



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1997 Volume III: American Maid: Growing Up Female in Life and Literature

American Women Who Shaped the Civil Rights Movement Explored Through the Literature of Eloise Greenfield

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Traditionally women have played a significant role in the growth and development of children. American children of the 90s are still strongly influenced by women, yet little emphasis is placed on where, when, why, and how women have shaped our country. In this unit of study, I would like to explore the history of women who worked for civil rights in the twentieth century using the writings of Eloise Greenfield, an African American children's author, as a springboard. The lives of Ella Baker, Mary McLeod Bethune, Rosa Parks, Eleanor Roosevelt, Mary Church Terrell, and Ida Wells-Barnett lend themselves for study. The parameters for the unit will be narrowed by my role as a library media specialist, the age of the children for whom the unit is designed, and the material available.

For today's children, the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s is as remote as the Civil War. Our children celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday with little awareness of the recency of the holiday. Most of our elementary school students were born after the third Monday in January was designated an official national holiday in 1986. In fact, very few people realize that this was the first national holiday established since Memorial Day was created in 1948. If we don't want Dr. King's birthday to turn into just another day off from school or work, or the advent of the winter vacation season, we need to prepare our children to continue the work of the civil rights movement. As Rosa Parks states in her autobiography, *My Story*, racism is still a major issues that our children must deal with in their everyday lives. Therefore, this unit is worthy of study.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is the embodiment of the civil rights movement. But without the help, support, hard work, and dedication of many people, particularly women, Dr. King would not have been able to accomplish as much as he did. In fact, Rosa Parks' act of defiance that sparked the national civil rights movement probably would not have been as successful if it weren't for the behind the scenes work of JoAnn Gibson Robinson and the Montgomery Women's Political Council. I would like contemporary children to meet, to dialogue with, and to question these women. Each of these six women dedicated her life to fighting both racism and sexism. Thousands of ordinary people were involved in the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s in the United States. Perhaps a child or even children in a class today have parents and grandparents who were active in demonstrations, boycotts, marches, and other forms of public protest. They even may have worked with one or another of these women. Even if they did not personally know the individuals, their lives would have been affected by the lives of these women. Eloise Greenfield writes in *Childtimes* :

People are a part of their time. They are affected, during the time that they live by the things that happen in their

world. Big things and small things. A war, an invention such as radio or television, a birthday party, a kiss. All of these help to shape the present and the future. If we could know more about our ancestors, about the experiences they had when they were children, and after they had grown up, too, we would know much more about what has shaped us and our world.(1)

The question that arises is how do we, as educators, bring these women's lives to very young children.

The criteria used in selecting these particular women were very simple. All of the women lived and worked for the civil rights movement in this century. Four of the six women were born in nineteenth century but five of them died in this century: Wells-Barnett in 1931; Terrell in 1954; Bethune in 1955; Roosevelt in 1962; Baker in 1986; Parks is still alive. There are also some common threads that weave their way through each of these women's lives. They all valued education, not just formal schooling but a love of learning making them truly life long learners. Each woman kept her mind open to new possibilities and each cared deeply about people. Also, there are multiple biographies of these women written on an elementary level. The lowest reading level of biographies that I have located is for second graders. Some however, could be appropriately read aloud to younger children, particularly two by Greenfield, *Mary McLeod Bethune* and *Rosa Parks*. Before we can introduce very young children in kindergarten and first grade to biographies and complicated social issues we must prepare them. There are a number of authors who have written picture books that introduce complicated human emotions that can provide an introduction to both movements. Lucille Clifton, Irene Smalls, and Eloise Greenfield are just a few children's authors who have produced a body of children's literature that could be used effectively. Even though I have selected Eloise Greenfield's writing for this paper, I wouldn't hesitate to incorporate Clifton's or Small's works.

Eloise Greenfield is a special person. Her writings are dedicated to making children aware of the wisdom and support older people can offer. Her adventure stories , for example, are not action ones but personal ones that will have a deep meaning for the main character. Ms. Greenfield was born May 17, 1929, in Parmele, North Carolina. At a very early age, her family migrated to Washington, D.C. where Ms. Greenfield has lived since. Through the influence of other Black writers, like Sharon Bell, Ms. Greenfield has polished her craft. Ms. Greenfield says, "Sharon talked so passionately about the need for good black books that it was contagious. Once I realized the full extent of the problem, it became urgent for me to try, along with others, to build a large collection of books for children." That is what Ms. Greenfield has done, publishing over thirty titles since 1973. Ms. Greenfield's personal coming of age and maturing in the second half of the twentieth century gives her writing a natural advantage for acting as the springboard for studying the growth and development of women during this period. For contemporary six-, seven-, and eight-year olds have little understanding of the turbulent times of the civil rights movements. What external and internal forces were at work during these times that left an impression on the women who became their grandmothers and mothers? How have these forces influenced their own lives? These are factors that I would like to explore in this unit using Eloise Greenfield's writing and the lives of Baker, Bethune, Parks, Roosevelt, Terrell, and Wells-Barnett Perhaps, we as adults must first refresh our memories about these women.

