

# ANCHORAGE MUSEUM

## ALASKA IS: HOW WE LIVE WITH EACH OTHER PART 3: JOY

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***Alaska Days (1948) 10-17-48 Orchestra for Alaska Day Dance McKinley  
Park Hotel 347-H-28***

Gelatin print  
Alaska Railroad Photograph Collection, Anchorage Museum, B1979.002.73

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## UNIT AT A GLANCE

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Learn more about the community of Eastchester Flats and Black joy in Alaska.

**Language Arts:** Students will examine three photographs from the Anchorage Museum collection, use word type constraints to describe their community and write an *I Am* poem as a form of reflection.

## STANDARDS

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### Alaska English Standards:

Reading Standards

2. Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; restate and summarize main ideas or events, in correct sequence, after reading a text

4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone)

## MATERIALS

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### Language Arts:

8.5"x11" paper

11"x17" paper or larger

Writing and coloring utensils

[I Am poem](#)

[One of A Kind by Elijah Hynson](#)

## KEY TERMS

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<i>joy</i>	a deep feeling of happiness
<i>community</i>	a group of people sharing a common trait, interest, or domain
<i>district</i>	a portion of an area noted for a particular characteristic
<i>urban renewal</i>	updating infrastructure in a neglected urban area; or clearing (often) low-income urban areas to attract economic development
<i>redlining</i>	discriminatory withholding of services such as bank loans based on residency
<i>The Harlem Renaissance</i>	The boom and revival of Black culture as a result of the first waves of the Great Migration in the 1920s and 1930s

## CLOSE-LOOKING

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### TIME FRAME

Approximately 40 minutes

### MATERIALS

*Alaska Days (1948) 10-17-48 Orchestra for Alaska Day Dance McKinley Park Hotel 347-H-28*, Alaska Railroad Photograph Collection, Anchorage Museum; B1979.002.73  
*Untitled*, Ward Wells Collection, Anchorage Museum; B1983.091.C1351.1  
*Untitled*, Ward Wells Collection, Anchorage Museum; B1983.091.C1655.3

### DIRECTIONS

1. Begin by looking closely at provided photographs. Use the questions below to guide discussion.

[30 min.]

**CLOSE-LOOKING:** Look closely, quietly at the objects for a few minutes.

**OBSERVE:** Share your observations about each photograph.



***Alaska Days (1948) 10-17-48 Orchestra for Alaska Day Dance McKinley Park Hotel 347-H-28***, Alaska Railroad Photograph Collection, Anchorage Museum; B1979.002.73

**ASK:** What do you notice about this image?

Describe the objects and people that you see in this image.

Why might the people in the photo be playing music?

Describe the sounds you might hear if you were in the image.

What does this remind you of?

What more can you find?



***Untitled***, Ward Wells Collection, Anchorage Museum; B1983.091.C1351.1

**ASK:** What do you notice about this image?

Describe the objects and people that you see in this image.

Why might the people pose for this image?

What words would you use to describe the mood of this image?

What does this remind you of?

What more can you find?



***Untitled***, Ward Wells Collection, Anchorage Museum; B1983.091.C1655.3

**ASK:** What do you notice about this image?

Describe the objects and people that you see in this image.

Why do you think this picture was taken?

What does this remind you of?

What more can you find?

**DISCUSS:** Use the [20 Questions Deck](#) for more group discussion questions about the photographs.

2. As a class, discuss the concept of joy. Ask students: *what is joy for you? What is joy for our communities?*

[10 min.]

## LANGUAGE ARTS: IN SO MANY WORDS

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<b>TIME FRAME</b>	Approximately 45-50 minutes
<b>MATERIALS</b>	8.5"x11" paper 11"x17" paper or larger Writing and coloring utensils
<b>DIRECTIONS</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. As a class, invite students to define a community in as few words as possible. Write student responses on the board. [5 min.]</li><li>2. Share with students the following terms: <i>neighborhood</i>, <i>sports team</i>, <i>school</i>. Ask students to give single words associated with a specific neighborhood, sports team, or school. Write student responses on the board. [5 min.]</li><li>3. Put students into pairs or groups of three and invite them to think about and discuss communities in which they belong. [3 min.]</li><li>4. Pass out 8.5"x11" paper to each student and invite them to create three columns labeled: <i>adjective</i>, <i>noun</i>, and <i>verb</i>. In each column, instruct students to write down single words of that type (adjective, noun, or verb) in each column that describe a community in which they belong. [5 min.]</li><li>5. Once finished, invite each student to assign shapes to groups of words. Inform students that they will use these shapes to create an image representing their community. [1 min.]</li><li>6. Pass out 8.5"x11" paper, coloring and writing utensils. Invite students to create an image using only shapes they assigned to words describing their community. Inform students that these images do not need to form a realistic image, but may also be abstract if students choose. [20 min.]</li><li>7. Once finished, invite students to present their work if they feel comfortable doing so. Afterwards, discuss as a class: <i>how might the words we choose to describe a community reflect how we feel about it? How might word choice differ if someone from outside your community were to describe your community? Why might it be important for people to reflect on the communities where we live?</i> [10 min.]</li></ol>

## ASSESSMENT

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Students will be assessed based on participation in class discussion and completion of sketches.

