

The Activists

Women of Consequence

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

This lesson discusses how Black women like Mary Ann Shadd Cary used activism to gain equal rights for African-Americans during the Colored Conventions Movement, and compares her to current female activists like Maya Angelou, Angela Davis, and Alicia Garza. Arts-wise, this lesson also focuses on representing relationships through the use of tableaux.

EDUCATION STANDARDS

Grade 11 | 90 minutes

Common Core Standards	National Core Arts Standards	NCSS Themes
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.9: Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.	ANCHOR STANDARD #5: Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.	II. TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE: identify and use various sources for reconstructing the past, such as documents, letters, diaries, maps, textbooks, photos, and others.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.	ANCHOR STANDARD #9: Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.	IV. INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT AND IDENTITY: analyze a particular event to identify reasons individuals might respond to it in different ways.

OBJECTIVES

1. Effectively introduce Mary Ann Shadd Cary and the impact of her contributions during the Colored Conventions Movement.

2. Have students identify similarities, differences, and relationships between Shadd Cary, Angelou, Davis, and Garza.
3. Show students how to create clear tableaus that visualize a message, and to accurately analyze the works of others.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. [Resource 3.1 - Excerpts from “Break Every Yoke” by Mary Ann Shadd Cary](#)
2. [Resource 3.2 - “Caged Bird” by Maya Angelou](#)
3. [Resource 3.3 - Excerpts from Angela Davis’s 2017 Women’s March Speech](#)
4. [Resource 3.4 - Excerpts from “Why Black Lives Matter” by Alicia Garza](#)
5. [Resource 3.5 - Rubric](#)
6. [Handout 3.1](#)

ACTIVITY

History Warm-Up/Think-Pair-Share

- As students walk in the room, the following quote will be on the board:
“Self-reliance is the fine road to independence.”
- For their warm-up, students are to respond to the following questions:
 - In your own words, what does this quote mean?
 - Based on what we have discussed the past two days, how do you think this quote relates to the Colored Conventions Movement?
- After taking time to respond individually, students will share their ideas with peers sitting near them.
- The teacher will then ask for a few volunteers to share their ideas aloud with the class.

Lesson Focus/Activation of Prior Knowledge

- Tell students that today we will discuss another way in which Black women sought to gain equal rights for African-Americans in the Colored Conventions Movement: through activism.
- Ask students what comes to mind when they think of “activism” or “activists.” Define activism as taking vigorous action to achieve political or social justice.

- Ask students to think of modern-day activists and how they spread their ideas.
 - Answers may include figures in the Black Lives Matter Movement, Women’s Marches, gun control, etc.
- Tell students that today’s lesson will focus on Mary Ann Shadd Cary, who was also an educator, but was more well known for her work as a lawyer and newspaper editor. Like activists today, Shadd Cary spread her ideas through words.
- Tell students that the quote they analyzed at the beginning of class was by Mary Ann Shadd Cary.

Movement Warm-Up and Mini-Lesson

- Have students stand and find adequate space in the room to move.
- Teacher will lead students through a warm-up to review the elements of shape, energy, action, and tempo.
- Tell students that they will practice one more element during today’s lesson: relationships. Define this element as the relationship the dancers’ body parts have to everything else (spatial relationships, time relationships, relationship to music, and to each other).
- Teacher will repeat the movement warm-up, this time giving students the opportunity to become familiar with the element of relationships.
- Ask students why they think the element of relationships might be especially relevant to the concept of activism.
- Students may be seated after the movement warm-up.

Integrated Arts Activity #1

- Each student will receive a copy of **Handout 3.1 (Mary Ann Shadd Cary Biography)**.
- Explain that relationships were very important to the work of Mary Ann Shadd Cary. Tell students that as they read her biography, they should pay attention to the numerous relationships important to her life and work.
- As students read **Handout 3.1**, they are to underline/highlight parts of the text that mention relationships.
- Students will get into groups of 3 or 4 and share the relationships they found in the biography.

