

How Environment Influences Our Lives: The Influence on Writers' Work and Ourselves

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Introduction

It is an age-old question. What is more important, nature or nurture? Does our genetics play a bigger role in developing who we are and influencing our lives, or does our environment, friends, treatment by our parents, etc., make us who we are. There are valid arguments for both theories. This unit will look at the nurture argument and show how our environment influences our lives and informs our decisions. By looking at how a famous African American writer took experiences from his own life and incorporated it into his writing, students will be able to see how they can also be influenced by their environment and harness their experiences to more fully understand themselves.

Background

I am a Media Specialist at Nathaniel Alexander Elementary School in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system (CMS). Our school currently has Pre-K through fifth grade, but I only serve kindergarten through fifth grade. This unit is designed for my fifth grade classes, but I believe it could be adapted for older students, as well. Our school is a Title 1 school, which means we have a high percentage of students living in poverty. Some of my students do not have access to computers at home, which means any technology related assignment, must be completed in class. My school also has a majority of minority students, with about 70-75% of students being African American.

As a Media Specialist (librarian) I teach all grade levels and I teach six classes a day. Each class is 55 minutes long, but the last twenty minutes of class is reserved for checkout. That leaves about thirty minutes for a lesson, which can be a challenge. The students see me on a rotating schedule. Each fifth grade class sees me about once a week depending on how the schedule is set for that week. Seeing the students so rarely makes it hard to teach long units. Also, I will need to collaborate with classroom teachers if I hope for students to complete any work outside of the Media class. I do not have an exact set of standards and objectives that I have to stick to when I am teaching my classes. I do have to incorporate the Common Core Standards and I also have to incorporate the Information and Technology Standards. I must teach students technology skills, library skills, research skills, and expose the students to different types of books and authors. However, outside of those standards and I am pretty much free to incorporate any subject area into my lessons. This gives me a lot of freedom in developing lesson plans in general, and when developing this unit.

Another challenge I face is a lack of technology in the media center. Currently I only have eight computers for a class to use to conduct research. With classes that range in size from twenty to thirty students, this makes it very difficult to complete any assignment that involves the computers. One solution I have used in the past is to create stations that students rotate through so that every student will eventually be able to use the computers.

Objectives

I believe that school should teach students more than just facts. School should teach students valuable skills they can use in school, but also use in the real world. I also believe that schools should teach students social skills and help students understand who they are and who they want to be. This unit incorporates this belief, because this unit will have students exploring who they are, how their own environment influences who they are and what they do, and how they can rise above the challenges their environment has put in front of them. The majority of my students face a wide variety of challenges, which goes hand-in-hand with teaching at a Title 1 school. The students need much more support from the teachers. This unit should help students see that there are many famous authors who also faced hardship, but they took those hardships and put it in their writing and used the hardships to become successful.

This unit will also expose students to different authors and different types of writing, like narratives and poetry. As a class students will read, discuss, and evaluate two books of poetry, with each describing the neighborhood of Harlem. Students need exposure to many types of writing because they will be expected to write various types of text throughout their time in school. Also, when the teacher introduces different types of texts to students the students may become interested in the new type of text and find something they enjoying reading. Every student enjoys reading different material, so exposing students to a wide variety of text gives the teacher a greater chance of finding something the student will like to read.

Another goal of this unit is to present students with role models. In today's society many students only dream of being famous or a professional athlete. However, many of these individuals are not good role models for students, plus, the majority of students will never realize their dream of being famous because few people are able to achieve that goal. This unit will present students with African American role models who overcame their hardships and became very famous and successful writers. The writers took things they had experienced and things they felt and incorporated that into their writing. When writers write what they know and put feeling into their writing the reader will feel a much greater connection. These authors will show students that you can overcome and even embrace the hardships and setbacks you face to succeed in life.

Giving students a wide variety of positive role models will show student they have many options in life and can achieve success in many ways.

