



## **Giving Voice to the Silenced**

Curriculum Unit 21.02.08, published September 2021

by Kaitlin M. Waldron

### **Content Objectives**

---

I currently teach in a building with over 1400 students. Having spent the last year virtual, many students are craving being taught in person. Demographically, my building is 46% Latinx students and 54% African American students. My classroom, however, doesn't quite reflect those numbers as we have a program for students who are new to the country. Those students attend classes with other peers who are also new to the country in a sheltered learning style called Newcomer Academy. The Newcomer Academy lasts for one full school year and then the students are gradually released into more general education classes. Those classes are a little less sheltered than the Newcomer Academy classes to ensure that language goals are met by the students who are learning English. I am a teacher in the Newcomer Academy and 80% of my students are LIEP students (Language Instructional Education Program) 20% of my students are African American.

With that being explained, many of my students don't see themselves in the history that is taught based on our standards. American History, in Virginia, is very focused on colonizers and their impact. When discussing the Great Migration, there is no discussion of how that looked out west with the influx of Mexican immigrants coming to the United States for jobs. Immigration is hyper-focused on those coming from South and Eastern Europe and less from Latin American countries. When the Gold Rush is taught, there is mention of Chinese immigrants coming to the United States, but it isn't until the following year that discrimination is discussed towards Chinese and Irish immigrants in tandem with African Americans.

Being a student of Virginia standards, I also have struggled to see myself in history. There are 6 women who are discussed in seventh grade history and one of them is a poster, Rosie the Riveter. There are even less women who are discussed in the sixth-grade curriculum which covers pre-history to 1865, with 4 women discussed. Thankfully, I was taught by many amazing women who would always include women in history and their impact.

The passages that have been chosen will look at topics that most students can relate to unfair treatment, moving, being new, sadness/ depression and many others. The passages also directly connect to the three major voices that are often the most unheard: Immigrants & Indigenous groups, African Americans and ultimately women. Although many of the passages are from lower-level books, they address very heavy topics that many students might connect to. There are a few books that will be included in the resources section that can be substituted for teachers who are using this at a higher level of history. This unit will also

mainly focus on the time following the Civil War as my curriculum to be taught is from 1865 to the present.

I want this unit to be as engaging as possible and to bring a voice to those who typically haven't had one. Every year, students come to history class and proclaim a distaste for the content. I feel like that is their belief because they don't see themselves within the content. The goal of this unit is to show students that people who looked like them impacted American history. There's also a lack of women in history who are represented in the curriculum I teach, so to remedy that, many of the passages picked will focus on women. At the beginning of the year, seventh grade history starts with Reconstruction and Post-Civil War America, with the focus being on the major legislation of the time: the amendments. When the students are learning about that topic, there are very few novels that address it as the content is very cut and dry. There will be one or two excerpts from *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You* used to remind students of the impact of the Civil War as well as explaining the immediate impact of that war on formerly enslaved African Americans. The reading of these passages will be used to explain to students how this unit will function with other topics.

### **Immigrants & Indigenous Groups**

As the other topics unfold along our nation's timeline, this unit will intertwine excerpts with it. For instance, when discussing the impact of the Trail of Tears on Native Americans and discussing the Battles of Little Big Horn and Wounded Knee, more content knowledge will be presented to the students to fully understand how these events brought about by Americans disregarded the Native's way of life using excerpts from *Braiding Sweetgrass*<sup>1</sup> to bring a face to the content. This novel is written with a heavy science base, however, Krimmerer is able to add in the oral history from the tribes that she has grown up around as well as the tribes she has come into contact with.

In *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Krimmerer introduces the everyday reader to the brain and science of Indigenous oral history aligned with botany. Her stories include origin stories as well as basic lessons that played out with her children. The stories are critical to the heritage of the Indigenous Americans, and as stated in one chapter, if it hadn't been for her taking a class to preserve the language,<sup>2</sup> there would be less than ten who could speak it. She does an amazing job making the oral history applicable to all who are reading the book and explains the stories with real life examples. These origin stories and lessons are applicable to all humans and should be shared.

America often boasts itself as a land of immigrants and having open arms to those who want to come to America for a better life. Although those sentiments might not always be true, there was a time in American history where immigration was a little less volatile. For instance, around the same time that African Americans were leaving the south looking for more opportunities in the North and West, Mexicans were leaving Mexico in search of job opportunities or for literal safety. In the book, *Esperanza Rising*,<sup>3</sup> we are shown one example of a family structure that is struggling with post revolution Mexico on top of the collapse of the economy. The United States looks like the best option to make a better life and so the family moves

Pam Muñoz Ryan paints the picture of a riches to rags story using Esperanza, a young girl growing up in Mexico. Her family dynamics change early in the story and herself and her mother are forced to make a drastic decision: stay on the family farm and be forced into a not so safe situation or go to the United States. Esperanza's story is told during the end of the Great Migration and Great Depression. It chronicles her exodus from Mexico to the United States and the search her mother goes on to find a job. The novel also discusses the living arrangements that Mexican immigrants, or any immigrant from Latin America are forced to endure. They basically moved into work camps and were able to earn a small living working the land<sup>4</sup> and harvesting

the crops of various plants throughout the year, later called internment camps during World War II. Ultimately Esperanza learns how to value the things that she works hard for and is able to appreciate those things that are given to her.

