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The Common Core State Standards have helped create a new focus on the use of informational reading material in classrooms, with resources that represent increasing text complexity at each grade level. This emphasis is also an invitation to use a diverse range of titles to create a deeper knowledge base for students in a particular subject area throughout the grade levels. Explore African American history with the following list, which introduces students to the lives and events of notable individuals, many lesser known, whose contributions range from something as mundane as the invention of the potato chip to the medalworthy achievements of African Americans in the military service of their country and so much more.

Artists and Filmmakers

Art from Her Heart: Folk Artist Clementine Hunter. By Kathy Whitehead. Illus. by Shane Evans. 2008. 32p. Putnam, \$16.99 (9780399242199). 759.13. K–Gr. 2.

In the 1950s, segregation laws denied artist Clementine Hunter admission to the gallery that exhibited her work. The words and images in this moving picture-book biography show that Hunter was not stopped by self-pity, and she did not wait for “the perfect time to paint.” She had no canvas, so she made art with whatever she could find—window shades, glass bottles, old boards—and Evans’ full-page paintings with bright collage and black lines evoke Hunter’s hard work.

Blacks in Film. By William W. Lace. 2008. 179p. illus. Lucent, lib. ed., \$36.10 (9781420500844). 791.43089. Gr. 7–10.

This volume on black actors in American cinema begins with the “Toms” found in early silent films and goes all the way up to recent Oscar winners Jamie Foxx and Morgan Freeman. Using high-quality film stills and boxed sections focusing on major themes and personalities, Lace takes the reader through the early blackface actors, the servant roles so prevalent in Depression-era cinema, the broadened awareness of African Americans following WWII, the blaxploitation films of the 1960s, and the impact of Spike Lee’s 1989 film, *Do the Right Thing*.

Dave the Potter: Artist, Poet, Slave. By Laban Carrick Hill. Illus. by Bryan Collier. 2010. 40p. Little, Brown, \$16.99 (9780316107310). 738.092. K–Gr. 3.

Little is known about the man known as Dave the potter. Two things are certain, though: he was a slave in South Carolina, and he was a potter of uncommon skill. As Hill writes in this Coretta Scott King Award winner, “Dave was one of only two potters at the time who could successfully make pots that were larger than twenty gallons.” For another version of the story, Andrea Cheng’s *Etched in Clay* (2013) presents a fictionalized biography of this nineteenth-century potter and poet.

I Heard God Talking to Me: William Edmondson and His Stone Carvings. By Elizabeth Spires. 2009. 56p. illus. Farrar/Frances Foster, \$17.95 (9780374335281). 811. Gr. 6–12.

Moved by a religious vision at age 57, Nashville janitor William Edmondson began carving tombstones and whimsical figures out of stone in 1931, eventually becoming the first African American artist to have a solo show at the Museum of Modern Art, in New York. This handsome picture-book-sized poetry collection pairs full-page black-and-white photos of Edmondson and his works with poems inspired by the images.

In Her Hands: The Story of Sculptor Augusta Savage. By Alan Schroeder. Illus. by JaeMe Bereal. 2009. 48p. Lee & Low, \$19.95 (9781600603327). 730.92. Gr. 2–4.

Little is known about the life of sculptress Augusta Savage, a prominent figure in the Harlem Renaissance, but here Schroeder provides a somewhat fictionalized account of the artist’s childhood and the events leading up to her enrollment in the Cooper Union School of Art. Episodic passages reveal how her flourishing talent is first recognized by her principal and later by a county-art-fair overseer, who persuades Savage to pursue a career as an artist in New York City.

It Jes’ Happened: When Bill Traylor Started to Draw. By Don Tate. Illus. by R. Gregory Christie. 2012. 32p. Lee & Low, \$17.95 (9781600602603). 759.13. Gr. 2–4.

