

HOMECOMING...SOMETIMES I AM HAUNTED BY RED DIRT AND CLAY

Topic

The disappearing African-American farmer - a story of land and love.

Age Group

Grades 9-12

Introduction

In 1920 there were nearly one million black farmers in America; in 1999 there are less than 18,000. Traveling to her cousin's farm in rural Georgia, filmmaker Charlene Gilbert investigates the social and political implications of African-American land loss in the South. Both a historical examination and an intimate look at one rural family, **HOMECOMING** documents the tradition and decline of black farming, and explores the bittersweet legacy of the land, a symbol of both struggle and survival.

Objectives

The student will be able to understand the plight of the African-American farmer.

Knowledge:

1. Know and be able to identify vocabulary terms
2. Explore the major historical events of the African-American farmer and draw a timeline of these events

Skills:

1. Identify major agricultural areas on a map
2. Use your research to write a short report or give an oral presentation

Values:

1. Understand the difference in opportunities between the African-American farmer and the white farmers
2. Understand the valuable contributions black farmers have made in America

Generalizations:

1. All farmers have unique values to our history.
2. African-American farmers have a rich history.
3. The black farmer is disappearing from the American landscape.

Terms:

red dirt	Reconstruction
Jim Crow laws	'40 acres and a mule'
foreclosures	New Deal
heritage	Tuskegee University
Civil Rights Movement	Brown v. Board of Education
sharecropping	NAACP
The Great Migration	homecoming

Preparation and Materials Needed:

Projection unit or television

VCR

"Homecoming" video

Find and prepare maps for study

Reserve computer lab

Type and copy research material

Internet access

Estimated Time

Four class periods - 1 screening period, 2 lessons, 1 presentation period

Scope and Sequence:**Lesson One - Before Viewing HOMECOMING**

Time	Teacher strategies	Student active participation
5 min. -	hand out study maps	
15 min. -	anticipatory set: origins	Map activity: students place locations of black farmers on a map and find any personal connections to their area (see Map activity below)
30 min. -	lecture and discussion: historical background of black farming from slavery to the present <i>See HOMECOMING website</i> http://www.itvs.org/homecoming/ : <u>"Black Farming and History"</u> <u>"Timeline"</u>	encourage questions, ask each student to come up with one question
10 min. -	closure: introduce students to film and filmmaker background <i>See HOMECOMING website</i> http://www.itvs.org/homecoming/ : <u>"About the Film"</u>	

Lesson Two - HOMECOMING Viewing**Lesson Three - After Viewing HOMECOMING**

Time	Teacher strategies	Student active participation
10 min. -	anticipatory set: ideas	students select and share with the group the scenes or events from the film which had the greatest significance for them
30 min. -	developing critical thinking about black farming (Bloom's Taxonomy Method)	as a group, students go through the Taxonomy steps (see below)
10 min. -	cooperative learning groups	choose cooperative creative project (see ideas below)
10 min. -	closure: Evaluation portion of Blooms' Taxonomy	How did this film change your attitude about African-American Farmers? How would you have changed history to improve the plight of the black farmer?

Lesson Four - Students Present Cooperative Projects

Exhibit cooperative projects in a public space (such as the school library, community center or public library)

Map activity: (Varies greatly with age group)

Use a political or historical map of the South on transparency and ask the following questions:

What states are considered the South?

Where are the majority of black farmers?

Pinpoint the leading cities of the South.

Outline the areas which produce various crops: cotton, soybeans, etc.

If your family has roots in the American South, where are/were they from?

If not, where are your family's roots? Did they work the land or in cities?

Cooperative Projects:

Divide the class into heterogeneous groups of three. Groups will decide which of the following projects to pursue for presentation to the class. Encourage the cooperative groups to discuss aloud, disagree and debate.

#1 Students will role-play a scene of a black farmer seeking a loan from a local bank in the 1930s. Use various roles, such as; banker, farmer, spouse, mayor, Department of Agriculture representative and grandparent.

#2 Students will research the folklore and culture of the black South. They will compare the similarities and differences of stories and songs in Southern white culture.

#3 For a musically inclined group, students will research the impact of African-American music on the evolution of American music. Then examine the role of agriculture in the words of some of these songs.

#4 Students will design a book cover for this film. Pretend the film was written in book form and has a different title. What would the book cover look like and what would be the title of the book? Have students articulate why they made certain choices.

#5 Students will research and report on the larger question of where history places the importance of agriculture. They may focus on one region of the world: i.e. South America, Europe, Africa, the U.S., asking how farming and the economics of agriculture changed over the centuries and exploring the relationship between workers and landowners.

#6 Students will interview black farmers in their area to create an oral history of local black farming. Students might use sound and/or video recording equipment, if available. If the school is located in an industrial or urban area, have students talk to African-Americans about their family's farm legacy or research typically black/minority industries in their region.

See *HOMECOMING* website <http://www.itvs.org/homecoming/>: "Stories & Remembrances" and "Your Stories" for examples of oral histories.

Blooms Taxonomy:

Knowledge: What are the chief agriculture crops of the South?

Comprehension: Describe some problems black farmers have faced in American history.

Application: Give an example of a person from the film who was dramatically impacted by the demise of the black farmer.

Synthesis: What do you think would have been the future of black farmers if they had received equal rights?

Evaluation: In your own opinion, did this film change your attitudes about African-American farmers? How would you have changed history to improve the plight of the black farmer?

SUPPLEMENTAL ACTIVITIES

Guided Reading Activity:

Select a reading about multi-cultural discrimination. Make copies for the class and then give the students a sheet of questions to guide their reading. Each student should answer the question as they read and be ready to discuss orally in the class.

Written Essay:

Select at least two solutions to the problems facing black farmers. How do these solutions impact individuals, groups, and our country?

CROSSING DISCIPLINES:

Agriculture -

This lesson deals with a cultural and statistical study of American agriculture, from the African-American experience.

American History -

The farms of America are the result of needs in this country. This lesson and film ties together the events of American history and events in the lives of black farmers.

Geography -

The students will examine black agricultural history from a geographic look. This use of geography will supplement the social issues.

Government -

Students will point out the contrast between the current legislative and advocacy issues.

Economics -

The students will examine the importance of black farmers to the Southern agricultural scene.

Multi-cultural Studies -

Students will look at the bias and prejudice of America during the 20th century

World History -

During the lecture, information will be given on agriculture in the region of origin for black Americans.

RECOMMENDED WEB SITES

See *HOMECOMING* website <http://www.itvs.org/homecoming/>: [“Resources & Links”](#)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Newman, Richard and Sawyer, Marcia. **Everybody Say Freedom: Everything You Need to Know About African-American History**. 1996

Shover, John L. **First Majority-Last Minority: The Transforming of Rural Life in America**. Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1976.

Stadtfield, Curtis. **From the Land and Back**. New York: Scribner, 1972.

U.S. Department of Commerce. **Statistical Abstract of the United States**. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1990.

Williams, Michael W. **The African-American Encyclopedia**. New York: Time-Life, 1993.

For additional bibliographic materials, see HOMECOMING website <http://www.itvs.org/homecoming/>: [“Bibliography”](#)

FOOTNOTE

The author of this lesson plan was raised on a farm in Southeastern Kansas and currently teaches in a rural high school in Eastern Kansas. He suggests that each teacher use personal experiences with this lesson plan. These experiences may deal with farm life from any aspect.