

From Then to Now: How African American Literature Shaped Civil Rights

Megan Woazeah

Rationale

We are in the 21st century. We are aging in a country where a young man named Trayvon Martin was murdered for what can probably be linked to the color of his skin. At the same time, an African American man who grew up in a period of the Modern Civil Rights Movement was voted in as America's president. Our country claims to embrace the rich history that has brought our people to where we are. However, it was a mere 45 years ago that men and women of different racial backgrounds were legally granted the right to wed. And yet, the generation following mine (or more disheartening yet, *my own* generation) is ignorant of the lives of so many that have brought us to this moment. Many teachers shy away from the concept of analyzing literature and asking the "tough" questions.

The identity of children is often founded in their family and genealogy. Frequently, their ideals, morals, and foundational pieces of who they are, exist based on their lineage, which the students themselves are uninformed about. They begin to develop in middle school and create new facets to their identity before they even understand the identity they have previously held for twelve to thirteen years. My goal is to help them discover themselves through their history.

History is not simply about the country itself, but the people, major events, and movements within the country. Many history books are pitifully inaccurate or underrepresent many of the people, events, and movements of the Civil Rights Movement. Without understanding United States' history, the comprehension of familial history is incomplete. To round out this account, we will focus on another history that is "left out" or incompletely realized by majorities: the Civil Rights Movement and history of African Americans.

Some of the questions we will seek to find answers to in this unit are: What impact did the writers of the Civil Rights Movement have on the American consciousness? Is it possible, that because of the absence of important narratives, that many Americans have grown up unaware of the Civil Rights Movement's importance to

the very fabric of this country? How does a new understanding define a new identity for the people of this country?

As each year progresses, I begin the year in similar fashion: assessing the qualities of strength and weakness in each of my students. This includes knowledge of subject (Language Arts), knowledge of self, knowledge of learning style, knowledge of maturational progress, and knowledge of societal norms. These categories of knowledge embody several different assessments. At the end of the assessments, however, is always a similar result. I find that students, without regard to their intellectual levels of understanding and their maturational stages, function at approximately the same level of societal understanding. Quite simply put, my students are naïve. They have grown up without being instructed to question, “Why?”

I teach at Francis Bradley Middle School in Huntersville, North Carolina. My current students are 8th graders. They are between twelve to fourteen years of age. There is a noticeable split between the family income averages. Approximately 50-65% of my students come from families that are considered middle class. Their parent or parents earn a salary that is enough to provide basic needs and beyond basic needs. Another 35-50% of my students come from families where their parent or parents earn less than an appropriate amount to provide basic needs for the student/family.

My students also come from diverse home situations. The range includes students with biological parents still married, biological parents separated and contemplating divorce, biological parents going through or completed in the process of divorce, biological parents remarried and step-parents included, single parent homes, no biological parents present, and/or living with grandparents. This creates a unique situation when it comes to family perspective. Students maintain different sets of values and it is apparent in the classroom when we engage in full-class discussions.

Another aspect of our diverse classroom is the amount of English as Second Language learners. I have a minimal number of ESL students, but it affects the nature of the classroom.

According to the Bradley School Improvement Plan, “Presently, we have 1153 students enrolled— 31% African-American students, 56% White students, 9% Hispanic, 2% Asian and about 2% of our students come from other races and ethnicities.”ⁱ

Academically, the former 7th grade class passed the End of Grade test last year with an average that was not a terrible score, but it is noticeably lacking. Some of the sub-groups that are in a particular scope of focus this year are African-American students, LEP students, and Exceptional Childrenⁱⁱ.

Objectives

This unit will be comprised of historical fiction, nonfiction, and students' own compositions. Students will read biographies and autobiographies of African Americans pre-, during, and post- Civil Rights Movement. Students will begin by learning the historical timeline of events leading up from when Africans were first brought to America up to present day racial events. Students will also document their own timelines—tracing their diverse backgrounds and histories. Other components of this unit will be poetry, prose, and song that were inspired during the Civil Rights Movement. We will seek to compare those pieces with pieces today. In order to achieve the goals for the unit, I have divided the unit into four sections with essential questions.

Essential Question for Week One: What is the Civil Rights Movement?

This will be the portion of the unit that is central to students' understanding the actual events over time in regards to African-American rights. Students are given minimal information in this week in comparison to the amount of information there is to be taught, but it is correlated to previous work students have done in their 8th grade Social Studies classes. My colleagues are collaborating with me by teaching portions of the Civil Rights Movement and assigning projects that correlate with my own unit. Students will not only review material taught in Social Studies classes, but will also present information themselves, putting the responsibility of instruction on to the students.

Essential Questions for Week Two: Who are/were the influential leaders of the Civil Rights Movement? What were the results of these leaders' efforts?

