



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1998 Volume I: The Use and Abuse of History in Film and Video

A Film and Literature Study of The African - American Migration

Curriculum Unit 98.01.05
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I have been teaching at L. W. Beecher School for four years. My students are regular education second graders. They are inquisitive, easily motivated, and interested in expanding their conceptual knowledge. The ethnic make-up of my class is a majority African-American with approximately two percent Hispanic.

In the past, I have had great success with utilizing a variety of educational media to meet goals and objectives; I therefore decided to take the seminar titled "Use and Abuse of History in Film" in order to learn more about incorporating film into the content areas. Additionally, I am a member of the L.W. Beecher team of the Teacher's Institute whose emphasis this year is the exploration of major movements in United States history. As a team, we will create an historical timeline with our units which will include such themes as Westward Expansion, the Civil Rights Movement, and the role and influence of Women in American history. My unit will cover the Black Migration from the 1870's through the 1940's, in effect spanning that period of time which is formative for not only understanding the modern Civil Rights movement and present day race relations, but also the integral dynamics of the urban landscape of America's cities.

Since living and teaching in New Haven, I have encountered people with strong ties to the South; many African-Americans have relatives residing in the Southern states. I began to explore the concept of migration based partly upon my personal interest in African-American history, and also because my students have often questioned why and when most African-Americans left the South and moved to the Northern cities. More to the point, they wonder why some of their cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandparents live in New Haven while other family members live far away in the South. Our discussion began when a student keenly pointed out that some Black people escaped from slavery and moved north -an observation based in part upon his knowledge of the Underground Railroad. Because of this and other discussions about why and when African-Americans left the South, I determined that my students needed to extend their knowledge beyond what is normally taught concerning the escape from slavery and the conditions in the South and focus instead on the mass migration of African-Americans from the 1870's through the 1940's.

This migration occurred in several phases. While it is true that many people escaped slavery and fled the South before and during the Civil War, the vast majority of African-Americans in the North descend from those people who migrated north after the war, beginning with Reconstruction and reaching its greatest extent in the first half of the Twentieth century. Specifically, it reached its peak during the period between World War One and Two. By this time, most of these young emigrants were second and third generations removed from slavery. They were leaving the land which their ancestors toiled as slaves, many of the sharecroppers leaving

the very plantations where their families had worked for generations. Although this new wave of emigrants were not fleeing slavery, they were reacting to the dire circumstances which plagued African-Americans in the South as a result of what can arguably be termed the failure of Reconstruction. The conditions of poverty, the limitations of sharecropping, and the charged racial tensions which remained in the South combined with a Biblical faith in the promised land of the North to promote the large-scale movement of African-Americans to the North, and in some cases, the West as well.

My research into the literature on the subject has led me to several specific reasons why large numbers of African-Americans migrated at this time. First, the work in the cotton fields which occupied many African-American workers failed to produce a sufficient living wage. Through sharecropping, the small farmer was promised a fraction of the cotton profits for the right to work the land. The system, however, favored the large land-owners who, in cooperation with the market itself, set not only the prices which the share-croppers had to pay for seed and supplies, but decided upon the price for their cotton, and thus their “wage” as well. Another reason which also concerns the dependence upon cotton was the boll weevil infestations of 1915 and 1916 as well as the floods of 1915 and 1927. These natural disasters created a labor surplus, driving low wages even lower. This temporary surplus later became permanent in the 1930’s and 1940’s as mechanization displaced the field hands. Work that once required the use of fifty people could now be done by a machine, thus severely reducing the number of employees needed. Lastly, the social climate of the South cannot be underestimated in providing an over-arching motivation for African-Americans to want to leave. The promises of a newly won freedom, economic independence, and personal dignity in the wake of the defeat of the Confederacy and the early years of Reconstruction failed to be realized as a new political and social order emerged -one which unfortunately resembled that of the Antebellum period in many respects. In short, the forces which stimulated the Great Migration were economic, political, and social, having roots in both class and race inequities which plagued the agrarian South.

