

From South Carolina to South High School
Linda Robinson, South High School
Grade Level: 3rd English
Summer 2003

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Title: From South Carolina to South High School:
A Voyage of Discovery
Author/School: Linda C. Robinson, South High School
Course: English
Grade Level: 3rd
Standard Met: ELA

One of the purposes of this unit is to introduce Gullah culture to students. Students will examine the culture and its impact upon culture outside of the Sea Islands. It is hoped that by studying Gullah culture students will more closely examine their own cultural heritage whatever it may be. The culminating activity gives the student the opportunity to further examine his/her heritage by conducting an interview with a family elder or by writing a narrative about a pivotal moment in his/her life.

Additionally, this unit has been prepared to foster a heightened awareness of the contributions of African Americans to the fabric of this place called America. African American culture has not had a major role, heretofore, in the history books and literature books that are used in schools. It is essential to augment the material that is available with lessons that reflect the culture of the majority of students in an urban environment.

Charleston, South Carolina was the port of entry for approximately forty percent of the slaves who came to America. Although some people may believe the slaves had no culture, they came from vibrant civilizations in Sierra Leone, Senegal and other West African nations. They came in shackles, but they came with skills that helped shape America. They were iron workers, basket makers and cultivators of rice. Plantation owners became wealthy because of the skill and hard work of slaves brought here for the express purpose of cultivating rice. The inhabitants of the Sea Islands were able to retain links to their forebears in Africa because of their isolation. When the plantation owners fled the oppressive summer heat for the city, the slaves were able to express themselves more freely and pass traditions on to their offspring.

This unit intersperses Gullah culture and language with slave narratives of Olaudah Equiano, and Booker T. Washington, and an excerpt from Richard Wright's autobiography Black Boy, found in the eleventh grade text Elements of Literature fifth course. In addition, narratives from the books Ain't you got a right to the tree of life? and Reminiscences of Sea Island Heritage will be used. The introduction to the Gullah language is exploratory in nature. Materials used include

Gullah fuh oonuh and An Introduction to Gullah. Spirituals, folk tales, and music were culled from the CD “Been in the Storm So Long”, the CD “Gullah Carry Me home, by Marlena Smalls and the Hallelujah Singers, and The People Could Fly by Virginia Hamilton. Additional resources may be found on the World Wide Web. Suggested keywords include, spirituals, slave songs, folk tales, Gullah, slave narratives, Charleston, Sea Islands. The Encarta Africana was an invaluable source.

Although this unit is designed to be used in English 3 (grade 11), there is no reason why it could not be modified for another grade level. My intention is to use it in my English 4 class. I will give my students the option of writing a biography of a family member or doing a research paper. The components of this unit could also be used as part of a Black History celebration or as part of a multicultural awareness program.

Resources

Carawan, Guy and Candie, Ain't you got a right to the tree of life?

Daise, Ronald, Reminiscences of Sea Island Heritage

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Fields, Mamie Garvin and Fields, Karen, Lemon Swamp and Other

Places

Geraty, Virginia Mixson, Gullah fuh oonuh

Hamilton, Virginia, The People Could Fly

Lyons, Mary E., Catching the Fire Phillip Simmons, Blacksmith

Raboteau, Albert J., Slave Religion

Thompson, Robert Ferris, Flash of the Spirit

Turner, Lorenzo Dow, Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect

Vlach, John Michael, The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts

The Great Migration Project, An Introduction to Gullah

Music

Smithsonian Folkways: “Been in the Storm Too Long” (CD)

**Ziplow Records: “Gullah Carry Me Home” by Marlana Smalls and the
Hallelujah Singers (CD)**

**T & K Productions, Inc., “Roots of Rhythm Sounds of Spirituals in the
Gullah Tradition” (VHS tape)**

Mt. Zion Singers, “Gullah Camp Meeting” (cassette tape)

Spoken Word

**Sea Island Translation and Literacy Project, “De Good Nyews Bout
Jedus Christ Wa Luke Write”**

Linda C. Robinson
South High School

Lesson 1
An Introduction: Gullah culture

Objectives:

To introduce students to Gullah culture.

To explore the impact of West African culture on the culture of the United States.

