

Love to Tell the Story: West African Expressions Come to West Philadelphia

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Overview
Rationale
Objectives
Folkloric Beginnings
Ethnographic Examination
Language Links
Oral Traditions
The Story Told
Lesson Plan 1
Lesson Plan 2
Lesson Plan 3
Annotated Bibliography
Student Resources
Appendix

Overview

This curriculum unit explores patterns and styles of storytelling performed orally and in writing among various groups of African people residing in the Overbrook neighborhoods of West Philadelphia. This unit's goal is to work on dismantling stigmas and stereotypes harbored among students about various African ethnic groups living in America. One of the objectives of the unit is to have students discover and explore cultural and historical backgrounds of fellow students about whom they have little understanding. The premise is that cultivating cross-cultural understanding will foster appreciation among the students for the cultural connections that can bring them together as one people.

Our exploration will commence with a compilation and comparison of proverbs used in conversation, song, and legendary tales across the African cultures. Another goal of the curriculum unit is to stimulate more informed dialogues in their cultural similarities found through the stories told in family structures, that emerge into students' lives; the way in which they live and/or practice particular rituals. Additionally, the curriculum unit uses several films to introduce students to folklore as the expression of collectively held ideas, and to explore reasons for variation across African cultures in Overbrook, West Philadelphia, and beyond.

This unit can be used in the traditional, honors, or advanced English Language Arts high school classroom. Some of the unit's content can be adapted for use in a learning-support classroom environment. The curriculum unit uses Pennsylvania Academic State Standards from three disciplines: Language Arts - Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening; History; a few standards from both Geography, as well as, the Arts & Humanities. This unit was developed in thinking of the inclusion of African-American studies into the School District of Philadelphia's curriculum guidelines. The majority of the study of African-Americans is left to English and History teachers in the secondary grades. This unit gives teachers additional materials to complement what they have been provided to make use of in the classroom.

Rationale

Many of the students who attend the comprehensive neighborhood high school located in the Overbrook section of Philadelphia are first generation American residents, from West Africa while many others are from various Caribbean Islands. Also, there are students attending the high school who are Africans born in America. Representing long family histories right from the neighborhood, these students add to the diverse dynamics of the redesigning of the community.

Like most students, my students are adept at noticing ethnic and cultural differences, and placing them in a negative light. But behind these few much vaunted differences, there are more than a few cultural similarities that go either unnoticed or ignored. These cultural similarities, which are thresholds to the history of the Black Atlantic, may be just the resources needed for strengthening a sense of belonging that benefits the school community, and is vital to the practice of citizenship.

Students who can recognize that there is a tie that binds us all together, no matter what language, dialect or color is seen or experienced will become better citizens. The premise of this unit is that the stories, proverbs and familial traditions and rituals are resources for building cross-cultural understanding among students. This unit will explore the lexis of West Africans (Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone), Jamaicans, and African-Americans. The curriculum unit does not neglect to include any other groups represented in the neighborhood; these African groups were considered and studied because of they represent the highest numbers of students at the high school.

For this and other reasons, the theme of this unit will facilitate the dismantling of stigmas and stereotypes that students harbor against one group of Africans or another. Students will be analyze the relationships among various contextual and stylistic markers used in all of their languages spoken and the practice of ritual that are a reflection of the language and/or dialect. Scholars have consistently pointed to the shared value placed on verbal dexterity, both written and oral, throughout the African world. Students will investigate how it is that the "word" is used to accomplish society. In order to reach this goal, students must have a basic knowledge of human interaction, verbal/non-verbal,

reading comprehension, and an understanding of the effect of an author's use of multiple literary devices. In readings, writings, recordings and films Students will be exposed to a number of language dialects that are used in West Philadelphia, where American English is mixed with French, Portuguese, Patois, and Village tongues.

In this unit, students will be exposed to several genres of the story, told orally, visually or written. This unit will enhance students' ability to have and hold an intelligible conversation with someone who may speak American English as a second language. In addition, students will have the opportunity and support to lengthen their writing assignments. This unit aims to get students writing across the genres in different styles. The focus for students will be to recognize, appreciate, and respect the multiple dialects spoken as expressive resources that enhance the life of the school.

