



2014

A CULTURAL LENS INTO THE STORY UNDERNEATH: A RESOURCE GUIDE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN ART, ARTISTS AND CULTURE FOR ART EDUCATION

Valerie Graves

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A CULTURAL LENS INTO THE STORY UNDERNEATH:
A RESOURCE GUIDE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN ART, ARTISTS AND CULTURE FOR
ART EDUCATION

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Art
Education at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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December, 2014

Acknowledgment

In loving memory of Mrs. Alice T. Brown, the author's mother, for her strength and encouragement.

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Abstract

A CULTURAL LENS INTO THE STORY UNDERNEATH: A RESOURCE GUIDE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN ART, ARTISTS AND CULTURE FOR ART EDUCATION

By Valerie D. Graves, M.A.E.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Art Education at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2014

Major Director: Dr. David Burton, Professor, Art Education

The goal of this study is to create a qualitative resource guide of African American culture, art, and artists for an art education curriculum. This project encompasses four main themes to reflect an area of African American culture via a work of art created by an African American artist.

These themes are, **Family** with the sub themes *African American Male, Matriarch, and Children*; **Spirit** with the sub themes *Faith, Spirituality, and Inspiration*; **Identity** with the sub themes *Artist's Voice, Triumph, and Hope and Vision*; **Community** with the sub themes *Ancestors, Social Issues, and Cultural Voice*. These themes constitute a basis depictive of the African American culture at a deeper level as resounded by ethicist Peter J. Paris's reflection of the culture's foundational building blocks, God, community, family, and person (Paris, 2004).

This thesis looks beyond the composition, artistic essentials, historical relevance, and biographical sketches of the artists, to create an accessible and effective way to approach African American culture thematically. The resource provides connecting elements into a culture that has contributed to the very essence of the larger American culture.

**A Cultural Lens into the Story Underneath:
A Resource Guide of African American Art, Artists and Culture for Art Education**

Introduction

Having taught art education to young people in the public school system for 24 years, the author has experienced much growth and many attempts at educational reforms from a myriad of perspectives for the author. Every aspect of addressing student achievement, student engagement, and student learning remain unwavering and consistent. The diversity of student populations also remain consistent and therefore warrant our efforts to approach every student with the most effective and productive teaching strategies. Given the resources, supplies, and now technology that equip us to be the most effective educators possible, teachers have at their fingertips the ability to locate many resources for lessons supporting the current Virginia Standards of Learning. Within this wealth of resources, some art teachers, including the author, hold true to the basic concept of presenting art lessons with visuals, objectives, strategies, and a detailed outline of the content for student learning and engagement. Whether it is a lesson in art history, art appreciation, art criticism, aesthetics, or studio art making, art teachers try to incorporate a vast amount of visual references into their own research and content enhancement.

As an art educator, one of the resources the author deems a valuable tool is presenting visuals that equitably represent the classroom population. Conversing with other art educators while presenting at state and regional art educational conferences, the author gained a consensus that more of the art education curriculum should include visual references of African American art and artists (Central Region Virginia Art Education Association, 2009). Although there are many ways of incorporating these works of art within the curriculum, for educators it can become quite time consuming to research artwork and artists, as well as incorporate them effectively into

lesson designs. The problem outlined in this thesis exists within the context of many areas: a need for greater cultural awareness, a need for expanded visual resources of African American art, a need for representation of a percentage of the student population that exists in most schools, and the means of placing this information in teachers' hands.

This thesis does not serve as a curriculum, but will organize a qualitative resource guide comprised of four main themes with three sub-themes within each theme. The four main themes are: **Family** with the sub themes *African American Male, Matriarch, and Children*; **Spirit** with the sub themes *Faith, Spirituality, and Inspiration*; **Identity** with the sub themes *Artist's Voice, Triumph, and Hope and Vision*; **Community** with the sub themes *Ancestors, Social Issues, and Cultural Voice*. These themes constitute a foundation depictive of the African American culture at a profound level reflective of ethicist Peter J. Paris' stance of the four spheres; God, community, family, and person (Paris, 2004)

Current educational reforms that attempt to encompass student diversity, differentiated learning, and inclusion of 21st century skill building aim to strengthen cultural awareness for each learner. Accordingly there is a need for representation of all student populations when possible. These efforts are effective because they force educators to incorporate facets of content strategies into student learning.

Educators must contend with the diversity within their given classrooms by attempting to establish a level of respect and acceptance by every one of the cultures different from their own. This reality necessitates a deeper level of intent, planning, and resources for teachers. The concept of developing a deeper level of multicultural education substantiates the organization of

information, biographical sketches, and personal aspects of each artist that the author has included in this thesis.

Peter J. Paris (2004) provides a paradigm of pedagogical thought processes via his teachings on the values of the African American culture. *Virtues and Values- The African and African American Experience*, is a small book encompassing a valuable insight into the connections and foundations of this culture. The author constructs the basic components needed to understand the unifying elements of African Americans within their cultural community. These interdependent spheres; God, community, family, and person, serve as the groundwork for accumulating the information about each artist and their configuration within this resource guide. The selected themes are structured to provide accessible information when incorporating a specific artist or artwork within the resource guide into lesson planning.

Educational terms such as visual culture, multicultural lens, cultural awareness, cultural responsiveness, cultural diversity, and cultural landscape sound alike semantically, but possess a host of different meanings. These terms, although different in meaning, allude to an awareness of the need to be inclusive of all students in a typical classroom setting on a daily basis. When we examine the ethnic diversity within our student populations, we should expect the teaching and learning for those students to reflect the same diversity. While that would be ideal, it is often not realistic. Although most of the school districts in Richmond, Virginia and surrounding areas may have small populations with diverse ethnicities, many schools in the area have large populations of African American students. Yet, the exposure to content, material, visuals, and learning that reflects their cultural identity is limited.

Robert Zimmer's (2003) article, *Abstraction in Art with Implications for Perceptions* refers to the use of children's artwork and tribal art as a basis for developing one's ideas of abstract art.

Recognizing the importance of looking at culturally diverse works of art is just the beginning of developing impressions and ideas for studio making by students. This thesis seeks to identify the importance of including African American art and African American artists within an art education curriculum and making this art accessible to art educators. The thesis consists of artwork representative of the African American culture, organized by the four main themes, **Family, Spirit, Identity, and Community**. Each sub-theme identified within a work of art creates an extended narrative depicting the African American culture. The technology of digital images, internet, and links to other resources provided within this guide allows the educator access and utilization in a modern day art classroom.

Review of the Literature

Researching theoretical foundations for conceptual support within this thesis led the author to explore the pedagogical constructs of Peter J. Paris (2004) and his writings pertaining to African American culture's connectivity to African values. Including African American artists and their artwork beyond superficial, stereotypical and clichéd references, as well as incorporating a qualitative understanding of the culture, transforms the structure of art curricula. In order to reasonably consider other ethnicities and their cultural contributions, we must first adjust our thinking as educators in appreciating, understanding, and equipping ourselves with a knowledge base complete enough to integrate these works of art into our lessons. Paris (2004) contended that the four spheres ground and unify the African American culture and provides a glimpse into the value and ethical components reflecting their way of life. Unifying experiences by African

Americans collectively permeate throughout artistic expressions that reveal key elements that are distinctive to this culture. For instance racial injustice or social challenges are just a couple of experiences that serve as subject matter or compositional framework of African American artists.

It is important to acknowledge the historical connotations and depictions that are embedded within African American art that exemplify those and other shared experiences.

African American Art-The Long Struggle, is the title of a book written by Crystal A. Britton (2006) that encompasses a rich and dynamic format of chronological arrangement of African American art and artists. The text and visual references of the artwork complement each other to inform and enlighten the reader about the contributions of these people to the American culture, as well as to the African American culture. Black visualization describes the imagery, productions, and compositions uniquely outlining the African American culture. Another source the author found extremely valuable in formulating the organization of this research include, *The Other Side of Color-African American Art in the Collection of Camille O. and William H. Cosby Jr.* by David C. Driskell (2001). Driskell creates a visual tour of the Cosby's art collection by illustrating the intent, purpose, and circumstances for the acquisition of each work of art.

Reading through this literature assisted in developing ideas that determined which works of art should be selected for this thesis. The outline by Driskell alluded to aspects of themes and commonalities representative of the African American culture, such as social issues, spirituality, family, and identity. Finding these core aspects within the literature supports Paris' building blocks for defining or at least formulating a cohesive understanding of the culture. *Challenge of the Modern- African American Artists 1925-1945* by Lowery Stokes Sims (2003) and *Creating Their Own Image-The History of African American Women Artists* by Lisa E. Farrington (2005) are scholarly works designated specifically to examine a particular style or gender. In these texts,

images of African American artists' paintings and sculptures authenticate the social, political, and historical value of African American art. This thinking asserts a view of supporting the valuable documentation, cataloguing, arranging, and provision of African American art to sustain a deeper pedagogical and multicultural education. It is not possible to find every aspect and all information pertaining to African American art and artists in one document, catalogue, or collection. Literature that attempts to provide such a compilation tends to present the collection from a specific or limited perspective, such as African American women artists, African American art in a particular style, geographical location, or specific art movements. In order to ascertain the importance of these contributions it is necessary to create a cohesive and basic outline that paints a larger picture of components of most African American artwork.

Painting the Musical City-Jazz and Cultural Identity in American Art 1910-1940, by Donna M. Cassidy (1997), illustrates the interweaving of other art forms depicting African American culture such as original music forms. Many works of art created by various African American artists either inspired musical creations or were inspired by the music of the times. Works of art depicting dancers, instruments, abstract movements, concerts, and interactions between musicians and artists were popular and paralleled great artistic movements, such as The Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and The New Negro Art of the 1960s.

Much of the related literature speaks to cultural awareness, or cultural relevance in a historical context. Scholarly references, such as 'The Journal of Negro Education', 'The Journal of American Folklore' and 'The Journal of African and American History', host many articles regarding the culture, validity, and relative information related to the African American population. These articles along with other literature enhance an awareness of the importance of

the contributions of these artists to society through their artwork, public service, and potential for educational value in the realm of studying art making. For example, ‘The Journal of American Folklore’ creates cross references of cultural paradigms between African and African American art traditions such as quilting, artful storytelling, and functional art.

Statement of the Problem

The premise of this thesis is to construct an informative perspective of African American culture and context consisting of four overarching parameters (and twelve sub-headings representing specific themes under those parameters). This resource would provide educators with the means of accessing thematic units of study that include visual references of African American artwork. Many art teachers may know and reference popular African American artists such as Jacob Lawrence, Romare Bearden, and Faith Ringgold. Most are also familiar with popular artwork such as *The Banjo Lesson* by Henry Ossawa Tanner and *The Domino Players* by Horace Pippin. Yet many art teachers are not cognizant of African American artists such as Dox Thrash (1892-1965) who created a process of printmaking by using the carborundum crystals (normally used to clean lithograph stones) on copper plates. They may not know the sculptors, Edmonia Lewis (1845-1910) or Meta Warrick Fuller (1877-1968), whose career lasted for more than 60 years. Augusta Savage (1892-1962) was a Harlem Renaissance sculptor and art educator whose major commissioned work, *The Harp*, was inspired by the song *Lift Every Voice*. Some art educators may know and utilize the artwork of contemporary artist Kehinde Wiley (born 1977). These are just a few African American artists and their work that could generate a greater insight into the African American culture, artistic expression, artistic style, artistic techniques, and skill building within an art classroom.

If we value the importance and the qualitative contribution of these artists and artworks, is their omission from many curriculums an oversight of the art educator? How is it that even within a school population that includes a large number of African American students, the students do not see their culture represented in positive and contributory ways? We exist in a time when this population and their artistic voice are no longer excluded from society to the extent that they were many years ago. However the evidence of their abilities and contributions displayed in many art forms and media has not transferred into the classroom with much vigor. How can current educational reforms fail to include this element of the great artworks, skills, and progressive thinking of these artists? Many districts develop art standards that correlate with their state standards of art, and yet there appears to be little mention of African American artists and their artwork as a reference or guide for lesson planning. How then can we establish a concrete, hands-on, contemporary, resource collection of African American artwork for educators that will enhance the current content and art curriculum?

Art teachers reference African American artists to some degree within their instruction. Many of them would welcome the opportunity to learn more about African American artists and the body of artwork they know exist, but they do not have the time, funds, or resources to access and expand upon for use within their classrooms. The pressure to utilize various technology and the ever-increasing demands upon educators to meet the needs of every student exacerbates the lack of time to include references that are less readily available than many other visual references. For example, many teachers can easily access popular Western or European artists with a quick glance of the internet. There are prints, museum collections, lesson ideas, in-depth information about their lives and their inspiration for creating art on many websites. Most teachers of any ethnicity do not possess enough knowledge about many African American

artists to reference them quickly when planning a lesson unless they take the time to research this content area extensively. Another issue is that teachers do not have the time to collaborate with institutions that may have collections and resources of African American artists. The museums or universities that possess important collections could become a wealth of information in establishing a basic knowledge and resource for teachers.

The problem with implementing these resources, visuals, and information is the difficulty inherent to systematizing, amassing, and sustaining it as a critical aspect of an art curriculum. A collection such as this resource guide could potentially become a vital component for teaching strategies, lesson design, and collaborative teaching. It is imperative to understand the important need of cultural identity intertwined in highlighting the work of these artists. *Virtues and Values-The African and African American Experiences*, written by Peter J. Paris (2004), reinforces the importance of recognizing the cohesiveness of these two cultures as garnering interdependent values supportive of each other. One concept gained from this literature is the significant African and African American ethics and values within this culture that is visible in their artwork. These cultural values permeate in their performing arts, literature, and inventions as notations to the life and times of the artists.

First-hand research and connecting with institutions such as The Anacostia Museum of African American Art (Smithsonian), The Black History and Heritage Museum of Richmond, Virginia and Hampton University Museum of African American Art History are vital in providing a fresh look at African American artwork. There is a need for art educational resources related to African American art and artists. While there might be sufficient reproductions, slides, and online visuals, additional rich historical and cultural information that makes them interesting and relevant, and that relates them to African American cultural context

is needed. This thesis will outline twelve different aspects of African American culture under four main headings through twelve works of art and artists:

- **Family**- African American Male, Matriarch, Children,
- **Spirit**- Faith, Spirituality, Inspiration
- **Identity**- Artist's Voice, Triumph, Hope and Vision
- **Community**- Ancestors, Social Issues, Cultural Voice

Methodology

The author's objective is to establish guidelines in formulating a visual, historical resource of African American artwork and artists' information for classroom teachers. The selection of main themes and sub-themes are not random nor haphazardly chosen. The collection of materials, references, and related literature will comprise a thematic organization of prominent African American artists and their artwork supported in a rich historical and cultural context in the form of narratives. Each main theme of **Family**, **Spirit**, **Identity**, and **Community** includes three sub-themes that reflect the paradigm of Paris' description defining the foundation of understanding the dynamics of the African American culture. Within the theme of **Family**, the sub-themes are *African American male*, *Matriarch*, and *Children*. This theme is relative and prevalent in any culture, but for African American artists it has served as a basis for compositions and articulating the value of the role each person plays within the family structure. Within the theme of **Spirit**, the sub-themes are *Faith*, *Spirituality*, and *Inspiration*. Perhaps less obvious to someone outside of the culture, these aspirations of depicting a deity or spiritual connotation prevail as either a direct or perceived image reflective of many African American artworks. Within the theme of **Identity**, the sub-themes are *Artist's Voice*, *Triumph* and *Hope and Vision*. Prevalent and necessary to convey the bigger picture or to outline aspects

of identity, this theme is vital accordingly for understanding each artist's intent and voice.

Within the theme of **Community**, the sub themes are *Ancestors*, *Social Issues*, and *Cultural Voice*. *African American Art-The Long Struggle* (Britton, 2006) substantiates the rich and historical value African American artists contribute to the overall American culture. Their artwork reflects the culture and provides a window to social issues involving their communal focus. The twelve narratives included in this thesis each feature a work of art created by an African American artist and consists of the following outline;

- 1. A brief reference to the main theme and sub-theme
- 2. A rationale for inclusion in the curriculum
- 3. An introduction to the artwork's artistic elements, style, and medium
- 4. Information about the artist's life and times and an interpretation of the artist's intent

This outline draws together a holistic look among the artists and the artwork. Reaching beyond the stereotypical, and surface biographical sketches this organization allows a deeper level of understanding African American art and culture. The selection of artworks provides educators with more than just a visual reference. Organizing themes within the resource in this manner permits the educator to locate various components for their lesson designs they deem applicable to specific subject matter and content exploration.

Each narrative includes a visual of the artwork, an outline of supporting information to its selection and other related artworks relative to the artists. This methodology organizes the format of each work of art with the artist's information relative to the cultural perspectives of its time and beyond. The narratives consist of the following main themes, sub-themes, artwork, and artists:

Family

African American Male- *The Banjo Lesson* by Henry Ossawa Tanner (1893, Appendix A)

Matriarch- *Dinner at Aunt Connie's House* by Faith Ringgold (1993, Appendix A)

Children- *School's Out* by Allan Crite (1936, Appendix A)

Spirit

Faith- *The Creation* by Aaron Douglas (1935, Appendix A)

Spirituality- *The Quarry* by Robert Duncanson (1863, Appendix A)

Inspiration- *Lift Every Voice and Sing (The Harp)* by Augusta Savage (1939, Appendix A)

Identity

Artist's Voice- *The Dancers* by William Henry Johnson (1942, Appendix A)

Triumph- *Maternity* by Elizabeth Catlett (1980, Appendix A)

Hope and Vision- *Forever Free* by Edmonia Lewis (1867, Appendix A)

Community

Ancestors- *Family Circle* by John Biggers (1997, Appendix A)

Social Issues- *Mr. Prejudice* by Horace Pippin (1943, Appendix A)

Cultural Voice- *Brownstones* by Jacob Lawrence (1958, Appendix A)

Purpose of Themes and Intent

What constitutes the selection of these themes and sub themes as representing the African American culture? The intent of the thesis is to provide an insightful resource guide for an in-depth study of multicultural education through African American artwork and artists. It is important to acknowledge the simple fact that including African American artists and their artwork to creative lesson designs reaches far beyond looking at the artwork and knowing a few biographical facts. If the author's intent is to encourage art educators to seriously consider the

value of including African American artists and their artwork as a part of daily instruction, we must contemplate the significance of the art.

According to the constructs of Peter J. Paris (2004), the basic building blocks for an African and African American social community originate and continue with the four concepts including God, community, family, and person (Paris, 2004 p. 2). These concepts parallel the author's conceptualization of a foundation in developing an in-depth pedagogy of multicultural education within our art classrooms. Understanding the basic concepts of structuring the important and vital aspects of African American culture provides an educational lens into the works of art that are discussed.

“Interpreting an artwork identifies the artist's critical choice and explores how these decisions derive from a coherent design or plan” (Gibbs, 1999, p. 305). Raymond W. Gibbs, author of *Intentions of the Experience of Meaning* (1999) affords us an opportunity to decipher the logistics of artist's intent, the viewer's experience, and the assumptions of meanings. Looking closely at these twelve narratives, artists, and artworks, encompasses an association between them and an understanding about the culture in which they derived.

