

Black Appalachian Voices

US History

CommonGood

This curricular resource was created in collaboration with the Association for Teaching Black History in Kentucky.



Learn to be *human, humane*, and to deliberate for the *common good*.

CommonGood was founded by educators in order to provide learning resources designed for, and with, diverse communities. Our materials support inquiry-based learning and are designed to center the narratives of communities that are underrepresented in the traditional curriculum.

We believe that for students to learn to be human, humane, and to deliberate for the common good, communities need curriculum that reflects their unique character.

We work directly with communities to collaboratively construct curricular materials that facilitate stronger, more meaningful classroom dialogue. We co-create, curate, and customize learning materials with schools, and community partners.

Our work is grounded in the idea that if teachers have resources designed with their students in mind, and that invites them into co-creating learning experiences for their students, teachers will be more emboldened and effective at meeting their students' learning needs.

Together, we can create a more *humanizing pedagogy* for our students.



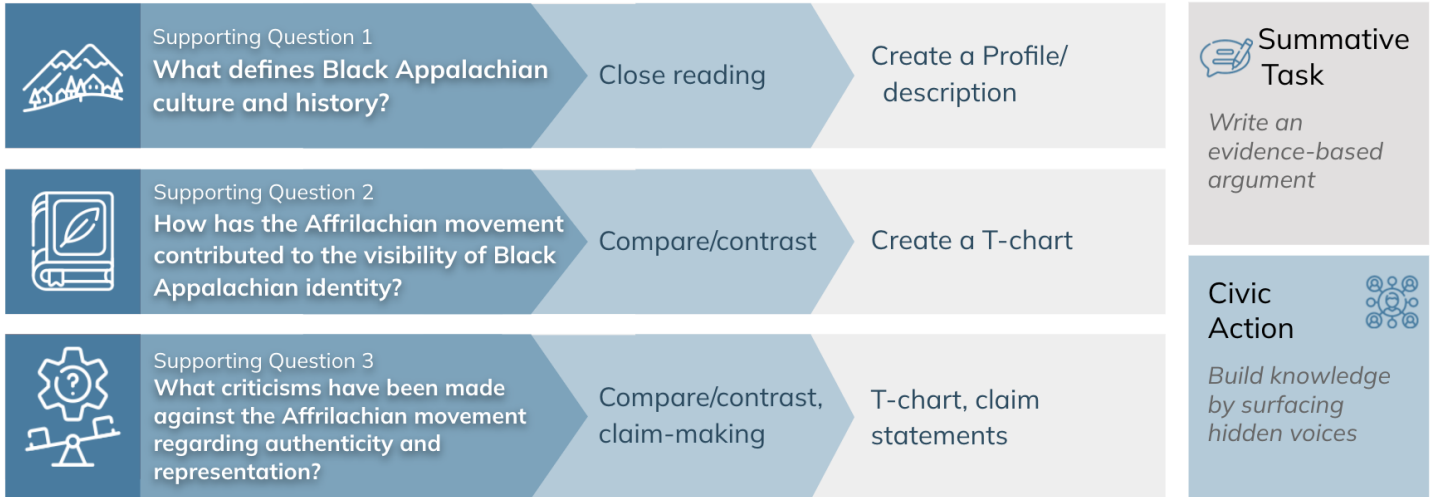
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Compelling Question: **Who can speak for Black Appalachians?**

Students investigate Black Appalachian identity and the Affrilachian movement.



Supporting Question 1: *What defines Black Appalachian culture and history?*

Students explore the foundational aspects of Black Appalachian culture, including factors that led to this diverse community being relatively hidden from prominent narratives about the region.

Formative Tasks	Develop a profile that lists and describes the key characteristics of Black Appalachian culture and history.	Sources: <i>The Conversation, How Black poets and writers gave a voice to 'Affrilachia'</i> Hidden Black History in Appalachia <i>Code Switch, NPR, Stereotypes Of Appalachia</i> Obscure A Diverse Picture Turner & Cabbell, <i>Blacks in Appalachia</i>
Assessment Product	Profile (list, description)	

Supporting Question 2: *How has the Affrilachian movement contributed to the visibility of Black Appalachian identity?*

Students consider the ways in which the Affrilachian movement has highlighted the contributions and experiences of Black Appalachians through literature, art, and activism.

Formative Tasks	Create a T-chart that includes the benefits of the Affrilachian movement in terms of authenticity and representation	Sources: Hidden Black History in Appalachia 'We're here': Affrilachian Poets make visible the African Americans in Appalachia Frank X. Walker, <i>"Affrilachia"</i> Gerald L. Coleman, <i>"bless your heart"</i> Shanna L. Smith, <i>"Rooted"</i> Kelly Norman Ellis, <i>"Raised by Women"</i>
Assessment Product	T-chart	

Norman Jordan, "One eyed critics"



Supporting Question 3: *What criticisms have been made against the Affrilachian movement regarding authenticity and representation?*

[add Section Overview]

Formative Tasks

Create a T-chart that contrasts the criticisms and benefits of the Affrilachian movement

Assessment Product

T-Chart; and claim statements

Sources:

Turner, *The Harlan Renaissance*



Summative Task

Students construct an evidence-based argument that answers the compelling question: *Who can speak for Black Appalachians?*

Summative Task
Assessment Product

Written explanation (e.g., essay)

Alternative Products

Multimedia presentation, socratic seminar notes



Civic Action: Knowledge-Building

Students examine the diverse communities from their region, considering how different groups seek to make diverse experiences more visible.

Civic Issue

Surfacing the hidden history of diverse people

Action Tasks

Share perspective with stakeholders (e.g., a local historical society, the newspaper, etc.)

Sources:

Student-identified, local sources

Description

This inquiry module leads students through an investigation of Black Appalachian identity and the Affrilachian movement. By investigating the compelling question—*Who can speak for Black Appalachians?*—students examine the key elements that define Black Appalachian culture and history, the contributions and impact of the Affrilachian movement, the criticisms regarding authenticity and representation, and the distinctions between representation, cultural appropriation, and cultural appreciation.

This inquiry module reflects the civic theme of *knowledge-building*. In the inquiry, students explore the complexities of regional and cultural identity, the politics of naming, and the importance of self-identification. By evaluating and taking action on the representation and diverse cultural narratives, students develop a deeper understanding of cultural resilience and the significance of amplifying underrepresented voices.

Context Information

Prior to using this module/inquiry, students should have been introduced to the broader history of the Appalachian region and the African American experience in the United States.

Prior to using this inquiry module, students should have had practice in applying critical analysis and source literacy skills, including evaluating primary and secondary sources, constructing evidence-based arguments, and engaging in reflective discussions on cultural identity and representation.

Intellectual Tradition

An intellectual tradition refers to a collection of shared ideas, beliefs, knowledge, and practices that have been passed down over time within a particular academic, cultural, or philosophical community. It encompasses the foundational concepts, theories, and methodologies that shape the way people within that community think, create, and analyze information. Intellectual traditions often influence how individuals approach various disciplines and fields of study, serving as a basis for critical thinking, scholarly inquiry, and the development of new insights.

This module anchors on Black studies, specifically employing the guidance of the Black Historical Consciousness framework, developed by education scholar Lagarrett King.

See the Inquiry Collection's Intellectual Preparation Essay for more information: [Intellectual Prep Essay - Association for Teaching Black History in Kentucky collection](#)

Design Features

Below are four features that ground the designs, and design processes, of CommonGood curricular materials.

Teacher as Co-Curriculum Maker

CommonGood materials invite educators into the co-creation of learning experiences. We believe that teachers excel when given the tools and resources to exercise, and further develop, their pedagogical expertise. As such, our curricular materials are designed to intentionally cultivate teachers' content and pedagogical expertise, while not taking away their power or professional judgment.

Modularity

Materials are designed to be modular in nature, in that we expect teachers to use material to supplement their existing curriculum or combine the different modules to create a core curriculum. We define a quality curricular resource as being purposeful, authentic, adaptable, relevant, and trustworthy. To that end, these materials strive to be clear and concise, avoiding over-prescription in order for teachers to make use of materials in a way that meets their students' needs and learning goals.

Community Co-Design

We believe that for students to learn to be human, humane, and to deliberate for the common good, they need learning experiences that reflect the unique character of their respective communities. We work directly with communities to collaboratively construct curricular materials that facilitate stronger, more meaningful classroom dialogue. This curricular resource was created in collaboration with the Association for Teaching Black History, whose mission is to: "recover the social, historical, and cultural contributions of black Kentuckians and to make these materials readily available to teachers in the Commonwealth, thereby promoting quality K-12 instruction in history. The goal is to ensure an inclusive, respectful experience for all students that provides for their academic success."

Data Collection

Throughout this module, each task and sub-task presents teachers with an opportunity to gather both formal and informal data about their students' learning. The flexibility of the materials allows teachers to respond to the data in order to reinforce skills and content, provide additional scaffolds, or apply other instructional practices.

