

Reading Philosophy in *The Hate U Give*

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Abstract

This unit focuses on teaching students three philosophical concepts – standpoint epistemology, identity philosophy, and the nature of history versus truth in philosophical inquiry. Students are taught to understand these big ideas not as esoteric concepts, but as crucial questions to consider in the study of literature. By applying key ideas from each of these concepts, students gain a deeper understanding of the novel studied in this unit, Angie Thomas’ award-winning text, *The Hate U Give*.

Problem Statement

In *Teaching thinking: Philosophical enquiry in the classroom*, Robert Fisher observes, “There are those who believe that intelligence is developed not through processes of thinking but through acquisition of knowledge” (2013, 17). He argues that this “illusion of knowledge” leads such people to “become trapped in what they already know” (Fisher, 2013, 17) and unable or unwilling to consider new ideas. The state of education in the 21st century is mired in a similar trap. Years of inculcating students into a high-stakes testing environment and a standards-at-all-cost culture, measured almost exclusively by set data points tied to those aforementioned high-stakes tests, have resulted in a generation of young people who are conditioned to believe less in the power of thinking and generating their own ideas and more in the mystical power of the supposed ‘right’ answer.

Sadly, this often leads to stilted class discussions in which students are unwilling to explore alternate theories of, say a hero or villain’s motivation in a piece of literature, because they are too focused on learning the ‘correct’ response that will earn them maximum credit on a course exam. Some teachers work to combat this trend; others, seeing the benefits of the trend to their own class test scores, encourage it instead. All too often, this creates a lose-lose dynamic, in which students in some classes are taught to memorize facts and recite ‘correct’ details, and others are taught to think, but given insufficient content to think about.

Students in general, and high school students in particular, need to develop and strengthen their capacity for deep, analytic thought; to build, as it were, their ‘thinking muscles.’ Contemporary college and career success requires an ability to think, as the situation demands, both quickly and deeply; to consider multiple options and make a determination supportable by both data and experience. Innovation, the buzzword of the 21st century tech boom and beyond, dictates that young adults be not just solid thinkers, but *creative* thinkers, approaching a task from multiple angles and being willing to

consider not just ‘outside the box’ ideas, but ‘outside current reality’ ideas. This is *not* the kind of thinking that can be objectively measured, and certainly it cannot be measured by standardized tests like those administered in public schools nationwide.

Furthermore, this is not even *education* in its truest sense. Rather, the need to know and repeat a set of facts is more accurately described as *training*. Grayling (2001) articulates the difference as follows:

The key is to distinguish education from training, to recognise that people require both, and to be unabashed about what is involved in the latter. Young children need to be trained in multiplication tables, reading, spelling and writing, exactly as an athlete trains his body: it takes coaching, repetition, and practice. When children have acquired skills they can use by reflex, it gives them the confidence and the materials to profit from the next step, which is education proper: the process of learning to think and to know how to find and use information when needed. Above all, education involves refining capacities for judgment and understanding; Heraclitus remarked that learning is only a means to an end, which is understanding - and understanding is the ultimate value in education (159-160).

The aim of this unit, then is to create a classroom climate which honors facts and content, while privileging the development of students’ capacities for judgment and understanding.

Rationale

In an effort to combat the test-driven ‘standardization of thinking’ currently promoted in American education, this unit will introduce high school literature students to the discipline of philosophical inquiry. Literature lends itself to this type of study because it is, at its heart, focused on storytelling to understand the ‘big questions’ of life and death, love and hate, morality and ethics. The unit will provide students with foundational vocabulary and tools for philosophical thinking, will lead them through thinking exercises designed to build and stretch their thinking muscles, and will ask them to apply their new skills and knowledge to the philosophical interpretation of literature in both discussion and writing. A set of scaffolding questions derived from philosophical inquiry will be created, and students will use the resulting inquiry framework to craft both written and oral arguments. Exposing students to the tools of philosophical thinking and providing them with this kind of scaffolding will both enable them to think more deeply, and will empower them to assert their arguments more confidently.

