



AWAKENINGS

- A Revolution of Love



Title: Reflecting on Toronto.ca visual series AWAKENINGS

Subtitle:

Duration: from 1 period to multi-day lesson depending on activity form 1-10 chosen

Best Courses fit: The Arts, Canadian & World Studies, English (Can be adapted to ESL), Interdisciplinary Studies, Social Sciences & Humanities, Technological Studies

Facilitator Reflection

This resource can be used in multiple courses.

This series of art projects reflect the untold stories of Toronto specifically through the lens of visionaries who are Black, Indigenous and people of colour. Participants will be asked to investigate the untold history of Black folks in their cities and Canada as a whole. This will require engagement with the Critical Consciousness Questions as you make sure participants engage with authentic sources of information. As a facilitator, prior to delivering this lesson, you can conduct a personal investigation of the history of the city you are in to guide participants in their research. The viewing of the specific digital short film, *A Revolution Love* and others in the *Awakenings* series, calls for participants to tune in carefully to the poetry and audio that accompanies the digital shorts to uncover valuable information.

Overview

This activity is a model for the series of videos in the [Awakenings series](#) of art projects. This series includes digital short films as well as conversations with artists as they engage viewers with their work as it relates to the themes of anti-oppression, anti-colonialism, anti-racism, sustainability, advocacy and storytelling. The questions suggested for this activity are specific to the digital short film: *A Revolution Love* but can be adapted to the other projects in the series and invites participants to develop creative, personal responses to the content learned.

Minds On

Prior to viewing the short digital film, get participants thinking about their location. Where they reside and the stories of those places. Participants can work in groups. Use the following questions as a guide.

What do you know about the history of the city in which you currently reside?

What were the foundations of the community you are a part of?

What monuments or historic sites document the history of your city?

What stories were you told about these historic sites?

Is there more to the story? An untold history of these sites?

Investigate and name the First Peoples on the land and the territory in which you reside.

What is written in the land acknowledgement for your location?

What is the Treaty for this territory?

Investigate the presence of Black folks in your city and/or neighboring cities.

Were there any early Black communities?

What was the experience of the members of those early Black communities?

Facilitators: Conduct research prior to asking participants so that you can guide them in their investigation. Of course, answers will vary and may be difficult to uncover as each city will have different results. You can connect with community organizations, Indigenous organizations and historical societies. You can broaden this question to include: provide one fact about Canadian history that relates to Black people in Canada.

Engage in whole group discussion to report back on responses then introduce the lesson beginning with the preamble below.

Preamble (and background info)

In December 2020, Toronto History Museums launched **Awakenings** – which is a virtual series of art projects by Black, Indigenous and artists of colour. The guiding principles of this series are anti-colonialism, anti-oppression, anti-racism, sustainability, advocacy and storytelling.

These projects were part of the city's efforts to address the reality of anti-Black racism.

The series uses storytelling, in various ways, to address the lack of representation in stories about Toronto and Toronto's history. Ultimately, each contribution by these visionaries, Black, Indigenous and artists of colour is an opportunity for us, the public, to join the conversation.

For this lesson we will be viewing [Awakenings - a Revolution of Love](#) and [Awakenings Reflections - a Revolution of Love: The Conversation](#). After viewing, you will respond to various discussion prompts that will culminate in a personal reflection in a medium of your choice.

A Revolution of Love

On the Toronto.ca [website](#), *A Revolution of Love* is described as “a digital short film that follows a young Black woman as she grapples with the histories of her ancestors and the present-day violence ravaging her community, and begins to imagine what her future looks like through dance. Conceived by an internationally recognized Black creative team and featuring the words of Assata Shakur, this piece spotlights 15 women of varying shades as they come together to re-frame revolution in the name of love. Filmed at Toronto’s [Fort York National Historic Site](#) in partnership with [Soulpepper Theatre Company](#) .”

Based on this brief description, how do you think the title may reflect the content? We will watch the digital short in its entirety, then we will view the video in discussion with the choreographer and directions. Do not hesitate to view the short film as many times as necessary for you to seek clarity of the concepts presented in the film.