Some of the influential leaders of the Civil Rights movement that I will introduce to the students are: Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Medgar Evers, Marcus Garvey, John F. Kennedy, Malcolm X, NAACP, Rosa Parks, Thurgood Marshall, the Little Rock Nineⁱⁱⁱ, Ruby Bridges, Angela Davis, Jesse Jackson, Nina Simone, and Mildred Loving^{iv}. We will research these individuals and groups and their impact on the Civil Rights Movement. We will read biographies and autobiographies that showcase the struggles and triumphs of these leaders.

Some of the individuals that students will read about are from before and some are from after the main focus of the Civil Rights Movement (1960's). These individuals are Roger Baldwin (founder of ACLU), Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. DuBois, Dred Scott, and Harriet Tubman^v.

Students have previously completed biographical research in their Social Studies classes and will present their projects on individuals on specified days during week two of the unit.

Essential Questions for Week Three: How do we define *identity*? How does identity shape our role as individuals in society?

I hope that through this unit, students will gain first & foremost an understanding of their own personal heritage. Beyond just an understanding, I want students to embrace their familial lineage. We will work fluidly as a class to discover the variety of racial and cultural background within each student. This will be done through lineage charts and cultural research. Research can include, but not be limited to family interviews.

Essential Question for Week Four: Where do we as members of society go from here? Is there hope in our future?

This is going to be the toughest portion of the unit for students, I imagine. This will be where they take their ideas of identity, justice, equality, and freedom and apply them to the society we live in. My challenge will be to explore their apprehensions and guide them in understanding the concept of hope for our future. Students will be given opportunity to share their hesitations, questions, and insecurities. Their culminating projects will be a compilation of their work throughout the unit. They will complete a self-assessment in order to organize their own growth over the four weeks.

The other concepts that I want students to explore are freedom, equality, and prejudice. These are terms that are loosely applied to a vast array of situations, and yet our students have little understanding of the terminology. Students will explore through research & Socratic seminars the meaning of the terms and how they are skewed throughout our society today.

Some products I am looking for the students to create are: lineage charts, life timelines, journals, analyses of text (fiction & nonfiction), prose, poetry, songs, posters, and Socratic seminars. These products will document students' journeys through the ideas of slavery, abolitionists, civil rights, and diversity. While the documents from the teacher perspective will be focused on the Civil Rights movement, students will be encouraged to explore other areas of race and diversity.

Strategies

The strategies that will be used in this unit are familiar to many teachers. The strategies correlate with the expected products listed above.

Strategy One: K-W-L chart

This is a chart where students will write about a specific topic. They will make a three-column chart to fill in. The categories are what they Know, what they Want to know, and what they have Learned. This will be used at the beginning and end of the unit.

Strategy Two: Journaling

This is simply a quiet, reflective time for students to write about specific ideas. Journaling will be prefaced with precise questions for the student to consider when responding via their journal. This strategy will be used throughout the entire unit.

Strategy Three: Socratic Seminar

This is a group discussion in which all members of the class participate. It is a student-led discussion, with the teacher facilitating and remaining as silent as possible. Students must come prepared with questions, quotes, notes, and other insight for the specified topic of discussion. This strategy will be used throughout the entire unit.

Strategy Four: Glogster^{vi}

Glogster is an interactive, online tool used to create collaborative poster. Students can incorporate text, pictures, and video on their glog. Students will use Glogster during the first and third week of the unit.

Strategy Five: Wordle^{vii}

Wordle is an online tool to create word clouds. This is where you take any text or create your own text and the tool will create a colorful representation of the words you have inserted into the tool. It will emphasize words used repeatedly by making them larger in the visual. This will be used throughout the unit and as an option for a portion of the final project.

Strategy Six: Children's Literature

Reading aloud has been studied for decades and the research has proven that it is essential to developing readers. Jim Trelease states in his autobiographical section of his website, "By 1985, the U.S. Department of Education's Commission on Reading was calling "reading aloud to children" the single most important activity one could do to raise a reader."^{viii} I will utilize several children's books to introduce concepts to the class.

Strategy Seven: Think-Pair-Share

This is a classroom activity that integrates individual and group learning. Students begin completing the given task individually. After a specific amount of time designated by the teacher, students pair up with a partner to continue to complete the task and discuss as partners. The next step takes the partner groups and creates small groups. As small groups they complete the task and discuss implications. Finally, a representative from each small group explains how they completed the task, differing perspectives, and discussion that students engaged in in the small group. This is a great strategy for reading and analyzing text. It allows students time to think for themselves, and then to branch out and hear varying student responses on the same topic. This is utilized throughout the unit.

