

From Cornrow Village to Corporate City I

Valerie A. Quarterman
University City High School

Overview

Rationale

Historical Background

Objectives

Strategies

Classroom Activities

Annotated Bibliography/Resources

Appendix-Standards

Overview

This unit, designed for use in science classes, is offered in tandem with the Life Skills Guidance designed by Karon Waters. Together the units address a transition faced by African American teenagers that we are calling “From Cornrows to Corporate.” “Cornrows” stand for a cultural and social way of being with distinctly African roots. In my unit, we explore differences and similarities across the African diaspora in three arenas for artistic self-expression: hair styles, food, and music. All three areas are linked to the health of body, spirit, and community life, but each allows ample room for historically contingent styles of expression. The close integration of art and life is in keeping with core African values, and places people who hold those values at odds with the principles of Western civilization that carve life up into separate spheres for art, family, work, religion, business and community. As Sterling Stuckey describes the process in *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundation of Black America*, “coming from cultures in which work and art were united so completely that any notion of art for art’s sake lacked meaning, Africans in North America created while working, as they had done before. For all the comparative leisure available to whites, the African used his imagination to reflect on life in the new land with an originality sufficient to bring indigenous artistic forms into being.”¹

This unit encourages students to identify, and reflect on, what they value about who they are and where they come from, and to hold onto that as they move through the spaces of the Corporate City and beyond. Each section of this unit introduces physiological, historical, and cultural information about hair styles, foodways, and musical forms of expression, and explores the ways in which African-based cultural

assets may be used for economic gain, and with what effect upon one's social identity. We will look at how historical figures such as George Washington Carver, Annie Malone, and Madam C.J. Walker became successful through innovations that combined African American cultural ideas with advances of Western science to solve particular problems of their people.

This unit emphasizes an empirical approach to self-discovery for the diverse African American population at University City High School. Exploring the cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds of students, this unit challenges them to research and further define who they really are, relying on empirical methods. The intent is to teach students to engage a scientific, empirically-grounded model for exploring self, culture, and community, specifically the community of University City High School.

Rationale

One of the Philadelphia School District educational requirements is African American history. The unit will focus on Native African and African American students interacting together in an urban high school in a changing community. The targeted student's ages will range from 14 to 18. The unit will cover the history of selected and interrelated Native Africans and African American hairstyles, foodways and forms of musical expression. This unit is designed to help to strengthen student's identities in relation to histories that are both similar and distinctive, and most fundamentally, deeply connected.

The time period to be covered extends from slavery to the present day. The focus on hairstyles, foods, and music lends itself to exploring the relationship between indigenous knowledge and Western science, and how both find application in everyday life. The dialogue between indigenous and ethnic knowledge and Western scientific thought has been mutually beneficial, but we often lose sight of the contributions that grow out of cultural memory and our committed engagement with our surroundings and communities. In our music, our foodways, and even in our hair we find historical and cultural memory. Musical instruments evolved as the expression of knowledge about the physics of sound, and which materials found in nature could produce the sounds needed for meaningful communication. Hair, already an expression of how human bodies adapted to certain climates over thousands of years, is then shaped into an expression of social identity. In the kinds of foods we like to eat, and the ways in which we prepare and consume our foods, we find a history of interaction between Africa and the Americas over the past five hundred years, echoing in our taste buds, language, and social events.

The History of our Cornrow Neighborhood

One of the earliest names for this section of Philadelphia was Blockley. In 1677, a man by the name of William Warner purchased more than 1,500 acres of land from the local Indians². Blockley predated the founding of Philadelphia by five years, but as Philadelphia became dominant people started calling the Township of Blockley by the name of West Philadelphia. Later, parts of Blockley were carved out to form the District of West Philadelphia³ proper. Today West Philadelphia covers the region from the Schuylkill River to Cobbs Creek and its Northwestern boundary is City Line Avenue.

What is referred to as the “Bottom” is a predominantly African American neighborhood in Philadelphia. Most of it was razed for urban renewal in the 50’s and 60’s⁴. Prior to this time, the “Black Bottom” was nickname for a portion of Hamilton Village. Like “Black Bottoms” in other U.S. cities such as Detroit and Nashville, the nickname referred to both racial and economic status. This neighborhood is located north and east of 40th and Chestnut Street. They say that a “Bottom has got to have a Top,” and in this case, the “Top” designated the higher elevation to the west of the Bottom, where the more well-to-do whites lived.

In 1854 the Bottom was home to many taverns and businesses catering to the stagecoach and cattle driving trades. After the Civil War it became one of West Philadelphia’s streetcar suburbs. This area was relatively inexpensive and it attracted many African Americans and migrants from Southern States wishing to avoid discrimination by settling in white dominated neighborhoods.

This area was once wholly occupied by African Americans who owned the two story row homes in which they resided. Members of this community also owned and operated mom and pop stores, barber shops, beauty shops, 5 & 10 stores, drugstores, libraries, shoe shops and a host of other neighborhood enterprises. The community educated its children in neighborhood schools that went from K-12.

In the 1920s and 30s, this area, like so many others, went through an economic downturn, and signs of physical and social deterioration soon followed. In the early 1940’s, the Health and Welfare Council Inc. established a pilot project called “Neighborhood Operations.” The plan was to bring together neighborhood residents with citizen leaders to plan ways of uplifting their area. The area from Powelton Avenue all the way down Lancaster Avenue made a dramatic turnaround. Investors purchased and renovated architecturally magnificent homes that were in decline. Part of the plan was to capitalize on the transportation lines that were and are an economic asset, including trains, trolleys, buses, and the newly renovated 30th Street regional/commuter rail line in the middle of University City.