Finally, this unit will incorporate the use of technology and some research, which meets the need of teaching 21st Century Instructional Technology skills. Part of the Media Specialist's job is teaching technology skills and preparing students for a global economy. Teachers today are supposed to create critical thinkers who can creatively solve problems and learn through inquiry, instead of rote memorization. This unit is going to have students learning through inquiry, using critical thinking skills and creativity to explore who they are and think independently. Teaching technology and critical thinking skills is especially important at a Title 1 school, because many students at the school do not have access to technology at home and need more support becoming critical thinkers. At the end of the unit students will use technology to create a final product. Students will have a choice of technologies to use, including PowerPoint and Word. Students need to understand how to properly utilize these technologies, because they will use these throughout their time in school and in life. Giving students a choice in presentation format tends to make students take more interest in the project, which leads to more effort being put forth to make the project above average. As a result of the students' projects I will have a clear picture of how my student's are affected by their environment. This unit is a great way to get to know the students and take a personal interest in them.

The lessons taught in the Media Center must incorporate North Carolina's Information and Technology standards. The overall goal of these standards is to ensure that students are able to use technology effectively and evaluate technology. This is ensure that students are ready to enter the workforce and become valuable employees in today's workforce. Below are the NC Information and Technology Standards that will be covered by this unit.

1. 5.SI.1.1 : Use various types of resources to gather information (including print and online resources). Throughout the unit, especially during station work, students will use many different types of information.
2. 5.TT.1.2 : Use a variety of technology tools to organize data and information. The students will use technology to create their final product.
3. 5.TT.1.3 : Use technology tools to present data and information. Students will use technology, the Promethean Board, to present their final products.

With each lesson the teacher should have a list of student objectives written on the board so that students understand what they are expected to be able to do by the end of the lesson or unit. Below are the student objectives, taken from the information mentioned above and from the individual activities listed later in the unit, for this unit. For a more detailed list of all the objectives that will be taught through this unit please see the appendix titled *Implementing Common Core Standards*.

Students will be able to...

1. Describe how a person's environment can affect them, giving specific examples from their own lives and from Langston Hughes' life.
2. Make connections between prior knowledge and a variety of texts when reading a new text.
3. Use technology to publish and present writing.

Pre-knowledge

The unit will incorporate history into lessons. History is a wonderful conduit that can be used to integrate all other subject areas. At the beginning of the unit students will explore the Great Migration, which will create some background knowledge for the students so they can understand the books that will be read later in the unit. Since the unit is incorporating information on the Great Migration it is imperative that the teacher have a good understanding of the Great Migration before presenting the history to the students. There are many resources available to learn more about the Great Migration.

The Great Migration occurred between 1916 and 1970. The time period saw more than 6 million African Americans move from the South to cities in the North, Midwest, and West. This migration had a large impact on urban life, which continues today. African Americans left the South in search of better economic opportunities and to leave the segregationist laws that created an extremely harsh existence for blacks in the South. At the beginning of World War I there was a large demand for industrial workers to produce goods and southern African Americans decided to take advantage of the opportunity. However, with the migration causing urban populations to rise, the migrants had to deal with poor working conditions, competition for living space, and racism. African Americans began to create a new black urban culture for themselves within the cities. This new culture would have tremendous influence during the time and still to this day.¹

Teachers will also need to be familiar with the history and influence of Harlem, including the Harlem Renaissance, because the two main read-alouds focus on Harlem. Background information on Harlem will need to be presented to students in order for students to fully comprehend the texts that will be read. Harlem was not originally built as an African American neighborhood. Initially it was designed for white workers who wanted to be able to commute into New York City. However, the developers grew too ambitious and the housing grew more hastily than transportation was able to grow. The white workers deserted the area and the white developers saw their prices drop. The developers began to either sell their properties to black real estate agents or rent to black tenants. Inside the city there was a movement to re-develop most areas and blacks were pushed out and fled to Harlem. Between 1900 and 1920 the number of blacks in Harlem doubled. Many of the country's best and brightest young African American had moved

to Harlem and brought their institutions and businesses with them. Soon Harlem was known as “the Black Mecca” and “the capital of black America.”²

