

Black History Project—Part One

Greetings, Historians,

Over the course of the remainder of the year, you will become an expert on an influential figure from African-American history. I will tell you about the “container” for this project at a later date, because I want you to really invest in the process of exploration and research, without thinking about product. This first phase of the project is crucial: filling yourself up with information, and using facts to help you make the big step into examining **how** and **why**.

Big Idea

What allows one person to break through impossibly strong barriers that have blocked others?

How does the shifting environment—physical, as well as experiential—of someone’s life shape the person they become?

Are leaders born or made?

This project will be part of your assessment in Social Studies, Language Arts, Art, and Applied Design, Skills, and Technologies (ADST).

This first phase—research—will set you up for success further down the line. It is the culmination of all the work we have done exploring note-taking techniques over the past year (or two years, if you are in grade 7).

You cannot be successful with this project if you leave it all to the last minute—there are too many pieces—so do yourself a favor and spare yourself a lot of stress by making a commitment to doing a little bit of work on this project each day. Use your checklist to ensure you are covering all the bases, but remember you are going beyond just a surface collection of facts; in each area you are engaging your critical thinking skills to push yourself into the realm of **how** and **why**.

Also: have fun.

Criteria for Notes

1. Written in your own words

As we have explored this year, successful note-taking is not a matter of cutting and pasting from on-line sources into a Google doc; doing so requires only a limited amount of thinking, and as time passes people often forget that they have copied someone else's ideas and then inadvertently pass these words and ideas off as their own. This is plagiarism and it is illegal.

Instead, focus on finding the balance between using the fewest possible words (but enough words) to capture the ideas. Sometimes this is one word; sometimes this is several words. This means that you need to *think* about what you are reading or viewing and figure out what the idea being explored is and how you would put that in your own words, as if you are sharing that idea with a friend.

If you come across an idea that you cannot find a way of paraphrasing (putting into your own words), record it in quotation marks and make note of the source directly beside or after it. If you use this idea in your project, you'll need to credit the source you used.

2. Organization

Successfully prepared notes have some sort of system or systems in place to make it simple to find notes when you need them. This may look like:

- Color-coding
- Headings and subheadings
- A separate document or page for each research area/aspect
- Boxes/containers
- Charts or tables
- Flow charts
- Mind maps
- Webs
- Sketchnotes
- Lynda Barry-type doodle collages
- Anything that works for you that makes it simple for you to look at patterns and Big Ideas, and allows you to quickly find any given note when you need it

3. **Thorough**

There is no set number of notes to govern this, but can you provide evidence that you have been exhaustive in your research? You will have at least a month and a half to dig into this work, and your task is to become an expert on your chosen person. Do your notes reflect that you have been using this time well and challenging yourself to dig deep?

4. **Depth and Complexity**

What I am looking for here is that you have *attempted* to incorporate Depth and Complexity into your research process, and that you are challenging yourself to go beyond just collecting and recording facts. There are many ways of doing this (and remember that I am always available for consultation around this idea if you get confused as to how to proceed), but I will be asking you what icons you have used to guide your research and what you learned as a result.

Look for connections across and through the life of the person you are exploring.

5. **Tracking of Sources**

Do you have a page or document where you have been tracking your sources?

A required element of our final project will be a bibliography, so as you do your research, keep track of the sources you have used: books and on-line sources. **WRITE YOUR SOURCES DOWN AS YOU USE THEM.** You might want to devote a page in your comp book to this. Your final project will contain a list of these sources in proper APA referencing style. We will explore this in class.

Your bibliography will need to contain **at least three** book, magazine, or reference book sources, **five** on-line print sources (not including Wikipedia, Quora, or Biography.com, although you can use and cite these sites as a source if you so wish), and **five** other forms of media such as podcasts, documentaries, video interviews, etc. Primary sources, if you are able to find and use them, are also an option (if your person is still living, can you email them...? If you are interested in this, talk to me).

Areas of Focus

We can break our search down into two areas that continually feed and circle back to each other: collecting facts/data, and then using that information to prompt questions around the **how** and **why**, which in turn eventually leads back to the need to gather more information.

The What

A **time-line** will be a part of the final project, so **while you engage in research, you will need to keep track of dates of important events in your figure's life**. You might want to devote a page or two in your comp book to write these down as you discover them, and then order them later. We will look at aspects of timelines in class

Extension: also plot dates of historical importance that would have had an effect on your person (such as the Brown vs. Board of Education decision or the Alabama bus boycotts, if applicable).

Building to How and Why

- Information about where they were born and how that place may have influenced their life
- Information about their family and how growing up in that people-environment may have influenced their life
- Important/influential events/highlights from your person's life—what experiences shaped the person they became? How did those experiences shape their beliefs and ways of being?
- Information about important relationships in your person's life—romantic relationships, friendships, mentors, role models, work relationships—and how those relationships helped shape who they became as a person
- Interesting details – what did you learn that captured your interest and your heart? What effect did these details have on your person's life?
- Examples of how your person encountered and overcame racism and income inequality and/or how other ethical issues affected his or her life—this relates directly to the Big Idea of this project (see page 1)

- Information about where they lived and why they moved to the place or places they moved to (think push factors and pull factors)
- Information about how your person impacted their field of work or the world or the lives of other people – what is their legacy? How did they change their field or the world, or pave the way for others to follow in their steps?

Tips:

- Be an active note-taker: always have your comp book out while you are reading or viewing.
- When reading or viewing, read or watch once through to get the general sense of the material you are exploring.

Then, make a list of what you think the Big Idea is and what the Sub-topics might be. This can be done in any of our note-taking forms.

Then, reread slowly in order to capture the important details. Stop at the end of each paragraph and pause to give yourself time to think. What sub-topic does this relate to? How do I say this in my own 11- to 13-year old words? How do I capture the essence of the idea?

If you are exploring a video, use pause and rewind frequently.

- Use the checklist to your advantage. Keep it in your accordion folder.
- Take chunks of time to reread your notes and look for connections. This can help you find traces of **how** and **why**.
- When you are stuck as to how to go further, choose a D&C icon and ask yourself, how does this focus my thinking? What new information will I need to explore in order to talk about this icon?
- Use our trusted news sources to look for archival and current thinking about your topic.
- Make the person you are researching your friend and mentor—be open to learning from them.