



Willie and Friends: Overcomers in the Land Stories by Faith Ringgold

Curriculum Unit 02.01.10
by Geraldine Martin

Introduction

African American Literature through the stories of Faith Ringgold becomes the basis of analysis for enrichment and encouragement to young children. Students are inspired to look beyond their struggles, problems, and surroundings. They are encouraged to look for ways in which they can become exceptional young people by facing the challenges in their daily lives.

In her book, *Tar Beach*, Ringgold takes young children on a dream ride through the eyes of Cassie Louise Lightfoot. Cassie looks down on Harlem as it was in 1939. Her father had to look for jobs in the winter as a blue collar construction worker because he was “colored” or considered a “half-breed Indian.” He was excluded from the union for the same reasons. The family is poor, and constantly faces prejudice because of their color. Cassie loves to lie on the tarred flat roof in the middle of the night and dream of her father being rich, holding a job that would make the family proud, and even owning The Union Building. Cassie is not going to let prejudice rule her future; she feels confident and capable of accomplishing anything. The book inspires children to master their own difficulties in their surroundings by dreaming and aspiring to one’s ambitions. They are encouraged to fly over their hardships. Are young children able to grasp and come up with meaningful conclusions about their surroundings and its consequential affects upon their lives? Are children able to dream on their own initiative or must they be taught to aspire and look beyond the challenges and difficulties in their surroundings? Suppose nobody challenges them or dares to put the spark within their souls!

With these thoughts in mind, I would like to explore strategies in which puppetry and the art of story-telling, via Faith Ringgold’s stories, can be integrated into a unit for helping young children explore their own feelings of hardships, and look for survival skills for overcoming those difficulties. The children will determine and discuss the hardships that face the characters in Faith Ringgold’s stories, along with the survival skills that they use to face their adversities. The children in turn will compare and contrast their own hardship with those of the characters. They will be challenged to dream of their future goals and aspirations coming up with suggestions for their own survival skills. The unit, whose primary emphasis is literature, will also integrate various art forms such as poetry, writing, song, drama, and crafts.

Why would I choose African American Literature as a basis for my unit of study? In my school at L. W. Beecher

where I teach first grade, 90 to 95% of the student body is from African American descent with the remaining population Hispanic/Latino and Caucasian. The class that I teach is a self-contained classroom with a wide variety of abilities in the six-to eight-year old age range. Coming from varying social-economic backgrounds, as well as academic abilities, the children exhibit a need for improved vocabulary and self-esteem. Many have a myriad of social-emotional problems that cloud their perceptions and hinder them in forming meaningful relationships. As a result, a lot of effort is lost through antagonism and anger.

More specifically, my unit will include activities suitable for children in kindergarten through third grades with an emphasis on literacy for the first grade child. The unit will cover curriculum areas such as social studies, science, music, drama, and art. This study is not bound by, but most probably will be used during the celebration of Black History in the month of February. It will be used to help align the curriculum across the three first grade classrooms in our building.

Objectives

My overall objectives for the course of my curriculum unit are:

(1) To provide an interactive experience through the use of puppetry and African

American literature:

- a. as individuals
- b. in small groups of two or four
- c. whole group instruction

(2) To help stimulate children's intellectual and cognitive development about the survival techniques that were used by the African American characters in Faith Ringgold's stories:

- a. through the written and illustrated works of Ringgold's books
- b. with creative puppetry
- c. by a drama production

(3) To improve the auditory reading and listening skills of participants through:

- a. written works of Ringgold's stories
- b. spoken language

(4) To encourage the development of self-assurance while participating in classroom activities:

- a. as listeners in a group setting
- b. as narrators reading stories and a play
- c. as actors in a play
- d. as members of an audience

(5) To connect the unit with our school's Comprehensive School Plan and the overall district's standards for curriculum:

- a. reading and language arts
- b. the arts -- theater, music, art
- c. science and social studies
- d. socialization skills

Strategies

How will the art of puppetry tie into my unit? The art of ventriloquism has been in my teaching repertoire for more than twenty-five years. As a result, many puppet characters have evolved along with my first grade curriculum. For example, Willie Sunday, a favorite in the classroom who helps to introduce stories and phonics lessons always misses letters and letter sounds to the squeals and delight of the children. Blue Monday, a compelling young fellow with a bold blue face and bright pink hair, reads stories to my children and helps them with story mapping, (a writing activity that helps with overall comprehension and organizes story into characters, setting, a problem in the story, and a solution to the problem.) Tuesday's Cup of Sugar, Alphabet Thursday, and Freddie Friday have all gained a stronghold in the classroom through their initiation of the writer's workshop, interactive writing, modeling classroom stories, and special awards initiatives. Wednesday Delight cannot be missed as she brings new poems for classroom discussion and reading on a weekly basis. All of the puppets contain personalities of their own, interesting voice variations and a flair for bright colorful appearances.

Although for the most part my puppets are full size ventriloquist puppets (dummies with either soft sculptured or hard plastic faces) hand puppets could just as easily be used for introducing stories and leading the class in discussion. If one chooses to omit puppetry entirely from the lessons, this will not weaken the unit. The teacher can easily adapt the lessons by introducing the stories in class.

