

## **“Teaching Black visual culture through PBL”**

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### **Abstract**

This unit is designed for high school students with limited English language proficiency, but can be adapted to the needs of mainstream student population. The unit explores four areas of Black Visual Culture: 1) Artwork; 2) Ekphratic poetry; 3) Photography; 4) Video clips / moving pictures. There will be four projects that focus on each area, and four ‘extension’ projects or activities that are modified to tailor to students’ personal experiences. Throughout all four subunits of the Black Visual Culture unit, students will engage in multiple diverse learning experiences where they will have to, first, collaboratively analyze visual artwork and learn about it, and then create a product connected either to their unique individual experiences, or producing a product similar to the one explored during the collaborative part. All four subunits will be taught using PBL—project-based learning pedagogical model. My recommendation for this unit is that it may best be taught during Black History Month.

### **Key Words:**

Black culture, African American culture, visual culture, photography, ekphratic poems, video clips, art, moving pictures, Black History month.

### **Content Objectives**

### **Problem Statement**

As a teacher at Northeast High School teaching English exclusively to the new arrivals into our country, I always look for new ways to foster inclusion and cultural understanding. My classroom is a perfect place to meet this end as my students come from all over the world, reflecting the country’s dominant immigration cohorts. For example, in previous years I had many students from a variety of Middle Eastern countries, such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria and even Iraq. This year (2021-2022) students from Guatemala and Brazil are two dominant groups, followed by a sprinkling of students from Palestine, Vietnam, China, Kyrgyzstan, Sudan, Haiti, Bangladesh and Dominican Republic. My students bring into the classroom not only their remarkable stories and rich cultural capital, but also different literacy backgrounds and habits—and not all of them are good. While some students received age-appropriate education in their countries and acquired plenty of literacy habits and tools to succeed in high school and beyond, others had either substandard or interrupted schooling, or even skipped schooling altogether for a prolonged period of time, and/ or are functionally illiterate in their own native languages. Throughout the years of teaching I found out that without culturally motivated activities that tap into their prior experiences these students will become disengaged from school, but when an opportunity arises for even the most disengaged students to share experiences from their cultures,

such as doing projects about food, childhood memories, family etc., they never fail to participate and submit work.

With this in mind, I am very excited to design a unit on Black Visual Culture which I intend to teach next year in February, during Black History Month. I believe that this unit will be extremely beneficial for all of my students, but perhaps even more so for my black students from such countries as Sudan and Haiti. My newcomers will not only develop a budding understanding of struggles, inner and outer beauty and expressiveness I am also looking forward to research the PBL, project-based learning, instructional technique that I always wanted to explore but never had time to do so. I intend to design all the activities using this pedagogical format, and during the implementation of my unit see whether PBL can be applicable to my classes. After each mini project in the unit, I am going to design “extension” projects where students will have to meet the same objectives, but this time using their own personal experiences. For instance, if there will be a project that is connected to matching artifacts to images, then the extension project will be finding artifacts that connect to a few of personal images, together with some literacy exercise, such as their description in full sentences in Present and Past Simple tenses.

## **Content**

There are four areas of Black Visual Culture that I intend to focus on in my unit: 1) Artwork; 2) Ekphratic poetry; 3) Photography; 4) Video clips / moving pictures. There will be four projects that focus on each area, and four ‘extension’ projects or activities that are modified to tailor to students’ personal experiences.

**The first project** will focus on three ekphratic poems by a single author – Natasha Trethewey. In layman’s terms, ekphratic poetry is simply poems about works of art—any object, such a vase, a pencil or, say, earrings; sculptures, archeological sites, and, of course, paintings. I’ve selected three poems that describe 2 paintings and a photograph (see below). The first poem is titled “De Español Y Mestiza Produce Castiza,” the second is “Blood,” and the third one is “Help. 1968.” All three poems deal with the artists’ commentaries on race seen in their respective works of art. The first poem describes a painting by Juan Rodriguez Juarez, circa 1715. It is quite short and has a simple structure—11 two-line and 1 four-line stanzas, and it is also written clearly and with easily understandable vocabulary. It describes what is going on in the picture—a light-skinned baby extending her hands towards her white father from her mother’s arms--by putting it into a historical content of the caste system. The second artwork piece is titled “Quadroon” and was painted in 1880 by George Fuller. The poem that describes the portrait of a girl who is written in a narrative format and reads as free verse poem and not a conventional rhymed poem. Despite the fact that it may appear more dense than other poems, it is easy to follow and easy to understand. The beautiful girl portrayed in the portrait is ¼ black and is painted with some black workers, presumably her kin, in the background. The third artwork piece is a photograph by Robert Frank, and the corresponding poem is also written in a narrative form that nevertheless assumes the structure of a poem as it is written in 5 stanzas. In this poem, Trethewey both describes the photograph and explains how it connects to her personal

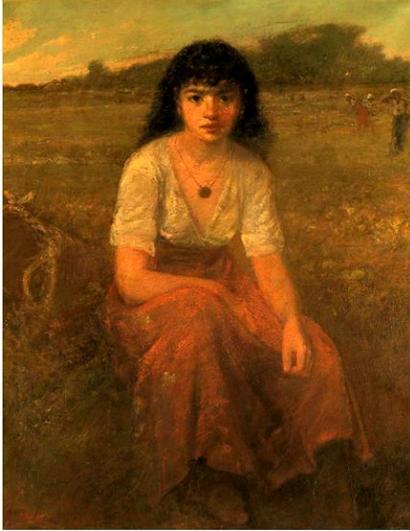
story, how her black mother was also often mistaken for a caretaker because of her little daughter's light complexion.



Help, 1968



After George Fuller's *The Quadroon*, 1880



The second project will be focused on two virtual art exhibits: Jacob Lawrence's *Migration Series* and also *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture*. I think the manageable project for my students connected to these series would be, first, to select a panel they like and come up with a presentation that will include putting it into historical context (a lot of this information is already there, accompanying each image), and then come up with their own image and also put it into historical context—this time connected to their own history. The first exhibition is essentially a narrative of the south-north migration that reveals its many aspects—for example, the very reasons of this migration, along with the means and hardships. These aspects are woven into a picture – for example, the reasons for migration spawn several pictures portraying discrimination and injustice towards the African Americans in courts and from the landlords, child labor and lack of education, extreme poverty, and boll weevil and floods responsible for failed crops. The second exhibition tells the story of Toussaint L'Ouverture, a Haitian general who fought for the liberation of Haiti from the French. The exhibition features many autobiographical snapshots from his life, from birth to leading the fight. It paints a many-faceted portrait of Toussaint L'Ouverture that reveals him as a strong and charismatic leader. This way, while the first exhibition chronicles the story of the whole people, the second one focuses on the individual story of a person. So, while teaching this part of the unit, I can go in several directions—for instance, after presenting the material and asking students to examine closely both exhibitions in context of a few activities, the students will be required to produce two things: 1. A historical account of one event from their country; 2. A biographical portrait of one person – either a family member, or a person whom they admire, also from their country. Alternatively, because this unit will be taught during Black History Month, students may be required to research one person of color and paint and describe several moments from their lives. The historical event has to be from their native countries, however, as it is important to reminisce on one's collective history as peoples. I will model the drafting of the project by producing a series of my own images with descriptions related to one event. As I come from Ukraine, I can depict a tragic event such as the Holodomor that decimated nearly ten million people, where the Ukrainians were literally starved to death by the Stalin regime. Or, I can focus on the economical flourishing of the Ukraine in the 70s and 80s under the Soviet Union—a time of universal

happiness and welfare that both of my parents remember with a great deal of nostalgia. I believe that drawing pictures related to these events will provide students with the opportunity to not only display their artistic ability, but process a certain event on a deeper level.

