



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1993 Volume IV: The Minority Artist in America

Jacob Lawrence's Freedom Trail

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by Casey Cassidy

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I. Introduction

This year my curriculum unit will highlight the heroic accomplishments of two great Americans—that of Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman as they led their peoples out of a land of injustice and inequality to a land of hope and opportunity. This project will focus on the lives of these two central characters as they are depicted in the masterful paintings of Jacob Lawrence, a man who was able to vividly illustrate the horrors of growing up Black in a racially divided South. He was able to celebrate African-American history, its significant figures, and their exploits through the usage of historical narrative. It is through these personal journeys to freedom that my students will be better able to understand the tragedies of slavery that many of their own ancestors endured.

At Roberto Clemente Middle School, our literature based reading program will lend itself nicely to an interdisciplinary approach to learning which will become the basis for this curriculum unit. We will have selected reading from Douglass's autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*, and the biography *Harriet Tubman: The Moses of Her People*. We will develop writing assignments related to these materials in the form of chapter summaries, character descriptions, and perhaps a book report. Certainly group discussions will become most interesting as we analyze what Douglass is relating to us on the surface but more so as we begin to explore with analytical and critical thinking skills as well as inferred meanings. Additionally, we will integrate our unit with the Clemente Art Department. We hope to have some of our young talented artists attempt to reproduce some of Jacob Lawrence's paintings. We will also secure slides from Mr. Lawrence's national traveling exhibition to serve as a pictorial narrative guide for our project.

II. Goals, Objectives and Strategies

My primary unit objective is to present a compact, comprehensive narrative history detailing the lives and accomplishments of Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman as perceived by Jacob Lawrence and masterfully recreated on his canvases. Additionally, we will read and appreciate the candid and powerful first-hand account of what it was like to be a slave and to be forced to endure under what must have been incredible hardships and severe persecution. Other objectives are to dramatically improve the reading and writing skills of our students and to expose them to quality pieces of literature written by and about powerful, positive role models. We will also seek to improve their critical thinking and inferential skills as we discuss both literature and art. We hope to challenge our students to excel, to develop a greater awareness of Jacob Lawrence's art and his modern interpretations of Black history, and to appreciate the heroic accomplishments of Douglass and Tubman alike.

My strategies for teaching this unit will reflect a diversified, interdisciplinary approach. Students will be challenged with comprehensive silent and oral readings; summarizing, finding the main idea and context skills; analytical and inferential skills; and writing and communication skills. The slides will lend themselves nicely to group lectures and oral discussions, especially concerning interpreted meanings. Throughout the autobiography of Douglass, we will highlight his heroic accomplishments as we analyze the mechanics of his writing and his writing style.

III. Biography of Jacob Lawrence and His Thematic Characters

Jacob Lawrence was born in Atlantic City, New Jersey in 1917, raised in Pennsylvania until he was thirteen, and settled with his family in Harlem about 1930. For all intensive purposes, Jacob Lawrence “grew up” in Harlem during the Depression and his career owes much to that situation. At that time, Harlem was recognized as the “international capital for the black race”. ¹ Alain Locke, a philosophy professor and a leading figure of that period, exhibited a major influence on blacks, encouraging them “to turn to their heritage in a search for cultural identity, guiding them to recognize black contributions to the folk traditions of America, and to explore them artistically.” Lawrence drew upon Harlem scenes and black history for his subjects, portraying the lives and aspirations of black Americans.

By 1936, Lawrence had established himself with many great figures of the Harlem Renaissance. He shared an art studio with painter Charles Alston at 306 West 141st Street—a famous meeting place for luminaries such as Langston Hughes, Alaine Locke, Claude McKay, and Aaron Douglas. His early work continued to be influenced by painters Romare Beardon, Ronald Joseph, and his future wife Gwendolyn Knight as well as sculptor Augusta Savage. His earliest works date from around 1936 and these were typically scenes of the Harlem community.