Paving the path was the work accomplished by Ida Wells-Barnett and Mary Church Terrell. Both women lived in Memphis, Tennessee, as young women but it wasn't until much later that their lives would cross. Mary Church Terrell was born into the black elite of Memphis, on September 23, 1863, while Ida Wells-Barnett was born to former slaves in Holly Springs, Mississippi, on July 16, 1862. Both her parents were ardent believers in education and sent their children to school as early as possible. Unfortunately, Wells-Barnett's parents died in a yellow fever epidemic that swept through Mississippi in 1878. Having passed the teacher's exam, Ida supported her five siblings on a monthly salary of \$25. After a year of teaching in Mississippi, she took two of

the younger children to Memphis where she secured a teaching position at a higher wage. In 1884, she had her first physical encounter with Jim Crow. On a segregated train, Wells-Barnett refused to move to the segregated car and she was forcibly removed. She won a case in the local courts against the railroad but the ruling was reversed by the state supreme court.

Being an ardent reader, Wells-Barnett eventually started writing for local black newspapers. After the lynching of friends of hers, she wrote scathing articles about lynching. She concluded that lynching was a racist device for eliminating financially independent black Americans. The newspaper offices were destroyed and threats were made against Wells-Barnett's life. She moved to New York City and continued her expose of lynching. She toured Europe trying to bring international pressure to bear on the United States to end segregation. She was one of two black women to sign the call for the formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909. Later she broke with it because of its predominantly white board and its timid stance when confronting racial issues. Ida Wells-Barnett believed agitation, activism, and protest were the only means of change in the United States. She was one of the first black leaders to link the oppression and exploitation of African Americans to white economic opportunity. She believed that black citizens had to organize themselves and take the lead in fighting for their own independence. Her death in 1931 came a little too early to see the fruition of her work.

Mary Church Terrell on the other hand led a very different life from Wells- Barnett but came to the same conclusions. Not encountering racism until she was sent to school in Ohio, Terrell resolved to excel academically to prove the abilities of African Americans especially black women. After graduating from Oberlin College in 1884, Terrell moved back home to Memphis with her father. He expected his well-educated and talented daughter to be a social hostess until she married. After only a year, Terrell accepted a teaching position at Wilberforce University in Ohio and then at M Street Colored High School in Washington, D.C. It was here that she met Robert Heberton Terrell, the only colored graduate of Harvard University in 1884. They were married in 1888 and were together until Robert's death in 1925.

Between 1888 and 1896, Terrell was faced with two major decisions. First, as an intellectual, she had to decide whether to remain in the United States, where she would not be judged by her abilities but by her race and gender. Second, as a woman, she had to decide whether to accept the Victorian ideal that a woman's place is in the home. At that time, married women could not teach school. Terrell decided to tour Europe. She returned to the U.S. as an advocate for racial elevation.

In 1890, Terrell spoke about black women's handicaps, that of race and gender, at the National Woman Suffrage Association convention in Washington, D.C.. She acknowledged that white women have a great handicap—that of gender to overcome but black women have a dual handicap—that of gender and race that must be addressed. Terrell worked for suffrage and interracial understanding and cooperation but her greatest contributions came in the field of the black club movement. Terrell was instrumental in forming the National Association of Colored Women and establishing socially progressive institutions such as kindergartens, day nurseries, and Mother Clubs. She began to move from an approach of black self-help to one of interracial understanding, advocating education as the way to this understanding.

By the last two decades of her life, Mary Church Terrell moved from the club movement to becoming a militant activist. Her most notable militant action was her leadership of a three-year struggle to end segregated public eating places in Washington, D.C. in the 1950s. Terrell employed picketing and boycotts to call attention to racial injustice. Her actions led to the 1953 Supreme Court decision that ruled that segregated eating facilities in Washington, D.C. were unconstitutional. Two months after the Supreme Court ruled on

Brown v. Board of Education, Mary Church Terrell died.

Mary McLeod Bethune was a contemporary of Wells-Barnett and Terrell. Their paths crossed many times, sometimes working together and sometimes not. Bethune's origins, strong Negroid looks, and personal religious faith took her along a different path.

Mary McLeod Bethune was the fifteenth child born to Patsy and Samuel McLeod but the first one to be born free. Her birth on July 10, 1875, marked a start of a new era for the McLeod family. Mary had a burning desire to learn to read but no one in her family could read because it had been against the law to teach a slave to read. When the opportunity arose, the McLeods wanted all their children to attend school but could only afford to send one, Mary. She walked five miles each way to Trinity Presbyterian Mission School where she was an excellent student, teaching family and neighbors what she had learned at night. After completing the mission school, Mary earned scholarships to Scotia Seminary in North Carolina and later to Moody Bible Institute in Chicago.

