**The Search for African Heritage and Identity:
Did the Negritude Movement Find the Answer?**

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INTRODUCTION

"But what did they lose?" asks Shamil, a sixteen year-old Turkish-Russian who is one of the most inquisitive students in my English 2 class. "Our heritage and our identity," says Mukule, a quiet boy from the Republic of Congo. "But what is the African heritage?" Shamil adds, "You see, the Russians have the Kremlin, the Japanese have their castles and *samurais*, the British have their Queen, and the Americans have democracy and the Statue of Liberty. What did the Africans have that they'd lost?" We have just finished reading Alice Walker's "Everyday Use," and the students are discussing why in the story an old quilt has become a symbol of the identity that African Americans had seemingly lost when they were brought to this country as slaves. "Surely, the Africans can do better than this quilt," adds Shamil in a tone that seems to challenge me to provide a convincing explanation. In this short story, a mother has to choose whom to give the family's heirloom hand-made quilt: to a less educated daughter who has worked and survived with her in a farm all these years, or to a college-educated daughter who has come back from the big city in search of her identity. The story is set in the rural South USA during the 1960s when many African Americans were discovering their heritage. The "black pride" movement, which grew out of the civil rights campaigns, called upon African Americans to recognize and celebrate their African roots and to affirm their cultural identity (Applebee 499). In the past, whenever students asked questions about the African Americans' "black heritage," I would simply point out their contributions to this country's arts, music, sports, and politics – as appropriate – then actively encourage them to consult with their Social Studies teachers for more elaborate explanations, for two valid reasons: 1) I am an English Language Arts (ELA) teacher and considering how cramped the curriculum already is, I often don't have time to engage in a substantive discussion of history, and 2) although the 10th grade ELA reading canon includes a proportionate number of significant African and African American works, these, in my opinion, largely portray heritage and identity as literary symbols rather than as historical facts or prominent cultural artifacts. However valid these reasons may be, Shamil's seemingly innocent question has led me to this seminar on African History in an effort to provide my students with more substantial and accurate explanations of the largely ignored and historically distorted view of the African heritage.

OBJECTIVES

My teaching is situated in Lee High School, a typically large urban high school in an economically depressed area in Houston. The school's blurb – "where the world comes to learn" – aptly describes the school's population. U.S.-born students are a minority in this school: a large majority comes from Latin America, twenty percent are immigrants and refugees from Africa, while the rest are from several countries in Asia, the Middle East, and the Caribbean. There are about 40 languages spoken – making the school an interesting mix of race, culture, and religion – and correspondingly, forty percent of the population are English Language Learners. Most students do not only struggle financially, but also academically; in fact, scores in the state-mandated standardized tests (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills or TAKS) remain one

of the lowest in the district, despite very significant gains in recent years. In an effort to truly prepare our very diverse student population for life beyond high school, the school has adopted a rigorous program aimed at strengthening the students' academic preparation through the development of high-order-thinking skills (HOTS). It is for this reason that I vertically align the objectives of this curriculum unit with the critical-thinking skills objectives specified in the district's ELA curriculum, namely: analyzing context clues, interpreting culturally diverse literature, monitoring and fixing comprehension, synthesizing and summarizing, evaluating and making conclusions, applying knowledge and skills, and predicting and processing information. The overarching goals within which these objectives will be achieved are culled from the curriculum goals for English 2 as specified in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) such as: *Goal 7 Reading Comprehension* – student comprehends selection using a variety of strategies; *Goal 8 Reading a Variety of Texts* – student reads extensively and intensively for different purposes in varied sources, including world literature; *Goal 9 Reading/Culture* – student reads widely, including world literature, to increase knowledge of his/her own culture, the culture of others, and the common elements across cultures; *Goal 11 Reading Literary Concepts* – student analyzes literary elements for their contribution to meaning in literary texts; *Goal 12 Reading/Analysis/Evaluation* – student reads critically to evaluate texts; *Goal 13 Reading/Inquiry/Research* – student reads in order to research self-selected and assigned topics; *Goal 4 Writing/Inquiry/Research* – student uses writing as a tool for learning; *Goal 19 Viewing and Representing* – student understands and interprets visual representations; and *Goal 20 Viewing and Representing* – student analyzes and critiques the significance of visual representations.

RATIONALE

I chose to write on Africa's search for identity not only because this topic provides many opportunities for my students to learn essential academic concepts and skills, but also because I am convinced that it can leave a huge impact on how they view their self-worth. Years of teaching have taught me that the more positive self-esteem a student has the better his\her chances for success. Self-esteem is built on a clear understanding of self including one's culture, heritage, beliefs, and traditions. Most adolescent high school students go though periods of identity crisis; for young immigrant teenagers like my students, who have been transplanted into an unfamiliar environment here in the US, their sense of individual and cultural identity could easily fall victim to the overpowering pressure to belong to the more accepted beliefs and practices of the majority culture. It is my intention to use this topic to help my immigrant students discover and appreciate their roots so that, like the Africans who have overcome centuries of disenfranchisement, they too can face a future filled with confidence.

UNIT BACKGROUND

Negritude, characterized by many scholars as a formative movement of African literature, is a significant ideological and literary development that originated during the 1930s. In essence, the movement aims to break down established boundaries and stereotypes of blacks that had been cultivated through several centuries of enslavement and of colonial rule. To writers in the Negritude movement, colonization had stripped their cultures of not only their uniqueness, but also of the means of expressing it. To them Negritude provided the best means of expressing the essence of black identity. This movement is important in the broader fight for African independence because it provided a great impetus to African literature in the 1930s and helped an entire generation of authors and intellectuals to develop an awareness and appreciation of their racial and cultural identities. In doing so, the movement also helped pave the way to national and political freedom for many African countries, and therefore it "should be placed within the context of an evolving African identity" (Ahluwalia 38). The question is: How did Negritude come about? To answer the question, a review of the recent history of Africa is in order. The long

history of Africa is filled with the rise and fall of many civilizations and features many diverging paths of human development. Anyone aiming to understand its complex history will find that it is difficult to decide where to begin. To start our study on the Negritude movement, we shall consider two specific times and events in the history of Africa as initial points of discussion, namely the "commercial revolution" that occurred prior to the Atlantic Slave Trade (AST) era, and the First World War that happened during Africa's colonial period.