As a teenager, Lawrence spent much of his time at the Metropolitan Museum of Art studying the techniques of Renaissance painters such as Botticelli and Crivelli. He also studied abstract painters and he shared Harlem community interest in African art and African culture. Through these influences his style became one of brightly-colored images, concerned with the drama of the human struggle. A distinctive feature of Lawrence’s paintings is his usage of a narrative, historical documentary. He was inspired by the Harlem community to develop a keen interest in the stories of early black leaders and to read about their struggles and their deep convictions. Because of his deeply-rooted search for cultural identity, Lawrence’s paintings adapted a narrative style to teach Black History to better convey the emotions and the ideas in the stories which he wished to tell. “I have always been interested in history, but they never taught Negro history in the public schools. . . . I don’t see how a history of the United States can be written honestly without including the Negro. I didn’t do it just as a historical thing, but because these things tie up with the Negro today. We don’t have a physical slavery, but an economic slavery. If these people, who were so much worse off than the people today, could conquer their slavery, we certainly can do the same thing. They had to liberate themselves without any education. Today we can’t go about it in the same way. Any leadership would have to be the type of Frederick Douglass. . . . How will it come about? I don’t know. I’m not a politician, I’m an artist, just trying to do my part to bring this thing about.” ³

Frederick Douglass was born in 1818, in Talbot County, Maryland, the son of a Caucasian father whom he never knew and an enslaved mother who was separated from him while he was just a babe. He lived on a plantation as a slave and, in his autobiography, he details the harsher than normal treatment that he received due to his mixed parentage. At the age of eight, he was sent to Baltimore, to the Auld family, to work as a houseboy. This turn of events proved very fortunate for Douglass because he was taught to read under the kind tutelage of Mrs. Auld.

In 1833, Douglass was returned to Talbot County to work as a laborer. Because of his rebellious nature, he was soon assigned to a Mr. Covey, a man who had a reputation as a slave breaker. Having thwarted a second attempt by Mr. Covey of being flogged, Douglass was again sent to Baltimore, this time to work in the shipyards. Soon after learning a shipping trade and being able to read, Douglass succeeded in escaping and

making his way to New York City. There he married Anna Murray and they settled in New Bedford, Massachusetts, eventually having five children. Later in life Douglass joined the forces of William Lloyd Garrison and the abolitionist movement, lecturing throughout the Northeast, narrating his life as a slave, detailing the cruelty and the inhumane treatment of the slaving system.

Harriet Tubman, like Douglass, was born a slave in Maryland around 1820. She was one of eleven children and she was forced to begin work at age five. When she was about fifteen, she felt her first sting of slavery when an over-seer struck Harriet on the head with an iron bar, which left her with a dented skull and a kind of seizure that plagued her the rest of her life. Because of her field work, Harriett developed great strength and endurance through plowing, cutting and loading wood. In 1844, she married John Tubman, a free black man, and in 1849 she escaped to a free Pennsylvania, guided mainly by the North Star.

In the North, Harriet worked as a domestic, saving her monies to liberate other slaves. From the beginning, she was guided by spiritual visions and her strong belief in God. In 1850, she returned to the South, freeing over three hundred slaves by means of the Underground Railroad. During a period of ten years, she became one of the most notorious “conductors” on the Railroad, with a reward of \$40,000 offered for her head due to her daring and elusive nature. She was able to rescue most of her brothers and sisters as well as her parents. Because of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, Harriet was forced to bring her peoples to Canada to avoid recapture.

Harriet Tubman was also a friend of Frederick Douglass and John Brown, and she became active in the abolitionist movements of the North. She was well known for her moving speeches on the abolition of slavery and for women’s rights. During the Civil War, Tubman served the North, especially as a nurse and as a spy. Her services were invaluable. After the war she settled down in Auburn, New York, continuing to work with her people. When she died in 1913, a large mass meeting was held in her honor and a bronze memorial was erected on the county courthouse.

