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## Other assignments and essay prompts (our 12th-grade course):

### Day 1 map assignment:

Opening of Haitian Revolution study assignment. Repeat at end of course/unit.

Map reading in pairs: Using [this map progression](#), answer the following questions in pairs on the discussion board. Once you've posted, you can read others' responses.

1. Should Toussaint Louverture be considered the hero of the Haitian Revolution?
2. Why did France lose Saint Domingue?
3. How does Haiti's unique topography and geography help or hinder unification throughout the course of the Revolution?
4. What's missing? What's surprising?

### Response to Huggins:

Huggins writes: "The African's personal world, then, was both private and cosmic" (16). Later, he writes, "The African's world did not prepare him for the onrush of history" (19). What about the Africans' world, according to Huggins, left them vulnerable to the "odyssey" which was to come?

### Responses to Trouillot:

1. In the first chapter of Michel-Rolph Trouillot's *Silencing the Past*, he offers a theoretical framework for understanding how power and history works: that humans "participate in history as actors and as narrators"; there are many perspectives, genres, points, and processes of historical production; and that multiple silences are inherent in all historical narratives. Respond to one of the passages below using Ch. 1 of Huggins and/or the Marquez excerpt [the Columbus encounter in *Autumn of the Patriarch*] and/or this painting, ["The Cycles of Colonization"](#) by Haitian painter Frantz Zepherin

- "The classification of all non-Westerners as fundamentally non-historical is tied also to the assumption that history requires a linear and cumulative sense of time that allows the observer to isolate the past as a distinct entity" (7);
- "the collective subjects who supposedly remember did not exist as such at the time of the events they claim to remember. Rather, their constitution as subjects goes hand in hand with the continuous creation of the past. As such, they do not succeed such a past: they are its contemporaries" (16).

2. In chapter 2, Trouillot discusses not only the mechanisms of historical silences but also strategies for reading against the power that produced them. In addition, he talks about the many ways history is produced outside the "Western"-dominated guild (colleges, your textbooks, academic journals, etc.).

Respond to one of the passages below using Ch. 2 of Huggins and/or the Walcott poem, [The Sea is History](#)

- “Thus the presences and absences embodied in sources (artifacts and bodies that turn an event into fact) or archives (facts collected, thematized, and processed as documents and monuments are neither neutral or natural” (48).
- “The knowledge that narrators assume about their audience limits both their use of the archives and the context within which their story finds significance. To contribute to new knowledge and to add new significance, the narrator must both acknowledge and contradict the power embedded in previous understandings” (56).

3. (Trouillot and Carpentier) Respond to one of the following:

- In his epilogue, Trouillot discusses “how public memory works and how history takes shape in a country with the lowest literacy rate on this side of the Atlantic” (155). Earlier, he writes, “We all need histories that no history book can tell, but they are not in the classroom—not the history classrooms, anyway. They are in the lessons we learn at home, in poetry and childhood games, in what is left of history when we close the history books with their verifiable facts.” Discuss how Carpentier and his characters engage with public memory and history?
- In his third chapter, Trouillot concludes, “Thus, the historiography of the Haitian Revolution now finds itself marred by two unfortunate tendencies. On the one hand, most of the literature produced in Haiti remains respectful---too respectful, I would say---of the revolutionary leaders who led the masses of former slaves to freedom and independence.” What do you think Trouillot would make of the manner in which Carpentier depicts the leaders of the revolution in his novel?

### **Responses to the beginning of the 1791 revolts:**

Respond to one of the following two prompts using Popkin AND the Dubois & Garrigus document reader.

1) David Walker wrote in his *Appeal*, “Moses would have become Prince Regent to the throne and no doubt, in process of time but he would have been seated on the throne of Egypt. But he had rather suffer shame, with the people of God, than to enjoy pleasures with that wicked people for a season.” A similar choice faced the free people of color in Saint Domingue as the uprisings began. How would you assess the role of free people of color in the growing revolution?

2) Assess the conditions under which the revolution in Saint Domingue began. What initiated the violence? What motivated the warring factions? Were ideas inspiring unrest, material conditions, or both? In your answer, please analyze at least one of the following primary sources from the Dubois & Garrigus reader to formulate your ideas and defend your argument.

- The *Code Noir* (handout)
- 8: *Letters from the Uprising of Vincent Oge*
- 5: The Free Citizens of Color, *Address to the National Assembly*, 1789
- 10: The National Assembly *Law on the Colonies*, 1791
- Jean-Francois and Biassou, *Letters to the Commissioners*, 1791
- 20: Thomas Clarkson, *The True State of the Case, Respecting the Insurrection at St. Domingo*
- 17: Gros, *In the Camps of the Insurgents*

### **Responses to Emancipation (using the map):**

Look at maps [1792-1794 \(Emancipation and Civil/Internal Conflicts\)](#) and [1793-1798 \(Emancipation and International Conflicts\)](#). Imagine you're either Sonthonax or Louverture or Biassou: What obstacles and opportunities do you see in those 2 maps?

