



Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

EFLA TEACHING GUIDE

Intro Unit: The Politics of Education: Propaganda vs. Empowerment

CLASS 1: The Miseducation of the “Negro”

OVERVIEW

“If you can control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his action. When you determine what a man shall think you do not have to concern yourself about what he will do. If you make a man feel that he is inferior, you do not have to compel him to accept an inferior status, for he will seek it himself. If you make a man think that he is justly an outcast, you do not have to order him to the back door. He will go without being told; and if there is no back door, his very nature will demand one.”

- Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*

“Why not exploit, enslave, or exterminate a class that everybody is taught to regard as inferior?”

- Carter G. Woodson

Black History cannot help but be politically oriented, for it tends towards the total redefinition of an experience which was highly political. Black History must be political, for it deals with the most political phenomenon of all, the struggle between the master and the slave, between the colonized and the colonizer, between the oppressed and the oppressor...all histories of peoples...are shaped by political and ideological views.

- Vincent Harding, 1970

The systematic study of African contributions to world civilization are often omitted or glossed over in school curricula. Formal educational institutions in the United States have failed to expose students to the truth of Black history and its profound legacy in the shaping of our nation and the world. In order to understand what drives these omissions and distortions, especially when it comes to the history and cultures of people of African descent, it is critically important to examine the relationship between POLITICS, EDUCATION, POWER, and IDEOLOGY.

This unit explores these issues by posing a fundamental question, “Why study Black history?” To answer this inquiry, we begin by introducing students to the work and legacy of Carter G. Woodson, also known as “The Father of Black History.” Woodson, a pioneer in the study of Black History and the founder of Negro History Week (later expanded to Black History Month), insisted that the American education system — a system of mis-education as he would say — played a critical role in the perpetuation of racial oppression, inequality and mental brainwashing. “The thought of the inferiority of

the Negro is drilled into him in almost every class he enters and in almost every book he studies,” wrote Woodson.

Although written in 1933, the central thesis of Woodson’s argument remains relevant today, and the problems of “mis-education” have yet to be rectified. In his classic book, *The Mis-education of the Negro*, Woodson argued that public education has historically been developed as “propaganda” to legitimize unequal power relations as opposed to providing a strong foundation for individual and community empowerment. In this lesson, students will explore Woodson’s mission to tell the truth about African history and the strategies he used to combat mis-education.

In addition to Woodson, this lesson will introduce students to pioneering historians, scholars, librarians and bibliophiles who dedicated their lives to unearthing, documenting and disseminating facts about African history such as Arthur Schomburg, J.A. Rogers, Vivian Harsh, Charlamae Hill Rollins, John Henrik Clark and Dorothy Porter Wesley. These individuals and others worked tirelessly to counter the prevailing mis-education and propaganda that proclaimed that Black people had no history or could speak of no worldly accomplishments. This was no easy task. They operated in a racist academic climate where access to books and literature that affirmed the contributions of Africans to world history were rare if nonexistent. Through their work, African Americans began to learn the truth about their history and the walls of mis-education began tumbling down.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

- ✓ Identify Carter G. Woodson and discuss his contributions to African American and American history
- ✓ Define the term “propaganda” and examine how it relates to the teaching of African American and African history in the past and present
- ✓ Discuss the concept “miseducation” and identify its potential effects
- ✓ Identify and differentiate between a primary and secondary source
- ✓ Examine a primary source document and make inferences regarding its audience, author, message and relevance

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

Students were assigned the following for homework:

- Carter G. Woodson, *The Miseducation of Negro*—Preface
Link: <http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/misedne.html>
- *The Miseducation of the Negro*, Chapter III—“How We Drifted from the Truth”
Link: <http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/misedne.html>
- *The Miseducation of the Negro*, Chapter XIII “Understand the Negro”
Link: <http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/misedne.html>
- Primary Source Document: Letter, Carter G. Woodson to Mr. Thomas Barnes, October 1, 1927 (5 minutes) – [Review for Class Activity]
Link: http://www.freemaninstitute.com/images/woodson_letter.jpg