Giving students a framework for critical thinking that is grounded in philosophical thought will provide them with the tools necessary for personal and professional success both inside and outside of academic settings. Privileging the process of thinking over the need for ‘correctness’ will encourage students to take mental risks, to try on new ideas, and to consider alternate interpretations. In addition to being an invaluable academic

skill-set, it's a powerful interpersonal one as well. When students can consider a position not their own from a philosophical perspective, recognizing both its merits and its flaws, and understanding that for many questions, there simply isn't one 'right' answer, a foundation for civil discourse has been established that will serve them well not just in classrooms, but in boardrooms and city council meetings as well. In this way, philosophical inquiry becomes bigger than the classroom, and truly contributes to the improved health of our ostensibly democratic society.

Background

Robert Fisher (2013) writes:

Philosophy is a quest not so much for knowledge but for understanding. It begins with the recognition of a problem or a cluster of problems arising from our experience as beings-in-the-world and the various claims or beliefs that people make or hold about being in the world. Among such problems are the following:

- problems about what is real and not real,
- problems about what is true and not true,
- problems about the nature of the world and who we are,
- problems about knowing what to do,
- problems about what is right for individuals and society

. . . Philosophical intelligence is called into play when thinking goes beyond mere information processing, beyond the 'given.' It does not ask 'What is that?' but 'Why is that?' and "Why do you think so?" . . . Philosophy is also the search for greater understanding of the world through interrogating the words, concepts, or ideas we use to explain the world." (188)

In order to facilitate the development of a philosophical inquiry community in the classroom, students must be made familiar with these problems, and they will be helped in attaining this familiarity by considering how philosophers have grappled with them over time. For this reason, a survey of the 'big ideas' of philosophical thinking is necessary for both teachers and students seeking to develop a philosophical stance when considering literature and life in both discussion and writing.

Philosophy as an academic discipline encompasses an impossibly broad terrain of thinking and ideas. For the purposes of this unit, three specific philosophical concepts will be addressed in detail as they lend themselves particularly well to discourse with high school students, and to application in a literature classroom. Certainly, these three concepts are not the only ones that would be useful additions to a high school English classroom, and teachers are encouraged to consider reading more broadly in philosophical texts to widen the scope of their application of philosophy in the classroom. A suggested reading list is provided in the Appendix for this purpose. It is worth noting,

however, that Worley (2011) asserts “one great thing about philosophy is that children do not need to be familiar with it to be able to do it” (3). He adds that “to be able to facilitate philosophical discussions, however, it helps to have a basic awareness of philosophical topics and debates” (Worley, 2011, 3). The background information that follows is provided to offer this ‘basic awareness’ to support facilitating of the activities that form the foundation of this unit.

Knowledge vs. Truth: Examining Standpoint Epistemology

Sandra Harding (2014) makes three general claims regarding standpoint epistemology. First, that knowledge is socially situated. Second, that marginalized groups of people can know more, because they are socially situated in such a way as to make them more aware to ask more relevant questions than non-marginalized groups. Finally, that research regarding the ways in which power produces knowledge should start from the knowledge perspective of these marginalized groups. These claims are grounded in the social constructivism espoused by both Michel Foucault and Simone de Beauvoir, who assert that truth and knowledge are not independently pre-existing, but are instead socially constructed. In other words, we are made by our societies. If we accept these statements as true, it follows that the truth and knowledge that are socially constructed for a person or a group of people will be largely dependent upon their place in the society that is constructing them. For standpoint epistemologists, then, it is crucial to understand that people and groups of people who are relegated to the margins of society will have a different perspective, and potentially a different truth than those who dwell in the society’s center. bell hooks coined the term “oppositional gaze” to further clarify this concept, observing that “Living as we did - on the edge we developed a particular way of seeing reality. We looked both from the outside in and from the inside out. We focused our attention on the center as well as on the margin. We understood both” (hooks, 1984, xvi).

This “oppositional gaze” can serve as a fulcrum for students’ exploration of standpoint epistemology. Asking students to observe who does and does not have power in a situation, and how that power (or lack of power) influences the narrative being promulgated (in a news article, a short story, a documentary, or a novel, for example) is a powerful strategy for helping them come to see the intersectionality of identity (i.e. gender, race, class) and how those intersectionalities impact power and knowledge, and what is considered true or truth.

