

Négritude
A Theme for Improving Self-Image in the French Classroom For Black History Month

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The 1990's have seen the development and use of multicultural curricula in schools all over the country. This has been a harbinger of not only the discussion of origins and background of the various ethnic groups within a school building and district, but also to the inclusion of interdisciplinary subjects to facilitate the teaching of ethnicity and its implications in the school, as well as race relations at large. In the Pittsburgh Public Schools, the multicultural curriculum has spearheaded the development of African-American studies, courses dealing mostly with African-American history and some literature. The introduction of African and Caribbean literature would enhance the multicultural curriculum. Specifically, Francophone African and Caribbean literature would highly complement any African American syllabus--whether it be in a social studies or a French class. After all, colonization, oppression, and dehumanization of Africans parallel the enslavement and dehumanization of Caribbean Africans and American Africans. Similarly, the gaining of independence by Africans from colonial rule and oppression echoes the freeing of the slaves and the gaining of civil rights by African Americans years later.

In the Pittsburgh Public Schools district, there are several reasons for the implementation of a multicultural curriculum, including Francophone African literature, in response to racial and ethnic issues. The school district has a total student population of just over 41,000, 51% of which is African Americans. One important goal of the district has been to create a learning environment in which all students, notwithstanding their ethnic background, will not only get along with each other, but also appreciate each other's background and ethnic origin. Very much in line with this goal, is the district's drive to reduce racism in the school system. That the black population in the Pittsburgh Public Schools is over 51% in a city which is 25% African-American is an indication of racism, however subtly that may be practiced. The fact is that most Whites living within the school district send their children to prep, parochial and other private schools. In addition, the flight of young white families to the suburbs has left mostly older whites without families and with less understanding of minority races. It has, therefore, become very important for the school district to cultivate good race relations within school grounds, especially since mostly other minority groups are moving into town and their children are enrolling in the city schools.

Taylor Allderdice High School is right in the heart of the city, but is located in what is often referred to as a “good neighborhood.” Squirrel Hill is predominantly Jewish. Though less than 10% of the area population is black, the school population is 25% African American, 40% Jewish and 35% other ethnic groups.

Since most of the black students attending Taylor Allderdice High do not live in the neighborhood, they have concerns and feelings about rejection not only in the community at large, but also in the school building. They do not feel a sense of belonging because they are mostly bused from black neighborhoods to their school. On a few occasions, disagreements between students from various neighborhoods have spilled over in the school building. There is, therefore, a definite need to address the issues relating to black students feelings of isolation, and rejection by Whites within the building and by the neighborhood inhabitants.

Exposition of the whole student body of Allderdice to various forms of literature, and especially the exposition of African-American students to the history of American blacks seems to have had very little impact on black students’ self-concept on one hand, and the overall understanding and appreciation of African and African American literature expressing the equality of blacks and whites as beings, artists, scientists, writers, thinkers, etc., on the other hand.

The degree of exposition to ideas and the intensity of thematic analysis are certainly instrumental in orienting student participants toward specific outcomes. While in the Pittsburgh Public High Schools African American literature and history and even some African literature are taught, it can hardly be said that they are given the special attention that encourages maximum outcome.

French is offered up to level six at Allderdice, and students do very well on their French Advanced Placement tests in grammar, but reading of themes by African writers has been rare.

Goal of Curriculum

The aim of this curriculum, therefore, is to expose students at Taylor Allderdice and other schools with comparative student population, racial make-up and curricula content to **Négritude**, which provides for self-esteem and self-image improvement. Introducing the student to this theme will bring several positive learning experiences.

The primary goal is for the student to experience reading in a foreign language, *viz*, French. But the intent is to immerse the student in African literature of positive meaning which is written in French. In fact, reading will be extended to include Afro-American literature that has been translated into French and falls within the context of Négritude.

It is certainly possible to introduce students to a foreign culture and literature by simply talking to them. In fact, from first hand experience, I know that many students in

my various classes already know much about me, of my country Cameroon (which has a French legacy), and some cultural values and norms of Cameroon, simply from asking me questions or listening to me talk about Cameroon. But the intent of the curriculum is more than just mentioning the literature to the students.

Reading is essential part of the curriculum so that students can associate their learning with the writings of Francophone Africans. Reading is intended to take place both at home and in class. Through these readings and discussions, students will learn a high level of language learning and acquisition. To make reading a less tedious task than most students already think it to be, and also make it more practical for the students, mostly extracts will be read for class work, especially in the case of long stories.

Another important goal of the curriculum is to increase student vocabulary and improve grammatical skills. Vocabulary lists and grammatical structure handouts will be given to students before each reading takes place, followed by class discussion and the explication of the text.

The last, but not the least goal, is fundamental and important, since this is the main reason for the implementation of this curriculum during Black History Month. The main purpose is to convey, through the comprehension of Francophone authors--African, Caribbean and American--the exaltation of the individual, the black individual, the former slave or colonized African, unto a higher position. This position is socially, philosophically, politically and otherwise as good as or better than, that of Whites who once oppressed them and thought negatively of everything black.

After each reading, the discussions on the literature of oppression, and resistance to all forms of oppression will be discussed and analyzed in a manner to show that the umbrella theme Négritude has many positive sub-themes for students, such as self-esteem, being at peace with nature, appreciation of others, believing in self, and having pride in one's origin. The discussion will be driven in a way to make students discover all these positive intrinsic values in their daily lives.