**The third project** will focus on two clips--Arthur Jafa's *Love is the Message, the Message is Death* and Jay-Z's *4:44*. Students will have to, first, analyze the conglomeration of images, and then create their own short film telling a personal story via one of the free programs allowing to do so. The first video features a series of snapshots from lives of different African American people that together describe both the collective pain and joy. Images of people having fun and engaging in joyful activities such as dancing and singing are interchanged with images of horror, such as police brutality and other acts of violence towards the African Americans—all is shown while Kanye West's gospel-like track , "Ultralight Beam" is playing. The second video is essentially Jay-Z's contrition and a love ode to his wife Beyonce, where he both proclaims his love to her and confesses his sins, inadequacy, and being unworthy of her love and companionship. But somehow, the scope of this video goes beyond their relationship, also featuring snapshots of lives of the African Americans the way Jafa's video does. When I will teach this material in preparation for the third project, I will design a few activities where students will have to analyze the images embedded in these videos and their purposes. Why are images of terror interspersed with images of happiness? What does it tell about lives of the African American people in the US? Can the same apply to the lives of students? For the individual project, I will ask students to create a video of their own using a Google video platform Vimeo. Students will be required to narrate a story about their people, culture, and / or individual story through carefully selected images and an accompanying soundtrack. Similar to the second project's art exhibitions depicting a historical event (migration) of one African American people and a history of one person— Toussaint L'Ouverture, this subunit also features a collective story of the African American people and an individual story of one mega couple, probably the most influential black celebrity couple in the US—Jay-Z and Beyonce. Students can also narrate a story of their people and / or an individual story after analyzing these two videos and also having undergone a tutorial in using the Vimeo application.

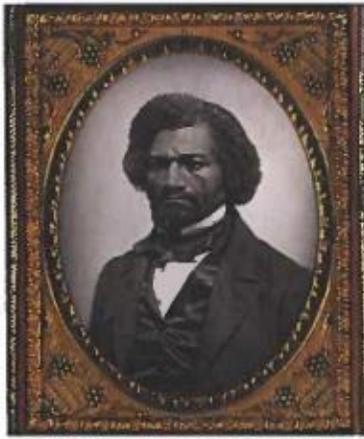
**In the final project**, the students will analyze photographs of Frederick Douglass. The project can be focused on analyzing the *how* and *why* of his portrayal. I can create a graphic organizer with criteria for this analysis, and the students can analyze a number of photographs according to this criteria. One interesting peculiarity about these portraits is that virtually all of them are very formal, especially in his early life. There is no glimpse and no trace of the informal, private Douglass in the beginning of his career, as if his whole life consisted solely of public service and it left no room for anything else. While most of the early daguerreotypes feature Douglass sitting and facing either the camera or looking in a distance in a very conventional pose (see below), later in his life come a few pieces that strike as being quite unconventional because of the portrayal from the back—which, combined with the sepia quality of the images create a uncanny and a bit creepy ambiance (see below). These more experimental and unconventional images definitely come from the later period of Douglass's life as we can clearly see his grey hair, and though he's still photographed in a formal setting dressed in formal attire, I believe that there is a clearly discernable attempt to provide a sneak peek into his private

life—for example, sitting in his private study or walking towards a coach. This way, to analyze the photographer's intentions and subjects' intentions in the early and later periods of Douglass's life, students can do a project where they can perform just that in context of a group activity. Next, students can do a similar project in relation to another person of color—for example, find 5 images of, say, Barack Obama before presidency, during presidency and / or post presidency, and ponder on the way he is portrayed in different ways. An alternative follow-up project can be to do the same with a few pictures they have of themselves or a family member. Such a project will allow them to analyze their own decisions in character portrayal of themselves or their loved ones.

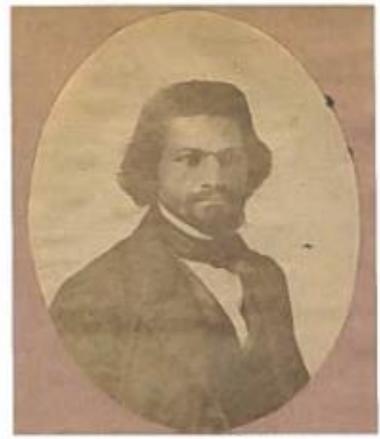
Conventional portrayal:



10. Unknown photographer, c. 1855. Sixth-plate daguerreotype, 2¼ × 3¾ in. NAMA.



11. Unknown photographer, c. 1856. Quarter-plate ambrotype, 4¼ × 3¾ in. NPG.



12. Unknown photographer, c. 1857. Copy print from a lost daguerreotype or ambrotype, 2 × 3 in. Clements.



13. Unknown photographer, c. 1858. Copy print from a lost daguerreotype or ambrotype, 8 × 10 in. NYHS.



14. Unknown photographer, c. 1859. Ninth-plate ambrotype, 2 × 2½ in. UNMAM.



15. Unknown photographer, c. 1860. Salted paper print, 4 × 3½ in. NPG.

Portrayal from the back:



139. Unknown photographer, c. 1893. Cedar Hill, 1411 W Street SE, Washington, D.C. Albumen print, 9 x 7 in. NPS.



140. Unknown photographer, c. 1893. Cedar Hill, 1411 W Street SE, Washington, D.C. Albumen print, 10 x 6 in. NPS.



141. Unknown photographer, c. 1893. Cedar Hill, 1411 W Street SE, Washington, D.C. Albumen print, 3 1/2 x 2 1/2 in. MSRC.



142. Unknown photographer, c. 1893. Cedar Hill, 1411 W Street SE, Washington, D.C. Postcard print, 6 x 4 in. NPS-MSRC; Emory-IC



143. Unknown photographer, c. 1893. Library at Cedar Hill, 1411 W Street SE, Washington, D.C. Albumen print, 9 x 7 in. NPS.



