

A GUIDE TO THE TEACHING OF NEGRO
LITERATURE IN HIGH SCHOOL

APPROVED:

E. G. Ballard

Major Professor

A. M. M. Turner

Minor Professor

E. S. Clinton

Director of the Department of English

Robert B. Toulougy

Dean of the Graduate School

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By

Rose Warren Tucker, B. S.

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INTRODUCTION

Out of the social conditions of slavery and discrimination has grown a tradition of literature in America which has been virtually ignored in our schools. The literature of black Americans is based upon the traditions of folk literature and social protest which present a self-revelation unsurpassed in literature written by white Americans. Herbert Hill states in Anger and Beyond that

the literature created by Negroes is not only a protest against the irrational racial situation, not only an attempt to explain the unique status of American Negroes to white society and to the world, but, most significantly, the literature of American Negroes is an attempt to explain the racial situation to themselves (3, p. xv).

The purpose of a unit in Negro literature would be first of all to promote language development and to enhance the students' appreciation of good literature. Quality will not be sacrificed in order to present the literature of Negroes. Just as only white American writers of quality are considered worth studying in our high schools, only Negro writers of quality will be considered worth studying.

A second purpose for such a unit is to promote growth in the understanding and appreciation of the Negro and his contribution to literature. Part of the racial problem in America is derived from the lack of understanding of Negroes

by white Americans and by the lack of appreciation of the Negroes' contributions to American culture. This will persist as long as literature by American Negroes is excluded from our school library shelves and from our English classrooms. In Nancy Larrick's article "The All-White World of Children's Books," she states: "There seems little chance of developing the humility so urgently needed for world cooperation, instead of world conflict, as long as our children are brought up on gentle doses of racism through their books" (4, p. 63).

A unit such as this one will also help Negro students appreciate their own heritage. Nancy Larrick also states that

across the country, 6,340,000 non-white children are learning to read and to understand the American way of life in books which either omit them entirely or scarcely mention them. There is no need to elaborate upon the damage--much of it irreparable--to the Negro child's personality (4, p. 63).

A unit such as this cannot repair all of the damage which has been done, but it can help the Negro child realize that he does have a cultural heritage and that Negroes have made worthwhile literary contributions. Barbara Dodds states that "if the white student is injured by a false idea of his importance, the Negro student is injured far more by a false idea of his inferiority" (2, p. 3). By presenting a unit on Negro literature to students, both black and white students

will be able to recognize the falsity of their previous assumptions and will be able to appreciate the Negro for the unique contributions he has made to American literature.

There are many reasons for our present concern for Negro literature. Robert Bone states the following reasons:

First, [there is] the emergence in recent years of a substantial body of good writing by American Negroes. And second is the determined assault by black students upon the racist practices that permeate our schools and universities, an assault which has produced a major crisis in American education (1, p. 510).

Not only is there a necessity at the present time for the addition of Negro literature to the curriculum, but there is also a possibility that Negro literature will add a great deal to the English curriculum. In Anger and Beyond, Herbert Hill states the following:

The unique social experiences of the American Negro is the stuff of great literature. . . . It is a story worthy of a Balzac or a Tolstoi, of a Pushkin or a Joyce, and today there are Negro writers who are preparing to do justice to that story, which is central to an understanding of life in America (3, p. xxii).

American literature, especially, has been incomplete without the unique contributions of the American Negro writers. It is time for our school's curriculum to close this gap and present to all of our students the true and complete story of American literature and American life which is present in the Negro's own story of his life in America.

Bone feels that certain preparations must be made by black and white students and teachers before entering into a

study of Negro literature. He feels that the white students need to study some Negro history and sociology, and both white students and teachers need some kind of sensitivity training to uproot any vestiges of unconscious racism. The focus of the black students' education, according to Bone, needs to be "literary and cosmopolitan," and "the education of black teachers should be aimed at overcoming their parochialism, broadening their intellectual and literary horizons, and consolidating their knowledge of their American and European heritage" (1, p. 515). Bone also states that

what is required on each side of the color line is an act of transcendence, a breaking out of the rigid compartments of American life. The teaching of black literature--and the learning to teach it--is of necessity a liberating, a transforming experience, a means of repairing the fatal breach that has appeared in the nation's soul (1, p. 515).

Since the eleventh grade year is the year in which students are introduced to a systematic study of American literature, this is the year in which a sequential study of Negro literature can be included in the curriculum. The most desirable method of introducing Negro literature would be to include it in the regular teaching of American literature; however, until this is done on a wide scale, a separate unit of Negro literature is necessary in order to present a sequential study of the Negro's contributions to literature.

This paper will be a survey of the major American Negro writers from pre-Civil War days to the present times.

Background information concerning each major period will be given, along with information about each author and comments about the selections which are appropriate for classroom discussion. Teachers will also be given suggestions for presenting the material to class, as well as suggested questions and assignments. In conclusion, it will be shown how the literature presented can be fused into the eleventh grade course of study for the Fort Worth Public Schools.

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3. Hill, Herbert, editor, Anger and Beyond, New York, Harper and Row, Publishers, 1966.
4. Larrick, Nancy, "The All-White World of Children's Books," The Saturday Review, XLVIII (September, 1965), 63-65, 84-85.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES AND PRE-CIVIL WAR WRITERS

Many authorities, including Robert Bone, feel that some introductory activities are necessary to familiarize students with the Negro heritage and to enhance their appreciation of Negro culture. The week prior to the beginning of the unit may be used to assign individual reports on famous Negro Americans. Some who may be included are Benjamin Banneker, Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver, Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglas, and Mary McCloud Bethune. Many students will be able to draw portraits of some great American Negroes. These may be used for a bulletin board display which features great American Negroes.

Since most Negro and white students will be unfamiliar with the history of the Negro in the United States, the first day of the unit may be devoted to a discussion of the Negroes' role in American history. As a reference the teacher may use as a source The Negro in Our History by Carter G. Woodson and Charles H. Wesley and Langston Hughes' A Pictorial History of the Negro in America. The class may be divided into four study groups: the African Past and

Slavery, Reconstruction, the Negro in the Twentieth Century, and the Negro Today and the Search for Freedom.

The next two days of introductory activities may be devoted to committee reports and individual reports on famous American Negroes. Students should be guided into the realization that American Negroes have played an important part in every major war and movement which has occurred in our country.

Students can be introduced to the pre-Civil War writers by helping them to realize that according to Barbara Dodds, these writings "have more historical than literary value" (2, p. 13). They should be helped to recognize the conditions of pre-Civil War America and the great controversy over slavery which prevailed throughout the country. In 1852, Harriett Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin was published and did more than any other literary work to stir up the hearts of the people against slavery.

Phyllis Wheatley (1753-1784) is the first major poet to be studied. In The Negro Caravan, a great deal of information concerning Miss Wheatley's life and works may be found. One of her most remembered poems is a tribute to George Washington after his appointment as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army. It is an excellent poem for an introduction to Wheatley's writing style. After reading "His Excellency General Washington," students should be guided into a

realization of the fact that Phyllis Wheatley's style and expression follow closely the English classical tradition of poetry.

Frederick Douglas (1817-1895) is another pre-Civil War writer worth studying. Students will be interested in facts about his life which can be found in Negro Caravan. He was a self-educated ex-slave who became an abolitionist and a great orator. His "long oratorical career ranked him with the greatest of nineteenth-century orators" (1, p. 606).

