

**“How Phillis Wheatley Was Recovered Through History”**  
**Lynne Lesky, Top of the Mitt Writing Project**  
**Designed for Students in Grade 11 or American Literature**

**My demonstration is meant to support my contentions that:**

- Students can synthesize information to reach conclusions.
- Students have a right to learn about historical figures from multiple perspectives.
- Students must be allowed to think about history in different ways by experiencing multiple sources in multiple formats including print text, audio, and video.
- Students should understand that enslaved Africans enjoyed an existence before they were captured and enslaved, and that this existence must always be considered.
- Students should understand that the poet Phillis Wheatley was once a child.

**Essential Question:** *Why does it matter who tells your story?* To engage students and get them thinking about the ideas addressed in the lesson, students will respond to this question in their writer’s notebook.

**Background Information:** To be introduced to the historical figure and author, students will view the short informational film, "Phillis Wheatley: The First Published African-American Poet | Black Patriots | History" (5:09) (<https://youtu.be/cEzrary7sOY>)

**Lesson Part 1:** Students will use the Left & Right Annotations method and the TQE Process to read, annotate, and discuss the article, “How Phillis Wheatley Was Recovered Through History” which is a book review for the poetry collection *The Age of Phillis* by the poet and professor Honorée Fanonne Jeffers.

The TQE Process:

1. Read/watch/listen using the Left & Right Annotations method.
  - LEFT: Mark, note, briefly summarize anything the author LEFT for you to find
  - RIGHT: Mark, note, briefly summarize anything you wonder while you read; “I wonder if I’m RIGHT...”
  - Students can annotate directly on the text and/or use the notetaker (handout)
2. Students write their OWN Thoughts, Lingering Questions, and Epiphanies about the text.
  - Choose one person to be the notetaker: Phillis Wheatley TQE Discussion Notes (handout)
3. Students discuss in small groups.
  - Using your article with annotations, participate in Small Group Discussions- use question stems and remember to use the author's name as often as possible
4. Whole group discussion of Top 2 TQEs.
  - Using sticky notes, place your group’s Top 2 Thoughts, Lingering Questions, or Epiphanies (TQEs) on the posters by the end of 15 minutes

- Participate in the Whole Class Discussion of TQEs

**Lesson Part 2:** Students will listen to a portion of an interview with the author of *The Age of Phillis*. In this part of the interview, Jeffers talks about her purpose in spending over 15 years researching and writing this collection of poetry. The author will read the poem “Dafa Rafet” from p. 10 of the book. Students will have a copy of this poem to refer to as the author reads and talks about the poem (view the transcript for the text of the poem).

Source: Poetry Off the Shelf-Phillis Reimagined: Honorée Fanonne Jeffers on listening to her ancestors (start 11:59 end 19:58, 8 min.)

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/podcasts/153579/phillis-reimagined>

**Lesson Part 3:** Create a “People I Admire Heart Map” for Phillis Wheatley. *Heart Maps: Helping Students Create and Craft Authentic Writing* p. 86-87.

**Lesson Part 4:** Students will read a poem by Phillis Wheatley, “On Being Brought from Africa to America”

**Lesson Part 5:** Students will read a letter by Phillis Wheatley: “Letter to Reverend Samson Occum” from Phillis Wheatley

**Lesson Part 6:** Use “Letter to Reverend Samson Occum” from Phillis Wheatley and Robert Hayden’s “A Letter from Phillis Wheatley” as a mentor text to write your own letter in the voice of Phillis Wheatley. Use some of the words from your Heart Map in your letter. First listen to the audio recording of *Robert Hayden reading his poems with comment in the Coolidge Auditorium, Oct. 5, 1976* (Start at 13:43 and end at 19:00) (<https://www.loc.gov/item/96707024>). After hearing the author read this poem, students will look at the poem together to discuss what they notice the author has done.