144. Unknown photographer, c. 1893. Library at Cedar Hill, 1411 W Street SE, Washington, D.C. Albumen print, 9 x 7 in. NPS-MSRC

## Teaching strategies

Project-based learning, or PBL, is a teaching method that has been gaining momentum in recent years. It is very attractive to many educators as it can be used in both large and small classes, can be also applied with success in mixed ability classes, and, most importantly, can help students develop critical thinking skills. (Isrokijah, 2020, p. 135). What makes PBL so full of potential as an effective teaching technique is the fact that it comes from the constructivist educational philosophy. Constructivism asserts that students acquire knowledge by building meaning through their interaction with the environment. As Mataka & Kowalske (2015) explain, there are three philosophical cornerstones that define PBL: 1. Understanding develops through interactions with the environment; 2. Cognitive conflict or puzzlement is the stimulus for learning and determines the organization and the nature of what is learned; 3. Knowledge evolves through social negotiation and through the evaluation of the viability of individual understandings (p. 930). All of these principles make PBL the kind of pedagogical approach that especially appeal to teachers who see their students as agents in constructing knowledge and not

just passive recipients of facts bestowed by the all-knowing teacher. But before I describe the components of this approach, I also want to mention a few drawbacks that are important to remember before implementing it in the classroom. As Bessa, Santos & Duarte (2019) claim, there are five main drawbacks that can be summarized as follows: 1. There is not enough time for working properly with PBL within a regular class; 2. The difficulty [lies] in building and sharing collective knowledge through teamwork as well as allowing the teacher to provide scaffolding of each participant individually; 3. Engagement and assessment of students may be problematic to measure, as some members may choose not to contribute; 4. Because it is considered descriptive rather than prescriptive and, if [its] principles are misinterpreted, it can lead to ... the distortion of the method (p. 453). This way, it is imperative to design PBL projects with manageable time frame in mind, and also come up with ways to ensure accountability of each team member—for instance, each student should be assigned a particular role, and all team members should rate (anonymously) participation of each of their teammates.

PBL seems to be the kind of an approach that allows a great deal of freedom in both design and execution. While some teachers would certainly appreciate this laxity, I would rather prefer a more rigid framework that would allow me to save time by following a predetermined format. But there are certain elements that should constant and present in every PBL project, as follows:

1. Challenging Problem And Question
2. Sustained Inquiry
3. Authenticity
4. Student Voice and Choice
5. Reflection
6. Critique and revision
7. Public Product

Isrokijah (2020) suggests a very comprehensible way of PBL application in the English classroom—by way of designing a pre-activity and incorporating 3 stages of the main activity. Isrokijah (2020) proposes, “First, preparation for preactivity includes selecting the appropriate basic competence, formulating learning objectives, designing exercises for language support. Second, preparation for PBL activity includes designing warm-up activity, main activity and closing activity. Good preparation will support the teachers in applying PBL in teaching English” (p. 135). In my unit, I am going to utilize this framework for all four projects. Here is the outline of each PBL project as proposed by Isrokijah:

**Pre-activity Phase:**

1. Learning Objectives;
2. Exercises for Language Support

**Activity Phase:**

1. Warm-Up Activity;
2. Main Activity;
3. Closing Activity

## **Classroom Activities**

### **Lesson 1: Narrating Collective and Personal Stories in Pictures**

#### **Part 1: Telling a Collective Story**

##### **Pre-activity Phase:**

1. Learning Objectives

Students will collaborate IOT analyze a painting

Students will answer questions IOT analyze a painting

2. Exercises for Language Support

#### **Sentence Frames for Oral Presentation**

##### **1. Warm greeting**

- Hello everyone, my name is...
- Hi everyone, it's great to be here. My name is...

##### **2. Memorable opening**

Relevant statistic or fact:

- Did you know that...
- Have you heard that...
- Did you realize that...

##### **Interesting and relevant anecdote:**

- The topic of X has sparked my interest, because when...
- X reminds me of the time...
- I'm going to start with a little story about...
- When X(name) was...

##### **3. Clear introduction**

State your topic:

- Today I'm going to talk about...
- The focus of my talk today is on...

**Why this topic is important:**

- X is really important because...
- The topic/issue of X needs our attention because...
- The motivation for examining X (topic) is...

**Summarizing:**

- To summarize...
- So, today I've explained...
- My three main points have been...
- The central point has been about...
- The main message of today is...

**Activity Phase:**

1. Warm-Up Activity

Select 1 painting and come up with a presentation about it.

Panel #	Panel 24 
Caption	Child labor and a lack of education was one of the other reasons for people wishing to leave their homes.
What details do you notice?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Children are lifting heavy baskets;</li><li>2. Children are shown in distorted, unnatural poses;</li><li>3. Children are wearing only shorts/ skirts.</li><li>4. The painting reminds of Ancient Egypt friezes.</li></ol>

<p>What is the historical context of the painting? (Copy a few points from the website)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Many members of Harlem’s early twentieth-century were interested in history of Ancient Africa.</li> <li>2. Ancient Africa also appeared in black music of the era. Biblical allegories likened past struggles for freedom to present-day fights for equality.</li> </ol>
<p>What are your thoughts about the painting? Why did you choose it?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I believe that children should help their parents, but they can never have an adult’s job.</li> <li>2. I chose the painting because I feel very strongly about child labor around the world.</li> </ol>

2. Main Activity

Paint one painting of a historical event from your country. Come up with a presentation about it.

<p>Painting</p>	
<p>Caption</p>	<p>Holodomor took lives of almost 10,000,000 Ukrainians who started to death from artificially-created famine.</p>
<p>What details are important to notice?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A dead child is carried by an emaciated boy.</li> <li>2. The three adult figures are extremely thin and fatigued.</li> <li>3. The house’s roof is in disrepair.</li> <li>4. There is no vegetation anywhere.</li> <li>5. The background is red.</li> </ol>
<p>What is the historical context of the painting?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Holodomor lasted a year, from 1932 to 1933, and decimated more than 13% of total Ukrainian population.</li> </ol>

	2. It was created artificially by Stalin.
What are your thoughts about the painting? Why did you choose it?	I chose this painting because I was born in Ukraine and my grandparents told me about Holodomor.  My great grandfather was elected into the committee that was taking food away from people, but he would leave them plenty of food to survive, risking his and his family's lives. Many people were grateful to him for saving their lives this way.

### 3. Closing Activity

Gallery Walk.

Painting#1 you like. Why do you like it?	The first painting I like is _____. I like it because _____.
Painting #2 you like. Why do you like it?	The second painting I like is _____. I like it because _____.

## Part 2 : Telling a Personal Story

### Pre-activity Phase:

#### 1. Learning Objectives

- Students will collaborate IOT analyze a painting
- Students will answer questions IOT analyze a painting
- Students will follow a model IOT create a work of art

#### 2. Exercises for Language Support

### Academic Sentence Starters for Structuring Ideas

Introduction or Conclusion 	To Share an Opinion 	Add Information 	Compare & Contrast 	Show Time 
When If It We I The My In Some As	The best My favorite The worst In my opinion It is important I prefer I believe I think I feel	One reason Another reason Also In addition For example Another Another reason Additionally One way Another way	Just like However Even though Both Either/or Similarly In contrast	First Next Then During Later Earlier Before After Soon Finally

**Activity Phase:**

1. Warm-Up Activity

Review all the paintings in groups and come up with a group presentation about 1 painting.