To identify areas on the West Coast of Africa that are viewed as the origins of Gullah culture.

To introduce the Gullah language.

To introduce the narrative as a literary genre.

ELA Standards:

11-12R2.1, 11-12R2.2, 11-12W1.1, 11-12S1.3

Materials: Chalkboard, chalk, CD/cassette player, Elements of Literature, fifth course, “De Good Nyews Bout Jedus Christ Wa Luke Write”, maps of the United States and Africa, the CD “Been in the Storm Too Long”, the book Gullah Fuh Oonuh or Introduction to Gullah

Activity One: (15 minutes)

Procedures:

Play a portion of the tape “De Good Nyews Bout Jedus Christ Wa Luke Write”.

Ask students, as they listen to the tape, to note the following:

- Words that seem familiar
- The accent of the speaker

Stop the tape and ask the following questions:

- What words seemed familiar? (List them on the chalkboard)
- Where do you think the speaker is from and how did you reach that conclusion?

Use a United States map and indicate the location of the Sea Islands. Have students locate specific islands on the map: St. Helena, Johns Island, James Island, etc.)

Inform the students that the language they have heard is Gullah. Gullah is the language spoken by the people of the Sea Islands. Some people believe that the word Gullah comes from the Sierra Leone Gola people. Others believe it derives from the term Angola.

Have a student volunteer locate these countries on a map of Africa.
Have a volunteer find Charleston, South Carolina on a U.S. map.
Inform students that 40% of slaves who were brought to the U.S. entered through the Port of Charleston.

Activity Two: What did they bring? (15---20 minutes)

Group Activity

Procedures:

Divide students into groups of three/four

Ask the students to discuss the following:

What one thing would you want to take with you if you were leaving home and were not going to return?

What, if anything, did the slaves bring with them?

Was it possible for the captives to communicate with each other?

If they were not from the same region, how did they communicate?

How did the slaves communicate with their oppressors (captors)?

Each group will report out to the larger group.

Points to bring out in large group discussion:

Although the slaves did not bring objects with them they brought their skills, memories, religion, and language

Skills: iron working, experience cultivating rice, basket weaving, etc..

Common words among different groups became common words in the larger slave population.

When unable to communicate in a common language, signs were used.

A pidgin form of English came into common usage as a means of communicating with the slave owners.

The slaves mixed English with African words and formed a language that is called Gullah.

Activity Three: A Taste of Gullah (25 minutes)

Play a track from the CD “Been in the Storm Too Long”

After the track plays inform the students that they are going to learn a few Gullah words or expressions.

Use the book Introduction to Gullah or Gullah Fuh Oonuh

Have students repeat the names of objects in the classroom:

Cheer (chair)

‘rasah (eraser)

papuh (paper)

Pensul (pencil)

uh des’ (desk)

uh black bo’d (blackboard)

Hold up objects or point to object and have students use the Gullah word to identify them. Repeat several times for practice.

Who are you? Where are you from?

Have students practice and repeat the following:

Uh Linda Robinson (I am Linda Robinson)

Uh John Smith (I am John Smith)

Uh Phillip Simmons (I am Phillip Simmons)

Repeat with own name

Have the students identify self when teacher or another classmate points at them. (Uh Tracy Jones, etc.)

Explain the Gullah belief that one “stays” on earth but hopes to “live” in heaven. The question therefore is not “Where do you live?”, but “Where do you stay?”

Have students practice and repeat several times:

Weh oonuh stay? (Where do you live?)

Uh stay tuh Eddysto. (I live at Edisto.)

Uh stay tuh Chaa’stun. (I live in Charleston.)

Encourage students to practice the words and expressions they have learned.

Activity Four Introducing the narrative (20 minutes)

Have students find the definition of a narrative in the Handbook of Literary Terms in the text.

Ask students if they have read narratives before. Remind students in grade 12 that they wrote a narrative when they wrote an autobiographical incident in grade 11.

Have them look at the portrait of Olaudah Equiano on page 56 of the text. Have students make some assumptions about Equiano based on his picture. Inform students that Equiano had been a slave and that his narrative is one of the first narratives by a black African to be published. Have students read the short synopsis of Equiano's life on page 56. Students should also record the new vocabulary words in their folders or notebooks.

