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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2005 Volume I: The Uses of Poetry in the Classroom

Rhymes and Rhythms of Black History

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I am a special education teacher at East Rock Global Magnet School in New Haven, CT. I currently co - teach in the 8th grade. This unit is being developed to expose my students to new ways of communicating and expressing themselves, as well as understanding how to interpret what others are expressing through their poetry. In this cross curricular unit I plan to introduce reading and writing poetry to my students in English class. I will then continue to use poetry to teach different time periods of Black History as the subject matter or time of authorship relates to that period. We will concentrate on the Middle Passage, Slavery and the Underground Railroad, Emancipation, Harlem Renaissance, Jim Crow and Civil Rights to present day. I will have the students interpret the meaning of the poetry as well as create their own poetry in their response to the literature, which is a skill needed for the 8th grade Connecticut Master Test (CMT) and the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) in 10th grade.

(Developed for Cross Curricular Language Arts and Social Studies, grade 8; recommended for Language Arts and Social Studies, grades 5-8)

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