Model

Name of Print	Dondon 
What details do you notice?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The women appear to hail Toussaint L'Ouverture. They raise their hands and appear to be joyful.</li> <li>2. The colors are muted, with white of the horse and blue of women's and their children clothes standing out.</li> <li>3. Toussaint L'Ouverture has his head down, appearing to be humble.</li> </ol>
What do you think is happening?	Toussaint L'Ouverture is going to protect / save women and their children.
What are your thoughts about the painting? Why did you choose it?	I like the painting because it's joyful. I shows Toussaint L'Ouverture as a humble man.

**Sentence Starters for Presentation**

Introduction or Conclusion 	To Share an Opinion 	Add Information 	Compare & Contrast 	Show Time 
When If It We I The My In Some As	The best My favorite The worst In my opinion It is important I prefer I believe I think I feel	One reason Another reason Also In addition For example Another Another reason Additionally One way Another way	Just like However Even though Both Either/or Similarly In contrast	First Next Then During Later Earlier Before After Soon Finally

## 2. Main Activity

Select 1 person of color, draw a picture of this person that depicts one important moment of this person's life, and then design a presentation that describes this picture.

Model

Name of the Person	Serena Williams
Drawing	
Who is this person?	Serena Williams is a professional tennis player.
What details did you put into the drawing and why?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Her racket;</li> <li>2. Clenched fists;</li> <li>3. Her figure expresses intense emotion of winning.</li> </ol>
What is happening in the drawing?	Serena Williams wins a competition.
What are your thoughts about the drawing? Why did you choose to draw this point in this person's life?	I chose to draw Serena Williams in state of winning a competition to show that hard work and perseverance always pay off.

## 3. Closing Activity

Gallery Walk: this time, instead of doing an oral presentation about their work, students will circulate around the classroom and look at other students' work. Then, they will vote on three most interesting pieces of work by filling in the following graphic organizer:

Name of the Student	Name of Person Described by the Student
#1	
#2	
#3	

## Lesson 2: Poems About Paintings

### Part 1: Exploring Examples

#### Pre-activity Phase:

##### 1. Learning Objectives

Students will take turns IOT read the poem out loud

Students will collaborate in groups IOT create a Mind Mirror of the poem

##### 2. Exercises for Language Support

The teacher will introduce (or reintroduce) the concepts of a phrase vs. sentence, quotation and a symbol—all of these concepts will be needed to complete the assignment “Mind Mirror.”

#### Phrase vs. Sentence

**Phrase:** A group of words that don't express a complete thought. A phrase, as compared to sentence, does not feature a subject and a verb.

**Write S after the sentences and P after the phrases for each group of words below.**

1. Plants and animals are living things. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Living things get rid. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Feed, grow bigger, move on their own. \_\_\_\_\_
4. All living things need air and water. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Make babies that look like. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Plants make their own food. \_\_\_\_\_
7. Animals move from place to. \_\_\_\_\_
8. Non-living things were never alive. \_\_\_\_\_

#### Quotation

- Quotations use the **exact words** of the original author.
- When you use a quotation, you want to make sure you copy it **word for word** exactly as it appears in the original source, and provide a citation.
- Quotations are set apart by "**quotation marks**" for shorter quotes or a block quote for longer quotations.

## How to Punctuate Quotations

### Punctuating Quotations

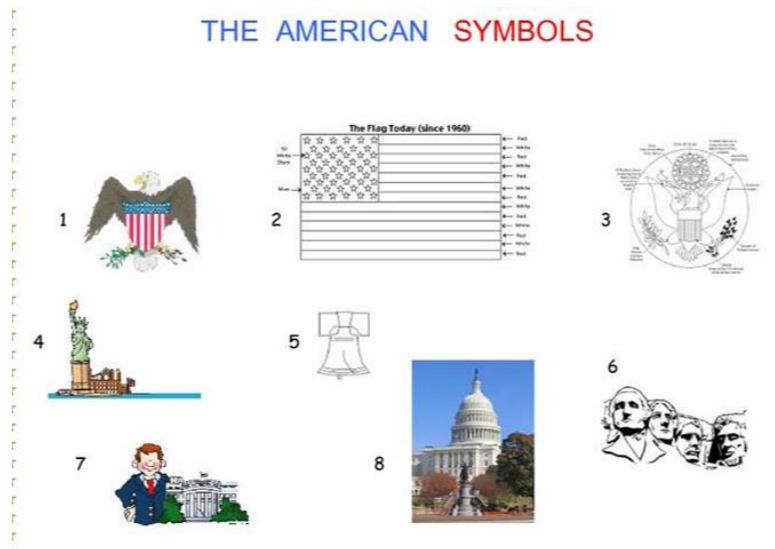
- The author's exact words go inside the quotation marks: "I am super, duper cool."
- The end punctuation (period, question mark, exclamation point) goes inside the last quotation mark. "Give me the damn money!"
- When the attribution comes after a direct quote, use a comma to separate the quote from the attribution. "Here it is," replied Bob.
- If a question mark relates to the sentence and not the quote, place it at the end of the sentence outside the quotation marks: What kind of moron says, "I am super, duper cool"?

## Symbol

a letter, group of letters, character, or picture that is used instead of a word or group of words

Ex." The company's *symbol* [=logo] is a red umbrella.

## The American Symbols



**Activity Phase:**

1. Warm-Up Activity;

**Reading in 4 Voices**

1. Students will be divided into several teams of 4
2. Each group will be assigned ONE poem only out of three poems total.
3. Students will read the poem in 4 voices—each his or her own color only!

**Poem 1: “De Español Y Mestiza Produce Castiza”**

How not to see

in this gesture

the mind

of the colony?

In the mother’s arms,

the child, hinged

at her womb—

dark cradle

of mixed blood

(call it Mexico)—

turns toward the father,

reaching to him

as if back to Spain,

to the promise of blood

alchemy—three easy steps

to purity:

from a Spaniard and an Indian,

a mestizo;

from a mestizo and a Spaniard,

a castizo;  
from a castizo and a Spaniard,  
a Spaniard.

We see her here—

one generation away  
nearly slipping  
her mother's careful grip.

**Poem 2: "Blood"**

It must be the gaze of a benevolent viewer  
upon her, framed as she is in the painting's  
romantic glow, her melancholic beauty  
meant to show the pathos of her condition:  
*black blood*—that she cannot transcend it.  
In the foreground she is shown at rest, seated,  
her basket empty and overturned beside her  
as though she would cast down the drudgery  
to which she was born. A gleaner, hopeless  
undine—the bucolic backdrop a dim aura  
around her—she looks outward toward us as if  
to bridge the distance between. *Mezzo*,  
intermediate, how different she's rendered  
from the dark kin working the fields behind her.  
If not for the ray of light appearing as if from beyond  
the canvas, we might miss them—three figures  
in the near distance, small as afterthought.

**Poem 3: "Help. 1968"**

*After a Photograph from The Americans*  
By Robert Frank

When I see Frank's photograph  
of a white infant in the dark arms  
of a woman who must be the maid,  
I think of my mother and the year  
we spent alone—my father at sea.