As businesses began opening up again, and jobs became available, people from diverse ethnic backgrounds started moving into the neighborhood. Africans opened little storefront restaurants, hair braiding salons, and food markets, Asians opened Chinese fast food stores, nail salons and spas, hair and beauty supply stores, and Latino variety stores and mini food marts appeared on corners.

But the Bottom found itself in the lengthening shadow of its expanding corporate neighbors, Drexel University and the University of Pennsylvania. Over the course of this expansion, the community spaces of the Bottom were supplanted with student dorms, libraries, book stores, research centers devoted to technology, pharmaceuticals, science, the Presbyterian Medical Center, Children's Hospital, the 30th Street Post Office and a host of upscale trendy stores. After the community known as Black Bottom was forcefully eclipsed by University City, former residents began to gather annually in Fairmount Park on the last Saturday in August to sustain, celebrate, and reflect on the community life that flourished in the Black Bottom.

The trajectory from "Cornrow Village to Corporate City" might seem to be complete, but in fact the process continues in the planning for University City High School. UCHS is the latest casualty of the "Cornrow to Corporate" process, because what was once a neighborhood high school in the next year or so is going to be renovated to become a science and technology high school owned and directed by the University of Pennsylvania and Drexel University. This plan to displace our students leaves them wondering where and how they fit into their continually changing neighborhood. "Cornrow Village to Corporate City" sets out to help students come to terms with a particular process of change by grounding themselves in shared roots, while visualizing shared branches on the horizon.

This is, of course, not the first time people of different African ethnicities have had to negotiate cultural differences in North America. Sterling Stuckey imagines what it must have been like sharing stories in different dialects three hundred years ago in the American South: "The South Carolina storytellers, like those elsewhere, told tales in which the dominant spiritual configuration provided the means by which Africans, whatever their ethnic differences, found values proper to them when the slave trade and slavery divorced them from their homeland. Consequently, listeners in the slave community who had previously been unexposed to those tales immediately understood what was being related, irrespective of the section of Africa from which their parents came. Moreover, those who told or listened to one set of tales also listened to and told others, all the common property of the community. A number of storytellers, therefore, held in their heads, as did those who listened with rapt attention, African cultural patterns that were dominant not simply in North America, but in the African diaspora as a whole.

When one bears in mind that slave folklore was not created to be transcribed or even to be heard by whites, one must conclude that what was eventually transcribed is probably just a small portion of that which died on the night air or continues to live, undetected by scholars, in the folk memory.” (1987: 10)

What each student knows through a lifetime of embodied participation in this folk memory will be a unique contribution to the class, and forms in its totality a vital resource for the journey from Cornrow Village to Corporate City.

History of the African Style of Music

Over the years African elements seem either to have been altered or to have disappeared from the cultures of the new world blacks altogether, but the concepts that embody and identify the cultural heritage of black Americans have never been lost. Mixing African musical ideas with European forms of melodic expressions, blacks created distinctly American styles of music, which were widely copied by whites. Early results incorporated “blue notes and the production of pitches uncommon in Western scale structures.” Morton Marks, in his article, “Ritual Structures in Afro-American Music,” notes, “one of the defining features of Afro-American rituals is the alternation or switching between European and African forms,”⁵ a switch that Roger Abrahams describes as going from “order” to “making noise.”⁶ Calling up both forms enables not only dialogue, but African self-definition against a backdrop of European Otherness.

Participation is the fundamental concept governing musical performance in Africa and African- derived cultures. As a participatory group activity, music making unites black people into a cohesive group with a sense of common purpose. This function of music making is explicitly expressed in typical invitations to churches, clubs, dance halls, and concerts: “Come and be moved by”, “Come and jam with”, “Come and get down with, and last “Come and party with”. The black music plays a multiple role in relation to the community, which it simultaneously expresses and renews. An avenue for the expression of group sentiments, music structures the participation of group members in creative experience.⁷

Music Presentation

The delivery of the music plays an important part in the physical mode of a person. For example: facial expressions, body movements, and clothing convey the essential quality that Mellonee Burnim calls “Aliveness.” Burnim writes, “Aliveness is expressed through visual, physical, and musical modes, all of which are interrelated in African musical performances.”⁸ African performers reinforce musical aliveness visually, through very colorful costumes and head pieces. Similarly, the American gospel singers

usually dress in robes of bold vivid colors and designs or traditional black and white being black bottoms and a white top making for a uniform. In slavery times, Africans participating in religious worship freely responded, lending voices and bodies wholeheartedly to the sermon or prayer. This style of participation was very much like the forms of participation used in Africa. Some people are standing, sitting, clapping their hands, stomping or patting their feet, groans and screams are also heard among the people or congregation.

Different music sounds

In Africa as well as throughout the Diaspora, black musicians produce unique sounds many of which imitate those of nature, animals, spirits and speech to form these sounds one must strike their chest, maneuver their tongue, mouth, cheek and throat. When all these things are arranged in order you end up with a musical composition,⁹ with the body as an astonishing polyvocal, polyrhythmic instrument.

