

Early Black Boston Digital Almanac: **Space/Place/Maps**

Unit Summary: This unit provides an introduction to mapping and critically looks at how space is used and who has access to space in Boston. It engages with the question of ownership over the city as well as highlights the pivotal spaces in early Boston Black history. It will also engage with digital mapping platforms and their evolution over time.

Learning Goals:

- Students will link the histories of space in Boston with the division of space.
 - This will shape their understanding of Boston's contemporary moment resulting in systems like redlining, gentrification, and so forth.
- Students will be able to identify the diverse social geographies of Boston and recognize the importance of being conscientious of space.
- Students will gain an understanding of the complexities of mapping regarding intentionality and consumption of certain spaces
 - Students will recognize how mapping and space have an effect on identity.

Massachusetts State Standards:

[Note: Because teachers have autonomy to choose what activities and primary sources they engage with, these standards could also be based on the area you chose to focus on]

- RCA-H (Literacy in Content Areas)
- WCA (Writing Standards)
- USI.T1: specifically point 5
- USI.T3: specifically points 3 & 4
- USI.T4: specifically point 2
- USI.T5: specifically points 5, 7, & 8
- USI.T7: specifically points 3 & 4

Exhibits (featured on the EBBDA site and these exhibits are focused on this unit):

- Copp's Hill Burying Ground
- Faneuil Hall
- Black Heritage Trail
- African Meeting House
- Map of Black Beacon Hill/West End
- South End map of Black Boston
- Roxbury and Dorchester in 19th century
- Mapping Phillis Wheatley

Possible Themes & Curricular Concepts:

- Space
- Access
- Ownership
- Mapping
- Historical
- Redlining
- Gentrification
- Identity

- Racial disparities

Glossary Terms:

- **Colonialism:**
 - Setting up colonies in another country (government).¹
 - Example
 - Christopher Columbus claimed control over indigenous land
- **Imperialism:**
 - Assume control and domination of one country by another (trade).²
 - Political and economic control
 - Example
 - British control of the Caribbean
- **Redlining:**
 - an illegal practice that promoted racial segregation. In Boston, real estate agents and mortgage companies created a color-coded map to separate/create boundaries among areas based on race, socioeconomic class, and businesses. Each color represented which areas were “good” or “bad”, green for the “best,” blue for “still desirable,” yellow for “definitely declining,” and red for “hazardous” → represented where it safe to insure mortgages
- **The Federal Housing Administration:**
 - established in 1934 as a response to the Great Depression
 - Refused to insure mortgages and loans near Black communities to further perpetuate redlining and gentrification .
- **Desegregation:**
 - End of racial segregation
 - **White Flight**
 - Describes the movement of white populations in major US cities after world war 2, into the suburbs when people of color began moving into them.
 - **Busing Movement**
 - Describes Federal and State attempts to diversify public schools by literally “busing” students to schools within or outside of their district.
- **Gentrification**
 - Describes social displacement, whereby middle-class people start moving into underserved/low-income communities. Because the cost of rents also rises and the sense of community also changes, thereby displacing the people who were there beforehand.

Overall Discussion Questions:

- How would you narrate the geographies of Boston?
- How do you define historical places?
- How does Boston’s contemporary engagement with space interact with its past?
 - What power does space carry in marginalized communities?
 - Who has ownership over these spaces?
- How does the demographic population connect to the space each neighborhood contains/has?
 - How has this demographic population shifted over time?
 - What communities surround each other?
 - What communities have the most resources? What communities have the least resources?

¹ Ibid

² Dr. Nicole Aljoe Postcolonial Women Writer’s PPT slide

- Why do you think the gaps between space, race, and access are so large in Boston?
- How does space correspond to our identities?

Activities:

- **Site Visits:**
 - **Goal:** Site visits allow students to physically engage with the spaces listed below:
 - The following local site(s) resonate and connect to the topic:
 - Boston Athenaeum
 - Museum of African American History
 - David Walker and Maria Stewart's House
 - Copp's Burial Ground
 - Map located in Ruggles of Early Roxbury
 - African Meeting House
 - Faneuil Hall
 - Black Heritage Trail
 - The 54th Regiment Statue
 - Phillis Wheatley
 - David Walker and Maria Stewart's House
 - Harriet Tubman
 - **Skills:** critical thinking, research, digital access
 - **Consider the following questions:**
 - How do these site visits change our understanding of these places?
 - What do these touristy atmospheres tell us?
 - Which locations are given more attention than others?
 - What historical significance do these places hold?
- **Boston's Historical Relics:**
 - **Goal:** Students will recognize the gaps in Boston's history through material culture shown by historical relics.
 - **Activity:**
 - Students will choose a topic, person, or movement from the 18th- or 19th-century (some examples could include the Sarah Roberts education freedom movement, Black feminism, patriotism, Back-to-Africa, etc) that they are interested in
 - They will research the sector of Boston this person, topic, or movement engaged with.
 - Students will then physically (or virtually) look for historical relics around Boston that speak to this specific aspect of Boston's Black history.
 - Consider the relic's purpose, intended audience, time, place, space, etc
 - Please encourage students to engage in a creative activity like taking a photo, drawing, or writing a poem about how this relic makes them feel.
 - Please write a 1-3 page (double spaced) reflection based on the questions below (in addition to the questions to consider):
 - How do these relics feel to you?
 - Would you notice them if you were not searching for them?
 - Define how this is a historical relic
 - **Skills:** critical thinking, research, digital access
 - **Questions to consider:**
 - Where are these relics located in Boston? How much space do they occupy?
 - How do we "define" historical relics?
 - How does Boston's present use of space interact with its past use of space?

