



Educator Watch Guide

# BLACK LIFE: UNTOLD STORIES

## EPISODE 5: “**Creation Insists**”

A look at the work of six Black Canadian artists, including Austin Clarke and Sylvia Hamilton

**BLACK LIFE**  
IMPACT FOUNDATION

Education Resource Development Partner:



CANADIAN MUSEUM OF HISTORY  
MUSÉE CANADIEN DE L'HISTOIRE

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# SERIES OVERVIEW

*Black Life: Untold Stories* is an eight-part documentary series that reframes the rich and complex histories of Black experiences in Canada, dispelling commonly accepted myths and celebrating the many, and often unrecognized, contributions of Black Canadians who helped to shape the country. Spanning more than 400 years marked with violence, racism, perseverance, and triumph, the series unveils a nuanced and unvarnished view of the lives and contributions of Black Canadians. The horrors of slavery and segregation are explored alongside illustrations of resistance, as well as the wonders and rewards of community, creativity, and resilience.



*Black Life: Untold Stories* employs intimate verité, expert testimonies, evocative recreations, rarely seen archival materials, and visually inspired storytelling to contextualize histories of Black Canadians for contemporary audiences, enabling an appreciation of the complexities of Canada's past. Eight Canadian directors bring their unique perspectives to considerations of slavery, Black empowerment, hip-hop, immigration, art and literature, sports, policing, and settlements, in separate episodes.

*Black Life: Untold Stories* is produced by Studio 112 in association with Northwood Entertainment, and Ugly Duck Productions. The executive producers are the Emmy®-award winning Leslie Norville; P.K. Subban, Miranda de Pencier, and Nelson George; Sandy Hudson serves as co-executive producer. Consulting producers are The Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Shadrach Kabango, Dr. Rinaldo Walcott, and Ravyn Wngz. For CBC, Sally Catto is General Manager, Entertainment, Factual, & Sports; Jennifer Dettman is Executive Director, Unscripted Content; Sandra Kleinfeld is Senior Director, Documentary; and Michelle McCree is Executive in Charge of Production, CBC Docs and The Passionate Eye. *Black Life: Untold Stories* is available to stream for free on [CBC GEM](#) and in other locations for educators listed on [www.blacklifeseries.com](http://www.blacklifeseries.com) including French language versions.

#### Production Partners





# MESSAGE TO EDUCATORS

The legacy of people of African descent is a critical component of Canadian history. From the first enslaved African who landed on Canadian soil, to the growth and development of Black communities across this nation, Black histories have been untold stories in need of recognition and study as they showcase and honour the lived experiences of Black Canadians.

In classrooms and schools across the country, the histories and contributions of people of African descent have been overlooked from the teaching and learning that takes place within educational spaces. Eurocentric curriculum is often positioned as the history of Canada, which signals to Black children, their families, and their communities that their stories are insignificant and not worthy of value.

In a highly influential [1990 essay](#), Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop uses the metaphor of mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors as she reinforces the significance of culturally relevant stories. In her work, she underscores the importance of a mirror where Black students see themselves reflected in the stories that are told in educational spaces. This enables Black students to experience a sense of belonging, affirmation, and positive identity development. The window provides a critical view to learn about Black experiences, lived realities, and intersecting identities. Importantly, this view is framed with an intentional focus to unlearn biases and stereotypes, question assumptions, and build new knowledge. The sliding glass door offers possibilities for everyone, as it signals a collective entry for deeper awareness, understanding, and insight. It provides an invitation to become part of the learning experience. *The Black Life: Untold Stories* episodes provide these opportunities for learning for students and educators across the country.

This episode watch guide was created to help bring the *Black Life: Untold Stories* documentary series into classroom spaces. It is meant to support educators in cultivating learning environments that focus on enhancing joy and affirming Black students' identities and lived experiences while developing in all students the ability to deepen their learning about Black Canadian history and present realities. When learning about Black histories and the often untold stories of Black people in Canada, there are times when the content might provoke intense emotional responses. Creating conditions in learning environments to effectively, skillfully, and creatively facilitate classroom activities and conversations is essential.

Strategies and resources are included in the guide to help educators confidently facilitate rich discussions about the often-overlooked histories of Black Canadians.

We want to begin by thanking you for engaging with this documentary content. It is our hope that these support materials will help you to create brave spaces in which learning thrives and students can develop the skills and ability to navigate the world around them. Our desire is that learners engage in critical conversations that build their understanding of current and historical contexts. This is a necessary step for students to contribute to a more compassionate and equitable world, now and in the future.

### In Solidarity,

**Watch Guide Creators:** Mandisa Bromfield, Rachael Brownell-Swain, Eboni David, Tina Jagdeo, Eileen James, Monique James, Phylicia McPherson, Channon Oyeniran, Nastassia Suban **Advisors:** David Austin, Afua Cooper, Karen Murray, Handel Wright. [See Credits](#)



# FACILITATION NOTES

This guide is intended to support educators and students in deep, critical engagement with the central themes, topics, and issues presented in “Creation Insists” It is imperative that both teachers and students honour the lived experiences of learners from African, Black, and Afri-Caribbean ancestry. Remain sensitive to the opinions and experiences of students from historically marginalized communities while you confront challenging material in order to create and maintain a brave classroom space.

