

African-American Narratives Exploratory: Detective Gazes & Futuristic Furies

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Introduction

This curriculum unit will focus its content in using detective fiction and science fiction stories by African-American authors. In doing so, students will learn to navigate African-American identity through fictitious characters in making plain an understanding of the use of both genres as a stage to illustrate extensions of self-identity, societal conflicts, and African-American intentions, their hopes, dreams, and aspirations. This unit is created to explore and delve into discussions of race, economic status and societal hierarchy as experienced by African-American people within the creations of detective and science fiction stories.

The unit will also use the study of African-American representation in these types of literary genres as an artistic and political response to the material and its symbolic spaces of racial containment .

African-American authors we will read in order to explore identity realities are Walter Mosley, Barbara Neely, Samuel Delany, and Octavia Butler. We will use short stories and excerpts from one or two novels written by Butler, Neely and Mosley. In considering a novel by Walter Mosley, we will also use one of the films of his novels that were later made and adapted for the silver screen. Using science fiction genre, we will view Derrick

Bell's, "The Space Traders," which is adapted for film. This will give students exposure to African-American authors' work in film while intensifying their depth of acquaintance to both genres.

Science fiction and detective fiction often invite us to identify with the protagonist, who is sometimes heroic at other times not so much. But, the value of these genres is that they often involve the idea of going someplace we did not expect (either because it is a great distance away from us or in another time or because "crossing the line" between law and order and injustice and disorder involves taking on the traits of the criminal.

Speculative fiction, this genre serves as an umbrella literary term for writings that are similar to the notion of science fiction, but contains no science. Speculative fiction has become in recent years a much more "elastic" category with a lot more stories entering the genre, some involve time travel, others involve fantasy. However, for this unit we will explore stories that use time travel as one of its characteristics allowing characters to move within some sort of societal order and/or to stave off chaos within the disorder of the time. This genre also gives readers space to think deeply about its perspective because characters cannot go back in time and change a paradox.

Rationale

This curriculum unit is intended for use in a high school English Language Arts classroom. More specifically for students in the School District of Philadelphia, with this in mind, upwards of 80% or more of these students is African-American. This unit, in addition, serves educators who are in need of supplemental materials for the African-American literature component, which has been included in the canon. Furthermore, this curriculum unit will show students the close relationship between literature and history.

In embarking upon this study, with students, this unit is created for students to gain knowledge and understand on subjects that are embedded within the text. This will help them identify with the hero in a story. Some of what students will discover is based on general literary study, while other aspects of understanding will hone on the African-American authors' experiences and how they communicate these experiences through their stories. Students will understand that authors convey ideas and messages that readers must infer.

It must be noted that these genres are most times thought of as "white" genres, using African-American writers for this unit will be a very serious intervention into a misconception many readers of African descent hold. An African-American hero, scientist, thinker, etc. is most times not presented in these type stories. Therefore, these stories are a stretch from what students have seen as the particular vision for the future of humanity, as well as what they see on the local nightly news. Today's Philadelphia students are living in what might deem urban war zones, this unit gives them a way to

look at their surroundings through literary lenses outside of their everyday actual and factual living.

Historical events are often provided within text to give insights of the human experience, making these genres playgrounds for spotlights to them. Science fiction written by African-American authors has deeper meanings than aliens and time travel, students will understand how to decode deeper meaning as they read. Detective fiction written by African-American authors uncovers insights of life in “black” communities in American cities, therefore giving notions of life worth living to the students who will read these texts. In these instances throughout this unit, Detective fiction will unravel what is thought to be an acceptance of the cards you’ve been dealt based on your family heritage and/or neighborhood residence.

The content in this unit focuses on using Detective fiction and Science fiction stories by African-American authors. By reading/exploring these works, students will learn how authors use fiction as a method for understanding what it means to navigate African-American identity. Fictitious characters in both genres illustrate self-identity, societal conflicts, and African-American intentions, their hopes, dreams, and aspirations. Furthermore, in offering these readings in this unit for study, students will be able to question and debate about African-American authors’ writings in these genres as a challenge of thought about the impact of the historical impact on people’s behaviors and misbehaviors.

