

DRIED BEANS: CULTURAL RESISTANCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE



OBJECTIVES

Describe the cultural and environmental significance of black-eyed peas as part of African Diaspora and African American foodways.

Explore how foods have historical, political, environmental, and cultural stories.

Elevate, center, and experience foods that are often underappreciated and underutilized.

MA STATE FRAMEWORK(s)

History and Social Science | United States History I (HSS.USI.T3.04)

History and Social Science | World History II (HSS.WHII.T2.01) (HSS.WHII.T3.03)

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What are black-eyed peas? What is the cultural significance of black-eyed peas?
- What are black-eyed peas symbolic of? Why?
- Why are beans considered an environmentally sustainable crop?

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Handouts attached to this lesson plan

LESSON

1. Project or pass around the poster "[Foresight](http://bit.ly/3XMoCoZ)" (<http://bit.ly/3XMoCoZ>) by Naima Penniman of Soul Fire Farm (<https://www.soulfirefarm.org/>).

This image is from the book [Farming While Black](https://www.farmingwhileblack.org/) by Naima Penniman

(<https://www.farmingwhileblack.org/>). As students observe the poster, ask them:

What do you see?

What do you notice?

What do you wonder?

**Questions are inspired by Harvard Graduate School of Education's Project Zero's [See Feel Think Wonder Routine](#)*

(<https://bit.ly/3WP8lad>)

3. Have students share-out their observations in small groups and/or in a large group discussion. Hopefully, students will notice the bean plant and the seed (black eyed-pea) in the center with a halo of light. If not, bring their attention to it. If needed, prompt them with questions, such as, "What might be the significance of the seed? Why might it be illuminated?"

4. After the initial discussion students explore the significance of the seed. Depending on your students' reading level and your goals you could:

a) Read [Black-Eyed Peas and Hoghead Cheese: A Story of Food, Family, and Freedom](https://bit.ly/3WNnEjB)

(<https://bit.ly/3WNnEjB>) by Glenda Armand & Steffi Walthall. Or watch a read-aloud [video](https://youtu.be/AdjAP6TjmCQ):

<https://youtu.be/AdjAP6TjmCQ>.

LESSON, cont.

b) Read this article, "[Akara from Africa: Black-eyed pea fritters, inspired by Hercules](https://bit.ly/3kHiHeQ)" (<https://bit.ly/3kHiHeQ>).

c) Read [Plant of the Month: Black-eyed Pea](http://bit.ly/3HEYCyL) (<http://bit.ly/3HEYCyL>). Students should fill out a [simple worksheet](http://bit.ly/40b4JlO) (<http://bit.ly/40b4JlO>) while reading to summarize the cultural and environmental significance of the black-eyed pea.

5. After learning about the historical and cultural significance of black-eyed peas ask students to read the poem "[A Love Letter to Future Generations](http://bit.ly/40cXOZh)" (<http://bit.ly/40cXOZh>)" by Naima Penniman. Ms. Cynar first read the poem in the book, [We Are Each Other's Harvest: Celebrating African American Farmers, Land, and Legacy](https://nataliebaszile.com/work) by Natalie Baszile. (<https://nataliebaszile.com/work>).

6. Lastly, project the poster, "[Foresight](http://bit.ly/3XMoCoZ),"(<http://bit.ly/3XMoCoZ>) again. Have students create a title for the poster, and write the title in their notebooks. Ask them to create a caption explaining the posters significance based on what they learned during this lesson. If there's time, have students share their titles & captions with the class.

EXTENSIONS & VARIATIONS

Group Cooking Lab: Black Eyed Peas

- Break students into groups of 4-5, and have them work together to make the recipe you select
- After they're finished cooking, ask them to complete the attached worksheet
- Recipe Idea: [Marcus Samuelsson's Black Eyed Peas with Coconut Milk](http://bit.ly/3wJ3Tis) (<http://bit.ly/3wJ3Tis>)
- Recipe Idea: [Akara](http://bit.ly/3RfQmbO) (<http://bit.ly/3RfQmbO>)
- Worksheet: [Cooking Lab Reflection](http://bit.ly/3jddnzs) (<http://bit.ly/3jddnzs>)

Discussion Group: Contributions of African Crops to American Culture & Beyond

- Divide up the article, [Contributions of African Crops to American Culture and Beyond](http://bit.ly/3XQ44og) (<http://bit.ly/3XQ44og>), to learn more about African Diaspora crops that are underrepresented in food education. The crops can be divided up by reading level and interest.
- Have students use [this worksheet](http://bit.ly/3JnEVNc) (<http://bit.ly/3JnEVNc>) to respond to the article
- Have students make a slide in a shared Google Slides document so they can read about the other crops and respond to each other's work.

Gardening: Grow Black-Eyed Peas in the Garden

- Order [Ezelle Family 'Fish Eye' Blackeyed Pea](http://bit.ly/3jIM1am) seeds (<http://bit.ly/3jIM1am>) from Truelove Seed (<https://trueloveseeds.com/>). They have an African Diaspora seed collection. Plant the seeds in spring. If you have a summer or fall garden enrichment program or class they can save the seeds to plant the following year.
- "[How to Save Seeds](https://youtu.be/zP1aO5ezmmY)" Video (<https://youtu.be/zP1aO5ezmmY>)
- For science connections you could expand on the nitrogen cycle, nitrogen fixation, and climate resilience with drought and heat tolerance.
- Participate in [Slow Food USA's Plant a Seed Kit](https://slowfoodusa.org/product/plant-a-seed-2022-kit/) (<https://slowfoodusa.org/product/plant-a-seed-2022-kit/>) and plant seeds in your school garden.

Additional Resources:

- Jessica B. Harris is the author of twelve critically acclaimed books documenting the foods and foodways of the African Diaspora. Check out her books and learn more about her on her website: <http://www.africooks.com/>
- Article: [Are Black Eyed Peas Really Peas?](http://bit.ly/3Jp3Xvr) (<http://bit.ly/3Jp3Xvr>)