## NOTICE OF SENSITIVE CONTENT

*“The Black Life: Untold Series includes conversations and imagery about a variety of potentially sensitive topics. We recommend that teachers preview the episode in full before screening it with their classes.*

## Curriculum Connections

The episode watch guides are designed to welcome teachers from all disciplines to engage with the material in any classroom context. These guides offer a universal bridge regardless of subject area as they do not explicitly connect to specific curricula expectations. The guides have been created to also differentiate between middle- (grades 7/8) and high-school learners (grades 9–12); however, all activities can be adapted to suit the needs of each student of each class. As versatile tools, these guides allow lessons to be injected with real-world relevance and perspectives. By embracing this adaptability, these guides pave the way for enriched, well-rounded educational experiences that foster deep understanding and critical thinking for all students across a range of curricula. Many voices carry the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and you are encouraged to use yours to join in the conversation.

## Using This Guide

This guide is full of activities and exercises for you to pick and choose from. You do not have to strictly follow along page by page. You might choose to use the selected quotes from the episode as discussion prompts, focus exclusively on covering the glossary of terms, or select one pre-viewing and post-viewing activity that interests and suits your class best. The learning is flexible and centres on the needs of your students and their wonderings and curiosity.



## Establishing the Space

A very strong sense of community needs to be co-developed among students before entering into conversations or discussions tied to Black histories. Prior to engaging with the material, it is imperative that you set the stage in your learning spaces for collaborative and meaningful conversation. While there are conversational norms that can and should be created, it is also important to:

1. Set clear expectations
2. Build trust
3. Foster inclusivity
4. Be proactive

These are key components to fostering educational spaces that support students' abilities to engage in collective thinking and grapple with new information and challenging topics. It is important to remember that students want to talk about critical issues that affect their lives and communities.

## Creating Conversational Norms

If we want students to become agents of their own learning, they must be able to not only think, reflect, and analyze independently, but also engage in critical conversations with each other. To achieve this aim, students have to be actively engaged in the collaborative process of creating conversational norms.

Before engaging with the discussion topics found in this guide, it is vitally important that all students and participants understand not only why it is important to engage in constructive dialogue, but also how to engage in that dialogue. Creating conversational norms with students is an excellent way to start any learning task. The following are a few examples of key components that you can build upon with your students:

5. **Practise active listening:** When listening to others, engage with your whole self. Give your full attention to the speaker and try listening to learn and understand. Remember: you do not need to respond right away.
6. **Use respectful language:** Use inclusive and affirming language that acknowledges and respects the perspectives of others.
7. **Be comfortable with vulnerability:** Acknowledge that certain topics might be challenging. Commit to supporting others as they share their stories and lived experiences. Remember that sharing is not easy; when possible, be open to sharing your own story as it relates to the conversation. Recognize that you must differentiate your personal anecdotes and opinions when considering the sustained histories and experiences being shared.

8. **Use empathy:** At all times remember that the lived experiences of others are valid and may differ from yours. Respect everyone's lived experience and intersecting identities.
9. **Lead with curiosity:** Ask questions to derive deeper meaning. Foster meaningful conversations by being open-minded and reflective.
10. **Seek to learn:** Enter these conversations with a willingness to learn in order to grow your own understanding of the topics discussed and how they affect you and the people around you.
11. **Honour multiple perspectives:** Everyone has a variety of perspectives and points of view. Remember, in many conversations there is not a right or wrong answer. Provide space for nuanced conversations to happen.
12. **Respect privacy:** If others in the space do not wish to share, be mindful of how certain topics may be affecting them. Conversations that happen in learning spaces should remain there, especially if people are sharing personal experiences or stories. Remember that to build trusting relationships, everyone must feel comfortable about sharing.

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### Suggested Conversation Openers After You Have Watched the Episode

What surprised you in this episode?

What is your new learning?

What thoughts and emotions did this episode ignite in you? Why?

What themes were present?

What person or event most interested you and why?

What is the importance and significance of this episode?

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More important tips, frequently asked questions, and go-further resources specially designed for educators new to this material are [available later in this guide.](#)



# EPISODE OVERVIEW

“Creation Insists” spotlights the work of six Black Canadian artists, some famous and some lesser known, and celebrates their enduring creativity, skill, accomplishments, and subject matter. East Coast painters Edward Mitchell Bannister and Edith Hester McDonald-Brown are profiled alongside writers M. NourbeSe Philip and Giller Prize–winner Austin Clarke and filmmakers Sylvia Hamilton and Clement Virgo. This episode showcases the inspiring journeys, struggles, and triumphs of these monumental artists and the contributions they have made to the cultural landscape in Canada and beyond. “Creation Insists” also looks at a controversial African art exhibit at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM), *Into the Heart of Africa*, with its decidedly colonial perspective, and the ensuing protests in Toronto.