Social constructivists believe that we are creations of our societies, and that we then create stories of our own to make sense of the world that has created us. Viewing these stories through the lens of standpoint epistemology enables, and indeed empowers, students to look beyond the dominant narrative and to consider other ways of seeing and understanding people and stories. It helps them to avoid what Chimamanda Ngozi

Adichie calls “the danger of a single story” (2009), and to cultivate a willingness to embrace multiple truths as a result of identifying and observing multiple perspectives.

Personal Identity: What defines humanness?

A natural progression from viewing an event (or topic, or person, etc.) from a variety of stances or standpoints is the consideration of what creates personal identity and how one’s humanness is defined. Questions under consideration here include:

- Who am I? What makes me a unique individual?
- What makes me a person? What differentiates a person from a non-person?
- Who is (or is not) considered fully human?
- Am I (or am I not) the same person over time?
- How different can I be while still remaining myself?
- Why do we care about identity anyway?

Philosophers generally accept that identity lives, at a minimum, on two distinct planes. First, there is a public identity, comprised of stories we tell and pass down about our shared history (for example, American Identity prominently features independence, as demonstrated in our shared colonial narrative around the Declaration of Independence). We also maintain a private or personal identity, made up of the stories we tell about ourselves in order to organize our lives and experiences and to give them meaning (i.e. - I come from a family of farmers, and therefore a love and respect for the land is central to my way of understanding the world). It is important to note, however, that in either case, the ‘truth’ of an identity, public or private, is subjective, because the interpretation of facts and decisions as to what pieces are important for the stories being told are left up to the people telling those stories. Consider, for example, how a British scholar might interrogate the narrative of American colonialism, positioning it as an example of rebelliousness and treason, rather than as a hero’s tale of independence. The very act of organizing events to create and convey meaning requires a selection of events to include, and an interpretation of the hierarchy of those events in order to construct a narrative around them. There is an interplay here between what is *factual* and what is *true*, and these two constructs are not necessarily synonymous.

In this area of philosophy, then, it is important to help students distinguish between self-construction of identity and social-construction of identity, and how those two constructions can vary, and can be influenced by who does and does not hold power. In this way, the philosophy of identity is clearly connected to students’ earlier work in standpoint epistemology, as once again, they are required to examine an identity construct through multiple lenses, and from divergent stances.

History and Truth: How do history and truth converge, and diverge, from facts and representation?

In the consideration of personal identity, students learned to distinguish between *facts* and *truth*, and that perspective will be invaluable in this third and final philosophical arena. In his book, *That Noble Dream*, Peter Novick (1988) asserts that truth in history must correspond exactly to the reality of the past, that there is one truth and that it is independent of a historian's interpretation, but is solely based on what actually happened. He further adds that any patterns that we may perceive in history over time are things that we have found (by applying an interpretative lens) rather than things that are made by the events themselves. In Novick's view, then, the provable facts of history are the only important truth. Taking up the other side of the coin is James Cracraft, who suggests that impartial facts reveal only a portion of history's truth, and that it is wrong to focus solely on what is provable, when the entire purpose for studying history is to see who we've been in the past and to understand who we've become - and how we've become - in the present. For Cracraft, then, interpretation is a crucial component of historical inquiry.

Bridging the divide between Novick's "just the facts" approach and Cracraft's search for patterns of historical influence over time is Tzvetan Todorov, whose seminal work, *The Morals of History* (1995) suggests that there is room for both stances in the examination of history and truth. Todorov asserts that truth is made up of "adequation" and "disclosure." He writes that adequation is concerned, as Novick espouses, with the facts of history - what happened, to whom did it happen, by whom was it perpetrated. Disclosure, however, is equally important, as it attempts to capture a spirit of an historical period by locating events within their place in the larger pattern of history over time; a task, it is worth noting, that requires interpretation. For Todorov, it is acceptable that the facts of history are not the only truth on offer when analyzing historical people and events.

Todorov's stance is crucial for students to understand, as it allows them to locate what they've learned from both standpoint epistemology and identity philosophy by creating a bridge that encompasses multiple truths. As students begin to delve into close analysis of a text (or character, or film, etc.), they will need to become comfortable with the shades of gray that color the intersection of facts versus truth.