The concepts of Family, Spirit, Identity and Community are broad enough to include a wide range of people and cultures. Peter J. Paris, (2004) expounds upon the importance of understanding all of the elements necessary in recognizing the African American culture and he asserts that these four ideas embrace each other to sustain the progress of the culture. He supports his reasoning with concepts and ancestral rudiments that reach back to African values and virtues. These selected themes are prevalent in many artistic compositions, quilts, textiles, and sculptures made by African American artists. When researching biographical information the author found that these themes are evident even if the artwork does not necessarily reflect

the idea as clearly as the artists' intent. For example, Robert Duncanson's landscapes reflecting realistic, idealistic images of vast landscapes have no biblical or apparent religious undertones. According to David C. Driskell's writing in *The Other Side of Color-African American Art in the Collection of Camille O. and William H. Cosby*, Robert S. Duncanson (landscape artist 1821-1872), searched many landscape venues to find the ideal place in nature to illustrate the existence of God (Driskell, 2001). Whether we can say that Duncanson was a religious man or not, it is clear that the historical references of his intent demonstrate a sense of divine presence in his artwork.

Other African American artworks demonstrate the four main themes and subsequently the sub themes selected for this thesis. The author's intent is not to limit the understanding of the African American culture to these twelve works of art and artists, but to create a methodology for curriculum inclusion of African American artists that is reflective of the culture. In order for educators to grasp a foundation of in-depth multicultural pedagogical experiences, it is imperative for us to provide as much information as possible to access these populations. Comparative works of art are included to enlighten us further about these twelve main works of art and artists chosen. The selected artworks and artists varies in order to showcase diverse techniques, materials, mediums, styles, intents, voices, compositions, reflections, and historical references. A complete list may be found in Appendix A.

Time and space restraints limit the number of artists and artwork that could extend this endeavor. The methodology presented provides an avenue to thoughtful multicultural educational experiences by connecting the African American artists and their artwork substantially to the African American culture.

This resource guide began with the idea of establishing accessible and extensive resources of artists and their artwork as an attempt to initiate multicultural pedagogy. Within this process, the value of understanding and incorporating information reveals the story underneath the surface.

The research and in-depth insight have permeated the author's resolve and determination in presenting this valuable component for curriculum inclusion.

This thesis is formatted as a digital resource guide with the main works of art and other works hyperlinked for quick viewing. As a printed format, the hyperlinked works of art will appear underlined.

Narrative One

Family- African American Male

***The Banjo Lesson* by Henry Ossawa Tanner- 1893, oil on canvas**

Reference to Main Theme and Sub-Theme

Many artists, male and female, of varying ethnicities and ages depict African American males as subject matter. The main theme of Family and the sub theme of the African American male is illustrated in this thesis with the selection of Henry Ossawa Tanner's [*The Banjo Lesson*](#) (Tanner, H., 1893, Appendix A). This choice is to create an understanding of the important role African American males hold within the culture. *The Banjo Lesson* derives from the vast sense of cultural context depicted in this work of art, parental support, familial teachings, and shared knowledge among different generations. The role of the African American male is an integral component within the culture because of the leadership, educational foundation, and the emotional and financial security he provides for the family and community.

Henry Tanner introduces us to the African American male as a strong, nurturing, patient, and knowledgeable teacher. The adult's legs are positioned to hold and support the child and appears solid and unwavering. His eyes are fixed to see, expect, and sense every action. The feet are planted to sturdy the stance of the younger child in the event there is a mishap, frustration, or even jubilation. The closeness of the two figures suggests their personal relationship. It is difficult to imagine another relationship besides a familial connection of these people. Here we perceive that the older African American male has much to offer the young child. It is interesting to note that Tanner offers us a glimpse of his own view of the significance and value of the male in the African American culture in his artistic portrayal of this important role. Also referred to as

The Banjo Player, this painting defines a momentum in the art career of Henry Tanner. Along with such paintings as [*The Thankful Poor*](#) (Tanner, H., 1894, Appendix A) and [*The Bagpipe Lesson*](#), (Tanner, H., 1893, Appendix A) Tanner gained notable acclaim from the Paris Salon (Britton, 2006).

The Banjo Lesson is a *genre* painting- ordinary people doing everyday things. This is an ideal choice for the theme, Family-African American male, because Tanner shows two African American males, and the relationship between them. The elderly male is showing the younger male how to play the banjo. The painting captures a perspective of ages and the connections between the generations of respect, role modeling, and custom preservation within the culture. “Circling the old man and the boy is a quiet intimate intensity-teacher to pupil. The old man’s patience and kindness, and the boy’s effort to seek mastery of the instrument, are keenly felt” (Britton, 2006, p.32).

In *The Banjo Lesson*, Tanner creates an atmosphere of intimate learning in his rendering of the two figures. Their positions and close proximity to each other generate a music lesson that could only take place between two people who are more than teacher and student. As the viewer, we do not assume that every student would get this attention and tenderness from their teacher. The author gains from this lesson imagery Tanner’s ability to create insight into the African American cultural dynamics.

Curriculum Inclusion Rationale

The historical context and intent of the artist provide a link to appreciating the value and significance of the culture’s existence. It is the task of the art educator to supply students with as many examples and supportive references as possible for art education content. Henry Tanner’s

The Banjo Lesson contains potential lesson ideas in creating color value, center of interest, portraiture, expression and communication, as well as a wealth of other artistic content thoughts, such as use of light, limited paint palette, family composition, and interior scenes. Art educators seeking to reach the deeper levels of multicultural teaching can utilize this work of art to show relationships and connections between African American males, traditional custom preservation and even the use of genre paintings to convey insight into ordinary people doing ordinary things. It appears to the author as an obvious choice to be included for any curriculum content for the compositional value, but also for the impact of its contribution to the understanding of African American culture.

Art teachers may consider including this artwork as a part of their instruction based on the popularity or awareness of Henry Ossawa Tanner or the painting itself. When we look further at Tanner's life, intent, the context in which he painted, and the artistic components of the painting, the value of *The Banjo Lesson* is evident of connecting thoughts to a coherent view of African American males and their place within the culture. The relevance of the artwork signifies a poignant contribution to the artistic community and American society in general, but creatively designates a wonderful work of art as noteworthy. Biographical information available pertaining to Tanner and this work of art also alludes to its significance and value as a part of an art education curriculum. Many artists depicted African American males in the context of cultural references, but this work of art provides sensitivity to an array of positive elements existing in representing this culture. Acknowledging and presenting this information achieves a deeper level of multicultural education. Art teachers equipped with vital knowledge of the artist's intent, motivation and influences strengthens our consciousness and perception of the work of art.

Tanner's portrait of the African American male linked to his culture is of great value to us as art educators. If we are to explore the deeper level of multicultural education including African American artists, it is vital to adhere to more than just the basic elements and principles of the artwork. *The Banjo Lesson* speaks to an illustrative and informative understanding of the culture beyond the surface level.

Introduction to Artistic Elements, Style, and Medium

The gentle strength of the African American male's presence anchors the composition and atmosphere in many ways. Henry Ossawa Tanner's artistic skill in painting, drawing, use of color, and arrangement of figures all allude to a formally educated painter. The shadows and highlights invite the viewer into the room, the lives, the event, and the world of these two figures. What do we see in the background that draws our attention to look more closely at the floor, the counter, the furniture, and the wall space? One may ask why this is significant to recognize as a potential aspect of the culture of these two figures. It is the author's opinion that it speaks to the home environment, setting, or atmosphere in which this lesson takes place. It does not appear to be a musical studio, classroom, or any other building. Although faintly obscure and somewhat obsolete, the table, pictures on the wall, items on a shelf, a pitcher and plate on the table are great opportunities for classroom discussions of identifying the artist's intentional depiction of ordinary objects for this *genre* painting.

At first glance, the viewer might miss the extended arm of the elderly African American male. The fingers blend into a dark brown to black color, as they merge into the elongated neck of the banjo. The other hand is curled and poised to correct, assist, and appear patiently waiting for the young boy to grasp a clear understanding of the process in creating sound. There is an aura and

prominence about this artwork that immediately commands a deliberate, respectful observation of the space as if we are about to hear the first tentative sounds of a beginner musician.

A limited palette of warm colors draws our attention directly into the music lesson without the two figures ever noticing our presence. This narrow range of colors also create a sense of calmness and peace. The artistic elements in utilizing the slightly, diagonal lines of the floor and the varying line levels of the draped cloth in the background create stability for the viewer's eye to rest for a while as we search for the obscure objects placed behind the heads and shoulders of these two figures. The textures, patterns, and solidity of forms found in the clothing, pots, and the banjo itself suggest a value interpreted by the viewer as important items in the lives of these people.

The style conveys an influence of impressionism with obvious brush strokes, use of light, and the evidence of the ordinary depicted as a highlight in the lives of the subjects. Tanner spent a large portion of his life in Europe and extensively studied European styles, mediums, and specific artistic elements of art and design.

The Artist's Life and Times, and Interpretation of the Artist's Intent

We know that with *The Banjo Lesson* one of Tanner's intent was to create a *genre* painting in depicting ordinary people doing everyday things. Given his background, family support, and parental positions in society, Henry Tanner may have had a greater advantage than most African American artists of his time. His father, Benjamin Tucker Tanner was a college educated and seminary-trained African Methodist Episcopal minister who became a Bishop in 1888. His mother, Sarah Tanner was a former slave sent north by her mother via the Underground

Railroad. She eventually became the owner of a school for young children (Britton, 2006).

Considering the possible financial backing and opportunities to live abroad, Henry Tanner was probably afforded the opportunity to use his artistic talent with a sense of pride and responsibility to the African American culture's voice.

Although he gained prominence and attention through his artwork, the media and art critics continued referring to him as the nation's foremost Negro artist (Britton, 2006). This measuring tool for talent based on the color of his skin perhaps advanced his desire to dispel societal negative perception of the African American artist. His creation of such scenes as the older African American male and younger African American male resonates with many in the art world. It would appear as an obvious sense of responsibility to create and depict images that reflect the artist and his culture. Henry Tanner captures a sense of humanity and respect for the African American males he has depicted in *The Banjo Lesson*. The scene, although ordinary and familiar to those within its cultural context, may not have been expected by those outside of the African American community. Given the historical setting of the time, the majority of society would not expect to see such a skillful, tender, and positive role model presented in the confines of an African American home environment. Tanner is able to use his talent to show the empathy and patience of the older man to the young boy.

Later in his career, Tanner began to depict religious themes and subject matter. His upbringing in a family of religious influence may have been a persuading factor in choosing these themes. The study and awareness of biblical genealogy, heritage, and traditions, provided Tanner with a significant amount of stories, images, and ideas to use as subject matter. Ironically, the many biblical figures he created did not have colored skin suggesting his intent to dismiss the lineage of Africans to heritage of these descendants. Henry Tanner spent considerable time in

Middle Eastern countries with people culturally related to those in biblical contexts and he still portrayed his religious subjects in the same manner as European artists. Perhaps the beliefs and power of religious concepts limit the effort to convey African American subjects as a positive and rich cultural perception.

As many artists of his day, Tanner spent many years in European countries to practice and garner success as an artist. His life spanned a period of American history that was difficult for many African Americans to exist in society as equal citizens and came on the heels of what some consider the darkest days of American history, the institution of slavery. Tanner was born in 1859, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, one of seven children, just a few years before the Emancipation Proclamation. It is difficult to determine the exact impact of slavery, segregation, and racism directly on his life. The author assumes that many of the artists' decisions and artistic endeavors were in some way impacted by the social climate of the times. Artwork viewed in the context of the era in which it is created can define, explain, or enlighten the viewer of the artists' reaction and response to what is happening. Tanner's *The Banjo Lesson* defies typical scenarios we can attribute to African Americans during this time. The apparent hardships, segregation, and inequality for African Americans prior to and after the institution of slavery in the United States appear far from the gentle and inviting scene. The males depicted in this painting may be of modest means, but they can evade the outside world during their lesson and time together. He creates a warm and generous look at a tenderhearted moment of generational male figures for our inspirational look at African American culture.

Understanding artwork starts from the premise that these artifacts were intentionally created to count as instances of art. Artworks, after all, are not mere products of nature. The

intentional nature of artworks immediately leads spectators to wonder about the purposes and meanings artists wish to express through their work (Gibbs, 1999, p.321).

Music is apparently a part of the lives of these African American males in that the boy is learning to play an instrument at an early age. Can this painting inform us about the type of music and what role it plays in the everyday lives of African Americans during the mid-19th century? Perhaps the banjo was a part of the lifestyle of the families he studied when he traveled to the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. Tanner's choice of centering these two figures with our eyes fixed on the act of the lesson points to the weight of the role music played within the African American culture.

Like other African American artists of the era, living in Paris afforded Tanner an opportunity to work and create in an environment free of the obvious racial prejudice that existed in America. Henry Tanner's rendering of the African American male is a bold, direct testament to his declaration against clichéd portrayals by others (Britton, 2006). In Tanner's *The Thankful Poor*, we see a strong sense of family and positive portrayal of the African American male. The older male is poised to say grace over his family's modest meal. He is teaching the younger child the value of a tradition of giving thanks in the midst of any circumstance no matter how dire. Tanner's artistic rendering of the two subjects, their clothing, and the room is indicative of his application of an impressionist's style (Driskell, 2002). His obvious influence from European painting is evident in the use of light, warmth of hues, and attention to brush strokes. The artwork presents positive attributes of the African American culture. Too often removed from society's perception of the African American culture are characteristics and images of positive role models, strength, and educational endeavors.

Traditions and customs relative to the African American culture may vary within regional areas of the country, but still maintain a unity of related experiences and generational heritage. The African American culture's connections to severe hardship, racial prejudices, discrimination, and societal exclusion does not appear to inhibit Tanner's attempt to seek recognition for the strength, humanity and positive characteristics of the African American male figure, especially his role in the family setting.

Narrative Two

Family- Matriarch

***Dinner at Aunt Connie's House* by Faith Ringgold 1993, book-cover design**

Reference to Main Theme and Sub-Theme

Faith Ringgold's book [*Dinner at Aunt Connie's House*](#) (Ringgold, F., 1993, Appendix A) represents the concept of the matriarch within the African American culture. Nurturing, strong, determined, caring, and proud are a few attributes associated with a matriarch as a highly respected woman or mother of the family. Ringgold has chosen to depict the lives of twelve prominent African American women in such a way that their stories epitomize the various aspects of the African American female as the matriarch. Each female represents a cultural aspect experienced by many African American females or a female relative. The literature tells the story of a young girl named Melody who goes to visit her Aunt Connie and Uncle Bates in their beautiful home in Sag Harbor, Long Island. Her Aunt Connie has two surprises for the family. One surprise is that Melody and the family will get to meet their newly adopted son, Lonnie, and the second is her latest work of art. It is very interesting that Faith Ringgold chooses a literary source to tell such important and memorable aspects of her life. *Dinner at Aunt Connie's House*, based on one of her story quilts entitled, [*The Dinner Quilt*](#) (Ringgold, F., 1986, Appendix A) is informative and engaging. Faith Ringgold is most noted for her vibrant, colorful, and simplistic illustrations, which narrate historical or childhood accounts.

In the book, Melody and Lonnie begin to look around the house and discover voices coming from the attic. It is there that they discover Aunt Connie's surprise, a collection of portrait paintings. Melody and Lonnie take a seat in the room where the portraits come alive to tell their

individual stories. From the walls of Aunt Connie's attic gallery, twelve African-American women speak with an inspirational story as strong as Ringgold's art. Ringgold introduces the children to Fannie Lou Hamer, a civil rights activist; sculptor Augusta Savage; actress Dorothy Dandridge, and others including well-known figures like abolitionists, Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth. Other portraits that come to life include civil rights activist Rosa Parks, educator and college founder, Mary Mcleod Bethune, famous writer Zora Neale Hurston, women's rights activist, Maria W. Stewart, blues singer Bessie Smith, and opera singer Marian Anderson. Madame C. J. Walker, a self-made millionaire of hair-care products for African Americans, finishes off the twelve portraits. All the women faced difficult circumstances or challenges and have an important message of inspiration to bring to today's children.

The Harlem Renaissance served as a haven for popular and positive displays of the African American culture. The matriarch theme purposes many definitions and attributes as do the African American female herself. The subject matter of maternity, motherhood, and nurturing the generation to follow gestures a sense of pride, strength, and optimism within the culture. The imagery provides reflective instances of African American endurance and familial values. This was also a popular theme during the Harlem Renaissance because it opposed the negative and grotesque stereotypical depictions of African Americans by other media sources at the turn of the century.

Matriarch, according to Webster's dictionary, is defined as a woman who rules or dominates a family, group, or a mother who is head and ruler of her family and descendants, varies slightly within the African American culture. Other images of women such as James A. Allen's photograph entitled *Brown Madonna* (Allen, J., 1941, Appendix A), is indicative of a visual reference to motherhood, but does not provide the extended depiction of what Ringgold's

portraits convey in *Dinner at Aunt Connie's House*. This literature and work of art embodies an in-depth glimpse of the roles, values, and contributions of the African American females as matriarch.

Curriculum Inclusion Rationale

Faith Ringgold's choices of women in *Dinner at Aunt Connie's House* make it an obvious selection for most educators to include as a part of their lesson design. Teachers have utilized Ringgold's children books for the richness of the illustrations, the depth of their storytelling, and the vibrancy of the artistic elements. The books provide an opportunity for students to realize the contributions of African Americans and identify with the culture's contribution to the American and global society in general. It is because Ringgold has an incredible manner of intertwining historical significance, prideful concepts, and elements of hope and inspiration in her literature that has endeared many educators to her work. She has won numerous literacy awards for her stories and illustrations as well as accolades to her award winning storytelling ability.

Ringgold's literature depicts African Americans as positive, enlightening, and inspirational, with a sense of hope. *Dinner at Aunt Connie's House* is no exception. It is this collection of African American women alongside her own triumphs and struggles that appear to leap from this literary work defining matriarchy in the African American culture. The ever-present idea of 'no matter what the situation, there is hope and victory that lies ahead', is potent throughout her stories. Ringgold celebrates the hope that once nurtured her and offers it to children living in another era.

Because of the childlike qualities of the writing and illustrations, Faith Ringgold's artwork is used by art educators primarily at the elementary level. When we look further into the artist's

objectives, we see more complex, structural, and deeper intentions that could be applied in any secondary art classroom setting.

Introduction to Artistic Elements, Style, and Medium

Patterns, lines, colors, shapes, texture, and use of total space are some of the predominant artistic elements present in Faith Ringgold's artwork. *Dinner at Aunt Connie's House* is no exception. Its simple figures, bold outlines and vibrant colors create an almost folk-art quality. The literature captivates the audience in the excitement of being at Aunt Connie's and Uncle Bates' home. Each page is filled with images that take us to the beach, into the house, up the stairs, and finally into the dining room for dinner. It is clear that the African American women in Ringgold's own life were very important figures who contributed greatly to her becoming who she is. When reading each small narrative spoken by the twelve historical women, the author sees that she includes very significant aspects of their lives simply enough for children to grasp their importance. For example, Mary Mcleod Bethune speaks of her assignment as a special advisor to President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman (Ringgold, 1993). Augusta Savage's speech includes the fact that as an educator she taught many students, including Jacob Lawrence (Ringgold, 1993).

Several pages within the book includes the two children sitting at the base of the portraits, centered largely in the middle of the page with patterned wallpaper behind the portraits as a permanent fixture. The color choices for clothing and background create an interesting balance of complementary and contrasting color schemes. Each portrait is recognizable as the African American woman she represents from her facial features and hairstyles to her clothing and

accessories. For example, Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth bear a strong resemblance to images created by Aunt Connie as they do in other reproductions.

