



## Portraits: The Black Experience in American Culture

Curriculum Unit 87.03.03  
by Doreen Peterson

### *Introduction*

There is perhaps no better time to explore in literature the plight and struggles of Black Americans than the present. The literature of the black experience, as expressed by black writers, is rich in details in describing the dramas of everyday living. These writers who sought to bring to life the melodrama and the pathos, the joy and the exhilaration, the fears and the angers, of the black experience could not have imagined that so much would change and yet so very little.

The Harlem Renaissance writers began the task of introducing America to itself—that part of itself that had been denied access into the cultural and economical mainstream. For so long Black Americans had been denied and misunderstood. For so long they had been kept apart from society as a whole, seeking identity, to be legitimized instead of ostracized. These writers perhaps did not realize what an awesome task they had undertaken. Perhaps, because of that, the lack of fear to accept the challenge, their works are a testimony not only to the people they chose to write about, but also of themselves, for what they attempted to do. Equipped only with paper, pen and words, they dared to dispel the false ideas and misconceptions of the black experience that had existed for so long.

From the signing of the Declaration of Independence up to the recent re-celebration of the Statue of Liberty, many writers have expounded in great detail on various styles and experiences of American Culture, past and present. The most poignant portraits, as depicted by prominent black writers, seek to challenge the conscience and values of those living in this country through prose and poetry, fiction and non-fiction. Many contemporary issues are explored. This in itself is amazing because many of these writers wrote of things in the early part of the 20th century that today, 1987, are just as contemporary, just as relevant. Langston Hughes poem “Harlem” is just as dismal and painful today as it was when it was first penned. Sadly enough the pain still exists. Lorraine Hansberry writing many years later, broke geographical barriers with her play *A Raisin In The Sun*. This play could have just as easily been written about New York’s Harlem or New Haven’s projects, as it was about Chicago’s South Side.

It is for this reason, that I chose in this unit to introduce students to black writers who have written of their experiences both in fiction and non-fiction. The writers include novelists, playwrights and poets. For this unit students will be looking at the works of Lorraine Hansberry, Richard Wright, Maya Angelou, Langston Hughes, Nikki Giovanni, Nella Larson and Gwendolyn Brooks. I feel that these writers are representative of the finest

that black literature has to offer.

The majority of students I work with are black and in addition to being culturally as well as economically deprived, they are also Learning Disabled with some social and emotional problems. They are indeed doubly handicapped. In teaching them, I find that bonding or “bridging” is extremely important. It is not enough for these students to read this literature just for enjoyment’s sake, though that is important too. Hopefully they will see that the stories they are reading are “their stories,” “their struggles,” and that the search for identity never ceases. This unit conceived with my students in mind is not limited in use to minority or disadvantaged students. I feel that the writers I have selected offer an abundance of knowledge and creativity. I believe any student would benefit with the wealth of information these writers have to offer. Hopefully through their readings students will be more empathetic to the differences and difficulties of others.

### *Objectives*

This unit will examine the following specific works: *A Raisin In the Sun*— by Lorraine Hansberry, excerpts from Maya Angelou’s *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings* , Richard Wright’s *Black Boy* and Nella Larson’s *Passing* , and assorted poetry by Langston Hughes, Nikki Giovanni, Gwendolyn Brooks and Maya Angelou.

I have four objectives in teaching this unit. The first objective is to introduce my students to the seven writers I have selected. I feel it is important for them to have a brief biographical sketch of each writer as well as an understanding of the times in which the writers lived and wrote. This will hopefully give insight into the works that are being discussed and the impact the works had in our cultural mainstream.

The second objective will be to examine specific works which look at the black struggle to survive in our American culture. What were the obstacles? The students will be able to see that struggle is nothing new and indeed, has even strengthened many blacks living in our society.

The third objective will be to examine the search for self-identity. Reading the experiences of other people in similar situations may help the students to understand and deal with their own lives.

Finally, the students will be given the opportunity to examine various forms of writing, specifically play, narration and poetry.