This picture-book introduction to Traylor is astonishing in both its biographical facts and Christie’s beautiful illustrations. Born into slavery in 1854, Traylor worked in the fields, witnessed the destruction of the Civil War, and lived jobless on the streets of Montgomery. Throughout, he saved up the memories of these times until 1939, when, at age 85, he started drawing, continuing to produce work until his death, in 1949. For more on Traylor, see Mary Lyons’ *Deep Blues: Bill Traylor, Self-Taught Artist* (1994) and Barbara Ann Porte’s *Black Elephant with a Brown Ear (in Alabama)* (1996).

Magic Trash: *A Story of Tyree Guyton and His Art.* By J. H. Shapiro. Illus. by Vanessa Brantley-Newton. 2011. 32p. Charlesbridge, \$15.95 (9781580893855). 709.2. Gr. 2–4.

Tyree Guyton sees raw materials when the other children on Detroit's Heidelberg Street see garbage, and he uses those materials to forge beauty from next to nothing, eventually converting Heidelberg Street into a public art installation, polka-dotting abandoned houses, suspending shoes from tree limbs, and decorating telephone poles with broken dolls. In telling this true story, Shapiro punctuates her zippy, buoyant narrative with rhyming refrains distinguished by larger, looping typography.

A Splash of Red: *The Life and Art of Horace Pippin.* By Jennifer Bryant. Illus. by Melissa Sweet. 2013. 40p. Knopf, \$17.99 (9780375867125); lib. ed., \$20.99 (9780375967122). 759.13. Gr. 1–4.

Painting subjects drawn mainly from observation, memory, family stories, and the Bible, Horace Pippin, a self-taught African American artist, was eventually discovered by the art community. Major museums display his works, and their locations are indicated on a U.S. map printed on the picture-book-biography's endpapers, along with small reproductions of six paintings by the artist.

Wake Up Our Souls: *A Celebration of Black American Artists.* By Tonya Bolden. 2004. 128p. illus. Abrams, o.p. 704.03. Gr. 6–12.

Bolden offers a beautifully illustrated introduction, in simple, graceful language, to a selection of African American artists, beginning with the nineteenth century and moving to the present. Accompanying each small biography is a well-reproduced, representative work from each artist and a discussion, in clear, succinct language, that will encourage readers to look closely at the images (and visual art in general) and form their own opinions of what they see.

Athletes

Black Jack: *The Ballad of Jack Johnson.* By Charles R. Smith. Illus. by Shane W. Evans. 2010. 40p. Roaring Brook/Neal Porter, \$16.99 (9781596434738). 796.83092. Gr. 1–3.

A quick tour of Jack Johnson's childhood has the son of former slaves learning to fight by standing up to bullies at the behest of his mother. As a gifted professional boxer, he was consistently refused a shot at the heavyweight crown because of the prevailing racism of early twentieth-century America.

Just as Good: *How Larry Doby Changed America's Game.* By Chris Crowe. Illus. by Mike Benny. 2012. 32p. Candlewick, \$16.99 (9780763650261). Gr. 1–3.

Though Jackie Robinson broke major-league baseball's color barrier, he was still considered the exception to a basic

belief: black baseball players weren't good enough. Signing with the Cleveland Indians just months after Robinson joined the Dodgers, Larry Doby became the first African American to play in the American League, and Crowe tells his story in this fictionalized biography.

The Last Black King of the Kentucky Derby. By Crystal Hubbard. Illus. by Robert McGuire. 2008. 40p. Lee & Low, \$17.95 (9781584302742); paper, \$9.95 (9781600608919). 798.40092. Gr. 2–4.

Jimmy "Wink" Winkfield grew up working the land as the son of sharecroppers, but he entered the world of horse racing while still in his teens, moving from stable hand to exercise rider and finally to jockey, a career that brought him international renown in the nineteenth century.

Marshall "Major" Taylor: *World Champion Bicyclist, 1899–1901.* By Marlene Targ Brill. 2007. 112p. illus. Lerner/ Twenty-First Century, lib. ed., \$31.93 (9780822566106). 796.6. Gr. 5–8.