Information on the Harlem Renaissance will also need to be covered with the students, so the teacher should have a firm grasp of the Harlem Renaissance. The Harlem Renaissance occurred from 1918 to 1937. The Harlem Renaissance was a time of African American cultural explosion, especially in the creative arts. Many famous writers, musicians, and artists sought to make a way for African Americans to shine in the arts in their own way. The movement did not only take place in Harlem, but Harlem was the center of the activity and was the symbolic capital of the movement. The Great Migration helped to contribute to the evolution of the Harlem Renaissance. Some of the famous artists from the time are Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Zora Neale Hurston, and Jean Toomer.³

Langston Hughes, his writings and his biography, will be shared with students. To teach the unit the teacher needs to know biographic information on Langston Hughes. James Langston Hughes was born on February 1, 1902. When he was very young his parents divorced. His father moved to Mexico. His grandmother raised him until the age of thirteen. At this time he moved to Lincoln, Illinois with his mother and stepfather. This is when he started writing poetry.⁴ Hughes had a very varied background, which contributed to his writing. When his first book was published he had lived in over 6 different cities, had worked as a truck farmer, cook, waiter, sailor, and doorman in a Paris nightclub, and he had been to Mexico, West Africa, Holland, France, Italy, and the Canary Islands.⁵ Hughes not only wrote poetry, but he also wrote novels, short stories, and plays.⁶ Many African Americans did not like Hughes writing during the time period because they felt that Hughes was not presenting African Americans in the best light. Many felt that work by an African American writer should only present the best of African American society if white readers might see it. Many of Langston Hughes' works were heavily criticized in the media.⁷

Strategies

Lecture

There will be times during the unit when the teacher will have to briefly give a lecture. The students will need a brief introduction to the unit and the Great Migration. Lecture is sometimes necessary so that you know every student heard the same information. With elementary students a lecture needs to take no more than ten minutes, preferable less, because students will have a harder time focusing the longer a lecture lasts. If the lecture is aided by visuals, like a PowerPoint, Prezi⁸, video clip, students are more likely to be engaged. The lectures will always be given at the beginning of class to focus the students on the topic at hand. Then after the lecture students will be involved in some sort of activity.

Read Alouds

During the unit there will be three read alouds. One book will be on the Great Migration and the other two books will be about Harlem. Read alouds are great to use in the classroom, especially with elementary students, because they do not have to focus on trying to figure out the words as they are reading. Instead, they can focus on the content. Plus, it is a great way to introduce students to new types of writing and/or authors. It is an easy way to integrate content and literacy into a lesson. During the read alouds students will be actively listening to the story. During the second and third read alouds students will complete a Connection Stems handout, which will focus their attention during the read alouds and ensure they are making connections between the text that is being read aloud and prior knowledge, lectures, and other texts. There should always be discussions after a book is read aloud to ensure that students understand the story and so that the teacher can ensure the teaching points are covered and understood.

Stations

In a library setting the use of stations can be very appropriate and engaging for the students. However, stations are also great in a classroom setting. Stations allow the students to get up and move around, while also learning. The use of stations is a very effective tool to use to present students with a variety of resources on a topic in a limited amount of time. It is also a way to make students responsible for learning the material and have students actively engaged, versus a teacher driven activity. Each station should have a different activity and information, so that students are learning something new each time they switch to a new station. Plus, if the activities are varied enough it helps keep them engaged. Stations should have clear and concise directions, so students can get started on their own. For this unit stations will be used to learn about the Great Migration and the Harlem Renaissance.

Connection Stems

Connection Stems are a way for students to connect what they are reading to prior knowledge about themselves or the topic of study. The handout comes from the Read, Write, Think website, which is free for educators to use in the classroom.⁹ Connection Stems give students an easy way to tie the new learning to things they already know. Having students make connections to the text, whether it is background knowledge or past experiences, allows students to make sense of the text and find it much more enjoyable to read. Plus it gives students the opportunity to connect other texts to the texts that are currently being read.