CommonGood is curious about how designs are working in classrooms. We believe that by understanding what is working, and for whom, everyone's practices improve.

As you enact this module, please share feedback here: [Feedback: Black Appalachian Voices](#)

Subject Areas and Grade Bands

This module is designed for **high school** classrooms, reflecting the standards alignment below.

Teachers can adapt this module for a lower grade band by making modifications that scaffold the sources and tasks.

- For sources, teachers should reduce the number of sources or consider modifications to make readings more age-appropriate. The supporting questions may also be combined to reduce cognitive load.

Suggested Subject Areas

This module was designed for incorporation into a **US History** or **Kentucky** history course. The inquiry module may also be adapted for incorporation into a **civics** course.

Standards and Framework Alignment

This module is aligned to the following prioritized standards. Note: this list is not exhaustive, in that it does not include all standards that are aligned, or could be incorporated, into the resources.

College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework

Dimension 1: Developing Questions & Planning Inquiries

D1.1.9-12. Explain how a question reflects an enduring issue in the field.

Dimension 2: Applying Disciplinary Concepts and Tools

D2.Civ.10.9-12. Analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interests and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights.

D2.Geo.6.9-12. Evaluate the impact of human settlement activities on the environmental and cultural characteristics of specific places and regions.

Dimension 3: Evaluating Sources and Using Evidence

D3.1.9-12. Gather relevant information from multiple sources representing a wide range of views while using the origin, authority, structure, context, and corroborative value of the sources to guide the selection.

Dimension 4: Communicating Conclusions & Taking Informed Action

D4.1.9-12. Construct arguments using precise and knowledgeable claims, with evidence from multiple sources, while acknowledging counterclaims and evidentiary weaknesses.

Kentucky Academic Standards for Social Studies

Questioning

HS.UH.I.Q.2 Generate supporting questions to develop knowledge, understanding and/or thinking relative to key concepts in U.S. history framed by compelling questions.

Investigating Using Disciplinary Concepts

HS.UH.KH.1 Examine how Kentuckians influence and are influenced by major national developments in U.S. history from 1877-present.

HS.G.KGE.1 Explain how Kentuckians view sense of place differently based on cultural and environmental characteristics of varying regions of the state.

Using Evidence

HS.UH.I.UE.1 Evaluate the credibility of multiple sources representing a variety of perspectives relevant to compelling and/or supporting questions in U.S. history.

Communicating Conclusions

HS.UH.I.CC.1 Engage in meaningful discussions/democratic discourse and respect diverse opinions

relevant to compelling and/or supporting questions in U.S. history.

Key Ideas & Essential Understandings

- Representation of cultural identity is a complex process that involves both self-identification and external perceptions.
- The Affrilachian movement has played a crucial role in highlighting the cultural contributions and experiences of Black Appalachians.
- The movement has both supporters and critics, with debates centered around issues of authenticity, representation, and cultural appropriation.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to...

- **describe** the socio-historical context of the Black Appalachian community and its contributions to broader narratives
- **evaluate** the criticisms and benefits of the Affrilachian movement in terms of authenticity and representation.
- **construct** an evidence-based argument in response to the compelling question.

Black Historical Consciousness

This inquiry module is based upon the following theme from the Black Historical Consciousness framework by Lagarrett King (2020).

BLACK HISTORICAL CONTENTION: Black historical contention is the recognition that all Black histories are not positive. Black histories are complex and histories that are difficult should not be ignored. Additionally, the principles highlight the differences in Black history. Black people were not a monolithic group; they had various ideas of how to solve issues.

Civic Applications

Every CommonGood module provides opportunities for students to demonstrate their transferable knowledge and skills by connecting learning to an authentic civic issue. Civic Action tasks are modeled after the C3 Framework's *Taking Informed Action* indicators, where students are expected to:

- (1) **understand** the issues evident from the inquiry in a larger and/or current context;
- (2) **assess** the relevance and impact of the issues; and
- (3) **take action** in ways that allow students to demonstrate agency in a real-world context.

This inquiry has a suggested informed action task. Teachers and students are encouraged to revise or adjust the task to reflect student interests, the topic/issue chosen for the task, time considerations, etc. Taking informed action can manifest in a variety of forms and in a range of venues. They can be small actions (e.g., informed conversations) to the big (e.g., organizing a protest). These actions may take place in the classroom, the school, the local community, across the state, and around the world. **What's important is that students are authentically applying the inquiry to an out-of-classroom context.**

CIVIC THEME This module's Civic Action task theme is **knowledge-building**. When students engage in knowledge-building civic action, they seek truth and aim to increase access to accurate information, for themselves and others. In the inquiry, students investigate the representation and ownership of Black Appalachian identity, the impact of the

Affrilachian movement, and the distinctions between cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation. In the Civic Action task, students apply their knowledge to take action by designing an initiative to amplify the voices of an underrepresented or misunderstood community, drawing parallels to the Affrilachian movement's efforts. By doing so, students surface hidden voices and hidden histories, as well as scrutinize the legacy of cultural representation in modern contexts.

Pacing

The needed class periods to teach this module will vary depending on teachers’ decisions around enactment. The structure of the module’s different individual sections is designed to allow for teachers to condense learning into one class period or expand into multiple.

Course Sequencing

Below is a table that demonstrates an example course sequence that includes this module. The emphasis reflects a curricular sequence of inquiry modules that explore [TOPIC].

State/US History Sequence

Module 1	Module 2	Module 3	Module 4	Module 5	Module 6
Black abolitionism	Horse Racing & Jim Crow	Sundown Towns	Intersectionality & Civil Rights Movement	Folk Music	Black Appalachia & “Affrilachia”

Modifications

As teachers are positioned to be co-curriculum makers, they are encouraged to adapt this inquiry module to meet the needs and interests of their students. Furthermore, teachers may decide to build out additional supporting questions and tasks to scaffold and/or reinforce learning. Below are some suggestions to consider when designing instruction.

For students who need a challenge

- Removing Embedded Scaffolds:
 - Encourage students to independently identify and select primary and secondary sources related to Black Appalachian history and the Affrilachian movement, rather than providing a curated list.
 - Remove detailed instructions for creating the annotated timeline, infographic, T-chart, and evidence-based claims, allowing students to determine the best approach and format.
- Providing Additional Sources or Longer Excerpts:
 - Provide access to more comprehensive academic articles, books, and documentaries on Black Appalachian culture and the Affrilachian movement.
 - Include longer excerpts from key texts, such as works by Affrilachian poets and writers, to deepen students' engagement with the material.
- Opportunities for Students’ Decision-Making or Independent Research:
 - Allow students to choose a specific aspect of Black Appalachian culture or history to explore in greater depth, such as the role of music, storytelling, or civil rights activism.
 - Encourage students to conduct independent research projects that investigate contemporary issues facing Black Appalachian communities and propose solutions or advocacy strategies.

For students who need supports

- Specific Task Scaffolds:
 - Provide claim stems for the argumentative essay, such as "One key element that defines Black Appalachian culture is...", "The Affrilachian movement has contributed to the visibility of Black Appalachian identity by...", and "A criticism of the Affrilachian movement is..."
 - Offer sentence starters for the annotated timeline, infographic, T-chart, and evidence-based claims to help students organize their thoughts and ideas.
- Source Adaptations:
 - Further excerpt and annotate primary and secondary sources to highlight key information and provide context.
 - Provide simplified summaries or visual aids to accompany more complex texts, ensuring students can grasp the main ideas.
- Providing Additional Sources that Help Scaffold Sources or Can Replace Featured Sources:
 - Include additional sources that offer overviews or introductory information on Black Appalachian history and culture, such as short articles, videos, or infographics.
 - Offer alternative sources that present the same information in a more accessible format, such as children's books or educational websites.
- Graphic Organizers:
 - Provide graphic organizers for each formative task, such as timelines, Venn diagrams, and T-charts, to help students visually organize information.
 - Use concept maps to help students connect different elements of Black Appalachian culture and history.

Compelling Question: **Who can speak for Black Appalachians?**

Supporting Question 1: What defines Black Appalachian culture and history?

Introduction to Black Appalachia studies

Supporting Question and Task

In the first supporting question—*What defines Black Appalachian culture and history?*—students explore the foundational aspects of Black Appalachian culture, including factors that led to this diverse community being relatively hidden from prominent narratives about the region. The formative performance task has students develop a profile that lists and describes the key characteristics of Black Appalachian culture and history.

INQUIRY OPENER Have a discussion about the terms *representation*, *(cultural) appreciation*, and *appropriation*.

- **Alternative:** Analyze a portion of one of the Affrilachian poems (from Supporting Question 2), identifying key ideas/themes.