Objectives & Strategies

Robert Fisher (2013) asserts that students gain important "lifelong learning skills" (157) from the practice of philosophical inquiry. These skills are the foundational objectives for this unit. Adapted from Fisher (2013, 157-158), they are:

- Discussion skills - the ability to engage in thoughtful conversations with others, including being open and receptive to differences of opinion
- Informational-processing skills - seeking the meaning of concepts and ideas and using precise language to express thought

- Inquiry skills - asking relevant questions, posing problems, and engaging in a process of “serious and sustained investigation”
- Reasoning skills - drawing inferences, making deductions, and giving reasons for opinions
- Creative thinking skills - being “playful with ideas,” generating new hypotheses, applying imagination to thinking, and considering alternative explanations and ideas
- Evaluation skills - applying personal judgement to debatable issues and developing criteria for determining the value of ideas, being self-aware and self-correcting

These objectives, while perhaps appearing initially too broad, are, in fact, explicitly tied to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the Pennsylvania Academic Content Standards for English Language Arts (ELA). The content standards in ELA require interpretation, analysis, and evaluation of works of literature, and the discussion of students’ findings in these areas in writing. For example, in one of the lessons for this unit, students are required to consider a character’s motivations for his behavior, to identify and process information from the text in support of their opinions, and to write a rationale that outlines their reasoning and final evaluation of the character’s intentions. These concrete tasks - directly tied to the CCSS - are also deeply grounded in the philosophical inquiry objectives for this unit.

The primary strategy for teaching students to become philosophical thinkers is group discussion. How, though, can a teacher distinguish between a ‘typical’ class discussion and a class discussion designed to promote philosophical thinking and inquiry? Fisher (2013) offers the following elements for evaluating a discussion for philosophical content: topics, aims, process, and learning outcomes (178-179). More specifically:

- Does the content of the discussion include the exploration of philosophical concepts?
- Is the learning goal specifically to help students learn to philosophize?
- Does the process include a community of inquiry approach in which students pose their own questions, are given time to think, and are encouraged to listen to and build on the ideas of others? Are students directed to follow the inquiry wherever it leads, to give reasons for their opinions, and to think about their own thinking and correct or modify it as needed?
- At the end of the learning exercise, are students assessed based on their ability to think for themselves, to generate questions, to develop and build on ideas, to communicate clearly, and to justify their beliefs? (adapted from Fisher, 2013, 178-179)

While creating an inquiry community to facilitate philosophical discussion is the primary strategy employed in this unit, it is noteworthy that students’ writing can be evaluated

along the same criteria. Students engaging in writing that grows from philosophical discussion will also need to incorporate philosophical concepts, to demonstrate their understanding of philosophical schools of thought and language, to pose and respond to questions raised in their study of literature, and to justify their beliefs and make their thinking transparent to their readers. In this way, their work in philosophical discussions is translated into their work as writers, because both types of work elevate the importance of clear thinking and communication about complex topics and big ideas.

Within the context of these two primary strategies - discussion and writing - three micro-strategies will also be employed throughout this unit. These are:

- Thinking exercises - targeted scenarios or role plays designed to stimulate thinking through the applicable philosophical lens
- Application activities - planned activities that require students to use the selected philosophical lens to analyze a particular character, topic, or text
- Scaffolding questions - crafted to support young writers in crafting written and oral arguments along the lines of philosophical inquiry and through the lens of a particular philosophical stance

These micro-strategies can be implemented in shorter time frames, and can ground the macro-strategies by centering students' discussion and writing around shared experiences with the assigned texts and philosophical positions.

Classroom Activities

The lessons in this unit are designed to be used with the award-winning young adult novel, The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas. Centering around the police shooting of an unarmed Black teenager, and currently in development for cinema by a major motion picture studio, this text is both highly relevant and of high interest to high school students. Additionally, it provides rich soil for the growth and development of philosophical discourse in the ELA classroom. Although the lessons in this unit reference this specific text, each lesson is easily adaptable to any other complex piece of literature being studied in an ELA classroom.

