



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

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

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## **Freedom Dreaming: Critical Thought Through Imagination**

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### **Introduction**

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*“Freedom dreams are born when we face harsh conditions not with despair, but with the deep knowledge that these conditions will change...” -Tourmaline<sup>1</sup>*

#### **The Birth of a Freedom Dream**

Throughout the history of America, Black people have existed and navigated through inequitable power dynamics that have intentionally sought to quell their intellectualism, creativity, and humanity. Older generations have defied laws and societal norms to pursue literacy because of the *soul belief* that knowledge is a powerful tool that will undoubtedly lead to liberation. Perhaps this sentiment served as a catalyst for the many violent attempts- *heavy on the word ‘attempts<sup>2</sup>*, of the American government to thwart literacy among Black folk throughout American history. Perhaps this heinous censorship solidified an abstract belief as a concrete fact. In his autobiography, Frederick Douglass recalls the day his slaver put an end to his lessons, asserting that learning to read would “unfit him to be a slave.”<sup>3</sup> Evident through Douglass’ account, this was a collective thought shared among many slavers who attempted to censor literacy, further underscoring the powerful connection between education and freedom while simultaneously inspiring many to challenge their censorship. The pernicious ideology from his slave master bothered Douglass to the core, filling him not with despair, but with a purposeful vision of the road to freedom: a *freedom dream*.

The effect of his words on me was neither slight nor transitory. The iron sentences, cold and harsh, sunk like heavy weights deep into my heart, and stirred up within me a rebellion not too soon to be allayed. ... I instinctively assented to the proposition, and from that moment I understood the direct pathway from slavery to freedom,<sup>4</sup>

Coined by Robin D.G. Kelley<sup>5</sup>, *freedom dreams* are powerful visions that arise in response to a critical understanding of reality. Douglass and many others such as Mattie J. Johnson<sup>6</sup> and Old Lady Patsy<sup>7</sup> (to name a few) shared a *freedom dream* of release from the bondage of slavery. As a collective and as individuals, enslaved people harnessed their imagination to invent creative ways to educate themselves when conventional methods were withheld. Their movement toward liberation formed a strong value for education

and literacy in Black American culture. For a time, literacy and freedom were synonymous. The dream began to spread like wildfire, even after enslaved folx<sup>8</sup> were freed. Schoolrooms began to transition from pits in the ground, to church basements, to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and even onward to virtual spaces like TikTok. Made clear through the journey of Black Americans, whenever a new adversity rose, it was met with imagination fueled by the *freedom dream* of liberation.

Being a Black Woman, educated on the south side of Chicago, and now educator on the south side of Chicago, I was inspired while examining the courageous act of imagining and better world and actively working toward it. The brilliance, the resilience, the *finesse* that blossomed as Black folx defied laws and societal norms in the pursuit for literacy are a source of pride for me. In reading about the innovative strategies for communal and self-taught literacy, I could see their dreams in my experiences. I learned to read by memorizing sounds and spellings when my mom read to me. I competed in Oratory Competitions and participated Pizza Hut reading challenges with my cousins. While reflecting on my past experiences, I felt connected to the history of Black literacy. Yet, at the same time, being a Black Woman, educated on the south side of Chicago, and now educator on the south side of Chicago I find myself concerned because the joy and the desire to learn appears to have fizzled.

I proudly teach at Owen Scholastic Academy located on the South Side of Chicago. My school is predominantly Black with a very small percentage of Latino students. The student body is small with less than 300 students in grades PreK – 8<sup>th</sup> and only one classroom per grade level which inspires a family-oriented environment. Although we are a tight-knit community, we still face many challenges academic-wise. On our Illinois School Report Card<sup>9</sup>, the most up-to-date reports from 2023 show that only 19.2% of our students are proficient in ELA and only 11.4% are proficient in Math. Despite the concerning numbers, this is not reflective of the brilliance that my students demonstrate outside of the traditional classroom. My students are entrepreneurs who sell handcrafted jewelry, organizers who host coat drives for people in need, musicians who travel to perform original compositions at colleges like the University of California in LA, human beings who can discuss the complexities of freedom and interdependence through spirited debates about an anime show called Naruto. Their actions directly contradict what is reflected on their standardized tests, which sheds light on a disconnect between what my students need to know and what us teachers need to teach. While I do not believe their proficiency scores reflect their actual proficiencies, I do believe these numbers are reflective of how many of students perceive the importance of education and a concern that many teachers are harboring in regard to their respective teaching situations.