Trade, Commerce, and Politics in Africa before the Atlantic Slave Trade Era

The Commercial Revolution is a period in world history (between 1000 BCE and 300 CE) when the rise of the merchant class caused a fundamental shift in the social economy of trade and created a pattern in the global exchange of goods that remains in use even to this day. Contrary to Eurocentric views that Africa was isolated from any global historical activity, changes brought about by the commercial revolution did in fact directly affect the rise and fall of the great medieval kingdoms and empires of Africa, in the same way that it did other civilizations in ancient times. Riding on the back of the spread of Islam in North Africa – which became an important catalyst for political development in Africa at this time – the most renowned of Africa's medieval civilizations that include the empires of Ghana, Mali, and Songhay rose to the highest stages of their international influence during the period following the commercial revolution (Khapoya 81). Wars against established empires of Egypt and the Maghreb had to be fought and won before the North African Muslims could expand the Islamic civilization in these regions. When the Muslim king, Ahmad al-Mansur finally did in the 1600s, they were also able to gain control of the lucrative trans-Saharan trade in gold that originated in western Sudan. Khapoya (84) notes that the earliest written reference to a western Sudanic civilization in what was called "the land of gold," from the 700 CE, mentioned the Mande-speaking (Soninke) kingdom of Ghana. These written sources portrayed Ghana's early medieval kings as living in great pomp and splendor, controlling a vast army and taking in much tribute and profit from the trans-Saharan gold trade. In 1076 CE, Islamic purifiers called Almoravids defeated Ghana's imperial rule and took over the gold route, signaling the gradual fall of the empire. As Muslim traders/armies controlled the increasing international demand for gold particularly in the medieval Mediterranean civilizations in Iberia and Italy, the autonomous Mande-speaking (Malinke) kingdom of Mali emerged and eventually grew to more than twice the size of Ghana's earlier empire. The founding hero of Mali's medieval empire was Sundiata (1235-1255) who, according to oral traditions transcribed by D.T. Niane, grew from a handicapped childhood to become a healthy and powerful prince in the royal Keita clan, to develop a strong confederation of Malinke *mansas,* and to lead this confederation's warriors to wars that won for them a vast empire. But by about 1430, when Muslim merchants in Timbuktu successfully refused to render tribute to Mali rulers, the empire began to disintegrate. In 1464, the autonomous medieval kingdom of Songhay broke away from Mali to become the third grand empire in the medieval western Sudan. Under Muhammad Toure (a Soninke by birth), Songhay rose to become one of the medieval world's largest multinational empires, and was the site of the fabled Sankore University in Timbuktu where some of the Islamic world's most respected scholars taught. Eventually in 1580, Songhay's trans-Saharan trade declined due to a succession of disputes, rebellions, and civil wars, and in part due to the increased competition from European sea merchants along West Africa's Atlantic coast which traded more than just gold (Khapoya 84-87).

The early European merchants characteristically offered manufactured goods – purple dye, metal goods, wine, olive oil, and so forth – for the raw materials or the partially processed natural products of Africa, such as the tortoiseshell and the frankincense and myrrh of the northern Horn of Africa, and gold from the West African coasts and hinterlands. Notably, the African markets' role in this pattern of exchange was that of a provider of raw materials. Thus, starting from the first millennium, Africa's subordinate role in world economy as provider of raw materials started

to take shape – a role that would eventually explain its less competitive position in world economy and its underdevelopment (Ehret 167)

The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

The years from 1450 to 1640 mark the emergence of a new era in the wider history of the world. The chain of developments by which the European gradually shifted from being peripheral actors on the world stage to chief protagonists began in this period. During this time, Europeans conducted commerce along the western side of Africa and across the Atlantic Ocean, opening up new sea trade routes of global reach between the Atlantic and the rest of the oceans of the world. This is the period that started a 500-year era we now know as the Atlantic Slave Trade (AST). However, as Dr. Klieman – the leader of this seminar – points out, European domination did not happen overnight, in fact, this era could be divided into four phases. Phase 1 (1450s–1600s) marks the creation of markets in trading towns and city-states along the west coast of Africa where Europeans and Africans traded goods and war captives. Phase 2 (1600s to 1700s) marks the extension of markets when trade in slaves began to dominate the economy. The Europeans, needing to supply more slaves to the New World, penetrated into Africa, consequently increasing incidence of war among kingdoms. Phase 3 (1700s to 1800s) is the height of the slave trade. This is the period when most of the 22 million slaves were shipped across the Atlantic and when Africans, not just Europeans, were involved. Political and economic power were now concentrated in the coast. Finally, Phase 4 (1800 to 1900) marks the slow death of the slave trade. Britain abolished slave trade in 1806 and began" mining" Africa for natural resources to fuel its industrial revolution. The Portuguese, Brazilians, and Americans continued on with slave trading in partnership with some Africans. The reduced need for slaves created a glut; eventually surplus slaves were used in production of goods for legitimate trade (Klieman).

This history is rather well known but what is often ignored is the impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on the Africans. *In what ways did it affect the Africans? What was their role in it?* And, going back to the very first question we asked at the beginning of this paper: *What was lost?* The estimates as to the total number of Africans enslaved range from 9 to 22 million. The obvious loss to this tragic saga, according to Dr. Klieman, is people; especially the most vibrant men aged 15-40 years old. Places in West Africa such as Senegambia, Upper Guinea Coast, Kongo, Angola, the Gold Coast, Bight of Benin, Bight of Biafra, Mozambique, and the Loango region all lost normal population growth, productive potentials, and technological development which began the process of underdevelopment still apparent today. Many of those enslaved were war captives from centralized states. These are societies that had greater class divisions and where there were more people at the bottom of social stratification, therefore many more people to capture and sell as slaves. Slave-trading in these states were carried out by kings, members of royalty, and merchants who united with Europeans for the intention of perpetuating their positions of power and the expansion of their territories (Klieman). Contrary to common knowledge, not all African kings or communities took part in the slave trade. For example, Almamy of Futa Toro (1789) refused passage of slaves through his domain, the Jola of Casamance rejected trade with Europe until the 17th century, the Baga of Guinea refused throughout their history, the Mpongwe of Gabon early on killed Europeans when they arrived (although they later traded a small number of slaves towards the very end of the AST), and the Kru of Liberia who were known to either kill raiders or kill themselves when captured – a resistance so ferocious that the Europeans eventually stopped pursuing them (Klieman).