The selection of *Dinner at Aunt Connie's House* for this resource guide is different from the other artworks selected in that it is an illustrated children's book. Faith Ringgold's artwork illustrates strength and encompasses an array of artistic elements that fosters art lessons creating a connection to the African American culture.

The Artist's Life and Times, and Interpretation of the Artist's Intent

Born in Harlem, New York, in 1930, Faith Ringgold lived at a time of artistic glory for African American artists. The Harlem Renaissance was just slowing down in its momentum of the high arts. It had set the stage for future artists to carve their own niche in the world of art. In the late 1930's, Ringgold began experimenting with mixed media of soft fabrics, paints, and sculptural forms. Faith Ringgold began combining the fine art practices she learned in school with sewing techniques that she acquired from her mother, who was a fashion designer and dressmaker (Ringgold, 1993). She enrolled at the City University of New York in 1948. Prohibited from majoring in an artistic field of study because those roles were dominated primarily by males, she deferred her desire to pursue an art career (Farrington, 2005). As an education major, she was greatly encouraged by one of her teachers to act on her impulses and have confidence in her convictions to be an artist.

In the summer of 1961, she traveled to Europe with her mother and her two daughters and experienced many facets of the art world in different countries. Upon returning home and facing the civil rights movement, racial tensions, black power, and segregation, Ringgold's artwork

took a political turn. She created works of art identifying critical issues such as racism and segregation with [*The Wall Between Friends*](#) (Ringgold, F., 1963, Appendix A) and the [*American People*](#) (Ringgold, F., 1963-1965, Appendix A) series. During the mid-1960's Ringgold sought acceptance into the popular African American arts organization, *Spiral*, whose artists included Romare Bearden, Hale Woodruff, Charles Alston, Norman Lewis and others. Bearden, secretary of *Spiral* at the time, commented that Ringgold's artwork was somewhat abstract, with condensed picture space, and distorted figures (Farrington, 2005, p.136). Ironically after her disappointing rejection by *Spiral*, she began an affiliation with New York's Spectrum Gallery, which had an all-white membership of abstract painters and sculptors.

After several years as an activist artist, Ringgold began concentrating on the visual arts once again. The volatile social climate of the 1960's and 1970's gave way to new artwork reflective of hope and aspiration. Ringgold's emergence as a storyteller and artist rests in the heritage of storytelling in the African culture. Her illustrative quilts and later works of art created an easy transition into those works of art becoming children's books. One of her most famous books, *Tar Beach* (Ringgold, F., 1990, Appendix A), received a Caldecott Honor and winner of the Coretta Scott King Award for children's literature illustrations. Her career spans several decades with some of her most prominent works of art being created in the 1980's and beyond. She creates such imagination and excitement from and for her young audience.

Faith Ringgold is one of the most widely recognizable African American artists in the art world. Her literature reaches a myriad of audiences of every ethnicity and age. Faith Ringgold has created and lived in the world of art and offers such a sense of reflection for the African American culture. She illustrated what it was like to experience rejection, segregation, and racial

inequality in some of her murals and paintings. Her artwork was and is a vital contribution to the awareness of the plight and experiences of the African American culture.

Faith Ringgold did not remain an activist painter, although societal issues were far from resolved and equitable for African American artists. Her artwork developed beyond political subject matter and reached into the realm of actively portraying African Americans in a positive and courageous manner. *Dinner at Aunt Connie's House* is colorful, bright, engaging, child centered, and includes perspectives and information about some of the most prominent African American females and matriarchs in history.

Narrative Three

Family- Children

***School's Out* by Allan Crite 1936, oil on canvas**

Reference to Main Theme and Sub-Theme

The subject of children and their role in the main theme of Family fits squarely in the heart of African American culture. They represent the continuation and preservation of the culture, its heritage and values. Typically children are portrayed in compositions as an awareness of their existence and a component of the family structure. [*School's Out*](#) (Crite, A., 1936, Appendix A) by Boston artist Allan Crite, depicts a variety of girls in a familiar setting and environment. The school is an all-girl, inner city school set around the early 20th century. The composition and title creates a very subtle hint of the end of a school day or the end of the school year. The children in *School's Out* are of various ages, complexions, sizes, and facial expressions. Their movement vividly captures walking and talking, yet their demeanor does not clearly indicate the excitement of school closing.

This work of art was chosen to represent the subject of children because of the variety of children that represent the African American culture. Allan Crite portrays these young girls in a way that could easily change to a scene of all boys at school, or perhaps a setting of all boys at playtime. The engagement of organized movement provides a look at an assortment of the African American girls, from their age to the hue of their skin. For most African American families during the 1930's this may not serve as a typical setting for school age children. An image of some rural areas of the United States and even other inner city school settings may not display children in the fine school attire we see in *School's Out*. The painting created by Charles

Alston entitled [*Family Group*](#) (Alston, C., 1955, Appendix A) depicts an African American family in a more generalized scene with the parents and two young girls strategically placed within the family portrait. These two young girls are an integral part of the composition. Although this family portrait including African American children may depict their cultural setting, it does not provide enough information about the vastness of diversity we garner by looking at *School's Out*.

This event of the end of school provides opportunities for communication, socialization, and perhaps just engaging the younger girls in momentary conversations. It is interesting that not many works of art depict children solely in and of themselves or apart from a family or parent figure. Allan Crite, a notable visual artist from the early 1930's to the 1990's, chose to tell the story of African American life including children. He considered himself the 'reporter-artist' of his neighborhood with his artwork illustrating African Americans not as stereotypes or exotic symbols, but as everyday Americans (Otfinoski, 2011, p. 58).

Curriculum Inclusion Rationale

Given the fact that a multicultural education would include visual references of the students we are teaching, *School's Out* serves as an obvious selection to share with all students. The array of African American girls and young adults depicted within the painting represents the cultural multiplicity within the African American culture of either gender. If teachers are exploring the idea of representing typically under-represented populations of their classes, this painting creates an opportunity to illustrate positive and enlightening aspects of the African American culture. Allan Crite notably depicted the everyday scenes of people in his Boston community. He created a variety of street scenes that demonstrated a normal, enjoyable, and progressive communal life

for African Americans. Allan Crite is best known for rendering realistic characterizations of African Americans, such as with his painting [*Harriett and Leon*](#), (Crite, A., 1941, Appendix A), (Britton, 2006). In that painting, we see a close-up look at the two adults with a boy and girl close by, but not quite engaged in the same setting. Although the four figures occupy the compositional space together, the idea of family or relationship does not exist. *School's Out* creates a range of lesson ideas such as perspective, portraiture, figure and gesture study, overlapping, and balance. The painting is consistently providing interest in design of pattern, texture, expression, color, and lines. Similar in compositional arrangement, Crite's painting entitled [*Parade on Hammond Street*](#) (Crite, A., 1935, Appendix A) depicts black families dressed in their Sunday attire enjoying an afternoon at a neighborhood event (Otfinoski, 2011). The positive relevance of illustrating children as Crite has done so well speaks to the significance of African American students seeing such a work of art. The two paintings demonstrate a scene that may not typify images related to African American culture of their time, especially in conjunction with other historical references that current students may know.

Introduction to Artistic Elements, Style, and Medium

The subject matter of *School's Out* is calm, pleasant, eventful, and fills the picture plane. These young African American girls posed in various positions and movement are clearly indicative of the title. We see the efforts of realistically portraying the figure and the intention of creating a typical scene outside of the school building. Allan Crite characterizes each girl as an individual, yet a part of the larger picture. He constructs a framework, undeniably individualized and makes it difficult to assume that he used the same model for every girl. The various skin tones, hairstyles, clothing, and body sizes can introduce great figure and gestural art lessons. Although Crite used a limited color palette, his colors appear intentional for the setting.

Artistic elements of value found in the skin hues and the clothes attempt to diversify the population of girls in the painting. Crite has created just enough contrast to show the bodies' movement by the bending of knees, and moving legs. The slight hint of blue color for the sky balances with the bright tones of yellow and lighter blues or pale whites of the clothes. Value is not as strong of an artistic element as his knowledgeable use of two-point perspective and depth techniques. The careful placement and figure proportion of each girl demonstrates the artist's observation and study of people. Throughout the 1930's, he painted the people in Roxbury and the South End, the main black communities of Boston (Otfinoski, 2011). The detail and realism convey affection and consideration for these neighborhoods.

The style of Allan Crite's *School's Out* is a *genre* painting in that it shows an everyday scene of ordinary people doing ordinary things. Children are at play and talking with their older counterparts. Crite produces a composition that entails artistic elements purposefully and plentiful enough to connect to an art lesson featuring African American artists and their artwork. It is interesting to recognize the close proximity of some of the girls with each other. Some are hugging as they walk, while others are holding hands, which endear us to the notion of a nurturing environment.

Another artistic element present in the composition is the balance of the figures and objects around them. The tall, strong brick building offers a support for the delicately placed portraits moving in both directions in the street. *School's Out* illustrates line variation with the many bodies and subtle motion of the children and young women.

The Artist's Life and Times, and Interpretation of the Artist's Intent

Allan Crite was born in Plainfield, New Jersey, in 1910, but moved to Boston with his mother and father before he was a year old. He attended the Boston English High School and received a scholarship to study at the Museum of Fine Arts (Otfinoski, 2011). He was an only child and was devoted to his parents' care and well-being. Crite grew up and spent nearly his entire life in the Boston area. He did not promote his own art and yet received numerous accolades as an exceptional artist of and for the African American community. His work depicts African American life in his neighborhood and signifies a positive and progressive African American lifestyle. It is unclear whether Crite's depictions were accurate of the majority of the culture surrounding him or if he chose to exaggerate the positive aspects of the African American community. It was his decision to depict African American life as he saw it. Many of his works of art illustrate children at play or in a carefree setting.

Allan Crite lived a very full life of artistic endeavors though he worked as an engineering draftsman with the Boston Naval Shipyard for more than 30 years. He was a devout Christian and his later work reflected his faith. His later drawings and illustrations depict biblical characters with African Americans as his models. Many of Crite's paintings portrayed Negro Spirituals (Otfinoski, 2011). Allan Crite taught at Oberlin College in Ohio and earned a BFA from Harvard University in 1968.

It is difficult to ascertain how the issues of the social climate involving the African American community influenced Crite and his artistic career. He was teaching, painting, and illustrating during the height of the Civil Rights Movement and yet he maintained an enthusiasm to create well into his later years. His early works of art emerge as a purpose-driven artistic mission to

represent the African American community as a very positive aspect of American life. The figures in his street scenes are often dressed in their finest attire with a sense of class and decorum. When looking at such paintings as *School's Out* and *Parade on Hammond Street*, we see a myriad of African Americans appearing from the same economic background.

His determined refusal to depict African Americans as exotics, symbols, or demeaning characterizations allows us a refreshing insight into a specific era and community. The artwork of Crite embodies a familial undertone of nurture and care that is evident in the compositions he chose to create.

Allan Crite died of natural causes at the age of 97 in 2007. There are contemporary interviews of him speaking of his work and his intent to create in the manner he did. It is valuable to note that the realism and detail in his artwork provides us with lasting positive perceptions of African Americans. Although Allan Crite lived and worked primarily in one area of the country all of his life, his capturing of that one area, Boston, Massachusetts, transcends to a harmony and closeness of the people he portrayed. *The Boston Globe* referred to Crite as ‘the grand-daddy of the Boston art scene’ in a 2002 interview (Otfinoski, 2011, p. 59).

Narrative Four

Spirit- Faith

The Creation by Aaron Douglas 1935, oil on Masonite

Reference to Main Theme and Sub-Theme

‘Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see’

(Hebrews 11:1, Bible- New International Version)

Aaron Douglas is the artist selected for the theme Spirit and the sub theme Faith. His painting, [*The Creation*](#), (Douglas, A., 1935, Appendix A) is inspired by the book of Genesis and shows the first man surrounded with plants, hills, the moon, the sky and the hand of God. As so many African American artists of his day, Aaron Douglas conceived a deep responsibility to consciously tell the story of black culture. He is considered the foremost artist of the Harlem Renaissance, 1920’s-1930’s, and is still one of the most popular African American artists studied today (Otfinoski, 2011).

If we modify the religious and biblical connotation of the word faith, there is a clear connection of *The Creation* to this theme. Do the various spiritual and religious themes depicted by African American artists convey an association with reliance and acknowledgement of a higher entity? At the turn of the 20th century, we see artists who embody many aspects of spirituality and religion. The work of Aaron Douglas indicates a change in the aesthetics and a questioning of African American artists of their own spirituality in the midst of the Great Migration (Sims, 2003). This shift of African American populations from the southern to the northern United States created opportunities for hope and restitution of a better way of life.

Artists were able to depict their culture and the ideals of hope within the realm of abstract, modernist designs and still have them interpreted as representational.

The figure in this painting could represent the entirety of each gender, every age, and many characteristics of African American people. The dark silhouette, the rigid stance, and upright gaze portray optimism of hope and faith. The Biblical definition of faith includes a confidence in what we anticipate and evidence of what we do not see. This definition encapsulates the author's understanding of Aaron Douglas' artwork. As an artist, illustrator, and educator, Douglas' artistic career extends from the height of the African American art experiences during the Harlem

Renaissance to a rich teaching career at Fisk University. A well-educated individual, Douglas' paintings reflect the life of African Americans during times of great upheaval and change and still he creates such optimistic visual references of a culture reaching for the brightest future possible.

He continued to paint, create, establish connections with fellow artists, and inspire the next generation through his teaching. Among his most prominent connections as an illustrator were with writers such as Langston Hughes and James Weldon Johnson. He later created the illustrations for one of Johnson's most popular sermon series. Aaron Douglas' continued to search for ideas to defy the negative artistic renderings of African Americans. His unique and highly individualized style uses African influence and depicts figures that are neither black nor white, but human. It is with these very deliberate artistic elements that his artwork is selected as the focus of faith and spirit.

Curriculum Inclusion Rationale

Aaron Douglas' painting, *The Creation*, should be a part of the art education curriculum for many reasons. The total body of his work intertwines his abilities as a fine artist and illustrator. He combines strong geometric shapes with bold angular design which cause the eye to follow lines and directions in his visual stories. Employing the idea of political and personal identity, Douglas constructs the rhythms of modern cubists with art deco and African imagery to establish a fresh voice for expectations. A pioneering giant in his use of African themes and modernist style, Aaron Douglas renders visual allusions to literary masterpieces created during his time. Publications related to the African American community such as, *Opportunity: Journal of Negro Life* (1926) and *Fire! A Quarterly Devoted to the Young Negro Artists* (1926) highlighted his talents as an illustrator through their cover designs.

His connection to the various art forms of poetry, visual arts, and music established strength for the endurance of the Harlem Renaissance era. These artists came together to combine their individual talents in portraying voices of the African American culture. Aaron Douglas created murals reflecting African American writing, spirituals, and events. His most popular endeavor features a four-panel mural entitled [*Aspects of the Negro Life*](#). (Douglas, A., 1934, Appendix A) for the 135th Branch of the New York Public Library. It tells the story of the Negro from their kingship in Africa to enslavement in America and to their migration from the rural south to the industrialized north. The historical relevance of these visual references provides an understanding of the movement and journey of African Americans from the perspective of a visual artist.

The artistic elements and varied art styles present new means of studying modern art from the viewpoint of an African American artist. Educators making the connections to influential art

movements and their impact of studio practices can engage the student to see how cubism, modernism, and African imagery are included in Aaron Douglas' artwork. The use of bold shapes, large forms, a limited color palette, and directional lines are topics of art curriculum content.

Introduction to Artistic Elements, Style, and Medium

Tribal, cubist, and abstract are artistic terms referencing Aaron Douglas' artwork. Crystal A. Britton's book entitled, *African American Art- The Long Struggle* (2006) has *The Creation* as its cover design. The notion of accessibility and opportunity for some African American artists to freely practice and pursue their artistic endeavors in a challenging society that was stifling of their human rights and pursuit of success is not always evident in their compositions. It is difficult to determine the amount of formal art training by Douglas when looking at his work. The painting by Aaron Douglas appears to substantiate the idea that in the midst of difficult times and tribulations the artistic voice speaks louder than the compositional structure demonstrating a level of artistic ability. "Exploring racial themes in his art, and Africa as a source of inspiration and beauty, Douglas effectively combines aspects of classical and African art to a kind of African modernism that celebrates African American life and culture" (Britton, 2003 p. 45).

Looking at the figure in *The Creation* with its upward gaze toward the commanding hand, Douglas' painting sings a song of submission and fortitude, a beginning and an ending, and a continuous connection between humanity and his creator. The translucent, overlapping areas of color extend from the face to the body of the individual who seems to represent humanity. The hand has no distinguishing shapes of fingers and features, but still conveys a divine power. The

curvature of the extended fingers along with the overlay of color simultaneously appear to reach down to as well as withdraw from the picture plane. The small almost insignificant star-like shapes give the impression of being released from the hand and landing randomly beside the figure. The figure is poised, broad shouldered, and waiting for the presence or endowment of the divine being. We look upward in the composition because he looks up and tilts his head in expectation.

This painting illustrates translucent pale colors of overlapping geometric shapes in the background and triangles for mountains in the landscape. Having such a strong connection to the Harlem Renaissance and its nuances of literature, music, and visual arts, Douglas' stylized painting incorporates a sense of all three art forms. The large lined panels of monochromatic green color look like the staff of a music sheet with the large circles emblematic of notes. They vary in size and opacity of color. These shapes influenced by African art and crafts sit ever so carefully to guide the viewer in a vertical glance occupying the space between the hand and the figure.

The Artist's Life and Times and Interpretation of the Artist's Intent

Born in 1899 in Topeka, Kansas, Douglas attended the University of Nebraska and graduated in 1922. He was one of the first art teachers in the schools in that area. After moving to Harlem, New York in 1925 and inspired by the literary publications highlighting African American life, he began illustrating for them. German artist and designer Winold Reiss encouraged Douglas to pursue his own African heritage for inspiration (Otfinoski, 2011, p. 74). The time and atmosphere was ideal for creativity and artistic expression by and for African Americans. The popular Harlem Renaissance movement was in full swing and Douglas was in the forefront with

his individual style, aspirations, connections, and determination to represent his culture in a very positive manner.

He created illustrations for publications distributed by important literary icons such as W.E. B. Dubois, Charles S. Johnson, Langston Hughes, Alain Locke, and James Weldon Johnson. He catapulted into the art world as an outstanding artist and illustrator. James Weldon Johnson again commissioned Douglas to illustrate his next book entitled, [*God's Trombones*](#), a collection of seven folk sermons that reflect events from the Bible (Otfinoski, 2011). This form of cohesive and creative collaboration between writer and artist produced the literary masterpiece we have today. The connectivity between African American artists, musicians, and poets launched their heightened cultural awareness to creative responsibility. In 1927, Douglas began creating murals and his work remains in educational venues including the Countee Cullen Branch of the New York Library, the Harlem YMCA, and the Fisk's International Student Center.