Work camps are seen again about fifteen years later when they are used with the Japanese Americans who are seen as a threat following the attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. These internment camps were meant to mimic the cities and neighborhoods that the Japanese Americans were already inhabiting. These camps are anything but positive. There are issues with lack of food, lack of water, supplies for upkeep but the people who are living there, they make the best of a poor situation. In her book, Traci Chee discusses the highs and the lows of living in the internment camps and how one could ultimately get out.<sup>5</sup>

Japanese Internment camps often are not written about in a positive light. There have been many Asian hate crimes in the past year due to the circumstances however, this is not the first time in history that Asian Americans have had to endure this type of treatment. In *We Are Not Free*, Traci Chee writes about a group of friends who are transplanted from San Francisco to multiple internment camps within California and the nearby states. She discusses the perspective from both the young men who are of draft age as well as the young women who are living in the internment camps. A few young men can leave the internment camps because they enroll in the military and state their love of country. Two of the other friends find people who will sponsor them in some of the major cities on the east coast and they are able to proclaim their love of country and then move from the internment camps. There is still a third group of Japanese Americans who renounce the United States and state that they want to go home to Japan. This group is treated the poorest of them all. The novel then follows the experiences of the young men who are of fighting age as they are sent off to fight in Italy and France.<sup>6</sup>

These are just a few examples of how immigrants were treated throughout American history. In a few novels we are able to hear more from the perspective of an immigrant who is going through life changes as well as dealing with a world that isn't always accepting of interracial friendships at any level. Specifically, Sandra Cisneros writes *The House on Mango Street* about a young girl who has immigrated to the United States and is struggling to discover how she is going to fit in. She discusses how friends are moving away because the neighborhood is described as going bad by her parents. Esperanza is the main character in this novel as well and she discusses her dislike for her name. In many foreign language classes, students are expected to pick a name that is related to the country they are learning the language of. In one passage, Esperanza explains how she wants to change her name so badly and how she wants it to sound *normal*.<sup>7</sup> Many students can relate to that discussion because they then will go by a nickname that they feel more readily represents them.

The book is written as a stream of consciousness that follows a child through her teenage years. She deals with bullying at school, not appreciating her name and navigating the ever-changing aspects of female friends. Esperanza discusses wanting to have a house of her own one day, one that is better than the house that her father has gotten for her family. She also discusses her first crush and her first experience with the opposite sex. This book truly highlights the intricacies of the middle school and high school years. All of which students are able to connect to on a deep level.

Immigration doesn't just stop at those from Europe, Asia or Central America. Following the attacks on 9/11 immigrants from the Middle East became targets for xenophobia. That terrorist attack changed the way the United States functioned. As more and more laws were put into place to control the terrorist situation, there are unwelcome behaviors that are ravaging American neighborhoods. A fear spreads, similar to the Red Scare, and millions of people are impacted by the lack of understanding as well as the lack of acceptance that

becomes very prominent. Varsha Bajaj writes about life in America following those attacks. She discusses the impact on everyday people and how families must learn from each other in order to grow.

In this novel, *Count Me In*,<sup>8</sup> Varsha Bajaj discusses what it is like to be targeted for being a different race. It is written from the perspective of a young woman who is seemingly a wallflower in her grade level with a grandfather from India. There is a race driven attack on her and her grandfather while walking home after a tutoring session with her neighbor. The grandfather discusses the impact that the attack on September 11 had on him for being *brown skin* and not white. There were accusations about his desire to be in the United States.<sup>9</sup> The story ends with the community coming together to support the girl's family. This book discusses immigration in a more present day setting but is relatable to immigration in the early 1900s.

## **African Americans**

African Americans have been held in a lower caste throughout all of America history. Starting with the forced migration and travel across the Atlantic Ocean to enslavement and finally limited freedoms earned through the various Civil Rights Acts that have been passed since the Reconstruction Era. Although students will learn about the Emancipation Proclamation and the Civil War Amendments, they usually struggle with how those things play out in today's world. There have been many assassinations of African American men and women broadcast on the news recently. One of the most famous, and not as recent, is the murder of Emmitt Till. By using the book *Ghost Boys*,<sup>10</sup> students will be able to read about a young man similar in age who becomes a ghost and has a story that runs parallel to that of Emmitt Till. Ideally this conversation will bleed into a discussion around the Black Lives Matter movement, that was also all over the news last summer. The excerpts from *Ghost Boys* are written in a way that students are able to relate and then comprehend what exactly happened to both the main character, Jerome, and Emmitt Till.

*Ghost Boys* follows the story of Jerome, a seventh grader who has few friends and is often bullied. He is befriended by a young boy named Carlos from San Antonio. Jerome is shot in the back by a police officer when he is seen playing with a toy gun in the park. When Jerome crosses to the other side, he meets a ghost boy and a still living young girl. He learns that the young girl is related to the officer who shot him, and they strike up a friendship. The ghost boy slowly reveals parts and pieces of his past until he tells his story. Emmitt Till had been helping Jerome process his death the entire time.<sup>11</sup> The story of Emmitt Till is mirrored heavily throughout the novel which covers the court case and family grief and processing of a loss. Fortunately, in our lifetime, the woman who accused Emmitt has recently recanted her story. With this breakthrough students will be able to read her statements and find closure for Emmitt.

