

# These Are a Few of My Favorite Things: African American Short Stories in the Jazz Tradition

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*“For, while the tale of how we suffer, and how we are delighted, and how we may triumph is never new, it always must be heard. There isn't any other tale to tell, it's the only light we've got in all this darkness.”*

— *James Baldwin, “Sonny's Blues”*

## **Overview:**

Currently the Planning and Scheduling Timeline for high school English in the School District of Philadelphia is slotted for elimination, or at least a dramatic overhaul, and has been historically overloaded with unrealistic expectations. Several of the books are not available in our classrooms, or are too long to copy for educational purposes. Furthermore, the reading in American homes has significantly decreased over the last decade, and while we want to push the agenda of replacing 300 letter tweeting with the greater attention span requirements, plot and character developments, as well as the rising and falling action of the novel, it simply will not happen in today's classroom. In the short story, we find a tremendously apt and fulfilling compromise to the length and time demands of the novel. Furthermore, with the adoption of the Common Core Standards beginning in the coming school year, new curriculum needs to adapt to the changes in how we are expected to teach, the goals of what that curriculum are to be, as well as to the ongoing, evolving demands of our particular students, be they English Language Learners, Special Education students, or the general population of diverse types of learners.

**Rationale:** Literacy and a highly flexible attention span are irreplaceable assets in any modern society, and in the society of the public, or even private high school, there are many students who face learning, as well as clinical, challenges as they move ahead in their goal of being educated and prepared for the workplace of the world, in addition to being enriched by the ideas, experiences and fulfillment of reading and writing literature. In the culture of the reading world, there has been a rise and fall in interest with longer reading passages, and we have adapted to

shorter and briefer snippets of dense, richly complex reading, while maintaining an ability to produce mass quantities of it.

This unit attempts to narrow the search for immediate gratification to a selection of specific short stories by African Americans, while at the same time leaving plenty of room for the exploration of a much greater list of texts at the reader's or teacher's discretion. Ultimately, this is a unit devoted to Jazz music and its traditions, possibilities, and beauty, with the narrow focus of how it takes its shape in the written short story.

**Background:** In Melvin Donaldson's "Cornerstones: An Anthology of African American Literature" (1996), he articulates a summary of the purpose of black writing in this country. In his words, "Perhaps most importantly, African American literature encompasses the breadth of the struggles, achievements, and roles of blacks in shaping American society . . . Despite the difficult or perilous circumstances in which it was created (historical, social, and/or political), African American literature goes beyond apology and protest to include an array of works that include an array of works that display the writer's talent, imagination, mastery of black verbal forms and Eurocentric language, and concerns with themes both timely and timeless, personal and universal." (The Handbook of African American Literature by Hazel Arnett Ervin, 2004: University Press of Florida, page X).

It is with this explanation of African American literature's both personal and universal relevance in mind that I embrace and communicate my own upbringing and background growing up white in the largely black Germantown section of Northwest Philadelphia, not unlike the area of West Philadelphia and University City in which I teach, in a predominantly black, albeit multicultural city. It was in this area that I was exposed to the porch full of musicians who made up "Sun Ra's Arkestra", the Settlement Music School's small building on Germantown Avenue, the regular echoes of a neighbor's horn being played amid the sounds of cars and police sirens, rattling trolleys and children playing in the playground and grass of Vernon Park nearby. Here and now, I give credit to the inspiration of playing my own saxophone along Spring Garden and 38th Street in the spring of 1993, when I lived on the verge of the neighborhood named Mantua, or more familiarly "The Bottom," from where University City High School now draws the largest share of its student population.

If we are to honestly investigate the strength and power of the stories in this unit, our attempt to understand the material is compounded by the impact of trying to understand and express the meaning of jazz music. Jazz began, by some accounts, as soon as Africans left Africa for "the New World," according to Guthrie Ramsey, musician, author, music professor and Teacher's Institute Seminar Leader of "Who Are Those People and Why Are They Listening to That Music" (Teachers Institute of Philadelphia Seminar, 2011). The generally accepted genesis of jazz in the early part of the 20th century seems to ignore the deep history of African musical traditions, to both entertain and heal listeners and participators with the power of music.

