

**Langston Hughes, Romare Bearden and Comrades:
Countering Negative Stereotypes through African American Arts Communities**

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Overview:

“Art is important because it puts a focus on how we see; it shows us how we learn to see our world.” Edward Epstein, Seminar Lecture, “Visual Arts and Society,” 01/31/2006

“If we were seeing...art someplace other than the Studio Museum in Harlem, would we necessarily read it as African-American at all? And because it is by African-American artists, must we automatically mine it for racial and political content? The answer to both is no....Art is about possibility...it is capacious; its history is ever-changing...”
Holland Cotter, Art Review: “Energy and Abstraction at The Studio Museum in Harlem,”
NY Times, 04/07/06

In a curriculum unit designed to be either a stand-alone art and literary history course or a unit within English class in the junior year of high school, students will develop an in-depth understanding of the difference between media portrayals of ethnic groups, particularly African Americans, and the broader deeper reality of community life as reflected in quality literature and art.

This unit, which provides information simultaneously about pejorative images of the past and the rich cultural life of African American artists working in communities in the 20th century, will encourage a comparative analysis of the media images proliferating around us with the multi-faceted portrayals found in serious visual art and literature. Students will learn about creative individuals in a variety of fields who helped one another overcome obstacles to creation and exhibition by banding together and providing community support.

Although the designation of the 1920's as the Harlem Renaissance (a term coined by John Hope Franklin long after the era had passed) focuses our attention on New York City as the nexus for the greatest creative output, other formal and informal coalitions of writers, fine and performing artists developed at other times and other places. Most notable for my students are the Pyramid Club and *Black Opals* magazine right here in Philadelphia. Additional large and small cities witnessed a proliferation of artistic expression subsequent to The Great Migration.

Rationale:

Young people today have (perhaps blessedly) limited knowledge of the negative stereotypes of African Americans in the early 20th century and how these stereotypes were used to limit opportunity and dreams. Further, it is a poignant commonplace in public education today that students, particularly in large cities, have little opportunity to study art, art history and other humanities.

An anecdote related by the poet Langston Hughes in his introduction to *The Best Short Stories by Black Writers* (a book that eight years after its publication would become part of the Supreme Court *Pico* case on school library censorship) tells of the innocent query to the author by the young daughter of a mid-West white couple hosting him during a lecture tour. The youngster said, 'Mr. Langston Hughes, can you teach me to shoot dice?' In answer to her crestfallen parents' query as to why she had asked such a question, the child replied: 'I see colored people all the time shooting dice in the TV movies.' It was with a clear sense of irony mixed with *deja vu* that I noted, on my on TV screen no more than a day or two after reading this story, a scene from the Oscar-nominated film, "Hustle and Flo" showing African Americans shooting dice.

My own horizons will be broadened as I become a co-investigator with students into the world of visual arts and their link to literature. My own preparation in visual arts paused with my last art class in 9th grade, resumed briefly with an art history class in college, and witnessed brief revivals with visits to a Horace Pippin exhibit at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and the Fisk University Art Museum in Nashville, along with my current practice of purchasing and displaying an African American artist's calendar in my school office for the past several years.

Langston Hughes and Romare Bearden are a powerful and significant pair of artists to investigate, not only for their creative efforts to bring the full humanity of people of color into the public consciousness, but for their political activism and expression as well. Hughes was part of the circle of friends of Bearden's family when they lived in Harlem and the two collaborated in activist circles through the 1930's and into the 1940's. Bearden was talented both as a visual artist and as a verbal political polemicist. Hughes allied himself with numerous political causes and sought to create visual art through

poetry. In a posthumous tribute to the pair in 1995, comedian Bill Cosby helped publish a children's book featuring Bearden's monumental panels, "The Block," with poems by Hughes.

Students will use both print and electronic sources to gain an understanding of the biographical background, the works of African American visual and literary artists and their place in history. Some names, certainly that of Langston Hughes, are familiar to today's high school students, but their knowledge is often limited to a vague association with the Harlem Renaissance and one or two poems. As students pursue a broader and deeper appreciation for the struggles and triumphs of minority artists, the youngsters' knowledge of American history itself will be enhanced. World War I, The Great Migration, segregated military, race riots, trends in entertainment, publication of essays and poems, art exhibitions, political activism, and the growth of educational institutions intertwine. As students come to appreciate these myriad connections, and at the same time undertake an organized investigation of visual art and linguistic techniques, they will be better prepared to be citizens, scholars, and perhaps, even artists themselves.

One fascinating theme underlying the movement toward artistic creation in the African American community – one that began with the first writings in the 1920's and continues with equal force today – is that of the artist's responsibility to the community. Is she required by some overriding moral imperative to represent community scenes and themes or is he free to set his own choice of images down on canvas? Some even questioned whether such a "community," i.e. that of African Americans, really existed or was perhaps an artificial construct.

Alain Locke clearly articulated the "community responsibility" concept: Harlem has become the greatest Negro community the world has known.... In Harlem, Negro life is seizing upon its first chances for group expression and self-determination. George Schuyler not so humbly differed when he wrote that "...it was a farce to pretend that Black people were any different from other Americans." (Campbell, 50). Hughes' "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" appeared a week later. Philadelphia's Alan Freelon, a life-long community activist and African American art pioneer nevertheless wanted occasionally to paint impressionistic renderings of sailboats in New England. This is a debate that can engage students in today's world as they consider media portrayals that either do or do not reflect their own lives and their own responsibilities in the use of their talents.