This challenge to engage students frequently arose in discussions from seminar demonstrating a collective need. As we examined the radical act of learning to read and write while Black in America, it became evident that the value of literacy has severely diminished. It feels like our students don't value education. But why? For enslaved Black Americans, there was a drive for education because it was a direct path toward liberation in both a literal and figurative sense. What is the fuel for our students? How can we as teachers reignite the dream and employ our imagination to cultivate a hunger for learning?

In my search for answers, it occurred to me that many of my students are searching for purpose. According to educator Septima Clark<sup>10</sup>, "Learning and purpose go hand in hand." In our ever-changing society, human beings evolve as do our needs, our understandings, our challenges, and our vision. During times of slavery and Jim Crow, learning to write wouldn't lead to an 'A+,' but it could lead to freedom if you learned to forge freedom papers. Education served as a pathway to freedom and yielded results that were immediately applicable to life. There was a clear purpose: freedom. And combined with the denied access to education, this contributed to the construction of a freedom dream. That radical imagination is fueled by purpose. If students

cannot imagine a use for their education, what purpose does school serve for our students?

I believe that we can begin to answer these questions by facilitating authentic classroom experiences that lead students to imagine the ways in which school can hold purpose within their lives. It is crucial that we hold space in our classrooms for students to visualize the world they dream of, thus creating a purpose. Many of my students are aware of the past efforts to gain access to education. Many of my students can explain why we're engaging in a particular lesson, but it is not *their why*. Therefore, the purpose that fueled us and those before us is different for the students of today. I do not say this to discredit the courageous efforts from the past, for understanding the connection between the past is salient to shaping the imagination. I say this to suggest the possibility our students can recognize the connection between the past and the present, but they are struggling to connect *with* the past in the present. To meet our students where they are, we must first ask, what conditions of reality affect them? Then we must invite them to engage in freedom dreaming, prompting them to expand on the freedom dreams that have built our society. What if our students were empowered to consider their ideas of a better world? What if our students were empowered to actualize their ideas of a better world, not in theory and abstract, but in practice and tangible incarnations?

This curriculum is designed to explore these questions by guiding and empowering students to create their own freedom dreams. By understanding the historical context and analyzing examples of freedom dreams, students will develop the skills to envision and plan for the changes they want to see in the world. They will learn that it's not enough to call out issues; they must also take the time to figure out what they want to see and feel, and then work toward that vision.

## Content Objectives

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This unit seeks to explore the concept of *freedom dreaming* by analyzing a diverse set of freedom dreams and engaging in critical reflection. The foundation of this unit is guided by the following inquiries:

1. What are freedom dreams and what significance do they hold in society?
2. How does deepening our understanding of the past contribute to understanding and navigating through present-day challenges in our communities?
3. What present-day challenges hold significance to students and how would it look when this challenge is overcome?
4. What actions could be taken to overcome this challenge?

This unit will be divided into three parts. Part One: Intro to Freedom Dreaming will introduce students to the idea of *freedom dreaming*, giving space for students to craft a definition that best demonstrates their understanding. Part Two: Dream Analysis will prompt students to study historical and contemporary social movements centered around literacy and education. Part Three: Gallery of Dreams will create space for students to engage in freedom dreaming and to present their vision in an interdisciplinary exhibition.

By centering the unit around freedom dreams, students are called to look introspectively to determine and choose topics that are relevant to their identities. Furthermore, this unit aims to foster a space where students to exist in the classroom beyond the role as a learner, as a contributor of knowledge and curricular content through intellectual exchange and collaborative conversations throughout.

## Part One: Intro to Freedom Dreaming

In this section, students will define the concept of *freedom dreaming*. This section uses quotes from Tourmaline, Toni Morrison, Carter G. Woodson, and Robin D.G. Kelley to evoke reflection. Students will then explore an online gallery of freedom dreams<sup>11</sup>, documenting their thoughts and observations. At the end of this section, students should submit a written definition of freedom dreaming/ freedom dreams in their own words.