Activities

This unit is designed for a four week study. It can be minimized or expanded, although I do not recommend the former! The four weeks are meant to be sequestered into the following sections: I. Timeline of the Civil Rights movement and historical understandings; II. Putting major figures into the timeline; III. Reaching back and family genealogies; IV. Hope for the future: a new genealogy. The main focus will be on the themes of freedom, equality, and prejudice. These will be explored via studies of white privilege, racial inequalities, and current article analyses. A resource that we will utilize throughout the unit is the novel New Boy^{ix} by Julian Houston and connected resources from a wiki webpage^x.

I would also preface this unit with an informational letter sent home to parents. The themes and concepts in this unit are universal and yet the material can be considered controversial. Particularly controversial are the elements of lynching, assassination, language in the novel, and some pieces of the documentaries that show victims' bodies. If there is a student whose parent(s) are not keen for them to view the material, I would suggest removing them from the class room during the times when troublesome clips are shown in class.

The novel New Boy utilizes slang terms that, while controversial in their use, are still used today. It would be the responsibility of the teacher to disclose this information prior to students reading the material. It would also be appropriate to take some time to teach about the origins of the terminology of certain terms that are inappropriate according to standards today. Students understand that certain slang is inappropriate, but they aren't aware of the reasons why. I didn't include this in the actual structured daily plans of the unit, because it is at the very least an uncomfortable topic. But, in establishing identity, it would be essential, in my opinion, to struggle with the terminology that also was used to identify races.

Week One: Introduction to the Civil Rights Movement

Day One: To begin the unit, we will look at the timeframe of the Civil Rights movement. A great resource for students to view and interact with is "The Brown vs. Board of Education Website" which is also known as "An Interactive Civil Rights Chronology"^{xi}. This tool documents key events from 1502 to 2000. Students will take a timeline template and enter significant moments from the historical dates provided^{xii, xiii}. Students will engage in higher level thinking by evaluating the five most significant moments in Civil Rights' history and justifying their reasoning in an analysis.

This introduction will be essential to give a foundation for students' understanding the historical figures, the reasons for familial research, and the formation of new opinions on topics of freedom, respect, rights, and racism. Students will journal about their prior knowledge of the Civil Rights Movement. They can utilize a "K-W-L" chart discussing what they know, what they want to know, and leave a space for them to reflect on what they have learned at the end of the unit.

Students will also read an excerpt from *The Narrative Of The Life of Frederick Douglass*. After reading, I will read aloud the children's book *Lincoln and Douglass: An American Friendship* by Nikki Giovanni. We will discuss the historical timeline listed at the end of the book and how Lincoln and Douglass' friendship influenced American history.

To end the class, I will read aloud the children's book *I Want To Be Free* by Joseph Slate and E.B. Lewis. This book documents a runaway slave's journey and the strength given to him by a young child he rescues from slavery.

Homework: Students will read chapters one and two in New Boy. They will journal answering the following question: How does the experience of the African American family differ from that of a Caucasian family? Think about the apprehensions of the Garrett family as they went to Draper.

Day Two: To open this lesson, students will have a creative journaling time. They will listen to music by John Coltrane and artistically represent their journal. Students will be allowed to write full journal entries or poetry, to draw, to paint, or utilize the artistic tools set out for them to use. The music will play for 20 minutes while students craft a response. After the time elapses, students will volunteer to share their pieces or discuss what the music meant to them.

We will look at poetry that was written for specific people in the Civil Rights Movement. Quincy Troupe's poem "For Malcolm", Gwendolyn Brooks' poem "Martin Luther King Jr.", Michael S. Harper's poem "Here Where Coltrane Is", and Robert Hayden's poem "Frederick Douglass" will be read & analyzed in class. Students will construct a Venn diagram to compare & contrast the poems, their Social Studies textbook's information on the subjects, and the timeline they created yesterday.

Homework: Students will read chapters three through five in New Boy. They will write in journals, giving attention to the following questions: Is there a difference in the treatment for Rob versus Vinnie? Rob versus Burns? Is this surprising? Why or why not?

Day Three: This will mark the look at the 1920-1950 time period in the United States and the Civil Rights Movement. We will watch a YouTube video^{xiv} giving an overview.

We will also utilize continued analysis of the following poems: Quincy Troupe *For Malcolm*, Gwendolyn Brooks *Martin Luther King Jr.*, Michael S. Harper *Here Where Coltrane Is*. These poems provide insight into other people's perspective on the figures of the time period. Students will be split into small groups and complete a Think-Pair-Share, where they discuss their own understanding of each poem.

Homework: Students will read chapters six and seven in New Boy. Students will construct a Wordle about their impressions of the Civil Rights Movement up to the 1950's. They will focus on the most important moments in time and the figures that they

identify as the most influential thus far. They can incorporate knowledge from class instruction and the novel.

Day Four: We will analyze portions of the film “The Black Power Mixtape”. To introduce this portion of the lesson, we will read the New York Times review of the film^{xv}. After reading the review, students will read a biography of Stokely Carmichael^{xvi}.