Within the story of Emmitt Till, there are aggressive displays of treatment towards African Americans that most novels, that are written for children, are glossed over. There is a discussion of being shot with a bullet and seeing blood on a pair of Air Jordan's, a discussion of a racially driven beating as well as lynchings. Although lynchings are not completely common in today's society, there are even more disturbing things shown in the news to show police brutality. When discussing this book, please ensure that you are capable to discuss the information included as well as the level of comprehension your students possess. It is more often than not that they have experienced a not so nice thing said their way from a person of a different race. This discussion should evolve into a conversation that is a safe space for all that are involved.

Emmitt is born towards the end of the Jim Crow hold on the South and in pockets across the United States. Another man who had his life cut short at the hands of those of the opposite race is Malcom X. Malcom X was survived by his wife, Dr. Betty Shabazz. Betty had her own struggles as a young girl growing up in Detroit at

the height of Jim Crow.<sup>12</sup> The impact that her upbringing had on her life greatly played into her relationship and support of Malcom X's work during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s.

*Betty before X* is the story of Dr. Betty Shabazz before she even knew of Malcom Little, Malcom X. Betty's life is tumultuous, and she ends up living with her aunt in Georgia. While living in Georgia, she unfortunately sees the results of a lynching and shortly thereafter, her aunt passes away. Following these traumatic events, Betty goes to live with her mother in Detroit. Although Michigan is a northern state, Betty quickly learns that there are similar sentiments towards African Americans all over the country. Most of her story takes place post World War II. There is a heavy emphasis on the discussion of church and family. There are also some passages that are hard to read, and they discuss difficult topics related to Jim Crow Laws and Betty's life, especially her relationship with her mother. This novel does a great job to humanize the riots in Detroit, police brutality and interactions between African Americans and whites.<sup>13</sup> There is also a section located in the back of the book that provides more historically accurate information about Detroit during the time period and could be used while setting up for the book or discussion following.

Police brutality is something that has impacted American history since 1619. The origins of the police can be traced back to the overseer of the plantation. This overseer mentality sometimes causes police officers to overstep and become vigilantes, almost as if they have forgotten their role to protect and serve the public. In many novels that were read in the creation of this unit, the issue of police brutality repeated itself often. The story was the same every time – shoot first, ask questions later.<sup>14</sup> Although Kezi is not directly shot by a police officer, the story written by Maritza and Maika Moulite show how young girls are fetishized and treated in a completely different manner compared to African American boys who often only know of the coldness of the bullet rather than the tightness of handtied rope handcuffs.

In the novel, *One of the Good Ones: Shouldn't Being Human Be Enough?* a teenage girl is chronicling her life and class project as a Youtuber. She was influential with her followers and was heavily invested in the history of the African American struggle throughout the United States and was planning to tour the United States based on the Greenbook from 1941. That was until a protest went awry and life unfolded dramatically different. Running parallel, we have another young girl who has finally left the foster care system and has successfully moved to California to pursue her dreams in acting. When they both arrive at a county jail and a fire breaks out, only one survives, the one who has a face the world knows. This book discusses the issues that surround African American women being pushed aside in acts of violence and police brutality. It also discusses Jim Crow America along with the Civil Rights Movement following the Greenbook that most African Americans were in possession of during those times.<sup>15</sup>

All of the topics mentioned are very heavy topics. They might not be easily accessible by students who either don't have enough background knowledge to support the allusions mentioned or students who have experienced trauma themselves may shut down. That is the last thing that you want to happen in the classroom. If that is the case, it might be beneficial for students to read overviews of the issues and events that African Americans have been experiencing since introduction to the colonizers. Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi put together a novel that chronicles the evolution from Africans to African Americans.

In the novel *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism and You*, by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi, the lives of African Americans from before interactions with Europeans to present day are discussed.<sup>16</sup> The authors explain how racist ideas came about, how colonizers manipulated Africans and ultimately how enslavement impacted Africans. This book chronicles through history and has multiple passages that can be used at the middle and high school level. There are, however, some passages that might not be appropriate at both levels and that



would be at the teacher's discretion. There are great excerpts for the major topics that are discussed in American history, post-Civil War including: Jim Crow, Reconstruction, World War I & World War II, Civil Rights Era, and a minor discussion on its impact today. Although the book does not explicitly discuss life for immigrants who are coming to America freely or the direct impact on women, for the most part, the novel provides excellent background information to get the students engaged.

## Women

All too often in American history are women missing from the story. Yes, sometimes we learn about Dolly Madison, because she saved the only painting of George Washington. Yes, we always learn about Harriet Tubman, who we definitely should learn about. But there are loads of women who go unsung, who don't have a voice when it comes to American History. For instance, it wasn't until I was on the newspaper staff in high school that I learned about Ida B. Wells, and it wasn't until I did further research on her recently, that I discovered her anti-lynching campaign. Sacajawea and Pocahontas are both taught but, what do we actually know of these two women who were much younger than described in history books or in movies.

