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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2021 Volume III: How to Do Things with Maps

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## **Distance, Location, and Movement in *Sing, Unburied, Sing***

Guide for Curriculum Unit 21.03.03  
by Aron Meyer

This unit introduces students to cartography as a strategy for facilitating comprehension of complex novels and literary elements. As an English teacher, I frequently use graphic organizers to help students arrange and understand material more clearly. At times, however, traditional organizers are inadequate for students to understand complicated, abstract literary concepts, particularly when using a challenging anchor text. This is where introducing mapping concepts can be especially useful.

The core novel I have selected for this unit, Jesmyn Ward's *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, features narrative and structural techniques that may be unfamiliar to students: alternating points of view, multiple timelines, and characters who inhabit different planes of existence from one another. While these components of the novel can be difficult, particularly for reluctant or developing readers, this unit is designed to build students' confidence and comprehension strategies by having them create maps that organize and visualize information from the text. By visually rendering complicated material and abstract concepts, students will become more confident readers, develop skills that can be applied to other difficult texts that they encounter, and be better prepared to make meaning of sophisticated material.

(Developed for English, grade 12; recommended for English, grade 12)

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