With all of these characters in mind, Willie will be used for introducing Ringgold's stories and guiding the children in their discussions. Puppetry will also be used in the Extended Day Program (see appendix) and in our classroom art center where the children make their own puppets and write stories on a more spontaneous basis within a less structured setting. For example, the children are given examples or ideas and then given the option of choosing and making their own crafts and stories. In other words, the teacher is more of a facilitator in guiding the children once they have made their selection.

Faith Ringgold, growing up in Harlem during the depression knew what it was like to feel encouraged and valued for who she was amidst hardship and a prejudiced society. The characters in her stories aspire to their dreams by making them a reality. Rather than getting discouraged and giving up as a result of their surroundings, they take a magical twist, flying above the difficulties as Cassie and Be Be do in *Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky*. The characters soon learn that their journey is not devoid of risks and dangerous encounters; however, meeting Harriet Tubman and gaining strength from her bravery, they are able to celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of Harriet's flight to freedom from slavery. Harriet Tubman did not gain freedom for herself and so many others without perseverance. Are my children able to move away from instant gratification? Are they able to realize that in order to move beyond the difficulties and become a survivor one must capture the Harriet Tubman spirit -- the spirit of persevering, laboring, and yes flying as Cassie did so as not to become stuck in the tribulations and lose their sense of self-worth? The children will center their discussion on questions such as: What do you think inspired Harriet to be so brave and run for her freedom? Why did she risk her life for others and help them to obtain their freedom? How could you be brave like Harriet Tubman and help others? Do you take risks sometimes? How? Why?

Rosa Parks in Ringgold's book, *If a Bus Could Talk*, tells how a young girl aspires to freedom by not giving up her seat to a white man on a city bus and how through that act of courage and bravery others were able to stand up for their rights. Willie will ask the children how this act of bravery helped us today. The children will be asked to think about their future -- what they want to aspire to be when they grow up and what obstacles they may have to overcome to accomplish their aspiration. They will write about these goals and aspirations in a writer's workshop where the children write about a desired accomplishment.

Dinner at Aunt Connie's House introduces the children to twelve African American women who having empowered themselves through many hardships and obstacles, have given the African American community and the community at large contributions that have helped to enhance our society and make our world a better place. Mary McCleod Bethune who had to drop out of school to help support the family by picking cotton persevered and finally opened her school for girls with only \$5.00 in her pocket. Later she founded the Bethune-Cookman College and was a special adviser to Presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman. Willie will ask the children how they think Bethune was able to open a school with so little money? What sacrifices do you think she had to make personally to undertake such an adventure? What would you do if you had no money or very little money to obtain your goals in life? The children will also participate in a craft project making doll characters from the book. They will write about these characters in first person, and participate in a tea party telling about their lives from the stories they have read.

Examples of other Ringgold books, *The Invisible Princess*, *My Dream of Martin Luther King*, *Tar Beach*, and *Counting to Tar Beach* will be used with the children to discuss and write about their special place in life and their family's life. The children will interview family members, gaining information and writing stories to bring to class and share with their classmates.

A culminating activity will be a drama production based on the story, *If a Bus Could Talk*. (See the appendix.) The production will be rehearsed in our Extended Day Academy and produced on stage for a school-wide assembly sometime during the celebration of Black History month in February.

Through this unit, I want my children to be able to draw upon their inner strengths, enhancing their own academic skills and strengthening their overall social-emotional development. They will do this by listening to the stories of Faith Ringgold where the characters overcame obstacles of hatred in a prejudiced society, empowering themselves through their dreams and aspirations to become the heroes of the past and to make

a difference in the lives of others for freedom around the world. Thus, they become the heroes of the present and future by inspiring young people to look beyond their immediate struggles, dreaming to become whatever they want to be and then aspiring to accomplish that desire.

Stories by Faith Ringgold

Tar Beach

Cassie Louise Lightfoot, an eight year old child, shares her wishes and dreams in a story that takes place in 1939 on a tarred flat roof of her family's Harlem apartment building where her family and friends gather in the warm summer evening. Her family has difficulty managing on her father's meager salary due mainly to the impact of a prejudiced society that does not allow him to advance in his blue-collar construction job. Cassie loves to dream at night from the tarred flat roof that her father is rich and even owns the Union Building. She dreams of flying over the George Washington Bridge and wearing it as a diamond necklace around her neck. She sees the beauty in the skyscrapers and dreams of flying to all of the places that she admires.

Week One First Day

As an introduction to our unit, Willie will tell the children that we will be taking a journey with Faith Ringgold and her stories of African American heroes who have helped to shape America's history and make an impact on what we do and how we are treated in our society today. Willie will show the children a picture of Faith Ringgold from her book, *Tar Beach* and tell them that just like the little girl in the story, Cassie Louise Lightfoot, Ringgold grew up in Harlem also. Willie will ask the children questions about a tarred rooftop making sure that they know and understand that this is an area that many families use for gatherings while living in a high-rise apartment complex. He will show them pictures from the book, and explain that Faith Ringgold's family often went up on the rooftop during a hot summer's night. The children were allowed to stay up late lying on a mattress while their parents played cards and talked with the extended family. In her book, Mr. and Mrs. Honey had more money than Cassie's family. Faith Ringgold describes how those couples that did not have children always seemed to have more money. These couples would constantly refer to honey this, and honey that, so she named a couple in the book Mr. and Mrs. Honey. In *Tar Beach* Cassie dreams that her mother would be able to laugh and sleep late like Mrs. Honey and have ice cream every evening for dessert.