Politically, slave trade marked the shifting of power in many kingdoms and city-states. To illustrate, in the Loango Kingdom, the Europeans backed up the local merchants who were at the forefront of trading slaves. With the unwitting help of court elders who advised the king to stay away from the white men lest he became corrupted, these merchants eventually became rich enough to oust the king from position of power. This divide-and-conquer strategy made it

possible for Europeans to weaken the might of medieval kingdoms such as the Kongo, Oyo, and Jolof in Senegal, and created in their place mercantilist states where commercial and political powers were completely fused (Khapoya 93). In pre-slave trade era, wars were battles between few people where losers paid tribute and a few captives were taken. In the European-corrupted African world, wars were now large scale and geared towards total destruction of weaker societies. The increased warfare took away the time needed for agriculture, in fact throughout the slave-trading age, there was scant agricultural development and no exports; instead there were famine, hunger, and disease. These changes eventually penetrated into the daily life and value systems of the ordinary Africans. Now constantly fearing for their safety, they became so insecure that the Igbo, for example, kept their children in locked and guarded stockades when they went and worked in their fields. New institutions developed among the slave-trade participants. Wealthy slave-merchants having health problems so feared the wrath of victims' dead ancestors that they sought the aid of witch doctors and superstitiously believed in the power of amulets, thus corrupting their traditional beliefs in the influence of dead ancestors on the activities of the living, and of the spiritual power of nature. They also established exclusive organizations aimed at protecting their interests, ensuring that their lineages would not die, and controlling/policing the trading system - precursor of today's politics of patronage in many African countries. Amidst all these, one social institution became the medium that saved African culture from being totally wiped out: the family. The destruction of family, often the slaves' most bitter experience, paradoxically became the building block of a surrogate kinship network which even up to now is very strong among African-descended communities (Klieman).

While it can be said that humanitarian reasons influenced Britain to abolish slave trade, an act that pressured other European countries to eventually follow towards the end of the 18th century, the change in the attitude of the British ruling class towards the slave trade was due to a number of factors. Packer, writing from a Socialist perspective on Britain's imperialistic activities during this period, explains that the loss of America as a colony in 1776, as a result of the American war of independence, led to a crisis in British imperialist policy. One result was that British imperialism accidentally discovered that it was making greater profits after the abolition of the 'mercantile system' with America (by which America was bound by rigid rules to trade only with Britain). This led to a development among the industrial bourgeoisie of support for Adam Smith's ideas of 'free trade', particularly for the increased exploitation of India. In the Caribbean, Britain's bitter rival, France, was profiting greatly from Saint-Dominique's (now Haiti) sugar and coffee produced from the labor of slaves which it bought from Britain, giving the latter more reason to end slave trade. But this was not enough to convince the British to pass the abolition bill. It was not until the French Revolution in 1789 whose cry of "liberty, equality, and fraternity" inspired radical French intellectuals in France and the discontented black population in Haiti to call for not just the emancipation of slaves, but for the independence of Haiti. The British realized that they could soon lose Jamaica where Africans were beginning to rise in resistance along the Haitian model. Knowing that continuing to import slaves from Africa risked increasing further slave revolts, Britain passed the act that outlawed slave trading in 1807 (Packer). The year should have marked the beginning of an end of Africa's subjugation and exploitation. But it did not.

Colonial Period

If in the previous era the Europeans came to rob Africa of its people, in the colonial period, they came to implant themselves in the continent and to rule over its people. Europe's Industrial Revolution in the 19th century and its huge demand for raw materials, is largely to blame for this. The Europeans had been aware of the vast natural resources of Africa from as early as the medieval era, when gold, ivory, iron, and other profitable resources were obtained there. So like ants that keep coming back to hoard more sugar, the former slave-trading countries came to stay, this time for good. It did not take long for tension to build, what with each country eager to mark

its own territory. To avoid a European war that might arise from the conflicting claims, German chancellor Otto von Bismark held the West African Conference in Berlin from November 1884 through February 1885, an event we now refer to as "The Scramble for Africa." Although this conference had everything to do with Africa, not a single of the fourteen countries represented was African. Of the seven European countries that would eventually control most of Africa, Great Britain, France, and Belgium together controlled most of Africa's territory. But what were the motives, policies, and abilities of these nations, and how much more would their colonization destroy the already suffering continent?

Numerous motives were behind Great Britain, France, and Belgium's colonization of Africa. Aside from supplying the raw materials so necessary to Industrial Revolution, each country's major reason for colonizing Africa differed from each other. Mazrui frames these motives using three broad categories: political/strategic, cultural, and economic. The political motivation is based on the political ideas in vogue in the 18th century, which equated colonial possessions with prestige and status. Just imagine the pride and the psychological sense of importance as world power felt by tiny countries like Belgium in acquiring a colony like the Belgian Congo which was nearly eighty times its size, or Britain which, at the zenith of its imperial power, controlled, in Africa alone, an area that was more than forty times its own size. This could have been the reason why after Napoléon Bonaparte's defeat at Waterloo in 1815, the humbled Frenchmen saw colonization in Africa as a chance to regain some of their dignity and prestige. Beyond the psychological satisfaction of being a great power, acquiring a colony also provided a large reservoir of manpower to be drawn upon in time of war. It is reported for example that during WWI, nearly one million persons of African descent fought on the side of the allied powers. In WWII nearly two million African served, again, on the side of those who were fighting against tyranny and oppression. Another advantage to holding certain areas in Africa during armed conflict is strategic in nature. For example, the Strait of Gibraltar, that small entrance into the western Mediterranean Sea, was the scene of intense military campaigns in WWII as the combatants sought to control it; whoever controlled the straits determined events in that important area of the world (Mazrui 661-666). It was V.I. Lenin, in his classic *Imperialism: The Highest State of Capitalism*, who most systematically articulated the economic rationale for the extension of imperial rule to the Third World. He argued that European countries sought to colonize African states in response to the inherent demands of capitalist economies, which not only needed natural resources with which to fuel the industrial revolutions in their own countries, but also sought to exploit the cheap labor. As the European economies expanded, captive markets in the Third World became necessary for disposing of surplus goods. Suffice it to say that the desire for wealth, trade, resources, and cheap labor did motivate European expansion into Africa and other parts of the world (cited in Khapoya 118).

The cultural reason for colonization was deeply rooted in the ethnocentrism of the European people, who regarded anyone different as being culturally inferior. In the case of the Africans, because they were not technologically advanced or their achievements were not always written and therefore not known to the rest of the world, the Europeans felt that it was their duty to "civilize" and "uplift" the African people. In fact, Britain distanced itself from France's imperial interests and Belgium's purely economic motivation by claiming to also have a Biblical motive (Khapoya 113). Of course many Englishmen looked at Africa as an economic opportunity, but there were those who solely wanted to open up the continent to what a British missionary called the "3 Cs": cut slavery, convert the blacks, and civilize the continent (Khapoya 113) The famous poem, "The White Man's Burden" written by Rudyard Kipling, vividly captures the sense of divine mission that was to characterize Europe's forceful entry into Africa. Kipling urges the West to: Take up the White Man's Burden- / Send forth the best ye breed- / Go bind your sons to exile / To serve your captives need; / To wait in heavy harness, / On fluttered folk and wild- / Your new-caught, sullen peoples, / Half-devil and half-child (Kipling 1899).