Négritude as an Umbrella Theme

Writing by Blacks in the first half of the century can mostly be classified under Négritude, because they expressed similar concepts, sentiments, ideas and feelings: independence, freedom of all sort, self-worth, self-identity, pride in one's heritage, and preservation of one's culture. African-American literature, even before the 1960's, not by accident, exhibits similar themes as those in African writings just before and after independence from European colonial rule.

The American scene, right after emancipation, not only fostered racism, but also promoted white-written novels and stories with negative portraits of Blacks. In fact, it

was in response to these negative portraits and the feeling of discrimination and marginalization that Langston Hughes declared, "I, too, sing America." The writings of Hughes, McKay, and others; the Civil Rights Movement up to Dr. King's assassination; the Supreme Court cases on the education of Blacks, and other social and political activities are indicators of oppression and negative treatment of American Blacks who had to claim their rights and self-esteem, and whose literary response is mostly Négritude in nature.

Similarly, Africans were soon to respond to their colonial masters' brutal treatment of the indigenous people as well as their negative characterization in novels, and in sociological, political and economic literature. For many years before the 1950's, when Africans started to write about Africa and Africans, and before they started to analyze their relations with their white colonial masters and started to agitate for independence, mostly whites wrote about Africa and Africans. Whether in literary, historical, or sociological context, Europeans mostly depicted Africans negatively. Africans and Blacks were portrayed as inferior, and lazy, even though they had to work hard for their white masters under all difficult conditions. In addition, white authors portrayed Blacks as stupid, superstitious, evil, and everything negative in the human society. Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness* is an exemplary novel whose denigration of Africa and Africans is even suggestive in the title.

Even those Whites who wrote about slavery and the slave trade, which was a tragedy for the black race, belittled and looked down on the black victim in every way possible: slaves were seen as a commodity that had to be traded in perfect physical condition, as prescribed by slave traders and owners, to carry out all forms of difficult and often demeaning tasks. But most slave masters treated their slaves worse than beasts of burden. They were overworked, deprived of very basic rights, beaten at will, and fed only inasmuch as they were able to work for long and tedious hours for their masters. Not surprisingly, short stories about the vicious nature of the slave trade mostly pitched the black slave trader, master or driver against his or her black brother while the real profiteer and ultimate authorities behind the activities were not exposed or made accountable. In Merimée's *Tamango*, extreme viciousness is reserved for the black slave trader.

It can be safely said that when Africans took up their pens to write in their colonizers' languages, the use of those languages was reason enough to make some of them express their revulsion at their adopted language and the whole cultural fabric. But these Africans were also strongly responding to the way in which Europeans had portrayed Africa and Africans in novels and stories up to that point. It was, however, a sort of coming of age for a people whose political system had been denigrated; whose cultural heritage had been ridiculed, ravaged and prohibited; and whose socio-economic foundations had been erased. In fact, most of those writers were like people who had had a nightmare, but who could rattle their saber against the monster only in their dreams. Paradoxically, the very scions engendered in the cultural process of colonial education were the ones to raise the battle cry and tear down the parapet built around the masters. They had been to the top and dined with their "superiors" and had dared not only to differ

from them, but indeed to criticize who and what they were. It was certainly the dawn of a new era, and many Africans who were actually the “assimilés” saw a different and new way of relating to their colonial authorities. Later on, the neo-colonial era was equally condemned by continuing and younger writers.

Most early African and Caribbean writers, responding to the negativity in European portrait of Africans, countered by providing more positive images and reason in the African society. In Conrad’s novel *The Heart of Darkness*, Africa and its people represent death, villainy, destruction, evil, and incoherence. In Loti’s *Le roman d’un saphi*, the main character describes Africans -- even the woman who bears his child -- as monkeys, evil, and deceitful. According to Mildred Mortimer, these books actually expose the inhuman treatment of Africans by greedy Europeans, and when Africans and other Blacks wrote, it was in response to these colonialist literature which depersonalized colonial subjects, just as the colonial political structure dispossessed them of their political rights (p. 27).

As the founding father of Négritude, the Martinican W.E.B. DuBois published his *The Souls of Black Folks* in 1914. Considered to be the Bible of the militant school of protest against the stereotyped pictures of the Negro child, the Negro clown and the bad and evil Negro in American literature, Dubois’ work was instrumental in the initiation of the Harlem Renaissance in America as well as defining the path of Négritude for African and Caribbean writers.

L’Enfant noir was published in 1953, and, according to most literary critics, was the first African novel to respond directly to writers like Conrad and Loti. Mortimer observes that Laye set himself a two-fold task : to show that the culture ignored, denigrated, and labeled “pagan” or “primitive” by colonialists was, in fact, different from, but **not** inferior to the European culture. Secondly, he set out to define himself, the African and the people.

Many more novels and poems followed, with Négritude as the central theme. A rather important leitmotif in most of the ensuing novels and poems is the “l’itinéraire de lucidité”, or the journey to self-understanding. This is an important aspect of Négritude that students lacking self-understanding will benefit from.

Some of the notable Caribbean and African writers who contributed to the idea of Négritude as we understand it today are Aimé Césaire, Camara Laye, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Mungo Beti, Ferdinand Oyono, Oyono Mbia. These black writers and others could not have received a better endorsement than that from Sartre, a revered institution by himself, who, reflecting on Négritude, wonders why anybody would expect Blacks to treat white colonialists kindly upon having the opportunity to write against those who treated them so despicably. To Sartre, the Black man was always a victim of oppression, inasmuch as he was just black--in his role as a colonized native or as a deported African. And because he was oppressed in his race and for his race, it was necessary for him to be conscious of his race first, and for him to write against his oppressors without equanimity and restraint.