Objectives

1. Students will investigate and observe how the images of African Americans in advertising and other mass media profoundly short-circuited the ability of citizens of color to be viewed as fully human or individual. They will analyze the content, intent and impact of images like the Golddust Twins (Foxworth, 46.). Students will match several

dates of negative stereotypical images with events in African American history in order to gain an appreciation of real-life consequences stemming from such portrayals. Students will develop a critical awareness of how ethnic, age, and racial groups have been and are portrayed in popular media, acquire an understanding of the history that set the course for these images, and broaden their exposure to and ability to create alternative images, both visual and verbal, that better express the authenticity of individuals and communities. Marilyn Kern-Foxworth, in her seminal work on Aunt Jemima and other portrayals of African Americans in advertising, observes that "...visual depictions offer more denigrating images than portrayals in prose." (88) How exponentially more powerful were the moving pictures that, beginning with *Birth of a Nation*, extending through *Gone With the Wind* and through any number of madcap comedies with the inevitable black butler or maid, set concepts of African Americans in both majority and minority consciousness and the unconscious as well. Antidotes range from *Cabin in the Sky* to *Glory* to the films of Spike Lee, Gordon Parks and Maya Angelou. Nevertheless, even a future African studies scholar, Henry Louis Gates Jr. was not untouched by media-based stereotypes as cited by Wilborn Hampton in his *New York Times* review of the recent stage resurrection, "Kingfish, Amos and Andy." Gates acknowledged in his memoir that "The day they took "Amos and Andy" off the air was one of the saddest days in Piedmont', (North Carolina). Yet curative notions, available to Gates and other African American from everyday living in family and community were largely unsought and/or unavailable to members of the white majority society.

2. Students will, through reading and viewing contemporaneous accounts of developments in the art and literary worlds--how "helpers" who came along to assist, like the Harmon Foundation in New York, had their own flawed views that subverted their good intentions. The Harmon Foundation, for example, referred in one case to 'inherent Negro traits' in an exhibition catalogue. (Mary Schmidt Campbell, 49) Students will gain an understanding of how well-intended, well-attended and extensive exhibitions in some ways maintained the larger society's racial segregation. By sharing research through classroom presentations on individual artists and how each responded to conditions and limitations set forth by patrons, students will help each other understand how powerful social and economic realities impinged on authentic artistic expression.

3. Students will investigate how, throughout American history, both political and artistic, Africans struggled just to speak, let alone to speak for and about themselves. James Weldon Johnson expressed the feeling in his autobiography that "...American Negroes...are beggars under the nation's table waiting to be thrown the crumbs of civilization. (326). By reading artists' manifestos, most prominently, Langston Hughes' 1926 essay "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain", students will discover that to find and explore their own identity in their own voices was a privilege rarely granted to Black Americans. (Powell, 46) How stunning it must have been for readers of *The Nation* in 1926 to read the forthright declaration by the 24-year-old Hughes:

One of the most promising of the young Negro poets said to me once, "I want to be a poet--not a Negro poet," meaning, I believe, "I want to write like a white poet"; meaning subconsciously, "I would like to be a white poet"; meaning behind that, "I would like to be white." And I was sorry the young man said that, for no great poet has ever been afraid of being himself....

We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame.... We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves. (Modern American Poetry: Hughes's "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain")

Students will consider whether, post liberation, white society would not, could not relinquish its determination to portray African Americans in a manner that conformed with its own preconceived, stereotypical views. Students will consider why one of the seven principles of Kwanza is Kujichagulia (Self-Determination): "To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves." People of color neither required nor desired their oppressors to tell them who they were. Years hence, Franz Fanon, in challenging Jean Paul Sartre's prediction of a non-racial universalist future, opined:

...black consciousness is immanent in its own eyes. I am not the potentiality of something. I am wholly what I am....My Negro consciousness does not hold itself out as a lack. It is. It is its own follower. (Powell, 7)

4. Students will investigate sources that include Daniel Levering Lewis in *When Harlem Was in Vogue* to discover the strategies behind the words and actions of African Americans in the arts as they sought to create art for their own purposes. When Virginia native and University of Chicago sociologist Charles Johnson set up shop in New York City in the 1920's as editor of the Urban League's *Opportunity* magazine, he clearly echoed the vision enunciated by Alain Locke, Langston Hughes, and others – that visual and other arts could forge a path to amelioration of African American lives on all fronts, political, economic and educational:

No exclusionary rules had been laid down regarding a place in the arts. Here was a small crack in the wall of racism, a fissure was worth trying to widen....If the road to the ballot box and jobs was blocked...the door to Carnegie Hall and New York publishers was ajar. Each book, play, poem, or canvas by an Afro-American would become a weapon against the old racial stereotypes. (48)

How amazingly audacious was this group, to (with the help of Johnson's leadership) call a meeting in March of 1924 at New York's Civic Club. On the surface aiming celebrate the recent publication of Jessie Fauset's novel, *There Is Confusion*, the

gathering served as a launching pad for “improving racial standing” through “writing poetry or novels or painting.” (Lewis, 89)

5. Students will gain experience reading art history texts like Patton’s *African American Art* and Patton’s *Black Art and Culture in the 20th Century*. Sharon Patton shares her growing awareness beginning in the late 1960’s that her own and others’ lack of awareness of this history and not prevented the development of an on-going “...alternative academy, a network of researchers in the black community...”. These part-time scholars shared a “...more centered African-American viewpoint...”. They further confirmed that “...art always represents the culture and society from which it emerges.”