One of Douglas' little known works of fiction, "The Heroic Slave," is a short story which students will enjoy reading. It is a "short story about Madison, who led the famous uprising in 1841 on the Creole, a ship engaged in the domestic slave trade" (1, p. 19).

Class Procedure:

1. Assigned Reading.
2. Class Discussion.
3. Points of Emphasis.

Class Discussion:

1. What is the purpose of Mr. Listwell in the story?
2. What is the effect of having most of the story told by Tom Gant, the first mate?

Points of Emphasis:

1. Contrast the attitudes of Tom Gant and Captain Williams concerning the slave trade.
2. Discuss Tom Gant's change in attitude and character as a result of the slave revolt.

Suggested Additional Readings for Pre-Civil War Writers:

1. Douglas, Frederick, Narrative of a Slave, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1960.
2. Banneker, Benjamin, "Letter to the Secretary of State" and "A Plan of Peace-Office for the United States."

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3. Hughes, Langston and Meltzer, Milton, A Pictorial History of the Negro in America, New York, Crown Publishers, Inc., 1963.
4. Woodson, Carter G. and Wesley, Charles H., The Negro in Our History, Washington, D. C., The Associated Publishers, Inc., 1966.

CHAPTER II

POST-CIVIL WAR WRITERS

Students should be introduced to the conditions which followed the Civil War. This was the Gilded Age, the period of "rags to riches." The rising Negro middle class or the "Talented Tenth" acquired a boundless faith in the American dream. Bone states the following:

They were precipitated by Emancipation into an expanding economy, and into a society whose main prize was success. These were decades of rapid industrialization, of the rise from rags to riches, of Horatio Alger and Silas Lapham. Progress was in the air, and a belief in race progress was an aspect of a basic nineteenth-century dogma. Racial advancement was regarded as synonymous with individual success, and was simply an expression of the prevailing American ethos, in Negro idiom (1, p. 13).

This was the period in which Negroes hoped that through education they would soon become equal citizens. Barbara Dodds states that because of this belief "much of the writing of this period is somewhat conservative, attempting to minimize the injustices suffered by the Negro and to reassure the whites that the Negro appreciated their kindness" (3, p. 17).

Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906) is one of the major writers of this period. He utilizes the Negro dialect and

the Negro folk tradition. Poems which can be studied in class are "Little Brown Baby," "We Wear the Mask," and "Dawn."

Class Procedure:

1. Reading aloud in class. The teacher may have to read "Little Brown Baby" because it is written in early Negro dialect.
2. Class discussion.

Class Discussion ("Little Brown Baby"):

1. Discuss some other American writers who wrote in dialect (James Whitcomb Riley).
2. What characteristics of early Negro folk tradition are evident in the poem?
3. What does the poem tell you about the father's feelings toward his small son?

Class Discussion ("We Wear the Mask"):

1. Discuss the symbolic meaning of the mask.
2. What does the poem tell you about the inhibited feelings of the post-Civil War Negroes?

Class Discussion ("Dawn"):

1. Discuss the figurative language in this four line poem.
2. What does the poem tell you about the versatility of Paul Laurence Dunbar?

W. E. Burghardt Dubois (1868-1963) is the second writer of this period to be discussed. He was the leader of the opposition forces which questioned the leadership of appeasers such as Booker T. Washington. He became the leader of the movement for complete equality of the Negro and founded the

Niagara Movement which was a forerunner to the N.A.A.C.P. Pupils will be especially interested in his life and in his controversy with Booker T. Washington.

Barbara Dodds suggests the use of two of Dubois' essays from The Souls of Black Folk. They are "Of the Meaning of Progress" and "Of the Coming of John." Both are heart-rending and touching, showing the expressive and poignant way in which the author was able to reveal the hopes, fears, strengths, and disappointments of the Negro people. Barbara Dodds states the following concerning the two narratives:

"Of the Meaning of Progress" is the poignant story of the backwoods community where Dubois first taught school. It shows the tragedy but also the strength of people barely managing to subsist against nature. "Of the Coming of John" tells the tragedy of an educated Negro who refused to accept segregation (3, p. 19).

Class Procedure:

1. Assigned Reading.
2. Class Discussion.
3. Assignment.

Class Discussion ("Of the Meaning of Progress"):

1. What are the characteristics of the community where Dubois taught?
2. Discuss some of the families which Dubois encountered. What happened to their hopes and their dreams?
3. What characters do you identify with? Why? (Girls will probably identify with Josie, boys with Jim.)

Class Discussion ("Of the Coming of John"):

1. Discuss how John emerged from a boy to become a man.

2. Discuss the relationship between the two Johns. How did their paths meet, and what was the effect on both of them?
3. How did the narrative end? What caused John's tragedy?

Assignment:

Write a two page essay giving your reaction to either "Of the Meaning of Progress" or "Of the Coming of John." Include a discussion of characters or incidents which had an effect upon you.

One of the best poems written by Dubois, "A Litany at Atlanta," expresses a plea for justice for the Negro. It is written in blank verse and can be read aloud by the teacher or by one of the class members who reads well. The italicized lines can be read in a chorus by the entire class.

Class Procedure:

1. Class Reading.
2. Class Discussion.

Class Discussion:

1. What is the verse form of the poem? What other American poet wrote verse forms similar to Dubois? (Students may be led to compare Dubois with Walt Whitman.)
2. Pick out some of the images in the poem. Explain their meanings.
3. What conclusions are derived at concerning what can be done to eliminate injustice? Explain.

James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938) "was as close to a Renaissance man as the conditions of American society would

permit a Negro to be" (5, p. 69). He was a teacher, lawyer, newspaperman, and composer at one time or another during his career. Johnson can be studied as the typical rising middle class Negro who emerged during the post-Civil War period. Some of his poems, especially "The Creation," may be already familiar to the students. In his publication God's Trombones, he wrote a series of sermons which are based upon biblical stories. Two of these, "The Creation" and "The Prodigal Son," may be read aloud in class as choral readings. No discussion is necessary except for mentioning of the vivid imagery which occurs in both poems. Many students will want to memorize these poems. It may be well to encourage this.

Suggested Additional Readings for Post-Civil War Writers:

Dubois, W. E. B., "Of Booker T. Washington," The Souls of Black Folk.

Washington, Booker T., Up from Slavery. Some students may like to read both Dubois and Booker T. Washington in order to compare their views.

Johnson, James Weldon, The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man. This is the story of a Negro man who abandoned his race out of cowardice.

Johnson, James Weldon, Along This Way. This is Johnson's autobiography which shows the life of a middle-class Negro during this period.

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4. Dubois, W. E. Burghardt, Souls of Black Folk, Chicago, A. C. McClurg and Company, 1931.
5. Emanuel, James A. and Gross, Theodore L., Dark Symphony, New York, The Free Press, 1968.

CHAPTER III

THE NEGRO RENAISSANCE

One of the most significant developments and one which had a tremendous effect upon the trend of Negro literature took place during the 1920's when suddenly Negroes became aware of their unique culture and of the fact that they had made a distinct contribution to American culture. Alain Locke states the following concerning this period of Negro writings:

In Negro expression the position of cultural conformity and the suppression of racial emphasis has since been reversed,--first by the dialect school of Negro expression of which Paul Laurence Dunbar was the leading exponent and more lately still by the younger contemporary school of "racial self-expression," which since 1917 or thereabouts has produced the most outstanding formal contributions of the Negro to American literature and art (7, p. 525).