This unit will begin in the spring and run for approximately eight to ten weeks. The rationale for this is that the first part of the school year will be spent laying down the ground work in basic English instruction (grammar, syntax, punctuation, etc.) This unit will be taught to eighth graders in a self-contained Special Education Program.

This unit will involve students in three forms of activities— *reading* , *interpretation* and *writing* . The first step will be in reading the material. For many of my students, this will be the first time they have been exposed to reading a play or poetry. It will be necessary to provide in-depth discussion on the components of a play, before the reading of one begins. The same will be necessary when working with poetry.

The next step is interpretation. This can be done in a variety of ways. Based upon their interpretations, students will be free to engage in various activities. Using the literature and information about the writer, students will be able to role play, perform excerpts from a play, stage imaginary dialogue between writers and do personal interviews. Visual aids will be incorporated wherever necessary to enhance the study of the literature.

The last step will be the writing process. Here, the students will be asked to defend and/or argue the positions of the writers and their material. They will write their own prose and poetry using illustrative art where appropriate. They will also write about themselves. In all three steps, *reading*, *interpretation* and *writing*, the works of the black writers will be the focal point. Approaches to be used with specific works, questions and issues raised in the works, as well as tasks to be assigned to students will be discussed under *strategies*.

### *Background*

The writings of this unit reflect the times of the culture. The writers' works to a great extent embody the essence of the black experience. To know the writers, the times in which they lived, is to understand the justification of their works. Langston Hughes is noted in literature as a Harlem Renaissance writer. Many of his works, prose and poetry alike, reflect the black American as the outcast, the down trodden of American culture. His work, particularly his poetry, captures a special image of the black American. His poetry of the 20s and 30s dealing heavily with the city of Harlem portrays "his people" with indomitable spirit, beauty and strength.

Hughes' poetry deals a great deal with identity and the struggle to survive. Some of his poems, "Bad Morning" or "125th Street," for example, are humorous in presentation. This humor, however, is merely a facade for a more somber portrait of the black experience. The common thread in Hughes' poetry was the desire that white Americans would see, "how beautiful I am/and be ashamed—I, too, am American."<sup>1</sup>

The writings of Richard Wright were influenced by his early life. He was mostly self-educated. He grew up with poverty, hunger, fear and hatred. His writings are an indictment of the injustices he suffered. His written accounts are poignant and unabashedly honest. His writings announce that a change was needed in approaching the education of white America. That education results in a graphic and at times brutal description of his own survival. *Black Boy* examines Wright's early life. With eloquence and fury he describes what it was like to grow up as a black boy in the south where Jim Crow was rampant. In reading *Black Boy* one can only marvel at his determination to survive at all costs.

I believe it would be a fair statement to say that the Harlem Renaissance writers of the 20s were greatly responsible for a newer renaissance of black writers that emerged in the late 50s and early 60s. "They passed from their ancestors—the folk—to their heirs—today's Black poets—an image of Black people's beauty, their strength, their indomitable spirit."<sup>2</sup> Lorraine Hansberry recognized this. Her award-winning play, *Raisin In The Sun* begins with the poem "Harlem," written by Langston Hughes. Again we see the theme, the struggle to survive, in an acclaimed piece of work. It is a theme that is repeated time and time again throughout black literature, but especially in this piece of work.

In examining the issues of identity and struggle one will find that blacks struggled with their conscience when trying to make their way in American life. Their choices may not have been many, but never the less the choices remained. One of the choices some blacks chose to explore was that of passing. Though not necessarily considered an important issue today, it was an extremely critical issue in the early part of the 20th century for many blacks.

Nella Larsen examines this issue in her work *Passing*. Written in 1929 this story deals with the "what if I could" aspects of a black passing for white. No examination of black identity in literature would be complete without at least acknowledging the fact that passing for white was considered by some blacks as a choice for survival. Students reading this or other works today may feel that the issue is hardly worth discussing. Others may feel anger or even a sense of betrayal. However, perhaps in reading the literature they will come to

understand why it happened and why it was considered a choice.

