



## **Power in the Pen: New Negro Movement Writers as Post War Prognosticators**

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:  
AP English Language and Composition/ 11<sup>th</sup> grade

**Keywords:** New Negro movement writers, economic boom, Great Migration, rhetorical triangle, audience, rhetoric, exigence, World War I, African-Americans

**Teaching Standards:** See [Appendix 1](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit

### **Synopsis:**

This curriculum unit focused on reading post World War I writings from New Negro movement writers through the lens of Aristotle's Rhetorical Triangle. In this unit, I explore how New Negro Movement writers like Hubert Harrison, Kelly Miller, W.E.B. DuBois, and A. Phillip Randolph felt about African American participation in the war. The premise for this approach is largely from students operating with a limited awareness of audience in their writing. In a rhetoric course, audience is the backdrop of all claims, evidence and commentary. For high school teens, understanding how audience shapes the tone and purpose of writing can be a challenge to explain. Using historical events is a great way to help students realize the value of audience because historical events are directly linked to contemporary issues. For this course, *World War I and the Shaping of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, that could not have been more pronounced. War changes things. War magnifies societal ills. War creates opportunities. War creates conflict. War causes conflict. From the COVID-19 pandemic to the murder of George Floyd-- a worldwide health crisis to racial, civil, and social injustice, the underpinnings of these issues can be traced back to World War I! I want my students to analyze the chronicled rhetoric of prolific New Negro movement writers forecasting warnings about unchecked and unresolved racial tensions brewing in Post-World War I America and the impending dangers it presents to future generations.

I plan to teach this unit during the spring semester to 60 students in a hybrid AP English Language and Composition 11<sup>th</sup> grade course. While creating and writing this CU, I tested some of these activities on my Fall 2020 students, thus I include some reflections on those experiences.

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# Power in the Pen: New Negro Movement Writers as Post War Prognosticators

*Deborah E. Brown*

## Introduction

This curriculum unit will teach AP Language and Composition students about Aristotle's Rhetorical Triangle with lessons specially highlighting audience awareness. These lessons will resonate with students because they will see the haunting juxtaposition between the systemic racial oppression and inequities of post-World War I America to the sustained systemic racial oppression and inequities of contemporary America. Upon completion of this unit, students will rhetorically analyze an open letter from Kelly Miller, a New Negro Movement writer, about systemic racial oppression and inequalities in Post-World War I.

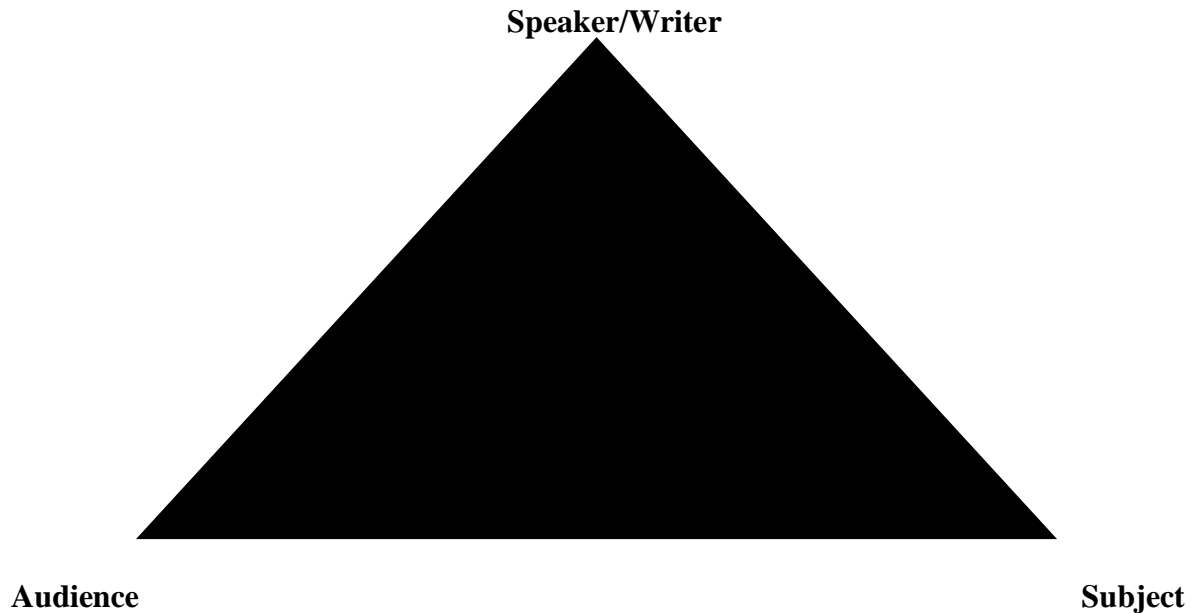
## Rationale

Everything we believe is good, think we need or place some value in requires an audience. An audience. Audience. The audience I am referring to is an audience mindset. In rhetoric, that is the central goal and aim of writing---to influence or change the mind of the audience using persuasive language. To move the heart of the audience through emotionally charged words, stories, and examples. To appeal to the logical sensibilities of the audience through efficient, effective, and appropriate evidence. To gain the audience's trust through establishing and affirming statements that are credible. Credible statements made by the writer impact the audience's will to believe the writer's claims, to value those assertions made, and to satisfy an unmet need of the audience. These credible statements are what also drive the intended message that moves the audience to action, aggravation or aspiration.

In rhetoric, the audience's beliefs, needs and values must align with the writer's claims and evidence in order to not only spark the goal of the speaker's purpose in the audience's mind, but also to ignite the rhetorical situation. The rhetorical situation: what exactly is a rhetorical situation? The rhetorical situation is the place where the speaker and the audience interact. Where the speaker and the audience share a common thought, a sameness of mind; it is the reason why the speaker and audience are in the same room—together. The rhetorical situation creates space for the commonplace claims of the speaker to appeal to the aspirations or irritations of the audience.

In rhetoric, the commonplace claim is what allows the interaction between speaker, audience, and message to form the interconnected points, better known as Aristotle's Rhetorical Triangle. Aristotle's Rhetorical Triangle is more than a geometric shape. It is a symbolic view of the way the speaker's argument "volleys" or interacts with the audience. Each point on the triangle operates as a boomerang between speaker, subject and audience. Are the claims and evidence the speaker makes compelling the audience to accept their view or repel the audience

from accepting assertions made? What did the speaker do with language to build credibility and get people on his side? Or how did the speaker use language to lose credibility and get people to defect or move towards the other side? The interconnected relationship between speaker, audience and message is in every form of communication. From bumper stickers to political post cards urging you to cast your ballot—people use language to persuade, inform and entertain their audience.