Furthermore, the words of Art Lange and Nathaniel Mackey describe how "The reception jazz has garnered and the influence it has exercised have extended not only far beyond the geographic boundaries of its country of origin but far beyond the boundaries of music itself." The editors go

on to indicate that “It has become a widely deployed symbol, a signifier freighted with a panoply of meanings, attitudes, and associations which are variously and sometimes conflicting aesthetic, religious, racial, political, epistemic, individual, social, philosophic, visceral, idiosyncratic, collective, utopic, dyspeptic-on and on. It has become, that is, iconic” (Moment’s Notice, Editor’s note, p. i).

Everyone has his or her own relationship with music, be it jazz, classical, country & western, pop, soul, neo-soul, funk, blues, R&B, rock & roll, gospel, or hip-hop. Just as Common sings in his song, *I Used to Love H.E.R.*, “Never knew throughout my life she would be there for me” (The Anthology of Rap, p. 364), in the age of iPods, piped in elevator music from every store we enter, and complete access to digital downloads, music has a way of permeating our lives with outside rhythm. In this context, “writers have been moved to inspect, as artists witnessing other artists wrestling with the limits of their particular medium, the possibilities and resistances peculiar to writing” (Editor’s Note, Moment’s Notice, p. ii).

**Objectives:** This unit is intended for English 4, the senior year curriculum, but could easily be applied to a music course or even to younger grade levels. The objectives for the unit are limited to the expectations of the Planning and Scheduling Timeline, but stretch beyond the limited cross-curricular possibilities of that document and provide more structure for the creative acts of both reading and writing short stories from a musical perspective, for both the Special Education and English Language Learners as well as regular education students, as many classrooms are now based on an inclusion model.

Students will already be exposed to the breadth of European Modernist philosophies in their course of study; what this unit takes as its main objective is the opportunity to explore the philosophy that music is a universal experience, and as expressed in the literature of these Americans it is expressed through Jazz. This unit will access the prior knowledge of most West Philadelphia students, and will be a companion to the traditionally offered literature of the curriculum. Furthermore, it will provide an introduction to shorter, more culturally relevant material which opens a larger door to the community in which I currently serve. Additionally, it is an opportunity to educate the teachers of this unit the historically marginalized and yet significant contributions of African Americans in a multicultural setting, which is quickly becoming the model environment throughout the world in which Jazz music travels.

The practical objectives of the larger unit view will include the following:

- read a short story from the list of selections for the unit (if possible, all four)
- write a short story based in a piece or genre of music, to be published
- write an essay examining some aspect of the writer’s philosophy and how it connects with the theme(s) of the work he/she produced
- complete a Reading Log, with Special Education supports (teachers will need to refer to specific IEPs in some cases--although the supports are of a general kind that will benefit all students in an inclusion model classroom)

- complete a plot diagram

**Background:** To prepare for this unit, I will be consulting with and researching the techniques of Special Education and English Language Learner teachers, as well as the necessary legal guidelines. I think it is important for each teacher accessing this curriculum unit to closely examine the needs, limitations, and strengths of their own individual students, especially when addressing the often rigorous demands of an Individual Education Plan (IEP); everything can be accommodated to the needs of the individual group or student, but this requires special skills.

**Strategies:** This unit will include using various Special Education supports and accommodations, specifically in the form of graphic organizers and guided reading notes, Reading Logs, and further differentiated instruction for English language Learners and credits the guidance of Michael Brennan, Special Education Liaison at University City High School, Donna Jones, Special Education Teacher at University City High School (and TIP alumna), and Meg Flisek, English Language Learners and English as a Second Language Teacher Leader at University City High School.

Among the tried and true strategies are several methods of instruction

### **Activities:**

Overview:

- each student will be expected to read a selection from the Reading List and complete the graphic organizers, Plot Diagram, Reading Logs, and Double-Entry Journals as they read the material.
- as a culminating project, each student will produce a short story of their own, with the hope that they proceed to publish it in some way, either through their individual school's literary magazine, newspaper, or outside publications such as [www.teenvoices.com](http://www.teenvoices.com), [TheBlacktop.org](http://TheBlacktop.org), [MightyWriters.org](http://MightyWriters.org), and others we will discuss.
- each student will produce a literary research essay, tailored to the time constraints of the Philadelphia School District Planning and Scheduling Timeline, but adaptable to classrooms throughout the nation.
- each student will get to choose some piece of music through which to focus their story, and each is expected to understand that piece on at least a personal level, but also if possible through research into the period and context of the musician(s) and genre.