Mary's goal was to become a missionary in Africa but no one wanted a black missionary. She returned to Mayesville, South Carolina where she helped teach at Trinity Presbyterian Mission until she got a job as a teacher at Haines Institute in Augusta, Georgia. She realized that she was being called upon to be a missionary to her people in the American south.

During the next eight years, Mary married Albertus Bethune and had one son, Alburus McLeod Bethune. But Mary wanted to start a school of her own. There were too many black children who lived in areas without schools. She wanted more black children to have an opportunity to learn.

With only \$1.50 in cash, Mrs. Bethune and her five year old son went to Daytona, Florida. There she founded the Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute for Negro Girls. Through determination and shrewd business skills, Mrs. Bethune guided the school into a fully accredited four year liberal arts college known today as Bethune-Cookman College. Along the way, Mrs. Bethune came into contact with some of America's most prominent philanthropists and industrialists. This only angered many who tried to terrorize her with the horrid antics of the Ku Klux Klan. But Mrs. Bethune's faith and determination kept her going.

In 1909, on a fund raising trip, Mrs. Bethune attended the National Association of Colored Women's conference in Hampton, Virginia. Bethune asked to address the group. After her impassioned eloquent speech, a collection was taken up for Bethune's school. Madame C.J. Walker, a black millionaire, volunteered to help direct a fund-raising campaign and Mary C. Terrell prophesied that Bethune would one day head the organization. By 1924, Terrell's prediction had proved correct. Bethune beat out Ida Wells-Barnett for the presidency.

In 1927, Bethune was the only black invited to a luncheon meeting of the National Council of Women. The meeting was held at the home of New York's Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt. When it came time to sit, a perceptible tension filled the room. Who would sit next to a black woman? The Governor's mother, Sara Roosevelt took Mrs. Bethune by the arm and led her to a seat between herself and her daughter-in-law, Eleanor Roosevelt. This was the start of a long and lasting friendship between Eleanor Roosevelt and Mary McLeod Bethune.

In 1935, Bethune founded the National Council of Negro Women "to open new doors for our young women (which) when (it) speaks, its power will be felt" and President Roosevelt appointed her to the Advisory Board of the National Youth Administration. At age sixty, Bethune was finally in a position as a college president,

national organization president, and advisor to the president of the United States to forward her four passions: race, women, education, and youth. She deftly maneuvered the administration of FDR to place these passions on the national agenda for the first time in the history of black Americans.

Mary McLeod Bethune continued working for social justice, dying shortly after the Supreme Court announced their decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. She left a message that is inscribed on a statue of her in Washington, D.C. that reads, "I leave you faith, I leave you hope, I leave you love."

Eleanor Roosevelt's path to involvement in the civil rights movement was different from that of other women. After all, Mrs. Roosevelt was born into a very affluent and politically influential family and married into another. But Mrs. Roosevelt's gender, race, and economic superiority did not prevent her from becoming a key player in the fight for civil rights.

Anna Eleanor Roosevelt was born in New York City on October 11, 1884, to Anna Hall and Elliot Roosevelt. Eleanor's ordinary looks caused her mother to shun her infant. By the age of ten, Eleanor was orphaned, her mother dead of diphtheria and her father of alcoholism. Eleanor and her one surviving brother were sent to live with their Grandmother Hall who imposed harsh discipline upon her grandchildren in hopes that they wouldn't turn out like her own children. It was a sad and grim childhood.

Until Eleanor was 15, she was educated by private tutors further isolating the young girl. She was then sent to Allenswood, a private school for girls in England. There Eleanor came under the influence Mademoiselle Maire Souvestre who challenged the girls to open their minds and imaginations and to think for themselves. Mlle. Souvestre made education an exciting and exhilarating experience. All subjects were discussed and explored. Eleanor had come to Allenswood feeling "lost and very lonely" - a shy, awkward girl starved for love and approval. After three years, she left in triumph, having earned the affection and esteem of her classmates, her teachers, and her headmistress. Eleanor believed that Mlle. Souvestre's liberal mind and strong personality had changed her life.

Grandmother Hall summoned Eleanor back to New York to make her debut into society. It was a dreadful experience but two good things came from it. The first was Eleanor's active involvement in the Junior League where she experienced the deplorable conditions of Manhattan's Lower East Side which was teeming with immigrants. She tutored at the Rivington Street Settlement House. The neighborhood with its dirty crowded streets scarred Eleanor but it was the children which continued to bring her back. She also visited sweatshops where she wrote "little children of four or five" were sitting at work tables "until they dropped with fatigue." The second experience for Eleanor was her involvement with a dashing Harvard student. She fell madly in love with a distant cousin, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. They were married two years later.

