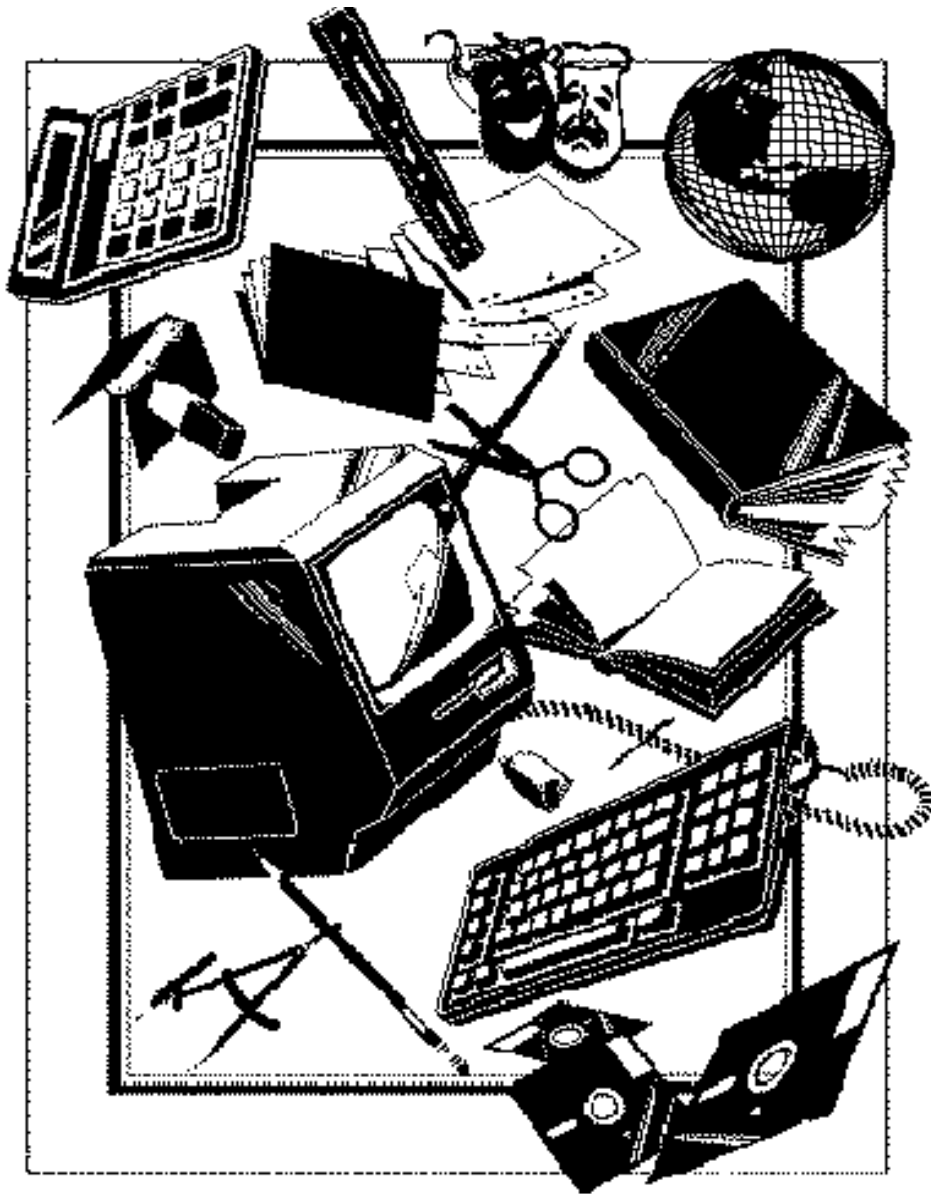


# African American Literature

2005



**DRAFT**

The Howard County Public School System • Ellicott City, Maryland  
John R. O'Rourke, Superintendent

**The Essential Curriculum Documents**

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## Foreword

*The Essential Curriculum Documents* for high schools define for teachers those aspects of curriculum (both content and skills) that are essential for all students to learn.

The concept of essential curriculum is relevant at all grade levels and all subject areas. The program areas of **art, career and technology education, educational technology, English, ESOL, family and consumer sciences, foreign language, guidance, health, mathematics, media, music, physical education, reading, science, and social studies** are included as they are present throughout the high school years.