### The elements of a Freedom Dream

Freedom dreams are critical and imaginative visions fueled by the desire for a better world<sup>12</sup>. This concept was a recurring theme I discovered over the course of our seminar meetings. Most often birthed in struggle, freedom dreams are a direct response to reality characterized by the belief that the future can and will be better. Freedom dreaming is no mere diversion to escape or cope with life's challenges. Nor is imagination just a whimsical thought or entertaining daydream; it is akin to dialectical thinking and highly scientific. In an interview with Vogue Magazine<sup>13</sup>, filmmaker and activist Tourmaline, shares that a key element of *freedom dreaming* begins with questioning and seeking deeper answers to those questions. This is identical to the first step in the scientific method, which is to ask a question. If we look closer at current trends, a prominent ideal of S.T.E.M. thinking is to seek connections to experiences outside of the classroom<sup>14</sup>. In a similar vein, *freedom dreams* are directly linked to their experiences and thoughtful analysis of daily affairs that beget questions and activate imagination.

Another element of *freedom dreams* is historical knowledge. In his book, Kelley prompts readers to consider not only where we have been, but also to envision where it is that we intend to go. I approach all historical explorations through the lens of Sankofa, an Akan principle originating from Ghana<sup>15</sup> that means "it is not taboo for you to go back for what you forgot (or left behind).<sup>16</sup>" Kelley also highlights the importance of knowing your history and leveraging that knowledge to make choices. Sankofa is also loosely interpreted to mean look back and take. This connects to an earlier point, to *freedom dream* is to question. Just as we can look to our daily experiences, we can also go back and study history to take or not to take lessons that can lead us to reimagine old ideas or even to create new ideals.

Kelley cautions against examining history solely through the lens of the victor. This is a key point to note for students. I have noticed that students tend to approach history with a dichotomous eye, not realizing the complexities and nuances that exist. When examining social revolutions, he offers a suggestion to identify the vision and to ask questions. In this precarious state of education, where government officials and policymakers imagine an education system devoid of multiple perspectives to preserve the dignity of white children and suppress knowledge of the horrifying abuse and military action that the United States government has afflicted upon many a marginalized group, it is imperative that students are provided opportunities to interact with history that discuss experiences outside of the dominant culture. This is a recurring concept that we I will revisit throughout the unit.

A freedom dream can big or small. Freedom dreams are more than large scale movements. They can occur when we show up as ourselves, wearing our natural hair on a humid day, raising our hand to speak, even though we're petrified on the inside. *Freedom dreams* can also be so grand that other people are able to pick up the mantle to ensure the dream is continued, sprinkling seeds to catch root within other leading to new iterations of the dream that reflect the current practices. I would also like to draw attention to the idea that *freedom dreams* are flexible. Kelley writes, "Without new visions we don't know what to build, only what to

knock down.” The beauty of a *freedom dream* is that you never quite know how big it will grow. As society changes, so does the struggle and adversities we face, and so does a *freedom dream*. Yet the question remains, what do our students have to fight for?

## **Part Two: Dream Analysis**

This section will present case studies of freedom dreams for students to analyze. The dreams that we analyze will be representative of the diverse and intersecting identities of my students. During the analysis, students will expand their knowledge of freedom dreams that led to tangible outcomes. Students will collaborate to discover the implications of the dream and will construct a timeline of their chosen dream showing connections to previous social movements and imagining how the dream could be reimaged in the future. Students can create their timeline using a method of their choice. In my classroom, we have options to record a short podcast, create a visual representation, compose a song/poem, written, or in a way they imagine that will demonstrate their understanding. I will share in detail, the context of the optional freedom dreams that students can choose.

It is important to note that *freedom dreams* are not limited to and for Black people. I selected Black History Month as the whole group model because it is a realized dream that is rooted in Chicago, the location of my current school. My students can visit significant locations such as the Wabash YMCA, a place where the father of BHM met with other dreamers who laid the foundations for what evolved into a month of celebrating the accomplishments (a.k.a. actualized dreams) of Black people. Additionally, Black History Month hold great significance in my school. While I have laid the groundwork for a freedom dream to analyze, you are invited to consider *freedom dreams* that directly relates to your learning community.