There are women who fall into the immigrant column or the indigenous or African American column who have never had their story told. The purpose of this unit is to pull those biographies and to allow students to explore those silenced women. With the books that have been chosen, there are women related to their timeline, or the author herself, that have impacted American History or our lack of knowledge and should be learned about. Ida B. Wells, Fannie Lou Hammer, Robin Wall Krimmerer, Yuri Kochiyama and Felicitas Mendez are just a few women who have been overlooked in history and countless others.

Robin Wall Krimmerer brings a voice to the indigenous people who are often overlooked throughout American History. She is not only a member of the Potawatomi Nation but is also a celebrated author and professor of science. Krimmerer uses her experiences as a mother to intertwine the stories of her ancestors and situations with her daughters to bring current day relevance as well as a voice to the matriarch.<sup>17</sup> In *Braiding Sweetgrass*, she uses Skywoman and the origin story of the Potawatomi people to introduce her love of science and botany. She truly gives Skywoman a voice and a life, through writing, that will live further than the current oral history. For reference, Skywoman would be comparable to Gaia in Ancient Greek mythology.

Felicitas Mendez was a Puerto Rican immigrant who fought to end the de jure segregation of California during the American Civil Rights Movement. Following World War II in 1946, schools in California were heavily segregated including Hispanic students. California claimed that there was a *language* barrier that kept the schools from being integrated. Felicitas was able to take the stand and speak in such a way that California ruled in her favor. Unfortunately, the school district did not agree and took the court case higher. This court case was crucial in not only Felicitas' life but in the career trajectory of both Thurgood Marshall and Earl Warren. Had the Mendez family not fought for the desegregation of the schools in Orange County, California, the landmark court decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* would have been that much harder to have pass.<sup>18</sup>

Linda Chavez-Thompson is a second generation Mexican American. Her primary focus was finding equality for Latin Americans in labor unions. Her career started in 1967 where she was working with a local labor union in Lubbock, Texas. After achieving for those union workers, she was able to climb and hold various positions with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees in San Antonio, eventually becoming the vice president from 1988 to 1996. Along with that prestige came other opportunities to be the first person of color to hold certain positions. For instance, the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, the largest union in the United States, elected Linda to executive vice president twice, first at

the 1995 convention and then again in 2005.<sup>19</sup>

Ida B. Wells was born into slavery in 1862 in Mississippi. Political activism ran through her veins as following the Civil War, her parents worked diligently throughout the Reconstruction Era in the political realm. While growing up, Ida learned quickly to speak for what she felt was right. In doing so, she was expelled from college for a heated discussion with the Rust College president. This fire in her soul allowed her to aggressively attack issues that pertained specifically to her as well as extending to others. The Wells family faced a tremendous loss when yellow fever took both of her parents. Following that Ida's life took a turn, and she became the soul provider for her younger siblings, with that change, she became a teacher. However, unable to hold her tongue, she continued to fight for equality, especially in 1884 when she filed a lawsuit against the train car company in Memphis, Tennessee for unfair treatment. Although she was victorious in this battle, she fell short at the federal level. For the greater part of the next decade, she turned her attention towards lynching after having seen her friend lynched. She had several articles printed in the newspaper which ultimately pushed her to move to Chicago in response to the nonstop violence she and her family were experiencing. Ida B. Wells was not always so easily accepted by other groups who were fighting for equality at the same time. The women's suffrage groups struggled to accept her into the group because she was confrontational with white women who were also working for suffrage and even worse towards those who were against suffrage in general. Towards the end of her life, she turned her focus to urban reform specifically for Chicago before passing away in 1931.<sup>20</sup>

Fannie Lou Hamer was born to sharecroppers in 1917 in the state of Mississippi. Having grown up in poverty, she left school at 12 and went directly to work. She married Perry Hamer and the couple worked on a plantation until 1962. As the only worker who could read and write, she was the timekeeper for the plantation. Unfortunately, Fannie Lou Hamer was taken advantage of by a white doctor. A hysterectomy was given when Fannie Lou had consented to the removal of a tumor in her uterus. Historically, African Americans were repeatedly taken advantage of by white doctors in attempts to sterilize the population. Hamer's surgery had earned the nickname of a "Mississippi appendectomy" which left her unable to have children. Having experienced this *supposed appendectomy*, Hamer started to get involved with civil rights issues that addressed other unfair treatments. She worked with the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee to register African Americans to vote, which promptly got her fired from her timekeeper position. Hamer worked relentlessly to get African American women registered to vote and lived with perpetual issues from a beating she took after being arrested for reregistering women to vote. Fannie Lou Hamer continued to work for voting rights and in 1964 she co-founded the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party to call out the Democratic party for blocking African Americans from participating in voting. She gave a speech, that was broadcast but only after Lyndon Baynes Johnson's speech, that described how hard it was to be an African American in the south and the racial prejudices that were experienced. It resonated across the nation. Fannie Lou Hamer changed the lives of many African Americans who were struggling and living in the south. From her sharecropping roots she founded the Freedom Farm Cooperative to ensure that African Americans had access to farmland to support themselves. At the age of 59, Fannie Lou Hamer passed away due to breast cancer.<sup>21</sup>

