



# YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

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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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## **The Spirit Task: African Americans Reclaim Power through Art and Poetry**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 18.02.10, published September 2018

by Nina M. Ford

Have you ever seen an object with a racist caricature in someone's home or in an antique store? What should we do with these relics of the past? Are they truly relics, or are they closer to us than we'd like to think? Designed for the high school art classroom, this unit seeks to uncover and name anti-blackness in America, today and throughout our history, while examining how we might think about conflict as productive. Objects of racial intolerance will be used to teach about racism, resulting in conversations that yield difficult but honest dialogue and the breakdown of racist ideas. Foci will include color-conscious pedagogy, ekphrastic poetry, and contemporary Black artists. Poets and artists whose work we will study will focus on topics like truth telling, fear, sorrow, power, and redemption. Because of the cross-curricular nature of this unit, it can be used in high school visual art or English classes. Students will gain new insight into American history and how artists and writers talk back to oppression and racism.

(Developed for Art II, grades 9-12; recommended for English/Language Arts, grades 9-12)

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