Action

This film is just over 4 minutes in length. Let us first view the film together in its entirety and then, after viewing the digital short film, divide into smaller groups to discuss and respond to the questions below. In your groups, you may view the film as many times as needed.

Film: [Awakenings - a Revolution of Love](#)

Discussion: [Awakenings Reflections - a Revolution of Love: The Conversation.](#)

1. Fill out the chart below: (Facilitators, the chart is designed to accommodate any art project in the Awakenings series)

Name of art project	
Name of main artist	
What was the artist's intent? (view the accompanying video or access the written information with/about the artists project)	
List two facts that represents new information that you learned from viewing this performance piece	

2. What historical references were made in the video? How does that information connect to the content of the performance piece?

3. This digital short film: *A Revolution of Love*, is performed to a spoken word piece by d'bi.young anitafrika — *r/evolution is love* (feat. Assata Shakur.) Listen again to the words in the poem. In the video of the discussion of the performance, Esie, Weyni and Lucius speak to the words that resonated with them, what 2 lines resonate with you? What personal implications do these words have for you? How do they make you feel? Explain. Do these words incite action? Explain.

4. In the video where a Revolution of Love is discussed with Choreographer Esie Mensah and Director(s): Weyni Mengesha & Lucius Dechausay, You will note that they mentioned an Adinkra symbol. The symbol they mentioned is the Sankofa bird. What is the meaning of Sankofa and how is the meaning reflected in the performance piece?

5. What parts of the performance resonated with you? explain. Be sure to include the time where that part of the video begins and ends.

6. How is the theme of resistance evident in the performance?

7. Black history and Heritage In Toronto is affirmed by this performance. It embodies the stories untold about Black experience. In what ways is your history and heritage affirmed where you live? If this is not clearly evident, in what ways can you suggest that your history and heritage be affirmed in the spaces where you live? How can multiple cultural stories be affirmed?

8. In conversation, Lucius expresses that this performance is about “moving to a place of action and change.” What do you think “action” looks like In response to this performance?

9. As mentioned in the beginning of this lesson, this video invites all of us to engage in conversations around anti-oppression, anti-colonialism, anti-black racism, sustainability and advocacy. Let Us first Define those terms so we are clear on their meaning. Once you have clarity write out what critical thoughts, feelings, ideas and actions that you have to add to the conversation.

Definitions:

Facilitators can also provide participants with examples of the terms below.

anti-oppression- are practices, strategies and actions that recognize the oppressions that exist in society and actively addresses power imbalances and challenges these systems of oppression

anti-colonialism- The presence and remnants of colonization are prevalent in all aspects of a colonized society. Anti colonization seeks to critically examine how the process of colonization has had an impact that has contributed to oppression and to actively engage in practices that dismantle colonization. To decolonize.

anti-Black racism- Anti-Black Racism is defined here as policies and practices rooted in Canadian institutions such as, education, health care, and justice that mirror and reinforce beliefs, attitudes, prejudice, stereotyping and/or discrimination towards people of Black-African descent.

Consolidation

Participants will use their responses from questions 8 and 9 to produce a creative piece that is reflective of their learning.

Question 8: *What do you think “action” looks like In response to this performance?*

Question 9: *What critical thoughts, feelings, ideas and actions do you have to add to this conversation.*

This will be accompanied by a written reflection to clarify your intent and the meaning within your piece.

Participants can respond with (not limited to):

A spoken word piece

An art work in any artistic medium

A graphic design on a t-shirt

Photography

A digital art piece

A short story

A dance

A musical composition

The final response is to be accompanied by a reflection piece that tells the story of how you have personally connected with the original performance: *A Revolution of Love*, through your chosen delivery. Be specific by drawing the viewer into your creation and pointing out specific aspects of your creation. If there is specific symbolism in your creation, be clear to express its significance and meaning.

These responses can be compiled onto a virtual space or be performed live.

Have participants respond to one other participant's contribution by answering the question: What is your take away?

Extensions

- Have participants choose another video from the Awakenings series and respond to the questions that have been posed above
- Student artworks can be curated into an online gallery for classroom and greater school/space community
- Create imagery that reflects and communicates their heritage in their city space.