Providing African and Caribbean scholars with reason to write, Négritude proved to be an embodiment of many interdisciplinary ideas. It was a literary term used to differentiate the style, context and soul of black writers in contrast to those of whites, especially the colonial whites. But it also suggested political equality with whites. Furthermore, in a sociological setting, Négritude defended the traditional African social fabric which colonialists systematically tried to tear down. Philosophically, it was forgiving and transcendental in nature, offering a crossroad for Blacks from all directions, possessing diverse literary, political and aesthetic values.

Curriculum Design

This curriculum unit is designed for use during the four-week period in February, celebrating Black History Month. At Taylor Allderdice High School, Black History Month is well-observed, students are informed about it and encouraged to take part in the related activities. This is the appropriate time to implement this curriculum unit.

All language classes at Allderdice meet five days a week, forty minutes a day. Though a forty-minute period is not very long, the five-day a week meeting provides for continuity. It also offers the opportunity to cover more grounds than if fewer classes per week were held. But with only forty minutes per class period, the readings will mostly be extracts from chosen novels or poems. Unless otherwise indicated, all excerpts are from *La littérature de déracinement* (1980) by Francis Fouet and Régine Renaudeau and *Anthologie Negro-Africaine* by L. Kesteloot.

Although the month of February may have as many as 20 school days, it is advisable to work with the fewest possible available school days. In fact, the year 2,000 will have 21 school days in February, but this month is always the beginning of a new semester in the Pittsburgh Public Schools, thus the loss of some days to clerical activities. An eighteen-day curriculum will certainly expose high school students to the fundamentals of Négritude, encourage self-analysis and actualization. During the first year of the implementation of the curriculum, an evaluation of how to accommodate second and third year students of the Black History Month Négritude Class the following year will be carried out.

Method of Learning and Appreciation of Lessons on Négritude

Before specifying the texts which students will read discuss, and the lay-out of the daily lesson plan, it is important to clarify the method of instruction and learning that should work best in implementation of the curriculum. Lecture, analysis of text and student hands-on tasks are the main three main methodologies that will be used.

First of all, for the part of the curriculum which has the objective of introducing students to the history and geography of Africa (including the slave trade) there will be a lot more lecturing from teacher than when it comes to reading and appreciating the chosen texts. There are also more hands-on activities for students in this section.

To facilitate literary reading, comprehension, appreciation, and application, the basic method in the “*explication de texte*”, as is termed in French, will be followed. In the “*explication de texte*” method, students will answer questions in the order below.

1. **Sommaire:** Depending on the class (track or level) this may be done in French, English, or even in both languages. Students will summarize, either in paragraph or listing form, the important ideas and activities that make up the story, excerpt or poem.
2. **Intrigue:** In some cases, the “*sommaire*” is the same as the “*intrigue*”, but when we start to talk about the novel of recollection, the anti-roman, or the avant-gardiste roman, the two may not be compatible at all. The “*intrigue*” is the actual plot in order, as things happened. Students will write out the “*intrigue*”. As with the “*sommaire*”, the specific class involved will determine the language in which it will be written. The “*intrigue*” should outline the important events and actions that advance , chronologically, the story, excerpt or poem. The progression should include “*le debut*” as well as the “*dénouement*.”
3. **Themes:** Students will have to list (and support their claims) all possible themes that they find in a given reading. The inclusive themes of *Négritude* are:
 - ◆ Journey to self-enlightenment
 - ◆ Beauty in Blackness and Blacks
 - ◆ Pride in Black Culture
 - ◆ Pride in self
 - ◆ Self Esteem
 - ◆ Togetherness and Collectivism
 - ◆ Nationalism
 - ◆ Liberation and Freedom
 - ◆ Naturalness and being at ease with nature
 - ◆ Communication with the past and ancestors
 - ◆ Respect for those who are older
 - ◆ Free style in writing
4. **Style:** Style will include point de vue, narratif, dialogue, choix de mot, ironie, and ton. Students will write and talk about style--how certain points of view may heighten or lower emotions; how the choice of certain descriptive words may make writing more vivid, more emotional (sorrowful, painful, angry, etc.).

Planning for Success in Each Lesson

To achieve goals in each lesson, reading in the classroom will be done aloud so that

pronunciation can be checked and corrected. Learning and retention of vocabulary will be assured in three ways:

1. New vocabulary will be reviewed with students before each reading
2. Students will be randomly chosen during class to explain words in context
3. Work will be provided for students to complete using appropriate vocabulary from list

On the other hand, grammatical structures will be explained regularly, as they are encountered in readings.

As for the retention and use of themes, students will be required, after each reading, to write three sub-themes under Négritude which they have found in the reading. Each student will be required to read his theme out loud to the class. While themes will certainly fall under Négritude, they will also be expected to relate somehow to Black History Month. Above all, themes should appeal to students inner self and provide for a feeling of self-improvement.

Sequence of Lessons

Part One: Places, Settings, Events and Conditions Leading to Négritude

This section of the curriculum unit introduces students to Africa, Europe and the Americas. It highlights the triangular trade pattern in which material goods from the Americas went to Europe while those from Europe went to Africa. Human goods (slaves) from Africa were shipped to America and the Caribbean Islands. The abolition of slavery and slave trade led to the European occupation of the African continent to secure sources of raw materials.