Objectives

The strategies used are interviewing (radio and print journalism); storytelling (long/short, oral/written); poetry (written and spoken word); film viewing (West African, African-American, and Caribbean). In using the background information provided while in the *From West Africa to West Philadelphia: Cultural Routes to Common Ground* seminar, students will explore, learn, and discover of the many oral traditions of their families and local community organizations in their neighborhood. Students will be encouraged to rekindle relationships with elder members of the families in order to engage in discussions about their heritage of storytelling and the African worlds opened up through their stories.

Students will be encouraged to retreat from their preconceptions about other neighborhood "tribes" and build upon their new knowledge of others with whom they are less familiar. A bit of folklore itself, the term "tribes" is used in a friendly manner, as shorthand for ethnic groups, different nationalities and the like. Folklore is an important concept, which needs to be clearly defined from the beginning. Folklore can be defined as stylized forms and patterns of social communication. Folklore emerges in the course of social life as situated and stylized ways of being, doing, speaking, and interacting. Folklore persists through the creative adaptation, sometimes in response to abrupt change, of traditional ways of being, doing, speaking, and interacting. Folklore, sometimes called "the peoples' knowledge," or "vernacular culture," (culture as it is lived) is culture that is dressed up to convey the identities of people, places, and events, and it can manifest in lots of different ways.

The proposed unit theme and initial strategies coordinate with the standards in Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening and some will correspond to the standards in the Arts & Humanities. I plan to correlate the unit to be used in the poetry, fable, informational text and narrative sections of the Planning and Scheduling Timeline of the already developed core curriculum of the District.

Folkloric Beginnings

Scholars note that family units preserve their pasts and record their present throughout their day-to-day living. While it may be true that the African families who were enslaved and brought to America and the Caribbean Islands lost some of their traditional tales during the slave trade, the tales themselves were expressions of ways of being African that continue to find expression in alternate but related ways. Verbal arts performed in West Philadelphia from pulpit and basketball court, on playground and in kitchen, on front stoop and in tavern exhibit recognizable folkloric connections to shared origins and ancestors. I see these connections in language patterns and lyrical practices engaged by students in my classroom. What connects them is a shared cultural logic that transcends historical and geographical differences.

Expressions that we would call folklore are often so taken for granted as to go unnoticed. When we look across cultures at systems for giving directions, or naming babies, or setting the table, or making dumplings, or improvising music, we can see cultural differences and similarities. If you ask someone how she makes pickles or how he tunes a guitar, the answer may come back: “Oh, just the regular way.” The discovery of just how many “regular ways” there are to do the same things differently is part of the joy of studying folklore. Folklore can be studied with reference to examining the things people do and the way they talk about what they do. Folklore can be put in simple terms for students, culture to practice to communication. The stories accounting for the way people do things, or why a street or a neighborhood carries a certain name all contain history lessons. Gathering the stories behind different styles of communication and ways of doing things is one way to recover a larger history that embraces all of us. Words, songs, stories, poems, and tales are all archeological sites that students will begin to recognize and explore. For this purpose, students will use folklore in the realm of vernacular¹ culture – the culture they engage in everyday life.

It is especially important to lead students through the connection between structures of performance and their social meanings. Stories, for example, may contain social lessons as they are written, but when they are performed, they temporarily impose a different social order on those present. One person becomes the performer, and the others become the audience. But ways of being performers and audiences can vary across cultures, and the structures for telling stories or for exchanging insults, for that matter, contain directions for interactional routines. These routines are often governed by rules, which tips us off that folklore is happening. Folklore expresses social relationships and creates/renews relationships among those who share it. Students can generate a catalogue of their genres of social communication² and describe the rules governing social interaction in each: who participates, how are roles distributed, is participation governed by age, gender, or social standing, what relationships are expressed, how are outcomes determined, how are meanings arrived at, what spaces and times are appropriate to each, and so forth. In the classroom explanations of folklore can be included while translating materials already used, relying more on teaching while using vernacular forms of

communication (stories, anecdotes, sayings, songs). Students will be guided in reflecting in new ways for translation through their native community perspectives.

