

Contexts for the Text

Anytime that we want to gain a deeper understanding of a text, we apply various “lenses” in order to do so. For instance, when we read *The Crucible*, we examined it from a historical context, a social context, and biographical context. We looked at the belief systems of the Puritans, the life of the playwright, Arthur Miller, and life in the U.S. during the Red Scare. Understanding those things helped us gain a fuller understanding of the play and what the underlying messages of the text were. The ability to use these lenses requires us to research a bit about the setting of the text and the time period in which it was written. We can research about the author’s life and look for ways his or her experiences show up in the text as well. Choose a classic novel (I’ve included a link to a resource from which you can access many texts for free, or if you already have a print resource, that works fine as well. Do a little digging and see what lenses you can apply to gain something more from a text than just entertainment. You can practice with the other links I’ve given you over Langston Hughes and the poetry of the Harlem Renaissance. Be sure to check out my favorite Harlem (also called a Dream Deferred)!