### **The History of Black History Month- Carter G. Woodson’s Freedom Dream**

“We are going to go back to that beautiful history, and it is going to inspire us to greater achievements.” - Carter G. Woodson<sup>17</sup>

Black History Month was officially established in 1976, just over 25 years after the death of Carter G. Woodson, known as the “father of Black History.” While Gerald Ford’s presidential proclamation marked the beginning of Black History Month for American society, the story of Black History Month had begun 60 years earlier in my city, “Chi City;” also known as Chicago. Its origin dates to the year 1915 when Woodson was invited to attend and present at the National Half-Century Exposition and Lincoln Jubilee<sup>18</sup>. This three-week event celebrated 50 years of emancipation, taking place in the historic Bronzeville Neighborhood on Chicago’s south side<sup>19</sup>. Thousands of Black folx descended upon the Chicago Coliseum for musical performances, speeches, poetry recitation, and exhibits that highlighted the progress Black people have made since being freed from enslavement.

Woodson, an advocate for Black history, was so inspired by what he experienced, leading him to plan a meeting with other Black intellectuals of the same mindset. Already, we can see the beginnings of a *freedom dream*. In September of 1915, he met with A.L. Jackson, Jesse E. Moorland, and others at the Wabash YMCA to discuss and imagine ways to promote Black History leading to the formation of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH), later renamed the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH)<sup>20</sup>.

Woodson’s quest for educating people about Black History is a *freedom dream* that is explicitly linked to the

dream his enslaved ancestors developed of freedom by means of education. During the early 1900s, America was still at war with Black literacy. Although many today may argue that politics has no business in school, it was political maneuverings that were employed to violently keep Black folk out of school. From Woodson's point of view, even those who were able to secure a traditional education, were lacking in critical literacy because of oppressive ideologies that presented Black people as inferior. It was through astute observation and analysis of reality that Woodson began to ask questions about the status of Black people in America. He imagined that the Black community could improve their self-perception and their status in America if they knew of the abundance of contributions that Black people to society.

As time progressed, so did Woodson's imagination. In 1916, he collaborated with more like-minded individuals to create the Journal of Negro History. By 1924, the *freedom dream* was further actualized when his fraternity, Omega Psi Phi, created the first Negro History Week, originally named Negro Literature and History Week, in 1924. Seeing the potential and the beauty of this movement, Woodson and the ASNLH continued to push the boundaries of their imagination with an official announcement of Negro History Week taking place in February 1926. It is important to note that the month of February was chosen to commemorate the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. I'd also like to shed light on current sentiments about the month of February. It is not uncommon to hear someone "jest" that February was assigned for Black History Month because it is the shortest month of the year. Whenever I hear students repeating this, I always take the time to inform them that BHM is FUBU, in other words for us, by us; however, I approach the subject with thoughtful consideration. Recalling part one of my unit, *Freedom dreams* are flexible and can be reimagined, especially as society changes. This critique of BHM taking place in February is not wrong, in fact, the critical analysis of this date led to the reimagined approach of Black History 365, a movement adopted and adapted by many that acknowledges Black History should not be limited to one month of acknowledgement and scholarship.

Woodson passed away in the year of 1950, twenty-six years before Black History Month because a nationally recognized entity by then president, Gerald Ford. Woodson's *freedom dream* still lives on. It is evident in the increasing amount of Black scholarship seen at multiple levels of society, in universities, social media, schools-well, some schools. The very same politicians who want politics to be kept out of schools, are the very same politicians using politics to suppress the study of Black History<sup>21</sup>. I imagine that someone will imagine a way to protect the histories and narratives of the folk who are purposefully excluded while inspiring deep healing and open hearts to those who perceive this to be a threat.

### **Representation Matters- Marley Dias' Freedom Dream**

"It's so nice to see that the Black girl is the main character and not the sidekick." – Marley Dias<sup>22</sup>

In 2015, a 10-year-old girl named Marley Dias took to social media to start a book drive. What made her campaign unique was that she specifically requested books that featured Black girls as the main character. She embarked on this journey not to exclude books that featured other races, but because she noticed a lack of representation in books, specifically in the books she read for school. Marley is not alone in her observations. A salient point of Carter G. Woodson was that Black people were conditioned to see themselves as inferior<sup>23</sup>, and Toni Morrison illustrates how these ideologies are passed down through literature<sup>24</sup>. Marley was not alone in her frustrations. It was a conversation with her mother led to a question: what would she change? Enter, critical imagination. Marley shares in a PBS interview that reflecting on that question helped her to visualize the book drive.

The notions of under- and misrepresentation of have also contributed to an increase in the publishing of books

that feature Black main characters<sup>25</sup>. Where there is need and desire, *freedom dreams* begin. In response to the need for diversity and representation in children's literature, many authors have been inspired to publish books with Black children in a variety of shades. Including Marley who published her first book, *Marley Dias Gets It Done: And So Can You*, at the age of 13. Her dream flourished and grew from a book drive that has collected and donated over 13,000 books to schools, to a fully-fledged database of Black girl books.

