



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1992 Volume IV: The National Experience: American Art and Culture

Crisis Times for African Americans

Curriculum Unit 92.04.03
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This thematic unit, “Crisis Times for African-Americans: Slavery and the Great Depression” is designed for eighth grade Chapter I reading students in an inner-city setting. The majority of the students are of African-American heritage. This unit is flexible in design so that it could be used for anywhere from four to six weeks. It is ideal for the Black History Month Curriculum, when classrooms in New Haven focus on the study of African-American culture.

This unit focuses on slavery and life during the Great Depression, two eras of critical survival for African-Americans in the United States.

The literature based selections, chosen for my eighth grade reluctant readers, are set during the Great Depression. This perspective seems especially appropriate in today’s economic times. Since many of the students have expressed concerns about financial hardships, the literature selections hopefully would be of value because they would gain insights as to how others coped during the hard times.

The primary subject matter emphases are in social studies and language arts, with the main focus on improving reading skills. In the first phase, students will study slavery by participating in selected textbook activities from *The African-American in United States History* by Benjamin da Salvia and study factual accounts of Julian Lester’s *To Be A Slave* . By studying slavery through social studies the students will have developed the necessary background knowledge to study the selected African-American literature. Understanding the concept of slavery is prerequisite to studying any African-American literature.

As the students learn about slavery, they will participate in various activities. For example, just reading and listening to the related oral literature selections, poetry and music “just for the fun of it” are integral parts of the varied activities in this unit.

After studying slavery, the social studies perspective will focus on the Great Depression with the textbook serving as the primary instructional tool for introduction to this phase of American history. Also, Katz’s *An Album of the Great Depression* , another excellent pictorial account, will be used as a main focus book.

In correlation with the study of the Great Depression, the students will read a Newberry Award winning novel, *Roll of Thunder. Hear My Cry* by Mildred Taylor. This is a story about the survival of a rural African-American family during the Great Depression in the South. This book set in the thirties is an unforgettable story of Black pride and heritage. This book also has a sequel, *Let the Circle Be Unbroken* , which gives further details of the

Logan family and their struggle against poverty and prejudice.

By studying African-American culture from the crucial historical perspectives and reading related literature selections, the students will gain insights and understandings that will enhance their perceptions of themselves and their heritage as Americans.

Unit Objectives

The Student will:

- ¥ Increase personal self-esteem and pride as a result of studying African American culture.
- ¥ Understand and appreciate the literature selections to be studied.
- ¥ Learn factual information about United States History, specifically the eras of slavery and the Great Depression.
- ¥ Improve classroom interaction skills by working on group projects and participating in classroom discussions.
- ¥ Gain a factual historical perspective on African American culture.
- ¥ Improve critical thinking skills.
- ¥ Practice the use of study skills such as note-taking and conducting research.
- ¥ Improve writing skills.
- ¥ Increase vocabulary development.
- ¥ Improve reading skills.
- ¥ Learn about recommended literature such as Newberry Award winning books.
- ¥ Develop an appreciation for African-American art.

Introducing the Unit

The very first thing I would do is to create a “literate environment.” In doing this, I would display a vast variety of related materials (not mentioned in the bibliography) such as biographical posters of famous historical and contemporary African-Americans. In addition, I would use bulletin boards, related pamphlets, brochures, songs, poems, choral readings, puzzles, teacher-made games and activities such as “Black Facts Challenge.” Further, I would include related *Scholastic* and *Scope* articles, *Ebony* and *Ebony. Jr.* magazines, autographed photographs of famous African-Americans such as General Colin Powell, historical charts, documents and timelines, maps and travel brochures plus a vast selection of fiction and non-fiction books, from picture books to reference sources.

I would introduce the unit to the students by reading the book *Nettie Goes South* by Turner. This powerful, beautifully illustrated book gives an overview of the problem of slavery in the South.

Before reading the book, I would ask the students how many of them had visited the South. (Many of them have relatives in various states in the South.) After they share experiences, I would show the *Nettle Goes South* picture book and ask them to predict what they think the book is about. After sharing predictions and

reading the book, we would discuss how the posted predictions relate to the actual story. Also, this story is *excellent* for introducing story mapping!

Or another approach

Show a filmstrip "The Old South" (Troll Associates) and ask the class to compare/contrast the filmstrip with their perceptions of the South of today. Discuss the slavery of the Old South and its absence today.

The Reading Process

In implementing this unit it is important to recognize that improving reading skills is a primary objective of this unit. Therefore the directed reading thinking activities must have certain characteristics which make them constructive reading activities. First, the pre-reading phase must set purpose, make connections and tap prior knowledge. The teacher is meant to be a resource person who leads "from behind." In this role, the teacher must provide a "link" from the known to the unknown. The metacognitive process must be modeled "by thinking out loud" as the teacher is constantly modeling for the students in the reading process.

There are many activities that can be used in the reading thinking processes in the *before*, *during*, and *after* reading phases. This unit only lists examples of such activities. The goal is to construct meaning from the text in choosing activities for the students. A lesson plan that illustrates a directed reading activity (DRTA) is attached in the lesson plan section. Finally, there are many opportunities for modeling with a strong focus on the aspect of metacognitive awareness, even though these are not specifically stated throughout the unit. The ultimate goal is to assist the students in becoming better readers and to encourage them to enjoy reading.

Why Study Literature?

