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# A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words

*Harnessing Visuals to Teach Black History*

ABSTRACT For many learners, knowledge of Black history is often restricted to the periods of American enslavement, the US Civil War, and the US Civil Rights Movement. Consequently, learners are rarely given opportunities to wrestle with accounts of Black history in other times and places, limiting their knowledge of Black history in its fullness. Despite this all-too-common curricular treatment, countless visuals related to the Black diaspora exist and offer untapped possibilities to enhance teaching and learning. Using exemplary visuals chronicling the Black experience, this article presents critical visual analysis strategies (i.e., Visual Thinking Strategies, See-Think-Wonder, Personal Responses Tour, and open-source materials from the National Archives and Records Administration and the Library of Congress) designed to strengthen learners' visual and historical literacies. The examples and approaches presented will also help equip and empower teachers to teach Black history to their students, providing a richer and more complete historical narrative. KEYWORDS Black history, visual teaching methods, K–12 education, social studies education

It was early in the semester in the social studies teaching methods course. The aim that day was to discuss and model for the pre-service K–12 teachers the power of visual strategies to engage learners. Using visuals such as Harvey Lindsley's portrait (ca. 1871–76) of Harriet Tubman and Augustus Washington's portrait (ca. 1846–47) of John Brown, the future teachers explored the See-Think-Wonder approach and Yenawine's Visual Thinking Strategies as means to help learners engage in critical analysis of images.[1] Additionally, the teaching candidates were prompted to consider how such practices might be used to teach Black history to their students.

The second component of the in-class activity that day was supported through a visual analysis of currency (see Fig. 1) from the short-lived Confederate States of America. The pre-service teachers expressed surprise, shock, and disappointment as they learned that the Confederacy showcased its most valued commodity—enslaved Black Americans—on its currency. One student commented: "I had no idea what Confederate currency looked like. Looking it up right before you shared it, my heart sank at the images displayed on each bill. I wish we, as a society, were further away from some of the ideals people from that era held."

1. Project Zero, *A Thinking Routine from Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education: See, Think, Wonder, President and Fellows of Harvard College and Project Zero*, 2022, https://pz.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/See%20Think%20Wonder_3.pdf; Philip Yenawine, *Visual Thinking Strategies: Using Art to Deepen Learning Across School Disciplines* (Harvard Education Press, 2013).

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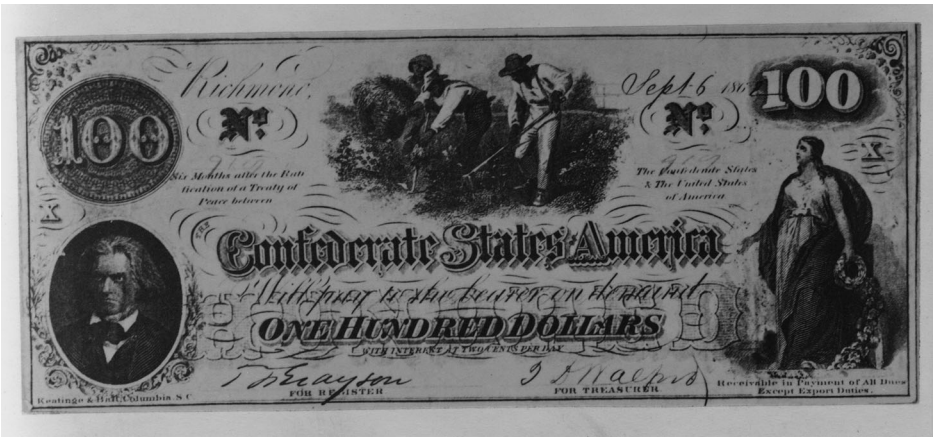



FIGURE 1. "Confederate One Hundred Dollar Bill" (ca. 1875). Image courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division (reproduction number LC-USZ62-125842), www.loc.gov/item/00650157.

The sentiments of our students bear witness to the proverb, "a picture is worth a thousand words," and illustrate how using visuals to teach Black history holds the potential to make the inconceivable fathomable for students. Although visuals have long been used by educators to teach about the past and present, they have been used mostly as enhancements and ancillaries to complement instruction. But we argue that visuals should not be mere props in the classroom. Rather, their use should be part of an intentional and thoughtfully crafted instructional approach that is grounded in educational research and best practice. As such, we argue that visuals serve as powerful tools to engage learners and to teach Black history. In the ensuing pages, we present teaching ideas, best practices, and cautions in harnessing visuals to teach Black history in the K–12 classroom.

## BLACK HISTORY

Nearly a century ago, Dr. Carter G. Woodson—credited as "The Father of Black History"—introduced the concept of Negro History Week (the precursor to Black History Month) to elevate the unsung experiences and contributions of people of African ancestry in the historical canon. Despite Woodson's efforts and those of other scholars, K–12 students still fail to receive sufficient knowledge of the experiences and contributions of the Black diaspora despite research indicating that exposure to this curricular knowledge is beneficial to the academic growth and development of students.[2] Out of the approaches

2. Worokya Duncan, "The Effects of Africentric United States History Curriculum on Black Student Achievement," *Contemporary Issues in Education Research* 5, no. 2 (2012): 91–96; Jarvis R. Givens, "'There Would Be No Lynching If It Did Not Start in the Schoolroom': Carter G. Woodson and the Occasion of Negro History Week, 1926–1950," *American Educational Research Journal* 56, no. 4 (2019): 1457–94, https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831218818454; Patrice P. Grimes, "Fulfilling the Promise: African American Educators Teach for Democracy in Jim Crow's South," *Teacher Education Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (2010): 35–52, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23479297.

advocated to teach Black history, visuals hold great—yet vastly untapped—promise as effective tools for engaging K–12 learners in historical knowledge of the Black diaspora.

