

# **American Politics through Literary Exposures: Film, Essays, & Speeches**

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## **Overview**

This unit is developed to enhance and support the teaching of films, essays, and political speeches concerning politics in an English Language Arts (ELA) classroom. The literary texts have been chosen to give students perspective on how the American political process has been viewed in the eyes of African-Americans is the focus of literary text choices. By studying these works soon after one of the most monumental and highly publicized presidential elections in American history, students will become politically literate in understanding American political trends, facts, and foundations, taking apart the myths and fictitious information. Through an analysis of several historical documents beginning with the United States Constitution, students will compare and contrast writings of famous American authors who contributed to the nation's political culture, and they will consider how those writings have impacted the African-American community in this country. Students will be shown several film clips, as well as be assigned to listen to few audio recordings of speeches, to augment and support the written word and give a more tangible connection to political eras both past and present.

Since American politics as focused in literature is so broad a topic, I have chosen to focus the unit's central theme on chronicling a framework of the Africans in America and their perspectives on American politics. Students will be taught how the African became a viable force in the politics of the country from slavery through to the Civil Rights era

until today. The election of 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, Barack Hussein Obama, is viewed by some as a racial break in the old way of thinking about Black people in America. Students will discover how the country has come to this point in its history. Students will study only the literary references that are positioned as key elements in political philosophy and thought for particular important time periods. Students will delve into the framing of American politics by experiencing a spattering of the savvy writings of the founding fathers of the country. More specifically, students will explore why Philadelphia was the founding central ground for the establishment of politics in this country. Students will discuss the foundational political efforts that continue to carry the country as we know it today. In setting a tone and foundation for study, students will have to read writing about race as it was accepted in the early days of the political establishment in America. In this unit students will use technology to design and recreate particular settings in American politics in the form of what filmmakers and audio technologists do in their professions. Students will have to understand voice, tone, and the political party allegiances that were formed through literate activities that benefited society, using literature and film. Students will also be taught to understand methods and techniques of persuasion, speechmaking, and how political tones are specifically directed to particular audiences.

This unit can be used in Advanced Placement or Honors English Language Arts high school classroom for grades 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> and can also be adapted for students at every other educational level. Social Studies teacher can benefit from sharing this unit with their students, using any or all parts in Advanced Placement American History, and American History. This unit will also support and supplement African-American History content at the high school level.

### **Rationale**

By participating in the seminar, *American Political Culture*, I gained a better understanding to pass on American historical and political foundational information as it relates to literary works. In consequence, this unit is created to provide a supplementary resource for teachers of both African-American History and African-American Literature. African-American classes are presently mandatory course offerings in the Philadelphia School District. These teachers will find useful many of the resources and the research in this unit. In using this unit, students should be able to compare, contrast, and critically analyze the influences in American Political History from religious traditions, immigrant ideals, popular culture, and racial attitudes. Students will learn and benefit from the implementation of strategies that will show them how literature in various forms has played an important role in the interweaving of American political thought – policy and process.

More specifically in support of approaching this unit, the request for teachers to instruct beyond their specific subject-content area will offer students a broader

intellectual range toward making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in state standardized assessments that measure students' subject-specific competencies within No Child Left Behind (NCLB) guidelines. In acquiring historical political knowledge through the use of political literary works, students will be trained to integrate their knowledge of writing within the elaboration of political principles while observing, analyzing, and reading in the English Language Arts content area. Using varied literary elements and themes, students will be guided through lessons providing big ideas that can integrate with significant political ideology and literary concepts.

## **Objectives**

This curriculum unit is specifically designed for an English Language Arts high school Honors, gifted or advanced classroom setting. It utilizes Pennsylvania State Standards of the 11<sup>th</sup> grade strand from Reading, Writing, and Speaking; and standards from 11<sup>th</sup> grade History. We will also use a variety of standards from Arts and Humanities. As a result, students will be competent in encountering and including historical knowledge and inquiry in politics into the English Language Arts subject areas. Students will be encouraged to become interested in the study of communications via American politics and race.

In choosing particular readings, I want to allow students the opportunity to expand their knowledge base for comparison literary works that are viewed by political scientists as some of the most important writings that frame political trends and attitudes in American History. For example, I will have students read, recite, and analyze *Sentiments of an American Woman (1780)*, probably written by Philadelphian Esther Reed. Philadelphia was at the core of all that was happening in the States. We will also study the lives of the mercenary slaves for purposes of voice and biographical inquiry - who was Sojourner Truth; why was her voice heard as the ambassador for Negroes of the period? Students will be asked to read in the writings comparisons between the roles of men and women and comparisons between these writings and the works of Shakespeare, which were widely read in early America: equality in spirit of participation; "...frailty of a woman..." from Shakespeare – and the mention of "digging trenches w/ feeble hands." These canonical readings will be compared to that of American writers and speakers of race and gender equality, such as Thomas Jefferson and Sojourner Truth.