The relative success of earlier migrants as told by their letters home as well as the active recruitment of Southern workers needed to fill jobs in the industrial North caused many African-Americans to forsake the oppressive conditions of the South in hope of prosperity and happiness in the North. Northern cities such as Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Philadelphia, and New York became the destination of Blacks leaving the South. Names such as “Promised Land” and “Paradise Valley” as descriptions of these Northern cities attest to the hope and optimism which inspired many to leave their homes in search of better lives. For various reasons, including the waning of Western European immigration during the Great War, the cities became a haven of great demand for industrial and service-oriented workers. Despite the fact that many of these jobs were in effect “reserved” for African-Americans due to the subservient quality of these services, they allowed for the advancement of many Blacks considering the conditions from which they had left. The expectations which many African-Americans had of the North centered around the betterment of themselves and their families.

Although many of these expectations were never fully realized or were amended to reflect the realities of the industrial North, the documentaries and films which explore the subjects associated with the Great Migration highlight some of its positive effects. The Northern Blacks reported how they were able to buy food, clothing, and amenities, as well as enjoy the entertainment offered in the cities. Additionally, they were able to send money back to family members who remained in the South. The job opportunities themselves offered many positive effects, not the least of which was the dignity and self-worth which comes with some semblance of economic independence. As a result, African-Americans began to achieve successes which would have been virtually impossible in the South. For example, in New York, a Southern migrant became the first African-American principal.

Despite the positive effects of the Great Migration, there were also many negative factors which resulted from the relocation of Southern Blacks in the North. Both films and documentaries describe the rising tensions between the various ethnic groups which resided in the cities. Especially after World War One as economic and labor factors played into the dynamics, the tensions sometimes resulted in violence. Neighborhoods were segregated and relationships in the work environment became strained causing Odell Willis, a relocated worker, to exclaim: "These working conditions began to resemble the South."

CLASSROOM IMPLICATIONS

Although this unit is designed for students in grade two, it can be broadened to apply up to grade eight. This unit will be designed to meet two curriculum areas: Reading/Language Arts and Social Studies, and by integrating these areas students will be able to construct meaning from a variety of resources.

Reading and Language Arts

Researchers agree that reading and language arts have six main components. By focusing on these six components in this unit students having differing learning styles will profit. There will be ample opportunity to synthesize information by addressing the many different ways to gather information as well as report information. The following is a list of cross-curricular objectives.

1. Reading. Students will:

- A. Read related selections of literature.
- B. Read a variety of periodicals which describe the time period.
- C. Read letters written by migrants as they traveled north and once they settled.
- D. Define relevant vocabulary for comprehension.

2. Writing. Students will:

- A. Express ideas through written accounts that pertain to the painting of Jacob Lawrence.
- B. Engage in writing experiences that promote reflective, persuasive, and expository writing.
- C. Record daily reflections to content and literature in a personal journal.
- D. Take notes about people and the situations they see as they view films, especially documentaries.

3. Viewing. Students will:

- A. Identify the producer's purpose for creating documentary and determine the point of view from which the information is reported.
- B. Judge decisions made by migrants, and evaluate situations they encountered.
- C. View films which depict conditions of the North and the South.

4. Technology. Students will:

- A. Utilize educational software that focuses on geography.
- B. Compose final projects using word processors.
- C. Operate the VCR and television to access videos.

5. Listening. Students will:

- A. Determine how language and sound of narrator's voice affects the message of documentary.
- B. Identify reasons why African-Americans migrated based on the oral histories presented in the documentaries.

6. Speaking. Students will:

- A. Recite excerpts from letters of Black migrants.
- B. Play the parts of people in the documentaries and films in order to present their opinions and attitudes.
- C. Recite descriptions of various occurrences and paintings while groups of students recreates the scenes themselves.