In 1939, Douglas received an invitation to start the art department at then, all-black Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee (Otfinoski, 2011). He served as chairperson, educator, mentor, and artist for the next 27 years. His mural [*Building More Stately Mansions*](#), (Douglas, A., 1944, Appendix A) commissioned for Fisk's International Student Center, perpetuates Douglas' ideals of hope. The symbols incorporated in the painting, define the condition of African Americans from early civilizations up to his present day. The end of slavery did not necessarily propel them into freedom, but the movement and migration points forward to a hope of that reality. This artistic rendering featured symbols of various cultures representing his optimism for the future of African Americans. His efforts to convey the aspirations of a culture that had endured great hardship and difficulties defied the majority of negative connotations perpetuated throughout most of the country during his time.

Alain Locke, a prominent literary genius of the 20th century, considered Aaron Douglas the father of black art in America (Driskell, 2001). Douglas is also one of the first African American artists persistently incorporating African themes, style, and designs into his compositions as an integral part of the artwork. Looking at Douglas' paintings of the struggles and everyday life of African Americans, we see a vast amount of energy and commitment placed in preserving the integrity of his culture.

Douglas continued to paint and create murals while serving as director of the art department at Fisk University and therefore projecting an excellent example of African American artists as contributing to the next generations. *The Creation* is just one of many dynamic compositions that weave the addition of past culture to present hopes and future aspirations. The fact that African Americans were experiencing the same social challenges as other Americans, such as World War 1, The Great Depression, The Great Migration, and racial upheaval, causes a greater respect for these artists who continued their commitment to creativity and artistic endeavors of all forms. Every region of the United States was in the midst of some major social event or economic situation which affected the way of life for many families.

It is unclear if Douglas' optimism for the plight of African Americans was solely based on the atmosphere of the artistic movement of his time, or if internal motivations conditioned him to have faith and hope for the future. His optimism derived from both, the chance of collectively creating in an artistic environment with so many other artists and his own desire to see more for the African American culture. Aaron Douglas leaves a legacy of great artworks, educational attributes, and lasting connections to a historical artistic era. His contributions to all artists in general offer the opportunity to reflect on their own personal voices and intents to create with conviction, responsibility, and commitment.

Narrative Five

Spirit- Spirituality

***The Quarry* by Robert S. Duncanson 1863, oil on canvas**

Reference to Main Theme and Sub-Theme

At first glance, [*The Quarry*](#) (Duncanson, R., (1863), Appendix A) appears to the viewer as another over-emphasized element of a landscape scene. The massive rock and cliff formation towers over the small serene body of water as if at any moment it will consume its own reflection. The small waterfall to the right pours ever so calmly, barely causing a ripple in the water below. The hint of smoke or mist in the distant background points to the possibility that there is life within reach of the peaceful landscape we see before us. Robert S. Duncanson, one of America's foremost landscape artists and his artwork, represents the sub theme of Spirituality within the main theme of Spirit.

As noted in the sub theme of Faith, if we expand the definition of Spirituality beyond the contexts of its deity-based meaning, it echoes a state of being spiritual. People believe that the nature that gives life, body, and energy is the spirit that becomes a powerful force for sustaining us. Living as an African American during a time when their freedoms were against the law and existence of an ideal life seemed out of reach, Robert Duncanson overcame great odds to become a successful artist. As a great landscape artist of the antebellum era, he chose to evoke a sense of spiritual awareness in the community by emphasizing the beauty of the physical world in which he lived rather than to create overtly political or socially conscious art. "He searched for the ideal place in nature to show the presence of God . . . and viewed the American landscape as a divine gift to humankind" (Driskell, 2001, p.13).

Born in 1821 to an African American mother and a Scottish-Canadian father, Duncanson began his artistic experience as a house painter and created works of art as a hobby. A self-taught artist, he acquired most of his artistic abilities by copying master artworks. Although he lived in the United States and Canada, he experienced success in the midst of the civil unrest in America. It is interesting to read the biographical information of this African American artist and his accolades for his work during his lifetime and to find that his paintings do not depict African American images. This omission does not diminish the contribution of Duncanson to the African American culture in any way. His work is reflective of this theme because of his intent and his success in rendering the idea of spirituality, romanticism, and divine intervention by his creatively depicting these landscapes.

The Quarry was given in May 2006 to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts by the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Council as a celebration of its 50th anniversary of service. This volunteer group deemed the work of art powerful in imagery and significance. The painting, like most of his landscapes, is formulaic in the style, execution, and realism of the artists from the Hudson River School of painters and typical of that era. Duncanson proved to the world that he, an African American artist, could render with skill, style, and finesse the most surreal and ideal images of nature as any other trained artist of his day. His landscape paintings capture the essence of divinely inspired and representational aspects of spirituality. As an *allegorical* painting, it alludes to something or some thought beyond its depicted images.

Curriculum Inclusion Rationale

Landscape painting, perspective techniques, realism in art, center of interest, scale, and distance are just a few of the concepts to consider for lesson planning. *The Quarry* is a painting

that engages the viewer in a dialogue of space and time as well as artist's intent. Unlike most of Duncanson's landscape paintings, this particular work of art does not include the very smallscale images of people that were characteristic of the Hudson River School. His goal was to inspire a belief in a supernatural being who gave humanity this wonderful gift of nature. We see why the figures are less obvious and often omitted in his landscapes. In [*Summer*](#), (Duncanson, R., 1849, Appendix A) Duncanson includes figures standing in the distance as if to demonstrate a typical family setting. He captures the essence of daily life and the environment using such distance and perspective in his work, which causes the viewer to appreciate the scale and value of the landscape around them.

Art educators can gain a wealth of information and insight into the American landscape painting by studying Duncanson's work. They could engage students in the perspectives, stories, images, and symbols within the compositions. With an endeavor to include environmentally conscious lessons and materials within educational settings, this African American presents a sensual view to how student artists may generate concern for the earth. It is possible to study the artwork from the artist's perspective in illustrating the great landmass as divine gifts to us. Perceptual awareness is another key concept to teach students and causes greater responsiveness to their own surroundings.

Robert Duncanson is worth studying if we wish to utilize western and other American landscape artists for specific curriculum concepts. It is important to demonstrate that he was skillful and determined to depict the compositions he deemed worthy of illustrating. If he was frustrated with the degrading treatment of African Americans and the civil unrest in his environment, he did not perpetuate the notion through overtly political art. Duncanson's allegorical artwork does include symbolism reflective of his response to social issues. His choice

of not depicting African Americans in the majority of his artwork does not dispel his lack of concern or cognition of the state of African Americans. The abolitionists and patrons of a free society were the largest contributors of his commissioned work and earnings.

It is worth noting that Duncanson did create portraits early in his career and that he created a landscape illustrating a scene from the popular abolitionist novel by Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). The painting is entitled, [*Uncle Tom and Little Eva*](#) (Duncanson, R., 1853, Appendix A). Although the figures are clearly visible, it is the strong elements of nature and use of light that creates a focal point of interest just as engaging as the contrasting skin colors of the figures.

Introduction to Artistic Elements, Style, and Medium

The asymmetrical composition challenges us to discover every single aspect of the elements in this natural setting. *The Quarry* is more than a landscape painting that documents a specific area of land. It provides a serene calming component to the basic artistic genre. The large-scale cliff, obviously marred to some degree from years of water and weather effects, sits ominously as the focal point of the composition. Given its present condition, the process of man's constant excavation and mining of its materials, has left it standing less profitable than its original state. We can speculate that Duncanson is creating a parallel version of the pre-Civil War condition of African Americans as slaves and their current state after the Emancipation Proclamation. The decaying tree closer to the foreground is barely rooted to the ground surface, yet still stands commanding our attention as well.

Robert Duncanson was afforded the opportunity to visit Europe several times by his philanthropic sponsors, and was greatly influenced by English landscape artist, J. M. W. Turner.

The effective use of light, scale of objects, and placement for distance demonstrates a trained or skilled artisan's observance of his subject matter. This landscape manages to include a cliff, a rock formation, a single tree, and a mass of trees, a body of water, mountains, a waterfall, and clouds sprawled across the sky. It is unclear if Duncanson exerted the time and effort to find an area which possessed all of these elements of a landscape or if they were included as a product of his artistic imagination. The scene appears real in every sense of expectation for a landscape creatively designed by a skillful artist. His work attracted the attention of prominent abolitionist, William Lloyd Garrison, who proclaimed Duncanson to be a fine untrained Negro artist (Otfinoski, 2011)

Formulaic green trees, blue sky, grey rocks, and brown ground lead to a realistic landscape painting. The dark water and lighter waterfall are also evidence of his close observation of the area's realistic components. The distance between the visually appealing land formations of the cliff and trees is poised far from the village or mill in the background. Duncanson illustrates this quarry with minimal disturbance to its natural state in spite of man's interference to mine the minerals within. His artistic skill allows him the ability to suggest an appreciation for the qualities and gifts of its beauty and strength. The placement of vegetation on the top, side, and bottom of the rock formation offers softness in contrast to the hard stone and cracks in the rock.

The Artist's Life and Times and Interpretation of the Artist's Intent

"One of the first African American artists to reach international acclaim, Robert Duncanson created landscape paintings that were parallel to those of European masters in his day" (Otfinoski, 2011, p. 76). In David C. Driskell's book entitled *The Other Side of Color- African American Art in the Collection of Camille O. and William H. Cosby*, Duncanson (1821-1872) he

is listed second to Joshua Johnson (1765-1830) in chronological order, which supposes that he is one of the earliest noted and chronicled African American artists. He was born into a biracial family and attended school in Canada while living with his father. Upon moving to Ohio, he embarked on a career as a house painter at the age of 20. His artistic endeavors began by creating artwork as a hobby and by studying paintings of other artists. Self-taught and self-determined his art drew the attention of wealthy abolitionists and business people. They marveled at his artistic skill and talent and the replication of the European Neoclassical style through which he rendered his landscapes. William Lloyd Garrison wrote favorably of Duncanson's work. Lawyer Nicholas Longworth hired him to paint large-scale murals in his home which took two years to complete. It appeared Duncanson's intent was to share the bountifulness of his interpretive depictions of landscapes with anyone willing to accept his conceptions.

The Cincinnati, Ohio area at that time was a bustling land of opportunity for newly freed blacks and a form of sanctuary from the ever-increasing threat of war among the states. Crossing the Ohio River via the Underground Railroad meant slaves were closer to freedom in the northern states or Canada. In the midst of this turmoil, Robert Duncanson painted the most serene, calming, spiritual, and ideal images of refuge. Depicting areas surrounding the Ohio River Valley, artists would later take on the terminology and resemblance of the famed artists of the Hudson River School. 'School' in this context meant a group of artists with the same ideals, outlook, perception, and inspiration. This artwork, characterized by surreal and dreamlike imagery, exaggerated the pristine and undefiled aspects of the American wilderness. Duncanson admired the artwork of Thomas Cole, an Englishman who portrayed the American landscape with admiration, and who was considered a leader in the Hudson River School of painters (Driskell, 2001). In spite of the civil upheaval and political tensions in the mid-19th century

Duncanson sustained a level of success with his artwork in the United States and in Europe. In 1861, with the onslaught of the Civil War, Duncanson moved to Canada and remained there until 1867, having spent some of those exiled years in England and Scotland.

It is difficult to truly grasp the atmosphere for Americans and even more so for African Americans during this era when the nation was divided and violence was ever present. Upon his return to the United States, Duncanson continued to create landscape paintings with more of a truthful depiction of the area. He was well aware of the plight facing African Americans and the turmoil of aftermath in the years following the Emancipation Proclamation that freed slaves in 1863. His light colored complexion and mulatto ethnicity did not guarantee his escape from mistreatment towards African Americans of any skin tone. He chose with confidence to view the world as a peaceful place of bountiful beauty and opted for natural scenes rather than for political or negative racial reflections (Driskell, 2001).

His response to the suffrage of African Americans may not be as evident in his artistic compositions, but he was involved in the issues or circumstances relating to his culture. The duality of Duncanson's dilemma as an African American and as a skillful artist was experienced by many African American artists who wrestled with their responsibility to use their talent to bring attention to the cause of their people. Was Duncanson at fault for not depicting and visually narrating the lives of African Americans as so many other African American artists did? It is difficult to answer this question today, as we cannot determine his reasoning for his choice of artistic pursuits. He was painting in the popular style of his day that guaranteed sales. Many artists of every ethnic background painted allegories. It was a popular and profitable style. These allegorical scenes with symbolic meaning, perhaps contained hidden social messages embedded within them.

The Quarry is not the first image that would conjure thoughts of the experiences and life of African Americans, but it is significant to acknowledge the artist's intent to defy the oppressive conditions of the society around him and demonstrate courage in executing his own ideas. We should include Robert Duncanson in our study of African American artists for his talent, perseverance, and strength from which he evokes the same sense of emotions and appreciation for our environment. His ideas and artwork are a legacy to the influential impact nature has on its people. Duncanson provides us with a historical reference of the environment, and the physical world during the antebellum era. He may not have interpreted the horrors of society that existed during that time, but we see that his determination to vivify the particular, heighten perceptual awareness, and garner an appreciation for our surroundings will have a lasting effect on future artists and African Americans. His contributions to our world of art are significant and important as attributing to our spiritual sensibility.

Narrative Six

Spirit- Inspiration

Lift Every Voice and Sing (The Harp) by Augusta Savage 1939, Painted plaster

Reference to Main Theme and Sub-Theme

In the 1988 Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture's retrospective of Augusta Savage, only 19 works of art were available for viewing, yet she is the chosen artist for the theme Spirit and the sub-theme of Inspiration. Her sculpture dually referred to as [*Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing*](#) and [*The Harp*](#) (Savage, A., 1939, Appendix A) is a striking 16-foot masterpiece of figures, forms and lines. It is important to note that the sculpture no longer exists nor was it ever cast in a permanent material. Demolished by bulldozers while cleaning the area at the end of the 1939 New York World's Fair, this work of art commemorates the voice and heritage of African American's connection to Negro hymns and spiritual songs. Savage was one of only four women and one of only two African Americans commissioned by the New York World's Fair Board of Design (Farrington, 2005). The sculpture, based on the theme of African Americans' contribution to music, and placed in a very prominent area of the fairgrounds, drew much attention and acclaim. The sculpture was well received by the public and small cast-iron copies were sold as souvenirs.

Webster defines inspiration as a force or influence that makes someone want to do something or that gives someone an idea about what to do. Augusta Savage demonstrated the ability to inspire others through her artwork and throughout her career. The sculpture, *Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing*, exemplifies the Negro Spiritual for which it is titled. The song, written as a poem by James Weldon Johnson in 1900, and set to music by his brother five years later, depicts the hopes and

aspirations of African Americans. It alludes to the horrific tribulations endured by African Americans while simultaneously expressing great hope for the future. Knowing the lyrics of the hymn generates an appreciation for Savage's ability to capture the essence of the Johnson brothers' words and music.

This work of art, considered less masterful compared to her other sculptures, towers in its physicality, and simply depicts children singing. Two years in the making, *Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing* consists of twelve standing figures, one kneeling in the front and the hand of God supporting them from the back. Throughout her career, Augusta Savage fought for equal rights as an African American and as a woman. Her biographies do not necessarily point to deep spiritual beliefs and practices, but her artwork projects fortitude, hope, and inspiration.

Curriculum Inclusion Rationale

Let us compare the sculpture *Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing* to her 1930 sculpture, entitled, [*Gamin*](#). (Savage, A., 1929, appendix A) *Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing* asserts a stylized and positive statement while *Gamin* engages in an intimate and personal manner. Each piece is differently rendered. *Gamin*, a bust in the likeness of her nephew, stood a mere 16 inches tall compared to the anonymous children towering in *Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing*, which stood 16 feet on a harplike pedestal. Teachers utilizing Savage's work have the opportunity to generate discussions and lesson ideas for student criticism and art history.

Savage produced a large body of art over her long career, but only a small number of works remain in existence today. An educator, artist, activist, and entrepreneur, Augusta Savage epitomizes the work ethic of an African American woman. Art curricula that strive for multicultural education at a deeper level can look to Savage and others to find a wealth of

individuality and stylized art forms depicting the African American culture. The Harlem Renaissance was fading, Jim Crow Laws lingering, and the racial divide persisting. Yet, Savage was able to maintain her endurance to continue creating works of art. She experienced little encouragement as a child by her minister father. She married, and was widowed at a young age, and still she met each of life's challenges with determination.

Savages' accomplishments, including being the first African American elected to the National Association of Women Painters, and appointed assistant supervisor for the Works Progress Administration (WPA), permitted her to continue fighting for equal treatment and opportunities for all minorities. Students would greatly benefit from the ideals, aspirations, and artistic endeavors of this artist to capsule their own determined productivity as artists.

Introduction to Artistic Elements, Style, and Medium

Savage carved *Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing* from plaster and painted it with a bronze patina because she lacked the funds to cast it in a more permanent material. Art critics who recognized the inferior material, considered it one of Savage's lesser works (Otfinoski, 2011). Photographs exist illustrating Augusta Savage working on the sculpture in her studio along with an image of the finished work that outlines the scale of the sculpture. To the public, *The Harp*, its other title, was one of the most celebrated artworks at the World's Fair in 1939.

The idea of creating a symbol of a harp to represent music and using children as the strings proved to be an ingenious way to convey the connection of the African American experience in music. Recognized later as the National Negro Hymn or Anthem, *Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing*, the song, can still be heard in many African American churches and is sung by many choirs. The precision of the children aligned to convey strings, and the kneeling figure provides stability to

the sculpture. The faces and heads uniquely possess African American features but the bodies are exactly alike as columns. With the close proximity of each head directly behind the other, the faces appear obscured from view. The creative resolution made by slightly turning the faces in alternating side views allows us to see them expressly different. This sculpture is an admirable feat considering the elevation of the first and the last figures. Other than the depiction of a harp, one wonders how Augusta Savage conceived the idea of using a hand to hold and stabilize that portion of the sculpture.

Vastly different in style from other African American women sculptors, Savages' work appears conducive to the hand building process of sculpting and manipulating a softer material such as plaster. The contour of the figures and heads in the likeness of their models leave little differentiation as individualized styling. Savage gained the attention of leaders in the art community with her bust of NAACP co-founder, W. E. B. Dubois, made for the Harlem Branch of the New York Public Library. Hailed as the best likeness of him in existence at that time, Savage emerged as a portrait sculptor (Ofinoski, 2011). Her ability was to portray the individual true to form and garner an empathetic response from the viewer. Sadly, financial restraints dictated her use of various in-expensive artistic mediums. Although she received sufficient income from her teaching and artistic sponsorship, funding did not materialize to allow her freedom to create at a more expansive level, as did other artists of the time. Remarkably, she leaves evidence of her exceptional artistic style and commitment to improving the lives of fellow artists.

The Artist's Life and Times and Interpretation of the Artist's Intent

Born Augusta Christine Fells, in 1892, in Green Cove Springs, Florida, she was the seventh of

14 children. Augusta's father, a Methodist minister, beat her when he found her sculpting animals out of clay (Otfinoski, 2011). Her first marriage at the age of 15 lasted less than two years when her husband died shortly after the birth of their daughter. Her second marriage to James Savage ended in divorce, but she kept his name. Traveling to New York in pursuit of an artistic career and education, sculptor Solon Borglum befriended her. He was the father of famed sculptor Gutzon Borglum, who created the presidential sculptures on Mount Rushmore (Otfinoski, 2011). Borglum, the father, helped her receive a scholarship to attend Cooper Union and assisted with her financial needs. In the summer of 1923, Savage applied for and won a scholarship to the prestigious art school at the Palace Fontainebleau outside of Paris, France. Denied entrance because two other scholarship recipients refused to travel with a 'colored' girl, Savage was devastated and decided to declare the blatant racism. The rescinded award led to public outcry and intervention by organization leaders such as W. E. B. Dubois to convince French officials to reconsider, but to no avail.