- During this time, the teacher should monitor students to ensure they interpreted the source correctly.
- After all students have shared their findings, each group will select one relationship to focus on to create a tableau.
- Students should be prepared to explain to the class how the relationships among dancers and space reflect the relationship discussed in the Shadd Cary biography.
- Groups will then share their relationship tableaus with the class.

History Mini-Lesson

- Tell students that Shadd Cary’s newspaper, the Provincial Freedman, was published until the outbreak of the Civil War. After the war broke out, Shadd Cary helped organize campaigns to recruit northern Blacks to fight for the Union. She later worked on campaigns for Black women’s suffrage and started initiatives to help Black women become financially independent.
- Show clip on Shadd Cary’s life
(<http://torontosun.com/2013/10/23/remember-me-mary-ann-shadd-cary/wcm/804aa5c6-0aa1-46dd-be80-9d7700b4c3ad>).
- Tell students that Shadd Cary paved the way for Black women to have a central role in political and social activism. Throughout American history, Black women have since been at the forefront of important social justice movements.
- Explain to students that they will be connecting Shadd Cary’s legacy to a 20th or 21st century Black woman activist. These activists include Maya Angelou, Angela Davis, and Alicia Garza.

Integrated Arts Activity #2 / Assessment

- Students will work with a partner for this activity.
- All students will receive a copy of **Resource 3.1 (Excerpts from “Break Every Yoke” by Mary Ann Shadd Cary)**.
- Each group will be assigned one contemporary activist. Students in groups assigned to Maya Angelou will receive a copy of **Resource 3.2 (“Caged Bird” by Maya Angelou)**; Angela Davis, **Resource 3.3 (Excerpts from Angela Davis’s 2017 Women’s March Speech)**; and Alicia Garza, **Resource 3.4 (Excerpts from “Why Black Lives Matter” by Alicia Garza)**.

- As they read both of their assigned resources, students will look for similarities they see between the Shadd Cary resource and the contemporary activist resource. Students should be mindful of similar themes, words, and phrases. They should also note any important differences they notice between the two sources. Students should keep track of these in **Handout 3.2**.
- After they have finished reading, students will share their findings with their partner.
- Students will then work with their partner to create a movement “conversation” between Shadd Cary and their assigned contemporary activist, using their findings on similarities and differences to inform their choreography. One student should play the role of Shadd Cary, and the other should play the role of Angelou/Davis/Garza.
- The movement “conversation” should include 4 shapes that reflect major similarities and/or differences they noted in the sources.
- Students will have 10 minutes to plan their movement “conversation” before performing it for a pair of peers assigned to the same contemporary activist.
- Students will give each other feedback on their performance. This feedback should focus on the clarity of the relationship between Shadd Cary and Angelou/Davis/Garza. Students should evaluate each other based on the rubric **(Resource 3.5)**.
- Students will then have 5 minutes to rehearse their movement “conversations” again, implementing the feedback they received from their peers.
- All pairs will then share their choreography with the class.

Exit Ticket

- Students will respond to the following questions before leaving:
- What did you learn about Black women’s activism through the life of Mary Ann Shadd Cary?
- Describe the similarities and differences you noticed between Shadd Cary and the contemporary activist you read about.

HANDOUT 3.1

Directions: As you read the biography of Mary Ann Shadd Cary, underline or highlight the parts of the text that discuss relationships that were important to her life and work. List these relationships in the box provided.

Synopsis

Born in Delaware in 1823, abolitionist Mary Ann Shadd Cary became the first female African-American newspaper editor in North America when she started the black newspaper *The Provincial Freeman*. Later in life, she became the second African-American woman in the United States to earn a law degree.

Early Life

Abolitionist, activist, journalist and educator Mary Ann Shadd Cary was born Mary Ann Shadd on October 9, 1823, in Wilmington, Delaware. The eldest of 13 children, Shadd Cary was born into a free African-American family. Her father worked for the abolitionist newspaper called the *Liberator* run by famed abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison and provided help to escaped slaves as a member of the Underground Railroad. Shadd Cary would grow up to follow in her father's footsteps. Along with her abolitionist activities, she became the first female African-American newspaper editor in North America.

