



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

2018 Volume II: Poems about Works of Art, Featuring Women and Other Marginalized Writers

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## **Activism and Cultural Identity Through Works of Art in Chicago Neighborhoods**

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by Laura Gillihan

We and our students want to see ourselves in our community and feel that our culture and identity are represented. This unit will turn students into activists for that purpose. Students will learn how to use works of art and poetry about works of art as the vehicle for community change.

Students will prepare for this by first interpreting works and then poetry about works of art through collaborative learning. Students will then view works by artists who have pursued the goal of reclaiming the culture and identity of their community. Students will then use their own photographs and poetry as community activists. Students will learn about three neighborhoods that surround our own and explore the history of Chicago's intentional segregation. They will study neighborhood art to learn how these communities have used and continue to use art to reclaim their culture and identity. We will have art walks in each neighborhood, with students documenting the art they see and later writing a poem about the works they documented. Students will display their work in gallery walks and in a poetry slam. Finally, students will create a collaborative mural for the whole community to view.

(Developed for Language Arts and Social Studies, grade 5; recommended for Language Arts/Social Studies, grades 3-8)

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