

**Renascent Africa:
Teaching French-African Art, Literature and Society.**

Marco Campos
Jack Yates High School

INTRODUCTION

I consider myself a very rich man. Sure, I live on the same modest salary as any other teacher, but I measure my fortune by experience. In my short 25 years, I have had the privilege of seeing many diverse parts of this world. I have traveled around the US, Latin America and Europe, but traveling in and of itself is not where I derive my notion of wealth. After all, snapping my own shots of various world famous landmarks hardly sets me apart from any other person who can see the same images in a coffee table photo book. Furthermore, every time I travel, I am always forced to adopt the strictest of budgets for lack of free flowing funds. Nonetheless, I always feel like the most privileged tourist when I leave my own country because I travel without the fear of being unable to communicate.

Is traveling all about communicating? Do you really have to talk to ‘those people’ if you want to enjoy your family trip to Belize? No, not necessarily, but again I am talking about my personal sense of wealth here. What makes me rich is that every time I have left my own country, I have formed real friendships with people of a culture different than my own. I always have been able to come away with a more than superficial understanding of every place I have visited because of my greatest asset—knowledge of a foreign language or two.

My first time leaving the country was to study in the first US government-approved exchange program to Cuba in September of 2000. Though my Spanish was not quite fluent, my ability to communicate immediately and effectively enabled me to have one of the most profound experiences of my entire life. I didn’t face the frustrations many of my peers endured, namely the awkward moments of misunderstanding between a native and a foreigner that seem unending because neither the visitor nor the host can bridge the gap of experience. To this day I have friends in Cuba that I consider family, and I have a deep understanding of Cuban culture not because I studied it but because I lived it. I left Cuba infected with the traveling bug, and armed with the knowledge that language is the key to understanding.

I traveled to Venezuela in 2002 only a month before a government coup, and to Spain in 2004 just two days after the terrorist bombing in Madrid. In each instance I was able to experience more than most tourists because I could delve deeper using language. I didn’t have to hide in shame of being an American. Instead, I could show that I was there to understand rather than judge, and people were willing to share because I could communicate. When I traveled to France, I met tons of young tourists frustrated and annoyed by their own inability to get a real feel for French culture. I, on the other hand, spent three weeks traveling alone and meeting young French men and women who were more than willing to share their culture with me and discuss transatlantic relations into the early hours of the morning.

As a high school French teacher, I’m exasperated when I meet people who express their frustrations with a second language by hopelessly stating, “I studied [insert foreign language] for X years in high school and don’t remember a single word.” Many people believe a second language is just something they can’t get, no matter what they do. They express their desire to be

able to just order a taco at a local Mexican restaurant, or to watch a foreign film without having to read all the small-print subtitles. They know it's important and valuable, but have resigned themselves to accepting that acquiring a foreign language is a feat that requires nothing less than a miracle.

Most people never consider why they seem to hit a roadblock when it comes to studying a second language. Typically, languages are presented in a structural manner, broken down in a categorical fashion with lists, rules and conjugations. Language, however, is not a set of grammatical structures and rules that exists in a perfectly diagramed chart; it is an experience between peoples and cultures. When we were toddlers, we learned our first language through visual, auditory and tactile experiences, and sometimes we learned different words or expressions from others our age because of where and how we lived. I believe that the most effective way to get students interested in a second language is to involve them in these experiences so that they see the similarities between themselves and those that speak a different language. I am passionate about foreign language instruction because I know first hand that it is both possible to learn and immensely rewarding. As a classroom teacher, I want to see my students empowered with the wealth of language, and I want to see them embrace diversity through experience.

I want to write and teach the unit "Renascent Africa: Teaching French-African Art, Literature and Society" for a variety of reasons. My primary vision is a curriculum that will allow students to examine an historical event in the context of art and poetry while at the same time acquiring linguistic skills in a second language. The French language will be put in a direct cultural context and students will use linguistic tools to describe and share experiences. The focus of this curriculum will be to create a unit that addresses the five C's of language acquisition: communication, connections, culture, comparisons, and communities (WGBH Boston).

Aside from language acquisition, I intend to put enormous emphasis on cultural understanding. I currently teach at Jack Yates High School, where the population is 91% African American and 8% Hispanic. As a Title I school, one-third of the school is designated special education and three-quarters of the population is considered at risk. Many of my students have never traveled beyond their own neighborhood and can hardly fathom what the word "foreign" means. They don't envision themselves ever visiting a country that doesn't speak their language, much less having to use what they learned in French class. This, of course, is due in part to lack of exposure, but I also believe it is a result of fear. My students don't trust themselves to be able to do something as remarkable as speak a second language, and, therefore, they shy away from anything that is remotely different from the world they know. I want this curriculum to present something entirely foreign to them, in the full sense of the word, and I want them to see that they can not only understand things that are different but also find common ground with people about whom they know very little.