## VISUAL STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING ETHNIC STUDIES

Visuals are powerful tools for engaging learners in inquiry and critical thinking.[3] When harnessed as teaching tools, visuals encourage students to make cross-disciplinary connections, deepen their respect for diverse perspectives, and enhance student learning. But in order for these learning gains to occur, the teacher must employ research-based pedagogical strategies and other available resources to drive instruction and inquiry. This article explores three visual strategies—Visual Thinking Strategies, See-Think-Wonder, and Personal Responses Tour—and two open-source resources from the National Archives and Record Administration and the Library of Congress that we have found to hold great promise for teaching Ethnic Studies in general and, in our estimation, Black history in particular. Each of these strategies and resources are described ahead, with illustrative examples for teaching Black history to follow.

## VISUAL THINKING STRATEGIES

Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) is an approach for analyzing works of art and other visuals that foster learners' critical thinking, communication, and visual literacy.[4] This student-centered approach calls on teachers to facilitate student inquiry around visuals through critical engagement using the following prompts: What is going on in this picture? What do you see that makes you say that? What more can you find?[5] Vital to this approach is the selection of appropriate and relevant visuals to activate students' prior knowledge and curiosity, providing time for silent observation of visuals, teacher facilitation of VTS prompts, and visual paraphrasing of student responses.[6] Through the facilitated critical engagement and discussion, teachers create spaces that encourage active learning, critical reflection, and perspective-taking.

## SEE-THINK-WONDER

From Harvard's Project Zero, the See-Think-Wonder approach invites learners to engage in critical thinking through exploration and reflection on the following prompts: What do you *see*? What do you *think* about that? What does it make you *wonder*? The See-Think-Wonder approach encourages students to activate prior knowledge, make

3. Bárbara C. Cruz et al., "'I Have Never Witnessed Students So Engaged': The Art of Democracy in Schools," *Art Education* 68, no. 6 (2015): 9–15.

4. Yenawine, *Visual Thinking Strategies*.

5. Philip Yenawine, "Theory into Practice: The Visual Thinking Strategies," paper presented at Aesthetic and Art Education: A Transdisciplinary Approach, Lisbon, Portugal, 27–29 September 1999.

6. Dabney Hailey et al., "Understanding Visual Literacy: The Visual Thinking Strategies Approach," in *Essentials of Teaching and Integrating Visual and Media Literacy: Visualizing Learning*, ed. Danilo M. Baylen and Adriana D'Alba (Springer, 2015), 49–73.

inferences, and connect deeply with the knowledge to be learned.[7] This approach can be used to analyze charts, videos, artwork, and artifacts.[8] When used to analyze artwork and other visuals, students engage in scaffolded examination, gaining deeper insights with each prompt.

## OPEN-SOURCE MATERIALS

The National Archives and Records Administration's (NARA) *Analyze Artwork* handout is freely accessible, can be modified for different age ranges and language levels, and allows students to analyze artworks and other visuals through a series of guiding questions.[9] Students analyze visuals at increasingly complex levels, beginning their analyses of visuals by reflecting on what they see and then moving into deeper analyses by considering individual components, the historical context, and the artist's intention. In short, this handout allows for meaningful engagement with visuals and introduces students to the idea of artwork as historical evidence.

Similarly, the Library of Congress (LOC) offers the tool *Teacher's Guide: Analyzing Photographs & Prints*, which is designed to facilitate observation, reflection, and questioning through prompts (e.g., "Why do you think this image was made?" and "What's missing from this image?"). Students are also invited to identify questions to guide further investigation and to develop a research strategy to answer their questions. Like NARA's *Analyze Artwork* handout (freely available for elementary and secondary learners, in English and Spanish; see appendix A), LOC's *Analyzing Photographs & Prints* handout (freely available, see appendix B) provides students with critical engagement with and reflection on visuals.

## PERSONAL RESPONSES TOUR

Finally, museum education and medical education scholars have found the Personal Responses Tour (PRT) method to be an effective visual analysis protocol to help cultivate empathy, reflection, and perspective consciousness among museum professionals and medical students.[10] The strategy can easily be adapted for use with K–12 learners and in teacher professional development. First, the participants are provided with a facilitator-created prompt to navigate the museum (drawn at random upon arrival). These prompts

7. Shari Tishman and Patricia Palmer, "Visible Thinking," *Leadership Compass* 2, no.4 (2005): 1–3, https://schoolofeducators.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/VT_LeadershipCompass-1.pdf.

8. Project Zero, *Thinking Routine*.

9. The *Analyze Artwork* handout was created by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). It is available in English and Spanish. The handout has also been modified to accommodate learners at the elementary and secondary levels. For secondary level, see appendix A; for novices, https://www.archives.gov/files/education/lessons/document-analysis/english/analyze-artwork-novice.pdf; for intermediates, https://www.archives.gov/files/education/lessons/document-analysis/english/analyze-artwork-intermediate.pdf.

10. Eva Gaufberg and Ray Williams, "Reflection in a Museum Setting: The Personal Responses Tour," *Journal of Graduate Medical Education* 3, no. 4 (2011): 546–49, http://dx.doi.org/10.4300/JGME-D-11-00036.1; Margot Kelly-Hedrick et al., "The Online 'Personal Responses Tour': Adapting an Art Museum–Based Activity for a Virtual Setting," *Academic Psychiatry* 46 (2022): 510–14, https://doi.org/10.1007/s40596-021-01505-z.

are designed to evoke an emotional response in participants. For example, participants might be prompted to find a work of art that reminds them of their childhood and to think about the reasons for their choice. Next, participants locate an artwork that resonates with their prompt. Then, they share their prompt and selected artwork with a peer, taking turns sharing in pairs. Finally, participants are reconvened to share their prompts, artwork, and reflections with peers in a whole-group setting, with the teacher serving as the facilitator. We have used PRT with both pre- and in-service teachers very successfully. They, in turn, have adapted the strategy for their own K–12 students, reporting success in promoting critical thinking skills, visual literacy, and intellectual curiosity and discovery among their learners.