On the ground, the colonial masters tailored their ruling styles according to their general objectives in the colony. The French followed an imperial model where Paris directly ruled the colonies through a governor. The civilizing mission is to remake the African in their own image. This "assimilation policy" was supposed to acculturate Africans into French culture so that they can participate normally in the life of the French society (Khapoya 118). One consequence of this policy is that it created generations of Africans with "colonial mentality," an attitude that regard almost everything that the colonizers have as more superior than anything that the colonized has or will ever produce. It is important to point out at this juncture that it is in this "assimilation" milieu that the founders of the Negritude movement gave birth to the idea of African nationalism and search for identity. Questions as to the degree to which the founders of Negritude were assimilated, as well as their attitudes toward French culture and African identity, will frame our later discussion on the Negritude movement.

Consistent with their reputation as social snobs, the British practiced an indirect rule, an approach that involved "identifying the local power structure: the kings, chiefs, or headmen who would then be invited, coerced, or bribed to become part of the colonial administrative structure." (Khapoya 127) To understand how this works, in the practical life of the colony, the indigenous people and the British were segregated. Social institutions like schools and hospitals were maintained in such a way that Africans were kept in their place – in the lower class. Grudgingly, the British would allow a well-to-do African to, for example, own a house in a predominantly white area, however, they did not see the possibility of the African ever becoming a social equal to a British – he/she has to have both ancestry and culture to be one. One significant political consequence to this is that segregation reinforced separate ethnic identities, thus it stunted the development of a national or colony-wide political consciousness.

Like the French, the Portuguese practiced a direct rule, albeit much harsher and stricter. They also regarded their colonies as overseas provinces, but they had no intention of granting them self-rule. The Portuguese were equally ethnocentric and racist toward Africans. Their civilizing mission is a cross between the French and the British. To them it was possible for an African to co-mingle with the Portuguese through marriage and cohabitation. This was a much abused system, however, because most of the unions were never made legal, leaving the mostly African women to be responsible for the biracial children resulting from these unions. Consequently, these children did not have strong identification with the Portuguese society that this seemingly "racial tolerance" was supposed to instill (Khapoya 128).

Another unfortunate result of the African colonization was the fact that all the colonizers commonly mistreated the indigenous inhabitants in African colonies in violent and brutal ways. On the whole, Europe's colonization of Africa led to severe underdevelopment: Europeans had exploited the resources throughout the nation without making much progress in developing the colonies they controlled. Very few Africans would have sufficient education to rule a country, and the arbitrary boundaries of colonies set during "the Scramble" (made regardless of indigenous political and ethnic realities) prevented the formation of unified national spirit to fight off colonization in a big way.

Although African colonies eventually gained freedom later on in the 20th century, nearly all struggled to create strong and legitimate nations. Most did not have capable citizenry, their economies were based largely on the extraction of raw materials, and a nationalist consciousness was often lacking. Without a doubt, colonization added more misfortune to a continent that has suffered for centuries. It consciously sought to humiliate a culture, and alienate a people from their true heritage. Martin Meredith in his book on post-colonial Africa quotes an unknown Algerian journalist, Ferhas Abbas, to express what ordinary Africans feel about their quest for a national identity:

> If I had discovered an Algerian nation, I would be a nationalist and I would not blush for it as though it were a crime. Men who die for a patriotic ideal are daily honored and regarded. My life is worth no more than theirs. Yet I will not die for an Algerian homeland, because such a homeland does not exist. I have not found it. I have questioned history, I have asked the living and the dead, I have visited the cemeteries; no one has told me of it…one does not build on the wind. (cited in Meredith 8)

The Awakening of African Nationalism

When one focuses specifically on understanding the genesis of black pride and the movement to reclaim African roots, there is, in recent African history a definite beginning: World War I. If nationalism was the current that swept the hearts and minds of many African intellectuals to fight for their independence, then World War I was the watershed event that caused these currents to overflow. Approximately one million Africans were drafted by their colonial rulers to participate in military actions in Europe, the Middle East, and in Africa itself during World War I. What happens when an exploitative government enlists in its army the very same people they oppress to fight their enemies? What happens when a subjugated people are forced to undergo considerable hardship and deprivation, and in many cases, injury and death in a war that is not their own? Does this government expect these long-suffering people to not learn anything from their experience in the war and to just go back to their subjugated existence once the war is over? Or, on the other hand, do the survivors return to demand a "just reward" for their efforts and sacrifices? Because they were denied this, many of the returning soldiers turned to nationalism and anti-colonial activities with an eye towards driving out their oppressors. It was military service that provides African veterans with the necessary skills to carry out a revolutionary struggle.

Historians of the colonial period in Africa, and particularly of African nationalism, have generally recognized the impact of the African military service in WWI. Carl Rosberg and John Nottingham, for example, note that somewhere in the Africans' collective experience in the war, whether for participating in small number with regular military units or in large numbers as porters in the Carrier Corp, lies the source of their first experiments in organized political activity. After the war, nationalism would begin to fashion effective alternatives to the spear (Rosberg and Nottingham 26). Bethwell Ogot draws much the same conclusion about this experience: "The Africans became more aware of themselves as a distinct racial group; they discovered the weakness and the heterogeneity of the white men; and even more crucial, they learned the importance of organized resistance" (Ogot 265). They learned modern military skills and demonstrated leadership abilities. Many of them performed acts of bravery and endurance that should have banished once and for all any racist notions that Africans, given a chance, could not measure up to Europeans. In what could only be considered as fateful irony, Africans realized that while they were fighting for French liberty and American democracy, they were themselves deprived of freedom and justice; that as they struggled to survive in an extractive economy, they were in fact helping the Europeans to survive in their destructive bid for world domination. Once the war ended, African veterans felt that they had earned at least the right to be treated with respect. They expected to be rewarded for their service with social and constitutional changes as well as economic concessions in ways that would improve their living conditions at home. Basil Davidson quotes a Nigerian soldier who wrote home from India during the war: "We all overseas soldiers are coming home with new ideas. We have been told what we fought for. That is 'freedom.' We want freedom, nothing but freedom" (cited in Khapoya 158). Indeed, it is not hard to understand how the African experience of WWI had convinced not a few in the African intelligentsia, both those in the Diaspora and the expatriated ones in Europe, to become their continent's active agents of modernization and organizers of political action.

