Joslyn Art Museum
Comprehensive Study Lesson Plan

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AFRICAN AMERICAN ART

Focus: Jacob Lawrence, The 1920’s...The Migrants Cast Their Ballots

Objectives – Students will:

- Create artworks, individually or in groups, related to the Great Migration, Voting Rights, or Harlem Renaissance that are inspired by Jacob Lawrence.
- Respond the questions “who is your hero?” and compare heroes from the beginning of the lesson to the end.
- Present a class portfolio of artworks they created to visually describe controversial current events.
- Connect the Civil Rights Movement’s progress with current events determining what more needs to happen to ensure equality for all.

Suggested Materials: Jacob Lawrence teaching poster, Pinterest Resource Board, construction paper, glue, scissors, newspapers or access to images of current events, see detailed lesson plans for additional materials.

Vocabulary: ballot, Civil Rights Movement, equality, Great Migration, Harlem Renaissance, hero, independence, polls, portfolio, print, series, Spoken Word, voting rights,

Procedure:

- Engage: Who is your hero? Have students brainstorm the criteria necessary for a hero. They may consider family or close friend first, then encourage them to look to their community and finally globally.
- Art Talk: Explain how Lawrence was commissioned to create an artwork that answered “What does independence mean to me?” The result – The 1920’s...The Migrants Cast Their Ballots. Encourage students to explore controversial current events for their composition and together the class creates a portfolio of their artworks. Refer to the gallery talk and art-making experience led by Camille Coonrod at Thursdays for Teachers.
- History: Who was Jacob Lawrence? What was the Great Migration? Refer to resources in the Teacher Support Materials for additional information. http://goo.gl/8TkzCF
- Aesthetics: Compare and contrast Lawrence’s 1974 print with the artwork that inspired it – the 59th panel from his series The Migration of the Negro. Discuss everything from simplified forms to media to color palette.
- Production 1: Voices for the Vote. Discuss the annual Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights March while making connections between past and present efforts to ensure equitable voting access. Have students work in small groups to create an artwork reflecting their thoughts. Refer to the lesson plan presented by Gabrielle Gaines-Liwaru at Thursdays for Teachers.
• **Production 2:** Cubist Poetry. Study the Great Migration and Harlem Renaissance – the birth of a new culture through African American poets, musicians, and visual artists. Take a poem or lyric to create a “cubist like” artwork. Refer to the workshop presented by Kristi Schmidt-Herrera at Thursdays for Teachers.

• **Close:** Who is your hero, part two. Have students research a hero that is not of their race, and have them present to the class.

**Extensions:**

• **Cultural Connections:** Federal Arts Project. Study how the government employed artists to create artworks depicting every day people in the U.S. Why was this opportunity significant to many artists like Lawrence?

• **Fine Arts:** Use your Voice. Challenge students to learn about the African American oral tradition Spoken Work then create their own pieces. Provide them with the opportunity to perform poems in an “open mic” like setting. Refer to the lesson presented by Felicia Webster at Thursdays for Teachers.

• **Language Arts:** Give students the opportunity to express their social justice side and create a "perfect world" essay. Then have them develop an action plan for how they would make it happen.

• **Math:** Have students study polling information from who votes to how polling districts are created. Use this exercise to teach about presenting data in line graphs and pie charts. For younger students, focus on more basic details of polling such as which percentage is bigger or who wins.

• **Science:** According to Scientific American, “African-American Longevity Suffered after Great Migration.” Have students listen to this podcast or read the transcript: [http://goo.gl/HLx0kY](http://goo.gl/HLx0kY) then continue researching the science of migration.

**Academic Standards & additional resources:**
Available on online version at [www.joslyn.org/education/teachers/thursdays-for-teachers](http://www.joslyn.org/education/teachers/thursdays-for-teachers) [select Lesson Plans, then Modern & Contemporary]

**About the Artwork:**

Jacob Lawrence was approached by Lorillard Tobacco Company, a division of Loews Theatres, Inc., in 1974 to create an artwork for the Kent Bicentennial Portfolio, which honored the 200th anniversary of the United States. Lawrence was one of 12 artists who contributed prints in response to the question: *What does independence mean to me?*

To Lawrence, independence meant exercising the freedom to vote. He described the scene, “During the post-World War I period millions of black people left southern communities in the United States and migrated to northern cities. This migration reached its peak during the 1920s. Among the many advantages the migrants found in the north was the freedom to vote. In my print, migrants are expressing that freedom.”

