

## **Paul Robeson, African-American Artist, and the McCarthy Era**

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### **Abstract:**

This curriculum unit, “Paul Robeson, African-American Artist, and the McCarthy Era” is intended to be a moveable unit, applicable in either the freshmen or sophomore English course. It may also be used in the American Literature course. The School District of Philadelphia uses a thematic approach in its curriculum, with “identity” the theme for the freshmen English course. Along these lines, the students will meet the man, Paul Robeson. The legend will come to life. Hopefully, they will identify with his struggles and the struggles of others like him.

In the sophomore course, the theme is social justice; if used at that level, the unit will have students will explore Robeson the social activist who fought for the liberation of all people. They will march with him as he defends the oppressed. The melodious voice of Marian Anderson and the thunderous voice of Robeson will echo in their minds as they hear the two artists speak for South African famine relief in the Abyssinian Baptist Church in New York.

This curriculum is based in English I and English II; however, it has the potential to be shared with other areas in the English Curriculum, particularly drama and art. Additionally, it has the potential to be team-taught with the Social Studies department. The fundamental question the unit will attempt to answer is: “What effect did the McCarthy Era have on American artists such as Paul Robeson and many others?” Students will investigate and ultimately evaluate the impact such pressure had on the artistic endeavors of artists, particularly African American artists.