Students will discuss what they expect from the documentary. They will make predictions and compose a prediction chart for their expectations of the clips. After discussion with a partner of their predictions for the documentary, we will view various clips of the film. As an exit slip, students will write down if their predictions were correct or incorrect and their reactions to the documentary clips.

Homework: Students will read chapter eight in New Boy.

Day Five: Students will view clips of the 1950’s and 1960’s efforts for integration.

Students will analyze the Civil Rights Movement from 1960’s to present. Students will read various legal cases that led to groundbreaking court decisions (Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483; 24th Amendment; Civil Rights Act 1964; McLaughlin v. Florida, 379, U.S. 184; The Philadelphia Plan; the Voting Rights Act of 1965; Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 20 U.S.C. 1861 et. seq.; Loving v. Virginia 388 U.S. 1; Civil Rights Act of 1968 (Fair Housing Act); Emergency School Aid Act of 1972; *Palmore v. Sidoti*, 466 U.S. 429; Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987; North Carolina Swann case).

Students will be organized in small groups. The groups will brainstorm inequalities that still exist in society today. They will compose and propose their own “legislation” to remedy issues with equality. Students will prepare a poster describing the “act” that will rectify the inequality they have identified including methods for implementation and consequences for opposition. These inequalities could be at varying levels as well (school, community, city, county, state, region, country, or world).

Homework: Students will create a Glog poster incorporating the five most significant moments of the Civil Rights Movement that they ranked from Day One’s class activities. The Glogs will be posted and students will view their classmates’ Glogs. Students will select a Glog from each class period to share on my wiki webpage.

Week Two: Biographies and Autobiographies

Day One: To begin this week, we will look at individuals and their contributions to society and the Civil Rights Movement. We will start with the very early movements in the Civil War time period.

I will begin class reading the children's book *Abe's Honest Words* by Doreen Rappaport. This book documents Abraham Lincoln's life and how he grew up seeing the effects of slavery. We will also read excerpts from the novel *Letters From a Slave Girl: The Story of Harriet Jacobs* by Mary E. Lyons, which is based on the true events from a fifteen-year-old slave. Students will work in a small group to create a journal where they write from the perspective of different characters from the time period: a white abolitionist in the South, a black slave in the South, a freed slave in the North, a white slave owner in the South, a white child of a slave owner in the South. They will construct a journal containing at least 5 entries.

Homework: Students will read chapters nine and ten in New Boy. They will journal focusing on the questions: How does the situation with the doorman affect Rob? How does the situation with Tyrone affect Burns? Was Burns wrong for his attitude and expectation toward Tyrone? Was Tyrone wrong for his attitude toward Burns? Which situation has more long-term effects? Why do you think that is?

Day Two: Students will listen to a variety of jazz music to open the class period while reading poetry from the Harlem Renaissance. Students will also view clips of performances of Coleman Hawkins. Students will read poetry from Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Claude McKay, W.E.B. DuBois, and Arna Bontemps. Students will read the article from Poets.org, *A Brief Guide to the Harlem Renaissance*^{xvii}

Students will explore the John Coltrane website^{xviii}. They will document five unexpected findings on the site. Students will view the documentary from the John Coltrane website.

Students will read the biography of Langston Hughes^{xix}. Students will read the following Langston Hughes poems: *I, Too*, *Sing America*; *Theme for English B*; *Let America Be America Again*; *Life is Fine*. Students will complete a Think-Pair-Share on the poems of Langston Hughes reflecting on the following questions: Which poem do you identify with most? Why? How did Hughes' life influence his poetry? What connections can you make?

Homework: Students will read chapters eleven and twelve in New Boy. What comparison can you make between John Coltrane and Coleman Hawkins? How did the music of each man affect society? Students will read the biography of Malcolm X. How did Malcolm X affect society? Was his approach necessary? How do you see the effects of Malcolm X's influence in New Boy?

Day Three: Today, we will explore the concept of masking. To begin, we will watch a YouTube video of Maya Angelou reciting her poem, "The Mask"^{xx}.

Students will read the poem by Paul Laurence Dunbar *We Wear the Mask*, discuss themes, and construct masks that show what they portray to the world. The masks will start out plain and white. Students will be given magazines, newspapers, markers, and

colored pencils in order to create an artistic representation of their mask. The mask will have two components. The outside portion of the mask will represent how they portray themselves to the world and society. The inside of the mask, which touches their face, will represent what qualities they hide from the world and society. Questions they will be asked to consider: What do you show the world? What qualities do you hide? What goals and fears do you expose? What goals and fears do you submerge beneath the surface? How are you expected to “fit in”? Do you comply? Why do you hide characteristics? Students will write an expanded journal on what they are masking and why. We will hold an “unmasking” ceremony at the end of the unit in week four.

Homework: Students will read chapters thirteen and fourteen. If incomplete, students will complete their masks. Students will also journal on the “questions to consider” listed above.