Pre-Colonial Africa and the Slave Trade

(Days One and Two)

Before the colonization and partition of Africa, and the ensuing arbitrary carving out of countries where none existed before in the continent, Africa was a land of independent kingdoms and empires. Some kingdoms were quite small, having a population of only a few hundred people while others had millions of people. A language, same cultural and traditional practices as well as a definite physical area usually were the criteria determining an ethnic group headed by a king or a chief. Empires were usually larger. Sometimes they were made of a mosaic of peoples from different ethnic groups, speaking different languages and dialects, and bound together by war treaties, marriage vows between members of the ruling families, etc.

Ancient Africa boasted of hundreds of kingdoms, chiefdoms and empires, most of which have never been mentioned in any text book. I happen to come from a Cameroonain kingdom of which I have not found the name in any text book yet. Regularly mentioned ancient African kingdoms, and empires include Moroe in Nubia, Axum in Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Songhai (Songhay), Asente, Ife, Benin, Zimbabwe, Buganda, Bakongo, Zulu, Bornu, etc.

Each of these kingdoms, chiefdoms and empires had a highly sophisticated political, military, social and cultural structure. Archeologists and historians have pieced information together, proving that very high level of civilization occurred in some of these states before they were destroyed.

Trade posts existed along the coast of Africa and European merchants brought various goods which they exchanged for gold, diamonds, ivory, hardwood and other items. This trade in material goods later shifted, though not completed to one involving humans. Africans were sold to Europeans who took them to the Americas and sold them to be used as slaves to work on plantations, individual farm lands and in homes. Sugar cane plantations in the Caribbean absorbed millions of Africans while cotton, tobacco and other plantations in America used millions of others.

The slave trade became more profitable than that of gold and diamonds. This made some powerful kingdoms and empires concentrate on warring and capturing people to sell as slaves. More sophisticated weapons brought in by Europeans encouraged states

as well as individuals to become slave hunters. In fact, when laws were passed by European countries to stop slavery and slave trade, the enforcement was problematic not only in Europe and America, but also in Africa where some kings claimed they would become destitute if they stopped the slave trade.

Human cost of the slave trade and slavery was enormous. Not counting casualties during raids and wars to take people to be sold into slavery, it is estimated that 15 million Africans died in transit to their destination as slaves or while working as slaves! This rivals the Jewish tragedy of the Holocaust.

Sample Lesson Plan

Lesson Goals

This lesson is to introduce the students to Ancient Africa, the slave trade and its effects. It discloses Africa's high degree of civilization in which all Africans including the children of former slaves ought to take pride. Lastly, even with its horrors, slavery and its long-term effect were an impetus to scholarly thoughts of Blacks.

Student Objectives

At the end of this lesson, each student will be able to:

- Draw the map of Africa and correctly locate given ancient kingdoms and empires
- Trace the triangular trade route between America, Europe and Africa
- State the merchandise or goods leaving one continent to the other
- Provide basic information on the social, political, military, and cultural structure of ancient African kingdoms and empires
- State the evils and benefits of the slave trade

Process

This is a teacher-driven lecture lesson. I will use maps, overhead projector and transparencies, and the striking pictures that appear in texts on slavery and the slave trade. The basic resources from which I will obtain most information are Leon Clark's *Through African Eyes*; Basil Davidson's *African History*; Phyllis Martin and Patrick O'Meara's *Africa*; Rex Colling's *A Modern Atlas of African History*, and Robert Smith's *Warfare and Diplomacy in Pre-Colonial West Africa*. Students will be expected to take notes during lecture.

Hands-on activities for students will include showing major kingdoms and empires on a blank map of Africa; showing major trading posts on the African coast, including a major slave post; showing the triangular trade route between America, Europe and Africa, specifying the "goods" involved.

COLONIAL AFRICA: 1884-1960's

(Day 3 and 4)

After the lucrative slave trade was finally stopped by all European and American governments, there was a need for all who had been involved in the business to find an alternative source of income. Even though trading in other goods had preceded the slave trade, the latter had proven to be more profitable to all those who had the means to be part of it.

For Europeans, going deeper into the heart of Africa to exploit the resources (and some had the ulterior motive to use the local people just like slaves) was the one way to recover losses resulting from abandoning the slave trade. Each country approached this issue in a different manner, leading to what was termed the “Scramble for Africa”. Eager to increase his wealth, King Leopold of Belgium sent the American explorer Stanley to make treaties with local Congolese kings, and by 1884, Leopold claimed an Africa territory as large as Western Europe. At the same time, Bismarck, Chancellor of the German Empire, made similar moves, and in 18 months (between 1883 and 1885) was able to carve out territories in Tanganyika (Tanzania), South West Africa (Namibia), Togoland (Togo), and Kamerun (Cameroun or Cameroon). Bismarck was more interested in political ventures than economic ends, and was intent on creating a competition between England and France (Germany’s enemy) and improving Germany’s position at home.

Bismarck’s activities brought the exact result that he had hoped for. Coupled with Leopold’s activities, his move had alarmed the other interested European countries. The scramble for Africa had reached a stage that needed set rules to avoid a catastrophe. The Conference of Berlin in 1884-5 lay down rules for the game. There was to be no slave trading, and no interference in the territories of other Europeans. By 1900, the competition was over, and Africa had been sliced and parceled out by European powers. This was termed the *Partition of Africa*.

French territories after the competition included most of North and West Africa (Sometimes referred to as the French Sudan). The specific countries which made up the French territories were Sénégal, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinée, Burkina Fasso (formally, La haute Volta), Mali, Niger, Benin, and Dahomey. When the German Kaiser lost the First World War, his territories were taken away by the League of Nations and administered as trust territories. Cameroon and Togo were given over to France, while Tanganyika was given to the British, and Namibia was administered by South Africa because it fought with the allies against the Germans.

