James Baldwin Education, Identity and Justice

Grades 6 through 12 | Five day interdisciplinary RST

The Fire Next Time • A Talk to Teachers • I Am Not Your Negro

First Name _____ Last Name _____
Date _____ Class _____

Standards and learning goals

NJSLS ELA RI.CR.6.1, RI.CI.6.2 and W.AW.6.1. Cite evidence, identify central ideas and support an argument. Grades 6 through 12 use grade appropriate complexity and evidence expectations.

CCLS RI.6.1, RI.6.2, RI.6.7 and W.6.1. Secondary extensions use RI.7.1, RI.8.1, RI.9–10.1, RI.11–12.1 and corresponding argument writing standards.

Interdisciplinary connections Social Studies inquiry into civil rights and historical context. Mathematics through ratios, percentages and data limitations. Science practices through operational definitions, controlled comparisons and evidence. Amistad connection through Black intellectual history, agency and resistance to racism.

Essential question

How does Baldwin connect truthful education, human dignity and the responsibility to challenge injustice?

Read each selection, complete the Do Now before reading and respond to the Quick Write afterward. All readings are original instructional summaries. The featured quotation preserves Baldwin’s original wording.

Use the response lines. Complete the assessment independently. The final RACE response should draw on at least two readings.

Day 1 Baldwin and the power of a witness

Do Now

What makes a witness credible?

James Baldwin was born in Harlem in 1924 and died in 1987. A novelist, essayist, playwright and social critic, he examined how race, class and sexuality shaped people’s lives. His writing joined personal experience to public questions. A personal account can reveal what a policy feels like, but readers must still distinguish an author’s experience from a claim about every person.

In this packet, a witness is someone who observes, interprets and communicates what happened. Baldwin’s perspective matters because institutions can describe themselves differently from the people who experience them. A reader should ask who is speaking, which evidence supports the claim and whose perspective is missing. Studying Baldwin also means examining his reasoning rather than treating his reputation as proof of every conclusion.

Quick Write

Explain why personal experience is evidence but cannot by itself establish how often something occurs.