Finally, distance from traditional art history and criticism allowed these chroniclers to recognize the value of all levels of creation – not just oil painting and sculpture – but folk art as well (Patton,12). Students will be able then to discuss and debate, in conjunction with a thorough-going exposure to a substantial number of artworks via the web, library and textbooks, the relative merits of formally-trained, traditional artists and self-taught and/or avant-garde artisans.

Strategies

The unit will proceed with a classic KWL query: what do students know about individuals, movements, and visual arts, what do they want to learn, and (after the work is complete) what they learned over the course of the unit, and what more there is to learn. They will portion off a section of their notebooks to record everything from first impressions to a finished research project and presentation. In a trial run this spring, for example, when asked to name painters – of no particular nationality, gender, or ethnic group, Leonardo, Michelangelo, Picasso, and Monet were the only responses. Not a single African American artist (or woman, for that matter) made the list. For 11th graders, this is an inquiry worth pursuing, indeed.

Students may become engaged in this study through a look at current arts institutions in Philadelphia, including the African American Museum and Lorene Cary’s organization, artsanctuary; through a systematic inquiry into Hop Hop culture – rap lyrics and video images; and through analysis of portraits of young African Americans in television advertising, programming and in films. Given recognition of their authority as interpreters, they can be encouraged to apply the same analytical skills to “historical” words and images. Hughes’ poetry, after all, was based on a musical form, the Blues. Bearden was a student and practitioner of cartooning and a composer of popular music.

Once the justification for seeking new knowledge is established, we will proceed to become acquainted with a variety of resources to assist us in setting the framework for our investigation. These include videos like *Against the Odds, a history of the Harmon Foundation* and *Woman of the 20th Century: Images in Popular Culture*, web searches of negative images like Aunt Jemima, Stepinfetchit, the movie *Birth of a Nation*, and

contrasting positive visual creations like those of Aaron Douglas and Romare Bearden, along with images in poetry..

As students gather information on the variety of visual and literary artists producing in the 1920's and 1930's, they will create a series of annotated timelines for each decade. This will provide a visual and connective reference showing students the interweaving of efforts by African American artists, their wider community, and the support of white artists, readers and patrons. We will address issues raised by critics both within and without the center as time progressed. They will gather the thoughtful expressions of James Weldon Johnson, W.E.B. DuBois, Jesse Fauset, Alain Locke, Langston Hughes, George Schuyler, Zora Neale Hurston, and Jacob Lawrence. The links between art and history were made clear when the Works Progress Administration provided opportunities in response to Depression-era economics, by the interruptions in that progress brought on by world war, and the stimulation to art that came from the Civil Rights Movement.

The curriculum unit will facilitate cross-curricular endeavors as we note the interaction of writing, visual arts, and music. Historical perspectives will be enhanced as students develop textbook analysis rubrics. They may note, for example, that as late as 1971, the standard college art history textbook, *The History of Art* by W.W. Janson, still lacked a single artist of color, and that the book *Imagining America: Icons of 20th Century American Art*, published within the last 10 years, lists in its index only two African American visual artists (Jean-Michel Basquiat (collaborating with Andy Warhol) and Kerry James Marshall), showing instead photographs of musicians like Louis Armstrong, Dizzie Gillespie and Duke Ellington, but not photographs by James VanderZee or Gordon Parks.

Students will learn to discern the conflicting world views of African American artists and critics as they sought to come to terms with manifestations of racism in multiple cultures around the world. The specific references students gather will contribute to their overall learning success. As noted by Daniel Willingham in his Spring 2006 article in the *American Educator*, "How Knowledge Helps," knowledge "...helps at every state [of learning new things]: as you first take in new information [either via listening or reading], as you think about this information, and as the materials is stored in memory." (30)

As students explore these themes, they will develop sophisticated research skills, e.g. by conducting a survey of *New York Times* and *Chicago Defender* articles containing the key phrase, "Langston Hughes." They will also develop close reading skills as they become familiar with the protocols of creating, then analyzing poetry, biography, and art history, and the connections among them.

Students will be guided toward little-known materials on Philadelphia artists like Dox Thrash and Allan Randall Freelon to help them discover the amazing accomplishments of

individuals who garnered little or no encouragement in their efforts to be true both to the African American community and to the expression of their individual visions. Through researching the Pyramid and Tra Clubs and *Black Opals* literary magazine, students will gain a sense of how an entire community can come forward to promote and support the work of artists.

Investigating www.artsanctuary.org on the web and via interviews and performance outings will bring awareness that exciting events continue to happen in their home city. The required novel for 11th graders, *The Price of a Child*, was written by artsanctuary's founder, Lorene Cary. A class trip to one or more of the year-long series of events (Appendix C) may provide students with the opportunity to meet and chat with the author. Her own research into antebellum Philadelphia allowed Ms. Cary to create an altogether enriching and surprising portrait of the City of Brotherly Love of 1855. Students will have the opportunity to compare their preconceptions of what life was like in our metropolis for white and black, rich and poor in those long ago days with a detailed and vivid word picture.

Of particular value is the February Celebration of Black Writing where students can attend free lectures by well-known authors and reputable scholars, participate in writing workshops and have books signed by literary heroes.

It is fortuitous that modern literary textbooks for high schools have a considerable amount of art work displayed on their pages. Both the 11th grade core curriculum text, *Elements of Literature* (Holt) and the other available text, *African American Literature* (intended primarily for 9th grade, but used there more for its verbal than visual content) have sufficient art plates to provide each individual student with a work to analyze.