Ethnographic Examination

Ethnography, or writing about culture, examines human behaviors within the framework of law, social customs, religion and appearance. Looking at their own behaviors through an ethnographic lens, students will be able to link the characteristics of their families and the basic knowledge links they have about the use of language, gestures, rituals and day-to-day practices in which they have participated or heard about in stories. Ethnography offers a way to relate a community's symbolic forms of expression to its forms of social organization, economy, religion, and politics.³

Currently, public discourse of ever-narrowing definitions of learning, achievement, and educational value, ethnographic perspectives brought into the classroom offers powerful evidence that not everything that matters is being counted. Ethnography included in education can reveal the importance and complexity of social, cultural, and linguistic life in schools, of processes of learning, and of the intricate relationships upon which it depends.⁴ Students will learn how to decipher what is revealed about their world from the stories told, how the memorized story came into being in their families or neighborhoods, the lesson(s) the story teaches, and if other ethnic groups can identify with its origin.

In bringing ethnography to the classroom, students will need a standardized knowledge and vocabulary base to begin to comprehend its meaning. Ethnography gives weight in discovering meaning through looking at family or group rituals. Understanding norms is an important aspect of ethnography. Norms can be defined for students as a customary practice within a society, a standard manner of living, a typical and regular mode in which to communicate or react/interact in situations.

Students will learn about trends regarding color use and meaning, physical shapes of people, and style physical or otherwise. Communication is a powerful tool in the study of ethnography the language process is dissected and how messages are understood is taken into account. Global experience is viewed through attitudes, mannerisms, vocabulary use and group dynamics. This portion of the unit study is a key component and concept that students must be aware of in order to be successful in this unit.

Students will have to be observers of people and situations they are placed in, looking for similarities and differences in what people say and what they do. A mini-lesson can be devised to assist in helping students to acknowledge the effects of this sort of study or research. Students will be asked to observe one or two people in their household, more specifically someone who is older than they are. After watching for a few days, they will have to create several questions to consistently ask those studied daily for a one-week period. Students will learn to observe small details and nuances about their subjects.

Finally, students will have to report to the teacher and the class their findings by writing a short story with a moral ending; crafting a sonnet, limerick, or spoken word piece that defines meaning of their study; by writing a song, ballad, or commercial jingle that excels or dispels myths found in ritual practices.

Language Links

“In the beginning was the word, ...” John 1:1⁵

Culture encodes the values, skills and interactions that need to be understood throughout one’s life cycle “to be” in a distinctive group or community. Within the framework of culture exists the process of communication connecting each one to the other. Communication purports word power, meaning, and understanding giving all within the culture a perspective of interaction.

African people, when extracted from the Motherland via the slave trade, were stripped of cultural connections by those who had assumed power. Today, students will find how they have come into a state of *reciprocity in motion*, having still the experience of deep cultural connections through communication after having these connections masked and veiled by those whom had the power. The cultural threads still exist through language. Students will research this notion. In using a strategy called Writing in the Round,⁶ students can experiment through writing about their connection to each other.

A part of West African language tradition, the griot is the king of all storytelling and historical documentation. They are the chieftain of historical information and dissemination. The griot is a wealth of knowledge and wisdom, bearing the right to impart information to his⁷ people whom they serve. Much of what is said by the griot is not heard in many others in the community, giving very high status to those who are the keepers of knowledge and history, while verbally attesting to knowing a families destiny.

There is and continues to be much discussion and debate about the positive and negative benefits and effects of oral literature in a society. This discourse has always revolved around African literary language practices, rituals, and tradition. However, the classroom teacher is beginning to consider its value as a result of the orality of rap and the hi-hop culture.

In Jamaica and other West Indies islands, Africa is present in the spoken language styles. For this study, we will look at “dub,” a form of performance poetry consisting of spoken word over reggae rhythms. The lyrical master or mistress is the king and queen of words. Jamaicans also have known in their culture, the dub poet. In contrast to the spontaneous chat of the dancehall DJ, the dub poet’s performance is normally prepared in advance. The dub poet will appear on stage with a band performing music specifically written to accompany the poems. Storytelling practices and children’s songs are of great

importance to the cultural fabric of the islands, and form a context for understanding dub poetry. Dub poetry is mostly of an overtly political and social nature. Therefore, we will visit this type for storytelling for the Caribbean students.

