

**AMERICA: It's one RADICAL Experience!**  
**Understanding the Quest for Freedom**  
**Through Radical Rhetorical**  
**Language**  
**By: Carrie L. Johnson**

**UNIT RATIONALE:** The curriculum for eleventh grade is designed to survey the growth of America through literature. It is also designed for students to understand the form of the literature that was produced, as well as the period it is associated with. As we all know, White Americans were not the only contributors to the development of this country. Through labor, literature, and arts, there is astounding evidence that supports the presence of other cultural influences upon this country. Because of this fact, I feel that students are academically cheated and socially crippled even further when African American and Native American texts are not woven into their lessons.

Our high school is very data-driven. It is important for us to have high Standards of Learning (SOLs) scores, as well as exceptional pass rates for the 11<sup>th</sup> Grade Research Paper. However, our scores consistently show a grave difference between the scores of African American students verses white students, which, in turn, continues to marginalize these students as “academically challenged.” Yet, it has been proven that when engaged and given material that one can relate to, or “see themselves” in, the

student maintains an interest and retains the given information. This fact speaks to the importance of identity and one of our SOL objectives speaks to this issue.

The SOL objective 11.3a states that students will *describe the contributions of different cultures to the development of American literature*. The presence of this objective is reason enough to warrant an update of our curriculum to implement materials that speak to multiple identities, as we are a very diverse school. Updating our curriculum to mandate a wider range of African American literature will increase our minority population's academic interest because they will be able to make personal connections to what is being taught in the classroom. This will ultimately increase our scores in the areas of literary content and writing on the Standards of Learning Tests.

The following unit is designed to compare and contrast literature written during the Revolutionary period. Supplemental materials by African Americans have been included in order to show the presence and influence of other cultures in the political, literary, and social realms. This will help students to find their culture's voice(s) in the past and relate it to the voices of the present.

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**Course**

English 11: Survey of American Literature

**Time Frame**

6 days

90-minute blocks

**Goal**

The goal of this unit is for students to critically assess 17<sup>th</sup> century founding documents and abolitionists materials. Students should be able to objectively point out the necessity of the texts and their effectiveness in the shaping of this country.

**Students Will Be Able To (SWBAT)**

**11.2** Analyze and evaluate informative and persuasive presentations.

**b.** Critique the clarity and effectiveness of delivery.

**11.3** Read and analyze relationships among American Literature, history, and culture.

**a.** Describe the contributions of different cultures to the development of American literature.

**b.** Compare and contrast the development of American literature in its historical context.

## Materials

Henry, Patrick. *Remarks Before the Second Virginia Convention*. Literature and Language.

Jefferson, Thomas. *Declaration of Independence*. Literature and Language.

Truth, Sojourner. "Ain't I a Woman?" Literature and Language.

Walker, David. Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World.

**Day One: I will begin this unit by playing the song "Revolution" by Arrested Development. I will explain that we are now in the Revolutionary Period. The song will be my "hook" to explain to students that many avenues have been used over time to "fight for" or promote social causes. I will explain that some of the initial avenues were oral and written and have progressed to protests, song (i.e. rap), strikes, television, etc.**

- ✚ Students will be given an anticipation guide. They will have about one minute to decide whether or not they agree or disagree with the statements regarding the word *radical*. After the minute is up, we will discuss their choices and their reasons for their decisions.
- ✚ As we are wrapping up the discussion, I will ask the students this question: "Well, what *do you* feel constitutes being radical, or for that matter, *who* is radical?" Students will respond orally and their examples (scenarios or people they deem as *radical*) will be written on the board. I will ask random students why they chose a particular example and what they feel about one that has already presented. This should engage students in a discourse surrounding the perceptions of what *radical* is.

- ✚ When this is finished, I will write the definition of *radical* on the board and ask students to consider if the formal definition has any bearing on the way they perceive this concept.
- ✚ We will read Patrick Henry's text aloud. I will read the piece so that students can hear the passion Henry evokes through rhetoric.
- ✚ Students will be given a brief lecture on rhetoric: its definition and use as a device. We will find a few examples of rhetorical devices in Henry's speech (guided practice).
- ✚ **HOMEWORK**
  - Students will find rhetorical devices and assign a possible emotion felt by one of the listeners
  - Students will also assign emotions that may have felt while listening to the speech
  - Students will provide a reason for why this text can be perceived as reason and give two examples from the speech to support their reason
  - Read Jefferson's D.O.I. [I will ask one of the students to familiarize him or her self with the text and read it aloud during the next class.]