# EPISODE INTERVIEWEES

**Cameron Bailey**

CEO, Toronto International Film Festival

**Dr. Kenneth Montague**

Art collector, The Wedge Collection

**Dr. David Chariandy**

Author

**Dr. Charmaine A. Nelson**

Provost professor, art history,  
University of Massachusetts Amherst

**Dr. George Elliott Clarke**

Poet and public intellectual

**Shawn Parker**

Descendant of Edith Hester  
McDonald-Brown

**Dr. Afua Cooper**

Historian and author

**M. NourbeSe Philip**

Poet and essayist

**Esi Edugyan**

Novelist

**Dr. Hyacinth Simpson**

Associate professor, Department  
of English, Toronto Metropolitan  
University

**Kelly Fyffe-Marshall**

Filmmaker and activist

**Gaëtane Verna**

Director, The Power Plant  
Contemporary Art Gallery (2012–  
2022)

**Sylvia Hamilton**

Filmmaker, writer, and artist

**Clement Virgo**

Screenwriter, producer, and director

**Adrienne R. Johnson**

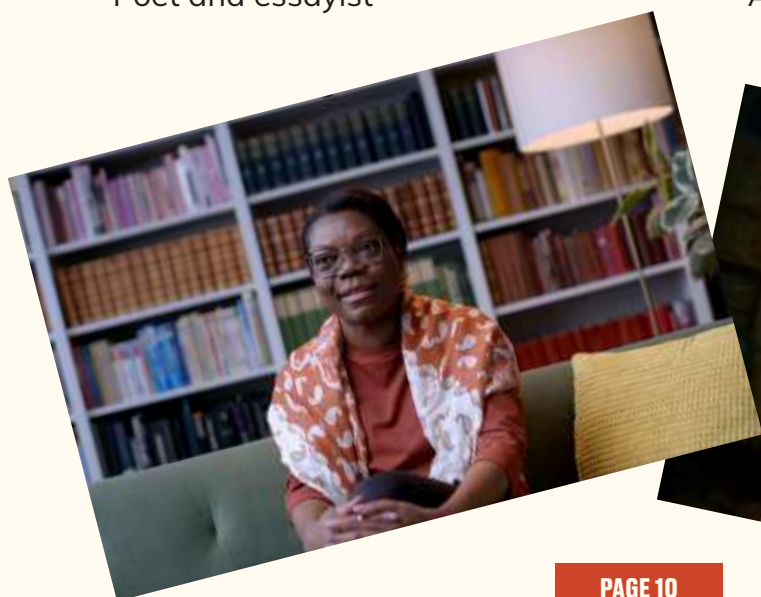
Art historian, McGill University

**Dr. Rinaldo Walcott**

Chair, Department of Africana and  
American Studies, University at  
Buffalo

**David Woods**

Artist, writer, and community leader





## DIRECTOR'S BIO

### Karen Chapman

Born to Guyanese parents, award-winning filmmaker Karen Chapman is committed to honing her craft as a storyteller. She is an alumnus of Emily Carr University, the Banff Centre, Women in the Director's Chair, the CaribbeanTales Incubator, the HotDocs Doc Accelerator, the TIFF Filmmaker Lab, and the 2020 TIFF Talent Accelerator. Chapman's CBC Short Doc *Walk Good* won Women in Film & TV – Toronto's 2017 Audience Choice Award at its annual showcase, and her short *Lessons Injustice* won the Best Screenplay Award the year after. In 2018, she completed the Cineplex Entertainment Film Program – Directors' Lab at the Canadian Film Centre and was named one of the "five filmmakers to watch" by *Playback* magazine. Chapman's love story *Essequibo* Rapture won the Caribbean Film Academy's international screenplay competition, and it received funding from the Bell Media/Harold Greenberg Fund's Shorts-to-Features Program. Her VR experience *They Should Be Flowers* premiered at Hot Docs and was nominated for a Canadian Screen Award for Best Immersive Non-Fiction. Her short *Measure* premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2019, where it won the Hollywood Foreign Press Association Award and residency at the 2020 Golden Globe Awards. Chapman is currently preparing to shoot her first feature film, *Village Keeper*, through Telefilm Canada's Talent to Watch Program.



# ACTIVITIES FOR GRADES 7 AND 8

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

**After completing these activities, students will be able to:**

- ✓ Understand the importance of the historical contributions of Black Canadians
- ✓ Engage with a variety of historical thinking concepts
- ✓ Manage discussions on a variety of topics relating to Black Canadian artists and authors



# PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITIES FOR GRADES 7 AND 8

Learn, Unlearn, Relearn

## MATERIALS NECESSARY

- Glossary of helpful terms
- Chart paper or printed handout (See Handouts Section)
- Writing utensils

## ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

Choose three concepts from the glossary to focus on as you view the “Creation Insists” episode of *Black Life*.

### BEFORE WATCHING

### AFTER WATCHING

Concept Name	Definition of concept in your own words	What have you learned in the past about this concept?	What misconceptions did you have that were dispelled?	What are some new ideas or questions you have about this issue?

# POST-VIEWING ACTIVITIES FOR GRADES 7 AND 8

## Four Corners

### MATERIALS NECESSARY

- Signs: Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly disagree
- List of statements connected to the documentary (see examples)

### ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

Generate discussion around some of the key concepts in the documentary using the “four corners” strategy. The teacher labels the four corners of the classroom with signs reading “strongly agree,” “agree,” “disagree,” and “strongly disagree.”

- Invite students to proceed to the corner that best represents their opinion on the shared statement. Students should share their opinion and listen to other opinions from their peers when in their chosen corner.
- After three to five minutes of small-group discussion, invite one representative from each group to share their opinion and examples or other types of proof to back up their thinking.
- Students might also want to respond to the points that other groups are making during the small-group discussion to promote active listening.
- The teacher or student leader, after hearing all the arguments, can ask students if there is a possible consensus, solution, or next steps that can come out of the discussion.

