



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

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

Reading in the Dark: Freedom of the Mind and Body

Guide for Curriculum Unit 24.02.02, published September 2024

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This curriculum unit focuses on the journey African Americans had in their pursuit of obtaining literacy skills. These skills would then be developed into tools to gain freedom during slavery; freedom of the mind and body through reading. The content background for this unit will be broken down into two sections, and from these sections one will have the knowledge needed to deliver the unit. This is not to say that one must solely use the information being provided, but rather view and utilize the given material as a steppingstone in understanding the subject matter of literacy in the black community. The two sections to be discussed will present information in regard to literacy developed during slavery, and literacy during the time period of Reconstruction within the black community. When discussing literacy during the time period of Reconstruction, there will also be a discussion centered around the freedmen schools established during the time of Reconstruction by the Freedmen's Bureau. In correlating past history with relatable current subject matter, in the unit I will also acknowledge the establishment of Armstrong High School in Richmond, Virginia, and the Jefferson School in Charlottesville, Virginia. Armstrong High School, initially known as the Richmond Colored Normal School established in 1867 by the Freedmen's Bureau, is the feeder high school for Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School.

(Developed for U.S. History, grade 6; recommended for U.S. History, grade 7)

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