When it comes to Black Revolution as expressed in literary terms Nikki Giovanni's name is a common sight. Though not suggesting a bloody revolution, her works, however, state the time has come and the time is now. Looking at her poetry students will be struck not only with the intensity and vitality to her work, but with her writing style as well. Her poems swell with verses of protest and love, militancy and pride. And oh, what candor! In her poem "Nikki Rosa" she expresses her fear of being misunderstood. She says "I really hope no white person has cause to write about me because they never understood Black Love is black wealth." <sup>3</sup> Being misunderstood is not uncommon. It is very hard to put feelings, desires and 200 years of struggle in a dozen or so words and expect it to be fully understood. Giovanni's work may have been considered radical at the time in which she wrote (60s and 70s), today however, her work is considered to have aptly described the times.

The works of Gwendolyn Brooks suggest a mastery of form, language and theme. In today's modern literature her poetry is without self-consciousness. She demonstrates a flair for lyrical and narrative descriptions. To Brooks, the racial element is inherent in a black writer's work regardless of whether the subject matter is racial or not. Her poems celebrate the truth of life and blackness. They reflect the truth of man. Her poems touch the sights and sounds of living in a black community. Students reading poems such as "Children of The Poor" or "The Bean Eaters" know that this is a person who can identify with their sounds, those of pain and laughter, broken bottles and yesterday's garbage. There is a bond between Brooks and the reader, one with deep roots. Her poems have made her an admired poet and spokeswoman for her race.

James Baldwin writes of Maya Angelou, "This testimony from a Black sister marks the beginning of a new era in the minds and hearts and lives of all Black men and women." <sup>4</sup> The literature to which he refers is Maya Angelou's *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings*. Though she has written several books of poetry, it is probably this story, her autobiography that has drawn the most critical acclaim. In this book Maya confronts her life in an honest yet heart-warming manner. She does so with quiet dignity but yet with strength and perseverance. In facing her life, she accepts that life isn't always fair. Her story pays tribute to herself as well as to others with similar stories.

### *Strategies*

The sequence of literature for the unit will be as follows:

- I. Week one, two, three—Lorraine Hansberry  
*A Raisin In The Sun*
- II. Week four, five—Richard Wright  
*Black Boy* (excerpts)
- III. Week six—Maya Angelou  
*I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings* (excerpts)
- IV. Week seven—Nella Larson  
*Passing* (excerpts)
- V. Week eight—Langston Hughes  
"Harlem," "Minstrel Man," "Dream Variation," "Mother To Son"  
"Still Here," "My People," "Bad Morning"
- VI. Week nine—Gwendolyn Brooks

“The Ballad of Rudolph Reed”  
“Bean Eaters,” “The Children of The Poor”  
VII Week nine—Nikki Giovanni  
“Nikki-Rosa,” “Hands: For Mother’s Day,” “Harvest”  
VIII. Week ten—Maya Angelou  
“Passing Time,” “Alone,” “Song For The Old One”  
“Now Sheba Sings”

As an introduction to the specific works students will be given a brief narrative of each writer and his life. This will be done in lecture form.

## ***PART ONE—PROSE***

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Before beginning with Hansberry’s *A Raisin In The Sun* the students will first have to be introduced to important elements of a play. This will be necessary before the actual reading of the play begins. Some of the key elements that will be examined are as follows:

### *Character*

Who are the main characters?  
What is their relationship with each other?  
What traits are important to these characters?

How does the writer develop their characterization?  
(dialogue, speech, actions, descriptions, etc.)

### *SETTING*

Where does the story take place?  
How is this essential to the story?  
When does it take place?  
Is the setting given, essential to the story?

### *PLOT*

What happens?  
Why does it happen?  
What specific actions in the story move the story along?  
Is there a climax or turning point?  
Is there a resolution?

