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W.E.B. Du Bois: A Teacher's Guide

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W.E.B. Du Bois in the Standards

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Texas §113.32.c.4.B (United States History)

History. The student understands the effects of reform and third party movements on American society. The student is expected to: *evaluate the impact of reform leaders* such as Susan B. Anthony, **W.E.B. Du Bois**, and Robert LaFollette on American society.

Biographical Summary

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William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, also known as ‘Willie’ (as a child) and W.E.B. Du Bois (as an adult) was born February 23, 1868 in Great Barrington, Massachusetts¹. He was an American civil rights activist, historian, author and editor. On August 27, 1963, at the age of 95, he died in Ghana, Africa. W.E.B. Du Bois announced, on the launch of his book *The Souls of Black Folk*, “...for the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line”². This statement would reflect Du Bois’s belief throughout all of his adult life—color would dominate America’s struggle for equality.

Early History

W.E.B. Du Bois’s parents were Alfred Du Bois and Mary Silvina Burghardt Du Bois. William’s home town of Great Barrington, Massachusetts was not plagued with the same racial oppression found in the South at this time, but the racial undertone was still evident. Young Willie realized early in life that he was different than the other (all most all White) kids in his class³. William’s mother was part of the free black population of Great Barrington. William’s father, Alexander, left him and his mother when he was two. William never saw his father again. However, even with the bleakness of being raised solely by his mother, Du Bois excelled in school and was encouraged by his teachers to seek higher education. Although he was not able to enter Harvard College at this time due to lack of funds, he was able to enter into Fisk University, an all Black college in Tennessee. Though his mother’s family worried about Willie living in the South, he looked upon the experience as a great adventure into the unknown⁴. After excelling at Fisk University, Du Bois was able to enter Harvard College with a \$250 scholarship. He earned his bachelor’s degree from Harvard in 1890, and with a stipend, he was able to attend the University of Berlin to begin his graduate work. By 1895, Du Bois became the first African American to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard University. William began his working career as a professor at Wilberforce University in Ohio, and then he continued at the University of Pennsylvania. He later moved to Georgia, again as an instructor at the University of Atlanta (later Clark University). In 1910, he left his teaching position to manage the NAACP. He returned to Atlanta as an instructor again in 1934.

Published Work

W.E.B. Du Bois is most notably known for the vast scholarly written material he left behind. From his time in college until a few years before his death, W.E.B. Du Bois published over four thousand written works. His work was revolutionary in that his writings were some of the first published works to openly criticize the dehumanization of blacks in racist America. *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899) was one of his first books to be published. This project had a twofold purpose—Du Bois wanted to do a study and record results that explained the African-American mind. Du Bois studied a section of Philadelphia that was predominantly black. In *The*

¹ David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois, Biography of a Race*, (1993), 11.

² W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: New American Library, Inc., 1903), 19.

³ Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, pg.2

⁴ Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois*, 55.

Philadelphia Negro, Du Bois assumes his audience will be mostly white, and his purpose was more to *explain* than to advocate. However, within three years, Du Bois soon changes his writing style from narrative to advocating in his next major book, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903).

Beliefs

Living over the age of ninety-five, Du Bois's views changed and evolved throughout his life. As mentioned above, Du Bois's first works were narrative, meaning they *explained* the Negro instead of advocating for the race. In *The Study of the Negro Problem* (Du Bois, 1897; Du Bois, 1898), Du Bois explained *why* crime has risen amongst Blacks from emancipation. He attributed the stress of newly freed blacks coping with work, travel (i.e. blacks leaving the south and seeking work in the north) and white oppression as some of the many factors that pushed many blacks into crime. Du Bois's second theme in this book would be beliefs that he subscribed to all of his life—Black crime would decline if the African-American population moved toward a more equal status with whites. The final theme of this book, however, would change. At this time, Du Bois agreed with Booker T. Washington's theory of the *Talented Tenth* or the 'exceptional men' of the black race that would lead the majority of blacks away from criminal problems into equality. At this time, Du Bois agreed with Washington that a class system was good and necessary. As the early 1900s continued, however, Du Bois's views changed and disagreed with Washington. In fact, Du Bois soon began to affix a Marxist view that would evolve into serving the Communist party in the later years of his life. This view would ultimately be at odds of Washington's class view and his Tuskegee Institute.

