

Teacher Lab

Lesson Plan

Title of Lesson:

Topic or Theme of Unit/Lesson: Migration, Relocation, and Segregation

Subject Areas:

Schedule: 6 class periods

Lesson Summary:

Students learn about the Great Migration of African Americans. They examine a painting by Walter Ellison and read a book by Janice Harrington connected to the subject. Students interview family members to learn the story of their family's arrival in Chicago. Then they make works of art that represent these stories.

American Artwork(s) on Which Lesson is Based:



Walter Ellison (1899–1977)

Train Station, 1936

Oil on canvas, 20 x 36 cm.

Art Institute of Chicago, Charles M. Kurtz Charitable Trust and Barbara Neff and Solomon Byron Smith funds, through prior gifts of Florence Jane Adams, Mr. and Mrs. Carter H. Harrison, and estate of Celia Schmidt, 1990.134

http://www.artic.edu/artaccess/AA_AfAm/pages/AfAm_4_lg.shtml

Big or Main Ideas Students Will Understand:

- People migrate or relocate for various reasons.
- Art can reflect events in people's lives and in society at large.

National Standards:

Language Arts

- 1: Reading for perspective
- 8: Developing research skills
- 12: Applying language skills

Social Science

- Understanding the causes and nature of movements of large groups of people into and within the United States, now and long ago

Visual Arts

- 4: Understanding the arts in relation to history and culture

Illinois Learning Standards:

- 1C: Comprehend a broad range of reading materials
- 5B: Analyze and evaluate information from various sources
- 27B: Understand how the arts shape and reflect history, society, and everyday life
- 26B: Apply skills and knowledge to create a work of art
- 1T: Students will appreciate American art

Chicago Reading Initiative Correlation: X word knowledge X writing X reading X fluency

Student Objectives: Students will...

- Interpret and analyze Walter Ellison's painting *Train Station*
- Analyze informational sources about Ellison, his artwork *Train Station*, and the historical context of this painting
- Identify how Ellison's *Train Station* reflected a period in his life and society at large
- Create a work of art that reflects their family's story of migration

Vocabulary Students Will Learn:

columns, destination, Jim Crow Laws, migration, porters, relocation, segregation, separation, symbols

Relevant Information about the Artwork:**About the Time Period**

- The Great Migration brought millions of African Americans from the rural South to Northern cities between 1910 and 1970. Ellison's painting *Train Station* was inspired by this historic event.
- In the South, African Americans were subject to Jim Crow Laws that enforced racial segregation and discrimination. They had very limited access to good jobs. They moved to northern cities, such as Chicago, in search of work and a better life.

- When Ellison’s painting was made, the Great Depression, a period of widespread unemployment and hardship, was occurring in the United States. A government program, the Works Progress Administration/Federal Arts Program (WPA/FAP), was established to support artists during the Great Depression. Ellison worked as an artist in the WPA/FAP.

Source(s):

- The Art Institute of Chicago, “*Train Station*, 1936, Walter Ellison, Poster Packet,” 2003.
- D. Barnwell, “A Portfolio of Works by African American Artists: Continuing the Dialogue: A Work In Progress,” in *African Americans in Art* (The Art Institute of Chicago, 1999): 57–58.
- The Art Institute of Chicago Web site, Art Access, description of Walter Ellison’s Train Station: http://www.artic.edu/artaccess/AA_AfAm/pages/AfAm_4.shtml.

Relevant Information about the Artist

- Walter Ellison lived from 1899–1977.
- In the 1920’s he was part of the Great Migration, moving from a community in the rural South (Georgia) to Chicago.
- In the 1930’s he attended The School of the Art Institute of Chicago.
- He continued to face forms of discrimination in the North.
- In the 1940’s Ellison helped to create the South Side Community Art Center in Chicago, an important training ground for artists that continues today.