Brainstorming Session

Having students participate in a brainstorming session is a great way to help students come up with ideas when they may be struggling to understand and get started. As teachers we get many ideas from other teachers. Students should have the opportunity to do the same thing. In this unit students will have a brainstorming session to help them come up with ideas about how our environment affects us, so that they can get started on their final product. During the session a cause and effect graphic organizer will be used to help students understand cause and effect.¹⁰ Using graphic organizers are a great way to help students visualize and comprehend connections and information you are covering in class. Graphic organizers are especially great with struggling and EC students, who need more support. Graphic organizers can be used with most lessons and topics. The completed graphic organizer can be kept for reference when students are working on their final product.

Activities

The unit is going to be broken down into three basic parts. The first section is the presentation of background information on the Great Migration. Students need to understand the Great Migration in order to understand the lives of the African American authors that will be studied and to understand the books that will be read. The second section is the study of the authors and two books that describe black urban centers and culture. This will also be the time that students learn about and understand how the authors' writings were influenced by their lives. The final portion of the unit will focus on students reflecting on how their environment affects their lives and creating their final product. Students will be given a choice of presentation method for their final product.

Section 1

Lecture

At the very beginning of the unit students will be introduced to the unit and given an overview of what will be included in the unit. Then students will be presented with basic information on the Great Migration. The teacher will utilize a Promethean Board and visual aids, including presentation software called Prezi, pictures, and videos about the Great Migration. Videos are a great way to engage students and present them with content information in a short time. Typically students enjoy videos. Both portions of the presentation will last no longer than ten minutes. See the List of Classroom Materials for the presentation. The presentation is meant as an opener. Students will learn more about the Great Migration during read alouds and station work.

Read Aloud

As a continuation of learning about the Great Migration the book *The Great Migration*¹¹ will be read aloud to students after the lecture portion of the lesson. The book tells the

many different perspectives of the Great Migration through various viewpoints and through poetry. The author's families were involved in the Great Migration. At the beginning is a brief description of the Great Migration. The book splits the narrative into five sections; The News, Goodbyes, The Trip, Question, and Up North. After the book is read there will be a discussion of the key points. The book is mainly being read to give students further background on the Great Migration and introduces students to how people felt during the time period. In order to ensure all students see the pictures a Document Camera will be used with a Promethean Board so the image on the book will be projected to the Promethean Board. The teacher will read the words to the students as the images are on the screen. Here are some discussion questions the teacher can ask the students after the read aloud is finished.

1. Why did African Americans living in the South want to move North?
2. How do you think you would have felt leaving your home, friends, everything you knew and going North?
3. The people moving North thought they were going to find a better, perfect life. Do you think the families moving North found the perfect life they were looking for?

Stations

Stations will be created with various materials on the Great Migration and Harlem, including the Harlem Renaissance. Students will be responsible for completing the activity at each station. Students will be in groups of around four and will switch stations every ten to fifteen minutes. The teacher should have a way to split students up into groups. Students could draw a number from a basket and that number tells them which station to start at. Alternatively the teacher could just have the students number off and go to the station. It may also be wise for the teacher to strategically create groups him or herself if the class is more prone to off task behavior. It will take about three class periods for students to be able to travel to each station. Stations will include computers, books, handouts, and other activities. While students are working at the stations the teacher should be moving around from station to station to ensure that students are on task and that students are comprehending the work at each station. When it is time to switch to the next station the teacher should have a signal and clear instructions for how to move to the next station. Usually students will move to the station with the next highest number, for example station four will move to station five, and the students at the last station will move to station one. At each station have students write down three new things they learned from the station. At the BrainPop video station students will also complete the video quiz after they have finished watching the video. Before sending students to station you should ensure that students know what to do at each station.

- Station 1: Computers- BrainPop video on Harlem Renaissance and video quiz
- Station 2: Article on Great Migration

Station 3: Article on Harlem Renaissance

Station 4: Assortment of nonfiction books on the Great Migration

Station 5: Assortment of nonfiction books on the Harlem Renaissance

Station 6: Langston Hughes biography

Each school has different resources in their library, so I have not included suggested titles for the stations that utilize books. The stations can include the books that are available at your school library or materials can be gathered from the local public library as well. Links to the website and articles used in the stations can be found in the List of Materials for Classroom Use appendix.