The subversion of semantics in English for the Rastafarian reveals the deconstruction of English literary principles, there exists a subtle disregard for the law in its use. The regular use of Rastafarian vernacular should not be confused with literacy or illiteracy, it can however, sometimes be attributed to intellectual status or folk status within a community. Conversely, students will learn and notice the language of Jamaican popular culture is not the preferred language of academia. Although most from academic populations will say that, some things are best expressed using the language of the heart. Jamaican students have learned to be more bilingual in the classroom setting and throughout their upbringing in American schools. Words spoken in dialect are considered as “broken English” and difficult to trace to any one language origin.

Oral Traditions

In an attempt to separate the voice of the text and the language of critique and analysis, students will study background information in regards to the constant debate whether or not oral text is literary work versus written text. Changes and variations in orality of literature cause distress in many who study various oral works. Students will learn and witness the emotional instances that come through in oral performance literature that is just not experienced in the written word. Seemingly, there are several facts that connect oral literature with West African and other African cultures.

African oral traditions are looked upon as the old way of practicing communal practices. Oral tradition is looked at as an early stage in human development, considered by some scholars in terms of folktales, tribal inheritances; myths produced by non-literate native speakers. Analyzing into the belief of literate and non-literate based on reading or not should be taken into consideration when teaching background information. Oral tradition study looks very different today than it had in the recent past. Scholars are presently taking a new perspective in the field. No more, is it considered to be deeply rooted in traditional culture. Oral text changes and transforms through its own stages of progression that people can practice or manipulate. Students need consider time periods, groups, and situations. There have been differences found in African oral tradition practices from old to new through politics, aesthetics, and location.

The possession of language is what separates human from animals, words give people our human characteristics. Next, is the ability to feel and sense another’s feelings when words are spoken. Oral tradition combines the interaction of performer and audience. The African griot may not exactly experience this type of emotional interaction but does bear some inflection of ideological bias regarding the patron family to whom they serve.

Oral literature is being transcribed and translated for study. Students will learn to realize punctuation usage; spelling and layout all effect the translations of the work. Oral tradition can be classified within the frame of cultural function, formation, origin, and central activity or theme. They are known to have dramatic forms and give children opportunity to make immediate personal and intellectual examination of life. Children learn the meaning of words when heard through a performance of orality or song. Sung performances bring together peoples from other communities thereby creating a body of commonality. Recording spoken voice text and songs have given new knowledge power to the socialization process.

The oral tradition in the Caribbean is more poetic than of prose form, the nation language has been strongly influenced by the African heritage. Patois is the spoken language heard in most Caribbean island countries. It is the language that is spoken in common places, when heard words sound like a dialect of English. In researching, it is found that 'dialect' has negative connotations when used in referring to spoken language. Dialect is inferior English. Dialect is the language used when you want to make fun of someone.⁸ For purpose of teaching students to appreciate the difference of others, lessons will be taught in a way that embraces the language variations and meanings of others' cultural influences. In this way, students can begin to gain trust and loyalty to their classmates, which in turn should influence their interactions with people in their neighborhoods.

Patois is a language mixture of French, Portuguese, Dutch, Ashanti and Congolese languages. The language is a reflection of the insistence of the conquering people to use their language in public discourse and conversation. The sounds of the language are beautiful and use a very different rhythmic system than the English language. Caribbean students will give rise to their native language. Caribbean born will be asked to tell short stories and give poetry recitations in their own voice.

The Story Told

Storytelling is one of the most powerful learning tools to use narrative to communicate ideas and differences. Students in this segment of the unit will develop a set of skills necessary to create their own oral tales, as well as, confidently re-tell the stories told repeatedly to them and others by the elders of their communities.

In Liberia, stories are used to build character as well as verbal agility and mental keenness in children. The language in which the story is told is important in that it allows for more a familiar flavor in uses of rhythm, rhyme and tone. For this unit we will have the story told to us in students' native language and in English. Allowing for language variety forms a training ground for cultural diversity, vision into other ways to make decisions and oratory practices.