The teacher or student leader reads out a statement connected to the documentary content. Some sample statements are provided below, or you can generate your own:

Be it resolved that ROM officials should have apologized for the *Into the Heart of Africa* exhibit once the protests emerged.

Be it resolved that the ROM should have commissioned and/or purchased portraits of Black people before the 2021 portrait of celebrated author Austin Clarke.

Be it resolved that artist Edith Hester McDonald-Brown’s work from the 1800s should have been included in museums once people noticed its artistic merit.

Be it resolved that poet M. NourbeSe Philip’s style, in *Zong!* for example, should be considered high art even though it does not look or sound like the “traditional canon.”

# CULMINATING ACTIVITY FOR GRADES 7 AND 8

## MATERIALS NECESSARY

- Journal
- Writing utensils
- Blank paper or printout of chart (see Handouts section)

## ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

You are asked to examine the ROM decision to launch the *Into the Heart of Africa* exhibit from a variety of perspectives. Black scholars have argued that the show was colonial and racist. Museum directors and curators, at the time of launch, argued that the show had historical and artistic merit and was an example of fine curatorial work.

Rewatch the sections in the documentary that depict the controversy to summarize in a short paragraph what happened. Identify the sources of the conflict: i.e., person–person, person–self, person–environment.

This activity will help you to explore the perspective of one of the people in this conflict. What are the thoughts, feelings, and behaviours connected to the *Into the Heart of Africa* exhibit? Think about how you could explain the point of view of the person you choose. More than one student can investigate each of the participants in the controversy.

- |   |                  |                   |
|---|------------------|-------------------|
| • Scholar(s) – i.e., historians, art historians | • Museum curator | • Parents         |
|   | • Protesters     | • News reporters  |
| • Museum director                               | • Students       | • Police officers |

### Building Empathy

When we explore issues from multiple perspectives, it allows us to view the world in a new way. What are the thoughts, feelings, and behaviours connected to the *Into the Heart of Africa* exhibit?

### Talk

With a partner, discuss the ROM issue from the perspective of the constituent you chose.

**Make**

Fill out the following chart to get a sense of all the perspectives tied to a particular issue (see Handouts section for printable version).

Constituent Name	Thoughts	Feelings	Behaviours	Questions that they might raise

- Is there a way to build consensus about this conflict?
- Why did people have to protest and put themselves in harm's way in order to be heard?
- What are your thoughts on the ROM's statement and admission that the exhibit was unintentionally but still racist 10 years later?
- What has the ROM done since to expand the presence of the Canadian Black experience? What have other Canadian cultural institutions done to amplify the voices of Black artists?



# EXTENSION ACTIVITY FOR GRADES 7 AND 8

## MATERIALS NECESSARY

- Journal
- Writing utensils
- Access to research materials on Canadian artists

## ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

In rewatching this episode, can you investigate to learn more about one of these Canadian artists? Consider answering the following questions in your paragraph write-up.

- Why is it important that their story is told?
- What about their work was courageous?
- How did they make a contribution to their specific field in the arts?

Edward Mitchell Bannister

Edith Hester McDonald-Brown

Jennifer Hodges

Sylvia Hamilton

Austin Clarke

M. NourbeSe Philip

Trey Anthony

Neville Clarke

Kelly Fyffe-Marshall

David Chariandy

Once you have completed your answers, share ideas with a peer about why this person is courageous and survived systemic racism. Refer to the glossary for definitions of terms that might help you during your paragraph write-up.





# ACTIVITIES FOR GRADES 9 TO 12

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

**After completing these activities, students will be able to:**

- ✓ Interpret and analyze media to help develop an understanding of Black Canadian history
- ✓ Use a variety of methods to engage in conversation about Black Canadian history
- ✓ Manage discussions on a variety of topics related to Black Canadian artists.

# PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITIES FOR GRADES 9 TO 12

## Creating an Anticipation Guide

### MATERIALS NECESSARY

- Episode summary text
- Writing utensils
- Markers
- Paper
- Chart paper

### ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

As a class, post or read the summary of the episode:

“Creation Insists” spotlights the work of six Black Canadian artists, some famous and some lesser known, and celebrates their enduring creativity, skill, accomplishments, and subject matter. East Coast painters Edward Mitchell Bannister and Edith Hester McDonald-Brown are profiled alongside writers M. NourbeSe Philip and Giller Prize–winner Austin Clarke and filmmakers Sylvia Hamilton and Clement Virgo. This episode showcases the inspiring journeys, struggles, and triumphs of these monumental artists and the contributions they have made to the cultural landscape in Canada and beyond. “Creation Insists” also looks at the controversial African art exhibit at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM), *Into the Heart of Africa*, with its decidedly colonial perspective, and the ensuing protests in Toronto.

Once students have read and re-read the summary, as a group create a list of five to eight themes that might arise while watching this episode. Allow the class to generate some themes, but offer the following as needed:

Allyship	Power	Dominant narrative
Compassion	Prejudice and bias	Authoring your own story
Excellence: role models, mentoring, icons	Privilege	Black erasure
Joy and resilience	Stereotypes and misconceptions	Black stories are Canadian stories
Legacy and traditions	Systems thinking	White gaze
Intersectionality	Discrimination	Colonization

From those themes, have students select four to six that will then become statements.

e.g.: “Black artists and authors have often been excluded from the literary and artistic canon.”