## VISUAL STRATEGIES AND RESOURCES TO TEACH BLACK HISTORY

For many learners, their knowledge of Black history is restricted to the periods of American enslavement, the US Civil War, and the US Civil Rights Movement. Rarely are learners of any level given opportunities to wrestle with accounts of Black history that fall outside of the purview of these periods. Consequently, learners are often left with superficial understandings of Black history that fail to fully account for moments of triumph, tragedy, and progress in the experiences of Black peoples across space and time. Further, waves of recently proposed and implemented state and national legislative curricular changes have caused many educators to feel fearful and stifled when teaching Black history. Thus, using the teaching approaches described previously, we offer the following historical visuals and related teaching ideas to deepen and broaden the scope of Black history offered to learners anchored in state-approved teaching standards. Finally, we acknowledge that the images curated for this article are nowhere near exhaustive of the Black diaspora. Yet, they represent a range of Black studies topics covered in social studies / history courses at the K–12 levels. As such, we recognize that readers of this K–12 focused section of the journal are likely familiar with the historical topics covered in this article and invite them to consider our recommendations as supplemental suggestions to enrich their instructional practices.

### Teaching Idea #1: See-Think-Wonder Approach

*Topic: Africa's Great Civilizations* Knowledge of contemporary Africa and ancient African civilizations is often riddled with misrepresentations and stereotypes (e.g., uncivilized, poor, and uneducated). For instance, despite the abundance of natural resources throughout the continent, many are surprised to learn that Mansa Musa, emperor of the Mali Empire (ca. 1312–37), is widely credited as one of history's wealthiest people. To demystify Africa for students and introduce them to African civilizations, project the Catalan Atlas map featuring Mansa Musa (Fig. 2). Have students analyze the image using the See-Think-Wonder approach with the prompts listed below:

1. What do you *see*?
2. What do you *think* about that?
3. What does it make you *wonder*?

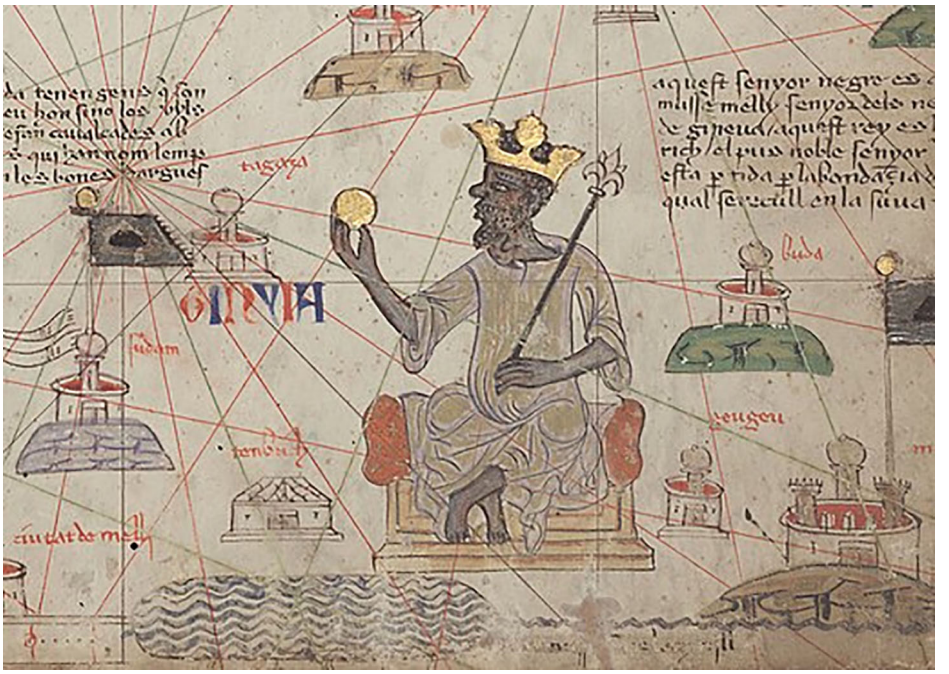


FIGURE 2. Abraham Cresques (1375). Detail from the *Catalan Atlas*, sheet 6, showing Mansa Musa. Image courtesy of Bibliothèque nationale de France, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Catalan_Atlas_BNF_Sheet_6_Mansa_Musa.jpg.

This activity can serve as an effective "hook" to pique students' interest in the forthcoming lesson. After students are given ample time to examine the image of Mansa Musa using the See-Think-Wonder prompts, provide students with background knowledge of Mansa Musa. Have students locate modern-day Mali and compare it with the scope of the Mali Empire during the 14th century. Additionally, have students compare Mansa Musa's leadership style with that of another leader, either one of his contemporaries or a leader of the modern era.

*Topic: Civil Rights in the 20th Century* The US Civil Rights Movement is a common area of Black history taught in schools. However, accounts that move beyond Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr. are far less common. To help expand commonly taught accounts of the Civil Rights Movement, teachers can emphasize the efforts of Claudette Colvin, E. D. Nixon, and Jo Ann Gibson Robinson during coverage of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Project the image of Robinson (1912–92) (Fig. 3), former professor of English at Alabama State College and civil rights figure in Montgomery, Alabama.[11] Have students examine the photograph using the See-Think-Wonder prompts:

11. Alabama State College is now known as Alabama State University.




FIGURE 3. Montgomery County, Alabama, Sheriff's Department (1956). Jo Ann Gibson Robinson. Image courtesy of Digital Library of Georgia, https://crdl.usg.edu/record/smokinggun_hotcrm_1103052mmugs24.

1. What do you *see*?
2. What do you *think* about that?
3. What does it make you *wonder*?

At the conclusion of the photo analysis, provide students with access to Robinson's *Don't Ride the Bus* leaflet.[12] This primary source is ideal to deepen and expand common understandings of the Montgomery Bus Boycott by highlighting the efforts of Robinson and the 2 March 1955 arrest of Colvin—nine months before the December arrest of Parks. After having learned about these other events leading up to the boycott, students can conduct additional research and create leaflets of their own that either provide additional narratives of the era or tackle modern-day injustices.