Crisis, the official publication of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and *Opportunity*, house organ for the Urban League were additional resources that combined political, literary, and visual arts works of the African American community. Students at A. Philip Randolph Career Academy will inevitably want to consult our namesake's radical rag, *The Messenger*. Randolph, though devoted for the most part to political and union organizing, nevertheless participated in helping develop artistic endeavors through his leadership of the Harlem Art Committee. (Bearden and Henderson, 239)

With sufficient practice in viewing and analyzing paintings in their textbook, students will develop habits that will serve them on several planned class trips to local museums and throughout their adult lives. The same questions can be applied to advertising materials and films. As students, and to a lesser extent, adults, are bombarded with media messages all day and all night, the habits of questioning and critiquing become essential in filtering the influx and making life direction decisions.

Strategies for reading the large amounts of history and criticism will be divided into three segments: Initiating, Constructing, and Utilizing. In the first segment, students will use brainstorming, quick writes, free writing, what's in a picture, and reaction guides – all from *A Handbook of Content Literacy Strategies: 75 Practical Reading and Writing Ideas* by Elaine C. Stephens and Jean E. Brown.. The second category includes pen-in-hand, x marks the spot, I wonder why, and word chains. The latter is also useful for linking artists through the years. Finally, utilizing can include e-mail correspondence, simulations, problem-solving, and RAFT (Role of the writer, Audience, Format, and Topic.) Anticipatory sets and exit passes will serve as bookends for individual assignments.

The academic standards addressed in this curriculum unit will be both language arts and arts and humanities <http://www.pacode.com/secure/data/022/chapter4/s4.83.html>. Learning to read independently in all content areas will be enhanced by the variety of media and texts used in research: newspapers, magazines, art texts, literary texts, history books. Experiences with poetry and art criticism will facilitate analysis and interpretation. Further, this unit offers opportunities in a variety of writing tasks. Students will gain facility in speaking during group discussions and in making oral/visual presentations. Finally, students will become adept at meaningful and original research.

In addressing Academic Standards for the Arts and Humanities, students will be learning the elements and principles of painting, participating in demonstrations that include the creation of collages and public art criticism. Through visits to local museums, students will become aware of community exhibitions and perhaps make such visits part of their own everyday lives. By studying the facets of the “New Negro” and the art renaissance of the 1920's, students will create both context and chronology. Included here will be an acquaintance with styles and genres as well as historical and cultural impact on works in the arts. at the same time.

Students in any region can gain an appreciation for art by learning about the individuals who share their geographic origins. Philadelphia has provided a myriad of important figures in the development of African American art and literature: Jesse Fauset, W.E.B. DuBois, Mae Cowdery, Henry Ossawa Tanner, Dox Thrash, Alan Freelon, Barbara Chase-Riboud, Howardina Pindell, and Mary Schmidt Campbell.

Utilizing the text, students will gain practice in analyzing a painting by using the five-step Bloom's Taxonomy for Art provided at <http://www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/Files/blooms2.htm>. Questions include:

- What is your opinion of the painting? Why? (Evaluation)
- What ways would you render the subject differently (Synthesis)
- Explain what you think the artist is trying to say about the subject matter. (Analysis)
- If you could interview the artist, what questions would you ask? (Application)

What is the subject or theme? (Understanding)

Describe the painting. (Knowledge)

In sum, with an ideal outcome, students will come to appreciate the inherent, deep value artistic expression has for individuals and communities. They will understand that history and art history are inseparable and that the latter can powerfully illuminate the former. As citizens and future parents, they will come to realize that art instruction, both practical and academic, is not a “frill.”

Lesson Plans/Activities

I. Introduction to Langston Hughes and Romare Bearden via "The Block."

Goal: To demonstrate the natural links between visual art and poetry. To have students complete a project emulating a published pairing of two artists, one a collagist, the other a poet.

Time Allotment: Three class periods

Materials and Resources:

Computers with internet access, printer
A History of African American Artists (Bearden and Henderson)
Half a dozen standard art history texts from school or public library
Paper, pencils or pens
Pre-printed Venn diagrams, blank
Construction paper
Glue sticks
Large newsprint and markers
Journal or notebooks

Initiation: Day One

- a. Survey class on knowledge of artists in general.
- b. Pool knowledge of class and enter on newsprint. Put aside for later comparison.
- c. Distribute list of African American arts derived from A History of African American Artists by Romare Bearden and Harry Henderson or another dedicated African American art history text.
- d. Using the list, students survey a collection of current and older art history texts to chronicle inclusion or exclusion of African American artists. Record observations in journal.

Construction: Day Two

- a. Students will search designated websites for biographical information on Langston Hughes and Romare Bearden separately, then together, with particular attention to their personal, political and artistic association in New York.
- b. Create a Venn Diagram (see appendix) as a way of displaying their separate and joint activities, three in each panel.
- c. Using The Block, Bill Cosby's matching of Hughes poetry with a Bearden mural, students will survey numerous Hughes poems and Bearden works with the goal of eventually selecting their own matching pair.

Utilizing: Day Three

- a. Students will print out art work and poem, write a brief analysis of the poem in terms of its imagery, evaluate the art work utilizing Bloom's taxonomy and create a poster for display.
- b. Posters may be displayed on walls or clotheslines. They may be gathered together and fastened at a later date to create a "book" for the classroom library.
- c. Extension: Read a series of poems and match with appropriate painting or sculpture on a poster or in a booklet. Write an introduction for young people explaining the juxtapositions. Donate to neighborhood elementary school.