Savage's interactions with Herman MacNeil, then president of the National Sculpture Society, deferred her aspirations of European travels, and convinced her to pursue her artistic endeavors as a sculptor. The influences of activist leaders such as Dubois and Marcus Garvey, both of whom commissioned her to create a bust, sparked her devotion to civil rights and political issues. By the early 1930's, her artwork received awards from the Rosenfeld Fellowship and the Carnegie Foundation that supported her financially. Finally afforded the opportunity to travel to Europe, Savage studied traditional sculpting styles and methods at the Academie de la Grande Chaumiere where she flourished (Farrington, 2005). Upon her return to the United States, she exhibited and received numerous commissions. In 1932, she opened the Savage School of Arts and Crafts in Harlem, New York.

Continuing her work as an active role model in the art community and in her neighborhood, Savage taught and inspired others to reflect on the needs, as well as the triumphs of African Americans. Her intent to create works of art that voiced the spirit and integrity of her culture was a signature all her own. Artwork such as [*Green Apples*](#) (Savage, A., 1928, Appendix A) depicts an African American child, who has eaten too many green apples. The sculpture is sleek, expressive, and emotional enough to evoke compassion and empathy for the youngster. It is poised ever so gingerly on the pedestal as if the wind alone could push him over. In *Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing*, the artist transports the viewer into the culture of her people by showing their experiences in effective ways.

One of the greatest contributions of Augusta Savage's artistic commissions to the African American community is her effort to improve the lives of others. *Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing* exemplifies the contributions of African Americans to music and demonstrates a legacy pointing to a rich heritage. The intertwining art forms of fine arts and music, woven together as components of structure, support the spirit and faith of this culture. Savage is an important artist of the African American culture through her depictions and reflections of their hopes and aspirations.

Her body of artwork created over a span of a few short years is small, but it consistently demonstrates her determined skill and individualized style. She is one of the most prominent African American women sculptors and artists of her time. Creating the work that she wrought amidst the challenges of her environment is commendable. Rejected and denied opportunities based solely on the color of her skin did not deter her from her overall goal of pursuing her artistic career. Her entrepreneurial ventures of starting an arts school, seeking leadership positions, and assisting others to achieve equal rights define her intent to promote the positive

aspects of her culture. In the theme of Spirit and sub-theme of Inspiration, Savage captures the essence of these with her sculptures. *Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing* along with [*La Citadelle /Freedom*](#) (Savage, A., 1930, Appendix A) are joyous visual references to an inner will created by a higher source of inspiration.

Her earnest efforts to inspire others and to be inspired by the African American community continued into the 1940's. Her resourcefulness when one door closed to seek out means to open another, is evident when she lost her directorial position of the Harlem Community Art Center. Savage became director and president of Harlem's Salon of Contemporary Negro Art. This black-owned and operated organization exhibited African American art featuring prominent artists (Farrington, 2005).

Savage spent her later years in the Catskill Mountains of New York writing children's books and mysteries. Selling an occasional work of art, she remained with her daughter until she died at the age of 70. With fewer than 20 works of art accounted for at a 20th century retrospective exhibit, Savages' artwork remains significant to the African American culture.

Narrative Seven

Identity- Artist's Voice

The Dancers by William Henry Johnson 1942, tempera, ink wash on paper

Reference to Main Theme and Sub-Theme

One of America's boldest and most inventive artists, having created thousands of paintings, drawings and prints, William Henry Johnson epitomizes the theme of Identity and the sub-theme of Artist's Voice. His life reads like that of a jet-setting contemporary world traveler with the luxury of art as a hobby. But that is not the case. Born in 1901, in Florence, South Carolina, Johnson exhibited artistic talents at an early age. He copied the comic strip illustrations from the local newspaper with skill and precision, impressing family and friends. At the age of 17, he traveled with an uncle to New York and worked until he could afford to attend art school.

There is clearly a connotative relationship between the painting, [*The Dancers*](#), (Johnson, W., 1942, Appendix A) and the theme of Identity and Artist's Voice. What is less obvious is the popularity of this subject matter in relationship to the vastly diverse life of Johnson. William Johnson was well traveled and spent many years in other countries pursuing his artistic career. His style of art and his subjects reflect the time and environment in which he lived. It is interesting to note the influences of the European surroundings upon his artwork, such as his Impressionistic style landscape, [*Chapel of Notre Dame de la Protection, Cagnes-sur-Mer*](#) (Johnson, W., 1927, Appendix A). His range of artistry for depicting images through realism, abstraction, or vernacular styles expands throughout his artwork.

Johnson creates with a passionate fervor the idealism he wishes to convey. Artwork from his series of the rural South such as [*Going to Church*](#), (Johnson, W., 1940-41, Appendix A) or his

religious themed painting, [*Swing Low Sweet Chariot*](#), (Johnson, W., 1939, Appendix A) do not define all of who Johnson was as an artist. His artistic voice retells the lives of African Americans but is only a portion of the totality which represents Johnson. His extensive travels and exposure to cultures and people so different from his own could have warranted an illustrative style of artwork that would have been more popular or marketable. *The Dancers* is one of many paintings in which Johnson captures the essence of the African American culture in the vibrancy of the urban setting. Creating in the same art circles as artists such as Jacob Lawrence, Augusta Savage, Hale Woodruff, Palmer Hayden and Richmond Barthe, afforded him financial support and funding opportunities (Britton, 2006).

Curriculum Inclusion Rationale

The Dancers and the series including [*The Jitterbugs VI*](#), (Johnson, W., 1941-1942, Appendix A) are full of life, vitality, and energy. He engages the viewer to experience energy and movement. Johnson depicted this couple in the midst of their dancing and full experience of the movement responsible for every motion. As art educators explain to students, principles of line, center of interest and emphasis, works of art play a vital role as examples of these concepts. Johnson developed a unique style of bold shapes, flat images, and vibrant colors. Similar in style to Jacob Lawrence in his use of shapes and indirect depiction of the figure, he creates a statement of a commanding presence for the subject. Unlike other artists creating during his time, Johnson's artwork captures the spirit and movement in a manner resembling folk art but it is rendered by a trained and educated artist. His choice of flat figures and bold colors were deliberately naïve (Otfinoski, 2011). The exaggerated hands, feet, lips, arms, and legs force the viewer to look closer at the positioning of the figures and their movements. The artist's choice becomes the apparent strength of the artist's voice in his composition, subject matter, and ideals.

Although William Johnson spent time in European and African countries, he was still committed to narrating and depicting African American lives and occurrences in the United States.

Johnson discovered his vision as an artist while he studied, traveled and developed a passionate portrayal of his observations. While living in Europe, Johnson married Holcha Krake, a Danish artist. It is interesting to note that his biracial marriage prompted him to move to parts of the world that were more tolerant and accepting of their union. Living in Northern Africa at the onset of the war in Europe, he incorporated his exposure to African art into his own artwork and stayed true to the ideas of creating art reflective of where he was or what he was experiencing at the time.

Connecting students to relevant themes, ideas, and concepts permeates the notion of acquiring an artistic vision for creation. Utilizing Johnson's artwork and the study of his life acquires a glimpse as to how he remained true to his experiences, training, and culture to manipulate visual references of African American life and endeavors. Students can evaluate his responses to social issues, personal encounters, and political institutions as so many other African American artists did in choosing to create positive reflections of their culture. The historical references in his artwork generate opportunities for biographical and informational learning for students in any curriculum. The broad spectrum of his work is worthy to note as well in helping students to experiment with various mediums, subjects, and styles in order to fine-tune their artistic voice.

Introduction to Artistic Elements, Style, and Medium

The Dancers, with bold colors, exaggerated features, and flat figures captivate a melodic imagery. The figures are just as engaged with each other as the viewers are with them. Although

the large shapes that define the clothing and shoes are less realistic, they are rendered with precision and detail to the style of the era. Johnson leaves little to the imagination about the event while he simultaneously creates questions about who are we seeing, how are they related, and how do they define the music of their time?

It is important, as with all of the artists selected for this thesis, to examine the totality of the artist's body of work. Johnson's lack of the realistic qualities of his figures and compositions, would suggest he was an untrained artist. But it is because of his art training that he could make the artistic decision to paint in a more abstract and expressionistic manner. The details that are included or excluded play important roles in our acceptance of the artist's voice and choice. For example, when looking at the *Dancer Series*, shapes are included to represent musical instruments, angles of lines show specific movements, and bold colors evoke a response of engagement. The absence of a detailed setting or depth to indicate perspective is less vital to an understanding of the event and experience of the participants.

His deliberate rendering of figures in this primitive, almost folk-like manner, alludes to his artistic choice of creating in his own style, medium, and subject matter. *The Dancers*, created at a time when the music was vital, influential, and progressive in the African American community, symbolizes only one aspect of the diverse experiences of this culture. Johnson's series of the dancers and musicians represent people of different ages and both genders dancing and making music. He tells a story with his style by focusing on the people and their movement rather than the details of the setting.

Dismissed are the influential aspects of his European counterparts such as post Impressionism and Fauvism, of identifiable brushstrokes and idealistic landscapes or subjects. "Johnson

propelled his artwork into a modernist abstraction and expressionism later known as ‘hardedged’ painting” (Driskell, 2001 p 56). The concept of flat images with bold, black outlines, draws us into the figures and creates a closer look at the spatial relationship of positive and negative spaces. With all of his world travels and artistic influences, he migrated back to his roots of depicting African Americans in everyday circumstances and experiences. Johnson materializes as a pioneering painter whose voice became his own representation of his African American culture.

The Artist’s Life and Times and Interpretation of the Artist’s Intent

The eldest of five children, Johnson recognized his talent and his desire to create art as a young child. He traveled to New York as a teenager with an uncle and worked long enough to save money for art school. Three years later, he enrolled in the National Academy of Design in New York and studied under artist Charles Hawthorne. With his assistance and encouragement, Johnson was able to travel to and work in Europe, Belgium, and Denmark. When he returned to the United States, the Harmon Foundation Exhibition of 1930 earned him his first major art award and initiated his career.

While painting a picture entitled [*Jacobia Hotel*](#), (Johnson, W., 1930, Appendix A) of an old structure in his hometown of Florence, South Carolina, he was arrested. This experience of spending time in prison, falsely accused of loitering, and the dehumanizing treatment he received, impacted Johnson greatly and he retreated to Europe and remained there for the next 14 years. It is during this time that he met and married Danish artist and ceramicist, Holcha Krake. The two would continue to work and travel together throughout Europe and Northern Africa.

During this period many social and political events occurred that influenced artists and their artwork. The racial discrimination and inequities for African Americans in the United States, the threat of World War II in Europe, and political unrest in other parts of the world all prompted the imagery and ideals of narration for artists like Johnson. His paintings that display the heroism and contributions of African Americans in the armed services during the war served as more than propaganda art, they passionately demonstrated what he felt. His visual references of the city scenes of people enjoying life, such as *Jitterbugs*, were indicative of his close observation of his surroundings.

Johnson painted at a time when the arts and recognition of African American artists paralleled the ending of the Harlem Renaissance. The once thriving art community of artists, writers, and performers began to transition into over-crowding and population diversity in inner cities. In his hometown of Florence, South Carolina, Johnson began to paint his family members and friends. It is apparent that his connection is a familial one and rooted in his preservation of the spirit of his heritage. [*Jim Johnson Artist's Brother*](#) (Johnson, W., 1930, Appendix A) is one example of the paintings created from his time spent back home. By 1945, Johnson had begun to create historical references in montage style paintings, which include such prominent figures as, John Brown, Booker T. Washington, and George Washington Carver (Otfinoski, 2011).

It is important for educators to comprehend the full capacity of the lives and times in which these artists created. The deeper level of multicultural education rests in an understanding of the purpose and intent in which artists choose to create the artwork we study. To grasp an idea of what influenced, inspired, and motivated them evokes a different perspective when looking at the works of art. For example, it is necessary to understand the logic for his many travels to European countries. Johnson initially ventured overseas to gain the exposure and educational

opportunities by studying with other artists in a less oppressive environment than in the United States. Conditions conducive for creating, the acceptance by the European art community, and working with his wife, all justified the duration of his travels. His ability and freedom to move about the countryside of Europe gave him the inspiration for his boldly colored landscapes and painted structures. It was his desire to escape the racial prejudices during WWII as Germans invaded more territory that prompted his move to Northern Africa. Enduring prejudice about his biracial marriage, the couple moved to other parts of the world and finally back to the United States. These facts are important in recognizing the circumstances through which some of his paintings and artworks derived. If we fully accept the notion that artists create from the depth of what they experience, then Johnson is an excellent example of seeing his passion for life and the ‘folks’ he chose to represent come alive in his artwork.

African American students who recognize themselves in prominent works of art where they are positively depicted garner a great sense of connection and cultural awareness. The concept of including African American artists in an art education curriculum is not new, but it should advance to a level of seeking to know the artists beyond the surface biographical sketches we often find. Johnson created from the inside out. His experiences and observations were integral to what he felt the need to depict.

After the death of his wife and his return to Denmark, her home country, Johnson began to slip into mental instabilities. The mid 1940’s would mark the last of his major art exhibitions and the beginning of his stay in an institution. His artwork from those years, placed in storage, was the last of what he created in his lifetime. His exceptional works of art numbered in the thousands and became the possession of the Harmon Foundation and was later given to the National Museum of American Art in Washington, D.C. The intensity through which he created and his

purpose in reflecting his culture remains with us as a reminder of the unique artistic voice of an iconic African American artist.

Narrative Eight

Identity- Triumph

***Maternity* by Elizabeth Catlett, 1980 marble**

Reference to Main Theme and Sub-Theme

Including the artist Elizabeth Catlett was not a difficult decision as was the choice of any one of her many themed sculptures, prints, or paintings. Triumph, the sub theme of this narrative, defined as a great success, accomplishment, or victory, echoes the visual reference of her sculpture [*Maternity*](#) (Catlett, E., 1980, Appendix A). Catlett developed a style and commitment that resonates with viewers as a vibrant identity to the African American woman and African Americans. This sculpture stands as a great achievement in the African American community. The bronze sculpture is one of several created by Catlett to celebrate the spirit and nature of African American women. Later sculpted in wood, *Maternity* is one of many versions of the theme of motherhood. Her series entitled, *The Negro Woman* embodies a vast amount of imagery, expression, mediums, and compositions reflecting her determination to project the positive essence of African American women.

Catlett, along with the other artists, presents a wealth of visual knowledge, talent, and skill, illustrative of her own unique way of composing art. The diversity of her artistic rendering to convey the same ideas profoundly reveal a talented and highly skilled artist. Her career spanned over 70 years, depicting the strength and endurance of African Americans, Mexican women and motherhood. The spirit and essence she captures radiates within each sculpture, print and painting.

The main theme of Identity and the sub-theme of Triumph is selected to outline fundamental structures defining African American culture as depicted through the visual arts and African

American artists. Considering the dynamics of history, social inequalities, and inhumanities experienced within the African American culture, it is the on-going perspective of new birth, new life, and new hope that propels the objectives of creating triumphs on every level of the African American experience. Elizabeth Catlett's biography contains highlights and successes of her as an artist and as an individual American. Her artwork transcends the boundaries of her culture alone and reaches the lives of women of any color or ethnicity.

Curriculum Inclusion Rationale

While studying women artists, the collection of artwork would suffice to include Elizabeth Catlett. Students are afforded the opportunity to experience an artist whose career spans several decades, art movements, social movements, and personal struggles. Catlett's sculptures were created in a variety of mediums including, wood, bronze, marble, and stone. Her thematic subjects engage the viewer to see many different points of view. Including the artwork of Catlett into a curriculum strengthens a student's perception of African American identity and a connection with respect to environmental or societal issues faced by the artist. It is important to recognize her political stance and views which construct her intent to inspire and relate her artwork to the African American culture.

Basic elements of art and principles of design that are important for studio production are displayed as foundational concepts in Catlett's work. The positive and negative spatial relations of her sculptures produce creative three-dimensional art compositions. Looking at the positive and negative spaces surrounding the inner constructs of the sculpture, *Maternity*, demonstrates a unique manner of conveying the placement of a child within the mother physically and spiritually. The sculpture reveals an expansion of intergenerational qualities of a mother at

childbirth or a grandmother raising a grandchild. This sculpture and many of Catlett's artworks also provide a sense of historical references and a determination of value to humanity.

Elizabeth Catlett is an important artist to include in the curriculum based on her contributions to the world of art in general. As an award winning artist, educator, printmaker, and sculptor, her work proclaims an affirmation to the aesthetics in contemporary art. The versatility of her skills and talent ensues in her educational career as she taught art history, painting, drawing, and printmaking at Dillard University in New Orleans (Farrington, 2005). Her humanitarian efforts carried over to her art creating a parallel view of intensity to preserving the positive imagery of African American people.

Introduction to Artistic Elements, Style, and Medium

Vivid, bold, strong, polished, engaging and poised are just a few of the terms that describe the essence of this sculpture. This 1980 version of *Maternity* created in bronze is selected particularly because of its strength and its representation of the African American culture's triumph. The head, created in profile and less defined figuratively, represents any number of ages, generations, or sizes. The torso in half format possesses its most victorious accomplishment-new birth. The breasts are an integral part of the body and appear anatomically correct. The polished look displays the wrapping arms embracing the small figure inside, but allows for expansion, growth, and escape from the interior cubical space.

Maternity is in the collection of William and Camille Cosby, one of many sculptures by Catlett. The sculpture possesses an ancient spirit of African and Mayan civilization while depicting a very modern, contemporary African American (Driskell, 2001). The intertwining of eras, cultures, and civilizations are just as connective as the ancestral bonds of generations within

the African American culture. Catlett captures the essence of birth and childrearing in one work of art that resonates the confidence of achievement, physically and culturally.

This sculpture is unique in a number of aesthetic provisions. It encompasses all of the components necessary to convey maternity, a mother, and her child. The etched lines of the hands are difficult to see at first glance, but add a subtle hint of texture within the sculpture. The broad shoulders outline the figure and encapsulate the idea of motherhood and strength while positioned precariously on the curved base. The figure of a child embodies any age or gender. Its placement in the center of this life giving entity waits its turn to emerge in an ever-challenging world. The sculpture is simultaneously playful and serious in the midst of ideas demonstrating the theme of identity.

The series of mother and child sculptures is interesting in the fact that Catlett creates a variety of positions, sizes, expressions, and conjunctions among figures to convey the spirit of birth. Her style, replicated in her paintings and prints of strong, bold, and powerful characters, evokes a sense of importance and value placed upon them by the artist. When looking at the different works of art and her inspired creations derived from her life in Mexico, we see close observation and perceptual awareness to her surroundings. The talent and artistic skill necessary for sculpting in the fine woods, marble and other stones clarify the notion of Elizabeth Catlett's proclamation as one of America's finest artists, sculptors, and painters.