Day Four: We will watch the Alicia Keys music video “Unthinkable”. Students will journal for a warm up about what themes they see in the video. After discussing their journals, students will watch the Loving vs. Virginia documentary^{xxi} and take notes. Students will also analyze the actual document of the court^{xxii}. Students will compare the relationship of the Lovings with the relationship of Rob and Paulette from New Boy^{xxiii}. Questions to consider: Does Rob face similar struggles as the Lovings did? If Rob were to date someone of the same race, do they have a “safer” relationship because they are of the same race, while the Lovings were interracial? How are their struggles different?

Homework: Students will read chapters fifteen and sixteen in New Boy. Students will construct a chart comparing themselves and the rights/privileges that they have to Rob and the rights/privileges he doesn’t have access to.

Day Five: Students will present their charts from last night’s homework. Students will participate in a large group discussion about the charts. We will construct a Wordle as a class about the similarities between the charts. We will also look at other classes’ Wordles to see if there are similarities and differences between the class periods.

We will read Clergymen’s *Letter to Martin Luther King*^{xxiv} and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr’s *Letter From Birmingham Jail*. Utilizing the website listed, we will analyze MLK’s famous letter and its significance^{xxv}

Students will address the implications of each letter and how the letter from the clergymen influenced the writing of Dr. King’s letter. Students will identify the direct references from Dr. King’s letter to the clergyman’s letter.

Students will listen to “The Death of Emmett Till” by Bob Dylan and read along with the lyrics. We will watch a film clip from the *Civil Rights Movement History Documentary* by Martin Kent^{xxvi}. I will read *A Wreath for Emmett Till* by Marilyn Nelson^{xxvii}.

Students will hold a discussion on the song, the events surrounding the death of Emmett Till, and the book. Emmett Till is a name that held the same weight in a 1950's household as the name "Trayvon Martin" holds in current households. The similarities will not be lost on the students and I expect meaningful discussion of comparison.

Homework: Students will interview their family members and discuss how they came about being named. Students will have research prepared for discussion on day one of week three.

Week Three: Reaching Back—Genealogies and A Civil Rights Family Tree

Day One: To open this lesson, I will read *Wangari's Trees of Peace: A True Story from Africa* by Jeanette Winter^{xxviii}. This book is based in Kenya, but displays such a parallel message to the struggles of the African-Americans. The protagonist, Wangari, lives in Kenya and notices a trend of the government cutting down the beautiful trees of her land. She resolves to plant trees to solve the problem of deforestation. The climax of the story is when Wangari is faced with imprisonment in order to stand up for what she believes in.

Students will discuss Wangari's options and what they would have done in her place. What parallels are there to what we have been learning about? Students can consider the Civil Rights Movement, Rob Garrett's struggles in New Boy, or current societal issues.

Students will read Langston Hughes *The Negro Speaks of Rivers* and participate in a Think-Pair-Share. Questions to consider: Why did Hughes address this poem to W.E.B. DuBois? What is the significance of introducing the Euphrates, the Nile, and Mississippi? Who is the speaker of the poem?

Students will discuss the research the meaning of their own names and what the significance location has in developing their character. Students will create an artistic representation of their locations: where they were born, where their parents were born, where they have grown up, where their parents grew up, etc. Students can create maps, poems, or an integrated version of the two.

Homework: Students will read chapters seventeen and eighteen in New Boy. Students will create a visual representation of their name and what they are "made of" using Wordle^{xxix}.

Day Two: Students will read Maya Angelou's poem *Our Grandmothers*. Students will journal focusing on the following questions: What do the generations before you offer? How did they make way for your generation? How does Maya Angelou express her feelings toward the matriarchs of her culture? Who are the matriarchal figures in your life? Are these all biologically related? If not, why are they included?

Students will read an article from Family Tree Magazine that gives tips on interviewing family members and what questions to ask^{xxx}. Students will also review the UCLA

Library Center for Oral History Research *Family History Sample Outline and Questions*^{xxxv}. Students will write interview questions for them to use when they sit down with/call and interview their family member(s).

Homework: Students will read chapters nineteen and twenty in New Boy. Students will finish composing/editing their interview questions and interview at least one family member.

Day Three: Students will read the poem by Etheridge Knight, *The Idea of Ancestry*.

Questions for students to consider: How does Knight's concepts of ancestry, lineage, and a family tree compare to yours? How do they differ? What bias do you face when interviewing your family members?

Students will begin a large group discussion of what constitutes a family tree. The class will construct a "Civil Rights Family Tree", in which they will list the originators of the Civil Rights Movement and document the shifts in leaders over time.

I will show students the variations between my family tree and my husband's. We will discuss the significance of our two very different lineages. Questions for the class to consider: How does your lineage show integration (This does not necessarily have to be African or African American, but a generic concept of integration. This could be a mix of Italian heritage and Irish heritage, etc.)? How do you imagine future generations of your lineage to look? What bias do you display within these expectations?

