

LESSON 7

TOPIC: Celebrations - The Hall of Negro Life: Fine Arts and Education

OBJECTIVE: The students will:

Extend their study of Celebrations through two of the six rooms revealing the accomplishments of the Negro.

Discover the individuals that helped make these exhibits a reality.

Discuss how the achievements of African Americans are highlighted in each room and the people who achieved them.

Understand the difficulties that African Americans had to overcome in the arts and in education due to their race.

SYNOPSIS: The Hall of Negro Life was comprised of six rooms in the areas of Agriculture, Arts, Business, Education, Health, and Mechanical Arts which reflected the accomplishments of the Negro. It was one of the first times in history that African Americans were encouraged to tell their own story instead of Whites telling it for them. This lesson will focus on the two halls: Fine Arts and Education. Many people were involved in the exhibitions in these two halls. The Fine Arts Hall represented achievements that had long been connected to the African American in Art and especially Music. The Education Hall showed the many advancements that had been made in the education of

the Negro, but also how inferior they were to the education of whites.

INFORMATION: HALL OF FINE ARTS

Fine Arts is defined as painting, sculpture, architecture, music, and poetry, as well as the performing arts of theatre and dance.

ART

The Harlem Renaissance was a period of artistic and cultural activity among African Americans between the end of World War I (1917) and the onset of the Great Depression and lead up to World War II (the 1930s). Most people only think of musicians and writers that flourished during this period, but sculptors, painters, and printmakers were key contributors to the first modern Afrocentric cultural movement and formed a black avant-garde in the visual arts.

The Hall of Negro Life exhibited the works of many artists. Aaron Douglas was the major contributor to the Hall of Negro Life with 4 murals. He became known as the “father of African American art.”

Painting Sculptures and Graphic Arts.

An art exhibit was assembled by the Harmon Foundation. It included artists such as:

Archibald J. Motley

Richmond Barthe

Sargent Claude Johnson

James Wells

Samuel Countee

Laura Wheeler Waring

Aaron Douglas (A separate lesson is presented on him.)

Hale Woodruff
Henry Letcher
Samuel Countee
Leslie G Bolling

The estimated value of the artwork that was displayed varied from \$100,000 to \$600,000.

Other artists worked under the Public Works of Art Project, financed by the federal government. As a result of federal backing, many artists have become recognized for their works, which have become parts of permanent collections around the world.

HANDICRAFT AND NEEDLEWORK

These displays were assembled by Mrs. Louise Simpson Sewell, Home Economics Instructor at Howard University. There was a booth of handicrafts including a tabletop by R.A. Johnson with 80,000 pieces of wood, two Lone Star quilts. A screen designed by Miss Hallie Queen which had autographed pictures of Joe Louis, Jesse Owens, and Eleanor Roosevelt among other.

Additionally, jewelry, textile design, and wood block printing by children in public schools reflect on the quality of these institutions.

MUSIC

The Harlem Renaissance was a period of cross-disciplinary artistic and cultural activity among African Americans between the end of World War I (1917) and the onset of the Great Depression and the lead up to World War II (the 1930s). Artists during the Harlem Renaissance often worked collaboratively with the poets, writers, dancers, and actors of the time. They captured the people, their aspirations, and the scenes of the time while incorporating their African heritage.

Gospel, jazz, and blues music were a central feature of the Harlem Renaissance. Aaron Douglas often depicted musical instruments and people dancing in his art. An example includes his illustration in God's Trombones, a musical composition, on the page facing the verse, "The Prodigal Son."

In 1936, it was said that the "Negro Spiritual is the Negro's greatest contribution to music and is the only native music that America possesses."

The Hall of Negro Life displayed the music and had charts and photos of foremost African American musicians and composers. "The consensus is that art and music are among the Negro's rarest gifts both expressing the deep emotions of the soul. A song seems to be suited for every mood." There was an amphitheater located with the Hall of Negro Life which held performances of many of the musicians of the Harlem Renaissance.

The most famous musicians whose works were included in the exhibit were:

Roland Hayes
Marian Anderson
Lillian Evanti
Paul Robeson
William Dawson
R. Nathaniel Dett
H.T. Burleigh
Hall Johnson

An R.C.A. radio-victrola constantly played recordings of the singers mentioned above, as well as male quartets, glee clubs, and choirs from colleges and churches. The music featured was blues, jazz, and spirituals.