Students may be introduced to the Negro Renaissance by the reading of Alain Locke's article "The New Negro" in the book of the same name which was edited by him. In it, the author stressed the fact that the "new Negro" of the 1920's has thrown off the old stereotype and suddenly emerged as a proud people aware of their rights and groping for their dignity. He states this idea in the following lines:

Similarly the mind of the Negro seems suddenly to have slipped from under the tyranny of social intimidation and to be shaking off the psychology of imitation and

implied inferiority. By shedding the old chrysalis of the Negro problem we are achieving something like a spiritual emancipation (8, p. 4).

The first day of the discussion may be devoted to a comparison of the Negro revolution of the 1920's to the one which has occurred forty years later, in the 1960's. The teacher will want to stress the forces which brought on the Negro Renaissance. Emanuel and Gross state that these forces are a confluence of historical and social developments which resulted in a defeat of Booker T. Washington's conciliatory position, the origin and growth of the N.A.A.C.P., World War I, the migration of the Southern Negro to Northern cities, and the Garvey back-to-Africa movement (4, p. 65).

Emanuel and Gross also discuss several characteristics of the Negro Renaissance writer. The following are some of the characteristics discussed by the editors: the use of dialect; fondness for the exotic, the bizarre, and at times the surrealistic; sentimentality and impressionism; pug-naciousness and at times violence; overt protestation such as in the poems of McKay and the essays of Dubois; criticism of white society through satire or cynicism, such as in stories of Rudolph Fisher, Eric Walrond, and Langston Hughes; highly emotional writing as in the fiction of Jean Toomer, Eric Walrond, and Claude McKay and in the poetry of Countee Cullen and Langston Hughes (4, p. 66). Students may be

asked to look for examples of these characteristics as they read the selections by the writers who will be studied.

The most violent and uncompromising of the Renaissance writers, Claude McKay (1891-1948), is an excellent writer to begin the study of the Negro Renaissance in order to recognize the general mood of the movement. Emanuel and Gross state that "the full flowering of the Negro Awakening begins with the publication of Claude McKay's 'If We Must Die' in The Liberator in 1919" (4, p. 65). Many of the students may want to compare McKay's ideas with those of the Black Power Movement today. "If We Must Die" is a protest poem which expresses racial pride and militant opposition to those who suppress the Negroes.

Class Procedure:

1. Class reading of poem.
2. Class Discussion.

Class Discussion:

1. Discuss McKay's use of figurative language.
2. Locate the words which are emotionally packed and discuss their effect upon the students.

"Summer Morn in New Hampshire" is described by Barbara Dodds as "a delicate poem about night and dawn far away from love" (3, p. 22). It is a beautiful poem full of vivid imagery and should appeal to most high school students.

Class Discussion:

1. Discuss the author's use of imagery.
2. What is the theme of the poem? One possible answer is that it reveals the author's feelings during a night and dawn while he is far away from love.

If the poem "If We Must Die" causes some students to react with mixed feelings to Claude McKay because of his extreme militancy, a better understanding of him may develop from the reading of his poem "America." In this poem he expresses a love for his country even though it is often cruel to him. This is expressed in the following lines:

Although she feeds me bread of bitterness,
And sinks into my throat her tiger's tooth,
Stealing my breadth of life, I will confess
I love this cultured hell that tests my youth!

Class Discussion:

1. Discuss the theme of "America."
2. What emotional appeal does the figurative language have?
3. Compare your reaction to "America" with your reaction to "If We Must Die." This can be done in the form of a short essay.

One of the most important writers of the Negro Renaissance, Jean Toomer (1894-1967), attempted to rise above the race issue and to assert himself as a member of the human race. He made the following statement: "I am of no particular race; I am of the human race, a man at large in the human world, preparing a new race" (4, p. 95). Regardless of this

proclamation, the author's most important product is a novel which consists of "a series of vignettes and poems about life among Negroes in the South" (3, p. 24). Most of the stories in Cane are elaborate character sketches which are too violent and sensual for the average high school student. However, some of the more mature students may be able to read "Ester" or "Avey," which both "illustrate Toomer's special talents as a writer and his compassion for those people who do not have the strength to triumph over their limitations" (4, p. 98).

Two poems from Cane are suitable for classroom discussion. Both "Song of the Son" and "Georgia Dusk" illustrate the author's talent as a poet and his deep compassion for the Negro people and the problems which they have had to bear.

Class Discussion ("Song of the Son"):

1. How does Jean Toomer draw his imagery from the racial past?
2. Find the words which have emotional appeal to you.

Class Discussion ("Georgia Dusk"):

1. Compare Toomer's symbolism from the racial past with that which was used in "Song of the Son."
2. Who are "the singers" in the last stanza?

Barbara Dodds says that "Countee Cullen (1903-1946) was one of the most significant writers of the Negro Renaissance" (3, p. 24). He was principally a poet who wrote about the

problems and fears of the Negro people without expressing the violence of Paul McKay or the extreme passion of Jean Toomer. Well educated, Cullen attended New York University and received his master's degree from Harvard University. He won the Witter Bynner Poetry Award while he was an undergraduate in college, and in 1925, at the age of twenty-two, he published his first volume of poetry.

In "Heritage" Countee Cullen explores the American Negroes' reactions to various aspects of Africa and African life. It is a soul-searching song of an American Negro who finds much in Africa to which he can and should relate. However, he realizes that his roots are also deep in Western culture after three hundred years of life in America.

Class Discussion:

1. What are some of the aspects of African culture to which the author relates?
2. In the third stanza, why does the author fail to find peace?
3. In the last stanza, how does the author's revelation compare to today's search for a black Christ? Students may wish to read the "Ebony" article in the July, 1969, issue.

"For a Lady I Know" is a four line poem which deals subtly with the ridiculousness of racial discrimination. Students may be asked to react to the implications of this poem.

"Saturday's Child" is the tale of a child born in poverty and is told in the first person. The author compares the poor child's lot with that of the child born with a "silver spoon" in his mouth. The reader gets a deep insight into the conditions of poverty and the little hope it offers to those who are unfortunate enough to be born in it.

Class Discussion:

1. What is the difference between the circumstances of the poor and the rich child's circumstances at birth?
2. Discuss the figures of speech used in the author's description of the poor child's circumstances.

"Yet Do I Marvel" is an excellent poem with which to end the study of Countee Cullen. In it he states that he does not ordinarily question the ways of God, but he does "marvel at this curious thing/ To make a poet black, and bid him sing." Students may be interested in discussing some of the problems of Negro writers, especially in the 1920's. The teachers may stress some of the points brought out by Sarah E. Wright in "Roadblocks to the Development of Negro Writers" in The American Negro Writer and His Roots. In this article, she stresses that

Negro writers are beset by the special handicaps of being Negroes and of writing on the "Negro theme." [They are beset by] the conditions that are destructive of the spiritual and intellectual development of the entire Negro group . . .: inferior educational facilities, especially depressed economic conditions, inferior cultural opportunities, and disfranchisement. . . . [In

addition to that] opportunities for apprenticeships in newer channels of communication are severely limited and are granted only when the writer will write "white" (10, p. 61).