Students will analyze in the literature comparisons between the roles of White and Black people, considering whether there are obvious, subtle, or blatant inclusion or exclusion of the certain groups in the society. In Ronald Reagan's address for the centennial celebration of the Statute of Liberty (*1986*), for example, students will consider who Reagan treats as his audience and the adequacy of that treatment. Furthermore, students will be encouraged to use video and audio technology to convey their comprehension on word usages and language as it is heard from the printed page or spoken from a technological media format.

Audio and video viewing can happen with literary works written after the launching of audio and video technology into American society and American homes at-large. Research for this unit showed that a number of vintage American political writings and speeches have been recreated in film. Students will be exposed to these clips to supplement lessons. Other readings will help students to distinguish historical political figures and their philosophies, particularly in how they impacted African-American communities, through the use of literary elements and the power the language bears in American political culture. The concept of voice, as is noted in the analysis of tone in the literature, will be a major aspect of my students' learning.

Students will delve into what articles of American political foundations still hold today, where absolutely no changes have been made, no alterations to fit today's society in regard to race and liberty, and also what changes have occurred. Students will be asked to consider the founding and sustaining documents that drive today's society in all aspects of American life. Students will be encouraged to fine-tune their thinking about the "hood" in regards to the right to bear arms and its effect on their communities. Another strategy used will be bibliography fact-finding, giving voice to the personalities of the men (founding fathers), their surnames, and how these names have become longstanding and well-established surnames in American Black families.

Students will proceed through specific complete or partial literary political writings and speeches for understanding with a basis in morality in regard to concepts and principles; controversial topics; radical doctrines; racial tensions and more. In thinking about the use of language and how it allows people in or either keeps people out, students will dabble in word and phrase references as a connection to particular groups of people, more specifically Black people. We will also include some of the ramifications of immigration factors in American Political thought and the political process as it closely relates to the population of students served by this unit, Caribbean Islander natives, African natives, and Latino groups.

### **American Political Base**

*"We the people, in order to form a more perfect union..."* opening words of the Preamble to the United States Constitution.

These words, written in Philadelphia at the dawn of creating a new equality, seeking to seal the deal for unity in a nation previously separated by class, religious practice and belief, human philosophy, political dogma, intellectual value, and more, have again come to the forefront of the minds of many. Then-presidential candidate Barack Obama spoke these words in Philadelphia's Constitution Center, to place emphasis on his campaign efforts and his wish to win the election of the Presidency without prejudice to his religious affiliations, his race, or his social ties. In this speech Obama provided an answer

to his minister's (Reverend Jeremiah Wright) publicized TV question-and-answer session with journalists. Students were again reciting the opening statement of the Constitution, which gave them a little glimpse of hope that they too were a part of the equation of the "We."

Because of Philadelphia students' interest in Obama's speech in their own back yard, so to speak, we will discuss and analyze this speech. We will critique the document in comparison to a sermon from the Reverend Wright; several short selections from Thomas Jefferson his Notes on the State of Virginia, particularly those parts that relates to race; and Fredrick Douglass' acclaimed "Fourth of July Oration," and we will correlate these works in a comparison/contrast to Obama's most recent speech. Students will be prompted to construct two-column notes to better summarize and paraphrase the speeches and documents for similarities and differences. Additionally, students will have to compose interview questions to the speakers to carry out a mock talk show, which will be videoed for future viewing.

Portions of the Articles of Confederation will be drawn upon for further inquiry and contrast. In this way, students will be able to grasp better the reasoning for the ideas that will be shown them in the Constitution. Since this unit is being developed for the ELA classroom, we will look at the patterns of language as used in the writing, transcriptions of particular founding documents and explorations of pertinent events and places in the City of Philadelphia relevant to those events. All of these strategies and searches will focus on the discussion of race relations for the Union. Students will search documents for discussions beyond just slavery. They will discover how Whites of the day viewed racial differences from an allegedly scientific basis, not only discourses about the color of one's skin and the likelihood of a life of servitude.

Students will be encouraged to compare and contrast these political selections, more for understanding present circumstances to prepare them to meet future challenges and to connect the classroom to the community – the political community more specifically. Students will be required to investigate the authors' use of description and illustration in the construction of larger ideas and on the development of a more coherent and positive relationship with their political movement or party.

### **Political Literature**

With the advent of up-to-the minute information on the Internet, political literature has become vast and varied in opinion, argument, and presentation. Gone are the days when students get their political science or civics lesson from a textbook, educational lecture, or encyclopedia. Today, my students can pick up their phones, turn on their iPods, link to the world-wide web and be informed on most any topic if they are willing to browse, scan, or read information for critical analysis and intellectual discourse.

Considering rhetoric as a tool of persuasion in politics, students will be lead in discussions and lessons utilizing the definition of rhetoric by Kenneth Burke: “The most characteristic concern of rhetoric – the manipulation of men’s beliefs for political ends... the basic function of rhetoric – the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents.”<sup>1</sup> Students will hear opposing views from Malcolm X, in his “Ballot or the Bullet” address, compared to Martin Luther King’s, “I Have a Dream” speech and/or A. Philip Randolph’s, “Address at the 1963 March on Washington.” In this way, students will be able to gather evidence from the speeches to illustrate and analyze the viewpoints of the speakers and to examine the political tone of the time period.

