



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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Overview:

"If you were to get a handbook on what's the path to the presidency, I don't think that the handbook would start by saying, be an African American named Barack Obama."

-Barack Obama

In the 2008 presidential election more than 66 million Americans (53% of all voters) cast ballots for Obama. An unprecedented ninety-five percent of black voters, forty-three percent of white voters, and sixty-six percent of Hispanic voters cast ballots for Obama and made this historic election a reality. Obama also captured the hearts and minds of young people bringing a new generation of voters to the polls. He garnered sixty-six percent of voters under thirty and seventy-one percent of first time voters. Some have noted that his speech "A More Perfect Union" compared to other compelling historical speeches such as Abraham Lincoln's speech "A House Divided" as well as Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, John F. Kennedy's speech on religion and Dr Martin Luther King Jr's "I Have a Dream" speech. (Alter 2010)

Many of my students were excited when Barack Obama became the first African American president of the United States. Like many teachers, I capitalized on this excitement. After his historic inauguration I had my students compose letters, offering the President suggestions for improving education and living standards. They wrote Obama odes; did critical readings of news articles and compared and contrasted Obama with Jay Z, who both spent time in single parent households. I even had my students critically read and respond to Obama's back to school speech in September, 2009. These teachable moments were not sustained over an extended period but did engage students to read, write and think topically about issues related to race and politics.

I had previously contemplated creating a lesson on race using Obama's "A More Perfect Union" speech, but was reluctant, because I was not sure how I could appropriately engage my sixth grade students in such complex topics of race and identity. However, I think that with over a full year of the Obama presidency complete, it is critical that my students explore excerpts of his speeches on race and make an inquiry into what it means to be black in the 21st century.

Barack Obama's election as President of the United States of America gave rise to a new era in American politics. Derrick Dingle, editor of Black Enterprise, says "Obama's bi-racial identity, international upbringing, broad education, and history of public service made him the ideal candidate to help shape the new political landscape of a more diverse America" (Womack 2010). To ascend to the highest elected office in the United States, Obama had to use effective rhetorical tools to address some of the divisive issues of race and convince Americans that he was uniquely qualified to lead the nation.

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 multimodal literacy practices through reading, writing and viewing social studies content. I will teach such concepts as rhetoric, free speech, and civil rights. This unit will guide students' inquiry into how Obama and other orators 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.

Rationale:

There exist some tensions in planning inquiry lessons about race and diversity when so many schools are racially isolated. Furthermore, it can be difficult to find room for such lessons within a curriculum that is often skills-based and standardized test driven. My solution is to create an inquiry-driven unit that incorporates reading, writing, speaking, and thinking, a unit anchored in analyzing Obama's rhetoric on race that also meets or supplements the core curriculum standards. Developing such an inquiry unit that fits within the prescribed districts' curricula is challenging. Discourse on race within or outside of schools adds certain risks. Do I alienate students or make them feel disenfranchised when I single out the topic of race? If post-black identity means that race is less an issue, does such inquiry deserve any merit? Lastly, with the advent of sound bites, micro-blogging and shorter attention spans, how do I encourage my students to be an effective audience for thought provoking speeches?

I teach 6th grade literacy and social studies at Beeber Middle School, in the Philadelphia School District. The pupil population is about 500. The student body is over 90% African American and less than 5% percent Caucasian. My school has a fledgling immigrant population of Latina, Caribbean and African students. There are also bi-racially mixed students and some from other ethnicities. Most of students come from working class families and over 80% qualify for free or subsidized lunch.

The Philadelphia School District has nearly 190,000 students; Latino students represent close to 15% of the total population. African Americans and White students make up 66% and 14%, respectively. Research in Action, an education advocacy and policy firm, has found that many schools in Philadelphia are racially isolated- more than 90% percent of one race. (Benjamin, 2005) The student population of my school has steadily decreased over the past several years. The decline in my school population is due in part to charter school growth. It should be noted that my school's performance in the Pennsylvania State System Assessment (PSSA) has not increased in the past 3 years, while the school district scores overall have made gradual improvement.

The state and local standards from Pennsylvania's Department of Education and Philadelphia School District will be placed in the center of this inquiry-based unit. As a culminating activity, students will create their own re-mixed podcasts or deliberations about what Barack Obama's rhetoric on race means to a post-racial America. Students may also produce other multi-media products to demonstrate elements of persuasion related to their inquiry about post black identity. This unit will allow students to synthesize what they learn about the art of persuasion and what it means to be black in post-civil rights era. Students may showcase their critical thinking and higher-order thinking skills using communications and media technologies such as videos, comic making software, and blogs.

This unit seeks to improve students' critical thinking, writing, and public speaking skills. To address the challenge of providing standards-based literacy instruction while also providing deeper engagement, this unit will examine post black identity through multiple modalities. This unit will require a wide range of resources including textbooks, picture books, online resources, popular magazines, documentaries, other technologies and community resources such as the National Liberty Museum, Philadelphia Arts in Education Partnership, Temple University's Media Education Lab, and ArtsRising, a community arts engagement organization.

Ethos, Logos and Pathos; Narrative of the Black Identity Complex

Before conducting any inquiry on post-racialized contexts it is critical to examine black identity. Countless figures helped shape the story of black identity in America. For the purpose of this unit, I will highlight 5 key orators representing distinct narratives, pivotal figures who led to the possibility of Obama.