Zora Neale Hurston (1903-1960) wrote one of the most significant novels of the Negro Renaissance, Their Eyes Were Watching God, which is the story of a widow who threw off respectability for a marriage which brought her love and fulfillment. "Hurricane," which is taken from the novel, is a very good selection for high school students. It tells of one of the many terrible experiences which Janie underwent in her life with Tea Cake and her happiness even in the face of hardships and dangers. Hurston sees meaning and fulfillment of life in the folk culture of the Negro masses. Robert Bone makes the following statement about Janie: "In true Renaissance spirit, it is the folk culture, through Tea-Cake, which provides means of her spiritual fulfillment" (1, p. 131). The story is written in the Negro dialect prevalent during the early part of this century, and because of this students will need some help in reading the selection.

Class Discussion:

1. Discuss the effectiveness of the dialect employed by the author.
2. What are some of the characteristics of the folk culture found in this selection?
3. Why did Tea-Cake and Janie refuse to run away from the hurricane? What were the consequences of their decision?

4. As a result of their experience in escaping the terror of the hurrican, how does Janie reveal her satisfaction and fulfillment in life?

Bone states that "Arna Bontemps (1902-) is a transitional figure whose novels bear the mark of the Negro Renaissance and of the depression years which follow" (1, p. 120). Bontemps was educated in California but went to Harlem in 1924 during the midst of the Negro awakening, where he became a part of the movement. The author is not only well known for his novels and poetry but also for his biographies and his editions of Negro anthologies.

Arna Bontemps wrote three novels--God Sends Sunday, Drums at Dusk, and Black Thunder. Of these, Black Thunder is considered the best. It is a historical novel based upon "authentic court records of the state of Virginia, which describe an abortive slave rebellion near Virginia in the year 1800" (1, p. 121). Although the hero of the novel, Gabriel Prosser, is an illiterate slave, he is a profound leader who possesses honor and dignity which most students will admire. Two selections from Black Thunder which are included in the Negro Caravan are appropriate for classroom use. "The Conspirators" shows how the slaves met and planned the insurrection, and "The Trial" relates the trial of the leading conspirator, Gabriel Prosser. Both excerpts relate the love of freedom and human dignity for which these black men fought and died.

Class Discussion ("The Conspirators"):

1. Discuss the quotation from Toussaint L'Overture which is at the beginning of the selection. Many students may not know who he is, and the teacher may wish to bring out some facts concerning his life. The discussion may lead to the slave rebellion in Haiti and the role which Toussaint L'Overture played in it.
2. What is your impression of Gabriel? Why?
3. Discuss Gabriel's statement: "A wild bird what's in a cage will die anyhow, sooner or later."

Class Discussion ("The Trial"):

1. Discuss the class' reaction to Gabriel in this excerpt. Have their opinions changed or been enhanced?
2. How does Gabriel show that in many ways he is as smart as the white lawyer questioning him?
3. Does the court abide by the American court system in which a man is innocent until proven guilty? Explain.

Most of Arna Bontemps' poems can be found in The Poetry of the Negro which was edited by Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps. Most of them deal with nature, and Barbara Dodds feels that they have a limited appeal with adolescents. However, three of these poems may be read and possibly enjoyed by some of the students.

Class Discussion ("A Black Man Talks of Reaping"):

1. What other writer in America has written poetry in this style? One answer may be Walt Whitman.
2. What are the symbolical meanings of sowing and reaping?

Class Discussion ("Golgotha Is a Mountain"):

2. What is the theme of the poem? (Man's history in mountains.)

2. Pick out the figures of speech used by the author. How effective are they?

Class Discussion ("A Note of Humility"):

1. What is the theme of the poem? (Death.)
2. What lines denote the fact that man shares this fate with even the most insignificant creatures?
For it will be with us as with the bee,
The meager ant, the sea-gull and the loon.

One of the best known of the Negro writers, Langston Hughes (1902-1967), has written almost every genre of literature. He has written more than any other Negro writer, and his works expand the areas of the Negro Renaissance, the Post-Depression era, and contemporary times. He was close to the Negro masses and understood their thoughts, fears, and hopes.

Working in every major fictional and nonfictional form, ever experimenting and ever remaining close to his racial sources without narrowing his sympathies, Hughes solidly earned his unofficial title as "the Poet Laureate of the Negro People" (4, p. 191).

Additional information about Hughes' life can be found in Emanuel and Gross' Dark Symphony and in Robert Bone's The Negro Novel in America.

In Langston Hughes' collection of short stories, Laughing to Keep from Crying, "One Friday Morning" is the story of a Negro girl in a Northern high school who was informed that she would win the art award which entailed a scholarship to the local art school. Nancy Lee's enthusiasm was curtailed the morning of the award when she was informed that the award

would not be given to her because the club had discovered that she was colored.

Class Discussion:

1. Characterize Nancy Lee. What kind is she? How does she show faith in the American dream?
2. What is your opinion of Miss O'Shay? How does she show her sincerity?
3. How does Nancy accept her disappointment?

Another short story by Hughes which is also found in The Langston Hughes Reader is "Thank You, Ma'am." This is the story of a young boy who tries to snatch a woman's purse. The attempt backfires, and she takes him home, washes his face, and gives him dinner. It is a very short, delightful story which high school students will enjoy.

Class Discussion:

1. What do you think Mrs. Jones' purpose was in taking Roger home?
2. What do you think Roger's home life is like?
3. What lines reveal why Mrs. Jones sympathized with Roger?

Langston Hughes' poems can be found in The Poetry of the Negro, edited by Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps. "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" is a moving poem which tells the history of the Negro race through the rivers he has lived near. "I, Too, Sing America" predicts the Negro's future

equality in America. Written in dialect, "Mother to Son" is a dramatic monologue in which a mother gives advice to her son about the hardships he must expect in life. An excellent poem to end the study of Langston Hughes is "Let America Be America Again." It expresses hope that America will one day be the land of dreams, the land of freedom for all people.

Class Procedure:

1. Class Reading.
2. Class Discussion.
3. Points of Emphasis.

Class Discussion ("The Negro Speaks of Rivers"):

1. How do the rivers mentioned indicate the history of the Negro race?
2. Discuss the meaning of the lines: "My soul has grown deep like the rivers."

Class Discussion ("I, Too, Sing America"):

1. What lines hint at the injustices done to the Negro in America?
2. What lines indicate Hughes' faith that equality will be gained by the Negro?

Class Discussion ("Mother to Son"):

1. What type of poem is this? (Dramatic monologue.)
2. Discuss the effectiveness of the Negro dialect in this poem.
3. Discuss the possible meaning of the various images (tacks, splinters, boards, etc.).

Class Discussion ("Let America Be America Again"):

1. According to the poem, to what groups has the dream of America been denied?

2. How does Langston Hughes show his faith in America even though he has been denied some of its privileges?

Points of Emphasis:

The teacher may wish to emphasize Langston Hughes' faith in America and in the American dream of equality and justice for all. Even though in many of his works he points out the injustices to Negroes, he never fails to express hope that America will one day be the land of the free. This can be brought out in class discussions of "One Friday Morning," "I, Too, Sing America," and "Let America Be America Again."

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CHAPTER IV

POST-DEPRESSION

The gay and exciting mood of the 1920's ended with the crash of the stock market in 1929. Bone says that "the gay, sporty mood of the flapper era was replaced by a new social consciousness, which emanated from vast stirrings beneath the surface of American society" (1, p. 112). Because of the seeming collapse of the free enterprise system, many disenchanted intellectuals, including the Negro intelligentsia, responded to the crises by a sharp turn to the political left. Bone also states that

whatever one's evaluation of the Communist party's position, it exerted a profound influence on the Negro writers of the 1930's who accepted it in full or in part. Wherever it was put forward, it gave additional impetus to the nationalist content of Negro literature (1, p. 116).