HILLBILLY ELEGY Several sources mention *Hillbilly Elegy*, a book written by former-Ohio Senator, Vice Presidential nominee (2024) J.D. Vance. While the book found success (and was adapted for a film), many in Appalachia criticized the book as universally condemning the region and ignoring systemic challenges. Likewise, Vance’s family was from the region, but was not himself from there (being instead from Middletown, Ohio—in-between Cincinnati and Dayton, Ohio, but not in Appalachia). In fact, many regional scholars released a response to Vance’s book, *Appalachian Reckoning: A Region Responds to Hillbilly Elegy*.

Task Product

Develop a profile that lists and describes the key characteristics of Black Appalachian culture and history.

Alternative Products: written description, list

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to...

- **identify** significant events and characteristics of Black Appalachian histories.

Instructional Guidance

Teachers may enact this section using the following procedures.



1. **INQUIRY OPENING DISCUSSION:** *representation vs. appropriation vs. appreciation*
 - Facilitate a discussion about the terms (cultural) representation, appropriation, and appreciation.
 - Use the definitions below to support the discussion, as needed.
 - **Optional:** Read one of the linked articles under “Additional Resources” below to start the discussion.

REPRESENTATION is when a culture, community, or group is depicted or portrayed in a way that is accurate, respectful, and reflective of their true experiences and identities. Oftentimes “representation” is associated with “diversity,” where there is the presence and representation of various identities and backgrounds, but not necessarily in accurate or authentic ways.

APPROPRIATION refers to the act of taking or using something, typically cultural elements or ideas, without permission, often in a way that is inappropriate, disrespectful, or exploitative. This term is commonly used in discussions about *cultural appropriation*, which involves adopting or using elements from another culture without understanding or acknowledging their significance, often resulting in the trivialization of those elements.

APPRECIATION on the other hand, refers to the recognition, understanding, and respectful acknowledgment of the value, significance, and contributions of a culture or its elements. It involves genuinely valuing and learning from cultural practices, traditions, art, music, literature, and other aspects without appropriating or misrepresenting them. *Cultural appreciation* emphasizes cultural exchange, mutual respect, and cross-cultural understanding.

OPENING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS Use these questions to frame discussion or as inspiration to build your own questions.

- What are the differences between the terms?
- Are there examples (real or imagined) that can demonstrate the difference?
- How does someone decide if it’s one or the other? Who decides?



2. **SOURCE ANALYSIS:** *Close reading jigsaw*

- Using one or more of the selected, list ideas, themes, and/or characteristics that help create a profile description of “Black Appalachians.”
- To review readings, ask the following:
 - *How has Appalachia often been depicted?*
 - *Why has there been a ‘single story’ of Appalachia?*
 - *What does your article say? What can you infer?*
- If students read multiple sources, with each new source, compare (or corroborate) the information they contain.
 - *How does the content compare/contrast?*
 - *How does one source deepen understanding of another?*
 - *What is the message of each source and how does the intended message impact the content?*
- *Optional Jigsaw:* assign different readings to students.
- After reading and identifying evidence in their article, students compare and contrast findings.



3. **ORGANIZE:** *Construct a profile of Black Appalachia*

- Using notes from the source analysis, construct a profile that describes the ideas, themes, and/or characteristics of Black Appalachia.
- The task product can take a variety of forms, including, but not limited to: a list, description, diagram, etc.

Sources

The listed sources were selected to help students gain context about Black communities in Appalachia. Teachers should annotate, modify, excerpt, or add/subtract sources based on student interests, needs, and local relevance.

[Source 1.1](#)

(301 words)

The Conversation, How Black poets and writers gave a voice to 'Affrilachia' (2021) In this article excerpt, Professors Alvarez and Hartley discuss how Appalachia has been reduced to a 'single story' that makes Black Appalachians invisible in narratives of the region.

[Source 1.2](#)

(526 words)

Hidden Black History in Appalachia (2019) In this web article, sociologist Jacqueline Clark discusses the relative invisibility of Black Appalachians, as well as how this invisibility impacts understanding of the region.

[Source 1.3](#)

(1020 words)

Code Switch, NPR, Stereotypes Of Appalachia Obscure A Diverse Picture (2014) In this radio program/article, the author discusses this history of Appalachia as a cultural melting pot.

[Source 1.4](#)

(405 words)

Turner & Cabbell, Blacks in Appalachia (1985) *Blacks in Appalachia* is considered to be a central text in understanding Black history in the Appalachian region. In this excerpt, the authors provide a historical overview of the region, comparing the experiences of Black Appalachians with Black Americans from other regions, as well as with white Appalachians.

Additional Resources

Appropriation vs. Appreciation:

- [Cultural appropriation vs cultural appreciation: what's the difference?](#)
- [What is the line between cultural appropriation and appreciation? | USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism](#)

Edward Cabbell Poetry, I, Too, am Appalachian: Resource from PBS. Access from: [I, Too, Am an Appalachian](#)

Context Essay: Althea Webb, Featured Essay - African Americans in Appalachia. *Oxford African American Studies Center.* Access from: [Featured Essay - African Americans in Appalachia](#)

Podcast: Black in Appalachia podcast (and resources). Access from: <https://www.blackinappalachia.org/podcast>

Compelling Question: **Who can speak for Black Appalachians?**

Supporting Question 2: How has the Affrilachian movement contributed to the visibility of Black Appalachian identity?

Origin & Impact of 'Affrilachia'

Supporting Question and Task

After establishing a foundational understanding of Black Appalachian culture and history, students build on these understandings to investigate the impact of cultural movements on community visibility and identity. The second supporting question—*How has the Affrilachian movement contributed to the visibility of Black Appalachian identity?*—asks students to consider the ways in which the Affrilachian movement has highlighted the contributions and experiences of Black Appalachians through literature, art, and activism. This portion of the inquiry was designed to emphasize the importance of cultural movements in shaping public perception and fostering community recognition.

Task Product

Create a T-chart that includes the benefits of the Affrilachian movement in terms of authenticity and representation.

Alternative Products: list, written summary

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to...

- **identify** ways in which the Affrilachian poets have raised awareness of diversity in Appalachia.
- **analyze** poems for key themes and ideas.

Instructional Guidance

Teachers may enact this section using the following procedures.



1. **POEM DISCUSSION:** *“bless your heart”*
 - Using the last stanza of the poem, “bless your heart” by Gerald Coleman, students discuss the meaning (or connotations) of the phrase “bless your heart.”
 - This discussion may include what meanings they associate with the phrase.
 - For more context—and to support inference-making if students are less familiar with the term—provide additional stanzas from the poem.
 - *Note:* explicit language in this poem was blacked out by highlighting the text in black. Teachers may elect to excerpt portions of the poem, black out the current text, or remove the highlighting.



2. **CONTEXTUALIZE:** *Growth of 'Affrilachia'*

- Using one (or both) of the two provided sources, students list evidence from the text that helps answer the supporting question:
 - *How has the Affrilachian movement contributed to the visibility of Black Appalachian identity?*
- To deepen the analysis, ask the following questions:
 - *Using information from Supporting Question 1, in what context did the Affrilachian movement emerge?*
 - *How does this context impact this source's content or meaning?*



3. **POEM ANALYSIS:** *Affrilachia Poetry*

- Read Frank X. Walker's poem, "Affrilachia."
 - Individually or in groups, annotate the poem, identifying questions, ideas, events/experiences, or other notable elements.
 - Use the Poetry Analysis questions in the Table below.

POETRY ANALYSIS Use these questions to frame analysis or as inspiration to build your own questions.

- Who is the poet? What is their connection to Appalachia?
- What themes, concepts, or ideas are central to the poem?
- What story are they trying to tell about themselves? About the region? About Kentucky?
- Are there any common themes across the poems?



4. **ORGANIZE:** *List of benefits*

- Add notes/ideas to a two-column T-chart, with the first column labeled "Benefits" of the Affrilachia movement.
- Consider common themes in the poems and how they share perspectives that are beneficial.

➤ For a scaffold, use a two-column chart: [Black Appalachia SQ2.3 Graphic Organizers](#)

Sources

The listed sources were selected to allow students to see the cultural impact of the Affrilachia movement, as well as analyze a handful of poems from the Affrilachian poets. Teachers should annotate, modify, excerpt, or add/subtract sources based on student interests, needs, and local relevance.

[Source 2.1](#)
(480 words)

[Hidden Black History in Appalachia \(2019\)](#) In this web article, sociologist Jacqueline Clark discusses the relative invisibility of Black Appalachians, as well as how this invisibility impacts understanding of the region.

[Source 2.2](#)
(759 words)

['We're here': Affrilachian Poets make visible the African Americans in Appalachia \(n.d.\)](#) This article from the University of Kentucky, includes perspectives from several of the 'Affrilachian poets,' including Frank X. Walker, who originated the term.