Colonization resulted in social, political, cultural and economic changes. Politically, the power structure and source shifted, as the colonial power superseded those of the local kings. Traditional rulers who resisted colonial rule always lost their authority and sometimes their lives. In carving out countries for colonial convenience, tribes, villages and sometimes families became parts of different “countries”.

The French, like all colonialists, imposed their cultural values on colonized people. Through education and religion, the French impressed the notion of the superiority of their culture and values on Africans. African religion and beliefs were

denigrated and traditional education and related institutions ridiculed, outlawed, and prohibited. The prohibition of traditional cultural practices and the implication that civilization and wealth came only through westernization are the causes of the extinction of many valuable cultural aspects. In Cameroon, for example, it is impossible to find many people who are part of the oral tradition, unless these people grew up in isolated rural areas.

The French thought that their colonies were going to be with them forever, so they thought of those territories as being part of France. Ironically, though, people in those overseas territories were not automatically French. Only intellectuals, highly educated individuals, politicians of national repute and some very rich business people were assimilated and became French people. They were called the “assimilés”.

As fate would have it, it was the intellectual group of these “assimilés” that quickly understood the hypocritical nature and narrow-mindedness of their European counterparts. This intellectual group of Africans who had become good French people started to criticize European practices in Africa, and especially the treatment of the local people and their culture as well as the portrayal of Africans in novels and other writings. This group became the literary, political and cultural conscience of colonized Africa and its people.

Economically, Africa became the “milking cow” of the colonialists. With the slave trade over and the industrial revolution at its height, African diamonds, gold, bronze, ivory, timber and rubber were exploited and taken to Europe. In addition, various types of forced labor and taxation were imposed on the indigenous people, to facilitate administrative practices. The French, of all people, ironically forgot what had caused the French revolution.

In conclusion, the period of colonization was one of exploitation and deprivation-- a period in which Africans lost virtually all their political, cultural, and economic rights to the European colonizers. Above all, Africans were deprived of their humanity; they were looked upon as animals, lower than Europeans. While the French were respected in Africa, and some times treated as gods, the African in Paris, in spite of his superior education and assimilation, was still despised, and patronized at best.

Sample Lesson Plan

Goals of Lesson

This lesson introduces students to the causes of the colonization of Africa and the process by which it was done. It also discloses the impact of colonialism on Africans, the culture, the social structure, and the political as well as the economic structure.

Student Objectives

At the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Explain the terms “the scramble for Africa: and “the partition of Africa”
- List all former French colonies in Africa and correctly point each out on a map

- State the political, social, economic and cultural changes during colonial years
- Explain how Africans could become French and why not many could be French
- Give a few reasons as to why French became the language of instruction in those countries .
- Make a list of situations under colonial rule in which they would feel slighted by Europeans

Procedure

Each day, after teacher lecture, during which students would be required to take notes, teacher will give students worksheets to for the remaining 15-20 minutes of class time. Each day work will vary one of reproducing information on paper and that of drawing maps, labeling or using other visual aids. Students would have answered all the above questions by the end of the lesson. Teacher will have to make up most, if not all the student worksheets. In addition to recommended texts in the preceding lesson, Basil Davidson's *Modern Africa: A Social and Political History*; Louise Crane's *Africa: History. Culture. Geography*; and Veronica Ellis' *First Book About Africa* are also useful sources.

INDEPENDENT AFRICA

(Day 5 and 6)

Between 1956 and 1962, all the continental French colonies in Africa gained their independence. Djibouti and the Comoros were the last to obtain their independence, more than a decade after the other countries, because France wanted to hold on to them for strategic reasons and because of the unstable politics in both islands. The late 1950's and the early 1960's saw most African countries get their independence in droves because of several reasons.

The most ironic reason always talked about is that Africans were ready to govern themselves. The open secret, though, was that Africans had highly sophisticated political and social structures before Europeans arrived and made "countries" by forcing the union of previously independent nations. So Africans were able to govern themselves before colonialism. The root of most of the chaotic situations in both colonial and independent Africa is the creation of these artificial nations in which many different peoples still pay allegiance to their kings, chiefs or other form of tribal ruler. It is a miracle that African countries have not fallen apart faster than Eastern Europe at the end of the Cold War.

Nor were African countries any more bellicose than Europeans before the latter went to Africa. In fact, European princes, kings and states were notorious for incessant and long wars. So when Europeans colonized Africa, it was not to stop wars; in fact they pulled Africa into two big wars.

Basically, Africans were weary of almost a century of European dominance, a century of being looked at negatively in spite of all their achievement. These were also

Africans who saw through the Europeans and saw how they were exploiting the country--taking away the best lands from the indigenous people and in turn employing same people to work on the seized land in a slave-master relationship. These were Africans who yearned to correct the wrong done to their countries and peoples--to revive banned traditions and cultures, to be more in tune with their national heritage than with those of Europe. These people stood for nationalism, embodying Négritude.

So, started long before independence in Europe, Négritude found even a more fertile ground on which to flourish at independence. According to Leon Clark, “..the concept of Négritude, like nationalism, was a means by which black Africans could claim their place in the universe, a place denied them by outside forces.” Négritude was at its height right after independence , a time when Europeans claimed to give Africans their independence , but in the case of France, especially, there had really been very little movement of people out of Africa. French men and women were in almost every government office as technical advisers, and being paid twice as much as their black supervisors.

