



Yale-New Haven
Teachers Institute®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1997 Volume V: The Blues Impulse

Building Character: Remaining Resilient, Resourceful, and Responsible in the Face of Adversity

Guide for Curriculum Unit 97.05.08
by Kelley N. Robinson

The lives of African Americans have been filled with much suffering and hardship. Since our enslavement, we have had to encounter many heart wrenching setbacks and obstacles. Even today, dreadful trials continue to beset us, yet we survive. Not only do we survive, but in the midst of our trials, we are able to experience a level of joy and laughter. How can this be? How can one be jovial when life seems to incessantly deal hard times? In the Black experience, tragedy is unavoidable. Resilience and revitalization of the human spirit are facilitated by the use of humor and by the knowledge that one is not alone; there are others who will bear witness to the profound sorrows of existence (White, 1984). The Blues culture, which encompasses this Black experience and uses all forms of oral and written expression, speaks to this depressed yet resilient spirit. Blues is defined as a state of depression and melancholy. Those who are a part of the Blues culture, however, do not swim in self-pity and sorrow but accept their situation and make the best of it.

In an effort to improve the moral and ethical integrity of children, the goal of this unit will be to expose students to The Blues culture and instill in them a sense of appreciation for struggle. This unit will assist children in accepting who they are and help them gain a level of self-respect. Most importantly, it will affirm children by letting them know that they have worth and are important to the survival of their race—no matter how bleak their situation may appear.

(Recommended for Social Studies, grade 4)

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