IV. Lawrence’s Narrative History of Douglass (selected slides from national traveling exhibition)

Jacob Lawrence produced the Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman Series between 1938 and 1940. The paintings of each of these series forms a cumulative narrative history and each individual painting describes a specific event in the central character’s life, accompanied by a brief description of related events and information pertinent to the painting. The Frederick Douglass series is comprised of thirty-two paintings, while the Harriet Tubman series has thirty-one. For this curriculum unit I have chosen ten selections from each series to create a shortened version of the original narratives. However, with background readings from Douglass’s autobiography and Tubman’s biography, I am sure that our students will come away from this experience much richer in their understanding of their cultural heritage and with a greater appreciation for the heroic accomplishments of their ancestors.

The Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman series are unique in Lawrence’s work for several reasons. The artist pursued figures who were related by their history, social condition, and race. Additionally, both were determined to free their minds and their bodies from slavery. Each series depicts personal journeys. “Frederick Douglass cut a path from ignorance and learning to self-knowledge; he traveled from being a pawn of the circumstances of his birth to independence, responsibility, and action. Harriet Tubman journeyed from

slavery to a freedom that transformed her into a mythical figure of a New World Moses acting out her role against the ancient and powerful symbolic resonance of the enslaved Jews of the Old Testament, their exile and wandering in the wilderness, and their eventual entry, after trials and privation, to a new homeland and the condition of freedom. ⁴The Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman series are among five historical narratives that Jacob Lawrence painted during the early years of his life. All are concerned with the history of Black Americans, their struggles against slavery, and their efforts to find a better life.

Douglass's Birthplace

"In Talbot County, eastern shore, state of Maryland, in a thinly-populated district, inhabited by a white population of the lowest order, among slaves who in point of ignorance were fully in accord with their surroundings — it was here that Frederick Douglass was born and spent the first years of his childhood — February 1818." ⁵This painting depicts the vast plantation owned by Colonel Edward Lloyd on which Frederick Douglass was born. The figures of the slaves who are busy at work and the plantation children at play offer a dramatic contrast, framed by the black tree limbs that create individual vignettes of life on a slave plantation.

A Mother's Visit

In the barbarous South, a common practice was to separate slave children from their mothers during their infancy or shortly after birth. On Colonel Lloyd's plantation, Frederick was brought up by his grandmother because his mother was hired out to a plantation miles away. The only times that his mother was able to visit and to be with Frederick were when she was able to steal away late at night, travel 24 miles to and from, and hasten back before dawn so that her absence would go undetected. Subsequently, Frederick saw little of his mother during her hasty and dangerous visits.

Slaves Living Quarters

In the slaves' living quarters, large numbers of people, both young and old, lived in the same room. There were no separate arrangements for married couples and everyone slept on clay floors, with no beds and few blankets. Usually flour sacks were used for clothing material and the slaves' work baskets doubled as the beds for the young children. In this painting Lawrence places a red flower in the middle bottom area which represents a symbol of hope. He repeats this symbol many times in other paintings.

Prohibited Education

In 1826, Frederick was sent to Baltimore to work as a house servant in the Auld home. Frederick's major responsibility was to take care of the Auld's son, Tommy. While in Mrs. Auld's home, Frederick learned to read from both Tommy and his mother. In this painting we find Mr. Auld severely chastising his mistress for this discretion, with Frederick hiding behind her chair. Mr. Auld tells her that a slave must learn only one thing, and that is to obey. This incident became a turning point for Douglass as it rekindled his desire for freedom. In his autobiography, Douglass stated that reading opened his mind to truth and it was because of this truth that he was never again able to tolerate the condition of slavery.

Douglass Refuses A Flogging

The cruel and oppressive flick of the lash was often used to break both the body and the spirit of the slaves as well as to quiet a rebellious attitude. Often slaves were whipped for minor offenses or as a means of suppression. Douglass's confrontation with Mr. Covey takes place in a stable as he resists being whipped. Douglass speaks in his autobiography of his body and spirit being crushed and his hopes were futile until he was inspired to fight off his cruel overseer, a man who was instructed to break Douglass. This was one of the

most important incidents in Douglass's life because he was never attacked by Covey again.

