http://www.josephinebaker.com/music.shtml
Paul Colin and Le Tumulte Noir portfolio
http://www.npg.si.edu/exh/noir/broch3.htm

Josephine Baker’s home, Les Milandes
http://www.milandes.com/historic.htm

Bibliography:

Children’s Books


Adult Reading

General Information and Biographies on Josephine Baker


**Paris in the 1920s and 30s**


Vocabulary Words

avant-garde
jazz
satirization (Satire)
stereotype
segregation
vaudeville

The Josephine Baker: Image and Icon Education Packet was written and compiled by Olivia Lahs-Gonzales, Director, The Sheldon Art Galleries, with help from Elissa Cahn and Yvonne Samuel.