Types of Instruments

Africans and Americans alike have used their bodies as percussive instruments. The clapping of the hands, slapping of the thighs, pounding of upper arms and chests, the stomping or shuffling of feet -- all these can produce irresistible rhythms that stir folk to react. In addition, the great variety of materials used to create drums attests to a tremendous knowledge of the natural world which Africans brought with them to the United States. There are drums made from zebra skin, goatskin, cowhide, and mahogany trees. There is a drum called (Ngoma) which is made by stretching an ox hide across the trunk of a macula tree. Then there the many varieties of materials that can be transformed into an instrument call a zither. In addition to stick zithers, raft zithers, board zithers and trough zithers, there is a "Marouvane" zither, made from a crocodile tail. The "Ilukere" is made from horse hair. The "Shawaro" is a artistically decorated tin rattle which could be played singly or in pairs. The sound of the rattle can be made using seeds, stones, and beads. Gourds grown in West Africa come in many shapes and sizes, and have a long history of use as musical instruments. Colorful beads, strips of bamboo and cowrie shells are woven into a loose net fitted around a gourd to make a rattling sound. And of course, the banjo, that mainstay of American bluegrass music, began as a gourd with a long neck attached to strings.¹⁰

All of the instruments mentioned here are used in one way or another by both Africans and Americans. Some are used in churches, schools, concerts, plays or different performances. All of our children have been prepared through participation in cultural activities that can be related in some way to these and other instruments that our children

listen to and play. In this unit the students will research what animals skins, trees, objects are used, visit museums, interview musicians and have hands on experiences with these and other instruments. Scientifically the students will use their senses by touching the instruments and see if they can guess what materials were used. Next the students will test the acoustics to see which instruments makes a louder or softer sound just by the way it is hit.

Singing for the occasion

When the brush cutters cleared a field for the rice planting, a small slit drum is used to entertain them. Boatmen and fishermen sing a certain song. When male elephants are killed the entire village sings and dances for hours. Herds boys play flutes as they watch the cattle. Soldiers sing to set the rhythm for marching. Last the call and response form is common to many songs. This is also very popular in American churches today. A leader starts the song, and the group answer, the leader sings again and is answered by the group and so on.

Music is an integral part of life for both Africans and Americans, who may sing, dance and play musical instruments spontaneously. In Africa it is a daily part of life because it is used for everyday work, religion, ceremonies and even as a form of communication. Many tribes have no written languages so they send messages by word of mouth, through singing, blowing signal whistles or by using talking drums which imitate the pitch of the human voice. African children learn about life through music. For example: A mother starts to sing to her child from birth and all through childhood. By singing and clapping of hands a child learns about their family members and other important people and events of their community, tribe and country. A mother also sings tales of famous native drummers and dancers who are important to know and remember. By singing songs which contain a moral the child learns what is considered right and wrong. Singing, dancing, hand clapping and the beating of drums are essential to many African ceremonies, including those for births, death, and initiation of famous events. At a marriage ceremony singing and dancing can go on for hours with hundreds of people participating.

Let's Talk About the Food We Eat

Because food is sometimes scarce in certain parts of Africa, the dishes are versatile enough that if a certain ingredient is not available, it is always possible to substitute another or leave it out. Soups and stews and a starch are a common meal in Africa¹¹. The soups or stews contains a variety of vegetables and maybe a little meat, poultry, or fish. The starch can be anything from bread or rice to fufu, the vegetables can be yams,

potatoes or plantains. A snack might be a piece of bread such as chapatti, roasted or fried plantains or meat on a stick¹². Many people don't have refrigeration in Africa so they eat fresh foods everyday. In the villages, people grow all of their own fruits and vegetables in small gardens. Some common fruits and vegetables that both ethnic groups eat are: bananas, oranges, cabbages, cucumbers less familiar are tamarinds, star apples and cassava¹³.

Meat, fish and poultry are less abundant, and therefore more expensive than fruits and vegetables. It is not uncommon for meat not to be in a meal. Meat, poultry, and fish like fruits and vegetables, are usually served fresh, although they are sometimes preserved by smoking or drying. Written recipes are considered a disgrace so many are passed down from generation to generation strictly by memory¹⁴. Here are some common foods that both ethnic groups eat: collard greens, rice, black eye peas and yams, just to name a few. The way these foods maybe different and they may come from different cultures, but they both are used by people from Africa and America.

Yams and peanuts are both plants that are used and eaten by both ethnic groups. First is the peanut which dates back from prehistoric time in Peru to traveling to America by way of Africa after being brought from Brazil.

Getting to Know a Little About the Peanut

George Washington Carver invented ways in which the peanut could better serve our world today. He first encouraged the cotton farmers to grow peanuts and not just cotton. One reason was he noticed that the cotton was depleting the nitrogen from the soil and if the farmers planted peanuts it would restore nitrogen back into the soil. By the 1900's peanuts were in great demand.

It is believed that peanuts originated in South America, and were carried by Spanish explorers back to Europe, and from there traders carried them to Africa and Asia. In Africa the peanut was cultivated until it was grown throughout West Africa, and was one of several plants regarded as having a soul. Peanuts arrived in North America with African slaves. The word "goober," which refers to peanuts, comes from the Congo word for peanut: "nguba." It is in the legume family *Fabaceae* (aka *Leguminosa*). The peanut is unusual in that it flowers above ground, and fruits below. The fruit, of course, is a brownish hull with typically two seeds inside. They can also be used like other legumes and grains to make lactose-free milk – like beverage (peanut milk). Peanuts are prepared in many ways and for different reasons. For example: some are made into vegetable oil, sauce, salted, roasted, fried, and made into peanut brittle.