UNIT BACKGROUND

Communication is the key component to foreign language acquisition, and I intend to keep it at the heart of the entire unit. My students will be encouraged to discuss their impressions of various forms of artistic expressions including visual art, poetry and photography. Specifically, they will examine the poetry and philosophies of the Negritude movement as defined by Martinique poet Aimée Césaire and Senegalese poet/politician Léopold Senghor. These writers redefined the interpretation of African art by boldly denouncing the concept of primitivism and restating the aesthetic value of African expressionism. Both writers struggled to create a sense of black identity independent of colonial misnomers. Their poetry influenced artists across the French-African Diaspora and fueled the movement towards African independence in the 1950s and 60s. Though they were primarily artists, the poets' ideas helped articulate the political developments in Africa at the time, since

...the humanist in Africa was particularly well qualified to assess the quality and direction of independence, political as well as cultural. The independence that came to Africa in the 1950s and 1960s was first expressed in political and economic terms, but important areas of social and intellectual activity were also involved, and the preoccupations of the African humanist often brought him into contact with basic questions of national development and purpose. (July 47)

To begin the unit, we will first have an open discussion of what the students know or think about Africa. At Yates High School, I am troubled by the perception that students display toward Africa and Africanness. Some consider it an insult to be called dark because to them, it means they are more African than African American. In fact, to call someone African is to actually insult them, or at least tease them. Many of my students think of Africa as a single country and are not aware of the rich cultural diversity of the continent. Because our textbooks hardly shed light on the contributions African culture has made in areas such as music, art and literature, many students conjure up only negative images of Africa and, as a result, do not want to be labeled or associated with Africanness. I think it is important for all students to understand that ethnic or racial labels are not or should not be construed as insults. The poets and artists of this movement addressed the concept of blackness and what being African really means. They embraced their heritage and demonstrated that being African was something of which they were proud. I would like to see the same response from my students.

The next step in the unit will be to watch the film *Lumumba*, a fact-based drama about the slain Congolese Prime Minister who fought to nationalize Congolese resources from the Belgian crown. The movie provides a poignant chronicle of colonialism's effect on African independence movements and African identity. It also opens with a sequence of historical photographs that illustrate the degrading European interpretation of African culture that the Negritude poets wrote to discredit. I have shown this movie to my students before, and most have a muted response, as they are not sure how to react. The movie is quite complex but vividly details the colonial and post-colonial attitudes toward Africa. I will use this movie as a vehicle to introduce the concept of colonialism in Africa and allow my students to analyze the various aspects of the movie in-depth. This will also be the primary history lesson for the students before they begin looking at the artistic response to colonialism.

In Césaire's words, colonialism was a "bridgehead in a campaign to civilize barbarism, from which there may emerge at any moment the negation of civilization, pure and simple" (Césaire 79). I will attempt to evoke a more complex reaction to this movie by focusing on the negative role colonialism played in Lumumba's demise, so that the students can better understand the sentiment that lies behind the poetry and art they will examine.

Senghor, Césaire and the Negritude Movement

Negritude has been a central component in the development of post-colonial African culture, particularly in literature. However, the movement, if it can be defined as such, has always incited controversy amongst political and literary circles. Of particular interest for this unit is the controversy over language. The artists who first embraced the term "Negritude" often tended to be Francophone intellectuals whose work and discourse was disseminated mostly in French. However, these same artists did not consider the movement to be limited only to former French colonies; rather, they envisioned a cultural and political awakening that was relevant to all the formerly colonized nations of Africa. As a result, in 1963 a Nigerian critic, Obiajunwa Wali, ignited a debate that would persist alongside the spread of the movement. Wali argued in his article "The Dead End of African Literature" that a true African literature must be written in the African languages and not the languages of the colonizers (Bishop 27). Supporters of French and eventually English African literature argued that it was the very use of the colonizer's languages

that provided the common African front. It would be unrealistic to attempt to abolish the Western languages when those languages facilitated communication between the many African peoples in their struggle against colonialism.

Because of the factions that arose in the Negritude literary movement, it is difficult to apply a definition to the term. For educational purposes, these factions open the subject of Negritude for use by various disciplines. The term originated with Aimée Césaire, a Martiniquan poet who influenced the literary ideology of other Caribbean artists. For example, Nicolas Guillen, a Cuban poet, and Wilfredo Lam, a Cuban artist, were both active in the Surrealist and Cubist movements. However, they followed the lead of artists such as Césaire and broke from the European artists to explore their own African cultural roots. Lam, for example, blended “images associated with *santeria* and elements of surrealism” and “invented an iconography that was both uniquely his and recognizably Afro-Caribbean” (Mujica 1). Furthermore, English African writers such as Chinua Achebe and Christopher Okigbo embraced the Negritude movement as a way to express their uniquely Nigerian cultural experience. Though this unit focuses on the French-African artistic response to colonialism, I hope teachers of Spanish and English literature would be able to adapt the content for use in their areas as well. The pan-cultural influence of the Negritude movement and its wide artistic scope provide an opportunity for meaningful cross-disciplinary instruction.

The main poem my students will discuss is entitled “*Femme Noire*,” or “Black Woman,” by Léopold Senghor. Senghor was born in Senegal and was the first African to complete the highest level of French education and receive a doctorate at a French university. Despite his French education, he and other young poets began to question the system of assimilation that insisted on Africans’ acceptance of European norms. Their goal as artists was to redefine what it meant to be African, and Senghor’s ultimate challenge would be to reconcile his Western education with the need to liberate African culture from European dominance. Most influenced by his contemporary Aimée Césaire, Senghor would adopt the style of the Negritude movement, “which demanded of its poets a strong verbal rhythm, a wealth of African allusions and a general exaltation of ‘the African personality.’ The true past of the Negro must be rediscovered beneath the layers of colonial history, his culture vindicated, and his future prepared” (Moore 6). This poem illustrates several characteristics of the renewed interpretation of blackness: color as a manifestation of nature, the black woman as a figurative source of nourishment, and the degradation of black beauty by outside forces.