All of the featured pioneers were very effective rhetoricians because they knew how to exploit Aristotle's three most important persuasive tools: *ethos*, *logos* and *pathos*. *Ethos* persuades by character. An orator must establish her creditability and ethical stance to make her trustworthy and authentic to her audience. *Logos* persuades by logic. *Logos* is often the heart of an argument and critical thinking. The 3 important tools of *logos* are facts, judgments and policies. *Pathos* persuades by emotions. *Pathos* engages an audience by evoking their sensibilities. Anger, shame, sympathy and empathy are very persuasive tools of *pathos*.

All the black leaders discussed below were effective orators because they used *logos*, *ethos* and *pathos* to appeal to the brain, gut and heart of their audiences. (Heinrich 2007) The information which follows provides background on these African American orators, an explanation of Obama's rhetoric on race, and a précis of post black identity.

Sojourner Truth 1797-1843

Sojourner Truth is an important figure not only because she was an abolitionist but also because she fought for women's rights. Her persuasive skills exemplified Aristotelian rhetoric. Her strong character and striking intelligence balanced with common sense and dramatic wit gave her powerful *ethos*. Obama could learn a lot from Truth's famous *Ain't I a Woman!* She employed effective *ethos* and *logos* through using her personal trials and experiences to show how women were equal to men and illuminated the injustices of racism and sexism. Obama similarly used the narrative of his bi-racial experience to establish his *ethos* to speak about a post-racial identity. I find Sojourner Truth's voice speaks to both my girl and boy students, who are often raised in single female headed households.

Frederick Douglass (1817-1895)

Frederick Douglass shares parallel experiences with Obama. Douglass, like Obama, was born of racially mixed

heritage. His mother was a black slave while his father was an unknown slave owner. Douglass, primarily self taught, wrote a moving autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*. Obama's memoir, *Dreams from My Father*, illuminates his similar bi-racial and multicultural narrative.

Douglass was also a powerful orator; he invoked sayings such as "Power concedes to nothing" and delivered the famous speech, "The Meaning of the Fourth of July for the Negro," which addressed some of the polarizing racial complexities during his era. Douglas uses *logos* by citing evidence from documents such as *The Declaration of Independence* in his speech about race and slavery. Obama used words from the preamble to the Constitution, "We the people, in order to form a more perfect union," to set up his speech on race over 160 years later. Comparing Douglass's narrative with Obama's may provide better context to explore how some aspects of black identity have changed while some have remained the same.

W.E.B. DuBois (1868-1963) and Booker T. Washington (1855-1915)

I have paired W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington because both these pioneering figures contributed to an important debate on the most effective methods to educate and develop blacks after slavery and the Reconstruction Era.

DuBois was the first African American to receive a doctoral degree from Harvard University. His scholarship, activism, and philosophy still influences generations of blacks today. His famous book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, explored the complexities of race and class in the early 20th century. He was one of the founding members of the N.A.A.C.P. and editor of its famous journal, *The Crisis*. Booker T. Washington was a leading educator in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. His background was different from DuBois's. Washington was born into slavery in the south, had some struggles with poverty, and received an education and taught at the Hampton Institute. He had a major influence on southern race relations. Washington founded Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute and started African-American cooperatives and business networks throughout the South.

The famous debate between DuBois and Washington centered on what type of education was needed for African Americans. The more conservative Washington was a proponent for vocational education, while the more radical DuBois championed the training in the liberal arts and humanities. DuBois believed that liberal arts education would produce a cadre of black intellectuals -"the talented tenth"- who would help uplift the race of Black people as a whole. Washington advocated for a more self-help approach and didn't see segregation as problematic as long as African Americans could lift themselves up out of poverty through hard work and industry.

The poem *Booker T and WEB*, by Dudley Randall can be found in the *Poetry Out Loud* anthology. Many of my students have a vague understanding of Jim Crow or the civil rights movements. This poem is accessible for most of my sixth grade students, and fits well with social justice topics incorporated in my school district's curriculum. The DuBois and Washington debate could provide interesting context for exploring the art of rhetoric as well as generate discourse about race, class and civil rights.

Martin Luther King (1926-1968)

King attended Morehouse College and became a leading preacher, activists, and spiritual leader of the Civil Rights Movement. King's leadership and tactics of non-violence and civil disobedience led to the changing of laws that officially ended segregation. The eventual passage of the federal Civil Rights Act can be attributed to King and other civil rights activists of his era. For many people, Barack Obama's election as president was the fulfillment of Martin Luther King Jr.'s iconic speech, "I Have a Dream".

King's "I Have a Dream" speech is recognizable to most of my students; some can recite excerpts of the speech word for word. King employs *pathos* that appeals to the sensibilities of adults and children. "*I Have a Dream*" employs the rhetoric of guilt-purification -redemption. King's *ethos* in his speech contains traditions from both the black church and white protestant liberalism. King effectively used the Aristotlian art of *pathos* to move whites to accept equal justice for blacks, by arousing their guilt and then providing them away to expaite that guilt. (Bobbit 2004) Many of rhetorical elements in the "I Have a Dream" speech had been used by King countless times before. The "dream" metaphor had been effectively used in a commencement address in 1961, at Lincoln University. In "The American Dream" speech, he says, "America is essentially a dream as yet unfulfilled" (M. L. King 1986). King's "dream" motif framed the *logos* of his prophetic message in the context of the future because he wanted to lead his audience to change the way they would judge his children, "not by the color of their skin but the content of their character."