#### Materials:

- Left & Right Annotations notetaker
- Phillis Wheatley TQE Discussion Notes
- “How Phillis Wheatley Was Recovered Through History.”
- “Dafa Rafet” p.10 *The Age of Phillis*
- Poetry Off the Shelf-Phillis Reimagined: Honorée Fanonne Jeffers on listening to her ancestors. (start 11:59 / end 19:58, 8 min.)
- “People I Admire Heart Map” (p. 86-87) from *Heart Maps: Helping Students Create and Craft Authentic Writing* by Georgia Heard
- “On Being Brought from Africa to America” (poem by Wheatley)
- “Letter to Reverend Samson Occum” from Phillis Wheatley
- Robert Hayden’s “A Letter from Phillis Wheatley”
- *Robert Hayden reading his poems with comment in the Coolidge Auditorium, Oct. 5, 1976*

**Additional Materials:**

- Phillis Wheatley (1753–1784) Bio: Poetry Foundation
- *Imagining The Age of Phillis*-A short film series directed by John Oluwole ADEkoje that brings a selection of the poems from Honorée Fanonne Jeffers’s book to life.
- *The 1619 Project: Born on the Water*.
- “Phillis Wheatley wrote herself into the history books” Evan Peter Smith February 8, 2022
- from “The Difficult Miracle of Black Poetry in America...” By June Jordan (keynote address)
- Phillis Wheatley: Crash Course Black American History #7 (11:55)

**Outside Influences:**

- Reading Standards for Informational Text Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 7. Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.
- SJ.DI.8: Respectfully express curiosity about the lived experience of others and exchange ideas and beliefs in an open minded way.
- SS Dimension 1/ The Arc of Inquiry 9-12: Central to a rich Social Studies experience is the capability for developing questions that can frame and advance Inquiry.
- SS Dimension 3: Includes the skills students need to analyze information and come to conclusions in Inquiry. Skills focus on gathering and evaluating sources, and then developing claims and using evidence for support.
- RI.2-Summarize complex concepts.
- RI.6-Analyze author’s purpose.
- RI.7-Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media.
- CCSS: W9.11-12 Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- Social Justice Standards:
  - Diversity 8: students will respectfully express curiosity about the history and lived experiences of others.
  - Justice 13: students will analyze the harmful impact of bias and injustice in the world historically and today.

**Invitations to Write:**

- Respond to the Essential Question
- Create a “People I Admire Heart Map” for Phillis Wheatley
- Write a letter in the voice of Phillis Wheatley

**Extensions and Adaptations:**

- Read *The 1619 Project: Born on the Water*
- Research Odell's background
- Research Wheatley's African roots
- Write a Collage Essay on Wheatley
- Exploring other stories that need to be researched that may have been told only from the White perspective
- Use Jeffers poems as a means to explore the meaning of Wheatley's poems

**Annotating a Text**  
**Left & Right Annotations**

<p><b>LEFT:</b> Mark, note, briefly summarize anything the <b>author LEFT for you to find</b>, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Argument(s)/Claim(s)</li> <li>● Thematic Ideas</li> <li>● Evidence (Ethos, Pathos, Logos)</li> <li>● Devices</li> <li>● SOAPSTone <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Speaker, Occasion, Audience, Purpose, Subject, Tone</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>RIGHT:</b> Mark, note, briefly summarize anything you wonder while you read; “<b>I wonder if I’m RIGHT...</b>”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Connections: history, literature, current events, music, film, other subjects</li> <li>● Opposing Opinions</li> <li>● Questions</li> <li>● Significance (Future Effects)</li> <li>● Agree/Disagree, why?</li> </ul>
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**TQE Group Discussion Notetaker**

Group Members:	
Text:	<b>“How Phillis Wheatley Was Recovered Through History”</b>

**Directions:** With your group, compile a list of as many TQEs as possible. Be sure everyone's voice is heard. Refer to your Left & Right Annotations and the article as needed.

**Thoughts:** Cool ideas or opinions that come from your brain and combine to make theories, hypotheses, and inventions.

**Lingering Questions:** Questions that you still have about what you read, watched or saw. Or, questions you now have *because of* what you read, watched or saw.

**Epiphanies:** Moments of sudden revelation or insight. These could be connections you make OR ideas about why the author chose to create what she/he did.

Thoughts	Lingering Questions	Epiphanies

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