Each lesson includes 3 key structures to facilitate philosophical thinking in the classroom. First, a *thinking exercise* is suggested to help students identify the myriad angles from which the topic/character/event under discussion can be viewed. Next, an *application activity* is provided to help students apply the tools of philosophical analysis to the text under consideration. Finally, *scaffolding questions* are suggested to help students craft either oral or written arguments in support of the position they elect to take.

Lesson 1: Incorporating Standpoint Epistemology

Materials: The Hate U Give, pages 20-39

Time: one 90 minute (or two 45-minute) class period(s)

Objectives: SWBAT read and analyze informational (headlines) and literary (novel excerpt) texts IOT identify and analyze multiple points of view around a single situation through the lens of standpoint epistemology.

SWBAT participate in collaborative discussion, using evidence from relevant texts to support their claims, IOT build and refine their own ideas, and to express themselves clearly and persuasively.

CCSS: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly, as well as inferences and conclusions based on an author's explicit assumptions and beliefs about a subject.

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research, applying grade-level reading standards for literature and literary nonfiction.

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions on grade-level topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

Evaluation: Do Now journal entry, class discussion, summative writing prompt

Strategies: thinking exercise, application activity, scaffolding questions, group discussion, writing

Procedures:

1. Students begin with a thinking exercise as a 'do now' activity.
 - a. DO NOW: In your journal, write about the similarities and differences you see in the provided headlines, each of which refer to a shooting incident in which at least one person was killed. What do you infer about the person described in each headline? Explain your inference.
 - “Theater shooting suspect was brilliant science student”
 - “Trayvon Martin was suspended 3 times from school”

“Slain Lakeland teen had been shot before, death possibly drug-related”

“Santa Barbara shooting: Suspect was ‘soft-spoken, polite, a gentleman’”

“Ohio shooting suspect described as ‘fine person’”

“Shooting victim had many run-ins with the law”

2. Introduce students to standpoint epistemology as a philosophical theory. Highlight the idea that knowledge is socially situated, and that it is influenced by who does and does not have power. Point out that standpoint epistemology suggests that people construct meaning and knowledge differently based on their place and power in society.

3. Application activity: Ask students to return to the headlines from their Do Now activity. They should identify the standpoint from which they believe each headline was written. Then, they should rewrite each headline from a different standpoint. When all students have completed the activity, ask volunteers to share examples with the class.

1. Example: “Trayvon Martin was suspended 3 times from school” was written from the standpoint of someone who wanted his shooting to be justified, so they painted him as a troubled kid who got into trouble. I might rewrite the headline to say “George Zimmerman was a violent man with a record of domestic assault charges” in order to focus on the crimes of the shooter, rather than on the perceived issues with the victim. Or I might rewrite it to say “Local teen, Trayvon Martin, ambushed and killed while walking home” to focus on the injustice of a teenager being killed on a walk and implying that his killer was guilty and intended to execute him.

4. Read pages 20-39 in The Hate U Give. Pause as needed during the reading to give students time to process the text and to ask questions.

5. Class discussion: guide discussion along scaffold of standpoint epistemology. Students must use evidence from the text to support their responses.

1. Whose knowledge was valued and empowered in today’s reading?
2. Whose knowledge was not valued?
3. What knowledge did Starr possess that Officer 115 did not?
4. What knowledge lives in the Garden Heights community that isn’t shared by the police?
5. What is Officer 115’s ‘truth’ in this situation? What is Starr’s truth? What was Khalil’s truth?

6. Writing activity: Students should select ONE of the questions from the class discussion to expound on in a 1-2 page essay, articulating their position and citing evidence from the text and references to standpoint epistemology.

1. Scaffolding questions:

1. Which character(s) in these pages has a mainstream cultural standpoint and which character(s) live in the margins of society?
2. How does the cultural standpoint of each character impact what he/she knows in this excerpt?
3. Who does and who does not have power in this excerpt?
4. How does power - or lack of power - inform the events in this excerpt?
5. What intersectionalities (of race, gender, class, authority, etc.) exist in the characters in this excerpt? How do those intersectionalities impact the events, and the characters' interpretations of those events?
6. What 'single story' is most dangerous in this excerpt? What multiple truths can you identify to counteract the single story narrative?

