



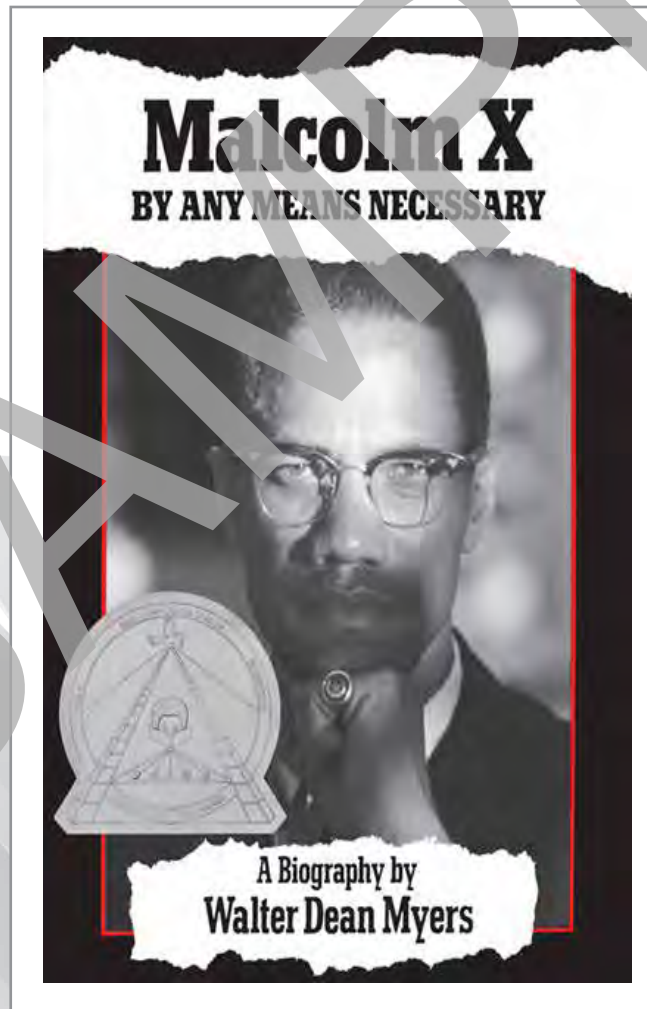
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 9-12

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Malcolm X: By Any Means Necessary

Walter Dean Myers



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Malcolm X: By Any Means Necessary

Walter Dean Myers

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

ISBN 978-1-50203-976-7

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Skills and Strategies

Writing

Poetry, essay, eulogy, précis,
dialogue, TV script

Comprehension

Cause/effect, compare/
contrast, prediction, opinion,
conflict

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, oral presentation,
staged interview

Vocabulary

Target words, definitions,
application

Literary Elements

Characterization, symbolism,
irony, inference, sequence

Thinking

Research, compare/contrast,
analysis

Across the Curriculum

Art—collage; Drama—script;
Music—appropriate
background music; Current
events—newspaper and
magazine articles

Genre: biography

Setting: Harlem district in New York City, North and South regions of the United States, Mecca; 1925–1965

Point of View: third-person omniscient

Themes: black experience in America, racial suppression, violent vs. nonviolent change, self-sacrifice for ideals, differing political viewpoints, handling persecution

Conflict: person vs. person; person vs. self; person/racial group vs. society

Style: narrative

Tone: serious, contemplative, insightful

Summary

Malcolm Little was born in 1925, the fourth child of Earl and Louise Little. His father was a minister and an organizer for Marcus Garvey, a fiery black leader who started a “Back to Africa” movement. Malcolm’s father died under suspicious circumstances in 1931. His mother’s increasing mental deterioration led to his placement with a foster family in 1938 and to her commitment to a mental hospital in 1939. His siblings were separated and placed in different homes.

Faced with societal and educational racism, Malcolm, an intelligent, athletic teenager, began a downward spiral. After moving to Boston to live with his half-sister Ella, he began to mimic streetwise young black men and began to hustle tips at a Boston nightclub. He then moved to Harlem and became known as “Detroit Red.” After returning to Boston, he led a gang of burglars and was in prison by the time he was 20 years old.