Miss Olive Jeter, a well-known musician with wide knowledge of African American composers, instrumentalists, concert soloists, and band conductors, assembled the music exhibit showing the important place that the African American made to the world's great music.

Amphitheater

The Amphitheater was located between the Health Exhibit and the Agricultural Exhibit. Live music and dramatic performances occurred daily in the amphitheater.

Entertainment included a film on the contributions African American Artists made to American culture. It was shown on motion picture film and equipment lent by the Harmon Foundation. The Harmon Foundation, founded in 1922, was the first major

foundation to support African American creativity and ingenuity. It closed in 1967.

ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENT

MUSIC

1. Blues and Jazz were the dominant secular music genres of the African American in 1936. Create a Venn diagram to compare these styles.
https://www.diffen.com/difference/Blues_vs_Jazz
2. Spirituals were the dominant sacred music genre for the African American from the slave days. Who were the Fisk Jubilee Singers and what impact did they have on the African American Spirituals? Create a Timeline of their existence.



<https://www.interfaithamerica.org/fisk-jubilee-singers-continue-to-sing-spirituals-150-years-later/>

3. Negro Spirituals had hidden messages within the “religious” texts. Discover how the words in spirituals were often coded messages. Create a chart of words that had double meanings in the African American Spirituals.

<https://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/applied-and-social-sciences-magazines/coded-messages>



4. Learn to play or sing one of these African American Spirituals.

https://musescore.com/artist/african_american_spiritual-231015

This Little Light of Mine

<https://musescore.com/user/266066/scores/3373326>

Wade in the Water

<https://musescore.com/user/498481/scores/8232512>

Steal Away

<https://musescore.com/user/33012693/scores/5740375>

My Lord, What a Morning

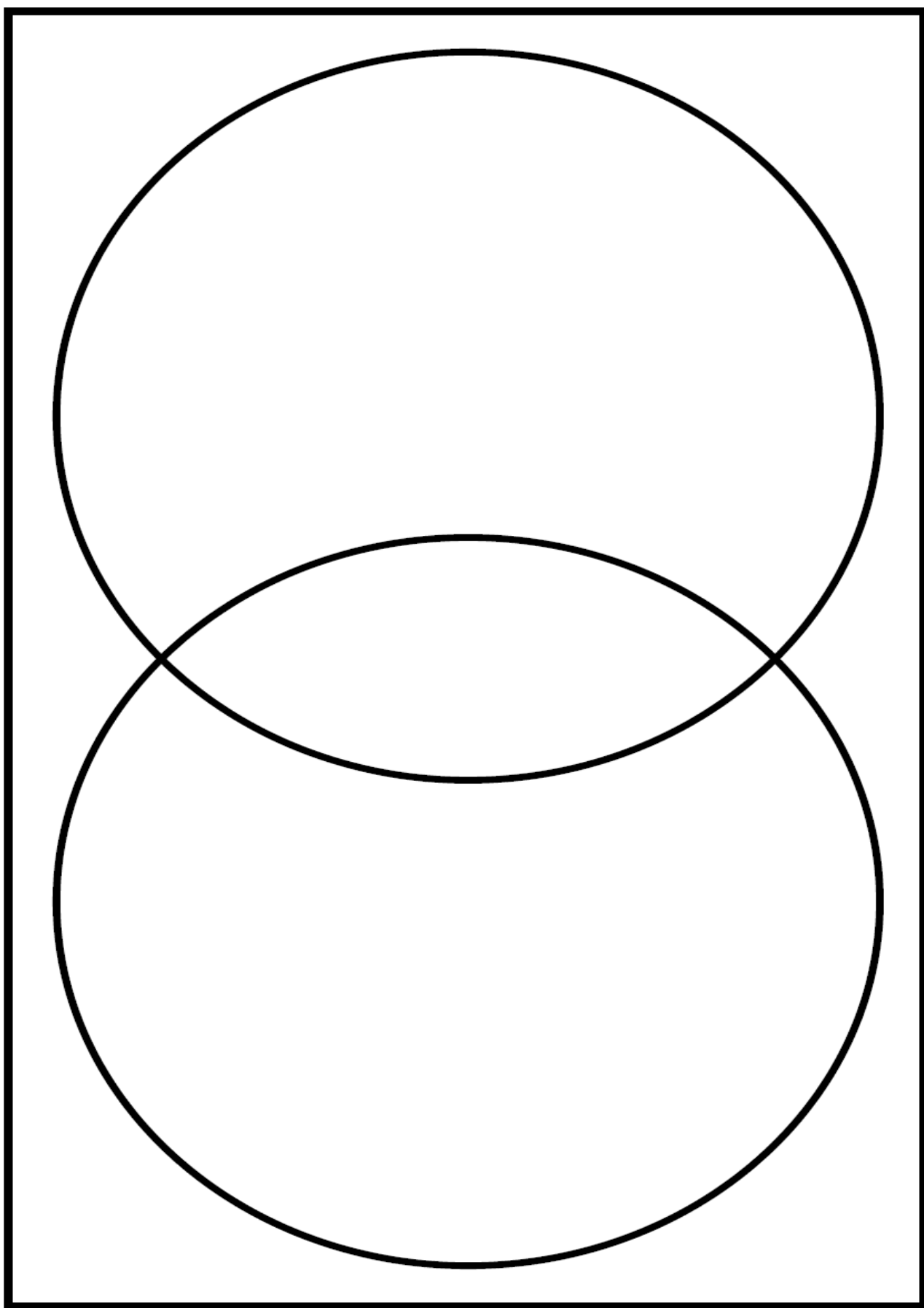
<https://musescore.com/user/498481/scores/6451720>