After helping to read the book in class, Willie will lead the class in a discussion of the story. Why do you think people in the city want "tar" beaches? Would you like to have your own "tar" beach? Why? What would you dream about if you had your own "tar" beach? Do you think Cassie felt better after she dreamed about flying around the city? Why? What problems do you think you have that you could fly above or even conquer some day? Willie will challenge the children to dream about what they can conquer or become some day if they will put their mind to it and determine with their attitude that they can triumph over anything.

If possible, as a follow up activity, the children will take a trip to New York City. They will be given the opportunity to visit the Empire State Building, and look for "tar" rooftops as they scan the horizon of the city. They will see the George Washington Bridge, and pick out other buildings that they think might have been in the story.

Week One Day Two

The children have been told to bring items for a day at the beach. They may bring a beach towel, sunglasses, sun block, a shovel and pail, etc. The children will spread their items on the floor, and pretend that they are Cassie, flying anywhere and doing anything that they wish. After a few moments of dreaming, they will write a story about where they have gone and what they have done. They will also write about their feelings, and why they have those feelings. These stories will be shared with their classmates and illustrated at their seats. The children's stories and illustrations will be bound into a big book and placed in our classroom library.

Week One Day Three

Faith Ringgold's story, *Tar Beach*, originated from a story quilt that she had made. The text was written on fabric strips around the border of the quilt with a large picture of a family enjoying a picnic on a roof top while two children, Cassie and her younger brother Be Be, are lying on a mattress. The border also contains scraps of fabric with bright colorful flowers that accentuate Cassie's dreams of rich and beautiful places.

A small committee of children will work on a large picture from the story that will be used in the center of our story quilt. The class will draw and color bright pictures of flowers. The children's version of Faith Ringgold's characters will be placed along with the flowers for the border of the quilt. The children will vote in class and decide to whom we will dedicate our quilt, and where it will be hung so that others may enjoy the finished product.

Week One Day Four

Two colorful easy books, *Counting to Tar Beach*, and *Cassie's Colorful Day* will be read by Willie to the children. In the book, *Counting to Tar Beach*, Ringgold depicts objects from the story, *Tar Beach* and uses sets for counting from one to ten. For example, on one page she has a drawing of four chairs. The page describes four chairs for Mommy, Daddy, and Mr. and Mrs. Honey to sit on while they are playing cards. On other pages she uses food for counting, and on the last page she has a drawing of a quilt with ten blocks in the center representing the number ten. All of the objects in the story are used by Cassie's family for having a picnic on the rooftop.

In the book, *Cassie's Colorful Day*, Cassie's dad is taking her out for a surprise treat. Ringgold describes the clothing they are wearing, objects they carry and see, and finally the special treat -- a strawberry ice cream sundae at her favorite ice cream parlor. The color words are accented in heavy bold print on each page.

Willie will lead the class in a discussion about colors. What colors do you like best in the book, *Cassie's Colorful Day*. Why? Is there anything about the colors that remind you of something at home, on the way to school, in school, etc.? Willie will tell the children that by mixing some colors, another color is produced. The children will be given the opportunity to experiment with colors at their art station during center time.

Week One Day Five

As a follow up activity, the children will make their own little published books modeled after the book, *Counting to Tar Beach*. They will think of a special theme. For example, they could choose a picnic at a park. On each page they will draw sets to correspond to numbers from one to ten. Each page will reflect their theme -- one table cloth to place our food, three plates with fried chicken, five cups of lemonade, etc.

Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky

Just like in *Tar Beach* Cassie Louise Lightfoot returns to flying in the skies. Cassie and her younger brother Be Be soar above mountain tops which look like rock candy and oceans like tiny cups of tea, and meet the Underground Railroad train. They encounter a tiny woman who is wearing a conductor's uniform. The woman is Harriet Tubman who takes Cassie and Be Be through the horrifying world of a slave plantation and a terrifying journey of escape.

Week Two Day One

Faith Ringgold gives a historical account of Harriet Tubman at the end of her book, *Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky*. Willie will show a picture from the book of Harriet Tubman, and tell the children that she was born a slave in 1820 in Bucktown, Maryland. Harriet's father taught her how to survive in the woods by hunting, swimming, and imitating bird calls. Her mother taught her nursing skills, using herbs for medicine found from common plants in the woods. Although Harriet Tubman could neither read or write, with the skills that her parents taught to her she was able to escort over 300 slaves to freedom in her famous Underground Railroad, to the anger and bitterness of the plantation owners of that time. She made 19 trips to escort the slaves to freedom, and although she narrowly escapes, not one person was lost. Her trips included her mother and father and all of the brothers and sisters.

Willie will tell the children that in the story they will hear about a circle of women all dressed in white surrounding Cassie in the sky. Faith Ringgold explains in her historical account that Harriet Tubman had a dream while ill and near death from an injury inflicted by her slave master. In her dream, Tubman was helped to escape by a circle of ladies dressed in white. Ringgold used this dream in her story, as well as the custom of throwing a quilt over a rooftop to bring good luck. In the story, a quilt is thrown over the roof of a house to let the slaves know it was safe to come out of the woods and enter the house for hiding.

