

Relevant Unit Objectives

Module 1: African American Community and Culture

This lesson addresses the following Essential Questions:

- How did African-American history, including slavery and discrimination, shape African-American communal life and cultural expression?
- How was the African-American community defined?

Objectives of the Lesson

Aim

What insights did the poetry of Langston Hughes offer about the African-American community in Harlem?

At the conclusion of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify aspirations and obstacles faced by African-American citizens in the middle of the twentieth century.
- Look for similarities between Langston Hughes' and Martin Luther King's dreams for the African-American community.

Introduction

Motivating Yourself:

Have a discussion about how people facing a difficult situation can deal with obstacles to making the solutions happen.

- Are there limits to being patient?
- Can frustration be a good thing, or a bad thing?
- Do you wait, or take action?

Instructional Procedures

Step One: The Poetry of Langston Hughes

“Harlem: A Dream Deferred”

<http://web.csustan.edu/english/reuben/pal/chap9/hughes.html>

The teacher distributes copies of the poem “Harlem: A Dream Deferred” to students. The teacher asks students to read the poem, asking them to focus on how the poem describes aspirations and obstacles.

Step Two: Introducing Langston Hughes

The teacher provides background information about Langston Hughes found in middle/upper school MAAP lesson plans.

Step Three: “I Have a Dream”

In 1963, Martin Luther King gave his famous “I Have a Dream” speech in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC. This speech can be found at: <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkihadream.htm>

Students will use Handout 1 to compare Langston Hughes’ poem with selections from Martin Luther King’s speech.

Conclusion

- Is the dream still deferred?
- What changed between 1951 and 1963?
- What has changed between 1963 and now?

Materials

Harlem: A Dream Deferred
<http://web.csustan.edu/english/reuben/pal/chap9/hughes.html>

Handout 1: Langston Hughes and Martin Luther King - Dreams

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"Harlem"	"I Have a Dream"	What is the connection?
<p>What happens to a dream deferred?</p>	<p>We cannot be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until "justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream."</p>	
<p>Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun? Or fester like a sore And then run? Does it stink like rotten meat? Or crust and sugar over - like a syrupy sweet?</p>	<p>One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. And so we've come here today to dramatize a shameful condition.</p>	
<p>Maybe it just sags like a heavy load.</p>	<p>We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of Now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy.</p>	

Or does it explode?	Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence.	
Langston Hughes, 1951	Martin Luther King, 1963	