



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
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## **Before the Hashtag: Reconstructing ‘Herstory’ Using Blackout Poetry**

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The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s served as the blueprint and inspiration for many seeking equity and access. Activists like Fannie Lou Hamer and Shirley Chisholm are examples of the historical voices of women advocates that served as catalysts for change. Today, a significant movement for change is #BlackLivesMatter which went viral in 2013 unifying many in protest to amplify calls for justice, police accountability, and an end to the systemic racism that is deeply embedded in the laws, practices, and institutions of our country. The three African American women founders of the hashtag, Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi walk in the same tradition as the foremothers of the movement; Tometi notes that they did not “create a historical movement, but instead come from a long legacy of resistance.” That legacy of resistance is the catalyst for this unit. My unit, titled “Before the Hashtag: Reconstructing ‘Herstory’ Using Blackout Poetry,” centers on African American women’s voices within a social justice curricular framework.

(Developed for ELA, grade 8; recommended for ELA, grades 9-12)

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