In the print, *The 1920's...The Migrants Cast Their Ballots*, Lawrence revisits a theme he explored in an earlier painting from his series *The Migration of the Negro*. The 59th panel in the series, completed in 1940, shows a single file line of voters waiting to cast their ballots. Two people sit at a table processing paperwork while the only white figure, a guard menacingly holding a nightstick, supervises the scene.

When he returned to the subject in 1974 Lawrence eliminated the guard, which removed a feeling of anxiety and unease that voters must have felt. He included a mixture of people waiting in line to show that the right to vote extended to everyone, including women with babies, elderly figures leaning on canes, businessmen wearing suits, and construction workers wearing overalls. Instead of waiting rigidly in single file, voters in the print read the newspaper or talk to one another while they wait. Two lines of people converge at a table in the center of the print, where a man in a black suit and hat signs a voter registration booklet. Behind him, a man in a voting booth pulls the curtain behind him so that no one will see which lever he pulls indicating his vote.

Lawrence began experimenting with printmaking in the 1970s, although he was primarily known as a painter. The technique he chose – screen-printing – is where mesh is used to transfer ink onto another surface, except in areas where a stencil has blocked the tiny holes. A squeegee or blade is moved across the screen to push ink through the mesh to reach the paper. Because only one color can be printed at a time, several screens are needed to produce a multi-colored image. Lawrence used seven different screens to produce this print.
Voices for the Vote

Inspired by Jacob Lawrence, 1920’s...The Migrants Cast Their Ballots
Created by Gabrielle Gaines-Liwaru, community activist and teaching artist
Grade Level Secondary (6th – 12th grade)

Overview
Building from discussing Jacob Lawrence's print and historical reference images (and posters) connected with the Selma to Montgomery March for the Voting Rights Act of 1965, students evaluate issues related to voting that have affected African-Americans. Acknowledging that voting should be the constitutional right of all Americans and that right should be exercised, students work in groups to make banners or posters encouraging positive human relations and voting rights.

Anticipatory Set
Project or display a large image of Lawrence's 1920's...The Migrants Cast Their Ballots and ask students to write three observations they make about the artwork + answer the question: Why do you think, in 1974, Jacob Lawrence painted a scene from the year 1920 of people voting?

Objectives
- Students will make connections between the purpose of Lawrence's artwork and the purpose of continuing voting awareness, through discussion of the historical march leading to the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and related voting history.
- Students will create and present posters or banners that advocate for voting and/or equity, civic engagement and humanitarianism.

Resources
- Joslyn Art Museum’s Jacob Lawrence teaching poster*
- Basic lesson tie-in with serigraph of 1920...The Migrants Arrive and Cast Their Ballots: http://goo.gl/7zj4iz
- The Great Migration: http://goo.gl/JCMGyt
- Selma to Montgomery March 1965 History Channel: http://goo.gl/3m770b
- Jacob Lawrence, The Great Migration Story*

Supplies
- Newspapers
- Sharpies/markers
- Glue
- Scissors
- Construction paper and decorative paper scraps in all kinds of sizes
- Oversized poster-board or reinforced butcher paper
LESSON PLAN

Vocabulary

- Migrants
- Discrimination
- Jim Crow Laws
- Humanitarianism
- Civic engagement
- Advocacy
- Equity
- Commemorate
- Fundamental
- Slogan/motto (add as needed)

Lesson Outline

After giving students time for the Anticipatory Set warm-up, take several minutes to call on students to share observations and answers to the writing prompt.

Provide some background information on the Great Migration from the South for many African-Americans, especially between 1915-1920. The Midwest/Nebraska became home for thousands who left the poverty in the South, to find jobs and greater freedom from Jim Crow Laws.

Explain impacts of discrimination on black families and family members' rights related to, for example, school, work, housing, voting, etc.

Explain why Jacob Lawrence created the print in 1974, showing the migrants in 1920, including how the discrimination and hate crimes against African-Americans trying to exercise their right to vote was horrible, through the 1960s and in Lawrence's lifetime.

Ask if any students have heard of or seen Director Ava DuVernay's movie SELMA (2014) and have them share what they observed regarding African-Americans' voting registration experience.

Show historical images and any modern imagery of the Selma to Montgomery March, which happens each year to commemorate March 7th "Bloody Sunday" and the 54 mile march that led to the Voting Rights Act of 1965 in August.

Give students opportunities to talk about what they see.

Share that the annual historic march still draws people from around the world who care about freedom and justice for all. HB56 from Alabama and SB1070 from Arizona (share as much relevant info as needed per grade level) were more recent legislative bills introduced in 2010-11, which many felt were for restricting voters' rights.

