

# *Alias – The Many Names of Malcolm X*

## Lesson Plan

**Grade Level:** 9-12

**Curriculum Focus:** Literature

**Lesson Duration:** Two to three class

### ***Student Objectives***

- Work collaboratively to evaluate four stages in Malcolm X's life: when he was known as Malcolm Little, Detroit Red, Malcolm X, and El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz.
- Consider how each name Malcolm X used reflected that period in his life.
- Write an essay drawing conclusions about how Malcolm X's experiences shaped his life and legacy.

### ***Materials***

- Discovery School video on *unitedstreaming: Great Books: The Autobiography of Malcom X*. Search for this video by using the video title (or a portion of it) as the keyword.

Selected clips that support this lesson plan:

- The Childhood of Malcolm Little
- Rough Years in Harlem: Malcolm's Life of Crime and Discovery of the Nation of Islam
- Malcolm Changes His Name and Becomes a Minister
- The Controversy of Black Nationalist Groups: Malcolm X Becomes a Leader of the Nation of Islam
- Malcolm X Becomes Alienated from the Nation of Islam Malcolm Becomes an Orthodox Muslim and Renounces His Hatred of White People
- The Assassination and Legacy of Malcolm X
- *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*
- Books and magazines about Malcolm X and the civil rights movement
- Computer with Internet access

### ***Procedures***

1. After students have read *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, discuss the names Malcolm X used in his lifetime. On the board, create a list of Malcolm X's names and the period in his life that he used these names. Malcolm X was born in 1925 as Malcolm Little. He was known as Detroit Red

in the early 1940s, took the name of Malcolm X in 1952, finally changing his name to El Hajj Malik El-Shabazz in 1964.

2. Ask students why a person would take a name, either legally or casually, other than their birth name? What do names tell us about a person? Do any students in the class prefer using a nickname to their birth name? Why?
3. Now separate the class into groups of four, assigning each group a name from a period in Malcolm X's life: Malcolm Little, Detroit Red, Malcolm X, El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz. Assign the following as an in-class assignment.

### **Character Analysis, Part One**

- (1.) Which name are you analyzing?
- (2.) How old was Malcolm when he used this name?
- (3.) What important events happened in his life during this time?
- (4.) Did he have any religious beliefs, and if so what were they?
- (5.) What were his influences at this time?
- (6.) What opinions did he have on violence?
- (7.) Did he have any opinions about African American identity or civil rights in the United States?
- (8.) Personality Summary: Describe the character of Malcolm X during this period in his life. Who was he? How did his experiences shape his life and choices?

Explain that each group will be analyzing one period in the life of Malcolm X. Ask each group to focus only on the chapters in the novel *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* that deal with that period of his life.

4. Have group members work together to answer the questions and write a one- to two-paragraph summary describing what they believe defined Malcolm X's personality during a specific period in his life. For example, if a group focuses on Malcolm Little, they should consider how the following events shaped his life: his parents' activism, the burning of his childhood home, his father's murder, his mother's mental breakdown, and separation from his brother and sister. If a group focuses on Detroit Red, students will explore his surroundings, addictions, lifestyle, and arrest. Students should draw conclusions in their summaries about how Malcolm X's experiences influenced his personality and life. Students can continue to work together until the end of class.
5. Assign the following for homework by reviewing their summaries and choosing one or two words that describe Malcolm X during this period in his life.

### **Character Analysis, Part Two**

In class, you wrote a personality summary describing Malcolm X during a specific period in his life. Now think of one or two words that best describe this period. Support your description with at least three passages from the book, citing where you found each one. Use the example below.

**Name/Description:** Malcolm Little = Shattered Dreams

**Passage #1:** “I was still not intelligent enough, in their eyes to become whatever I wanted to be. It was then that I began to change-inside. I drew away from white people.” Chapter 2, page 37.

For extra credit, create a visual representation of Malcolm X or draw an image to illustrate the words and quotes you chose.

Examples of student descriptions could include the words “afraid, angry, disappointed, lost, strung-out, spiritual awakening, or charismatic.” Students will take these descriptions and find at least three quotes from the book that support their descriptions.

6. On the following day, regroup students into groups of four, making sure that each member of a group represents a different period in the life of Malcolm X. Have students share their activity sheets with their new groups, including the one- to two-word descriptions and quotes they recorded as homework.
7. After groups have shared their findings, have students write a short essay on their own, answering the following questions:
  - How did Malcolm X’s experiences as Malcolm Little, Detroit Red, Malcolm X and El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz shape his life?
  - How did each of these names symbolize different periods in his life?
  - What did he learn from his experiences under each identity?
  - What might we learn from his struggles?

Student essays should cite at least three quotes from the novel that represent different periods in Malcolm’s life. Students can use the quotes they have found, as well as the quotes the group members have used.

## Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students’ work during this lesson.

- **3 points:** Student essays are thoughtful, clearly written, well organized, and include quotes and information they have gathered collaboratively within their groups. Essays have drawn thoughtful conclusions. Activity sheets have been completed and include a concise summary that answers all questions and provides relevant text citations..
- **2 points:** Student essays contain some pertinent quotes, make valuable connections, but are unable to grasp the big picture, and do not include at least three text citations, or answer all of the summary questions. Activity sheets are mostly complete.
- **1 point:** Student essays contain few pertinent quotes, are unable to comment on different periods in Malcolm X’s life, and were unable to work collaboratively with their group. Activity sheets are incomplete.

## Vocabulary

**civil rights**



*Definition:* The nonpolitical rights of a citizen, especially the rights of personal liberty guaranteed to U.S. citizens by the Constitution

*Context:* Martin Luther King, Jr., led African Americans in the civil rights movement in a nonviolent protests for equal rights.

### **demagogue**

*Definition:* A leader who makes use of popular prejudices and false claims and promises in order to gain power

*Context:* A demagogue will manipulate emotions and fears to gain power.

### **Muslim**

*Definition:* An adherent of Islam who believes in Allah as the sole deity and in Muhammad as his prophet

*Context:* Followers of Islam believe that Muhammad is the prophet of the god Allah.

### **racism**

*Definition:* A belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race

*Context:* Malcolm X was first a victim of white supremacist racism when his childhood home was attacked and burned by the Ku Klux Klan.

## **Academic Standards**

### **National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE )**

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the International Reading Association have developed national standards to provide guidelines for teaching the English language arts. To view the standards online, go to <http://www.ncte.org/about/over/standards/110846.htm>.

This lesson plan addresses the following standards:

- Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.
- Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

### **Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)**

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit link:

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:



- History – United States History: Understands the struggle for racial and gender equality and for the extension of civil liberties
  - Language Arts – Writing: Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process, Uses the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing, Uses grammatical and mechanical conventions in written compositions; Reading: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of literary texts
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## **Support Materials**

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the [DiscoverySchool.com](http://DiscoverySchool.com) Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

- <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html>