



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1991 Volume III: Afro-American Autobiography

Use of John Johnson's Life Story in Conjunction with Other Black Entrepreneurs as Role Models for Potential Black Businessmen

Guide for Curriculum Unit 91.03.04
by Carol L. Cook

Autobiographies can be used for many different purposes. I have studied the autobiography of John Johnson to see what character traits he used in his search for success. I have also reviewed the lives of Mary McLeod Bethune, Booker T. Washington, and Jake Simmons, Jr. to see what pattern emerges in all of their lives. I have compared the role models that each person followed in his/her search for success. I have compared how each person handled problems such as lack of credit associations, cast subordination and prejudice. I also observed the character traits that led each person to great achievement.

In these four autobiographies, we find a combination of these two things: subjective awareness and a "message." We learn to understand each separate individual. At the same time, we are introduced to their social-historical lives. We are introduced to the life of a freed slave in Booker T. Washington's autobiography. We became acquainted with the life of a Black in the early 1900s with Mary McLeod Bethune's life. Then, we learned what life in the Southwest was for a Black person during the time of 1901 to 1981 with Simmons' life. Finally, we learned what life was in Chicago from approximately 1918 to the present with Johnson's life.

Each autobiography told us how the individuals handled the problems of each time. We certainly see that in all four cases, the individuals seemed to succeed with the same strengths: never giving up, ignoring failure, dealing with people of all races, having belief that they can succeed in anything that they do.

(Recommended for General Business and other Business courses, grades 9-12)

Key Words

Autobiography Afro-American Business Leaders

<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

©2019 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University

For terms of use visit <https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/terms>