For the next twenty-eight years, Eleanor was a conventional society matron: raising her six children; dealing with her husband's rising political career; forgiving her husband's affair; and nursing her husband through polio which left him cripple. Then Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected the 32nd president of the United States. For the next twelve years, Eleanor Roosevelt became an unorthodox First Lady influencing her husband's administration in many areas. She was instrumental in FDR's integration of the armed forces and companies that held government contracts.

In 1938, Pauli Murray, a young black women, wrote to the president and sent a copy of her letter to Mrs. Roosevelt who personally answered her. This was the beginning of a long and prickly friendship. Pauli Murray never hesitated to question or to challenge Mrs. Roosevelt to do more for the American Negro. Murray wrote in her autobiography:

In 1940 she (Mrs. Roosevelt) had not yet become fully aware of the extent to which all Negroes suffered almost daily humiliations and how bitterly we felt about these injustices. She was deeply compassionate . . . I think her gradual rise to her position as foremost champion of human rights came slowly and painfully, and that her greatness developed out of her capacity for growth through difficult experiences and from her unflinching honesty with herself and others.(2)

Eleanor Roosevelt's relationship with Mary McLeod Bethune caused quite a political ruckus in Birmingham, Alabama. Both women were attending a meeting but could not sit together because of Jim Crow. Eleanor simply picked up her chair and put it down right in the middle of the aisle separating blacks and whites.

Only a few weeks later, Eleanor took her most controversial political stance and resigned from the Daughters of the American Revolution because they would not allow the great black singer Marion Anderson to perform in their large auditorium in Washington, D.C. Mrs. Roosevelt arranged for Marion Anderson to sing in front of the Lincoln Memorial with 75,000 people lining the Mall from the Lincoln Memorial to the Washington Monument. When people protested to the President about Eleanor's actions he responded by saying, "I may be President of the United States, but I can't tell Eleanor what to do or what to think." Eleanor Roosevelt continued to work to fight injustice for all people calling national and international attention to the problems caused by segregation. Her work for the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights kept her busy until her death in 1962.

Ella Baker has been described as a leader behind the scenes but not a leader to be ignored. Without her work and dedication many ordinary people might never have been exposed to either the civil rights or women's movements. Born on December 13, 1903, in Norfolk, Virginia, Baker grew up in Littleton, North Carolina where she knew the horrors of Jim Crow first hand. Fortunately her family saw that she learned at an early age the qualities of courage, ambition, the ability and desire to work hard, and a love of education. These are qualities that Baker relied on and utilized all her life. These same qualities are ones that we would want instilled in our children today. If children come to school with these qualities, we need to reinforce them and if they come without them we need to instill them, no matter what our personal beliefs are. Baker's family was not rich but they saw that all three children were educated. Baker graduated from Shaw University in North Carolina in 1927. The only career open to educated black women in the South at this time was teaching. Since Baker did not want to be a teacher, she moved to New York City where she discovered that again teaching was the only career open to her. Instead of teaching she became a waitress, factory worker, and newspaper reporter. The Harlem Renaissance was in full swing when Baker arrived in New York City. She found an excitement in meeting different people and being exposed to many different philosophies. Then the Great Depression forced Baker to rely on one of her earliest lessons, that is, we all must care for other people. Many people, particularly marginally employed people lost their jobs and needed help to survive. Baker worked with groups of people teaching them how to buy in bulk and share the goods. Coops were formed with Baker's help and guidance. Baker went to work for the Works Progress Administration and then for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. She was involved in many aspects of social change.

The NAACP had developed a reputation in some underdeveloped areas of this country as an organization that was only concerned with the middle class educated Black community. Baker traveled throughout the deep South dispelling that myth. She was an early believer in grassroots organization. She was able to communicate with all people and help them do what they felt needed doing. She aroused in people a sense of strength in numbers and in a common goal. Baker broke with the NAACP over its hierarchical leadership structure in the early 60s. She helped to organize the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and paved the way for creation of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee along with organizing the Mississippi

Freedom Democratic Party. Anne Butler, who was a college student in 1966, has written that Baker was “ a civil-rights activist,” whose philosophy was “strong people do not need strong leaders that do not allow for all to participate.” Baker believed in building strong people and creating harmony between members of a group. When Ella Baker died in New York City on December 13, 1986, her importance to the civil rights movement was recognized nationally. But today, when children think of the civil rights movement, they tend to only think of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We as educators need to introduce our students to other strong workers like Ella Baker who contributed significantly to the civil rights movement.