The audience determines the evidence the writer chooses—the evidence the writer chooses does not determine the audience. The spring of 2020 was a wake-up call for Americans. The death of George Floyd opened the eyes of many Americans to the deeply ingrained systemic racism and oppression in society. Yet, as this CU reveals, systemic racism, and public conversations about it—was nothing new in America. Over 100 years ago, intellectuals in the New Negro movement sparked conversations across America about the status and future of Black people in America.

In this CU, I will have students analyze speeches, letters and other primary source documents from the WWI era (1914-1923) to learn how New Negro movement leaders such as W.E.B. DuBois, Hubert Harrison, Kelly Miller, A. Phillip Randolph, William Trotter, and Ida B. Wells drew attention to the systemic racism and oppression which African Americans continued to endure after fighting in a war intended to “make the world safe for democracy.” This course *World War I and the Shaping of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* has crystallized some ugly truths about the reverberating effects of the war. World War I had been a short moment when it appeared to many blacks that they were getting a chance to demonstrate their loyalty and finally be treated as equals. Many truly believed that they were taking part in a pivotal moment of racial transformation in America when they joined the war effort—and analyzing their rhetoric during and after their hopes and dreams were dashed helps us to understand better the ongoing struggle against systemic racism in America.

Without CTI, I would never have been exposed to these prolific New Negro movement writers. It would have never crossed my mind to create a unit on analyzing the rhetoric of New Negro writers in during and after the Great War for AP English high school students. CTI's writing project afforded me opportunities to flesh out ideas that daily classroom practice does not. CTI can be thought of and it is no doubt "work" after work, but in the world we live in now, where information is becoming increasingly more complex, it requires teachers to not only know more but to grow more in their respective content areas. Writing about what is being taught forces teachers to reflect on the content, the material, and the instructional delivery. Writing about content teaches teachers about content.

### **School/Student Demographics**

Vance High School, a Title I school, serves approximately 2,088 students. Of those 2,088 students, 59.3% are African American, 33.5% are Hispanic, 2.5% are Caucasian, 2.3% are Asian, 2.1% are multi-racial, less than 2% are American Indian and less than 1% are Pacific Islander. Within this racial makeup, 47.4% are female and 52.6% are male. 11.3% of students identify with a learning disability while 1.1% of students certify as academically gifted and talented. 2.3% are registered as McKinney Vento, 13.7% are English learners, and 2.3% are students with 504 plans.

Vance High School's Advanced Placement course offerings include English Literature and Composition, English Language and Composition, Calculus AB, Spanish Language, U.S. History, Psychology, and Human Geography. This unit will be designed for my AP English Language and Composition class. This course primarily focuses on non-fiction writing and the techniques behind reading, writing, speaking, and listening to all forms of persuasion.

Our school and the English department consist of four levels of English. The AP English Language and Composition course is a one section, year-long course that meets on an A/B day schedule. The AP course seeks to promote equity in learning by granting *all students access* to challenging coursework. For this reason, the methods of instruction must be differentiated to meet diverse learning modes.

Vance High School has been partnering with the (EOS) Equal Opportunity Schools initiative to increase the number of students we have taking advanced courses. Currently, our school only has 273 students enrolled in AP courses. This CU will be taught in the spring semester to 60 of my students on an A/B day schedule. By the end of this year, we would like to identify ways we can prepare students for AP courses and the type of support they will need. As a CTI fellow, I know that creating a curriculum unit using content material taught by a UNC Charlotte college professor for school-based instruction directly grants students access to challenging coursework. As their classroom teacher, it grants me access to high quality instruction from well-trained professors while considering my content in a more comprehensive and robust way.

### **Unit Goals**

A central goal I have for my AP Language and Composition students is to reach emerging writers who comprise a large component of the class. Emerging writers often do not think about their audience when writing, they think about what they want to say, and that is only one point on Aristotle's Rhetorical Triangle. For emerging writers, that lack of interconnectedness with all points of the triangle in communicating a message becomes apparent in tone, in word choice, and in writing style. The tone is usually boastful, the word choice is limited, and the writing style is singularly focused and flat. For emerging writers that are interested in participating in advanced placement coursework that promotes equity, access and values diversity, it is critical that they are given opportunities to work with course material that will inform and elevate their current perspective while grounding them in historical fact. History sets a great context for helping students understand the power of words.

I will challenge the assumptions my students have about WWI and its contemporary relevance by having them analyze letters, articles, editorials, and speeches. Reading these primary source documents challenges the notion that World War I's history is relegated to a time when everything was in black and white. Through letters, articles, editorials and speeches, I hope to challenge and expand their views of what it means to be an "American." During this war, there was a group of male intellectuals who comprised the "New Negro movement" and who were bold enough to speak out against the war and black participation in it – *during* the wartime implementation of the Sedition and Espionage Acts – legislation that could have resulted in their arrest, imprisonment, financial fine or all three.<sup>1</sup> These men found a way to speak the truth by embedding their anti-war rhetoric within the political grandstand commentary of President Woodrow Wilson. The men in this New Negro movement were debating the role, place, and value of blacks within American society and whether it could be improved. Reading documents from this period gives high school students an opportunity to analyze war rhetoric against all three points of Aristotle's Rhetorical Triangle. It is amazing for high school students to have access to World War I war writings penned over 100 years ago, yet which still hold the same level of controversial truth now as they did then. *Refer to Appendix 1: Teaching Standards for details.*

## **Content Research**

What do we really know about each other? How are our opinions of one another shaped? Is it through the lens of a single story? The single story is a dangerous story because it leads us to view any group of people through a myopic lens.<sup>2</sup> This narrow viewpoint is what leads larger groups and races of people to make assumptions, to stereotype, to cast invalid assertions, to belittle, to mimic, to devalue, debase and dehumanize another person or group of people. It is the romanticized lie that has the power to encapsulate, interrogate and infiltrate mindsets. Romanticized lies have the power to invade and infect open minds; therefore, knowledge of the audience in rhetoric helps students understand how claims and evidence work within a rhetorical situation—that is, within the assembly of speaker and audience.