The Pan-African Congress

The first wave of this rising tide of nationalism surfaced in Paris during the inaugural Pan-African Congress in 1919. Organized by Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois, an African- American intellectual and political/social activist, the congress' main task was to petition the Versailles Peace Conference to: 1) require the Allied Countries (i.e. France, Italy, the United States, the Russian Empire, and the British Empire) to persuade the European powers to adopt a Charter of Human Rights for Africans as a reward for the sacrifices they had made during the war; 2) to take charge of the administration of former territories in Africa as a condominium on behalf of the Africans who were living there; and 3) to petition the colonial powers to allow Africans to take part in governing their countries as fast as their development permits, until some specified time in the future (BBC World Service). The first congress was attended by 56 black Francophone and Caribbean delegates, and Blaise Diagne of Senegal, the lone African delegate from the continent. Khapoya notes that this conference would not have been allowed to take place in Paris, if not for the presence of Diagne, the first African to serve in the French parliament, who used his influence with the French Prime Minister to secure permission for the conference to be held (Khapoya 161). The Allied Powers, assembled to sign the Treaty of Versailles, were not sympathetic at all to such a large gathering of black people, The United States was afraid that Du Bois might use the international forum to publicize lynchings of black people in the U.S., while the Europeans did not want any negative publicity associated with the brutal and repressive actions of their governments in African colonies. And certainly, none of the Allied Powers wanted the sterling accomplishments of black soldiers highlighted by this gathering for fear of offending the white soldiers and the European public.

This conference and the next four (in London, Brussels, and Paris in 1921, London again in 1923, Lisbon in 1927, and Manchester, U.K. in 1945) that Du Bois organized brought out many issues concerning Africans that reverberate even up to this day. In his 1903 book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois predicted that the major issue of the 20th century was going to be one of race. Like most African intellectuals, Du Bois felt that prejudice and racism toward people of color was based on ignorance. So much negative and false theory had been written about Africans to justify colonization that most people in the Western World actually thought that Africans were worthless, had no past, and had made no contribution to civilization. He rightfully demanded that European powers protect Africans from abuses of all sorts, that education be provided, and that "slavery," forced labor, and corporal punishment be outlawed (cited in Huggins 1986).

Out of this intellectual environment and political context important new literary movements arose, which were to further the cause of nationalism and involve ideas of Africanism and Black Pride. It is to these movements we will turn now.

The Harlem Renaissance

As the tide of Black nationalistic pride continued to rise in Europe, a volcanic-like eruption of artistic creativity and political activism fostered by a movement we now know as the Harlem Renaissance, simultaneously occurred in the United States. As we have already seen, the anti-colonial sentiments of African *intelligentsia* in Europe and their increasing levels of awareness of their inherent right to self-governance emerged from their experience of World War I. Similarly, the anti-racism sentiments of the African Americans, and their increasingly loud and confident voices that exalted the uniqueness of their culture and artistic expressions emerged from the rampant racial injustices and frequent grisly lynchings they experienced during the first two decades of the 20th century. Whereas Africans intellectuals living in France, Britain, Portugal, and in some places in the Caribbean preoccupied themselves with articulating the philosophical and political rationale of their pan-African movement, Black writers and artists in the United States created new forms of literature, art, and music that were rooted in African aesthetics, in an effort

to assert their identity and instill *black pride* in the cultural, social, and political landscape of the country.

How did the Harlem Renaissance advance the agenda of an independent Africa, and of culturally proud Africans? Professor Richard Powell, in a round-table discussion on the movement shown on Public Broadcasting System (PBS) explains that Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s was arguably one of the first instances in the 20th century when whites -- albeit white elites and white social reform types - collaborated with black intellectuals, social activists, educators, and artists in attempts to transform a largely segregated and racist society (*PBS Newshour Forum*). It is important to highlight this historical instance at this juncture because this Harlem Renaissance-inspired interracial collaboration would later resonate in the ideas of Leopold Senghor, one of the architects of the Negritude movement. Secondly, the promotion of nationalistic fervor among Blacks on both sides of the Atlantic gained more momentum in the "back to Africa" and "Africa for Africans at home and abroad" slogans of the Harlem-based Jamaican political activist Marcus Garvey, a battle cry that, again, would be espoused by Negritude writers. How these ideas came to influence the Negritude movement in Europe can be explained in three related ways. First, works of prominent African-American writers were read and analyzed by the founders of the movement. For example, one of the founders of the movement, Aime Cesaire, wrote a dissertation on the movement in the 1930s (Nesbitt). Works of Langston Hughes, James Weldon Johnson, and Claude McKay, to name a few, were common readings and topics for discussions among the Paris-based Francophone Africans. Second, Harlem Renaissance's mission to rehabilitate and resituate the articulation of black consciousness and its attendant cultural expression within the context of racism became an important Negritude concept which relocated the mission within the context of colonialism. Third, the activism and literary works of the African-Americans inspired many of those in the Negritude movement, in fact, Senghor, one of the founding fathers had gone so far as to cite McKay as the spiritual founder of Negritude: "Claude McKay can rightfully be considered the true inventor of Negritude. I speak not of the word, but of the values of Negritude. . . . Far from seeing in one's blackness an inferiority, one accepts it, one lays claim to it with pride, one cultivates it lovingly" (cited in Nesbitt). Like the evolution of the term "black" in the United States in the hands of the Harlem writers, Negritude took a stigmatized term 'negro' and turned it into a word of pride. To illustrate the depth of influence that the African Americans had on Negritude, let us examine a few works of the two of the leading voices of the Harlem Renaissance – Langston Hughes and Claude McKay.

Hughes – a poet, novelist, and playwright who became one of the foremost interpreters of racial relationships in the U.S. – depicted realistically the ordinary lives of black people. Many of his poems, written in rhythmical language, were meant to be read aloud, crooned, shouted, and sung perhaps to underscore the idea of pride in their 'blackness': "Rest at pale evening.../ A tall slim tree.../ Night coming tenderly/ Black like me" (Rampesad and Roessel 2002). In his writings, Hughes emphasized the importance of African culture and of his belief that the African rebirth could only come from an understanding of African roots. He writes in the poem "Cross": "My old man died in a fine big house. / My ma died in a shack. / I wonder where I'm gonna die, / Being neither white nor black?" (from *Selected Poems*, 1958) In another poem, he tells his people what to do with their black-ness: "Wear it / Like a banner / For the proud - / Not like a shroud. (Rampesad and Roesel, 2002) To Hughes, African pride does not just come from being 'black,' rather, it must be linked to one's heritage and history, i.e. the black person's African past. In his classic "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," Hughes speaks of another aspect of the black past, of the race's age-old migration, and of his people's river-like existence: I've known rivers: / I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow / of human blood in human veins. / My soul has grown deep like the rivers. / I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young. / I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep. / I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids

above it. / I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went / down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy bosom turn / all golden in the sunset. / I've known rivers: / Ancient, dusky rivers. / My soul has grown deep like the rivers (Rampesad and Roesel 23).