Yuri Kochiyama was a civil rights activist who was inspired to speak up for those who were discriminated against based on her own experience of living in an internment camp. Born in San Pedro, California in 1921, Yuri and her family lived in a predominately white neighborhood. Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, her father was removed by the FBI thinking that he was a potential threat because of his friendship with the Japanese Ambassador and photographs of Pearl Harbor found in the house. Shortly after his release, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt passed Executive Order 9066 which forcibly removed Japanese Americans from their homes and forced them to live in internment camps. She lived in the camp at Jerome, Alabama

where she met her husband. Following the release from internment camps, the couple moved to New York and Yuri joined the Congress of Racial Equality. When she met Malcolm X they had an inseparable bond and Yuri completely understood Malcolm's ideals. With her husband, she fought for reparations for the Japanese who were forced to relocate into internment camps. Once Japanese Americans received their reparations, she continued to fight for reparations for African Americans. Yuri extended her fight for equality to include Muslims, Middle Easterners, and South Asians who were facing bigotry throughout the United States following the attack on September 11, 2001. At the age of 93 in 2014, she passed away.<sup>22</sup>

The women mentioned above are excellent starting points for students. As you are looking at the demographics of your students, you can pick and choose other women who align with your population. Because my students are mostly African American and Hispanic, I would ensure to make time for multiple examples of women who have voices who have gone unheard that look like my students. I would also make sure to pay attention to engagement throughout the lesson. If the students are participating and asking many questions for a specific group of people, look into some of the other women listed, they are a great starting point. Also, if you are aware of a woman who changed your community and have the ability to include those women in your unit, do it. Students should be able to recognize those who have made direct impacts on their lives. It is all too often that schools are emphasizing the impact that men have had on American History when there are women and immigrants who have left greater marks on history that have been silenced.

### **Women In History**

When the teacher is researching the women who align best with the unit of content being taught as well as the reading, many of the women listed in my research were found on Wikipedia more readily than they were on student accessible sites. I would suggest that in preparing for this part of the unit, the teacher does their own research and creates a list of student friendly resources to direct their students. For instance, if a teacher wanted to use Shirley Chisholm with their content, there is a great YouTube video that could be used rather than a strict reading. Students should practice pulling research information from multiple sources.

## **Teaching Strategies**

---

### **Paired Passage Approach**

To give students the full picture, each unit will start with vocabulary specific to the unit and the excerpt chosen. Then the whole class or individual student will read the excerpt and answer some driving questions that will be able to connect to curriculum. The questions might be comprehension based or a writing prompt that pushes the students to place themselves in the characters shoes and describe the next event or explain how they would feel. For instance, my students who have left their home country might have many things to say about immigrating to the United States and my African American students might have more to say about how people perceive them when shopping for instance. Following the reading and discussion, the class would then continue on with their lessons on the content that is being discussed. Towards the end of the lesson or topic (some lessons might last two days), students will be able to read a short biography of a woman from that time period who has impacted the American way of life. They will also, time permitting and for most women, have a short speech or primary source document that will tie together the novel, the unit of study and the woman highlighted. On the same graphic organizer, students will be able to compare and contrast the



character from the novel to the real-life women and draw their own conclusions based on their content knowledge. The students would have to use the vocabulary to explain their connections.

## **Technology**

If using Google Classroom, or any online learning platform, students would ideally have a section for Women in History that they learn about (or however the teacher wants to label that learning). Minor variations will be made towards the end of the year as more and more women are discussed in the curriculum. There is a slight variant in the unit using *Ghost Boys*. The story of Emmitt Till is so impactful that it will be used along with a primary source of his accuser recanting the story. During the World War II unit, while using the book, *We Are Not Free*, there will also be the use of multiple perspectives of Japanese Americans who were in internment camps as one excerpt explains the draft within the internment camps and that person going off to war and the other explains internment from a woman's point of view. I feel that these perspectives and explanations allow the readings to come full circle and for the curriculum to be better understood. There is also a list provided of women who have impacted history with a link for further research. With time permitting, the teacher could allow the students to look more into the women who have not been explicitly described.

## **Interactive Notebook**

The use of the interactive notebook is not just a way to stay organized, but it is a method many teachers use to supply notes. Some teachers may have students do all of their work in the notebook, using a composition notebook approach. With this style, all pages must be sized down and glued into the notebook. Whereas other teachers will use an interactive notebook that is more binder based. Students can take the pages out and manipulate them and then put them back in the binder. In my unit, I would have students keep track of their notes within their notebook in a specific section. They would be able to add in their close readings that relate back to their novel passages. This would allow students to have easy access to their observations from the historical fiction passage, the notes on the content and the close reading activity completed with the biography or primary source document. Students would then be able to use those to create a summary for their content that ties the three parts together.

## **Close Readings**

Students will be using their close reading toolkits to break down the texts that are bookending their topic. The close reading strategy is a way for students to comprehend the differences found in their historical fiction text and their primary source or secondary source documents. Students, when given a primary source document, will have the opportunity to break down the article multiple times to ensure that they are fully grasping the content presented. There will be spaces for them to make predictions about what is happening in the reading based on the title. Students will also be able to speak with other peers to ensure they are understanding what is being asked or to clarify the passages. Students will also be able to read through again to ask questions or to answer questions based on the second reading of the passage. Lastly, the students will be asked to summarize their reading through a quick blurb, either written or spoken to prove they understood the text. Throughout their readings, students will be marking up their pages with cues to help students find the important information more easily. For instance, if there is a section in the biography or primary source document that links to the content, students can draw a small chain in the margins because that section links to their notes.