In addition to these elements, students will need to understand stage directions and dialogue. The play will be read aloud. I feel this could best be done by having students assigned specific roles. Emphasis in reading will be on literal comprehension as well as making inferences. Students will have to employ reading skills as well as listening and speaking skills. On another level, students will have to draw on their personal lives in order to make comparisons between the Younger family in Hansberry's play and their own. Questions to be raised include: What similarities are there between the Younger family in Chicago and their own? What problems are common? What self-identity problems if any do the characters have to deal with? What attempts and/or solutions made to resolve the problem in this play are still viable options today?

I have anticipated that three weeks would be spent on explaining the elements of a play and the actual reading of the play itself with class activities. This is a flexible time line as it may be necessary to handle the

play reading in small segments so that students fully comprehend the material involved. The play has three acts and as such, activities will be related to each act.

### *ACT ONE*

The major characters are introduced in this act. They include Lena Younger, her son Walter, his wife Ruth, Lena's daughter Beneatha and her grandson Travis. In the first act relationships are examined, especially as they exist between mother and son and husband and wife. The family is confronted with a problem surrounding money acquired by Lena from her late husband's insurance company. Students will read each scene aloud in this act, to be followed by a general question and answer period.

### *ACTIVITIES*

1. Students will be asked to locate passages from the first and second scene which through dialogue, author's description and/or through character display of action, tell something about each character's personality.
2. Students will be asked to identify what problem or problems each character faces.
3. In a writing assignment, students will be asked which character they feel is more concerned with family survival? They will be asked to support their answers using evidence from the play.

### *ACT TWO*

In Act Two, Lena Younger decides to buy a house, with the money she has acquired, in an all white neighborhood. She also decides to give her son Walter a chance at being the head of household, by giving him financial responsibility of the money that is left. At the conclusion of Act Two, two important developments have occurred. The family is offered a chance to sell out and not move into their house and Walter loses the money entrusted to him.

### *ACTIVITIES*

1. Students will be asked to respond to Lena Younger's decision in Scene One to buy a house in an all white neighborhood. Students will be asked to defend or argue against her decision to do so in writing.
2. Students will be given the opportunity to act out the final scene in the Second Act involving the family's reaction to the loss of their money by Walter. Afterwards, students will get together in small groups to discuss their reactions and how this loss will effect individual members of the family. They will also get a chance to offer some possible solutions.
3. At this time, students may want to voluntarily draw upon their personal experiences and relate how an action taken by themselves or a member of their family resulted in a serious problem and how that problem was resolved.

## ACT THREE

In Act Three, there are resolutions to several problems which were confronted in Act One and Act Two. In the end, the Younger family decides to go ahead and move into their new house and Walter regains his pride and self-respect.

## ACTIVITIES

1. Students will be asked to respond to the outcome of the play. Do they feel the actions taken at the end were believable?
2. Students will be asked to describe the qualities they admire in Lena Younger. Afterwards they will be asked to write about someone they know whom they feel possesses these same qualities.

The next part of the unit will cover readings from *Black Boy*, *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings* and *Passing*. The first two are autobiographical. In *Black Boy*, students will read chapter one, the section describing hunger. This is a topic familiar to many of my students. I'm sure they will be able to draw comparisons not just to the physical hunger, but the emotional hunger as well.

That particular chapter deals with the struggle to have and keep what is yours. In this case, it's keeping grocery money from neighborhood bullies. In this particular chapter Wright's mother tells him to fight back or else be locked out of the apartment. In truth, there are two sets of rules that many of my students follow. The ones they follow in the streets and the ones they follow in school. It must be confusing to these students, ages 13 and 14, in sorting out what rules to follow. On the streets, they are told they must fight by their peers and even members of their family. Yet, they are severely punished for fighting the minute they step over the boundaries of street and school yard.

## ACTIVITIES

Reading Wright's *Black Boy* will present several important issues for the students to deal with. What are the rules for survival where you live? Are there ever exceptions to those rules? Students will respond to these and other questions in discussion groups as well as in debates. They will have to defend their positions before their classmates. As a writing assignment, students will also be asked to defend or argue in this chapter the action in the story taken by young Wright to survive during his youth. Students afterwards will be asked to make alternative solutions to the ones that Wright made. I'm making them do this because so many of my students feel that to most of their problems, there is only one solution. If they are to survive today they must learn early that there are choices in their lives, and they must seek them out. Another activity would involve students in role playing. Given problem situations on a card, students in small groups would role play to solve the problem.