Source 2.3 (123 words)	Frank X. Walker, “Affrilachia” (2018) Poem from Frank X. Walker, who originated the term ‘Affrilachia,’ featured in <i>Black Bone: 25 Years of the Affrilachian Poets</i> .
Source 2.4 (288 words)	Gerald L. Coleman, “bless your heart” (2018) Poem from Affrilachian poet, featured in <i>Black Bone: 25 Years of the Affrilachian Poets</i> .
Source 2.5 (210 words)	Shanna L. Smith, “Rooted” (2018) Poem from Affrilachian poet, featured in <i>Black Bone: 25 Years of the Affrilachian Poets</i> .
Source 2.6 (171 words)	Kelly Norman Ellis, “Raised by Women” (2018) Poem from Affrilachian poet, featured in <i>Black Bone: 25 Years of the Affrilachian Poets</i> .
Source 2.7 (44 words)	Norman Jordan, “One eyed critics” (2018) Poem from Affrilachian poet, featured in <i>Black Bone: 25 Years of the Affrilachian Poets</i> .

Additional Resources

Web Archive—Description of Affrilachian Poets: Access from:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20150427215219/http://www.theaffrilachianpoets.com/history.html>.

Journal Article: Taylor, K. T. (2011). Naming Affrilachia: Toward rhetorical ecologies of identity performance in Appalachia. *Enculturation*, 10, 21.

Compelling Question: **Who can speak for Black Appalachians?**

Supporting Question 3: What criticisms have been made against the Affrilachian movement regarding authenticity and representation?

Challenges to the 'Affrilachia' Label

Supporting Question and Task

After students establish a foundational understanding of Black Appalachian culture and history, and investigate the impact of the Affrilachian movement on community visibility and identity, students build on these understandings to critically assess the movement's reception and the debates surrounding it. The third supporting question—*What criticisms have been made against the Affrilachian movement regarding authenticity and representation?*—asks students to consider the critiques that have emerged about the movement, including concerns about its inclusivity, potential for cultural appropriation, and the accuracy of its representation of Black Appalachian experiences. This portion of the inquiry was designed to foster critical thinking and encourage students to engage with multiple perspectives on cultural movements.

Task Product

Complete the second half of the T-chart, detailing criticisms.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to...

- **evaluate** criticisms of the Affrilachian movement.
- **construct** evidence-based claims about the legacy of Black jockeys.

Instructional Guidance

Teachers may enact this section using the following procedures.



1. **SOURCE ANALYSIS:** *Sourcing*
 - After reviewing the “Benefits” of the Affrilachia movement from the previous Supporting Question, read a criticism of Walker and the term “Affrilachia” in the excerpt from *Harlan Renaissance*.
 - Complete this analysis individually, in groups, or as a whole class.

SOURCE ANALYSIS QUESTIONS Use these questions to frame analysis or as inspiration to build your own questions.

- Who did this source come from? What are his credentials?
- In what ways does Turner challenge the ideas surfaced in Supporting Question 2?

- What does the source say/contain?
- What is their argument – or – what are they trying to prove?
- To what extent would Turner say “Affrilachia” is appropriation, appreciation, or representation? Why?
- To what extent do YOU think it is appropriation, appreciation, or representation?



2. **ORGANIZE:** *List of criticisms*

- Add notes/ideas to the second column of the previous two-column T-chart (labeled “criticisms”)
- Consider common themes in the *Harlan Renaissance* excerpt with the sources from the previous two sections.



3. **Optional: CLAIM-MAKING:** *Collaboratively build a collection of evidence-based claims*

- Using sources from across the inquiry module, create multiple claim statements that address the compelling question.
- After creating a collection of claims, individually or in groups, prioritize the claims by ranking the claims (or selecting their top 3-4 claims) according to how strong they believe the claim and evidence are.
 - For the top three claims, write why they think it is a strong claim and evidence pairing.
 - This justification should connect directly back to the claim/evidence, but also allows students to express a subjective opinion.

Sources

The listed source was selected to show a particularly targeted criticism of the Affrilachia cultural movement. Teachers should annotate, modify, excerpt, or add/subtract sources based on student interests, needs, and local relevance.

[Source 3.1](#)

(976 words)

Turner, *The Harlan Renaissance: Stories of Black Life in Appalachian Coal Towns* (2021) In this excerpt from scholar William Turner, he criticizes the label of ‘Affrilachia.’ In short, he believes the label and the products of the ‘Affrilachian poets’ don’t consistently represent the experiences of Black Appalachians.

Compelling Question: Who can speak for Black Appalachians?



Construct an Evidence-based Argument

Compelling Question and Task

Throughout the inquiry, students examined the “Affrilachia” cultural movement, considering its relationship to Black Appalachian studies, as well as reviewing both its benefits and criticisms through the lenses of appropriation, appreciation, and representation.

In the Summative Task, students communicate their knowledge, apply disciplinary skills, and construct evidence-based claims using multiple sources to create an argument responding to the compelling question: *Who can speak for Black Appalachians?*

Task Product

Students construct an evidence-based argumentative essay.

ALTERNATIVE PRODUCTS Students’ arguments could take a variety of forms, including a multimedia presentation, a Socratic seminar, or other structure that authentically communicates their informed perspective.

SCAFFOLD OPTION Using the Student Outcomes below, student critique each response, using evidence from the sources to support or challenge the argument

Potential Responses

Students’ arguments should reflect a range of possible responses, including one or more of the following:

- *Only those who have lived experiences as Black Appalachians should have the authority to represent and define the community's cultural identity.*
- *Representation should be open to anyone who has a deep understanding and respect for Black Appalachian culture, regardless of their personal background.*
- *The authority to represent and define the community should come from a collective consensus among Black Appalachians themselves.*
- *Scholars and cultural historians, irrespective of their own heritage, can contribute to the representation and definition of Black Appalachian identity, provided their*
- *work is done collaboratively with the community.*

Civic Action: Whose story should be told?

Apply Learning to a New Context through Informed Civic Action

Students have the opportunity to take informed action by considering the complexities of regional and cultural identity through the lens of the term 'Affrilachian' and its contested usage. Students can use what they learned in this inquiry module to consider how they can make diverse experiences of their communities more visible.

Civic Theme: *Knowledge-Building*

This module's Civic Action task theme is *knowledge-building*. When students engage in knowledge-building civic action, they seek truth and aim to increase access to accurate information, for themselves and others. In the inquiry, students investigate the representation and ownership of Black Appalachian identity, the impact of the Affrilachian movement, and the distinctions between cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation. In the Civic Action task, students apply their knowledge to take action by designing an initiative to amplify the voices of an underrepresented or misunderstood community, drawing parallels to the Affrilachian movement's efforts. By doing so, students surface hidden voices and hidden histories, as well as scrutinize the legacy of cultural representation in modern contexts.

Understand

Students examine the diverse communities from their region, considering how different groups seek to make diverse experiences more visible.

KENTUCKY DIVERSITY In Kentucky, there are several organizations whose mission is to make visible and celebrate cultural and regional diversity. Below are a few examples to get started.

- [Vibrant Communities—Kentucky Arts Council](#)
- [Kentucky Heritage Council](#)
- [Kentucky Chinese American Association](#)

Assess

Evaluate the contributions and impact of the group (or cultural movement) in promoting cultural diversity and visibility. Students should take into consideration issues related to authenticity and representation within the work cultural movements and broader cultural contexts.

Take Action

Determine ways to elevate or contribute to their work. This could mean sharing your own experiences, if they represent a community to which you belong, sharing the organization with others, or contacting them for more information about how you can support their work in making communities' experiences visible.

Supporting Question 1 Sources

Source 1.1

Alvarez, A.A. & Hartley, J. (2021 April 1). How Black poets and writers gave a voice to 'Affrilachia'. *The Conversation*. Web article.

In this article excerpt, Professors Alvarez and Hartley discuss how Appalachia has been reduced to a 'single story' that makes Black Appalachians invisible in narratives of the region. (Additional excerpts from this source about Black Appalachian's relative invisibility are included in Source 2.1).

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Appalachia, in the popular imagination, stubbornly remains poor and white.

Open a dictionary and you'll see Appalachian described as a "native or inhabitant of Appalachia, especially one of predominantly Scotch-Irish, English, or German ancestry."

Read J.D. Vance's "Hillbilly Elegy" and you'll enter a world that's white, poor and uncultured, with few, if any, people of color.

But as Black poets and scholars living in Appalachia, we know that this simplified portrayal obscures a world that is far more complex. It has always been a place filled with diverse inhabitants and endowed with a lush literary history. Black writers like Effie Waller Smith have been part of this cultural landscape as far back as the 19th century. Today, Black writers and poets continue to explore what it means to be Black and from Appalachia. [...]

Upending a 'single story' of Appalachia

In the 1960s, the Appalachian Regional Commission officially defined the Appalachian region as an area encompassing counties in Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia and the entirety of West Virginia. The designation brought national attention – and calls for economic equity – to an impoverished region that had largely been ignored.