## Frayer Model

A typical Frayer Model will highlight the major vocabulary word in the middle and then have the students write the definition, provide characteristics, examples, and non-examples. This isn't always easy in a history classroom. In my class, we complete a Frayer Model that has the word highlighted in the middle. The word is then defined. The word is also listed with all of the endings it could have. Although this sometimes changes the word, explore to explorers, from a verb to a noun, it helps students who are not as proficient in English translate the sentence that it is used in. Lastly the students will use the word in a sentence in one box and in the other, students will draw a picture of what reminds them of the vocabulary word.

## KWL Chart

When a new content unit is started, the teacher will review vocabulary using a Frayer Model and will then give the students a KWL Chart. Typically, a KWL chart is asking the student to list what they know, what they want to know and then what they have learned. This KWL chart will be slightly different in design. The K column will stand for what the students might already know. Some of that knowledge could come from the vocabulary review. The W column will be completely different from the anticipated KWL chart, and it will ask the students to answer the following question, "What was the reading about?" where they will provide a short summary of the reading. The last column will remain a list of things that the students have learned. The teacher can help the students ensure that they have the right idea by highlighting or underlining key phrase and giving the students an opportunity to ensure they have those phrases.

## Classroom Activities

---

### Day 1 Activities

During day one, students will be introduced to the vocabulary for the unit. They will complete an augmented Frayer Model for those vocabulary words. In the Frayer model, the students will write the word in the center and then define the word in the upper left-hand corner. Since many of my students are bilingual, in the upper right-hand corner the students will list out the word with different endings so that the word is understood in various settings. For instance, if the word is *explorer* the other versions of the word would include explores, exploring, explored, exploration, etc. In the bottom left-hand corner, the students would use the word in a sentence, either created together by the entire class or done independently. In the bottom right-hand corner, the students will draw a quick picture to jog their memory. For instance, with the word *explorer* the students could draw a ship or a map to show an explorer.

Following the vocabulary activity, students will receive a KWL chart to complete with their readings. In the KWL chart, the students will list what they know, what was the reading about, like a summary, and then what they have learned. The title of the KWL chart will be the word *migration* and students will list what they know about migration in the top half of the K column on the chart. Those answers could range from the definition of migration, which would have just been discussed, or it could reference animals migrating south in the winter. The teacher will ask the students to draw a line under the student definitions and ask the students a follow up question, "What about when people migrate? What does that mean or look like?" The teacher will give the students a few minutes to think about how migration applies to people. After some share out, the teacher will explain that migration with people is usually a response to an event or a law that is passed. For instance,

following the war for Mexican independence, Mexicans were migrating from Mexico to the United States in search of jobs and a better way of life.

Following the KWL chart, students will read the excerpt along with the teacher as they read it aloud. They will highlight the vocabulary words that were just gone over in class and circle words they don't understand so that they can be defined in the margin. The excerpt for this lesson comes from *Esperanza Rising*. For instance, the teacher might share the following quote with the students, "That night, as she soaked her hands in warm water, she realized that she no longer recognized them as her own. Cut and scarred, swollen and stiff, they looked like the hands of a very old man."<sup>23</sup> After reading through the short excerpt, students will write a two to three sentence summary of the passage. The teacher will then ask students to share out one thing that they learned from the reading and compile a list on an anchor chart or on the board. Answers should align with migration took place in other places, impacted not only African Americans, but it also wasn't easy, work camps are hard, it's okay to be sad with big changes. Together the teacher and students will fill out what the students should have learned from the passage. The students will keep this KWL chart in their interactive notebook for the duration of the unit of study.

### **Background Knowledge for the teacher**

This unit is based on the Great Migration era of the United States. The unit, according to the Virginia standards, focuses on African American migration from the south to the North and West. What Virginia does not focus on is that there was a migration that started towards the end of the migration era as the Great Depression is starting to rear its ugly head. Students do not know that there is an influx of immigrants coming to the United States from Central America.

### **Day 5 Activities**

During this class period, the students will receive a blank map of the United State and chronicle the mass exodus from the South of African Americans. On this map, students will draw the route that people could have taken from major cities in the south, like Atlanta, to major cities in the north and west like Detroit or Chicago. They will use one color to document the departure of African Americans. The students will also glue a picture of the Great Migration, the iconic one, where the family has loaded all they own into a car and are in dressed in their Sunday best attire. The students will glue that picture down on the right side of the paper. The teacher will model where major cities are in Mexico and the Southwest region of the United State. The teacher will then show the students the path that Mexicans could have taken to reach the United States. The teacher will also show pictures of what the work camps could have looked like that Esperanza lived in. The students will map out those routes that people took to leave Mexico in a color that is separate from the one that was use for the Great Migration of African Americans.

The students will then create a Venn Diagram to compare the two groups of people who participated in a migration. They will respond to the *Wh* question stems - who, what, where, when and why. In the intersection of the circle, the students will explain how the migrations are similar and how the migrations are like the immigrants coming to the United States around the same time. This activity will live in their interactive notebook that they have for history class.