Students may be given some background about the depression era and the idealistic communist goals which appealed to these writers. It should be pointed out to students that most of the writers later rejected communism when they discovered its actual practices. Students should also be told to look for this influence as they read the Negro literature from this period.

Not only did writers during this period register social protest but they also continued an interest in the Negro

heritage that had begun in the 1920's. Bone states that

the writers of the 1930's accepted "race material" as the basis for their art, and sought to expand their social consciousness in order to cope with it more effectively. The result was a gain in scope which at once embraced depth in time and breadth in understanding of contemporary society (1, p. 118).

Since realism and naturalism permeated the writings of Negroes during this depressed era, students should be given some background in these literary concepts so that they can recognize them in the writings of this period.

Finding appropriate classroom material from this period is extremely difficult, since there is much expression of violence and sex. The reading material used in the unit was chosen with care. However, the individual teacher must still use her judgment concerning the appropriateness of material, according to the maturity of her students.

One of the most widely recognized Negro authors, Richard Wright (1908-1960), wrote primarily of the Negro's estrangement from American society. According to Emanuel and Gross, he was "the first twentieth-century writer to deal extensively with the economic and moral problems of the Negro as they existed in the ghetto" (3, p. 222).

Wright's personal story of his own suppressed and violent youth are told in his autobiography, Black Boy. Some of the more mature students will want to read this for a full account of Richard Wright and his attitudes toward American society.

Wright was one of the writers who turned at first toward a Marxist answer to the Negro's problems. He later rejected Communism and turned to existentialism. These viewpoints are expressed in his writings along with his bitter denunciation of America and his acceptance of violence as a means of reacting against the society which has oppressed his people. A few of his writings have been found which may appeal to the average student, but, for much of his writings, it may be necessary for the teacher to use her professional judgment in modifying assignments.

Class Procedure:

1. Assigned Reading.
2. Class Discussion.
3. Points of Emphasis.
4. Class Assignment.

The first two short selections by Wright are the less violent selections from Eight Men. Both of these are appropriate for the average student. "The Man Who Saw the Flood" is the story of a family who is hurt by the flood and who has continuously been hurt and subjugated by the white man. "Man of All Work" is the story of a man who is so desperate for a job that he dresses in his wife's clothing. It is an exciting and moving story, parts of which could be dramatized in class.

Class Discussion ("The Man Who Saw the Flood"):

1. Describe the family's reaction to the damage done by the flood.
2. Does Tom have a choice in whether or not to return to Burgess? Explain.
3. What is the theme of the story? (How nature and the white man gang up to destroy the Negro's chances.) How is this exemplified in the story?

Class Discussion ("Man of All Work"):

1. What were Carl's reasons for dressing as a woman? Give your reactions to it.
2. What was the high point of interest in the story?
3. Was the story realistic? Explain.

"The Ethics of Jim Crow Living" is an autobiographical sketch of Richard Wright which is important in understanding Wright's attitude toward American society. Mature students may desire to read Black Boy in order to get a more thorough understanding of the circumstances of the author's boyhood. However, this sketch gives some of the lessons that most black boys growing up in the South during Wright's boyhood had to learn in order to survive in a Jim Crow society.

Class Discussion ("The Ethics of Jim Crow Living"):

1. List some of the trials which Wright faced as a boy in a Jim Crow society.
2. How did he learn to handle these situations?

Point of Emphasis:

The loss of dignity and manhood experienced by the author as he accepted the various circumstances of Jim Crow living should be stressed.

Native Son is generally recognized as Richard Wright's masterpiece because in it he revealed all of his anger, frustrations, and fears as he denounced society's strangling of Negro youth. "The Plea" is taken from Native Son; it is the argument for Bigger Thomas, the protagonist in the novel who has committed two murders. In the lawyer's plea for Bigger Thomas, Richard Wright injects all of his feelings about society's estrangement from the Negro and places the blame for Bigger Thomas' crimes squarely upon the shoulders of the American society which, he says, has used the Negro and has taught him only hate and brutality. The lawyer ends his plea by claiming that this boy must live in order that society may redeem itself. This is seen in the following lines:

Your Honor, I ask in the name of all we are and believe, that you spare this boy's life! With every atom of my being, I beg this in order that not only this black boy live, but that we ourselves may not die (5, p. 190).

The teacher must use her judgment about teaching this selection. She may only want to use this with very mature students or with rapid learning classes. Some of the students may want to read the entire novel Native Son and should be encouraged to do so if they are mature enough to understand it.

Class Discussion ("The Plea"):

1. What were the major points of Mr. Max's plea?
2. How does he hold society responsible for Bigger Thomas' crimes?

Point of Emphasis:

The words which may bring about emotional response should be picked out and discussed.

Assignment:

Can one be ever justified in blaming society for the transgressions of a member of that society? Defend your answer in a 400 word essay. Consider Mr. Max's plea for Bigger Thomas and refer to it whenever necessary.

Also considered one of the major writers of this period is Ralph Ellison (1914-), who wrote the novel Invisible Man, which is considered one of the greatest works by a Negro author. Although Ellison was attracted by radical politics like Richard Wright, he never joined the Communist party because of his extreme individuality. This is reflected in most of his literary works.

Ellison explores the theme of racial identity in Invisible Man and in many other works. Many critics feel that Invisible Man is not appropriate for high school students because "the language is earthy, and there are several scenes that are very raw, especially a rape scene and the castration dream at the end" (2, p. 36). However, one of his short stories, "Flying Home," which is found in Emanuel and Gross' book Dark Symphony, was written in the period before the publication of Invisible Man, and it reflects much of his thinking that is found in the novel.

Emanuel and Gross state that in "Flying Home" the author "underscores the difficulty that a young Negro has in knowing

his place in contemporary white society and his own complex relationship to his racial heritage" (3, p. 251). In the short story, Todd is an army pilot on a training mission who has crashed on a plantation in Alabama. His primary concern is to impress his white superiors, and he wishes to disassociate himself from the old, illiterate farmhand who tries to help him. At the end, it is the old farmhand who must save him from the white planter, and Todd is forced into the realization that he has an identification with the old Negro that no amount of education or technological ability can allow him to escape.

Class Discussion ("Flying Home"):

1. What is the significance of the story told by Jefferson, the old Negro, concerning his experience as an angel? How did Todd react to the story?
2. In the light of this short story, discuss the following statement made by Ralph Ellison: "If I cannot look at the most brutalized Negro on the street, even when he irritates me and makes me want to bash his head in because he's goofing off, I must still say within myself, 'Well, that's you too, Ellison?' And I'm not talking about guilt but of an identification which goes beyond race" (Harper's, March, 1967).

Depending upon the maturity and interest of each class, this discussion question can be used as a written assignment or as a panel discussion in class where different members may discuss the significance of the statement in terms of the story and in terms of their own experiences.