While in prison, Malcolm began the journey that would culminate in his conversion to Islam and his adoption of the name Malcolm X. After leaving prison in 1957, he became an active member of the Nation of Islam. This brilliant, radical, African-American leader advocated revolution against white supremacy, demanding full equality and freedom for his people “by any means necessary.”

Malcolm X left the Nation of Islam and formed the Muslim Mosque, Inc., in 1964. During a pilgrimage to Mecca, he began to believe that it was possible for black and white people to co-exist peacefully. He was assassinated in 1965. His legacy continues today.

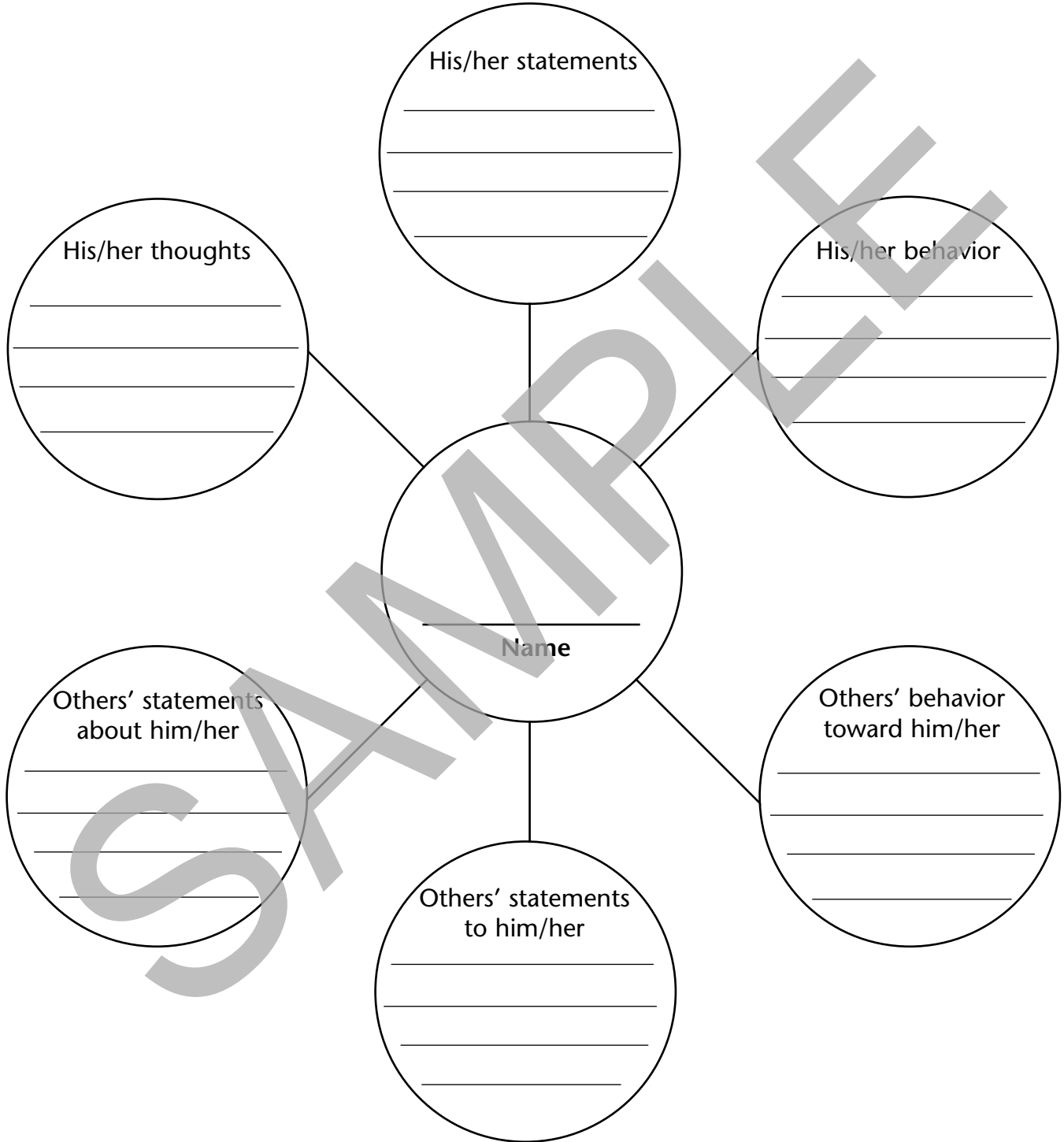
About the Author

Personal: Walter Dean Myers was born August 12, 1937, in Martinsburg, West Virginia, to George and Mary Myers. Herbert and Florence Dean adopted him when he was three years old. The family lived in the Harlem district of New York City. He served in the U.S. Army from 1954–1957 and later received a bachelor of arts degree from Empire State College. In addition to his writing career, he has worked as an employment supervisor, a trade book editor, and a teacher of creative writing and black history. He is a member of PEN and the Harlem Writers Guild. He lives in Jersey City, New Jersey, with his wife, Constance, and their family.

Career: Myers began writing poems and stories as a teenager. Although he won awards for his achievements, his race and economic status seemed to limit him. He continued to write while serving in the U.S. Army and later while working in menial jobs. He began to have some of his

Character Web

Directions: Complete the attribute web below by filling in information specific to a character in the book.



Introduction–Chapter 1, pp. 1–22

The arrival of Malcolm X and the Black Muslims at the police station following the arrest of a black man in Harlem introduces the biography. The reaction of the police and citizens of Harlem demonstrates the power the militant group had in the 1950s and 1960s. Malcolm was born in 1925 to Earl and Louise Little. His father’s death under suspicious circumstances in 1931 led to his mother’s mental deterioration and the family’s separation.