Rosa Parks, the “Mother of the Civil Rights Movement”, was born on February 4, 1913, in Tuskegee, Alabama. Her father, James McCauley, was a carpenter and a builder and her mother, Leona Edwards, was a teacher. Since there was a building boom in Tuskegee, at this time, Rosa’s parents thought that it would be a good place to raise a family. Rosa’s mother had hopes that her future children would be able to attend Tuskegee Institute but things didn’t work out that way. Rosa’s father’s job took him away from home for long periods of time. Rosa’s mother moved her two children to Pine Level, Alabama to live with her parents. Rosa’s father stopped visiting them when Rosa was five years old. She did not see him again until she was a married adult. So, Rosa’s mother was forced to accept a teaching position in a neighboring town where she boarded during the week. Rosa and her younger brother were basically raised by her Edwards grandparents. At this time, school for black children lasted only five months a year because they were needed in the cotton fields, while white children attended school for nine months a year. Rosa’s mother realized what a disadvantage black children had, so she sacrificed to make it possible for Rosa to get extra help and continue her education. On account of Rosa’s mother’s ill health, Rosa was not able to graduate from high school until after her marriage to Raymond Parks in 1932.

For the next twenty-three years, Rosa Parks became more involved in fighting racial injustice. At the time of their marriage, Raymond was actively involved in seeking justice for the Scottsboro Boys. His actions were extremely risky. Whites openly accused anyone who worked to help black people of being a Communist and secretly tormented and tortured them. Raymond worked secretly and effectively with the newly formed local branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People to appeal the death penalty imposed on the Scottsboro Boys. But it was not until 1950, that the last of the nine Scottsboro Boys was released on parole.

Rosa was drawn into the Montgomery Chapter of the NAACP. At her first meeting she was elected secretary because she was the only woman member. Mr. E.D. Nixon was elected president. His priority was voter registration and documentation of racial injustice. Rosa worked as a seamstress but on her lunch hours and after work she would work on NAACP projects. The Poll Tax and the Literacy Test were two great stumbling blocks to voter registration because whites could demand stiff poll taxes and not announce when the literacy test would be administered. Rosa, herself, was not able to register to vote until 1945. Her husband never registered in Alabama.

It was Rosa’s active involvement with NAACP that actually led to her arrest on December 1, 1955. Seated in a colored seat on the bus, Rosa was absorbed in her thoughts about preparing for an upcoming NAACP Youth Council conference. She was not aware that the white section of the bus had filled up and the bus driver was yelling at her to stand. Aroused from her thoughts by a bullying bus driver, Rosa decided she was tired of the treatment she and other black Americans received every day of their lives. Quietly and respectfully, when the bus driver asked her if she were going to stand up, Mrs. Parks just responded, “No.” The bus driver said, “Well, I’m going to have you arrested.” She answered, “You may do that.” Those were the only words exchanged. Mrs. Parks’ quiet strength and dignity launched a boycott of the Montgomery buses for 381 days. The soft-

spoken, mild-mannered, hardworking lady became the symbol that the Montgomery NAACP and the Women's Political Council needed to challenge the law. Rosa continued to work behind the scenes for the NAACP and the newly formed Montgomery Improvement Association under the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

After the successful bus boycott, Rosa and Raymond found it difficult to continue to live in Montgomery. Whites harassed them on the telephone and refused to hire them for jobs. Rosa's brother and his family helped them relocate to Detroit where Rosa eventually worked for Congressman John Conyers until her retirement in 1988.

Raymond Parks died in 1977 and two years later her mother died. Both her husband and mother suffered from cancer. Being a caring person, Rosa nursed them both while continuing to work. She also made public appearances for numerous social issues.

In 1987, Rosa Parks and her close friend Elaine Eason-Steele cofounded the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self-Development, an after-school program for Detroit youth. *The New York Times* reported on June 30, 1997, that Mrs. Parks and Ms. Eason-Steele have submitted a proposal to the Detroit Board of Education to open a charter school that would be modeled after the institute and would serve 250 students in kindergarten through the 12th grade. Ms. Eason-Steele says, "Mrs. Parks is a role model that these students look up to, and they feel very honored and privileged to be in her company."

On April 11, 1996, *The Seattle Times* quoted Mrs. Parks, "It is time for the nation's youth to carry on the struggle for African-American social and economic progress by developing self-respect, educating themselves and nurturing their spirits. Religious faith was key to the civil rights movement King led and it's just as important today." Perhaps that is the driving force that propels 86 year old Rosa Parks to petition the Detroit Board of Education to start her own charter school.

The role of school librarian has changed drastically in the last few years. We are no longer just keepers of the books but collaborators with classroom teachers in designing, implementing, and evaluating units of study. Contemporary library media specialists are partners with teachers in implementing action research. Together we identify a problem, formulate a focus, decide on a means of collecting data, help students collect that data, analyze the data, report findings, plan improvements, and generate further questions. Classroom teachers bring knowledge of the students and content, while the library media specialist brings knowledge of resources and information skills process. Together we plan, teach, assess, and evaluate the students work. Here in New Haven, we utilize Mike Eisenberg's Big 6 model for research which teaches children to ask focused questions, to locate resources, to utilize the resources, synthesize the material, design a product, and learn to evaluate the product. The Big 6 are introduced at the kindergarten level and refined for each succeeding grade level. We start by getting the students to ask focused question and proceed to higher levels of thinking.

Kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers at Helene W. Grant School introduce picture books that stimulate further research. Working with the K-2 teachers, I will explore the fiction and nonfiction works of Eloise Greenfield. Together with the classroom teachers we will help the students formulate focused questions based on the works read. The students will use the resources of the Library Media Center and the community to answer their question(s). These resources will include both print and electronic material.

LESSON ONE

GOAL:

To have the students realize the importance of literature as a mirror of human experience, reflecting human motives, conflicts, and values

STUDENT OBJECTIVES:

1. To describe the main character(s)
2. To compare the main character with a real person
3. To practice asking focused questions

ACTIVITY:

1. Read aloud the poem, *Grandma's Bones* by Eloise Greenfield and then reread it.
2. Ask the students who the poem is about? Who is the main character?
3. Record the answer on a large sheet of chart paper.
4. Using the information in the poem, describe the main character. (You may need to reread the poem.)
5. List the answers on the chart paper. Here are some possible responses:
 - a. Grandma grew up in the 1940s.
 - b. She danced the jitterbug.
 - c. She listened to the music of Duke Ellington, Benny Carter, and Count Basie.
 - d. She could spin a yoyo.
 - e. She could put two sticks that she called bones between her knuckles and make them beat out a rhythm.
6. From this list, is there anything that you would like to know more about?

Possible responses:

- a. What were the 1940s?
 - b. What is the jitterbug?
 - c. Who were Duke Ellington, Benny Carter, and Count Basie?
7. Have some books, pictures, cassettes, and videos readily available to help the students answer the questions.
8. Does the main character, Grandma, remind you of anyone that you know?
9. List some of the questions that you would like to ask that person.

Possible responses:

- a. When did you grow up?
- b. Where did you live as a child?
- c. What kind of dancing did you do?
- d. What kind of music did you listen to?
- e. Was there anything important going on in the world when you were growing up?
- f. Which TV shows did you watch?
- g. What kind of food did you like?

EXTENDED ACTIVITY:

Have the students interview an older family member or friend. Borrow some photographs of the individual at different times during his/her childhood.

Help the students to scan the pictures into the computer and make a hyperstack to be used in a slide presentation entitled, "Our Grandmas."

LESSON TWO

STUDENT OBJECTIVES:

1. To research life in America
2. To use nonfiction books to find facts
3. To search the Internet successfully

ACTIVITY:

1. Read the short story, *The Sad Girl*, by Eloise Greenfield.
2. List the main characters—Nedra and Richard
3. When does the story take place? (in present and in the 1940s)
4. Compare and contrast the 1990s with the 1940s.
5. List the resources that could be used.
 - a. the story itself
 - b. facts from our interviews
 - c. books
 - d. Internet
6. List the ways that the students think that they could demonstrate the differences and similarities between the 90s and 40s.
 - a. charts
 - b. pictures
 - c. dioramas
 - d. posters
 - e. models
 - f. timelines

EXTENDED ACTIVITIES:

Have the students research the 90s and 40s, then have them select a method listed above to demonstrate what they learned.

LESSON THREE

STUDENT OBJECTIVES:

1. To read a biography for information and pleasure
2. To be able to identify a biographical work from a work of fiction.

ACTIVITY:

1. Preview the book *Mary McLeod Bethune* by Eloise Greenfield.
2. Examine the illustrations of Jerry Pinkney.
3. List anything that is different about this books from other books you may have read or have read to you.
4. Read the first 4 pages aloud.
5. Do these pages sound like the start of a work of fiction?
6. Be sure to provide evidence for your responses.
7. List the responses on large chart paper.
 - a. The main character is named with a first and last name.
 - b. A place is named, Mayesville, South Carolina.
 - c. The main character's parents are identified by name.
 - d. The main character's date of birth is given.
8. Continue reading the book, stopping periodically to add to the list.
9. What kind of information have we collected? (facts about a person's life—introduce the word biography)
10. List the ways that a biography is different from a story like

EXTENDED ACTIVITY:

1. Copy the facts the students learned about Mary McLeod Bethune.
2. Distribute copies to every student.
3. Working in small groups (3 or 4) have the students explore ways to present the facts.
 - a. timeline
 - b. chart
 - c. series of illustrations
 - d. report
 - e. play
 - f. video an interview with Mrs. Bethune
4. Have supplies at various tables so that the small groups can work on their presentations.
5. Present their finished product to the class.
6. After each group has made its presentation, ask if anyone has any questions about Mrs. Bethune's life that may not have been addressed in Greenfield's biography or concepts addressed that need further exploration.
7. The questions should have the students looking at other biographical material on Mary McLeod Bethune.

Notes

1. Eloise Greenfield, *Childtimes: a three-generation memoir* , (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1979) viii.
2. Pauli Murray, *Song in a weary throat: an American pilgrimage* . (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1987) 135-136.

BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR TEACHERS

Black women in America: a historical encyclopedia; Darlene Clark Hine, editor. Brooklyn, New York: Carlson Publishing, Inc., 1993.

Each of the articles in this two volume encyclopedia are signed and include a bibliography.

Evans, Sara M. *Born for liberty: a history of women in America*. New York: The Free Press, 1989.

This is a comprehensive history of American women that includes all the women in this unit of study. It is a good initial source.

Gates, Henry Louis Jr. *Bearing witness: selections from African-American autobiography in the twentieth century*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1991.

There is a selection from Mary Church Terrell's autobiography.

Gloria Naylor: critical perspectives past and present. New York: Amistad, 1993.

Naylor's novels present contemporary black society in all its complexities.

This collection of critical essays examines themes of relations among women, of female friendship, sisterhood, and community.

Giddings, Paula. *When and where I enter: the impact of black women on race and sex in America*. New York: Bantam Books, 1984.

If you are looking for a wealth of little known facts, this is a great resource. The section on the Montgomery Bus Boycott includes information that Rosa Parks doesn't include in her autobiography nor does JoAnn Gibson Robinson discuss in her memoirs.

Hine, Darlene Clark. *Hine sight: black women and the re-construction of of American history*. Bloomington: Indiana University, 1994.

Black women's history, particularly that of working women is explored through fourteen essays.

In praise of our fathers and mothers: a black family treasury by outstanding authors and artists . compiled by Wade Hudson and Cheryl Willis Hudson. East Orange, New Jersey: Just Us Books, Inc., 1997.

Over forty artists and authors have contributed pieces on the African American family. Each entry reflects the authors' and artists' unique style. The short biographical entries with photographs of the contributors at the end of the book could be useful.

Myers, Walter Dean. *Now is your time! : the African-American struggle for freedom*. New York: Harper Trophy, 1991.

This 292 page history could be used by middle or high school students but it might overwhelm elementary students. Elementary teachers will definitely find prose and pictures that would enrich a class project.

Murray, Pauli. *Song in a weary throat: an American pilgrimage*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1987.

An autobiography of a black American lawyer, poet, scholar, author, educator, administrator, religious leader, civil rights and women's movement activist who lived from 1910 to 1985 is well documented.

Parks, Rosa. *My story* . New York: Dial Books, 1992.

Jim Haskins writes with Rosa Parks producing a very readable account of her life. Middle and high school students could easily read

this.

Robinson, JoAnn Gibson. *The Montgomery bus boycott and the women who started it: the memoir of JoAnn Gibson Robinson* . Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987.

This is an excellent insider's view of the Montgomery bus boycott.

Roosevelt, Eleanor and Lorena A. Hickok. *Ladies of courage* . New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1954.

Women need to get involved in politics is the underlying theme of this work. The historical material on the suffrage movement and the women who became involved in politics could be useful.

Terrell, Mary Church. *A colored woman in a white world* . New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 1996.

Terrell's autobiography was originally published in 1940.

BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR STUDENTS

Ash, Maureen. *The Story of the women's movement*. Chicago: Childrens Press, 1989.

A brief history of how women in this country have tried to gain equal rights with men is presented with many photographs.

Adler, David A. *A Picture book of Rosa Parks* . illus. Robert Casilla. New York: Holiday House, 1993.

This is an easy to read biography that is well illustrated.

Benjamin, Anne. *Young Rosa Parks: Civil Rights Heroine* . illus. Ellen Beier. Troll Associates, 1996.

This is a good example of a child's first introduction to biographies.

Many pages only have three or four short sentences.

Burch, Joann J. *Marian Wright Edelman* . Brookfield, Connecticut: The Millbrook Press, 1994.

Edelman is noted as the founder of the Children's Defense Fund but in this biography there is a good section on her involvement in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee while at Yale and afterwards in Jackson, Mississippi.

Cooney, Barbara. *Eleanor* . New York: Viking, 1996.

This picture book biography of Eleanor Roosevelt reads like a story book. Cooney had done beautiful illustrations to depict Roosevelt's childhood.

Dallard, Shyrlee. *Ella Baker: a leader behind the scenes* . Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Silver Burdett Press, 1990.

This is definitely more comprehensive biography that would be appropriate for a good fourth or fifth grade reader. It includes a time line of the civil rights movement, a timetable of her life, a suggested reading list, and a good index.

Dudley, Karen. *Great African Americans in government* . New York: Crabtree Publishing Company, 1997.

Of the thirteen contemporary politicians included six are women.

Duncan, Alice Faye. *The National Civil Rights Museum celebrates everyday people* . photos by J. Gerard Smith. Troll Medallion, 1995.

This over size history of the civil rights movement is a great supplemental source for student research.