In addition, the students will read excerpts from Aimée Césaire’s defiant “*Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*” in which he denounces European labels of blackness. Césaire is credited with having defined the artistic purpose of the Negritude movement. Of great concern to Césaire was dealing artistically with the history of Africa in his poetry. Particularly, Césaire set out to reject colonialism and its affects on African culture. In this poem, the narrator asks “Who and What are we?” as Césaire attempts to reassert African values independent of European labels. In much of his work, Césaire spoke out against what he called “the colonial imposition of a single system of history on the world. He further contended that the colonial viewpoint could not be raised to the universal because it was only an ideological ‘*trompe l’oeil*’ or lie” (Kubayanda 36). His work set a precedent for Negritude writers in all parts of the world, from Africa to the Caribbean, from Francophone to Spanish writers. Some other writers that may be examined are David Diop and Leon Gotran-Damas. To provide an interesting alternate viewpoint on Negritude, my students may also examine works by the French writer Jean-Paul Sartre, who wrote critiques on the movement.

Since the material of this unit is historical in context, it puts the students into a cultural language experience that is more real to them than if they simply learned vocabulary words from a list. This will allow me as a teacher to focus on the next component of language acquisition,

which is making connections. If my students can find an aspect of the language with which they can relate, it is more likely to be retained (WGBH Boston). I, therefore, plan to incorporate a parallel between the Negritude movement in French-African colonies and the Civil Rights Movement here in the United States, which took place simultaneously and fed off one another.

In my first year of teaching, I was utterly stunned when a majority of my students were not aware as to why they had an upcoming three-day weekend. I could hardly believe that I was telling a population of predominantly African American students that they were getting a day off from school to celebrate Martin Luther King Day. It seems that students today have barely a superficial knowledge of the Civil Rights Movement. They know of Malcolm X because of Denzel Washington and of Rosa Parks because of *Outkast*. If they do have knowledge of the Civil Rights Movement, it hardly goes beyond the “I Have a Dream” speech. I want this unit to solidify my student’s understanding of the important political and social changes that took place during the fifties and sixties in this country and around the world. Not only did Civil Rights leaders in the US collaborate with political leaders in Africa; artists’ ideas of a new African identity traversed borders as well. For example, the Black Arts Movement in the US produced writers such as Maulana Karenga, whose efforts to define an African-American artistic aesthetic inevitably led to a sharing of ideas with writers of the Negritude movement. “Senghor’s idea that art should be functional, collective and committing provided Karenga with the theoretical lever for bringing into being the idea of a revolutionary [African American] aesthetic in the context of a racist society” (Asante 55). Though I don’t anticipate looking too closely at African-American literature, I think the parallel is crucial to enable students to understand that language is not a barrier to common experiences and so does not have to be a barrier to communication.

The New African Aesthetic

In able to understand the philosophies of the Negritude movement it is imperative to understand the conflict between European or Western interpretations of the African aesthetic and African views on the issue. By the time I introduce this unit to my students, I should have already introduced them to the more familiar Francophone artists and writers. This unit then presents an opportunity to introduce another component of the five C’s: comparisons.

I vividly remember during my first year of teaching finding a few issues of *African Arts* in one of my filing cabinets. I left the magazines out so that students could peruse them should they have any down time. Often, if a student picked up the magazines, they would either laugh at the ‘spooky’ masks or just give a look of complete disconnect. Again, I credit this response to a lack of exposure and fear of dealing with things that are unfamiliar. After my students are well versed in the politics and theories of the Negritude movement, we will then proceed to look at African visual art and try to relate ‘primitive’ art to the new concept of African aesthetics.

I will devote a lesson to teaching about African masks and sculptures to illustrate the concepts of Ntu African philosophy. My main source is the book *Muntu: An Outline of the New African Culture* by Janheinz Jahn. By “new culture”, Jahn is referring primarily to post-colonial Africa, especially as a consequence of the Negritude movement. Jahn denounces the term primitive and further challenges primitivism as an art movement. His central argument is that prior to the Negritude movement, African art was interpreted as illogical and useless by westerners. Because Europeans could not reconcile African works of art with their own value structures, they dismissed the African aesthetic altogether. When European artists such as Picasso began using African techniques in their own works, they misinterpreted the theory behind such techniques. They did not fully understand how the images represented in African masks related directly to African culture. As a consequence, their use of sharp angles and repetitive geometrical figures that created “primitive” looking images in a sense bastardized the original aesthetic intent of the masks. The masks were not simply trying to look surreal; rather, they were

imitating various elements of the mask maker's day-to-day life and belief system, which European artists simply could not understand.

Jahn shows that African art, primarily in the Yoruba region and in the French Congo, does in fact share a logical and coherent artistic theory that is not "primitive". African culture, and by extension African art, has not followed the logical conclusions anticipated by European "planners and prophets" because contact with Europe did not lead to a Europeanized African culture. Even though elements of European colonialism have forced themselves into African culture, what has emerged is still a unique African identity, not an imitation of European values.