Obama's Rhetoric on Race in a Post Black Context

Obama's narrative and bi-racial ancestry is grounded in King's "dream" motif. In the post black context, Obama is not just a hero but a culmination of King's dream (Remnick 2010). Accordingly, Obama remixes elements of the civil rights message with his own temperament and personality.

Obama's "coming out" *ethos* was established when he delivered the keynote address at the 2004 Democratic Convention. His personal narrative as a bi-racial child, of a mother from Kansas and father from Kenya, embodied America's ambitions and hope. While King capitalized on the "dream" rhetoric to win the hearts and minds of Americans, Obama used the metaphor of "change" as the center of his rhetorical appeal. Obama changes his presence and style to fit his audiences' needs. During his presidential campaign he demonstrated his ability to "code switch". "Obama is a multi-lingual, a shape shifter" (Reminick 2010). Obama is at ease addressing corporate executives as well speaking at black churches. His ability to "code switch" is relevant to my students, because many of them intuitively posses this useful skill.

Obama's "A More Perfect Union" speech situates his vision of getting past racial disunity. He took on the issue of race unlike any prior politician; he did not use race to inflame conflict, nor did he evade it or talk in generalities; he confronted race and made an eloquent, nuanced analysis (Jackson 2009). The speech addressed the complexities of race from both sides of the divide and showed that the U.S. Constitution is still a work-in-progress that remains unfinished in part because issues of race undermine the ultimate progress of our nation. Using excerpts or sections of this speech will provide not only opportunities for my students to analyze Obama's rhetoric, but also a foundation for their inquiry into post black identity.

Post Black Identity

Due to America's past — the slave economy; civil war; Jim Crow system; civil rights struggles; and affirmative action outcomes — many Americans are obsessed with race. Race as it has been understood within American society has been steadily redefined. DuBios dubbed the term "double consciousness" to explain how African Americans reconciled their duality as both "an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings..." (Sharpley-Whiting 2009). During most of the twentieth century, the vast majority of the black middle class and its mainstream leadership focused on liberal integration. This approach was concerned with addressing racism through liberal reforms and the assimilation of blacks within all levels of civic, commercial and cultural strata. In 1960, liberal integrationists defined politics mostly through a prism of electorism. The premise was that electing more African Americans to congress, state legislatures, and city councils would increase and concede more power to blacks (Marrable 1995).

Many cross currents gave rise to a new post racial identity. The Bill Cosby Show on television depicted the Huxtable family as a non stereotypical middle class African American family. Furthermore, the post civil rights era spawned a generation of hip-hop and grass- root provocateurs that changed the game of liberal integration. African Americans were also breaking the proverbial glass ceilings in industrial, commercial, and governmental organizations. The increase in legal and undocumented workers from Africa, Caribbean and other developing countries transforms the ethics, cultural and social fabric of urban working class communities (Marrable 1995). Fundamentally, the essence of a monolithic identity, no longer shapes the social, cultural, or political practices of black people. Obama addressed many of his detractors who deemed him to either "too black" or "not black enough". He was simply an American qualified to be president.

Discourse in the classroom on what it means to be black in the 21st century offers rich possibilities to engage and provoke students to look more critically at what the Obama presidency means beyond cultural pride. Can students find evidence to support or refute the idea that racism plays a central role in shaping the quality of health care, education and opportunities for typical Americans? Can students find evidence to support or refute the notion that since Obama became president conditions for the average African American have improved? Can students persuade one another that Obama's biography and *ethos* make him uniquely qualified to usher in an era of post racial politics?

Objectives

This unit provides approaches for exploring race and persuasion through multiple texts. The unit incorporates inquiry while still meeting district core curricula standards. The overall objectives are described within 4 major categories below:

Researching and Analyzing Rhetoric in Speeches and Non-Fiction Text

To provide students with background knowledge, I will cover examples of rhetoric used during pre and post civil rights periods. I plan to use biographies or speech excerpts from Sojourner Truth, Fredrick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, and Martin Luther King, as well as documentaries, and poetry to expose students to the history and rhetoric used during important historical events. Once students obtain background knowledge about rhetoric and persuasive forms they will conduct an inquiry into Obama's speech on race and post black identity. Students could conduct research into Barack Obama's policies and his influence on health care or education. Lastly, students could complete first person research narratives about their journey of discovering the persuasive nature of Obama's speeches and the meaning of a post racial society.

Reading, Writing and Responding to Speeches and Other Media

To improve literacy skills, students will read and write responses, speech reviews, persuasive essays, and other writing. The reading and writing of editorials could activate students' inquiry about the nature of persuasion and the issues of post racial identity. Students will compare and contrast the rhetoric of Obama with that of other orators. Students will write speeches or essays on whether Obama's presidency has had a positive or negative impact on the quality of life for the typical African American citizen.

Critical Thinking and Evaluating Rhetoric

This unit will teach students to gather, evaluate, and question rhetoric and persuasion techniques found in a variety of sources. To further engage students they will analyze and interpret the credibility, accuracy, and reliability of different speeches related to race. Students will learn to check for rhetorical elements using media literacy principals.

1. Who created the speech and what is its purpose?
2. How might different people understand this speech differently?
3. What creative techniques are used to attract and hold attention?
4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in this speech?
5. What is omitted from the speech?

