

Discussion Questions and Classroom Activities

Use the following questions to:

- Have students share their museum observations in classroom discussions
- Identify research papers, oral reports, and essay topics for students
- Make connections between the exhibition and what you are studying in the classroom

In the museum:

Note: Have students bring notebooks for writing and sketching. Use pencils, not pens.

1. Visual Arts and Social Studies: Historical Perspective

Painter Charles White made large portraits of Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth for the mural *Five Great American Negroes* (1939-40) (Gallery 2). The gallery panel is reproduced on page 21. Compare these idealized features to Four Races figures in the upper panels of Diego Rivera's *Detroit Industry* frescoes (1932). What world events were happening as both murals were painted? Discuss why both artists created general instead of specific features for these symbolic figures. Contrast this style with the specific features in portraits by both artists—White's *Woman Worker* and Rivera's assembly line workers:

<http://www.dia.org/education/rivera/plan1/index.htm>

2. English Language Arts: Poetry and art inspired by Native American cultures

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's epic poem *Songs of Hiawatha* inspired Edmonia Lewis' two sculptures in the Evans collection (Gallery 1) and her two small busts in the DIA's permanent collection (see page 26). View and sketch details of these works in the gallery. In the classroom, read modern illustrated adaptations of the poem, or view the video and discuss (see Resources, pp. 22-24.) What is accurate about these depictions of Native American cultures? See a high school poetry lesson based on 'Hiawatha's Wooing' Chapter 10 in Longfellow's poem:

<http://www.nw-service.k12.mn.us/Poetry-%20Sannes.pdf>.

3. Visual Arts: Analyze, describe and evaluate works of art in context

Compare and contrast the sculpture in the exhibition. How do works by Edmonia Lewis and Elizabeth Catlett differ? Compare Catlett's figures to Richard Hunt's work. How does the historical context affect the materials, purpose and style of each artist? Include Richard Hunt's *Field Section* and Lewis' two busts in the DIA's permanent collection (see page 26.)

In the Classroom

1. English Language Arts: Several works were inspired by poetry and share titles including:

- Aaron Douglas *The Negro Speaks of Rivers* after a poem by Langston Hughes (Gallery 2) <http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15722>
- James Weldon Johnson's *God's Trombones* poems illustrated by Aaron Douglas (Gallery 4) <http://docsouth.unc.edu/southlit/johnson/johnson.html>
- Margaret Walker's *We Have Been Believers* is the title of a work by Charles White (Gallery 4) http://www.english.uiuc.edu/Maps/poets/s_z/walker/onlinepoems.htm

Access these works and encourage students to compare and contrast these writers' styles, themes and moods. Students can create illustrations as they listen to audio works. See this high school lesson on Harlem Renaissance poets during the 1920s and 30s:

http://www.givens.org/curriculum_detail.asp?CurriculumID=81

- An image, Romare Bearden's *The Piano Lesson* inspired the Pulitzer Prize-winning play by August Wilson, which can be accessed at this site:

<http://www.sparknotes.com/drama/piano/>

2. Music: links to traditional African American musical forms including Jazz and Blues

Several works in Gallery 6 "Music as Muse" were inspired by music including:

- Romare Bearden *The Blues Has Got Me* inspired by Bessie Smith's lyrics for In the House Blues

http://blueslyrics.tripod.com/lyrics/bessie_smith/in_the_house_blues.htm

- Beauford Delaney's *Portrait of Ella Fitzgerald*

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

Compare and contrast Bearden's style to Delaney's more abstract portrait of Ella Fitzgerald. Students can create illustrations as they listen to audio works.

3. Social Studies: Civic Perspective and core democratic values

Have students research and report on the lives of Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth, the subjects of portraits by Charles White (gallery 2). Why did White include them in his mural *Five Great American Negroes*? See gallery panel on page 21. Students can research biographies of George Washington Carver, Booker T. Washington, Marian Anderson and other African American men and women of distinction. How do their achievements exemplify the core democratic values?

Reports can take a variety of formats—students can design bookmarks, or contribute a page to a book project, see for example:

http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/01-1/lp221_02.shtml