During this segment of the unit, students will be guided through lessons about historical inquiry into literature that requires a certain understanding of concepts of a particular era. Students will learn that the context of literature (document, speech or film) includes context clues in not only the politics practiced but also in sociology, economics, religion, the arts, and philosophy. Students will also note the use of primary (original) and secondary (research based on the original) sources. In written documents, students will examine voice (perspective and/or point of view) presented in political literature. Voice is contingent upon various viewpoints based on race, class, gender, and political affiliation. For purpose of this unit, voice will be defined as: something likened to speech as conveying impressions to the mind.<sup>2</sup>

The study of political literature for students will offer a stimulating mode of inquiry into the institutions and principles of American politics as it relates to the American people both Black and White. Political literature, including many genres, can be viewed as having driven a way of life and thinking for Americans. This study will not only give insight to writing, speaking and thought but also, give insight to the study of politics.

### **Political Culture in Film**

Our discussion must begin at one of the most publicized and highly attended screenings across the country, the debut of the film *Birth of a Nation* by D.W. Griffith and its depiction of post-Civil War political trends, White people’s supposed moral duties, and the racial hatred of its era. In an answer to that film, students will be required to view Oscar Micheaux’s *Within Our Gate*, which attacks the racism depicted in Griffith’s film. In viewing the films, we will use film clips derived from the entire films for specific “focus discussions” in groups, and/or in use for writing response essays developed after the students are prompted with topic-specific essay questions.

It must be mentioned in this unit that today’s students are privileged in linking on to YouTube and other video linked websites either to view full films or video clips and snippets to research for political views, ideas, speeches and reenactments. These sites provide vivid imagery of varied particular points in American political culture within our

society. From these Internet sites, students will conduct I-searches for keywords and politically affiliated names to find pertinent information about their assigned topic or person. They will also create a mini-video show containing clips that they found to represent a summary of their finds.

In this way students will be able to make inferences, analyze author's purposes, equate voices, and come up with main ideas that are generated from their viewing. After students observe films and/or clips they will probe thinking and ideas through questioning representations in each film. Discussion forums will be developed for further inquiry and to create centers for agreement, opposition, and critical analysis. We will work together as an entire class using the film *To Kill a Mockingbird*. This will begin this section of the unit to ignite spirited discussions about the law and politics in America and its impact on African-Americans historically. Students will be asked to describe conflict in the film in regard to their own personal beliefs, not only focusing on their viewpoints but also on the facts represented in the film and how those facts are emphasized for audiences. Students will have to re-write the ending, and then justify their new ending using the laws of today. Students will be asked to simulate dialogue with the defendant at the onset of the arrest--what would they say, what is their position, and how will they begin their defense, or if they would take the case at all. Finally, students will have to determine which political party, of stated time periods, stands on which side of the case, and what may be seen as the side of justice or humanity. In this way, students will address the all-too-commonplace experiences of Blacks and the criminal justice system in American society during that time, the period of the greatest power of the Jim Crow order.

### **Politics and the African-American**

The structure of power in political relations in America has been shaped in part by a long-standing relationship of race and religious development in the United States. This began when the Founding Fathers sat to write the *Constitution of the United States* deliberately dismissing Black people and their place within the society because of trends in the South, and in parts of the North. The ensuing clashes between the North and the South up until long after the end of the Civil War will give students opportunities to trace the series of actions placed in motion by decision makers to include or not include Blacks in the equation of politics and/or political decisions. Students will be assigned an I-search activity to show data on a timeline that will help them to develop an evaluative graph to frame documents, events, films, and speeches that concerned Black people during specific times.

We will use the writings of Absalom Jones and Richard Allen to begin to unfold the thinking of Black people and politics in Philadelphia during the days of early American government. Students will conduct research on attitudes expressed in writings (essays and film) about education, religion, and the inclusion of Blacks in the political process. They will read Sojourner Truth's speeches, some as recorded by Whites, to discover the temper

in attitudes and societal behaviors of the later antebellum period. They will watch clips from the movie blockbuster *Gone with the Wind* and its depictions of the Civil War and post-Civil War eras. For the period after the Jim Crow system of segregation came to prevail in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, students will be guided through viewings of a few Shirley Temple films, looking at the depiction of Black people in those films as part of the process of social education in America and how these film portrayals went against or reflected dominant societal tones.

Students will first look for African-American's status and inclusion in society as they delve into the readings, writings and viewing of films. Students will then create a roundtable for debate, author questioning, and further investigation of political positions based on race.