Background Information

Harlem (p. 2)—well-known black community; located north of Central Park in New York City
Jackie Robinson (p. 3)—(1919–1972); first black person to play major league baseball; joined Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947 and played ten years
Willie Mays (p. 3)—(1931–); famous black baseball player; named to Baseball Hall of Fame
Black Muslims (p. 3)—name used to identify members of several related religious groups in the United States; almost all are African Americans; support racial separation, black nationalism, and economic independence for African Americans
Nation of Islam (p. 6)—comprised of two groups of Black Muslims: the original Muslim organization (1930–1975) and the reestablished Nation (1977)
Marcus Garvey (p. 10)—(1887–1940); black leader who believed blacks would never receive justice in countries of predominantly white people; began a “Back-to-Africa” movement in the United States; gained an estimated 2,000,000 followers in early 1920s
Ku Klux Klan (p. 14)—group of whites who oppose advancement of African Americans, Jews, and other minority groups; members wear robes and hoods; noted for burning crosses at outdoor meetings and at homes of minorities
J. Edgar Hoover (p. 16)—(1895–1972); director of F.B.I. (Federal Bureau of Investigation) for 48 years; congressional investigation in 1975 disclosed his abuse of power and violation of some individual’s civil rights
Underground Railroad (p. 16)—informal, secret system that helped slaves escape to Northern United States and Canada in the mid-1800s
Great Depression (p. 18)—worldwide business slump in the 1930s; a rapid drop in stock values in October 1929 began a lengthy period of high unemployment and low business activity; millions of Americans were left jobless and penniless

Vocabulary

precinct (1)
martial arts (5)
racism (8)
valor (8)
exploited (11)
philosophy (12)
clemency (16)
Caucasian (18)