Once you have created the statements, give each student a sheet of paper and have them make the following chart (or use the printable version in the Handouts section):

Before Viewing		Statement	After Viewing	
Agree	Disagree		Agree	Disagree

Each student will write down the statements they created (see facilitator’s notes for statements that are potentially harmful/hurtful and suggestions on how to redirect should the need arise) and decide if they agree or disagree with them.

Once viewing begins, have them fold over the “before viewing” columns.

Modification: If you feel as though the students in the room will not be able to create statements or complete this activity for any reason, a modified version that can be kept personal is also an option.

Students will read the episode summary and individually reflect on how they might feel given what they might confront in the episode. Have students copy and complete this chart (or use the printable version in the Handouts section of this guide):

What might I see/hear	How I feel about it	Questions I may have	Answers from the viewing
e.g.: I might hear about forms of discrimination based on race or ethnicity	e.g.: This makes me feel uncomfortable because I don’t like hearing about things I can’t control.	Why do systems discriminate against people?	

Have them keep it with them while watching to be able to jot answers down. As a follow-up, you might collect papers and use the questions generated as a way to gather the learning in the room via discussion.



# POST-VIEWING ACTIVITIES FOR GRADES 9 TO 12

## Snowball Discussion - Whole Class

### NOTES TO TEACHERS

This activity gives students an opportunity to respond to discussion prompts through written reflections and have those reflections shared in a whole-group setting.

Remind students that using this activity to anonymously write comments that are hateful, hurtful, or harmful is not acceptable. (Refer to Facilitator's Notes). As the teacher, consider vetting the snowball statements prior to reading them out to the group. As the comments are being read out, allow time for organic conversation to develop. If there are questions that arise in the responses and the collective wants to openly discuss, allow time for that to take place.

### MATERIALS NECESSARY

- Three prompts
- Pieces of paper
- Markers

### ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

Have the class sit in a conversation circle. Provide them with the first discussion prompt.

Prompt	
1	"Artistic empowerment": Many Black artists have used their creative talents to address themes of identity, empowerment, and social justice. Think back to the episode you watched and recall the ways in which the artists or authors used their craft to challenge stereotypes, inspire change, or celebrate resilience within the Black community. What examples can you remember?
2	How did this documentary episode deepen your understanding of the contributions of Black creators to Canadian culture? Discuss any of the artists, filmmakers, or authors who resonate with you and explain the impact of their work on your perspective.
3	What is the importance of diverse representation in the arts, and how did this documentary episode influence your appreciation for underrepresented voices in the creative realm?
4	Think about other Black artists, not showcased in the episode, who have influenced you. How and why?

Students will then respond to the prompt on one piece of paper, crumple their responses, and throw them into the middle of the circle. Once everyone has had a chance to respond, each person goes into the middle of the circle and selects a response that is not their own. One at a time, the responses are read to the group.

## Modified Wise Council

### NOTES TO TEACHERS

This modified version of a coaching conversation uses the “thoughts, questions, and epiphanies” model in a setting that is structured and supported. Remind students of conversation and community norms prior to engaging in this or any group conversations.

### MATERIALS NECESSARY

- Paper
- Writing utensils

### ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

- Place students into groups of four. Make sure that they have enough space to be heard, but also to hear you giving instructions and keeping time. Each student should have something to write with and write on.
- Give three minutes for students to brainstorm and reflect on the episode. Explain that you will be discussing thoughts, questions, and epiphanies and that they should have at least one of each to contribute.
- Ask students to select a beginning “A”; each person will get a chance to be an “A.” The remaining students are “Bs.”
- Explain that when you are in the A position, your role is to begin the conversation with your thoughts, questions, and epiphanies. You will speak, uninterrupted, for two minutes. Students in the B roles will listen without speaking. They can make notes on what was said if they choose.
- After three minutes, students in the B positions now have three minutes to ask follow-up or clarifying questions to person A. (See below for a list of questions that generate conversation.)
- At the end of three minutes, person A will turn away from the group as they take two minutes to synthesize the conversation. During this time, the Bs may discuss person A’s responses, asking each other questions about the thoughts, questions, and epiphanies that were discussed.
- The final two minutes of conversation are a chance for A to respond to or develop any new perspectives based on the questions or conversation.
- The roles then rotate.

Each cycle takes 10 minutes and each person should have a chance to play the role of A. This activity should then take a total of 40 minutes, not including instruction time.

### Sample Questions

What resonated for you?

Why do you think that was the case?

What can you do with this new information?

How will you apply this new perspective to yourself?

What is something outside of this episode that connects to something within the episode?

What impact does this information have on you?

What did you mean by\_\_\_\_\_?

How is that showing up for you now?



# CULMINATING ACTIVITIES FOR GRADES 9 TO 12

## Voices Unveiled

### NOTE TO TEACHERS

**Objective:** To gather the learning from the pre-watching activities' theme words/statements and create original art pieces that act as a reflective tool for students.

### MATERIALS NECESSARY

- Anticipation guides
- Art supplies

### ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

#### Part 1: Artistic Expression

Based on the themes, stories, and emotions portrayed in the documentary, students will create an artistic piece that reflects their impressions. They can use the theme words and theme statements from the anticipation guide to help create images that reflect their understanding of the documentary episode and how it has affected them.