MATERIALS

- EFLA Quiz Intro-1
- Internet Access and Audio/Visual Equipment
- EFLA Document: Biography of Carter G. Woodson (5 minutes)
- Primary Source Document: Letter, Carter G. Woodson to Mr. Thomas Barnes, October 1, 1927 (5 minutes)
Link: http://www.freemaninstitute.com/images/woodson_letter.jpg

INTRO UNIT CLASS 1: QUIZ Intro-1 (with answer key)

(35 – 45 minutes)

Instructions

- Distribute EFLA Document: Quiz Intro-1 (below), which is based on the homework assignment. Give students approximately 15-20 minutes to complete the quiz. The answers are provided. Some answers may vary.
- Once the quiz is complete, call on student volunteers to provide the answers to each of the questions. Allow students the opportunity to grade their own quiz. This is a great activity to teach and build integrity. Define *integrity* for students and how it applies to the self-graded quizzes.
- Facilitate a class discussion by reviewing the answers together. Collect and review graded quizzes for accuracy and place in student folder.
- If students have access to computers and/or smart phones in class, periodically give “open book quizzes” that allow students to reference articles on the EFLA website while completing the quiz. The object of the daily quizzes is to ensure that students are actively learning and engaging the material.

Note: The first quiz should be “open book” if students have access to computers and smart phones.

Quiz Questions

Preface of *Mis-education of the Negro*

1. What is the primary goal of education, according to Woodson?

Answer: “the mere imparting of information is not education. Above all things, the effort must result in making a man think and do for himself...”

2. What has Woodson identified as the difficulty of the “educated Negro”?

Answer: “In thus estimating the results obtained from the so-called education of the Negro the author does not go to the census figures to show the progress of the race. It may be of no importance to the race to be able to boast today of many times as many ‘educated’ members as it had in 1865. If they are of the wrong kind the increase in numbers will be a disadvantage rather than an advantage. The only question which concerns us here is whether these ‘educated’ persons are actually equipped to face the ordeal

before them or unconsciously contribute to their own undoing by perpetuating the regime of the oppressor..."

"The so-called modern education, with all its defects, however, does others so much more good than it does the Negro, because it has been worked out in conformity to the needs of those who have enslaved and oppressed weaker peoples. For example, the philosophy and ethics resulting from our educational system have justified slavery, peonage, segregation, and lynching. The oppressor has the right to exploit, to handicap, and to kill the oppressed. Negroes daily educated in the tenets of such a religion of the strong have accepted the status of the weak as divinely ordained, and during the last three generations of their nominal freedom they have done practically nothing to change it..."

"The difficulty is that the 'educated Negro' is compelled to live and move among his own people whom he has been taught to despise."

Chapter III—"How We Drifted from the Truth"

- 3. According to Woodson, how did teachers of Black children continue to perpetuate Black inferiority? Why did he believe teachers failed to change or challenge the biased curriculum in the schools?**

Answer: "The status of the Negro, then, was justly fixed as that of an inferior. Teachers of Negroes in their first schools after Emancipation did not proclaim any such doctrine, but the content of their curricula justified these inferences.

An observer from outside of the situation naturally inquires why the Negroes, many of whom serve their race as teachers, have not changed this program. These teachers, however, are powerless. Negroes have no control over their education and have little voice in their other affairs pertaining thereto. In a few cases Negroes have been chosen as members of public boards of education, and some have been appointed members of private boards, but these Negroes are always such a small minority that they do not figure in the final working out of the educational program. The education of the Negroes, then, the most important thing in the uplift of the Negroes, is almost entirely in the hands of those who have enslaved them and now segregate them...

Taught from books of the same bias, trained by Caucasians of the same prejudices or by Negroes of enslaved minds, one generation of Negro teachers after another have served for no higher purpose than to do what they are told to do. In other words, a Negro teacher instructing Negro children is in many respects a white teacher thus engaged, for the program in each case is about the same..."