The woman stands in profile, back  
against a wall, holding her charge,  
their faces side by side—the look  
on the child's face strangely prescient,  
a tiny furrow in the space  
between her brows. Neither of them  
looks toward the camera; nor  
do they look at each other. That year,

when my mother took me for walks,  
she was mistaken again and again  
for my maid. Years later she told me  
she'd say I was her daughter, and each time  
strangers would stare in disbelief, then  
empty the change from their pockets. Now

I think of the betrayals of flesh, how  
she must have tried to make of her face  
an inscrutable mask and hold it there  
as they made their small offerings—  
pressing coins into my hands. How

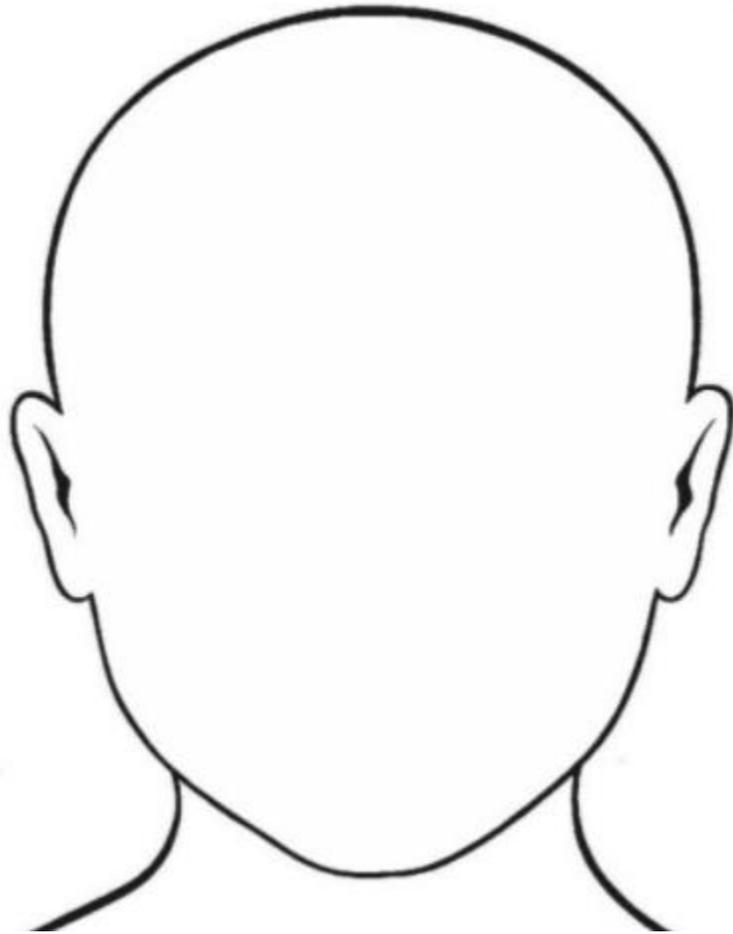
like the woman in the photograph  
she must have seemed, carrying me  
each day—white in her arms—as if  
she were a prop: a black backdrop,  
the dark foil in this American story.

2. Main Activity: Mind Mirror

Directions: In groups, create a Mind Mirror demonstrating your collective understanding of the poem.

- Two quotes from the speech, properly marked with quotation marks
- Two original phrases about the speaker written by the group
- Two symbols that relate to the poem
- Two relevant drawings

## Mind Mirror



### Mind Mirror

#### 3. Closing Activity: Gallery Walk

Groups will put their Mind Mirrors all over the classroom. Students will walk around the classroom and look at other students' work.

Alternatively, groups of students may make a presentation of their Mind Mirror in front of the class. Each student will have to explain certain components from their presentation. The teacher should introduce sentence starters for oral presentation, as follows:

#### Frames for Discussing a Poem

1. I noticed \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_ on line \_\_\_\_\_.
2. I found it interesting when \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.
3. My understanding of this part of the poem was \_\_\_\_\_.
4. At first I thought \_\_\_\_\_, but now I think \_\_\_\_\_.
5. I wonder \_\_\_\_\_.

6. A great line in this poem was \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_

7. A connection I can make is \_\_\_\_\_

8. I like how the author uses \_\_\_\_\_ to show \_\_\_\_\_.

## Part 2: Researching and Creating

### Pre-activity Phase:

#### 1. Learning Objectives

Students will navigate a website IOT locate a work of art

Students will utilize Google translate and an image IOT write an ekphrastic poem

#### 2. Exercises for Language Support

Students will refresh their knowledge of rhyme, rhythm and repetition—elements of poetry that we studied in context of a few poems throughout the school year. Though students are not required to use these elements while writing a poem (unless the teacher makes it a requirement), they are certainly welcome to do so.

### What is Rhythm?

- Any poem has the chance of having rhythm.
- A poem has rhythm if the reader of the poem gives the poem rhythm.
- For a poem to have rhythm, it has to be read following a pattern with its syllables. For example:  
da, da, dadada da da, da, da, dadada da da,  
da, da, dadada da da, da, da, dadada da da.

**What is rhyme?**

- Words sound alike because they share the same ending vowel and consonant sounds.  
LAMP  
STAMP  
↑ Share the short "a" vowel sound
- (A word always rhymes with itself.)  
↑ Share the combined "mp" consonant sound

Repetition uses a word, phrase or image more than once *for emphasis*.



### A poem to Practice these Elements

*Directions: Please read the poem and underline all the instances of repetition and circle all the words that rhyme.*

- Last night I dreamt about chickens  
They were playing on my pillows  
They were nesting in my head  
They were walking in my room  
They were lying on my bed.

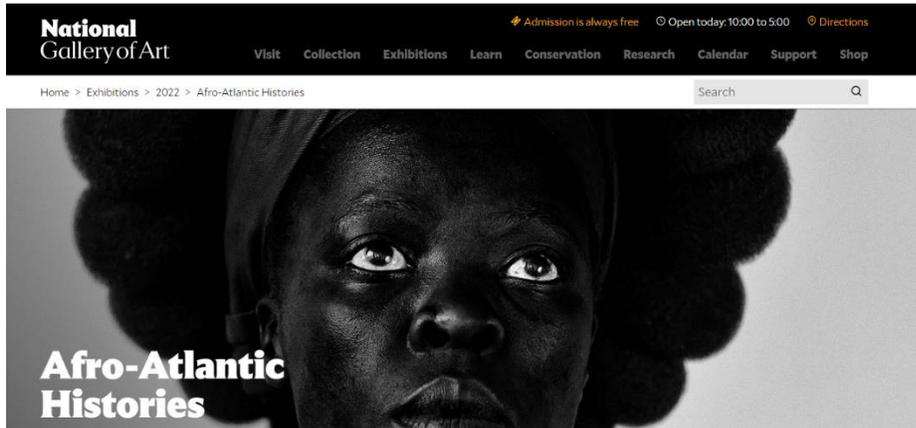
## Activity Phase:

1. Warm-Up Activity;

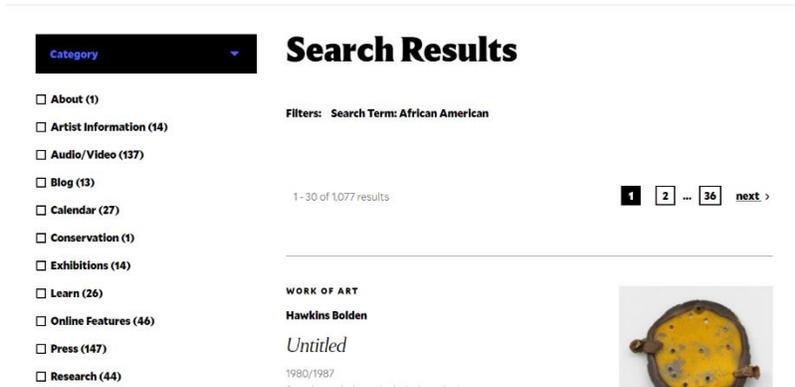
Finding a painting or a photograph on the website of “National Gallery of Art.”

## Stepper for Finding the Image

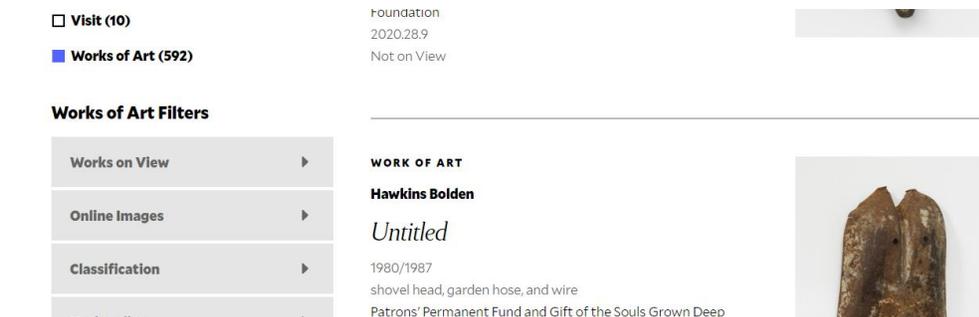
**Step 1:** Go to the website *nga.gov*



**Step 2:** Put in the phrase “African American” into the search window.



**Step 3:** On the right-hand side, you will see the word “Category.” Scroll down to “Works of Art” and click on it. This will limit all the search results only to the works of art.



**Step 4:** Explore all twenty pages of works of art featuring African American subjects and / or connected to African American history. You can select an object, print, painting or photograph.

2. Main Activity;

### Writing a poem

1. Write an ekphrastic poem describing this work of art in *at least 20 lines*. The style can be anything you want—there is no requirement to maintain a particular style format.
2. Print out your ekphrastic poem together with the image of the work of art you've described.
3. Closing Activity

### Gallery Walk

Students will circle around the classroom, looking at the works of art and corresponding ekphrastic poems done by their classmates. They will vote on three best poems by filling up a quick questionnaire. Students whose poems got the most votes will get a winning prize.

### The Best Poem Questionnaire

Name of the poet	Best Poems
#1	
#2	
#3	

### Lesson 3: Analyzing Photographs

#### Pre-activity Phase:

1. Learning Objectives

Students will collaborate in groups and answer questions IOT analyze images

Students will locate images and answer questions about them IOT perform analysis

2. Exercises for Language Support

The teacher will define the following verbs:

To wonder

To think

To feel

To notice

To differ

#### Activity Phase:

## 1. Warm-Up Activity

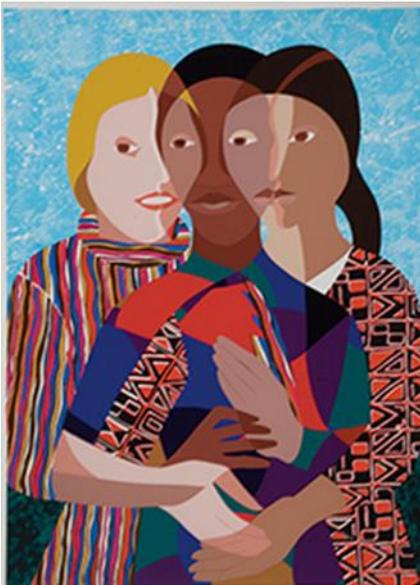
Before analyzing images, the teacher may project a painting of her choice and ask what students wonder about, what they notice, and what they feel when they look at it.

Possible images:

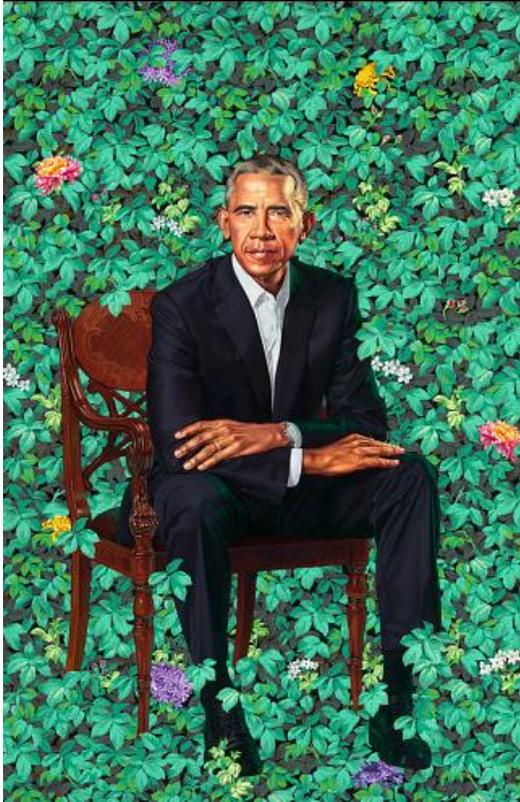
1. Pepper-Pot: A scene in the Philadelphia Market, 1811.



2. Three Women of America



### 3. Barack Obama



### 2. Main Activity

Directions: Please collaborate in groups of 3-4 and answer questions about these series of images:

	What do you notice about these photos? What details do they have in common?	How do you feel about these photos?	What do you wonder when you look at these photos?	Why do you think Douglass wanted to be photographed this way?	Do you like each series of photos? Why or why not?	How are these photos different? Why do you think they differ?
Series 1	I notice... The details these photos have in common are as follows:	I feel... when I look at these photos.	I wonder if ... when I look at these photos.	Douglass wanted to be photographed this way because...	I do / do not like these series because...	I think that these photos differ in... They differ because ...