The Artist's Life and Times and Interpretation of the Artist's Intent

Catlett, one of the most prolific and celebrated American artists, was born in Washington, D. C. on April 15, 1915, into a middle-class family. Her father, who passed away before she was born, was a math professor at Tuskegee Institute. She attended Howard

University in Washington D. C. after she was denied admittance to the Carnegie Institute of Technology because of her race. She graduated from Howard with honors in 1936, and began a teaching career in Durham, North Carolina, teaching high school art and fighting for equitable pay for women and minorities. She departed from teaching to pursue a higher education degree at the University of Iowa and received the first Master of Fine Arts Degree given by that school in 1940 (Otfinoski, 2011).

It is here that Catlett studied with the renowned American artist Grant Wood who encouraged her to explore her African American heritage and sculpting. Soon after graduating, Catlett was awarded First Prize in Sculpture for her *Mother and Child* (Catlett, E., 1959, Appendix A) at the American Negro Exposition in Chicago. Married to the artist Charles White, her art career created opportunities for sponsorships, exhibitions, and awards. While traveling with her husband in the South, Catlett taught several courses at Hampton Institute, in Hampton, Virginia. In 1946, the couple traveled to Mexico and soon thereafter separated. Catlett remained in Mexico utilizing a fellowship grant she received and later married Mexican painter Francisco Mora. Finding inspiration and freedom in Mexico, Catlett flourished in various mediums and artistic genres.

Maintaining a commitment to empowering the under-represented and minorities, her work demonstrates a social consciousness and involvement in political matters in both Mexico and the United States. Investigated for anti-American activity she became an expatriate and a naturalized Mexican citizen. Her work remained popular, strong and influential in the art community as others protested her treatment by the government. Catlett, unwavering by the banishment, resolved to continue her commitment in highlighting unethical mistreatment of minorities by depicting their stories through her artwork. She thrived in Mexico and became the first woman

professor of sculpture at the National University in Mexico City. During the 1968 Olympics in Mexico, her sculpture, *Reclining Woman* (Catlett, E., 1958, Appendix A) was displayed.

The artist's intent was clearly defined by her passion to depict the under-represented population in various mediums, compositions, and styles. Catlett was as well-versed in sculpture as she was in painting and printmaking. One of her most famous works of art, [*The Sharecropper*](#) (Catlett, E., 1957, appendix A) is recognizable in the art community as a precisely rendered print in its carving and ink application. The resounding basis for much of the artwork created by Catlett was to create with passion and voice and bring attention to the characteristics of women and African Americans. Her representation of figures, cast in various degrees of earth tones, became the voice for underprivileged people of all ethnicities and races.

Her artwork reflect potential, hope, and confidence. Elizabeth Catlett, a pioneer in her unique sculpting style, attributed her inspiration to the people she aimed to inspire and uplift. Her artwork is skillfully rendered, engagingly artistic, and poignantly timeless. The ideals of social climate resonate throughout each piece as a well-crafted narrative. The versatility in which she composed numerous works of art is commendable and triumphant.

An important factor to consider is her persistence and her determination in her work. Catlett continued to produce art and create in the midst of civil unrest, her political involvement, and the accusations by the United States government. The quality of the sculptures, paintings, and prints that she created is greatly appreciated and celebrated by the numerous awards and accolades she received. Catlett's artwork garners an amplified view into the African American culture. Her participation in propelling black art as a part of the 'Black Art Movement' in the late 1940's generated an awakening and social awareness among other minority groups. The efforts of these

artists permitted an alliance between artists to display, work, and exhibit their artwork in conjunction with efforts of supporting one another. Each group's struggles became everyone's platform for social changes and political equities. Native American, Latino, Asian, and African American artists banded together in the late 1960's to 1970's to collectively share in depicting their own unique identities (Britton, 2006). Catlett's eagerness to encourage other artists, inspire racial identity, evoke community awareness, and relate to the African American culture echoed as her mantra throughout the years of the civil rights era and beyond (Farrington, 2005).

Narrative Nine

Identity- Hope and Vision

Forever Free by Edmonia (Wildfire) Lewis 1867 marble

Reference to Main Theme and Sub-Theme

[*Forever Free*](#) (Lewis, E., 1867, Appendix A) epitomizes the main theme of Identity and the sub theme of Hope and Vision. The connection is obvious, but it is important that we explore the story underneath. Edmonia Lewis, considered the first African American woman and sculptor to achieve international success and acclaim, dispelled many negative myths of women artists (Britton, 2006). Born at some time between the years of 1843 and 1845, Edmonia Lewis' heritage represents a diverse ethnicity. Her father, an African American, and her mother, a fullblooded Chippewa Indian, both died when Edmonia was a young child. Raised by her mother's Native American family and immersed in a racially charged environment of slavery, she overcame the harsh, repressive conditions to become an outstanding artist.

Forever Free is one of her most famous sculptures and epitomizes the essence of Hope and Vision. The two figures, broken free from their chains and its heavy weight now planted firmly under the man's foot, speak to the conditions in the United States during 1867. Their facial expressions signify an attitude of thankfulness that symbolizes the era following slavery's end. Their upward gaze clearly acknowledges a divine intervention responsible for their newfound freedom. The sculpture, created in the neoclassical art style, reflects the prevailing art movement of the mid to late 19th century. It is also an *allegory* symbolizing the condition of many African Americans and minorities of that time. Like Duncanson's painting, *The Quarry*, we could ascertain that there are hidden meanings only the artist is privy to understanding.

Her struggles began early in her life. She attended Oberlin College, where she received a classical education. Although Oberlin College, located in Oberlin, Ohio, was the first College to admit African Americans, the thoughts and actions of some faculty and students were still rooted in segregation and racism. Afforded an opportunity to study art with the well-known sculptor Edmund Brackett, Lewis moved to the Boston area in the mid 1860's.

By 1867, around the age of 23, Edmonia Lewis began to create works of art that reflected both her Native American and African American heritage. Inhumanity and racial oppression echoed loud and clear in her artistic expressions. Her first-hand experiences as a female, of Native American and African American descent, reflected the harsh circumstances from the society in which she lived. Her strength, courage, and determination to forego the expected way of life for women in her day and pursue her aspirations for a career as an artist is truly amazing. Her talent and artistic skills remarkably show the detail in which she mastered such a demanding art technique as sculpting in marble.

Curriculum Inclusion Rationale

Including this work of art and this artist as a component of the art education curriculum enables the art teacher to introduce three different minorities within one artist-African American, Native American, and a female. The opportunity of studying this artist and her work is enriching for understanding the tenacity and artistic skill needed to depict with precision and artistry the images we see today. Most secondary and elementary art curricula engage students in comprehending and manipulating three-dimensional materials. We have occasions to discuss the process of studio making, artistic decision-making, and execution of ideas via Edmonia Lewis'

artwork. Her sculptures reflect the bountiful heritage of two or three cultures and a woman's perspective artistically.

Another reason for including Lewis in an art curriculum is the depth of harsh and volatile circumstances surrounding her life experiences. It is important to recognize the opposition and negative discourse she endured. Art history, aesthetics, and art elements are critical areas that can engage students in higher-level thinking. For example, asking students to compare and sequence the order of historical events between the dates of an artist's birth and death would garner a greater level of connecting the artwork's style and intent. *Forever Free* was created in 1867, just four years after Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. Although this sculpture obviously portrays freedom, history tells us that African Americans and other minorities still faced many years of great tribulation before they attained any degree of equal rights and privileges in America. Analyzing this sculpture allows the student to decipher the historical and artistic information while exploring understandings and relationships.

Aesthetically speaking, within the neoclassical art style, it is difficult to deny the artist's formality in portraying the personality, character, and anatomical realism of the two individuals depicted in *Forever Free*. Other sculptures created by Lewis include a series reflecting her Native American heritage, which also tell stories. The classical art style initiated by the ancient Greeks and Romans, depict figures heroically and dramatically. The neoclassical art style, which began in the 1700's had similar characteristics. This sculpture represents the plight and aspirations of the African American culture at the onset of freedom just barely removed from slavery. The hope of a better and more promising future is in their view and the theme of Hope and Vision emanate from their stance and position.

Introduction to Artistic Elements, Style, and Medium

Sensory properties of line, form, shape, and texture are immediately visible in *Forever Free*. The visual line of the extended arm of the male down to the bend of the woman's knee creates an elongation of the total sculpture. This pose, referred to as *contra post*, consists of one knee bent and one hand raised is a homage to classical orator sculptures (Farrington, 2005). The stance also deviates from the typical images of a subservient slave. The torso and the distinctive facial features of the male and female are strong and defined. The shapes and closeness of their bodies unify the space they occupy and create an interest in the negative spaces generated by their positions. The alabaster color does not detract from the fact that these figures are African Americans. The hair texture of the male figure is indicative of African American ethnicity, while the female possesses characteristics of Native Americans. Edmonia Lewis' heritage suggests this interpretation.

The artwork is neoclassic in style with its formally realistic figures, dramatic expressions, and draping of garments. It is believed that Lewis chiseled directly from the marble, without the advantage of having a model to look at while sculpting (Otfinoski, 2011). Form and contour lines generated from figure to figure strike an interesting formation of height. The female figure, though appearing submissive by kneeling, is also supportive of the male figure. Lewis' ability to capture the expression, realism, and characterizations of her culture through proportion and expression is admirable.

It is astounding given the time and atmosphere surrounding people of color, that Edmonia Lewis was able to execute her sculptures in marble or any permanent material. Artists such as Augusta Savage and Meta Warrick Fuller did not have the level of financial support that Lewis

did. Living in Boston by 1863, her acquaintance with the influential abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison may have led to her apprenticeship with the neoclassical sculptor, Edward-Augustus Brackett. Her financial supporters funded many of her artistic endeavors and enabled her to sustain herself with her own artwork. Lewis' brother, Samuel 'Sunrise' Lewis financed her education at Oberlin College, and provided support later throughout her career. Her medium of choice, marble, a challenging material for most artists, attracted art critics to see her work in her studio to prove that she had actually carved the sculptures (Farrington, 2005, p. 58). The artistic elements, style, and medium are all distinctive characteristics of art that are not often associated with African American artists.

The Artist's Life and Times and Interpretation of the Artist's Intent

A woman of color, and a Native American, Edmonia Lewis achieved many accomplishments as an artist. Her triple minority status remains a pivotal aspect to understanding and appreciating the ability, determination, and tenacity of this artist.

Edmonia Wildfire Lewis was born between 1843 and 1846, in Greenhigh, Ohio, or Albany, New York. Her father, a freed black, and servant, died as did her mother, when Edmonia was just a child. Her brother's success as a gold miner allowed her to attend Oberlin College in 1862. It was here that Lewis experienced the volatility of a society's attitude towards African Americans. Lewis' two white roommates accused her of attempting to poison them when they fell violently ill one night. After her trial and acquittal of the crime, her troubles continued. The townspeople disagreed with the verdict and brutally beat Lewis after kidnapping her from her dorm room. No one was ever brought to justice for the attack. Lewis later found herself accused again of stealing art supplies. Although acquitted, she was forbidden to graduate from college.

Upon leaving Oberlin, she traveled to Boston, Massachusetts, then the nucleus of abolitionism and the fight to end slavery. Still supported by her brother, Edmonia opened a studio and shared a space with another African American artist, Edward Mitchell Bannister (Otfinoski, 2011), and Edward Brackett, a well-known Boston artist, provided her with limited professional training.

Lewis began to develop her artistic talent. Her successful artwork at that time included busts of abolitionists William Lloyd Garrison and Charles Sumner (Otfinoski, 2011). Lewis also created a series of medallion pieces of abolitionist John Brown. One of her signature works of art was the bust of [Colonel Robert Gould Shaw](#), (Lewis, E., 1866-1867, Appendix A) the white leader of the first all-black army unit, the Massachusetts 54th Infantry. The financial result of selling copies of this bust garnered Lewis some financial freedom, independence, and ability to travel.

Lewis traveled to Europe in 1865 and opened a studio in Rome. Burdened with the plight of her people and a determination to create art, she developed her talent alongside other expatriate artists. The duality of her artistic ambition and the ethnic conflict that so many African American artists must have wrestled with during that time must have been enormous. The European culture compared to that of the United States provided a degree of relief from the daily reminders of the struggles, prejudice, and hatred most African Americans experienced. However, the opportunity to focus on being an artist and not being inundated with the struggle for survival and acceptance proved to be a short-lived refuge. Lewis came back to the United States to sell her sculptures and to seek acceptance and financial recognition for her artwork. After several years in Europe, she became the only African American artist to display her artwork at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1876 (Otfinoski, 2011).

Lewis created artwork reflective of her ethnic diversity such as, [*Old Indian Arrow Maker and*](#)

[His Daughter](#), (Lewis, E., 1872, Appendix A) [Hiawatha](#), (Lewis, E., 1868, appendix A) and [Hagar in the Wilderness](#), (Lewis, E., 1875, appendix A). Although lauded for her artistic ability as a sculptor and artist, she was criticized for the polished and finished degree of the material to the point that the work lacked expression (Farrington, 2005). Looking at the detail and intricacies of these sculptures created with the intent of reflecting upon her culture, they possess a different rendering than her bust of Colonel Robert Shaw. Lewis expresses a passion and evident connection to the subject matter and representational pieces closely related to who she was as a person, an artist, African American, Native American and female.

Lewis represents a diverse grouping of underrepresented populations. As unequivocal as the sculpture *Forever Free* is about hope and vision, the sculpture *Hagar* at first glance is less clear in symbolizing a similar idea. The artwork refers to the Biblical story of Hagar, banished to the desert by Abraham after bearing him a son years before. You may not see the connection of longing for freedom and restoration depicted in this sculpture, however Lisa E. Farrington noted that Hagar appears to resemble Lewis in her shape and countenance and therefore suggests that the artist may have been the model for the sculpture (2005).

Edmonia Lewis' struggles to survive in her early years after losing both parents, the false accusations she incurred at Oberlin College, and the constant battle to find her place in the white, male dominated field of art and sculpture are not the only reasons to consider her artwork for study. Considering the concept of hope and vision and its direct reflection on the African American culture, Lewis penetrates the heart by illustrating these themes and examining a challenging medium in the process.

It is important that students today recognize, understand, and appreciate the work ethic, determination, and fortitude it has taken some to achieve artistic careers while maintaining lives of some normalcy and humanity. Looking at Lewis' artwork and summarizing her as just a classical sculptor of minority status would not do justice to her contributions to the African American culture. Her story behind the faces of her sculptures and the skill of sculpting in marble is worth an in-depth examination into the history, influences, and experiences that fostered the artwork.

Narrative Ten

Community- Ancestors

***Family Circle* by John Biggers 1997, acrylic on canvas**

Reference to Main Theme and Sub-Theme

[*Family Circle*](#) (Biggers, J., 1997, appendix A) is the choice for the theme Community, and the sub theme Ancestors. Recognizing the various artistic elements and figurative elements within the painting, we see the value of including this important work of art. John Biggers is one of the most prominent African American artists of the 20th century. His art, hard work, commitment to cultural responsibility, and educational attributes all contribute greatly to the improvement and progress of African Americans. *Family Circle*, painted during a time when Biggers worked with an intense cultural consciousness of depicting, reflecting, and representing African Americans with fervor and zeal, illustrates four figures intertwined. The shapes, patterns, lines, and vivid colors represent a closeness of the connection within the family structure, but also points to an African heritage. The large neck bracelets and intricate design patterns are visual references to African tribal attire and African art.

Ancestors is a concept that embodies not only the genealogical attributes of heritage, but the cultural mindset of birthing generations of values, beliefs, and ideas within a family structure. For example, many African Americans may not have the ability to trace their ancestral familial lineage, but they can name previous generations of relatives, neighbors, or friends who were integral to their lives. These older members of the larger family unit took on the role of ancestor and mentor. *Family Circle* illustrates a symbolic and literal circle surrounding the parents, child, and the less obvious figure hovering above the family. The figure is suspended above the rest,

emblematically protecting, guiding, and reflecting on the continuation of the family legacy. The small plant-like images released from the hands of the child at the base of the composition, transcend into star-like shapes as they reach closer to the sky. The symbols, details, and intricacies of this painting are enough to keep the viewer gazing, searching, and desiring for more of what Biggers has to proclaim and illustrate. The characteristic of one generation supporting another materializes visually when looking at the small hands of the child appearing to hold up and bear the parental figures. But it is the solid rod gripped by the large, powerful, and dominant hands of the parents that literally hold up the child. The highlights on the hands and back of the parental figures evoke a sense of hard work, functionality, and determination needed to sustain the traditions of past generations.

Biggers developed tremendous bodies of work including murals and sculptures primarily through his connections to various higher educational institutions. John Biggers began his artistic career with a support from one of his teachers while attending Hampton Institute, which later became Hampton University. Viktor Lowenfeld, his mentor, encouraged Biggers to delve deeply into his African American cultural roots for inspiration (Otfinoski, 2011). This particular painting encompasses images that repeat in other works of art by Biggers, with the very round heads and non-frontal views of the subjects. [*Tree House*](#), (Biggers, J., 1989, Appendix A) was painted as a mural for Hampton University and portrays African Americans under a large tree standing close enough to embrace one another. It creates an ancestral projection of moving forward and maintaining a balance of historical reference. Like *Family Circle*, each painting embodies a communal connotation of a divine or cosmic presence of entities that are greater than human beings. According to Peter J. Paris, a consciousness of African and African American beliefs in its foundational function is to preserve and promote the life of the community (2004).

This painting conveys this concept in a very interesting and captivating manner referring to the theme of Community and Ancestor.

Curriculum Inclusion Rationale

Imagine the conversations and inquiry this painting will generate in an art classroom of teachers and students. Why are there animals at the bottom of the painting? Why is the family standing on what resembles a raft in the water? Are the jewelry pieces symbolically significant to the African culture? What does the ambiguous figure suspended overhead represent? Teachers may engage just as eagerly with questions and discussion topics to evoke a critical response from their students. *Family Circle* is aesthetically pleasing to the viewer with its variations of blues and interesting symbols and details. There is plenty for students to reflect upon and respond to in the context of artistic elements and principles of design. John Biggers' conceptualization of the family unit is unique in the way that he creates a literal composition outlining a mother, father, and child. Including this artwork in a class curriculum allows the teacher to expand upon creative ideas for students illustrating a family portrait. Incorporating symbols, cultural or heritage design elements empowers students with a sense of identity and inclusion. African American students should understand that John Biggers demonstrated an artistic freedom to develop and display cultural aspects in his artwork. Early in his artistic career, Biggers traveled to Africa to study African tradition and culture, and therefore applied many of his findings to his own art compositions (Britton, 2006). He supported the arts greatly by collecting African American crafts, art, and folk art.

Including *Family Circle* in the curriculum affords a wealth of artistic elements for student recall at the secondary level, and reaches beyond the elementary concepts of line, shape, color, and pattern. Form, color value, movement, balance, unity, and emphasis are important starting

points for engaging student discussion and brainstorming art ideas. These principles are embedded in this painting. For example, the values of the blue create a depth for the sky area and background as clearly as they do for the clothing and slightly evident water at the bottom of the composition.

Introduction to Artistic Elements, Style, and Medium

Most of Biggers' art consists of many details, attention to symbols, patterns, and contrasting values. The large-scale murals and paintings are massive and speak eloquently to and for the African American culture. John Biggers' cultural consciousness to depict historical African American experiences contributes to our understanding of the impact on the culture. For example, Jason Sweeney refers to Biggers' life as a legacy that remains visible in the murals found on the walls of libraries, colleges, and other public buildings in Houston and throughout the South (Sweeney, 2008). The size of the murals created by John Biggers is eye-catching with bold colors and details of smaller scenes within the large paintings. Located in very public areas of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's), his artwork is meant for viewing by large numbers of people.

