

Ransom Rambo's "[Faces of Freedom](http://facesoffreedomseries.com/)<sup>1</sup>" is a dramatic collection of original oil portraits honoring our nation's African-American heroes. Each of the portraits includes a short historical biography of the individual. These portraits can be incorporated easily into 7<sup>th</sup> grade social studies classrooms in the following way.

**Corresponding 2011 GLEs:**

- 7.1.3 Analyze the causes and effects of key events and ideas in the development of the United States
- 7.3.3 Examine the motivations and influence of major American reform movements during the 19th century
- 7.10.1 Describe the influences on and the development and expansion of individual rights and freedoms

**Objectives**

- Students will analyze the portrait and identify the key conclusions it is communicating.
- Students will learn and write about the contributions of African Americans throughout U.S. History as a result of analyzing this portrait.

**Directions**

1. Distribute [the picture](#) to the students or project in the classroom for students to view.
2. Ask students to examine the picture individually for a few minutes, jotting down any features or details that they notice.
3. As students view the lithograph as a whole, have them record the information based on the [OPTIC structure](#)<sup>2</sup>.

**OPTIC**

**O** is for overview

- Conduct a brief overview of the visual.

**P** is for parts

- Focus on the parts of the visual.
- Read all labels.
- Notice any details that seem important.

**T** is for title

- Read the title of the visual for a clear understanding of the subject.

**I** is for interrelationships

- Use the title to help identify the main idea or the big umbrella that connects the parts of the visual.

**C** is for conclusion

- Draw a conclusion about the visual as a whole.
- What does it mean? Why was it included?
- Summarize the visual in a few sentences or a well-constructed paragraph.

4. Group project (adapted from lesson plan found [here](#)<sup>1</sup>)

- Explain to students that they will write very short biographical sketches and will need to provide the most significant information about their subjects. This sketch is to be no more than one page in length, and it should begin with a clear and engaging opening paragraph. Stress that the paragraph should:

- Identify the subject of the biographical sketch.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://facesoffreedomseries.com/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/classroom-support-toolbox/teacher-support-toolbox/lesson-assessment-planning-resources/whole-class>

- State the main focus of the sketch (i.e., include a short, to-the-point description of the subject).
- Include an interesting hook that encourages the reader to keep going.
- Label a piece of chart paper or a list on the chalkboard "A biographical sketch should..." and have students discuss and reach agreement about the elements a sketch should include. Responses should include some form of the following:
  - Describe the life of a real person.
  - Use facts from reliable sources to support the sketch.
  - Relate the subject's story to other events and people from the same time period.
  - Tell the story with the targeted audience in mind.
- Have students work as a group to research the historical figure from the lithograph.
- Explain to students that they will be writing their first drafts using what they remember from their research. Then remind them that they will share their writing with others to receive feedback. It also means that they will need to be ready to give feedback on others' writing.
- Discuss some basic expectations for the biography sketch with students: writing to the appropriate audience, providing interesting, relevant information about their subject, and writing to an agreed-upon target length (suggest a length of approximately one lined notebook page). Distribute the sample [Writers' Workshop: Biographical Sketch Rubric](#) so that students can refer to it as they write. This rubric reinforces the discussion about writing goals and the elements of a biographical sketch and allows students to self-assess their work.
- Model the writing process by beginning to draft a short biographical sketch of your own. Refer to your research, and think aloud as you write your draft as a model for students. As you go, explain any changes you make. Reasons for making changes may include:
  - Making a mistake with a fact
  - Revising a sentence that sounds awkward
  - Deleting a piece of information that is not very interesting
  - Forgetting an important point
  - Thinking of a better word to use
  - Remembering what the audience might like to know
- Start the in-class writing time so students can write first drafts of their biographical sketches. As students write, walk around the classroom and provide feedback to individuals on the content you see. Comment on particularly interesting tidbits, ask leading questions as appropriate, and prompt students to refer to the rubric as necessary.
- Emphasize how important proofreading is to the writing process and that it must be completed before they can submit their final drafts. Explain that they need to read through their sketches looking for minor errors. They should note corrections on their drafts.
- Allow students to work on their final drafts.