Homework:

Read from: “”, The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano pages 57-65. Be prepared to discuss the narrative in class.

Assessment: Informal

Teacher observation

Participation in group discussions

Participation in Gullah language activities

Completion of reading assignment

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English 3

Lesson 2

Story Telling: Gullah Style

Objectives:

To discuss the reading assignment from “The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano”

To make the cultural connection between folktales from Africa and folktales from the Sea Islands.

To learn to count in Gullah

To examine the decorative arts of the Sea Islands

ELA standards:

R2.1, R1.1, W2.4, W3.1, W3.3, W3.5, S1.2

Materials:

Elements of Literature fifth course, sweet grass and sweet grass baskets, basket making tool, pictures of Phillip Simmons and his gates taken in Charleston, South Carolina, souvenir from Phillip Simmons’ workshop, Introduction to Gullah, The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts, Catching the Fire: Phillip Simmons, Blacksmith, a quilt purchased in South Carolina.

Activity One Journal Activity (15 minutes) Respond to Literature.

What did you know about slavery before you read Olaudah Equiano’s narrative? What, if anything, did you learn about slavery by reading Olaudah Equiano’s narrative?

Student volunteers will share their journal entries.

Activity Two (15 minutes)

Group Activity

Divide the students into groups of 3-4 students and have them discuss the importance of slave narratives in American literature.

Have students discuss why Equiano would have written about his enslavement.

Each small group will report back to the larger group.

Activity Three

Show and Tell (15minutes)

Discuss previous trips to Charleston/St. Helena

Display baskets purchased in Mount Pleasant.

Show the students the sweet grass and the basket making tool.

Explain that the original basket makers were men.

Show a picture of Dr. Cokely's baskets and discuss the range of prices and quality.

Show pictures of master gate maker Phillip Simmons, his home and workshop.

Read an excerpt from the book Catching the Fire.

Show a quilt purchased in South Carolina and one made by grandmother.

Have students discuss the items and tell about people in their families or acquaintances who are artisans.

Are there any skills that have been handed down through the family?

Activity Four

More Gullah fuh oonuh (15 minutes)

Students will review the terms learned in the previous day's lesson.

Additionally they will learn to count in Gullah.

Students repeat the numbers 1-100.

Activity Five

A Gullah folk tale (10 minutes)

Read the tale "De Bull en' de 'Nat in Gullah"

Ask students to listen carefully and try to determine what the tale is about.

Read the tale again in English.

Have students list similarities between this tale and other tales from Africa.

Homework

Practice Gullah words, phrases and numbers

Read the poem "Africa" by Doretha Williams on page 65 of the text.

English 3

Lesson 3
“Paint a Story”

Objectives:

- To produce a piece of writing in response to a prompt
- To produce a piece of writing based on a reaction to visual stimuli
- To share writing
- To read with accuracy and fluency

ELA Standards:

R2.1, R3.2, W3.3, W2.1

Activity One

Journaling (15 minutes)

Students will respond to the question

Is it possible to tell a story without using words? Why, or why not?

Student volunteers will share their responses.

Activity Two (25 minutes)

“Paint a story” Students will view prints by the artists Jonathon Green and John Jones. (If work by these artists is not available, substitute different artists).

Provide background information about the artists.

After looking at the prints students will create a one or two paragraph story.

Ask a few students to read their stories to the class.

Do not critique the stories but remind students that their writing needs to be as vivid as the colors in the prints. They should “paint a picture with words.”

Ask them to recall a story that was vividly told. What made the story memorable?

Activity Three (remainder of the class period)

Literary Selection from “The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass”

Page 425

Students are to silently read the Douglass narrative

Homework

Prepare 10 questions that can be used in an interview. Be prepared to interview a class mate.

Assessment/Informal
Teacher observation
Completion of journal entry
Completion of story

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English 3

Lesson 4
Practical Matters: Conducting an Interview or
Writing a Narrative

Objectives:

To learn and practice interviewing techniques
To write a report based on interview questions
To practice webbing techniques

ELA Standards

W2.4, W3.3, W2.1, W2.2

Activity One: (30 minutes)

Students will be randomly paired to conduct classmate interviews. Partner A will answer Partner B's questions and vice versa. Upon completing the questioning each person will write a paragraph based on the information elicited.