## Day 2

- ✚ We will discuss the homework assignment at the beginning of class. **Approx. 20-25 minutes**
- ✚ Selected student will read the **D.O.I.** In groups of three or four, students will reread the document focusing and noting the similar goals of each man; the similarities/differences between their rhetorical styles. Upon doing this they will discuss the following questions:
  1. **For whom are these documents requesting freedom?**
  2. **What does this request mean for enslaved persons?**
  3. **What methods should enslaved persons take to ensure their freedom?**

**4. Is it possible for the use of radical rhetorical language to be affective in the pursuit of freedom by the enslaved persons of America? Or, do they need to use more “radical” methods.**

**\*This question will be a precursor to promote the use of literacy as a weapon both then and now. It will also promote the intelligence of the enslaved persons and dissipate the idea of violence as the first weapon/method of choice.**

**Approximately 30-40 minutes**

- ✚ Each group will present their responses to these questions.
- ✚ Last portion of class will be used to discuss literacy (oral, written, critical) as a form of radicalism and freedom. This will be a precursor to Walker and Truth.
- ✚ **HOMEWORK:** Students will find a speech, poem, or song lyrics that they feel directly expresses what they deem as radical or expresses something they are willing to “fight” for. They will present their method of expression during the next class. They will be evaluated according to their oral delivery. Extra points will be given for creative props or dress.

**Day 3: Begin class by playing “Nothing 2 Lose” by Field Mob. I will explain to students that I chose this song because this hip-hop group discusses freedom through spaces ranging from American slavery to inner-city life.**

- ✚ Students will present their speech, poem, or song lyrics.  
**Approx. 45 minutes-1 hour**
- ✚ Last portion of class will be used to begin reading Walker’s *Preamble* and selected passages from Article I.
- ✚ To ensure the students’ understanding of **rhetorical devices**, I will have them find **five** examples of rhetorical devices within the given text. This will be done individually.

- ✚ We will begin discussing the text with these questions in mind:
1. **What are the similarities and differences between Walker's desires and those of Henry and Jefferson?**
  2. **What contradictions from the "D.O.I." and "Remarks..." does Walker's text expose? Why are these contradictions *ironic*?**
  3. **Is the Appeal more or less radical than Henry's speech and the D.O.I., or are they equal? Why?**
- ✚ **HOMEWORK:** Students will finish responding to these questions.

**Day 4: Students' desks will be arranged in three clusters: less radical; more radical; equivalent. "Less radical" will be written on a blue sheet of paper; "more radical" will be written on red paper; "equivalent" will be written on beige paper. Students will be told to sit in the cluster that reflects their position.**

- ✚ We will discuss the first two questions. For the last question, each group will have an opportunity to present the reasons for their arguments. Using the compare and contrast method, students will be encouraged to site specific examples that support each man's goal and their opinion of that goal. Students will use a graphic organizer to write down the information given by each group about their respective position.

**Approximately 1 hour**

- ✚ Before the end of class, I will provide notes regarding the importance of the oral tradition and critical literacy. I will use the article by Cutter "Dismantling the Master's House." This will be a precursor to "Ain't I a Woman?"

## Day 5:

- ✚ I will dress the part of Sojourner Truth and recite “Ain’t I a Woman?” This will demonstrate the use of the oral tradition to capture the audience.
- ✚ Students will be responsible for taking informal notes based upon the following questions, which will be written on the board:
  1. **What do you hear?**
  2. **What do you see?**
  3. **What do you feel?**
  4. **Why?**
- ✚ Before sharing their responses, students will be asked to listen again and jot down anything they may have missed during the initial reading.
- ✚ We will discuss this piece using the following precepts:
  1. **The affects of gender.**
  2. **The affects of oration.**
  3. **The importance of critical literacy and how it shaped Truth’s speech.**
  4. **The importance of language.**
- ✚ The discussion will focus on Truth’s ability to engage a crowd through a different avenue of literacy. This may incite students to say that being literate is not necessary. However, I will turn the discussion into one about various literacies and the importance of manipulating as many as possible for advancement and navigation in the world.

## Day 6: EVALUATION

✚ For their evaluation, students will write an in-class essay on the following topic:

- 1. Literacy, whether critical or traditional, can be used as a weapon to fight for freedom. Using two of the texts you have read, explain how radical rhetoric language heightens the effectiveness of the projected messages.**

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