Series 2	I notice... The details these photos have in common are as follows:	I feel... when I look at these photos.	I wonder if ... when I look at these photos.	Douglass wanted to be photographed this way because...	I do / do not like these series because...	I think that these photos differ in... They differ because ...
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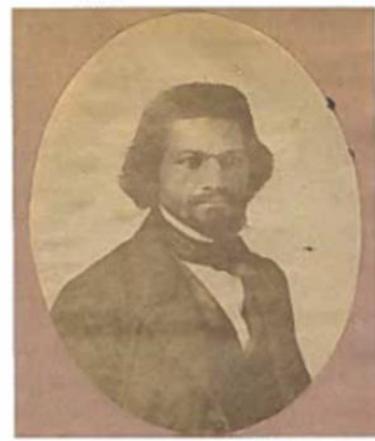
Series 1:



10. Unknown photographer, c. 1855. Sixth-plate daguerreotype, 2¼ × 3¼ in. NAMA.



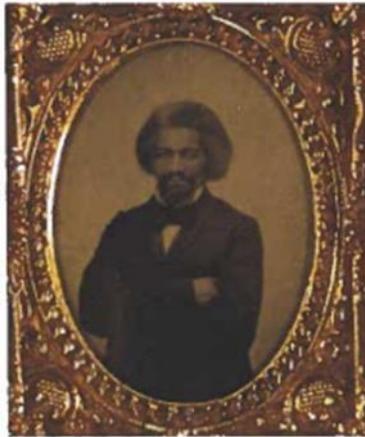
11. Unknown photographer, c. 1856. Quarter-plate ambrotype, 4¼ × 3¼ in. NPG.



12. Unknown photographer, c. 1857. Copy print from a lost daguerreotype or ambrotype, 2 × 3 in. Clements.



13. Unknown photographer, c. 1858. Copy print from a lost daguerreotype or ambrotype, 8 × 10 in. NYHS.



14. Unknown photographer, c. 1859. Ninth-plate ambrotype, 2 × 2½ in. UNMAM.



15. Unknown photographer, c. 1860. Salted paper print, 4 × 3¼ in. NPG.

Series 2:



139. Unknown photographer, c. 1893. Cedar Hill, 1411 W Street SE, Washington, D.C. Albumen print, 9 x 7 in. NPS.



140. Unknown photographer, c. 1893. Cedar Hill, 1411 W Street SE, Washington, D.C. Albumen print, 10 x 6 in. NPS.



141. Unknown photographer, c. 1893. Cedar Hill, 1411 W Street SE, Washington, D.C. Albumen print, 3 1/2 x 2 1/2 in. MSRC.



142. Unknown photographer, c. 1893. Cedar Hill, 1411 W Street SE, Washington, D.C. Postcard print, 6 x 4 in. NPS-MSRC; Emory-IC



143. Unknown photographer, c. 1893. Library at Cedar Hill, 1411 W Street SE, Washington, D.C. Albumen print, 9 x 7 in. NPS.



144. Unknown photographer, c. 1893. Library at Cedar Hill, 1411 W Street SE, Washington, D.C. Albumen print, 9 x 7 in. NPS-MSRC.

### 3. Closing Activity

#### Analyzing Photographs of One Person

*Directions: Please come up with at least six photographs of a renowned person of color, and analyze them using the same questions.*

	What do you notice about these photos? What details do they have in common?	How do you feel about these photos?	What do you wonder when you look at these photos?	Why do you think [name] wanted to be photographed this way?	Do you like each series of photos? Why or why not?	How are these photos different? Why do you think they differ?
Series 1	I notice... The details these photos have in	I feel... when I look at	I wonder if ... when I look at	[name] wanted to be photographed	I do / do not like these series because...	I think that these photos

	common are as follows:	these photos.	these photos.	this way because...		differ in... They differ because ...
Series 2	I notice... The details these photos have in common are as follows:	I feel... when I look at these photos.	I wonder if ... when I look at these photos.	[name] wanted to be photographed this way because...	I do / do not like these series because...	I think that these photos differ in... They differ because ...

## Bibliography

Bessa, B. R., Santos, S., & Duarte, B. J. (2019). Toward effectiveness and authenticity in PBL: A proposal based on a virtual learning environment in computing education. *Computer Applications in Engineering Education*, 27(2), 452471. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cae.22088>

In this article, multiple challenges of PBL instruction are summarized and explored, and the question posed explored the ways to help teachers design PBL activities that will retain both principles of authenticity and effectiveness. Though the article explored the applicability of virtual leaning environment to PBL tasks, a lot of article’s ideas are applicable to other learning environments as well.

Frederick Douglass, “Pictures and Progress” in *Picturing Frederick Douglass*, 161-171.

In this compelling essay, Douglass writes about the very nature of picture-making. He argues for numinous, religious quality of creativity in general, and explores it in context of childhood and different Christian denominations among other things. The idea that though few people can express themselves eloquently, many people feel and thus can comprehend art on a deep level, is reiterated time and again. In addition, the language and the depths of the ideas in this article astound by both their beauty and profoundness.

‘Gold Standard PBL: Essential Project Design Elements’ *PBL Works*. 03 March 2022.

<https://www.pblworks.org/what-is-pbl/gold-standard-project-design/>

This resource explains seven essential product design elements, thus providing framework and starting point for designing activities according to this format. There are multiple links to other resources that explain each step of planning a perfect PBL activity. The website also features a variety of videos where teachers showcase their prowess at designing PBL activities.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., “Epilogue: Frederick Douglass’s Camera Obscura: Representing the Anti-Slave ‘Clothed and in Their Own Form’”, in *Picturing Frederick Douglass*, 197-216

In this essay, Gates writes about the significance of photographs in portraying Black people in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, together with many challenges surrounding this portrayal—the biggest one being the challenge of camera capturing the tone of the Black body, a problem partially addressed by the Zone System. Gates also writes extensively about Douglass’s favorite literary figure—chiasmus, a figure which allows the order reversal of words in a sentence, and argues that photography is an “optical counterpart” of this literary figure that also can be used to reverse the established order of things.

Isorhiza, I. (2020). Problem based learning: A model in teaching English at junior high school. *Journal of Research on English and Language Learning (J-REaLL)*, 1(2), 133- 141. <https://doi.org/10.33474/j-reall.v1i2.6900>

This article defines PBL and gives examples of its application to high school English. It gives examples of how to apply it to teaching grammar, genre texts, and short fictional texts. One great merit of this article is that it also discusses both benefits and shortcomings of this pedagogical method as was evidenced in the author’s classroom.

John Stauffer, ed., “Introduction,” in *Picturing Frederick Douglass: An Illustrated Biography of the Nineteenth Century’s Most Photographed American* (New York: Liverlight, 2015), ix-xxvii.

In this essay, Stauffer writes about Douglass’s understanding of the power of photography and its capacity to further his cause of fight for equality via such means as providing objectivity and truthfulness in representation of Black lives. Stauffer describes the ways Douglass used to promote rights for the Black citizens and his own societal portrait with the help of a photograph. He also details Douglass’s ideas in regards to this medium, such as the importance of the Black photographers in capturing identities of the Black people, as opposed to their white counterparts who tend to misrepresent black bodies. Stauffer also chronicles and explains the careful crafting of Douglass’s public identity through the use of photographs.

