Replicate the History of the Black Bottom

Myrtle Bastien
University City High School

This unit is appropriate for students in grades nine through twelve and is designed to supplement the African American History Curriculum. It will start during the month of April when the Harlem Renaissance is studied and end in June when the contributions of African Americans in our own times are highlighted in the curriculum. The class consists of 33 inner-city students in a non-graded classroom. They will have a basic understanding of the history of the community, and the characteristics that make that particular community distinguished from other Philadelphia neighborhoods.

This unit will give students an opportunity to research historical documents such as newspaper articles, maps, census data, and photographs. The students will also conduct interviews, act out certain scenes from a play written about the Black Bottom, and create an historical marker for the school. Lessons will include neighborhood walks, visits by an archivist, and lectures.