2012 was a big year for the annual Selma to Montgomery March because of those bills. Student-groups from different states wore matching t-shirts and brought posters to show support for fellow American citizens. Even in spite of great risks, children/students have been a part of the annual march since the first one in March 1965.

For the 50th annual historic march in 2015, just months after the movie SELMA debuted, 25 Omaha high school students + 2 UNO students + 7 educators went to march and found the crowd marching the actual 54 miles was much smaller than the 15-20 thousand people who gathered to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge with President Obama, commemorating Bloody Sunday.

The Omaha Public Schools students from 7 high schools called themselves Omaha Student Voice Council and their art committee had made a banner to represent Nebraska, saying “Student Voices Matter...Just Listen.” VOTING MATTERS was supposed to be centered in an image of NE, however, some materials used in the banner were not waterproof...and it rained the day they marched.

The students marched for several miles in the rain, with Alabama residents/farmers, elementary students, high school students and college students from other states, senior citizens and individuals from overseas...and they all marched with enthusiasm for voting rights and justice for all.
Introduce the idea of making a banner or poster to express a concept of justice/equity/importance of voting; as Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee worker Courtland Cox said: “The right of people to make decisions about their own lives is the most fundamental right of members of a democratic society.”

Determine groups of about four-five students, and have them brainstorm ideas for a slogan/motto and, if necessary, vote and agree on one that represents the group’s ideas best.

Instruct/demonstrate with collage materials and markers, creatively, to make a banner or poster. Each group should decide on each person’s contribution, based on each person’s strength (drawing, cutting, letters, choosing papers/colors, etc). Each student should have a reasonable role planned for presenting the finished product.

Finally, have them present posters with the group’s rationale behind the slogan, along with historical information from the lesson that resonated with them.

Exhibit student posters in the school.

Extensions
• Nature Mathematics: Students can create timelines, measuring the number of years between historical events or legislation related to voting—coming up with medians, etc.
• Language Arts: Students can write a persuasive piece about prioritizing voting awareness

Academic Standards
Available on online version at www.joslyn.org/education/teachers/thursdays-for-teachers [select Lesson Plans, then Modern & Contemporary]

About the Artist
Jacob Lawrence, born on September 7, 1917, in Atlantic City, New Jersey, first moved to Easton, Pennsylvania at the age of two and then relocated to Philadelphia in 1924 after his parents separated. Lawrence’s mother, unable to find a steady job, moved to New York where she believed there would be more economic opportunity. Lawrence and his siblings stayed in Philadelphia, moving between foster homes until 1930, when they rejoined their mother in New York. The city was exciting for young Lawrence, who loved to observe the constant activity in his Harlem neighborhood. In the 1930s, almost 35,000 African Americans lived within five square miles.

Lawrence struggled in school and was frustrated by the lack of black leaders and historical figures in his textbooks. Worried that her young son would get into trouble because of his dissatisfaction with school, his mother enrolled him in an after-school program where he met artist Charles Alston. The seasoned artist encouraged Lawrence to experiment with paint and praised the young artist for his talent.

Rejected the first time he applied to the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Federal Arts Project, a government program that paid artists to document life in the United States, because of the age requirement, Lawrence re-submitted his application after he turned 21. The easel division required that artists submit two paintings every six weeks, which gave Lawrence free time to research and create two series of paintings: The Life of Frederick Douglass (1939) and The Life of Harriet Tubman (1940) which were exhibited at the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., for the 75th anniversary of the Thirteenth Amendment.

In 1940 Lawrence began research for a huge project called The Migration of the Negro. All 60 panels were completed in 1941 with the assistance of artist Gwendolyn Knight. The series was an instant success, and Downtown Gallery exhibited it, subsequently making Lawrence the first African American artist to be represented by a major New York commercial gallery.