### Teaching Idea #2: Visual Thinking Strategies

*Topic: The Peculiar Institution* The institution of enslavement in the United States was unquestionably a brutal system. Enslaved people of African ancestry had "no rights that the White man was bound to respect."[13] Therefore, the enslaved were regularly subjected to random fits of rage, acts of violence, terror, and abuse at the hands of their enslavers. Additionally, Black family units were undermined, as enslaved children learned that obedience to their enslavers superseded obedience to their parents.[14] Further, the lives of enslaved women were especially constricted and vulnerable as they were regularly the targets of sexual violence.[15] Enslaved people also endured the separation of their families, labor exploitation, having little legal recourse—all in a system that was codified to ensure and perpetuate their less-than-human status. To help learners gain insight into this heinous institution, have them reflect on *The Parting "Buy us too"* (Fig. 4) using the VTS method. VTS calls on participants to reflect on the following questions:

1. What is going on in this picture?
2. What do you see that makes you say that?
3. What more can you find?

It is important to serve as a neutral facilitator, not providing evaluative feedback on students' responses; this promotes more divergent and creative student thinking. After students are given time to engage with the image and the VTS prompts, conduct a debriefing that provides students with knowledge of the ways in which Black Americans suffered under enslavement but also the ways in which they rebelled against the system both in

12. Conclusion resource: Historical Thinking Matters, "Robinson on the boycott leaflet campaign," excerpt from Jo Ann Robinson's memoir, *The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Women Who Started It*, ed. David J. Garrow (University of Tennessee Press, 1987), 45–47, https://historicalthinkingmatters.org/rosaparks/1/sources/21/fulltext/index.html.

13. Dred Scott v. Sandford, 60 U.S. 393 (1856), https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/60/393.

14. Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself* (Penguin Classics, 1861).

15. Stephanie M. H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (W. W. Norton, 1985).




FIGURE 4. Henry Louis Stephens (1863). *The Parting* "*Buy us too*." Image courtesy of The Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division (reproduction number LC-USZC4-2525 DLC), https://www.loc.gov/item/93503990.



FIGURE 5. James E. Taylor (1867). *Selling a Freedman to Pay His Fine at Monticello.* Image courtesy of State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory, https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/298731.

overt ways (e.g., Nat Turner's Insurrection of 1831, striking their enslavers, running away) and covert ways (e.g., feigning sickness, poisoning enslavers, breaking tools).

*Topic: Black Codes* Although Reconstruction was a transformative period of progress for Black Americans, this progress was short-lived due to backlash from some White Americans. For instance, Black codes—laws passed in the post–Civil War South to restrict the freedom of African Americans—were enacted to keep Black Americans in positions subservient to Whites. In Figure 5, James Taylor captures such practices with the selling of a Black man for failure to pay a fine. Using the VTS prompts, project Figure 5 on the board and invite students to reflect on the following:

1. What is going on in this picture?
2. What do you see that makes you say that?
3. What more can you find?

After facilitating the VTS prompts, provide students with additional examples of Black codes and have them reflect on the impact of such codes on the lives of free Black Americans in the post-enslavement era. We have found that VTS works best when

teachers select visual artworks that depict people, students are pushed to substantiate their observations with visual evidence, and teachers avoid offering praise during student discussion so that divergent perspectives are not stifled.

### Teaching Idea #3: Open-Source Materials

*Topic: The Reconstruction Era* The Reconstruction era was a brief but transformative period for the United States that does not always get the attention it merits in schools. For example, though students are likely aware of Reconstruction-era amendments, they are likely far less knowledgeable of the lives and experiences of Black men—some of whom were formerly enslaved—who served in Congress following the US Civil War. One notable Black congressman was Rep. Josiah Thomas Walls (1842–1905) of Florida (Fig. 6). Allow students to analyze this image using LOC's *Analyzing Photographs & Prints* handout (see appendix A).

Following the completion of LOC's *Analyzing Photographs & Prints* handout, engage students in a discussion of key events from the Reconstruction era. The discussion might include efforts by the Radical Republicans to ensure rights for Black Americans, the work of the Freedmen's Bureau, the growth of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), efforts of Black women to educate the formerly enslaved, Black parents' efforts in educating themselves and their children, the post-enslavement reunification of Black families, or the rise of sharecropping.

*Topic: The Harlem Renaissance* The late 1910s gave rise to the Harlem Renaissance, a resurgence of Black cultural expression birthed by "New Negroes"—Black artists, writers, intellectuals, and activists—whose pursuits affirmed and centered the experiences of Black folks. On this unapologetic centering of Black cultural expression, poet Langston Hughes commented, "If white people are pleased, we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too."[16] In other words, Black figures used their talents to promote race consciousness, the Black aesthetic, and Black liberation.

One such figure was Augusta Savage (1892–1962), a talented sculptor and arts educator noted for her use of art to elevate the experiences of Black folks and credited with cultivating the talents of Gwendolyn Night, Jacob Lawrence, and countless others. Students can be provided with the words to the Black National Anthem, "Lift Every Voice and Sing,"[17] playing a version of the song (e.g., Raheem DeVaughn or Jazmine Sullivan) while they listen and then be given the opportunity to provide their interpretation of the meaning of the song. Finally, using NARA's *Analyze Artwork* handout (see appendix B), students can examine Savage's complementary 1939 masterpiece *Lift Every Voice and Sing (The Harp)* (Fig. 7). After students work through the handout, provide them with additional knowledge of the Harlem Renaissance and its impact on the lives of all Americans and citizens of the world.

16. Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," *The Nation* 122 (23 June 1926): 692–93.

17. James Weldon Johnson, "Lift Every Voice and Sing," in *James Weldon Johnson: Complete Poems*, ed. Sondra Kathryn Wilson (Penguin, 2000).

