

Down These Mean Streets Research Project

Reading in Context:

The events that Piri Thomas describes in *Down These Mean Streets* are from another time and another place. In order to understand the story, it is important that we also understand the context from which it takes place. For the next couple of days we will be working in class to create research projects that depict different cultural aspects of *Down These Mean Streets*. Hopefully this will give us new insight into where Piri is coming from as he describes his life living in Spanish Harlem.

Research Project:

1. **Puerto Rican Culture** – You should include some understanding of Puerto Rico and what the culture is like in the physical country, but you should focus on what it is like to be Puerto Rican in America, particularly New York. What is the family life like? What are the morals and values? What is important? How do Puerto Ricans maintain their culture in America? What is it like to be Puerto Rican in America? What was life like for Puerto Ricans living in New York? What was it like economically?
2. **Spanish Harlem** – What exactly is Spanish Harlem? What was it like to live there? Remember the time period is the 1940s on up. Try to stay within 1940-1960. How did the depression affect Spanish Harlem? How did WWII affect it? What cultures were living there? How did they get along?
3. **Historical Timeline 1** – What was happening in America from 1940-1950? How could these events have impacted Piri and his family? How could these events have impacted New York and Spanish Harlem?
4. **Historical Timeline 2** – What was happening in America from 1950-1960? How could these events have impacted Piri and his family? How could these events have impacted New York and Spanish Harlem?

The Final Product:

Your final project should consist of the following:

- ✓ A visual aid of bullet points listing information to share with the class
 - i. This can be a movie, a poster, a slide show, overhead projector sheets, handouts, etc.
- ✓ A **MINIMUM** 5-minute presentation for the class outlining the information that you discovered
- ✓ A 4 page paper (typed, double-spaced, 12-point font, 1 inch margins)
- ✓ A bibliography of cited sources.

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Research Project:

5. **Puerto Rican Culture** – You should include some understanding of Puerto Rico and what the culture is like in the physical country, but you should focus on what it is like to be Puerto Rican in America, particularly New York. What is the family life like? What are the morals and values? What is important? How do Puerto Ricans maintain their culture in America? What is it like to be Puerto Rican in America? What was life like for Puerto Ricans living in New York? What was it like economically?
6. **Spanish Harlem** – What exactly is Spanish Harlem? What was it like to live there? Remember the time period is the 1940s on up. Try to stay within 1940-1960. How did the depression affect Spanish Harlem? How did WWII affect it? What cultures were living there? How did they get along?
7. **Historical Timeline 1** – What was happening in America from 1940-1950? How could these events have impacted Piri and his family? How could these events have impacted New York and Spanish Harlem?
8. **Historical Timeline 2** – What was happening in America from 1950-1960? How could these events have impacted Piri and his family? How could these events have impacted New York and Spanish Harlem?

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