

A Bronzeville Story

Lesson 2: Reader's Theater

Focus Questions

What was the Great Migration? Why did African Americans from the South choose to relocate to Chicago during the Great Migration? What contributions did African American migrants make to Chicago, both economically and culturally?

Core Understandings

Students will understand that the Great Migration brought over 500,000 African Americans to Chicago between 1916 and 1970. They will understand why African Americans left the rural South and what factors led them to relocate here. They will understand the impact new migrants had on Chicago as well as the opportunities and challenges they encountered here.

Knowledge

Students will know that the Great Migration was a significant historical event both locally and nationally. They will know how the Chicago neighborhood of Bronzeville evolved and what it was like to live there around 1949.

Skills

Students will use language arts skills to interpret the past and be able to discern fact from fiction. They will also gain an understanding of how works of art are produced.

Common Core ELA Standards

CCSSR1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
CCSSR3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

ISBE Social Science Standards

Goal 15: Understand economic systems, with an emphasis on the US.
Goal 16: Understand events, trends, individuals and movements shaping the history of Illinois, the US, and other nations.
Goal 17: Understand world geography and the effects of geography on society, with an emphasis on the US.
Goal 18: Understand social systems, with an emphasis on the US.

ISBE Fine Arts Standard

Goal 26: Through creating and performing, understand how works of art are produced.

In This Lesson

Through a reader's theater performance of *A Bronzeville Story*, students will make personal connections with history and better grasp the challenges and opportunities Penny and her family encountered in Chicago. The story elements of character, setting, dramatic tension, and resolution are addressed. This lesson was researched and written by Beatrice Quatrokro.



Activity

Cast student volunteers for a reader's theater performance of *A Bronzeville Story*.

Roles include:

Narrator

Penny

Cleet

Daddy (Luke)

Mama (Grace)

Uncle Obie

Lurlene

After the performance, lead the class through the reading-comprehension and critical-thinking questions that accompany *A Bronzeville Story*. <http://www.chicagohistory.org/greatchicagostories/bronzeville/reading.php>

If you have computer access in the classroom (or you can reserve your computer lab), have students explore the map interactive of *A Bronzeville Story*. Here they can view story locations including neighborhood homes, business, schools, churches, and nightclubs. <http://www.chicagohistory.org/greatchicagostories/site/storymap/index.html?story=9>

If you do not have computer access in the classroom, have students make a drawing of their favorite character or scene from the story, incorporating any details mentioned in the narrative. Add these to your bulletin-board display created in Lesson 1. This activity may also be assigned as a Home Connection.

Materials & Resources

- **Printouts of *A Bronzeville Story*:**
http://www.chicagohistory.org/greatchicagostories/pdf/story/A_Bronzeville_Story_by_Pamela_Dell.pdf
- ***A Bronzeville Story* discussion questions:**
<http://www.chicagohistory.org/greatchicagostories/bronzeville/reading.php>
- **Computer access for students in the classroom** (optional)
- **Drawing supplies** (optional)

Instructional Notes

Decide in advance how elaborate you would like the performance to be. Enhance the activity by bringing in 1940s-era costumes and/or accessories for the performers to wear. (Second-hand stores are a great resource for this.) See the Classroom Activities section of the *Great Chicago Stories* website for more tips on facilitating reader's theater.
<http://www.chicagohistory.org/greatchicagostories/classroom/reader.php>

Extension Activities

For contrast read another migration story such as *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Munoz Ryan, featuring migrant Mexican farm laborers in California during the Great Depression.