Using a much stronger, more militant voice, Claude McKay's poems assert the affinity that blacks of the Diaspora have with their forefathers in the continent. An example of this affirmation is the poem "Outcast": "For the dim regions where my father come / My spirit, bondaged by the body, longs. / Words felt, but never heard, my lips would frame; / My soul would sing forgotten jungle songs. / I would go back to darkness and peace, / But the great western world holds me in fee, / And I may never hope for full release / While to its alien gods I bend my knee. / Something in me is lost, forever lost, / Some vital thing is gone out of my heart, / And I must walk the way of life a ghost / Among the sons of the earth, a thing apart. / For I was born, far from my native clime, / Under the white man's menace, out of time" (from *Harlem Shadows*, 1922). In another poem, "If I Must Die," McKay strikes an enraged voice of defiance against the systematic extermination of his people: "If I must die, let it not be like dogs / Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot, / While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs, / Making their mock at our accursed lot" then implores them: "O kinsmen! We must meet the common foe! / Though far outnumbered let us show us brave, / And for their thousand blows deal one death blow! / What though before us lies the open grave? / Like men we'll face the thunderous cowardly pack, / Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!" (from *Harlem Shadows*, 1922)

The Negritude Movement

Historically, Negritude was a literary and ideological movement founded by French-speaking black intellectuals – Aime Cesaire, Leopold Sedar Senghor, and Leon Gontian Damas – as a reaction against colonialism: a rejection of the political, social and moral domination of the West. Its aim was to rehabilitate Africa and all blacks from European ideology that holds the black inherently inferior to the white. Its founders met while studying in Paris in 1931 and began to publish the first journal devoted to Negritude, *L'Étudiant noir* (*The Black Student*), in 1934. The term "Negritude" was coined by Césaire in his *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (*Return to My Native Land*, 1939), which means, in his words, "the simple recognition of the fact that one is black, the acceptance of this fact and of our destiny as blacks, of our history and culture" (Nichols 157). He elaborates in this poem below: my negritude is not a stone / nor a deafness flung against the clamor of the day / my negritude is not a white speck of dead water / on the dead eye of the earth / my negritude is neither tower nor cathedral / it plunges into the red flesh of the soil / it plunges into the blazing flesh of the sky / my negritude riddles with holes / the dense affliction of its worthy patience (Nichols 157).

Earlier we asked to what degree Francophone Africans had been assimilated, and how that affected their understanding of the African identity. Given the intensity of the assimilationist drive toward "Frenchness," one wonders just how capable Francophone Africans of the bourgeoisie class were of finding their authentic African voices. We should let their works speak for themselves. Cesaire's is a unique voice, inspired by a heroic vision. It is both socialistic and humanistic, yet it is a cry of outrage at the Western world's hypocrisy and inhumanity to the Third World. His dedication to righting these wrongs emerges in a poetry that has the grandeur of an epic yet haunted by past afflictions and charged with future hopes. One gleans from the following poem Cesaire's quick and furious response to the question my student asked: What did the Africans lose: Treasure? Let us tally it up. / The madness that remembers / the madness that howls / the madness that sees / the madness that unchains itself. / And you know the rest (Eshleman and Smith, 1985). In this case, 'the rest' is, literally the rape of a continent, and the enslavement and brutalization of its peoples, whose only crime lay in not being white. But Cesaire's is not an angry voice, instead it is one of hope and resistance: "With blows they knocked your solar tiara down around your neck / they've transformed it into an iron collar; they

put out the clairvoyance / of your eyes; prostituted your chaste face; / screaming that it was guttural, / they muzzled your voice, which was speaking in the shadow's silence / Africa, / do not tremble at this new fight"(Eshleman and Smith, 1985).

If Cesaire gave us the term Negritude, Senghor is famous for giving the term wide application, not just in Literature, but also in arts, politics, and even psychology. Senghor's "Anthology of New Negro and Malagasy Poetry" (1948), featured a preface by Jean-Paul Sartre and was largely responsible for establishing the concept of Negritude at the center of the debate regarding black identity among Black scholars. Senghor endorsed the notion of a racial essence grounded on undeniable visibility of skin color. He argued that the black soul is an Africa from which the black 'Negre' is exiled amidst the cold buildings of white culture and technology (Bâ, 1973). Senghor's primary themes are alienation and exile, along with the recognition of the central role played by the culture and tradition of his African homeland. Finding his/her African roots, therefore will complete a black person. To find these roots, one only has to examine his/her black emotional and psychological experience, an innate ability which only a black person can effectively do. In a much criticized pronouncement, Senghor declared that "the black African relates to the world in feeling and emotion, while white Westerner relates through analysis and reason" (cited in Wilder 245). Senghor does not hide respect for the culture that assimilated him, but maintains that it is through this cultural awakening that he is able to find his roots: "Now dies the Africa of empires—the dying of a pitiable princess / And Europe's too, to whom we're linked by the umbilicus" (cited Wilder 245).

The third architect of the movement is Leon Damas. The chief concerns in his poetry are racism, the problems of self-identity caused by assimilation, and the weaknesses of Western culture and society. The poems in his first publication, *Pigments* constitute Damas' most vehement and direct treatment of his major themes. In "Solde" ("Sell Out"), he addresses the discomfort and alienation a black person feels as a member of Western society: "Sure enough I'll get / fed up / and not even wait / for things / to reach / the state / of a ripe camembert / Then / I'll put my foot in it / or else simply / my hand around the neck / of everything that shits me up in capital letters / colonization / civilization / assimilation / and all the rest…. / I feel ridiculous / among them an accomplice / among them a pimp / among them a murderer / my hands frightfully red / with the blood of their ci-vi-li-za-tion" (from *Pigments,* 1937). In "S.O.S." he suggests that the relationship between colonized blacks and colonizing whites is similar to that between the Jews and Nazis during the years surrounding World War II: you will see them / really stop at nothing / no longer content to laugh with restless forefinger / when they see a Negro going by / but coldly beating up / coldly knowing down / coldly laying out / coldly / beating up / knocking down / laying out / the blacks and cutting off their genitals / to make candles for their churches (from *Pigments,* 1937).