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CHAPTER V

THE POSTWAR AND CONTEMPORARY WRITERS

The following statement by Robert Bone best describes the post World War II conditions which had a tremendous effect upon Negro America and consequently upon the literature produced by black Americans:

After Pearl Harbor the American Negro lived through a period of rapid social change, with dramatic consequences for the racial status quo. In spite of the war riots, the social climate of the war years was distinctly favorable to the Negro's cause. Although the war in the Pacific had unmistakable racial overtones, the war against Hitler called forth a sharp attack on the very concept of a master race. Government spokesmen, inspired by the manpower shortage and the need for national unity, proclaimed a new era in American race relations. Sensing their tactical advantage, American Negroes demanded and received a fuller share in the national life (3, p. 158).

The 1940's witnessed a Fair Employment Practices Committee, the abolition of segregation in interstate travel, and integration in the nation's military forces. The 1950's witnessed the historic Supreme Court decision in which racial segregation in public schools was outlawed, while the 1960's ushered in the breakdown of a segregated system in most ranks of American life. Throughout the past two decades, Negroes have pressed harder and harder for Civil Rights through boycotts, sit-ins, freedom rides, and other forms of demonstration. The Negro's new intolerance for anything short of full

racial equality is reflected in the literature of the contemporary period. Writers such as James Baldwin, John Oliver Killens, and Le Roi Jones expressed through their writings the anger and frustrations of the modern Negro who has to cope with a society where he is considered less than a man. Students may be able to relate the selections of these authors to some of the recent events and movements which they are old enough to remember such as the recent race riots and the black power movement. Students should be guided into a mature discussion of what these events and movements actually mean and what benefit, if any, the present day Negro can gain from them.

Another trend in the contemporary Negro writing is the revolt against protest. This trend has resulted from the increasing inclusion of Negro Americans in all facets of American life. Bone states that there are three kinds of possibilities: pulp fiction which "poses no problems concerning race"; assimilationist literature "which avoids racial conflict by avoiding Negro life"; and a type of revolt against protest literature, literature which "deals with race material but not necessarily with racial conflict, approaching the Negro concretely as a human being rather than abstractly as a protagonist in the racial struggle" (3, p. 166). As students read the literature written during this period, they may be guided into looking for these various types of

selections which represent the revolt against protest that characterized much of the literature by contemporary writers.

Because he was reared in the Harlem ghetto and knew firsthand the bitter frustrations of the inner-city life, James Baldwin (1924-) was able to relate realistic accounts of the effects which this life had upon him as a young boy. Emanuel and Gross describe Baldwin's writings as "a search for identity . . . that is really the quest for an ideality in which love, public and personal, has triumphed over hatred, bigotry, and oppression" (6, p. 296). Baldwin is considered not only an outstanding Negro writer but an outstanding writer of today as he "penetrates the mask of hypocrisy which all men wear and forces them to face themselves" (5, p. 38).

Two of Baldwin's essays, "A Fly in Buttermilk" and "Nobody Knows My Name," which are found in his book Nobody Knows My Name, relate the author's visit to the South. Both essays describe a Northern Negro's reactions to some of the events which were occurring in the South at that particular time. As Baldwin comments upon the inequalities and racial injustices of the South, he is equally honest about the racial problems of the North. His comparison is seen in the following lines from "Nobody Knows My Name": "And in exactly the same way that the South imagines that it 'knows' the Negro, the North imagines that it has set him free" (1, p. 99). Both white and Negro students will identify with some of the

problems which Baldwin discusses, and both groups will undoubtedly identify with his feelings because of his honesty and frankness in discussing various racial problems such as segregated schools, lynchings, segregated housing, and the Negroes' overall struggle for manhood. Students may be able to note some of the advancements which have been made since these essays were first published.

Class Discussion ("A Fly in Buttermilk"):

1. What delusions were the Southern Negro educator suffering from, if any? Do you agree with the author's analysis of the educator's feelings?
2. Do you agree with Mrs. R. and her son's opinion of the quality of education in segregated schools? Defend your answer.
3. What is your opinion of the principal of G's new high school?

Class Discussion ("Nobody Knows My Name"):

1. What is your opinion of the following statement from "Nobody Knows My Name": "But the dispute has actually nothing to do with education, as some among the eminently uneducated know. It has to do with political power and it has to do with sex" (1, pp. 88-89).
2. Do you agree with Baldwin's summation of the quality of "separate but equal" education? How does it apply in your town?

In reading and discussing these essays by Baldwin, especially in an integrated classroom, the teacher should be careful to keep everything on a high level of thought. White and black students may differ in their reactions to Baldwin's

ideas, and it will be the teacher's responsibility to prevent the discussion from descending to a lower level. If a teacher does not feel equipped to handle this situation, she should avoid using these essays in class.

"The Seventh Day" is an excerpt from the novel Go Tell It on the Mountains, which describes the religious life of a Harlem family and the effect it had upon a young teenage boy. Students will be able to identify with John's fears and frustrations, his desire to be a regular teenager, and his resentment that his father favored his younger brother. The selection is very descriptive with interesting insights into the personalities of John, his mother and father, and other members of the family.

Class Discussion ("The Seventh Day"):

1. Characterize John and the members of his family (this would make an excellent outside assignment).
2. What was John's major conflict? (Some students may say his conflict with his father. However, others will see it as a conflict within himself concerning whether or not he should be a regular teenager or be saved in the church.)
3. What kind of relationship did John have with his mother and father? Give incidents from the story to support your opinions.
4. Describe John's feelings of alienation when he visits the fashionable part of the city.

Points of Emphasis:

Students should be guided into an understanding that the author is not being anti-religious at any point in the

selection, but he is against the self-righteous person who is exemplified by John's father. This point should not be dwelt upon if there seems to be adverse reactions to it.

Educated at Fieldston School and at Harvard University, William Melvin Kelley (1937-) has become one of the most popular Negro writers today. Kelley's philosophy of writing is summed up in the following two statements made by him:

Each lone Negro must find something in himself that he feels is worthy of respect . . .

The Negro writer must use his art . . . to help repair the damage done to the soul of the Negro in the past centuries (6, p. 455).

Students may want to keep these statements in mind and discuss them in relation to the selections by Kelley which they will read.

Dancers on the Shore is a collection of short stories which centers around the family of a Northern Negro doctor and the various experiences with which they were faced. In "Connie," the pregnant sister is faced with the consequences of her mistake and forced to make an important decision with which she can live. It is a touching story of a young girl struggling with her conscience, which conflicts with the attitudes of her middle class parents. In the end, with the help of her brother, she is able to accept her responsibilities and to make the decision with which she can live.

In the short story "The Life You Save," a young college-educated Negro, Peter, who is one of the doctor's sons, works

in a camp program with a group of problem eleven year old boys. It gives an interesting account of how he tries to help Mance and is unsuccessful until a situation arose in which Peter forgot about his middle class values. Boys from poverty-stricken and ghetto areas will be especially able to identify with Mance because his world and his language will be similar to theirs.

Class Discussion ("Connie"):

1. What role does Peter play in revealing the truth to their parents? In helping Connie make her own final decision?
2. How does Connie finally make her decision to reject her parents' plans?
3. What is your opinion of Connie's final decision? Do you agree or disagree with her?

Class Discussion ("The Life You Save"):

1. Characterize Mance Bedlow. What do you think of his actions?
2. Why are Peter's initial attempts to help Peter unsuccessful?
3. In the end, do you think Peter succeeds in winning Mance's respect? Explain.