A Conspired Escape

In 1836, Douglass and a group of fellow slaves conspired to escape at night. From his readings of *The Columbian Orator*, a freedom newspaper, he influenced his co-conspirators to escape, only to find out that they had been betrayed. At mid-day, they were called off the fields, placed in chains, and taken away to be punished for their planned flight to liberty.

Learning A Slave Trade

After his unsuccessful escape In 1836, Douglass was again sent to the Auld home in Baltimore, Maryland, where he was assigned to work in Mr. Gardiner's shipyards. This turn of events proved fortuitous for Douglass due to the proximity of Northern soil. Additionally, it was in these shipyards that Douglass learned a caulking trade that enabled him to earn monies, a portion of which he was allowed to keep. In his autobiography Douglass explained his feelings about giving up his weekly pay to a man to whom he owed nothing: "To make a contented slave, you must first make a thoughtless one. It is necessary to darken his moral and mental vision, and, as far as possible, to annihilate his power of reason. The man who takes his earnings must be able to convince him that he has a perfect right to do so." ⁶ Subsequently, Douglass planned to escape again. This time he was much closer to Northern soil, to water and train transportation systems, and armed with some monies and a greater ability to read. He was now ready!

The Fugitive

Douglass's escape from slavery was facilitated by his ability to read, his knowledge of sailing, and his desire to become free. On his escape by train he traveled through Maryland, Wilmington, Philadelphia, and finally arrived in New York, a free man. On his journey, he disguised himself as a sailor because he knew the trade well after his shipyard experiences for Mr. Gardiner in Baltimore.

The Lecturer

Douglass's first few years as a free man were spent in New York working various non-skill labor jobs such as shoveling coal and dock work. In New York City he lived with an abolitionist family. Soon after he married his fiancée from Baltimore and they moved to New Bedford, Massachusetts where Douglass began to regularly attend antislavery meetings, especially those led by William Lloyd Garrison. Douglass's career as an abolitionist began in 1841 when he was asked to speak of his experience as a slave. People were eager to hear his narrative of slavery horrors as he spoke about the cruelty and inhuman treatment of the slave system.

The Publisher

After the publishing In 1844 of his first autobiography, which revealed the names, places and dates of his slavery experience, Douglass moved to Britain in 1845 to avoid recapture. It was here that Douglass articulated the dangers and the evils of slavery. While he resided in England, two Quaker Englishwomen paid for Douglass's freedom. In 1847, Douglass returned to America, establishing *The North Star* newspaper with \$2,500 given to him by compassionate sympathizers. As editor, he wrote on many controversial topics such as the Fugitive Slave Law, the Dred Scott Decision and other issues that affected his enslaved and oppressed peoples. His many accomplishments as lecturer and publisher are quite significant considering that he was completely self-educated. Douglass also continued to help with the Underground Railroad as a stationmaster for Rochester, New York, a role that brought him great satisfaction. "I never did more congenial, attractive,

fascinating and satisfactory work. . . . It was like an attempt to bail out the ocean with a teaspoon, but . . . (it) brought to my heart unspeakable joy.”⁷

V. The Tubman Narrative

A Childhood in Maryland

In this narrative series, Jacob Lawrence introduces us to Harriet Tubman in this painting depicting a group of slave children playing leaping and tumbling games. Harriet is one of these children playing in Dorchester County, Maryland, seemingly carefree as children often are.

The First Sting of Slavery

When Harriet was about fifteen years old, she received her first beating when she was struck on her head with an iron bar by an overseer on the plantation. In this painting Harriet is viewed as she is lying on the ground unconscious as the overseer retreats. A black snake slithers toward Harriet, symbolically conveying evil and wickedness, representative of plantation life.

Water Girl To Field Hands

As Harriet grew older, she became a very strong woman with large massive arms and hands. Her daily tasks consisted of cutting wood, plowing fields and hauling logs. She was about five feet tall, stocky and very strong.

