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African American History & The Five Senses

By Kate Johnson

Grade Level: First Grade (can be altered for other primary grades)

Time Frame: 4 -5 weeks

Subject Matter: social studies, science, literacy, religion, social skills

Curriculum Standards:

- 1.To understand the importance of famous African-Americans from the past; to understand the contributions of certain African-Americans in history to their fields of work.
- 2.To identify the five senses; to understand how each of the five senses is used in everyday life.
- 3.To create community and understand family tradition through a pot luck event.
- 4.To promote reading and writing in everyday life such as cookbooks, invitations, and signs.

Description: This is a month long unit that ties African-American history month with the five senses. For each week of African-American History month, the class studies one of the five senses with one area of African-American History. The sense of sight is paired with African-American art, the sense of hearing with music from African-American history, the sense of touch with African-American athletics, and the senses of taste and smell are matched with food. The unit then ends with a family pot-luck event where the families of the students are invited to school with favorite dishes from their family and/or history.

Technology Used: PowerPoint, Digital Camera, Library of Congress and other websites, The Great American Potluck collection on the Learning Page.

Lesson Plans:

Week One: Sight & Romare Bearden

Lesson One: Using a poster that has a picture of a person, the class identifies which part of the body enables people to see. The eyes on the poster are then labeled and the poster is saved for future use. The students then play a quick game of "I Spy" to concentrate on the sense of sight.

Lesson Two: Students are introduced to the African-American artist Romare Bearden. The teacher reads *Me and Uncle Romie* by Claire Hartfield and talks to students about the life of Romare Bearden, highlighting his role in the Harlem Renaissance and his collage work.

Lesson Three: Students view images of Romare Bearden and his paintings through a PowerPoint presentation. Special emphasis is placed on his collage work.

Lessons Four and Five: Students create a collage painting of their own. These lessons are split so the students can first paint their picture, then after it dries they can cut pictures from magazines, newspapers, and photographs to complete their collages.

Assessment: Students earn grades for their collages.

Week Two Hearing/African-American Music

Lesson One: Using the same poster from week one, students discuss and identify the part of the body that allows people to hear. The ears on the poster are then labeled and the poster is saved for future use.

Lesson Two: Using a variety of examples of spirituals, jazz, blues, and gospel music (most downloaded from the American Memory Collection), students listen to each type of music. The teacher gives a brief description of each type of music before listening to it, and leads a quick discussion about what the students thought after listening to the music.

Lesson Three: Students look at pictures of various musical instruments that jazz musicians might use, such as a trumpet, trombone, and piano. The teacher reads Ben's Trumpet.

Lesson Four: Students draw pictures and write words to express how they feel as they listen to one song from each genre: spirituals, jazz, and gospel. Then, students draw and write about their favorite type of African-American music.

Assessment: Students are graded on their work in lesson four.

A sample wav file Hay Black Child.

Week Three Touch/African-American Athletes

Lesson One: Using the same poster from weeks one and two, students discuss and identify the sense of touch. The hands on the poster are then labeled and the poster is saved for later use.

Lesson Two: The students are introduced to the life and achievements of Jesse Owens. Emphasis is placed on not only his athletic accomplishments, but his importance in history with relation to Hitler and the 1936 Olympic Games. Then, the class proceeds to the gym and learns how to do an official track start. Boys and girls are split into two groups to run short running races with track starts.

Lesson Three: Students are introduced to Jackie Robinson, Arthur Ashe, Althea Gibson, Tiger Woods, Venus Williams, and Serena Williams. Using imaginary sports equipment, students learn how to swing a baseball bat, golf club, and tennis racket. Students are then shown pictures of the athletes in a PowerPoint presentation. (Pictures are from the American Memory and other websites.)

Lesson Four: Students pick one athlete that they learned about in the last few days and draw a picture of that athlete performing in their sport. Students may write words and sentences to show other information they learned about their athlete.

Assessment: Students are graded on their work in lesson four.

Week Four (and Five, if necessary) Smell/Taste/Family Food

Lesson One: Using the same poster from previous weeks, students discuss and identify the senses of taste and smell. The nose and mouth on the poster are then labeled with the appropriate senses.

Lesson Two: Using foods supplied by the teacher, students try foods that demonstrate the tastes sweet, sour, salty, and bitter. As the students try each taste, they plug their noses to see how their taste is affected by doing so. Then, the students smell a variety of food samples (also supplied by the teacher) and guess what each is.

Lesson Three: Students engage in a discussion about their family traditions and their favorite foods. The teacher explains the meaning behind a pot luck and invites children to bring in a favorite family food to share. With the parents, the teacher organizes the foods that each child will bring and invites the parents to attend the family potluck. Families are also asked to bring a printed copy of their recipe to be later put in a class cookbook.

Lesson Four: Students bring in pictures of their families for display in the classroom. The students share about their families to build engagement and excitement in the upcoming pot luck.

Lesson Five: Students create decorations for the classroom and placemats for the families to eat on. Students can also make invitations and help clean the room to prepare for the guests.

Lesson Six: Family Potluck! Families arrive at school and the class shares in a potluck lunch. Students and parents are invited to introduce themselves and the food they brought. Students make cards to label the food that they brought, and the teacher takes pictures (using the digital camera) of the event.

After the potluck, teacher assembles a class cookbook with the recipes that the students brought in. Use the digital pictures to decorate the book! Also, teacher submits student recipes on the American Memory website: The Great American Potluck.

Assessment: Upon completion of the unit, students take a teacher-made test on the five senses.

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