Du Bois's civil rights activism was a belief that he carried into practice. His focus and crusade was on segregation, political disfranchisement and basically how to improve African American life. Du Bois's most notable creation, with the help of Mary White Ovington, was the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). His writing continued in this domain through his managing and dedications to newspapers⁵. His writing style wasn't limited to narratives or straight forward avocation pieces. He also wrote poetry, fiction and drama. Also, Du Bois's fame in civil rights is not grounded in purely proactive writings, but his disagreements with other well known African American civil rights activists. One of the more heated debates was with Booker T. Washington⁶. During the early 1900s, Washington's fame was growing steadily amongst politicians in Washington and southern whites for his Tuskegee Machine. The Tuskegee University or often referred to as the Tuskegee Machine, was originally created as a black college with a focus on industrial and manual labor. Washington believed blacks needed to be taught the value of being brick layers, mechanics, farm machinery operators and jobs that were considered skilled labor. Du Bois disagreed with this idea, insisting that the only true way blacks could empower themselves was to seek university education. Even Washington's close associates called him the "Great Accommodator"⁷, because Washington was famous for trying to pacify whites by indicating blacks needed to work for whites and not rebel. Du Bois also disagreed with Walter Francis

⁵ Du Bois wrote articles for the include [San Francisco Chronicle](#), [Chicago Defender](#), the [Pittsburgh Courier](#) and the [New York Amsterdam News](#). In addition to the above, for 25 years, Du Bois worked as [editor-in-chief](#) of the NAACP publication, [The Crisis](#).

⁶ Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois*, chapter ten—'Clashing Temperaments'.

⁷ Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois*, 238.

Whine, the editor of the NAACP, who believed that some racial segregation was acceptable. Du Bois held to the view that any racial segregation was wrong.

Du Bois's political views were largely shaped from seventy years of his life, ultimately determining where he died and current American beliefs of him. As early as 1891, while Du Bois was in Berlin studying for his graduate degree, he began to understand and agree with Marxist ideology. Much of his beliefs for complete equality derived from positive experiences he felt in Germany. As a graduate student, he was treated the same as all other men, with literally no racial segregation that was the norm in the United States. During the 1930s, Du Bois cheered on Imperial Japan's victory over Russia, sensing a comparison between Japan's 'color' against the white aggressor, in this case, Russia. Du Bois returned to Germany in 1936. He noted that he received more respect from German academics than from his own American colleagues, but he was horrified by the treatment of the Jews⁸. By 1942, Du Bois's writings were considered 'Socialist' and he was investigated by the FBI⁹. In 1950 (Du Bois was 82 at this time), he ran for the U.S. Senate as a representative of the American Labor Party. Although he only received four percent of the vote, within a few years he joined with the Trotskyites, ex-Communists and independent radicals that sought a voice in the New York State Senate. Du Bois wrote an uplifting piece on Joseph Stalin after his death on March 16, 1953, and this article alone was considered controversial and despised by many Americans in a time that anti-communist fear was at its' height. Du Bois defended Russia until his death, maintaining that, "...Stalin was probably too cruel; but...he conquered Hitler¹⁰." After Du Bois's trip to Communist China, he was questioned again by the United States' Government concerning his communist sympathies. Du Bois received the Lenin Peace Prize in 1959, and he officially joined the Communist Party USA in 1961. Du Bois and his wife left the United States the same year for Ghana, Africa. Upon leaving, Du Bois knew that, as a Communist member, he would never be allowed re-entry into the United States.