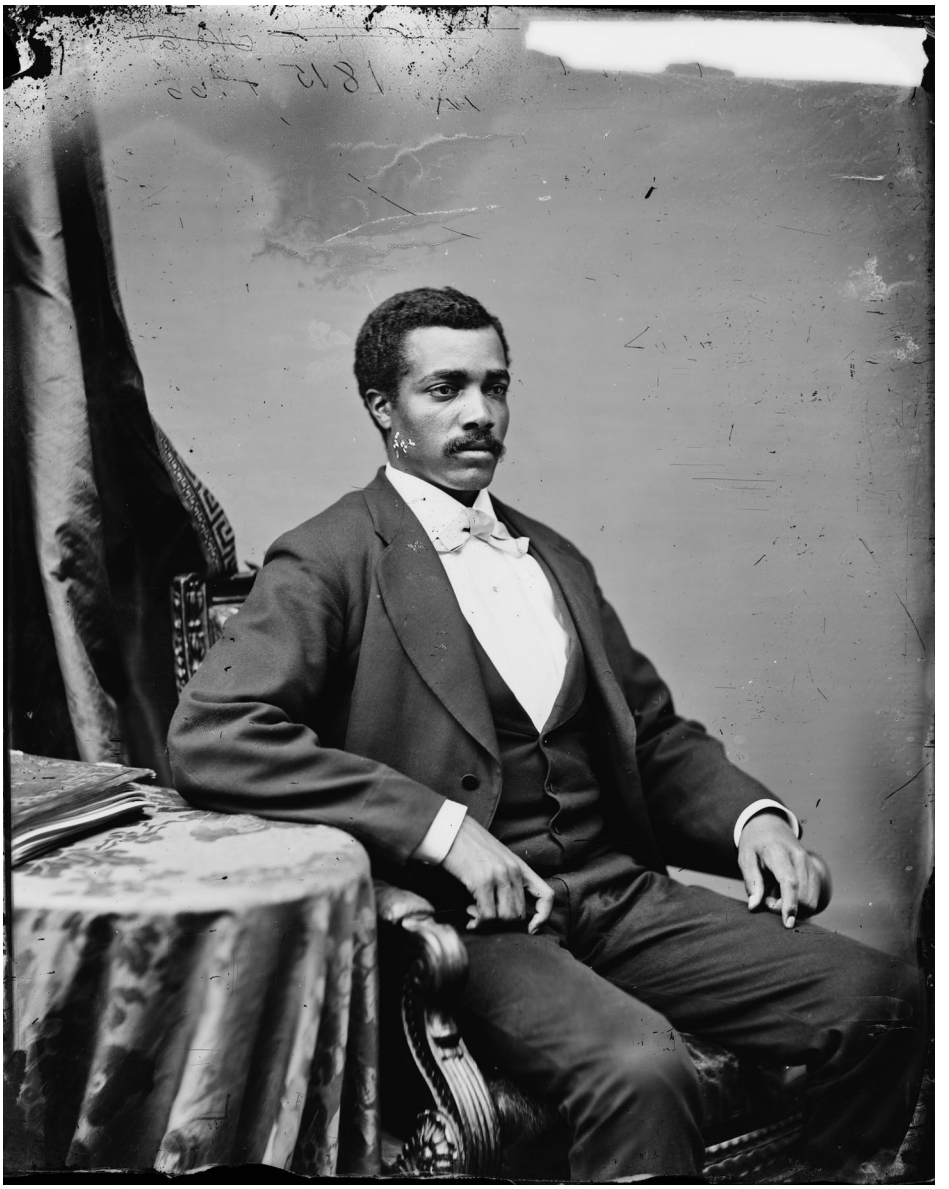


FIGURE 6. *Hon. Josiah Thomas Walls of Florida* (ca. 1860–75). Image courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division (reproduction number, LC-DIG-cwpbh-00552 DLC), https://www.loc.gov/item/2017894093.

### Teaching Idea #4: Personal Responses Tour

*Topic: The Harlem Renaissance* The PRT method encourages thoughtful reflection through engagement with works of art. First, participants are invited to randomly select prompts created by the facilitator. (It is helpful if the facilitator visits the collection ahead of time and creates prompts tailored to the exhibition.) Next, participants tour the museum for one artwork related to their prompts. Third, participants share their prompts and reflections with a partner. Finally, the facilitator conducts a debriefing session with all



FIGURE 7. Augusta Savage (1939). *Lift Every Voice and Sing (The Harp)*, reproduction. Image Courtesy of the Eartha M.M. White Collection. University of North Florida, Thomas G. Carpenter Library Special Collections and Archives. UNF Digital Commons, https://digitalcommons.unf.edu/eartha_images/24.

participants to enable them to share their prompts, artwork, and reflections in a whole group setting.

Ideally, PRTs are facilitated in museums; however, because we are aware that not all school districts facilitate field trips (due to funding limitations and other reasons), K–12 teachers might consider the following modifications for in-classroom use. Teachers can display color prints of works around the classroom or in the media center, creating

a "walking gallery." Students can be provided with PRT prompts (see sample prompts ahead) and participate in the activity in situ, whereby their historical and visual literacies are activated and enhanced through their reflections on the prompts and artworks. K–12 teachers could facilitate a PRT using visuals of or from the Harlem Renaissance. Potential visuals include *Midsummer Night in Harlem*, 1936 by Palmer C. Hayden; *Black Belt*, 1934 by Archibald J. Motley Jr.; *Lift Every Voice and Sing (The Harp)*, 1939 by Augusta Savage; *Couple, Harlem*, 1932 by James Van Der Zee; and *Mother and Daughter*, ca. 1927, and *Girl in Pink Dress*, ca. 1927, both by Laura Wheeler Waring. Sample prompts might include:

- Find a work of art that you would like to step into. Why would you want to be a part of that scene?
- Find a work of art that reminds you of a life-changing event in your life.
- Find a work of art that reminds you of joyful moments with those you love most.

In our work with K–12 learners and pre- and in-service social studies and art teachers, we have found the visual strategies and resources discussed in this article to be effective in fostering critical thinking, reflection, and collaboration among students. For example, during a recent workshop that employed the See-Think-Wonder approach to engage secondary learners in lesser-known figures of the civil rights era, we found that this approached helped make the invisible visible for students, with one student commenting that the lesson and visual teaching strategies "showed me that all of this actually happened and that everything said is not made up or false."