An excellent novel for classroom use is A Different Drummer by William Melvin Kelley. It is the story of how Tucker Caliban, the descendant of a rebellious slave, struggled to become a man who would be free from the white family for which his forefathers had worked. Tucker's actions

in burning his house, salting his land, and leaving with his family caused a mass exodus by all the Negroes in this mythical southern state. The members of the white family for which Tucker had worked were forced to search their hearts to find a meaning for his actions; and in understanding Tucker's actions, they were able to find peace within themselves. The bewildered townspeople lynched the last Negro in town who was actually a Northern Negro closely associated with the past of David Willson, Tucker's former employer.

This is an excellent book because of the deep analyses of the characters within it. Barbara Dodds states that "instead of emphasizing racial conflict it deals with man's need to be a man" (5, p. 41). Each student will probably find some character with which he can identify. All of them will undoubtedly give sympathy and understanding to both black and white characters in the novel.

Class Discussion (A Different Drummer):

1. What is the significance of the title? (Students may want to discuss the poem at the front of the book by Henry David Thoreau.)
2. Briefly discuss the major white characters--Harry Leland, Mister Leland, and Dymphna, Dewey, Camille, and David Willson--and their relationships to Tucker and his wife Bethrah.
3. How does the mythical story of the rebellious African add to the interest and suspense of the entire novel?
4. Discuss the role of Bennett Bradshaw in the life of David Willson and in the novel itself. What is the meaning of David's lament: "Bennett, Bennett, now we are both lost" (10, p. 195)?

5. Discuss the significance of the following entry in David Willson's diary: "Anyone, anyone can break loose from his chains. That courage, no matter how deeply buried is always waiting to be called out. All it needs is the right coaxing, the right voice to do the coaxing, and it will come roaring like a tiger" (10, p. 166). Many students will be able to see that the theme of the entire novel is summed up in these words.

Assignment:

Choose one of the major characters in the novel and write a character sketch of him. Be sure to explain his relationship to Tucker Caliban and the understanding of himself that resulted from that fatal Thursday when Tucker Caliban defied the entire town.

Lorraine Hansberry (1930-1963) was described by her publishers as a writer who "touched the taproots of American life as never before . . . a writer who penetrated beyond the racial to create universal characters, a writer deeply committed to 'the how of living.'" A Raisin in the Sun is an excellent book for students of all levels of ability. It also satisfies the students' love for drama and their need to identify with realistic problems of modern life. It is a play about an urban Negro family--their hopes, dreams, fears, and disappointments.

Students will enjoy the drama better if it is staged in the classroom and acted out as drama should be. The best way to choose students for the various roles is to let them audition for the parts, and then let the other students, using secret ballots, vote for their choices. After the student

actors and actresses are chosen, students will enjoy setting up the stage production with students being used as manager, producers, stage artists, etc. As much time as needed should be given for the production of the play because it will be an exciting, moving experience enjoyed by all the students.

Class Discussion (A Raisin in the Sun):

1. Discuss the meaning of the title, using the poem by Langston Hughes which begins as follows: What happens to a dream deferred? / Does it dry up / Like a raisin in the sun?
2. Discuss the major characters--Ruth, Walter, Lee, Beneatha, and Lena--in relation to their strengths, weaknesses, motives, and drives.
3. What was the major conflict in the play? (Many students will see it as Walter Lee's conflict with himself in his struggle for manhood.)
4. What do you think the future holds for the Youngers? Base your answer upon what was happening to the family at the end of the play.
5. What racial conflict is brought out in the play? How is this handled by Walter Lee, and what part does it play in his ability to find his manhood?

The author of The Third Generation and If He Hollers Let Him Go, Chester Himes (1909-), has authored thirteen other novels and many articles, a number of them for the French press. Himes was a close friend and confidant of the late Richard Wright who has continued writing until the present day.

His short story, "Mama's Missionary Money" is about a young boy living in a ghetto area who gradually stole all of

his mother's missionary money. With the money, he went to the movies, treated his friends with ice cream and flap-jacks, and bought new baseball equipment. He soon became the most popular boy in the community as he continued taking the money. Eventually, he was caught, and the punishment was a severe beating until he yelled out his change of heart: "He gone, ma! Oh, he gone!" he yelled, dancing up and down. "Dat ol' devil gone, ma! I done tuk Christ Jesus to my heart!" (8, p. 175). This is a delightful story which requires little or no class discussion. Students will enjoy reading it for pleasure. Some discussion may center around why each student enjoyed the story and why Lemuel took the chance of stealing the money knowing he would eventually get caught.

Frank Yerby (1916-) is one of the Negro writers who has virtually ignored his Negro heritage in most of his works by writing historical novels such as The Foxes of Harrow, The Vixens, The Golden Hawk, and Pride's Castle. However, in his short story "The Homecoming," Yerby deals directly with the race problem by relating the story of a Negro soldier returning home from battle. Willie has earned many honors in battle and is minus one of his legs. Because of his experiences, he can no longer accept the Jim Crow conditions in his native Southern town. He expresses his new attitude in the following words: "I done forgot too many things . . . I done forgot how to scratch my head and shuffle my feet and grin when I don't

feel like grinning" (12, p. 152). Willie has become a man who refuses to be treated like a "colored boy" any longer, and his new attitude almost prevents him from leaving the town until Colonel Bob, his ex-employer, prevents the lynching by making the authorities believe that Willie is crazy.

Class Discussion ("The Homecoming"):

1. How does Willie Jackson express his new attitude with the two white men standing near the monument? With the white clerk?
2. Does Colonel Bob understand Willie's attitude at first?
3. What statement by Colonel Bob shows that he is beginning to understand Willie? ("Three hundred years of wounded pride." "Three centuries of hurt dignity. Going down the road marching.")
4. Do you think that Willie appreciated Colonel Bob's way of saving him from being lynched? Explain.

Born and reared in the Mississippi Delta, Margaret Walker (1915-) knew firsthand the problems and perils the Negro faced in the deep South. She was educated at Northwestern (B.A., 1935) and Iowa State (M.A., 1940) and received early recognition as a poet, winning the Yale University Younger Poets competition in 1942, followed by the Rosenwald Fellowship for creative writing in 1944.

Margaret Walker's book of poetry For My People was published as a result of her winning the Yale University award. Barbara Dodds states that Miss Walker's poetry is "simple,

direct and very good for slower students. Most of her work affirms pride in her heritage as a Negro" (5, p. 47).

"For My People" is a poem which prays for a new world for a deprived, mistreated people. It is a beautiful, moving poem which lacks rhyme, rhythm, and much traditional punctuation. "Molly Means" is a ballad about a witch who dies because of her evil doings. Neither poem requires much class discussion because students will enjoy reading them for pleasure. "Molly Means" is suitable for choral reading; both poems should be read aloud for enjoyment.

Another poem by Margaret Walker which is excellent for classroom use is "Harriett Tubman." Students may be interested in finding out some information about the life of this courageous ex-slave who became the conductor of the underground railroad. Like "Molly Means," it can also make a good choral reading in class.

The only Negro poet to win the Pulitzer Prize, Gwendolyn Brooks (1917-), has published many volumes of poetry, including A Street in Bronzeville (1945), Annie Allen (1949), The Bean Eaters (1960), and Selected Poems (1963). She has also conducted creative writing classes at three Illinois colleges--Elmhurst, Columbia, and Northeastern State--and she is presently teaching full time at Chicago Teachers College, North.