"This is slightly dangerous ground here, however, for the Negro's mind has been all but perfectly enslaved in that he has been trained to think what is desired of him. The 'highly educated' Negroes do not like to hear anything uttered against this procedure because they make their living in this way, and they feel that they must defend the system. Few mis-educated Negroes ever act otherwise; and, if they so express themselves, they are easily crushed by the large majority to the contrary so that the procession may move on without interruption."

Chapter XIII—"Understand the Negro"

4. What is the difference between "learning facts" and "learning to think"? And why is this distinction important to Woodson?

Answer: "Such has been the education of Negroes. They have been taught facts of history, but have never learned to think. Their conception is that you go to school to find out what other people have done, and then you go out in life to imitate them. What they have done can be done by others, they contend; and they are right. They are wrong, however, in failing to realize that what others have done, we may not need to do. If we are to do identically the same thing from generation to generation, we would not make any progress. If we are to duplicate from century to century the same feats, the world will grow tired of such a monotonous performance."

In this particular respect 'Negro education' is a failure, and disastrously so, because in its present predicament the race is especially in need of vision and invention to give humanity something new. The world does not want and will never have the heroes and heroines of the past. What this age needs is an enlightened youth not to undertake the tasks like theirs but to imbibe the spirit of these great men and answer the present call of duty with equal nobleness of soul."

Not only do the needs of generations vary, but the individuals themselves are not duplicates of one another; and being different in this respect, their only hope to function efficiently in society is to know themselves and the generation which they are to serve. The chief value in studying the records of others is to become better acquainted with oneself and with one's possibilities to live and to do in the present age. As long as Negroes continue to restrict themselves to doing what was necessary a hundred or a thousand years ago, they must naturally expect to be left out of the great scheme of things as they concern men of today."

5. Why did Woodson believe it was important to teach the youth the truth about African culture and history at a young age in elementary and secondary school?

Answer: "Several mis-educated Negroes themselves contend that the study of the Negro by children would bring before them the race problem prematurely and, therefore, urge that the study of the race be deferred until they reach advanced work in the college or university. These misguided teachers ignore the fact that the race question is being brought before black and white children daily in their homes, in the streets, through the press and on the rostrum. How, then, can the school ignore the duty of teaching the truth while these other agencies are playing up falsehood? The experience of college instructors shows that racial attitudes of the youth are not easily changed after they reach adolescence. Although students of this advanced stage are shown the fallacy of race superiority and the folly of social distinctions, they nevertheless continue to do the illogical thing of still looking upon these despised groups as less worthy than themselves and persist in treating them accordingly. Teachers of elementary and secondary schools giving attention to this interracial problem have succeeded in softening and changing the attitude of children whose judgment has not been so hopelessly warped by the general attitude of the communities in which they have been brought up."



QUIZ Intro-1

Name: _____

Date: _____

1. What is the primary goal of education, according to Woodson?

2. What has Woodson identified as the difficulty of the “educated Negro”?

3. According to Woodson, how did teachers of Black children continue to perpetuate Black inferiority? Why did he believe teachers failed to change or challenge the biased curriculum in the schools?

4. What is the difference between “learning facts” and “learning to think”? And why is this distinction important to Woodson?

5. Why did Woodson believe it was important to teach the youth the truth about African culture and history at a young age in elementary and secondary school?

Class Activity 1

(30 – 45 minutes)

MATERIALS

- EFLA Document: Biography of Carter G. Woodson (5 minutes)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Distribute the biography of Carter G. Woodson and ask a student(s) to read it aloud.
2. Lead a class discussion using the following questions:
 - Ask student(s) if they can explain the difference between informal and formal education. If not, explain it for them using the definitions below. Then discuss the significance of Carter G. Woodson's informal and formal education. How was his informal education linked to his formal education? Note that Woodson did not begin his formal education until he was 20 years old.

Formal education consists of the educational experiences within an established school system based on curricula and set standards. Formal education is facilitated in the classroom under the direction of certified or trained teachers.