Willie will assist in reading the story and leading a discussion with the children. On numerous occasions having successfully escaped and gaining her freedom Harriet Tubman narrowly escaped from being recaptured. Why do you think after receiving her freedom she went back to the plantations and risked her life to save so many people? It was against the law to teach a slave the skills for reading and writing. Some slaves, however, learned to read and write either on their own initiative or from a slave owner who taught them for their own economic gain or on rare occasions out of the kindness of their heart. Harriet was one of the unfortunate slaves who could neither read nor write. Even though she could neither read nor write would you call Harriet Tubman unintelligent? Why? Do you think it would have been an easy task to plan escape routes for the slaves to travel on the Underground Railroad? Why or why not? It was against the law to harbor runaway slaves. Therefore, the people who helped the slaves to escape were risking their lives also. Would you have wanted to risk your life to hide the slaves? Why or why not? How would you have helped where would you have hid the slaves?

Week Two Day Two

The children will watch an animated cartoon style video about Harriet Tubman. The video focuses upon Harriet's daring plan of escape for her family and her deep faith in God as she helps so many escape the horrible chains of slavery. The selflessness and great risks that Harriet took regardless of her personal safety will surely inspire the children to accomplish their very best in the tasks that seem difficult in their young lives. Many times the myriad of social-economic problems that the children bring to the classroom each day overshadow the tasks set before them in first grade. It is like a cloud that hinders them from accomplishing their very best or from producing at all.

After watching this inspiring account of Harriet Tubman risking all for her freedom for so many others, the children will be challenged to write a first person story in which they describe helping someone escape to freedom. The children will discuss possible solutions for forming an escape route, and then write their own account and illustrate the story.

The Invisible Princess

In a tiny village called Village of Visible, in the deep south, there live two slaves called, Mama and Papa Love. They do not want any children of their own for fear of what the slave master Captain Pepper, will do to their child. However, one day, the Great Lady of Peace came to tell Mama Love that she will have a child -- a baby girl. The Great Lady of Peace promises Mama Love that her girl will be a princess and bring peace, love, and freedom to the Village of Visible. Mama Love begs the Great Lady of Peace to hide her baby and protect her. Great Lady of Peace asks Prince Night to conceal her from all human eyes. One day Patience, the slave master's daughter, who is blind, is playing in the cotton fields, and sees a little girl about her age. She is so happy that she can see the little girl and runs home to tell her father. Captain Pepper becomes very angry and wants to harm Mama and Papa Love. Patience finds the Invisible Princess and warns her of Captain Pepper's plans. Through the help of the Queen of the Bees, anyone who is stung by the Queen or her army and eats the honey cakes becomes invisible. Captain Pepper discovers that not only is nobody in the cotton fields, but his own daughter, Patience, is invisible too. Finally, Captain Pepper is sorry for all of the cruelty and pain he has brought to the slaves. He begs for forgiveness and wants to be stung by the bees so that he too can eat the honey cakes and enter the Invisible Village of Peace, Freedom, and Love.

Week Two -- Day Three

After assisting in the reading of *The Invisible Princess*, Willie will help to lead the children in a class discussion. Do you think that Faith Ringgold used any historical accounts to tell the story like she did in *Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky*? What historical account did she use? How was the Invisible Princess like Harriet Tubman? How was she different? Did you like the character Captain Pepper in the story? Did you change your mind about Captain Pepper at the end of the story? Why or why not? Would you like to enter the Invisible Village of Peace, Freedom, and Love? Why? Do you think that by becoming invisible your problems would go away? How? Is there a better way to solve problems than by becoming invisible? Tell us a better way.

At the end of her story, Ringgold shares a poem she wrote about the Invisible Village. We will write a class poem modeled after Ringgold's poem. We will give our village a name, tell who lives there and what we do in our village. Ringgold dedicates the poem to the "freedom of every man and woman and every girl and boy." We will decide to whom and what we want to dedicate in our poem.

Week Two -- Day Four

Today Willie will tell the children that they are going to write a story about their own Invisible Village. What will your village be called? What will it look like? Who will live in your village? What will you do in your village? How will you feel in your village? Why? The children will illustrate their stories, and their finished products will be displayed on a bulletin board in the school hallway.

My Dream of Martin Luther King

Ringgold writes the story in first person about a young girl who is watching a television program about Dr. Martin Luther King. She falls asleep and dreams about Dr. King when he was a child about six years of age. He encounters all kinds of prejudice including a time when he is arrested and put in jail for demonstrating for freedom and justice with a group of peaceful demonstrators. While his mother visits him in jail she holds him and tells young King that someday he will find a way to change things. However, she tells him that he will not find a way to change things today because it is Sunday and they must go to church to hear his father preach. After this part in the story, Dr. King becomes a minister and leads many groups in protest of injustice to the African American community. His famous speech at the nation's capital is woven into the story, as well as his death and the nation's mourning.