It is my hope that through the study of literature the students will consider past and present experiences and their reactions to those experiences. As a result, they will gain insights into their feelings, actions and value system. With this increased awareness of self and greater understanding of others, hopefully will come a greater sense of responsibility to self and to others. The intent of this unit is to serve as a stepping stone to helping students mature as individuals, in addition to creating an interest in reading and improving reading skills.

The literature selections will serve as springboards for discussion. Through reading and discussion, the students will compare and contrast characters and situations to their own lives. This approach hopefully will offer clarification, encouragement and knowledge that will aid the students in dealing with the emotional aspects of their conditions of living. Literature can speak to their needs if it is carefully selected and presented. First, the selection must be of interest; then it must relate to them personally. Finally, the students must be able to articulate their ideas as they relate to the literature, so the techniques used by the teacher are of ultimate importance. For example, the questions that spark the discussion must be given careful consideration to ensure involved participation.

My basic approach to teaching the literature is first to read, then analyze, then discuss and evaluate. However, in this unit we will watch the movie of *Roll of Thunder. Hear My Cry* before reading the novel. The reason for seeing the movie before reading the novel is to motivate the students. Since many of my students are reluctant readers, the movie creates an interest in reading the book. From past experience, I have found this approach works well with the students. After viewing the movie, we will analyze and discuss some of the related basic philosophic concepts as these relate to the lives of the students. Then the students will study the

books to examine vocabulary, literary devices, comprehension and other skill-related activities.

This unit precludes in-depth structural analyses of all the writings. Students will consider such literary devices as point of view, symbolism and setting. For example, when characterization is of importance in a selection, characterization will be studied. This literary device might be overlooked in the next lesson because the chosen lesson might lend itself better to the study of some other aspect of literary devices. The study of literary device will be used mainly as a means for interpretation of meaning for discussion and extended activities.

Oral Literature

It is very important in the study of African-American literature to focus on the oral literature of the people. One reason for emphasizing this study is because the early literature of the African-Americans was primarily oral. This was because the people of African-American heritage, in the days of slavery, were not allowed to be educated. As a matter of fact, it was illegal to teach them to read or write. Therefore, it is important that the students have opportunities to read/share examples of this literature that was passed down loyally for several generations.

Roll of Thunder. Hear My Cry is, indirectly, an example of this literature. *Roll of Thunder. Hear My Cry* was told to the author, Mildred Taylor, by her father throughout her growing up years. Many such stories are passed down from one generation to the next. Virginia Hamilton's *The People Could Fly: Black American Folktales* and the collections by Joel Chandler Harris, *Jump*, *Jump Again*, and *Jump On Over* are examples of this literature that are excellent for reading aloud by the teacher just for student enjoyment. It is interesting to note that Harris used animals to symbolize people, especially the white master and the slaves in revolt. It would be of interest to redo the tales by substituting fictional people for the animals.

Poetry

Much of the oral literature was later published in the form of poetry. Jupiter Harmon's writing around 1750 marked the beginning of the first efforts of the literary emergence into the European movement. The extension from the oral tradition to the published did not come easily because of opportunities denied African-American writers. Arna Bontemps, Paul L. Dunbar, Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes and Gwendolyn Brooks are some of the most prolific writers. *Black Out Loud*, *I am the Darker Brother*, *Bronzeville Boys and Girls*, and *Dream Keener* are some of the excellent collections and anthologies of African-American poetry. Also, the bibliography contains recordings of anthologies.

The students will read and listen to poetry primarily for enjoyment. If time permits, they will discuss poetry, participate in writing activities or analyze for literary devices. Further, poetry lends itself well to many creative activities such as illustrating, dramatizing and role playing.

Music

Throughout *Roll of Thunder. Hear My Cry* there were references to spirituals. These Negro spirituals were passed down from generation to generation, as was their literature. These songs were meaningful because they addressed the oppression the African-Americans faced as slaves. Many of the spirituals masked meanings known only to the slaves themselves. For example, loudly singing certain songs that could be heard by slaves in a nearby plantation could have meant to "meet in the swamp at midnight" to discuss how poorly the master was treating them.

The students would enjoy singing songs from *Walk Together Children. I'm Going to Sing: Black American Spirituals* (with music and illustrations). The bibliography has other references for recordings of African-American music that students would enjoy hearing. The students could compare/contrast the old spirituals to contemporary music by African-American artists, or use them to trace the development of music from the spiritual, through the age of jazz, up to today's rap music.

Art

Slowly people of the Western World have come to understand that the African art forms have meaning and beauty. The work they did was different from that done in Europe. With great skill they shaped works of art in their own forms. Craftsmen could be artists too. They worked with gold, silver, glass, cloth and clay. Today their work is found in museums all over the world. Some of these works are advanced forms of carving and sculpture. They used many kinds of materials and many different ways to use the materials of art. Western artists have learned much from the African artistic expression. Beautifully carved African masks, spoons, knives and other common objects, in addition to carefully made pottery, woven mats and tapestries are on display in museums throughout the world today.

For many years whites could not accept the idea that black men and women could produce works of art. Yet a few African-Americans did finally break through. Henry O. Tanner, who did much of his work in Paris, was one of the world's greatest artists in the 1890's. After he gained fame in Europe, his paintings were brought back to the United States for museum display. Many of them were on religious subjects.