Although Du Bois's political affiliation might have caused concern amongst Americans in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, people should recognize in modern times that the fear of communism or holding anti-communism hatred is irrational. Du Bois was a visionary—he saw in 1895 an America that allowed equal rights. Unfortunately, it wasn't until his later years that civil rights began to make obvious changes. Du Bois was truly an individual who was brave and lived what was correct, regardless of national ideologies in the United States.

Personal Life

Whereas Du Bois's achievements and public persona are well documented, his private persona is not. He was married twice. His first wife was Nina Gomer Du Bois, whom he married in 1896. She died in 1950. They had two children, Burghardt and Yolande. Burghardt died of diphtheria at the age of two, and this experience left Nina emotionally scarred for the rest of her life¹¹. David Levering Lewis's second volume on W.E.B. Du Bois (*W.E.B. Du Bois, The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919-1963*, 2000) documents his extramarital

⁸ Ishmael Reed, "Eminent Contrarian", *Voice Literary Supplement*, October-November 2000.

⁹ W. E. B Du Bois, (April 19, 1999) [1903]. Gates, Henry Louis and Oliver, Terri Hume. ed. *The Souls of Black Folk* (New ed.). New York City: [W. W. Norton](http://www.wwnorton.com). ISBN 039397393X.

¹⁰ Edward J Blum, *W. E. B. Du Bois* (2007), 196.

¹¹ Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois*, 309.

affairs vividly in chapter eight—“...that his relationships with women, always vigorous and varied, became sexually ever more exuberant to such a degree that they resembled the compulsiveness of a Casanova. The episodic dalliances, the star-crossed love affair with Fauset, the comfortable arrangements with Georgia Johnson and Mildred Jones began to be replicated with a seeming insatiety...”¹². Since Lewis’s work received a Pulitzer Prize, it is tempting to trust his sources that indicate Du Bois had over twelve different love twists besides his marriages. However, in Raymond Wolters’ *Du Bois and His Rivals* (2002), he responds in Du Bois’s defense that, “...none of Du Bois’s alleged lovers ever admitted to such liaisons casts...doubt upon the supposed tysts”¹³. However, even with Wolters’ disagreement, Lewis provides enough evidence to indicate Du Bois was vigorous in his personal life as well as the public sphere.

Du Bois was invited to Ghana in 1961 by President Kwame Nkrumah to direct the *Encyclopedia Africana* project. By this same time, Du Bois had officially joined the Communist Party U.S.A., so the offer of leaving the United States and contributing to a project directly affecting Africa was appealing. Within a year, his health declined, and he died one day before Martin Luther King Jr’s “I Have a Dream” Speech. At the March on Washington, Roy Wilkins called for a moment of silence in Du Bois’s remembrance.

¹² David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois, The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919-1963*, (2000), 267.

¹³ Raymond Wolters, *Du Bois and His Rivals*, review by Mitchell Verner D. From *African American Review*, Thursday, June 22, 2006. See <http://www.articlearchives.com/education-training/education-systems-institutions/1589514-1.html>.

Interpretations Over Time

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W.E.B. Du Bois's life, a total of ninety-five years, was documented from the time he was a small child until his death. Throughout his life, he has been loved and hated by many Americans. He was the outspoken voice of his time, and people listened. Biographies on W.E.B. Du Bois range from 1959 (four years before his death) until 2007. The tone and purpose of each biography is different concerning how Du Bois is presented, but all authors agree that he has made great contributions to his race.

Francis L. Broderick's *W.E.B. Du Bois, Negro Leader in a Time of Crisis* (1959) was one of the first full and complete biographies made while Du Bois was still alive. By the time of the publishing of this book, Du Bois was well known amongst academics and civil rights activists. His fame was rising to almost mythical portions, and Broderick wanted to present Du Bois in more of a humanistic view. Broderick's chapter on Du Bois's indictment for Communist sympathies sets this work apart from the others¹⁴. It explains what Du Bois felt¹⁵ at the age of 83 while being indicted. Although Du Bois's defense didn't even have to speak (the judge dropped the charges before the prosecuting attorneys finished speaking), it was another victory for Du Bois. Although civil rights are a key issue in Broderick's work, the common themes of his day are also evident—the Cold War and diplomatic relations.

