



## Insider/Outsider

### Thematic Ideas and Lesson Plans for Teachers

The following are seven different Unit themes with accompanying lesson plans that can be used in Middle or High School classrooms to engage students in various subjects. Literature, Music, History, Visual Art, Science, Math and Activism can all be addressed by using the Registry. This site can provide material to draw from, create from, and explore.

These Unit plans are constructed to make use of the site, to encourage ways of creating lessons that are interdisciplinary, and interactive, while still meeting standards.

So often *teaching from a theme* can in itself be inclusive and deep as opposed to teaching separate units on “black poets” African American music”. In this way we do not “other” a culture, race or community, but rather weave them into the inclusive world we want to create in our classrooms while still emphasizing the importance of their unique identity.

As you will see, the Registry provides a natural resource into many themes that connect to student lives, concerns and passions.

**Note: You can pick or choose among the suggestions for each Thematic Unit. It could be an activity from the Unit that takes one day; or you may want to pick and choose what activities and lessons you want to involve for one week of exploration and instruction. The Registry is ideal in its flexibility. These Units aim to be flexible as well.**



## **MDE Social Emotional Goals—All Are Part of Every Unit Plan for the Registry**

Self-control of feelings and behavior  
Shared use of space and materials  
Identify of self in relations to others  
Social and emotional understanding  
Relationships and social interactions with familiar adults  
Relationships and social interactions  
Conflict negotiation  
Responsible conduct as a group member

### Standards Addressed in the Unit: Celebration

Standards addressed in this unit include

Citizenship and Government --Civic Skills, 8.1, 9.1  
Geography—9.3,  
Historical Thinking Skills—9.  
United State History—Indigenous and Slave labor-9.4.4.16.5  
United States History—Slaves struggle for rights-9.4.4.19.4  
United States History—Jim Crow –racism 9.4.4.20.5

Language Arts:

Conventions of English when writing or speaking: 6.11.1.1  
Consulting Reference Materials 6.11..44  
Evaluate Content in Diverse Media 6.5.77  
Write Narratives and Other Creative Texts—7.7.3.3- 12 th grade  
Prepare for and Participate in range of conversations –7.9.1.1- grade 12  
Communicate using traditional or digital multimedia formats—7.9.8.8  
Write Narratives and other Creative Texts—9.7.3.3



## **African American Registry, Unit Plan- Insider/Outsider**

### **Theme: Insider/Outsider: Who Belongs, Who is left out**

All students, no matter how good they are at getting good grades, or excelling in sports, or seem like they are the most popular students in the school have times when they feel left out, rejected or ignored. This begins on the playground in elementary school: name calling, eating alone at lunch, last one chosen for the baseball team at recess. At a historical level, we see whole people who are left out of the economic system, are racially segregated, disenfranchised, or kept from access to certain institutions, careers, neighborhoods, organizations based on their race, culture, ethnicity. This unit explores aspects of being an outsider or an insider, from the personal to the political and historical.

**Intersections: Literature, Music, History, Psychology, Current Events, STEM, Art**

**Age: Grades 5-12**

**Goal:** This unit is structured to lead students from the personal experience of feeling left out, and conversely, feeling included in various aspects of their lives. From this they will explore how whole groups have been denied access. From the settling of countries to the present-day exclusion of whole peoples, students will explore: who is an insider, who an outsider now?

How does this follow from historical trends and events? Students will be able to see the trajectory of such status, from slavery to Jim Crow, to Civil Rights, the School to Prison pipeline, to Black Lives Matter in the case of African Americans. By the end of their exploration of this topic, students will be able to see and trace historical trends through research and writing.

**Materials:** Notebooks with sections for personal, historical, research, current events and poetry/prose/art work around the topic of Insider/Outsider.

**Introducing the Unit:** Ask students to make a list or write of times they feel/have felt like an **outsider**.

**Step One: Give them 6 minutes to fast-write on each of the following categories:** in school, at home (family), at the park (on the street), at lunch, at parties, with friends for a total of 36 minutes.

Call out the categories one at a time.

**Ask students to read around in small groups, their lists, reading one category at a time:** reading their outsider/school ones first, then another go around reading their home/family ones...etc.



Ask them, as a whole, to name other contexts in which they feel outside...at a restaurant, in church or mosque or synagogue? Let them offer categories.

**Step Two: End with a discussion** about this feeling and how they deal with it. Let them talk about their coping mechanisms, their actions as outsiders that make them able to go on.

Talk about resilience and what it takes for each of us to survive in a world where there will always be times when we feel like an outsider.

**Show the video from the Registry:** [Latin American Culture and Skin Color with Steve Ascencio.](#)

Ask students to talk about things they are often forbidden to talk about and how this might create the feeling of Outsiders in others, in themselves.

**Step Three:** Have students write about times when they feel like insiders, when they feel comfortable and included in where they are, what they are doing, who they are with. Ask them to read aloud their lists, going through the whole list at one time.

Discuss with them what exactly might make them feel this way: the music they hear, the way people speak, the place they are in: the smells, sights, sounds, textures, tastes.

**Step Four:** Ask students to create a written description, using all five senses, of places, times when they feel like an Insider.

**Read Lucille Clifton's poem:** [Good Times from the Registry](#) from the Registry to students. Ask them to think of "good times" and describe how these make them feel like insiders. What events, places, people are involved in creating their Insider World.

**Step Five:** Ask students to create a piece of art or language about when they feel like an Insider or an Outsider. This can be spoken word, painting, video, photography collage, piece of music. Often students who do not learn well through verbal tasks may be able to connect through music or drawing.