The session started with student reflections on Jo Ann Gibson Robinson's *Don't Ride the Bus* leaflet, which they were responsible for reading prior to class. Some students commented that they had familiarity with Claudette Colvin but were far less familiar with Robinson and shared their appreciation for learning about lesser-known historic figures of the civil rights era. This discussion was used to launch into our session titled The Long Road to Freedom: The Modern Civil Rights Movement. Like all good lessons, this lesson featured numerous visuals (e.g., posters from the Double V Campaign, Norman Rockwell's *The Problem We All Live With* (1964), and Jo Ann Gibson Robinson's arrest photograph (Fig. 3), among many others. During the opening segment of the lesson, students were prompted to engage with a Double V Campaign poster using the See-Think-Wonder approach. After students had time to reflect on the prompts independently, they shared their responses in pairs and finally in a whole-group setting. As a result, students gained a greater appreciation of efforts to secure equal rights for Black Americans beyond what most students are commonly taught. Moreover, by tapping into students' visual literacies, this exercise allowed students to deepen their contextualization of the Civil Rights Movement.

Likewise, through a collaborative university–school partnership among our College of Education, the Institute for Research in Art at the University of South Florida's Contemporary Art Museum, and the public schools in our district, we host in-service social studies and art teachers biannually and provide them with innovative arts-based teaching

approaches to engage secondary learners in explorations of pressing societal issues. During the fall 2024 workshop, we engaged participants by facilitating a Personal Responses Tour (PRT) in the museum's gallery. The PRT strategy capitalizes on "the potential of the art museum as an environment that supports reflection, invites personal connections, and builds community."[18]

First, we provided participants with an overview of the PRT steps and distributed prompts tailored to the exhibition. Examples include:

- Find a work of art that inspires you. Think about the reasons for your choice.
- Find a work of art that could be used to foster intercultural understanding.
- Find a work of art that raises more questions than it answers. What questions would you pose to the artist about this work?

Next, participants were directed to explore the museum, searching for one artwork related to their prompt. They then had the opportunity to share with a partner their prompt, the artwork chosen, and their reflections. Finally, we engaged participants in a debriefing session. As a result of their experience, many participants expressed their enthusiasm to replicate the PRT with their students. They noted its effectiveness in facilitating critical thinking and subsequent conversations around social issues.

## BEST PRACTICES

As we have shown, visuals are powerful windows to the past and provide students with the means to engage and develop their visual and historical literacies. When harnessed by teachers as teaching tools, the research-based visual strategies and resources described in this article offer pedagogical approaches to enhance teaching and learning. To strengthen the use of visuals in the classroom, we offer the following best practices to K–12 teachers:

1. *State-approved curriculum standards*: Link the visual strategies and resources presented in this article to state-approved social studies and visual standards.
2. *Age-appropriate*: Curate age-appropriate works of art and other visuals that are easily accessible and relate to state-approved standards.[19]
3. *Primary sources and archival materials*: Enhance the use of visuals in the classroom with related primary sources and other archival materials.
4. *Trust your students*: Often, as teachers, we assume that students are too immature or inexperienced to wrestle with complex topics and materials—and then they astonish us with their insights.
5. *Diversity matters*: Our world is increasingly diverse and interconnected. As a result, our students and world benefit when students are equipped with knowledge of diverse experiences. James A. Banks reminds us that our inability

18. Ray Williams, "Honoring the Personal Response: A Strategy for Serving the Public Hunger for Connection," *Journal of Museum Education* 35, no. 1 (2010): 94.

19. See appendix C for examples.

to work with those from different backgrounds or belief systems than our own ultimately inhibits our ability to solve the world's most pressing problems.[20] Thus, we encourage teachers to select diverse mediums, artists (e.g., women and men), and topics to ensure diverse representation in their use of visual strategies and resources.

6. *Professional development*: Embrace professional development opportunities for course refreshers and intellectual exchanges with colleagues. We have found that such opportunities encourage teacher empowerment, collaboration among colleagues, and increased content knowledge.

## REFLECTIONS AND CAVEATS

In our politically divided times, some teachers might shy away from deeply and meaningfully exploring Black history and the visual strategies and resources presented in this article, fearing discord in the classroom or backlash from parents. Yet, we have found that when such approaches are effectively integrated into teaching as part of a comprehensive and inclusive social studies education, it can be enlightening for both students and their teachers. Indeed, in a recent workshop of in-service elementary school art teachers, where socially conscious art was used to teach Black history, we found that our workshop participants felt empowered to pursue or continue infusing Black history in their teaching, with one participant commenting that she was reminded that "we can *still* talk about important issues even considering the silencing of teacher voices." Thus, we offer these parting reflections and caveats:

BLACK HISTORY IS EXPANSIVE Black history does not start with enslavement in the Americas. Consequently, students deserve engagement with Black history that deepens and broadens their knowledge and understanding of the Black diaspora across space and time.[21]

TRIUMPH, TRAGEDY, AND PROGRESS ARE CENTRAL TO THE EXPERIENCES OF BLACK FOLKS Though Black history is replete with tragic accounts, it is also rich in narratives of triumph and progress. Students should be exposed to diverse accounts of the experiences of the Black diaspora through visuals, given opportunities to consider the contributions and successes of Black peoples throughout history.

BLACK WOMEN'S HISTORY IS FOUNDATIONAL TO BLACK HISTORY No discussion of Black history can be complete without the inclusion of Black women. Black women have served as the backbone of movements for change across space and time. They have also suffered (and continue to struggle) with intersectional markers of marginality (e.g., misogynoir).[22] Many artworks by Black female artists, in particular, have been lost to history due to their

20. James A. Banks, "Teaching for Social Justice, Diversity, and Citizenship in a Global World," *Educational Forum* 68, no. 4 (2004): 296–305, https://doi.org/10.1080/00131720408984645.

21. LaGarrett J. King, "Black History Is Not American History: Toward a Framework of Black Historical Consciousness," *Social Education* 84, no. 6 (2020): 335–41.

22. Moya Bailey and Trudy, "On Misogynoir: Citation, Erasure, and Plagiarism," *Feminist Media Studies* 18, no. 4 (2018): 762–68, https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2018.1447395.

double confrontations with racial and gender discrimination. As a result, their surviving, collective oeuvre makes them even more precious and important to include in any Ethnic Studies course.