Tanner was not the first important black artist. In the 1830's, Edmonia Lewis was well known as a sculptor. Her most famous work was a statue called *Forever Free*. She was later matched in fame by Meta Fuller, who studied in Paris at the same time as Tanner. Her great sculpture, *the Wretches*, showed how she cared for all suffering people. Richard Barthe was the first black sculptor to be made a member of the National Academy of Arts and Letters.

Other black artists have been leaders in their fields of work. Among them are Charles Alston, Jacob Lawrence and Howard Pippin. Pippin was one of the greatest self-taught painters. Probably his greatest known work is "John Brown Goes to his Hanging." Alston is an artist of many talents whose paintings have become well known. He has also designed public buildings. One of the best known of these is the Harriet Tubman Elementary School in New York City.

Jacob Lawrence, probably the best known of African-American painters, has painted many works that show life in the ghetto. His well known exhibition that opened at the Whitney Museum in 1974 projects the black experience in America consistently and effectively. Lawrence was both heir to the "Negro Renaissance" and child of the Great Depression. He was part of the mass migration of the African Americans from the South to the North. He later recreated the famous "Migration" series. In the paintings he captured the anonymous humanity, the rhythm of people in flux, the vulnerability of the masses, the forces driving people like bits of paper in the storm. The study of this series would provide visual appeal and convey the emotionality of the Great Depression to the students. *Jacob Lawrence* by Milton Brown, a pictorial presentation of many of Lawrence's works, provides an excellent reference for his paintings. Including the "Migration" series, his six series provide an imposing study of African-American history in paintings. The other series are: "Toussaint," "Tubman," "John Brown," and "Harlem."

Winslow Homer's depictions of African Americans will be the next artist's work for study. Homer conveys so much realism about everyday life of the African American during the 1850's. There are many books of

Homer's work which would be accessible to most teachers. The prints in the books could be used with an opaque projector for classroom discussion, if the actual prints were unavailable for study.

Homer had a real interest in African American life. During the 1870's he revisited Petersburg, Virginia and spent time using them as serious subjects of his paintings. In the "Cotton Pickers," he gave the women dignity and physical beauty. There is a sympathetic humor in "The Carnival," in which two women are sewing up a young buck in a brilliant pierrot costume. The contrast of the dark skin and the multi-colored clothes, seen under sunlight that picks out bright notes, reveals a color sense rich in juxtapositions and harmonies. His "A Visit from the Old Mistress" is a good study of class differences in the black and white cultures. Later in Homer's life he spent much time in the tropics. *Winslow Homer in the Tropics* by Hannaway is an excellent source of blacks as subjects of this art. The prints are in color and insightful commentaries about each work make it a very good reference for teachers and students. The very famous "The Gulf Stream" is displayed on the outside cover of the book. This painting of the Bahamian lying on the deck of a dismasted boat waiting apathetically for inevitable death is a powerful version of a recurring theme, the peril of the sea. Some other paintings with the tropical theme with depictions of dark-skinned natives are: "Shark Fishing," "The Conch Divers," "Sea Gardens, Bahamas," "Sponge Fishing/Bahamas," "Under the Coco Palm," "Rum Cay," "The Turtle Pound," "The Water Fan," "After the Hurricane" and others.

One contemporary African American artist that students should know is Faith Ringgold, born during the Great Depression in Harlem. They should learn about her because her art is somewhat different from the other artists. It differs by the media she used in her expression.

"The U.S. Postage Stamp Commemorating the Advent of Black Power" is a response to the unfair advantage that white people have. It exhibits one hundred faces; ninety are white and ten are black. The words 'white power' are spelled out in large white letters dividing the faces, 'black power' is also spelled out in smaller black letters placed diagonally along the canvas. The entire painting is like a large postage stamp. It expresses Faith's desire to send a message: inequality is wrong and must be stopped.

Her expertise with cloth, which she had learned as a child, became a part of her work. She learned the art of quilting from her mother and grandmothers. This skill led her to produce "Edith and Bessie," her aunts, in two life sized cloth masks. They can be worn as a costume or hung from a wall. She used many materials to make them. The heads are painted canvas, the dresses are embroidered cloth with beads and fringes. Another, "Martin Luther King," is larger than life size. The head is made of foam rubber, sewn and painted in a way to make the face look like him. She even let the stitching show his wounds. As her soft art developed, she began to make sculpture and eventually quilts. "Lena" is a soft sculpture of a homeless woman in Harlem. Then Faith Ringgold began to use her soft art to tell stories, an art that she learned from her mother. Her quilt, "Sonny's Quilt," tells the story of Sonny Rollins, a well-known jazz musician in pictures.

Her picture book, *Tar Beach*, combines autobiography, fictional narrative, painting and quilt making into one art form. It is the first in the five quilts in Ringgold's "Woman on a Bridge" series in the Guggenheim Museum in New York. Reading this colorful picture to the students would be an excellent way to introduce them to the Harlem female artist. Ringgold's work will inspire the students to explore a variety of media in creative artistic expression.

Finally, a trip to the Yale Art Gallery will be part of the unit. "Weighing Cotton," by Thomas Hart Benton depicts the mood of the Great Depression. The 20th century sharecroppers scene is depicted with no faces, representing anonymity of the era. Even the bags of cotton look like bones. Thomas Eakins' "Will Schuster and the Black Man Going Shooting" shows a black man and a white man in a boat. It is a study in double vision and

consciousness, in skill, balance, motion and the relativity of white and black. Among other paintings to be viewed are “Coney Island” by Reginald Marsh and “The Battle of Bunker’s Hill” by John Trumbull.