Social Studies

In our seminar a strong emphasis is placed on a person's ability to decide what is a true representation of history. Given an adequate amount of resources, students should be able to determine the value of the information they are receiving, the quality of the medium, and research methods used to gather information. It is my hope that students are able to evaluate and question any information presented in such a way that they make informed decisions about the truth -whether the vehicle of information is film, documentary, or literature. The following is a list of curricular objectives for social studies:

1. History. Students will:

- A. Demonstrate sensitivity to values and behaviors of people in a different historical context.
- B. Use facts drawn from the literary resources to make decisions about representation of truth in films.
- C. Compare and contrast the appropriateness of films or literature to represent history.
- D. Compare behaviors and lives of African-Americans during the 1870-1940s to today.
- E. Identify needs and wants of African-Americans during the post war years.
- F. Understand cause and effect as it relates to ending slavery, migration, and living in a new region.
- G. Explain the different culture of African-Americans in the North and contrast that with Southern culture.
- H. Explore possible interpretations of the Great Migration from perspectives different from that of the documentaries, e.g. that of White Southerners, White Northerners, the leadership of the various Northern cities, etc.
- I. Compare the lives of African-Americans who migrated to those who remained in the South.

2. Geography. Students will:

- A. Identify the major cities in the North to which many African-Americans migrated and the areas from which they came.
- B. Map the northern routes taken by African-Americans from the Southern states.

3. Economic. Students will:

- A. Evaluate the system of sharecropping to determine who benefited the most.
- B. Draw comparisons and contrasts between sharecropping and slavery.

4. Community/Family. Students will:

- A. Investigate when and from where their own families came to the North.
- B. Interview family and community members who may have experienced migration themselves.
- C. Learn about the efforts of local industries to specifically recruit African-Americans from the South, e.g. the Winchester Rifle Company in New Haven, CT.

FILM REVIEWS

Though the use of the following films, I intend to portray the legacy of the migration movement by exposing students to principles of self worth, determination, prosperity, and perseverance. As a result of viewing the films, I expect the students to be able to answer the following questions. These questions along with previously noted objectives will help to retain purpose and focus for our studies.

1. Were there any benefits for African-Americans to remain in the South after slavery?
2. What was the system of sharecropping and who benefited from it?
3. Did African-Americans make valuable contributions to the Southern economy?
4. Why was the term “promised land” given to places to which African-Americans migrated?
5. What forms of transportation was used by the migrants? Did these change from phase to phase?
6. Was life better for the African-American in the north?

“Goin’ to Chicago”

This film is a documentary about a group of people who live in Chicago and who return to the South every year. The subjects in the film still have close ties to Granville, Mississippi.

These stories are told by people who migrated to Chicago as well as those who decided to remain in Mississippi. This film’s purpose is to allow its subjects a chance to reflect on their childhood in the South as well as inform its viewers of factors which led to their leaving home for the North.

People like Cliff Durvell, Clory Bryant, Dr. McKinley Martin, Mildred Heming, Viethel Willis, Vernon Jarrett, to name a few, were young teens during the 1940’s. They told their stories of how radio and newspaper publications inspired them to leave the South. Newspapers like the Chicago Defender were circulated among African-American communities in Granville. The people spoke of the progress made by other family members who had moved North in previous years. In some cases, when one family member went North and became settled, they would send for another member. Eventually, the entire family would be together in the North.

John “Son” Thomas, a blues singer, sang about the routes which were traveled to get to the North. He made songs like “Highway 61” that depicts in lyrics a popular road which many Southern Blacks took to get to Chicago.

Jarret and Willis told of the rapid segregation which took place in the Northern neighborhoods. They spoke of the practice of White people moving out whenever a Black family would move in. They also remembered violent attacks endured by Blacks who would not leave neighborhoods already populated by Whites.

Eddie Maten described Chicago as a “workplace hub” of railroads, hotel services, and industries. Others, like Koko Taylor, remembered holding a house cleaning position with dignity and respect, and making more money in one day than she made in one week in the South.

Some Southerners like Mae B. Carter and Cliff Durvell evaluated their lives much like these other people did, yet felt they could do better in Mississippi than in Chicago. Both families farmed by sharecropping and both had little to no chance of education. They described the school year as short and unpleasant because of having to walk for miles to go to school. They both agreed that working hard in Mississippi was far more beneficial than moving to Chicago. Like Mildred Heming they felt that the “city” just was not for everyone.

