



HONORING OUTSTANDING AMERICANS

Learning Objectives: The students will...

1. Develop an appreciation for the influence and accomplishments of Martin Luther King, Jr., Thurgood Marshall, and/or Sojourner Truth.
2. Understand the reason for African-American History Month.
3. Communicate their thoughts by writing a letter.

TEKS: SS 1.12B, 1.16A, 1.17D, 2.10B, 2.16F

Materials Needed: Copies of the Letter and Envelope handout for each student, access to the I was the First. Vote for Me! website (www.texasbar.com/iwasthefirst).

Vocabulary: accomplishments, admire, African-Americans, celebrate, descent, honor, outstanding

Teaching Strategy:

1. Explain to students that Dr. Carter G. Woodson, a historian, was the son of former slaves. In 1926 he began the tradition of honoring the lives of outstanding African-Americans during the second week of February each year. Since 1976, the entire month of February has been designated as Black History Month or African-American History Month. During the month of February, we celebrate the history, culture, and achievements of people of African descent, and how they have influenced our nation.
2. Tell students that during February they will be learning about one or more outstanding African-Americans. The teacher should acquaint students with the accomplishments of Black History Month historical people on the I was the First. Vote for Me! website.
3. The teacher should lead a discussion using any of the following questions:
 - a. What kind of person was (name of person)? List some of his/her characteristics.
 - b. How are you like (name of person)? How are you different from (name of person)?
 - c. What do you admire most about (name of person)?
 - d. What were (name of person) greatest accomplishments? Why do you think so?
 - e. How might our country have been different if (name of person) had not existed?
 - f. What question would you like to ask (name of person) if he/she were still alive today? Why?
4. After the discussion, give each student a copy of the Letter and Envelope handout. Have students write a thank you note to the person that they learned about during the lesson. Students should use the standard letter format and put the date, greeting, body, closing, and signature. In the body of the letter, students should begin with the following stem sentence: "Thank you for " The second sentence should begin with: "I admire you because ... " The last sentence should begin with the stem sentence: "I wish ..."
5. The letters/envelopes may be displayed on a bulletin board headed by the following caption: "Notes of Appreciation" or "Thanks for Making A Difference."

Extension for Gifted/talented:

Have students conduct research on another outstanding African-American and create an acrostic poem about the person using the letters in the selected person's first and/or last name.