Section 2

Lecture

Students will be given a brief lecture on the life of Langston Hughes and how his environment and life influenced his writing. This information will be presented using Promethean Board and presentation software. The lecture will take no longer than ten minutes. The lecture is meant to give students some basic background information on Hughes and basic information on how his environment affected him. This will aid students when it is time for them to make their final products. It will also help students come up with some ideas of how our environment affects us during the brainstorming session that will come later in the unit.

Read Aloud

After the lecture the teacher will read the book *The Block*¹², which is a collection of poems by Langston Hughes that all center on Harlem, which is a neighborhood in the New York City borough of Manhattan. The teacher will pick a selection of poems to read, instead of reading the entire text. The teacher will once again use the Promethean Board and Document Camera to show the text to the students. During the reading of the poems students will complete a Connection Stems handout¹³, which we will discuss after each poem is read. The teacher should connect the book to the prior information that was learned, through the lectures, station work, and previous read aloud, before reading the book, so that students have an easier time making connections while the book is being read. The teacher can also model the behavior by using the language from the handout to help students see how to make the connections. The teacher can also explain that there are different types of connections, text to text, text to world, and text to self.

The next class period another book will be read aloud. The teacher will read *Harlem* by Walter Dean Myers. The entire book is one long poem about Harlem. The entire book will be read. The Promethean Board and Document Camera will be used to ensure all students can see the book as it is being read. As the book is being read students will

once again complete a Connection Stems handout. After the book is read we will discuss what students made connections to and we will discuss what different parts of the book meant. The teacher should once again connect the book to the prior information that was learned, through the lectures, station work, and previous read aloud, before reading the book, so that students have an easier time making connections while the book is being read. The teacher can again ask students about the different types of connections they made, text to text, text to world, and text to self. When students are listening to the second read aloud, *Harlem*, ask the students to make connections to the first text, *The Block*. A discussion will also continue about how the environment might have affected the author.

Section 3

Brainstorm Activity: Cause and Effect Chart

It is important that students are able to see some ideas on how our environment affects and influences us before they are sent out to work on their final product. Therefore, a brainstorming activity is needed. For this activity the teacher will use a cause and effect chart¹⁴ on the Promethean Board. The teacher can use a chart from a website or the teacher can make their own. For this unit a self-created chart will be created using the Promethean software so that the teacher/students can write on the chart using the Promethean Board and save the image for later use. The teacher will explain how the chart works and will ask students to tell one thing that is in their environment. For example, they can discuss something at home, in the neighborhood, or at school. Then the teacher will ask how that makes the student feel or what impact it has. The teacher can call on different students for this part. Finally the teacher will ask what effect does that have on a person. The teacher will record each answer on the chart so that students can see the different ways our environment can affect us. By the end of the brainstorming session students should have at least three examples of how our environment can affect us. The chart can be saved and printed off for students to refer to when they are completing their final product. Alternatively, the teacher can have a blank copy of the chart printed off for each student and have him or her fill in the chart as the teacher is writing the answers on the board.

Final Product

In the final stage students will be given a handout with directions on creating a final product. Students will have to complete some work outside of the regular school day. While at home students should be observing their environment and taking notes on how their environment affects and influences their personality, behavior, etc. Since I see students only once a week, students will complete this task in the week between our last class and our next class. In class students will utilize PowerPoint, Word, Prezi, or Glogster¹⁵ to create their final product. They can create a PowerPoint presentation,

poem, song, Glog, etc. for their final product. Their final product must tell the teacher what their environment is like, how it influences them, and how they can overcome the challenges of their environment to achieve success. The final products will only be presented on a volunteer basis. The reason for this is that the final products should be very personal and some students will not complete the project if they know they will have to share it. It is more important for students to complete the project than it is for students to share it with their classmates. Therefore, students will only have to present if they would like to, but no one will be forced to present. The hope is to collaborate with classroom teachers on this unit so that students will have regular class time to work on the project and if the classroom teacher is involved students will be more willing to complete the outside of school work/homework that will be required. The direction sheet for students can be located in the List of Materials for Classroom Use.

