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

Douglass, Booker T. and W.E.B.: A Study of Black Educational Theories

Guide for Curriculum Unit 91.03.05
by Deborah E. Hare

This curriculum unit examines some of the educational views and experiences of three prominent African-Americans. They are Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, and W.E.B. DuBois. The goal of this curriculum unit is to familiarize students with these three men, including their personalities, time period, philosophies and writing. This study begins with “Narrative of the Life of a Slave” by Frederick Douglass and continues with the famous educational debates between Washington and DuBois. This unit attempts to show the progression of black education from learning to read during slavery to admission to prestigious private schools as exemplified in the new book “Black Ice” by Lorene Cary. Included are autobiographies, poems and plays in an attempt to present a manageable curriculum unit that traces the chronology of the struggle for black education. In this manner students can better gauge their own place in this struggle and perhaps develop more understanding and respect for themselves and their struggle. An additional outcome of this unit might be in helping students explore educational opportunities and ideas relevant to them in this chaotic world.

(Recommended for American Literature and Multi-cultural Studies, grades 9-12)

Key Words

Autobiography Afro-Americans Education Literature

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