#### Part 2: Sharing and Gallery Walk

Once everyone has completed their artistic expressions, arrange a gallery walk where participants can display their work. Each student can create an artist statement that helps provide context for their work prior to the gallery walk.

#### Part 3: Group Reflection and Discussion

Conclude the activity with a final group discussion:

- How did translating your thoughts and feelings into art enhance your understanding of the documentary's themes?
- How do you envision the lessons from this documentary affecting your future appreciation of Black artistry and literature?
- What other avenues can we explore to continue learning and celebrating the contributions of Black artists and authors?



# EXTENSION ACTIVITIES FOR GRADES 9 TO 12

## Step In, Step Out, Step Back

### MATERIALS NECESSARY

- Paper
- Writing utensils

### NOTES TO TEACHERS

This activity fosters and develops perspective-taking. It can be done in a whole group (using conversation circles), a small group (using small-group discussion frameworks), or as an individual written reflection. This technique can also be used if there is a difference of opinions in the classroom setting, as both parties will need to understand themselves as well as the other person or people involved.

### ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

- Students are encouraged to ground their thinking in the episode and the conversations that have come out of exploration of it. They should think of a specific person from the episode in order to “step IN.” This requires students to consider “what this person might think, feel, believe, know, or experience.” This exploration can come in conversational or written form.
- In the next phase, students “step OUT” and ask themselves, “What would you need to learn in order to understand this person’s perspective better?” This phase is designed to confront our own first impressions and become better at understanding someone else’s perspective beyond our own initial impressions or assumptions.
- In this phase, students “step BACK” and ask students to consider their own perspectives and what it takes to understand someone else’s. This phase explores the limitations to understanding others and allows students to be clearer on how to not only take perspective, but also to understand how prior knowledge and understanding affects how readily one is able to understand multiple perspectives.





# EPISODE QUOTES TO EXPLORE AND DISCUSS

## QUOTES EXERCISE

Concentric circles or two lines – whole-class conversation.

For this exercise, you will need to arrange the class into two circles (or two parallel lines), one within another so that each student is facing a partner. Students are going to discuss three specific quotes from the episode using the same prompts. After three minutes, the inner circle will rotate clockwise so that new pairings are formed and the next quote is discussed.

## Quote

## Discussion

**“They said it was a critique of colonialism, but the way it was interpreted by us, it was like a celebration of colonialism.”**

Dr. Afua Cooper

Do you think that the ROM exhibit is a critique or a celebration of colonialism?

Who is the “us” in this statement?

What has shifted in terms of your understanding of colonialism?

**“It gives them the impression that white culture is better than African culture.”**

Charles Roach

What are possible impacts of students with Black identities viewing the ROM exhibit *Into the Heart of Africa*?

Do you think it represents a threat to their psychological safety? Why or why not?

What is the impact of Black students seeing their stories and their past depicted in a negative way only?

Where is the Black joy, Black hope, or Black resilience when this occurs? Is Black Joy always able to be present?

**“May we author ourselves.”**

Dr. George Elliott Clarke

What is the significance of this quote?

Why is it important for Black people to author their own stories?

What happens when other people tell your stories? What can get lost?

What is the risk of cultural appropriation if Black people do not author their own stories? Is it possible for people who are not Black to tell Black stories? What conditions make this possible, or not?

# GO-FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

## For Educators

[CBC Radio. \(2016, October 27\). "Cultural Appropriation vs. Appreciation." YouTube.](#)

Foster, C. (2005). *Where Race Does Not Matter: The New Spirit of Modernity*. Penguin Canada.

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Gehmacher, A. & Edmonds, P. (2021, August 4). "Portraying a Literary Giant." Royal Ontario Museum. <https://www.rom.on.ca/en/collections-research/magazine/portraying-a-literary-giant>.

Morris, W. (2018, May 30). "Who Gets to Decide What Belongs in the 'Canon'?" The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/30/magazine/who-gets-to-decide-what-belongs-in-the-canon.html>.

United Nations. (n.d.). United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent, 2015–2024. <https://www.un.org/en/observances/decade-people-african-descent/links>.

## For Students

Black Artists' Network in Dialogue (BAND). (n.d.). Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/blackartndialog/>.

CBC/Radio Canada. (2018, April 26). "14 Must-Read Works of Fiction by Black Canadian Authors." <https://www.cbc.ca/books/14-must-read-works-of-fiction-by-black-canadian-authors-1.4535443>.

Hopper, T. (2023, January 27). "National Arts Centre Event to Allow Only 'Black-Identifying' Theatregoers." National Post. <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/national-arts-centre-black-only-theatregoers>.

# GLOSSARY OF HELPFUL TERMS

## Ally

An individual in a position to stand in solidarity with an equity-deserving group to end oppression, discrimination, and prejudice.

## Allyship

An intentional strategy to advocate for the rights of those outside of one's own identity group (e.g., ability, gender, race, ethnicity) using one's privilege and influence to do so.

## Barrier

Obvious or subtle obstacles or blocks put in place to inhibit progress.

## Bias

The inclination of prejudice toward or against a particular person, group, or thing, often leading to unfair or unbalanced judgments and decisions.

## Black erasure

The deliberate or unintentional act of disregarding, downplaying, or excluding the contributions, experiences, and histories of Black individuals or communities.