Specifics:

*Week 1: (i.e., Monday-Friday)*

“Students should never have to ask themselves, ‘what am I supposed to be doing?’ when they enter your classroom, nor should they be able to claim not to know what they should be doing.” (*Teach Like a Champion*, p.152). In any level classroom, there is the possibility that transitions may lead not only to apathy but also disorganization, disorientation, and even chaos. This is especially true as students begin something new, i.e., a new week, a new day, a new class period, or a new unit. In order to transition effectively, students need direction, even when it involves them finding it themselves. The craft of teaching involves deciding how much direction and how

much freedom students need, and I believe that just as a parent is ever vigilant in supervising his/her own child as an infant, the beginnings demand thorough forethought and organization. “Being clear with students about what to be working on and eliminating the excuses that lead to distraction” (Teach Like a Champion, p.152) are the rationale for the “Do Now”/warm-up that waits for my students at their desks or on the board as they enter my room, as well as for what follows throughout the lesson. No matter what, it must be both eye- *and* mind-catching, be both visually appealing *and* intellectually stimulating, like a savory snack to get the salivary glands watering before the menus are passed around. In order to develop routines and keep it simple, I use colored 3x5 cards with lines on one side.

I also like to play music for my students. For this unit, the focus is on Jazz, but as there is a wide variety of choice in what’s important, popular, or effective in generating respect for the past, fostering appreciation for the art, and developing an atmosphere conducive to work; the DJ has to be the teacher of record in the room, and therefore I leave it to your discretion. While my taste runs as wide as the field, I prefer to keep it simple for both me and my students by playing discs 4 and 5 from the soundtrack to Ken Burns’ documentary, JAZZ (see bibliography). These two discs provide a sampling of the diversity of modern jazz, while at the same time suggest some classics from which to build an understanding of the medium (albeit in the background: it would be ideal if students could learn more in the context of a music class simultaneously, or in “concert” with a music teacher and some instrumental instruction.) Plan to know something of which you teach, though; play what *you* like and with which *you* feel comfortable, but do some “research” by listening, too.

The following weekly lesson plan is based upon the 7 step lesson plan according to Madeleine Hunter, and is the “gold standard” for the School District of Philadelphia (at the present time), using “Direct Instruction,” “Guided Practice,” and “Independent Practice.”

### Weekly Lesson Plan

<b>Teacher: Sydney Coffin</b>	<b>Grade/Subject: 12th/English 4</b>
<b>Time/Period: 45 minutes</b>	<b>Dates:</b>

	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri
<b>Instructional Goals and Objectives</b>	Given a think/pair/share (t/p/s) activity, students will be able to (swbat) develop a thesis for how their music engages others	Given a short, simple story, swbat read & identify a central or main idea (“Theme”) in a short explanatory writing piece	Given a short, complex story, swbat read & identify a Theme	Given a review of Buddy’s Monologue, swbat identify key lines that support a central idea in the story	Given a list of vocabulary words from the week’s study, swbat use them in an SAT style short essay based upon a prompt
<b>Activities Aligned</b>	<b>1.5.11-12.C=</b> Evaluate how	<b>1.3.9-10.C=</b> Determine a	<b>1.5.11-12.A=</b> Initiate and	<b>1.3.11-12.A =</b> Cite strong and	<b>1.3.11-12.J=</b> Acquire and

<p><b>to Goals and Objectives</b></p> <p><i>List activities that will be implemented in order to accomplish the instructional goals.</i></p>	<p>the speaker’s perspective, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric affect the credibility of an argument through the author’s stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone.</p> <p><b>1.2.11-12.L=</b> Read &amp; comprehend literary non-fiction and info text on grade level, reading independently and proficiently</p> <p><b>1.4.11-12.H=</b> Write w/a sharp distinct focus identifying topic, task &amp; audience. Introduce the precise, knowledgeable claim</p>	<p>theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.</p> <p><b>1.3.11-12.C =</b> Determine and analyze the relationship between 2 or more themes or central ideas of a text, including the development &amp; interaction of the themes; provide an objective summary of the text.</p>	<p>participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions on grade level topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own ideas clearly and persuasively</p> <p><b>1.3.11-12.C =</b> Determine and analyze the relationship between 2 or more themes or central ideas of the development &amp; interaction of the themes; provide an objective summary of the text.</p>	<p>thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences and conclusions based on and related to an author’s implicit and explicit assumptions and beliefs</p> <p><b>1.3.11-12.B =</b> Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama</p>	<p>use accurately academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking &amp; listening at the college and career readiness level;</p> <p><b>1.3.11-12.K=</b> Read &amp; comprehend literary fiction on grade level, reading independently and proficiently</p> <p><b>1.4.11-12.S=</b> Draw evidence from literary or info texts to support analysis, reflection, and research</p>
<p><b>Instructional Strategies</b></p> <p><i>List the strategies being highlighted for</i></p>	<p><b>1.(5 minutes) Do Now</b> = on a 3x5 note card, (students) write a type of music</p>	<p><b>1.(5 min) Do Now</b> = on a blank Frayer Model, copy the definition of a</p>	<p><b>1.(5 min) Do Now</b> = on a large 5x7 note card, draw and execute a</p>	<p><b>1.(5 min) Do Now</b> = on a 3x5 note card, respond to the following</p>	<p><b>1.(5 min) Do Now</b> = quick quiz on vocab terms (thesis, theme, and</p>