Independent Africa provided the environment for the growth of writers on Négritude. They wrote on Négritude, but they also wrote about negative neocolonialist practices which were being carried out by now Blacks in position of power, or the French who stayed behind.

Sample Lesson Plan

Goals

The aim of this lesson is to show how Négritude, started as a literary and cultural movement actually contributed to, and strengthened nationalistic movements which in turn led to the decolonization of Africa. In addition, it highlights the fact that, because of Négritude, Africans were prouder than ever to reclaim their cultural values and traditions, as they journeyed into the new era of independence. It introduces participants to an era of cultural revival which reached its height in the 1980’s. Négritude authors are also introduced along with their newly independent country.

Student Objectives

At the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- List all the African countries that gained independence from France between 1956 and 1975
- State from which country each writer to be discussed originates
- List some activities that suggest cultural revival
- Show how Négritude, nationalism and cultural revival are intertwined

Procedure

Teacher will lecture to students about the achieving of independence by African countries, first starting with activities at the United Nations. The role of various African intellectuals in hastening the achievement of independence, including those of writers will be emphasized. A list with individual countries, dates on which they obtained

independence and associated authors will be provided to students. Special efforts made by countries to obtain independence, like the self-declaration of independence by Guinée, as well as the fact that Laye comes from Guinée will be highlighted. For hands-on activities, students will be given blank maps, which they will label as the lecture progresses. At the end of the lecture students will answer questions tied to the objectives above. Some textbooks used in preceding lessons will have adequate information, but many other sources are listed in the bibliography

THE CARIBBEAN

(Day 7)

The Caribbean or the West Indies are central to the discussion of Négritude. Haitian writers are said to be the precursors to Négritude, expressing the inequality that existed between Blacks and Whites in Haiti and in France, many years after Haiti obtained her independence from France. These writings asked for equality between the races. Later on, the student leaders who started Négritude came from Martinique, Guyana, and Guadeloupe.

The Islands were settled by African slaves brought by different European nationals (The British, Dutch, Spanish, French) in the seventeenth century to develop prosperous sugar plantations. The islands under French control were Haiti, Martinique, Guadeloupe; Guyana was shared by Great Britain and France. While Haiti got her independence from France well over a century ago, Martinique and Guadeloupe remained French overseas territory until in 1946, when a relationship comparable to that of Puerto Rico and the USA was established between them and France.

The sugar cane plantations of the Caribbean were a grave yard for Blacks in many ways. For many years, they worked on these plantations forcibly for no pay. After emancipation, they worked for very little money under very harsh conditions. Working long hours, they sometimes were cheated out of their pay or given nothing for unexplained reason. The life of a black person was of little value to the white people who controlled his life. The movie *Sugar Cane Alley* is an excellent example of the inhuman living conditions that Blacks experienced in Martinique and in all the other islands where they worked on cane fields for Whites.

No wonder, therefore, that Négritude has a rather strong Caribbean connection. After the mockery of Haitians writing about the inequality of races in spite of the declarations, during the French Revolution, of equality and brotherhood, “Légitime défense” was written by a group of Caribbean students (led by Etienne Léro from Guadeloupe) studying in France in 1932. This was to encourage fellow islanders and other Blacks to write and express themselves differently from their colonial white French masters. Later on, Du Bois and Césaire from Martinique; Damas from Guyana ; Senghor from Africa, and other black students studying in Paris founded L’Étudiant noir,” which lay the foundations of Négritude.

Sample Lesson Plan

Goals of Lesson

This lesson points out the importance of the Caribbean Islands in the literature of Négritude. As a reminder to the fact that slaves were not only shipped to mainland America , it also stresses the fact that the treatment of slaves and freed Blacks left much to be desired. They were overworked, treated inhumanly and were of no importance once they could no longer work due to illness or age.

Student Objectives

From this lesson, students will be able to

- Identify French Guyana, the islands of Martinique, Guadeloupe and Haiti
- State the link between the islands, Africa and Europe during the slave trade
- State what type of jobs slaves and freed Blacks did and specify their work conditions
- Establish the importance of the Caribbean in the context of Négritude

Procedure

Teacher will gather and organize material to give students a lecture on especially the social, political and economic conditions of Blacks in the Caribbean. This of course, will be in the context of slavery and colonial workers. Since the slave trade and the way Blacks got to the islands has already been treated, this will again be mentioned but not delved upon. Parts of the movie *Sugar Cane Alley* can be shown here while the remaining parts are shown during the week in which Césaire and other Caribbean writers are being discussed.

THE COMING TOGETHER OF ASSIMILATED AFRICANS AND CARIBBEAN AND AMERICAN THINKERS

(Day 8)

This is rather a short lesson to discuss influences leading to the birth of Négritude as it is known today. In all respect we know that individuals influenced others, some directly by being together, while others' influences were not direct or personal. But all those who engaged in a conscientious and systematic way in rehabilitating a black race that Europeans had demeaned and demonized thought very much alike.

Du Bois is said to be one of the very few American Blacks in his time to have attained a high level of education, receiving a doctorate. Of Martinican origin, he had moved to America where he and his ideas were not well-received by Whites. Having launched the *Niagaran Movement* and written *The Soul of Black Folks*, he traveled to Europe and Africa, where he was influenced a lot by educated Africans, most of whom led African countries into independence: L'influence de Du Bois fut enorme. Blaise Diagne, George Padmore, Nnamdi Azikiwe (first P.M. of Nigeria) Kwame Nkrumah (first president of Ghana) Jomo Kenyatta (first president of Kenya) were all directly influenced. His *The Soul of Black Folks* started the Harlem Renaissance in America, and laid the foundation of Négritude, even though some sources would rather credit earlier Haitian writing for this.