Creating Post-Black Media Persuasion Products

To support students in synthesizing their inquiry about Obama's persuasive power and post black identity, students will create their own media products. I plan to collaborate with arts and media making organizations to support students in creating mixed media projects reflecting their culminating deliberations and discoveries.

Strategies

I plan to deliver this unit primarily during my 45 minute Social Studies block for 4-8 weeks. I will also use my literacy block to supplement teaching some of the reading and writing skills for certain lessons. What follows are strategies I plan to use while meeting my instructional objectives:

Analyzing Speeches

Providing students the ability to articulate what makes speeches, essays or debates persuasive is invaluable. Part of the reason some students "don't get" formal rhetoric is that they have no accessible guidelines for explaining what makes a speech persuasive or not. Critical reading of speeches is essential to being able to critique and explain what rhetoric works in a speech. Through this process, students learn to read a speech for its denotation and connotation. Critiquing strategies can apply to speeches, essays or debates. Through teaching students to analyze speeches they will be able to better self-assess their own persuasive techniques. Differentiated strategies incorporating students' learning styles may be best suited for supporting diverse learners. This should increase students' engagement and reduce their frustrations while interacting with complex speeches. I will use the following approaches inspired from the Aristotelian school of thought on rhetoric.

Read the Speech Aloud

It is essential that speeches be read aloud by a competent reader to bring out the *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos* in the speech. Therefore, when I introduce a new speech, I read the speech out loud, use a CD/DVD, or have advanced students read the speech in unison with emerging readers. It is better to give students a speech in advance and not have them read it "cold."

Audience, Timing and Setting (Kairos)-

Mini-lessons to guide students in identifying the audience and the setting of a speech are important. Students should uncover what is goal of the speaker and why is it important that she persuade her audience? What medium the speaker is using to convey her message is also critical for understanding the context of the speech?

Ethos -

After reading or hearing a speech aloud, students should determine what type of person the speaker is. How does the speaker connect with her audience? How does the speaker show that she is decent, has good judgment, and is not acting out of self interest?

Logos-

When analyzing speeches students need to determine the central arguments and describe the reasoning that supports the premise of the speech. Students should pay attention the tense used by the speaker. Does she focus on the past, present, or future in her speech? Does the speaker want the audience to reach a judgment, create a feeling about the present, or call the audience to action?

Pathos-

Most effective speakers use rhetoric to evoke certain emotions from their audience. Students should determine what techniques or words a speaker uses to provoke fear, anger, despair, pride, hopefulness, sympathy, etc.

Analyzing Speeches Using Differentiated Instructions

Because my students' reading levels are so varied, from 4th grade to 10th grade levels, when teaching the basics of Aristotelian rhetoric, I will have to do some of the instructions in small guided reading groups. Some students will however, be able to work independently, but others will need extensive guidance. What follows are strategies I will perform in co-operative groups. Tiered, differentiated or mixed groupings are best suited for the strategies that follow:

Sound devices

Some speeches offer pleasure to the ears. Students should analyze the use of sound devices found in the speeches—e.g. the use of alliteration, repetitions, rhythm, etc. This tactic may be well suited for auditory and kinesthetic learners. Students can even tap out the beats or rhythms found in a speech.

Language use/word choice

Students should analyze the use of language—did the speaker use strong, descriptive verbs, figurative language, sensory details, etc.? What is the relationship between word choice and the style, mood or tone of the speech? This approach may be suitable for verbal and visual learners. Visual learners could illustrate what they see or feel while hearing or viewing a speech.

Speech Organization

Students should analyze the arc of a speech—e.g., does it have a beginning that connects with the audience, does it use compelling arguments in the middle and then have an ending that convinces or satisfies the audience? Does the speech include irony? Is the speech complete? Does the speaker omit anything important? How does the speech leave the audience feeling at the end? Linguistic and extroverted learners may be more inclined to this method. Students could even practice delivering or dramatizing parts of a speech.

Punctuation/ Delivery.

Students should analyze the punctuation and its relationship to how the speech is delivered. What do you learn from the punctuations? What is the relationship between the purpose and the length of the speech? How does the speaker use pace, volume, gestures, and decorum? Spatial and visual learners may find this activity more appealing. Student could experiment with different punctuations or delivery to alter the cadence of a speech.

Before, During and After (BDA)

BDA reading strategies are designed to stimulate student's prior knowledge, construct meaning and promote critical thinking. Prior knowledge is essential for students to understand complex text. Research indicates that students with prior knowledge of particular topics remember more information than do students with little or no prior knowledge (Learning Point Associates 1995).The following strategies can be used to help students discover rhetoric in speeches and improve reading comprehension skills:

Text Reformulation

In *Text Reformulation*, students may reformulate speeches into another type of text. For examples students may turn excerpts of Truth's speech into a poem, or a news report. When student reformulate text, it promotes active discourse about the original text. This strategy supports students with identifying main ideas, cause and effect relationships, sequencing, generalizing and inference making. *Text Reformulation* can extend to re-mixing speeches. Student may re-write speeches and video record their reformulated text.