<p>each activity, including any differentiation based on assessment data (Explicit instruction and modeling; guided practice independent practice; or before, during and after learning). Include strategies for intervention.</p>	<p>you like and why it inspires you: what do you get from it? collect cards after 5 min  <b>2.(10 minutes)</b>  <b>Direct Instruction=</b> explanation of objective for the day, including:  <b>(a)</b> teacher demo. of the meaning of a thesis with a Frayer Model &amp; <b>(b)</b> how a t/p/s activity is performed  <b>3.(10 minutes)</b> t/p/s activity =meet w/a partner and discuss the “Do Now” (allow for groups of 3 if there is interest) and then choose 2 pairs to share with the whole class  <b>4.(10 minutes)</b> modeling= allow students to read a short excerpt of Amiri Baraka (below) and/or play a video</p>	<p>Theme (= main idea) and list the essential characteristics, examples, and nonexamples (this should not be the first time they have done Frayer Models) &amp; collect after 5 minutes  <b>2.(10 min)</b>  <b>Direct Instruction=</b> (a)explanation w/ student examples of main ideas from literature &amp; (b)explanation of how to read playing “popcorn” (=each student reads a sentence and calls out the next student’s name to continue. (If not comfortable with each other, read in a circle or select 2 proficient readers to follow you as you model fluent reading)  <b>3.(15 min)</b></p>	<p>Frayer model for the noun “narrative” or verb “to narrate”  <b>2.(5 min)</b>  <b>Direct Instruction=</b> explain how narrators tell stories and they usually have multiple characters; in Buddy’s <u>Monologue</u>, by Yusef Komunyakaa there is 1 character who speaks, so it is a monologue (vs. a “dialogue”); What is the main idea?  <b>3.(15 min)</b>  <b>Guided Practice:</b> read, practicing “popcorn” in paragraphs or in a circle or even “jigsawing”, by breaking the tale into parts, after reading the introduction together  <b>4.(10 min)</b></p>	<p>question: what is mental illness? (collect &amp; read aloud)  <b>2.(5 minutes)</b> video clip on racism as a mental illness by Yusef Komunyakaa  <b>3.(5 min)</b> t/p/s activity: what did YOU see in the film? Discuss 3 examples of what you saw that show his view on writing...  <b>4.(5 min)</b> quick share-out then write down your partner’s 2 responses  <b>5.(5 min)</b>  <b>Direct Instruction=</b> these notes are examples from the “text”; today we will cite examples from yesterday’s story “Buddy’s Monologue”, in teams (2-5 students), using a handout to document them</p>	<p>monologue)  <b>2.(10 min)</b>  <b>Direct Instruction=</b> demonstration on how to use examples collected yesterday in teams to answer: “How does the style of writing in ‘Buddy’s Monologue’ exhibit a kind of music? Explore this question using at least 3 examples from the story”.  <b>3.(20 min)</b>  <b>Guided Practice:</b> students will use the writing guide &amp; other supports to respond to the prompt  <b>4.(10 min)</b>  <b>Independent Practice &amp; Homework=</b> continue with writing in order to submit a rough draft by Monday’s</p>
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<p>from Youtube with him speaking on the subject of jazz (see link below)</p> <p><b>5.(10 minutes)</b> have students write a thesis of their own about music and what inspires others using the writing guide prompts from below</p> <p><b>6.Wrap-up and Review</b></p> <p><b>7.Exit Ticket=</b> describe 1 idea or concept you used in your (student's) thesis that came from your t/p/s activity</p>	<p><b>Guided Practice:</b> distribute copies of a well-known fairy tale, ie. Cinderella, Snow White, Little Red Riding Hood, or GoldiLocks &amp; read as a whole class activity as described earlier</p> <p><b>4.(5 min)</b> discuss possible themes of the story as a class</p> <p><b>5.(10 min)</b></p> <p><b>Independent Practice:</b> interpret the text in writing, using a writer's guide as needed, or scaffolding for students having difficulty</p> <p><b>6.Wrap-up &amp; Review=</b> Theme</p> <p><b>7.Homework=</b> distribute (or include on the opposite side as the first fairy tale) another tale w/directions to</p>	<p><b>Independent Practice:</b> work in teams to discuss the main idea(s) of the piece, either based upon the jigsaw method or using the idea map (see below)</p> <p><b>5.(5 min)</b></p> <p><b>Wrap-up/ Review</b></p> <p><b>6.(5 min) Exit Ticket=</b> write the summary main idea from our work today in your own words</p> <p><b>7.Homework=</b> create a list of 3 terms we have studied this week and define them in makeshift Frayer Models (or a drawing- - be as creative as possible, but keep them simple)</p>	<p><b>6.(10 min)</b></p> <p><b>Guided &amp; Independent Practice in Teams/Groups:</b> find 3-5 examples of how "Buddy's Monologue" exhibits a kind of music in its style of writing</p> <p><b>7.(5 min)</b></p> <p><b>Wrap-up/Review</b></p> <p><b>8.(5 min)</b></p> <p><b>Check Homework=</b> study these terms for a quiz tomorrow: be prepared to give examples from the story to support each term, by the end of class, but know each term by the beginning of class for the quiz</p>	<p>class time</p> <p><b>5.(5 min)</b></p> <p><b>Wrap-up/Review</b></p> <p><b>Discussion</b></p> <p>whole class meeting and Q&amp;A for anyone struggling with the work planned for the weekend</p>
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		read for homework & identify a Theme			
<b>Resources and Materials</b>	1.colored 3x5 note cards 2.completed Frayer Model handouts and/or whiteboard 3.handout excerpts from Blues People, by Amiri Baraka	1.blank Frayer Model handouts 2.copies of short(!) versions of 2 familiar fairy tales or children’s stories 3.writing paper		1.access to a YouTube video	