Prior to the Civil War, peanuts were regarded as food for poor people, and not widely embraced by the middle and upper classes. During the Civil War, Confederate soldiers were sustained by peanuts, which could be carried in large quantities and had a long shelf life, so to speak. "Goober Peas," a folk song sung during that period is still heard today: "Peas, peas, peas, peas, Eating goober peas, Goodness, how delicious, Eating goober peas." A New Orleans publisher released it as the work of lyricist A. Pindar and composer P. Nutt.¹⁵

Following the Civil War, peanuts became widely popular and today peanuts are a four billion dollar business.¹⁶ Peanuts are used as an animal feed as well as soil fertilizer. They are sent abroad as a remedy for starving and malnourished children in Africa and elsewhere. They are used in the manufacturing of plastics, wallboards, abrasives and fuel. Peanuts have industrial uses in Africa as well as America, for example, in paint, furniture polish, insecticides and nitroglycerin. Peanuts are known to be a source of protein.

Health and Peanuts

The peanut has a monounsaturated fat, an oleic acid that contributes to healthy skin. Research has found that peanuts, like other fruits and vegetables, are rich in antioxidants. Peanuts are a source of coenzyme Q10 which is also found in fish oil, beef, and soybeans. Although peanuts are good in many ways, people also develop food allergies and this can be very deadly. Peanuts supply the niacin needed by the brain for optimal functioning, and for blood flow. A significant source of the chemical resveratrol, studied for potential anti-aging effects, the peanut is also credited with reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease and cancer. As a source of food and a carrier of history for both Africans and African Americans, the peanut is a legacy in common and part of the heritage that children in the cornrow neighborhood should know.

The Way We Cook

The villagers very seldom have modern machines or tools for cooking or farming so they make do with what they have. For example: plowing is done with a wooden plow pulled by oxen. A mortar and pestle are commonly used for grinding or pounding foods. The most important tool used in Africa is fire. While we have stoves that run by gas or electrically, some West Africans still practice what their ancestors did and cook over the fire. They use some of the same utensils when cooking such as spoons, and spatulas. Some common phases used are brown, garnish, simmer, and sauté.

Social Meanings of Eating Habits

Eating habits can reflect one's ethnic group or social status. Some West Africans (Nigerians) eat their meals with their right hand only, while others, like Americans, use utensils. In both cultures, eating together as a family at each meal time is given priority. Another common practice is washing the hands before eating. Tipping after dinner is common just as it is here in America for most personal services.

Diets

Most of the dishes are hot and spicy. Normally their meals are accompanied by a pepper sauce made with fish, meat, or chicken. Because of the tsetse fly, dairy cattle are scarce in coastal region, but canned margarine, cheese, and powdered milk are used as dairy-products substitutes.

Let's Talk About "Black Hair"

African hair is as different as the different shades of skin. Some people have frizzy hair, and some have kinky hair. These kinds of hair developed as adaptations, protecting the head by providing insulation and shielding it against harmful rays of the sun. Textures of African hair also range from curly to straight and from thick to thin. There is one thing that all African Americans and Native Africans have in common when it comes to their hair and that is the social and cultural significance of each strand which makes it so beautiful.

Hairstyles have been given specific meanings at different times and in different cultures. A person's hair can symbolize marital status, age, religion, ethnic identity, wealth and rank within a community or tribe.¹⁷ In some countries a person's hair signals what tribe they come from because each tribe has its own unique hairstyle. Traditionally the leaders of a community -- men and women alike -- showcased the most ornate hairstyles, and only royalty or the equivalent would be expected to wear a hat or headpiece¹⁸. A woman in West Africa with long thick hair was well liked amongst the men. Long thick hair also indicated life-force, the multiplying power of profusion, prosperity, a green thumb for raising bountiful farms and many healthy children. The hair had to be clean, neat and arranged in a specific style, usually in a braided design, to conform to tradition. A particular style might attract the opposite sex or signal a religious ritual. Unkempt hair signalled that something was wrong – that a person was depressed, bereaved, or just dirty¹⁹.

The Hairdresser

Hairdressers were considered to be the most trustworthy people in society. The time consuming task that they have of washing, combing, oiling, braiding ,twisting, and /or

decorating the hair with different hair accessories made a person feel really good about themselves. In that regard, the hairdresser performed a nurturing function: attending to hair is a way of one's spirits.

Positive Attitude About Black Hair

Black people in general have been proud people and hair style is a means of communicating that pride. The strength of these African cultures is a testament that their hairs remain in traditional societies today. When the Europeans came in contact with the Africans in the 15th century they were amazed by the complexity of style, texture, and adornment of the black hair²⁰.

Types of Hair

One type of hair, called Virgin hair, has never had any chemicals of any kind put in it. This type of hair usually only takes water and hair grease in order to maintain or care for it. "Nappy" hair is short, thick, difficult to comb and hard to manage. Another type of hair is "Good hair," which is usually long and wavy or curly and feels soft and silky.

Tell Me About The Products

Native Africans and African Americans women have come a long way with their hair, a way that has not been without conflict. The texture and style of a woman's hair can cause her to be fired or never hired. Women with unmanageable hair may suffer from low self-esteem or related health problems, including stress. This issue plagued women well into the 20th century, until two women of darker hue, with problems of their own came up with some solutions. These two women's names are Madam C.J Walker (1867-1919) and Annie Malone (1869-1957), both from St. Louis, Missouri. .