Shadd Cary was educated at a Quaker school in Pennsylvania, and she later started her own school for African Americans. After the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, she went to Canada with one of her brothers. Not long after, the entire Shadd family moved there. In 1852, Shadd Cary wrote a report encouraging other African Americans to make the trek north to Canada.

Founding 'The Provincial Freeman'

It was in Canada that Shadd Cary started a newspaper called *The Provincial Freeman*, a weekly publication for African Americans, especially escaped slaves. She wrote many of the articles herself, and often returned to the United States to gather information for the paper.

In addition to creating a newspaper, Shadd Cary established a school that was open to children of all races. While living in Canada, she met Thomas F. Cary. The couple married in 1856 and had two children. He died only a few years later.

Later Years

When the Civil War broke out, Mary Ann Shadd Cary returned to the United States to help in the war effort. In 1863, she worked as a recruiting officer for the Union Army in Indiana, and encouraged African Americans to join the fight against the Confederacy and against slavery. After the war, Cary became a pioneering spirit in a new direction, earning a law degree in 1883 from Howard University. She was the second African-American woman in the United States to earn this degree. Mary Ann Shadd Cary died in 1893 in Washington, D.C.

In the box below, list the relationships that you noted:

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the student to list the relationships noted.

RESOURCE 3.1

Excerpts from “Break Every Yoke” by Mary Ann Shadd Cary

The speech below is a sermon Mary Ann Shadd Cary gave on Sunday, April 6, 1858, to an audience in Chatham, Canada.

These two great commandments, and upon which rest all the Law and the prophets, cannot be narrowed down to suit us but we must go up and conform to them. They proscribe neither nation nor sex—our neighbor may be Either the oriental heathen the degraded Europe and or the Enslaved colored American. Neither must we prefer sex the Slave mother as well as the Slave father. The oppress, or nominally free woman of every nation or clime in whose Soul is as Evident by the image of God as in her more fortunate contemporary of the male sex has a claim upon us by virtue of that irrevocable command Equally as urgent. We cannot successfully Evade duty because the Suffering fellow woman be is only a woman! She too is a neighbor. The good Samaritan of this generation must not take for their Exemplars the priest and the Levite when a fellow woman is among thieves—neither will they find their Excuse in the custom as barbarous and anti-christian as any promulgated by pious Brahmin that [word crossed out] they may be only females. The spirit of true philanthropy knows no sex. The true christian will not seek to Exhume from the grave of the past [word crossed out] its half developed customs and insist upon them as a substitute for the plain teachings of Jesus Christ, and the Evident deductions of a more Enlightened humanity...

Those with whom I am identified, namely the colored people of this country--and the women of the land are in the pit figurat[ively] speaking are cast out. These were God's requirements during the Prophecy of Isaiah and they are in full force today. God is the same yesterday today and forever. And upon this nation and to this people they come with all their significance within your grasp are three or four millions in chains in your southern territory and among and around about you are half a million allied to them by blood and to you by blood as were the Hebrew servants who realize the intensity of your hatred and oppression...

Slavery American slavery will not bear moral tests. It is in Exists by striking down all the moral safeguards to society by—it is not then a moral institution. You are called upon as a man to deny and disobey the most noble impulses of manhood to aid a brother in distress—to refuse to strike from the limbs of those not bound for any crime the fetters by which his Escape is obstructed. The milk of human kindness must be transformed into the bitter waters of hatred—you must return to his master he that hath Escaped, no matter how Every principle of manly independence revolts at the same...

No friends we suffer the oppressors of the age to lead us astray; instead of going to the source of truth for guidance we let the adversary guide us as to what is our duty and God's word.

RESOURCE 3.2

“Caged Bird” by Maya Angelou

The poem below is from Angelou’s autobiographical *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, published in 1969. Much of Angelou’s work reflects her experience dealing with racism during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

A free bird leaps
on the back of the wind
and floats downstream
till the current ends
and dips his wing
in the orange sun rays and
dares to claim the sky.