#### Responses to the end of the Revolution:

1) How does this image, [Dessalines Ripping the White from the Flag by Madsen Monpremier](#), address the role of Dessalines, the Armée Indigène, and/or end of the Haitian Revolution? If it's helpful, you might compare this image with depictions of Toussaint Louverture (just Google). Another way of thinking about this issue might be: The winning battle against the French is Vertières in November, 1803. Why do you think Flag Day is the big national celebration of Independence and not the anniversary of Vertières?

2. Haiti declared its independence in 1804 and wrote its first constitution as a sovereign nation in 1805. Consider the aims of the various constituencies of revolutionaries since the uprisings began in the early 1790s and analyze whether the Constitution of 1805 succeeded in honoring these goals. Your work should be informed by close reading of the Constitution itself as well as evidence drawn from other primary sources in the document reader.

#### Responses to *Avenia*:

Respond to one of the following prompts:

1) In Walker's "Appeal," he writes: "For let no one of us suppose that the refutations which have been written by our white friends are enough--they are *whites*--we are *blacks*. We, and the world wish to see the charges of Mr. Jefferson refuted by the blacks themselves..." (in Article I). While there's no evidence Walker had *Avenia* in mind, he surely had white abolitionist writing in general in mind. What about Branagan's text might demand the sort of revision Walker asks for? Topics to consider might include: genre, audience, authenticity, and more. Feel free to use any of the supplementary texts from this week as well.

2) After Toussaint is killed and the French troops win, the novel ends with the title character's suicide. In this context, why is the work called *Avenia*, and what does her character say about revolution, protest, or the role of--and bodies of--women in the novel? It's worth thinking about Jesse Jackson's comment on the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr.: "America hates marchers but loves martyrs." Feel free to use any of the supplementary texts from this week as well.

#### Responses to *Dance on the Volcano* and *Stella*:

Respond to one of the following prompts:

1) Consider the tensions and problems of the new nation of Haiti and its eventual motto: L'Union fait la force (Unity is Strength). How does *Stella* or *Dance on the Volcano* address (and maybe complicate) those tensions and problems?

2) In *Dance on the Volcano*, historical background is revealed for Mme. Acquaire and Jasmine/Minette on pages 30 and 44/45 respectively. With it comes a loss of innocence for Acquaire and Minette as well. Compare and consider the ways race, class, legal status, and gender intersect in these two moments.

#### Final essay: Carpentier and course final

In Michel Rolph-Trouillot's *Silencing the Past*, he famously calls the Haitian Revolution "unthinkable." Specifically he writes, "The Haitian Revolution thus entered history with the peculiar characteristic of being unthinkable even as it happened...If some events cannot be accepted even as they occur, how can they be assessed later? In other words, can historical narratives convey plots that are unthinkable in the world within which these narratives take place? How does one write a history of the impossible?" (73). We have asked you to think about the ways that fiction might answer some of the historical silences that have been part of the historiography of the Haitian Revolution. Pick an element of Carpentier's *Kingdom of This World* (a theme, a motif, a character) and consider how it helps us make the "unthinkable" thinkable. What does this element change in your understanding of this time/place/event?

### **Alternate end-of-term final project:**

In 3 groups, we will explore the digital archives to look at Haiti across three moments in time: colonial Saint Domingue, 1791-1804, and the new nation. As part of the process, we will be thinking about how history works and is made across fiction, historical texts, and primary documents. We will consider Trouillot's ideas about silences and historical erasures in the archive and a question posed by Jean Casimir and quoted in our opening [essay](#), "when you write the story of Columbus arriving in what the indigenous people then called Ayiti, you have to make a decision: are you on the boat or on the shore?"

Each group will take an important area: Cap-Haïtien (Cap François) and the northern plain; Port-au-Prince (Port Republicain) and the Cul-de-Sac (the area around Croix-des-Bouquets); and Cayes and the Cayes plain. To show your work, you will create an interactive map of the area (from the archive) using [Thinglink](#). Each group will explore the online archives, use our primary document reader, and rethink the texts read so far in class. As each group explores their location across time, the archive will be uneven. In part, your task will be to document the nature of what you find and assess the opportunities and obstacles within that archive to create, as Trouillot advises, a fuller, richer set of histories of the Haitian Revolution.

In our final meeting, you will share your Thinglink (TL) with the class and submit a curatorial statement exploring the issues above (keep notes!). Your group TL should have at least 20 links from a variety of sources. Your individual statement should be approximately 2 pages. Each day over the next 2 weeks, we will meet in the classroom to work together and share resources.

See a sample ThingLink [here](#), from [Digital Aponte](#) or [here](#)