By 1972, Du Boisian history is demonstrated quite differently than in Broderick's book. Virginia Hamilton's *W.E.B. Du Bois, A Biography* fits well with the image of Black Power, Black Panthers and Black militancy. In her work, Du Bois is created as an almost mythological figure. Examples of this are any references to Booker T. Washington and Du Bois. Hamilton depicts Washington as corrupt and arrogant¹⁶ and the Tuskegee Institute as a failure¹⁷. Hamilton also dedicates two chapters to Du Bois's arrest and indictment, but the difference between her work and Broderick's work is that a lot more emotion and appeal to the subject is given here—“Dr. Du Bois, with the other officials...were indicted as criminals. And no other act affecting his life so humiliated and discouraged the Doctor. That the country which he tried all of his life to make a more perfect place should suddenly indict him for treason was an incredible act of cruelty, to say nothing of the charge.”¹⁸ In this quote, as with the entire book, W.E.B. Du Bois is referred to as ‘Dr. Du Bois’. Charged words like ‘cruelty’ and ‘perfect place’ are evident. This is the tone of the book: Du Bois as the hero on almost mythological portions. By the last pages of Hamilton's work, Du Bois is presented in poems and dreamy dedications: “An ocean lay between the Doctor's death and our lives, but that didn't matter. He was our great man, our keeper, and we were his dream. The distance between us was never far.”¹⁹ This work fits with scholarly writing of the early 1970s. Hamilton fits a social historian's perspective, focusing on class activism against the *oppressive white force*. The book is full of grammatical errors and

¹⁴ Broderick, Francis L. *W.E.B. Du Bois, Negro Leader in a Time of Crisis* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959), see chapter entitled *The Eclipse of Race*.

¹⁵ Broderick, *W.E.B. Du Bois*, 217

¹⁶ Virginia Hamilton, *W.E.B. Du Bois, A Biography* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1972), 87-88.

¹⁷ Hamilton, *W.E.B. Du Bois*, 84.

¹⁸ Hamilton, *W.E.B. Du Bois*, 170.

¹⁹ Hamilton, *W.E.B. Du Bois*, 197.

passive voice, and her depiction of Du Bois in God like comparison is highly problematic. However, her work gives the reader a glimpse of how Du Bois was viewed by the end of the 1960s and early 1970s.

A more moderate view of Du Bois can be seen in Gerald Horne's *Black & Red, W.E.B. Du Bois and the Afro-American Response to the Cold War, 1944-1963* (1986). Horne's work was published at the end of the Cold War, so although his reflection on Du Bois is over twenty years past his death, issues about the Soviet Union were still common in newspapers and the television. Unlike Hamilton's and Broderick's biographies, this is a glimpse of a much shorter time into Du Bois's life. Also, the general theme of Communism is stressed than Du Bois's civil rights career. Horne's thesis is woven throughout his book but it is seen clearly at the end. While Du Bois was revered as a civil rights hero in Ghana, Africa and the Soviet Union, he was unjustly treated as a national threat in the United States. After prostate surgery, Du Bois (age 95) was recovering slowly while, "Du Bois may have been an elderly, sick man but United States government agencies acted as if he were a robust revolutionary in the trenches."²⁰ Du Bois was very open about his Communist belief at a time when many Americans were worried about being falsely accused of being a Communist. This made Du Bois daring and a target for the F.B.I. to investigate his life. Although Horne doesn't place Du Bois in mythological proportions like Hamilton does, it is evident that there is a sympathetic note woven in the last chapters. Horne also does a masterful job of documenting illogical anti-Communist fears of the United States Government and its people during the 1940s and in the 50s.