It is easy to forget things. It is easy to forget or fail to see how a piece of history continually repeats itself even when times are “good,” when everything is “normal,” when people are being treated “fairly.” It is easy to be lulled back to a conscious sleep under the rhetorical guise of liberty and justice for all. It is easy to forget about World War I. I mean, it is World War I for crying out loud! It is a war that some people might consider to be “ancient history.” It was a war that was photographed in black and white! It is old. It does not matter anymore. Contemporary America has more pressing issues that need our attention than some supposed Great War that has already buried its dead.

This perspective is shared among many high school aged children. And this also feeds into the notion of the stereotypical single story! For many high school children, they do not realize why knowing about specific events in World War I matters let alone contemporary effects on African Americans. They are millennials—they grew up with computers, all they have to do is Google it! How will reading about the primary source commentaries of old, dead people matter today? It matters today because despite the time period of these writings, the exigence of the problems these post-World War I writings identified in the 20<sup>th</sup> century remain.

### Economic Boom and The Great Migration

The African American experience during World War I was a series of dreams deferred. Beginning with The Great Migration and the economic boom of the 1910s, African Americans were on a never-ending quest for equality.<sup>3</sup> In America during “1910, 90 percent of African Americans lived in the South, four-fifths of them in rural areas.”<sup>4</sup> This statistic reveals that while living among and in congested communities of color, African Americans dreamt of their own version of 19<sup>th</sup> Century America’s westward expansion—but rather from South to North, not East to West.

Imposing Jim Crow laws, southern disenfranchisement of African Americans in the South and labor shortages up North is what gave The Great Migration its momentum. There were jobs in the North! They were hiring Black people! Workers were in short supply due to the military draft and a reduction of European immigration.<sup>5</sup> This caused labor shortages in the North while the need for industrial goods was at an all-time high. This labor shortage was a boon to Black southerners as it provided them with opportunities to do more than work—it fostered the dream of productive citizenship: better pay, industry work in steel, shipbuilding, automotive, ammunitions and meatpacking factories—as well as a chance at inserting themselves in the fabric of social and political life in the North.<sup>6</sup> That far off promise of the Great Migration dream could finally be realized! From 1910-1940, the first Great Migration wave, approximately 1.5 million African Americans relocated from the southern states to cities in the north.<sup>7</sup> A creative outpouring of intellect and art, better known as The Harlem Renaissance, was birthed.

Economic inequality was another social issue that the Southern black hoped a regional move would improve; however, this too proved to be difficult. Ironically, issues surrounding racial equality presented themselves in the North as well. These issues are what sustained African Americans deferred dream of fair and equal treatment. Also, these issues ultimately



became the catalyst for the civil rights movement in America.<sup>8</sup> Despite patriotic zeal, loyalty and a sense of moral obligation to the symbolic tenets of the American flag (life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness), African Americans were not able to walk in their full Constitutional freedoms, hence deferring their dream once again—the Great War was not so great for African Americans.

### Volunteerism and Military Service

The symbolic tenets African Americans held firmly to was actualized once again in their zeal to volunteer for the draft once President Wilson announced that the United States was going to war against Germany in 1917.<sup>9</sup> Although treated and seen as unequal and inferior to white soldiers, African Americans have been an integral part of military conflict since the inception of the United States.”<sup>10</sup> This impressive display of loyalty, patriotism and idealism stirred up an unyielding will in them to fight for democracy, a reality this government was not yet ready to realize.

This fierce, unyielding will was crystallized in the 369<sup>th</sup> infantry regiment known as the Harlem Hellfighters. The Hellfighters were sent to fight in the French Army in 1918. These soldiers held combat positions and valiantly fought in two battles: The Second Battle of Marne and the Meuse-Argonne Offensive.<sup>11</sup> Private Henry Johnson single handedly fought off German snipers in a surprise raid.<sup>12</sup> For his heroism, he received the Croix de Guerre medal from the French military, in fact, 170 soldiers received honor.<sup>13</sup> However, upon their return to the United States, there was no government or military recognition of their bravery.<sup>14</sup> In the 371<sup>st</sup> infantry, Corporal Freddie Stowers heroically led troops through German territory, battled and was wounded in the Meuse Argonne Offensive. For his bravery, it was recommended he immediately receive the French Medal of Honor, but it was posthumously awarded in 1991.<sup>15</sup> Honoring the heroic contributions of these men would have proved the elitist ideologies of the American government wrong. The Jim Crow policies President Wilson wove into the fabric of federal government buildings shattered the burgeoning inclusive atmosphere and erected an exclusive one. It clearly defined who was and who was not going to be allowed to participate in the “New America” that was forming itself as a result of the war.<sup>16</sup>

### African American Nurses

The Jim Crow divide followed African American nurses in their service with the Army Nurse Corp. Black nurses were barred from serving overseas with the Army Nurse Corp and the American Red Cross at the start of the war. Limiting the capacity through upholding elitist segregated practices in the Army, black nurses were relegated to work on the US homefront with German prisoners of war or wounded African American soldiers.<sup>17</sup>



Even though the government held misgivings about incorporating African Americans as soldiers in the war, African Americans viewed the war as an opportunity to advance their place in American society. Black men enlisted more vigorously than white men. More than 20,000 enlisted in the military.<sup>18</sup> After the Selective Service was enacted, which was an initiative to increase the number of White men enlisting, over 700,000 African Americans registered for military service.<sup>19</sup> By participating in the war effort, they thought that the current US government would see how this duty to country aligned with safeguarding the democratic ideals of President Wilson. As a result, they argued that the government should realize its own short sightedness and seek to amend the invalid assertions made about African Americans.<sup>20</sup> However, the United States government did not consider African Americans to be part of “the world” that needed to be safe for democracy.