Source(s):

- The Art Institute of Chicago Poster Packet on Ellison’s *Train Station*.
- D. Barnwell, “A Portfolio of Works by African American Artists: Continuing the Dialogue: A Work In Progress,” *African Americans in Art* (The Art Institute of Chicago, 1999): 57–58.
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Relevant Information about the Artwork

- Ellison’s painting *Train Station* could possibly represent the station in Macon, Georgia where the artist—and countless other African Americans—began their northward journey.
- *Train Station* reflects the social conditions, economic disparities, and segregation of the era:
 - *The painting* is divided into three sections by large columns which separate the black and white travelers, suggesting segregation that marked the era.
 - The left section shows well-dressed white travelers heading south to Florida for winter vacation.
 - The right section shows African Americans heading north to Chicago or Detroit to find better jobs and living conditions.
 - The center section shows black porters who assist the white but not the black travelers.
 - A sign reading “Colored” above the platform doorway on the right emphasizes the degrading conditions that African Americans faced at the time.
- The artist’s initials appear on the suitcase in the left section of the station--a reference to his biography.

- The train has been a symbol of movement, the future, and hope for prosperity (used by other African American artists and writers).

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Resources:

Texts, Web sites, and Primary or Secondary Sources for Student Use:

Web Sites

The Art Institute of Chicago Web site, Art Access, description of Walter Ellison’s Train Station: http://www.artic.edu/artaccess/AA_AfAm/pages/AfAm_4.shtml.

Books

Harrington, Janice, *Going North*, illustrated by Jerome Lagarrigue (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2004).

Selections from the *Art Institute of Chicago: African Americans in Art* (1999).

Other Materials/Supplies Needed for the Lesson:

Paper, colored pencils

Student Activities:

Day	Emphasis of this Lesson Idea/Outcome	Activities
1	Introduce students to the concept of migration and relocation.	<p>Introduction/Motivation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduce vocabulary. 2. Read the story <i>Going North</i> by Janice Harrington to students. 3. Discuss the story.
2	Guide students in a close read of Ellison’s <i>Train Station</i> .	<p>Development—Close Read/Discussion</p> <p>Direct students’ attention to a poster of Ellison’s <i>Train Station</i>.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. With the poster in a central viewing area, give students time to look closely. 2. Students list in writing details from the artwork. 3. Students share their observations. 4. Guide a discussion of the artwork. Some of the following questions may be useful: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is going on in this picture? • What did you first see when you looked at this picture and why? • How does the artist show us what is important?

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let's look at how the painting is organized. It's divided into sections. What's happening in each section? • What do you notice about the artist's use of color? • What's the mood of the painting? • What do you think the artist wanted to communicate? • What would be a good title for this artwork? • Let's think about ways in which the painting could relate to the book <i>Going North</i>. Do you have preliminary ideas?
3	Research the artist, artwork, and time period.	Development—Research (Library) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Working together in groups, students use predetermined Web sites and reading materials, highlighting information about Ellison, the artwork, and time period of the painting. 2. Students list information on chart paper. 3. Discuss information identified by each group.
4	Analyze how the artwork represents Ellison's self-determined identity.	Synthesis/Assessment—Revisiting the Artwork <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Briefly review the students' list of relevant information. 2. Identify information and interpretations from the lists and apply them to the reading of <i>Train Station</i> through a large-group discussion. <p>Questions for guiding discussion:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What does this artwork tell us about the artist? 2. What does it tell us about the time period when Ellison lived? 3. What message is Ellison trying to communicate? 4. What are some ways that Ellison's painting relates to the story in <i>Going North</i>? <p>Homework Assignment: Students talk to their parents, grandparents, or guardians to learn how they or earlier family members came to live in Chicago. Why did they come and how did they get here?</p>
5-6	Guide a class discussion and activity that help students make connections between the book, artwork, and their lives and family stories.	Synthesis/Assessment—Creating a drawing. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students share the family stories about journeys to Chicago. 2. Students draw a picture to show how they or family members first came to Chicago. 3. Students share their artwork with the class. 4. Display the students' drawings in a book.