Faber, Doris. *Eleanor Roosevelt: first lady of the world* . illus. Donna Ruff. New York: Puffin Books, 1985.

This is a biography that emphasizes Roosevelt's early years.

Freedman, Russell. *Eleanor Roosevelt: a life of discovery* . New York: Clarion Books, 1993.

This Newbery Honor Book will be a little difficult for elementary students.

Friese, Kai. *Rosa Parks: the movement organizes* . Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Silver Burdett Press, 1990.

This is a more difficult biography that includes a civil rights movement time line.

Greene, Carol. *Mary McLeod Bethune: champion for education*. Chicago: Childrens Press, 1993.

This is an easy to read biography with many photographs.

Hacker, Carlotta. *Great African Americans in history* . New York: Crabtree Publishing Company, 1997.

Each of the thirteen biographies include a personality profile and a table of accomplishments. This makes the reading easier.

Halasa, Malu. *Mary McLeod Bethune: educator* . New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1989.

This comprehensive biography has an introduction by Coretta Scott King, a chronology, a list of readings, and an index.

Jacobs, William Jay. *Eleanor Roosevelt: a life of happiness and tears* . New York: Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 1981.

This is also a higher level biography that would be too difficult for most elementary students but teachers might use.

King, Sarah E. *Maya Angelou: greeting the morning* . Brookfield, Connecticut: The Millbrook Press, 1994.

The early part of Angelou's life was lived in Arkansas. The biography depicts the rural south in the 30s and 40s.

Levine, Ellen. *Freedom's children: young civil rights activists tell their own stories*. illus. with photographs. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1993.

The civil rights movement is described by people who were children during 1950s and 1960s.

McKissack, Patricia A. *Mary McLeod Bethune: a great American educator* . Chicago: Childrens Press, 1985.

This is a difficult read for elementary students but the detailed chronology could be very useful.

McKissack, Patricia and Fred. *Mary McLeod Bethune*. Chicago: Childrens Press, 1992.

This is an easier read for elementary students with many photographs.

Mary McLeod Bethune: a great educator . illus. Ned O. Hillside, New Jersey: Enslow Publishers, Inc., 1991.

This is the easiest of the McKissacks' biographies of Bethune. Early readers should be able to read this volume independently. Difficult words are in boldface type and defined in the glossary.

Meriwether, Louise. *Don't ride the bus on Monday: the Rosa Parks story* . illus.

David Scott Brown. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973.

Children can compare and contrast the illustrations in this volume with photographs in other biographies.

Myers, Walter Dean. *Brown angels: an album of pictures and verse* . New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993.

The pictures of hardworking people—tenant farmers, porters, and teachers of the “colored” schools—are an excellent addition to a unit on the civil rights movement.

Rochelle, Belinda. *Witness to freedom: young people who fought for civil rights* . New York: Puffin Books, 1993.

This is a wealth of primary source material. Students who integrated Little Rock's schools tell what it was like. Others tell about participating in a sit-in or a boycott.

Turner, Glennette Tilley. *Take a walk in their shoes: biographies of fourteen outstanding African Americans* . illus. Elton C. Fax. New York: Puffin Books, 1989.

Besides biographical material this book contains skits that the class could act out.

Turner, Robyn Montana. *Faith Ringgold* . Canada: Little, Brown & Company, 1993.

Ringgold's acrylic on canvas, #4 The Sunflowers Quilting Bee at Arles depicts Walker, Truth, Wells-Barnett, Hamer, Tubman, Parks, Bethune, Baker, and van Gogh could work very well with a unit on civil rights.

LIST OF BOOKS BY ELOISE GREENFIELD

Africa dream . illus. Carole Byard. New York: Harper Trophy, 1992.

Bubbles . illus. Eric Marlow. published by the author in 1972.

Childtimes: a three-generation memoir . illus. Jerry Pinkney. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1979.

First pink light . illus. Jan Spivey Gilchrist. New York: Black Butterfly Children's Book, 1976.

Grandmama's joy . illus. Carole Byard. New York: Philomel Books, 1979.

Grandpa's face . illus. Floyd Cooper. New York: Philomel Books, 1988.

Honey, I love and other love poem . illus. Diane and Leo Dillon. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1978.

Koya DeLaney and the good girl blues . New York: Scholastic Inc., 1992.

Mary McLeod Bethune . illus. Jerry Pinkney. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1977.

Me & Neesie . illus. Moneta Barnett New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1975.

Nathaniel talking . illus. Jan Spivey Gilchrist. New York: Black Butterfly Children's Books, 1988.

Night on Neighborhood Street . illus. Jan Spivey Gilchrist. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1991.

Rosa Parks . illus. Eric Marlow. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1973.

Talk about a family . illus. James Calvin. New York: Harper Trophy, 1978.

William and the good old day . illus. Jan Spivey Gilchrist. New York: Harper Collins, 1993.

"The Sad girl." *Instructor* , January / February, 1997.

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