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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2010 Volume II: Persuasion in Democratic Politics

Barack Obama's Rhetoric: The Trajectory of a Post-Racial America?

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by Samuel A. Reed, III

The essential question for this unit is: "How persuasive is Barack Obama's effort to inaugurate a post-Black Identity for Americans?" This unit is intended for students in grades 6-8, but could be adapted for high school students. While the unit will be anchored in the persuasive genre, it will integrate media literacy practices through reading, writing and viewing social studies content. This unit will cover such topics as rhetorical analysis, free speech, and civil rights. This unit will guide students' inquiry into how Obama and other orators, such as Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, and Martin Luther King Jr. persuade and influence societies. Students will explore what rhetorical tools are used to address issues of race. Through the study of persuasive speeches students will be able to inquire into what Obama's presidency means in a post-racial America. This unit will culminate with students responding and deliberating about race through multiple digital formats. Students will use Obama's speech "A More Perfect Union" as an anchor text in their inquiry and remix new media products that persuade audiences that Obama is qualified or not qualified to lead a post-racial society.

(Developed for Social Studies and Literacy, grades 6-7; recommended for Social Studies and Literacy, Middle School grades)

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