Within the structure of American political rhetoric as it relates to African-Americans, students will delve into anti-discrimination legislation that impacted education, affirmative action, and they will also examine and critique other aspects of the Civil Rights era. Students will not have to focus as much on dates, but on governmental concepts, legal scholarship, and political theory that helped established political processes that affect African-Americans today. The culture of inclusion and/or exclusion will be explored in relation to the justice system and how politics has impacted the societal woes of African-Americans living in poverty. This will be most pronounced when considering documents, essays, and legislation written during antebellum times when most Blacks did not have the opportunity to learn to read and also when many blacks were denied other opportunities to access information. But we will also consider how Blacks were subsequently denied equal opportunities and access in many more modern forms of media.

Through inquiry about race and its relation to politics the critical race theory, this reassesses the gains of the civil rights movement. They will explore racism, stereotyping, and racial stigma that have purported some of the unconscious racism in America. Students will have to dissect particular writings, such as those of Booker T. Washington and W.E. B. Du Bois, to compare the subjects/areas of their split in thinking and racial philosophy. The political and institutional adjustments and re-alignments that were made after the exchange of new ideas by both men will be.

## **Lesson Plan I**

Mine Eyes are on the African-American Political Story

Goals: Students will analyze, compare and contrast, critique, evaluate and discuss political implications as seen in selected films. They will explore persuasive measures used by film directors in the stories told that propagate certain understandings of American politics. Students will examine films featuring depictions of the plight of the



African-American in politics from the stories/speeches of President Abraham Lincoln to the YouTube film clippings of President Barack Obama. Students will examine the theme of film and media and the use of two rhetorical strategies, comparison/contrast and analogy. The exploration of literary devices increases student awareness of language and its objective use in the political framework. Students will learn to trace historical accounts via film literature to develop timelines showing the progress of African-Americans in the political arena. Students will also view several Hollywood depictions of politics and the African-American story within politics.

Objectives: PA State Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening 1.1.11.B, D, G; 1.2.11.A and B; 1.3.11.E; 1.6.11.C., D., E., and F. PA State Standards for the Arts and Humanities 9.1.12.F; 9.2.12.A, B, C, F, G, I. PA State Standards for History 8.1.12.A, B, C, D; 8.2.12.A and C; 8.3.12.A, C, D. PA State Academic Standards for Civics and Government 5.1.12.H., J., M.; 5.3.12.G., and J.

Materials: Have film clips pre-set or determine the timing to set up clips. Projector system, projection screen, DVD player or computer with DVD capability, 3x5 index cards, chart poster paper or Interactive Whiteboard, films in DVD format or cued on the web.

Audience: this lesson is designed for students in high school literature or social studies classes. It can however be adapted for use in a learning support environment or even a middle school advanced class setting.

Procedure: This lesson consists of 3 to 6 days of activities which can be chunked in 30 minute intervals or up to a 45 minute class. Students will be set in groups of four (as per their regular seating arrangement) and given instructions on a 3x5 index card of the tasks they must complete as a group. Each group's cards will elicit answers for one question that the group will determine the way in which they will present the answer. All students will view the same films while developing constructed response answers. The 3x5 cards will read: Give your opinion about the theme of the clip; support your evaluation citing examples from the film. Give a brief account of what occurred in the film; give at least three details. Illustrate the main events in the film, show why you believe they are of the most importance to depict. Make a word list of all vocabulary terms that stood out for you; define and cite the situation in which the word was used in the film. Compare the character (s) \_?\_ and \_?\_ ; identify their similarities and their differences.

Next, have students discuss what it is they must do, give time for them to ask questions of you and their peers. Then, show the film clips (preferably two films from the (past/present or present/present or present/speculative future), giving time between each clip for brain storming within the groups. Begin showing film clips after student questions have slowed. It might work best if the class does a clip together with the teacher to alleviate any confusion when in actual group work.

Day 2: Discuss previous day's lesson from beginning to the end, ask students to again sit in their assigned group seats. Show the first clip. After the clip ends, allow for group discussion and note taking review. Ask students to also consider when answering their questions, what ramifications were sparked by the political leaders in the film? What were their intentions – to harm, hinder or heighten awareness, and of what issues? Assign for homework – finish any notes and definitions that were not completed. Student may be prompted to look for clips on the Internet if they need additional viewings.

Day 3: Ask student to share their findings, how they answered the assigned questions, and to share new vocabulary terms. This discourse will bring about personal viewpoints and further ideas and perspectives from the groups. Teachers will need to monitor discussions carefully so that each participant to the conversation is given respect in terms of time and viewpoint. Show other film clips to the class and repeat steps from Day 2. Discussions that follow these writing assignments allow students to challenge each other's analyses and assumptions.

Day 4: Students will be asked to describe specific incidents and events in a narrative essay or short story. They must include concrete sensory details and feelings of highlighted characters or political figures. Teachers may want to refine their written work by giving two or three points of the film to describe versus giving students a choice from an entire film showing. Students will be prompted to consider a character's perspective when they write their narrative. The details they present or explain can be influenced by the character's point of view. A shift in perspective can be brought out in the writing to note change in the character's point of view and the events that connect to the conception of the change. Assign revisions for homework, collect the work the next day and ask specific students to share their writings. Teachers many also consider posting stories to a blog or wiki classroom site.