This unit will center its study on works by African-American authors - Walter Mosley, Barbara Neely, Samuel Delany, and Octavia Butler. We will use some other short stories by other African-American authors, as well. We will further our readings using one or two novels written by Butler or Neeley or Mosley. In considering a novel by Walter Mosley, we will complement the reading using one of the adapted film versions. This will give students exposure to African-American authors in film while intensifying their depth of acquaintance and comprehension to both genres.

Additionally, students will be able to reflect upon their current societal happenings that are hard to process outside the realms of these genres and the nightly news. In order to provide a focus for students as they prepare for the next stages of their own lives, throughout the study, we will explore the concept of detection and analysis through observing language patterns, clues, and inclusion of information from various American happenings. In doing so, students will be able to reach beyond the sphere of the future vision that tends to function in science fiction and detective fiction – an idealized all-white past that hints at racism in view of the elimination of black people in the usual story of these genres.

Students will come to know and understand that African-American authors have typically used both genres to explore inhumanities experienced, discovered, and/or

known to them and others in the past or present. These understandings will open students thinking to arrive at the big idea – the African-American author uses the genre as a platform to tell reality without excuse of recourse because it is all “just a story” anyway.

This unit will give students skills that which they will be able to read between the lines of text through the use of annotation. Students will be able to identify the conventions of the genre structure through its function within the story. They will be able to follow and/or create a time sequence of events in a story and construct it to make sense of a concept, idea, or theory. Students will be able to recognize historical input in the story – The Great American Migration, Negroes and servitude, politics, geography (placement) and race relations from the African-American perspective. Finally, students will be able to discuss relevant African-American issues through processing text consisting of clarifying, questioning, summarizing, researching and info graphing.

Objectives

In considering what students will understand as they undertake this study, there are particular essential questions under consideration. They are as follows: How does science fiction by African-American authors reveal human truths? Why have African-American authors chosen the detective fiction genre as an imitation of real-life happenings? How do we read between the lines of the text in these genres? What can we learn from the past history (African-Americans) when telling a story? How do these stories relate to me? What makes these genres page-turners? How is the written text different from the film literature? (Same story considered) Where did the story ideas come from? (Historical) How do these stories reflect the African-American culture? How does the story activate our emotions? (Film & text) In what ways does film literature enhance textual literature? How does the author use “truth” in fiction?

Students will know after completing this curriculum unit in whole or part that novelists often provide insights into human experiences through fiction. Also, they will learn that both science fiction and detective fiction engages readers by setting up uncertainties, dilemmas, tension and mystery. Students will understand the simplicity of the statement, writers do not always say what they mean, thus students being able to read between the lines. Students will find how emotions are effected when African-American authors use historical events in the story.

Students will also know after interacting with this unit, Novelists often provide insights into human experiences through fiction. Both sci-fi and detective fiction engage readers by setting up uncertainties, dilemmas, tension and mystery, students will get first-hand experience in this while studying this unit. Writers do not always say what they mean, with this in mind, students will learn to annotate text in consideration of historical record or present-day activities in black communities. Students’ emotions might also be affected when citing historical events from the story, thus we will be mindful that every

students' connection to the text must be in the forefront of our minds (African-American students specifically).

Students will be able to use a variety of the following skills while studying this unit: Read between the lines through use of annotating the text. Communicate genre structure through its function within the story. Follow/create a time sequence of events in the story. Recognize historical input in the story. (African-American) Discuss relevant (African-American) issues through processing text. Clarifying, questioning, summarizing, and researching will all be a part of the context of learning from this unit beyond the readings. The reading selections each connect to real-life circumstances, issues, and more in our society thus; students will be guided to master connecting the fictional text to facts of their own lives.

Dualistic Genres

When considering genres, we will examine detective and science fiction, each genre distinguishable by their entirely formulaic patterns with distinctive structures and/or frameworks of fiction. If reading a crime novel, we expect a mystery, an investigator, and a solution. If reading a Sci-Fi novel, we expect fantastical plots, far-off worlds, special effects (film) and striking descriptions of the future. The codes and conventions of the society in which the literary texts are produced, make these genres give to capacity for investigating race.

Race is a salient topic of examination in these genres, but for this unit, we will intersect race in detective fiction and Sci-Fi representation. However, the social construction and representation of race and/or non-whiteness is an ongoing process, via symbols and other forms of expression within these textual genres. Students will know that Black folks don't do well (usually killed in the first chapter) in science fiction and in detective fiction, Black folks are the usual suspects. For this study choosing African-American authors in these genres will provide a way for students to throw out their thoughts of "normal," making readers catch up to understanding a different reality.