Around 1900, freedom was becoming more of a reality and many African American women were earning an income and purchasing cosmetics and products for their hair. They worked toward achieving the "acceptable" look of the "New Black Woman".

At that time, women and men used a product called a "perm"; this is a chemical made product in the form of a paste, strong enough to straighten any type of hair. The perm has an odor and this is because of the different chemicals mixed together. The perm is left on the head as long as 30 minutes and sometimes less. It is then rinsed off. Other conditioners and moisturizers are applied, and then rinsed off. These are just ways of making one's self look and feel better.

The Mothers of the New Black Woman

The tenth of eleven children, Annie Malone was born in Illinois in 1869. She had some background in chemistry so she began mixing things together so she could come up with a product that would solve hair problems such as baldness and breakage. Some of these disfiguring conditions were caused by stress, diet and improper hygiene habits.

Ms. Malone was trying to find something that would work long before the invention of straighteners, hair grease, and hot combs. She called her invention “Wonderful Hair Grower” and began selling it by going from door to door. She quickly became one of the most successful African American business woman, managing a company with employees. Her success was the result of her effort to make a living by enhancing the opportunity for other black women to succeed in the working world. (1) She offered incentives such as diamond rings and gold plaques to her top sales agents and she also gave out diplomas to those who completed a course of training.

Ms. Sarah Breedlove (aka) Madam C.J. Walker was another woman who made history by inventing a way of making a woman feel good about herself. Madam C.J Walker was born in Delta, Louisiana in 1867. She was orphaned at an early age, married and had a child by the age of 21. Ms. Walker had problems with her own hair, which was short and afflicted with patchy spots and baldness. Most of her life she wanted to do something for woman experiencing the same problems with their hair.

Later in life Ms. Walker opened a beauty parlor training school, which she named for her daughter: Lelia College. The Walker agents who graduated were dubbed “hair culturists”. She started to enlarge her company by selling Hair Grower, Glassine (a pomade) Vegetable Shampoo, Telter Salve (an antidandruff treatment and temple grower)²¹.

Madam C.J. Walker made history when she devised the shampoo-press and curl method of straightening hair, which revolutionized the Black beautician industry. Ms. Walker was also known for inventing the hot comb. Made of metal and heated over fire, this device is used mainly for women with either short hair or long thick hair, who want straighter hair with a light flowing look.

Neither Ms. Walker nor Ms. Malone had an interest in promoting the straight look. Their interest was in improving a woman’s appearance and building up her self-confidence. As Ms. Walker put it, “To be beautiful, does not refer alone to the arrangement of the hair, the perfection of the complexion or the beauty of the form....To be beautiful, we must combine these qualities with a beautiful mind and soul.” This was

a new concept for Black Americans, who had been routinely denied the luxury of beauty rituals²². These two women became successful by overcoming their own problems and seeking ways of bettering themselves and others. Madam C.J.Walker gained so much pride that she put her own picture on all of her products.

The Birthing Of Hairstyles

The Afro started in Africa and Americans adopted this hairstyle because it was an easy style to manage. A hairdresser by the name of Camello Casimir introduced the Afro in 1960 when she cut the hair of South African singer Miriam Makeba very short. During this period the counter-cultural hippies began wearing cornrows and braiding their hair. In 1979, when the actress Bo Derek in 1979 wore her hair in cornrows in the movie 10, the trend caught on amongst white people. Many whites now get their hair braided when they go to the Caribbean Islands. In 1962 actress Cicely Tyson sported the new popular hairstyle of cornrows on a TV series East Side, West Side. This move, of wearing cornrows at work or even out in public, was the beginning of the African American's cultural pride. African Americans began to feel comfortable enough to wear their hair in any style, without worrying about what the mainstream society deemed acceptable. Many white and Asian men and women are now getting their hair braided in African inspired styles.

There is a perm called "Rasta" that white people put in their hair and in a matter of minutes turns straight hair into dreadlocks. White people also put perms in their hair to straighten their hair from being curly or frizzy.

African Americans, on the other hand, use hair grease to keep their head from getting dry. A hot comb is used on virgin hair or coarse hair to straighten it and to keep it manageable. A hot comb is shaped just like a regular comb the only difference is it has to be heated over fire or the hairdressers use something that looks like a hot plate of some kind. African American men and women also had a hair style called jeri curls which consist of products that contained chemicals that would make the hair curly and it would stay in that style for weeks .

Nubian knots are another hair style that is being accepted in our society today. This style consists of taking the hair and twisting it and pinning the end to make a knot. Now African Americans are wearing their hair any way they want and because they know who they are and where they came from Nubian Knots, Cornrows, Dreadlocks, Afro-puffs and weaves are all ways of expressing who they are and showing off their identity. Singer India Arie sings a song entitled "I Am Not My Hair" this is a question that we should all ask ourselves does our hair make us or is it just the way we identify ourselves.

Objectives:

The objectives for this unit are to have students understand who they are and where they came from. They will have a clear understanding of the common foods, hairstyles and music that is used by both African Americans and Native Africans. By first hand experiences the students will visit and eat at different restaurants, share knowledge of different hairstyles and how they came to form and last having knowledge of different instruments from both Africa and America. They will learn the history time period of each of these topics and apply what they learned from research and hands on experience to their everyday lives.

Strategies

The strategies used to accomplish these various lessons will consist of the KWL charts, Venn Diagram, designing maps, power point presentations, using their critical thinking skills, creative writing skills, and cooperative group activities.