A Historical Perspective

Prior to studying the African-American literature selections, the students will study a factual historical perspective of the African-Americans. The factual accounts will provide insights into the culture of a people who were brought to this country in bondage and forced into servitude.

It is important that students understand that of all the people who make up the “mixed salad” of this nation, the African-Americans were the only group to arrive here in chains. This factor alone makes the African-American culture unique. Not only did they come involuntarily, but they were denied opportunities to learn the new language and customs. To further their isolation, they were denied the right to speak their native language and to practice their native customs and traditions. The denial of practicing their customs and speaking their native language was just the opposite for other immigrants.

Other immigrants came here voluntarily in hope of finding a better life and were not forced to abandon their customs. This profusion of differences among immigrants created a singularity or bond that contributed to making this nation great. It was different for African-Americans because they were totally disenfranchised, stripped of freedom, rights and dignity.

European slave merchants who first arrived in Africa in the 18th century eventually brought a total of approximately 15 million slaves to the New World Colonies in Central and South America , West Indies, and finally to North America.

In 1619 the Colonists in Jamestown, Virginia purchased 20 African-Americans as indentured servants. Then Virginia began importing slaves at the rate of about 1,000 per year. By that time, slavery had spread throughout the colonies.

Slavery continued to grow despite opposition and conflict. The Civil War, lasting from 1861-1865, was sparked by bitter controversy about the future of slavery. This war, which claimed more lives than any other armed conflict in American history, centered around states’ rights to extend slavery into newly acquired territories.

The Emancipation Proclamation, issued by Abraham Lincoln in 1862, stated that all slaves were free. This Proclamation marked the beginning rather than the ending of the black struggle for freedom. From the late 1800’s to the 1960’s, black people were treated as second class citizens.

Due to custom and a body of laws referred to as the Jim Crow laws, blacks were robbed of their civil rights. Since white lawmakers, especially in the South, believed in firm control of the blacks, there was no legal recourse for them.

For a short time after the Civil War, the blacks enjoyed degree of freedom. They established their own schools and began participating in government. It was not long until the white supremacists regained control. Groups such as the Klu Klux Klan began to flourish. Many blacks were terrorized or killed if they attempted to gain economic independence or if they attempted to assert themselves in any way. There was no justice for blacks in the southern courts. Many people were imprisoned or sentenced to hard labor for minor charges.

Legally, black citizens in the South were no longer slaves. But they were forced to live in oppression that was really no better than slavery. They were forced to become sharecroppers on land of a former master. The

payments for using the land were usually so large that it was virtually impossible to purchase land of their own. Then laws were created to prevent participation in government for those who did not own land. So the conditions led to segregation in living conditions, in churches, in schools, and in all aspects of public life.

A Federal government, now eager to repair the damages to a country split apart by the war, ignored the plight of the blacks. With no political or economic base, and subject to the terror of the white supremacists, the blacks remained for nearly a century barely better off than they were before the war. The period during the Great Depression was especially difficult for African-Americans. The economic plight for most Americans was poor, but the Thirties were devastating for many African-Americans. By 1930, black workers on the farm had many problems. Most farmers in the South were tenant farmers, and the owners of the land they farmed were beginning to buy farm machinery. This meant that fewer farmers were needed, since these machines could do more work than any man. Black farmers and their families migrated from the South to the North in a steady flow. Once in the cities, they found that their farm skills did not mean much. This great migration of black workers to the North continued because of conditions in the South. However, it meant that they had to take the lowest paying jobs in the factories, work as servants, or take menial jobs in factories and restaurants. Low pay meant no real improvement in the way a family could live. Worst of all was the old Jim Crow fear the black worker was the last hired and the first fired.

During the period between the two world wars the United States experienced the Great Depression (1929-39). There were many causes of the depression. The blacks were especially hurt because their farm labor was no longer needed in the South and the new machinery in the northern factories replaced them. So there were fewer jobs and loss of wages for many. The country suffered from widespread unemployment, and many people experienced hard times. In 1932 thirteen million people did not have jobs. A large part of them were black women, who were therefore forced to do many things to keep their families together.

In Norfolk, Virginia in 1935, eight out of every ten families had to have relief. The rate of unemployment for black workers was almost four times the rate of unemployment among white workers. It became increasingly difficult for blacks to get work because now the white worker was forced by necessity to do the minimal jobs that were previously done by black workers. "Last hired and first fired" proved to be true in the worst possible way. Yet, somehow life was a little freer, this made it a little better.

Then in the 1950's changes began to improve the lot of the blacks. The historic moment came when the Civil Rights Bill was signed in 1964, almost one century after Lincoln declared freedom for the slaves in the Emancipation Proclamation.

Also, the students will do research and present oral and written reports on topics such as slavery, the Civil War, Reconstruction, the Great Depression, and Civil Rights. They will look at such important related historical documents as the Emancipation Proclamation and the United States Constitution, and the related amendments. Through research and study of the factual accounts of African-American heritage, the students will gain insights that will provide basic understandings for and increased appreciation of the study of African-American literature.