African-American authors' writings in both genres often reflect societal happenings that are hard to process outside the realms of these genres and the nightly news. African-American authors use both genres to explore inhumanities experienced, discovered, and/or known to them and others in the past or present. Therefore causing us to think about how our students read between the lines of the text in these genres. Our students will also consider what can be learned from the African-Americans' past when telling a story and how do these stories relate to them, the individual. Race as confronted in the narrative; for the characters, the individual levels of eradicating race issues, which aren't presented on a systematic level.

In reading these genres, students will become enthralled in the stories which most times are page-turners that relate to some area of their own life, either by relationship to crimes or in habitually reading the “hard-boiled”¹ detective story. While on the other hand, reading fantasy and viewing films of other worlds beyond one’s imagination. We will allow students curiosity to be aroused not only by the stories, but also in thinking about these questions: What’s the relationship between the author and the story? How does the African-American author hook readers beyond race, gender, class and/or sexual identity? How do these (contained in this unit) authors confront humanity of themselves or all? Finally, but important to this study, in what ways do these authors teach the reader the contradiction of America’s concept of “justice for all”?

Detective fiction and Science fiction involves social and economic ramifications, they use and interweave many social issues that play a part in the status of Black people within the framework of American society. Both genres use race in the narrative and in their characters to level the field in eradicating race issues, but not on a systematic level.

We will use various reading and viewing strategies for this unit. Students will be asked to read, lead, follow and discuss the text through guided and shared reading, reading aloud, and independent reading. Their independent reading will be offered from a specified online community hub, this will house the electronic texts and offer them space to question, answer and discuss with one another during and after classroom activity throughout the lessons in the unit.

While interacting with the unit, students will be guided in analyzing plot, character development and they will have to comprehend major and minor thematic issues, both historical and social. During these times, students will be introduced to migratory patterns of Black people in America since embedded in most of the selected readings is movement of the people. Additionally, students will become more familiar with understanding vernacular forms in the written text and how it’s used to depict a range of identifying traits for characters.

Most fascinating about both genres is that they are easy reads, not because of their content, but because of their appeal to most readers. Students at all levels will be able to understand important issues in all of the selected readings providing excitement in the lessons as we yearn to find out what happens next, especially for my students who aren’t necessarily intrigued by the written word.

Who’s Gazing at Whodunit?

What constitutes wrongdoing in our society, detective fiction usually tackles with sorting it out. Nevertheless, the black detective story shows how a detective pursues crime in a chaotic circumstance and disorder while crossing boundaries that eludes others who aren’t able to amass information within particular communities, black communities.

Moreover, police are trained to look for incongruities and the anomaly of the black detective is that his black body, his black man appearance negates wrongdoing from the onset.

The cultural heritage of the African-American detective is complex. Students will be guided in learning to look for particular characteristics of the detective through careful observation of language uses, specifically vernacular and behaviors patterns. African-American authored detective fiction differs from the mainstream detective fiction, often the detective is unwilling to be a detective as seen in Mosley's Easy Rawlins stories, and the detective doesn't always have and intentionally forged path. The "Dick" having to fight to maintain empathy without this the job cannot be done, or the "Dick" can become the criminal. Moreover, the African-American detective is moving in and out of areas of respectability. African-Americans are always thinking what is or isn't the respectable thing to do or participate in or who to be seen amongst in their communities.

The African-American authored detective is sometimes treated as a criminal and has to deal with the cynicism and mistrust of others from outside their own community. These detectives are never given access to equality or respect in regards to the profession. These "Dicks" are seen as a breach in the status quo, students will learn to read that in between the lines of the text, while at other times it will be presented straightforwardly. In considering this, these stories have a sort of "doubleness" to them, survival for the Dick both in and out their communities. These characters are often always betwixt and between crossings (borders, moral codes, codes of the street, status quo).

While on the other side, the criminal in these stories is often connected to the "Dick" via their character attributes. The criminal is usually disconnected from reality; dehumanized; never ashamed; will kill/hurt folks who don't matter; they go in and out of view from society (a sort of underground lifestyle); finally, they are untouchable beyond punishment which adds to the sense of social design.