Jahn outlines a complex yet fascinating theory of African aesthetics called *Ntu* philosophy. In this system, everything in the world falls into one of four categories: *Muntu* or human being, *Kintu* or thing, *Hantu* or place and time, and *Kuntu* or 'modality.' One tactile lesson that I envision involves allowing students to work with Play-dough to make imitations of African pieces shown to them. The students will discuss "designation" of the "Nommo" in which they as the creator establishes the function of their sculpture before it takes form, thereby practicing African art. They will attempt to grasp the notion that:

the designation is ...independent of the shape or form of the image. The image receives its meaning through its designation; through kuntu it receives its form. For the understanding of African sculpture it is first of all necessary to separate these two components (160).

This activity will then allow them to compare African aesthetics to the traditional, modern, Western aesthetic. Students will examine African works and also look at European implementations of African philosophy by artists such as Picasso. The *Ntu* philosophy will then be applied to the poetic devices used by the Negritude poets, since "the first of African arts is ...poetry, not sculpture. The art of words is the pure Art of Nommo" (168).

LESSON PLAN FRAMEWORK

Currently, I mostly teach levels 1 and 2 French in high school, with a few level 3 students. Some of my students are classified Gifted and Talented while in the same room are students with severe learning or behavioral disorders. In most of my planning, I always try to use very involved activities that are learner-centered. This enables the more advanced students to engage in independent work, allowing me to focus more on students with special needs. The lessons currently do not include modifications that will be made for special needs students, since the types of modifications needed change each year. However, my general approach to planning incorporates what I call a VAT method: begin with a visual, practice with an auditory assignment, and then demonstrate comprehension through a tactile activity. This method has served me well as a default tool for teaching to all students' needs.

Because my classes are characterized by such wide levels of skills, I will spread the instruction of the unit over two six-weeks periods. I hope this will enable all students to keep up with the diverse, challenging content and also allow time for more in-depth analyses. The grading of the individual components of the unit will also be spread over the two six weeks periods so the content will be a continual part of the students' grades rather than just one large project grade.

At the moment, I am not sure what levels of French I will be teaching next year. However, I plan to make the unit useable for French levels 1-4. If I am only teaching beginning levels, then I will try to co-teach the unit with another French teacher. If this does not work, I can rearrange the lesson to allow the beginner students to do all the lessons and work in another form of peer-to-peer instruction. The unit will be planned as if one teacher were responsible for all levels of French.

One ongoing component of the unit will be a portfolio based solely on this unit in which the students trace their growth and understanding of the content. The portfolio will consist of journal entries, student creations, notes, mini-quizzes, and other material collected over the course of the unit.

LESSON PLANS

Lesson 1: Perceptions of Africa

Part 1

The objective of this lesson is to evaluate students' understanding of Africa and begin to develop a new perspective. When students enter the room on the day of this lesson, they will see pictures of African people and artifacts scattered around the room and displayed on the TV and overhead. Music will be playing that emphasizes the cultural focus of the activity. Instructions on the front chalkboard will instruct students to take 15 minutes to explore the room on their own. As the students enter I will record individual reactions to the visuals, either physical or verbal. Before we begin talking about the items, I will present the students with a simple diagnostic quiz that is designed to bring out some common misperceptions of the continent. Some sample questions are: Is Africa a country? What are some languages spoken in Africa? Who are some leaders from Africa? Where is Africa in relation to other parts of the world? What other information do you know about Africa?

The goal of the diagnostic is not to make the students feel bad. I will not grade the diagnostic nor collect it. Instead, it is to allow them to recognize that, in general, as Americans, we pay very little attention to this part of the world. Our discussion will begin by allowing students to answer the questions from the quiz out loud. This will enable slower students to participate orally because they will already have written their responses. I will emphasize that they should not be worried about sharing their thoughts, because at this stage, they are not expected to be masters of this content. Using the Socratic Method, I will attempt to achieve even more in-depth responses from students that are more advanced. For example, instead of asking if Africa is a country, I will ask them why we refer to Africans as one people when there are over 40 countries on the continent. Why don't we single out Zimbabwe the same way we do France when talking about cultures, language and history?

The purpose of jotting down students' reactions to the materials dispersed around the room is to have available an immediate resource should the open discussion begin to slow down. For example, if I notice a student is not participating I could ask, "Susy Q, I noticed that when you walked in and heard the music, you began to dance a certain way...can you explain?" Or I could ask Johnny, "I noticed you were looking at that picture in the back of the room for a while. Is there something about it that strikes you, or that perhaps you are familiar with?" I want to make sure the students are comfortable sharing their ideas, and one of the best ways to do this is to ensure that all students are participating, so that no student feels like he or she is being singled out.

Though I will not make this a crucial part of the curriculum, I will use this lesson to briefly discuss Edward Said's concept of Orientalism. I will emphasize that much has been written about the way Western civilization has perceived and misjudged cultures that are not familiar to them. Hopefully, they will understand that at this point, it is okay if they perhaps had a slightly inappropriate impression of Africa because they have not been exposed to the region enough. In turn, I also want them to be ready and willing to be open to new perspectives, especially if after our discussion they felt somewhat 'guilty' about one of their responses to the diagnostic quiz.

To close the lesson, I will finally ask students to share their impressions of the articles around their room. What do they think the objects or paintings represent? What do they say about the

culture we are about to study? What role do they expect these objects play in the lessons that lie ahead? Were any of the images particularly jarring and if so why? At the end of the discussion, the students will make their first journal entry for their portfolio. I will ask them to reflect on their initial impressions as they entered the classroom versus how they now feel about Africa after our discussion. In particular, I will want them to ask me questions that focus on their interests or doubts, enabling me to do additional research that addresses their specific needs.