This Trailblazer Biographies entry profiles Marshall Taylor, an African American bicyclist who, despite facing prejudice in racing and in life, achieved world renown at the turn of the last century. Following an introductory author's note, Brill's accessible, personable prose vividly relates Taylor's experiences, from the childhood trick-cycling gig that earned him his nickname to his later triumphs as the first black world cycling champion.

Perfect Timing: *How Isaac Murphy Became One of the World's Greatest Jockeys.* By Patsi B. Trollinger. Illus. by Jerome Lagarrigue. 2006. 32p. Benjamin, paper, \$14.99 (9780979343124). 798.40092. Gr. 1–3.

This picture-book biography celebrates a legendary African American jockey. Using the jockey's "perfect timing" as a framework, Trollinger begins with a serendipitous moment, when Murphy was 12, that started his career. Off-track scenes appear, but Trollinger focuses on Murphy's rigorous training and the thrilling races, described in moment-by-moment detail.

Playing to Win: *The Story of Althea Gibson.* By Karen Deans. Illus. by Elbrite Brown. 2007. 32p. Holiday House, \$16.95 (9780823419265). 796.432. Gr. 1–4.

Tennis star Althea Gibson, born to sharecroppers in South Carolina in 1927, grew up in Harlem and became a bit of a wild child. Channeling her restless energy into sports, Gibson became a champion in the local African American tennis league before traveling south for more training and education.

Queen of the Track: *Alice Coachman, Olympic High-Jump Champion.* By Heather Lang. Illus. by Floyd Cooper. 2012. 32p. Boyds Mills, \$16.95 (9781590788509). 796.43. Gr. 3–5.

Alice Coachman's intense training in track and field

landed her a spot in the 1948 London Olympics, where she worked through pain to set a world record in the high jump and became the first African American woman ever to win an Olympic gold medal. Lang's descriptive text and Cooper's signature sepia-tone oil illustrations offer a rich, deep depiction of Coachman's determination to overcome obstacles. Pair this with Ann Malaspina's *Touch the Sky: Alice Coachman, Olympic High Jumper* (2012) to enrich Olympic Games collections.

Racing against the Odds: The Story of Wendell Scott, Stock Car Racing's African-American Champion. By Carole Boston Weatherford. Illus. by Eric A. Velasquez. 2009. 40p. Amazon/Two Lions, \$17.99 (9780761454656). 796.72092. Gr. 2–4.

Weatherford presents a profile of Wendell Scott, the first and (so far) only African American to win a NASCAR race, as an all-too-typical tale of pervasive racial discrimination and harassment overcome by quiet, stubborn endurance. Weatherford's lively writing animates this unique profile and introduces a groundbreaker whose achievements have fallen into unjust obscurity.

She Loved Baseball: The Effa Manley Story. By Audrey Vernick. Illus. by Don Tate. 2010. 32p. HarperCollins/Balzer+ Bray, \$16.99 (9780061349201); e-book, \$11.99 (9780062184801). 796.357092. Gr. 1–3.

With her husband in New York City, Effa Manley organized labor protests in Harlem and founded the influential Negro League team that became the Newark Eagles. Vernick's repetitive phrases emphasize Manley's activist spirit, while Tate's illustrations convey both the historical setting and the timeless excitement in the ballpark.

A Strong Right Arm: The Story of Mamie "Peanut" Johnson. By Michelle Y. Green. 2002. 128p. illus. Dial, paper, \$5.99 (9780142400722). 796.357. Gr. 4–7.

Johnson was a pitcher with the Negro Leagues' Indianapolis Clowns from 1953 to 1955. This biography follows her from her childhood on her grandmother's South Carolina farm and her personal struggle against discrimination through her breakthrough and triumph on the team.

We Are the Ship: The Story of Negro League Baseball. By Kadir Nelson. Illus. by the author. 2008. 96p. Disney/Jump at the Sun, \$18.99 (9780786808328). 796.357. Gr. 5–8.

Award-winning children's book creator Nelson offers a history of the Negro Leagues, told from the vantage point of an unnamed narrator, that reads as if an old-timer is regaling grandchildren with tales of baseball greats Satchel Paige, Josh Gibson, and others who forged the path toward breaking the race barrier before Jackie Robinson made his historic debut.