Informal education includes educational and learning experiences that take place outside of traditional classrooms. Informal education can take place in one's family, community, after-school programs, or peer group. Learning on your own is another example of informal education in which skills and knowledge are self-taught.

- Note in the biography that Woodson describes Oliver Jones as "well-educated but illiterate." Explain the meaning of "paradox"—a statement that seems contradictory or impossible but is likely to be true. Ask students to discuss Woodson's description of Jones as an example of a paradox. How did these men and women learn so much about world events, history and economics if they could not read or write? *[Also, point to the significance of the oral tradition in African and African American communities, and Woodson's mission to preserve oral history. Oral traditions provided a means for those who were illiterate to gain knowledge and information and pass it onto future generations.]*
- What were some of the initiatives that Woodson founded in order to counter the lack of information on the accomplishments of Blacks?

3. Ask students to think about the title of Woodson's classic, *The Mis-education of the Negro* and gauge their initial thoughts about the word "mis-education."
 - What do you think Woodson means by the term mis-education?
 - Why do you think the title focuses on Blacks and not Whites?

Class Activity 2

(45 – 60 minutes)

MATERIALS

Primary Source Document: Letter, Carter G. Woodson to Mr. Thomas Barnes, October 1, 1927 (5 minutes)

Link: http://www.freemaninstitute.com/images/woodson_letter.jpg

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Explain the difference between primary and secondary sources. Definitions are provided below:

Primary Sources

- Primary sources are documents, artifacts, speeches, or other "original materials" that were produced during the time period under study. These sources are first-hand accounts of an event or historical period. Examples include: diaries, interviews, photographs, autobiographies, letters, minutes, organizational records, and government documents. Creative works from the time period are also primary sources such as music, poetry, novels, and films.

Secondary Sources

- Secondary sources are the interpretations and analyses of primary sources. Second-hand accounts include textbooks, histories, biographies, and newspaper articles about events or people. Secondary sources are not evidence, rather they offer interpretations or a discussion of the evidence.

Emphasize the importance of exploring primary sources to understand the past. Since secondary sources can often promote biased interpretations of evidence,

and people tend to interpret the facts differently, it is important for students to examine primary sources in order to learn to interpret information for themselves. Primary sources present their own arguments and messages, and students should learn to read and use them without relying on the interpretations of others.

2. Distribute a copy of Woodson's letter to Thomas Barnes and introduce the document as a "primary source." Tell students they will act as historians and read and interpret the document for themselves. This process will include four different approaches to reading the document.

Reading 1

- Ask students to examine what the document looks like before reading its content. What is the first thing they notice about the document?
- Ask students to identify the context: place, date, author.
- Next, instruct students to look at only the top and the bottom of the letter and record what they see. Students should take note of the letterhead, which includes the different organizations that Carter G. Woodson founded, along with the names of Black leaders and their contact information. Why did Woodson include a list of leaders? What impact might this list have on the reader? At the bottom, students should note that Woodson signed his name and title. This letter indicates that it was written by a professional man with access to networks, authority, and leadership.

Reading 2

- Ask students to read the content of the letter and underline only one sentence that best captures Woodson's main idea. Tell them to ignore the words they may not understand, and focus instead on the big idea. Call on students to share the sentence they have underlined and discuss what they think the main idea of the letter is. If students disagree, allow them to come to a consensus.
- Ask students to identify parts of the letter that are confusing. Are there historical references or vocabulary words that they do not know? If there are some difficulties, push students to talk through them and offer their own interpretations.
- What did Woodson mean by "propaganda"? Based on the contents of the letter, ask students to define propaganda. Review the definition of propaganda, which is "ideas or statements that are often false or

exaggerated and that are spread in order to help a cause, a political leader, a government, etc.” How can education serve as propaganda?