## Black excellence

Examples of notable achievements from members of the Black community across the African diaspora and the honouring or celebration of these achievements.

## Colonialism

The occupation of lands and exploitation of the colonized territory and its people by colonial powers.

## Colonization

The process by which one nation or group exerts control, often through force, over another territory, people, or culture, typically resulting in economic, social, and cultural dominance.

## Compassion

The sympathetic consciousness of and concern for another person's suffering or misfortune, combined with a desire to alleviate it; empathy coupled with action.

## Diaspora

Members of past or current generations that were forced from their ancestral homelands. The African diaspora refers to the many communities of people of African descent dispersed throughout the world as a result of historic movements.



## Digital archive

A place to store and protect digital information such as files, invoices, deeds, or other documents.

## Discrimination

(see also: Racial discrimination)

The unjust treatment of or negative actions taken against individuals or groups based on prejudices that are held about these individuals' or groups' perceived differences.

## Dominant narrative

The prevailing and widely accepted perspective or story that shapes societal understanding and values.

## Human rights

The basic rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, gender, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, ability, and many other identifiers. They include, but are not limited to, life, liberty, safety, education, food, freedom of expression, and shelter. Laid out under the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, for example.

## Injustice

A lack of fairness or the violation of the rights of others; an unjust act.

## Intersectionality

The ways in which systems of inequality based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, class, and other forms of discrimination “intersect” to create unique dynamics and effects.

## Joy

(see also: Resilience)

The personal experience of peace or contentment in spite of challenging circumstances.

## Nation

A nation is a territory where all the people are led by the same government. The word nation can also refer to a group of people who share a history, traditions, culture, and, often, language – even if the group does not have a country of its own.

## Oppression

A combination of prejudice and institutional power that creates a system that regularly and severely discriminates against some groups and benefits other groups.

## Prejudice

A negative attitude toward another person or group formed in advance of any experience with that person or group. Prejudice is often manifested through discriminatory behaviour.

## Privilege

The unearned advantages, benefits, or opportunities that certain individuals or groups have in society because of aspects of their identity, often resulting in systemic inequalities.

## Protest

A public demonstration against an institution or the policies of the government.

## Racial discrimination

Racial discrimination refers to the practice of treating people differently or unjustly because of their race, ethnic origin, skin colour, language, or religion. It can also be systemic, meaning that the discrimination has been built into the structures and institutions of society.

## Racism

An ideology that directly or indirectly asserts that one group is inherently superior to others. It can be openly displayed in racial jokes, slurs, or hate crimes but can be more deeply rooted in attitudes, values, and stereotypical beliefs. In some cases, these are unconsciously held and deeply embedded in systems and institutions. Racism can be individual, systemic, and societal. Source: <https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/racial-discrimination-race-and-racism-fact-sheet>

## Resilience

The ability to adapt and demonstrate emotional strength and perseverance in the face of adversity, challenges, or setbacks.

## Social identity

The qualities, values, beliefs, personality traits, physical characteristics, behaviours, experiences, relationships, and connection to place that make someone who they are.

## Social justice

Deliberate action to remedy social inequalities that exist in society.

## Stereotypes

Oversimplified and generalized beliefs or ideas about a particular group of people.

## White gaze

The perspective through which predominantly white individuals or groups perceive and interpret the world, often reinforcing white norms and values.

# ZONG!

M. NourbeSe Philip



As told to the author by  
Setaey Adamu Boateng

# HANDOUTS

# CHART FOR LEARN, UNLEARN, RELEARN

BEFORE VIEWING

AFTER VIEWING

Concept Name	Definition of concept in your own words	What have you learned in the past about this concept?	What misconceptions did you have that were dispelled?	What are some new ideas or questions you have about this issue?

# CULMINATING ACTIVITY FOR GRADES 7 AND 8 CHART

Constituent Name	Thoughts	Feelings	Behaviours	Questions that they might raise



# CHART FOR ANTICIPATION GUIDE

Before Viewing

After Viewing

Agree	Disagree	Statement	Agree	Disagree

# MODIFIED CHART FOR ANTICIPATION GUIDE

What might I see/hear	How I feel about it	Questions I may have	Answers from the viewing
e.g.: I might hear about forms of discrimination based on race or ethnicity	e.g.: This makes me feel uncomfortable because I don't like hearing about things I can't control.	Why do systems discriminate against people?	



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FROM EDUCATORS

Are there norms of collaboration that should be established or personal beliefs that should be discussed in my class to ready us to engage in critical conversations?

Yes: it is important that educators create a safe and welcoming learning environment where all learners feel seen and heard. This can be done through classroom discussion and the co-creation of norms with students.

The following additional resources might be helpful in this process:

- [Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion. \(n.d.\). Who We Are.](#)
- [Government of Canada. \(n.d.\). Canada's Black Justice Strategy: Fact Sheet: Key Historical Facts about Anti-Black Racism and Discrimination in Canada. Department of Justice.](#)
- [Government of Canada. \(n.d.\). Guide to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.](#)
- Kleinrock, L. (2021). *Start Here, Start Now: A Guide to Antibias and Antiracist Work in Your School Community*. Heinemann.
- [Learning for Justice. \(2022\). Let's Talk! Facilitating Critical Conversations with Students, 2nd ed.](#)
- [Sefa Dei, G.J. & Lara-Villanueva, M. \(2021, April 26\). "Anti-Racism Education in Canada." The Canadian Encyclopedia.](#)
- [Taylor, C.S. \(2023, October 18\). "Why the Way We're Taught about How Black People Came to Canada Is Completely Wrong." CBC.](#)

## Why speak about these issues in the classroom? Is this not divisive?

It is necessary to discuss and unpack issues of race, racism, and social justice in all classroom spaces. Acknowledging that racism exists and is present in Canada, both historically and currently, is essential. It is through the acknowledgement of social differences that schools can build a common understanding of what it means to live in and strive for an inclusive and just Canadian society.