II. Utilizing African Art History and Poetry to Counter the Commercial Images of Aunt Jemima

Goal: Students will first become acquainted with stereotypical images of the past, apply critical thinking skills to analyze both their meaning and effect, then find and display substantive literary and historical counter images.

Time Allotment: Three class periods

Materials and Resources:

Computers with internet access, printer
 Paper, pencils or pens
 Pre-printed Venn diagrams, blank
 Construction paper
 Glue sticks
 Large newsprint and markers
 Journal or notebooks

Initiation: Day One

- a. Google Aunt Jemima images. In pairs, discuss variety in images. Write descriptions of three in journal, analyzing hidden message regarding members of the African American community.

b. In cooperative groups, read portions of the chapter on Aunt Jemima from the book, *Aunt Jemima, Uncle Ben, and Rastus: Blacks in Advertising, Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, by Marilyn Kern Foxworth. Using the jigsaw strategy, i.e., each group reads one portion, then reports back to the larger group. (62-63, Verta Mae's analysis; 77-82, The Anatomy of a Stereotype; 82-86, Dissension from the Black Race; 92-95, The Language of Aunt Jemima; 95-98, The Stereotypical Situation: The Plantation; 98-100, The 1989 Metamorphosis of Aunt Jemima; and 101-104, Artistic Reaction to the Image of Aunt Jemima).

Construction: Day Two

a. View a taped portion of an "Amos and Andy" program and analyze portrayals: list five facets of characters presented and label "positive" or "negative."

View portion of more current comedy program featuring African Americans. Note five facets of characterization and again label "positive" or "negative." Write a one-sentence comparison statement that includes one specific detail from each segment viewed.

b. Compare two up-dated representations of Aunt Jemima by modern-day African American women artists: "The Liberation of Aunt Jemima," 1972 by Betye Saar and "Who's Afraid of Aunt Jemima?" 1983, by Faith Ringgold. (The latter work, in the form of a story quilt, served the dual purpose of addressing the Aunt Jemima stereotype and promoting Ringgold's theretofore unpublished autobiography.) Working in groups, students will be asked to explain how the artists utilized unusual materials and humor to express an artist's rejection of a long-standing negative stereotype. Share conclusions with brief oral presentations by group representatives.

Utilization: Day Three

a. Create a two-part companion Chronology of Important Dates to match five dates in the History of Aunt Jemima. For each year or decade listed, identify a visual work of art and accompanying poem to counter the commercial event,

AND/OR

b. Select 10 dates from chronology of Aunt Jemima and Amos and Andy and match with historical events in African American history. Example:

1900

R.T. Davis, trademark promotional strategist for Aunt Jemima, dies.

James Weldon Johnson writes "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing."

A World's Fair. The Paris Exposition was held, and the United States pavilion housed an exhibition on black Americans. The "Exposition des Negres d'Amerique" won several awards for excellence. Daniel A. P. Murray's collection of works by and about black Americans was developed for this exhibition.

c. Affix a timeline with enhanced dates and events to the classroom wall. Conduct a "gallery walk" for the class itself and possibly other classes.

III. Creating Arts Communities in Harlem.

Goal: Students will gather data to illustrate both individual accomplishments by artists and cooperative efforts to conceptualize, implement and display works of art. In the process, they will experience success in and develop a rubric for appreciating visual and literary expression and the links between.

Time Allotment: Three to Five Days

Resources and Materials

Computers with internet access, printer

A History of African American Artists (Bearden and Henderson)

Paper, pencils or pens

Construction paper

Glue sticks

Journal or notebooks

Butcher block paper or newsprint

Initiation: Day One

Using an anticipatory set (see Appendix), identify the confluence of events that lead to the proliferation of visual arts and writing in New York City and other urban centers in the United States in the 1920's. Source: Bearden and Henderson, *The Twenties and the Black Renaissance*, from *A History of African-American Artists*, 115-117.

Construction: Day Two

- a. Working in groups, each selects one name and creates journalist's bio of a philosopher of the movement, i.e., Alain Locke, Claude McKay, Jesse Fauset, H.L. Mencken, George Schuyler, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Romare Bearden, Albert Barnes, Ralph Ellison, Eric Michael Dyson and bell hooks. Respond with answering essays that incorporate references to modern day art forms.
- b. Investigate the connections among these individuals. Create a connection wall, similar to *Time Magazine's* chart on historical connections.(May 8, 2006, centerfold)
- c. Each group will describe the individual's stance regarding African American art and artists in that era. From the writings, extract a list of issues being addressed, including self-definition, economic challenges, patron pressure, commercial demands, individual expression, racism in society. Write a one-sentence summary of each philosopher's position.

Utilization: Day Three

- a. Each student selects her or his own visual artist from the Bearden/Henderson text, make notes for class discussion on how that particular artist approached a given issue, in terms of subject matter and style.
- b. Follow sources on the individual artist for each student's research project of flexible length (one day up to a month, depending on course.)
- c. Use the art version of Bloom's taxonomy to describe one selected work of the artist chosen:

What is your opinion of the painting? Why? (Evaluation)

What ways would you render the subject differently (Synthesis)

Explain what you think the artist is trying to say about the subject matter. (Analysis)

If you could interview the artist, what questions would you ask? (Application)

What is the subject or theme? (Understanding)

Describe the painting. (Knowledge)

(<http://www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/Files/blooms2.htm>.)