A Synopsis: Roll of Thunder. Hear My Cry

Roll of Thunder. Hear My Cry is a story of survival of the human spirit. This is a story about Cassie Logan, an African American girl, raised by a family determined not to surrender their humanity and independence simply because they are black. Cassie has grown up as a child protected, strong and unaware that any person could consider her inferior or force her to be untrue to herself. It takes just one year for her world to fall apart

because of acts of prejudice and discrimination.

The story is set in rural Mississippi during the Great Depression. Even though slavery has been abolished for over a half-century, life has not changed much for African-Americans in the rural South.

The Logans are a hard working family. The mother, Mary Logan, is a teacher and the father, David, works on the railroad. Because of hard work the family enjoys the privilege of home ownership, which is a rare privilege for blacks during the thirties.

The story tells of many injustices that the family suffers because of their race. For example, even though Cassie's mother is a teacher, her children are required to use old textbooks discarded by white students. The Logan children are purposely splashed and dirtied by a white school bus driver as he drives the white children to their own school. The Logan children must walk to another school designated for black children.

The story tells of the burning of homes of the blacks who rebuff white men. The blacks are supposed to shop at local stores. When the Logans go to Vicksburg to make purchases, local merchants are angered and retaliate on the family. They eventually force Mary out of her teaching job and the family faces loss of their home and land.

The story details accounts of relationships among Cassie's brothers and sisters. It tells about the joys and sorrows they experience with their friends.

This is a story about how the awareness of prejudice is learned through the eyes of a young child. The depiction is cruel, destructive and humiliating. Even though the story took place over fifty years ago, there is evidence of the same discrimination being inflicted today. It seems as if prejudice and racism will never cease; it continues in various guises. In spite of hardships, human beings display courage and independence as Cassie does in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* .

(Table available in printed form)

Strategies and Activities

Some of the activities and strategies to aid the students in accomplishing the objectives related to the study of slavery and the Great Depression eras are:

Slavery

Playwriting

Prepare a short play about a slave market in Africa. A slave trader has four slaves for sale. He describes them to a European buyer who finally purchases them for four barrels of rum.

Panel Discussion

Prepare a panel discussion on slavery. One person is the discussion leader who explains how slavery changed life in Africa. Two speakers give excuses for continuing the slave trade. Two others explain why slave trade is evil and should be ended.

Map Skills

Using an outline map of the world, draw a route that a ship might take from West Africa to the West Indies and to the new world. Tell how many weeks each part of the trip might take. (Remember that a good sailing ship can sail from 100 to 200 miles a day with good winds.) Show the times and distances on your map.

Maintaining a Log

Pretend that you are the ship's captain and you must maintain a log of the journey. Write dally entries in your captain's log of your journey transporting slaves from America to the new world.

Notetaking

Pretend you are aboard a slave ship as a passenger because no other transportation was available. Make notes on what you observe and use the notes to write an article for a newspaper.

Listing

Read Paula Fox's *The Slave Dancer* . This is the story of a teenager who was kidnapped to make music so that the slaves could get exercise on a slave ship. List ten things that you witnessed as a reader that really bothered you.

Devising a Plan

Imagine that you were an African soldier who was sold to slave trader. You have arrived in the new world and are sold as a slave. Describe your situation as a slave. Describe how you would escape or how you would plan a revolt with the other slaves.

Short Story Writing

Write a short story about a slave who runs away from his/her master. Make it exciting with many descriptive details. Give it a happy ending.

Listing and Explaining

Make a list of at least ten places in your neighborhood that would be good hiding places or "stations" for runaway slaves. Write one or two sentences for each place telling why it would be good for this purpose.

Diary

Maintain a diary of your daily activities as you leave New Orleans as a slave to travel to freedom through the Underground Railroad. Tell about the places and people you encounter.

Letter Writing

You are an African-American land owner. You have just learned that the property owner next to you is the Grand Wizard of the Klu Klux Klan. Write a letter to a friend about the situation.

Letter Writing

You are an African-American living in the North. Write a letter to your friend in the South who is a slave.

Word Bank

Make a word bank for all the words you are learning related to slavery. Use these words to create puzzles and other creative activities.

Time Line

Construct a time line of events related to slavery, labeling events and dates from the time of the African slave trade to emancipation.

Letter Writing

You are an African-American slave in the South. Write a letter to your friend in the North telling about your life.

Great Depression

Writing News Articles

You are a social worker and your job is to write a newspaper article telling the unemployed how to take care of their families during this crisis time.

Dialogue Writing

You are a poor tenant farmer in the South. Create a dialogue between yourself and a man who is well-to-do and wants to buy your land and machinery because he really does not want you living there.

Biography Writing

During the Great Depression there was a government called the Black Cabinet. Write a one page biography about one of these members of the Black Cabinet: Mary McLeod Bethune, Dr. Robert Weaver, Dr. Ralph Bunche, Carl Rowan, Dr. James C. Evans, Judge William Hastie, Robert Vann, or Frank Horne.

Writing Comparisons

Read Chapter 5 of *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck. Compare the account of this white tenant farmer to that of the black tenant farmer.

Research

What was the New Deal? Write a report explaining how it helped deal with the poverty of the Great Depression.

Writing Ads/Campaign Slogans

Why was Franklin Roosevelt considered a great president during the Great Depression? Write campaign ads/slogans for his election.

Mural Painting

Paint a mural or large poster depicting a historical event related to the Great Depression.

Other

Oral Presentation

Present a report to the class on a visit to one of the southern states. Tell about your visit. What places did you visit? What did you learn?