When President Lyndon B. Johnson declared his "war on poverty" in 1964, it was with Appalachia in mind. However, as pernicious as the effects of poverty have been for white rural Appalachians, they've been worse for Black Appalachians, thanks to the long-term repercussions of slavery, Jim Crow laws, racial terrorism and a dearth of regional welfare programs.

Black Appalachians have long been, as poet and historian Edward J. Cabbell put it, "a neglected minority within a neglected minority."

Nonetheless, throughout the 20th century, Black Appalachian writers like Nikki Giovanni and Norman Jordan continued to write and wrestle with what it meant to be both Black and Appalachian.

Source 1.2

Clark, J. (2019). Hidden Black History in Appalachia. The Society Pages (University of Minnesota). Web article.

In this web article, sociologist Jacqueline Clark discusses the relative invisibility of Black Appalachians, as well as how this invisibility impacts understanding of the region.

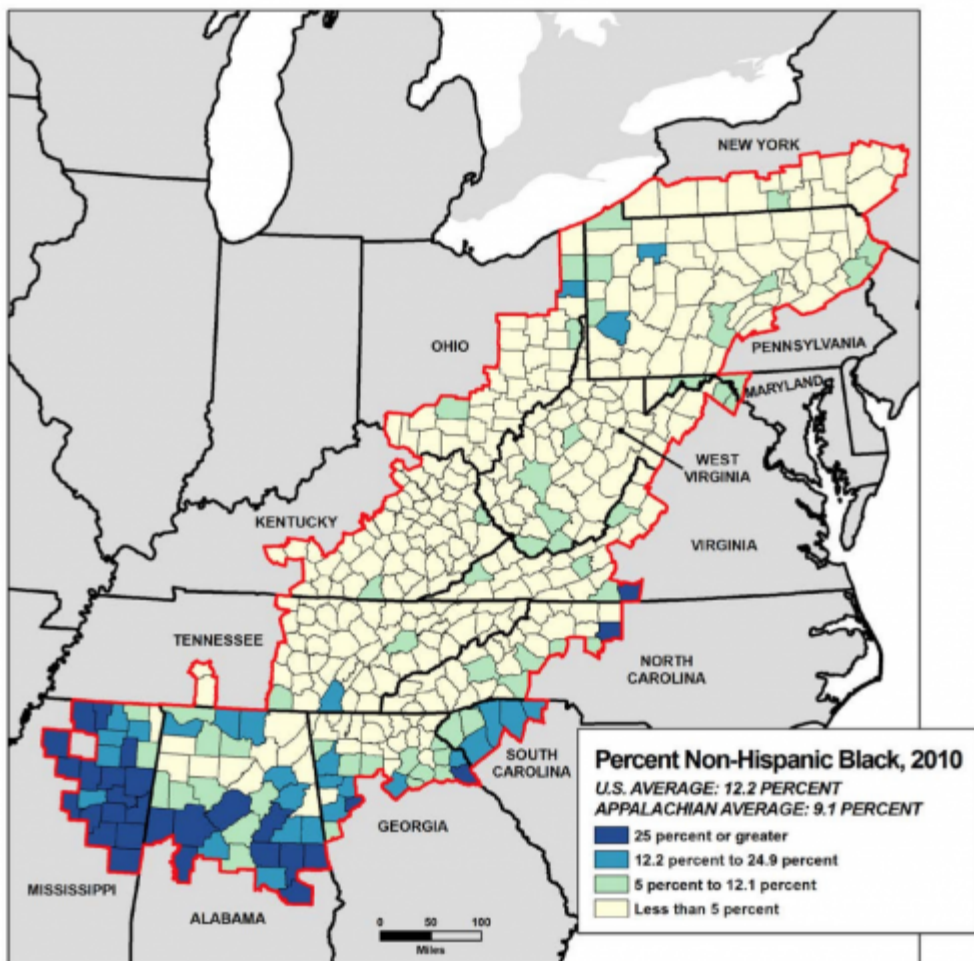
CC BY-NC-SA 3.0. Available at: [The Society Pages](#).

In February of 1926, Carter G. Woodson helped establish “Negro History Week” to educate teachers, students, and community members about the accomplishments and experiences of Blacks in the United States. A native of Virginia, and the son of formerly enslaved parents, Woodson earned a PhD in history from Harvard University, and dedicated much of his life to writing and teaching about information largely omitted from textbooks and other historical accounts. Although Woodson died in 1950, his legacy continues, as “Negro History Week” eventually became “Black History Month” in 1976.

Nearly a century later, Black History is still at risk of erasure, especially in (once) geographically isolated areas, like Appalachia. The standard narrative that Scots-Irish “settled” Appalachia starting in the 18th century hides the fact that there were often violent interactions between European immigrants and indigenous people in the region. Even in the 1960s when authors like Michael Harrington and Harry Caudill reported on Appalachian mountain folk, the people were depicted as Scots-Irish descendants, known for being poor, lazy, and backward, representations that are reinforced in contemporary accounts of the region, such as J. D. Vance’s wildly popular memoir *Hillbilly Elegy*.

Accounts like these offer stereotypical understandings of poor Appalachian whites, and at the same time, they ignore the presence and experiences of Blacks in the region. Work by social scientists William Turner and Edward Cabell, as well as “Affrilachia” poet Frank X. Walker, and historian Elizabeth Catte attempts to remedy this problem, but the dominant narrative of the region centers still on poor whites and their lives.

Work I have been doing documenting the life experiences of Leslie [“Les”] Whittington, a native of Western North Carolina and a descendent of a formerly enslaved people, has opened my eyes to a historical narrative I never fully knew. African Americans, for instance, accounted for approximately 10% of the Appalachian region’s population by 1860, and many were enslaved, including Les’ grandfather, John Myra Stepp. Yet, their stories are glaringly missing from the dominant narrative of the region.



Map Title: Percent of Population in the Appalachian Region That Is Black Alone, not Hispanic, 2010
 Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Decennial Census.

Source: Appalachian Regional Commission Census Data Overview

So too are the stories of Blacks living in Appalachia today. Even though the number of African American residents has increased in some parts of Appalachia, while the white population has decreased, little is formally documented about their lives. That absence has led scholar William Turner, to refer to Blacks in Appalachia as a “racial minority within a cultural minority.” Not only does erasing African Americans from the past and present of Appalachia provide an inaccurate view of the region, but it also minimizes the suffering of poor Blacks, who relative to their white counterparts, are and have been the poorest of an impoverished population.

Woodson established “Negro History Week” to document and share the history of Blacks in the United States, recognizing that, “If a race has no history, it has no worthwhile tradition, it becomes a negligible factor in the thought of the world, and it stands in danger of being exterminated.” The history of African Americans in the Appalachian region is largely absent from the area’s official record, and without making it part of the dominant narrative, we risk losing that history.

Source 1.3

Baird, S. (2014). Stereotypes Of Appalachia Obscure A Diverse Picture. *Code Switch*, NPR.

In this radio program/article, the author discusses this history of Appalachia as a cultural melting pot.

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When policymakers and news organizations need a snapshot of rural poverty in the United States, Appalachia — the area of land stretching from the mountains of southern New York through northern Alabama — is the default destination of choice. Poverty tours conducted by presidents from Lyndon Johnson to Richard Nixon, almost every member of the Kennedy clan, and religious leaders like Jesse Jackson have all painted the portrait of Appalachia the same way: poor, backward, and white.

While the economic despair and major health epidemics are an unsettling reality for the region, a glaring omission has been made from the "poverty porn" images fed to national audiences for generations: Appalachia's people of color.

"When we tell the truth about Appalachia, it's only then that we tell the real story about who we are," said Aaron Thompson, executive vice president and chief academic officer for the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education.

Growing up as an African-American outside Manchester, Ky. — a coal town home to the lowest per capita income in the state, according to US census data — Thompson has become one of the few outspoken role models for young people of color in his mountain home. "There's no one story of Appalachia, no one voice. It's time for everyone to feel like they can speak up, like their story is important."

The region's population growth is increasingly fueled by minorities, who have composed almost half of Appalachia's new residents (42 percent) over the past three decades and helped fuel awareness about the heterogeneous reality of mountain towns.

Appalachia's history as a mountainous melting pot dates to before the Revolutionary War, when the region's misty crags were an almost impenetrable Western frontier. Indian nations, including Cherokee and Shawnee, were the first to inhabit the area. A major wave of European settlers — primarily of Irish and Scottish descent — arrived via federal land grants in the early 18th century. African-Americans, both free and enslaved, arrived at this time as well. All these groups played key roles in shaping and molding the cultural traditions of the region.

African-Americans made up more than 10 percent of the region's population by 1860, with Appalachia's ethnic profile shifting dramatically as multiracial families boomed. (Later, those with blended Scots-Irish, Native American and African-American roots would come to be known as Melungeons.)

