Abstract:

The curriculum unit theme will focus on exposing students to African American poets in the 21st century with an emphasis on self-expression and cultural awareness. Students will discover that poetry is an enjoyable genre with countless connections to their daily life. As we read poems, students will apply critical thinking skills and engage in debates regarding poetry interpretation. One goal is to have students critically analyze and evaluate poems instead of reading unconsciously. Furthermore, the variety of contemporary and traditional poets selected for student analysis will expand student awareness about African American contributions to literature. These reflective activities provide an opening to improve student self-esteem because they can begin to visualize their past, present, and future role in history. This is intended to be a multi-disciplinary unit that integrates literature and history.

The resources to accomplish these goals will include books, music, movies, and technology. Guest speakers may be invited to read and discuss poetry. Live recitations will help students to experience emotional feelings that emerge when an author completes a reading.

This curriculum unit intended for 6th through 8th grade students will take approximately ten 50-minute lessons. However, the unit will extend across the curriculum and include writing and history. Additional time is necessary to plan for student research and follow-up.