Reading 3

- Ask students to read the content of the letter again. This time, have them pay attention to how Woodson constructs his argument. What arguments, assertions or evidence does Woodson provide to support his main argument?
- Ask students to underline supportive evidence and to note whether or not they find these arguments convincing or strong. Is his argument logical? Is it believable? What is a Home Study Department? How does it work?
- Remind students that primary sources provide arguments that are often interpreted differently. What are the supporting arguments? And are they persuasive?

Reading 4

- Ask students to review the letter one more time and consider the material they gathered during the first reading of the document. Given the date of the letter, what is Woodson responding to or in dialogue with? Is his letter convincing? What do you think were Mr. Barnes' concerns? Who is Mr. Barnes?
- Remind students that reading primary source documents includes some skepticism; sources should not always be taken at face value. Ask students to consider who might disagree with Woodson's perspective. What facts did the author leave out and why? What questions are unanswered by the document?
- What does this letter tell us about Woodson's perspective on mis-education? What should people do to combat mis-education? What makes this document significant?

Teachers can access “Four Reads: Learning to Read Primary Documents” for more preparation.

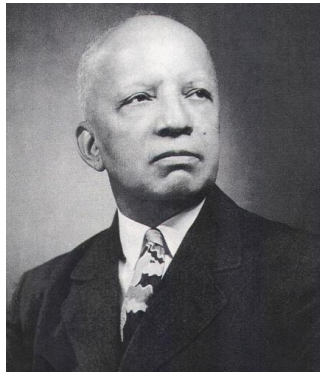
Link: <http://teachinghistory.org/teaching-materials/teaching-guides/25690>



Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

Biography: Carter Godwin Woodson

(Excerpts taken from "A Burgeoning Cause" by Charlynnne Spencer Pyne and "Carter G. Woodson" by Korey Bowers Brown.)



Carter Godwin Woodson, "the Father of Black History," was born in Buckingham County, Virginia on December 19, 1875. One of seven children born to James and Anna Eliza Woodson, who were formerly enslaved, Woodson was forced to work on the family farm throughout his youth. However, his parents emphasized the importance of education and racial pride. Due to the demands of sharecropping, Woodson was only allowed to attend school four months out of the year, between harvesting and planting. His love for learning grew exponentially when he moved to work in the coal mines of West Virginia. There,

Woodson became acquainted with Oliver Jones, a man he described as well-educated although he was illiterate.

When Jones learned that Woodson could read, he engaged Woodson to read the daily newspapers to him and his customers in exchange for free treats. By subscribing to "black" and "white" newspapers, Jones sought to keep abreast of the news in the black community, as well as in the nation and the world. Woodson, in acknowledging the educational value of this experience, wrote:

"I learned so much myself because of the much more extensive reading required by him than I probably would have undertaken for my own benefit. ... In seeking through the press information ... for Oliver Jones and his friends, I was learning in an effective way ... history and economics" (Woodson 1944).

The "history of the race" was a frequent topic at Oliver Jones's place. Woodson would listen intently as the veterans and "old-timers" talked of their experiences during slavery, the Civil War and Reconstruction. He would later become a pioneer in the use of oral history.

Woodson began his formal education when he was 20 years old. His dedication to study enabled him to earn a high school diploma in West Virginia. In 1901, he graduated from Berea College and later worked as a teacher and school supervisor in the Philippines. He became fluent in both French and Spanish and traveled to Paris to study at the acclaimed Sorbonne for one semester. He went on to earn Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the University of Chicago in just a few years. In 1912, Woodson became the second African American to earn a PhD at Harvard University.

Recognizing the dearth of information on the accomplishments of blacks in 1915, Dr. Woodson founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History to dispel the

myth that the Negro had no history, and to promote the scholarship of black historians. Under Woodson's pioneering leadership, the Association created research and publication outlets for black scholars with the establishment of the Journal of Negro History (1916) and the Negro History Bulletin (1937), which garners a popular public appeal. Woodson also formed the African-American-owned Associated Publishers Press in 1921, which produced several of his own works, including The Negro in Our History (1922) and the time-honored classic, Mis-Education of the Negro (1933).