Caribbean students in France wrote "La Légitime Défense", the justification of free style writing for Blacks, as opposed to the rigid classic style of Whites. The newspaper *L'Étudiant noir* brought black students together and claimed the creation of freedom of Blacks from all Western pretexts, inviting them to go back to their African roots.

The fact of the matter is that African-Americans were treated poorly in America

even after emancipation, just as Caribbean people were treated poorly by the French in the Caribbean. Africans under colonization were treated like slaves in some cases, and at best mainly patronized by French Whites. The meeting of thinkers with similar experiences facilitated the creation or establishment of a response mechanism or technique. This took place in the 1920's and the 1930s.

PART TWO

With the presentation of the historical background of Négritude completed, it is now easier for the students to put ideas, people and places in context and try to make sense of Négritude as a social, political, cultural, economic, or just literary concept and movement. The selection of readings to be analyzed in class is representative of African, West Indian, and American writers in French. The selection of excerpts instead of whole texts makes it easier to include more authors than if whole novels, essays, or poems were treated.

W.E.B. Du Bois

(Day 9 and 10)

Born in Martinique in 1868, Du Bois spent his adult life in other countries, including the United States, where he was a citizen not much liked by whites. He was one of very few black Americans who received a doctorate degree in those days, after attending prestigious universities including Harvard. In the USA where he saw the basic rights of Blacks, including the right to vote, denied them, he became very active in rallying people to fight for their rights. Upon founding the Niagara Movement, he declared that all they (Blacks) wanted was their basic human rights. He spent a lot of time in Africa and in Europe, where he met future African leaders and African students, respectively. He was greatly influenced by African leaders such as Nkrumah, Azikiwe, Kenyatta, all of whom led the way in fighting for African independence.

Generally, Du Bois is thought of as being the official defender of the black race, and the father of the Négritude Movement. In addition to all his activities to promote race equality or to claim equality for the black race, he wrote *The Soul of Black Folks*, which was the Bible on the conditions of Blacks in America. This started the Harlem Renaissance in America and other Black literary and cultural movements elsewhere. To most literary historians, this is where Négritude also started.

Selected Work: “Le Mythe de la liberté” from his **Ame noires** (1903). This is an excerpt from Kesteloot’s *Anthologie Negro-Africaine*.

Sample Lesson Plan

Goals of Lesson

The goals of the lesson are to introduce students to the person usually referred to as the father of Black freedom movement in America. His “Mythe de la liberté” is an insightful introduction to the racial inequalities that existed between Whites and Blacks, and especially the deprivation of American Blacks of their basic rights and freedom.

Student Objective (Starting with this lesson, each subsequent lesson will have student objectives including the procedure for the analysis of text. If no student objectives are outlined, teacher will have to make one based on the content of the lesson, making sure especially to include the concepts of self-esteem, self-motivation, etc.).

By the end of the lesson, each student will be able to:

- State reasons why Du Bois is considered as the father of Black freedom Movement
- List five concrete activities that Du Bois did to promote race relations or improve the conditions of Blacks
- State one or two important aspects of leadership or self-esteem that they have learnt from Du Bois and would make practice and apply to themselves
- Master vocabulary, especially that dealing with race, equality, and leadership
- Analyze text using the method provided above (See section on Method of Analysis)

Procedure

Day before the first lesson, a vocabulary list of the key words in the lesson as well as other words that do not look basic and familiar at third year level will be given out to class, to find meanings at home. The first day on Du Bois, teacher will lecture about him, highlighting his many activities leading to the Civil Rights Movement. Teacher will go over vocabulary list with students, making sure that every student has the meanings of the words on the list. Since the excerpt is very short, the class will read it out loud today, with different students taking turns to read a few sentences. For homework, students will be required to reread the excerpt, and do their analysis of text, following the specifications on the “explication de texte” guide , with summary in English. On the second day, after a quick translation of text by teacher, the rest of the class period will be filled with student activities, according to specifications of student objectives for the lesson.

Langston Hughes and Claude McKay (also Mac Kay) (Day 11 and 12)

Ten years after Du Bois’ *Soul of Black Folks*, the Harlem Renaissance was born and many young black authors and artist of all types blossomed. Many young artists of Négritude, two of whom were Hughes and McKay, came on the scene.

Langston Hughes

Born in 1902, Hughes was an American of mixed race. After a childhood of poverty, during which he taught himself how to write and read, he became knowledgeable in all subjects. Years later in Paris, where he became personal friends with Damas and Sènghor, he was supposedly the one American with the most influence over all the black writers in France.

Hughes himself is considered one of the best black writers, especially because of his themes, which include the distress of Blacks and the understanding of the pain and suffering under slavery. His other themes all fall under Négritude: black people’s long journey of suffering; nostalgia about Africa; the uneasiness of black people in a white world; and his famous declaration of his right in the American society.

The selection most suitable to students, short, easy to understand and containing a blunt message is Hughes' "I Too Sing..." ("Moi Aussi Je Suis L'Amérique" from *Anthologie Negro-Africaine*).

Goal of Lesson

To show students that a background of poverty cannot stop them from doing whatever their goal is (as was the life of Hughes). In the same author, students with little self-concept will find out that they can rightfully declare their place, especially when they are right.

The lesson plan is similar to that of Du Bois above, except for a few questions which will deal specifically with Hughes life and work.

