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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

2024 Volume II: A History of Black People as Readers: A Genealogy of Critical Literacy

Parody and Counter-Narrative in Art: Viewing Against the Grain

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This unit defines and explores the use of parody and counter-narratives in visual art as a means to challenge, critique, and subvert dominant cultural narratives. Students will engage with five artistic works: *George Washington Carver Crossing the Delaware: Page from an American History Textbook* by Robert Colescott, *Washington Crossing the Delaware* by Emanuel Leutze, *Shadows of Liberty* by Titus Kaphar, *American Gothic* by Grant Wood and *The New American Gothic* by Criselda Vasquez. Students will learn how parody and counter-narrative function as tools of resistance and commentary. The unit will encourage students to "read against the grain" by examining the underlying messages and ideologies that these works seek to expose or disrupt in hopes that students can become more active agents of social change.

This unit is designed for a sixth grade English Language Arts classroom to extend the learning of a previously developed unit titled *Image as Text* written in 2017. The unit could be used in middle school or high school art, humanities, or English classes. It assumes little-to-no background knowledge in analyzing art or with the history associated with the works of art.

(Developed for English Language Arts, grade 6; recommended for Social Science and English, grades 6-12)

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