Assessments: Students will be asked to write a persuasive prose piece that convinces the audience to believe their point of view based on the film. They must use at least three specific scenes from the film to support their claim. Their written selection must be at least five paragraphs and can be written in the form of a political speech as if they were running for a political office in support of or opposition to the film's showing in their city.

To adapt this assignment for the learning support environment, students can be asked to write a short speech that includes 2 or 3 examples from the film. They can also support their position with a graphic display that they must explain in detail. All students will be allowed to use illustration to appeal to the audience's intellectual curiosity, relying on the force of their collected film evidence to sway and convince.

## **Lesson Plan II**

## Speak to me the Language of Political Power

Goals: Students will learn to identify rhetorical elements and literary strategies in specific speeches. Students will consider oral techniques (e.g. tone, content, literary devices) for content and persuasion. Students will outline ideas about how oral style is connected to theme, purpose, and audience interpretation. Students will show and understand the use of logic as students develop an awareness of how speechwriters use premises in the development of their arguments. In addition, students will begin a thorough analysis of the uses of inductive and deductive reasoning and of the importance of audience in the formulation of an essay and its means of expression. Students will be exposed to social justice issues and explore ethical implications for African-Americans.

Objectives: PA State Standards for Reading Writing, Speaking and Listening 1.1.11.A., B., D., E.; 1.2.11.A., B., 1.4.11.B., C.; 1.5.11.A., B., C., D., E., F., & G.; 1.6.11.A., B., C., D., E. PA State Standards for History 8.1.12.A., B., C.; 8.2.12.C.; 8.3.12.A., C., D.; PA State Academic Standards for Civics and Government 5.1.12.H., J., M.; 5.3.12.G., J.

Materials: speech transcripts for each student --- audio, visual, and print of U.S. Representative Barbara C. Jordan in her *1976 Democratic National Convention Keynote Address* and then U.S. Senator Barack H. Obama in his *2004 Democratic National Convention Keynote Address* and/or President Ronald Reagan's *Address at the Statue of Liberty*. Also have ready the audio selection of Malcolm X's famous speech, *The Ballot or the Bullet*. Projection system with Internet connection ([www.americanrhetoric.com](http://www.americanrhetoric.com)), chart poster paper, 8.5 x 11 construction paper, and Venn diagram<sup>3</sup> handouts.

Audience: This lesson is designed for the American literature segment of the high school English Language Arts classroom. It can be used and adapted for use in civics, social studies, and the African-American History classroom. Terms for focus in this lesson are: accumulation, allegory, alliteration, allusion, ambiguity, amplification, anaphora, anticipation, anticlimax, aphorism, aposiopesis, apostrophe, assonance, chleuasmos, climax, commonplace, commoratio, confirmation, concession, connotation, deduction, deliberative, denotation, effectio, ellipsis, encomium, enthymeme, epanalepsis, epicrisis, epideictic, epimone, epiphora, epithet, epizeuxis, erotesis, ethos, euphemism, euphuism, hyperbole, induction, oxymoron, parallelism, pathos, proverb, pun, refutation, rhetor, rhetoric, rhetorical canons, rhetorical question, rhetorical situation, trope, understatement, and voice. There are more terms to discover; however, for this level of students this list will suffice.

Procedure: Day 1 – Discuss with students specific literary terms for rhetoric, public speaking and purposes of persuasive speaking. Try a brainstorm session, writing all terms on the board to generate a list and then ask students to demonstrate meaning of each term through personal examples or by using a dictionary (online or hard copy). Allow students

to hear a snippet of a speech from President Obama and ask them to record in their notebooks terms that come to mind as they listen. Remind them to only list rhetorical terms, determine a set number for students to compile. For learning support students adapt the number set for their success in the assignment.

Day 2 – Students will begin the class with a Do Now.<sup>4</sup> It will state that students will create a graphic display, showing the ideas and concepts they learned in the previous day’s activity. Students can draw pictures, use word collages, add symbols, and phrases from speeches. Single sheets of construction paper will be available for students to pick up before going to their seat. If students are stuck for ideas, provide a textbook to scan for photos or illustrations that might spark their thinking. Collect papers at the end of a 15 minute period. Have a student volunteer hang the graphic creations to be displayed in the room later in the day.