Lesson 2: Incorporating Identity

Materials: The Hate U Give, pages 240-257; pantoum poem worksheet

Time: one 90 minute (or two 45-minute) class period(s)

Objectives: SWBAT apply philosophical ideas of identity to a character in the novel
IOT analyze that character's self-concept, motivations, and character development.

SWBAT participate in collaborative discussion, using evidence from relevant texts to support their claims, IOT build and refine their own ideas, and to express themselves clearly and persuasively.

CCSS: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly, as well as inferences and conclusions based on an author's explicit assumptions and beliefs about a subject.

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research, applying grade-level reading standards for literature and literary nonfiction.

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions on grade-level topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Evaluation: Do Now journal, identity maps, class discussion, pantoum poem

Strategies: thinking exercise, application activity, scaffolding questions, group discussion, writing

Procedures:

1. Students begin with a thinking exercise as a 'do now' activity.
 - a. DO NOW: In his book, Just Mercy, Bryan Stevenson writes: "Each of us is more than the worst thing we've ever done." Respond to the following questions, keeping Stevenson's quote in mind.
 - Do you believe this to be a true statement? Why/why not?
 - Is an individual the same person, regardless of the choices he/she makes?
 - Is an individual the same person over time, or does he/she change over time and become a different person?
 - What makes a person a unique individual?
 - Why is identity important? Or, is identity important? Why/why not?
2. Introduce students to philosophical positions around personal identity, specifically around the concept of public versus private identity. Highlight for students how identity is socially situated and socially interpreted. Give examples showcasing how an identity claimed by one person/group can be interrogated or resisted by an opposing group based on their position in the discourse. (Example: the Revolutionary War is viewed as a fight for freedom in America, and as an act of treason in England.) Be sure that students connect identity construction to the importance of who does/does not have power (as discussed in standpoint epistemology). (Example: "History is written by the victors." - Winston Churchill)
3. Application activity: Divide students into small groups. Each group reads pages 240-257 in the novel. Each group is assigned ONE character to create an identity map for (Starr, Maya, Hailey, Uncle Carlos, Brian Cruise aka Officer 115, Khalil). Students should use evidence from the text, and their understanding of both standpoint epistemology and identity philosophy to create their maps.

Scaffolding questions for identity maps:

 - What sequence of events is relevant to your character?
 - How does your character interpret those events?

- What power does your character possess or lack? How does that impact his/her interpretation of events?
- How does your character see him/herself and his/her own identity?
- Is your character's personal construction of his/her identity shared by other characters? Why/why not?
- How is your character's identity impacted by questions of what is factual and what is true?

4. Class discussion: Each small group presents their character to the class and offers their analysis of his/her identity; the rest of the class interrogates that analysis with evidence from the text. After each group has presented, the whole class should discuss why identity is difficult to concretely establish, and how identities can shift/change/be differently interpreted or reinterpreted, and how power and identity are connected.

5. Writing activity: Students will write a pantoum poem using 5 lines from the book that encapsulate their character's conception of their identity, and 3 lines of their own writing that interrogate the character's self-concept.

Lesson 3: Understanding history and truth

Materials: The Hate U Give, pages 387-388, 442-444

Timeline: one 90 minute (or two 45-minute) class period(s)

Objectives: SWBAT analyze the resolution of the novel in accordance with the 3 philosophical ideas they've learned IOT craft a well-reasoned essay making claims about knowledge, identity, truth, and power in the novel.

SWBAT participate in collaborative discussion, using evidence from relevant texts to support their claims, IOT build and refine their own ideas, and to express themselves clearly and persuasively.

CCSS: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly, as well as inferences and conclusions based on an author's explicit assumptions and beliefs about a subject.

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research, applying grade-level reading standards for literature and literary nonfiction.