Discussion Questions

1. What impact did the arrival of the Black Muslims, a.k.a. the Nation of Islam, have on Harlem? *(A formation of black men, the Black Muslims, appeared before the precinct shortly after police pulled a handcuffed, injured black man from a car and took him into the police station. The men were neatly dressed, unsmiling, and standing peacefully. They moved away only after being assured the prisoner had been taken to the hospital and was receiving adequate care. Noting the arrival of the Black Muslims, the people of Harlem realized something important was happening. They quickened their pace, became tense, and decreased the volume of noise. A crowd began to gather around the men, who were rumored to hate all whites and were trained in martial arts. The crowd followed the militant group to the hospital. The police responded to the presence of the Black Muslims by sending the prisoner, Johnson Hinton, to a hospital by ambulance. The community discussed the confrontation with police, and police wondered what challenges the militant group would present. pp. 1–6)*
2. What impact did Malcolm X have on the police at the 28th Precinct? What did this reveal about him? *(The police officer at the desk backed down when Malcolm X insisted that he be*

allowed to see prisoner Johnson Hinton. Police complied with Malcolm's demand that they send the man to a hospital. After learning that Hinton was receiving proper care, Malcolm gave a signal and the Black Muslims moved silently away. This incident revealed Malcolm X's power as leader of the Black Muslims, the respect his followers had for him, and the apprehension the police felt toward him and his men. pp. 4–6)

3. Discuss Malcolm's father and analyze the effects of racism on the Little family. (*Earl Little was a large man, capable of working with his hands and his mind. He was a minister of Christian beliefs and an outspoken proponent for the rights of black people. He was frustrated with the limitations white society placed on him. His primary desires were to help blacks gain their independence, to help them reach their full potential, and to have a family. Although he worked diligently to help people attain racial equality by advocating the beliefs of Marcus Garvey, he did not live to see his dream come true. After warnings from the Ku Klux Klan to keep quiet and racist threats against his family and employers, Little moved his family from Omaha to Wisconsin and bought a house. He continued to spread the message of black independence. The Little family was stoned when they moved into a white neighborhood, and he again moved his family. Earl Little's struggle against racism ceased when he fell beneath the wheels of a trolley and was killed. Louise believed her husband had been killed by whites who wanted to silence him. pp. 8–22*)
4. Discuss Marcus Garvey, his philosophy, and his impact on the Little family. (*Garvey was a fiery black leader who believed that African Americans were too dependent upon whites. He envisioned blacks uniting to create their own businesses, jobs, and schools and suggested that they turn to Africa as their spiritual home. He started the Universal Negro Improvement Association, a.k.a. U.N.I.A., and a newspaper, Negro World. His fund-raising tactics led to his arrest for mail fraud. He was tried, found guilty, and sent to a federal prison. Earl Little became a spokesman for Garvey's philosophy, and Louise Little joined the U.N.I.A. After Garvey was sentenced to prison, Little wrote letters pleading for clemency, and F.B.I. director J. Edgar Hoover intercepted one of these letters. Little's involvement in Garvey's movement contributed to his death and the separation of his family [inference]. pp. 10–12*)
5. Analyze the reaction of blacks, white hate groups, and the F.B.I. to Earl Little's political activism. (*Their reactions were symbolic of the racial tension of the 1920s and 1930s. Nervous blacks discouraged Little because they were afraid he would stir up trouble for them. White hate groups, advocating white supremacy, warned Little to keep quiet and threatened his family's safety. The F.B.I. investigated Garvey and his organization because they considered anyone attempting to unite blacks as a possible threat to the security of the United States. pp. 14–16*)
6. Examine Malcolm's introduction to racism and the effect his father's death had on him. How might Malcolm's life have been different if his father had lived? (*Malcolm and his siblings stood outside and watched their house burn to the ground. He sensed the hatred of white people as they stoned his house. Many times he heard the cheering African-American crowds as his father spoke about the need for black people to unite. He would never forget the night his father was killed, the screams of his mother, and the fatherless family huddled together. Earl Little left a lasting impression on his frightened young son. pp. 20–22*)

Supplementary Activity

1. Research: Working in small groups, research and present an oral report to the class on one of the following: racial climate of the late 1950s and early 1960s; Nation of Islam, a.k.a. Black Muslims; Ku Klux Klan; Underground Railroad; Great Depression; J. Edgar Hoover.