Anticipation Guides

Anticipation Guides help activate prior knowledge, promote discussion, and make prediction about text. For example, I may use a series of generalizations related to the "A More Perfect Union" speech. Students would agree or disagree with statements related to Obama's speech. Next students could take notes to monitor the issues raised while reading or viewing the speech. Students could then review their responses to monitor their predictions or determine if their viewpoints changed. An example of an *Anticipation Guide* statement is: *Racism doesn't exist in America*. Students could respond by agreeing or disagreeing. More detailed examples of *Anticipation Guide* statements are provided in the sample lesson plans and activities section.

Constructed Responses

As per the Philadelphia School District's core curriculum, students must be able to respond to open-ended prompts related to fiction and non-fiction text. The TAG it 3 strategy graphically helps students to *Turn* a prompt into an opening statement; *Answer* the prompt; Give details, evidence and examples from the text to support their answers. The more students practice this method the better they perform on state tests. Students could write constructive responses comparing and contrasting the rhetoric of Obama's "A More

Perfect Union" speech with King's "I Have Dream" speech.

Graphic Organizers

Graphic organizers provide an effective way to elicit students' prior knowledge and assess what they are learning. Examples of few graphic organizers are described below:

Vocabulary Squares

A vocabulary square is a graphic organizer divided into four quadrants that demonstrates understanding of a word's origin or part of speech, word variations, illustrations or icons and a brief definition of a word. I will use vocabulary squares when introducing interesting or difficult terms. For examples students may create vocabulary square for the words *ethos*, *logos*, *pathos*. Vocabulary squares can be found on the following link: <http://www.englishcompanion.com/pdfDocs/vocabsquares.pdf>.

K-W-L - What You Already Know, What You Want to Know and What You Learned

Using a K-W-L graphic organizer is a good starting point for eliciting students' prior knowledge and determining what they know about a particular genre, concept or topic. Using KWL is great with inquiry because teachers can ask probing questions to lead student to learn new things. Asking clarifying questions encourages students to think for themselves. I find that facilitating discussions through using a K-W-L chart supports both my higher and lower functioning readers and writers.

Venn Diagram

Using a Venn diagram allows students to organize information to compare and contrast speeches or rhetorical devices. Students could chart the similarities and differences of the rhetoric in the famous debate between DuBois and Washington. Students could compare and contrast the rhetoric in Truth's *Ain't I a Woman* and Douglass's *The Meaning of the Fourth of July for the Negro*. A web-based Venn diagram is available at *ReadWriteThink* (<http://www.readwritethink.org/materials/venn/>). This site provides a variety of graphic organizers to support students with reading, writing, speaking and researching tasks.

Deliberating and Debating Race in the classroom

Deliberate discourse is important for classrooms involved in discussing controversial topics. It is therefore critical that prior to the preparing my students for classroom discussions about post-racial identity, that I conduct mini-lesson(s) on deliberating and debating. I will teach students how to make an argument using a model suggested by Kate Shuster, the Executive Director of the Middle School Public Debate Program. The model is called ARE. When debating in a classroom forum, there are three parts, (1) The Assertion, (2) The Reasoning, (3) The Evidence (www.middleschooldebate.com).

Modeling this approach will guide students in discussing and arguing different points of views. This structure helps students think more critically before sharing their arguments. Students may work in teams to prepare their deliberation. For examples student may deliberate on this resolution: Resolved: Barack Obama's presidency provides proof that racism does not exist in America. A rubric for assessing students' debating and deliberation skills is provided the teachers resources sections.

Multi-Modal Literacy Practices.

Many of my students are not motivated to read and write for traditional academic purposes. Even higher functioning students often find reading, writing and listening to speeches boring. This unit taps into students' multi-modal literacy practices -blogging, social networking, podcasting, etc. - to provide a bridge for connecting with traditional academic learning. The strategies that follow are suggested means for creating authentic purposes for reading, writing and producing rhetoric.

Blogging Rhetoric

Blogs provide a useful forum for teachers and students to respond to provocative topics. There are many free educational blogs, such as www.blogger.com, www.edublogs.org, and www.nicenet.org. Student could create blog posts sharing speech reviews, editorials, or news stories related to President Obama's policies on education, health care, immigration, etc. As an alternative to setting up and managing a blog, teachers can create a mock blog template using a word processing program. Students could write blog-like entries manually and the teacher could post final published pieces on a teacher's wiki or blog space. Teachers should make sure they have parents sign release forms to publish students' work on any outside domain.

Remixing and Digitalizing Speeches

Remixing speeches using technology provides students an opportunity to tap into new literacy skills and foster collaboration. Creating digital responses will allow students to use technology to link traditional Aristotelian rhetoric to themes about race and identity.

In remixing speeches, students may explore rhetoric in speeches that cover a trajectory of African American experience from the abolition movement, reconstruction, Jim Crow, civil rights movement up until the current post-racial period. Students may brainstorm and collaborate using different methods to demonstrate their inquiry learning. For example, students could use storyboards to decide what images, symbols, sounds and transitions they used to translate selected speeches into non-print presentations. Once storyboards are completed, students could work in groups to create podcasts, I Movies, or PowerPoint presentations of their reformulated text.

Assessment

Assessments will include an evaluation of student's activities described in the sample lessons plans. Assignments will be graded on completeness, proficient writing standards (focus, content, organization, style, and convention), as well as the demonstration of understanding of rhetoric and persuasion. Included in the grade will be an assessment of the student's ability to use internet sources, personal interviews, direct quotes, other media resources. Students' responses to speeches will further demonstrate their understanding of basic rhetorical and persuasive devices. Students' persuasive speeches and media products will be assessed using rubrics that will evaluate both content and presentation style. Presentation and public speaking rubrics are provided in the appendix. Ultimately students should uncover some of the complexities of being members of a multi-cultural society.