Lesson I**Listen To The Music****Objective:**

Students will conduct research to learn more about instruments used by any tribe of their choice in West Africa.

Students will identify 5 instruments played in West Africa.

Students will compare American and African instruments and identify where they originated from and how they are played.

Students will present what they've learned through a creative demonstration of their instrument and give a short presentation.

Materials:

Flipchart

computer

Time:

Two sixty min. class periods

Procedure:

The teacher will teach a lesson on West African culture specifically focusing on instruments.

The teacher will allow the students a chance to brain storm about what countries make up West Africa.

Next the teacher will make up a KWL on a flipchart and explain what this chart means and how it is used. K stands for what they know, W stands for what they want to know and L stands for what they've learned. The students will give their input to help fill in each section of the chart. Meanwhile identifying what they already know before the lesson and what they wish to learn through researching by the end of the lesson.

The class will go back to their seats and teacher will show a short documentary video on Mali West Africa and how the people there make instruments from animal skin and other material found in the village.

The classes will then break into groups of two and choose a country in West Africa and start researching by using the internet in class on instruments of their chose.

The students will now compile what they've learned from the video and classroom research to finish filling out their KWL chart.

The students will now be able to take the information used in their "Learned" section and use it to formulate an outline to help organize all their research. Their outline will be used in the next lesson when they are making their own instrument.

Assessment:

The students will develop their own KWL chart and present it as their classroom presentation.

Lesson II:**Listen To The Music****Objective:**

The students will be able to identify West African instruments by name and sight.

The students will know which country in West Africa the instruments originate from.

Students will design an instrument from their imagination and develop an instrumental song using musical cords.

Materials:

Beans	nails
Paint brushes	wooden planks
Glue	scissors
Shells	feathers
Wire	wooden balls (small –med- Large)
Hammer	hard plastic tubing
Leather material	med. size flower pots (med.)
String	rice
Wooden sticks	
Peas	
Beans	
Glue	

Time: Sixty minutes class time

Procedure:

Each group will select a person to gather the material needed to make their instrument.

The students will then decide if they are going to make a drum or a rattle.

The students together will design and make a creative song to play to the class.

Each group will present their newly created instrument by identifying and telling what materials were used. The class will then listen to each group's musical song that they wrote for their instrument.

Assessment:

The students will do a Venn Diagram comparing how West African and American instruments are different and how they are similar.

Lesson I:

What's Cooking

Objectives:

Students will be able to identify common West African dishes and African American foods.

Students will know commonly used vocabulary words.

Time: Two sixty minute lessons

Materials:

World Map, journals, blackboard, 3x5 cards

Procedure:

The teacher will explain in full detail where West Africa is on the map and show what surrounding countries make up the continent of West Africa.

Next the teacher will have an open discussion on what foods are commonly found in Africa and America using a Venn Diagram and explaining how we live in different parts of the world=2 0but we have a lot in common.

The teacher will write common foods and utensils on the blackboard and have students copy these words in their class journals then write a sentence showing that they understand the word and its meaning.

Vocabulary Words

Fufu	spatula	mango	tongs
Chapatti	rolling pin	peanuts	garlic
Plantains	black eye peas	simmer	thyme
Carrots	garnish	corn	
Rice	saute'	lamb	

The teacher will now introduce two parents one from West Africa and the other from West Philadelphia these parents will explain different commonly eaten dishes and how they are similar in both countries. They will explain what method is used in preparing these dishes. At the end of class time will be allotted for questions and answers.

Assessment:

Students will create a recipe and share their dish with the class. Writing their recipes on a 3x5 card the teacher will then compile all the cards and make a recipe book.

Lesson II

What's Cooking

Objectives:

Students will display their creative dish to the class

Students will explain what country they are representing.

Time: One class period sixty minutes

Materials:

Plates, Bowls, 3x5 cards and Silverware

Procedure:

Students will choose a number from one to thirty to see who will start the presentations.

Each group will come to the front of the class and present their dish also allowing the class to taste their dish. The students will explain everything it took in complete detail in planning and arranging the display of the creation of their dish.

Assessment:

Students have to write a positive comment about their favorite dish.

Lesson I:

My African Hair

Objectives:

Students will gain a better understanding of their hair.

Students will learn the scientific construction of the hair

Materials:

Computer
Class Journal
Pen or Pencil

Time: Three sixty minute class periods

Procedure :

The teacher will start the class off with asking the students what you know about caring for their hair.

The teacher will make up a KWL chart explaining how to use this chart and what KWL means. K stands for what you know and the W stands for what you want to know and the L stands for what you learned.

The teacher will show pictures of healthy hair and damage hair from magazines and allow the students to participate in a class discussion on hair and help fill in the KWL Chart.

The teacher will now write vocabulary words on the board for them to put in their class journals.

Follicles	root	cells	texture	perm	relaxed	conditioner
Chemicals	damage	hair bulb	papilla	trim	hot-comb	

Assessment:

Students will write a sentence for each of the vocabulary words.

Lesson II:

My African Hair

Students will learn how to care for their hair

Students will learn how diet affects your hair.

Students will learn what products help and hurt your hair

Time: Sixty minutes class time

Materials:

Worksheets

Blackboard

Lecture Sheet

Class Journal

Procedure:

The teacher will hand out lecture from the book “**Brown Skin**” together the class will read (chapter4) “**Hair and Nail’-Care Know How.**

The teacher will then have an open discussion on hair care that they found important and interesting from their reading.