TEACHERS ARE NATION-BUILDERS AND CITIZEN-MAKERS As such, the strength and survival of nations across the globe require that teachers cultivate spaces in which students are given opportunities to think critically and engage in discourse with diverse groups of people. We agree with Doug Blandy that visual strategies and resources are ideal tools to equip students with these vital skills.[23]

## CONCLUSION

In these politically polarized times when education has come under fire from myriad sources, many teachers might hesitate to incorporate the curricular and instructional suggestions shared in this article. Yet, our experiences show that it is precisely these types of active learning and teaching practices that hold the power to deepen and broaden students' understandings of historical periods and to move our schools—and, by extension, our society—away from ideals and beliefs that divide to ideals and beliefs that unite.

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## APPENDIX A

Library of Congress
*Teacher's Guide: Analyzing Photographs & Prints*

TEACHER'S GUIDE
**ANALYZING PHOTOGRAPHS & PRINTS**




Guide students with the sample questions as they respond to the primary source. **Encourage them to go back and forth between the columns; there is no correct order.**

### OBSERVE

**Have students identify and note details.**

Sample Questions:

Describe what you see. · What do you notice first? · What people and objects are shown? · How are they arranged? · What is the physical setting? · What, if any, words do you see? · What other details can you see?

### REFLECT

**Encourage students to generate and test hypotheses about the image.**

Why do you think this image was made? · What's happening in the image? · When do you think it was made? · Who do you think was the audience for this image? · What tools were used to create this? · What can you learn from examining this image? · What's missing from this image? · If someone made this today, what would be different? · What would be the same?

### QUESTION

**Have students ask questions to lead to more observations and reflections.**

What do you wonder about...
who? · what? · when? · where? · why? · how?

### FURTHER INVESTIGATION

**Help students to identify questions appropriate for further investigation, and to develop a research strategy for finding answers.**

Sample Question: What more do you want to know, and how can you find out?

A few follow-up activity ideas:

*Beginning*
*Write a caption for the image.*

*Intermediate*
*Select an image. Predict what will happen one minute after the scene shown in the image. One hour after? Explain the reasoning behind your predictions.*

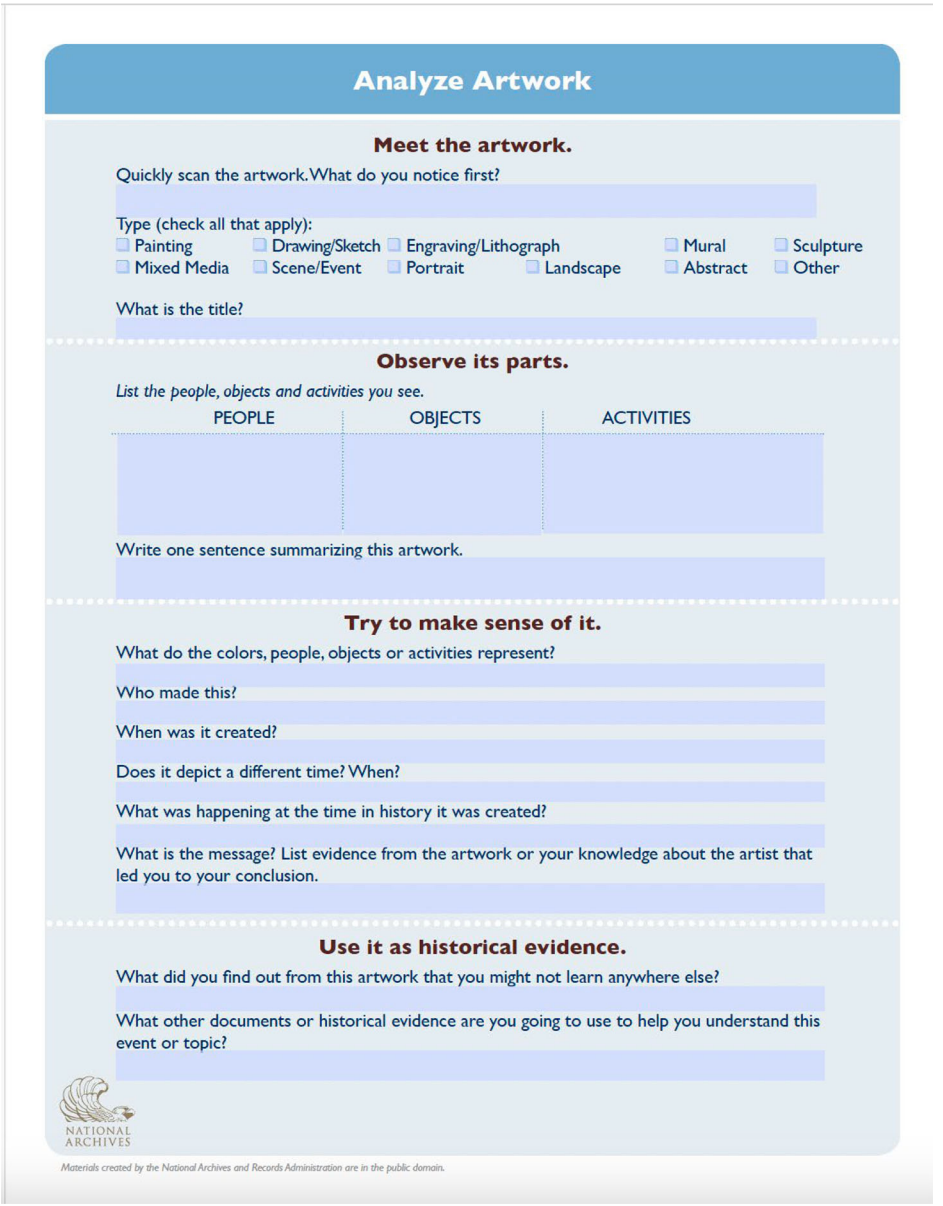
*Advanced*
*Have students expand or alter textbook or other printed explanations of history based on images they study.*

*For more tips on using primary sources, go to*
***http://www.loc.gov/teachers***

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS | LOC.gov/teachers

**APPENDIX B**

National Archives and Records Administration
*Analyze Artwork* Handout
Secondary Level



## Analyze Artwork

### Meet the artwork.

Quickly scan the artwork. What do you notice first?

Type (check all that apply):

☐ Painting ☐ Drawing/Sketch ☐ Engraving/Lithograph ☐ Mural ☐ Sculpture
☐ Mixed Media ☐ Scene/Event ☐ Portrait ☐ Landscape ☐ Abstract ☐ Other

What is the title?