In rhetoric, emotionally-charged words enveloped romantic viewpoints about the war which revealed the writer’s message to the intended audience. The United States government was privy to this and realized it needed a specific agency to govern the manufacture of wartime rhetoric that appealed to the American citizens sense of duty to country.<sup>21</sup> So, the Committee for Public Information – or CIP – was formed.<sup>22</sup> CPI, the public relations juggernaut of the federal government, was uncertain about targeting African Americans in their war propaganda posters.<sup>23</sup> If the CPI projected a unifying message of 100% Americanism in their advertising, then that would send a message that the country is welcoming their participation in its democracy.<sup>24</sup>

Democratic Senator James K. Vardaman of Mississippi was vehemently against the war draft. To Vardaman, he thought that it was important to maintain the same oppressive social structure in southern military camps. He was convinced that it would do no good to have African American soldiers believe they could ascribe the same demands for democracy as white soldiers. That would have disrupted the oppressive Jim Crow social order of the South and challenged the unequal way that Americans were practicing so-called “democracy” in their own country at home.<sup>25</sup>

Considering this through the lens of Aristotle’s Rhetorical Triangle, the speaker is the government, the enlisted African American men are the audience and the message is President Wilson’s charge to “safeguard democracy” by opening the draft for civilians to enlist in the war against Germany. However, all three points of this rhetorical triangle were not interconnected. The unwillingness of the government to eliminate Jim Crow and other discriminative barriers shows that although African Americans were a part of the audience and heard the message of the president *and* enlisted in the nation’s military forces—they were never a part of the rhetorical situation. The government did not want African Americans to respond to the Committee on Public Information’s public outcry for 100% Americanism.<sup>26</sup> This is the very result of the deeply embedded systemic racism in the United States. This reveals that rhetorical situations are driven by the speaker’s language and not through segregated social structures.

Assumptive audience knowledge determines the claims a writer makes, and the evidence that writer uses as support. This perspective is what allows the writer to interact with the audience and shape the subject of the message.<sup>27</sup> For this unit, students will examine several

primary source documents for claims and evidence writers make about the role of African Americans in post war America. Examining claims writers made during the war allows the students to see the kinds of evidence the writer selected in making rhetorical assumptions about the needs, values, and beliefs of his intended audience. The kinds of evidence writers use allow students to see the position the writer has taken within the rhetorical situation; this gives the writer a purpose for pointing out issues which are intended for the audience to act.

Kelly Miller, a mathematician, and a New Negro movement writer penned several primary source documents that chronicle his advocacy for the humanity of black people in post-World War I America. In Kelly Miller's chapter "The Negro and the War" from his book *Our War for Human Rights...*<sup>28</sup> includes a portion of a speech given at Camp Upton by Major General Bell, a white army officer addressing "The Buffaloes" the 367<sup>th</sup> regiment. In his address, he debunks assumptive knowledge of blacks. He states that the murmurings of the slow footed apathetic Negro are just not true. Miller argued that not only is the Negro capable of being trained for combat as any soldier fit and ready for battle, but the Negro has also shown himself superior to other soldiers.<sup>29</sup> Colonel Moss, a white military authority, further echoes the sentiment of Major General Bell by citing additional examples in his personal commentary about blacks as a soldier. Having students analyze the rhetoric of black and white men, of soldiers and civilians, of veterans and war protestors illustrates how in rhetoric, the speaker is influenced not only by his audience—but also by his own systemic racism.

Miller was not a man who minced his words. In his letter writing, he was just as assertive to his audience. What was intriguing about this open letter penned to President Wilson titled "The Disgrace of Democracy" in 1917 was his unabashed ease in chronicling the careful observations he made of President Wilson publicly. This same careful observation of a writer's audience is keenly supported by the AP standards—writing introductions and conclusions appropriate to the purpose and context of the rhetorical situation.<sup>30</sup>

Typically, in a speech or letter the writer will use language to point out to the audience what they are missing in hopes that they will acquiesce and take some form of action. In this instance, Miller is using language to point out to President Wilson what Miller and other African Americans are missing. The components of this rhetorical situation have shifted. The president who, using Aristotle's Rhetorical Triangle, is notably seen as the speaker. As such, he addresses his audience which would be the American public. This is the typical top down structure of his executive position. However, in Miller's letter to President Wilson, he has taken the role of speaker and the American public is the audience. Miller is wise, courageous, and frank enough to eloquently express disconcerting events breaking out across America in 1917. The President, whose central job is to care about the American citizens is being told by an African American citizen that he is not doing his job.

Hubert Harrison is another New Negro movement writer who was equally as impassioned as Miller. He lends his voice to the postwar conversation by way of an article written in *The Voice*, the first newspaper of the New Negro movement. In this article, he articulates a resounding echo of Miller's premise, 15 months after the war has ended--the United States government does not wish to involve, aid or address blacks in any political governing decisions, let alone the 1919

Peace conference in France. The exigence of his 1918 article “The Negro at the Peace Conference” in *The Voice* is his attempt to speak to his New Negro movement brethren—Marcus Garvey, W.E.B Du Bois, and Monroe Trotter. He wanted to point out to them a stark reality they lived in and not allow romantic American ideals to overwhelm them into believing that the American government had made space for the Negro to sit at the same table at a Peace Conference in Paris, France with political leaders across the world to deal with the fierce systemic and racial oppression ravaging the country.<sup>31</sup>

Using this article invites students to explore a nuanced key question within the AP writing standard for rhetorical situation—what diction and syntax choices should you make in order to influence not only how your audience perceives you but also the degree to which they may accept your argument? It is evident, in this article, that Harrison not only knew his audience, but he was unafraid of telling them the truth. In his article, “The Negro at the Peace Conference” Harrison laid bare the intentions of the United States at the Peace Conference. Harrison argued that there was going to be no discussion of domestic terrorism against black people because the world does not see that as a worldwide issue.<sup>32</sup> This is a similar sentiment found in Kelly Miller’s open letter to President Wilson. Miller argued that neither President Wilson nor President Mc Kinley saw it necessary to intervene in the gross murders of black people across the country. It was more prudent on their part to turn a blind eye, deaf ear, and indifferent stance towards these evil atrocities plaguing the country 15 months prior to the end of the Great War. These primary source readings create great fodder for analysis and open, honest discussion.

