Abstract:

This curriculum unit explores patterns and styles of storytelling performed orally and in writing among various groups of African people residing in the Overbrook neighborhoods of West Philadelphia. This unit’s goal is to work on dismantling stigmas and stereotypes harbored among students about various African ethnic groups living in America. One of the objectives of the unit is to have students discover and explore cultural and historical backgrounds of fellow students about whom they have little understanding. The premise is that cultivating cross-cultural understanding will foster appreciation among the students for the cultural connections that can bring them together as one people.

This unit can be used in the traditional, honors, or advanced English Language Arts high school classroom. Some of the unit’s content can be adapted for use in a learning-support classroom environment. The curriculum unit uses Pennsylvania Academic State Standards from three disciplines: Language Arts - Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening; History; a few standards from both Geography, as well as, the Arts & Humanities. This unit was developed in thinking of the inclusion of African-American studies into the School District of Philadelphia’s curriculum guidelines. The majority of the study of African-Americans is left to English and History teachers in the secondary grades. This unit gives teachers additional materials to complement what they have been provided to make use of in the classroom.