Homework: Students will read chapters twenty-one and twenty-two in New Boy.

Students will interview another family member different from the family member the night before. Students will begin filling in their family tree.

Day Four: Students will watch a few episodes from PBS' program "Finding Your Roots with Henry Louis Gates, Jr."^{xxxvii} Students will discuss the importance of "finding your roots" for the individuals on the program and for themselves. With a partner, students will write down five surprising facts they learn from viewing the program.

Students will be given time to work on constructing their family tree, based on the interview conducted the night before. Students will also find areas lacking information and attempt to write questions to interview another family member for homework to fill in the blanks.

Homework: Students will read chapter twenty-three in New Boy. Students will finish their family tree, complete with visuals. Visuals can include family photos, maps, and flags.

Day Five: Students will present their family tree projects. Students will discuss at least one surprise that they encountered while researching their heritage.

Students will compose questions, summaries, and discussion points based on chapter twenty-three from New Boy. Rob writes a compelling final paper in which he includes this conclusion: “Since Reconstruction ended, things haven’t changed much in the South. Segregation has become the accepted way of life, but lately, among Negroes, there is a feeling of change in the air.”^{xxxiii} Questions to consider for the Socratic seminar: Rob states that the African-American population has been “abandoned”. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not? What parallels can you elaborate on in today’s society? Does this comparison extend beyond America? Why or why not?

Homework: Students will begin to compile their projects into a portfolio. The portfolio must include the K-W-L chart, their Wordles, family tree, artistic representations from warm ups, and journals typed up. Students may also include notes from their Socratic seminars.

Week Four: Hope for the Future

Day One: Students will read Conrad Kent Rivers’ poem *The Still Voice of Harlem*, Langston Hughes’ *Dream Variation* and *Dreams Deferred*. Questions to consider: What were the dreams of the Harlem Renaissance artists? Were those dreams realized in the decades to come?

Students will examine Martin Luther King Jr.’s *I Have a Dream* speech and identify similarities and differences between MLKJ’s dreams and Langston Hughes’ dreams. Again, students will answer the question: Were those dreams realized in the decades to come? Students will provide evidence via notes and handouts from the previous three weeks of study.

Students will read and watch Amiri Baraka read an excerpt^{xxxiv} from his poem *Why Is We Americans*^{xxxv}. This poem and performance will prove disheartening for students when examining the concept of hope. The poem expresses the anger of oppression, which many students will not be able to understand completely. However, at this point in the unit, I expect to move into a point where students develop their own righteous anger for the oppression of the past.

Homework: Students will read chapters twenty-four and twenty-five in New Boy.

Day Two: Students will listen to some Nina Simone songs and journal as a warm up for the lesson. They will have opportunity to artistically represent their journal. Students will be allowed to write full journal entries or poetry, to draw, to paint, or utilize the artistic tools set out for them to use. The music will play for 20 minutes while students craft a response. After the time elapses, students will volunteer to share their pieces or discuss what the music meant to them.

Students will listen to Dr. Seuss's *Oh, The Places You'll Go!*^{xxxvi} After hearing Seuss's book, students will read Audre Lorde's *For Each of You*. Students will compare and contrast the two pieces of poetry.

Based on the idea of "going somewhere" students will create a "Roadmap to Equality and Peace". They will show the way through oppression to equality and peace, showing the roadblocks and wearisome portions of the journey. Students can use their timelines, notes from the past 3 weeks, and the journeys that Rob goes through in the story.

This portion of the unit is important because it gives students the access to evaluate the struggle of African Americans throughout their oppression in America. This is a good tool to help introduce parallel oppressive struggles such as the Pilgrims and Native Americans, the Holocaust, the Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda, the Liberian civil war, etc. The thematic concept of oppression is unfortunately seen in repetitive patterns throughout history.

At the end of the lesson, students will share what the end of their "Roadmap" looks like. Questions to consider: What was the point in the journey where there was hope to reach the end destination of equality and peace? Does everyone reach the destination? How are these roadmaps universal to the struggles of those oppressed? Is the concept of oppression relevant today? What about the concepts of equality versus inequality, freedom, or peace?

Homework: Students will read chapters twenty-six and twenty-seven in New Boy.

Day Three: Students will read and listen to Margaret Walker's *For My People*. Students will create a parallel version of the poem, where they write to people that they have learned about throughout this unit. They can use the following ideas to start their poems: "For my friends", "For MLKJ", "For Rosa", "For oppressed people", "For the silent protesters". They are not limited to these beginnings, but instead, they have the freedom to compose their own poems. Students will be given 20 minutes to compose, during which I will play music softly in the background.