Mataka, L. M., & Kowalske, M. G. (2015). The influence of PBL on students' self-efficacy beliefs in chemistry. *Chemistry Education Research and Practice*, 16(4), 929-938. <https://doi.org/10.1039/c5rp00099h>

This remarkable study explores an affective factor in mastery of learning objectives in the context of PBL instructional technique. In a nutshell, the findings point to the positive and significant effect of this instructional technique in bolstering student motivation and belief in one’s ability to succeed. The study provided both quantitative data and also qualitative data and participants were also interviewed to relay their experiences with PBL.

Ruiz-Gallardo, J., Gonzalez-Geraldo, J. L., & Castano, S. (2016). What are our students doing? workload, time allocation and time management in PBL instruction. A case study in

science education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 53, 51-62. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2015.10.005>

In this study, the time allocation to PBL activities is examined, and the important questions are raised in regards to the subject of time, such as whether students fit their workload to the subject time, whether it is possible at all to modify poor time habits to reach maximum results, and whether the trend of time allocation stands the same during a semester.

Sixteen Racial Classifications of 18th century Latin America Castas Paintings. *Latin American Studies*. 24 May 2022. <http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/race.htm>

This resource is essentially a guide to the caste systems that were present in Mexico, Peru and the French colonies. Together with a complete pictorial representation of this system with inscriptions, it features several paintings of the era which subject was racial mixing, done in classical tradition.

The Casta System. *COW Latin America*. 24 May 2022. <https://cowlatinamerica.voices.wooster.edu/2020/05/04/the-casta-system/>

This resource sets a historical background to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century caste system in Latin America. Together with providing extensive historical background to the phenomenon of caste system, it features twenty two paintings with names of each instance of racial intermixing. The resource also explains how this legally long-abolished system still exists de facto in Latin America, effectually putting colored people at the bottom of the social hierarchy.

Tina M. Campt, “Prelude to a Black Gaze” in *A Black Gaze: Artists Changing How We See* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2021), 1-24.

In this compelling article that will work perfectly to go in tandem with project 3, Campt explains why moving image, as contrasted with still photography, is a preferred means of artistic expression for Black people—mainly, to document the precarity of everyday life together with expressing one’s life aspirations and just beauty of day-to-day life functions. The works of several popular Black artists are analyzed through the lens of Black gaze.

W.E.B. DuBois, “W.E.B. DuBois, “Forethought” and “Of Our Spiritual Strivings,” in *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Vintage/Library of America, 1990; originally published 1903).

In the “Forethought,” DuBois outlines what he intends to explore in his essays and the occurrences that let him to initiate such an exploration. It is in his essay titled “Spiritual Strivings” DuBois wrote about “double consciousness” of Black people—the sense of looking at oneself through the eyes of other people, who do the work of constant judging. DuBois writings remain actual for the present day Black people—the failed promise for complete equality and systematic and systemic prejudice still make lives of the Black people trying in the US.

## **Student Reading List**

1<sup>st</sup> Project: Trethewey, Natasha. *Voetica*. 20 March 2022.  
<https://voetica.com/voetica.php?collection=2&poet=893>

### De Español Y Mestiza Produce Castiza

This poem describes what is going on in the painting by Juan Rodriguez Juarez, circa 1715—a light-skinned baby extending her hands towards her white father from her mother’s arms--by putting it into a historical context of the caste system.

### Blood

This poem describes the 1880 painting “Quadroon” by George Fuller where a beautiful ¼ black adolescent girl is portrayed with some black workers, presumably her kin, in the background. In this poem, Trethewey picks up on the contrast of the young girl with the black workers in distance—how she is full of light while they are almost indiscernible, and yet how her beauty fails to surpass the condition into which she’s born.

### Help, 1968

This poem describes a 1968 photograph by Robert Frank. Trethewey both describes the photograph and explains how it connects to her personal story, how her black mother was also often mistaken for a caretaker because of her little daughter’s light complexion.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Project:

Lawrence, Jacob. “The Migration of the Negro.” *Moma*. 21 March 2022.

<https://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2015/onewayticket/>

On the website Moma.org where this exhibition can be found it is stated that it is “[a]n in-depth look at Jacob Lawrence's landmark 1941 painting series about the mass movement of African Americans from the rural South to the urban North.” There are 60 paintings that can be accessed in this online exhibition, and each painting is accompanied by many historical artifacts to help situate it in context, such as songs, historical documents and commentary, and even recipes!

Lawrence, Jacob. “The Life of Toussaint L’Overture.” *Colby*. 04 April 2022.

<https://museum-exhibitions.colby.edu/explore-jacob-lawrence/>

On the above-referenced website it is stated that this exhibition is “a rare series of 15 prints by Jacob Lawrence... Haiti was the first republic in the world to be founded by former slaves. An important fact on its own terms, this history and Toussaint Louverture’s role in this quest for freedom gains a new level of relevance today within the context of the ongoing struggle for racial justice.” Some of the paintings feature a short historical description that puts it into context for viewing and understanding.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Project:

Video 1: Jafa, Arthur. (2016). *Love is the Message, the Message is Death* [Video]. Retrieved

March 21, 2022 from <https://www.juxtapoz.com/news/film/arthur-jafa-love-is-the-message-the-message-is-death/>

In this video, Jaffe compiles a montage of images that explore both positive and negative experiences of black people in the US that are foundational in the creation of black identity. The montage of moving pictures is set against Kanye West's "Ultralight Beam" song featuring elements of gospel music tradition.

Video 2: Jay-Z. (2017, June 30). 4:44 [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved March 21, 2022.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zSkA61esq\\_c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zSkA61esq_c)

In this title song for Jay-Z's celebrated album with the same title "4:44," a montage of images featuring both joy and anguish of black people in the US is shown. Images of police brutality and protests are interwoven with uplifting scenes of dancing and singing African Americans.

4<sup>th</sup> Project:

Stauffer, John. *Picturing Frederick Douglass : an Illustrated Biography of the Nineteenth Century's Most Photographed American* /. New York :: Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W.W. Norton & Company, 2015. Print.

This document is a chapter from the above-referenced book (pp. 179-196). This chapter is a compilation of dozens of portraits of Frederick Douglass throughout his life. Though these portraits come from different ages, all of them represent Douglass in the same fashion—decent, thoughtful and a bit impersonal, looking at a distance.

## Appendix

PA Common Core Standards:

CC.1.2.9–10.J Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college- and career-readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

CC.1.4.9–10.E Write with an awareness of the stylistic aspects of composition. • Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic. • Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms of the discipline in which they are writing.

CC.1.3.9–10.B Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly, as well as inferences and conclusions based on an author's explicit assumptions and beliefs about a subject.

CC.1.4.9–10.F Demonstrate a grade-appropriate command of the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.

CC.1.4.9–10.V Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CC.1.5.9–10.D Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning; ensure that the presentation is appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

CC.1.2.9–10.G Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account

CC.1.2.9–10.K Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade-level reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies and tools.

CC.1.4.9–10.H Write with a sharp, distinct focus identifying topic, task, and audience.

CC.1.4.9–10.U Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.

CC.1.5.9–10.A Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions on grade-level topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.