Wilma Unlimited: How Wilma Rudolph Became the World's Fastest Woman. By Kathleen Krull. Illus. by David Diaz. 1996. 48p. Harcourt, paper, \$7 (9780152020989). 796.42. Gr. 2–5.

Wilma Rudolph was a wonder. Though partially paralyzed by polio as a child, she managed—through indomitable spirit and unlimited determination—to transform herself from a disabled five-year-old to a world-class runner and the first woman to win three gold medals in a single Olympics.

You Never Heard of Willie Mays?! By Jonah Winter. Illus. by Terry Widener. 2013. 40p. Random/Schwartz & Wade, \$17.99 (9780375868443); lib. ed., \$20.99 (9780375968440). 796.357092. Gr. 2–4.

Winter infuses this engaging picture-book biography with contagious excitement for his subject that begins with the book's title.

Culinary and Community Heroes

Bring Me Some Apples and I'll Make You a Pie: A Story about Edna Lewis. By Robbin Gourley. Illus. by the author. 2009. 48p. Clarion, \$16 (9780618158362). K–Gr. 3.

Edna Lewis, the granddaughter of an emancipated slave who founded Freetown, Virginia, grew up to become a famous chef of southern cuisine. Inspired by Lewis' childhood, this debut children's book by an artist and cookbook author celebrates the growing seasons and the irreplaceable pleasure of fresh food shared with family.

Farmer Will Allen and the Growing Table. By Jacqueline Briggs Martin. Illus. by Eric-Shabazz Larkin. 2013. 32p. Readers to Eaters, \$17.95 (9780983661535). 630. Gr. 1–4.

Basketball player turned urban-farmer Will Allen is the subject of this inspiring picture book. After spending his childhood on a farm—where he vowed never to plant or dig ever again—Allen went on to play professional basketball in Europe. While there, he realized that he actually enjoyed making food grow, and so, back in the U.S., he purchased a derelict lot in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and began the process of transforming it into an urban farm.

George Crum and the Saratoga Chip. By Gaylia Taylor. Illus. by Frank Morrison. 2006. 32p. Lee & Low, \$16.95 (9781584302551); paper, \$8.95 (9781600606564). 641.5. Gr. 2–4.

As a young man, George Crum became an excellent cook and was hired as a chef at a renowned restaurant in Saratoga Springs, New York, where he created the forerunner of the potato chip. This picture-book biography describes dramatic moments that reveal Crum's creativity, artistic temperament, and relentless pursuit of perfection.

Molly, by Golly! *The Legend of Molly Williams, America's First Female Firefighter.* By Dianne Ochiltree. Illus. by Kathleen Kemly. 2012. 32p. Boyds Mills/Calkins Creek, \$16.95 (9781590787212). 363. K–Gr. 2.

Set in New York City, this biography chronicles how Molly Williams, an African American cook, jumped in to help a skeleton crew of firefighters put out a house fire during the 1818 blizzard. Through her capable, courageous actions, Williams secured both a job as “Volunteer No. 11” and a place in history. Ochiltree’s richly colored picture book is full of action, drama, and fascinating period details about firefighting.

Historical and Military Heroes

America's Black Founders: *Revolutionary Heroes & Early Leaders with 21 Activities.* By Nancy I. Sanders. 2010. 144p. illus. Chicago Review, paper, \$16.95 (9781556528118); e-book, \$13.99 (9781613741214). 973. Gr. 6–10.

This lively, illustrated, and never simplistic volume about the essential role of blacks in America’s early history includes complicated views, such as that of African Americans Richard Allen and James Forten, who opposed the back-to-Africa movement because freed blacks in the U.S. were the strongest fighters for the abolition of slavery. Included in this fascinating volume is a chapter entitled “Founding Mothers.”