A similar approach will be taken with Maya Angelou's *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings*. Students will read chapters 4 and 9, which deal primarily with self-identity. Upon completing the readings, students will be asked to make comparisons between the early childhood of Wright and Angelou, looking for similarities and differences in their early lives. I would also like at this time to have the students write a brief autobiography. This task will be assigned basically to get an idea of how they see themselves and their lives also, to draw any



parallels from what they have read thus far. I suspect this will be difficult for them to do as it involves opening up and sharing their lives. Therefore they may write as little or as much as they feel comfortable doing. Emphasis will be on content not mechanics.

Before beginning Nella Larson's *Passing* , I would like my students to spend some time discussing the issue of color. Right now for some of my students this issue is of less importance than economics or survival. However, in the late 20's and 30's this was a great issue.

To understand this more fully I would like my students to see excerpts from the movie *Roots : The Second Generation* . This is now available on video cassette. Many of my students have already seen this but with limited guidance and discussion. In one segment of the movie, one of the author's great aunts falls in love with a man considered by her father "too light." She was forbidden to marry him. As a result she swore she would never marry and she didn't. I think the visual aspect of seeing this, how important color was, would be more effective than reading it. With some discussion they would be ready to begin reading the excerpt, Chapter 2 from Nella Larson's *Passing* . There will be no planned activity other than oral discussion on the material read and on whether or not "passing" would be a viable option today.

## ***PART TWO—POETRY***

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The last section of the unit will be poetry. Several weeks will be spent on this area. To begin this section, students will need an introduction to terminology related to poetry. Important vocabulary to know will be:

Mood

Imagery

Figure of Speech

Rhyme

Simile

Metaphor

Alliteration

Assonance

Students will first learn the terminology and be given examples of each. When reading each poem, students will be asked to give examples where appropriate. This will be done in addition to interpretation of the poetry and class activities. All poetry will be read aloud, to be followed by a question and answer period. At this time I would like my students to begin keeping a poetry book. Initially, I would just like them to get into the habit of writing down what they're feeling and get their reactions to poetry they are reading. Their poetry books will contain selected poems read in class along with their interpretations, opinions, etc. In addition, the books will include their own writings. Throughout this section on poetry, students will be given specific writing tasks, that will involve using various elements of poetry. This will be done gradually, as initially I will be more concerned

with their getting their thoughts and emotions on paper than I will on the structure of their writing. For reluctant writers, I hope to have available poetry written by other students which has been published. I think this might encourage my students to at least try.

The first poet will be Langston Hughes. Students will be exposed through lecture to the time period in which Hughes lived and write. Each of his poems will be read aloud. They include: "Still Here," "Harlem," "Dream Variations," "Bad Morning," "Mother to Son," "My People" and "Minstrel Man." Students will be asked to comment on the following: Who or what is being described? Is the content important? Is it relevant now? Could the same poem be written today and have the same meaning? Students will respond to these questions orally as well as on paper.

### *ACTIVITIES*

1. Students will be asked to re-read the poems "My People" and "Mother to Son" and give examples of the use of metaphors used in each poem.
2. Students will be asked to identify which of Hughes' poems deals specifically with the theme of survival.
3. Students will be asked to write a poem on one of the following topics: Dreams, On the Streets and My Sons. The poem should deal with some aspect of survival and make use of metaphors and/or similes.

The next poet is Gwendolyn Brooks. Her poems "The Ballad Of Rudolph Reed," "The Bean Eaters" and "Children Of the Poor" deal with common people who are less fortunate and are trying to maintain some semblance of dignity. Students will be asked to describe the mood of each poem and explain how the writer's visual images aid in their interpretation of the poems.