Week Two -- Day Five

Willie will assist in the reading of the story, *My Dream of Martin Luther King*, and lead in a discussion of the story. He will tell the class that in her book, Faith Ringgold tells about the history of the civil rights movement - Dr. King organizes the group, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, who encourage a boycott against segregated buses, sit-ins at segregated lunch counters, demonstrations for decent housing, and voter registration for Black people, along with jobs for all people. Willie will ask the children how they feel Dr. King made a difference for them today. Dr. King encouraged the people to be peaceful in their demonstrations. Do you think this was the best way or should he have used violence? Why or why not? Suppose someone hurts your feelings by calling you unkind names -- what is the best way to react? How can you be peaceful today and still change things that are not right?

Two other books, *Happy Birthday Martin Luther King*, and *Martin Luther King, Jr.* will be read in class as resource books for more information about the history of Dr. King.

Week Three -- Day One

Today the children will be asked to write an essay. They will use the theme "I have a dream..." The children will reflect on how they can become better citizens and help the world to become a better place. They may draw from Dr. King's strengths in their writing. For example, Dr. King stood firm for justice even though he was treated unfairly. He thought about making a difference for others, and took risks so that people everywhere could be treated equally. How can you take a risk so that you can make a difference for people everywhere? The essays will be illustrated by the children and displayed in the school hallway.

If a Bus could Talk: The Story of Rosa Parks

As a young girl Rosa Parks walks many miles to her one-room school building in Alabama while the white children ride to their school on a bus. Late Rosa becomes old enough to have a job and she rides on the city bus. However, she may not sit in the same row with a white person. One day, Rosa is asked to give up her seat to a white man because there are not enough seats on the bus. Rosa is courageous and refuses to give up her seat. The bus driver calls the police, and Rosa is arrested and taken to jail for breaking the segregation laws.

Week Three -- Day Two

As Willie assists in reading the story, the children soon discover that in Ringgold's book, *If a Bus could Talk: The Story of Rosa Parks*, a bus does the talking. The book helps the children to understand through the character Marcie that Rosa Parks is the mother of the Civil Rights movement. At the end of Marcie's magical

ride she meets Rosa Parks at a birthday party held in her honor. Willie will lead the class in a discussion about Rosa Parks' bravery in standing up or rather sitting down for freedom. What makes Rosa Parks an outstanding hero for our time? How do you think her act of courage has helped people around the world? Do you think you could be brave like Rosa Parks knowing that you might be arrested and put into jail? Was it a good thing for Rosa Parks to break the law which said that an African-American must give up their seat to a white person on the bus? Why?

Puppetry will be used in our art center where the children make their own puppets and write stories on a more spontaneous basis within a less structured setting. The children will be given instructions (i.e., make a puppet and write a story about Rosa Parks.) After the child has decided which character they want to make into a puppet -- Rosa Parks, Marcie, people on the bus, etc. then the teacher becomes a facilitator and helps to guide the child as they produce their project.

In a follow-up activity the children will take part in a drama production based upon Ringgold's book. (See appendix.) The production will be rehearsed during the After School Program and take place in school when classes are asked to participate in a Black History Assembly. At the assembly, the children will sing a Black Spiritual called, "Oh Freedom." Rosa Parks tells Marcie that her mother used to sing this old Negro Spiritual and that it inspired her belief in freedom.

Another follow-up activity will include a writer's workshop where the children write about what they want to become when they grow up. They will be asked to think about a future profession to which they would like to aspire and the training needed to accomplish their goal. They will also think about obstacles that they may have to overcome, and what they will do to become successful. These written works along with the other writings from the unit will be placed in a special folder in the classroom.

Dinner at Aunt Connie's House

Melody is a little girl who visits her Aunt Connie and Uncle Bates in their beautiful house on the beach in Sag Harbor, Long Island. Lonnie, an adopted son of Aunt Connie and Uncle Bates, along with Melody, find Aunt Connie's paintings in the attic. To their surprise the paintings can talk. Twelve African-American women (Rosa Parks, Fannie Lou Hamer, Mary McCleod Bethune, Augusta Savage, Dorothy Dandridge, Zora Neale Hurston, Maria W. Stewart, Bessie Smith, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Marian Anderson, and Madame G. J. Walker) tell their stories to Melody and Lonnie. Just as they finish Uncle Bates finds the children in the attic and asks them to assist in taking the paintings downstairs to hang in the dining room. The surprise paintings are revealed to the family who has sat down to a dinner of roast turkey, duck, cranberry sauce, corn bread, stuffing, macaroni and cheese, candied sweet potatoes, and fresh greens.

Week Three -- Day Three

After the story has been read by Willie, he will lead the children in a class discussion. Did the paintings really talk in the story? How did they talk to Melody and Lonnie? Tell us about a favorite painting and what the person in the painting accomplished. After telling about their favorite person, the children will make their own paintings and write what their person is saying.

Week Three -- Days Four and Five

Today the children will make a doll character out of paper. They will use a pattern and cut two pieces. They

will decide which character they would like their doll to represent, and design their doll to look like the character. They may look at the book, *Dinner at Aunt Connie's House* or other books for ideas about designing their dolls. They may also look up their favorite character on the Internet at their computer station, and gather additional ideas for their dolls, along with factual information. The dolls will be pasted and stuffed to give them dimension. The children will write short stories based upon facts from Ringgold's book or facts that they have read about on the Internet. After the dolls and writings have been completed, the children will read their stories with their dolls at a tea party.