In 1926, Dr. Woodson initiated the celebration of Negro History Week, which corresponded with the birthdays of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln. In 1976, this celebration was expanded to include the entire month of February, and today Black History Month garners support throughout the country as people of all ethnic and social backgrounds discuss the black experience. In honor of all the work that Dr. Carter G. Woodson has done to promote the study of African American History, an ornament of Woodson hangs on the White House's Christmas tree each year.

It is important to note that Woodson developed a thirst for knowledge from elders who could not read or write. These men and women, though illiterate, were extremely knowledgeable about Black history and they instilled in young Woodson the value of knowing the "truth." Woodson's lifelong commitment to rewriting history and education inspired generations of scholars, teachers, students, activists and ordinary men and women to seek the truth about Black contributions to civilization and the development of the modern world.

For additional biographies of Carter G. Woodson, see:

The Library of Congress

Link: <http://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/94/9403/woodson.html>

Association for the Study of African American Life and History

Link: <http://www.asalh.org/index.html>

The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, Incorporated

JOHN R. HAWKINS, PRESIDENT

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The Journal of Negro History

CARTER G. WOODSON

DIRECTOR AND EDITOR

1538 NINTH STREET, N. W.

Washington, D. C.

October 1, 1927.

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Mr. Thomas H. Barnes,
311 W. State Street,
Oleans, N. Y.

My dear Mr. Barnes:

Why establish a Home Study Department? What need is there for such an effort? Why not let the established schools do this work? The answer is simple and clear.

Recently a Negro instructor in a college was asked to give a course in Negro history. He treated the request as a joke. He has been well instructed in the story of the Hebrews, the Greeks, and the Romans. He has made a special study of the achievements of Europeans and Americans. He has been taught that these nations accomplished all. From his point of view, therefore, there is no other history worth considering.

The fact is that the so-called history teaching in our schools and colleges is downright propaganda, an effort to praise one race and to decry the other to justify social repression and exploitation. The world is still in darkness as to the actual progress of mankind. Each corner of the universe has tended to concern itself merely with the exploits of its own particular heroes. Students and teachers of our time, therefore, are the victims of this selfish propaganda.

The Association is trying to bring before the world the whole truth that the truth may make men free. To do this it has decided not only to publish informing books but to offer by mail instruction in Negro life and history. The Home Study Department has, therefore, been established for the special benefit of those who would like to study the aspects of African civilization which were neglected in the schools in which they were trained.

These courses are conducted by correspondence. They cover every aspect of the history of the Negro race, its economic progress, its social problems, African art, African Anthropology, and African Philosophy. Some of the most distinguished scholars of this country have been secured as instructors. The circular herewith enclosed will give particulars. The undersigned will be delighted to answer further inquiries and will enroll any one desiring to become a student.

Respectfully yours,

C. G. Woodson
C. G. Woodson,
Director.

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Homework Assignment for Intro Unit Class 2

(Total Reading Time: Less than 1 hour)

Assign the following for homework:

- The Authentic History Center: Caricatures of African-Americans: The Coon (15 min)
Link: <http://www.authentichistory.com/diversity/african/3-coon/1-history/index.html>
- The Authentic History Center: The Mammy Caricature (15 min)
Link: <http://www.authentichistory.com/diversity/african/1-mammy/>
- The Authentic History Center: Description of the Pickaninny Caricature (15 min)
Link: <http://www.authentichistory.com/diversity/african/3-coon/2-pickaninny/index.html>
- Blacks and Vaudeville: PBS documentary (19:54 min)
Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8kbnn3E7Gp8>
- View: Scrub Me Mama With a Boogie Beat Cartoon (6:51 min)
Link: https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=lazy+town+cartoon
- Cotton and Chick Watts Blackface Minstrel Show Comedy (3:42 min)
Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-_swtbli2F0
- Ten Little Niggers Nursery Rhyme / Book (2 min)
Link: <http://efla.homestead.com/~local/~Preview/Intro2video2.html>