Bad News for Outlaws: *The Remarkable Life of Bass Reeves, Deputy U.S. Marshal.* By Vaunda Micheaux Nelson. Illus. by R. Gregory Christie. 2009. 40p. Carolrhoda, lib. ed., \$17.95 (9780822567646); e-book, \$13.95 (9780761357124). 363.28. Gr. 3–5.

Born a slave, Reeves became one of the most feared and respected Deputy U.S. Marshals to tame the West. Nelson’s anecdotal account, winner of the 2010 Coretta Scott King Award, reads like a tall tale, and together with Christie’s memorable images, it gives this overlooked frontier hero the justice he deserves. Gary Paulsen also takes on Reeves’ grand story in *The Legend of Bass Reeves* (2006).

Benjamin O. Davis: *Air Force General & Tuskegee Airmen Leader.* By Sari Earl. 2010. 112p. illus. ABDO, lib. ed., \$34.22 (9781604539615); e-book, \$34.22 (9781616133542). 358.40092. Gr. 6–9.

Davis first saw an airplane in 1926, and from then on, he knew that he wanted to fly. But even though his father was a well-regarded member of the U.S. military, Davis still encountered many obstacles as he made his way through West Point and then as leader of the U.S. Army Air Force African American flying unit, the Ninety-Ninth Squadron. For more on pioneering African American aviators, including Davis,

see Patricia McKissack and Frederick McKissack’s *Red-Tail Angels: The Story of the Tuskegee Airmen of World War II* (1995).

The Buffalo Soldier. By Sherri Garland. Illus. by Ronald Himler. 2006. 32p. Pelican, \$16.99 (9781589803916). K–Gr. 3.

Using the perspective of a fictional recruit, Garland recounts the history of the six African American cavalry regiments that served the U.S. from 1866 through 1953. Nicknamed “buffalo soldiers” by the Cheyenne Indians because of their curly hair and bravery, the men protected settlers on the western frontier, marched up San Juan Hill in 1898, and continued to serve until the military was integrated at the end of the Korean War.

Courage Has No Color: *The True Story of the Triple Nickles—America's First Black Paratroopers.* By Tanya Lee Stone. 2013. 160p. illus. Candlewick, \$24.99 (9780763651176); paper, \$17.99 (9780763665487); e-book, \$24.99 (9780763668204). 940.5403. Gr. 5–9.

Known as the Triple Nickles, the 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion was America’s first black paratrooper unit. Though WWII brought increased racial integration to the military, the pace was painfully slow. This book traces the paratroopers’ story through their training and their long wait for orders to join the fighting overseas—orders that never came.

Double Victory: *How African American Women Broke Race and Gender Barriers to Help Win World War II.* By Cheryl Mullenbach. 2013. 272p. illus. Chicago Review, \$19.95 (9781569768082); e-book, \$15.99 (9781613745359). 940.53082. Gr. 7–12.

Historical accounts of African American women during WWII often focus solely on the military service of the Women’s Auxiliary Army Corps or the performers who entertained during USO-sponsored events. Mullenbach, however, explores black women’s advances on the home front as well, shining a light on lesser-known foremothers of American civil rights and activists, such as Layle Lane and journalist Charlotta Bass.

Fort Mose and the Story of the Man Who Built the First Free Black Settlement in Colonial America. By Glennette Tilley Turner. 2010. 48p. illus. Abrams, \$18.95 (9780810940567). 975.9. Gr. 7–10.

Born in West Africa around 1700, Francisco Menendez was captured and sold as a slave in South Carolina. Eventually, he was granted unconditional freedom and named the leader of Fort Mose, Florida, the first “officially sanctioned free black town in what is now the United States.” Though little is known about Menendez’s life, Turner’s graceful account clearly distinguishes between fact and supposition.

Musicians

A Band of Angels: A Story Inspired by the Jubilee Singers. By Deborah Hopkinson. Illus. by Raúl Colón. 2002. 40p. Simon & Schuster/Paula Wiseman, paper, \$7.99 (9780689848872). Gr. 2–4.