### **Day 10**

This day comes after the unit of study has ended. Students have taken an assessment on the rise of communication, electrification, and transportation. They have answered questions on the Great Migration and

Harlem Renaissance. At this point, the unit would typically be completely done, however, the impact of women is ever present in this unit of study. The students start this unit of study looking at the novel, *Esperanza Rising*, and that person is fictitious. The goal is to put a face and a voice of a woman with the unit of study. To do that, the students will have a Google Slide presentation in their Google Drive that will be worked on throughout multiple units of study. The presentation will be set up like a museum gallery where there would be hyperlinks to other slides within the presentation that would take a visitor to a different room in the museum. Each room will be set up in the template and the students will complete the slides based on the room they are working on. For instance, if the topic is Hispanic Women, the students would complete the slide on Linda Chavez-Thompson.

The students will read a short biography about Linda Chavez-Thompson, who is a second generation Mexican American. Based on the limited information we have on her background, her father, who is described as a sharecropper living in West Texas, would have arrived to the United States around the same time that Esperanza and her family came to the United States.

The students would read a short biography on Linda and create an entry in their museum gallery about her. They would include her picture, her birthplace and birth information, her political background, what she did with the American Federation of Labor and what she does now. The students would also include a summary of her career and why she should be taught in schools.

## Bibliography

---

Bajaj, Varsha. *Count Me In: A Novel*. New York: Puffin Books, 2020. This book discusses more current day issues in immigration and discrimination.

Chee, Traci. *We Are Not Free*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2020. A powerful book that discusses Japanese internment camps following the attack on Pearl Harbor.

"Felicitas Méndez." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, May 29, 2021.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Felicitas\\_M%C3%A9ndez](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Felicitas_M%C3%A9ndez). This link contains biographical information.

Kimmerer, Robin Wall. *Braiding Sweetgrass*. Tantor Media, 2016. A novel that integrates both oral tradition of Native Tribes as well as a love for biology and science.

"Linda Chavez-Thompson." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, June 26, 2021.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linda\\_Chavez-Thompson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linda_Chavez-Thompson). This website contains biographical information.

Michals, Debra "Fannie Lou Hamer." National Women's History Museum. 2017.  
[www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/fannie-lou-hamer](http://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/fannie-lou-hamer). This website contains biographical information.

Moulite, Maika, and Maritza Moulite. *One of the Good Ones / Shouldn't Being Human Be Enough?* Inkyard Press, 2021. This novel addresses the treatment of African American girls and women by social media and how they are fetishized. It also discusses the historical significance of the Greenbook and how that was used to ensure safety during the Jim Crow Era. Some topics are a little heavy for middle school students but could

more easily be used in a high school setting.

Norwood, Arlisha. "Ida B. Wells-Barnett." National Women's History Museum. 2017. [www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/ida-wells-barnett](http://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/ida-wells-barnett). This website contains biographical information.

Reynolds, Jason, and Ibram X. Kendi. *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2020. Chronicles African American history from before colonization to the present. Written at a higher than middle school level but could more easily align with high school.

Rhodes, Jewell Parker. *Ghost Boys*. NY, NY: Thorndike Press, a Part of Gale, a Cengage Company, 2019. The story of a young man who is a victim of police brutality and how his story aligns with Emmitt Till.

"Robin Wall Kimmerer." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, June 21, 2021. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robin\\_Wall\\_Kimmerer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robin_Wall_Kimmerer). This website provides biographical information.

Ryan, Pam Muñoz. *Esperanza Rising*. Farmington Hills, MI: Thorndike Press, a Part of Gale, a Cengage Company, 2019. Story of a family post-Mexican Independence who is forced to move to the United States to find work.

Sánchez, Erika L. *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*. Waterville, ME: Thorndike Press, a Part of Gale, a Cengage Company, 2020. Written more for a high school audience, discusses the issues of immigration in the United States and what it is like living as an illegal immigrant.

Shabazz, Ilyasah, and Renée Watson. *Betty before X*. First edition. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2018. Betty Shabazz' story of her childhood prior to her connection to Malcom X. Addresses Jim Crow laws in the United States following World War II.

Stone, Nic. 2018. *Dear Martin*. London, England: Simon & Schuster Children's Books. This book is also targeted more towards high school students but addresses a young man's desire to live a more nonviolent life when he is constantly being presented with violence.

Woodson, Jacqueline. *Brown Girl Dreaming*. New York: Puffin Books, 2014. Written as a verse novel, the book is easily read by students of all levels. Addresses Jim Crow Laws, Great Migration, as well as the Civil Rights Movement from the perspective of a child growing into adulthood throughout these time periods.

"Yuri Kochiyama." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, June 27, 2021. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yuri\\_Kochiyama](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yuri_Kochiyama). This website contains biographical information.

## Appendix on Implementing District Standards

---

Richmond Public Schools uses the Virginia Standards of Learning. The standards start broad and then become more refined with the sub-standards.

USII.4. The student will apply social science skills to understand how life changed after the Civil War by examining the reasons for westward expansion, including its impact on American Indians; explaining the



reasons for the increase in immigration, growth of cities, and challenges arising from this expansion; and describing racial segregation, the rise of “Jim Crow,” and other constraints faced by African Americans and other groups in the post-Reconstruction South. This theme is constantly addressed throughout the unit because Jim Crow is ever present in American history. There are a few interactions with Native Americans that are discussed in this standard and *Braiding Sweetgrass* helps to explain the interactions of Americans with Native Americans and why assimilation was not successful.