The teacher will hand out a worksheet title: **How Much Do You Know About Hair** here the students are asked 10 questions. This worksheet is then collected.

Next the teacher will write on the blackboard different vitamins and foods and describe how each plays a part in developing a healthy head of hair.

The teacher will now tell the students to write these words in their class journal.

The teacher will now have a beautician visit the class bringing with them products that are chemical based and natural. Displaying pictures of people with healthy and damage hair. The beautician is allotted time for questions and answers.

The teacher will now have the student’s pair off into groups of two and choose amongst themselves who is going to be the stylist and who will record.

Assessment:

One student will give the information on a 3x5 card of who is the stylist and who is the recorder.

Lesson III

My African Hair

Objective:

Students will create a hair style and present their creativity to the class.

Time: Sixty minutes class time

Material:

Chair
Comb and Brush
Gel
Moisturizers
Mirror
Hair pins
Rollers, (hot and plastic)
Flat irons
Beads
Scissors
Shells

Procedure:

The students will come to class with their hair already washed and dried so all the stylist has to do is style.

The students will now break into their groups and begin styling.

The students at the end of class will present their style and the recorder will tell in full detail what all was involved.

Assessment:

Each group will give feedback on their experience as a stylist.

What Are Good Foods and Vitamins for Healthy Hair

Water

Iron: red meats, beans, peas, dried fruit, dark greens, or legumes, liver

Zinc: meat, seafood

Copper: Shellfish, liver, fresh vegetables nuts, seeds (sunflower, pumpkin)

Vitamins: A, B, C, D, E

Protein: eggs, cheese, yogurt,

Calcium: milk, sardines, root vegetables

Exercise

- By sprinkling flaxseed oil or powder and pumpkin seeds over your food is another way of getting your fatty acids.

How Much Do You Know About Hair

1. Give the definition of natural, relaxed hair.

2. Hair is made from what protein? Circle the correct answer

Follicle Keratin Cortex

3. Name the three layers of a strand of hair

4. Name three textures of hair.

5. Name the causes of breakage in human hair.

6. Name five products used in the care of relaxed hair.

7. What hair styles are commonly worn amongst Africans and American men and women in the summer?

8. How often should a person trim their hair a year?

9. Name five tools used for the care of hair.

10. What are the differences between locks, twists, and braids?

Standards for Lessons I – III of “My African Hair”

Academic Standards for Science and Technology

Concept 3.1.10: Unifying Themes

[3.1.10](#). E- Describe patterns of change in nature, physical and man made systems.

[3.1.10](#). E.4- Describe changes to matter caused by heat, cold, light, or chemicals using a rate function.

Concept 3.4.10: Physical Science, Chemistry, and Physics

[3.4.10](#). A- Explain concepts about the structure and properties of matter.

[3.4.10](#). A.6

Describe various types of chemical reactions by applying the laws of conservation of mass and energy.

Standards for Lessons I – II of “What’s Cooking”

Academic Standards for Health, Safety, and Physical Education

Concept 10.1.12: Concepts of Health

[10.1.12](#). C- Analyze factors that impact nutritional choices of adults.

[10.1.12](#). C.2- food preparation (time and skills)

[10.1.12](#). C.4- nutritional knowledge

Standards for Lessons I – II “Listen to the Music”

Academic Standards for Arts and Humanities

Concept 9.1.12: Production, Performance, and Exhibition of Dance, Music, Theatre, and Visual Arts

[9.1.12](#). A- Know and use the elements and principles of each art form to create work in arts and humanities.

(Music)

[9.1.12](#). A.2.2.a- composition

[9.1.12](#). A.2.2.b-form

[9.1.12](#). A.2.2.c- genre

[9.1.12](#). A.2.2.d- harmony

[9.1.12](#). A.2.2.e- rhythm

[9.1.12](#). A.2.2.f- texture

[9.1.12](#). B- Recognize, knows, use and demonstrate a variety of appropriate art elements and principles to produce, review, and revise original works in the arts.

(Visual Arts)

[9.1.12](#). B.4.1- paint

[9.1.12](#). B.4.2- draw

[9.1.12](#). B.4.3- craft

[9.1.12](#). B.4.4- sculpt

[9.1.12](#). B.4.5- print

[9.1.12](#). F- Analyze works of arts influenced by experiences or historical and cultural events through production, performance, or exhibition.

Bibliography

Abrahams, Roger D. 1992. *Singing the Master: The Emergence of African-American Culture in the Plantation South*. New York: Penguin Books.

Bebey, Francis. 1975. *African Music: A People's Art*: Lawrence Hill..

This book is one of the few books the gives an authoritative overview of the continent's music cultures.

Blackbottom.org. Blackbottom website. <http://www.blackbottom.org/blackbottom/>

This website covers the history of the gentrification of the Bottom, and includes oral histories of residents gathered under the direction of Dr. Walter Palmer, a professor of sociology at the University of Pennsylvania who grew up in the Bottom. In addition to articles and lists of resources, the site contains links to other neighborhoods in Philadelphia facing issues related to gentrification.

Burnim, Mellonee. 1985. "The Black Gospel Music Tradition: A Complex of Ideology, Aesthetic, and Behavior," in *More than Dancing*, ed. Irene V. Jackson. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Byrd, Ayana D., and Lori L. Tharps. 2001. *Hair Story: Untangling The Roots of Black Hair In America*. New York: St Martins Griffin.