Shrieks of Flogged Women

In this horror scene at night, Lawrence paints a shadowy vision of slave women being whipped. This abstract painting seemingly captures the loud screams and shrieks of these tortured souls as the overseer, whip in hand and sleeves rolled up, goes about his evening duties. The women’s hands are vividly painted as they beg for mercy.

Auctioned

In this painting, Harriet is auctioned off to the highest bidder. Having been frequently whipped and poorly fed, as well as having incurred head injuries when struck with that iron bar, Harriet’s master sold her. Mr. Lawrence creates a very interesting perspective with this work because we view the auction through the eyes of the slave being sold as she watches men with whips and chains waiting to bid on her human flesh. I found myself returning often to this painting to gain a clearer insight into the cruelties of the slavery system and the despair of the individual participants.

Northern Star

Three paintings in this narrative series involve the dramatic northern escapes to freedom against the vivid background of the night sky and the North Star to be used as the guiding light. In the first instance, Harriet is viewed as breaking from the chains of slavery with her hands extended upward towards the North Star as if to pull herself to freedom. She carries a few belongings in a red traveling case and her eyes are wide open, casting fearful glances over her shoulder. The symbolic black snake lurks nearby as she starts on her long, lonely journey. She is between the ages of twenty and twenty-five and Mr. Lawrence paints her in a white robe

to express the “purity of her mission”.

The second painting lacks any human figure. Rather, the scene is a wooded landscape on a clear night with many stars in the skies, and a flesh-toned hand lays across the evening sky as if to signal the direction in which Harriet is to travel. The caption beneath the landscape offers a \$500 reward for Harriett’s capture and the wording describes Harriet as a piece of property rather than as a human being.

“\$500 Reward! Runaway from subscriber on Thursday night, the 4th inst., from the neighborhood of Cambridge, my negro girl, Harriet, sometimes called Minty. Is dark chestnut color, rather stout build, but bright and handsome. Speaks rather deep and has a scar over the left temple. She wore a brown plaid shawl.

I will give the above reward captured outside the county, and \$300 if captured inside the county, in either case to be lodged in the Cambridge, Maryland jail.

(signed) George Carter Broadacres, near Cambridge, Maryland September 24th, 1849”⁸ In the third Northern Star painting, Harriett’s figure bends forward in her stride to freedom, guided once again by the bright starlight. Her white robe moves across the wooded landscape, enshrouded by the hills and valleys. She travels by night and hides by day, sleeping behind trees or crouched in swamp areas to avoid recapture.

The Underground Railroad

In the North, Harriet was overjoyed that she could now keep all of her earnings, and she diligently saved these monies so that she could return South and rescue other slaves. Accordingly, her first trip South was in 1850 to rescue her sister and her sister’s two children in Baltimore. Each night, Harriet would conduct these people North, climbing the mountains, wading the rivers, threading the forests, many times carrying the babies. In panel 15 of her series, Harriet is painted in her white robe against the dark sky leading three people towards freedom. Over a course of several years, Harriet made nineteen such journeys and escorted over three hundred people to safety.

Harriet’s rescue efforts became very widely known. She was very clever with disguises and went undetected as she moved from plantation to plantation. The plantation owners wished to capture her and to burn her at the stake. Panels 18 and 19 of Lawrence’s series deal with the constant search for Tubman and the \$40,000 bounty that was placed on her head because she was so bold, daring and elusive.

In 1850, the Fugitive Slave Law was passed, which forced the return of slaves found North of the Mason and Dixon line. Subsequently, the Underground Railroad extended its network of escape routes into Canada. Panel 20 illustrates Harriet and two of her charges trudging through the northern snow. Canada became a haven for fugitive slaves between 1850 and 1865.