Soyinka's Critique: The Real African Heritage

The Second World War brought profound change to Africa as it paved the way for decisive shifts in power away from Europe and its colonial controls. As European influence declined, the emerging superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, competed for ascendancy. For different reasons, both assumed an anti-colonial stance. When Winston Churchill and President Roosevelt drew up the Atlantic Treaty in 1941, supporting the right of all people to choose their own government, Africa was on its way to finally gaining its independence (Meredith 9). It is in this context that we understand Wole Soyinka's withering attack against the Negritude movement. Soyinka, the first African Nobel Laureate in Literature, called Negritude "a narcissistic cult of the African world" (Soyinka, *"An Image of Africa"* 1976) which veered away from its original vision as being "an anchor of cultural identity for people of African descent in their battle against the residual effects of slavery and colonialism" (Thompson 143) into a movement of "superficiality and racial self-romanticization." Emboldened by the winds of change

sweeping through the continent at the end of WWII, post-colonial writers like Soyinka saw moral and artistic hypocrisy on the part of Negritude writers. In the essays "L.S. Senghor and Negritude" and "Negritude and the Gods of Equity," Soyinka faults the "midwives of Negritude" for seeking a "premature closure to the historic travails of the Africans by freely forgiving their victimizers." He argues that the movement's assertion that "culture is racially specific, and that the culture of African peoples, rather than being something to be ashamed of, should be celebrated," is a lie because at the core of these writers still hides a strong loyalty to the French culture. In fact, Senghor, who became the first African member of the French Academy, eventually replaced his affection for negritude with "a vigorously expressed affiliation to what he termed *metissage*, or cultural cross-fertilization, in which French culture symbolized the apotheosis of human civilization" (Soyinka, *The Burden*, 1998). Negritude's celebration of *blackness* should be treated with caution, according to noted author Maryse Conde, who calls Cesaire's "fetishization of blackness" a "sentimental and empty trap." She argues that Cesaire's 'negre' does not exist. It is, in fact, an illusory 'racial' community that romanticizes its heritage of suffering, but ironically discriminates against the real struggles of the African people. "Our liberation," Conde asserts, "will come through the knowledge that there will never be any "negres". There has only ever been human exploitation" (Conde, 1974). This critique implies that Negritude cannot remain an invocation of what's good and glorious of black identity and heritage, instead true African Literature, on its own terms, must illuminate the real essence of "blackness" which is its people's cry for freedom and objective confrontation of their exploited past. It is only when African writers stop to mythologize Africa that, in the words of another well-respected African writer Chinua Achebe, "African society can regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self abasement" (from "An Image of Africa," 1976).

To Soyinka and other enlightened writers of post-colonial Africa, African heritage and identity is the story of their people's resilience and dignity in the face subjugation and exploitation. To them, the African is identified by what he/she has done, and not by who he/she is, as Soyinka so succinctly asserts in this famous metaphor: "A tiger does not shout its tigritude. It acts." (Soyinka, *Myth, Literature*) To answer Shamil's question at the start of this paper - What is the African heritage? – a more informed answer might be: African heritage is the historic epic struggle of a people to right what is wrong with how human beings treat other human beings. Thus, reading African history leads to an understanding of African heritage, and the knowledge of which will ultimately bring us to a better understanding of our humanity.

LESSON PLANS

This curriculum unit will be spread across four weeks of teaching using activities that tackle the four topics discussed in the unit background, namely: the "lost" heritage of Africa, the awakening of "black pride" through the Harlem Renaissance, the romanticizing of the African heritage by Negritude writers, and the corresponding reaction of post-colonial writers. To achieve the high-order-thinking skills (HOTS) objectives listed at the start of this paper, several instructional strategies will be implemented. The first strategy is *Read Aloud*. Here, the teacher gives students a listening prompt prior to reading aloud. Then teacher models how to discuss the piece and to generate meaning-making and engagement activity. After the modeling, students practice reading aloud two or more short passages with a partner. Then they discuss the piece or write a response. The second strategy is called *Think Aloud*. The act of reading is invisible, unconscious: *think alouds* make the unseen seen. During *think alouds*, students read by talking out loud the reading process and their thoughts as they engage the text. They also model their thoughts and share the schema and strategies they employ while reading. The third strategy is *Cloze Procedure*. In this strategy, students work on a page-long passage with several blanks. Their task is to write the missing word on the blank. Teacher provides explicit modeling of the reading strategies students

are to use. Students read through passage first then think of several possible words then choose the best one. Teacher helps students transfer the strategies they use doing cloze to what they do when they read real books. Fourth is the *Inductive Thinking Model* strategy. Here, students work with a *data set* which is composed of several short paragraphs about a single topic. Some of these paragraphs have similar sub-topic or category. The task is to group all paragraphs that belong to the same category. To do this, students will first examine the data, then classify data into categories, and finally interpret the data and search for other related data to complete the meaning of the category. The last strategy is called *Make and Break*. In this strategy, students organize a set of short paragraphs into a logical order. Teacher starts by distributing piece by piece cut up passages. Students then scan every passage looking for clues prior to reassembling. In the end, they justify the order they have decided on.

Lesson One (Week 1) – The "Lost" Heritage of Africa

Objective**:** At the end of this lesson students will write a descriptive essay about a historical event from Africa's medieval period, or an iconic cultural artifact from any period of African history.

TEKS**:** (19) understand and interpret visual representations; (20) analyze and critique the significance of visual representation; (7) comprehend selection using a variety of strategies; (8) read extensively and intensively for different purposes in varied sources including world literature; (9) read widely in order to increase knowledge of his/her own culture, the culture of others, and the common elements across cultures, (4) use writing as a tool for learning

Materials: *Wonders of the African World* (a documentary by Henry L. Gates, Jr.), passages from the epic *Sundiata* by D.T. Niane and from the novel *Segu* by M. Conde that describe the richness of African culture, pictures of UNESCO world heritage sites, short excerpts from "Getting the Terms of Our Discourse Straight" ("Tribes," "Tribal," and "Primitive") from Ehret's book, *The Civilization of Africa* (2002)

Procedures: Start by showing pictures of UNESCO world heritage sites asking students to identify the countries represented in the pictures. Explain meaning of "heritage" through this activity then extend by having students match famous historical events with countries or groups of people (e.g. *Cinco de Mayo* = Mexico). Next, have students do a "show and tell" of any cultural artifact that symbolizes their own country. At the end of this activity ask if students know any specific historical event or iconic cultural artifact that represents Africa or the African heritage. Get students to realize that many people have a negative or wrong perception of Africa resulting perhaps from the influence of media that tends to mostly focus on and produce images of the African wild, and the victims of famine, war, and genocide; create *teachable moments* to correct these perceptions. Next, distribute excerpts from "Getting Terms of Our Discourse Straight" and do a *read aloud*. Focus the students' listening by having them respond to this prompt: *As I read this passage I want you to write down at least two reasons why words such as 'tribes/tribal' and 'primitive' are demeaning.* Do two more *read alouds* using short passages from *Sundiata* and *Segu*. Have students respond to this prompt: *As I read this passage, I want you to visualize the richness of African culture.* Finally, have students watch Louis Gates' documentary *The Wonders of Africa*, and using this as springboard, have them write a descriptive essay on their impressions on African history and heritage.

