Delve Deeper into Homegoings
A film by Christine Turner

This multi-media resource list, compiled by Linda Brawley of San Diego Public Library, provides a range of perspectives on the issues raised by the POV documentary Homegoings.

Through the eyes of Harlem funeral director Isaiah Owens, the beauty and grace of African-American funerals are brought to life. Homegoings paints a portrait of grieving families and a man who sends loved ones “home.” A co-production of ITVS and POV’s Diverse Voices Project, with funding provided by CPB. A co-presentation with NBPC.

ADULT NONFICTION


Smith, Suzanne. To Serve the Living: Funeral Directors and the African American Way of Death. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010. From antebellum slavery to the 21st century, African American funeral directors have orchestrated funerals or “homegoing” ceremonies with dignity and pageantry. To Serve the Living offers a fascinating history of how African American funeral directors have been integral to the fight for freedom.


Van Der Zee, James and Billops, Camille. The Harlem Book of the Dead. Dobbs Ferry, New York: Morgan & Morgan, 1978. James Van Der Zee was a photographer from Harlem who specialized in portraits of the dead mostly from the 1920s and 1930s. With a forward by Toni Morrison, this work also incorporates poems and text reflective of the Harlem culture and past.


Funderburg, Lise. Pig Candy: Taking My Father South, Taking My Father Home: A Memoir. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008. Pig Candy is the poignant and often comical story of a grown daughter getting to know her dying father in his last months. During a series of visits with her father to the South he’d escaped as a young black man, Lise Funderburg, the mixed-race author of the acclaimed Black, White, Other, comes to understand his rich and difficult background and the conflicting choices he has had to make throughout his life.

ADULT FICTION

Gable, Craig. Ebony Rising: Short Fiction of the Greater Harlem Renaissance Era. Bloomington, IN: Indiana Press, 2004. This is a gender-balanced collection of short fiction from the greater Harlem Renaissance era (1912–1940). This was a time marked by writing of extraordinary breadth and depth by some of the most famous authors in African American literary history including, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston and Jean Toomer.

Mathis, Ayana. The Twelve Tribes of Hattie. New York: Random House, 2012. This is a story of the children of the Great Migration through the trials of one unforgettable family. In 1923, fifteen-year-old Hattie flees Georgia and settles in Philadelphia, hoping for a chance at a better life. Instead, she marries a man who will bring her nothing but disappointment. After losing her firstborn twins to an illness a few pennies could have prevented, Hattie gives birth to nine more children whom she raises with grit and mettle and not an ounce of the tenderness they crave.

McFadden, Bernice L. Glorious: A Novel. Brooklyn, NY: Akashic Books, 2010. It’s set against the backdrop of the Jim Crow South, the Harlem Renaissance, and the civil rights era. Blending the truth of American history with the fruits of imagination, this is the story of Easter Venetta Bartlett, a fictional Harlem Renaissance writer whose tumultuous path to success, ruin and revival offers a candid portrait of the American experience in all its beauty and cruelty.

Reed, Ishmael. Mumbo Jumbo. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1972. This classic freewheeling look at race relations through the ages, Mumbo Jumbo is Ishmael Reed’s brilliantly satiric deconstruction of Western civilization, a racy and uproarious commentary on our society set in Harlem. In it, Reed, one of our preeminent African-American authors, mixes portraits of historical figures and fictional characters with sound bites on subjects ranging from ragtime to Greek philosophy.
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FICTION FOR YOUNGER READERS

In this coming-of-age story, fifteen-year-old Jesse pours his heart and soul into his sketchbook to make sense of life in his troubled Harlem neighborhood and the loss of a close friend.

Sixteen-year-old Hazel, a stage IV thyroid cancer patient, has accepted her terminal diagnosis until a chance meeting with a boy at a cancer support group forces her to reexamine her perspective on love, loss and life.

C.J., who aspires to be as great a jazz musician as his uncle, searches for Uncle Click’s hat in preparation for an important photograph and inadvertently gathers some of the greatest musicians of 1950s Harlem to join in on the picture.

NONFICTION FOR YOUNGER READERS

This collection of poems about singing and music is paired with movement-filled photos of the Boys Choir of Harlem. Smith’s colorful resource uses catchy poems and vibrant photographs to explore different musical concepts, such as tempo, rhythm and harmony.