Poetry Reading

Read poetry by Langston Hughes or Gwendolyn Brooks, in small groups, just for enjoyment.

Finding Violations of Constitutional Rights

Read the first seven articles of the Constitution. Brainstorm as to what you think each of these means. As you read *Southern*, record how these constitutional rights were violated.

Summarizing

Read the Emancipation Proclamation. Summarize what you think it means.

Current Events

Find news articles about African-Americans and share with the class your summaries of what you've read.

Collage

Look through old copies of *Ebony* and *Ebony Jr.* magazines and find clippings for making a collage. Tell how it relates to this unit.

Trip Planning

Plan an itinerary for an automobile trip to Mississippi (the setting for *Roll of Thunder*) List the travel time, places you will visit on the way, and what you will do when you arrive. List the places you want to visit in Mississippi. Explain why these places are of interest.

Directed Reading Teaching Activity (DRTA)

Social Studies Lesson

Textbook *The Afro-Americans in United States History*, "The Coming of the Great Depression." Pages 266-273. Globe Book Company, New York, 1969.

Background

One of the focus books for my African-American thematic unit is *Roll of Thunder. Hear My Cry*. Since this book is set during the Great Depression, it is important that the students understand what it was like for Americans, especially the African-Americans, during that crisis time of our nation's history. Therefore, it is important that

the students gain background knowledge of this period in social studies prior to studying the literature selection.

I. Pre-Reading Large Group

The purpose of the following activities is to activate prior knowledge, generate motivation and set purposes for reading. Depending upon the nature of the group, it might be necessary to use any combination of the options listed below:

A. Create a cause-effect semantic map

1.

Write a cause-effect semantic map with the focus word poverty on the chalkboard.

(Figure available in printed form)

2. Elicit responses from the students.
3. Record responses on the chalkboard.
4. Ask for clarifications in the process.
5. Reflect with the students about their responses.
6. Summarize the ideas using the four-step summary procedure.

The summary of the causes and effects of poverty will link the students to the concept that the period in American history called the Great Depression (1929-1939) was a time of great poverty.

- B. *Preview the text pages*. Note vocabulary, main topics, headings, sub-headings, pictures, captions, illustrations.
- C. *Make predictions about how you think the people, especially African-Americans, fared during the Great Depression*. Record responses. Predict/Read/Prove or a modification of the procedure might be used.
- D. *Post questions related to what the students "want to know" as a modification of a K-W-L procedure as a pre-reading activity*.

II. During Reading Small Groups

(5 groups with 5 students in each group)

In groups of five, the class will read the assigned textbook selection and complete the following map after reading:

(Figure available in printed form)

A. Reading and Recording Information in Groups

Each of the groups will be assigned one of the above topics to complete on large newsprint. For example, group one will be assigned "Problems of African-Americans." The group will read the selection and record information on their newsprint, etc. After recording information, each group will share its findings with the class. After sharing and discussing, *all* students will reread the entire selection to look for new information to add/delete to each group's recorded information.

will each write a five-paragraph summary covering each of the five topics shown on the map, The reason for asking each group to

write a summary of *all* the topics is to ensure knowledge of all the assignment, not just one topic. In the groups, each student will write a one paragraph summary to contribute to their five paragraph group summary. In this process, all students in the group will be required to assist in the revising, editing and proofreading of the final draft of the group summary.

III. *Post-Reading Individual Activity*

A. *Journal Writing*

TV NEWS BULLETIN

“No more jobs No more money!”

All factories and jobs are closed! No one will be receiving pay for his/her job! What will your family do? How will you help? Describe what changes you will experience. Tell what your new life is like! Perhaps you may wish to add illustrations.

B. *Vocabulary*

Complete the attached context vocabulary puzzle, perhaps as a homework activity. The students might be challenged to prepare a similar puzzle using other vocabulary words from the selection.

C. *Other Optional Post-reading Activities*

(individual or small group)

1. Make up ten good questions on the social studies selection on the Great Depression. Make an answer sheet for your questions. Exchange with classmates.
2. Conduct research
 - ¥ How did America get out of the Great Depression?
 - ¥ What was the “New Deal”?
 - ¥ Who was Franklin Roosevelt and what was his role in the Great Depression?
3. Read other books about African-Americans in the Great Depression. For example, the sequel to *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, *Let the Circle be Unbroken*, by Mildred Taylor or *Souder*, by W. H. Armstrong.

Vocabulary Context Puzzle

1. _ _ V _ R _ Y
2. _ R _ D _ _ T _ _ N
3. U _ _ _ P _ O _ E _
4. _ E _ I _ F
5. _ N _ _ _ L _ Y _ E _ _
6. _ _ P _ _ S _ I _ N

- A. Living in ___ was so difficult because she did not have enough food.
- B. Some people say that this country is in a ___ because so many people are out of work.
- C. She was very sad because her mother had no job and her father recently became.
- D. Many factories are closing because there is not a demand for ___ of their materials.
- E. The rate of ___ is very high because so many people have lost their jobs.

F. Sometimes people must seek ___ when they have no food or shelter.

(Answers: 1. poverty 2. production 3. unemployed 4. relief 5. unemployment 6. depression

A. poverty B. depression C. unemployed

Lesson Plan Examples: Roll of Thunder. Hear My Cry

1. Write your own definition of *prejudice* .

2. Now read the dictionary definition of *prejudice* . Paraphrase it and write the definition in your own words.

3. Write at least five examples of *prejudice* .

4. What causes *prejudice* ?

5. How can the country be freed of *prejudice* ?

During Reading

Chapter 1:

Why was Little Man upset about his book?