Next, provide students with a Venn diagram and have students listen and watch Barbara Jordan and Barack Obama’s Democratic Convention speeches. Ask students to note in their diagram similarities, differences and gender/race specific terms. For advanced level classes, have students identify specific rhetorical device strategies that affect audience attitudes, actions, and/or responses. Students will be required to develop a five-paragraph essay analyzing what they heard, saw and noted on their graphic organizer. Students in AP English classes should be able to develop a critical essay containing at least seven paragraphs that use critical terms from their rhetoric study. AP and Honors level students will be required to analyze and interpret samples of good writing, identifying and explaining an author’s use of rhetorical strategies and techniques; apply effective strategies and techniques in their own writing; create and sustain arguments based on readings, research, and/or personal experiences; produce expository, analytical, and argumentative compositions that introduce a complex central idea and develop it with appropriate evidence drawn from primary and/or secondary sources, cogent explanations, and clear transitions; demonstrate understanding and mastery of standard written English as well as stylistic maturity in their own writings; demonstrate understanding of the conventions of citing primary and secondary sources; move effectively through the stages of the writing process, with careful attention to inquiry and research, drafting, revising, editing, and review. In these ways students will be exposed to developing written ideas from visual and audiology media.

Assign for homework - completion of their essays, if posted on Google docs<sup>5</sup>, they can request peer editing from the teacher or another student in the class.

Day 3 – Do Now: ask students to define on paper “American Democracy,” including some aspect or element from the speeches they heard the day before. Then they are to share their definition with classmates seated nearby (a maximum of 3 other students). Instruct students that after sharing is completed, they must place the best (group agrees upon) definition on the class blog for posting.

Begin teaching asking students to share with the entire class about the Do Now exercise. Then ask for five student volunteers to read aloud their essays. Require listening students to write down on post-it notes three things that stood out about the work and three questions that they might have to ask the writer. Reader students will be given the notes at the end of their reading. Generate discussion in the room by asking about rhetorical literary terms in reference to students' essays that were read aloud. Focus the discussion on at least five to ten terms that students cited from hearing their classmates' essays. Ask several students to record the discussion; noting the rhetorical terms they pointed out, issues that were brought up (quoted material from speeches) that students strongly disagreed on, and questions that were raised from the readings, hearing and viewing of essays and speeches.

Assign for homework – write a one-paragraph reflection about the day's lesson. Include at least one thing that you heard that you feel strongly about (pro or con).

Day 4 – Do Now: write a statement taken from one of the speeches on a scrap piece of paper that requires others to take a side. Teacher must have room set up prior to student entry, with large poster papers in four distinct areas of the room that read: Strongly Agree (I'm with it); Agree (I think it is that way.); Disagree (You drawlin'); Strongly Disagree (No way, no how!). After the completion time of the Do Now, explain exercise – students must go to one of the corners that represent their attitude (“It's My Prerogative”) on scrap paper before moving to a corner, students must write their attitude position down first to prevent group think based on power and personalities in the class. After hearing one of the statements and going to the respective corner, then they are to share their feelings based on their viewpoints with one other person in that corner. Allow students to share information regarding a personal experience related to their views for exactly one minute. The speaker has one minute to talk while the listener may not say anything or interact with the speaker except for body movements. After the minute expires, have the listener share the information with the class to see if s/he was actually listening. Then they are to switch roles.

Assign for homework – write a short evaluation of today's exercise on the blog and make further revisions to your essay.

Day 5: Collect all essays for grading. This lesson can include a follow-up activity, setting up a TV news panel that discusses and covers the events surrounding the speech, or to interview audience members then to put the show on video/audio recording of the session.

### **Lesson Plan III**

Interpreting Political Formal Writings

Goals: This lesson is designed for students to begin to focus on the formal elements of American Political works in language, structure and tone. It will provide opportunity to analyze intrinsic and extrinsic matters. Students will learn to examine cultural, social, and intellectual currents of a historical period. This lesson will call attention to how text is read by the experienced reader, bringing assumptions, values and expectations to the text. It will highlight the reader's unique interaction with text. Students will learn to deconstruct and/or reveal ambiguities in the language. Students will learn to determine the multiple and sometimes contradictory meanings in the text.

Objectives: This lesson is reading intensive; therefore several reading strategies will be incorporated to enhance student ability in many areas. Additionally, this lesson can be repeated many times throughout the school year and does not necessarily have to be completed in consecutive class periods. PA State Standards for Reading Writing, Speaking and Listening 1.1.11.(all); 1.2.11.(all); 1.3.11.C., & F; 1.6.11.A., B., C., D., and E. PA State Standards for History 8.1.12.A, B, C, D; 8.2.12.A and C; 8.3.12.A, C, D. PA State Academic Standards for Civics and Government 5.1.12.H., J., M.; 5.3.12.G., J.

Materials: lined writing paper, blackboard, chalk; reading passages from Robertson, Steele, Truth, and Jefferson, copied for students.

Procedure: Day 1: Choose a passage from one of the authors/speakers above. Distribute copies to each student. Instruct students to read silently with you, while you read the passage aloud. They are to underline any word, phrase or line that jumps out at them, even if they are not sure why. Tell students to think about sound, syntax, diction, (anything that suggests style) as they underline. Next, ask students to re-read the passage with you but this time they read aloud with you anything that they have underlined.