Claude McKay

Born in 1860 in Jamaica, he spent his adult life in the USA after having traveled by various means to many different countries. His wandering and unstable life was by choice because he repeatedly received scholarships to study in the Tuskegee Institute founded by Booker T. Washington. To satisfy his curiosity, he lived in Harlem, working as a dishwasher; to know America, he worked as a seaman on a coasting vessel and in a Pullman on the Trans-American rail road, and finally to know the world, he worked as an engineer on a cargo boat to Russia. In Europe, he worked in a printing shop in London; reported for a newspaper; and from Marseilles to Barcelona, he worked as a stevedore.

But he neither stopped writing nor thinking about and fighting for the rights of black people. When finally back in the USA, he was heavily involved in the Harlem Negro Renaissance, and with Hughes, Jean Toomer, Countee Cullen and others, he took part in activities, protests, etc. He founded the realist American Negro novel, writing *Home to Harlem*, and *Banjo*, from which the excerpt “Vous êtes une bande perdue, vous les noirs instruits”.

In this excerpt, Mac Kay is basically angry at educated black people who “sell out”. “You receive a white man’s education and you learn how to despise your own people.”

Lesson Plan

Goal

Mac Kay’s “You are a lost bunch” introduces the student to another aspect of the difficulties and problems that Blacks faced. Education was hard for Blacks to obtain. But those who got it and did nothing to help improve the condition of their fellow blacks, whatever the reason, ran the risk of being accused of looking down on the other blacks. Lesson objectives for students and procedure for teaching the lesson should follow the method of analysis provided above. Individual questions and observations on Mac Kay will be added to objectives.

Aime Césaire

(Day 13 and 14)

Césaire was born in 1913 in Basse-Point, Martinique. He went through the teachers professional school and received a teaching certificate. After teaching for a few

years at Fort-de-France he was elected a parliamentarian on the communist Party slate. Today, he lives in Fort-de-France as mayor, but there is a disagreement as to whether he resigned from the Communist Party in 1956 (Fouet and Renaudeau) or if he actually is the head of that party now (Kesteloot).

His role in the Négritude Movement is important. He left Martinique for France, where he met Senghor and Damas. *Légitime Défense* was the outcome of the meeting of these three and other black students. Later on the three of them founded l' *Étudiant noir*.

At the beginning of the second World War, he left France and went back to Martinique, where he met André Breton. After the war, he went back to France as a parliamentarian for his party.

Of all the writing that he did on Négritude, we are going to analyze a page long of excerpt from his "*Discours sur le colonialisme*" and the poem *Négritude*, both from his *Cahier*.

Goal of Lesson

The lesson introduces students to Césaire's concepts of Négritude, which embodies everything natural and African, but rejects everything artificial, fake and European. The excerpt on colonialism is an analysis of the financial interest of Europeans in colonizing Africa, a point which students were told about in the historical section, which is more immoral to him than anything else.

Léopold Sédar Senghor

(Day 15 and 16)

He was born in Joal, Sénégal, in 1906, to a family with land. After high school, he went to France and had an education at the Sorbonne, where he was the first Black African to get a degree under the French education system.

Senghor went back home to teach, and was briefly imprisoned during the second World War. After the war, he went back to teaching and then into politics where he was soon elected a parliamentarian, to represent Sénégal in the Constituent Assembly. In 1955, he became secretary of state and five years later, at independence, he became the first president of Sénégal. After about three decades as president, he retired from politics and is now living in France. His education and political success facilitated his assimilation.

Senghor is regarded by some authorities as being the master behind the Négritude Movement. As has been discussed, there are others who did things in that direction before him. The theory of Négritude, though, has a lot to do with what Senghor thinks, especially his theory on going back to African roots, though he himself has lived a full French life.

Selected readings are all poems, and represent Senghor's view on Négritude.

“Femme noire” and “Aux tirailleurs sénégalais morts pour la France.” Both poems are taken from Marie Collins’ *Black Poets in French*.

Goals of Lesson

A lesson with Senghor gives the opportunity to quickly review the concept of assimilation, since Senghor was Senegalese president for three decades, but now is living in France as a French man with his blond French wife. More importantly, this lesson lets us put his theory into perspective, by looking at his poems and his personal ways. The main part of the lesson plan follows the *explication de texte* method accompanied by questions of personal meaning and learning for students

Camara Laye

(Day 17 and 18)

Laye (some authorities have Camara as the last name) was born in 1928 in Kouroussa, Guinea. First went to Muslim school, then to a French language primary school, and eventually left for the capital Conakry. After Conakry, he got a grant to go to France and study. After getting his license in auto-mechanics he went on to get a degree in engineering. While working in France, he wrote his first two novels, *L’Enfant noir*, and *Le Regard du roi*.

Laye went home when his country became independent in 1958. Guinea is one African country that wanted a total break with her colonial past, so the French were forced out and they took with them everything they could carry, including phones and light bulbs. This was intended to make life difficult for Touré’s young Government. Laye did not get along with the government after a while and had to leave again.

Written in 1953, *L’Enfant noir* is said to be first Black African novel (on Négritude). As such, Laye had the novel while Senghor theorized and wrote poems. In fact, according to Fouet and Renaudeau, *L’Enfant noir* is, without a doubt, the most well-known of all Black African. We will read two excerpts including the “Le serpent” and “Une chance Unique.”

Lesson Plan

This lesson introduces the student to the first Black African novelist and one whose novel has all the characteristics of Négritude. For this last lesson, I will first have the students do a lot of exploratory work. For each excerpt that we read, they will first be expected to determine the aspects that make up Négritude. After that the regular lesson plan format, including the stating of student objectives will follow.

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