As an art educator and artist, John Biggers early artistic endeavors were community-oriented. He was offered the opportunity to start the art education program at Texas State University for Negroes in Houston, Texas, in 1949, at the age of 25 (Otfinoski, 2011). Most of the large-scale murals he painted in the Houston area, Biggers painted with some of his students. His style of incorporating African tribal references and themes developed after his frequent trips to African countries. He told stories and gave a presence to African heritage by incorporating traditional African attire and jewelry on his figures. The figures in [*Old Couple*](#) (Biggers, J., 1946, Appendix

A) and [*The History of Negro Education in Morris County, Texas*](#) (Biggers, J., 1955, appendix A), exist within houses, environments, and interiors reflective of African American dwellings during the 1940's-1950's in America. The figures in [*Origins*](#) (Biggers, J., 1992, Appendix A) and [*Ascension*](#) (Biggers, J., 1992, Appendix A) are representational and convey African heritage. A monochromatic color scheme of blues in the foreground contrasts effectively against the warm orange tones of the background and the figures' skin. It is a subtle hint of the changes of blue within the pattern of clothes that lead the eye from top to bottom and emphasize the strength of the figures. A vertical line of symmetry exists to divide the composition and engage our eyes on the two circular shapes in front of the figures that interchangeably overlap the hovering figure. A symmetrical balance presents itself in many of John Biggers' compositions as if to force a story of two worlds, two cultures, two histories, and even two ideas; African and African American. The visual quality of the headdress, clothing, and shapes in the sky are attention grabbing to suggest a specific texture of the surfaces.

John Biggers' style of portraying the family is somewhat comparable to that of another prominent African American artist. Charles Alston's portrayal of the family structure, [*Family in Cityscape*](#), (Alston, C., 1966, Appendix A), is similar to Biggers' *Family Circle*. It consists of a mother, father, and children figures. Both artists show the strength of the parents as solid and positioned figures with the much smaller subjects illustrating their place in the family configuration.

The Artist's Life and Times and Interpretation of the Artist's Intent

Many similarities exist between the life and times of Aaron Douglas and John Biggers. These two prolific artistic giants contributed substantially to the world of art and the African American community. The author Olive Jensen Theisen expounds so eloquently and vehemently upon the

life and times of John Thomas Biggers. Her books entitled *Walls That Speak: The Murals of John Thomas Biggers* (2010), and *A Life on Paper: The Drawings and Lithographs of John Thomas Biggers* (2006), are packed with perceptive, personal, and admirable insight into the life of the artist. John Biggers entered the Hampton Institute in Hampton, Virginia, in 1941 with the intent of studying the practical trade of plumbing. His professor Viktor Lowenfeld encouraged him to pursue his artistic talents. He left Hampton Institute (now Hampton University) in 1946, a committed artist, recognizing his calling to tell the story of the Negro in America through his art (Theisen, 2006). One of the first African American artists to visit Africa frequently and include its influence as an integral part of his artwork, John Biggers' art career spans more than 50 years (Otfinoski, 2011). As an artist and educator, his research in the African and African American experience affected many students. Biggers often collaborated with his students on the creation of his large-scaled murals and installations.

It is important to remember that this was a time when mandated segregation existed in the deep southern regions of the United States. The opportunities and acceptance for many African Americans were limited to their own culture and surroundings. Biggers created such powerful works of art that spoke to his heritage in a way that brought recognition to hidden aspects of the African American culture's identity and their self-respect. Paintings such as *Old Couple* and *The History of Negro Education in Morris County*, demonstrate purposeful and intentional empathy for the African Americans depicted. Biggers' characters possess both strength and disadvantage, a sense of desperation and accomplishment. His artistic skills, like those of Henry Ossawa Tanner and Allan Crite, enabled him to point the viewer in the direction of seeing the subjects in a very personal and intimate manner.

During the 1970's and beyond, we see a more abstract rendering and exploration in Biggers' compositions. He is including more of the allegorical scenes and symbols that we have come to associate with his artwork, especially his murals. *Family Circle* conveys a family structure of parents and children in an unconventional setting. The painting tells a story that commands our attention to listen and learn.

John Biggers has contributed significantly to the study of African American art and culture. Olive Theisen (2006) writes of the legacy and historical references to John Biggers' upbringing. As the youngest of his siblings, he spent a lot of time in the company of his grandmother, who was the great granddaughter of an African woman from Guinea. This ancestor had earned her way to America, but she was enslaved in both Virginia and North Carolina (Theisen, 2006). Biggers speaks of his parents and the work ethic they instilled in them as children to always work hard and do the very best that they could at everything they did (Theisen, 2006). It is evident that these teachings from his parents as a child held strong with Biggers throughout his career.

After 36 years at Texas State University, in 1983, John Biggers retired and devoted his attention towards his art (Otfinoski, 2011). The African influences were very much a part of his paintings. The artwork that Biggers produced during these years of retirement are those that he is most noted for artistically. The large murals telling the origins and spirituality of the African and African American people are filled with symbolism, details, imagery, and intertwining moments of time. Two large scale mural examples, [*House of Turtle*](#) (Biggers, J., 1992, Appendix A) and *Tree House* are both located in the Harvey Library at Hampton University. Biggers captures our attention with patterns, color, design, symmetry, symbols, abstraction, and an array of shapes. These murals, like others he created as artist-in-residence at Hampton University and his

hometown of Gastonia, North Carolina, are memorials to his mission to tell a story of the African American culture. The diversity of his artistic talents and skills presents the viewers with a large volume of artwork that is interesting, intriguing, unique, and informational.

Narrative Eleven

Community- Social Issues

***Mr. Prejudice* by Horace Pippin 1943, oil on canvas**

Reference to Main Theme and Sub-Theme

Horace Pippin and his painting entitled, [*Mr. Prejudice*](#), (Pippin, H., 1943, Appendix A) are the selection for this narrative. Various artists throughout our history express the main theme of Community and the sub-theme of Social Issues vividly in a number of artworks. The painting, [*The Problem We All Live With*](#) (Rockwell, N., 1963, Appendix A) by Norman Rockwell is a powerful example of this thought process. Unsure of the purest intent other than to shine a spotlight onto the issue of desegregation and its measure of opposition, Rockwell, a prominent American artist, provides another perspective on the theme of racism and prejudice in the United States.

There are several figures Pippin deemed worthy of noting for this important historical documentation. The painting is symmetrical in that one side mirrors the other although the characters on the left are African American and those on the right side are white. The large letter V stands for victory and the figure in the middle splitting the V represents 'Prejudice' (Lyons, 1993). Horace's painting is a metaphor of the division the nation endured because of segregation and racism. While serving as a part of the 369th regiment in the U.S. Army, Pippin experienced racism first-hand which compelled him to depict his reaction and thoughts. Stationed for a short while in South Carolina for training before heading overseas in WWI, the all-black regiment felt the harsh realities of the South and the prevailing atmosphere of hatred. They were not welcomed and were gravely mistreated during their stay in South Carolina.

Horace Pippin is an artist whose artwork is a direct response to the effects of prejudice and racism so many African Americans experienced after a specific personal event. Pippin's experiences in army training and World War I apparently were the earliest and most disheartening events in his life up to that time. He saw the willingness of black soldiers to serve the same America that white soldiers were committed to serve and yet facilities, accommodations, supplies, and support were vastly different for both groups.

Horace Pippin's painting, *Mr. Prejudice*, is as literal as it is symbolic. He created artwork as he saw it in his mind and felt in his heart. The innocence and purity of confidence to tell it like it is, without any outside influence, impact, or pressure, is a credit to Pippin's integrity. African American artists approached their ideas of political art cautiously so as not to appear propagandistic in nature or less patriotic during that time of war. Conceivably this is why, given the amount of racism and prejudice Pippin may have endured, we see *Mr. Prejudice* as his personal reaction and response to that theme.

Curriculum Inclusion Rationale

Historical references of the contributions African American artists provide to the art education landscape are exceptional. They are first-hand accounts of the events, actions, and the responses to very critical components, that helped to shape the American landscape. It is appropriate to include this artist as an advocate. African American artists like Pippin have chosen to utilize their artistic talents as a political platform.

Horace Pippin is considered a 'purist' who rendered what he saw or what was in his mind. He created as if he were telling the story to everyone who would listen. Every event or occasion of value and importance for recording became a source of inspiration for another painting. His life

is an inspiration for students to see and to appreciate his determination and commitment to the art process. Pippin received a disabling gunshot wound to the right shoulder during World War I. He was forced to contemplate his inability to work or draw the disturbing images of war (Driskell, 2001). He devised a means to hold a hot poker in his disabled right arm while supporting that arm with his left arm. The process of painting with a hot poker or burning the surface, is referred to as Pyrography or pyro gravure. It is defined as the art of decorating wood or other materials with burn marks resulting from the controlled application of a heated object such as a hot poker. His paintings on wood are darker and less focused perhaps due to the lack of experience with this new method. His first pyro gravure took him a year to finish. The tedious procedure of burning dark values into the wood while leaving the light areas of the wood for highlights became a triumph for the artist. The importance of his willingness to create and render art is commendable and significant for students to understand for their own art making development.

Studying Horace Pippin offers a perspective of a self-taught artist who possessed natural artistic abilities and skill. The problems that Pippin faced after his discharge from the army and his lack of opportunity to work solely on his creative desires were exacerbated by his physical and financial woes. Longing to paint, but not having the funds for paints and supplies, Pippin began using house paint he found in his neighborhood. His resourcefulness to find what he needed in order to create the images he desired to convey merits admiration. He thoroughly and deliberately created the images and experiences of the war that were so much a part of his psyche at that time.

One of the most valuable contributions and a rationale for including Pippin in the curriculum is the process in which Pippin created his artwork. With limited exposure, assistance, materials

or support, his persistence was intrinsically motivated. Students should be exposed to such an artist who can encourage their own artistic motivation to share with the world their artistic expression. The value of their artistic voice, contribution, and determination promotes an environment conducive to productive studio art making.

Introduction to Artistic Elements, Style, and Medium

Often considered a folk artist, Pippin defied characteristics of typical artists by creating different and varying subject matter. His work became stylistically visible by the early 1930's. Completely self-taught and self-motivated, Pippin painted exactly what he wanted to communicate to others. "The pictures which I have already painted come to me in my mind, and if to me it is a worthwhile picture, I paint it" (re-quoted, Otfinoski, 2011 p. 168). *Mr. Prejudice* portrays two groups of figures symbolic of Pippin's feelings and thoughts about racism. The symmetrical composition is difficult to interpret or understand without knowing the artist's intent and experiences. The figures are daunting and mysterious at first glance, but apparently have a profound message to relay.

The colors Pippin used relate to the attire or uniforms of the characters, and the background does not allude to a specific setting or place. The representatives of the armed forces such as the sailor, the air force airman, the army soldier, and the technicians on both sides of the large letter V are clearly depicted. It is the ghostlike figures in the front left corner and the right background who pose questions about their purpose. We see that the Statue of Liberty is painted as an African American and leaning sideways as if to hover over the other African American figures. The horrific practice of lynching symbolized by the noose in the hand of the white figure in the middle ground is nearly obscured. Victory is still a far-reaching goal as the nation remains

divided. The faces gaze at each side with questions or mistrust, but there is hope in the outreached hands of the black sailor and the white aviator (Lyons, 1993).

Aesthetically this painting does not seek to excite the viewer with bright, vibrant, and engaging colors compared with one of the last paintings he created. [*Man on a Bench*](#), (Pippin, H., 1946, Appendix A) encompasses a bright red bench supporting the man as the focal point and bright yellow leaves which hang with texture and defined placement. The colors create a distinctively different mood than *Mr. Prejudice* that is somber in tone with many neutral colors. Symbolism and representation reign throughout the composition, as does the starkness of the light against dark. The absence of a definitive spatial depth among the figures creates a claustrophobic struggle for space between the figures in the foreground. It is difficult to ascertain which figure on either side is in front of, behind, or beside the other one in the foreground area.

The figures are clearly people who participate in the various armed services. Their profiles are defined yet simplified in facial features and values. Horace Pippin's style is appreciated for the talent and skill he renders. His artwork consistently tells his story in his unique way. Little to no evidence suggests that he copied or attempted to duplicate another artist's style or compositions. He created his subject matter with a passion and a concern for how they made others feel by seeing them. The innocence of creating art for art's sake seems to be the purpose of Pippin's artistic endeavors.

The close proximity of the figures to one another is interesting, as if forced to share a common place much like the trenches and barracks during the war. The large figure who looms over them all in the middle wielding the axe, is painted using just black and white. He is about to strike the V again and has already begun to split this symbol of victory. It is important to include in this

segment that a part of Pippin's style was his need to paint what was in his mind. It is there that he arranged the details and the elements of what to include in his paintings.

Pippin often reflected on his childhood memories, current events, and biblical references for inspiration, translating well into the painting techniques he used. Canvases were scarce in the early days of his art making and cotton fabric served as the support of his artwork. A few of the wood panels, consisting of hunting and fishing scenes that he created with the hot pokers, helped to strengthen his disabled arm. Once again, we see Pippin utilizing the scenes and life experiences around him for inspiration, as he participated in these activities during his recovery time after the war.

The Artist's Life and Times and Interpretation of the Artist's Intent

Born in West Chester, Pennsylvania, February 22, 1888, Horace Pippin faced great poverty and difficulties in his childhood. His father abandoned the family at a very early age, which prompted a move to Goshen, New York, where his mother found domestic work. In school, he would illustrate his spelling words and create pictures at every opportunity. These illustrations did not impress his teachers and they punished him for not completing assignments appropriately. After the death of his mother, Pippin moved to New Jersey and worked a variety of jobs until he enlisted in the army in 1917 (Driskell, 2001).

Corporal Pippin was assigned to the French command as a part of the all-black 369th Infantry regiment. He faced hardships and harsh conditions while serving overseas. He felt the appreciation by the French to have American soldiers of any color help them as allies against the German troops. He could also sympathize with the people experiencing war, poverty, and

fighting in their neighborhoods. The weather contributed to the misery and disheartening conditions of working and fighting during wartime. “World War I has been called the War of Mud, and Horace Pippin never forgot how it felt to walk, eat, and sleep in mud” (Lyons, 1993, p. 15). His painting entitled, [*The Barracks*](#) (Pippin, H., 1945, Appendix A) is painted in a dark and muted color palette with a hint of yellow and red. He created several works of art that reflect his time spent at war. Pippin, seriously wounded in his right shoulder, was the recipient of the Croix de Guerre and the Purple Heart (Otfinoski, 2011). After his discharge and return to West Chester, he married Jennie, a widowed mother of a young son.

Unable to work and haunted by the experiences of the war was difficult for Pippin. It is during this time that he began his pyro-graphic method of using a hot poker heated on the fires to burn images into wood panels. One of his major works entitled, [*The End of the War: Starting Home*](#) (Pippin, H., 1931, Appendix A) took three years to complete. Pippin yearned to tell many stories using his imagination combined with his innate artistic ability. His intent to capture African American life, and specifically his own life, is evident in the variety of subject matter and compositions. The diversity of his artwork is as vast as his means of telling different stories. Painting during the time of the Harlem Renaissance and in the area of northeastern United States, few references link Horace Pippin to this movement of celebrated African American art and artists. His artwork paralleled or was created slightly later than that of other artists during that era and yet he appears removed from their company. Like Aaron Douglas, Pippin has a unique style of art formed without any training and art education.

Once he began painting regularly and his arm strengthened, Pippin’s artwork was displayed in local business shops and windows. In 1937, local critic and historian, Christian Brinton saw his work and obtained a one-man art show for him at the West Chester Community Art Center.

Within a year, four of his paintings were displayed at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Numerous opportunities for gallery exhibitions and awards followed. He seemed to include just about every subject possible, from his scenes of war, to landscapes, portraits, still life, and biblical themes. Additionally, he created two historical series of narratives featuring John Brown. Another historical narrative featured Harriet Tubman. One of his most celebrated paintings, [*John Brown Goes to His Hanging*](#), (Pippin, H., 1942, Appendix A) tells the story of the trial, conviction, and hanging of the famous abolitionist, John Brown.

Pippin's last years were tragic and lonely, candidly portrayed in his last painting, *Man on a Bench*. Painted in 1946 and believed to be a self-portrait, it is a painful indication of his later years (Otfinoski, 2011). His wife was committed to a mental institution in 1944. Pippin died two years later of a stroke. Ironically, his wife died ten days after he did. Although marked with tragedy, poverty, and sorrow throughout much of his life, Pippin's work speaks with a vibrancy and passion to creativity. His legacy of artwork and determination to the art making process is exceptional. Humble and modest in his personal life as well as his artistic undertakings, Pippin left a body of work that outlines the life, character, and pulse of the African American culture.

Pippin's painting, *Mr. Prejudice*, representing the main theme of Community, and the subtheme of Social Issues, undeniably defines them both. The painting is only one piece of the puzzle of Pippin. Created as a response to the devastating manner in which he and his fellow African American soldiers were treated, it serves as one way he chose to react to prejudice and racism. Understanding the political overtones of the time and that any signs of non-patriotic actions raised strong reactions, Pippin decided to express his thoughts through his artwork. *Mr. Prejudice* is a brazen and bold statement that visually speaks out against the racism he

experienced in the army. Perhaps his paintings were not as popular as other African American artists at the time, but they were just as significant in voicing his opinion and reaction to the world around him.

Horace Pippin developed a style unique to his situation and condition. His lack of funds for quality art supplies, his disability from the war, and his lack of formal art education all contributed to his resourcefulness and determination. Painting from his heart and soul, Pippin addressed social issues with dignity, true to his culture as an African American artist.

Narrative Twelve

Community- Cultural Voice

***Brownstones* by Jacob Lawrence 1958, Egg Tempera on Hardboard**

Reference to Main Theme and Sub-Theme

One of the most popular and iconic African American artists, Jacob Lawrence is an ideal selection for the main theme of Community and the sub-theme of Cultural Voice. His work and life resonates with educators of art and art history and his legacy is definitive in the world of art. [*Brownstones*](#) (Lawrence, J., 1958, appendix A) is just one of many paintings that represents this theme because it encompasses a great deal of the imagery, storytelling, and vibrancy associated with Lawrence's work. His series of narrative paintings possess the duality of primitive power and expressive modernism, which tells of the life of African American people (Otfinoski, 2011). Lawrence's artwork illustrates themes reflecting racial pride and humanity reaching beyond the confines of one culture or people. Though his subjects were primarily black, his art affected and attracted a wider spectrum of people.

Jacob Lawrence created art with a passion for African American culture and a knowledge of his world. Like Horace Pippin, he developed a style uniquely his own to tell his stories from his own cultural voice as an African American. Unlike Pippin and many other African American artists, Lawrence received a formal art education and training. His artwork extends over a long and productive art career. Lawrence's series, defined by his research and reference of significant historical figures and events, are left for us to see and feel the plight and experiences of those he portrayed. The first of these series was his interpretation and illustration of a black slave who became the founder of the Republic of Haiti in the West Indies. Completed in 1938, [*The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture*](#) (Lawrence, J., 1938, Appendix A) consists of 41 separate works of art

Lawrence called *panels*. This series of panels was just a beginning, and other series of paintings about John Brown, Frederick Douglas, and Harriet Tubman followed. His historical rendering of the Great Migration, the onslaught of African Americans from the rural areas of the South to the inner cities of the North is one of his most popular series. [*The Great Migration of the Negro*](#) (Lawrence, J., 1940-41, Appendix A) consists of 60 panels and embodies a myriad of subjects, scenes, and characters. The series told the story of the Great Migration from the perspective of African Americans, and Lawrence in his artistic genius expounds on the various facets of such a movement.