The “essential curriculum” of the Howard County Public School System:

- Is presented in *The Essential Curriculum Documents* for a primary audience of teachers and administrators
- Defines clearly what content and skills all students must know and be able to do
- Is based upon subject area national standards, Maryland Essential Learner Outcomes, and the Maryland Voluntary State Curriculum
- Aligns with national, state, and local assessment programs, including the Maryland School Assessments and the Maryland High School Assessments
- Is supported by curriculum resource guides for the subject areas.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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# **African American Literature Overview**

This curriculum for building a yearlong African American Literature course includes a framework that is aligned with High School Core Learning Goals 1, 2, and 4. Goal 4, however, is identified as Goal 3 in this resource for numerical purposes. A text box at the end of each unit contains informative, persuasive, and creative choices from which teachers may select assignments; however, there has been no attempt by the curriculum writers to prescribe assignments. Teachers are strongly encouraged to adapt this resource to meet the needs of their students and their individual programs.

## **Unit 1 – Colonial Period (1746-1800)**

The Middle Passage is an important theme in African American literature, reflecting the experience of transition between Africa and America, past and present, freedom and slavery, and oral and written traditions. African American literature of the Colonial Period reflects the divided selves of Africans who were transported without choice to Colonial America. Writers used the written word as a means of expressing protest concerning the evils of slavery. The Revolutionary War served as a platform for African American literature. The reality of slavery, the Revolutionary War, and the relations between the colonists and Native Americans affected the development of African American writing. The issues of the Colonial Period still are relevant today.

## **Unit 2 – The Antebellum Period (1800-1865)**

The Antebellum Period is best described as the era of the Underground Railroad and a time of desire for freedom, justice, and equality. Works of the Antebellum Period include slave narratives describing the denigration of slavery, stories about abolitionists, and songs, poems, and writings that explore the social, political, and moral implications of slavery. Slave narratives, spirituals, and feminist writings continued to make an impact on cultural development during this period.

## **Unit 3 – The Reconstruction Period (1865-1900)**

Literature from the Reconstruction Period reflects that while slavery had been abolished, the United States was far from being a place of freedom, equality, and justice. Writers emphasized the theme of slavery versus freedom. The central debate centered on social, economic, and political disenfranchisement. African American writers used the pen to wage war for physical and political freedom. The Reconstruction Period marks a time in American history when racial, gender, and class roles were re-evaluated.

## **Unit 4 – The Harlem Renaissance (1900-1940)**

This time marks a period of creative explosions among African American artists. Although it began as a series of discussions in various sections of New York, this movement was ultimately known as “The New Negro Movement,” a term coined by Alain LeRoy Locke. Later this time was known as the Harlem Renaissance. During the Harlem Renaissance, Blacks openly celebrated their heritage and strove to become “the new negro.” Efforts during this period

extended beyond previous literary and social movements as they were used to encouraged the individuality of African American culture and artistic expression.

### **Unit 5 – Protest Movement (1940-1959)**

Protest Movement literature focuses on major events, movements, and people in relation to the racial issues of the time period. African American authors focused on the “black experience,” and gave voice to protest against segregation and the reality of racial injustices. This literature focuses on the conditional aspect of equality and the factors of race, gender, and ethnicity in eliminating racism and the accompanying social inequity.

### **Unit 6 – Modern and Contemporary (1960-present)**

The works in this unit reflect a realistic depiction of life that extends from the written expression of the experiences of Blacks that began with slave narratives. This period highlights the creative freedom of African American literary artists evidenced by a wide range of writing. The literature of the 1970s emphasizes historical information about slavery and racism and calls attention to the politics of race, gender, and sexual orientation in profound ways. Works of this period are characterized by a rich and varied vocabulary and a skillful use of the feelings of the rhythms of speech. Implicit in the literature were universal themes that removed barriers associated with gender, race, class, and cultural differences.