Although David Levering Lewis's book *W.E.B. Du Bois, Biography of a Race* (1993) is quickly becoming dated, his work still is one of most complete studies compiled on Du Bois. His 580 pages of text and 207 pages of notes and bibliographies demonstrate precise and complete work. A year after it was published, Lewis won a Pulitzer Prize for it. Lewis's book entwines the personal life of Du Bois with his public persona, giving the reader the feel of how complicated his life was. This volume is only half of his life, with more focus on his college years and early years with the NAACP than on his childhood. Unlike Broderick and Hamilton, this work is not compact and a fast read. This is a work that doesn't just focus on Du Bois, but his friends and rivals as well. Lewis doesn't paint Washington as the protagonist like Hamilton does, but instead explores how Washington's mind operated in contrast to Du Bois. Du Bois's Talented Tenth theory is explored and used as an underlying theme in much of Lewis's book. Du Bois's belief that ten percent of the Black population would be leaders to the rest. He encouraged all Blacks to attempt to be a Talented Tenth. His requirements for being a Talented Tenth were to seek a college education and to travel abroad. This line of thinking differed with his colleague and rival Booker T. Washington.

Lewis's second volume on Du Bois, *W.E.B. Du Bois, The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919-1963* (2000) also won a Pulitzer Prize. This book is as hefty in writing as the first—572 pages of text and 128 pages of notes and bibliographies. Lewis's work is unique from other works reviewed here in two ways: although careful documentation of his Communist and political activities are here, isn't the focus. Unlike Broderick, Hamilton and

²⁰ Gerald Horne, *Black and Red, W.E.B. Du Bois and the Afro-American Response to the Cold War, 1944-1963* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), 351.

Horne's works, Lewis is able to pass on the feeling of race instead of leaving the reader with the sense of political choices. This is important, because Du Bois is most notable known as a civil rights activist and editor, and earlier works have capitalized on the sensationalism of the day (Communism) instead of the whole picture. Du Bois is presented as a race activist without the mythological proportions Hamilton inserted. Although chapter eight's "Holding On, Amorously and Angrily" accounts of Du Bois's extramarital affairs are controversial, there are enough sources and evidence to suggest that most of Lewis's documentation is correct. The debate of whether biographers should include the personal life apart from the public persona would be appropriate here, but Lewis's inclusion of this chapter sets Du Bois in a human depiction that allows the reader to make connections with. This chapter wouldn't have made it into Hamilton's book in 1972, but it is appropriate in 2000, a time when President Clinton's extramarital affairs were making news headlines across the country.

One of the most current works available on Du Bois today is *Du Bois and His Rivals* (2002) by Raymond Wolters. This work is unique in that Wolters makes a biography of Du Bois by tracing Du Bois's rivals throughout his life. The reader is able to understand differences in thinking amongst many of the African-American civil rights activists at this time instead of the traditional 'lumping' together as one group. Wolters also explores past authors of Du Bois and their flaws in sources. Lewis's second volume is criticized, because his chapter eight on Du Bois's extramarital affairs is problematic in that many of the sources do not confirm that had affairs with Du Bois. Here, Wolters may be grouping for an argument, as infidelity is not something many people are going to admit. As long as Lewis has evidence of several sources (which he does), the question of Du Bois's personal life is evident to the reader. Wolters does a good job in portraying Du Bois as the activist instead as a diehard communist, and this merits his work in a more serious light than Horne's work. Also, Wolters doesn't portray Du Bois as a mythological God like Hamilton does. Unfortunately, this work is not a straight forward biography, so the reader shouldn't use this book if they are trying to follow Du Bois's life. This work is more of a focus on Du Bois's mind and character when challenged by different ideals.

Du Bois is an excellent study in historiography. He was born a few days after Andrew Jackson was impeached, and he died the day before Martin Luther gave his 'I Have a Dream Speech.' His life has passed through many stages of academic study. Du Bois's long life and careful documentation allows the reader to learn more than just his focus on civil rights, but on how history has been documented as well. The chronological bibliography is still being published, but thematic discourses are even more common. In the last few years, Du Bois's name has been used more in literature and historical studies. 'Bring back Du Bois' has been a common theme in universities²¹. Authors such as Vilashini Coopan, Joy James, Alys Eve Weinbaum, Brent Hayes Edwards, Claudia Tate, Hazel V. Carby, Roderick Ferguson, Mason Stokes, Fred Moten, Shawn Michelle Smith and Susan Gillman have linked Du Bois with historical focuses that didn't exist in his time, such as transnationalism, sexuality and gender focuses, masculinity and maternity, eroticism, domestic science and Black Internationalism. During Du Bois's time and for twenty years after his death, he was remembered as a