## What are developmentally appropriate ways for students to act on their learning after viewing these episodes?

After viewing the episodes and engaging in various activities, students might want to consider ways that they can take action to make a difference in their classrooms, schools, or communities.

Allyship might be one way for non-Black students to become involved. For example, students can consider what it means to be an ally. Prompting questions that educators can use to guide students in this process include: “How might you stand up for friends who have been excluded because of their race?” “Is there something you can say and do publicly or privately that might make a difference?”

Students are also encouraged to think about the varied ways that they can take action. Here are some suggestions to provide:

- Develop and participate in education and awareness campaigns about anti-racism at school.
- Share some of the key messages from the documentaries with students in lower grades.
- Share the information learned in the documentary in a school assembly.

## How do I inform parents about what students will be learning? Is there a parent-education piece to support this work?

Engaging with the community should be at the centre of any authentic conversation about race and racism. It is important to consider connecting with families, informal educators, and local agencies in extending the learning before, during, and after each episode is viewed. Educators and students are co-learners,



and this ongoing collaboration throughout and beyond the school community is essential. We suggest that you share information about this work with parents, families, caregivers, and community leaders. You might also want to share some of the questions from this FAQ page with families.

## What is the best way to find definitions for some of the key terms used or concepts discussed in the episodes?

Each of the episode watch guides contains a glossary with key definitions to support the understanding of the documentary's content.

## What should I do if a conversation becomes heated or difficult in the classroom?

In brave learning spaces, it is important to prepare for diverse opinions and difficult dialogue between students. Comments that are hateful, hurtful, or harmful may surface and need to be addressed through an anti-oppressive approach. During challenging moments, it is also important to reestablish the space by referring to co-created norms of collaboration to ensure that learning can continue. An educator's professional judgment is to be used to navigate debate at all times. It is appropriate to reflect on how all comments affect the learning space. Moreover, it is important to embrace challenging conversations that are well structured and supported. Teachers are encouraged to review their school board's policy with regard to student code of conduct to support students as they grapple with difficult topics.

## Here are some helpful tips for educators to support critical, yet contentious, conversations in the classroom:

- Remain calm.
- Revisit the conversational norms that have been co-created by students.
- Use clarifying questions or statements: e.g., "Tell me more about what you mean?"; "I think I am hearing . . ."
- Be prepared to intervene (i.e., pause, redirect, seek clarification, or stop harmful or hateful conversation).
- Script a response: work with a colleague to develop a series of "What would I say if . . ." prompts in anticipation of difficult learning moments.
- Adjust the length, design, and or medium of the conversations (e.g., shorten the length of activity, shift from whole-group to small-group collaboration,

move from an oral activity to instead complete a written reflection or drawing).

- And, most importantly, maintain resilience in order to engage in the learning after a demanding teaching moment.

## How do I keep students on topic?

- Take a break; check in with students about their feelings regarding the learning.
- Provide time to pause and engage in wellness activities.
- Adjust timing of the lessons: activities in this package are designed with flexibility in mind.

## How should I engage historically marginalized or minoritized students when teaching concepts from the episodes?

It is important that educators do not assume that Black students represent the “voice” of all Black Canadians. Black lived experiences are vast, complex, and diverse. Black students should not be put “on the spot” or expected to have expertise to comment on the historical and current Black Canadian experience.

All students need to be encouraged to deepen their understanding of topics addressed by asking questions, conducting further research, and reflecting on their own experiences and prior knowledge.

## Additional questions to think about:

What is the difference between creating a safe and a brave classroom? Why is the latter term preferred now?

Some people will reference “Black Canadians” while others use “people of African or Caribbean descent”, some use both interchangeably. As an educator how will you approach this?

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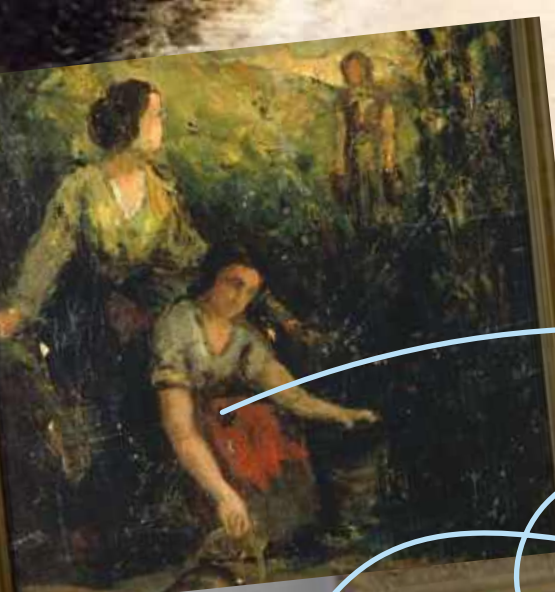
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