



Clarice Moran, English instructor

Email: cmoran@sms.edu

African-Americans in a Post-Jim World

A Lesson Plan for use AFTER *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain

Time required: Two 45-minute class periods, or one 90-minute period

Objective: Students will examine and discuss the struggles African-Americans have endured since emancipation from slavery in the context of reading excerpts from Booker T. Washington's autobiography *Up From Slavery*. Students will reach their own conclusions about whether the struggle is ended or not.

Essential question: How does Martin Puryear's "Ladder for Booker T. Washington, 1996" reflect the themes of Washington's book *Up From Slavery*, as well as act as a metaphor for the struggles African-Americans have faced?

Materials:

- Copies of the *Up From Slavery* excerpt by Booker T. Washington (attached)
- A copy of Martin Puryear's picture "Ladder for Booker T. Washington, 1996"
- Personal journals or paper
- Large paper or posterboard for ladders

Vocabulary:

Metaphor - a comparison of two unlike things ; **desolate** - bare, uninhabited; **engraft** - to attach something permanently; **contrivance** - a devious plot or scheming; **flogging** - to beat someone very hard; **sloven** – sloppy or unhygienic; **gratification** - satisfaction

Procedure:

1. (5 min.) Teacher tells students they will read an excerpt of an autobiography by Booker T. Washington, who lived close to the same time as Jim in *Huck Finn*. Teacher directs students to think about the differences between Jim and Washington as they read.
2. (5 min.) Teacher provides short biographical information about Washington:

Born in 1856 and died in 1915; Born into slavery in Virginia – had a white father and slave mother ; After he was freed through the Emancipation Proclamation, he did odd jobs, then went to college; was a teacher, then head of the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama; known for oratory skills and writing; *Up From Slavery* is his most famous book.

3. (15 min.) Teacher hands out excerpts from *Up From Slavery*. Defines vocabulary words. Silent reading.
4. (10 min.) Teacher displays picture “Ladder for Booker T. Washington, 1996” and writes the following journal prompt on the board or on an overhead transparency. Students should answer the journal prompt after they finish reading:

This is a picture by Martin Puryear called “Ladder for Booker T. Washington, 1996.” Look at the picture and think about Booker T. Washington and Huck Finn’s Jim. How did African-American slaves climb a ladder to freedom? Is life today different for African-Americans? Is it the same?

5. (5 min.) Teacher points out aspects of the picture and verbally models a response to the journal question. “Thinks aloud.”
6. Day 1 closing: Teacher tells students to be prepared to share their responses to the reading and picture during the next class period. Homework: Review or finish reading the excerpt and finish the journal prompt.

Day Two:

1. (5 min.) Teacher displays the picture again and asks students to review their journal responses. Think-Pair-Share: Share your response with a partner. How does this picture reflect Booker T. Washington’s life? Why did the artist call it “Ladder for Booker T. Washington?”
2. (15 min.) Class discussion. Teacher leads class discussion on the *Up From Slavery* excerpt and the journal responses. (Sample questions:What was Washington’s attitude? How did this attitude help him achieve his goals? How is he different from Jim? What would happen if Jim and Washington met? How does the painting reflect the artist’s sympathy for Washington?)
3. (15 min.) Divide the class into small groups of 3-4 students. Distribute large paper. Tell students to work together to draw a ladder, using prior knowledge to create rungs that represent the separate steps slaves have taken toward freedom. Each group must decide if African-Americans have reached the top rung – or not. (Sample rungs: slavery; Emancipation Proclamation; right to vote; Civil Rights Movement; integration; Obama elected)

4. (5-7 min.) Groups share their responses with the whole class.
5. Closing: Summarize class feelings, ideas. Is it time to put the word “struggle” to rest? Or is there still work to be done? Homework: (EXTENSION EXERCISE) Opinion column on African-American struggles.

EXTENSION EXERCISE (Can be used as an assessment of student understanding): You are an opinion columnist for the newspaper in your hometown. Write a 500-word column on WHETHER OR NOT the African-American struggle has ended. Use an example (or two) from Booker T. Washington’s book *Up From Slavery*, as well as *Huckleberry Finn*, to illustrate former slave life.