W.E.B. DuBois also includes his commentary about Negro voice and presence in post war America with his article printed in *The Crisis* the newspaper of the NAACP that he founded. In his 1919 article “Returning Soldiers,” DuBois’ rhetoric matches Harrison’s article in tone and sentiment. He outlines provokingly perpetual issues—lynching, disenfranchisement, overt and outright disrespect. This article invites students to keenly explore DuBois’ word choice. The abstract of the article tells readers that his perspective shifts to a radical socialist towards the end of the war. Within the article, it is evident that DuBois has some biased perspectives, but he has to be careful to craft those ideas in a way that demonstrates audience awareness. In keeping with the AP writing standard for intended audience, a key question that invites students to think about how to recognize and retool bias perspectives in analyzing an argument is—how do you recognize your own biases and then make word choices in your argument in consideration of those biases?<sup>33</sup> From the article, it is evident that he worked with his pronouns. He made it a collective cry— “we are returning from war!” “It steals from us.” “We return fighting.”<sup>34</sup> The act of lynching Negroes with such ferocious velocity was in no small part to instill an overwhelming sense of dread and fear among them. It is an inhumane way to keep Negroes in their place. He inserts himself in the problem, but he also inserts himself in the solution. In this

way, DuBois is able to control his narrative and also see how to help his audience envision a solution—collectively.

A. Phillip Randolph, an American labor unionist and organizer of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, chided New Negro movement writers and leaders for not upending the state of affairs for black people in the United States in any way that yielded significant lasting change. His magazine article “New Leadership for the Negro” printed in *The Messenger*, uses some names students will be familiar with from primary source documents of Miller and Du Bois. These names were of men who were becoming deeply associated with speaking out about racial violence. Knowing that these men are mentioned in the article piques the curiosity of students. They are able to make associative links and inferences to the arguments they read and weigh their findings against the ideas Randolph presents.<sup>35</sup> It also makes students want to read additional writings by these New Negro movement men to further their understanding of each man’s position.

In an editorial “*The Crisis of The Crisis*” printed in Randolph’s magazine, *The Messenger*, Randolph continues his critical assertions against Du Bois as editor of *The Crisis*. Randolph’s editorial bridges his knowledge of rhetorical analysis writing while making his argument against Du Bois’ as a leader, a writer and a political thinker. In a rhetoric class, Randolph’s editorial and article is argumentative gold! Randolph’s audacious writing helps students see that in politics, just as in life everyone does not agree. These men were grouped in the same intellectual brotherhood—New Negro movement writers, yet their ideas about the direction black leaders were taking in the articles they wrote held significantly contrary views. Students can unravel the exigence of Randolph’s claims for the evidence he weaved into the argument’s overall tone and style.

It is important to select texts which offer conflicting or contradictory viewpoints. This supports the reality of the times then, as well as the realities of our current times—everyone does not and will not always agree. In this way, students will be able to see that the goal in rhetoric is not agreement, its goal is to influence or convince an audience to take some form of action.

In this CU, I include reflections on my “dress rehearsal” of some of these activities. While I was creating this unit in Fall 2020, I tested out some of my activities on my students and reflected on them as I wrote the curriculum unit. (I write this to clarify that this is not a recycled CU.). Teaching tools I used were primarily Google document features: tables to create color-coded legends for annotation and graphic organizers. I also used Canvas discussions to create the writing prompts for student warm up and collaborative writing engagement. There are features

within Canvas discussions that can be checked to modify the discussion board features. As a newbie to this LMS, I was test driving most days on how to get the program to work so students could “cyber” speak to each other. What I ended up doing was creating a general space where everyone could post and reply by enabling the feature where it fit best.

## **Teaching Strategies**

### Rhetorical Terms

parenthesis, anaphora, parallelism, conduplicatio, distinctio, exigence, anadiplosis, hypophora

Knowing rhetorical terms is a prerequisite to reading the articles, letters, and essays for its rhetoric. So, I have my students complete Frayer Model graphic organizers. Introducing students to advanced vocabulary using Frayer Model graphic organizers grants them access to rhetorical language, style and sentence structure they will need to comprehend the claims, concepts and key ideas of these writers.

One of the ways I can teach components of rhetorical analysis writing to emerging writers in this virtual setting through digital graphic organizers. Digital graphic organizers act as a scaffold to support student learning. If an emerging writer thinks he or she only has to fill out information the size of a square from short prompts for intended audience, then the work seems manageable while developing or proficient writers are able to adjust that same square to fit their writing length.

Pandemic teaching has shown me how to boil down multi-layered concepts into essential components. In a physical classroom, I would not have approached rhetorical analysis lessons this way. However, in some ways, I do see a silver lining in anchoring students in the key questions on a Google document or a Canvas discussion board post instead of having students take notes from direct instruction. With a digital graphic organizer and short prompts, students are able to showcase their work to their peers and/or to me as an instructional tool or an exemplar that can be shared with the class. Using the highlight tool helps students focus on how to think through a response. Students can enter into the teacher’s virtual writing space—in this way, reading and writing analysis has become more focused and intentional. So, I suppose there are some positives that come out of “computer screen” teaching time.

## **Lessons**

Lesson 1: Intended Audience

AP Skill 1A Reading: Identify and describe components of the rhetorical situation: the exigence, audience, writer, purpose, context, and message.

AP Key Question: Who or what is the writer, audience, message, purpose, and context that comprise this rhetorical situation?

AP Skill and Key Question connection: The goal in this exercise is to recognize the rhetorical moves the writer has made. For this activity, students will use the highlighting tool to identify where the excerpted speech, letter, article, or essay of any New Negro writer shows the components of the rhetorical situation. The key question says “who or what is the…” which implies that in the speech, letter, article or essay, the writer is revealing through the rhetorical situation who or what is the central premise. Highlighting the sentences for writer, audience, message, purpose, and context helps the student determine who is the intended audience.

A Warm Up Activity: In this Canvas discussion board warm up, students explore their intended audience by explaining what rhetoric is, why they should want to contribute their voice and viewpoint to conversations in the world, and how knowing the function of the rhetorical situation helps them do that.

Warm Up: What is rhetoric? Why is it important that you be able to understand and participate in important conversations around the world? And how does knowing the rhetorical situation help you do that? Post a response and reply to two other posts.

### *Rhetorical Reading*

Here is the activity: Using an excerpt of the open letter by Kelly Miller to President Woodrow Wilson, and the key question “Who or what is the writer, audience, message, purpose, and context that comprise this rhetorical situation?”<sup>36</sup> students will color code the excerpt for the rhetorical situation—exigence, audience, writer, purpose, context, and message. I did allow students to select colors they would like to use for the legend at the top of the page.