Stories are found in many different places and used in many different spaces. Storytelling, most importantly, “is an art form that brings people together, all over the world.”⁹

Lesson Plan 1

Calling of the Song

Objectives: This lesson is aimed to motivate students in authoring, creating and developing, and performing a call and response song using some of the background information they gained during the lecture portion of the unit. The theme for the lyrical writing will be determined either by prior readings in class or determined by reading a small segment of Abraham’s *Singing in the Master*, and/or listening to one of the children’s double-dutch jump rope songs, or hearing a few snippets from *Sounds of Slavery*.¹⁰ This interaction with text, sounds and lyrics will give students a base from which to write songs and/or chants.

The lesson focuses student learning in writing and speaking, however, this lesson is unique in its process because students will use shared terms from their various cultures while allowing for dialectic differences in their vocal performance. Formulaic phrasing¹¹ (a fixed form of words used regularly in the same manner) is an essential component of this lesson; students will learn and use the language concept. Student will find that they have already used the technique and will have a scholarly term to associate with its practice. Another key communication concept is the use of vocal intensification, vocalizing a chant that is punctuated by shouts.

The academic standards applicable to the lesson come from Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking; History; and the Arts and Humanities. (See appendix A)

Materials: Students will need lined paper; ink pens or pencils to use for their writings. The teacher will need for whole class instruction colored markers or pencils; lined paper strips, Internet access and audio technology; a Whiteboard (preferably a Promethean board).

Audience: This lesson is designed for use in an English Language Arts high school classroom; it can also be used in a World Cultures class. Additionally, it can be adapted for use in a learning support environment.

Procedure: The lesson can be completed in 4 to 8 days over a standard 45-55 minute class period. The lesson can be extended if choosing to use smaller segments of time within the class period. Day 1: Review and revisit key points and main ideas generated from lecture on oral traditions and language links. Teacher will have students prompt the teacher’s postings through brainstorming after being given one or two key words (praise, protest, sorrow, joy, etc.). The teacher can write key words and phrases from the

brainstorming session on the board, or have students take notes while the class verbally agrees on the expressions that should be noted for future use.

Day 2: Students will glance over the notes from the day before. Next, assign students to free write a rhythmic set of lyrics that heavily uses literary devices such as alliteration, meter, and dialectic terms. Mention to the class those fifteen minutes will be specified for free writing. During that time, remind students to only write down what it is they are thinking, not to worry about spelling, grammar or punctuation. Make sure you write on the board the specific time when students are to end the free writing session. Stop the class at the fifteen-minute mark. Ask students to place pencils/pens down on their desks. Next, ask students to review what they wrote - each word. Tell students that the full actualization of each word should be considered for emotional expressiveness and verbal enactment. This action may require the teacher to model the activity required of the students. Students will then verbalize each word that they wrote to a student neighbor. Student listeners should be paying special attention to the literary devices and repetition of sound that writers have included in their chant/song. While the writer is saying their words, the listener will jot down thoughts, feelings, praises and criticisms of what they heard in the piece. Thereafter, the other student will repeat the same action. During this segment of the lesson, you may want to allow one or two students to perform their chant/song to the entire class, if near perfection exist. At the end of the segment, ask students to suggest with their partner what changes or revisions might be considered in their song. Assign revisions and additional word phrasing for homework.

Day 3: Begin the day with students listening to a few short rhythmic chants/songs from the Caribbean or West Africa (Smithsonian folklore website), ask students to respond through interpretation in poetic verse or journal type prose. This will give students time to rebuild trust of the entire class enabling them to perform their call and response song they completed the night before for homework. After listening to two or three chants/songs from Smithsonian,¹² open class discussion with a question and answer dialogue among the class. Pick one or two students to be recorders of information, one student will record the questions and the other student will record answers. The two student volunteers will use the board for communal sharing. Ask students at least two questions from your compilation of questions generated from Smithsonian site, have students record their answers on lined paper strips and turn them in. Save their responses to use at the end of the lesson segment. Using this strategy will allow students to witness their own knowledge base broaden about specific spoken word cultural differences.

Day 4: Begin the day with a journal prompt that uses skills learned the day before. Prepare a quick assessment for students concerning song as a way to communicate ideas to be used following pre-class work (journal). Use one or two of the questions from the list compiled from Smithsonian site. Collect responses and switch papers among students in the class. Open floor to discussion of correct/incorrect answers. Have the class determine grading for the assessment. Recollect papers and distribute prior to the class leaving for the day.