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions on grade-level topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

Evaluation: do now journal, headlines, group discussion, summative essay

Strategies: thinking exercise, application activity, scaffolding questions, group discussion, writing

Procedures:

1. Students begin with a thinking exercise as a 'do now' activity.
 1. DO NOW: What 'facts' do you believe led the grand jury *not* to indict Officer Cruise (aka Officer 115)? Do these facts tell the whole story, the whole truth? Why/why not?
2. Introduce students to the different understandings of history and truth espoused by Novick, Cracraft, and Todorov. Highlight for students the differences between focusing on strictly facts (objective outlook), strictly interpretation (subjective outlook), and a combination of the two (objective facts with focused interpretation). Pay special attention to encouraging students to debate whether or not facts can be truthfully understood outside of their context, or whether context precludes a clear understanding of the facts.
3. Application activity: Ask students to write 3 headlines for the riots that occurred in Garden Heights following the announcement of the grand jury's decision. One should focus on 'just the facts,' one should focus on how the decision and riots fit into a pattern of history over time, and one should focus on blending facts and the context in which they occur.
4. Discussion: Ask for volunteers to share their headlines with the class. Make connections between the headlines students share and (a) the different philosophical views of history and truth being studied, and (b) both standpoint epistemology and identity philosophy, making special reference to questions of power and dominance in truth-making/truth-telling.
5. Writing activity: Students will write a 2-part summative essay. Part I should be a personal philosophical statement, wherein students articulate their own stance on

the 3 philosophical ideas they've studied. Part II should be a retelling of Khalil's story, crafted from the philosophical positions espoused in Part I.

1. Scaffolding questions:

Part I

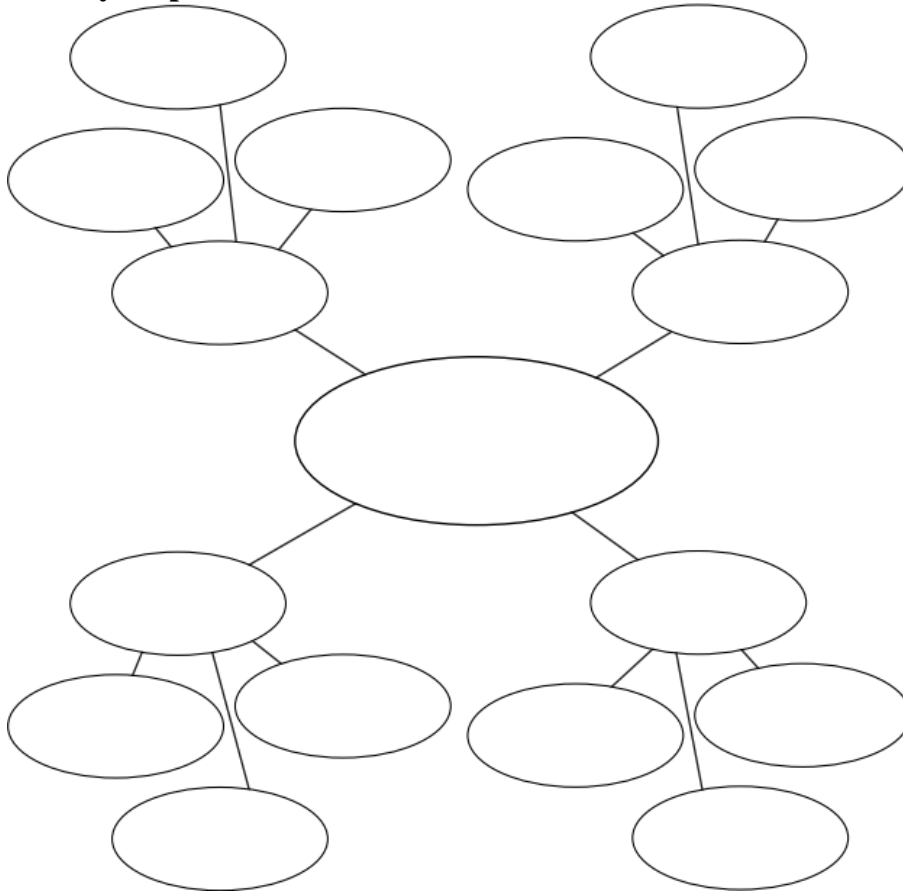
1. Do you agree or disagree with the premise of standpoint epistemology? Why?
2. Is the 'oppositional gaze' an important consideration in avoiding the 'dangers of the single story'? Why/why not?
3. Is identity important? Why or why not?
4. What makes a person's identity unique?
5. Are we the same person, regardless of the choices we make?
6. In looking for truth in history, what's most important - the facts, or the context in which the facts occur? Why?
7. Are facts and truth synonymous? Why or why not?