ART

1. Work as a group. Each person selects an artist. Click on an artist and read about their accomplishments. Complete the chart: **ARTISTS AND THEIR ART**. Place the number of the artist beside their work and write the medium they used. The works of these artists were exhibited at the Hall of Negro Life.

2. Read the story of famous African American singer, Marian Anderson being denied the stage at Constitution Hall. Many African American visual and performing artists over the years have been discriminated against because of their race. If you were a singer or an artist who was denied a stage or an

exhibit because of your race, create a response. Be diplomatic, yet firm with reasons why you are disappointed. Write a letter or a speech. Think of the place you were planning to perform or exhibit. What is its history? Why do you believe they didn't allow you to perform. Did you have an opportunity to perform somewhere even more exciting? What was your attitude during your performance or exhibit?



ARTISTS AND THEIR ART

#	ARTIST	# of artist	NAME OF WORK	MEDIUM OF WORK (Painting, Carving, Pottery, Sculpture,
1	<u>Archibald J. Motley</u>		Mask	
2	<u>Samuel Countee</u>		Blackberry Woman	
3	Aaron Douglas		Days of the Week	
4	<u>Laura Wheeler Waring</u>		Looking Upward	
5	<u>Richmond Barthe</u>		W.E.B.DuBois Portrait	
6	<u>Sargent Claude Johnson</u>		Returning Home	
7	<u>James Wells</u>		Rickwood & Ohio Art Pottery	
8	<u>Leslie G Bolling</u>	Ex.3	Aspects of Negro Life	
9	<u>Hale Woodruff</u>		My Guitar	
10	<u>Henry Letcher</u>		Octoroon Girl	

REFERENCES:

Book

Thomas, Jesse O. (1938). *Negro Participation in the Texas Centennial*. Christopher Press, Boston USA.

Black Spirituals

<https://blackmusicscholar.com/negro-spirituals-and-folk-music-3>

Blues vs Jazz

[https://www.diffen.com/difference/Blues vs Jazz](https://www.diffen.com/difference/Blues_vs_Jazz)

Harlem Renaissance

<https://www.nga.gov/learn/teachers/lessons-activities/uncovering-america/harlem-renaissance.html>

Harmon Foundation

<https://www.wchsmuseum.org/blog/harmonfoundation#:~:text=Originally%20the%20new%20foundation%20supported,African%2DAmerican%20creativity%20and%20ingenuity>

Marian Anderson and Constitution Hall

<https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/marian-anderson-and-constitution-hall.htm#:~:text=In%201939%2C%20Constitution%20Hall%20was,use%20of%20its%20concert%20hall>

INFORMATION: Hall of Education

The Education exhibit revealed relevant information, even to those in academia who didn't realize the extent to which facilities for the training of African American youth had been developed by the different states, counties, municipalities, as well as from organized philanthropic organization and private resources. Nowhere before had such a large representation of African American educational equipment and achievements been on display.

