Lesson Plan #1 for *Genius of Freedom*: Adorn-a-Parlor Lesson by Liz Taylor

**Grade level:** Upper elementary and middle school

**Topics:** Social history, African American leaders

**Pennsylvania History Standards:** 8.1.6 B, 8.1.9 B, 8.2.9 A, 8.2.9 B

**Pennsylvania Core Standards:** 8.5.6-8 G

**African American History, Prentice Hall textbook:** N/A

**Overview:** This is a quick activity meant to get students thinking about African American families after the Civil War. Often, discussions of African American history in the classroom neglect to mention families, class structure, or other important elements of the human experience. This activity uses images from *Genius of Freedom* to ask students to pay particular attention to images selected by African Americans to hang in their parlors, or living rooms. It also involves the students in history by making them choose their favorite of the proffered images.

**Materials Needed:**

1. “Colored Beauty”
3. “Distinguished Colored Men”
6. Assorted portraits
Procedures:

1. Ask the whole class what sorts of images hang in their living rooms. Entertain answers and comments from the students.
2. Ask students to imagine what images people might have hung in their houses in the late nineteenth century.
3. Project the six images and discuss each.
4. Students will work in pairs to choose which of the images, of the above listed six, they would like to hang in their parlor, if they were an African American family in the North after the Civil War. Students should also provide a rationale for their choice. Students should answer the questions: Who is in the image? Why are they pictured? Why did you choose it instead of the other images?
5. Students will briefly (1-2 minutes) present their choices, and as they talk, the teacher will project the images so that the students not presenting can examine the pictures in depth.
6. Extension activity: students can design their own image to hang in their parlor and should include an appropriate caption that mimics what they observed on the historical images.