# African American Literature Essential Curriculum

## UNIT I: Colonial Period

**Goal 1. The student will demonstrate the ability to respond to text by employing personal experience and critical analysis.**

Objectives – The student will be able to:

- a. Employ strategic reading to interpret poems, narratives, and oral traditions by:
  - Analyzing the “revolutionary” aspects of writing produced by African Americans for challenging ideas about race, class, and gender.
  - Analyzing how the purpose and intended audience for selected works influence the tone, voice, and mood. [CLG 1.2.3]
  - Comparing and contrasting responses to the condition of slavery.
  - Examining how African American oral tradition is similar to written text and how societal influences have affected the works.
  - Assessing the appropriateness of diction, tone, and structure in relation to purpose, content, and audience and how dialect reflects class, gender, values and maturity. [CLG 1.3.1]
  - Identifying main ideas, themes, and supportive evidence.
  - Evaluating the dramatic presentation of literary texts. [CLG 1.3.4]
- b. Characterize African American oral tradition by:
  - Recognizing the role of rhythm and music in African American spirituals.
  - Analyzing how tales from the Colonial Period focus on the injustice of slavery and the desire for freedom.

**Goal 2. The student will demonstrate the ability to compose in a variety of modes by developing content, employing specific forms, and selecting language appropriate for a particular audience and purpose.**

Objectives – The student will be able to:

- a. Apply techniques of expository writing. [CLG 2.1.3]
- b. Apply techniques of creative writing focusing on a social issue in a poem, narrative, or oral tradition. [CLG 2.1.2-3]
- c. Compose an oral and visual presentation.
- d. Apply techniques of persuasive writing.

\*Teachers may select from the following suggested Colonial Period assignments for Goal 2 which addresses the ability to compose.

<b>Creative</b>	<b>Persuasive</b>	<b>Informative</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create field songs similar to the period.</li> <li>• Construct a poem reflecting the issues relating to race, class, or gender of the time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate how African American oral tradition is similar/dissimilar to written text of the period.</li> <li>• Construct a piece demonstrating how religion plays an essential role in colonial literature.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compare and contrast two literary works of the time.</li> <li>• Identify the injustices of slavery.</li> </ul>

**UNIT II: The Antebellum Period: A Quest for Freedom and the Fight to Abolish Slavery**

**Goal 1. The student will demonstrate the ability to respond to text by employing personal experience and critical analysis.**

Objectives – The student will be able to:

- a. Employ strategic reading to interpret plays and narratives by:
  - Assessing beliefs and attitudes about freedom.
  - Determining how the style of African American female writers differs from that of African American male writers.
  - Relating issues from the Antebellum Period text to contemporary contexts. [CLG 1.3.2]
  - Assessing the appropriateness of diction, tone, and structure in relation to purpose, content, and audience. [CLG 1.3.1]
  - Identifying significant textual features such as sequence, cause and effect, and rhetorical devices specific to drama.
- b. Characterize African American oral tradition by:
  - Determining the social, political, or cultural issues in song lyrics.
  - Evaluating the double meaning associated with spirituals.

**Goal 2. The student will demonstrate the ability to compose in a variety of modes by developing content, employing specific forms, and selecting language appropriate for a particular audience and purpose.**

Objectives – The student will be able to:

- a. Apply techniques of expository writing. [CLG 2.1.3]
- b. Apply techniques of creative writing focusing on a social issue in a poem, narrative, or oral tradition. [CLG 2.1.2-3]
- c. Compose an oral and visual presentation.
- d. Apply techniques of persuasive writing.



\*Teachers may select from the following suggested Antebellum Period assignments for Goal 2 which addresses the ability to compose.

Creative	Persuasive	Informative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construct a letter describing life as a captured/free slave.</li> <li>• Develop a codebook that details the Underground Railroad route to the North.</li> <li>• Write an editorial for an abolitionist newspaper reflecting the social and political climate.</li> <li>• Capture the experiences, ideas, and values of African Americans during the Antebellum period by creating a poem, song, musical score, visual display board or art object.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect the attitudes of this period for or against slavery.</li> <li>• Develop a piece for or against the institution of slavery.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outline key “actors” and events in Power Point format.</li> <li>• Construct a display board or art object with reflections on the social, political, and cultural aspects.</li> <li>• Capture the experiences, ideas, and values of African Americans during the Antebellum period by creating a poem, song, musical score, visual display board or art object.</li> </ul>

**Goal 3. The student will demonstrate the ability to evaluate the content, organization, and language of texts.**

Objectives – The student will be able to:

- a. State and explain a personal response to a print or non-print text. [CLG 4.1]
- b. Assess the effectiveness of choice of details, organizational pattern, word choice, syntax, use of figurative language, and rhetorical devices in the student’s creative writing. [CLG 4.2]

**UNIT III: The Reconstruction Period**

**Goal 1. The student will demonstrate the ability to respond to text by employing personal experience and critical analysis.**

Objectives – The student will be able to:

- a. Employ strategic reading to interpret literary text by:
  - Identifying a general idea or insight about life such as the abolition of slavery and the beginning of the African American Feminist Movement that an author wishes to convey in text.
  - Assessing the importance of understanding African American values and culture found in sermons, speeches, spirituals, and stories.
  - Analyzing the evolution of the stereotypical African American character presented as “folk” in literature during Reconstruction.

