American Politics through Literary Exposures: Film, Essays, & Speeches

Bonnee Breese
Overbrook High School

Abstract:
This unit is developed to enhance and support the teaching of films, essays, and political speeches concerning politics in an English Language Arts (ELA) classroom. The literary texts have been chosen to give students perspective on how the American political process has been viewed in the eyes of African-Americans. By studying these works soon after one of the most monumental and highly publicized presidential elections in American history, students will become politically literate in understanding American political trends, facts, and foundations, taking apart the myths and fictitious information. Through an analysis of several historical documents beginning with the United States Constitution, students will compare and contrasts writings of famous American authors who contributed to the nation’s political culture, and they will consider how those writings have impacted the African-American community in this country. Since American politics as focused in literature is so broad a topic, the unit’s central theme is chronicling a framework of the Africans in America and their perspectives on American politics. Students will be taught how the African became a viable force in the politics of the country from slavery through to the Civil Rights era until today.