The "Dick's" thoughts are on the road less traveled, they deal in life in terms of exigency especially since they see everyone as not always who they seem to be. Therefore, in African-American detective fiction it is not always about whodunit. Sometimes the crime itself is not the essential state of affairs that creates the chaos in the beginning of the story. Often times there is a process of peeling back the very base of the corruption, the motivation causing the crime to have been committed in the first place. African-American detectives think about the logic of the criminal, putting the pieces of the criminal process together and then doesn't flinch at the actual reality of the base of the crime. This gives way to the detective begin able to test his/her own commitment to their own code of ethics and living. Being Black in America, accepting the cards you've been dealt and proceeding in and out the framework to solve a crime.

Students will have to discuss the perceptions of Blackness while reading the assigned stories. What it means to be Black in American inner cities and/or suburbia? How are Black people characterized on TV? How does the justice system further criminalize Black people? Even more importantly, does being Black make you a credible witness to a crime? And does it matter if you are a Black male or female?

In addition, students will learn to recognize the formulaic presence of a scientific method, (police procedural inclusion) and some problem solving of statistical probability through deducing the criminal element methods in most of these stories. Since each story reflects specific time periods in its writing, students will grapple with the historical context while coming to understand why the historical aspect is important for a more accurate interpretation toward comprehension.

Futuristic Fortes For Black Folks

Black folks don't do well in the science fiction narrative or Black folks aren't even apart of the narrative in a futuristic space adventure story. Black folks are the last in space and/or the first killed in the other world and what's even more troubling is we continue to have a need to be saved or civilized in the "other" world by a "White" somebody. Not in this unit.

In today's film industry we have been recently included in the futuristic narrative, i.e., primarily Philadelphia's own Will Smith as the hero/savior/scientific genius in *Independence Day* (1996), *Men in Black I & II* (1997, 2002) and *I am Legend* (2007), most famously. The affirmation of blackness in the future is new to readers both adult and children, therefore we will explore several science fiction narratives that show African-Americans as valuable and viable beings. Octavia Butler's *Parable* tales show a Black woman as the protagonist shero who creates a religion, saves the people, and builds a future for the few people of color who have survived the rampaged catastrophe of North America. This novel is like an apocalyptic tale in accordance with the fraying of the social contract in their society. Comparisons to present-day will provide stop and start points throughout our reading.

Butler's novels will be used for students to think about and develop their own call to action for change in their communities and for them to learn how to gather knowledge by paying attention to current trends as the overarching lesson framework. Butler's work, *Kindred* is a great place to start for students then moving to her *Parable of the Sower* because each of these are written in a sort of way that movement of time and space are fluidly played out through the narrative. *Kindred*, moves back and forth fluidly playing in time travel with its black female protagonist, while *Sower*'s black female protagonist moves people through knowledge as a healer, teacher, and ultimately a leader of new nation of people of color.

Time and space travel in these narratives is a means of survival. While on the other hand, students will view *Brother From Another Planet* (1984), and *Cosmic Slop* (1994),² to juxtapose their thinking as they read Butler's works about the reasons time and space travel exist in these film narratives. We will have open discussions via our online created community for this section of the unit so that comments can be made without prejudging another of their thoughts or diverting anyone's thinking process about what is happening in the stories and how we are interpreting the happenings.

Time travel in science fiction sets a tale in motion of either providing order or staving off chaos for characters. The travel often times is a product of the good and bad of what happens to us without having an ability to return to the time in order to change a paradox. Staying in the present keeps the reader from thinking about all of what it takes to make you the person you are. This immersion in time causes the reader to figure out the circumstance of necessity for time travel in the text.

Classroom Activity I

Decoding Genre beyond the Science of Realities

Students will understand when authors use inference to convey ideas and messages. The impact of using historical events on the reader's emotions and how they are used to give insight of the human experience. Detective Fiction and/or Science Fiction by African-American authors are sometimes based on insights from life in American Black communities. African-American authors writings often reflect societal happenings that are hard to process outside the realms of the nightly news or the most recent Sci-Fi film.