After the assessment, have students share their work with the class. Ask for volunteers first, and then begin to call on students. Determine and set-up a standard rubric system for grading, students can participate in this process or not. Grading must comprise every student; therefore, this activity can take place over several days.

Lesson Plan 2

Storytellers Enchantment

Objectives: This lesson will include analyzing and expanding upon stories told to students as young children from their elders. They will be asked to bring in examples of the story both written and oral forms of myths, folk tales, and ethnic conversation. This assignment will use modern recording technology (cell phones, iPods, MP3 players and other recording devices).

The lesson focuses student learning in writing and speaking, and listening. It also gives students a broader knowledge background in analyzing ways in making connections to text, critical exploration of themes, exercises in memory and evaluative thinking. This lesson will use shared cultural terms, interviewing and questioning techniques from their ethnic orality forms which are distinct characteristics of their own cultures. There will be special interest in allowing for dialectic differences in vocal performances.

The academic standards applicable to the lesson come from Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking; History; and the Arts and Humanities. (See appendix A)

Materials: Students will need a digital recording device, questions that will drive the inquiry for cultural knowledge, lined paper; ink pens or pencils to use for their interviews and writings; an item from the home that has a story. On the latter part, students can bring any item in the classroom that can become a story or an item that can tell a story if it had a voice. The teacher will need for whole class instruction colored markers or pencils; audio technology; a Whiteboard (preferably a Promethean board).

Audience: This lesson is designed for use in an English Language Arts high school classroom; it can also be used in a World Cultures class.

Procedure: Begin by discussing with students the differences and similarities between oral and written storytelling. Students should be able to take notes in column style from the question and answer lecture. Next, give students a list of teacher prepared questions (see Appendix B). Assign homework students to determine which questions are appropriate for their cultural background, then to justify their choices.

Lesson Plan 3

Poetically Ripened for Yak and Chitchat

Using current events from students' homelands and historical happenings from their homelands, students will create self-awareness poems that use the conventions of the story through use of verse, figurative language, repetition and alliteration devices. Examples of a completed creation for modeling will come from Jamaican dub poetry; from the voice of the African Griots, and from African-American spoken word poets.

Annotated Bibliography

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Asante, Molefi Kete. "African Elements in African American English." *Africanisms in American Culture*, ed. Joseph E. Holloway. Bloomington: Indiana University Press: 65-81, 2005. A powerhouse text. Students will also be able to reference the discussions of the text to their lives. Dr. Asante is a talk radio personality in Philadelphia, so students will have background knowledge to further question the author about his study of context.

Brathwaite, Kamau, Edward. *History of the Voice: The Development of Nation Language in Anglophone Caribbean Poetry*. London: New Beacon Books, 1984. A wonderfully rich printed text from a conference in the Third World segment: Azanian Caribbean and Navajo. It gives truth in practice of Caribbean peoples. Students will be able to use this text to compare and contrast what they know of their cultural roots.

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- American culture, too. Students will be able to use this text to compare and contrast what they know of their cultural roots.
- Dargan, Amanda, and Steven J. Zeitlin. "American Talkers: Expressive Styles and Occupational Choice." *Journal of American Folklore* 96: 3-33. 1983. A wonderfully crafted text categorizing American spoken trades. It is an interesting read, students will enjoy its easy reading.
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- Szwed, John and Roger Abrahams. "After the Myth: Studying Afro-American Cultural Patterns in the Plantation Literature." *African Folklore in the New World*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977. A scholarly study and review of cultural patterns as seen in African-American culture in cities and rural areas.
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- White, Shane and Graham White. *The Sounds of Slavery: Discovering African American History through Songs, Sermons, and Speech*. Boston, Beacon Press, 2005. This text also has links listed on the Web. This provides a real sound-bite occasion in the classroom
- Yankah, Kwesi. "Proverb Rhetoric and African Judicial Process: The Untold Story." *Journal of American Folklore* 99: 280-300. 1986. Lots and lots of proverbs, their meanings and connections to life in this text. Also, listed is who used them in songs or poetic verse. Additionally, the editors listed years of origin. Students can use this text, it is easy to read and understand by the way in which they chose to format it in print.

