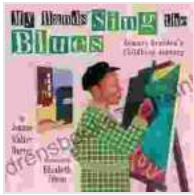


# Romare Bearden: A Childhood Journey Through Art and Identity



Romare Bearden, one of the most celebrated and influential African American artists of the 20th century, began his journey into the world of art at a tender age. His childhood experiences, marked by both joy and

adversity, shaped his artistic vision and laid the foundation for his transformative contributions to the art world.



## My Hands Sing the Blues: Romare Bearden's Childhood Journey by Jeanne Walker Harvey

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 11497 KB

Screen Reader: Supported

Print length : 40 pages



### Early Life and Artistic Influences

Romare Bearden was born in 1911 in Charlotte, North Carolina. His parents, Bessye and Howard Bearden, were prominent figures in the city's African American community. Howard Bearden worked as a barber and real estate agent, while Bessye Bearden was an accomplished pianist and music teacher.

Romare's early exposure to music and the arts ignited his imagination. At the age of six, he began taking piano lessons with his mother. His fascination with drawing soon followed, and he spent countless hours sketching and painting. Encouraged by his parents, Romare developed a keen eye for detail and a passion for capturing the beauty of the world around him.

### The Great Migration

In 1914, the Bearden family embarked on the Great Migration, a mass movement of African Americans from the rural South to the urban North.

They settled in Harlem, New York, a vibrant hub of African American culture and art.

Harlem provided Romare with a wealth of artistic inspiration. He attended the Harlem Boys' Club, where he met other aspiring artists and learned new techniques. He also immersed himself in the city's dynamic music scene, frequenting jazz clubs and studying the works of renowned musicians like Duke Ellington and Billie Holiday.

### **Formal Education and Artistic Development**

In 1932, Romare Bearden enrolled at the Art Students League of New York. Under the guidance of renowned artists such as Thomas Hart Benton and George Grosz, he honed his skills in painting, drawing, and printmaking.

Bearden's early works reflected the influences of both his Southern upbringing and his experiences in Harlem. He depicted scenes of rural life, jazz musicians, and urban landscapes with a distinctive style characterized by bold colors, simplified forms, and a strong sense of rhythm.

### **World War II and Political Activism**

Romare Bearden's artistic career was interrupted by the outbreak of World War II. He was drafted into the United States Army and served in Europe. The horrors of war left a profound impact on Bearden, influencing his later works and his commitment to social and political activism.

After the war, Bearden returned to New York and actively participated in the civil rights movement. He created powerful artworks that addressed issues of racial inequality, segregation, and the fight for human rights. His art became a vehicle for raising consciousness and galvanizing change.

## **The Collage Technique**

In the 1960s, Romare Bearden developed his signature collage technique, which became a defining characteristic of his artistic style. He meticulously cut out images from magazines, newspapers, and other sources and assembled them into intricate compositions that told complex stories about African American life and history.

Bearden's collages allowed him to combine a wide range of visual elements, including photographs, drawings, paint, and fabric. He drew inspiration from folklore, music, literature, and his own personal experiences. Through his collages, Bearden created a unique visual language that celebrated the diversity and resilience of the African American community.

## **Innovative Contributions and Legacy**

Romare Bearden's groundbreaking contributions to the art world extended beyond his own artistic practice. He co-founded the Cinque Gallery in 1969, which became a showcase for emerging African American artists. He also taught at various institutions, including the Yale School of Art and the City College of New York, mentoring and inspiring countless future artists.

Bearden's art has been exhibited in major museums and galleries around the world. His works are celebrated for their beauty, their historical significance, and their enduring relevance. Romare Bearden's legacy as an artist, activist, and educator continues to inspire and empower generations of artists, scholars, and audiences.

Romare Bearden's childhood journey was marked by both privilege and adversity, giving rise to an artistic vision that embraced the complexities of

the African American experience. Through his evocative paintings, powerful collages, and passionate advocacy, he created a body of work that not only reflected his time but also transcended it, becoming a timeless testament to the human spirit's resilience and the transformative power of art.



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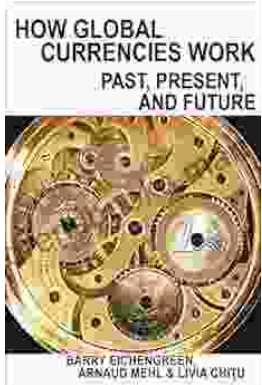
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