This documentary was novel in the sense that, unlike others which I reviewed, these people still had close ties to the places from which they had come. Every year they traveled by bus back to Mississippi where they were reunited with old friends, neighbors, and family members still residing in the South.

“Killing Floor”

This film is set during World War One and its purpose is to show the dynamics at work in the Chicago stockyards at the time of great labor unrest. In the slaughterhouses, cattle are killed and butchered to produce meat products. These places were dangerous because of the machinery, the sharp knives and saws, and the lack of proper sanitation.

There have been men who fought hard to organize labor unions to protect workers from these and other conditions which made their workplaces unsafe. Historically, unions have also fought hard to increase pay for workers, often resulting in conflict between workers and management. Despite the dangers inherent in the work itself as well as the tensions within the companies, many African-Americans sought out these relatively well-paying jobs.

Topics addressed in the film are the organization of labor unions, the interaction between ethnic groups, the “invisible” lines which separated and segregated Chicago’s neighborhoods, and the life many African-Americans endured once they had made the move north to Chicago. The film begins as two men travel to Chicago in hopes of finding profitable jobs and affordable housing. Both men find jobs in the stockyards where they observe poor working conditions and poor race relationships among the various ethnic groups. One character, Frank Custer, has a family that he leaves behind in the South until he can establish himself. His friend is a single man who has dreams and high hopes for Chicago, but constantly criticizes and complains about the practices in the stockyards. By the middle of the film, Frank has brought his family North while his friend has joined the Army to fight in World War One. Frank joins with friends in the workplace to organize labor unions. These organizers undergo great criticism and judgment by workers who object to the unions. By the end of the film, Frank has realized the fight for the unions is not worth the pressure and his friend has returned from the war. Both men realize that conditions in the workplace have worsened because of competition with the war veterans to get jobs and the failure of the unions to solidify their strength among the workers.

My purpose for using this film is that it demonstrates the sharp contrast between hopes and dreams for Chicago, and reality in Chicago for African-Americans. As many African-Americans desired to provide better lives for their families, they suffered through similar situations they had encountered in the South. This film will allow the student to determine if migrants to the North found what they had hoped and dreamed for in Chicago.

“The Promised Land”

Part One: “Any Place But Here”

This film is a documentary that traces the later migration of African-Americans to the North in the 1930’s and 1940’s. By relying on the testimony of those who actually experienced this migration it presents their particular hopes and dreams while at the same time documenting the wider phenomenon of the Great Migration. Part one, “Any Place But Here” focuses on the situation in the South which forced many African-Americans to leave. An examination of the sharecropping system and its inherent inequities presents a tragic picture of the economic as well as social conflicts which kept the vast majority of Southern Blacks in abject poverty. The message of the documentary echoes that of one of its characters: the sorry conditions of African-Americans in the South moved many of them to want to live “any place but here.”

By focusing on the individual lives of an array of Southern Blacks who had moved North, the documentary is able to project the diversity of people who migrated North as well as the similarity of their experiences in the South and their motivations for leaving. Rev. Uless Carter, for instance, speaks of the flagrant inequalities of the sharecropping system, as does Florida Denton. Both speak of the manner in which their families would have to go into debt to the plantation owner throughout the year in order to live, and then would have to

“settle up” with him just before Christmas. The rule rather than the exception was an inflation of prices and often fraudulent keeping of records which resulted in the sharecropper not receiving anything at the end of the year. Rev. Carter relates one specific instance when the plantation owner admitted to his father that he owed him money for the cotton he had produced but was not going to give it to him because he had to send his son to college. Unfortunately, this type of larceny and chicanery was indicative of the system itself.

All of the people interviewed in the film related the fear and tension that characterized the daily aspects of their lives. They were, in effect, prisoners of the system, unable to do anything but work the fields of the plantation owner. Vagrancy laws which allowed any Black not working to be put in jail as well as strictly enforced curfews kept dissent impossible. The plantation owner could have you put in jail if you would not work, just as he could have you let out -even if you killed another Black person- if he needed your labor. There was no justice for African-Americans in this type of society, as lynchings and beatings were frequent. One man pointed out that there was always the threat that you could be accused of whistling at a White women, an offense which could elicit the death penalty. Such conditions convinced many African-Americans that they must leave the South for their own sense of well-being.