Activity Two: (20 minutes)

Whole group discussion.

Ask these questions: (write responses on the chalkboard)

What attributes does a good interviewer possess?

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Are there questions you should not ask?

What problems might you encounter when conducting an interview?

Give interview guidelines for culminating activity:

Conduct an interview with an elder of the family or an older person of interest; this could be a minister, grandparent, uncle, aunt, older neighbor, and a nursing home resident.

Video tape or tape record the interview if you have secured permission. If you do not have permission to tape the interview, take notes, and write the interview as soon as possible.

If you have the interview on tape you must turn in the tape as well as a type written copy of the interview.

Due date: 10 days from the date of this lesson

(Place chart with guidelines and grading rubric on the classroom wall.

Students may copy the guidelines into their notebooks.

Activity Three (20 Minutes)

The narrative. Introduce the narrative as the culminating activity alternative for those who are not going to conduct an interview. The guidelines are as follows:

Write a narrative about a pivotal moment in your life. A pivotal moment is one that caused you to rethink the direction of your life or made you stop and think. A pivotal moment is not necessarily a dangerous or violent situation. You may want to do a web of your life in order to help you pinpoint noteworthy occasions. The narrative is to be typewritten. It must be double spaced. It should be at least three double spaced type written pages.

Use one inch left and right margins.

Due date: 10 days from the date of this lesson

(Guidelines and grading rubric will be posted on a chart on the wall.

Students may copy the guidelines into their notebooks.)

Activity Four (time remaining)

Students may begin formulating questions for the interview or do the webbing exercise to begin the narrative.

Extra credit will be given to those students who turn in a copy of their questions or a copy of the webbing exercise.

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Unit Plan
English 3

Lesson 5
Richard Wright:
Black Boy
Objectives:

To respond to literature
To develop and use good listening techniques
To participate in group discussion
To make inferences based on reading

ELA Standards
S1.2, S2.2, R2.1, W3.3

Activity One (5-10 minutes) Biographical information about Richard Wright.

Activity Two (30 minutes) Read the excerpt from Black Boy.

Activity Three (20 minutes)

Whole group discussion

How does Wright's situation compare to that of Olaudah Equiano or Frederick Douglass?

What shackles did Richard Wright have?

Activity Four (10 minutes)

The class will listen as the teacher reads excerpts from Ain't you got a right to the tree of life and Reminiscences of Sea Island Heritage.

Activity Five (5-7 minutes)

Students will write a reaction to the reading in their journals. If there is time they may volunteer to share what they have read.

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English 3
Lesson 6
Gullah, Gullah, Everywhere!

Objectives:

- To use the media center resources for research
- To work cooperatively in a research group
- To do a short oral presentation of the group's findings

ELA Standards:

W2.2, S1.2, S1.3, R2.4

Resources:

Poster board, magic markers, media center resources including the internet.

Activity One: (45--50 minutes)

Divide the class into small, 3-4 person research groups.

They are to use a variety of resources in the Media Center, books, internet, etc. to uncover Gullah cultural influences that may exist in South High School or their own homes and neighborhoods. For example, are there any expressions that are used that are related to Gullah words, are there any customs or traditions that have Gullah influences? Are there foods or seasonings in our markets that are linked to Gullah cooking? Are there Gullah influences in music?

Activity Two: (20 minutes)

The class will reassemble and report out to the large group. Influences will be listed on poster board.

Activity Three (time remaining) Listen to selections from "Gullah Camp Meeting" until class is dismissed.



Slide 1


Praise and Worship

Musical Influences in African
American Worship Services
By Linda C. Robinson

Slide 2

**From the shores of Africa to the Shores
of Lake Erie**

- Music is an essential part of the African American worship experience.
- From the shores of the Motherland to the shores of South Carolina to the shores of Lake Erie African Americans have expressed devotion to God through music.



Cultural Connections

- Slaves who survived the Middle Passage brought African culture with them.
- They brought a reverence for God and nature.
- Additionally, they brought dance and music which were elemental in worshipping the deities and ancestors.
- Out of the melding of African influences and American experiences the spiritual was born.

Slide 4