Next, ask student to pair of with another student seated nearby, together they are to check how many underlined words or phrases they can label using the rhetorical terms from *Lesson Plan I* of this unit. Students should write their collective ideas in the margin of the passage. Students will begin to have dialogue about the motivation behind the writing/speaking and the purpose the author had in mind.

Assign for homework – re-read the passage and mark-ups on the copy. List all terms noted in the margins, make sure you understand the meanings of the terms.

Day 2: As students to get their notebooks, then to choose a clean page and make three columns on the page. Head columns on that page with the words *Text*, *Effect*, and *Reflection/Connection*. Be sure to place lines on page to distinguish one column from the other. It might be easier for some students if you model the strategy on the board. In the *Text* column, students can list sentences, lines or place numbers of the line/sentence/paragraph for ease of reference. The *Effect* column is used for

naming/describing the effect (literary term). These two columns offer students a way to reformat their notes from the previous day. The third column, *Reflection/Connection*, gives students opportunity to write how the two columns work together as a part of the whole document, speech, or story. Students can do this in simple sentences or more. This third column should reflect some thematic reference to the entire document. At the end of class, student will be asked to post their charts on the wall prior to leaving.

Day 3: Do Now – Have students take a wall walk around the room. Post-it notes will be given to them as they enter the class, beginning with the teacher and then given to classmates by a student. As they walk around reading others' charts, they can make comments on three charts that they find interesting.

Thereafter, we will share our thoughts in a class discussion; I will have already prepared another chart on the board to use for the discussion. In this way, students will be asked to look at some of the common ideas, concepts that they brought up about style. I will continually ask students to find me an example of their effects and reflections in the passage and to share it aloud with the class.

Assessments: Students will publicly perform their written response from the following choices: write a one paragraph reflective summary about how style of the passage was instrumental in conveying the idea of a group of people; or write three or more paragraphs about a single rhetorical strategy discussing how the technique conveys theme, feeling, or idea; or write a one paragraph about anything you wish that reflects your life, using a single rhetorical strategy (show markings).

### **Annotated Bibliography**

Storing, Herbert J. ed. What Country Have I? New York: 1970. Booker T. Washington. "Democracy and Education." This is the address Mr. Washington delivered in New York in 1896. Interesting reading for students and teachers. This selection gives great insight into the thinking and rhetoric of the speaker. This is the full speech which is included in the text along with a foreword that gives readers additional reading resources.

---. Frederick Douglass. "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" This is the full speech which is included in the text along with a foreword that gives readers additional reading resources.

---. James Baldwin. "Stranger in the Village." This essay taken from Baldwin's first book of essays is another great reading for students and teachers. In this essay, students can experience the sense of his political comprehension and placement in the society.

- . Malcolm X. "The Ballot or the Bullet." This is the full speech which is included in the text along with a foreword that gives readers additional reading resources.
- . Martin Luther King, Jr. "Letter from Birmingham Jail." One of the most publicized letters by a Black man. It includes the full text and can be used with students. The foreword of this chapter includes additional resources for readers.
- . W.E. B. Du Bois. "The Conservation of Races." This document includes the *Academy Creed* for Negro people and is a great literary resource for students. The foreword of this chapter includes additional resources for readers.

Johnson, Lyndon B. "Commencement Address at Howard University." Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum.  
<http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/speeches.hom/650604.asp>.  
 Updated June 2007. Accessed March 2009. This is the full text of the speech. A great resource for teachers and students.

Robertson, Pat. "A Portrait of America," American Political Thought. Norton: 2009. This will show the Conservative Christian movement as a modern current in the political structure of America. This is a good read.

Steele, Shelby. "Affirmative Action: The Price of Preference." The Content of Our Character: A New Vision of Race in America. New York: 1990. 111-125. A great reading for students and teachers, it gives personal reflection in a scholarly tone to aid students and teachers in understanding point of view in the plight of the African-American.

Obama, Barack. "Opportunity." The Audacity of Hope. 2005. A chapter from the book outlining the plight of America for all. Seemingly prophetic, as you read you will find that the US is/was in this predicament as Obama takes the office of the President in the US.

---. "A More Perfect Union." 2009. The election campaign speech in answer to the bad press received of the Rev. Jeremiah Wright. This speech was delivered at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, PA in March of the chronicled year.

Prendergast, Catherine. Literacy and Racial Justice: The Politics of Learning after Brown v. Board of Education. Carbondale: 2003. This book is a great outline of the measures of progress and stagnation of the educational processes in America as it relates to literacy. A great resource for teachers.

Wright, Jeremiah A., Jini Kilgore Ross, ed. What Makes You so Strong? Sermons of Joy and Strength from Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr. This text includes several sermons



considered now as classic commemorating the life, work, and theology of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It includes study questions after each sermon, adding a dimension of interaction to the powerful messages.

## **Student Resources**

Randolph, A. Philip. "Call for a March on Washington."