²¹ Susan Gillman and Alys Eve Weinbaum, *Next to the Color Line, Gender, Sexuality, and W.E.B. Du Bois*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

Communist and civil rights' activist, in that order. In 2007, he is remembered as a visionary and as a proactive academic who lived what he believed.

Recommendations for Teachers

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Lesson Plans

[W.E.B. Du Bois and the 1900 Paris Exposition](#) (David J. Cope)

In this lesson, students will study primary and secondary sources to discover how W.E.B. Du Bois portrayed African Americans at the 1900 Paris Exposition. They also will create a similar exhibit using their classroom as the example. This lesson serves as a great complementary lesson to the early years of the Jim Crow era and can easily be adapted for upper elementary through high school students.

[Role Play W.E.B. Du Bois and other famous African-Americans](#) (David W. Lasater)

In this lesson, students read a small biography of Du Bois. Students investigate other famous African-Americans before role playing some of their achievements in front of the class.

[C-SPAN videos of Du Bois and other historical figures.](#) (National Satellite Cable Cooperation)

C-SPAN offers videos of Du Bois and other historical figures. This link can act as a lesson or a resource to a lesson.

Places to Visit

[Du Bois Museum in Ghana, Africa: Virtual Tour](#) ([cinderellatnb](#))

An online sight that explores the Du Bois museum in Africa, statues and libraries in the United States dedicated to him, as well as memorabilia from around the world.

Websites

[Speeches and written works by Du Bois](#) (Wikisource)

This hyperlink will take the reader to a list (with hyperlinks) to some of Du Bois's most famous works and speeches. The reader will be able to play some of the speeches through their computer, an excellent introduction in the classroom.

[More written works by Du Bois](#) (Robert W. Williams)

Contains links to the freely accessible e-texts of some of W.E.B. Du Bois' writings.

[Digital Collection of W.E.B. Du Bois, \(Library of Congress, Online\)](#)

The digital collections of the Library of Congress contain a wide variety of material associated with W. E. B. Du Bois, including manuscripts, photographs, and books. This guide compiles links to digital materials related to W. E. B. Du Bois that are available throughout the Library of Congress Web site.

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Primary Source Materials

Du Bois, W.E.B. [*The Souls of Black Folk*](#). Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Company, 1903.

The Souls of Black Folk is a collection of essays that document Du Bois's feelings and frustrations towards the inequality of the turn of the century.

[*Striving of the Negro \(W.E.B. Du Bois\)*](#)

This Speech was made in 1903, a discourse against slavery of the past and economic slavery of the present.

[*The Talented Tenth \(W.E.B. Du Bois\)*](#)

Du Bois's belief that ten percent of the Black population need to seek university education and travel abroad, to later be leaders of the rest.

Full-length Biographies

Broderick, Francis L. *W.E.B. Du Bois, Negro Leader in a Time of Crisis*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959.

One of the first biographies of W.E.B. Du Bois, published in the latter years of his life. A very close look at his political views is evident here, along with his court appearance (in which no charges were pressed) concerning his sympathies towards communism. This work is interesting, because it gives the reader a look at how people viewed him while he was still alive.

Gillman, Susan and Alys Eve Weinbaum, Alys Eve. *Next to the Color Line: Gender, Sexuality, and W.E.B. Du Bois*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

This work argues that within Du Bois's work may be found a juxtaposition that connects race, gender, sexuality, and justice. It is a collection of articles written by historians that focus on rhetorical strategies that Du Bois approached, used and repressed issues of gender and sexuality. The book calls for a proposal to return to his work for modern day application.