In the end, the film points out that there were several forces which drove the majority of people to flee Southern plantations for Northern industries. All, however, were directly or indirectly the result of the sharecropping system and the Jim Crow laws. The dynamics of Southern economic and social constructs provided the conditions which prompted many of them to leave. The promise of a better life in the North gave them the hope which fueled their motivation.

Part Two: “Sweet Home Chicago”

In the second part of “The Promised Land,” the story continues by tracing the movement of the characters from the South to Chicago. Those Blacks who had migrated North earlier in the century provided a vital link between the Northern cities and the South. Many African-Americans either had relatives, friends, or knew of someone who had gone North years before and was now living well. Florida Denton tells of how she knew that she would leave the South and go to live with her aunt as soon as she was old enough. Rev. Ernest Whitehead tells of his rich uncle who would visit from Chicago, wearing new suits and handing out money. Chicago grew mythical in the minds of the Southerners who longed for a better life.

Newspapers such as the Chicago Defender added to the lure of the North. While vocally opposing the oppressive conditions of the South, the paper portrayed Northern industry as the hope of those who would leave. It was the voice not only of the African-Americans who lived in Chicago, but also those still in the South. The paper said things no one in the South could say. It gave hope and support.

The reality of Chicago, however, was something short of a paradise. Rev. Whitehead tells of being afraid of the city, where anything was available -both virtues and vices. Rev. Carter speaks of the temptations such a place held for many poor Blacks coming from the South who had never encountered such a culture. In this respect, the film reminds the viewer of the courage it took for young men and women to leave their homes and families to search out a better life in Chicago.

Another important aspect of the film is the presentation of the role of the railroad in the Great Migration. The train came to be regarded as the ticket to freedom, demanding its own respect and affection. Songs were written about it, paintings captured its strength. The drive North resembled the Biblical Exodus of the Israelites out of Egypt about which many Southern Blacks had sung in their gospel songs. Porters George Tillman and Charles Johnson relate the jubilation which many showed at crossing the line into Ohio where

slave states were separated from free states. They also tell of the place of the Pullman in the African-American community, a job which appeared servile but was in fact a respected position among the Southern Blacks. Porters were able to ease the transition from the South to Chicago by looking out for the welfare of those who were seeking a better life in the North. They tell of how they would drop off bags full of the Chicago Defender at Southern stations, and how the powerful Pullman Porter Union established a new-found respect for the Black worker.

While the mechanization of cotton farming displaced many workers in the South, James Hinton tells of how International Harvester, the producer of many of the machines, recruited Southern workers to come North to their factories. He, like many others, heard of their interest in labor from his family members, and quit school to move to Chicago. The reputation of the Southern Blacks as hard workers made them readily employable by the 1940's as the war economy boomed. The war itself had another effect. Returning veterans who were supposed to be able to vote and enjoy other basic rights found that they were still treated the same. After having fought for their country, many were unwilling to remain in a place where they were not afforded the rights which they had struggled to preserve. This, as well as the promise of industrial jobs, led them North.

The second half of the film moves beyond the scope of this project in its important portrayal of the harsh reality of life in Chicago in contrast to its characterization as the "promised land." The difficulty of industrial jobs, the cold winters, the racial tensions, and the segregation showed Chicago for what it really was. Several characters remarked that they faced similar dangers in the North that they did in the South. Segregation was "de facto," as there were no Jim Crow laws, but people knew where they could and could not go. The film continues by exploring the rise of the ghettos and the failure of the urban economy, important themes that fall outside our scope.