Here is what did not work: What I thought was going to be a simple exercise in color coding was a small nightmare in remote comprehension. In a virtual learning environment, there are a lot of assumptions made on either side of the screen which makes the teaching and learning dynamic unfamiliar territory at best. There were several shortcomings within this lesson. Some students were not familiar with the terms well enough to proceed with color coding for the rhetorical situation, some students were not able to effectively use the features on the Google toolbar, and other students could not get past the word “exigence.” The rhetorical terms scared some of them and delayed their full participation in the virtual class. They had more questions and excuses about reading and why they had to read material with weird terms. For emerging readers, I knew I would entertain some push back, but in a virtual setting where the students were still “learning” how to learn independently at home online, it remained a contentious issue for a few.



Here is what I would do differently: The activity, using color coding to highlight the rhetorical situation was a good exercise overall, but here is where I would have leveled up the annotations. I would have required students to color code for the rhetorical situation, and, since they were using a Google document, have them use the comment column to explain their reasoning for the components they chose to color code. That way, I would be able to assess how their thinking was leading them to see the intended audience and the central premise instead of only checking to see if their color-coded sentence for the rhetorical situation components was correct.

In addition, I would have selected the colors for students to use instead of having them select their own colors. That too became a problem. At first, I figured that would add a bit of “flair” to the activity by allowing them to self-select the colors. It did add flair. A flair of confusion for me. With over 40 students each deciding on the color they chose for labeling the parts of the rhetorical situation in the open letter, it too became an overwhelming fright for me assessing the work. So, use a generic color code then have students include in their color code a comment bubble that explains their reasoning for the sentence that represents the intended audience as well as the rhetorical situation. For review also, the comment bubbles are a great way to engage in a robust discussion with students about how a writer’s choice impacts the rhetorical situation. Which allows students to see the open letter through the lens of skill category one of the AP English Language and Composition reading standard, “explain how writers’ choices reflect the components of the rhetorical situation.”<sup>37</sup>

## Lesson 2: Thesis Statement

AP Skill 1B Reading: Explain how an argument demonstrates an understanding of an audience’s beliefs, values, or needs.

A Key Question: How does the (photographer) anticipate and address the audience’s values, beliefs, needs and background, particularly as they relate to the subject of the argument?

AP Skill and Key Question Connection: The goal in this exercise is to help students see that images are arguments just as much as words. Also, thesis statements can be crafted from images as well. Allowing students to select their image or video clip gives them voice and choice in the rhetorical triangle. They as the audience determine what need, belief, or value the photographer wanted them to see in the visual.

A Warmup Activity: In this warmup, students are using primary source material to analyze the argument the photographer captured.

Warm Up: Using silent video clips or still images of Negro activity in World War I<sup>38</sup> from the National Archives website, select and upload to the discussion board a video clip (indicate start



and stop time) or still image that reveals how the photographer connected to a need, value, or belief of the viewing audience. Respond to the post of one peer evaluating the post for audience effectiveness.

Here is the activity: In this Canvas discussion board post, students are allowed voice and choice in selecting the World War I image they feel addresses them as an audience member. Without much context from the still and silent images to understand the TOP (time, occasion and place), and supported by the key question “What perspectives on the subject might the audience have due to their shared and/or individual beliefs, values, needs and backgrounds, “students are doing what good writers have to do in order to connect with the needs, values and beliefs of their audience, they are making assumptions.<sup>39</sup> What this activity also does is it allows students to respond to a peers post with words like “reveals” “implies” relates” to describe the way the image met a need, belief or value for them as part of the audience. Self-selecting images take students on a brief jaunt through a time period that they can only piece together from pictures that someone else took. This forces them to consider the image as more of an argument than a black and white picture. Questions like “Why”? “What could he have meant by...” “Where are the...” “Who are the...” pushes inquiry and requires critical reflection.

Here is why I think it works: These critical thinking skills support what close readers do, and it also yields similar results. It gets students thinking about implicit and explicit implications of an image. Which is where the shift in traditional thesis statement writing changes. For more complex texts, the thesis statement is not a one liner. It is embedded in the text and it can be implicit or explicit.<sup>40</sup> There is no guarantee that a student will be able to highlight the single sentence that reveals the thesis statement in rhetorical writing. However, the critical thinking and reading strategy that was applied in the warmup can also be applied to excerpted texts for implicit and explicit sentences.

Here is the virtual learning benefit: In a remote setting, allowing students to participate in learning critical thinking skills by using silent video and still images for inquiry is a refreshing change in digital instruction. It drives them to read a picture or a video clip, and to speculate in order to uncover the mystery embedded in the primary source. It brings back to mind Aristotle’s Rhetorical Triangle and gets them to work in the angles each side represents to see the purpose of the argument the picture generates. As a result, the rhetorical consideration they give to the image creates its own implicit or explicit argument which ultimately is what drives thesis statement writing in a rhetorical situation.

Rhetorical Reading

For the close reading activity, students will fill out a graphic organizer that has them analyze what they see and what they can infer in the image or video clip they selected. Students will create a short list of two or three things they saw in the image (explicit) or can infer from the image (implicit). After students have created this short list, they will write a statement that tells what the audience of this image or video clip needs, believes or values. For complex text, the implicit and explicit sentences are the marker for locating the thesis statement. In complex text, the thesis statement is not the traditional “single sentence.” In complex text, the thesis statement is embedded in the needs, values, and beliefs of the audience. For it is out of those needs, values and beliefs, those commonplace ideas—where the speaker has figured out what the audience is missing. The implicit and explicit way the speaker uses sentences points the thesis statement out to the audience which gives the speaker a purpose for writing. This also allows students to see the image or video clip through the claims and evidence captured or recorded.<sup>41</sup>

### Lesson 3: Effective Evidence

AP Skill 3A: Identify and explain claims and evidence within an argument.

AP Key Question: What kind of evidence (e.g. facts, anecdotes, analogies, statistics, examples, details, illustrations, expert opinions, personal observations, personal experiences, testimony, or experiments) does the writer use to defend their claim?

AP Skill and Key Question connection: The goal in this activity is to identify the different kinds of evidence Kelly Miller’s uses in any part of his open letter to President Wilson by using the Google highlight tool, then defend the writer’s claim in a pop out comment bubble.

Warm Up: What are some ways writers weave evidence into their writing and how can this writing style impact your own?