Stories we will read using a variety of strategies: Walter Mosley's, *Devil in a Blue Dress*; Octavia Butler's, *Kindred*; Derrick Bell's, *Space Traders*; Charles Johnson's, *Menagerie: A Child's Fable*; Barbara Neely's, *Blanche Among the Talented Tenth*. There will be several films to correspond with some of the readings, i.e. *Devil in a Blue Dress*; *Cosmic Slop*; *The Caveman's Valentine*; *Brother from Another Planet*. The aforementioned titles may not be read in this order, each planned to be introduced within the overall scope of students' learning throughout the unit of study.

Authors' perspective/point of view; historical events are checked and accurate & literary tools are recognized; effective communication (written & oral), students must show in their work a thorough understanding of the concept of author perspectives in consistently being able to list and defend their selections from the text. Students must be able to show that the facts are accurate and that they are clear as to how those facts link to the tale as explained by the authors. Students must provide purposeful meaning in their presentation choice.

Day one - Essential Questions: They are listed on board as students come into class: What's the relationship between the author and the story? How do African-American authors confront humanity of themselves within the story context? How does the African-American author hook the reader beyond race, gender, class and/or sexual identity? In what ways do these authors teach the reader the contradiction America's concept of "justice for all"? How has the African-American become the hero, the one who saves the day?

Use any of the following strategies to have students begin to think deeply about their reading for the day. Quick writes: What is the big idea and what 3 pieces of evidence can you site for this idea? How does the story/chapter/reading relate to you, your parents other family members? Notebooks: students use post-it notes for annotating the text. Complete the sentence(s): I have known all that time that... ; She/he would be suspect if... ; The evidence shows... ; I need to know... in order to tell you...

Homework – bring in your thoughts (poetic form, drawing or list) about today's reading. Summarize key ideas from story.

Classroom Activity II

Hero/Shero – Giving You This Story

Goal – identify ways to communicate ideas that specifically indicate author's point of view from the story. Use this following as method choices to sift through all the facts form the story, choose whichever model works best for the reading or film viewing of the day.

Quick writes: What is the Big idea and what 3 pieces of evidence can you site for this idea? How does the story/chapter/reading relate to you, your parents other family members? Notebooks: students use post-it notes for annotating the text. Complete the sentence(s): I have known all that time that...; She/he would be suspect if...; The evidence shows...; I need to know... in order to tell you... Answer one question: How does my thinking about "snitches get stitches" interfere with my retelling clues? Tell me the role of the detective? Who is the real criminal and why?

Role – Your job is to become the literary detective providing information to literary critics to agree or disagree with your perspective of the claim(s). Audience will act as if they are literary critics of the era.

Situation - challenge involves annotating text; questioning the author; thinking about your perspective of the reading or film presentation; planning your performance. The speeches, slide films, radio scripts, as well as, all other evidence and even the students' self-assessment work will provide evidence of understanding.

Product, Performance, and Purpose – you will create a persuasive speech or a script for a radio interview or a short film slide show in order to reveal the truth of the matter in the specifics of authors purpose/perspective uncovering a deeper meaning. The authentic presentation that students will use are: script for the radio show or a slide show presentation which uses a video format, set up like a PSA or short news show.

Show Day: Homework will be performed if created in poetry or a drawing. We will video the presentations. Those who compiled a list will be interviewed 1:1 for a newscast type show.

Peer Review & Rubric development day. Rubrics will be student developed specifically to cater to the assessment, however, care will be taken in constructing a rubric that has value when overlapping skills performed in the varied methods of the product/performance. Furthermore, consideration will be taken when considering which criterion to use for which performance task.

Needs assessments discussion should happen when students come to class the following day so that everyone has a clear understanding of the performance product expectations for clarity. The students will create driven data collection of completed and submitted work for all assignments. Homework: bring in what you forgot to add in your rubric design.

Assessment: Your product/performance must: 1. Be justified, 2. Be appropriate, 3. Be insightful, 4. Be revealing, 5. Be perceptive, 6. Be reflective. The classroom of literary critics will use a predetermined rubric that will judge your work.

Classroom Activity III

Breaking the Mold of “Snitches get Stitches”

“Snitches get stitches” why? Write a paragraph defending your position.

Begin: Quick write – have a “crime” scene photo projected upon students’ entry, ask students to write 2 paragraphs about the setting, giving specific details they saw in it.