Part 2

Either during the same class period or the class immediately following the above lesson, students will see a visual representation of French speaking Africa and the French African Caribbean. Students will acquire the vocabulary necessary to describe geography such as location, capitals, borders, regions, physical features and cultures.

To get the students involved in the cultural geography of the lesson, French 1 and 2 students will adopt French African names that I provide them. They will write brief letters in their French African identity that describe their ways of life, things they enjoy, etc. These will be evaluated by advanced level students. French 3 and 4 students will do more elaborate work and create travel brochures that provide basic information about each country that will be evaluated by beginner students. The brochures will be part of the advanced students' portfolios and will follow a rubric that guides the student's independent research. Their research will focus on basic characteristics of their chosen francophone country and should provide cultural insight for beginning students. All students will engage in a discussion of expected customs, religions, languages, etc. Beginning students will discuss what they learned about the various French-speaking countries in Africa while advanced students will discuss what they imagine daily life to be like in these countries.

After the discussion portion has ended, all classes will begin collaborating on a geography project. Each class will take part in creating an oversized floor map of Africa and the Caribbean. The map will be large enough for one person to walk on, and hopefully sturdy enough to withstand repeated use. The collaboration will lead to a teaching tool created and used by the students themselves. The students will play a game of "Where in French Speaking Africa and the Caribbean is Carmen San Diego?" They will be given clues that come directly from the letters that were written or the brochures that were created and students will be timed as they try to correctly place markers on various countries on the map. If we cannot find a material that is durable, we may make more than one floor map. This activity will count as a form of assessment for the introductory lesson.

Lesson 2: History of Colonialism in Africa

The goal of this lesson will be to give students an in-depth understanding of the nature of colonialism and how it has affected Africa's past and present. My students will watch the film *Lumumba* and answer a movie fact sheet at the same time. This movie sheet will be graded and will also be a part of the portfolio. The movie will be subtitled, but I will ask all of my students no matter what their level to try and listen for words they have already encountered. Occasionally, I may stop the movie to address certain historical complexities or just to go over the French they have heard.

This movie will be viewed over the course of 3 one and a half hour class periods. After each viewing period, students will turn in the corresponding fact sheet for a quick participation grade. The sheets will be returned with feedback should a student have missed a certain question. The sheet will tell them what to look for in the next section and what to make note of in the viewed sections to help them understand the correct response to the question.

During the same periods that the students watch the film, they will also read "French Colonialism in Africa" (Pederson). The reading provides a map of colonized Africa, highlighting

all the European powers that occupied the continent in 1914. Students will engage in a discussion of what they think the impact of colonization was. We will discuss ways in which American culture was affected by colonization, then compare and contrast this experience with that of Africa.

I will try to make very clear to the students that the movie we are watching only represents a small portion of the colonial experience, and for only one country. As the map they will see demonstrates, several European countries occupied Africa and each dealt with their colonies in unique ways. I will have them think of ways in which different colonizers might treat their occupied territories differently and how this might create different cultures throughout the continent.

This lesson will close with another portfolio entry in which students look at different resources on the continent of Africa. I will ask them to compare the colonization map to the resource map and tell what method of administration may have been used to control the colonies and why. For example, mining of diamonds or rubber would have been much more difficult than cultivating peanut farms. Based on the resource map, what did each country use the colonies for, and how might their colonization be characterized? The students will keep both maps and their analyses in their portfolio.

Following are the comprehension questions to be answered on fact sheets for the film *Lumumba*:

- In 1885 the Congo became the property of what European country? How long would Lumumba last in office? What does the following phrase mean: *Ceci est une histoire vraie*? What is the name of Lumumba's political party? How many other parties are there in Congo at this time? When freed from prison, where does Lumumba go and why?
- A Belgian politician states that Belgium is giving up the communists like France did with what country? Based on the attitudes of the Belgian politicians, what do you think (or what do they say) they are going to try to do? Why is Joseph kicked out of the MNC meeting? Do you think there might be a consequence for this? A Belgian politician states that Congo is not a nation; it is a bunch of _____. Based on the impressions of Africa that we have discussed, why would the Belgian make this statement?
- Mr. Kasavubu assumes what position when Congo becomes independent? Who is his closest ally at the time? A Belgian diplomat warns the newly formed Congo not to replace Belgian institutions unless what? What institutions do you think the diplomat is referring to, and why would he not want the Congolese people to change them?
- The Congolese national army is in the middle of the conflict between independence and colonization. They first come to Lumumba complaining about what?
- Thinking critically, why would this be a difficult complaint for Lumumba to address? What might his options be and what would be the consequence of each action? After arresting disobedient soldiers, General Janssens, a white Belgian officer, states that independence is for whom? What does Lumumba force this general to do? When Lumumba meets with the Belgian Ambassador, what does the Ambassador offer to do concerning the growing unrest? Does Lumumba accept this offer? What do you think influenced his decision?

After the viewing of *Lumumba* is complete, in the next class period I will incorporate the connection component of the unit that I think will most make the content 'stick' with the students. We will view portions of the film *Malcolm X* (1992) and read excerpts from *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. Students will be asked to create a Venn diagram in their portfolios in which they compare the anti-colonial movement in Africa to the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. I will only provide clips from the movie that make clear connections but will not explain those

connections. Instead, they will collaborate to make their diagrams and then write their own response in their journal to demonstrate comprehension of the content. After all journal entries are evaluated and returned to the students, we will discuss their observations as a class to close the second portion of the unit.