Bibliography for Teachers

Bond, Victoria and T.R. Simon. *Zora and Me*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press, 2010.

This is a fictionalization of the childhood of author Zora Neale Hurston. The story is told from the point of view of Carrie, Zora's friend. The book explores Zora's love of storytelling, but also the racial tensions of the time period. At the end of the book the author included biographical information about Zora Neale Hurston, timeline of her life, and a list for further reading.

Brown, Lois. *Encyclopedia of the Harlem Literary Renaissance: The Essential Guide to the Lives and Works of the Harlem Renaissance Writers*. New York: Checkmark Books, 2006.

This is a great resources to use to research authors of the Harlem Renaissance. There are over 600 essays on novelists, poets, playwrights, journalists, and others in the writing profession. The book also includes information on prizes that were awarded and venues for literary activity in Harlem during the Harlem Renaissance. Finally, the book included analysis of well known plays, novels, and poems.

Greenfield, Eloise. *The Great Migration: Journey to the North*. New York: HarperCollins, 2011.

This is a Coretta Scott King Honor book. The book tells the many different perspectives of the Great Migration through various viewpoints and through poetry. The author's families were involved in the Great Migration. At the beginning is a brief description of the Great Migration. The book splits the narrative into five sections; The News, Goodbyes, The Trip, Question, and Up North.

Hughes, Langston. *The Block*. New York: Viking, 1995.

This book comprises collage work by Romare Bearden and assorted poems by Langston Hughes. The poems describe the neighborhood of Harlem. This is one of the books that will be read aloud during one of the lessons.

Hughes, Langston. *Selected Poems of Langston Hughes*. New York: Vintage Books, 1990.

This is a collection of poetry written by Langston Hughes. This collection includes all of his famous poems, plus many that the normal reader may not have encountered before. The poems are grouped together into topics.

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. New York: HarperCollins, 1937.

This is a classic book by an African American writer. The book tells the story of fair-skinned Janie Crawford who is independent, but spends her life looking for love. The book follows her journey through three marriages, poverty, wealth, and many trials. The book uses vernacular and shows a more authentic picture of life for African Americans in the South during this time period.

Myers, Walter Dean. *Harlem*. New York: Scholastic Press, 1997.

This is a book of poetry that describes the neighborhood of Harlem. The book is one long poem. There are illustrations, by Christopher Myers, to accompany the text. This is one of the books that will be read aloud during one of the lessons.

Pomplun, Tom, ed. and Tooks, Lance, ed. *African American Classics*. Mount Horeb, WI: Eureka Productions, 2011.

This is a graphic novel that has many works by the greatest African American writers. The book includes stories from Langston Hughes, W.E.B. Du Bois, Alice Dunbar Nelson, Zora Neale Hurston, Jean Toomer, and Effie Lee Newsome. Students will enjoy reading these stories in the graphic novel format. At the end of the book the editors included information on all of the authors.

Sanders, Jeff and Nancy I. Sanders. *Readers Theatre for African American History*. Westport, CT: Teacher Ideas Press, 2008.

This book includes plays that students can perform in class on the main aspects of African American history. The book includes a play for the Great Migration called "Moving North to a Better Life." There are also other plays that could be tied into this unit of study. Students enjoy performing skits and plays in class, so this book can be a great resource to engage students.

Wilkerson, Isabel. *The Warmth of Other Suns*. New York: Vintage Books, 2010.

This nonfiction book tells the story of the Great Migration through the lives of three individuals. The book is extremely engaging, but is meant for an adult audience. However, parts could be pulled out for younger students. The three stories show the three different, yet average experiences of someone during the Great Migration.

Reading List for Students

Bond, Victoria and T.R. Simon. *Zora and Me*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press, 2010.