After the 20 minutes of rough composition, students will have opportunity to share, as in a poetry performance. It will not be required, but a free time for students to express.

After listening to classmates, students will be asked to consider these questions: How were you moved by the poetry of your classmates? Why? How did the poetry, music, essays, speeches, and prose of the Modern Civil Rights Movement propel individuals to action?

Students will listen to some of the Civil Rights Movement protest music. Students will also be exposed to modern artists inspired by the Civil Rights era artists. Questions to consider: After hearing historical protest music, how does that shed new light on the music of modern artists?

Homework: Students will read chapters twenty-eight and twenty-nine in New Boy. Students will journal answering the following questions: What was the significance of the white police officer's presence on the first day of the sit-in? What happened on differently on the second day? Why did the events happen the way they did? Do you think the situation would be similar in today's society (as far as the parent to child interactions and reactions)? Why?

Students will find a meaningful, modern song that they think exemplifies the same characteristics of the music of the Civil Rights Movement.

Day Four: Students will get into small groups and share the songs from their homework the night before. After ten minutes of discussion, students will select one song that best exemplifies the Civil Rights Movement characteristics. Students will share songs with the class while they write reactions to the song choices. Students will discuss their reactions to the songs as a large group.

Students will read Claude McKay's *After the Winter* and discuss the thematic significance of the seasons. Students will engage in a Socratic seminar to wrap up the novel New Boy. Students will discuss the questions from the previous night's homework: What was the significance of the white police officer's presence on the first day of the sit-in? What happened on differently on the second day? Why did the events happen the way they did? Do you think the situation would be similar in today's society (as far as the parent to child interactions and reactions)? Why?

Homework: Students will put together the final elements of their culminating portfolios.

Day Five: To mark the end of the unit, we will share projects completed over the past four weeks. Students will first share their poems of hope for the future. After sharing, students will complete a self-reflection. This will include going back to their journal from the first day and filling in the "L" section of the "K-W-L" chart, which represents what they learned over the course of the unit.

A second time of sharing will be the unmasking ceremony. Students will share their masks, which they started in class in week two. They will unmask themselves and discuss how it feels to let their vulnerabilities show. As part of a continued Socratic seminar, students will compare their unmasking to the end of the novel New Boy^{xxxvii}. Questions they will be asked to consider: Did Rob have a moment of unmasking? Did he have several? When was/were the moment(s)? How do the events over the course of the novel affect Rob's perspective on society? How does your unmasking expose your perspective on society? How has your "worldview" changed over the course of the unit?

To culminate this unit, students will write letters to themselves discussing the questions to consider and the points discussed in the Socratic seminar. They will identify their moments of unmasking, how they identify with their heritage and family, and how all of these pieces affect their role in society.

Culminating Assessment

The nature of this unit is on self-exploration and growth. Due to this factor, the only assessment that I would feel fairly evaluates students' learning over the four weeks would be a portfolio.

The elements of the portfolio will include, but shall not be limited to: individuals' K-W-L charts, Wordles, Glogster work, family tree, artistic representations from warm ups, journals (either neatly re-written or typed up), masks, roadmaps to equality and peace, and final letters written to themselves on the last day of the unit. Other elements that can be included are: notes from Socratic seminars (re-written neatly or typed up), poems or prose written as a result of the unit studies, group work (including the journal entries written from various perspectives during the Civil War time period), and any elements that students found via their own exploration after class activities (i.e. music, art, video clips, poetry, or prose).

Appendix

Resources: Annotated Bibliography

In addition to the resources listed throughout the unit, these are resources that are of particular importance and worth when working through a unit on the Civil Rights Movement.

Teacher Resources

Finding Your Roots^{xxviii} This website, by PBS, is such an excellent tool for genealogy research and teaching about the importance of such. It explores the lives of prominent figures in society today, displaying their journey into their heritage and past. The website also lists profiles, videos, blogs, resources, and teacher resources. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. has put together a wonderful resource to accompany this unit.

History Is A Weapon^{xxix} This website is “an online Left reader focusing largely on American resistance history.”^{xl} It contains several documents from important figures in the Civil Rights Movement, as well as other movements. This is a great resource for comparative work; to utilize this you can work with graphic organizers such as a Venn diagram.

Teaching For Tolerance^{xli} This resource discusses the concept of white privilege. It defines and identifies instances that display white privilege. This tool functions as a way to bridge the gap that currently exists with my students’ education and understanding of societal norms in America (or beyond, for that matter).

Top 10 Civil Rights Protest Songs Of All Time^{xlii} This website has ten protest songs that have great meaning in this unit. This resource is extremely useful if you decided to look more to the musical aspects of the Civil Rights Movement. My unit only touches on it briefly, but there is so much depth to the music of the 50’s, 60’s, 70’s, and 80’s in relation to the Civil Rights Movement.

