

**HISTORICALLY RESPONSIVE LITERACY FRAMEWORK  
LEGACY UNIT PLAN BY DR. GHOLDY MUHAMMAD**

**UNIT THEME: WHAT IS BLACK STUDIES?**

**PART 1**

**Essential Question(s):**

- What is Black Studies?
- What is Black excellence and genius?
- Why is Black Studies essential for education and schools?

**Overview of Unit Plan:** This unit plan is designed to introduce students to key ideas and concepts that form the foundation of Black Studies. This unit sparks student inquiry about Black history and culture that will drive them through the semester. Students will end the unit with a deeper understanding of why it is important to study diverse histories, the power and privilege of this focused knowledge, and how ethnic and cultural knowledge is valued as a part of the national American story, and as such, a valuable course of study for the school community.

\*Black Power Movement should be taught prior to this unit.

**PART 2**

**LEARNING PURSUITS**

**Identity:** Students will reflect upon the examples of Black genius and joy that they have known throughout their lives. **(Assessment—Free Write; Discussion)**

**Skills:** Students will explain and analyze how individuals and movements have shaped United States history (1763-1877). **(Assessment—Research Paper and Presentation; Discussion)**

**Intellectualism:** Students will learn about the history of Black studies. **(Assessment—Small Group Discussion)**

**Criticality:** Students will learn how the inception of Black studies was important due to the centering of Eurocentrism in society and education. **(Assessment—Small Group Discussion)**

**Joy:** Students will learn about the beauty of Black culture by examining art and music. **(Assessment—Small Group Discussion; Exit Ticket; Research Paper and Presentation)**

## PART 3

### Anchor Text—What is Black Studies? by Darius Spearman

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1fAM6DoklAOmm-PURF50sfDhogcGO2rwpCT3Dh1aVzAU/edit?usp=sharing>

### Layered Text—*Video*—History of Black Studies

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FI0sZz\\_sUvc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FI0sZz_sUvc)

*Poem:* For My People by Margaret Walker, (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M6iZd779yuc>)

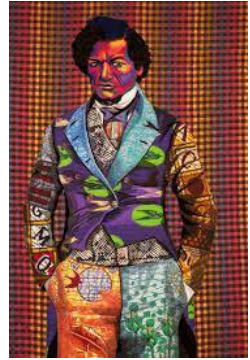
My People by Langton Hughes

### Song Selection:

- “Black Orchid”—Stevie Wonder
- “Black Man”—Stevie Wonder
- “Lift Ev’ry Voice,” – J Rosaman Johnson and James Weldon Johnson
- “Say it Loud- I’m Black and I’m Proud” – James Brown
- “A Change is Gonna Come”- Sam Cooke
- “Fight the Power” – Public Enemy
- “To be Young Gifted and Black” – Nina Simone

### Art Selection:

-Bisa Butler



*Images—*



Other Textual Resources:

<https://rethinkingschools.org/articles/for-my-people/>

**Family/Home/Caregiver Connection:**

Select one question to discuss as a family:

1. *Why is Black history, American history?*
2. *What do we love and appreciate about Black culture and Black excellence?*
3. *What would we like to explore (new) when it comes to Black studies?*
4. *Why is it important for everyone to learn Black studies?*
5. *What did we learn about Black culture in K-12 education?*

**Misconceptions of Black Studies:**

*“Black education/studies is just for Black students” All can benefit from Black studies and education*

**PART 4**

**STUDENT SPARK**

Play the song, *Young, Gifted and Black* by Nina Simone  
Ask the students to write down words or phrases they hear when they listen to the lyrics and instruments.

Then play the song again and have the lyrics in front of the children. Ask them what they hear, feel, and love about the language and music. Engage in a discussion around the following:

- When you hear “Black” what words/thoughts come to mind?
- What does it mean to be young, gifted, and Black?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Why do you think songs like this had to be created? What were Black people resisting?</li> <li>● How are you gifted and genius?</li> </ul>
<p><b>UNIT BREAK DOWN</b></p>	<p><b>Day 1:</b> Following the Student Spark, engage students in a viewing of the short video, <i>History of Black Studies</i>, and follow with an individual reading of <i>What is Black Studies</i> (article).</p> <p>As students are reading the nonfiction article, they should <a href="#">annotate</a>. After their reading and annotation, they should share their understanding in small groups.</p> <p>As a whole group engage in a discussion:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is Black? What is African Diaspora ?</li> <li>2. What is Black studies?</li> <li>3. Why is Black beauty and genius important to be taught in schools?</li> <li>4. Why was Black studies created?</li> <li>5. What is Eurocentrism and why is the centering only of this harmful?</li> <li>6. What is the Black Power Movement?</li> <li>7. What is self-definition and self-determination? Do you have this?</li> <li>8. How has colonization harmed the world?</li> <li>9. Why do you feel you would like to learn Black history and culture?</li> <li>10. What do you already know about beauty in Blackness?</li> </ol> <p>Other instructional options can be a fishbowl, small group discussion, or Socratic seminar.</p> <p><b>Day 2:</b> Open the class the reading of <i>My People</i> by Langston Hughes. Ask students the questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>What is this poem about?</i></li> <li>● <i>Who were Langston Hughes referring to as his people?</i></li> <li>● <i>What beautiful parts of the earth did he compare his people to?</i></li> <li>● <i>Why did he write this poem? What was happening in the sociopolitical environment?</i></li> <li>● <i>Who are your people and how are they beautiful?</i></li> </ul> <p>Then engage students in the reading of <i>For My People</i> by Margaret Walker. Before reading, teach a short biography of Margaret Walker as well as the context in which she penned the poem. Following the reading, ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>What is this poem about?</i></li> <li>● <i>Who were Margaret Walker referring to as her people?</i></li> <li>● <i>What are the beautiful parts of the poem?</i></li> <li>● <i>Why did she write this poem? What was happening in the sociopolitical environment?</i></li> </ul>

- *What do you want your people to have?*

Exit Ticket Question: *How are Black people beautiful and genius?*

**Day 3:** Music Stations

Divide the class into six small groups. Give each group a song and the lyrics in front of them. It is key to share a brief bio of each artist. Invite one of the students to use their smartphones to play the song to their group several times. Each group member should listen to the song and have an informal discussion around the following questions:

1. What is this song about?
2. What examples of Black culture does this song help to express?
3. What is beautiful about the lyrics?
4. What is one word or phrase that really captured my attention?
5. What do I want others to know about the meaning of this song?

\* These questions can be put on a graphic organizer or worksheet.

**Day 4:** Art Stations

Divide the class into six small groups. Give each group a work of art (print in color or have a color digital copy). It is key to share a brief bio of the artist, Bisa Butler. Each group should engage in an informal discussion around the following questions:

1. What is this art piece about?
2. What examples of Black culture are represented in the art?
3. What is beautiful about the art?
4. What do I notice in the art?
5. What do I want others to know about the meaning of this art?

\* These questions can be put on a graphic organizer or worksheet.

If time permits, ask groups to share their art piece and analysis.

**Day 5:** Open the class as a free write: *Reflect upon the examples of Black genius and joy that you have known and used throughout your life.*

Each student will be invited to do a research report on Black genius by selecting a person, place, movement, or community to research and write about. Teachers should offer a suggested list for research.

Extension: Have students submit their research reports and present them to the class.

**SOCIAL ACTION EXTENSION**

Have students create Black Genius projects and presentations and invite the community when sharing.

**Teacher Notes:**