This is a fiction story of the childhood of author Zora Neale Hurston. The story is told from the point of view of Carrie, Zora's friend. The book explores Zora's love of storytelling and the problems Zora and her friends encounter when a dead body is found. At the end of the book the author included information about Zora Neale Hurston, timeline of her life, and a list of other books to read.

Greenfield, Eloise. *The Great Migration: Journey to the North*. New York: HarperCollins, 2011.

This is a Coretta Scott King Honor book. The book tells the many different viewpoints of the Great Migration through poetry. The author's families were involved in the Great Migration. At the beginning is a brief description of the Great Migration. The book splits the narrative into five sections; The News, Goodbyes, The Trip, Question, and Up North.

Hughes, Langston. *The Block*. New York: Viking, 1995.

This book comprises collage work by Romare Bearden, an African American artist, and a mixture of poems by Langston Hughes. The poems describe the neighborhood of Harlem, which is a predominately African American neighborhood in New York City.

Myers, Walter Dean. *Harlem*. New York: Scholastic Press, 1997.

This is a book of poetry that describes the neighborhood of Harlem, which is a predominately African American neighborhood in New York City. The book is one long poem. There are great illustrations by Christopher Myers, Walter Dean Myers' son.

Myers, Walter Dean. *The Glory Field*. New York: Scholastic Press, 1994.

This book tells the story of one African American family. It follows the family from when the first member is put into slavery all the way until the present. It follows their struggles and teaches students about the problems of each time period.

Pomplun, Tom, ed. and Tooks, Lance, ed. *African American Classics*. Mount Horeb, WI: Eureka Productions, 2011.

This is a graphic novel that has many works by the greatest African American writers. The book includes stories from Langston Hughes, W.E.B. Du Bois, Alice Dunbar Nelson, Zora Neale Hurston, Jean Toomer, and Effie Lee Newsome. Students will love the pictures and reading these stories as a graphic novel, which is a popular format today. At the end of the book the editors included information on all of the authors.

Ringgold, Faith. *Tar Beach*. New York: Random House, 1991.

This book is told from the point of view of Cassie Louise Lightfoot. She lives in Harlem in 1939. In the book she is on her rooftop, the Tar Beach of the title, and she is daydreaming of flying over Harlem. The book helps tell some of the story of Harlem.

List of Materials for Classroom Use

- Document Camera will be used when doing the read alouds to ensure all students can see the text.
- A way to project computer images, preferably an Interactive Whiteboard. A Promethean Board will be used throughout the unit, including during the lectures, read alouds, and brainstorming session.
- Copy of *Harlem* by Langston Hughes for read aloud.
- Copy of *The Block* by Walter Dean Myers for read aloud.
- Copy of *The Great Migration: Journey to the North* by Eloise Greenfield for read aloud.
- An Interactive Whiteboard created file of a Cause and Effect Chart for read aloud. Example is provided below.

Cause and Effect Chart

Cause	Effect
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

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- Computers for students to use for station work and to create their final products for read aloud.
- Two class sets of Connection Stems because students will use the handout with two different read alouds. Handout is below.

CONNECTION STEMS

Name: _____ Date: _____

I have a connection...

to _____

because _____

I have a connection...

to _____

because _____

- Access to Microsoft Word and PowerPoint, Prezi, and Glogster. These programs will be used by students to create their final products.
- Access to this <http://prezi.com/2h2ztzazmr7/great-migration/> to show during the Great Migration lecture.
- Access to this <http://prezi.com/mgb8ajsyyhj8/harlem-and-the-harlem-renaissance/> to show during the Langston Hughes lecture.
- At least four copies of the Great Migration article to be used during the station activity: <http://www.history.com/topics/great-migration>
- At least four copies of the Harlem Renaissance article to be used during the station activity: <http://www.history.com/topics/harlem-renaissance>
- Harlem Renaissance video to be shown on individual computers for students to view during the station activity: <http://www.brainpop.com/socialstudies/ushistory/harlemrenaissance/>
- An assortment of books on the Great Migration to be used at one of the stations.
- An assortment of books on the Harlem Renaissance to be used at one of the stations.
- An assortment of biographies on Langston Hughes to be used during the station activity. These can be books or articles printed off from the Internet.
- Copies of Final Product Directions sheet for each student. Direction sheet is below.