Here is the activity: In this Canvas discussion board warm up, students explain two-or three-ways writer’s use evidence when they write. The second part of the question asks them to think about themselves as writers and how can they use professional writing techniques in their own writing. In this activity, students are allowed to reflect on their own writing style while considering the way writers write in general. AP Daily Video Skill 3A Video 3 was used as their writer’s springboard.<sup>42</sup>

Here is what I noticed: In reviewing student data from this discussion post, I saw the words “quotations, paraphrasing, summarizing” trend along with “supports my claim/argument.” Based on those responses, that told me students understood the purpose of evidence in writing as well as why they needed to have it in their own. Oddly enough, in some of the student responses, I did see them use the word “parenthesis” as a way to weave evidence into writing. For example,

Abdul's post reads, "Writers weave evidence into their text by adding in quotations or parenthesis. They put it in there to make their writing clear and more understandable for the reader as well. It can help me by backing up my claims or making my argument stronger" while Khaimah writes, "Some ways writers weave evidence into their writing is by adding quotations and parenthesis. Writer's use this to add context to what was previously stated to help the reader better understand the text. This allows the reader to analyze the text better therefore getting a deeper meaning of what the writer wrote." What I was impressed by was both students' confidence in applying recently learned rhetorical terms to a writing prompt. This lets me know that they not only understand what the word parenthesis means, but they understand its rhetorical function and how to apply it to further support their evidence—as commentary. I was also pleased to see they understood the purpose of evidence—to back up claims in order to make the argument stronger.

Here is what did not work: In a remote setting, it can be a challenge to get students to speak with one another. I posted the activity to the discussion board to hear what students had to say about evidence and how it works. Although the students did respond, and they did share their strategy for using evidence in their own writing—what I did not see was a variety of kinds of evidence. I tended to see the same types posted from different students. Now, this could be for two reasons: first, they could have been reading other posts to see how another student answered the question and paraphrased their own strategy or they generally default (with the exception of Abdul and Khaimah) to using quotations, paraphrasing and summarizing. The other reason could be that they just think about evidence in generic terms—evidence. As a result, I want to broaden the kinds of evidence they choose when they write.

### Rhetorical Reading

Using an excerpt of Kelly Miller's open letter to President Wilson, students will identify and describe the claims and evidence of an argument through reading to answer the key question: What kind of evidence (e.g. facts, anecdotes, analogies, statistics, examples, details, illustrations, expert opinions, personal observations, personal experiences, testimony, or experiments) does the writer use to defend their claim?<sup>43</sup>

### Activities

Here is the activity: Using the computer as my central platform for instruction, I plan to use the color coding features in Google. Students will have the excerpted portion of the open letter and a color-coded legend for each type of evidence listed in the question. They will use the highlight tool in Google to mark the text on the first day for facts, anecdotes, analogies, or statistics. On the second day, they mark the text for examples, details, illustrations, or expert opinions. On the

third day they mark the text for personal observations, personal experiences, testimony, or experiments. On the fourth day, students will use the third column which is labeled the “key question column” on the graphic organizer to review the entire excerpt and answer the second portion of the key question “How does the writer use testimony to defend his claim?”<sup>44</sup> Each kind of evidence is written as a question, allowing students to think of the open letter in light of each one. The final column on the graphic organizer is where the student writes his or her answer to the question.

In the first activity, students read an excerpt of Kelly Miller’s open letter to identify and explain claims and evidence within an argument. To continue with this close reading activity, students will read the color coded notes they created from the first lesson and using AVID focused notes strategy, process those notes by underlining, highlighting, circling, chunking, questioning, adding, and deleting in order to classify the main ideas and details.<sup>45</sup> From that process note activity, students will create an additional column and type the second key question at the top of the page “What is the writer’s thesis (i.e. the main overarching claim they seek to defend or prove by using reasoning supported by evidence)?”<sup>46</sup> Identifying this will help students focus on what the writer seeks to defend.

### **Resources for Classroom Use**

Muller, Gilbert H and Melissa E. Whiting. *Language of Composition: Art of Voice 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*: Ohio, McGraw Hill Education 2019.

This textbook works well with introducing students to the complexities of rhetoric. The e-book ancillary materials were essential components for teaching in this remote environment. Chapter 1 goes into great detail about the importance of Aristotle’s Rhetorical Triangle. I found this textbook to be quite helpful in grounding me with a clearer understanding of the rhetorical triangle, audience, and reading material in context to help me think through lesson activities.

*Rhetorical Devices: A Handbook and Activities for Student Writers*: Delaware, Prestwick House 2007

This book is great for teaching rhetorical terms for this unit. The definitions for each term are creatively illustrated at the top of each page. I find the examples as a good way to review terms with students for warm up or reteaching as they applied the rhetorical terms to their reading and writing activities in this unit.

Kelly Miller “Our War for Human Rights” accessed November 21, 2020,  
<http://blackfreedom.proquest.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/kelly3.pdf>

In my CU, I reference this chapter because the testimony provided by military leaders of the value black soldiers holds historical context and rhetorical value. In the classroom,

this reading allows for a deep analysis of how biased viewpoints allow stereotypes and racist ideologies to perpetuate themselves. Students can also examine this text for audience awareness.

Kelly Miller “The Disgrace of Democracy” Hathi Trust, accessed November 21, 2020, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=emu.010001066661&view=1up&seq=1>

This open letter makes it easy to see the horrifying juxtaposition of racial inequality and social injustices of 1917 that continue to plague this country today. Students can analyze this letter for claims and evidence, audience awareness, contemporary value, and the implied thesis statement by identifying and describing explicit and implicit sentences.

W.E.B. DuBois “Close Ranks” in African American Political Thought: 1890-1930.

This black male “recruitment” editorial was under fire as claims were made that he wrote it in exchange for a captaincy in the Army. Using this editorial along with “Returning Soldiers” is a nice juxtaposition. It helps students see the conflicting ideologies and emotional turmoil DuBois that plagued him at the time. Capturing the assumptive audience knowledge with these writings will spawn great rhetorical debates in the classroom.

A Phillip Randolph “The Crisis of the Crisis” in African American Political Thought: 1890-1930.