Students will, at various junctures, expand their repertoires by trying their hands at note-taking, outlining, graphic organizers, short descriptions, student-created poetry following models, art criticism, historical analysis, and research reporting

- d. Install a wall timeline and affix a mini-poster for each artist at the appropriate juncture. Invite neighboring classes to tour the museum. Student researchers act as docents.

Individual Projects/Extensions:

Beginning with Bearden/Henderson's description of 306, catalogue the artists and writers who were part of the group, along with a listing of their social and political concerns. Create a poster that includes portraits and mini-bios of the individuals involved.

Imagine a meeting of any five of the individuals thus catalogued. Create a brief set of minutes for one day's meeting and discussion.

Identify at least two other organizations or programs or individuals that actively supported African American art during the 20's and 30's. Describe their operation and/or contributions.

IV. Philadelphia Artists and Organizations

Goal: Students will discover and become familiar with the local history of art and artists. They will come to appreciate and understand the connection between historical circumstances, e.g. limited access to schools and galleries, and positive coping strategies adopted by artists who refused to accept the status quo.

Time Allotment: Two days of classroom activities; two or more days for field trips

Materials and Resources:

Computers with internet access, printer
A History of African American Artists (Bearden and Henderson)
Paper, pencils or pens
Pre-printed outline maps of New York and Pennsylvania, blank
Color pencils, rulers, markers
Journal or notebooks

Initiation: Day One

Using Google or another search engine, gather biographical and aesthetic data on artists, art figures, poets and institutions in and from Philadelphia throughout the 20th century from the following list: Jesse Redmon Fauset, Alain Locke, Dox Thrash, Alan Freelon, Black Opals magazine, the Pyramid Club, the Tra Club, Mae Cowdery, Barbara Chase-Riboud, Howardena Pindell, artssanctuary, Village of Arts and Humanities, the Barnes Foundation, Lincoln University, Joe Beam and Sonia Sanchez.

Construction: Day Two

a. Using the RAFT strategy (Role, Audience, Format, Topic), compare the lives and careers of Dox Thrash and Alan Freelon. Both served in World War I, both worked in Philadelphia, both were involved with the Pyramid Club. Freelon was a native Philadelphian, Thrash a much-traveled native of the South. Their styles, subjects, media and techniques differed. Example: You are a mature paint brush speaking to a group of young paint brushes. Provide career advice with a focus on whether Freelon or Thrash would be the ideal employer. In the course of the advice giving, include at least ten details from the life and artistic creations of the two men.

b. Create an annotated map comparing New York and Philadelphia regarding their involvement with the development and promotion of African American art, noting especially the connections between the two metropolises. If feasible, divide the class into groups of four and assign each group its own area for mapping: artists, art schools, exhibitions, museums. Alternate configuration: groups gather and display data on a particular five or ten year period.

Utilization: “Day” Three:

Plan one visit to the African American Museum at 7th and Arch Streets near the end of the semester. The architect who designed the building was a graduate of Dobbins Area Vocational Technical High School. Plan a second visit to the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts to compare offerings. (Pippin's “John Brown” is at PAFA.)

Student Task: Create an annotated guide book for a younger student group going through the same exhibit. Include information on art history, art techniques, and what to look for.

V. Assessment

Students will create flash cards for vocabulary covering historical, cultural contexts, as well as for terms in the arts glossary provided at the conclusion of the standards. A word wall in the classroom will reinforce this acquisition. Periodic quizzes and an end-of-unit test will provide data on acquisition of vocabulary and concepts.

Annotated Bibliography: Teachers

Adoff, Arnold, Ed. *I Am the Darker Brother: An Anthology of Modern Poems by Negro Americans*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1968.

Provides a variety of poets beyond the basic Langston Hughes with brief biographies in the back.

Bearden, Romare and Henry Henderson. *A History of African-American Artists*. New York: Pantheon, 1993.

A thorough-going review of artists and their work along with commentary on political as well as artistic activity. Bearden did not live to see publication. Even covers “objectively,” Bearden’s sharp critique of and grudging appreciation for the Harmon Foundation, a white banker’s multi-year, series of prizes and exhibits provided to African American artists.

Chiles, Nick. “Their Eyes Were Reading Smut.” *New York Times* 04 Jan. 2006, Opinion. <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/04chiles.html?th=&oref=login&emc=the&page....>

Decries the current trends for creation and proffering of near pornography, complete with ancient stereotypes as “black literature.” Contains a half dozen useful references to quality authors.

Hampton, Wilborn. “Amos, Andy and company are Seen Through Time’s Lens.” *New York Times* 15 Mar. 2006, E6.

Holt, Rinehart and Winston. *African American Literature: Voices in a Tradition*. Austin: Holt, 1998.

Hughes, Langston. *The Best Short Stories by Black Writers: The Classic Anthology From 1899 to 1967*. Boston: Little, Brown: 1967.

A magnificent collection of stories portraying a great variety of individuals who in no way resemble the advertising icons in popular culture for the same period of time.

---. “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain”. (Modern American Poetry: http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/g_l/hughes/mountain.htm).

---. *The Langston Hughes Reader: The Selected Writings of Langston Hughes*. New York: Braziller, 1958.

Writings both biographical and on the topic of art itself. Laced with humor and containing some items that might be described as “turn about is fair play.” Hughes gently mocks the expectations of white readers as they encounter writings of African Americans.

Ittmann, John. *Dox Thrash: An African American Master Printmaker Rediscovered*. Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2001.