Student Resources

Houston, Julian. *New Boy*. Boston: Graphia An Imprint of Houghton Mifflin Company. 2005. This novel is essential in order to give students a glimpse of what life in the time period of the 1950’s was like. The novel is based on the author’s actual experiences growing up in 1950’s segregated South and attending a Northern boarding school.

I Am The Darker Brother: An Anthology of Modern Poems By African Americans. Edited by Arnold Adoff. New York, NY: Aladdin Paperbacks, 1997. This collection of poetry was first seen in 1968, when the poetry was indeed “modern”. However, these poems resonate even today. The sections were also part of my inspiration for the organization

for the unit plan. The anthology contains poetry by prominent poets: Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Brooks, Nikki Giovanni, Amiri Baraka, Margaret Walker, Maya Angelou, Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Richard Wright, Haki Madhubuti, and Alice Walker.

Implementing District Standards

Common Core Standards^{xliii}

The following are the Common Core standards for the eighth grade Language Arts curriculum. They are organized by type of standard. The letters and numerals at the beginning of each represents the category (RL—Reading Literature), the grade level (8—8th grade), and the number of the standard in that particular category (RL 8.1—the first standard in the Reading Literature section). These are the standards that will be addressed in the unit plan. While many standards are long term goals, or are implemented daily, these are aligned particularly with this curriculum unit plan.

Reading Standards for Literature

These standards apply to the novel, New Boy, that is utilized throughout the unit. It is essential to the unit for themes to be determined, analysis of plot, textual evidence utilized to support analysis, and comparison between different pieces of literature.

RL 8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RL 8.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

RL 8.3 Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

RL 8.5 Compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style.

RL 8.6 Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor.

Reading Standards for Informational Text

These standards are addressed as the many pieces of informational text are utilized. It is essential for understanding that textual evidence is cited for all analyses, central themes

are recognized, author's point of view is established, and two pieces of nonfiction are analyzed for their relevance and truthfulness.

RI 8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly support an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RI 8.2 Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text.

RI 8.3 Analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events (e.g., through comparisons, analogies, or categories).

RI 8.6 Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints.

RI 8.8 Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; recognize when irrelevant evidence is introduced.

RI 8.9 Analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.

Writing Standards

Students are asked to write and express themselves daily throughout this unit. This is essential for meeting the goals of this unit.

W 8.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

W 8.6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

W 8.7 Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.

W 8.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Speaking and Listening Standards

In order for students to apprehend the understanding necessary to deem them masters of this information, individuals must be able to express orally their understandings of the concepts in this unit. The Socratic seminar is a strategy employed throughout the unit. Speaking and listening are tools that must be utilized over the course of the four week unit.

SL 8.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

- a. Come to discussions prepared, having read or researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.
- b. Follow rules for collegial discussions and decision-making, track progress toward specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.
- c. Pose questions that connect the ideas of several speakers and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant evidence, observations, and ideas.
- d. Acknowledge new information expressed by others, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views in light of the evidence presented.

SL 8.2 Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.

SL 8.4 Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

SL 8.5 Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.

ⁱ(Francis Bradley Middle School 2012-2013)

ⁱⁱ(Francis Bradley Middle School 2012-2013)

ⁱⁱⁱ(Brunner n.d.)

^{iv}(Biography.com n.d.)

^v(Biography.com n.d.)

^{vi} (Glogster n.d.)

^{vii} (Feinberg 2011)

^{viii} (Trelease 2011)

^{ix} (Houston 2005)

^x(Baldwin, et al. 2011)

^{xi}(Balkin, Rodriguez and Aguero n.d.)

-
- xii Timeline Template 1
xiii Timeline Template 2
xiv (rothSSteacher 2008)
xv (Scott 2011)
xvi (The Biography Channel website n.d.)
xvii (Poets.org 2012)
xviii (The John Coltrane Foundation 2012)
xix (The Biography Channel website n.d.)
xx (AlphonsosSimpson 2011)
xxi (sgtrius 2009)
xxii (Legal Information Institute n.d.)
xxiii (Houston 2005)
xxiv (Ashbrook Center at Ashland University n.d.)
xxv (Ecclesio.com n.d.)
xxvi (Kent 2010)
xxvii (Nelson 2005)
xxviii (Winter 2008)
xxix (Feinberg 2011)
xxx (Family Tree Magazine 2010)
xxxi (UCLA Library Center for Oral History Research 2012)
xxxii (PBS 2012)
xxxiii (Houston 2005)
xxxiv (Baraka 2002)
xxxv (urbanrenewalprogram 2010)
xxxvi (palombab 2009)
xxxvii (Houston 2005)
xxxviii (PBS 2012)
xxxix (History Is A Weapon 2012)
xl (History Is A Weapon 2012)
xli (Holladay n.d.)
xlii (Gane-McCalla 2011)
xliii (Common Core State Standards Initiative 2012)