Student Resources

- Asante, Molefi Kete. "African Elements in African American English." *Africanisms in American Culture*, ed. Joseph E. Holloway. Bloomington: Indiana University Press: 65-81, 2005. Students will also be able to reference the discussions of the text to their lives. Dr. Asante is a talk radio personality in Philadelphia, so

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Brathwaite, Kamau, Edward. *History of the Voice: The Development of Nation Language in Anglophone Caribbean Poetry*. London: New Beacon Books, 1984. A wonderfully rich printed text from a conference in the Third World segment: Azanian Caribbean and Navajo. It gives truth in practice of Caribbean peoples. Students will be able to use this text to compare and contrast what they know of their cultural roots.

Cooper, Carolyn. *Noises in the Blood: Orality, Gender and the 'Vulgar' Body of Jamaican Popular Culture*. MacMillan Press Ltd.: London and Basingstoke. 1993. A terrific reference text to Jamaican culture and how women are viewed through the lens of the poets, deejays, and storytellers. This is a wonderful resource with a rich bibliography to assist in researching Caribbean influences in American culture, too. Students will be able to use this text to compare and contrast what they know of their cultural roots

Folkstreams.net. "A National Preserve of Documentary Films about American Roots Cultures." <http://www.folkstreams.net>; 2000-2005. Accessed 2008. The site includes transcriptions, study and teaching guides, suggested readings, and links to related websites.

Smithsonian Global Sound. <http://www.smithsonianglobalsound.org/index.aspx>. Washington: Smithsonian Institute Museum; 2007. Accessed 2008. This website will open the eyes and minds of you and your students. You will need a membership to obtain more than just samples for free but the samples are worth the connection through the link.

The Center for Folklore & Ethnography. www.sas.upenn.edu/folklore/center/index.html; University of Pennsylvania: 2008. This site engages students in the study of oral creativity and meaning making, and the bearing of these on the renewal of community life and place. The site will include downloadable mp3s of folklore recorded in the 1950s in Jamaica by MacEdward Leach, as well as mp4s of Liberian Elders from the Agape Center in West Philadelphia telling stories.

White, Shane and Graham White. *Stylin': African American Expressive Culture*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998. A great resource to use as a base for study of Africanisms in Black culture, thinking, and talk. Students can also use this text.

White, Shane and Graham White. *The Sounds of Slavery: Discovering African American History through Songs, Sermons, and Speech*. <http://www.beacon.org/soundsofslavery>. Danvers: Beacon Press, accessed 2008.

This is the accompanying website for the text. A wonderful site that has a vast amount of vocal performances in mp3 format.

Yankah, Kwesi. "Proverb Rhetoric and African Judicial Process: The Untold Story." *Journal of American Folklore* 99: 280-300. 1986. Lots and lots of proverbs, their meanings and connections to life in this text. Also, listed is who used them in songs or poetic verse. Additionally, the editors listed years of origin. Students can use this text, it is easy to read and understand by the way in which they chose to format it in print.

¹ Any mode of language expression that reflects popular taste or indigenous styles.

² Interactional routines.

³ Mary Hufford. *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of World Folklore and Folklife*. P. 27.

⁴ Ethnography in Education Research Forum, University of Pennsylvania.

⁵ *Holy Bible*, King James version.

⁶ Writing in the Round: students are seated in a large circle in the classroom. For one-half of the class size, there are sentence starters passed out on a sheet of lined paper. Each sentence will begin using at least one word/term that has connection to all cultures. Students will be asked to: a. Finish the first sentence. b. Pass the paper to the next student who will write another sentence to begin the creation of a story, poem or tale. c. Once paper has reached all students and the writing is completed, two students will be chosen to orally present the work. d. Students will be encouraged to use words of their native tongue.

⁷ Griots – the hereditary occupation is generally handed down to only the male gender.

⁸ Kamau Brathwaite. *History of the Voice*:... p. 13.

⁹ Linda Goss. P. 115.

¹⁰ S. White and G. White, 2005; found at www.beacon.org/soundssofslavery.

¹¹ Formulaic phrases use the same phrase and rhyming lines combining them in different ways and adding new ones.

¹² Smithsonian Global Sound. <http://www.smithsonianglobalsound.org>