- Describing how linguistics provide rich language unique to African Americans during this period.
  - Examining the emergence of women’s rights.
  - Recognizing how the treatment of slavery versus freedom differs from previous periods.
  - Tracing the evolution of African American life from the Colonial Period to the Reconstruction period.
  - Comparing themes of freedom and women’s rights to contemporary texts. [CLG 1.3.5]
  - Assessing the appropriateness of diction, tone, and structure in relation to purpose, content, and audience. [CLG 1.3.1]
- b. Interpret African American oral tradition by:
- Identifying a general idea or insight about African American life present in speeches.
  - Recognizing the significance of religious sermons for promoting social, economic, and political equality.

**Goal 2. The student will demonstrate the ability to compose in a variety of modes by developing content, employing specific forms, and selecting language appropriate for a particular audience and purpose.**

Objectives – The student will be able to:

- a. Apply techniques of expository writing. [CLG 2.1.3]
- b. Apply techniques of creative writing focusing on a social issue in a poem, narrative, or oral tradition. [CLG 2.1.2-3]
- c. Compose an oral and visual presentation.
- d. Apply techniques of persuasive writing.

\*Teachers may select from the following suggested Antebellum Period assignments for Goal 2 which addresses the ability to compose.

Creative	Persuasive	Informative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an original poem expressing the theme evident in one of the Reconstruction writings.</li> <li>• Trace the oral tradition in Reconstruction literature in post-Civil War America.</li> <li>• Create an original poem expressing the theme of slavery versus freedom.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine how women writers analyze the tripartite, race, class, and gender discrimination that black women often faced.</li> <li>• Support how women’s rights have improved in today’s society compared to this time.</li> <li>• Convince the reader that African American women of this period were equal, socially, to their male counterparts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine the theme of slavery versus freedom in poetry.</li> <li>• Compare and contrast the oral and written tradition in post- Civil War America during this period.</li> </ul>

**Goal 3. The student will demonstrate the ability to evaluate the content, organization, and language of texts.**

Objectives – The student will be able to:

- a. State and explain a personal response to a theme that arises from a text written during Reconstruction. [CLG 4.1]
- b. Assess the effectiveness of choice of details, organizational pattern, word choice, syntax, use of figurative language, and rhetorical devices in the student’s creative writing. [CLG 4.2]

**UNIT IV: The Harlem Renaissance**

**Goal 1. The students will demonstrate the ability to respond to text by employing personal experience and critical analysis.**

Objectives – The student will be able to:

- a. Employ strategic reading to interpret literary texts by:
  - Analyzing how Africa has been symbolically transformed in literature.
  - Determining the effectiveness of a poet’s use of rhetorical devices. [CLG 1.2.3]
  - Examining stylistic features characteristic of Harlem Renaissance artists. [CLG 1.3.2]
  - Examining how physical, artistic, emotional, and spiritual evolutions influence writers.
  - Explaining the interrelationship of literary elements such as plot, characterization, setting, point of view, mood, tone, and theme. [1.2.1-2]
  - Analyzing the themes of interracial and intraracial relations.
  - Relating issues in a text from the Harlem Renaissance to contemporary contexts. [1.3.2]
  - Assessing the appropriateness of diction, tone, and structure in relation to purpose, content, and audience, and how dialect reflects class, gender, maturity, and education.
  - Recognizing characteristics of an author’s style and technique.
- b. Interpret African American oratorical conventions by:
  - Evaluating the text of a speech written during the Harlem Renaissance.
  - Analyzing how oratory reflects key social, political, economic, or artistic goals.

**Goal 2. The student will demonstrate the ability to compose in a variety of modes by developing content, employing specific forms, and selecting language appropriate for a particular audience and purpose.**

Objectives – The student will be able to:

- a. Apply techniques of expository writing. [CLG 2.1.3]
- b. Apply techniques of creative writing focusing on a social issue in a poem, narrative, or oral tradition. [CLG 2.1.2-3]
- c. Compose an oral and visual presentation.
- d. Apply techniques of persuasive writing.