A follow up activity will involve parents or grandparents from our classroom. Parents will be asked to come into our classroom and share an obstacle from their young days and how they overcame the problem. They will also be asked to share about their careers or dreams for the future, and how they overcame any obstacles or how they are working on fulfilling those dreams.

Standards

This unit will address the following *Language Arts Standards* for grade one as are approved by the New Haven Board of Education.

Content Standard 1.0: Reading

Demonstrate successful reading behaviors.

Students will select a variety of books for enjoyment and information.

Demonstrate strategic reading skills.

Students will preview and predict a text.

Students will discuss what they already know about the topic.

Students will identify key information and supportive details.

Students will compare similar topics and characters from familiar texts.

Students will distinguish real events from make-believe.

Students will show understanding by responding orally, in writing, through technology, and/or through the arts.

Content Standard 2.0: Writing

Demonstrate successful writing behaviors.

- Students will establish a purpose by writing and make a plan.
- Students will use complete sentences, margins, headings, and correct spacing.
- Students will check for correct spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.
- Students will exhibit, share, and/or publish their writing.
- Students will keep a folder that demonstrates progress in writing.

Content Standard 3.0: Speaking

Demonstrate strategic speaking skills.

Students will speak courteously and respectfully to all persons.

Students will speak in a clear voice and pronounce words correctly.

Students will retell stories and personal experiences, read information aloud and make presentations.

Students will share information and participate in discussion groups.

Assessments

The completed written works by the children serves as an assessment for the unit. In addition to the written stories, the teacher uses the rubric found at the end of the unit to evaluate oral and written responses. Students use the rubric for self-evaluation.

Lesson Plans

The following lesson plans summarize in a condensed manner what has already been written in the narrative.

Lesson one

Story: *Tar Beach*

Curriculum Unit 02.01.10

Content Standard 2.0: Writing

Demonstrate successful writing behaviors.

Content Standard 3.0: Speaking

Demonstrate strategic speaking skills.

Objectives: Students will...

reflect upon a dream for going anywhere they wish.

produce a written response.

share their written response with classmates.

Procedures:

1. The children will prepare for a beach party in the classroom. They will spread their items, (e.g. beach towel, sunglasses, sun block, a shovel and pail, etc.) on the classroom floor.

2. The children will be given a few moments to lie on their beach towels and pretend they are flying anywhere they wish like Cassie and Be Be in the story.

3. The children will return to their seats and write a story about where they have gone and what they have done. They will also write about their feelings, and why they have those feelings. They will illustrate their stories.

4. The children will go back to their beach towels and share their stories with their classmates.

Lesson Two

Story: *The Invisible Princess*

Content Standard 1.0: Reading

Demonstrate strategic reading skills.

Content Standard 2.0: Writing

Demonstrate successful writing behaviors.

Objectives: Students will...

listen to a story read to them by Willie (a classroom puppet.)

interact in a group discussion.

produce a written response.

1. Willie will assist in reading *The Invisible Princess*.
2. Willie will lead the children in a class discussion. Questions for discussion: Do you think that Faith Ringgold used any historical accounts to tell the story like she did in *Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky*? What historical account did she use? How was the Invisible Princess like Harriet Tubman? How was she different? Did you like the character, Captain Pepper in the story? Did you change your mind about Captain Pepper at the end of the story? Why or why not? Would you like to enter the Invisible Village of Peace, Freedom, and Love. Why? Do you think that by becoming invisible your problems would go away? How? Is there a better way to solve problems than by becoming invisible? Tell us a better way.
3. Willie will read the poem at the end of the story.
4. The class will write a poem modeled from Ringgold's poem.
5. They will do a shared reading in class of the poem.

Lesson Three

Story: *Dinner at Aunt Connie's House*

Content Standard 2.0: Writing

Demonstrate successful writing.

Content Standard 3.0: Speaking

Demonstrate strategic speaking skills.

Objectives: Students will...

make a doll character from the book, *Dinner at Aunt Connie's House*.
write factual information about their character.
share their written work at a tea party.

Procedures:

1. The children will choose a favorite character from the story.
2. The children will make a paper doll depicting their favorite character. They will use a pattern and cut two pieces. The dolls will be stuffed with paper. The children may look in *Dinner at Aunt Connie's House* in order to

obtain ideas for making the doll (e.g. facial features, hair, clothing, etc.)

3. The children will search for factual information about their favorite character on the Internet.

4. The children will write a story about their character.

5. The children will share their stories in class at a tea party.

Appendix

Extended Day Academy

The Extended Day Academy meets after school for approximately six to eight weeks, two days a week for an hour session. Children who wish to enroll in this program do so on a voluntary basis with their parent's permission. Enrollment is on a first come basis until it reaches approximately fifteen children.

First term's children will study the art of puppetry. They will make their own puppet creations and study three falsetto voices. *Details for creating puppets and using falsetto voices can be found in one of my previous units. The children will choose a falsetto voice that is suitable for their puppet. Stories will be written in class based upon a personal experience or a fictional one where their character was treated unfairly. The stories will provide a survival technique for turning the situation into a positive experience.