Lesson 3: Introduction to Negritude Visual Art and Poetry (begin split lesson plans)

French 1 and 2

Beginner level students will focus on works of African visual arts. The communicative goal is to attain the necessary vocabulary and oral skills to describe a piece's color, shape, size, form, aesthetic qualities, and its origin. They will have at hand an activity sheet labeled "Toolbox" which they will keep in their portfolio. The toolbox breaks down the various communicative objectives so that they can use selective application of the language when describing a work of art. For example, they will be asked to shade in boxes labeled with a color in French after I have presented the vocabulary visually by holding up various objects and calling out the word in French. Before describing a work of art, they will describe simple objects such as a book or a table in order to practice the communicative objective. The toolbox will combine grammatical elements, vocabulary, and idiomatic expressions that the students can combine to make their own full sentences selectively.

One class period for this lesson will be conducted in the computer lab. Students will engage in independent research on various African artists. I will ask them to find where the artists are from, in what time period they were most active, the names of some of their works, and also to identify any terms they come across that address politics or art such as Expressionism, Surrealism, Nationalism, etc. When the students convene, they will add to their toolbox by inserting artist's data and the terms they found (I will give them the French equivalent of the artistic or political term).

After their toolboxes are full, we will take part in an individual oral assessment. Students will meet with me one on one or as partners and will be expected to react to a piece of artwork presented to them. The assessment is only geared at evaluating their ability to communicate and use the items from their toolbox. They will not be graded on knowledge of artistic terminology at this point. The students should be able to engage in a sustained dialogue or a monologue, incorporating elements from their toolbox as well as previously learned material. Before the assessment, I will give the students a self-evaluating rubric. They will be asked to tell how well they think they have mastered a certain element in the toolbox and how confident they feel about using it in their assessment. After the evaluation, I will add my comments in a teacher evaluation column that responds to their self-evaluation in accordance with their performance. Finally, there will be a feedback column that places their overall performance on a determined scale. The score the student receives on the scale will reflect their self-evaluation and my teacher evaluation. Finally, I will provide comments on where they should focus as we move through the unit.

After all students have been evaluated, the lesson will be completed with an open discussion of the works of art they saw in the assessment and during their independent research. They will compare the African art they saw to pieces of more familiar western art and discuss the differences in content and style. Is one more 'artistic' than another? Is one more valuable than another? How do these pieces relate to our discussion of colonialism and African independence? The students will add their reflections to their portfolio attached to their assessment evaluations.

French 3 and 4

Advanced level students will focus on poetry analysis. The communicative goal will be to attain the necessary vocabulary and oral skills to express emotions in response to a poem. They will also acquire vocabulary terms necessary to analyze poetry such as stanza, rhythm, rhyme,

phrasing, and syllables. As advanced students, they will learn to recite poetry out loud using correct syllabic interpretation with mute E's and liaisons. Advanced students will be expected to create their own toolbox by identifying the necessary communicative objectives for each oral task.

The first activity for advanced level students will be to listen to the poem "Femme Noir" narrated by the author Leopold Senghor (it is available on line but I have not found the link again yet). They will be asked to listen for emotion, content, rhythm, and style. After hearing the narration, they will read the poem on their own without translating it. Working in groups, they will be asked to put together a visual interpretation of what they think the poem expresses. They can act it out as it is read out loud, mime it, etc. The objective is to not only recognize the words, but to get a feel for the emotion expressed in the poem. The group interpretations will be evaluated by their peers, and each student will get a copy to add to their portfolio. This will be the primary activity in which they add tools to their toolbox.

As was done in the beginning level classes, the advanced students will do preliminary research on various Negritude poets. They will retain their data in their portfolio for use on a later project and will add whatever tools are necessary to their toolbox. Advanced students will also be assessed in the same manner as were the beginner students. However, each student will be expected to bring in their own Negritude poem that they find using their own research and be prepared to discuss its content and emotion and their feelings toward the poem, either with me or with another student. They will be expected to reference the poem without having it at hand, and to convey the general feel of the poem by selectively using various stanzas that most appeal to them. Partnered students will also be expected to ask questions of each other in order to keep the dialogue flowing.

After all students have been evaluated, the class will reconvene to discuss the poems and poets they researched. During this discussion, I will provide whatever background is needed as questions arise during the discussion. Any questions that are not answered will be documented in the portfolios so that I, or the student, may go back and research. The focus of the discussion will be to identify common themes in the poems, common techniques, and overall content. How do the poets use rhythm and sound to create a distinctly "African" poetry? What elements reappear in various poems? Who do the students like the most and why? This discussion should take place all in French, with use of English only for clarification of history or technical terminology.

The students evaluating poetry will have a journal entry that is expected to be longer than the normal entries. I will ask them to undertake the argument that arose in the Negritude movement concerning the appropriate language that should be used in Negritude poetry. Students will enact a "Negritude" assembly, where one group represents the ideas of Senghor and another represents the ideas of Wali. They will be given a brief situation card detailing their position. The card will be brief because I want them to create their own arguments based on their own research and experience. After the assembly adjourns, they are to write a "Summary of Conference" for their portfolio in which they detail what the Negritude artists (themselves) discussed and their final position on the issue.