- **Post Activity Reflection:** Create your own early Boston Landmark. Determine its name, appearance, and purpose
- **Redlining & Gentrification:**
 - **Goal:** Students will engage with Boston's neighborhood history.
 - **Activity:**
 - Students will be separated into several groups and divided into different neighborhood areas in Boston including Allston
 - Back Bay
 - Brighton
 - Charlestown
 - Chinatown
 - Dorchester
 - Downtown
 - East Boston
 - Hyde Park
 - Jamaica Plain
 - Mattapan
 - Roslindale
 - Roxbury
 - South Boston
 - West Roxbury
 - In groups, they will research each neighborhood's foundational histories
 - Consider: demographic, size, resources, population, accessibility, housing, etc
 - Make sure to include historical context and list what "color" on the redlining map the neighborhood would assume/respond with.
 - What does this tell us about special history?
 - Create some sort of neighborhood profile at the end and write a 2 page reflection on the following questions.
 - **Skills:** critical thinking, research, digital access, analysis, analytical data
 - **Questions to Consider:**
 - What demographic population is associated with each neighborhood?
 - What communities surround each other?
 - How has this demographic population changed over time?
 - What communities surround each other?
 - What communities have the most resources? What communities have the least resources?
 - As you do research, try to be conscientious about your sources
 - Consider who wrote the source, where it appears, and how it appears
 - **Preliminary Activity:** If possible, have students (1) compare the wait times for the Ashmont and Braintree trains and record them, and (2) Have students ride the redline from Ashmont to Alewife to observe the experience.
 - **Follow-Up Activity:** Give students the opportunity to research how accessible each neighborhood is by recording and describing the type/amount of grocery stores, restaurants, hospitals, transportation routes, etc it has.
 - **Questions to Consider:**
 - What community has the most resources? What community has the least resources?
 - Why do you think the gaps between space, race, and access are so large?

- What is the relationship between race and property?
- **Space: Connecting the Past & Present**
 - **Goal:** Students will engage with spaces in Boston that have been transformed/gentrified.
 - **Activity:**
 - Research the history of gentrification in Boston
 - Reference
 - [How Gentrification and Displacement Are Remaking Boston](#)
 - ["Gentrification as Anti-Local Economic Development: The Case of Boston, Massachusetts."](#)
 - Find a specific space in Boston that has been gentrified.
 - Go to that area and take pictures of what space now is and find an image online of what it used to look like.
 - Research the history of the area's transformation from the 18th - 20th century to the present moment. Present your findings in a creative project of your choice.
 - Consider the reason why it was displaced, the significance of the space in Boston, the change in environment, etc
 - Think about COVID and the ways that it impacts displacement today.
 - **Skills:** critical thinking, hands-on engagement, photography, analysis, compare/contrast
 - **Questions to Consider:**
 - What essence does space carry now?
 - Who's occupying the space?
 - What population is the space now serving versus what population it used to serve?
- **Mapping Space in Boston:**
 - **Goal:** Students will engage with Boston's geographical histories and document the number of resources within each area/neighborhood – the process of mapping
 - Students will also consider the act of mapping itself – what does it mean to map something? How do they have the right to do so? When one creates a map, what do they have to consider?
 - Recommended Readings: *The Four Voyages of Christopher Columbus*, Christopher Columbus, and *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast*, Lisa Brooks
 - Additional: [How to Lie with Maps](#) by Mark Monmonier
 - **Activity:** Create their own story maps of the resources distributed across Boston neighbors (Dorchester, Roxbury, Mattapan, Hyde Park, South Boston, Roslindale, West Roxbury, North End, South End) in terms of schools, transportation, food, hospitals, community spaces, libraries, and so forth inevitably comparing and contrasting the past and the present social geographies.
 - Begin by focusing on a theme or aspect of that neighborhood you would like to look at such as schools, transportation, food, hospitals, community spaces, libraries, and research its evolution over time.
 - Remember you are documenting aspects of these areas (if any) from early Boston (18th/19th century) to the contemporary moment (20th/21st century)
 - You are ONLY choosing one of the following to focus on: schools, transportation, food, hospitals, community spaces, libraries, and research its evolution over time.
 - Use at least 2 primary sources

- When using these sources consider the purpose of the site, intended audience, information being reflected, reliability, and so forth
- Choose text and images that you feel best represent this dynamic you are trying to present.
- Watch this tutorial on story maps
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X33ud7RYZFg>
 - Reference [this page](#) for any additional quest
 - This is an example of a story map created about Phillis Wheatley:
<https://ebbda.northeastern.edu/moira-callahan-mapping-wheatley/>
- Write a brief reflection of the process afterward.
 - Please reference the reflection questions below for inspiration, but feel free to write beyond that
- **Skills:** critical thinking, research, creativity, analysis, primary source engagement
- **Questions to consider:**
 - What was your experience mapping Boston?
 - Did you notice anything you haven't noticed before?
 - How has space in Boston changed?
 - What relationship does space have with race?

