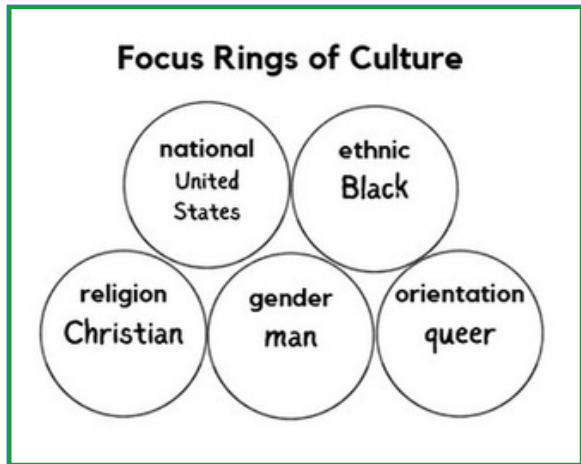


Jimmy's Rhythm and Blues

By Michelle Meadows



Vocabulary	
devour	relentless
nurture	awareness
oppressed	refuge

SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & ACTIVITIES

Building Background Knowledge

It would be helpful to support readers in building background knowledge on the following:

An introduction to the Great Depression, the Harlem Renaissance and the Civil Rights Movement to help students understand the cultural and historical context of Baldwin's life. A discussion about identity and belonging, including how individuals may hold complex or multiple identities that influence how they move through the world (e.g. being a writer, or being someone who resists societal labels)

During Reading

Page 16: Turn and talk - Jimmy spent a lot of time reading and thinking. What kind of person does that tell you he was? Page 26: Turn and talk (making predictions) - The text says that "writing helped (Jimmy) discover true power. What might Jimmy do through the power of writing? Page 42: Conduct a think aloud to model cause and effect. You may say: " (cause) Baldwin refused to stay silent about racism and inequality, people around the world listened to his words. (effect) The effect was that he became a powerful voice in the Civil Rights Movement and beyond, even though it wasn't always easy or safe."

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Extension Activities

Inspired by Baldwin's belief in the power of writing, invite students to write their own

short reflections, poems, or opinion pieces about something they care deeply about or a time they felt brave. Collect the pieces into a class anthology titled "Our Words Matter" and hold a classroom author celebration where students present their pieces to their peers and invited guests. Create a classroom "History Snapshot" that contextualizes Baldwin's life and work. Students work in small groups to examine brief excerpts or visuals related to the 1920s–1980s (e.g., the Harlem Renaissance, Civil Rights Movement, March on Washington, Black Power Movement). Each group discusses and presents: What was happening in the world during this part of Baldwin's lifetime? How might that have shaped his thinking and writing?

SEL Connection

Self-Awareness – This text supports students in exploring how James Baldwin's feelings, thoughts, and experiences shaped his identity and purpose. As they reflect on Baldwin's journey, students are invited to consider their own strengths, values, and ways of making sense of the world—especially through words and self-expression.

Identifying Cultural Behaviors

Cultural Behavior	Examples from the Text
Communalism - The group is more important than the individual.	Although James Baldwin faced personal challenges and risks as a Black writer speaking out against injustice, he consistently put the needs of his community and the fight for equality before his own comfort and safety. His words and actions were dedicated to lifting up collective voices and advancing justice for all.

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Suggested CLR Protocols

Educators can access all CLR protocols on CLR+

Activity	CLR Protocol
Vocabulary	<p>Personal Thesaurus</p> <p>The Personal Thesaurus supports students in expanding their vocabulary by building on the language they already use, fostering linguistic flexibility and confidence while honoring their cultural and linguistic identities.</p> <p>Validate and Affirm (VA) Field Dependence, Subjectivity Builds and bridges (BB) Academic Vocabulary</p>
During Reading	<p>Hot Seat</p> <p>Ask students a question, and have them silently think about their responses for an appropriate amount of time. Then, have student pairs discuss their thoughts encourage pairs to share their responses with other pairs or with the entire group. To cultivate listening skills, have each student explain their partner's ideas.</p> <p>Validate and affirm (VA) Sociocentrism, Collaboration, Verbal Expressiveness</p>
Extension Activities	<p>Mix & Move</p> <p>Provide students with a prompt/question, use the signal "Mix/Move" to have students walk around the room in between and around chairs. Then, use the signal "Pair/Share" to have students stop to find partners who are not part of their table group to high-five, fist bump, or use another appropriate greeting with, such as handshakes or a verbal greetings. Students share with partners for about 60 seconds. When time is up, repeat the process again until all questions have been answered.</p> <p>Validate and affirm (VA) High Movement, Sociocentrism</p>