Lewis, David Levering. *When Harlem Was In Vogue*. New York: Penguin, 1979, 1981, 1997.

Meyer, Michael, Ed. *The Bedford Introduction to Literature: Reading.Thinking.Writing*. Boston: Bedford, 2005.

Numerous African American writers in a variety of modes, as well as a “A Study of Langston Hughes,” that includes a biography, paintings and photos of the writer, perspectives by critics, numerous poems, the famous quotation from Hughes’ 1926 piece, “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” and reference to the 1930’s tongue-in-cheek profile, “The Ways of White Folks.”

Jubilee, Vincent. “In the shadow of Harlem.” *Pennsylvania Gazette* 37-40 May 1981

National Gallery of Art. *The Art of Romare Bearden*. New York: Abrams, 2003.

Beautiful compendium of the totality of Bearden’s output with detailed biographical accounts that make clear the association between this prodigious creator and his literary counterpart, Langston Hughes.

Patton, Sharon F. *African-American Art*. Oxford: Oxford, 1998.

Covers Colonial times through 1993, with sections on The Great Migration, The Jazz Age, The New Negro movement, The New Negro artist, Civil rights and double-consciousness.

Powell, Richard J. *Black Art and Culture in the 20th Century*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1997. Key chapter two: Enter and Exit the “New Negro”.

Sherman, Joan R., Ed. *African-American Poetry, An Anthology: 1773-1927*. Mineola, New York: Dover, 1997.

Amplifies works available from the earliest days of stereotyped advertising. Corrects my long-held belief that no poetry written by African Americans was published between Wheatley and Paul Lurance Dunbar.

Studio Museum of Harlem. *Harlem Renaissance: Art of Black America*. New York: Abradale, 1987.

Valuable for its opening essay by Mary Schmidt Campbell, premier Bearden scholar and native Philadelphian. Keen perspective on the philosophical underpinnings of the “New Negro Movement.”

Video:

Edwards, Amber, Producer/Director. *Against the Odds: The Artists of the Harlem Renaissance*. PBS Home Video, 1995
Focus on the Harmon Foundation.

Student Readings:

American Educator. “Virtual Exhibits, Genuine Learning.” 30-1, Spring 2006. 38-46.

Excellent introduction and orientation for exploring a multiplicity of museums online. Numerous links, including: www.metmuseum.org/toah/splash.htm. Yield: Art History Timeline.

Bearden and Henderson. *A History of African American Artists*. New York: Pantheon, 1993.

A thorough-going review of artists and their work along with commentary on political as well as artistic activity. Bearden did not live to see publication. Even covers “objectively,” Bearden’s sharp critique of and grudging appreciation for the Harmon Foundation, a white banker’s multi-year, series of prizes and exhibits provided to African American artists.

Bontemps, Arna. *American Negro Poetry* (Rev.) New York: Hill and Wang, 1974.

A feast of poetry from suitable for matching with visual art works from before, during and after the Harlem Renaissance and through the radical 1960’s.

Bundles, A’Lelia. *On Her Own Ground. The Life and Times of Madam C.J. Walker*. New York: Washington Square, 2001.

Interesting insight into the interconnectedness of business, politics and art in Harlem during the teens, and twenties.

Cotter, Holland. Art Review: “Energy and Abstraction at The Studio Museum in Harlem.” *The New York Times*. 07 Apr 2006.

Article addresses the persisting issues for African American artists: how to be an individual and representative of others at the same time. Barbara Chase-Riboud and Howardena Pindell are mentioned prominently.

Cowdery, Mae V. "A Brown Aesthete Speaks," *We Lift Our Voices and Other Poems*. Philadelphia: Alpress, 1936. Reprinted in *Alumnae News*, Philadelphia High School for Girls, Fall 1999, p. 22.

Edmonds, Arlene. "Art and Circumstance: 'Beauford Delaney: From New York to Paris' at the Philadelphia Art Museum." Sojourner 10-4 Fall 2005: 14-25.

Hansberry, Lorraine. *To Be Young, Gifted and Black*. New York: Vintage, 1969. Real-time chronicle of family, community, and world influences on the future playwright growing up in Chicago. Short, thought-provoking segments.

Holt, Rinehart and Winston. *African American Literature: Voices in a Tradition*. Austin: Holt, 1998.

9th grade level text that provides biographical, prose, poetic and visual portraits of creativity. Many samples in matching art and poetry (e.g. Paul Laurence Dunbar's "We Wear the Mask" with Lois Mailou Jones' "Les Fetiches") that can serve as models for similar student endeavors.

Hughes, Langston. *The Langston Hughes Reader.*" Cora Unashamed," "The Weary Blues," "Central High," "When the Negro Was in Vogue," "Breakfast in Madrid," "The Fun of Being Black," numerous poems, personal choice.

Hughes, Langston, ed. *The Best Short Stories by Black Writers*. Introduction, "A Summer Tragedy" by Arna Bontemps, "Flying Home" by Ralph Ellison, "Santa Claus is a White Man" by John Henrik Clarke, "Mother to Son" by Conrad Kent Rivers, "The Only Man on Liberty Street" by William Melvin Kelley.

Johnson, James Weldon. *Along This Way: The Autobiography of James Weldon Johnson*. New York: Penguin, 1989.

The life story of a man who single-handedly disproved and fought every negative stereotype: educator, attorney, poet, songwriter, novelist, diplomat, political organizer. Author of "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing," the Negro national anthem.

