Utilizing Art, Literature, and Film to Teach Black History

Guide for Curriculum Unit 01.04.03
by Judith Dixon

I am a special education teacher at East Rock Global Magnet School. I teach in a fifth grade inclusion classroom. Literacy is the major focus in our school system. Literacy addresses reading, writing and speaking. My curriculum addresses the speaking and writing aspect of literacy. I will center my literature on the Underground Railroad, Civil Rights Era, and the book entitled *Through My Eyes* by Ruby Bridges.

There are discrepancies and a lack of factual information in regard to African American History. I will choose two or three movies, and let the children go beyond what was presented during these movies through reading additional literature and researching various topics presented. In order to better interpret the movie and gain a better understanding of race and ethnicity, my students will compare and contrast the information presented in the movie(s) versus non-fictional literature.

In order to address the speaking and writing aspects of literacy, I will introduce the students to various pieces of art, which depict African American moments in history. They'll be introduced to Jacob Lawrence's pieces called, "The Migration Series" and "Harriett Tubman Series," along with Faith Ringgold's pieces on the quilts. They will in turn write to explain what the piece of art means to them, and make an oral presentation to the class on their findings. They will create their own art work and collectively create a quilt of their own interpretation. The lessons will involve reading, writing, math, and a culminating quilt making project.

(Recommended for Social Studies, and Reading/Language Arts, grades 5-6.)