Second term's children will study the art of acting on a school stage and rehearsing a play suitable for production. Voice projection will be taught so that the audience will be able to hear their lines. The children will be taught how to project their voices and at the same time maintain their voice quality. Mime will be taught through a series of activities whereby the children are asked to think of an event in their lives (something special that brings feelings of happiness.) The children will project facial expressions and body movements for a few moments, freeze those movements, and then talk about their experiences. We will look at the pictures of the characters *If a Bus Could Talk*, and discuss their facial expressions and body movements. After reading our play, we will use mime to express the various expressions and body movements that we think our characters should display on stage.

The following play was adapted from *If a Bus Could Talk* by Faith Ringgold. While this play is based on situations from Ringgold's book, the language is my own.

*"The Use of Puppetry to Increase Self-worth through the Windows of Poetry," *Recent American Poetry: Expanding the Canon*, Vol., IV, 1991.

Scene I

Narrator: A strange looking bus pulled to Marcie's school bus stop. The bus had a face and it smiled at Marcie as the door opened. Marcie did not know if she wanted to enter the bus, but she did not want to be late for school. She saw that there were many passengers already on the bus. As Marcie entered the bus she saw that the bus did not have a driver, but that the bus did the talking.

(Children are seated in rows on chairs to form a make believe bus. Marcie comes on stage to where a child is holding a sign that reads, "Bus Stop.")

Bus: Come on in Marcie. Do not be afraid.

Marcie: Oh dear I think I am on the wrong bus. I don't know anybody, and this bus doesn't have a driver. Let me out! Oh dear, the door is shut, and the bus is moving.

Passengers: The passengers are reading newspapers and talking to each other.

Marcie: I think I'll take this seat.

Passenger: Don't take that seat Marcie. That seat is reserved for Rosa Parks.

Passengers: Repeat in a chorus: Amen, Amen.

Marcie: Please tell me about this bus.

Scene II

Narrator: (Three children portray the family. One child holds a doll portraying Rosa's baby brother.) The bus began to tell Marcie the story of Rosa Parks. Rosa McCauley was the oldest child who was born to James and Leona McCauley in Tuskegee, Alabama. Her father left the family with Rosa's Grandparents on a small farm while he went up North looking for work to provide for his family. Rosa worked hard helping her grandfather on the farm.

Grandmother: One day Rosa told me that a little white boy told her that he was going to punch her. Rosa picked up a stone and told the boy that if he dared to punch her she would hit him. I was afraid that one day this would get Rosa in trouble.

Rosa: (Portrays a teacher with a few children sitting in front of her.) When I was six years old I went to school with sixty children in one room and one teacher. Our school went to the sixth grade, and it was only open for five months each year. The white school went to the twelfth grade, and was open for nine months. Also, the white children took a bus to school, but the African American children had to walk a long way.

Narrator: (Boy and girl portray Rosa getting married.) Rosa married Raymond Parks. He was very active in helping people for their rights. He helped four young men to get out of jail for a crime they did not do. He also helped Rosa to get her rights to vote.

Scene III

Narrator: (The make believe bus is back on stage.) On December 1, 1955 Rosa Parks wanted to ride the bus home from work. The law said that African Americans must sit in the back of the bus. If there was room near the front for African Americans and a white person wanted the seat, the African Americans had to give up their seat and stand. The same bus driver that had been mean to Rosa before and told her to get off the bus after paying her fare was driving the bus.

Rosa: (Gets on the bus and sits down.)

Bus Driver: You have to get up and let my friend sit there.

Rosa: I will not give up my seat.

Passengers: Amen, Amen.

Bus Driver: I will call the police and have you arrested.

Police: (Come and take Rosa off the stage.)

Scene IV

Narrator: Because of Rosa's courage a bus boycott was planned in Montgomery, Alabama. Dr. Martin Luther King gave a speech about the bus boycott.

Dr. King: We are tired of being treated unfairly and with disrespect.

Narrator: The people of Montgomery did not ride the bus for 381 days. Now the busses were almost empty and the bus company was losing money. Finally on November 13, 1956, the law was changed. The new law said that African Americans could sit anywhere on the busses. They did not have to give up their seats.

Scene V

Marcie: (Rosa and Marcie come onto the stage.) I want to thank you for being so courageous and not giving up your seat on the bus.

Rosa: You are welcome Marcie. Remember you can be anything you want to be if you do your best. Let's all sing: "O Freedom Over Me." (The children's choir ends by singing this spiritual.)

*It is permissible for teachers to copy this play for classroom distribution.

Teacher's Bibliography

Carter, Polly. *Harriet Tubman*. Englewood Cliffs: Kirchoff/Wohleberg, 1990. A great resource book, and a book that can easily be read to young children. The colored drawings add a lot of meaning to the text.

Green, Richard L. *A Gift of Heritage: Historic Black Women*. Chicago: Empak Enterprises, Inc., 1990. The book contains writings on famous Black women who have felt the pressure for survival in our society. Some of the featured women are Mary McLeod Bethune, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Madame C. J. Walker, etc.

Katz, William Loren. *Black Women of the Old West*. New York: Simon and Schuster Children's Publishing Division, 1995. This inspiring book tells how African American women helped to fight against white bigotry and lived inspiring lives on the western frontier.

McKissack, Fredrick and Patricia. *Frederick Douglass: Leader Against Slavery*. Springfield: Enslow Publishers, Inc., 1991. A great informational book about Frederick Douglass that can be read and understood by young children. Some of the advanced readers will be able to read this book on their own. A good glossary in the back of the book pertaining to the Civil War era.