Hair Story takes chronological look at the culture behind the ever –changing state of Black Hair – from fifteenth – century Africa to the present day United States. It is a must read for people of all races: who want to celebrate the designs and styles of Black hair.

Dodson, Howard.2002. *Jubilee: The Emergence of African-American Culture*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2002.

Jubilee provides a clear-eyed chronicle of slavery and its enormous effect on our nation's history and economy, tracing the origin and development of the slave trade and the realities of life for Africans –slave's runaways, and freedmen.

Dodson, Howard, and Sylvian A Diouf, eds. 2004. *In Motion: The African-American Migration Experience*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2004.

In Motion is the first book that chronicles the two forced and eleven voluntary migrations to within, and out of the United States that have created our diverse and vibrant African American community.

"Hair finder: Hair styles, Hair Care and More." Hairfinder.com June 6, 2006. <http://www.hairfinder.com/hairquestions/hairgrowth.htm>. This article is very informative in answering the questions about the growth and formation of hair.

Harris, Juliette, and Pamela Johnson, eds. 2001. *Tender headed: A Comb-Bending Collection of Short Stories*. New York: Pocket Books. This is an interesting collection of

short stories which focuses on the social and personal ramifications of hair texture, style and care.

Liberatoe, Paul. 2008. "African Drumming is A World of Rhythm" *Marin Independent Journal* (CA). 16 April 2008.

This is an interesting discussion about a group of people in Marin whose mission is to build a community around African music and culture.

Major, Clarence. 1994 [1970]. *Juba to Jive: a dictionary of African-American Slang*. New York: Penguin Books.

A compilation of slang terms introduced from African sources into American speech, indicating the African language, the original meaning, and the provenance of use.

Marks, Morton. 1974. "Ritual Structures in Afro-American Music." In *Religious Movements in Contemporary America*, eds. Irving Zaretsky and Mark P. Leone. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Maultsby, Portia K. 2005. "Africanisms in African American Music." In *Africanisms in American Culture*, ed. Joseph E. Holloway. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Nabwire, Constance and Bertha Vining Montgomery. 1988. *Cooking The African Way*. Minneapolis: Learner Publications Company.

This invites you to discover the cooking and culture of East and West Africa. The instructions are clear, and easy to follow. The dishes are exotic and fun to share with your family.

----- . 2002. *Cooking the East African Way*. Minneapolis: Learner Publications Company.

This book gives you excellent recipes for Chapatis, Luku, Plantain soup and more. It also includes vegetarian recipes.

Neeley, Paul and Abdullahi: Seidu. 1995. "Pressing patrons with proverbs talking drums at the Tamale markets." *Notes on Anthropology and Intercultural Community Work* 17 "1995:" 33-43.

This article gives an interesting perspective and insights into the phenomena of drumming in the Tamale marketplace. It provides a study of sound interacting in the areas of performance practice, linguistics, and ethnomusicology.

Rosenthal, Leon S. 1963. *A History of Philadelphia's University City*. Philadelphia: The West Philadelphia Corporation. <http://uchsc.net/Rosenthal/rosenthalofc.html>

Stuckey, Sterling. 1987. *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundation of Black America*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Taylor, Susan MD. 2003. *Brown Skin*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers Inc.

This book is devoted to the concerns of people of color that will help them enhance and protect the health and beauty of their skin, hair, and nails.

Thompson, Robert Farris. 1984. *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy*. New York: Vintage Books.

Wikipedia entry: "Black Bottom" (Philadelphia)
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Bottom_\(Philadelphia\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Bottom_(Philadelphia))

...

Endnotes

- ¹ Sterling Stuckey. 1988. *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America*.
- ² See Leon S. Rosenthal. 1963. *A History of Philadelphia's University City*. Philadelphia: The West Philadelphia Corporation. <http://uchs.net/Rosenthal/rosenthaltofc.html>
- ³ See Rosenthal, 1963; see also www.Blackbottom.org.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Morton Marks. 1974. "Ritual Structures in Afro-American Music." In *Religious Movements in Contemporary America*, ed. Irving Zaretsky and Mark P. Leone. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 110;
- ⁶ Roger D. Abrahams. 1992. *Singing the Master: The Emergence of African-American Culture in the Plantation South*. New York: Penguin, 103ff.
- ⁷ Abrahams, 1992, pp. 103-105.
- ⁸ Burnim, Mellonee. 1985. "The Black Gospel Music Tradition: A Complex of Ideology, Aesthetic, and Behavior," in *More than Dancing*, ed. Irene V. Jackson. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- ⁹ Abrahams, 1992, pp. 91-97.
- ¹⁰ See Francis Bebey. 1975. *African Music: A People's Art*: Lawrence Hill
See also Portia Maultsby. 2005. "Africanisms in African American Music." In *Africanisms in American Culture*, ed. Joseph E. Holloway. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 326-355.
- ¹¹ Nabwire, Constance and Bertha Vining Montgomery. 1988. *Cooking The African Way*. Minneapolis: Learner Publications Company.
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goober_Peas
- ¹⁶ <http://www.nationalpeanutboard.org/classroom-history.php>
- ¹⁷ Ayana D. Byrd and Lori L. Tharps. 2001. *Hair Story: Untangling The Roots of Black Hair In America*. New York: St Martins Griffin.
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ See Juliette Harris and Pamela Johnson, eds. 2001. *Tender headed: A Comb-Bending Collection of Short Stories*. New York: Pocket Books.
- ²¹ Byrd and Tharps, pp. 76-83.
- ²² Ibid.