Classroom Activities / Lesson Plans

Sample Lesson Plan 1

Title: Ain't A I Woman- Identifying *Ethos*, *Logos* and *Pathos*

Grade Range and Subjects: 6th – Social Studies / Literacy (Reading and Writing):

Duration of Lesson: 2-4 Class Periods of at Least 45 Minutes.

The specific goal(s) are: Students will be able to identify the rhetoric (*ethos*, *logos*, *pathos*) found in Truth's speech Ain't I A Woman. Students will be able to complete a proficient constructed response describing the *ethos*, *logos* and *pathos* found in a speech.

The materials and resources: print, electronic versions of Truth's biography and speech, pre-formatted or teacher generated graphic organizers (vocabulary squares).

Inquiry Question: What persuasive tools did Sojourner Truth use in the famous speech *Aint I a Woman*?

Do Now Activity – Quick Write – Do women have equal rights and opportunities as men?

Can women do the same jobs as men? In their journal books, students will write brief paragraph describing how women do or do not have the same rights as men. Student may consider how women fair in employment, education, and government opportunities.

Mini Lesson – *Ethos*, *Logos*, *Pathos* Vocabulary Squares:

Teacher should provide a mini-lesson describing the 3 main tools of Rhetoric: *ethos*, *logos* and *pathos*. Teacher should explain that *ethos* is argument by character. *Ethos* is the character of speaker or writer. Is the speaker credible or reliable? *Logos* is arguments by logic or reason. *Logos* includes facts, judgments, and policies. *Pathos* is argument by emotions. *Pathos* may include emotions such as anger, sympathy, shame, etc.

The teacher will guide students on completing vocabulary squares for terms *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos*. Using 4 squares, students will provide examples, non examples, illustrations and a brief definition in their own words for the terms *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos*. This should go in students' notebooks.

Activities – Guided Reading – *Ain't I a Woman* Persuasion Tools:

In small –guided- reading groups students will be assigned to read a brief biography of Truth and her speech *Ain't I a Woman*. Students will read the speech aloud in unison. In the reading groups students should select a leader and recorder to summarize the rhetoric (*ethos*, *logos*, *pathos*) found in the speech. The reading team will select one member responsible for tracking the *ethos* in the speech, one member to track the *logos*, and one member to track the *pathos*- found in the speech. After students have identified examples of persuasion, students will record the rhetorical elements in the speech *Ain't I a Woman*. Students will do a closer reading of the speech. Using a rhetorical graphic organizer, students will identify 3 examples each of, *pathos*, *logos* and *ethos* found in the speech.

Ain't I Women Persuasion Tools

<i>Form of Rhetoric</i>	<i>3 Textual Reference or Quotes (include line / paragraph number).</i>
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Ethos — Who is the speaker?	1.
How does Truth demonstrate her credibility and likeability?	2.
	3.

Logos — What facts does Truth use? What judgments does she use? What policies does she challenge?	1.
	2.
	3.

Pathos — What emotions does Truth use? Sympathy, shame, anger, etc.	1.
	2.
	3.

Wrap-up or Extension— Constructed Response *Ain't I a Woman*:

As wrap up students could respond to an open ended prompt about of the rhetoric used in the speech. Prompt: Describe the how Sojourner Truth uses *ethos*, *logos* or *pathos* to persuade her audience in her speech *Ain't I a Woman* at the 1851 Women's Convention in Akron Ohio. Provide at least 3 examples to support your response.

Rubric - Constructed Response - Ain't I a Woman

<i>Standard Level</i>	<i>Points</i>	<i>Expectations</i>
<i>Mastery (Complete)</i>	3	Response demonstrates full understanding of prompt. Response answers all parts of the question. Response provides 3 examples or textual evidence to show how the speaker uses <i>ethos</i> , <i>logos</i> or <i>pathos</i> .
<i>Proficient (basic)</i>	2	Response demonstrates understanding of prompt. Response answers most parts of the question. Response provides some examples and textual evidence. Response may provide some examples and details that do not support the prompt.
<i>Minimal (below basic)</i>	1	Response demonstrates limited understanding of prompt. Response provides few examples and textual evidence. Response includes unrelated and inaccurate evidence.
<i>No Credit</i>	0	Response is incorrect or not legible.

Sample Lesson Plan 2

Title: Douglass and Obama - The more things change the more they stay the same.

Grade Range and Subjects: 6th - Social Studies / Literacy (Reading and Writing):

Duration of Lesson: 4-6 Class Periods of at Least 45 Minutes.

The specific goals are: Students will use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast Douglas' and Obama's

biographies. Students will synthesize their understanding of Douglas' and Obama's racial identity by completing a tiered choice board activity.

The materials and resources: picture books, print, electronic versions of biographies and speeches of Douglas and Obama, pre-formatted or teacher generated graphic organizers Venn diagrams, comic life or other comic making software.

Inquiry Question: Does Barack Obama's biography parallel Frederick Douglass's?