In sequence, these two parts of "The Promised Land" portray in striking reality the conditions which drove many African-Americans to leave the South, the hopes and dreams which the North offered, their journey to Chicago, and the success and disappointments which they faced once there. By focusing on the same characters, the films document different phases of the same trip, and offer a complete picture of what it was like to leave home for the city. Both of these films will allow the students to judge for themselves the benefits and disadvantages of deciding to migrate, as well as providing first hand accounts of important background information.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

As described in the annotated bibliography, each piece of literature has a unique purpose. Some are used specifically in developing the concept during lessons, while others are used for expanding the teacher's knowledge. Literature has been successfully integrated with film in my previous classes, as it provides a context for listening and creating mental images. When using literature, students are encouraged to think abstractly while synthesizing elements of literature and film. For the purposes of this unit, I have selected texts published during the early 1900's to contrast with those of a more recent date. Such a comparison allows the students to judge both accounts of the migration in terms of the other as well as in light of their own learning. I have analyzed the texts to report to the students the perspectives of the various authors. Because of the abundant scholarship on the subject, there is much which can be utilized from the sources in the bibliography. However, this subject is under-represented in history textbooks for secondary and middle grades, requiring the commitment of the teacher to discern suitable primary sources and secondary

scholarship to supplement their lessons.

DESCRIPTION OF POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES

1. Vocabulary Development

Before viewing the visuals and films, students should be introduced to pertinent vocabulary. By understanding terms such as migration, disenfranchisement, segregation, sharecropping, mechanization, and industrialization, students will be able to construct meaning from film and text.

2. Family Migration History

As a result of watching the films and reading and listening to literature, students can develop a standard questionnaire that will probe interviewees for specific information. Also to model the format of the documentaries, students can interview family members or community members to get an oral account of the migration and gather photographs and mementos that depict their journey North.

3. Advertisements and Publications

The students can view publications such as the Chicago Defender to understand how media persuaded African Americans to move North. After viewing the advertisements the students can make predictions about how they as Southerners would have responded. Then the students can be allowed to see actual letters written by African-Americans where they expressed an interest in the jobs and opportunities listed in the publication.

4. Visual Interpretation

Using Lawrence's text of paintings, students can develop dialogue that matches a particular painting. Based on information in the films and literature students can assign dialogue to individuals or groups depicted in the paintings. The format for assigning parts can be in the form of a play or Reader's Theater, where choral reading is involved.

5. Poetry

Langston Hughes wrote a poem entitled "One Way Ticket." Written in Negro dialect, this poem takes the voice of a recent migrant by telling how he only needs a one way ticket North, not round trip. This implies that the traveler will not be returning from his destination and that he plans to start a new life in this new place. This poem can also be used to give a voice to migrants seen in film and literature.

6. Media Literacy

By assessing the producers' motives for making each documentary students can discuss reasons for making each film. Concepts students should be asked to keep in mind are education, information, persuasion, economics, or creativity. Once all ideas are listed students can inventory results using a semantic feature analysis. After this, allow students to analyze the graph to debate which documentary truly purports to deliver a broad or narrow view of the Great Migration.

7. Using Historical Film

First the students should view the “Killing Floor” to get information about labor union organization. Students can judge the workers’ efforts to create Labor Unions. Also using this film, students can compare and contrast the main character in the film to interviewees in the documentaries.

8. Geographical Studies

Students can determine routes that African-Americans took to get to their desired ‘promised lands.’ This activity incorporates the use of maps and conclusions of interview questions. Students can trace the routes traveled by African-Americans from Southern states; for example, students can diagram the directions from North Carolina to New York, from Tennessee and Alabama to Pittsburgh and Detroit, and from Mississippi and Alabama to Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Louis. By determining routes, students can also make deductions about why certain cities and locations were chosen by migrants.

LESSON PLANS

Sample Lesson 1

Objectives:

1. The students will view films that depict working conditions of the North in the Chicago stockyards.
2. The students will identify reasons why African-Americans migrated to Northern cities.
3. The students will compare and contrast a person depicted in film with a real life person during the time of the film.
4. The students will define relevant vocabulary for comprehension.
5. The students will take notes about people and the situations as they view films.
6. The students will judge decisions made by migrants and evaluate the situations they encountered.
7. The students will use facts drawn from the documentary film to make decisions about representation of truth in the film “The Killing Floor”.