\*Teachers may select from the following suggested Harlem Renaissance Period assignments for Goal 2 which addresses the ability to compose.

Creative	Persuasive	Informative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a diary reflecting experiences while touring Harlem, NY.</li> <li>• Analyze how photography of this time reflects the spirit of the time.</li> <li>• Critique a Harlem Renaissance work for an editorial section of a popular magazine.</li> <li>• Create and perform a dramatic poem that describes a famous character from a work of the period.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support that how the works of this time are revolutionary for the African American artists.</li> <li>• Support how race, class, or gender positively/negatively impacts a character from a work.</li> <li>• Argue how the components of musical works from the Harlem Renaissance benefitted or devalued the work.</li> <li>• Persuade the reader how the image of Africa created within a poem from this time is similar or different from contemporary perceptions of Africa.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze the effectiveness of an author’s writing style in conveying their message.</li> <li>• Compare and contrast the beliefs of famous African American leaders of this time.</li> <li>• Identify common themes and ideas shared between different authors.</li> </ul>

**Goal 3. The student will demonstrate the ability to evaluate the content, organization, and language of texts.**

Objectives – The student will be able to:

- a. State and explain a personal response to literary texts. [CLG 4.1.1]
- b. Assess the effectiveness of the details, organizational pattern, word choice, syntax, use of figurative language, and rhetorical devices in the student’s creative writing.[CLG 4.2]

## **UNIT V: Protest Movement**

**Goal 1. The student will demonstrate the ability to respond to text by employing personal experience and critical analysis.**

Objectives – The student will be able to:

- a. Employ strategic reading to interpret literary text by:
  - Comparing and contrasting the poems, narratives, and oral traditions by African Americans during the Protest Movement to the various forms of written and oral protest created during previous periods.
  - Determining how the literature helped fuel the struggle for civil rights.
  - Analyzing how and why female protest literature differs from male protest literature.
  - Determining how literature from previous periods affects protest literature.
  - Determining the mental and the physical effects of protest literature on African Americans.
  - Determining the effectiveness of a poet’s use of rhetorical features. [CLG 1.2.3]
  - Examining stylistic features characteristic of a particular author or time period. [CLG 1.3.2]
  - Explaining the interrelationship of literary elements such as plot, characterization, setting, point of view, mood, tone, and theme. [1.2.1-2]
  - Relating issues in a text to cultural, historical, or contemporary contexts. [1.3.2]
  - Assessing the appropriateness of diction, tone, and structure in relation to purpose, content, and audience, and how dialect reflects class, gender, maturity, and education.
  - Recognizing characteristics of an author’s style and technique, and how his/her influence limits the audience.
- b. Understand African American oral tradition by:
  - Interpreting the presentation of songs to assess the emotional effect on an audience.
  - Interpreting the presentation of a speech to assess the emotional effect on an audience. [1.3.4]

**Goal 2. The student will demonstrate the ability to compose in a variety of modes by developing content, employing specific forms, and selecting language appropriate for a particular audience and purpose.**

Objectives – The student will be able to:

- a. Apply techniques of expository writing. [CLG 2.1.3]
- c. Apply techniques of creative writing focusing on a social issue in a poem, narrative, or oral tradition. [CLG 2.1.2-3]

- d. Compose an oral and visual presentation.
- e. Apply techniques of persuasive writing.

\*Teachers may select from the following suggested Protest Movement assignments for Goal 2 which addresses the ability to compose.