In the years following the Civil War, former slaves migrated north to the region to escape the persecution of the Deep South. In Eastern Kentucky, Berea College opened its doors in 1867 to students of all races, with the first year's class totaling 187 students: 96 African-American and 91 white.

The coal crescendo during the early part of the 20th century brought in even greater diversity, with tens of thousands of Hungarian, Italian and Eastern European immigrants flocking to the mountains to cash in on booming mining towns. After the Great Depression, many of these immigrants — along with African-American families — moved to urban centers such as Cincinnati and Detroit in pursuit of more stable and less backbreaking work. These pioneers were some of the first to create "urban Appalachian" enclaves, spreading the traditions of an isolated region to metropolitan areas across the Midwest.

This fusion is most obvious in Appalachia's signature food and music. As Rachel Ellen Simon describes in an article for

The Appalachian Voice, the African akonting was a precursor to the banjo — the instrument now synonymous with the region's plucky, twangy bluegrass sound. Spoonbread, chowchow and succotash all point to both African and Native American influences and are celebrated as culinary specialties of the area.

Despite a long history of ethnic diversity, racism continues to be a problem in the region, particularly as Hispanic communities grow larger. According to reports from the Appalachian Research Commission, African-Americans remain the region's largest minority (bucking a national trend) and make up about 9 percent of Appalachian residents. But Rachel Ellen Simon calculated that the region's Latino population — which composed just over 4 percent of Appalachians in 2010 — has increased by more than 240 percent over the past 20 years. Still, the stigma associated with transient migrant workers remains.

"Even though Hispanic families have been here for decades, they're definitely still unfairly targeted," said Megan King, a photographer whose work captures portraits of Latino families in and around Johnson City, Tenn. "When I was at the police station one day photographing a couple of [Hispanic] cops, a call came in and said that two Latino men were trying to steal a police car. It was the officers I was photographing — it was their police car."

From the beginning, the topography of Appalachia has proved to be a double-edged sword. The hard-to-manuever hills and valleys have created a wholly unique, blended culture and communities with remarkable closeness, but also a level of outsider skepticism and self-imposed isolation that have plagued progress in many areas, from economic growth to health care.

"People in Appalachia are more concerned about kinship than skin color," said Thompson. "When my high school was integrated, it was a struggle the first couple of years. By senior year, I was class president and prom king. That initial fear of the unfamiliar — whether it's people of another race or any outsiders— looms large."

While there still is a way to go, a less whitewashed portrait of Appalachia seems to be gaining a foothold nationally, thanks in part to the efforts of scholars and grass-roots organizations. The term "Affrilachia" — a portmanteau of "African" and "Appalachian" coined by Kentucky poet laureate Frank X Walker — has brought together a loose collective of multiracial artists previously excluded from conversations about what it means to be an Appalachian. The word is now an entry in the Oxford American Dictionary, second edition. In 2005, as Simon has noted, Appalachian State University professor Fred Hay successfully petitioned the Library of Congress to change the definition of Appalachians from "Mountain Whites" to "Appalachians (People)."

That movement toward a more holistic regional picture may be a strong step toward tackling the larger societal ills. "In order to fix the issues of the region," said Thompson, "we first have to recognize we have a diverse bunch of people living there."

Source 1.4

Turner, W. H., & Cabbell, E. J. (1985). *Blacks in Appalachia*.

Blacks in Appalachia is considered to be a central text in understanding Black history in the Appalachian region. Historian (and author) William Turner's book Harlan Renaissance is the primary text for Supporting Question 3. In this excerpt, the authors provide a historical overview of the region, comparing the experiences of Black Appalachians with Black Americans from other regions, as well as with white Appalachians.

Note: In-text citations were removed for ease of reading.

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As black slavery became entrenched in the rest of the South, with the complicity of the Cherokees, most blacks in Appalachia were removed to the plantation region. Some remained with white mountain masters, and a few remained as the captives of the last remaining Cherokee planters. In 1838, when the Cherokees were removed from their homelands in the Great Smoky Mountains of the Carolinas, Tennessee, and Georgia, nearly a thousand black slaves accompanied them on the infamous Trail of Tears. This group comprised Oklahoma's slave population even before statehood. The blacks who originally inhabited northwest South Carolina (Spartanburg County) and the central and northeast corridors between Birmingham and Chattanooga that extend north to the Cumberland Gap of Tennessee, Virginia, and Kentucky were also slaves before these states came into being. Blacks in the Appalachian region thus predated the arrival of black slaves in the Cotton South, who had arrived en masse by the time of the first census in 1790. [...]

Just as blacks had been the axis of the agrarian wheel, in Appalachia they became (between 1870 and 1930) the vanguard of a working class with industrial experience in logging, in steel, and in coal and salt mining. Blacks in the Deep South were by and large still bound to the land-peonage system when the Great Depression realigned the booming economy of industrial Appalachia. The region, at the turn of the century, seemed no different to southern blacks seeking refuge from the ravages of post-Reconstruction agricultural methods (economic opportunity) and the doubly oppressive racial etiquette of the lower South. [...] While Appalachia did not confront blacks with a culture of segregation that was distinctive by comparison with the Cotton Belt South, it was no Eden free from racial prejudice and economic discrimination. The situation led blacks in Appalachia to assimilate aspects of (white) culture and society as they accommodated themselves to the prevailing ethic of racial subordination. There subsequently emerged a subsociety of Black America far more visible than it was fluid and as integrated as it was disruptive. It showed a peculiar mixture of southern black folkways, a distinctive and unique cultural heritage both with rural dimensions and with the social features of industrialism. Black Appalachians have thus acquired a quality of distinctive ethnicity (eth-class) that mediated their transformation as they (and their white counterparts) moved from rural tradition-bound countryside to a region that was tied to, yet peripheral to, the dominant modern industrial society.

Supporting Question 2 Sources

Source 2.1

Alvarez, A.A. & Hartley, J. (2021 April 1). How Black poets and writers gave a voice to 'Affrilachia'. *The Conversation*. Web article.

In this excerpt, the authors discuss the ways in which the Affrilachian cultural movement has helped dispel the 'single story' of Appalachia, demonstrating the rich, cultural traditions of the region. (Additional excerpts from this source about Black Appalachian's relative invisibility are included in Source 1.1).

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In 1991, after a poetry reading that included Black poets from the Appalachian region, Kentucky poet Frank X. Walker decided to give a name to his experience as a Black Appalachian: "Affrilachian." It subsequently became the title of a poetry collection he released in 2000.

By coining the terms "Affrilachia" and "Affrilachian," Walker sought to upend assumptions about who is part of Appalachia. Writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has spoken of the danger of the single story. When "one story becomes the only story," she said in a 2009 TED Talk, "it robs people of dignity."

Rather than accepting the single story of Appalachia as white and poor, Walker wrote a new one, forging a path for Black Appalachian artists.

It caught on.

In 2001, a number of Affrilachian poets – including Walker, Kelly Norman Ellis, Crystal Wilkinson, Ricardo Nazario y Colon, Gerald Coleman, Paul C. Taylor and Shanna Smith – were the subjects of the documentary "Coal Black Voices." In 2007, the journal Pluck! was founded out of University of Kentucky with the goal of promoting a diverse range of Affrilachian writers at the national level. In 2016, the anthology "Black Bone: 25 Years of Affrilachian Poetry" was published.

A unique style emerges

Roughly 9% of Appalachian residents are Black, and this renders many of the region's Black people "hypervisible," meaning they stick out in primarily white spaces.

Many Affrilachian poems explore this dynamic, along with the tension of participating in activities, such as hunting, that are stereotyped as being of interest only to white Americans. Food traditions, family and the Appalachian landscape are also central themes of the work.

Affrilachian poet Chanda Feldman's poem "Rabbit" touches on all of these elements.

Her poem shifts from the speaker hunting for rabbits with their father to the hunt as a larger metaphor for being Black in Appalachia – and thus seen as both predator and prey:

*He told me
of my great uncle who, Depression era,
loaned white townspeople venison
and preserves. Later stood off*

*the same ones with a gun
when they wanted his property.*

An Affrilachian future

We reached out to Walker and asked him to reflect on the term, 30 years after he coined it.

Walker wrote back that it created a “solid foundation” that “encouraged a more diverse view of the region and its history” while increasing “opportunities for others to carve out their own space” – including other poets, musicians and visual artists of color throughout the region.

In her book “Sister Citizen,” journalist and academic Melissa Harris-Perry writes, “Citizens want and need more than a fair distribution of resources: they also desire meaningful recognition of their humanity and uniqueness.”

Affrilachian artistry and identity allows Appalachia to be fully seen as the diverse and culturally rich region that it is, bringing to the forefront those who have historically been pushed to the margins, out of mind and out of sight.

Source 2.2

Umar, A. (n.d.). 'We're here': Affrilachian Poets make visible the African Americans in Appalachia. University of Kentucky, College of Arts & Sciences. University publication.

