

## MEET THE MAN: EXPLORATION OF AN HOMETOWN HERO'S IMPACT ON LOCAL HISTORY AND NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

LESSON AUTHORS: CHERYL RUSH DIX AND SARAH THOMPSON, PENNSYLVANIA EDUCATORS  
USING EXCERPTS FROM "HARRY T. BURLEIGH FROM THE SPIRITUAL TO THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE"  
BY JEAN E. SNYDER

### SECONDARY LESSON OUTLINE CONTENTS:

LESSON PROTOCOL WITH EXTENSIONS; SAMPLE READINGS; PRIMARY SOURCE MATERIAL; GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

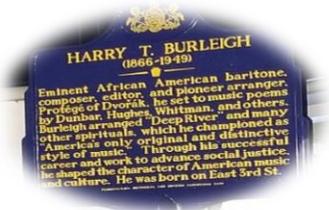
### Standards

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy: RH.11-12.1-3, .7,.9;**

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STUDENTS ESTABLISH THE TIMELINE OF BURLEIGH'S LIFE;  
EXPLORE BURLEIGH'S ROOTS, ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND RISE TO PROMINENCE;  
EXPERIENCE THE USE OF RESEARCH AND PRIMARY SOURCE MATERIAL IN WRITING FACT-BASED HISTORY.

### Materials & Resources

<p><i>Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission marker image and text</i></p>		<p><i>Erie, PA East 6<sup>th</sup> between French and Holland Streets</i></p>
<p><i>Burleigh biography and excerpts</i></p>	<p><i>"Harry T. Burleigh from the Spiritual to the Harlem Renaissance" by Jean E. Snyder, PhD</i></p>	<p><i>Erie County Public Library, Erie Public School Libraries</i></p>
<p><i>Morehouse Glee Club Audition</i></p>	<p><a href="https://www.classicalmpr.org/story/2016/02/08/sing-to-inspire-history-of-the-morehouse-glee-club">https://www.classicalmpr.org/story/2016/02/08/sing-to-inspire-history-of-the-morehouse-glee-club</a></p>	
<p><i>Burleigh Reinternment</i></p>	<p><i>"Bringing Harry Home DVD"</i></p>	<p>Copy in ECPL Heritage Room Erie Cemetery</p>
<p><i>Primary Sources</i></p>	<p><i>Census records, Erie newspaper articles</i></p>	<p>Heritage Room - Erie County Library</p>

## Performance Tasks

**Introduce a video clip of the Morehouse Glee Club singing a Burleigh arrangement including the following:**

*“These young men are singing music written down by a man from Erie, Pennsylvania. The music, called spirituals, is studied and sung around the world. Harry T. Burleigh was born in Erie and became a leader in American music because wrote down this music and shared it with the world.”*

**Conclude with a video clip from Burleigh’s funeral procession and reinterment in Erie, “Bringing Burleigh Home.”**

**Complete readings and record the answers to the following questions:**

*If you could travel back in time to the Erie of Burleigh’s youth, what would we see?*

*In what sources could you find details of his early life and form a picture of where he lived?*

*Where did he go from there?*

**In groups of two to four students, construct a timeline of Burleigh’s life and develop a list of questions for further research.**

*Terms: Gradual Abolition Act, Jim Crow, Harlem Renaissance, Spirituals, Art Songs, Reinter.*

**In groups, complete additional guided research focusing on Burleigh’s:**

*BACKGROUND - LIFE IN THE ERIE COMMUNITY - EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES - PROFESSIONAL CAREER  
PATH COMPOSITIONS AND PERFORMANCES - IMPACT ON OTHERS IN AMERICAN MUSIC  
DEATH and LEGACY.*

**Students may either write an essay or create an exhibit on the impact and significance Burleigh’s life, addressing, but not limited to, the following questions.**

*What do we know about the life and times of Harry T. Burleigh?*

*How is Erie, PA a part of his life story?*

*For what accomplishments is HT Burleigh remembered?*

*Which circumstances of his life shed light on the larger picture of careers and contributions of African Americans?*

*How do historians document and analyze the history, community, and culture of an era?*

## Extensions

**Students create a digital resource (e.g. website, posting) that features the significance of Burleigh’s life and work, using their research in the areas from the lesson.**

## Ancillary Notes

The meticulously researched and supported biography (extensive footnotes and bibliography) offers lessons for both educators and students alike, on the role of primary sources in the writing of a full and accurate history, i.e. the process by which history is actually written.

High school students can take their understanding of Burleigh's life and legacy into a deeper exploration of local history and primary sources. There are also extensive possibilities for connections to the larger story of US history. Students can trace the roots of Burleigh's legacy back to his early years in Erie, PA following the opportunities he pursued to become an important part of the national music scene in the first half of the twentieth century. Jean Snyder's Burleigh biography includes detailed descriptions of Burleigh's life in Erie, as well as information on his parents and grandfather. These chapters, along with primary source documents take students back to a time when Erie was a place of both opportunity and constraints for African Americans. The issues of slavery in Pennsylvania and the state's Gradual Abolition Act are illustrated by looking at census records and the life story of Burleigh's grandfather. Brief readings from a copy of Erie's census records capture the circumstances of Burleigh and his family in Erie. The breadth of the biography goes on to include Burleigh's time in New York City and his role in the Harlem Renaissance movement.

### **Unit Options**

**Day One:** Introduction to Burleigh and his legacy. Students explore basic elements of the Burleigh story using videos, readings from Dr. Snyder's book and primary source section taken from the Erie, PA census.

**Day Two:** African Americans in Erie, PA at mid-nineteenth century- free and enslaved. Students focus on the status of African Americans of the time using readings from the biography and primary sources such as contemporary Erie newspapers.

**Day Three:** Erie to New York City. Students create a timeline of Burleigh's career path and opportunities, using the biography including supporting, additional details from its index.

**Day Four:** Harlem Renaissance. Students compile a key name search and map a network of Burleigh's relationships as a member of the Harlem Renaissance using summary information and readings from the biography.

**Day Five:** Coming Home to Erie. Students gather details of Burleigh's later life and the circumstances that lead to reinterment at the Erie Cemetery at 2116 Chestnut Street, Erie, PA.

**Days Six & Seven:** Capstone. Students either create an exhibit showing his life story or write an essay on an aspect of Burleigh's legacy.

**Days Eight-Ten:** Extension. Students create their own Harry T. Burleigh website. Weebly.com is a user-friendly site that allows students to create professional looking websites; share text, photos, and videos with others and take great pride in their final product.