### **Hungry for Equity- The Dyett Hunger Strike**

After slavery was partially abolished (language in the 13th Amendment continues to uphold the existence of slavery in America), the threat to the rights of Black folk, as educated readers and writers, persists. Inequities in funding and access to resources are two specks from an endless batch of intentional tactics that construct the infrastructure of modern oppression. And still, these challenges are met with actualized visions by way of justice such as the Dyett Hunger Strike of 2015. Led by Black folk in Chicago, community members demanded local city government work with Chicago Public Schools to provide funding to reopen and sustain Walter E. Dyett High School<sup>26</sup>. Together, advocates and activists ensured their neighborhood public high school remained open for all students instead of the privatized school it was slated to become. As was the case for dreamers in Chicago who imagined an equitably funded school, accessible to the children in that neighborhood. After weeks of abstaining from food, Dyett reopened as an arts-centered school and remained a neighborhood school. The community's demands of an innovative school with green technology, however, were ignored. This does not mean that the dream has ended, for the halls remain open, the students are not required to travel in distant neighborhoods to receive their education. I imagine that members of this learning community are still actively engaging in their collective imagination to ensure that this school will meet the growing needs of its students, providing them with top tier resources and materials all while creating a sustainable green building.

### **Chi-town, stand up!- Dilla's Freedom Dream**

Sherman "Dilla" Thomas, who operates under the handle of 6figga\_Dilla on social media is an urban history who's love for his city and history created new access points for people to learn about Chicago History; his classroom was social media. Dilla's history with history began with a need, which was to drive his father's car to place like The Rink (a Black owned skating rink on the south side of Chicago)<sup>27</sup>. He was only allowed to borrow the vehicle if he was able to name his destination and the directions to get there. During this time, applications like Google Maps were nonexistent, so like many other drivers, he had to learn all the street names and directions. This experience became useful to him as he courted his wife. In an interview with Block Club Chicago, Dilla shares how he noticed smaller brown street signs that were honorariums to Black historical figures while on a date and how those led to questions. After researching the names on the signs, he began posting blurbs about it on Facebook, leading him to search for Chicago History on social media. What he found was alarming:

Before I got on there, you type in Chicago history, and it was like someone explaining why some other dude got shot by this dude and beefing. I understand that that goes on, and I respect it as historical journalism because, in 20 years, people will be able to back and look at those stories and say that Chicago was going through something — but that isn't Chicago history.<sup>28</sup>

This gave way to a *freedom dream*. Dilla desired to shift, not erase, but shift the narrative of Chicago by

sharing the rich histories that exist outside of violence. His dream blossomed into a viral TikTok page that reaches millions of people, educating them with counter stories of life in Chicago neighborhoods that weren't centered around trauma. His dream further expanded when he started Mahogany Tours<sup>29</sup>. On Saturdays and Sundays, he offers tours of Black south side neighborhoods.

### **Part Three: A Gallery of Dreams**

In this part, students will then engage in deep critical reflection of their realities. We've looked at the freedom dreams of others, and now students will practice freedom dreaming, employing their newfound perspectives gained through analysis. Students will be invited to answer these questions:

1. What present-day challenges hold significance to students and how would it look when this challenge is overcome?
2. What actions could be taken to overcome this challenge?

The response to these questions will then be used to practice critical imagination that results in an idea and practical steps that can be taken to achieve this. Students will then create a representation of this dream. This process will be interdisciplinary, allowing students to incorporate the skills and knowledge they possess from in and outside of the classroom. In my classroom, this could take the form in paintings, podcasts, speeches, videos, songs, or other forms of expression.

The culmination of this phase is the "Gallery of Dreams" event, where students will present their projects to an audience of peers, teachers, and community members. This gallery will not only showcase their imaginative and thoughtful work but also serve as a platform for students to voice their visions for a better future. Through this experience, students will learn the power of collective dreaming and advocacy, understanding that their ideas can inspire real-world change.