Lesson 4: Critical Analyses of Muntu Aesthetic in Correlation to Negritude.

The goal of the lesson is to provide students the opportunity to analyze art through a perspective different from their own. The basis for this lesson stems from Jahn's Muntu philosophy. Instruction will be conducted in French and beginning students will be provided a toolbox to assist them with new terminology. Advanced students will create their own toolbox as they progress through the lesson. Target vocabulary will focus on acquiring the terms necessary to describe shape, form, style, size, function, and modality.

All students will be given a block of Play-dough. Each student will be given a word that relates to the functions identified by Jahn, for example: village, chief, spirit, etc. The word the student has been given will be their “Nommo,” or the function of their sculpture before it takes form. They will then be instructed to turn their block into a symbolic representation of the Nommo by using one of the four different “ntus”. However, they will be advised that their structure does not have to approach realism. If a triangle to them means house, then they can simply create a triangle to represent that Nommo.

Three students will be instructed to wait outside of the room while the other students are making their sculptures. When they enter, they will be asked to identify the sculpture that represents a given Nommo without consulting with the students (who in this case are the Muntu, or creators). After the students who were outside the classroom pick their sculptures, the Muntu will reveal their Nommo. Each student will tell in French why they made their sculpture the way they did and the students who were outside of the room will tell why they picked the sculptures they did.

At this point we will discuss the Ntu philosophy and I will clarify for the students that in the African aesthetic, there is a predetermined function that supercedes the importance of form and style. Without a function, the form and style cannot be achieved. The modality of the sculpture is determined by its success in fulfilling its function, not in being ‘aesthetically pleasing’. The more the sculpture achieves what its Nommo intended, then the more value it has as a piece of art.

I will show the students different masks and African sculptures and allow them to discuss what they see in relation to what they just practiced with the Play-dough activity. I will introduce to them the concept of repetition and rhythm in African art. Essentially, repetition is used to emphasize important symbolic references. For example, if the Muntu decides to use two wavy lines to represent water, the piece of art may repeat the use of these lines in various forms to reiterate the importance of water. The extremely important element of rhythm in art is one that will be revisited when the visual art is compared to poetry. In this case, the form of the art achieves a higher modality if it evokes a sense of rhythm that is culturally significant, usually drawing from the influence of traditional African dances. The students will attempt to incorporate these two elements as they analyze pieces of art presented to them.

Lesson 5: Collaborative Learning Projects

The goal of this lesson is to provide peer-to-peer instruction through project-based learning. All students will be expected to engage in the projects using only the target language, French. As they are now ‘masters’ of their researched content areas and have been evaluated in their communicative goals, they can now apply their progress to teach other students.

French 1 and 2 students will create a blown-up museum magazine where they advertise the arrival of an African art exhibit. The magazine will provide analyses of different works of art, background on the artists and samples (if permission can be attained) of Negritude-influenced art. The pages of the magazine will be poster board size and will be displayed around the room upon completion. All material appearing on the boards will be in French. Students will be in charge of determining the layout, design, and content of their magazine. To ensure that all students are participating in the creation of the magazine, they must all document their research and drafts in their portfolios.

French 3 and 4 students will create a book of literary criticism that highlights the works of the poets they have researched. Students will write brief criticisms of chosen poems in French that identify the various components of the Negritude movement. They should take into consideration the voice of the poem, its structure, rhythm, and historical content. Their criticisms will also

include biographical information about each writer, and certain students will be chosen to write a preface for the book that details their understanding of the movement. It will be left to the students to choose a display method that is aesthetically pleasing and presentable to the beginner students.

I will not evaluate the final projects. Instead, French 1 and 2 students will read and evaluate the projects of the advanced students and vice versa. The evaluators are mostly judging how much they learned from the work that was created. In essence, my advanced students should be able to read the pages of the museum magazine and come away with an understanding of the way the art relates to the poetry they studied. The beginner students should be able to identify basic concepts that they came across in their research of the visual arts in the poetry analyzed by the advanced students.

Lesson 6: Wrap Up and Extension of Lesson

The goal of this lesson is to reiterate the impact of the Negritude movement on African identity and to reinforce the importance of understanding other cultures. After students have completed the unit, we will engage in ‘fun’ activity that will not be graded as part of the project. Instead, I hope to see the students use what they have already learned to lead discussion. As much of the discussion as possible will be conducted in French.

Students will get to listen to the lyrics of “Hijo de Africa” by the French African rapper MC Solaar, from Senegal. The song discusses current issues relating to African identity but is presented using hip hop and rap, with which most students will immediately identify. We will read a short biography of the rapper and then discuss the lyrics of the song in light of all that we have learned concerning the effect of colonialism in Africa. Students will sing along with the song a few times and even try to sing it on their own without the words in front of them. There will be no assessment for this activity, as it is designed to simply allow them to use their knowledge in a fun way without the burden of a grade. However, at the same time they will be getting involved in a fun activity that may spark further interest and their own investigation if they choose. The song will give them a good representation of the Negritude movement’s impact on present African culture and identity.