Materials:

Films- “The Killing Floor” and “The Promised Land.”

A compare and Contrast graphic organizer or chart

Grouping:

Grades two-six, whole class

Procedure:

1. Prior to viewing the two films, have students set a purpose for viewing. Instruct them to select similar vocabulary, ideas and people represented in both films.
2. Once both films have been viewed, generate a list of terms that could be found in both films and terms which were exclusive to a film (i.e. migration, stockyards, unions, attitude, family)
3. Then identify the character Frank Custer ("The Killing Floor") and Odell Willis ("The Promised Land").
4. Prepare the students to think about ways in which these men can be compared and contrasted with regard to the terminology listed in procedure #2.
5. Discuss the historical importance of "The Killing Floor" and encourage students to question its accuracy based on the information provided in the documentary "The Promised Land."
6. To conclude the lesson refer to the following comprehension questions for students to discuss:
 - How was the term "promised land" used in "The Killing Floor"? What were Frank Custer and his migrating comrades expecting to find in the North?
 - What forms of transportation was used by Custer and the other migrants? What significance did this have to the historical essence of the movement?
 - Describe how life was different for the relocated Custer? Was life better for him in the North? Explain.

Sample Lesson 2

Objectives:

1. The students will express ideas through written accounts that pertain to the paintings by Jacob Lawrence and demonstrate sensitivity to values and behaviors of the people depicted in the paintings.
2. The students will recite written versions of the various occurrences seen in paintings while recreating images depicted in the paintings.
3. The students will identify the major cities in the North to which African-Americans migrated and the areas from which they came.
4. The students will identify the reasons for the migration.
5. The students will identify the needs and wants of African-Americans as they decided to migrate North.

Materials:

Jacob Lawrence's *The Great Migration: An American Story*, Writing Materials, Computer Word Processor

Grouping: Grades two-six, cooperative groups

Procedures:

1. To engage students into the text, capture their interest by providing background information about the front and back covers' illustrations. The observant students will recognize the art from the "The Promised Land" documentary.
2. Allow students to reflect on both paintings by referring to prior knowledge of the migration.
3. Read the introduction by Jacob Lawrence. Have students understand the author's purpose for painting and writing this book.
4. Discuss the authenticity of the written and painted information. Ask students if, based on what the author has written in the introduction, we can trust this work to be a true representation of history. Have them explain why or why not.
5. Continue to allow students to make personal reflections about the paintings by previewing each painting in the text.
6. Encourage the students think about the message the author is trying to portray.
7. Now read aloud the text and allow students to confirm their predictions about the author's messages.
8. As you read aloud, encourage students to select a picture that they may want to reproduce and subsequently create dialogue for the people being portrayed.
9. After read aloud is over, assign students in groups of 3-5. Instruct them to decide on at least 3 paintings to create dialogue for and dramatize.
10. Allow students to word process their scripts. They should be encouraged to perform for other groups, classes, etc.
11. While performing the dramatizations, students can display their reproductions of Lawrence's

paintings in the background.

Sample Lesson 3

Objectives:

1. The students will engage in writing experiences that promote reflective, persuasive, and expository writing.
2. The students will compose final projects using a word processor.
3. The students will compare the behaviors and lives of African-Americans during the 1870's-1940's to today.
4. The students will compare the lives of African-Americans who migrated to those who remained in the South.
5. The students will read letters written by migrants as they traveled North and settled as well as letters by people who were trying to migrate and responding to the advertisements in the Chicago Defender.
6. The students will recite final projects to other students or to an audience.

Materials:

Writing materials, word processor, Letters of African- American migrants.

Grouping:

Grades two-six, individual

Procedures:

1. Begin by explaining the day's objectives. Let the students know that they will be using a specific writing structure called R.A.F.T. The acronym stands for:

Role (what position is the writer taking)

Audience (who the writer is directing the message to)

Format (how the writer get the message across)

Topic (what the writer will write about)

2. Model the strategy by reading aloud letters by migrants. Asking the children to analyze each letter to determine all components of R.A.F.T. Tell students that they will be responsible for a written piece following the R.A.F.T. structure.