## **Teaching Strategies & Pedagogical Considerations**

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### **Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR)**

This strategy is built around modeling and chunking content. We begin in whole group during Part Two where everyone is responsible for taking notes, however, I am guiding and demonstrating throughout the process. The first release happens when students get into small groups to complete the dream analysis, this creates a shift in my role as teacher to facilitator. Finally, when students reach Part three, they should have a strong sense of agency over their work and are able to facilitate research and collaboration with minimal assistance from the teacher.

### **Demystifying Content**

Students will interact with various content that may be challenging to understand and might also create discomfort. Rather than attempting to avoid this, by demystifying content, students can hone processes that it will be important to break down meanings and address common misconceptions at the start of the unit. It is very often that we use specific words or phrases, but the understanding will differ person to person and some students fear classroom discussions because they don't want to be wrong<sup>30</sup>. In demystifying content, the



class can establish a shared definition and help to foster a risk-taking space.

## Classroom Activities

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### Part One: Intro to Freedom Dreaming

Essential Question: What are freedom dreams and what significance do they hold in society?

These activities will help students to develop their own definition of *freedom dreams*. In the context of this, when I use the words *freedom dreams* and *freedom dreaming*, I am speaking with the concept in mind. Whether using the noun or verb form, the concept remains the same. This may need to be communicated to students for clarity.

#### Activity One: Demystifying Content

The first classroom activity is the hook to offer students a buy in. By tapping into an issue that is closely related to their experiences as students. We will do a close read of an article for the 2023 Florida State Standards for social studies. In this standard, there is a controversial statement that calls for students to study the life and conditions of people were enslaved, followed by a clarification that it should specifically include that enslaved people learned different skills and trades that benefited them once they were freed. This standard was seen as offensive to the conditions of slavery, suggesting that there were benefits to being enslaved. Some students may have a misconception that might suggest that it is true that they were able to use those skills, but reply with the question, wouldn't they have these skills if they were at home?

The first classroom activity will build the foundational understanding of *freedom dreaming*. After analyzing quotes from Robin D.G. Kelley and Tourmaline, students will begin by selecting words and phrases that resonate with them and search for the deeper implications by creating a T-Chart that compares the literal meanings of their selections with the bigger implications they interpret. This will help to demystify challenging texts and to prompt critical thinking.

This activity can be adapted for any classroom setting. For example, this could be approached utilizing the jigsaw method where students analyze one thing as a group. For a class where physical space is a challenge, the T-Chart could be facilitated on a Padlet or another online collaboration board.

At the end of this activity, students should review the chart and reflect on what they noticed. The following are questions that students might consider as they reflect. Were there any words or phrases that came up often? Are there any interpretations you agree and/or disagree with? This could take place through journaling, discussion, or even mental documentation.

#### Activity Two: Exploring the Call to Imagine

In this activity, students will visit a digital gallery that showcases the *freedom dreams* that people share. This is done through text, imagery and hyperlinks. It also extends to social media through the Instagram handle @call\_to\_imagine where people can share their *freedom dream* to be reposted. Operating through the view that *freedom dreams* are seeds that are planted & spread, this movement was created with the intention to

host an interactive space for marginalized folx to share, reflect, and inspire others. While exploring this website, students will keep a journal of any dreams that resonate or stand out to them, describing what they noticed in terms of the content and the medium of the expression. This journal is an important tool that students can refer to in part 3 when they begin crafting their culminating project. At the end of this activity, students should be invited to exchange their experience with classmates.

### **Activity Three: Defining Freedom Dreams**

This activity can serve as a formative assessment. Students will write their definition of *freedom dreaming*. This activity also presents space for creativity. In my classroom, we will use a cut out template to decorate and write their definitions. We will then use these definitions to create a bulletin board. This culturally relevant approach highlights student achievement and helps to empower student ownership in a space that was not designed for them, but with them.

### **Part Two: Dream Analysis**

Essential Question: How does deepening our understanding of the past contribute to understanding and navigating through present-day challenges in our communities?

In this section students will assemble small groups and select a *freedom dream* to analyze. Before they break into groups, I will model the analysis with the class by exploring the history of Black History Month. My objective is to get students to observe the following:

1. *Freedom dreams* involve collective action. No one does the work alone.
2. The dream begins with critical analysis of the conditions of reality.
3. *Freedom dreams* are constantly reimagined and connections can be found throughout history.