Resources:

- **Site Visit Sources:**
 - Boston Athenaeum: 10-1/2 Beacon St, Boston, MA 02108
 - [Hayden Collection](#)
 - [Museum of African American History](#): 46 Joy St, Boston, MA 02114
 - [David Walker and Maria Stewart's House](#): 81 Joy Street (originally 8, then 4 Belknap Street)
 - [Copp's Burial Ground](#): 45 Hull St, Boston, MA 02113
 - African Meeting House: 8 Smith Ct, Boston, MA 02114
 - [MAAH Description](#)
 - [African Meeting House](#)
 - [Mass Historical Society Context about African Meeting House](#)
 - Faneuil Hall: 4 S Market St, Boston, MA 02109
 - Slave ship Desire: China Town
 - **Additional Readings:**
 - ["Ship Desire, William Peirce, Master – The First Ship to Traffic Enslaved Africans into the Massachusetts Bay Colony"](#)
 - Zong, Nourbese Philips
 - ["Slave Ship \(Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying, Typhoon Coming On\)"](#)
 - Maps of early Boston in Ruggles: 1150 Tremont St, Roxbury, MA 02120
 - Wheatley Statue: 256 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02116
 - [Harriet Tubman Memorial](#): Harriet Tubman Square, Boston, MA 02118
 - Slave Auctions/Sales in Boston: Faneuil Hall & Charleston

- **Additional Readings:**
 - [“Slave Auction Memorial Outside Faneuil Hall Is One Step Closer To Becoming Reality”](#)
 - [Early Newspaper Archive in Boston](#)
 - Contained [“slave-for-sale advertisements ended in The Gazette, the newspaper had 1,103 different “slaves for sale” ads with over 2,500 individuals being sold”](#)
- Black Heritage Trail
 - [Tufts Project Maps The Landmarks Of Black Boston](#)
 - [Upon the Hill: The Beacon Hill Community](#)
 - Includes the following:
 - Robert Gould Shaw Memorial
 - George Middleton House
 - Phillips School
 - John J Smith House
 - Charles Street Meeting House
 - Lewis and Harriet Hayden House
 - John Coburn House
 - African Meeting House
 - John Abiel Smith School
 - Smith Court Residences
- [The 54th Regiment Statue](#)
- Phillis Wheatley
 - [Boston Women’s Heritage Trail: Phillis Wheatley](#)
 - [Women’s History: Phillis Wheatley](#)
 - Used for mapping her experience in Boston
 - Contemporary Connections to Wheatley
 - [Kevin Young “Homage to Phillis Wheatley”](#)
 - [June Jordan “Something Like a Sonnet for Phillis Wheatley”](#)
- **Mapping Resources**
 - [Boston Planning and Development Agencies](#)
 - [Boston Public Library](#)
 - [Leventhal Maps](#)
- **Space/Place**
 - *African-Americans in Boston: More than 350 Years*, Robert C. Hayden
 - *The Color of Law A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, Richard Rothstein
 - *Black Bostonians: Family Life and Community Struggle in the Antebellum North*, James Oliver Horton, and Lois E. Horton
 - *Mapping Boston*, Alex Krieger
 - Literary Books that engage with Space
 - *The Living is Easy*, Dorothy West
 - *Black Marks*, Kirsten Dinnall Hoyte
 - [Camila Domonoske Interactive Redlining Map Zooms In On America's History Of Discrimination](#)

- [Terry Gross A 'Forgotten History' Of How The U.S. Government Segregated America](#)
- [National Housing Act 1934](#)
- [Civil Rights Teaching - Segregation](#)
- [Busing & Desegregation Forty Years Later](#)
- [Zebulon Miletsky and Tomas Gonzalez How Gentrification and Displacement Are Remaking Boston](#)
- [Boston Globe Spotlight Series](#)
- **Other Important Resources:**
 - Black Digital Humanities Projects & Resources
 - https://docs.google.com/document/d/1rZwucjyAAR7QiEZl238_hhRPXo5-UKXt2_KCrwPZkiQ/edit?usp=sharing
 - [Teaching Hard Histories](#)
 - [White Spaces by Tobin Miller Shearer](#)
 - [The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House by Audre Lorde](#)
 - [Colored Conventions Project](#)