Brownstones, created some 18 years after the *Migration* series, is reflective of the promising and hopeful endeavors for the African American families. Activity abounds everywhere, from the couple with the carriage to the children playing in the streets. A cultural voice has spoken loud and clear with a resounding example of the life of African Americans prior to, during, and after the devastating institution of slavery and oppression.

Curriculum Inclusion Rationale

Already a staple in most art educators' African American collections, Jacob Lawrence's artwork is one of the most popular resources in the classroom. Art educators recognize his talent and his depiction of the life of his people. His work correlates well with various art elements and principles of design. For example, his use of bold, vivid primary colors and strong use of lines throughout his paintings encourages students to utilize these concepts. Lawrence employs a vibrancy of flat, geometric and dramatically posed shapes to depict his figures in such a manner that young children can discuss and articulate what they are seeing in his artwork.

The storytelling component is a major aspect of Jacob Lawrence's work, depicting historical figures with accuracy. Storytelling is one way to point students in the direction of engaged learning and participation. In or out of its contextual format, the paintings possess a style and visual language that encapsulates a grand idea of a masterful artist.

This particular painting by Jacob Lawrence encompasses many of his artistic characteristics and garners lesson ideas based on composition, medium, aesthetics, and art history. If we are to educate students on a deeper level of multicultural education, it is important to know the story underneath and understand how Lawrence's artistic connections and exposure to prominent artists such as Augusta Savage, Charles Alston, and Aaron Douglas strengthened his resolve and ability to pursue his own artistic endeavors.

Introduction to Artistic Elements, Style, and Medium

Jacob Lawrence's style is representative of his life and his observation of the world around him. The influences and impact of the Harlem Renaissance resonated within most every African American artist's psyche, and it is no wonder Lawrence's name is prominently associated with the art movement. Lawrence possessed an ability to generate visual energy and activity of his figures. The couple with the carriage is moving, the children in the background are jumping, and the boy in the foreground is walking his dog. The people are in the same compositional space, yet they are not directly involved with one another as they continue their appointed activities.

The buildings, with the open windows and doors permit us an inviting glimpse into the activities and conversations inside. The figures, ambiguous in detail, possess enough definition for recognition of gender, age, and race. The compositional color choices relate to the aspect of emphasis and focus by the use of the neutrals next to the vibrant primary colors. The obvious

wheels on the carriage with diagonal lines repeat themselves in the outstretched legs, arms, and railings.

The paradigm of Modernism attributed to Lawrence, outlines his style, subject matter, and intent. “The so-called Great Migration of African Americans from the south to the north between 1913 and 1946 may be considered the pivotal event in the history of African Americans in modernism” (Sims, 2003, p. 41). Lawrence became more than a masterful storyteller. He was also a documenter of the economic, social, and political aspirations of African Americans. His detailed panels demonstrated his commitment to tell the story in the best possible light of hope and newfound awakenings within the African American culture. The painting [*The Library*](#), (Lawrence, J., 1960, Appendix A) images of businesses, and specific structures point to the determination to take advantage of literacy and societal freedoms once denied to African Americans. To illustrate these concepts demonstratively, he used bold color, large figures with large powerful features, and a dynamic sense of movement.

The principles in his spatial design demonstrate a skill and artistic awareness of depth, contrasting color, and center of emphasis. Jacob Lawrence encapsulates various hints of other artist’s styles, such as Picasso, Matisse, and African American artist, Archibald Motley. Is it the amount of visual references, the use of bold color, the absence of tonality, or the various shapes that capture and hold our attention to his artwork? Lawrence’s paintings entail such attention to detail of the events within the story and continues to command our consciousness. For example, another painting by Lawrence entitled, [*The Seamstress*](#), (Lawrence, J., 1946, Appendix A) shows a woman hard at work with scissors, a dress model, material, fabric, sewing machine, and threads so intently occupying the space with the figure. Purposeful art making, passion for

creating, and continuation of storytelling, prevail as significant trademarks to Lawrence's artwork.

The Artist's Life and Times and Interpretation of the Artist's Intent

The life of Jacob Lawrence is just as expansive as the body of artwork he leaves as a legacy to his artistic greatness. Terms such as 'primitive power' and 'expressive modernism' equally were used to describe Lawrence's art (Otfinoski, 2011). Born in Atlantic City, New Jersey, September, 1917, the eldest child of a railroad cook, Lawrence is considered one of the most influential and prominent African American artists of the 20th century. After the separation of his parents when he was very young, he moved with his mother to Pennsylvania and then to Harlem in New York. He attended public schools and his mother enrolled him in an after-school art program, the Harlem Art Workshop, where he was fortunate enough to meet and work with major artists such as Charles Alston. Alston recognized Lawrence's artistic talent and introduced him to artist Aaron Douglas and writer Langston Hughes.

His youth, marked by the United States' participation in WWI, the Great Depression and events leading up to WWII were not the best of times for most Americans of any ethnicity. For African Americans and other economically disadvantaged Americans, it was particularly difficult. The loss of his mother's job, and their need for assistance, compelled Lawrence to quit high school. In 1936, Lawrence moved to up-state New York, and worked in the federally funded Civilian Conservation Corps, planting trees and draining swamps (Otfinoski, 2011).

Lawrence returned to Harlem in 1934, and through the Works Progress Administration (WPA) program, continued his study of art at the Harlem Community Art Center, directed by Augusta Savage. It is at this time that Lawrence was inspired by the richness of the Harlem community

structures of buildings, the movement of people, the color of the city and the juxtaposition of objects in his environment. Simplifying shapes, lines, and forms to create an individualized style, Lawrence developed his own vision as an artist and storyteller. He found that basic shapes defined figures just as powerfully as if they were rendered realistically. His connections and exposure to other artists and art venues permitted Lawrence to experiment with various mediums and subject matter. His greatest compositions reflect African Americans and their life experiences. An avid reader and historian at heart, Lawrence's first major work, based on his research of the black Republic of Haiti founder, Toussaint Louverture, became a series to tell Toussaint's full story. This was the beginning of his intent to retell, inform, enlighten, and inspire everyone about the important contributions of African Americans. The historical references, the events and struggles became more than an illustration of facts, but an expressively personal decision by Lawrence. Eventually, Lawrence began to depict individual, working African Americans such as barbers, shoemakers, carpenters, and tailors.

An established artist by the young age of 25, Jacob Lawrence gained the appreciation and support of major galleries and the art community for further pursuit of artistic ventures. A few of these institutions included The Harmon Foundation, The Baltimore Museum of Art, Julius Rosenwald Foundation fellowships, The Museum of Modern Art, New York City, and The National Institute of Arts and Letters. The exhibition of *The Migration* series at the prestigious New York Downtown Gallery advanced Lawrence as the first African American artist represented by a major art gallery. The opportunities and support continued for Lawrence throughout the 1950's and 1960's generating more creative works of art.

Along with the extended list of galleries and program support, is a succession of teaching opportunities for Lawrence. His first teaching assignment at Black Mountain College in

Asheville, North Carolina, provided a backdrop for inspirational paintings of African American life in the South. He taught at several other institutions of higher learning including Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts, the New School for Social Research and the Pratt Institute in New York City (Otfinoski, 2011). He retired from the University of Washington in Seattle 1983 after teaching there for twelve years. His artwork hangs prominently in numerous prestigious galleries, private collections, museums, and travels as touring exhibitions.

Jacob Lawrence is laudable as a major contributor to African American culture. His legacy of artwork and the artistic ingenuity that he left is timeless in the scheme of recording African American history. His work reaches further than outlining or depicting the culture as historical references, it applies the very essence of a personal vision of interpretation.

He incorporated simple and basic shapes, colors, and lines to illustrate the formality of compositional arrangement. Yet, his compositions contain a strength, boldness, and power that extend beyond just the interpretive elements of design. His subject matter changed over the years, but his commitment to portraying the African American culture did not vary off course.

The expansiveness and diversity of Lawrence's career include his achievement as an artist, illustrator, and educator. His final series, [*Builders*](#), (Lawrence, J., 1980, Appendix A) constructed during his last years of life demonstrate the African American work ethic and Lawrence's continued vision of telling a story. He continued to paint after his retirement in 1983 from the University of Washington. His perseverance, endurance, and persistence for studio art making and building on his artistic ability is admired and appreciated today by the volumes of work in various collections and galleries. The observational keenness and sensitivity of his surroundings are depicted in his series of paintings created in Harlem, then in the South, and finally in the

West. His last series, that illustrates workers coming together to construct a building, perhaps is metaphorically similar to Lawrence's desire to empower the efforts in changing society's views of African Americans. It is important that we include this iconic artist in our study of African American culture and art education in general as a valuable and profound testament to artistic creativity and inventive application of studio processes.

Conclusion

“Africans and African Americans share a common worldview, which comprises a cosmological whole and unites all of life in and among the realms of spirit, history, and nature” (Paris, 2004, p. 1). The thematic organization of this thesis alludes to the paradigm of multicultural education at a deeper level of involvement and integration within the curriculum. In order to compile this information, the author researched and included thought processes for pedagogical inclusion of African American artists and artwork. Each narrative outlines information necessary to be included in a lesson design. It is enough information to warrant quick access and applicability for inclusion of daily or unit instruction.

Resources, supplies, and lesson strategies permit us to be the most effective educators possible. Teachers have at their disposal the ability to locate many resources for lessons supporting current standards of learning. This cohesive resource guide affords educators to look at utilizing African American artists and their artwork in daily art instruction cohesively.

The author’s goal as an educator is to teach to the ‘total individual’ and assist in developing an awareness of the world around them. We may find it difficult to master all of the demands of educational standards, current education strategies, and increasing evaluation guidelines. However, the author’s intent is to assist in resolving the demanding responsibilities perpetuated within daily instruction by providing this resource as an aid to access information pertinent for student learning.

This resource guide enables educators to reach beyond just a visual reference of African American artwork and a quick biographical sketch of the artist, but it shoulders the responsibility of equipping the educator and student with relative information for analyzing the purpose, intent, and influences involved. For example, only referencing “*Mr. Prejudice*” by Horace Pippin, we

may miss the defining figures and their purpose to help Pippin tell his story in responding to racial and segregated treatment during his time spent in the army. The painting, “*The Banjo Lesson*” is viewed differently based upon the realization of Henry Tanner’s primary intent to dispel the negative stereotypes of African Americans that were prevalent in the media sources of his time. The biographies and visuals have always existed for our reference, but it is proposed that we examine the stories underneath these great works of art and explore the cohesive message of African American culture they convey to us.

Appendix A- Works of Art

- Allen, J., (artist), (1941), Brown Madonna, [photograph]
<http://mavcor.yale.edu/conversations/object-narratives/james-latimer-allen-madonna-and-child>
- Alston, C., (artist), (1955), Family group, [painting]
<http://jjacoblawrence.wordpress.com/charles-alston/>
- Alston, C., (artist), (1966), Family in cityscape, [painting] <http://negroartist.com/>
- Biggers, J., (artist), (1992), Ascension, [painting] <http://johnbiggers.com/>
- Biggers, J., (artist), (1997), Family circle, [painting]
http://www.michaelrosenfeldart.com/artists/john-biggers-1924-2000/selectedworks/5#biography_3
- Biggers, J., (artist), (1992), House of turtle, [painting]
<http://www.southernspaces.org/blog/artdiaspora-and-identity-john-biggers-papers>
- Biggers, J., (artist), (1946), Old couple, [painting]
<http://www.michaelrosenfeldart.com/artists/john-biggers-1924-2000/selected-works/1>
- Biggers, J., (artist), (1992), Origins, [painting] <http://johnbiggers.com/>
- Biggers, J., (artist), (1955), The history of Negro education in Morris County, Texas, [painting]
<http://www.michaelrosenfeldart.com/artists/john-biggers-1924-2000/selected-works/2>
- Biggers, J., (artist), (1989), Tree house, [painting]
http://museum.hamptonu.edu/our_museum.cfm
- Catlett, E., (artist), (1980), Maternity, [sculpture]
<http://www.cavetocanvas.com/post/37837982457/elizabeth-catlett-maternity-1980>
- Catlett, E., (artist), (1959), Mother and child, [sculpture]
<http://www.bluffton.edu/womenartists/WomenArtistsPw/catlett/catlett.html>
- Catlett, E., (artist), (1958), Reclining woman, [sculpture]
<http://www.bluffton.edu/womenartists/WomenArtistsPw/catlett/catlett.html>
- Catlett, E., (artist), (1957), Sharecropper, [color linocut]
<http://www.bluffton.edu/womenartists/WomenArtistsPw/catlett/catlett.html>
- Crite, A., (artist), (1941), Harriett and Leon, [painting]
http://www.conservapedia.com/Allan_Rohan_Crite
- Crite, A., (artist), (1935), Parade on Hammond street, [painting]
http://www.phillipscollection.org/research/american_art/artwork/Crite-Parade_Hammond.htm
- Crite, A., (artist), (1936), School's out, [painting]
<http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=5965>

Douglas, A., (artist), (1934), Aspects of the Negro life, [mural painting]
http://amerikainstitut.userweb.mwn.de/American_Art/Artwork/Harlem%20Renaissance/pages/page_4.html

Douglas, A., (artist), (1944), Building more stately mansions, [painting]
<http://www.aarondouglas.ku.edu/resources/mansions.shtml>

Douglas, A., (artist), (1935), The creation, [painting] <http://www.encore-editions.com/aarondouglas-the-creation>

Duncanson, R., (artist), (1849), Summer, [painting]
<http://www.michaelrosenfeldart.com/artists/robert-s-duncanson-1821-1872>

Duncanson, R., (artist), (1863), The quarry, [painting]
<http://www.theathenaeum.org/art/full.php?ID=47463>

Duncanson, R., (artist), (1853), Uncle Tom and little Eva, [painting]
<http://www.dia.org/objectinfo/049548ef-cd51-4396-ba39-140f51a07778.aspx>

Johnson, W., (artist), (1927), Chapel of Notre Dame de la Protection, Cagnes-sur-Mer, [painting]
<http://www.florencemuseum.org/william-h-johnson/william-h-johnson-bio-p3/>

Johnson, W., (artist), (1940-1941), Going to church, [painting]
<http://northbysouth.kenyon.edu/1998/art/pages/whjohnson.htm>

Johnson, W., (artist), (1930), Jacobia hotel, [painting] <http://www.florencemuseum.org/williamh-johnson/william-h-johnson-bio-p3/>

Johnson, W., (artist), (1930), Jim Johnson artist's brother, [painting]
<http://www.florencemuseum.org/william-h-johnson/william-h-johnson-bio-p3/>

Johnson, W., (artist), (1941-1942), Jitterbugs VI, [painting]
<http://whitney.org/ForKids/Collection/WilliamHJohnson>

Johnson, W., (artist), (1939), Swing low sweet chariot, [painting]
<http://northbysouth.kenyon.edu/1998/art/pages/whjohnson.htm>

Johnson, W., (artist), (1942), The dancers, [painting]
<http://www.williammalcolmcollection.com/blog/?p=424>

Lawrence, J., (artist), (1958), Brownstones, [painting]
<http://whitney.org/www/jacoblawrence/art/neighborhood.html>

Lawrence, J., (artist), (1970), Builders, [painting]
<http://artseverydayliving.com/blog/2011/09/jacob-lawrence/> Lawrence, J., (artist), (1940-1941), The great migration of the Negro, [painting]
http://www.phillipscollection.org/research/american_art/artwork/LawrenceMigration_Series1.htm

Lawrence, J., (artist), (1960), The library, [painting]
<http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=14376>

Lawrence, J., (artist), (1938), The life of Toussaint L' Ouverture, [painting]
<http://dmaeducatorblog.wordpress.com/2009/12/17/jacob-lawrence-the-life-of-toussaintlouverture/>

Lawrence, J., (artist), (1946), The seamstress, [painting]
<http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=14376>

Lewis, E., (artist), (1867), Forever free, [sculpture]
http://faculty.risd.edu/bcampbel/Templates/Templates/Afr_Ame_Art2003-neoclassical.html

Lewis, E., (artist), (1875), Hagar in the wilderness, [sculpture]
https://www.courses.psu.edu/arth/arth497c_jhr11/lewis4.html

Lewis, E., (artist), (1868), Hiawatha, [sculpture]
https://www.courses.psu.edu/arth/arth497c_jhr11/lewis4.html

Lewis, E., (artist), (1872), Old Indian arrow maker and his daughter, [sculpture]
https://www.courses.psu.edu/arth/arth497c_jhr11/lewis4.html

Pippin, H., (artist), (1942) John Brown goes to his hanging, [painting]
<http://www.gwarlingo.com/2013/horace-pippin/>

Pippin, H. (artist), (1943), Mr. Prejudice, [painting]
<http://www.gwarlingo.com/2013/horacepippin/>

Pippin, H., (artist), (1945), The barracks, [painting]
http://www.phillipscollection.org/research/american_art/artwork/Pippin-The_Barracks.htm

Pippin, H., (artist), (1931), The end of the war: starting home, [painting]
<http://www.gwarlingo.com/2013/horace-pippin/>

Ringgold, F., (artist), (1963-1965), American people, [painting]
<http://nmwa.org/exhibitions/american-people-black-light>

Ringgold, F., (artist), (1993), Dinner at Aunt Connie's house, [book /cover design]
<http://www.faithringgold.com/ringgold/book03.htm>

Ringgold, F., (artist), (1990), Tar beach, [book/cover design]
<http://www.faithringgold.com/ringgold/d09.htm>

Ringgold, F., (artist), (1986), The dinner quilt, [painting]
<http://www.faithringgold.com/ringgold/book03> Ringgold, F., (artist), (1963), The wall between friends, [painting]
<http://raceandidentityspring2014.blogspot.com/2014/04/kelsey-franks-racism-in-americanpeople.html>

Rockwell, N., (artist), (1963), The problem we all live with, [painting]
http://arthistory.about.com/od/famous_paintings/ss/The-Problem-We-All-Live-With-ByNorman-Rockwell.htm

Savage, A, (artist), (1929), Gamin, [sculpture]

<http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=21658>

Savage, A., (artist), (1928), Green apples, [sculpture]

<http://brblarchive.library.yale.edu/exhibitions/awia/gallery/savage3.html>

Savage, A., (artist), (1930), La Citadelle/freedom, [sculpture]

<http://wwwFOUNDERS.howard.edu/hucollection/savageAugusta2.htm> Savage,

A., (artist), (1939), Lift ev'ry voice and sing, [sculpture]

http://www.1939nyworldsfair.com/worlds_fair/wf_tour/zone-2/the-harp.htm

Tanner, H., (artist), (1893), The bagpipe lesson, [painting]

<http://www.prydein.com/pipes/painting>

Tanner, H. (artist), (1893), The banjo lesson, [painting] <http://www.canvasreplicas.com/Tanner.htm>

Tanner, H., (artist), (1894), The thankful poor, [painting]

<http://www.theathenaeum.org/art/detail.php?ID=359>

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