Sherman, Joan R., Ed. *African-American Poetry: An Anthology: 1773-1927*. Mineola New York: Dover, 1997.

Amplifies works available from the earliest days of stereotyped advertising. Counters my long-held belief that no poetry written by African Americans was published between Phillis Wheatley and Paul Laurance Dunbar. I stand corrected.

#

Appendix A

Curriculum Standards

I. Selected Pennsylvania Academic Standards for Arts and Humanities

9.2.12 Historical and Cultural Contexts

- A. Explain the historical, cultural and social context of an individual work in the arts.
- B. Relate works in the arts chronologically to historical events.
- E. Analyze how historical events and culture impact forms, techniques and purposes of works in the arts.

9.3.12 Critical Response

- A. Explain and apply the critical examination processes of works in the arts and humanities.
Compare, Analyze, Interpret, Form and test hypotheses, Evaluate/form judgments
- D. Analyze and interpret works in the arts and humanities from different societies using culturally specific vocabulary of critical response.

9.4.12 Aesthetics

- A. Evaluate an individual's philosophical statement on a work in the fine arts and its relationship to one's own life based on knowledge and experience.
- D. Analyze and interpret a philosophical position identified in works in the arts and humanities.

http://www.pde.state.pa.us/stateboard_ed/lib/stateboard_ed/pdfarts.pdf

II. Pennsylvania Academic Standards for English and Language Arts

Academic Standards for Writing, Speaking and Listening: Grade 11

1.1.D. Identify, describe, evaluate and synthesize the essential ideas in text. Assess those reading strategies that were most effective in learning from a variety of texts.

1.1.F. Understand the meaning of and apply key vocabulary across the various subject areas.

1.2 Reading Critically in All Content Areas

A. Read and understand essential content of informational texts and documents in all academic areas.

1.3. Reading, Analyzing and Interpreting Literature

1.3.C. Analyze the effectiveness, in terms of literary quality, of the author's use of literary devices.

1.4 Types of Writing

1.4.B. Write complex informational pieces(e.g. research papers, analyses, evaluations, essays)

1.5 Quality of Writing

1.5.B. Write using well-developed content appropriate for the topic.

Assessment

1.2.C. Produce work in at least one literary genre that follows the conventions of the genre.

www.pde.state.pa.us/k12/lib/k12/RWSSLStan.doc.

Appendix B

Anticipatory Set for Harlem Renaissance

Mark each answer either PT (Probably True) or PF (Probably False). Share your predictions with another student or in a group. Explain your reasoning and make an effort to have others change their guesses to match yours. After a brief discussion, consult the reading to confirm or alter your responses. For each item, note the paragraph number and phrase or sentence that supports your confirmed or revised conclusion.

1. _____ Many African Americans moved north in search of jobs in the war industry.

2. _____ African Americans gained confidence by serving in integrated military units during World War I.

3. _____ Having moved from rural to urban settings proved unsettling to many African Americans.

4. _____ Many African American artists who gained prominence in the 1920's had been born in the South.

5. _____ Artistic success in music and the theater laid the groundwork for future successful endeavors by African Americans in writing and the visual arts.

#

Appendix C

About Art Sanctuary

Art Sanctuary, located in North Philadelphia, uses the power of black art to transform individuals, unite groups of people, and enrich, and draw inspiration from the

inner city. We invite established and aspiring artists to help create excellent lectures, performances, and educational programs.

Art Sanctuary was founded in June 1998 by author and educator, Lorene Cary with a vision to bring the creators of contemporary black arts into the community. Housed in the Church of the Advocate, a National Historic Landmark in the heart of North Philadelphia, Art Sanctuary programming exists to create a community curriculum that enables groups as large as the School System and as small as the *Grands As Parents* teen group to explore fine art by enjoying it, studying it, and creating it. Our aim is to connect individuals and a whole community to artistic excellence—in hip-hop, literature, dance, and visual art, music. Art Sanctuary uses art and the connection to create event-specific programs that generally increase community involvement and awareness of art and the issues it explores. Having featured more than 200 artists including the great choreographer **Bill T. Jones**, poets **Nikki Giovanni** and **Sonia Sanchez**, writers **Chinua Achebe**, **John Edgar Wideman** and **Terry McMillan**, hip hop recording artists **Rah Digga** and **The Roots**, the **Sun Ra Arkestra** jazz band, and songstress **Rachelle Ferrell**, Art Sanctuary has made good on its promise to bring excellence in art to North Philadelphia. Art Sanctuary's status as a community institution can be seen by the quality and number of established partnerships, the depth of programming, consistent increase in audience and program participation, and the degree of organizational advancement achieved over the last six years.

Art Sanctuary programming and administrative office is located in the 5th Councilmantic District and defines its extended neighborhood boundaries with Spring Garden Street on the south, Fairmount Park on the west, 10th street on the east and Hunting Park on the north. Creating community relationships and utilizing the Church of the Advocate facility, positions Art Sanctuary to play a significant role in the cultural, social and economic development of the area. Programming attracts audiences across economic, social, and racial/ethnic stratum that share an interest in the arts and letters of black artists.

We believe that a thriving arts series and arts education -- to old and young, at basic and advanced levels, across class lines -- puts the power of the artists' presentations at the center of people's intellects and emotions. It teaches creativity and hope, slipping them under the skin and into the brains of as many as possible where it will raise IQs and E.Q.s. (Emotional Quotients) because, to paraphrase poet Audre Lorde, art is not a luxury. www.artsanctuary.org