## LEARN MORE

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### EASTCHESTER FLATS

Housing covenants in Anchorage prevented many non-white Alaskans from purchasing property within the city limits of Anchorage. At the time of Anchorage's founding as a city, areas such as Spenard and Eastchester were yet to be incorporated as part of it. A portion of Eastchester, Eastchester Flats, accounted for three-fourths of Anchorage's Black population in the 1950s.

Due to denied access to material, most Eastchester Flats residents could not build properly insulated housing. Even after Anchorage annexed the Flats in 1954, city officials did not provide funding to the community for years; instead investing in wealthier white housing developments. The unannexed area of Eastchester renamed itself Fairview in September 1954, later being incorporated into Anchorage in the 1960s.

In its heyday, no community in the area rivaled Eastchester Flats in its atmosphere of excitement and entertainment. Clubs, cocktail bars, and gambling operations catered to many people in and outside of the community. Additionally, many Black-owned small businesses such as laundromats, real estate offices, barbershops, cafes, and at least one grocery store provided necessities to residents and those moving into Eastchester Flats.

Asymmetrical distribution of funding was evident in the lack of water and sewer line access, paved roads, and sidewalks throughout the Flats. The Alaska State Housing Authority would later cite these conditions to investors to enact urban renewal. The construction of several new roads cut through Eastchester Flats, effectively destroying the neighborhood and displacing Anchorage's Black community.

### READ:

Anchorage Daily News - [Here's how Anchorage's Mountain View, Fairview and Government Hill neighborhoods were named](#)

Anchorage Press - [Redlining in Fairview](#)

Society of Architectural Historians - [The Making and Unmaking of the Nation's Northernmost Black Community](#)

University of Alaska Anchorage/National Park Service - [Black History in the Last Frontier](#)

Hartman, I. C., & Reamer, D. (2022). *Black Lives in Alaska: A History of African Americans in the Far Northwest*. University of Washington Press.

### LEARN:

Black In Alaska - [Black In Alaska](#)

## LANGUAGE ARTS: POETRY AND IDENTITY

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### TIME FRAME

Approximately 2 class sessions

### MATERIALS

8.5"x11" paper  
Writing and coloring utensils

[I Am poem](#)

[Celebrating "Black Joy" - One of A Kind by Elijah Hynson](#)

### DIRECTIONS

1. Begin by discussing the definition of identity with the class. Ask students: *who are we to ourselves? Who are we to others?*

[5 min.]

2. Copy the format of the [I Am poem](#) onto a board and invite students to create their own. If students feel comfortable, invite them to present their *I Am* poems. Collect all poems at the end of the learning session.

[20 min.]

3. In the next learning session, share [Celebrating "Black Joy" - One of A Kind by Elijah](#)

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**Hynson** with students to silently read.

[3 min.]

4. After the initial reading, invite students to reread *One of a Kind* aloud with a partner or a group of three.

[5 min.]

5. Following this second reading, invite students to reconsider the questions *who are we to ourselves* and *who are we to others?* in silence.

[2 min.]

6. Invite students to discuss with a partner or small group their thoughts about who they are within the context of a friend group.

[5 min.]

7. Return to the *I Am* poem and copy the format again on the board, this time replacing the words “I am” with “we are”. Invite students to work independently, or in groups, to create their *We Are* poems.

[10-20 min.]

8. When finished, pass out students' original poems back to them. Invite students to read their *I Am* poem and to compare it with their *We Are* poems.

[5 min.]

9. When finished, revisit the questions *who are we to ourselves* and *who are we to others?* as a class. Invite students to share their responses in pairs and to share if comfortable.

[5 min.]

## ASSESSMENT

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Students will be assessed based on participation in class discussion and completion of *I Am* and *We Are* poems.

## LEARN MORE

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### BLACK JOY

The impact and influence of Black joy is ubiquitous in popular culture. One of the most famous eras of Black joy in its many expressions is undoubtedly the Harlem Renaissance. This period of cultural and artistic development was a result of the large influx of Black migrants into cities in the northern United States in the first wave of the Great Migration. Though Harlem is emblematic of this renaissance, booms of artistic and cultural expression flourished throughout areas affected by the Great Migration. In this period, the congregation of Black Americans from different parts of the southern United States came to define the shared Black experience in the United States through film, painting, poetry, literature, and music.

In Alaska, Black joy is no different. Black artists continue to create, inspire, and inform the Black experience throughout the state. Artists such as Rebecca Chol from South Sudan are representative of more recent arrivals into Alaska, and the United States at large. Additionally, artists of Black and Indigenous heritage such as Piyyuk Qungurkaq-Shields, Phillip and Stephen Blanchett of Pamyua, and Air Jazz all draw from Indigenous traditions to create new expressions of the Black experience.

### LEARN:

Smithsonian Music - [Musical Crossroads: African American Influence on American Music](#)

[Women Film Pioneers Project](#)

[Early African American Film](#)

Perseverance Theater - [Black Alaskan Art Matters Showcase](#)

**READ:**

History - [The Harlem Renaissance](#)

Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture - [A New African American Identity: The Harlem Renaissance](#)

Smith, S. L. (2021). *What Was the Harlem Renaissance?*. United States: Penguin Young Readers Group.

The New Republic - [Black Cinema Matters](#)

Wall, C. A. (2016). *The Harlem Renaissance: A Very Short Introduction*. United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.

**WATCH:**

Air Jazz - [Yaw Du Néh - S'áxt' \[OFFICIAL AUDIO\]](#)

PAMYUA - [Bubble Gum by PAMYUA](#)