



## **More than Rhythm and Rhyme: An Acoustic Trek through the African American Experience**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 11.03.10  
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For many African American students in inner-city public schools, reading and reading comprehension prove challenging. Related test scores for these students are often disproportionately low as compared to their white counterparts. By grade three, young learners are immersed in children's literature predominantly written in narrative form; they are expected to put scaffolded knowledge into action to make sense of text. However, a number of students – again disproportionately African American – continue to fall short of reaching that goal. Should we consider modifying our approach to how we use literature with children in the elementary grades, particularly in third grade?

An important reality to consider is that the poetic voice is very much a part of black expression. Could educators thus zero in on the elements of poetry and the poetic voice to enhance reading and reading comprehension skills for these children? Could teaching poetry from a culturally-responsive perspective serve as an empowering springboard to enhance reading and reading comprehension skills for all children? I contend, "Yes!" Targeted at students in grade three, but modifiable for upper elementary and middle grades, this unit examines this possibility.

(Recommended for English Language Arts and Social Development, grades 3-5)

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