Warm Up Activity – Cloze Reading Douglas and Obama:

Students will complete a cloze reading activity of Douglas and Obama's narratives. Students will use the following key terms to complete this task: Confederacy, Kansas slave, Dreams of my Father, writer, Caucasian, Massachusetts, father, offices, Lincoln, slavery, first, former, Civil, north, Kenya, Indonesia, Community Organizer, graduated, Harvard Law, Great newspaper, school, president, Columbia, abolish, Hawaii

Cloze Biography 1 - Douglass was born into slavery; his mother was a _____ and his _____ was white. In 1838, he escaped slavery in Maryland and moved _____ to _____ where he soon became an international figure in the fight against slavery. During the _____ War, Douglass met with U.S. President Abraham _____ many times, discussing Lincoln's efforts to _____ slavery and the arming of _____ slaves to fight the _____. In 1847, Douglass started an anti-slavery _____ called the North Star. Douglass' autobiography, "Life and Times of Frederick newspaper," was published in 1882. (www.enchantedlearning.com)

Cloze Biography 2- Obama was born in state of _____ during the civil rights movement in 1961; his mother was white from _____ and his father was black from _____. In 1967, he moved to _____ with his mom and her 2nd husband. Obama graduated from _____ University in 1983 and worked as a _____ in Chicago, Illinois. He _____ from Harvard Law School (1991) and was the first African-American _____ of the Harvard Law Review. Barack has written two books, _____ (1995) and The Audacity of Hope (2006). Obama won the Nobel Peace.

Mini Lesson – Obama and Douglas Evoke the Constitution:

A mini-lesson should be conducted to demonstrate how both Obama and Douglass used the U.S. Constitution to address issues related to race in American society. Excerpts of speeches "The Meaning of the Fourth of July for the Negro," and "A More Perfect Union" should be reviewed to show how the Constitution was used as *logos* in both speeches.

Activities – Venn Diagram:

Using a Venn diagram, students will compare and contrast the biographies of Douglass and Obama and the *logos* used in their speeches about race. Student may visit the www.enchantedlearning.com website for summary biographies for both Douglass and Obama. Students may view other websites, picture books or reference materials to help complete their Venn diagrams. See the resource section for suggested materials.

In small groups students may use an interactive Venn diagram located on the Read-Write-Think website. Groups could display their Venn diagrams on an interactive white board. Students will use construction paper to create a hard copy Venn diagram. The Venn diagram should summarize at least 4 different ways each Douglass and Obama had to deal with racism or identity, and 4 similar ways both Douglass and Obama had an

impact on society. In small groups, students will present their Venn diagrams and discuss how Douglass and Obama addressed issues of race and black identity.

Wrap-up or Extension— Douglass and Obama Choice Board:

Students will have different choices for showing what they learned about the biographies of Douglass and Obama. Students may work in groups of 3's or work individually. Each choice will meet a different tier or level of intelligence (visual, creative writing, acting, musical, etc).

Frederick Douglass and Barack Obama Choice Board Activities

Type of Intelligence / Role	Audience	Format / Product	Activity
Writer	Peers and teacher	Resume, Presidential Brochure	Create a resume or campaign brochure showing the jobs Obama or Douglass had.
Writer / Actor	6th Grade peers and teacher	Skit, Monologue, Presidential Campaign Speech.	Create monologue or campaign speech for Obama or Douglass sharing their views about race and black identity.
Visual / Artistic	6th grade peers and teachers	Visual Timeline, Biographical Comic, Campaign Poster. (comic life)	Create non-print images or illustrations, icons, symbols demonstrating Douglass or Obama biographies.
Musical / Lyrical / Poetic	6th grade peers and teachers	Biographical Odes, Song, Rap Lyrics	Create lyrics, poem, or rap describing the shared biographies of Douglass or Obama.

Sample Lesson Plan 3

Title: Deliberation on Race in Post Racial America

Grade Range and Subjects: 6th – Social Studies / Literacy (Reading and Writing):

Duration of Lesson: 2-4 Class Periods of at Least 45 Minutes.

The specific goals are: Students will be able to read excerpts of Obama's speech on race and identify examples of *ethos*, *logos* and *pathos*. Students will be able to use their own rhetoric to deliberate and debate using assertion, reasoning, and evidence. Students will be able to use media tools to create a persuasive response to Obama's speech on race.

The materials and resources: picture books; print and electronic versions of biographies speeches and debates of Washington, DuBois, King and Obama; pre-formatted or teacher generated graphic organizers; garage band, I Movie, video camera, PowerPoint, Comiclfe or other media making software.

Inquiry Question: Has Obama's presidency given rise to a new -black identity- post racial America.

Warm Up Activity – *Booker T and W.E.B.* what was the debate really about?

Students will read the poem Booker T and WEB by Dudley and write a brief response in their notebook

explaining what the central argument was in debate between Washington and DuBois.

Mini Lesson – Debating Race in the Classroom

The teacher should review and discuss the ground rules for debating race in the classroom. Students will be guided on the process for deliberating a controversial topic. The teacher should model how *ethos*, *logos* and *pathos* can be applied when using the ARE approach for deliberating or debating. The teacher should describe how debating requires three parts, (1) *An Assertion*, (2) *Reasoning*, and (3) *Evidence*. The teacher could give examples how *ethos* could be used during the assertion; *logos* could be used during reasoning and *pathos* could be used during closing evidence of a debate.

The teacher should provide background for the "A More Perfect Union" speech; context should be provide to explain that the speech was giving as a response to criticism Obama received for his association with the controversial pastor Reverend Jeremiah Wright.