How My Environment Effects Me Project

Directions: Students will create a project that describes their environment, explains how their environment affects them, and explains how the student plans to overcome these challenges.

Step 1: Look around you while you are at home and think about your environment. Take notes on what your environment is like.

Step 2: Now that you have down what your environment is like think about how it might affect you. Write down some ways. You can create a cause and effect chart like we did in class if you would like. Think about how it affects your personality, behavior, mood, etc.

Step 3: Now think about how you can overcome these challenges. What can you do to make sure you are successful?

Step 4: Decide on how you would like to share this information with the class. You can create a PowerPoint, a Prezi, a Glogster, a poem, a song, write a letter, or write a paper.

Step 5: In class we will work on your projects. You will have 3 class periods to finish your project.

Step 6: Anyone who would like to share their project with the class can share on the last day of the unit. Sharing is voluntary, so no one will have to share if they do not want to.

Grading

What does an A look like?

You fully explained what your environment is like, how it affects you, and what you will do to overcome the challenges of your environment. Your project looks good (layout is nice, if your project has pictures they fit with your topic). You have correct spelling and grammar.

What does a B look like?

You fully explained what your environment is like, how it affects you, and what you will do to overcome the challenges of your environment. Your project looks pretty good, but could use a little more work. You have 2-3 spelling/grammar mistakes.

What does a C look like?

You did not fully explained what your environment is like, how it affects you, and what you will do to overcome the challenges of your environment. Your project does not look very good and needs more work. You have 4-6 spelling/grammar mistakes.

What does a D look like?

You only included 1 of the 3 parts. Your project's does not look very good and needs a lot of work. There are no visuals and barely any information. You have more than 6 spelling/grammar mistakes.

What does an F look like?

You did not turn in a project.

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- ¹ “Great Migration,” The History Channel, accessed September 23, 2012, <http://www.history.com/topics/great-migration>.
- ² “Harlem: The Black Mecca,” The Biography Channel, accessed September 23, 2012, <http://www.biography.com/tv/classroom/harlem-renaissance>.
- ³ “Harlem Renaissance,” The Biography Channel, accessed September 23, 2012, <http://www.biography.com/tv/classroom/harlem-renaissance>.
- ⁴ “Langston Hughes,” Academy of American Poets, accessed September 23, 2012, <http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/83>.
- ⁵ “Langston Hughes,” Poetry Foundation, accessed September 23, 2012, <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/langston-hughes>.
- ⁶ “Langston Hughes,” Academy of American Poets, accessed September 23, 2012, <http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/83>.
- ⁷ “Langston Hughes,” Poetry Foundation, accessed September 23, 2012, <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/langston-hughes>.
- ⁸ “Prezi,” accessed September 23, 2012, <http://prezi.com>.
- ⁹ “Connection Stems,” Read, Write, Think, accessed September 23, 2012, <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/printouts/connection-stems-30840.html>.
- ¹⁰ “Cause and Effect Chart.” Educational Oasis, accessed October 28, 2012, http://www.educationoasis.com/curriculum/GO/cause_effect.htm.
- ¹¹ Greenfield, Eloise. *The Great Migration: Journey to the North*. New York: HarperCollins, 2011.
- ¹² Hughes, Langston. *The Block*. New York: Viking, 1995.
- ¹³ “Connection Stems,” Read, Write, Think, accessed September 23, 2012, <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/printouts/connection-stems-30840.html>.
- ¹⁴ “Cause and Effect Chart.” Educational Oasis, accessed October 28, 2012, http://www.educationoasis.com/curriculum/GO/cause_effect.htm.
- ¹⁵ Glogster, accessed October 28, 2012, <http://www.glogster.com/>.