Creative	Persuasive	Informative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change a narrative into a free verse poem maintaining the conflict and/or theme.</li> <li>• Map the evolution of the African American periodicals from the Protest Movement to the present.</li> <li>• Compose a short story with a specific cultural emphasis; analyze how the cultural emphasis influences the story and its themes.</li> <li>• Create a play with a focus on one or more stylistic elements.</li> <li>• Prepare a PowerPoint presentation on the influence of African American musical forms on other cultures during this time period.</li> <li>• Prepare a presentation on the cultural influences of African American literature and music.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support whether or not modern day cultural and societal issues faced by African Americans are more or less important than those faced during the Protest Movement.</li> <li>• Convince the reader that the political and social issues, as presented in early Black periodicals, are still relevant today.</li> <li>• Examine the connection between political movements and African American literature and how one reflects the other.</li> <li>• Debate the effectiveness of the messages of two prominent figures during this period.</li> <li>• Convince the reader of the effects of African American literature on Black Americans.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compose an analysis on the effects of protest literature on the African American population during the Protest Movement.</li> <li>• Journal personal responses to protest literature.</li> <li>• Compare and contrast the personal response evoked in individuals during the Protest Movement.</li> <li>• Compose an analysis of how cultural and societal events influenced Protest Movement works.</li> <li>• Compare and contrast how the various themes in oral tradition are different/similar to those evidenced in text.</li> <li>• Explore the way writers reveal personal views of their lives and cultures while exploring universal themes.</li> <li>• Investigate a writer's individual style and technique.</li> <li>• Compare and contrast the African American music of the Protest Movement to contemporary African American protest music.</li> </ul>

**Goal 3. The student will demonstrate the ability to evaluate the content, organization, and language of texts.**

Objectives – The student will be able to:

- a. State and explain a personal response to a literary text. [CLG 4.1]
- b. Assess the effectiveness of choice of details, organizational pattern, word choice, syntax, use of figurative language, and rhetorical devices in the student’s creative writing.[CLG4.2]

## **UNIT VI: Modern and Contemporary**

### **Goal 1. The student will demonstrate the ability to respond to text by employing personal experience and critical analysis.**

Objectives – The student will be able to:

- a. Employ strategic reading to interpret literary text by:
  - Examining the connection between contemporary political movements and African American literature.
  - Identifying similarities and differences between the characteristics of African American writings and non-African American writings.
  - Analyzing “neutral” African American literature which does not focus on racial issues.
  - Determining the effectiveness of a poet’s use of rhetorical strategies. [CLG 1.2.3]
  - Analyzing the works of contemporary female African American writers.
  - Examining stylistic features characteristic of a particular author or time period. [CLG 1.3.2]
  - Explaining the interrelationship of literary elements such as plot, characterization, setting, point of view, mood, tone, and theme. [CLG 1.2.1-2]
  - Examining the use of language from the current period and its connection to politics and art.
  - Relating issues in a text to cultural, historical, or contemporary contexts. [CLG 1.3.2]
  - Assessing the appropriateness of diction, tone, and structure in relation to purpose, content, and audience. [CLG 1.3.1]
  - Recognizing characteristics of an author’s style and technique from the period.
- b. Characterize African American oral tradition by:
  - Interpreting the role of musical forms such as blues, jazz, and rap and its impact on contemporary literature.
  - Interpreting the emotional impact of songs on its audience.
- c. Evaluate the importance of African American literary criticism unique to the period.

**Goal 2. The student will demonstrate the ability to compose in a variety of modes by developing content, employing specific forms, and selecting language appropriate for a particular audience and purpose.**

Objectives – The student will be able to:

- a. Apply techniques of expository writing. [CLG 2.1.3]
- b. Apply techniques of creative writing focusing on a social issue in a poem, narrative, or oral tradition. [CLG 2.1.2-3]
- c. Compose an oral and visual presentation.
- d. Apply techniques of persuasive writing.

\*Teachers may select from the following suggested Modern and Contemporary Period assignments for Goal 2 which addresses the ability to compose.

Creative	Persuasive	Informative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construct a rap or poem expressing modern and contemporary themes.</li> <li>• Identify a theme from the period and produce a musical score.</li> <li>• Prepare a presentation defining neo-realism, while analyzing African American writings from 1970-present.</li> <li>• Prepare a Power Point presentation tracing the progression of African American women’s writing during the neo-realism period.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support how literature during the neo realism movement reflects the social, cultural, and political changes within society.</li> <li>• Distinguish how art and music are used differently in literature as forms of free expression.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare a graphic tracing the development of black dialect.</li> <li>• Trace the progression of social, political, and cultural events and its impact upon the literature during this time period.</li> <li>• Explain how literature from the Neo-Realism movement articulates the theme of slavery versus freedom.</li> </ul>

**Goal 4. The student will demonstrate the ability to evaluate the content, organization, and language of texts.**

Objectives – The student will be able to:

- a. State and explain a personal response to a literary texts [CLG 4.1.1]
- b. Assess the effectiveness of choice of details, organizational pattern, word choice, syntax, use of figurative language, and rhetorical devices in the student’s creative writing. [CLG 4.2]