Chapter 2:

Why did Mr. Logan bring Mr. Wallace to live with them?

Chapter 3:

What did the children do to revenge the white bus driver for splashing them?

Chapter 4:

Why did Stacey get whipped at school?

Chapter 5:

Going to Strawberry taught Cassie some important lessons. Tell what she learned:

Chapter 6:

What kind of a man is Uncle Hammer?

Chapter 7:

Describe Christmas with the family.

Chapter 8:

What happened when the Logans would not sell their land?

Chapter 9:

What happened to the families that went to another town to buy goods?

Chapter 10:

Describe the Grangers.

Chapter 11

Why did the Logans help T.J.?

Chapter 12

What is the conflict among the families about?

After Reading

Find five examples of prejudice in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* . Write a description of each event.

Reread the poem, "Roll of Thunder," at the beginning of Chapter 11. What does the poem symbolize?

Find examples of the many dialect expressions used in the story. Write at least five examples and what each means. (Example: "I betcha Mama's gonna clean you. . . ." page 2You had better stop worrying about staying so clean or Mama will make you sorry for worrying so much.

Annotated Student Bibliography

Adoff, Arnold, Editor. *I Am The Darker Brother: An Anthology of Modern Poems by Negro Americans* . New York: McMillan, 1968.

This is an excellent pictorial anthology of poetry for young people.

Allen, Jerry. *The Adventures of Jimmy Poole* . Minneapolis: Dillon, 1976.

This little fiction book is a story about a black boy and a white boy growing up together as friends in the South.

Armstrong, William H. *Souder* . New York: Harper & Row, 1969.

A Newberry Award winning book that tells of the life of a poor black sharecropper and his family. It is a story of courage about a boy and a dog. The sequel, *A Sour Land* , tells about the boy when he reaches manhood.

Brooks, Gwendolyn. *Bronzeville Boys and Girls* . New York: Harper & Row, 1956.

This is an excellent collection of Brooks' poetry for young people.

Brown, Milton. *Jacob Lawrence* . New York: Dodd Mead, 1974.

This book has pictures with commentaries about the paintings on exhibition at the Whitney Museum in 1974.

Burch, Robert. *Ida Early Comes Over the Mountain* . New York: Viking, 1980.

This novel tells the story of the Sutton children and how they survived the Great Depression in the South.

Carlson, Natalie. *The Empty Schoolhouse* . New York: Harper & Row, 1965.

This contemporary story, set in the changing South, tells of the problems Lullah Royal had when she tried to enter a white school in Louisiana.

Da Salvia, Benjamin. *The African American in United States History* . New York: Globe, 1972.

This is a comprehensive social studies book used in sixth grade classrooms in the New Haven Public Schools.

Duffe, Marcelle. *Southern Colonial Days* . New York: Harper & Row, 1942.

This beautifully illustrated picture book gives an account of the luxurious life of a plantation owner's son in Virginia.

Fox, Paula. *The Slave Dancer* . Boston: Bradbury Press, 1973.

This Newberry Award winning novel describes how a thirteen year old boy was kidnapped to make music on a slave ship. It gives depictions of living on a slave ship.

Goodrich, Lloyd. *Winslow Homer* . New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1973.

The book contains many of Homer's works with commentaries about the paintings.

Grenfield, Eloise. *Rosa Parks* . New York: Crowell, 1973.

The biography of Rosa Parks is readable, colorful and well illustrated.

Hamilton, Virginia. *The House of Dries Drear* and the sequel, *The Mystery of the Drear House* . New York: Greenwillow Press, 1987.

A black family living in the house of Dries Drear, long dead abolitionist, must decide what to do with his treasure hidden for one hundred years.

Hamilton, Virginia. *M.C. Higgins. The Great* . New York: Macmillan, 1974.

Mayo Cornelius Higgins must decide whether to do what he wants to do or what is best for his family.

Hamilton, Virginia. *The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales* . New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985.

This book contains a selection of retold African-American folktales of animals, fantasy and the sorrow and hope of the slaves.

Hamilton, Virginia. *The Planet of Junior Brown* . New York: MacMillan, 1971.

A story about Junior Brown, who lives with his mother, and how Junior takes care of a friend who has no family.

A 1972 Newberry Honor Book.

Hamilton, Virginia. *Arilla Sun Down, The Gathering, Zeely, The Time Ago Tales of Jadhu, Paul Robeson: The Life and Times of a Free Black Man, The Writings of W.E. B. DuBoise* .

These titles are excellent suggested books for middle school students who are interested in reading more literature about African-Americans.

Hannaway, Patti. *Winslow Homer in the Tropics* . Richmond, Virginia: Westover Publishing Co., 1973.

This book is an excellent reference for Homer's art during the period when he was in the tropics.

Harris, Joel Chandler. *Jump, Jump Again! , Jump On Over!* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986, 1987 and 1989.

A series of three books of the adventures of Brer Rabbit adapted by Van Dyke Parks. Each of the books tells the tales with beautiful watercolor illustrations.

Hooks, William. *The Ballad of Belle Dorcas* . New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990.