This article from the University of Kentucky, includes perspectives from several of the 'Affrilachian poets,' including Frank X. Walker, who originated the term.

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In 1991, South Carolina native Nikky Finney came to Lexington to perform at a poetry reading titled, “The Best of Southern Writing.”

Before Finney, who is black, was added to the list of performers, the event was called, “The Best of Appalachian Writing.”

Danville native Frank X Walker, a UK English professor and former Poet Laureate of Kentucky, was conflicted about the name change.

He wondered why this change was made and found that the definition of Appalachians at the time was, “white residents of the mountainous regions of Appalachia.”

Moved by this, he crafted a poem using the word “Affrilachian” for the first time and presented it to his friends at their weekly poetry group. This ultimately set in motion the formation of the Affrilachian Poets and the beginning of validation for many isolated Affrilachians. [...]

“Part of what we’ve done as Affrilachians is commit to this idea of making the invisible visible, giving the muted a voice, because we always felt like that. The structure was designed to make us feel invisible,” Walker said. “We pushed back against an idea and tried to say as loudly as possible that, you know, hell yeah we’re here.”

Though the group is called the Affrilachian Poets, it embraces different cultures and types of artists. Since 1991, the group has been fighting the stigma that Appalachia is a homogenous place. Though their cultures and races might be different, their identities are interwoven with the region.

In fact, one Affrilachian Poet and fellow UK professor considers herself “wholly Appalachian,” though some people have disagreed with her.

Crystal Wilkinson grew up in Indian Creek, Kentucky, just half an hour away from Walker, on the same land her family has owned for 250 years. Her family represented the only African Americans in their small community. And although Wilkinson faced racism and discrimination where she grew up, she wouldn’t think of calling anywhere else home.

It wasn’t until Wilkinson met the Affrilachian Poets that she finally felt seen. When she thinks about it, she still becomes teary eyed.

“That level of acceptance, of validation, of connections with family was probably the most inclusive environment I had been in at that time,” Wilkinson said. “Like I’d never really felt like I fit in anywhere else, not completely. Like there were things that I could relate to but not completely with both, my entire self. That was the first time. And so it was mind-blowing. So to be around a table where you’re fully accepted and everybody knows what you’re trying to attempt in a loving and critical environment, it was everything.”

Wilkinson sees herself and the other Affrilachian Poets as role models not only for writers of color but Appalachian writers in general. Walker’s sentiments are much the same.

“What the founders have done is make it easier for the next generations of poets who came behind us to just produce art,” Walker said. “We had to carve out a space initially and then defend it with a lot of energy.”

Makalani Bandele, a relatively new edition to the Affrilachian Poets, is one of many people inspired by the founders and their work. Going to his first Affrilachian Poets meeting is something he’ll never forget, he said, and he’s glad to be part of that now.

“It blew my mind. I’d never seen anything like that before and since then,” Bandele said. “If you get more than five of us to read at a time, some people be leaving crying, some people be shaking. It’s powerful. So that impacted me.”

Though Bandele is from Louisville, he spent part of his childhood in his father’s hometown of Needmore, Kentucky, which is the same town Walker’s mother is from. He considers himself a third- or fourth-generation Appalachian poet.

While Walker’s work focuses on family, identity, place, history, and social justice, and Wilkinson’s work focuses on land, storytelling, traditions, freedom, and nature’s capacity to heal, Bandele’s is different. Both Walker and Wilkinson’s works are heavily focused on Appalachia. On the other hand, Bandele’s work focuses on black history and social justice in general. He said since he’s a beneficiary of the Affrilachian Poets’ founding efforts, he doesn’t necessarily have to talk about place and defend himself like the older generation.

Wilkinson said this is one of the reasons why she became an educator, to “start to affect the youth so that the youth can grow up with pride and be happy about where they’re from, to have a feeling that they don’t have to leave Kentucky to make an impact.”

Source 2.3

Frank X. Walker, "Affrilachia," in *Black Bone: 25 Years of the Affrilachian Poets*.

From the Black Bone biographies section: Multidisciplinary artist and Danville, Kentucky native, FRANK X WALKER, is the former Poet Laureate of Kentucky and Professor in the department of English and African American and Africana Studies Program at the University of Kentucky. The founding editor of pluck! is a Cave Canem fellow, co-founder of the Affrilachian Poets, and the author of eight collections of poetry.

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thoroughbred racing
and hee haw
are burdensome images
for Kentucky sons
venturing beyond the mason-dixon

anywhere in Appalachia
is about as far
as you could get
from our house
in the projects
yet
a mutual appreciation
for fresh greens
and cornbread
an almost heroic notion
of family
and porches
makes us kinfolk
somehow
but having never ridden
bareback
or sidesaddle

and being inexperienced
at cutting
hanging
or chewing tobacco
yet still feeling
complete and proud to say
that some of the bluegrass
is black
enough to know
that being 'colored' and all
is generally lost
somewhere between
the dukes of hazard
and the beverly hillbillies

but
if you think
makin,'shine from corn
is as hard as Kentucky coal
imagine being
an Affrilachian
poet

Source 2.4

Gerald L. Coleman, “bless your heart,” in *Black Bone: 25 Years of the Affrilachian Poets*.

From the Black Bone biographies section: GERALD L. COLEMAN, cofounder of the Affrilachian Poets, studied Philosophy, English, and Religious Studies, culminating in a MA in Theology. Author of the fantasy novel, When Night Falls: Book One of The Three Gifts, and poetry collections, the road is long and falling to earth....

- According to the [Black Earth Institute](#), Coleman is a Lexington native.

Note: explicit language in this poem was blacked out by highlighting the text in black. Teachers may elect to excerpt portions of the poem, black out the current text, or remove the highlighting.

Used with permission.

bless your heart
 i don't remember
 where i heard it
 first
 it was just
 in the air
 like please, thank you
 and ma'am

it's that tart
 piece of lemon
 floating on a
 white frosty layer
 of glaze
 in the sweet ice tea
 it's that extra inch
 of meringue
 on the brown
 sugar pie
 it was the big smile
 wrapped around
 a cruel lie

you see, down here
 where the ale eight is cold
 and the a la mode is warm
 where cole slaw
 and baked beans
 on the side

of fried catfish
 is the law
 we don't scream
 kiss my [REDACTED]

we like to pour molasses
 on our consternation
 lap it up
 with a biscuit

nobody does it better
 than a saccharine
 sanguine sara
 a how do you do
 sally mae, anna bell
 patricia faye or abbie gail
 with her gum poppin
 and her hips rockin
 to the side
 with a manicured hand
 perched
 just so
 on a hip
 curved like a
 granny smith apple

you see, down this way
 where the grass
 is blue

between the corn bread
 and the corn puddin
 with homemade rolls
 and collard greens
 chased down with
 five
 berry
 pie
 we don't holla
 dumb [REDACTED] or
 take the lord's name
 in vain

we like to spread butter
 all over our dissatisfaction
 eat it toasted
 maybe with a little
 jam

so listen close
 or you might
 mistake the smile
 for a grin
 or the curse
 for a blessing

because

down here
where the whisky
is bourbon
and the koolaid
is diabetes sweet
we don't yell
■ you
we like to smother it

and cover it
with gravy
until it's running

over the sides

down here
we smile
we wave
and say

bless your heart

Source 2.5

Shanna L. Smith, “Rooted,” in *Black Bone: 25 Years of the Affrilachian Poets*.

From the Black Bone biographies section: SHANNA L. SMITH is a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Department of English and Modern Foreign Languages at Jackson State University. She earned her doctorate in American Studies, specializing in African American Literature and Culture, at the University of Maryland College Park. A native of Kentucky, Smith is an Affrilachian Poet.

In this poem, Smith references influential Black women activists by their first names (Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, Mary McLeod Bethune, Fannie Lou Hamer, Daisy Bates).

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Rooted

for sister forebears

I like carved out paths,
nicely moved runways,
the salute of oaks bowing,
pussy willows applauding my sway.

I don't mind sauntering behind
the way prepared
and I think Harriet understands,
she and Sojourner shaking
the heads of wildflowers at me
catcalling, “Go on, Girl!”
as I step onto their well worn footprints.
It's their hands that press forward
my back, rooted.

Rooting!

“Didn't I knock over trees for you, Girl?”
Ida B. huffs at my spine,
as together they shape smooth
the worry in my brow.
I hang onto them,
who set my skull with grandmotherly palms,
kneading to focus my mind
before the world hardens it.

This is no pampering
as I teeter in the archway,
peek out at miles
where I must add my own step.
No, this laying on of hands
wills instructions.
Mary Bethune solidly lifting my chin,
“Didn't you read mine?”
She straightens my shoulders.
Fannie Lou works her battered limbs,
using them as my divining rod.