The first exhibit was a display of the United States Office of Education revealing the advantages that the department had made available to African Americans.

Educational institutions for African Americans such as Howard University, a university founded by General O.O. Howard for the education of Negroes, presented an exhibit of 70 scans viewed from a projection device called a balopticon machine.

Two schools, Hampton Institute in Virginia, where Booker T Washington, graduated and Prairie View State Normal and Industrial College, the largest college for African Americans in Texas, were presented in a diorama model.

Fisk University in Nashville, the place where the possibilities of the African American spiritual were realized was featured. John W. Work as director of Fisk singers, made spirituals more appreciated. Roland Hayes, another alum, became a famous singer.

Other schools included were: Tuskegee Institute, Tuskegee, Alabama; West Virginia State College , Institute, West Virginia, Florida A&M College, Tallahassee, Florida; Langston University, Langston, Oklahoma; Howard University, Washington, D. C.; Xavier University, New Orleans, Louisiana; the Bordentown Manual Training School, Bordentown, New Jersey; Bishop and Wiley Colleges, Marshall, Texas; Virginia State College, Petersburg, Virginia and many other similar institutions of a secondary grade.

At end of Hall, was a collection of books by and about African Americans. Mrs. Dorothy B. Porter, Fisk University, assembled them. There were books written covering Literature, Drama, Art, Biography, Economics, Education, Fiction, Poetry, Theology and Religion. Reference Books of various kinds and a countless number of monthly quarterlies and periodicals.

Some titles included were, *The Negro in the American Social Order*, by Horace Mann Bond; *Black Reconstruction* by W.E.B. DuBois; and *What the Negro Thinks* by Dr R. R. Moton

The Bureau of Census exhibit was installed by Charles E. Hall, Specialist, African American Statistics. This showed charts and graphs of the African American in Texas, pictures of buildings and class activities. The average salary of teachers, the Depression's effect on African American education, number of illiterates, and the distribution of African American teachers was also displayed. Also, the Negro's land and home ownership, number of business

enterprises, earning capacity, number of businesses operated and controlled by African Americans and the number of African Americans in various professions was exhibited. Robert L. Vann depicted the story of the African American in America statistically.

Supplemental information was handed out at the information desk. 100,000 copies of W. E. B. DuBois information about the Negro's contribution to Texas and the United States. Also, a bibliography of all the books that were on display as well as biographical info on the artists whose works were on display.

In order that the visitors might not leave with the belief that all the African Americans had achieved in the field of Education was at the same level as White institutions, there were charts, graphs, and maps comparing the average salaries of African American teachers with White teachers, number of students White teachers and African American teachers had, the amount of money to educate a White child versus an African American child, the average length of school terms for White and African American children, the library facilities of White and Black, and the amount spent in the transportation of children to consolidate rural schools for White and Black.

ASSESSMENTS/ACTIVITIES: Select one activity.

Select a topic about Education and the Negro. Read the information and summarize it with topic and three important facts that sum up your findings. Share it with your class.