But a bird that stalks
down his narrow cage
can seldom see through
his bars of rage
his wings are clipped and
his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.

The free bird thinks of another breeze
and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn bright lawn
and he names the sky his own

But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams
his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.

RESOURCE 3.3

Excerpts from Angela Davis's 2017 Women's March Speech

The following is from the speech Angela Davis gave at the 2017 Women's March in Washington, D.C.

The freedom struggles of black people that have shaped the very nature of this country's history cannot be deleted with the sweep of a hand. We cannot be made to forget that black lives do matter. This is a country anchored in slavery and colonialism, which means for better or for worse the very history of the United States is a history of immigration and enslavement. Spreading xenophobia, hurling accusations of murder and rape and building walls will not erase history...

This is a women's march and this women's march represents the promise of feminism as against the pernicious powers of state violence. And inclusive and intersectional feminism that calls upon all of us to join the resistance to racism, to Islamophobia, to anti-Semitism, to misogyny, to capitalist exploitation.

...We dedicate ourselves to collective resistance. Resistance to the billionaire mortgage profiteers and gentrifiers. Resistance to the health care privateers. Resistance to the attacks on Muslims and on immigrants. Resistance to attacks on disabled people. Resistance to state violence perpetrated by the police and through the prison industrial complex. Resistance to institutional and intimate gender violence, especially against trans women of color...

Over the next months and years we will be called upon to intensify our demands for social justice to become more militant in our defense of vulnerable populations...

This is just the beginning and in the words of the inimitable Ella Baker, 'We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes.'

RESOURCE 3.4

Excerpts from “Why Black Lives Matter” by Alicia Garza

Alicia Garza is one of the founders of the Black Lives Matter Movement. The excerpts below are from a speech she gave about the movement in 2016.

It is important to us that we understand that movements are not begun by any one person. That this movement actually was begun in 1619 when black people were brought here in chains and at the bottoms of boats. And certainly we should be reminded that it is the combined effort of so many incredibly courageous and bold and fearless and wise people that some, you will never know their names. But you should know that they **too** are co-creators of what it is that we are experiencing and participating in today.

With that being said our role has been to remind us of our humanity. To remind us that black lives matter, too. To remind us that we are still living in a time when that is a contested statement. And it should not be.

...what civics did **not** teach me, and black people **like** me, was that my citizenship is conditional. This is the harsh reality for black people in America today. That we are expected to participate in democracy while receiving conditional citizenship in return...

You see, a cauldron has been bubbling under the surface for a very very long time, occasionally expressing itself in instances of uprising. But none as sustained as what we are experiencing today. Indeed, the last decade of post-racialism, and the neoliberal assault on black communities, has prompted a beautiful upsurge in black resistance. And it is a resistance that has resulted in a new political order...

Black people have been at the center of the fight to force this country to live up to the values and ideals that it espouses. The very ideals and the very values that underpin our version of democracy. From Nat Turner’s revolts, to Sojourner Truth’s “Ain’t I a Woman?” speech, to white suffragettes, to Fannie Lou Hamer being sick and tired of being sick and tired and calling for independent black political power, black resistance and black organizing have **consistently** shaped the way that we understand and the way that we experience civic participation.

RESOURCE 3.5

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
Use of Elements	Did not implement any required elements.	Two-three shapes were missing in the movement sequence.	One shape was missing in the movement sequence.	Four or more shapes were present in the movement sequence.
Clarity	Most shapes are irrelevant and/or do not reflect a relational aspect between Shadd Cary and Angela, Davis, or Garza.	Some shapes are irrelevant and/or do not reflect a relational aspect between Shadd Cary and Angela, Davis, or Garza.	Most shapes are relevant and/or reflect a relational aspect between Shadd Cary and Angela, Davis, or Garza.	All shapes are relevant and/or reflect a relational aspect between Shadd Cary and Angela, Davis, or Garza.