This ain't no civil rite.
These women were angry
At my settled softness—
long since they overcame
and I arrived—
chosen by these sisters to model
my own stuff.
Miss Daisy thrusts me her ticket,
bating me sharply,
We bought you that ticket, Girl!”

And they pushed.

Source 2.6

Kelly Norman Ellis, “Raised by Women,” in *Black Bone: 25 Years of the Affrilachian Poets*.

From the Black Bone biographies section: KELLY NORMAN ELLIS...is a recipient of a Kentucky Foundation for Women writer’s grant and is a Cave Canem fellow and founding member of the Affrilachian Poets. Ellis is an associate professor of English and creative writing and chairperson for the Department of English, Foreign Languages and Literatures at Chicago State University.

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I was raised by
Chitterling eating
Vegetarian cooking
Cornbread so good you want to lay
down and die baking
“Go on baby, get yo’self a plate”
Kind of Women.

Some thick haired
Angela Davis afro styling
“Girl, lay back
and let me scratch yo head”
Sorta Women.

Some big legged
High yellow, mocha brown
Hip shaking
Miniskirt wearing
Hip huggers hugging
Daring debutantes
Groovin
“I know I look good”
Type of Women.

Some tea sipping
White glove wearing
Got married too soon
Divorced

in just the nick of time
“Better say yes ma’am to me”
Type of sisters.

Some fingerpopping
Boogaloo dancing
Say it loud
I’m black and I’m proud
James Brown listening
“Go on girl shake that thing”
Kind of Sisters.

Some face slapping
Hands on hips
“Don’t mess with me,
Pack your bags and
get the hell out of my house”
Sorta women

Some PhD toting
Poetry writing
Portrait painting
“I’ll see you in court”
World traveling
Stand back, I’m creating
Type of queens
I was raised by women

Source 2.7

Norman Jordan, "One eyed critics," in *Black Bone: 25 Years of the Affrilachian Poets*.

From the Black Bone biographies section: NORMAN JORDAN, a native of Ansted, West Virginia, co-founded the African-American Heritage Family Tree Museum and the African American Arts and Heritage Academy. His poetry has been anthologized in many books....

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3:30

In the morning

With not

A soul in sight

We sat

Four-deep at

A traffic light

Talking about how

Dumb and brainwashed

Some of our Brothers and Sisters are

While we waited

For a green light

To tell us

When to go.

Supporting Question 3 Sources

Source 3.1

Turner, W. H. (2021). *The Harlan Renaissance: Stories of Black Life in Appalachian Coal Towns*. Academic book.

In this excerpt from scholar William Turner, whose expertise is on Black Appalachia (having written Blacks in Appalachia—Source 1.4—along with Ed Cabbell, mentioned in this excerpt), Turner criticizes the label of ‘Affrilachia.’ In short, he believes the label and the products of the ‘Affrilachian poets’ don’t consistently represent the experiences of Black Appalachians.

Note: In-text citations were removed for ease of reading; and excerpts were formatted to include bolded elements, headers, and other organizational features to support in reading.

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[Origin of “Affrilachia”]

Twenty years after Ed Cabbell distinguished himself as the light that brightened the way to the study and appreciation of what he called the "invisible" history and culture of Blacks in Appalachia, Frank X Walker, African American and a poet at the University of Kentucky, fastened himself onto Blacks in Appalachia. But Mr. Walker did not like that classification—Blacks in Appalachia—so he renamed them "Affrilachians." Getting quickly to my downbeat response to Walker's entree, I have christened him and most of his colleagues, the Affrila-chian Poets, strangers in Appalachia with some inapplicable poems. Full transparency: despite my opinion, "Affrilachian" became an entry in the New Oxford American Dictionary shortly after Walker came up with the word in 1991. [...]

Why [past Black Appalachian poets have not been] recog-nized by Mr. Walker—and the gatekeepers of Appalachian letters—remains a mystery to me. [...]n the case of Mr. Walker's novel term for Black people in Appalachia—which he grounded on the premise that nothing of literary signifi-cance existed in the Black Appalachian sphere until he coined the term Affrilachia—the caretakers of Appalachian culture required no answers or explanations. Maybe Affrilachian disciple and passionate Walker devotee Ms. Marie Cochran summed up best the panache of Walker's term in a 2019 essay titled "I Pledge Allegiance to Affrilachia": "Affrilachia is a clever term that is short enough for a tweet and long enough for a bumper sticker."

[“Affrilachia” as a Misbranding]

The renaming of Black people in Appalachia by Mr. Walker, who was born in central Kentucky, is reminiscent of how Christopher Columbus renamed the resident people whom he encountered when he landed in the Antilles. Co-lumbus christened the New World location where he went ashore in the Caribbean Sea the Indies, the medieval name for Asia, then widely thought of as the rough equivalent to modern-day India. As you would have expected, by fault of logic, Christopher Columbus called the Antilles inhabitants he encountered Indians, and the label has stuck in various European languages ever since.

In a similar way, Mr. Walker's new term for Black people in Appalachia—Affrilachians—became quite popular; the phrasing and jargon having considerable currency among academics, expressly among specialists in Appalachian lit-erature [...who have had] no arguments with Walker's problematic branding and labeling of Black people in the region.

[Black Appalachian Scholars]

Practically all the Black academics, activists, and research-ers who have published about Black life and culture in Ap-palachia—starting with Ed Cabbell and certainly including me—see the term Affrilachia as little more than a contrivance, a thingamajig, a crafty means to turn Black people in Appa-lachia into a commodity. Black Appalachian culture for sale. [...]

The assertion that Blacks were not visible in Appalachia prior to the publication of *Affrilachia* in 2000 is an outstandingly appalling example of selfish overindulgence and intellectual dishonesty. [...]

[What does “Affrilachia” represent?]

It could be that *Affrilachia* is Mr. Walker's way of show-ing the overlap between different people's social identities, known as intersectionality. Looked at in Walker's way, the experiences—the historical and material conditions—of Black Appalachians operate on the same level as that of all Black people; that is, he, without a lived experience in the region, can "relate to" and "identify with" them, a set of Black "others." Black Appalachians were, essentially, to Walker, no different than the residents of the housing project where he grew up in the Bluegrass section of Kentucky [not in Appalachia], in Danville, thirty-five miles southwest of Lexington. Geography, not to mention topography, does not matter to Walker, who simply adjusted his environmental lens and blurred the image of Black Appalachians, making them his alternate background. The mountain setting became a unique framework for his self reflection as a person and creative artist. To Walker, appar-ently, most of Kentucky is Appalachia, including his campus base at the University of Kentucky in Lexington. Sadly, to some "outsiders," some on the coasts, for example, Walker is correct. [...]

No matter how "woke," progressive, or intersectional Mr. Walker is, he can neither walk in the shoes of nor genuinely understand the world of Blacks in Appalachia, especially not in central Appalachian coal camps. He is entitled, as is anyone else, to identify with Black people native to Appalachia, but there is nothing he can write or say or do to make of himself a Black Appalachian; nor do any of his poems make Blacks in Appalachia *Affrilachians*. [...]

[Who do the “Affrilachian Poets” represent?]

Clearly, Mr. Walker intended for the word *Affrilachia* to trigger people to recognize the presence of Black people in the Appalachian region, primarily because it patches together stereotypical images of Africa and Appalachia. However, Walker, in the FAQ section of the *Affrilachian Poets* website, runs that image together with a more indefinite-and confus-ing-description of his brand: "*Affrilachian Poets*" represent "a myriad of ethnicities, from all around the world, Africa, Europe, Asia, South America, and the Caribbean." The web-site goes on to say, "*Affrilachia* plays host to a spectrum of racial and ethnic identity ... a cross-section of people who can claim a number of nationalities, not just that of African descent." [...]

That all said, I give proper credit and polite respect to my brother Mr. Frank X Walker, whom I have known since he came to the University of Kentucky as a freshman almost four decades ago, when I was faculty advisor to the frater-nity he joined. But I defy him to convince me that *Affrila*-chia is little more than an amazing trick involving a craftily marketed brand that rests on the most shockingly mislead-ing stereotype of the Appalachian region, which he says he took from Webster's Dictionary: "Appalachians are white residents of the mountainous regions of Appalachia." Had he visited Harlan County, Kentucky, even as late as 1991, when he coined the term *Affrilachia*, the *New Oxford American Dictionary* would have one less word.

As both my grandmothers would say, "Bless his heart."

Appendix

Directions: Copy and paste select sources into the scaffold of choice.

Scaffold 1

Use this scaffold if you intend on substantively modifying the text. By including the original and modified side-by-side, students are able to digest information in a more student-friendly way, but also compare it to the original. This approach maintains the rigor and authenticity of the source analysis, as well as help students comprehend difficult text.

ORIGINAL	MODIFIED
[text]	[text]

Scaffold 2

Use this scaffold if you want students to conduct a close reading and/or want to analyze particular portions of the text.

MODIFIED, Numbered Lines	
1	[text]
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