



Yale-New Haven  
Teachers Institute®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2021 Volume I: The Social Struggles of Contemporary Black Art

---

## The Journey of the Artist: Story-telling to Transform

Guide for Curriculum Unit 21.01.06  
by Melissa Dailey

This unit will be used with the AP English Literature students, but it is primarily written to cater to high school English students. My students have shared that music has been key to getting through difficulties in their lives during the pandemic or otherwise. It inspired this idea of the healing power of art with the guiding text “Sonny’s Blues” by James Baldwin. We will read “Sonny’s Blues” by James Baldwin and *Citizen: An American Lyric* by Claudia Rankine. Some of the artwork we will look at includes works from Trenton Doyle Hancock, David Leggett, Nick Cave, Kara Walker, Zanele Muholi, Bisa Butler, and Yinka Shonibare.

The students will explore the literary and art materials to analyze their transformative and/or healing elements. Through this exploration, students will sharpen their own voices and find within themselves a cause worth expressing for, fighting for and/or healing from. They will work on creating playlists as we travel through the texts and artwork. They will also create a piece of artwork with an artist’s statement that we can publish in a magazine representing the whole class’s effort and aspirations.

(Developed for English 4 and AP English Literature, grade 12; recommended for English, grades 9-12)

---

<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

©2021 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University  
For terms of use visit <https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/terms>