This richly and dramatically told fictional account of the Fisk University Jubilee Singers is based on the real-life Ella Sheppard, who was born into slavery and later joined the chorus, which went on the road to raise money to repair Fisk's dilapidated buildings.

David Gets His Drum. By David Albert Francis and Bob Reiser. Illus. by Eric Velasquez. 2002. 32p. Marshall Cavendish, o.p. K–Gr. 2.

African American jazz drummer David “Panama” Albert Francis first heard stories of magical island drums from his Haitian father. Eventually, young Francis received a beautiful steel drum from Brulla Roberts, a drummer and band leader the boy admired. Francis' memoir is illustrated with lush oil paintings of early twentieth-century Miami.

Harlem's Little Blackbird: The Story of Florence Mills. By Renee Watson. Illus. by Christian Robinson. 2012. 40p. Random, \$17.99 (9780375869730); lib. ed., \$20.99 (9780375969737); e-book, \$17.99 (9780375985379). 782.42165092. Gr. 1–3.

In Washington, D.C., at the turn of the last century, a little girl grew up listening to her mother sing spirituals. That girl, Florence Mills, became a star singer in the U.S. and London while also facing discrimination. Alan Schroeder's *Baby Flo* (2012) also tells the story of this trailblazing musician.

Scientists and Inventors

Daniel Hale Williams: Surgeon Who Opened Hearts and Minds. By Mike Venezia. Illus. by the author. 2010. 32p. Scholastic/Children's Press, paper, \$6.95 (9780531223505). 617.092. Gr. 2–4.

Venezia combines a chatty text with a mix of period photographs and playful cartoons in this history of Daniel Hale Williams, who not only performed one of the first successful open heart operations, in 1893, but also made great strides in opening up top-quality medical access to African Americans.

Heart Man: Vivien Thomas, African-American Heart Surgery Pioneer. By Edwin Brit Wyckoff. 2007. 32p. illus. Enslow Elementary, lib. ed., \$22.60 (9780766028494). 617.00899. Gr. 2–4.

Wyckoff's straightforward profile introduces little-known African American Thomas, who stunned a prejudiced medical community by inventing a special heart clamp and directing

an operation that proved surgery could be performed successfully on a beating heart. A great introduction to an overlooked figure.

What Color Is My World? The Lost History of African-American Inventors. By Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Raymond Obstfeld. Illus. by Ben Boos and A. G. Ford. 2012. 44p. Candlewick, \$17.99 (9780763645649); e-book, \$14.99 (9780763664411). Gr. 3–6.

Abdul-Jabbar and Obstfeld introduce 16 mostly lesser-known African American inventors through a chatty and informal fictional story told by young twins, who learn that many items in a typical American house—the ice-cream scooper, the microphones in cell phones, and more—were invented or developed by African Americans.

Women in Engineering. By Shaina Indovino. 2013. 64p. illus. Mason Crest, lib. ed., \$22.95 (9781422229262). 620.0092. Gr. 5–8.

This entry in the Major Women in Science series profiles nine women who became movers and shakers in the field of engineering, including Aprille Ericsson-Jackson, an African American aerospace engineer who helped build NASA satellites.

Henrietta Smith, a Professor Emerita at the School of Information in University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida, teaches courses in children's and YA literature.

Common Core Connections

By Kristin Rydholm

Below are suggestions for implementing the Common Core State Standards with titles about African American trailblazers. You can find more information about the standards at www.corestandards.org.

In the Classroom: The Kentucky Derby takes place the first Saturday in May. Isaac Murphy won the derby three times—along with many other accomplishments as a jockey. By reading Patsi B. Trollinger’s *Perfect Timing: How Isaac Murphy Became One of the World’s Greatest Jockeys* in the week prior to the race, students will build background knowledge about the race, the sport of horse racing, and Murphy’s contribution to its history. After students have read *Perfect Timing*, ask them to write an acrostic poem, using the letters that comprise Murphy’s name as the beginning of each phrase (e.g., *I*–Isaac Murphy, *S*–Silks from head to toe, *A*–And ready to race full tilt). Trollinger integrates some specific horse-racing vocabulary into her book (e.g., *paddock*, *stable*, *groom*); and the Kentucky Derby’s website offers a “Kids Corner” vocabulary link with more horse-racing words (www.derbymuseum.org/vocabulary.html) that would enrich the acrostic’s language and introduce additional information about the sport.