Assessment: Students can accurately identify, describe in detail, and explain with text evidence their impressions on African history and heritage, and criticize historic misconceptions and current media misrepresentations of Africa.

Lesson Two (Week 2) - The Poems of the Harlem Renaissance

Objective: At the end of this lesson, students will write a compare-contrast essay on the theme, style, and techniques of the poets Langston Hughes and Claude McKay.

TEKS: (19) understand and interpret visual representations; (20) analyze and critique the significance of visual representation; (7) comprehend selection using a variety of strategies; (8) read extensively and intensively for different purposes in varied sources including world literature; (9) read widely in order to increase knowledge of his/her own culture, the culture of others, and the common elements across cultures, (4) use writing as a tool for learning

Materials: sample poems of Langston Hughes and Claude McKay, powerpoint presentation of iconic figures and symbols of the Harlem Renaissance (teacher made), artifacts (e.g. music, posters, etc.), timeline

Procedures: Show and annotate the PowerPoint presentation; instruct students to take down notes on images from the slides that strike, interest, and intrigue them. Have students think-pair-share their ideas about Harlem Renaissance. Then present the timeline of the period: using question-and–answer, have students identify the significant events, prominent figures, and contribution of the period to Africans' search for identity. Next, using an *inductive thinking model* strategy, have students categorize 12 to 16 short poems by Hughes and McKay according to theme (e.g. journey to self-enlightenment, beauty in blackness and Blacks, pride in Black culture, liberation and freedom, naturalness and being at ease with nature, nationalism, and communication with the past and ancestors). Using this activity, review or teach literary devices and techniques, diction, author's purpose, and symbolism. Next, have students do *cloze* exercises, again, using poems by Hughes and McKay. When deciding what words to "blank" in the cloze, choose words that have obvious context clues, and vocabulary words that have been learned in previous lessons. In processing the cloze activity, lead students to discuss the similarities and differences of the two poets. Next, have students do a *think aloud* using any poem by Hughes and McKay. Instruct students to annotate the page with visuals and notes that show their interpretation of the poem. Have students share their annotated poems in a small group. Finally, have students write a compare-contrast essay on Hughes and McKay.

***Assessment*:** The compare-contrast essay should show evidence of students' ability to distinguish the similarities and differences between the two poets. Things to look for in the students' essays: evidence of ability to interpret poems, and of understanding of Harlem Renaissance themes.

Lesson Three (Week 3) – The Poems of the Negritude Movement

Objective: At the end of this lesson, students will have written journal responses to every poem read in class.

***TEKS*:** (7) comprehend selection using a variety of strategies; (8) read extensively and intensively for different purposes in varied sources including world literature; (9) read widely in order to increase knowledge of his/her own culture, the culture of others, and the common elements across cultures, (4) use writing as a tool for learning; (12) read critically to evaluate text

Materials: Timeline of Negritude movement, *Make and Break* paragraphs, *Inductive Thinking Model* data set, *read-aloud* and *cloze* passages, journals

Procedures: Present the timeline of the Negritude period starting from WWI: using question-and–answer have students identify the significant events, prominent figures, and contribution of the period to Africans' search for identity. Next, using a *Make or Break* strategy, have students arrange in order scrambled paragraphs that describe significant events during the colonization of Africa and the Negritude movement. At the end of the activity, have students write journal entries describing their personal experience relating to oppression or discrimination. Next, using an *inductive thinking model* strategy, have students categorize 21 to 24 short poems by Senghor, Cesaire, and Damas (7 or 8 poems per author) according to theme. Unlike in the previous lesson, do not tell students the themes, instead have them discover the themes for themselves. At the end of this activity, have students write in their journal a response to a poem they choose from any of

the Negritude writers. Next, have students do *cloze* exercises using poems written by the three Negritude writers. As in the previous activity, when deciding what words to "blank" in the cloze, choose words that have obvious context clues, and vocabulary words that have been learned in previous lessons. In processing the cloze activity, have students discuss in small groups the similarities and differences of the three poets, then write about their favorite poet and why in their journal. Next, have pairs of students do a *read aloud* of a Negritude poem of their choice. Instruct pairs to each prepare a writing prompt that they will ask their partner to respond to after the *read aloud*. Have students write their response to prompt in their journal.

Assessment**:** The writing prompt should show interpretive knowledge of the poem; the journal entries should show reflective understanding of the themes of Negritude movement and of its purpose.

Lesson Four (Week 4) – The Authentic African Identity: Soyinka and Achebe

Objective: At the end of this lesson, students will be able to write a persuasive essay based on this prompt: Does Soyinka and Achebe's reaction to Negritude movement lead to a better understanding and appreciation of the African heritage and identity?

TEKS**:** (7) comprehend selection using a variety of strategies; (8) read extensively and intensively for different purposes in varied sources including world literature; (9) read widely in order to increase knowledge of his/her own culture, the culture of others, and the common elements across cultures, (4) use writing as a tool for learning

Materials: Read-aloud and cloze passages on the background and teachings of Soyinka and Achebe related to Negritude, excerpts from Soyinka's *The Road* and Achebe's *An Image of Africa,* handout notes on the form and features of persuasive essay

Procedure**:** Start with a review of the basic aims of the Negritude movement. Then have students discuss whether these objectives lead to the finding of an authentic African heritage/identity. Introduce Soyinka and Achebe by having students do a *read aloud* of short passages about these two writers, their background and their reactions to Negritude. As in previous *read alouds*, students read the passage first, get its main idea then write a writing prompt for his/her partner to respond to. Next, have students do a *cloze* exercise using passages that expound on Achebe and Soyinka's opposition to Negritude. Then have students *think aloud* two one-page excerpts from Achebe's *An Image of Africa* (1975) and Soyinka's *The Road* (1965). Finally, have students write a persuasive essay based on the prompt mentioned above.

Assessment**:** Students should be able to show in their writing the ability to use the format and features of persuasive essay, and to use the knowledge they have gained from the readings about the opposition to Negritude to discuss their persuasive arguments.

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