### *ACTIVITIES*

1. Students will copy these poems in their poetry books and include their interpretations of the poem.
2. Students will write one paragraph telling whether they agree or disagree with the action taken by Rudolph to defend his home and family in the poem, "The Ballad Of Rudolph Reed".

The third poet is Nikki Giovanni. Her poems "Nikki Rosa," "Hands:For Mother's Day" and "Harvest" are interesting not only for their content but in writing style as well. Students will readily be able to see the visual difference in her writing style compared to, say, Hughes or Brooks. Some of her poems extend for lines without ever seeing a period or a comma, where others are heavily punctuated with a series of dots as if while she were writing, her thoughts drifted or just stopped, only to begin again or to change to something new. Her poetry is written in conversational form, a predecessor to the more popular "rapping" rhymes heard today. Students will find her poetry interesting and perhaps more challenging to work with.

## ACTIVITIES

1. Students will imitate the style of Nikki Giovanni by writing a poem on any topic they wish.  
*or*
2. Students can write a rap song dealing with some aspect of self-identity. The song should include positive qualities about themselves. Music can be added at their discretion. This will be an easy task since many of them have done this in the past quite successfully in drama class.

The final poet will be Maya Angelou. I thought that at this time students could use illustrations for poetry as an alternative way of interpreting what they are reading. Maya Angelou's "Now Sheba Sings" is a good example of poetry conceived with illustrations in mind. In this book Maya Angelou wrote poetry to accompany drawings that were given to her. Students may want to experiment with this by writing poetry for artwork. Students can use drawings or pictures from reading books, art books, magazines etc. They can be abstract or thematic. In addition, they can reverse the process and take some of Angelou's poetry and illustrate them. Angelou's "Song For The Old Ones" and "Alone" would work well with this.

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

1. Students will identify and cite examples of the following in Maya Angelou's Poems "Alone" and "Sons For The Old One"
  - A) Rhyme
  - B) Figure Of Speech
  - C) Similes
  - D) Imagery

In the following section I will give detailed plans of some of the activities described in this unit.

## ***SAMPLE LESSON PLAN—Week #3***

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**OBJECTIVE:** To check literal comprehension related to reading of play *A Raisin In The Sun*

**ASSIGNMENT:** Students will answer the questions below in complete sentences.

*A RAISIN IN THE SUN*

1. Who are the members of the Younger family?
2. Where do they live?
3. What is the main problem that Mama must deal with as presented in Act One?
4. What problem does Ruth have as presented in Act One?
5. What does Mama decide to do with the insurance money?
6. Why does Mama give Walter the responsibility of handling the money?
7. How does Walter lose the money?
8. Who is Mr. Linder? What does he want?
9. What does Walter threaten to do at the beginning of Act Three that upsets the family?
10. What finally happens at the end of the play?

## ***SAMPLE LESSON PLAN—Week #6***

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### *OBJECTIVE :*

To develop an awareness of self-identity.

To identify strengths and accomplishments.

*ASSIGNMENT :* This assignment will help you think about what it's like to be you. Answer each question in the space provided.

1. What do I look like? (tall, short/thin/brown hair/black eyes, etc.)
2. What kind of disposition do I have? (quiet/shy/friendly/moody, etc.)
3. What things am I good at?
4. What things do I like to do? To eat? To wear?
5. What things or people are important to me?
6. What am I good at?
7. What would I like to do with my life?
8. What do I believe in strongly?
9. What do I particularly dislike?

## RELATED ACTIVITY

Students can draw pictures of themselves and then cut pictures, illustrations or words from magazines that tell about them and add them as background to their drawings. Students can highlight things they like,—hopes, ambitions, personality, etc. These drawings can be displayed on a bulletin board.

This activity can be done as a follow up exercise after doing their autobiographies.

## **SAMPLE LESSON PLAN—WEEK #9**

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**OBJECTIVE** : To review definitions of terms related to poetry.