Read aloud - Discuss findings from various students as a whole class. Sharing writings then in small groups. What did your own thinking bring into the writing? Read short story, The Shoemaker Murder by George Schulyer. While reading, listening – write elements for exit (annotate text). Exit – list clues discovered throughout the story. Describe the murder scene, characters – police, victim, detective, and witnesses.

Homework: When I didn't understand the text or the historical referencing, I... K/W/L chart³ made (know/want to know/learned) Imagine you are the criminal, what is your next move? How did it feel to not be found out?

Next day – Compare your quick write to your exit writing. Determine the perspective and point of view of the writing. Neighborhood, race, and socio-economic status: in what ways did the writer show contradiction of “justice for all” in America? Discuss findings – polish writings (for display), then in small groups come up with 3 questions you want to ask Mr. Schulyer about his story = how & why questions only.

Small groups convene – begins the following day, the task – each assigned to a specific section of the story – create a Black community or radio interview or race taskforce group policies or police policy based on how to respond to such a scene. Remember, to design it using only your assigned pages.

Exit – short Q & A session about the work and their roles in groups (Snitches talk). Students will also use the online community to post questions. The community's site will be projected onto the whiteboard for all to view as questions are being shared.

Return to your group – inquire about misunderstandings, review, revise and add story quotes to your design creation. Prior to leaving – think about the issues that came up in your group. Write 5 lines about your part in your group. Feelings – Findings – Process – Needs – Relationship to story – etc.

Assessment: students will decide on the best rubrics that will provide a clear understanding of the expectations of the class assignment. Thereafter, we will use students' group rubrics in a rotating fashion so they will be able to comprehend testing strategy goals and expectations which will help them digest varied methodologies to testing as they approach standardized tests.

Annotated Bibliography

Nama, Adilifu. *Black Space: Imagining Race in Science Fiction Film*.

1st ed. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008. Science fiction film offers its viewers many pleasures, not least of which is the possibility of imagining other worlds in which very different forms of society exist. Not surprisingly, however, these alternative worlds often become spaces in which filmmakers and film audiences can explore issues of concern in our own society. Through an analysis of over thirty canonic science fiction (SF) films, *Black Space* offers an investigation of how SF film since the 1950's has dealt with the issue of race and specifically with the representation of blackness.

Hogan, David J., editor. *Science fiction America: Essays on SF Cinema*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2006. From the inception of the science fiction film, writers, directors, producers, and actors have understood that the genre lends itself to a level of social commentary not available in other formats. Viewers find it easier to accept explorations of such issues as domestic violence, war, xenophobia, faith, identity, racism, and other difficult topics when the protagonists exist in future times or other worlds that are only vaguely similar to our own. The book contains 22 original essays in this collection examine how the issues in particular science fiction films.

Barr, Marleen S., editor. *Afro-Future Females: Black writers Chart Science Fiction's Newest New-wave Trajectory*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2008. The first combined science fiction critical anthology and short story collection to focus upon black women via written and visual texts. The volume creates a dialogue with existing theories of Afro-Futurism in order to generate fresh ideas about how to apply race to science fiction studies in terms of gender. The contributors, including Hortense Spillers, Samuel R. Delany, Octavia E. Butler, and Steven Barnes, formulate a woman-centered Afro-Futurism by repositioning previously excluded fiction to redefine science fiction as a broader fantastic endeavor.

Jackson, Sandra and Julie Moody Freeman. *The Black Imagination, Science Fiction and the Speculative*. London: Routledge, 2011. This is a critical collection that covers a broad spectrum of works (literary and cinematic) and issues from a range of writers, directors, and artists who claim the sci-fi, spec fic, Afro-futurist genres. This anthology extends the discursive boundaries of science fiction by examining iconic writers like Octavia Butler, Walter Mosley, and Nalo Hopkinson through the lens of ecofeminist veganism, post-9/11 racial geopolitics and the effect of the computer database on human voice and agency.

Butler, Octavia E. *Conversations with Octavia Butler*. Conseula Francis, editor. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010. This is a combination autobiography and biography with interviews ranging from 1980 until just before her sudden death in 2006. The book reveals Butler as a writer very much aware of herself as the "rare bird" of science fiction even as she shows frustration with the constant question, "How does it feel to be the only one?"

