The ‘New Negro’ of the Harlem Renaissance

Overview:
Together with your small group you will analyze two songs of 1927: *(What Did I Do to Be So) Black and Blue* and *Brown*. After identifying key aspects of the sense of black identity conveyed in those works review the six poems, six pieces of art, and six images. Select one poem, one piece of art, one image to accompany each song. Arrange the songs and accompanying cultural artifacts on a poster, along with a brief explanation of connection.

Activity in Detail:
1. In your groups look at each poem in turn. Discuss the following questions and individually make note of your discussion.

   *(What Did I Do to Be So) Black and Blue*
   1. What is the mood of this song?
   2. What does this suggest about the status of African Americans?
   3. What is the overall theme of this song?
   4. How does the music contribute to this theme?
   5. What social and cultural conditions in the 1920s support this attitude?

   *Brown*
   1. What is the mood of this song?
   2. What does the composer suggest when she writes ‘I know what makes life worthwhile’?
   3. What is the overall theme of this song?
   4. What type of music would you expect to accompany these lyrics?
   5. What social and cultural conditions in the 1920s support this attitude?

2. Write a short statement describing the sense of African American identity conveyed in this work.

3. Review the packet of resources. Select one (1) piece of artwork, one (1) poem and one (1) picture to accompany each poem.

4. For each selection write out three (3) reasons why this selection is an appropriate accompaniment to the song, demonstrating an analytical understanding of the song lyrics and the selection.

5. Put it all together on a poster. The poster will be in two parts, corresponding to the two songs. Each part must include the lyrics, statement based on the lyrics, artwork & explanation, poem & explanation, picture & explanation. Follow these guidelines for creating the poster:
   a. The poster must have an original title.
   b. It must be complete.
   c. It must convey scholarly analysis of the selections and connections to African American identity.
   d. It must be neat and visually appealing.
   In addition, the poster may have the following:
   e. Extra enhancements to further convey the identity of each section

See next page for a sample layout of the poster
Sample Poster Layout

3 Statements Explanation & Connection to Song

Lyrics to (What Did I Do to Be So) Black and Blue

Statement

Artwork

1.
2.
3.

Poem

Image

1.
2.
3.

Artwork

1.
2.
3.

Lyrics to Brown

Statement

Image

1.
2.
3.