Anti-Slavery Lecturer

Between 1851 and 1857, St. Catherines in Canada became home for Harriet Tubman. One of the northernmost stops on the Underground Railroad was Rochester, New York, and it was here that Harriet would work closely with Frederick Douglass. Tubman soon began to attend abolitionist meetings and it was there that she became an excellent speaker, relating the evils of slavery and the suffering of her people as only a person of Harriet’s experience could. Her speeches brought tears to the eyes and sorrow to the hearts of her listeners when she spoke. Panel 21 displays eager listeners clutching at the rail, wide-eyed and seemingly hanging on Harriet’s every word.

Union Nurse

When the Civil War broke out, Harriet was asked by Governor Andrews of Massachusetts to volunteer to serve the Union forces. Initially she assisted the negro slaves who had fled into the Union lines. However, shortly thereafter she became invaluable as an intelligence gatherer as she organized spy and scouting missions. From the captive slaves she learned troop positions, which hastened the Southern defeat.

Harriet was also a hard working nurse during the Civil War. Utilizing her knowledge of herbs and roots, she was able to allay fevers, small pox and dysentery. Through her efforts, the lives of many Union soldiers were saved.

Rest In Peace

After the war was over, Harriet went to live at her home in Auburn, New York where she lived well into her nineties. In 1869, she married Nelson Davis, a private in a black southern volunteer army. She supported herself through domestic work, farming and donations. She lived to attend the funeral of her abolitionist friends Wendell Phillips in 1883 and Frederick Douglass a few years later.

Harriet remained very active despite her old head injury received from that cruel overseer. She died on March 10, 1913 and was buried with military honors. A memorial service was held on June 12, 1914, and thousands of people came to pay their respects to a great humanitarian and heroine. Outside the county courthouse a memorial tablet was erected in Auburn.

Jacob Lawrence paints Panel 31 in a very reflective mood as he reflects on Tubman's many trips to rescue the slaves as they were guided by the bright stars against the dark, blue sky. Frederick Douglass, in a letter he once wrote to Tubman, speaks of these stars and sky:

"The difference between us is very marked. Most that I have done and suffered in the service of our cause has been in public, and I have received much encouragement at every step of the way. You, on the other hand, have labored in a private way. I have wrought in the day -you in the night. I have had the applause of the crowd and the satisfaction that comes of being approved by the multitude, while the most that you have done has been witnessed by a few trembling, scared and foot-sore bound men and women, whom you have led out of the house of bondage, and whose heartfelt 'God Bless You!' has been your only reward. The midnight sky and the silent stars have been the witnesses of your devotion to freedom and to your heroism. Excepting John Brown — of sacred memory — I know of no one who has willingly encountered more perils and hardships to serve our enslaved people than you have." ⁹

Douglass's words will echo forever.

VI. Lesson Plans.

- 1.) Selected readings from the autobiography of Frederick Douglass and the biography of Harriet Tubman: The Moses of Her People will be utilized to magnify the heroic accomplishments of the two great libertarians. Students will be challenged with oral and silent readings as they seek to

develop critical thinking and analytical thinking skills. They will also be asked to search for main ideas, details, conclusions and subtle underlying messages.

Within the context of each reading, students will be motivated to excel, to participate frequently in oral and written communication exercises, and to develop a greater appreciation for the sacrifices endured by their peoples in their quest for liberty, equality and opportunity.

2.) To gain a greater insight into the realities of the slavery system, students will be encouraged to listen carefully to oral readings of Chapter One of Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave. After several paragraphs have been read, students will be better able to understand the cruel and inhumane treatment induced upon the slaves by plantation owners and their overseers. Following the oral readings, students will be encouraged to join group discussions. Sample questions to be discussed may be among the following:

A. What are the circumstances influencing Douglass's childhood? B. Compare your childhood relationship to your parents with Frederick's relationship to his. C. Who were Frederick's parents? D. Describe the whipping of Aunt Hester and the effect that this brutality had on Douglass.

Students may also be encouraged to read other books about Frederick Douglass. The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass deals primarily with his escape from slavery. These readings can be done on an individual basis.