Delany, Samuel R. *Conversations with Samuel R. Delany*. Carl Freedman, editor. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009. A collection of interviews with Delany from 1980 to 2007. Delany insists that all interviews with him be written correspondence so that he is allowed the time and space to deliberate on each response. As a result, the conversations presented here are as rigorously constructed, elusive, and intellectually stimulating as his essays.

Bailey, Frankie Y. *African American Mystery Writers: A Historical and*

Thematic Study. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2008. This text examines the works of modern African American mystery writers within the social and historical contexts of African American literature on crime and justice.

Reddy, Maureen T. *Traces, Codes, and Clues: Reading Race in Crime Fiction*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2003. The author traces the racial coding of (primarily American) crime fiction. She deftly exposes the white/male/heterosexual central consciousness that underpins both hard-boiled and classical mystery novels, analyzing works by more than ninety writers. This book is as accessible to general readers as it is valuable to scholars.

Bland, Eleanor Taylor. Editor. *Shades of Black: Crime and Mystery Stories by African-American Authors*. 1st ed. New York: Berkley Prime Crime, 2004. African-Americans writers are sampled in this delightful twenty-two short story collection though some of the writers are not yet household names. The stories are all solid with none a failure, only a handful attains greatness such as Walter Mosley's thought provoking take on the use of the race card. The book contains tales that will entertain.

English, Daylanne K. *Each Hour Redeem: Time and Justice in African American Literature*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013. major reinterpretation of African American literature from the late eighteenth century to the present by demonstrating how its authors are concerned with racially different experiences of time. The text explores how African-American writers have employed multiple and complex conceptions of time to trace racial injustice and construct a powerful literary tradition across the centuries.

Galaxy is Rated G: Essays on Children's Science Fiction Film and Television. edited by R.C. Neighbors and Sandy Rankin. 2011. Collectively, the essays discover, applaud and critique the hidden--and not-so-hidden--messages presented on our children's film and TV screens. The collection includes a few essays with specific discussion studies about blackness (racial influence or not) within the genre.

Visions of the Third Millennium : Black Science Fiction Novelists Write the Future. Sandra M. Grayson. Trenton, NJ : Africa World Press, 2003. This is an in-depth study about how writers of African descent use the codes of science fiction to explore race and gender, myth and language, slavery and freedom, alienation and difference.

Focusing on established and relatively new writers such as Octavia E. Butler, Samuel R. Delany, Steven Barnes, and Nalo Hopkinson, Grayson's study is concerned with how black science fiction writers interweave the memories of enslaved Africans in their works. In these authors' stories Grayson discovers their text as revealing journeys in time through Africa that are both metaphorical and literal in their span of physical space,

traditional beliefs, and African history. By simultaneously looking back and forward in their novels, the writers reflect a construction of time as a pendulum moving in patterns of recurrence that represent inseparability among the past, present, and future.

Black Noir: Mystery, Crime and Suspense Stories by African-American Writers. edited by Otto Penzler. New York : Pegasus Books, 2009 This book was an eclectic mix of writing from the 19th century through to the 21st. This book was good in that it shows that African American writers had been writing in the genre for a long time before becoming more noted in the craft.

Pimping fictions: African American Crime Literature and the Untold Story of Black Pulp Publishing. Justin Gifford. Temple University Press, 2013. This book is a study of the art and business of black crime literature is ingenious in its embrace of elements of street literature from historical and literary perspectives along with the culture of the writers who produce it, the commercial enterprises that publish it, and the 'white-controlled spaces' they occupy and must negotiate.... In exploring how these writers, little noticed by academia or mainstream media, negotiate the connection between white-controlled spaces in urban centers, prisons, and publishing, Gifford makes a persuasive case for their importance.

Schulyer, George S. *Black No More: Being an Account of the Strange and Wonderful Workings of Science in the Land of the Free, A.D. 1933-1940.* 1999. The story of Max Disher, a dapper black rogue of an insurance man who, through a scientific transformation process, becomes Matthew Fisher, a white man is a satiric romp. Matt dreams up a scam that allows him to become the leader of the Knights of Nordica, a white supremacist group, as well as to marry the white woman who rejected him when he was black. *Black No More* is a hysterical exploration of race and all its self-serving definitions.

Annotated Filmography

Always Outnumbered, Always Outgunned. Dir. Michael Apted.