### Observe its parts.

*List the people, objects and activities you see.*

| PEOPLE | OBJECTS | ACTIVITIES |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

Write one sentence summarizing this artwork.

### Try to make sense of it.

What do the colors, people, objects or activities represent?

Who made this?

When was it created?

Does it depict a different time? When?

What was happening at the time in history it was created?

What is the message? List evidence from the artwork or your knowledge about the artist that led you to your conclusion.

### Use it as historical evidence.

What did you find out from this artwork that you might not learn anywhere else?

What other documents or historical evidence are you going to use to help you understand this event or topic?

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

*Materials created by the National Archives and Records Administration are in the public domain.*

## APPENDIX C

### Curriculum Crosswalk

*Suggested Visuals to Teach Black History at the Elementary Level*

| Sample Curriculum Standards | Historical Focus | Artists and Artworks/Visuals |
|---|---|---|
| **Social Studies: Florida**<br>SS.4.A.5 Crisis of the Union: Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida<br>**Visual Arts: Florida**<br>VA.5.H.3.1: Discuss how skills learned through the analysis and art-making process are used to solve problems in non-art areas. | Reconstruction era in the United States | Henry Ossawa Tanner (1859–1937): *The Banjo Lesson* (1893), *The Thankful Poor* (1894) |
| **Social Studies: Massachusetts**<br>Grade 5, Topic 5: Slavery, the legacy of the Civil War, and the struggle for civil rights for all.<br>Content Standard 9: Explain how the 20th-century African American Civil Rights Movement served as a model for other movements for civil rights (e.g., the second phase of the women's movement in the 1960s and 1970s, the disability rights movement, the LGBTQ movement).<br>**Visual Arts: Florida**<br>VA.5.H.1.3: Identify and describe the importance a selected group or culture places on specific works of art. | Civil rights era in the United States | Mario Moore (1987–): *Bring Back Our Mighty Dream* (2020), *I Continue to Dream* (2020) |

**Curriculum Crosswalk**

*Suggested Visuals to Teach Black History at the Middle School Level*

| Sample Curriculum Standards | Historical Focus | Artists and Artworks/Visuals |
|---|---|---|
| **Social Studies: Florida**<br>SS.8.A.4.12: Examine the effects of the 1804 Haitian Revolution on the United States acquisition of the Louisiana Territory.<br>**Visual Arts: California**<br>8.VA:Cn11: Distinguish different ways art is used to represent, establish, reinforce, and reflect group identity. | Haitian Revolution | Jacob Lawrence (1917–2000): *The Birth of Toussaint* (1986), *General Toussaint* (1986) |
| **Social Studies: Massachusetts**<br>Grade 8, Topic 5: The constitution, amendments, and Supreme Court decisions<br>Content Standard 3: Analyze the Constitutional issues that caused the Civil War and led to the eventual expansion of the power of the federal government and individual civil rights.<br>**Visual Arts: Kentucky**<br>Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.<br>VA:Cn11.1.8: Distinguish different ways art is used to represent, establish, reinforce, and reflect group identity. | American Civil War | Mario Moore (1987–): *The Great Reckoning* (2020–21) |

**Curriculum Crosswalk**

*Suggested Visuals to Teach Black History at the Secondary Level*

| Sample Curriculum Standards | Historical Focus | Artists and Artworks/Visuals |
|---|---|---|
| **Social Studies: Florida**<br>SS.912.G.4.7: Use geographic terms and tools to explain cultural diffusion throughout places, regions, and the world.<br>**Visual Arts: Florida**<br>VA.912.H.2: The arts reflect and document cultural trends and historical events, and help explain how new directions in the arts have emerged. | Black Diasporic history, Afro-Latino history, Africans in the Americas, Africans across the globe, or Haitian history | Modesto Brocos (1852–1936): *The Redemption of Ham* (1895)<br>Renata Felinto (1978–): *Raymundo Manuel Querino* (2024)<br>Philomé Obin (1892–1986): *President Tiresias Sam Entering Cap-Haïtien* (1958) |
| **Social Studies: Florida**<br>SS.912.AA.3.10: Describe the Harlem Renaissance and examine contributions from African American artists, musicians, and writers and their lasting influence on American culture.<br>**Visual Arts: Florida**<br>VA.912.S.1: The arts are inherently experiential and actively engage learners in the process of creating, interpreting, and responding to art. | Harlem Renaissance | Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller (1877–1968): *Ethiopia Awakening* (1921) |
| **Social Studies: California**<br>11.10: Students analyze the development of federal civil rights and voting rights.<br>5: Discuss the diffusion of the civil rights movement of African Americans from the churches of the rural South and the urban | Jim Crow Era in the United States | Elizabeth Catlett (1915–2012): *In the fields . . .* (1946); *I have always worked hard in America* (1946–47) |

*(continued)*

| Sample Curriculum Standards | Historical Focus | Artists and Artworks/Visuals |
|---|---|---|
| North, including the resistance to racial desegregation in Little Rock and Birmingham, and how the advances influenced the agendas, strategies, and effectiveness of the quests of American Indians, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans for civil rights and equal opportunities.<br>**Visual Arts: Florida**<br>VA.912.C.3: The processes of critiquing works of art lead to development of critical-thinking skills transferable to other contexts. | | |

**Links to Resources Highlighting Black Art and Artists**

African American Museum of the Arts: www.africanmuseumdeland.org
Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture: www.ganttcenter.org
Kinsey Collection: www.thekinseycollection.com
Metropolitan Museum of Art's large-print exhibition catalog *The Harlem Renaissance and Transatlantic Modernism*: http://bit.ly/3JpDHDh
Museum of African American Art: www.maaala.org
Museum of African Diaspora: www.moadsf.org
Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Arts, Brooklyn: https://mocada.org
National Museum of African American History and Culture: https://nmaahc.si.edu
Smithsonian National Museum of African Art: https://africa.si.edu
Spelman College Museum of Fine Art: https://museum.spelman.edu
Studio Museum in Harlem: www.studiomuseum.org