Of course, this week would be followed by collecting and reading the student’s writing and having them revise it.

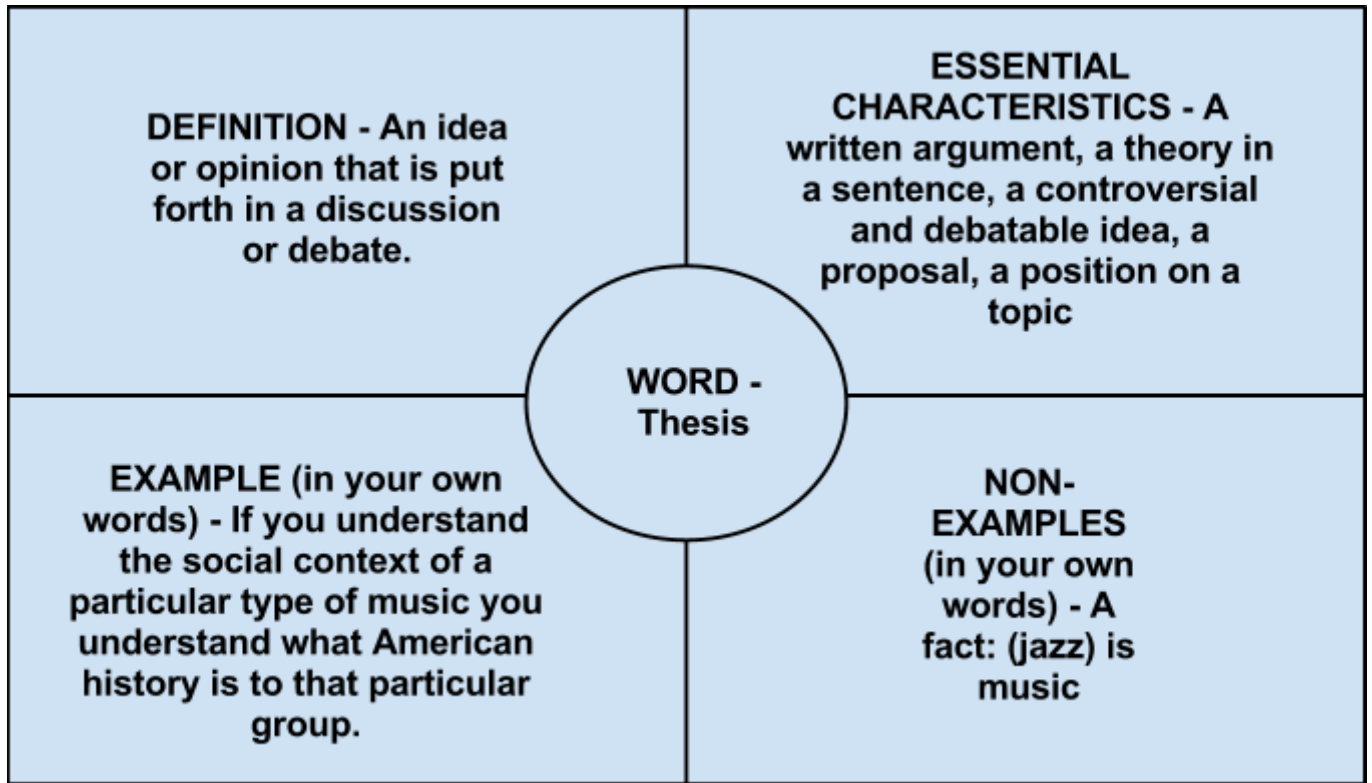
*Resources for Week 1:*

- Reading Log to be used: from the School District of Philadelphia, it includes questions such as:
  - 1) What does the main character value? How do you know? Cite evidence to support your thinking.
  - 2) Analyze the main character’s attitude toward the theme. Cite evidence to support your analysis.
  - 3) What motivates the main character? Give 2-3 examples to support your thinking.
  - 4) Chart how the main character’s attitude changes from the beginning of the story to the end. What are the factors that bring about or contribute to change?
  - 5) What is the central conflict of this work? What central events in the story either help shape or reveal this conflict? Cite evidence to support your conclusion.
    - Vocabulary words to be pre-taught: Thesis, Theme, Monologue
    - Amiri Baraka wrote:

***“The Negro as slave is one thing. The negro as American is quite another. But the path the slave took to “citizenship” is what I want to look at. And I make my analogy through the slave citizen’s music--through the music that is most closely associated with him: blues and a later, but parallel development, jazz. And it seems to me that if a negro represents, or is symbolic of, something in and about the nature of American culture, this certainly should be revealed by his characteristic music.”*** (Baraka, Blues People, p.ix)

- Notes: In order to develop an understanding of a thesis, I recommend the use of a Frayer Model. (Definition and other information comes from Merriam-Webster’s online