Hamilton, Virginia. *W.E.B. Du Bois, A Biography*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1972.

Published at the height of Black militancy. Hamilton's portrayal of Du Bois is almost in mythical portions. Booker T. Washington's views are rejected by the author, and Du Bois's views are regarded with high esteem. In fact, the author refers to him as 'Dr. Du Bois' throughout most of her work.

Horne, Gerald. *Black and Red, W.E.B. Du Bois and the Afro-American Response to the Cold War, 1944-1963*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986.

This work may not be a conspiracy piece per say, but Horne does examine how Du Bois's connections with Civil Rights and the United State's anti-communism sentiment coincide. Horne makes comparison to colonialism, civil rights and communism in Du Bois's mind, and attempts to explain why Du Bois supported communism. The reader should see a relationship between racism and Cold War McCarthyism.

Lewis, David Levering. *W.E.B. Du Bois, Biography of a Race, 1868-1919*. New York City: Henry Holt and Company, 1993.

This is the first biography that won a Pulitzer that David Lewis received. This work is complete, probably the most concessive book on Du Bois's life. This work explores all aspects of his early life until 1919. The stopping point for this work is important, because it is when Du Bois takes on a more radical political stance that ultimately shapes his later years.

Lewis, David Levering. *W.E.B. Du Bois, The Fight for Equality and The American Century, 1919-1963*. New York City: Henry Holt and Company, 2000.

This is the second volume of Du Bois's life by Levering. This work is about Du Bois's latter years. It includes the controversial chapter eight, which is about Du Bois's extra material affairs. Lewis calls Du Bois a 'priapic adulterer' in this section. However, like Lewis's first biography, this second volume also received the Pulitzer Prize.

Wolters, Raymond. *Du Bois and His Rivals*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002.

It is in this work that Lewis's *W.E.B. Du Bois, The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919-1963* is challenged concerning Du Bois's extramarital affairs. Wolter's work is not a biography, but instead a historiography. However, Raymond doesn't just compare authors. He also examines *critiques* of Du Bois during his day, such as Marcus Garvey and Oswald Garrison Villard.

[Click here for Wikipedia's biography on W.E.B. Du Bois.](#)

Article- or Chapter-length Biographical Sketches

Bauerlein, Mark. "[Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois: The Origins of a Bitter Intellectual Battle](#)". *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, No. 46 (Winter, 2004-2005), pp. 106-114.

This is a short article that explores in depth the bitterness between Du Bois and Booker T. Washington, going into some depth through debates at the turn of the century.

Zuckerman, Phil. "[The Sociology of Religion of W.E.B. Du Bois](#)". *Sociology of Religion*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (Summer, 2002), 239-253.

Du Bois's belief in religion is complex, to say the least. Although he was a Communist in his later years and shared a strong belief that socialism would benefit the most in the

United States, he also attended Baptist Churches regularly and expressed his interest in God. This article explores some of the more intricate thinking process Du Bois had concerning religion.

Juvenile Biographies

Hinman, Bonnie. *A Stranger in My Own House: The Story of W.E.B. Du Bois (Portraits of Black Americans) (Library Binding)*. Greensboro: Morgan Reynolds Publishing, 2005.

This work would be appropriate for grades six through twelve. It is a very straight forward biography of W.E.B. Du Bois's life, with source notes, a bibliography, and a list of Internet sites provided at the end of the book.

Rowh, Mark. *W.E.B. Du Bois: Champion of Civil Rights (African-American Biographies) (Library Binding)*. Berkeley Heights: Enslow Publishers, 1999.

This work would be appropriate for grades six through twelve. This work is probably a more 'scholarly' work, as Rowh explores Du Bois's interest in Pan-Africanism and his support of communist governments. This book would work for economics as well as history.

About the Author

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Matthew McConnell is a graduate student at the University of Texas at El Paso. His focus is on borderland history. He teaches fifth grade Dual Language in Las Cruces, New Mexico, where he lives with his wife and eight month old baby. His hobbies include caring for farm animals, soccer, and karate.