3. After providing practicing for the students, as a group generate a list of possible roles, audiences, and formats. The topic should remain: The Migration.

Possible roles: Southern (people who decided to remain in the South) or Northern African-Americans (recent migrants), Southern or Northern Whites, African-Americans who wish to migrate, union workers.

Possible audiences: Same possibilities as roles.

Possible formats: letter, speech, journal, poster, debate, radio script, poem, dialogue or conversation.

Topic: Migrating North or remaining in the south

4. Once the list of responses has been compiled by students, permit them to begin pre-writing by selecting one possibility from each category.

5. After this prewriting stage they should be ready to produce a first draft and complete the writing process. Encourage peer conferences so students will have practice presenting their final projects.

6. To strengthen oral speaking skills arrange a time for students to present their final projects to another class or audience.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Candaele, Kerry. *Bound For Glory. Milestones in Black American History.* Chelsea House Publishers. 1997.

Describes the challenges and obstacles that African-Americans faced in the south. These factors became reasons for migrating.

Cooper, Michael. *Bound for the Promised Land: The Great Black Migration.* New York: Loadstar Books. 1995.

The use of original black-and-white photos enhance the depiction of the experiences of African-American men and women as they migrated North.

Harrison, Alferdteen, ed. *Black Exodus: The Great Migration from the American South.* Jackson and London: University Press of Mississippi. 1991.

Essays presented by Blyden Jackson, Derron Davis, Stewart E. Tolnay, E.M. Beck, Carole Marks, James Grossman, William Cohen, and Neil McMillen. Topics vary from the economic, social, political, and domestic elements in society during and after the Great Migration.

Hauser, Pierre. *The Community Builders. Milestones in Black American History.* Chelsea House Publishers. 1996.

Follow the period between 1877-1895 when nearly 50,000 "Exodusters" migrated to the midwest and thousands of others became cowboys in the west. -, *Great Ambitions. Milestones in Black American History.* Chelsea House Publishers. 1995

Covers the time period between 1896-1909. An exploration of the formation of the NAACP and other reactions to oppression.

Hughes, Langston. *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes.* Edited by Arnold Rampersad. New York: Knopf. 1995.

In this collection the poem "One Way Ticket" is told in the voice of a person preparing to migrate.

Henri, Florette. *Black Migration: Movement North, 1900-1920.* New York: Anchor Books. 1976.

This early study attempts to show how visible and audible black people were during the period between 1900-1920 in Northern cities. Questions such as how and why did this Migration happen are answered.

Lawrence, Jacob. *The Great Migration* New York: HarperCollins. 1993.

Paintings by Lawrence show visual representations of the Great Migration. The story is told by the artist and is meant to portray his personal journey during the movement.

Lemann, Nicholas. *The Promised Land: The Great Migration and How It Changed America.* New York: Vintage Books. 1992.

This novelist tells the story for five million men and women who left their sharecroppers' shacks for the ghettos of Northern cities. This work was the inspiration for the documentary "The Promised Land".

Marks, Carole. *Farewell We're Good and Gone.* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. 1989.

This scholarship describes the migration in historical and theoretical context. It also shows the migration as a labor movement and struggle for power.

Rosenstone, Robert A. *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press. 1995, 1996.

Discusses the development of history being presented in motion pictures. The essays attempt to judge films and their content for authenticity.

Scott, Emmett J. "Letters of Negro Migrants." *Journal of Negro History* 4 (July and October 1918): 290-340 and 412-75.

Actual letters of both recent migrants and African-Americans wishing to migrate. Most of these letters are in response to the advertisements made in the Chicago Defender for the Great Northern Drive (May 15, 1917).

Films

Goin' to Chicago. Dir. George King. California Newsreel. 1994.

The Killing Floor. Dir. Bill Duke. Public Forum Productions. 1985.

The Promised Land. Producer Anthony Geffen and Nancy Lebrun. BBC. 1995

* films are available in the Film Studies Department at Yale University.

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