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Chapter 7 addresses the Negritude movement and its critics. Discusses Jean-Paul Sartre’s referring to Negritude as anti-racist racism.
- Césaire, Aimée “Discourse on Colonialism.” *Postcolonial Criticism*. Ed. Willy Maley, Bart Moore-Gilbert, Gareth Stanton. New York: Longman, 1997.
Primary source; Césaire’s own words criticizing European involvement in Africa and primarily challenging the notion that colonization inherently leads to civilization.
- Jahn, Janheinz. *Muntu an Outline of the New African Culture*. Trans. Marjorie Grene. New York: Grove Press, 1961.
Excellent source of information on African aesthetic in visual arts with direct correlation to philosophies of Césaire and Senghor. Vivid explanation of Muntu, Nommo and designation in African art.
- July, Robert W. *An African Voice: The Role of the Humanities in African Independence*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1987.

Political connection to the literary Negritude movement. Discourse on Visual arts and the effect of Europeanization of African art.

Kubayanda, Josaphat B. *The Poet's Africa: Africanness in the Poetry of Nicolas Guillen and Aime Césaire*. New York : Greenwood Press, 1990.

This book offers great insight to Aime Césaire's philosophy and his influence on other writers. It also examines the differences between Césaire and Senghor.

Moore, Gerald. *Seven African Writers*. London: Oxford University Press, 1966.

Great source for any discipline interesting in incorporating this content into their curriculum. Provides the ideology of not only francophone writers, but other African writers in the movement as well.

Mujica, Barbara. "A Turning Point in Modernism." *Americas* (English Edition). Mar.-Apr. 1992: 26+.

<<http://www.questia.com/>>.

Pederson, Nicholas. "The French Desire for Uranium." Section IV-V.

<<http://www.acdis.uiuc.edu/Research/OPs/Pederson/html/cover.html>>.

Sections 4 and 5 offer a very good insight into French colonialism pre and post WWII. Could be a good source for student research as well since it offers a lot of basic historical information on France.

Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books. 1979.

Classic source exposing and exploring western European stereotypes of other cultures.

WGBH Boston. *Teaching Foreign Languages*. <<http://www.learner.org>> Produced by WGBH Boston in association with the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2004.

This website offers extensive model lessons that focus on language acquisition rather than language mastery. I will use this as my guide for lesson planning.

Supplemental Resources

Cinematography

Lumumba Dir. Raoul Peck. Zeitgeist Films Ltd. 2002.

This film chronicles the brief period of Patrice Lumumba's reign as Prime Minister of the Congo. A complex movie, it provides rich insight into colonialist attitudes and African 'tribalism.'

Malcolm X. Dir. Spike Lee. Warner Bros. 1992.

The film adaptation of Alex Haley's book "The Autobiography of Malcolm X" provides a brief synopsis of the rise and fall of one of the two most influential Civil Rights leaders in America.

African Visual Art

Bascom, William. *African Art in Cultural Perspective: An Introduction*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1973.

This book offers several illustrations of African art and philosophies based on regions. Of key interests are the areas of Gabon and Cameroon, francophone countries.

Freeland, Cynthia. *But is it Art?* New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Seminar reader that offers insight to analyzing cultural art. Chapter 3 offers a look at the primitivism movement and African fetish sculptures.

Ife, Zadia. "The African Diasporan Ritual Mode." *The African Aesthetic: Keeper of the Traditions*. ed. Kariamu Welsh-Asante. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994. 31-46.

This article evaluates the growth of the Black Arts Movement primarily amongst African-Americans, yet draws parallels to the Negritude movement as well.

Jegade, Dele. "Art for Life's Sake: African Art as a Reflection of an Afrocentric Cosmology." *The African Aesthetic: Keeper of the Traditions*. ed. Kariamu Welsh-Asante. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994. 237-245.

This article aims to identify the European misnomers toward African art and discount primitivist viewpoints towards African art. It helps to understand where the misunderstanding takes place.

Kasfir, Sidney Littlefield. *Contemporary African Art*. London : Thames and Hudson, 1999.

Great visual examples of contemporary African art and analysis of art in a post-colonial context.

African Literature

Haigh, Sam, ed. *An Introduction to Caribbean Francophone Writing: Guadeloupe and Martinique*. New York: Berg, 1999.

Chapter 7 details the debate over writing in French or in creole for French Caribbean writers. Chapter 2 offers literary criticism of Césaire's "Cahier."

- Masolo, D. A. *African Philosophy in Search of Identity*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994.
Chapter 7 provides in-depth explanation of Bantu philosophy and the degrading European interpretation of African people.
- Moore-Gilbert, Bart, Gareth Stanton, and Willy Maley, eds. *Postcolonial Criticism*. London: Longman, 1997.
Chapters 1 and 2 offer insight into the affect of Colonialism on national culture and identity struggles. Can be used to analyze film “Lumumba.”
- Owomoyela, Oyekan, ed. *A History of Twentieth-Century African Literatures*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1993.
Chapter 6 provides historical examples of European adaptation and misinterpretation of African Art. Chapter 7 offers background on the beginnings of the Negritude movement with other writers besides Césaire. Chapter 12 takes on the debate of Language in African literature.
- Scharfman, Ronnie Leah. *Engagement and the Language of the Subject in the Poetry of Aime Cesaire*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1987.
Chap 3 provides good insight into Césaire’s treatment of women in his poetry. Literary criticism of Césaire’s “Cahier.” Useful for interpretation of Senghor’s “Femme Noire.”
- African Philosophy***
- Appiah, Kwame Anthony. *In My Father’s House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*. Oxford University Press, New York, 1992.
Chapter Seven offers a discourse on post-colonial African culture.