USII.6. The student will apply social science skills to understand social, economic, and technological changes of the early twentieth century by describing the social and economic changes that took place, including prohibition and the Great Migration north and west. Students will address this theme when reading through *Esperanza Rising*.

USII.7. The student will apply social science skills to understand the major causes and effects of American involvement in World War II by explaining the causes and events that led to American involvement in the war, including the attack on Pearl Harbor; and explaining the impact of the war on the home front. The first sub-standard directly discusses the attack on Pearl Harbor. The second sub-standard discusses the impact of that attack. Including the treatment of Japanese Americans and African Americans.

USII.8. The student will apply social science skills to understand the economic, social, and political transformation of the United States and the world between the end of World War II and the present by describing the changing patterns of society, including expanded educational and economic opportunities for military veterans, women, and minorities. Throughout the novel *Brown Girl Dreaming* the author discusses the ever-changing role of women throughout society. *Braiding Sweetgrass* also addresses the changes in treatment to the American Indian population.

USII.9. The student will apply social science skills to understand the key domestic and international issues during the second half of the twentieth century and early twenty-first centuries by examining the impact of the Civil Rights Movement, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the changing role of women on all Americans; and evaluating and explaining American foreign policy, immigration, the global environment, and other emerging issues. This unit will focus more on the Civil Rights Movement as well as immigration and other emerging issues, which would cover xenophobia as it arises following the attacks on September 11, 2001. Many of the books listed in the bibliography would fall under this standard.

## Notes

---

<sup>1</sup> Kimmerer, Robin Wall. *Braiding Sweetgrass*. Tantor Media, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Kimmerer, Robin Wall. *Braiding Sweetgrass*. Tantor Media, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Ryan, Pam Muñoz. *Esperanza Rising*. Farmington Hills, MI: Thorndike Press, a Part of Gale, a Cengage Company, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Ryan, Pam Muñoz. *Esperanza Rising*. Farmington Hills, MI: Thorndike Press, a Part of Gale, a Cengage Company, 2019.

- <sup>5</sup> Chee, Traci. *We Are Not Free*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2020.
- <sup>6</sup> Chee, Traci. *We Are Not Free*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2020.
- <sup>7</sup> Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*. New York: Vintage Books, 2013.
- <sup>8</sup> Bajaj, Varsha. *Count Me In: A Novel*. New York: Puffin Books, 2020.
- <sup>9</sup> Bajaj, Varsha. *Count Me In: A Novel*. New York: Puffin Books, 2020.
- <sup>10</sup> Rhodes, Jewell Parker. *Ghost Boys*. NY, NY: Thorndike Press, a Part of Gale, a Cengage Company, 2019.
- <sup>11</sup> Rhodes, Jewell Parker. *Ghost Boys*. NY, NY: Thorndike Press, a Part of Gale, a Cengage Company, 2019.
- <sup>12</sup> Shabazz, Ilyasah, and Renée Watson. *Betty before X*. First edition. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2018.
- <sup>13</sup> Shabazz, Ilyasah, and Renée Watson. *Betty before X*. First edition. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2018.
- <sup>14</sup> Moulite, Maika, and Maritza Moulite. *One of the Good Ones / Shouldn't Being Human Be Enough?* Inkyard Press, 2021.
- <sup>15</sup> Moulite, Maika, and Maritza Moulite. *One of the Good Ones / Shouldn't Being Human Be Enough?* Inkyard Press, 2021.
- <sup>16</sup> Reynolds, Jason, and Ibram X. Kendi. *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2020.
- <sup>17</sup> "Robin Wall Kimmerer." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, June 21, 2021.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robin\\_Wall\\_Kimmerer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robin_Wall_Kimmerer).
- <sup>18</sup> "Felicitas Méndez." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, May 29, 2021.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Felicitas\\_M%C3%A9ndez](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Felicitas_M%C3%A9ndez).
- <sup>19</sup> "Linda Chavez-Thompson." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, June 26, 2021.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linda\\_Chavez-Thompson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linda_Chavez-Thompson).
- <sup>20</sup> Norwood, Arlisha. "Ida B. Wells-Barnett." National Women's History Museum. 2017.  
[www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/ida-wells-barnett](http://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/ida-wells-barnett).
- <sup>21</sup> Michals, Debra "Fannie Lou Hamer." National Women's History Museum. 2017.  
[www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/fannie-lou-hamer](http://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/fannie-lou-hamer).
- <sup>22</sup> "Yuri Kochiyama." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, June 27, 2021.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yuri\\_Kochiyama](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yuri_Kochiyama).
- <sup>23</sup> Ryan, Pam Muñoz. *Esperanza Rising*. Farmington Hills, MI: Thorndike Press, a Part of Gale, a Cengage Company, 2019, 180.

---

<https://teachers.yale.edu>

©2023 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University, All Rights Reserved. Yale National Initiative®, Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute®, On Common Ground®, and League of Teachers Institutes® are registered trademarks of Yale University.

For terms of use visit [https://teachers.yale.edu/terms\\_of\\_use](https://teachers.yale.edu/terms_of_use)