3.) Slide presentations of Jacob Lawrence's paintings will be developed to create a narrative history of two American slaves who escaped to freedom in the North and who lived to become major figures in the fight against slavery. Students will be encouraged to actively participate in group discussions as they carefully study each painting. I have selected ten paintings for both Douglas and Tubman with the hope that as a total entity they will dramatically examine the personal journeys of these two central characters. Additionally, each individual slide will serve to highlight important occurrences along their route to freedom and they will lend themselves very nicely to our literature studies as well.

4.) Geographical Map Locations will be developed by the instructor and students alike as we follow the routes to freedom as taken by Douglass and Tubman. We will follow them from their place of birth to their final resting place. We will also analyze the land boundaries of the states in which they traveled to see just how they compare to the present day boundary conditions.

5.) Encourage students to start autobiographies of their own lives.

6.) Role Playing:

A. Demonstrate an incident involving a master-slave relationship.

B. Show how a slave might have learned to read in secret.

C. Imagine that you were with Harriet Tubman on The Underground Railroad. Explain how difficult it was for you to escape and how frightening it was on your journey. What were some of your secrets on making a successful getaway?

7.) List some dreams that they may have for their own futures. What can be done to make them come true?

VII. Chronology,

- 1917 Born Atlantic City, New Jersey
- 1919 Moved to Pennsylvania
- 1930 Moved to New York City's Harlem
- 1932-37 Studied at WPA-sponsored Harlem Art Workshops
- 1936 Painted first significant works, Harlem scenes
- 1937-39 Studied at American Artists School, New York. Painted first series, Toussaint L'Ouverture.
- 1938-39 Worked as easel painter on WPA Federal Art Project
- 1941 Married Gwendolyn Knight, painter and sculptor. Traveled to the South. Joined Downtown Gallery, New York.
- 1943-45 World War II, served In U.S. Coast Guard as combat artist; traveled on troop ship to Europe, Near East, India.
- 1944 First major one-person exhibition, Museum of Modern Art, New York
- 1946 Received Guggenheim Fellowship to paint War series. Taught at Black Mountain College, North Carolina, the beginning of his teaching career.
- 1954-70 Taught at Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Maine; Pratt Institute, New York; Five Towns Music and Art Foundation, Long Island; Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts; New School for Social Research, New York; Art Students League, New York; California State University, Hayward; University of Washington, Seattle.
- 1960 First retrospective exhibition, Brooklyn Museum, New York (toured nationally).
- 1964 Lived and worked in Nigeria.
- 1971 Appointed full professor, School of Art, University of Washington; moved to Seattle, where he still lives and works.
- 1974 Traveling retrospective, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.
- 1978 Appointed commissioner, National Council of the Arts (six year term).
- 1979 Created first mural, Games, Kingdome Stadium, Seattle, Washington.
- 1983 Elected member, American Academy of Arts and Letters.
- 1986 Traveling retrospective, Seattle Art Museum.
- 1987 Retired from teaching. Professor Emeritus, School of Art, University of Washington.
- 1989 Seventh mural installed, Community, Government Services Administration building, Jamaica, New York.
- 1990 Completed his fifteenth series, Eight Sermons of the Creation from the Book of Genesis. Received National Medal of the Art, from President Bush.

VIII. Footnotes

1. Wheat, Ellen. Jacob Lawrence American Painter. (Hampton: Hampton University, 1986) pg. 27.
2. IBID. pg. 29.
3. Wheat, Ellen. Jacob Lawrence: The Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman Series of 1938-1940. (Hampton University, 1991) pg. 14.
4. IBID
5. Douglas, Frederick. Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave. (New York: Signet, 1968 [originally 1845]).
6. IBID
7. IBID, pgs. 271-272.
8. Conrad, Earl. Harriet Tubman (New York: Doubleday, 1943) pg. 24.
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Classroom Materials

A. Douglass Slide Collection by Jacob Lawrence

B. Tubman Slide Collection by Jacob Lawrence

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