After we have done an example analysis together, students will select a *freedom dream* to analyze. The options that I have prepared feature work of Carter G. Woodson, Marley Dias, The Dyett Hunger Strike, Septima Clark, and Sherman “Dilla” Thomas. Students will present their analysis on a “soap box” as opposed to a traditional presentation, students will be prompted to present as though they are campaigning for their dream on a soap box or in an interview. Additionally, I have pulled examples from my city that feature Black Americans to represent my students, you are invited to reimagine this for your communities.

This website is an example of how I will disseminate information for my students as they engage in their research. You may also use this as a resource:

<https://sites.google.com/cps.edu/purposefuldreams?usp=sharing>

### **Activity Four (A): Modeling Dream Analysis**

In this activity, as a whole group students will analyze the history of Black History Month that was outlined in the content objectives. The way this information is presented can vary depending on your skillset, classroom materials, and technology access. For my classroom, I have created a website and curated online resources for students to use as their starting point. As we research, students will complete an accompanying note catcher to document key take aways.

What makes this a <i>freedom dream</i> ?	
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What inspired the <i>freedom dream</i> ?	
What solutions did they imagine?	
How long did it take to before the dream came to life?	
Which aspects of the dream were individual and which aspects were of through collective action?	
In what ways did other people share the dream?	

#### **Activity Four B: Dream Analysis**

Continuing with GRR, students should be divided into groups in your preferred method to analyze a one of the case studies and complete the accompanying note catcher. Students will choose a case study after viewing brief overviews, ideally, there would be one group per case.

#### **Activity Five: Advocacy Station**

This activity can serve as a formative assessment for Part Two. Students will demonstrate what they learned by advocating for their study through presentation on a “soap box.”

#### **Activity Six: Synthesize**

### **Part Three: A Gallery of Dreams**

In this part, students will then engage in deep critical reflection of their realities. We’ve looked at the freedom dreams of others, and now students will practice freedom dreaming, employing their newfound perspectives gained through analysis. Students will be invited to answer these questions:

1. What present-day challenges hold significance to students and how would it look when this challenge is overcome?
2. What actions could be taken to overcome this challenge?

The response to these questions will then be used to practice critical imagination that results in an idea and practical steps that can be taken to achieve this. Students will then create a representation of this dream.

#### **Activity Seven: Guided Journaling**

Students will begin to self-reflect on their life experiences to consider what is affecting them so deeply that it inspires purpose. The next step in this activity will be to imagine a world they have solved this issue and create a journal entry. The next entry would be to write down the steps for building toward this vision.

#### **Activity Eight: Choose Your Own Adventure**

This activity is in preparation for the Gallery of Dreams. During this time, students should begin designed a presentation about their dream, describing the dream and their action plan. Students can refer back to the journal entries from part one and part two as they brainstorm ideas, or brainstorm with the assistance of a teacher.

### **Activity Nine: The Gallery of Dreams**

This activity can serve as a culminating project for this unit. In my classroom, students will create explore their *freedom dreams* through interdisciplinary means. We will create a guest list of people to invite contemporary historians in addition to parents and families to visit the gallery.

#### **Bonus Activity**

This last activity is a field trip that I am curating for my students. I have planned a field trip that takes students to the important sites from the case studies. While I live in Chicago, someone from a different location could put together a virtual field trip, or reach out for virtual classroom visits.

## **Appendix on Implementing District Standards**

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CC.6-8.W.HST.9 Research to Build and Present Knowledge: Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis reflection, and research.

Students will conduct research during Part 2 of the curriculum and will present their research to their classmates.

SS.IS.8.6-8.LC. Analyze how a problem can manifest itself and the challenges and opportunities faced by those trying to address it.

During Part 2, students are specifically asked to identify how freedom dreams were inspired by adversity.

SS.CV.3.6-8.LC, MdC, MC. Compare the means by which individuals and groups change societies, promote the common good, and protect rights.

Students not only explore different cases of collective action, students will also engage freedom dreaming to create solutions for the issues they believe effect society and will exchange ideas in the culminating activity.

SS.H.1.6-8.MdC. Analyze connections among events and developments in broader historical contexts.

Students will conduct research, exploring different cases of collective action in order to discover connections between the various cases.

8th MA:Pr4.1.8a. Integrate multiple contents and forms into unified media arts productions that convey specific themes or ideas in order to reach a given audience.

Students will engage freedom dreaming to create solutions for the issues they believe effect society and will exchange ideas in the culminating activity. As they share their vision, students will use multiple forms of art and media to convey their intent.

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## Notes

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