This picture book is a story about Belle, a freed slave who was in love with Joshua, a slave.

Hopkins, Bennett Lee, *Don't Turn Your Back* . New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969.

This is a young people's book of poetry by Langston Hughes.

Hopkins, Bennett Lee. *On Our Way: Poems of Pride and Love* . New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974.

This is a poetry book containing poems on blackness, feelings, remembrances and love.

Hughes, Langston. *The Dreamkeeper and Other Poems* . New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1932.

This book contains selections of Hughes' dream poems and other poetry.

Katz, William. *The Great Depression* . New York: Franklin Watts, 1978.

This pictorial book gives a chronology of events in the Great Depression. The photography adds so much to the depiction of the grim reality of that decade in history.

Lester, Julius. *To Be A Slave* . New York: Dial, 1968.

This book provides first hand accounts of life as a slave.

McElroy, Guy. *The Black Image in American Art (1710-1940)*. Washington D.C.: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1990.

This is a beautiful source of African-American art from the eighteenth to twentieth centuries.

McKissack, Patricia. *Martin Luther King, Jr.: A Man To Remember*. Chicago: Regensteiner Publications, 1984.

This is a pictorial account of the accomplishments of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Meyers, Walter D., *Scorpions* . New York: Harper & Row, 1988.

This is a novel about life in a gang of African American young people.

Mintz, Steven. *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life* . New York: The Free Press, 1988.

The book has an excellent selection of African-American photographs and art.

Monjo, F.N. *The Drinking Gourd* . New York: Harper & Row, 1970.

This illustrated book is about escaping from slavery to find freedom in the North.

Ringgold, Faith. *Tar Beach* . New York: Crown, 1991.

This beautifully illustrated book is a fictional biographical account of the author's life in Harlem.

Smucker, Barbara. *Runaway to Freedom* . New York: Harper Row, 1978.

This is a fictional account of two black twelve-year old girls, one of whom is crippled, and their escape to freedom through the Underground Railroad.

Taylor, Mildred D. *Roll of Thunder. Hear My Cry* . New York: Dial Press, 1976.

A Newberry Award winning book that tells how Cassie Logan, a black girl, learned about prejudice during the Great Depression. The sequel, *Let the Circle be Unbroken* , tells more about her experiences in later years.

Taylor, Mildred. *The Friendship* . New York: Dial Press, 1987.

This illustrated picture book tells the story of life in the South during the Great Depression era.

Turner, Anne. *Nettle's Trip South* . New York: McMillan, 1987.

A powerful and moving account of a girl's reaction to slavery in the South that is based on a real diary of her great-grandmother. The illustrations which accompany the text make it suitable for any grade level.

Walker, Alice. *Langston Hughes: American Poet* . New York: McMillan, 1978.

This is an interesting biography of one of the most famous African American poets.

Walter, Mildred. *Ty's One Man Band* . New York: Four Winds Press, 1980.

This is a story about making music in the rural South with emphasis on the African-American contribution.

White, Anne T. *North to Liberty. The Story of the Underground Railroad*. Chicago: Garrard Publishing. 1963.

This is a pictorial narrative tracing the history of the black Americans' struggle for freedom as they escaped the bondage of slavery.

Whitmore, Amelia. *The Bread Winner* . Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1990.

This novel tells how Sarah, a courageous 12 year old, survived losing her home and had to move into a shack during the Great Depression.

Woods, Harold. *The South Central States* . New York: Franklin Watts, 1984.

This book gives the factual geographical perspectives to the South Central states, especially Louisiana. A good reference source.

Annotated Teacher Bibliography

Adoff, Arnold, Editor. *Black Out Loud* . New York: McMillan, 1970.

This is an excellent anthology of modern black poetry.

Bontemps, Anna, Editor. *Golden Slippers* . New York: Harper & Row, 1941.

This is an anthology of black poetry that contains biographical information about the poets.

Cullen, Countee. *On Thee I Stand* . New York: Harper & Row, 1947.

This book is a collection of the best poems by Countee Cullen.

Da Salvia, Benjamin. *The African American in United States History* . New York: Globe, 1972.

This is a comprehensive social studies book used in sixth grade classrooms in the New Haven Public Schools.

King, Woodie, Jr., *The Forerunners: Black Poets in America* . Washington, D.C.: Howard Press, 1975.

This collection of black poetry has an introduction by Langston Hughes.

Randall, Dudley, Editor. *The Black Poets* . Detroit: The Broadside Press, 1971.

This is an anthology of black poetry.

Rodgers, Bertha, Editor. *Little Brown Baby* . New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1940.

This is a collection of Dunbar's poetry that includes a biographical sketch of Dunbar.

Simpson, Jeffrey. *The American Family: A History in Photographs* . New York: Viking Press, 1976.

This is an excellent source of photographs of different ethnic groups covering the 1800's-1970's.

Smead, Howard. *The Afro-Americans* . New York: Cheslea House, 1989.

This factual account details historical events, accompanied by commentary, from slavery to the Civil Rights Movement.

Strickland, Dorothy, Editor. *Listen Children* . New York: Bantam Skylark, 1982.

This anthology has an excellent collection of black literature that students would enjoy. It is a good book for teachers to use for reading aloud to students.

Walck, Henry. *The Thirties. America and the Great Depression* . New York: Boardman, 1967.

This is a good reference book for research on the Great Depression.

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