The last two decades of his life, Lawrence focused on racial tensions and the political atmosphere. He documented the Civil Rights Movement’s progress by depicting topics such as intermarriage, discrimination, segregation in public schools, and non-violent protests. In 1971 he moved to Seattle after accepting a full professorship at the University of Washington. Lawrence continued to produce artworks featuring civil rights topics, both prints and paintings, until just a few weeks before his death in 2000.
LESSON PLAN

Use Your Voice, Your Vote Matters: The Spoken Word &
The Works of Jacob Lawrence

Inspired by Jacob Lawrence, 1920's...The Migrants Cast Their Ballots
Created by Felicia Webster, visual artist & inspirational/spoken word artist
Grade Level Middle School (is adaptable)

Overview
This lesson will explore the Jacob Lawrence Print 1920's...The Migrants Cast Their Ballots and to get students to begin by thinking of a significant historical event that has occurred in their own lives, to their ethnic group, or that has influenced their family heritage. Students will brainstorm individually and collectively as a class then create two free verse poems: One about a historical time period and their own lives and one about the print 1920's...The Migrants Cast Their Ballots

Anticipatory Set
Perform your own piece (from Thursdays for Teachers if you were in attendance).

Objectives
• Students will learn about the African American oral tradition Spoken Word.
• Students will create their own piece and perform it.

Resources
• Joslyn Art Museum’s Jacob Lawrence teaching poster*
• Jacob Lawrence, The Great Migration Story *
• John Duggleby, Story Painter: The Life of Jacob Lawrence*

Supplies
• Pencils
• Lined Paper
• Construction Paper
• Colored Pencils
• Markers

Vocabulary
• Migration
• Voting rights act
• Civil Rights Movement
• Spoken word poetry
• Storytelling
• Free verse writing
• The Great Migration
• Expressionist Artist
• Storytelling
• Open Mic/Slam
• Signifying

Lesson Outline
1) Open with the poem you wrote from this class. Hand out posters or images of Jacob Lawrence's work.
2) Explain, we are going to explore Lawrence and his print 1920's...The Migrants Cast Their Ballots.
3) Ask the class these questions. (Write questions on the board to connect to visual learners)
   Rephrase or interpret what I was talking about in my poem?
   How does my poem relate to Lawrence’s work?

LESSON PLAN

4) To gain further knowledge about Lawrence, read some background information on the artist’s life.

5) Who was Jacob Lawrence? How did he become interested in art? What can you say about his life? What choice would you have made?

6) Tell students, using the information you have just learned, please create two free verse poems: one about a historical time period in your own lives and one about the artwork, 1920’s...The Migrants Cast Their Ballots. (This can happen over a couple of days)

7) Edit/Re-Write. Using construction paper, colored makers and or pencils design the construction paper to frame their personal poem. The poem related to Lawrence’s work can be shaped or designed like a ballot.

8) Set up an open mic in the classroom to share poems.

9) Discuss the importance of audience/poet respect. Clap after each poet. Teacher mc’s the event with enthusiasm. Example: Next up we will have Felicia come bless the mic...

10) Ask questions as a group. What did you think about this activity? What did you learn?

Extensions
• Students create a storytelling painting about an important event in their personal lives.
• Students create a group piece (3-4) about the importance of voting in these present times.
• Social Studies: Describe ways in which language, stories, folktales, music, and artistic creations serve as expressions of culture and influence behavior of people living in a particular culture.

Academic Standards
Available on online version at www.joslyn.org/education/teachers/thursdays-for-teachers [select Lesson Plans, then Modern & Contemporary]

About the Great Migration
For many African Americans living in the South after the Civil War life proved just as difficult as it had been before they were freed from slavery. Racial violence and lack of economic opportunity left people destitute and desperate. Fortuitously, an opportunity for change presented itself with the outbreak of World War I in 1914. The war stemmed the constant flow of European immigrants, which resulted in a shortage of labor for industrialized urban areas in the northern United States. Recruiters for these companies targeted African Americans in the South, promising economic opportunities in cities like New York and Chicago.

Eager to escape the dismal living conditions in the South, blacks relocated to New York, Chicago, Detroit, and Philadelphia in huge waves. By 1919, one million African Americans had left the South, and they were followed by five million more over the next decade. This mass movement, today known as the Great Migration, went nearly undocumented even though it had a significant impact on our nation’s history and on the lives of millions, including Jacob Lawrence. His parents were among the migrants that fled from southern states, and later he witnessed the struggles of many families moving to his New York neighborhood, Harlem, with nothing but the clothes on their backs.

Lawrence explained, "I didn’t know the term ‘migrant,’ but I would remember people used to tell us when a new family would arrive. People in the neighborhood would collect clothes for these newcomers and pick out coals that hadn’t completely burned in the furnace to get them started.”