Brother From Another Planet. Dir. John Sayles.

Devil in a Blue Dress. DVD. Dir. Carl Franklin. Writer Walter Mosley and Carl Franklin. Clinca Estetico and Mundy Lane Entertainment Production. 1995. Ezekiel "Easy" Rawlins is a decorated war hero who returns home to work as a private eye. His job of finding a missing socialite puts him between the white power elite and the vibrant black community of Central Avenue in Los Angeles. As soon as Easy and his trigger-happy

friend Mouse find Daphne Monet, trouble follows. Denzel Washington and Don Cheadle play the starring roles; this is a film to marked as a classic.

Cosmic Slop – Space Traders. TV Movie. Dir. Reginald Hudlin. Writer Trey Ellis and Derrick Bell. 1994. <https://youtu.be/y6-n9axdiOs> This is a movie based on a science fiction short story written by Derrick Bell and is packed full of racial innuendo and insinuations. The theme of this episode is that America sells out the black race and in the end, they are all literally sold into space to unknown aliens.

Annotated Student Resources

Delany, Samuel R. “Aye & Gomorrah.” *Dark Matter: A Century of Speculative Fiction for the African Diaspora*. New York: Aspect: Warner Books, 2000. In this story, certain sexual tendencies, which have in many cultures caused widespread disagreement no longer, hold their controversial status, and the claims made in reality against these tendencies are easily spotted as invalid when viewed next to what has been developed in Delany’s fictional world. Centered on a “spacer” who seems to have neither sex nor gender, the story works as a lens through which to view this debate-provoking topic in a new and refreshing light.

Du Bois, W.E. B. *The Comet*. New York: Warner Books, 1920. In a vaguely futuristic yet oddly contemporary world, a passing comet casts a shadow of death over Manhattan. Only two survive: a black man whose world has been one of poverty and hard work, and a white woman who knows only leisure and privilege.

Mosley, Walter. *Devil in a Blue Dress*. New York: Norton, 1990. The author’s early writings of the Easy Rawlins detective fiction series. A good read because it will keep you turning the pages.

---. “Black Dog.” *Always Outnumbered, Always Outgunned*. New York: Washington Square Press, 1998.

---. “Gator Green.” *Six Easy Pieces: Easy Rawlins Stories*. New York: Atria Books, 2003.

---. “Gray-eyed Death.” *Six Easy Pieces: Easy Rawlins Stories*. New York: Atria Books, 2003.

---. *Smoke*. *Six Easy Pieces: Easy Rawlins Stories*. New York: Atria Books, 2003.

Neely, Barbara. *Blanche Among the Talented Tenth*. New York: Penguin Books, 1994.

Butler, Octavia E. *Kindred*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2003.

---. *Parable of the Sower*. New York: Warner Books, 2000.

Schuyler, George S. *Black No More: Being an Account of the Strange and Wonderful Workings of Science in the Land of the Free, AD 1933-1940*. New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969.

Appendix/Content Standards

Common Core Standards applied to this curriculum unit:

RL 11.6. Analyze a case in which grasping point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

RL11.1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

RL11.12.4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text.

W.11.12.1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. **a.** Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

b. Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.

c. Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.

e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

W.11.12.2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

W.11.12.4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W.11.12.6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

SL.11.12.1. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues*, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

b. Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed.

c. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

d. Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

SL.11.12.5. Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

L.11.12.2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

b. Spell correctly.

L.11.12.3. Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

L.11.12. 4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on *grades 11–12 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies. **a.** Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph, or text; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase. **b.** Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech (e.g., *conceive, conception, conceivable*). **c.** Consult general and specialized reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning, its part of speech, its etymology, or its standard usage. **d.** Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).

R.H.11.12.6. Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

R.H.11.12.9. Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

RST.11.12.5. Analyze how the text structures information or ideas into categories or hierarchies, demonstrating understanding of the information or ideas.

WHST.11.12.6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

WHST.11.12.10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for 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.

¹ Hard-boiled is distinguished by a tough portrayal of crime and violence; the detective is normally viewed as having a split personality and is White.

² While viewing students will answer questions and spark further discussion using www.todaysmeet.com.

³ KWL Chart – What you know, what you want to know, what you learned – placed on a poster size sheet of paper or on your black/whiteboard.