[http://www.wwnorton.com/college/history/archive/resources/documents/ch30\\_0.htm](http://www.wwnorton.com/college/history/archive/resources/documents/ch30_0.htm). Essay taken from the "Call to Negro America to March on Washington for Jobs and Equal Participation in National Defense." 1941. Accessed April 2009. Students will be interested to find the originator of the 1963 March on Washington and how long he had this in mind to happen. It provides a great read for students to compare and contrast with what actually happened with Martin Luther King as the leading speaker.

Dictionary.com LLC. [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com). 2009. Accessed 2/19/2009. The best reference dictionary online yet. It is easily accessible and offers a variety of definitions for almost every word I ever searched. It is a multi-source dictionary search service and it's free.

Facing History and Ourselves. <http://www.facinghistory.org/home>. Massachusetts: 2009. Accessed February 2009. Facing History has been reaching out to those wider communities-providing occasions to study the past, explore new ideas and approaches, and develop practical models for civic engagement that link history to the challenges of an increasingly interconnected world of choices. This is a great website for students and teachers. Teachers, sign-up for weekly web newsletters, too. Free.

Independence Visitor Center. <http://www.nps.gov/inde/> Philadelphia: 2009. Accessed March 2009. The Visitor Center is just a stone's throw from some of Philadelphia's most popular attractions, including the new Liberty Bell Center, Independence Hall, and the National Constitution Center. This makes a well rounded excursion for students.

Nott J.C. and G. R. Gliddon, Types of Mankind, 246-271. Photos from pages. This gives students a detailed and graphic explanation of tones surrounding scientific notes about Blacks as they were in early American society.

Jefferson, Thomas. The Declaration of Independence.

<http://www.ushistory.org/Declaration/document/index.htm>.

ushistory.org.Philadelphia:1999-2009. Accessed February 2009. This site will

- allow students to access the full text of the Declaration and many other drafts of the document. A nice site.
- Jones, Absalom and Richard Allen. "A Narrative of the Proceedings of Black People." 1794. An essay collaboratively written by the two Philadelphia Black Episcopal priests about the abhorrence of slavery in these times and in the eyes of God.
- Reagan, Ronald. "Speech Commemorating the Centennial of the Statute of Liberty." 1986. <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1986/70386d.htm>. The Reagan Library and Museum. Texas: 2009. Accessed May 2009. A great website for those who choose to study Ronald Reagan from his early political days to throughout his presidency.
- Storing, Herbert J. ed. What Country Have I? New York: 1970. This book is a compilation of political writings by Black Americans. It can be used with and for students as a resource for actual writings of essays, book excerpts, and speeches. A great resource for the English or Social Studies classroom. Please check in bibliography for complete annotation about specific selections.
- Truth, Sojourner. "Ain't I A Woman?" 1851. [http://womenshistory.about.com/od/sojournertruth/a/aint\\_i\\_a\\_woman.htm](http://womenshistory.about.com/od/sojournertruth/a/aint_i_a_woman.htm). About.com New York Times Co.: 2009. Accessed May 2009. This is the actual text written in broken English. The account is written by Frank Gage 1881. A great resource site.
- . *On Race Relations*. Battle Creek; 1863. Copy obtained from the University of Pennsylvania Political Science Department. 2009. The actual text, a great read if you can find it and expose your students.
- . *On the Injustice of Slavery*. Anti-Slavery Bugle: Michigan; 1856. Copy obtained from the University of Pennsylvania Political Science Department. 2009. The actual text, a great read if you can find it and expose your students.
- . Interview with President Lincoln. Virginia: 1864. Copy obtained from the University of Pennsylvania Political Science Department. 2009. The actual text, a great read if you can find it and expose your students.
- YouTube. <http://www.youtube.com>. Accessed March 2009. A worldwide site that allows online visitors to upload, download, and/or view a plethora of videos in several formats. It is a wonderful site. However, the School District of Philadelphia has the site blocked from use in the classroom. Teachers can refer to their computer tech in their buildings to find methods to circumvent the block.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.americanrhetoric.com](http://www.americanrhetoric.com) , Scholarly Definitions of Rhetoric.

<sup>2</sup> [www.Dictionary.com](http://www.Dictionary.com)

<sup>3</sup> An overlapping circle(s) diagram to visualize likeness and differences between two things or to compare and contrast concepts, ideas, words and to organize data.

<sup>4</sup> Do Now – pre-class work, student driven; teacher direction not required. The teacher must have the assignment posted in the room prior to students' entry.

<sup>5</sup> [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) – user account required.

## **Appendix A**

### PA Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening

- 1.1 Learning to Read Independent*
- 1.2 Reading Critically in All Content Areas*
- 1.3 Reading, Analyzing and Interpreting Literature*
- 1.4 Types of Writing*
- 1.5 Quality of Writing*
- 1.6 Speaking and Listening*
- 1.7 Characteristics and Functions of the English Language*

### PA Academic Standards for History

- 8.1 Historical Analysis and Skills Development*
- 8.3 United States History*

### PA Academic Standards for Civics And Government

- 5.1 Principles and Documents of Government*
- 5.3 How Government Works*