



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
1993 Volume III: Twentieth-Century Multicultural Theater

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## **The Role of the African Playwright as a Griot**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 93.03.09  
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This creative writing curriculum is multi-faceted. First, it is designed to hone the writing skills of inner-city African, Latin, and white high school juniors and seniors. (The term African is utilized throughout this paper in lieu of black, Afro-American or African-American. It is intended to encompass all people whose biological ancestry may be traced to Africa.) Additionally, this unit of study is structured to enhance the African students' sense of self. It will provide them with a clear understanding of the evolution of African and African-American history and literature as well as influences/impacts on and from other cultures. At the same time Latin and white students will be sensitized to the history of the African. Students will sample and discuss the work of playwrights of African descent in the U.S. and in the motherland. It focuses on three significant time periods: Antiquity, Slavery, and The Harlem Renaissance.

Exercises have been developed to provide students with skills needed to write scripts that are technically astute as well as imaginative (i.e., drills that focus on creating realistic dialogues and review various formats/styles of scripts as well as lessons that consider the history of theater in Africa). Discussions will be focused on the function of the playwright/griot as: spokesperson; observer; historian; designer of standards, values and direction of society; conscience of society or group; and reporter. Guests from the Yale University African Studies Center will be invited to speak to the students.

This curriculum may be used by anyone teaching: drama, creative writing, history, ethnic studies or English classes, as well as anyone interested in Ancient Africa, Slavery or The Harlem Renaissance.

(Recommended for Creative Writing, Drama, Afro-American story, and English, Grades 10-12)

### **Key Words**

*Playwriting Writing Instruction*

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