McKissack, Fredrick and Patricia. *Mary McLeod Bethune*. New York: Children's Press Inc., 1992. A great book giving information for the teacher on the life of Mary McLeod Bethune. The pictures will be of interest also in telling her story.

McKissack, Fredrick and Patricia. *Sojourner Truth: A Voice for Freedom*. Springfield: Enslow Publishers, Inc., 1992. A great book about the life of Sojourner Truth that can be read to young children. The drawings are beautiful and give good insight into Sojourner Truth's life and how it looked during her day.

McLoone, Margo. *Mary McLeod Bethune*. Mankato: Capstone Press, 1997. The information, dates, and pictures help to tell the story of Mary McLeod Bethune. A great book to read to young children.

Wheeler, Jill C. *Coretta Scott King*. Minneapolis: Abdo Consulting Group, Inc. 1992. The book gives a lot of information about Coretta Scott King, wife of Martin Luther King, Jr. during their journey together for the justice of all people in our society. There are many historic pictures throughout the book of the King's lives together.

Woodson, Jacqueline. *Martin Luther King, Jr. and His Birthday*. Englewood Cliffs: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1990. This book gives a lot of information that the young child can understand. It is written in story form and contains a lot of colorful pictures throughout the story.

Children's Bibliography

Coles, Robert. *The Story of Ruby Bridges*. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1995. A delightful story about Ruby Bridges as the first black child to attend an all white school in New Orleans. The story portrays a beautiful child who displays faith and courage amidst hatred and prejudice.

Marlowe, Sam. *Learning About Dedication from the Life of Frederick Douglass*. New York: The Rosen Publishing Group, Inc., 1996. Children can learn so much from this character building book about a slave and how amidst severe hardship he was able to survive and help others to freedom.

Marzollo, Jean. *Happy Birthday, Martin Luther King*. New York: Scholastic, Inc., A beautiful book written for young children about the life and times of Dr. King. The book begins with his birth in 1929 and ends with his death in 1968.

Pinkney, Jerry and Schroeder, Alan. *Minty: A Story of Young Harriet Tubman*. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1996. A beautiful story about the childhood of Harriet Tubman. The story shows young Tubman as a bold child who later suffers for her boldness. The colorful pictures add a lot of warmth to the story.

Ringgold, Faith. *Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky*. New York: Crown Publisher's, Inc., 1992. Ringgold writes in poetic style as she tells the story of Harriet Tubman through Cassie and Be Be. The book gives an account of the chilling realities of slavery and the joyful celebrations of freedom.

Ringgold, Faith. *Cassie's Colorful Day*. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1999. Pictures are taken from Ringgold's book, *Tar Beach*. Cassie is going on an outing with her father. An easy reader for young children filled with bright colors.

Ringgold, Faith. *Counting to Tar Beach*. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1999. The book is based on Ringgold's *Tar Beach* where Cassie and Be Be are going on a magical picnic. The book is a counting book and is filled with bright colorful pictures from the picnic beginning from one to ten.

Ringgold, Faith. *Dinner at Aunt Connie's House*. New York: Scholastic, 1993. Ringgold's story is based on her story quilt that she painted in 1986. The painting is called, "The Dinner Quilt," and tells a story of famous African-American women such as Rosa Parks, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Marian Anderson, Madame C. J. Walker, etc.

Ringgold, Faith. *If a Bus Could Talk: The Story of Rosa Parks*. New York: Simon and Schuster Books for young Readers, 1999. Ringgold's book tells the story of Rosa Parks through Marcie's magical ride on a talking bus, the Rosa Parks bus. At the end of the story Marcie meets Rosa Parks at a birthday party. In this story the reader discover why Rosa Parks is the mother of the Civil Rights Movement. Ringgold weaves a Black Spiritual into the story.

Ringgold, Faith. *My Dream of Martin Luther King*. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1995. Faith Ringgold tells the story of Martin Luther King in first person through a dream. Not only does she tell the story of Dr. King but she gives the history of the civil rights movement. Beautiful illustrations in vivid colors.

Ringgold, Faith. *The Invisible Princess*. New York: Random House, Inc., 1999. A story of conflict between a village of slaves and their evil plantation owner. The story takes on magical qualities as the slaves become invisible through the help of Mama and Papa Love's invisible princess and the bees. The plantation owner's daughter also joins the invisible slaves in the magical village of freedom and peace, and the evil plantation owner eventually repents and joins the group.

Ringgold, Faith. *Tar Beach*. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1991. Cassie Louise Lightfoot is on the rooftop of their apartment building where her family often has gatherings on a hot summer's evening. She dreams that she is free to go

wherever she wants to go for the rest of her life. One evening her dream comes true and she flies above the George Washington Bridge and other tall buildings. The book contains beautiful pictures with vivid color.

Teacher Resources

"Fun with Character Voices" -- The video gives examples of using various character voices with puppets.

Contact:

One way Street, Inc.

P.O. Box 2398

Littleton, CO 80161

Phone: (303)790-1188

"Harriet Tubman" - An animated cartoon style video about the life of Harriet Tubman.

Contact:

Warner-Nest Animation

6100 Colwell Blvd.

Irving, TX 755039

Phone: 1-800-452-4485

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