Emanuel and Gross state that Miss Brooks' best poetry "has 'the concentration, the crush' which she declares important in her effort 'to vivify the universal fact' wearing contemporary clothing" (6, p. 499). Her artfulness and humanity are revealed in the six unnamed poems from Annie Allen which are entitled "The Children of the Poor." The poems are written in blank verse and are filled with vivid imagery which expresses the deep compassion of their author toward those in need. These poems need to be read aloud in class for students to best understand them and to be able to see the many literary devices utilized by the author.

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CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Since Negro literature has been excluded so long from our high school classrooms, the ideal situation is to include some of the best of this literature within the already existing courses of study. Using the Handbook for Teachers, Curriculum Bulletin No. 353, published by the Fort Worth Public Schools in 1966, the Negro literature discussed in this paper can be included in the regular curriculum of the eleventh grade. Much of the literature can easily meet the objectives of the various units, and in many cases the selections discussed can enhance the objectives by giving a broader and more realistic view of American life.

Two of the objectives in Unit I--A Modern Sampler--are as follows: "To present an understanding and appreciation of the various literary genre" and "To preview genres that will be studied in detail in later units" (1, p. 149). "Saturday's Child" by Countee Cullen would make an excellent lyric for this unit because of its rhyme, rhythm, and many literary devices. "Connie" by William Melvin Kelley can be introduced as a short story in this unit. It is a modern story with a conflict which students can understand and relate to, and it contains most of the elements of the short story which are discussed on page 151 of the handbook.

"To reinforce through the study of literature knowledge of the founding and settlement of America" (1, p. 159) is one of the objectives for Unit II--Spanning the Continent.

Phyllis Wheatley's poem "His Excellency General Washington" is a lyric in which a young slave girl expresses praise for the father of our country. An insight into the early development of our country is found in "The Heroic Slave" by Frederick Douglass.

Two objectives of Unit III--Rights and Duties--are "To give a deeper understanding of our nation's past" and "To emphasize the role students should actively perform in a democracy" (1, p. 167). Two poems from this Negro literature survey expand these objectives by giving the viewpoints of a people who have been denied the rights and liberties which are a part of American democracy. However, both poems express love and faith in our country even though it has denied certain rights to the Negro people. The two poems are "America" by Claude McKay and "Let America Be America Again" by Langston Hughes.

The two objectives relating to literature in Unit IV are "To emphasize that much of America's strength comes from the many nationalities represented" and "To show that people, both literary and real, retain much of their character because of their regional and national dialectical language pattern" (1, p. 175). "Little Brown Baby" by Paul Lawrence Dunbar is

a poem written in Negro dialect which illustrates the strength and love of a Negro father. "Of the Meaning of Progress" by W. E. B. Dubois poignantly expresses the dreams and hopes of some rural Negro families while "Heritage" by Countee Cullen relates the cultural roots of Afro-Americans.

Two poems, "Georgia Dusk" by Jean Toomer and "A Black Man Talks of Reaping" by Arna Tontemps can be used to enhance the following objective from Unit V--Work and Play: "To show that the good life is closely related to work and play activities and effective communication is necessary for both" (1, p. 183). In both poems, the story of the black man's many years of toiling on the soil of America are related, as well as the black man's hopes and dreams that one day he will be rewarded for his work.

"The Creation" by James Weldon Johnson is already included in Unit VI--Love and Faith--which has two of the following objectives: "To emphasize that every individual has a basic need to be loved and recognized and that security is a necessary ingredient of love" and "To show faith in oneself is requisite to being a happy individual" (1, p. 193). James W. Johnson's "The Prodigal Son" can also be added to this unit to illustrate man's need for love and faith. A beautiful love poem by Claude McKay is "Summer Morn in New Hampshire," and a beautiful love story which can be included is Zora Neale Hurston's "Hurricane." James Baldwin writes of a young boy

who struggles to find love and faith in "The Seventh Day," an excerpt from his novel Go Tell It on the Mountains.

The next six units in the eleventh grade handbook are about great American authors and their times. To these units can be added a great Negro author who is representative of the times in which he lived. Langston Hughes is one possible author to use in this additional unit. More so than any other American Negro writer, Hughes loved and understood the Negro masses. His writings extend throughout a large portion of the twentieth century and reflect trends and attitudes prevalent from the Renaissance period to contemporary times. His short stories, "Thank You Ma'am" and "One Friday Morn," can be included in this unit along with his poems, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," "Mother to Son," and "Let America be America Again."

All three objectives in Unit XIV--Lyric America--can be enhanced by the inclusion of some of the poetry by Negro America. The objectives are as follows: "To guide students in their search for true enjoyment in reading and understanding poetry," "To augment students' idea of the elements of poetry and to explain how this knowledge can enrich their lives," and "To lead to an understanding of word usage, figurative language, imagery, symbol, tone color, rhythm, and rhyme as elements of the special language of poetry" (1, p. 229). Some of the lyric poems which can be included are "Dawn" by

Paul Lawrence Dunbar, "If We Must Die" by Claude McKay, "Song of the Son" by Jean Toomer, "For a Lady I Know" by Countee Cullen, "A Note of Humility" by Arna Bontemps, "For My People" by Margaret Walker, and "The Children of the Poor" by Gwendolyn Brooks.

Some of the objectives of Unit XV--The American Short Story--are as follows: "To analyze the short story as a literary type through the study of plot, setting, characters, narrative techniques, and theme," "To recognize similarities and contrasts among various kinds of short stories," and "To create an awareness of the range and value of the short story gained by reading many stories" (1, p. 237). Many of the short stories discussed in this survey have all of the elements of a good short story, and they represent realistic portrayals of life situations which the students can share. Some of the best ones for use in this unit are "The Man Who Saw the Flood" by Richard Wright, "Flying Home" by Ralph Ellison, "The Life You Save" by William Melvin Kelley, and "The Homecoming" by Frank Yerby.

Two short stories, "Mama's Missionary Money" and "Thank You, Ma'am," can be used in Unit XVI--American Humor. Two objectives of this unit are "To help pupils understand elements of humor by allowing the elements to develop from reading and enjoying the selections" and "To encourage students to develop a pleasant or an unpleasant personal

experience into a bit of humorous prose" (1, p. 247). Both short stories are delightful and make pleasurable reading experiences which would aid in meeting the above objectives.

Unit XVII is entitled American Biography. Its objectives are "To help students understand that biography may be serious, humorous, or both, depending upon the author's purpose," "To emphasize that the three requirements of good biography are story, interesting style, and truthfulness," and "To evaluate biography, using accepted standards of judging" (1, p. 251). "The Ethics of Jim Crowing Living," which is an autobiographical sketch of Richard Wright, is an excellent selection for this unit. A poem which may be included is "Harriett Tubman" by Margaret Walker.

The only drama included in this survey, "A Raisin in the Sun," can easily be used in Unit XVII--Drama in America. Because this is an interesting play about the problems and conflicts of a modern urban family, this drama will serve to enhance the following objectives of this unit: "To teach students to enjoy drama" and "To show that true drama is related to real life and living characters" (1, p. 255).

The inclusion of American Negro literature in our high schools would greatly enhance the study of American literature and would also remedy the situation which has resulted in a cultural denial of one-tenth of the American population. Since there is much literature of quality and since there is

a demand for the inclusion of this literature in our public school curriculum, it is hoped that English teachers and curriculum committees will see the need for enhancing our curriculum by the addition of literature by Negro Americans.

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