Common Core Connections

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.4.** Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 3 topic or subject area.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.4.** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from nonliteral language.

In the Classroom: After students have read Don Tate’s *It Jes’ Happened: When Bill Traylor Started to Draw* and Kathy Whitehead’s *Art from Her Heart: Folk Artist Clementine Hunter*, use an Internet image search to select online images of Bill Traylor’s or Clementine Hunter’s work, and ensure that you have collected at least one piece of artwork per student. Next have each student select a unique image and write a paragraph that objectively describes the drawing or painting. For example, a paragraph to accompany Traylor’s *Woman with Handbag and Umbrella* could read: “A woman is wearing a blue print dress, black gloves, and blue stockings. She is carrying a black umbrella in one hand and a black purse in her other hand.” Each student will then follow this description with three questions about this image that respond to the phrase, “I wonder . . .” So, for example, a student could write, of *Woman with Handbag and Umbrella*, “I wonder, what the woman is going to buy? I wonder, will she get caught in the rain? I wonder, did she make her dress?” After these paragraphs are completed, create an audio recording of each student reading his or her composition, pairing it with a projected image of the Traylor or Hunter print, and share the production with the entire class.

Common Core Connections

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.1a.** Introduce the topic or text they are writing about, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure that lists reasons.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3.5.** Create engaging audio recordings of stories or poems that demonstrate fluid reading at an understandable

pace; add visual displays when appropriate to emphasize or enhance certain facts or details.

In the Classroom: In Deborah Hopkinson’s *A Band of Angels: A Story Inspired by the Jubilee Singers* and Mary Lyons’ *Deep Blues: Bill Traylor, Self-Taught Artist*, the authors offer numerous metaphors and similes throughout their texts. An example from Hopkinson’s title is, “Their voices joined hers, like streams flowing into a deep river.” And Lyons’ many similes include these: “They carried their guitars, or ‘boxes,’ and spread the blues like seeds on the wind” and “Like two train rails, Bill’s life and the blues ran side by side.” After sharing one or both titles with students, generate a list as a class of talents and gifts that students have (e.g., writing, painting, singing, running). Once the list is complete, ask each student to select one of the talents and draw a picture of a person demonstrating that gift. When the pictures are finished, have the students create a simile that corresponds to their illustration (e.g., if the picture is of a runner, then the simile can begin, “She ran like . . .”).

Common Core Connections

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.5a.** Explain the meaning of simple similes and metaphors (e.g., as pretty as a picture) in context.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.1.** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

In the Classroom: George Crum found great satisfaction and success in being a chef. After reading Gaylia Taylor’s *George Crum and the Saratoga Chip*, ask the students to work in small groups to generate questions about working as a chef or running a restaurant using the following prompts, if necessary:

- How many . . . ? (e.g., How many eggs do you use in one day?)
- How long . . . ? (e.g., How long did it take for you to become a chef?)
- Why do you . . . ? (e.g., Why do you wear a white uniform if you know you will get food on it?)
- What is your favorite . . . ? (e.g., What is your favorite spice?)
- Can I . . . ? (e.g., Can I see how fast you can chop a carrot?)

If possible, invite a chef from a restaurant to speak to the class in person or through videoconference technology and respond to the students’ questions. (Better yet, arrange a class trip to a restaurant.) Select questions from the students’ responses for each individual child to ask the chef. Allow time for the chef to respond to the questions, and encourage follow-up questions from the students. After the conversation, the students can reflect on the experience by writing a thank-you note to the chef. The letter should include at least three references to pieces of information that the student learned from the speaker.

Common Core Connections

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3.3.** Ask and answer questions about information from a speaker, offering appropriate elaboration and detail.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.2.** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

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