A rhetorically charged editorial, that sharply criticizes W.E.B. DuBois as a thinker and activist for black people. This editorial has some length, so it would take a good week to get through. Randolph unravels with rhetorical deftness claims, counterclaims, and arguments of DuBois with refined analytical skill. Tracing the line of reasoning in this document would embolden the student’s appreciation for historical text and inspire them to improve their writer’s craft.

Hubert Harrison A Hubert Harrison Reader “The Paris Peace Conference: The Negro at the Peace Conference” 209.

This article chides New Negro leaders WEB DuBois, William Monroe Trotter, and Marcus Garvey for believing that inroads were being made for African American inclusion in world affairs. Examining this article for claims and evidence will help students see the implicit and explicit sentences that ultimately carry Harrison’s thesis statement.

## Resources for Students

Heinrichs, Jay. *Thank You for Arguing: What Aristotle, Lincoln, and Homer Simpson Can Teach us About the Art of Persuasion*. New York, Three Rivers Press

Students enjoy the simplicity of Heinrichs discussion of argument. In this book the anecdotes, sidebar notes and examples are funny and easy to understand. Many students stated in their AVID focused note catchers that Heinrich made difficult terms easy to see why they matter.

## Resources for Teachers

Advanced Placement Course and Exam Description

This curriculum guide is comprehensive in scope and also in planning the curriculum unit. Writing the unit showed me how to view the curriculum guide in an organized way by focusing on reading or writing skill categories while selecting my standards for this unit.

“Coach Hall Writes” YouTube video channel, February 6, 2019.

<https://www.youtube.com/c/CoachHallWrites/featured>

Her instructional videos on using AP testing prompts to target test preparation strategies are high quality. For my unit, I would watch her videos to help remind myself that this unit ultimately should prepare them to take the exam in May, and as a result, the more I include annotating and close reading techniques with argumentative texts as Coach Hall shows on her channel, the more it strengthens their reading and writing skills.

## **Appendix 1: Implementing Teaching Standards**

AP Skill 1A Lesson 1 Reading: Identify and describe components of the rhetorical situation: the exigence, audience, writer, purpose, context, and message.

- The goal in this exercise is to recognize the rhetorical moves the writer has made. For this activity, students will use the highlighting tool to identify where the excerpted speech, letter, article, or essay of any New Negro writer shows the components of the rhetorical situation.

AP Skill 1B Lesson 2 Reading: Explain how an argument demonstrates an understanding of an audience's beliefs, values, or needs.

- The goal in this exercise is to help students see that images are arguments just as much as words. Also, thesis statements can be crafted from images as well.

AP Skill 3A Lesson 3 Reading: Identify and explain claims and evidence within an argument.

- The goal in this activity is to identify the different kinds of evidence used in an open letter written by Kelly Miller, a New Negro Movement writer.



## Appendix 2

### Lesson 1: Intended Audience      Graphic Organizer

message	Exigence	Audience	Writer	Purpose	context

Using the color-coded grid above, identify and describe the excerpt of a New Negro movement writer for components of the rhetorical situation.

Speech Excerpt Here:

### Appendix 3

#### Lesson 2: Thesis Statement

#### Graphic Organizer

Directions: For the image you chose, ask these two questions, then fill out the graphic organizer.

(explicit) What do you see?	(implicit) What can you infer?
I see...	I can infer...

Directions:

1. Read over your notes from the graphic organizer above.
2. Then, using the information from your notes, write a statement that tells what the audience needs, believes, or values.
  - It is evident that the audience needs \_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_.
  - Based on the image, it is clear that the audience believes \_\_\_ since \_\_\_\_.
  - The audience values \_\_\_ since \_\_\_\_.

## Appendix 4

### Lesson 3: Effective Evidence

### Graphic Organizer

Color Legend	Claims	Evidence	Key Questions
Facts			
Anecdotes			
Analogies			
Statistics			
Examples			
Details			
Illustrations			
Expert opinions			
Personal observations			
Personal experiences			
Testimony			
experiments			

## Appendix 5: Assessment

Edulastic, an online interactive formative assessment, will be used to check for student understanding before, during and after each lesson. Using the data from the student trackers embedded in the program supports my ability to watch their growth in real time as I provide targeted support for emerging, developing, and proficient writers.

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<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey B. Perry, *A Hubert Harrison Reader* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 201-202

<sup>2</sup> Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "Danger of a Single Story," filmed 2009 at TED Global 18:34, [https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_ngozi\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en)

<sup>3</sup> "World War I and The Great Migration, History, Art and Archives: United States House of Representatives, accessed Nov 18, 2020, <https://history.house.gov/Exhibitions-and-Publications/BAIC/Historical-Essays/Temporary-Farewell/World-War-I-And-Great-Migration/>"

<sup>4</sup> "World War I and The Great Migration."

<sup>5</sup> "World War I and The Great Migration."

<sup>6</sup> "World War I and The Great Migration."

<sup>7</sup> "The Great Migration," HISTORY.com editors, January 16, 2020, [https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/great-migration#section\\_4](https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/great-migration#section_4)

<sup>8</sup> "The Great Migration HISTORY.com editors"

<sup>9</sup> Jamie L. Bryan "Fighting for Respect: African American Soldiers in WWI" The National Museum of the Army, accessed November 18, 2020, <https://armyhistory.org/fighting-for-respect-african-american-soldiers-in-wwi/>

<sup>10</sup> "African American Heritage: World War I," National Archives, accessed November 21, 2020, <https://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/wwi>

<sup>11</sup> "African American Heritage: World War I."

<sup>12</sup> PBS History Detectives: Special Investigations, "Our Colored Heroes" accessed November 21, 2020, <https://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/investigation/our-colored-heroes/>

<sup>13</sup> "African American Heritage: World War I."

<sup>14</sup> PBS History Detectives: Special Investigations"

<sup>15</sup> "African American Heritage: World War I."

<sup>16</sup> Lehr, Dick, "The Racist Legacy of Woodrow Wilson," *The Atlantic*, November 27, 2015.

<sup>17</sup> Chadhury, Yasmin, "Honoring African American women who served in the Army Nurse Corps in World War I" accessed November 20, 2020, <https://www.worldwar1centennial.org/index.php/communicate/press-media/wwi-centennial-news/4046-honoring-african-american-women-who-served-in-the-army-nurse-corps-in-wwi.html>

<sup>18</sup> "World War I and The Great Migration"

<sup>19</sup> "World War I and The Great Migration"

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