**ASSIGNMENT**: Part One—using terms listed below, give the correct answer for each definition.

- (A) Rhyme
  - (B) Stanza
  - (C) Metaphor
  - (D) Simile
  - (E) Consonance
  - (F) Assonance
  - (G) Figure Of Speech
  - (H) Alliteration
  - (I) Lyric Poem
1. \_\_\_\_ Repetition of the beginning letter in several nearby words.
  2. \_\_\_\_ Device that presents a picture in words.
  3. \_\_\_\_ Repetition of the same consonant sound in several words.
  4. \_\_\_\_ Comparison of two unlike things using *like* or *as* .
  5. \_\_\_\_ Comparison that does not use the words like or as.
  6. \_\_\_\_ Repetition of the same vowel sound in several words.
  7. \_\_\_\_ Descriptive feelings.
  8. \_\_\_\_ Grouped lines or verses in a poem.
  9. \_\_\_\_ Two or more words that sound alike.

*PART TWO* : Select poems from either Langston Hughes or Maya Angelou. Write the title of the poem and lines from the poem that illustrate each one of these terms.

1. Simile
2. Metaphor
3. Figure Of Speech
4. Alliteration

## Notes

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1. Langston Hughes, *On Being Black* , ed. Charles T. Davis and Daniel Walden, (Greenwich: Fawcett Publications, 1970), p. 179.
2. Eugenia Collier, *The New Negro Renaissance* , ed. Arthur Davis and Michael Peplow, (New York: Holt, Rineholt, Winston, 1975) P. XXIX.
3. Nikki Giovanni, *Soulscript* , ed. June Jordan, (New York: Double day, 1970) p. 22.
4. Maya Angelou, *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings* , (New York: Random House, 1969), p. 247.

## TEACHER ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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1. Angelou, Maya. *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings* . New York: Random House, 1969.  
Autobiography of a young black girl growing up in the rural south and then California.
2. Angelou, Maya. *Now Sheba Sings* . New York: Dial Books, 1987.  
Illustrated book of poetry dealing with the theme, Black Women, their beauty, strength, and dignity.
3. Bontemps, Arna, ed., *American Negro Poetry*. New York: Hilland Wang, 1974.  
Anthology of poetry by black poets.
4. Collier, Eugenia. *The New Negro Renaissance*. New York: Holt, Rineholt Winston, 1975.  
Excellent anthology of black literature beginning with the Black Renaissance writers up to and

including Richard Wright.

5. Davis, Charles T. and Walden, Deniel, eds. *On Being Black*. Greenwich: Fawcett Publications, 1970.

A good source of work on black writers dealing in prose and poetry.

6. Hughes, Langston. *Selected Poems*. New York: Random House, 1959.

Selection of poems chosen by Hughes from his earlier volumes as well as later works, dealing with the many facets of the black experiences.

7. Jordan, June. *Soulscript*. New York: Double Day, 1970.

Selection of poetry by black writers, which includes a section written by young students.

8. Walker, Alice. *In Search Of Our Mother's Garden*. New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1983.

Book of prose containing several essays dealing with black female identity and noted black female writers.

9. Wright, Richard. *Black Boy*. New York: Harper and Row, 1937.

First half of autobiography dealing with early days of Wright growing up in the Jim Crow South.

10. Wright, Richard. *American Hunger*. New York: Harper and Row, 1977.

Second half of the autobiography of Wright's life beginning with his leaving the south in his late teens and going north.

## STUDENT ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Angelou, Maya . *Now Sheba Sings* . New York: Dial Books, 1987.

Illustrated book of poetry dealing with the theme Black Women—their beauty, strength and dignity.

Hansberry, Lorraine. *A Raisin In The Sun* . New York: Signet Books, 1966.

A serious drama of a black family trying to survive in Chicago after World War II.

Hughes Langston. *Selected Poems*. New York: Random House, 1959.

Selection of poems chosen by Hughes dealing with the many facets of the Black Experience.

Strickland, Dorothy. *Language For Daily Use* . Orlando: 1986.

Curriculum English Text Book used city wide. Covers all areas of English usage. Available in grade levels K-8.

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