Even though stories similar to this one were common, they were rarely discussed in schools. Lawrence wanted his art to educate others, and he used the Great Migration as the subject for his most famous series- The Migration of the Negro. Each of the 60 panels focused on a different aspect of the mass-migration and told the stories of the millions of African Americans who made the brave journey in search of freedom.
Lesson Plan

Cubist Poetry

Inspired by Jacob Lawrence, 1920's...The Migrants Cast Their Ballots
Harlem Renaissance: The Great Migration. The birth of a vibrant culture.
Artists covered Jacob Lawrence, Faith Ringgold, Romare Bearden, Langston Hughes, Maya Angelou, Louis Armstrong, and Billie Holiday
Created by Kristi Schmidt-Herrera, Art Teacher at Brownell Talbot School
Grade Level 3rd Grade (can be adapted up to 12th grade)

Overview
Students will study the Harlem Renaissance and learn about various poets, visual artists, and musicians. Also have students explore the Cubist art movement – Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. Then explain that students will use their favorite quote, poem, or song lyrics and create a cubist artwork with it.

Anticipatory Set
Show students examples of finished 'Cubist Poetry' artworks and analyze what they depict. Share artworks by Jacob Lawrence, Faith Ringgold, and Romare Bearden. Talk about favorite poems, quotes, or song lyrics. Read a couple of poems by Maya Angelou and Langston Hughes and listen to Louis Armstrong and Billie Holiday. Finally talk about how to illustrate the poems that in a simple line drawing.

Objectives

• Students will learn about the rich culture of the Harlem Renaissance and the Cubist art movement.
• Students will connect with a favorite quote, poem, or song lyric.
• Students will create a work of art

Materials & Resources

• Joslyn Art Museum’s Jacob Lawrence teaching poster*
• Brain Pop: Harlem Renaissance https://goo.gl/AGT6DN
• Mike Venezia, Faith Ringgold ‘Getting to Know the World’s Greatest Artists’
• Tonya Bolden, Wake Up Our Souls*
• Jacob Lawrence, The Great Migration Story*
• James Haywood Rolling, Come Look with Me: Discovering African America Art for Children*
• Charles Sullivan, Children of Promise: African-American Literature and Art for Young People*
• Posters of art or a power point with art by Jacob Lawrence, Faith Ringgold, Romare Bearden.
• Poems by Langston Hughes and Maya Angelou.
• Music by Louis Armstrong and Billie Holiday.

Supplies

• Paper
• Markers or Watercolor
• Pencils
• Rulers
• Black Sharpies or Metallic Silver or Gold
LESSON PLAN

Vocabulary
- Harlem Renaissance
- Cubism
- The Great Migration

Lesson Outline
1) Discuss The Great Migration, Harlem Renaissance, Cubist Movement.

2) Have students measure our paper and make a line, every two inches.

3) Write out poem, quote, or song lyrics. Every letter needs to touch the top line and the bottom line to create small sections.

4) After the words are all written, the students will draw a simple line drawing, big, filling up the whole paper to illustrate their writing.

5) Then they will go over all of the pencil marks with black sharpie. (Metallic silver or gold can be used rather than black if they wish.)

6) They will marker or shade with watercolor in between every pencil mark with a different color. Cool colors in the illustration and Warm colors in the background or vise versa.

Extensions
This lesson goes hand in hand with Math (using a ruler and measurement), Writing, Reading, History and Art History.

Academic Standards
FA 5.2.1 Students will use the creative process to make works of art exploring subjects and themes with a variety of materials
FA 5.2.1.a Develop ideas using a variety of materials
FA 5.2.1.b Use observation, imagination and interpretation in creating artworks that reflect a variety of styles, themes, (glossary) and subjects.
FA 5.2.1.e Apply various techniques to develop craftsmanship (glossary) skills
FA 5.2.2.a Communicate artistic statements (glossary) using art terminology
FA 5.2.2.c Examine how the process of collecting and displaying artwork varies depending on the purpose (e.g., cultivate awareness and appreciation of ideas, beliefs, experiences).
FA 5.2.3.b Categorize elements and principles in works of art (e.g., group works of art by the use of line, shape, balance).
FA 5.2.3 Students will use the critical process to examine works of art, learning about themselves and cultures.
FA 5.2.3.c Interpret the message communicated by a work of art, using knowledge of visual elements, subject matter, and mood.
FA 5.2.3.d Compare personal interpretation of a work of art with the interpretations of others.
FA 5.2.4 Students will examine contemporary, historical, and cultural context in art and life.
FA 5.2.4.a Identify ways that artists influence lives and communities.
FA 5.2.4.b Compare and contrast works of art from a variety of contemporary, historical, and cultural contexts.
FA 5.2.4.d Explore how images and objects are used to convey a story, familiar experience, or connection to the world.