Part II

1. How will standpoint epistemology impact a retelling of Khalil's story?
2. In what ways can the oppositional gaze impact Khalil's story?
3. What was Khalil's identity publicly? Privately? Is this important?
4. What are the facts of Khalil's case? How does context influence his story?
5. What is the truth of Khalil's story? Is it the same or different from the facts? How/why?

Resources

Identity Map



Pantoum Poem

You have been assigned a character from chapter 14 of The Hate U Give. You will select 5 lines of text said by or written about your character from this chapter that reveal something important about his/her identity. You will then write 3 lines about your character's identity, as you understand it. You will order the lines as you see fit within the structure of the pantoum poem.

How to Write a Pantoum Poem

Of the three lines you wrote yourself, one should go in the first stanza. The other two lines can go wherever you choose.

First stanza:

Line A
Line B
Line C
Line D

Second stanza:

Take the second line of your last stanza and make it the first line of this stanza (B)
Insert a new line (E)
Take the fourth line of your last stanza and make it the third line of this stanza (D)
Insert a new line (F)

Third stanza:

Take the second line of your last stanza and make it the first line of this stanza (E)
Insert a new line (G)
Take the fourth line of your last stanza and make it the third line of this stanza (F)
Insert a new line (H)

Fourth stanza:

Take the second line of your last stanza and make it the first line of this stanza (G)
Take the third line of the first stanza and make it the second line of this stanza (C)
Take the fourth line of your last stanza and make it the third line of this stanza (H)
Take the first line of your first stanza and make it the fourth line of this stanza (A)

Beginning Your Pantoum Poem

Gather eight lines you'd like to use for your poem. Write your lines below. Keep in mind that you can come back and change the order of these lines later. Please note the source of each line in parentheses following the line, i.e.: (my own writing) or (pg. 245) on this note-taking page.

A: _____

B: _____

C: _____

D: _____

E: _____

F: _____

G: _____

H: _____

Writing your Pantoum Poem

Stanza 1

A: _____

B: _____

C: _____

D: _____

Stanza 2

B: _____

E: _____

D: _____

F: _____

Stanza 3

E: _____

G: _____

F: _____

H: _____

Stanza 4

G: _____

C: _____

H: _____

A: _____

Appendices

Academic Standards

Primary standards are listed for each lesson, however, each of these standards would be addressed at some point during a full unit study.

Content Standards: Pennsylvania Content Standards for English Language Arts, grades 6-12 (available at:

<http://static.pdesas.org/content/documents/PA%20Core%20Standards%20ELA%206-12%20March%202014.pdf>)

- **CC.1.2.9–10.B:** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly, as well as inferences and conclusions based on an author's explicit assumptions and beliefs about a subject.
- **CC.1.2.9–10.C:** Apply appropriate strategies to analyze, interpret, and evaluate how an author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.
- **CC.1.2.9–10.D:** Determine an author's particular point of view and analyze how rhetoric advances the point of view.
- **CC.1.2.9–10.F:** Analyze how words and phrases shape meaning and tone in texts.
- **CC.1.2.9–10.G :** Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.
- **CC.1.2.9–10.H:** Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing the validity of reasoning and relevance of evidence.
- **CC.1.2.9–10.L:** Read and comprehend literary nonfiction and informational text on grade level, reading independently and proficiently.
- **CC.1.4.9–10.A:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately.
- **CC.1.4.9–10.C:** Develop and analyze the topic with relevant, well-chosen, and sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic; include graphics and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
- **CC.1.4.9–10.I:** Distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims; develop claim(s) fairly, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level and concerns.
- **CC.1.4.9–10.S:** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research, applying grade-level reading standards for literature and literary nonfiction.

- **CC.1.4.9–10.V:** Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- **CC.1.4.9–10.X:** Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.
- **CC.1.5.9–10.A:** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions on grade-level topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- **CC.1.5.9–10.C:** Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.
- **CC.1.5.9–10.D:** Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning; ensure that the presentation is appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

Teaching Materials

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