Jim Crow Schools

<https://www.aft.org/periodical/american-educator/summer-2004/jim-crows-schools>

Booker T. Washington's Attitudes about African American Education

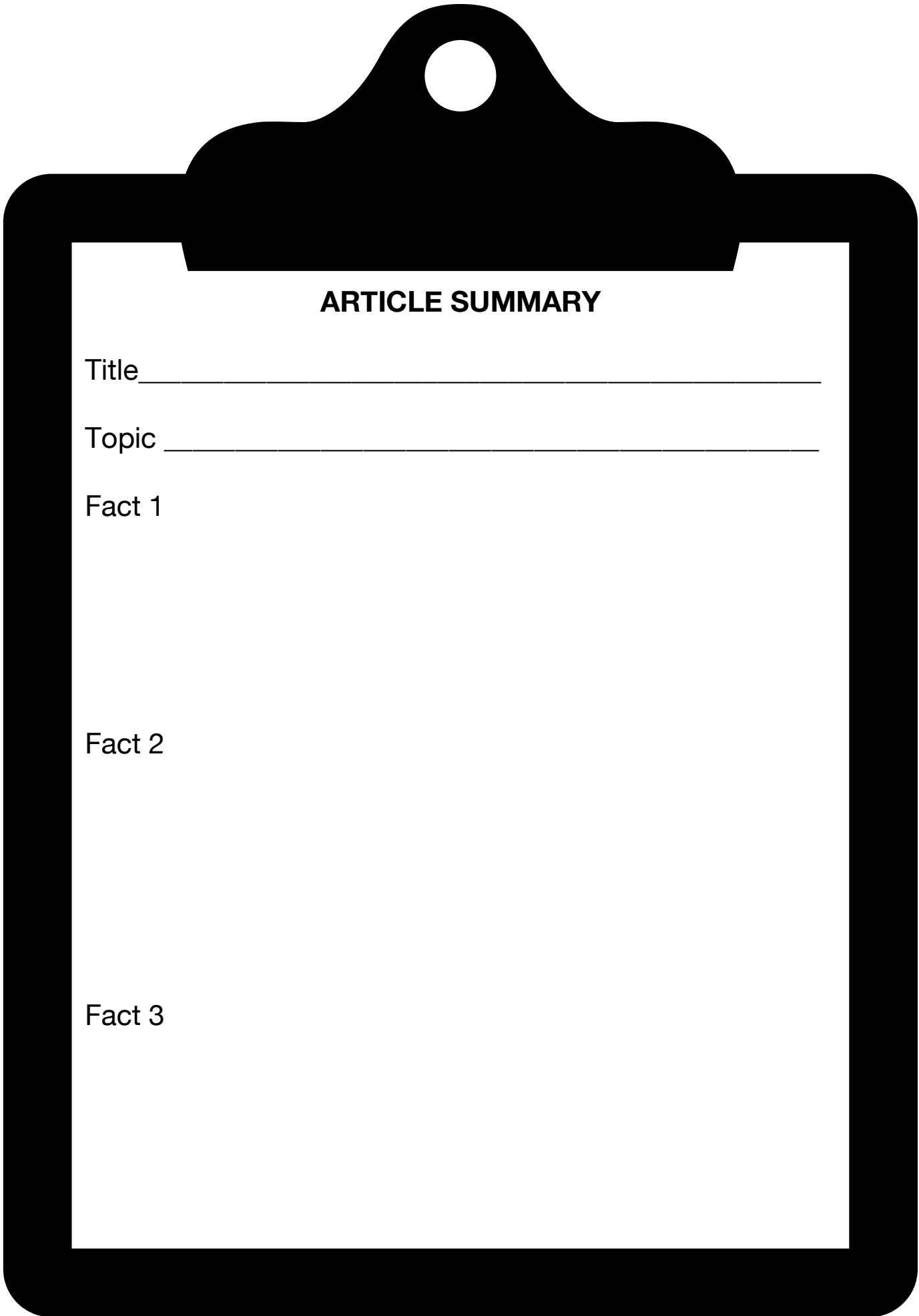
<https://www.crf-usa.org/black-history-month/booker-t-washington>

George Washington Carver's Educational Experiences

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1250256.pdf>

8 Famous African American Educators

<https://classrooms.com/8-famous-black-teachers-from-history>



ARTICLE SUMMARY

Title _____

Topic _____

Fact 1

Fact 2

Fact 3

Celebration or Not?

Lesson 7: Education and Fine Arts

Characteristic	Yes	No	Comments
Was a visit to the two hall a positive event?			
Was there social interaction with others?			
Did the rooms reveal a look to the past and remember past accomplishments?			
Did the information in the halls reflect on what was done well and what could be done differently?			
Did the information take stock of people and resources needed to move forward?			
Did these rooms pave the way for future success.			
Did the African American feel felt more supported after participation?			

REFERENCES:

Thomas, Jesse O. (1938). *Negro Participation in the Texas Centennial*. Christopher Press, Boston, USA.