Activities – Viewing and Responding To "A More Perfect Union"

Students will copy and circles agree or disagree the with Anticipation Guide statements:

Racism doesn't exist in America.	Agree or Disagree
The "We the People" in the constitution represents all people regardless of race, class or creed.	Agree or Disagree
Obama is responsible for solving racial problems in the U.S.	Agree or Disagree
Obama is more black than white.	Agree or Disagree
You can be prejudiced but still be decent person.	Agree or Disagree
Black people are the cause of their own problems (lower education levels, poor health care, high crime rates, etc.).	Agree or Disagree

Before reading excerpts of Obama's speech, students will view or listen to video or audio clips and monitor their *Anticipation Guide* statements. As a whole class, students should discuss whether hearing or seeing the speech changed their earlier views. After listening or viewing parts of the speech, students will be placed into 6 groups to do a closer reading of the speech. The Race for Bridges for School website, referenced in the students' resource section provides a 6 part excerpted version of *A More Perfect Union* speech. Students will read the speech aloud in unison. In reading groups students should select a leader and wordsmith to use context clues or dictionary to define important, interesting or difficult words in the text. The reading team will select one-two members to be responsible for tracking the *ethos* in the speech, one-two member to track the *logos*, and one-two members to track the *pathos*- found in the speech. Students may use a similar graphic organizer used to analyze Truth's speech.

The whole class should be brought back for discussion. The group leaders or designate should share important, interesting or difficult words, and summarize how Obama used *ethos*, *logos* and *pathos* in the excerpt of the speech their group read.

Wrap-up or Extension— Digitally Responding, Deliberating and Debating About Race.

This unit may culminate with students responding and deliberating about race through multiple digital formats. With support from a media arts partner such as Temple University's Media Education Lab, students' work may be presented at outside venues. Students may create podcast that take lines, phrases words from Obama speech that persuades an audience that Obama is qualified or not qualifies lead a post-racial society.

The teacher or media artist could model how to use storyboards for planning podcasts or other media products. Students may use royalty free images and audio in their projects.

Students may choose to work in groups to document their deliberations on Obama's speech about race. Prior to video recording their deliberations students would have to frame their debate question i.e. Resolved that: Barack Obama presidency provides proof that racism does not exist in America. Students should plan, draft and write their script using the ARE model Assertion, Reasoning, and Evidence. Students should practice their oral deliberations prior to recoding their talks. A Flip Camera could be used or other digital recording students' projects. Students could also create blogs, digital comics or digital presentations reflecting on their deliberations about race and black identity.

The teacher can develop a rubric for evaluating the aesthetics of the projects with input from students. A sample rubric for evaluating the content of students' responses to Obama's presidency and their deliberations about race is included in the appendix.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Pennsylvania and School District of Philadelphia Curriculum Standards

Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening and Viewing Standards

Standard: Reading #1 - Apply effective reading strategies to comprehend, organize, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate texts to construct meaning.

Standard: Reading #3 - Read for a variety of purposes: to seek information; to apply knowledge; to enhance enjoyment; to engage in inquiry and research; to expand world views; to understand individuality, shared humanity, and the heritage of the people in our city as well as the contributions of a diversity of groups to American culture and other cultures throughout the world.

Standard: Writing #2 - Write for academic, personal, social, civic, and school-to-career purposes.

Standard: Writing #4 - Conduct and document inquiry-based research using oral, print, and communications systems.

Standard: Viewing -View media, technology, and live performances for a variety of purposes including gathering information, making informed judgments, processing information, and for enjoyment.

Social Studies Standards

Culture - Demonstrate an understanding of culture and how culture affects the individual and society.

Time, Continuity, and Change - Analyze historical events, conditions, trends and issues to understand the way human beings view themselves, their institutions, and others, now and over time, to enable them to make informed choices and decisions.

Individuals, Groups and Institutions - Demonstrate an understanding of the role of individuals, groups, and institutions and how their actions and interactions exert powerful influences on society.

Appendix 2: Sample Rubric for Evaluating Students Digital Projects.

Students' Response To Obama's Presidency and Deliberations About Race

Advanced Achievement	4	Offers accurate analysis and understanding of Obama's speech about race. Shows an exceptional understanding of the causes and effect racism. Shows thorough knowledge of Obama's duties as president and his personal narrative. Extensively uses prior and new knowledge to provide an in-depth understanding of the issues being discussed and possible implications of a post racial society.
Proficient Achievement	3	Offers mostly accurate analysis and understanding of Obama's speech about race. Shows an adequate understanding of the causes and effect racism. Shows some knowledge of Obama's duties as president and his personal narrative. Use some prior and new knowledge to provide an understanding of the issues being discussed and possible implications of a post racial society.
Basic Achievement	2	Offers basic analysis and understanding of Obama's speech about race. Shows a basic understanding of the causes and effect racism. Shows basic knowledge Obama's duties as president and his personal narrative. Uses little prior or new knowledge to provide an understanding of the issue being discussed or possible implications of a post racial society.
Minimal Achievement	1	Offers little or no analysis of the implications of Obama's speech about race. Shows little or no understanding of the causes and effect racism. Show little or no knowledge about Obama's duties as president or his personal narrative. Uses minimal prior or new knowledge to provide any understanding of the issues being discussed or possible implications of a post racial society.

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