## Activities

### History and Outsider Status

**1. Show the Registry video clip of Kevin Mahala, from the Minn. Historical Society called [Perspectives of Race](#),** speaking about the how groups of people are made to be outsiders over history. Ask them to name groups where they believe this has been true. Ask them to list all they can think of, they can even get wild: meat eater vs. vegetarians, singers vs. tone deaf, left handed people vs. Right handed people, etc. Ask them to be serious, Blacks left out over time, Natives forced onto reservations, etc. LGBTQ people not allowed to marry. They can create these lists in groups of five as collaborations or on their own.



Discuss the lists: What are Outsider groups that have consequences that are serious, vs. those that are not as long lasting or that do not affect as many people.

Read the poem by [Cornelius Eddy, “My mother if she had won free dance lessons.”](#) Take the first line: “Would she have been a person with a completely different outlook on life?”

Have them write on something that might have changed your life so far, dance lessons? Money? Different skin color? Religion? Culture?

They can discuss this in small groups and report back.

## **2. Show the video of [Jonathan O’Dell](#) speaking of how he grew up in Mississippi.**

Ask students to think of someone or a group who has always felt like he or she, or they are outside of their life, someone they don’t usually connect with or even think about.

They can even brainstorm a list of these groups or individuals. Perhaps it is the bus driver they see each day but do not know much about. Maybe it is the star soccer player they rarely talk to because they don’t play the same sport.

Assign the students to interview a person like this in their lives... Jonathan O’Dell describes doing this in the clip they saw. How would they approach the person? How would they begin the interview? If they have a phone as them to record the interview or take a photo if this is acceptable. Brainstorm a way to approach this: “I have always wanted to learn soccer...”, “What did you have to do to become a bus driver”, Can we talk?

Ask them to a one-page essay: What I learned about....

Have a follow up discussion as a class, about how we are cut off from each other in our lives, how we create outsider categories all the time.

## **3. Play the Video “[Why Join an Activist Organization](#)” [Katie McWatt](#) interview.**

Ask students to list things that they want to see changed: climate/environment, racism, health care, voter rights, education. Ask them to think of current people who have done that, Colin Kaepernick, Women in the #MeToo movement, and others.

This is a way of creating activist groups by creating a sense of being an Insider, where they may have felt like an outsider trying to change things on their own.

How do we create new “insider” groups that will change history?

Ask students to work in pairs or in groups, on topics, issues that matter to them.

Ask them to research information on a topic: ie racism in education, sexism in IT careers, etc.

the environment: what it will take to change climate change...

The final project will be a poster session on making a change: informative posters created from collage materials, text, music, art work that illustrates how change can happen in the issue that they have researched. Point out that doing this work is creating new insider groups that can bring together athletes, singers, poets, movie makers, around one cause.



#### **4. Being an Insider:**

Have students write on their paper the following categories, leaving five or six lines between categories

Pre-school,

1<sup>st</sup> grade,

4<sup>th</sup> grade,

Middle school,

High School

Have them list when they felt like, or at the present time feel like, an **insider** beside each category.

**Ask students to read the poem from the Registry: [“Uncles” by Nikki Finney.](#)**

This is an example of a group of men, as she was growing up, who made her feel like an insider.

**Play Brenda Bell Brown video clip from the Registry** Voices that Guide Us

Are there consistent people in your life through the years so far, that have made you and make you now, feel like an Insider? Can you think of people in your family, or in your church, mosque or synagogue, or a community center, a coach of a team, a teacher, who helped you feel like an insider?

Write a word portrait of this person.

Draw a portrait of this person.

Interview this person about his or her life, and her memories of being an Insider.

#### **5. The/Arts and Insiders. Begin with the video by [Seitu Jones: The Community as a space of being an insider:](#)**

Play all three videos of Seitu Jones.

Many artists who are also activists build spaces where people can experience being an Insider. Seitu Jones, a visual artist does this. He created a mile-long table in his neighborhood and provided a meal for everyone who came. Watch the videos where he talks about his life and his belief in his art.

Ask students to name times when they have listened to music, visited a studio or museum, been part of a performance, a reading, a dance, a play that made them feel they were part of something.

Provide time for collaboration among students to create: a play, a poem, a short story together, a dance, a community experience, that could bring people together.

Let students play with ideas for at least an hour in smaller groups.

Combining music and poetry would be a way for students in both areas could work together on a joint performance.



Perhaps a children's book could be created and brought to an elementary school to read to the children.

**Look at the Registry video of [Brain Kasoro](#):** Reflection: Ask students to talk about what teachers have helped them become what they want to be, how have they done this? What challenges you to be your best in school? What parts of school make you feel like an insider?

**6. Ask the students to read the poem ["Praise Song For the Day."](#)**

This was read at the inauguration of Barack Obama. It was a time that many African Americans began to feel like insiders in the United States.

What other big events make you feel you are part of the country, your state, your school? How important is it to feel this way?

**7. Ask students: Have you ever done something that you know will set you apart?**

Have you decided not to do something your friends are doing, because it is wrong? What happened?

**Show the video clip from the Registry [Science Career Advice, Tolu Oyelowo](#).** Many girls (white and black and brown) do not want to be different. They do not want to go into science because they believe girls are not good at it, cannot do it, will not look "cool" spending time on their studies, math, science.

Research people who have been brave and challenged what people think they 'ought' to do, even though it made them unpopular or "on the outs" with their classmates. Look in newspapers for this, research on the web, look at the Registry for those who set themselves apart at great cost to make positive changes for others.

Use the Search the Registry" function and the category "Activist/Abolitionist" in the list of subjects and explore them. After reading about some of these people, explore the internet and your library to find out more about one person (they select) and their willingness to challenge the system to bring justice.

**8. Write a poem about being an Insider or an Outsider** in your community, school family. You do not have to read this or hand it in. It is for you. If you want to share it, please do so.