

Teacher Guide

Theaster Gates: The Gift and The Renege

On view | May 17–October 20, 2024



Theaster Gates, *Bright Sunny Day*, 2024 Torch down, bitumen, enamel- based industrial paint, and steel. Artwork courtesy Theaster Gates. Image courtesy of Phillip Pyle, II

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Exhibition Overview

Theaster Gates: The Gift and The Renegade is a profound exploration of the seen and unseen dynamics of Houston's Freedmen's Town in the Fourth Ward. This exhibition at Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (CAMH) features Theaster Gates's large-scale paintings, sculptures, and installations that delve into themes of resilience, liberation, and urban transformation. The works highlight the significant role of Black labor, materials, place, and community, emphasizing the intrinsic value of Black spaces often overlooked in American history.

Themes and Concepts Explored

- **Resilience and Self-Sufficiency:** The exhibition utilizes robust materials such as steel and bronze to symbolize the strength and endurance of Black communities.
- **Historical Memory and Urban Renewal:** Through the artistic lens, Gates connects historical significance with contemporary efforts to preserve and revitalize communities.

Key Questions for Students

- Think about the materials Theaster Gates is using, how do these materials contribute to the themes he explores?
- Reflect on how historical and cultural significance can be conveyed through art. How does Gates achieve this in his exhibition?
- Considering the works in this exhibition, which work is most impactful to you? Why?
- Consider the impact of community and collective memory in urban spaces. How does this exhibition enhance your understanding of these concepts?



Theaster Gates, *New Egypt Sanctuary of the Holy Word and Image*, 2017 Wood, marble, bound periodicals, found objects, and light. Artwork courtesy Theaster Gates. Image courtesy of Phillip Pyle, II

Curriculum Connections

- History/Social Studies: Activity | Mapping

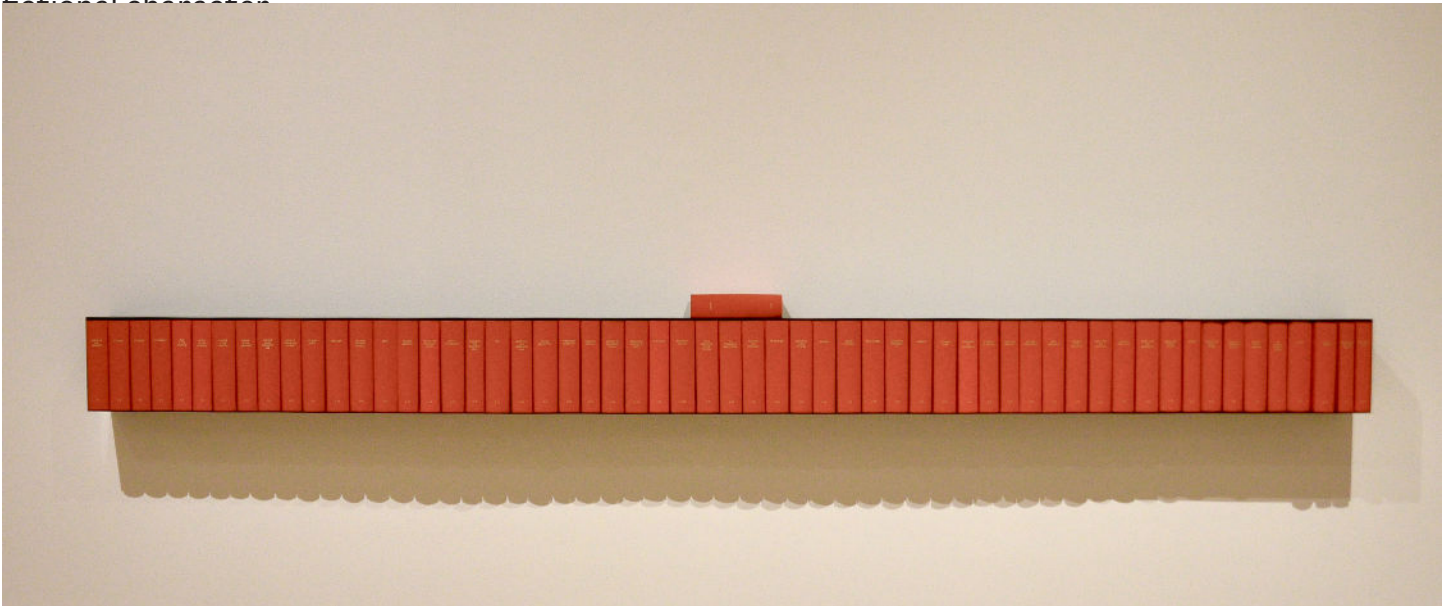
Freedmen's Town Activity Description: Students create a visual timeline or a digital map showcasing the historical development and key transformations of Freedmen's Town, using online resources, historical maps, and texts.

- Art/Visual Arts Activity | Material Metaphors

Activity Description: After a discussion on the symbolism of materials used by Theaster Gates, students gather materials that represent their own community's history or dynamics to create mixed-media artworks.

- English/Literature | Activity: Narratives of Resilience

Activity Description: Students write short stories or poems based on themes from Gates's exhibition, such as resilience or community, possibly from the perspective of a historical or fictional character.



Theaster Gates, *From My People and My Skin*, 2019 Bound books, aluminum shelf. Artwork courtesy Theaster Gates. Image courtesy of Phillip Pyle, II