resources at: (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/thesis?show=0&t=1340395091>)



- (credited to Dorothy Frayer & colleagues, University of Wisconsin) (<http://wvde.state.wv.us/strategybank/FrayerModel.html>) with additions made by the author of this unit (Coffin, 2012) referring to Amiri Baraka's ideas in Feinstein's Ask Me Now: Conversations on Jazz Literature, p. 7.

### *Week 2: Lesson Plans (Monday-Friday)*

The second week is primarily about reading more creative writing in the Jazz tradition and writing creatively, inspired by music of some kind and based upon student interest and passion. According to Anne Mazer in Spilling Ink: A Young Writer's Handbook, an easy-to-find edition of advice for young writers (and their parents), "Don't let the writing process scare you off writing." She says, "When I'm writing, I never think about the writing process. I never worry about whether I'm drafting, brainstorming, revising, or editing. I just write. My goal is to express my ideas in the strongest way possible" (Mazer & Potter, p.184). This can be useful advice for anyone getting started, especially inexperienced young writers, in that they need to embrace the fact that they are Mad Scientists, and there is no one way to write creatively and effectively.

There are many methods to creative writing (in reality, as many as there are writers) but complemented by the advice of another book, Writing Stories: Fantastic Fiction from Start to Finish by David L. Harrison, teenagers may benefit from some direction when they are lost, whether from a book, a teacher, a peer, or most of all, themselves. Harrison suggests "Think

about it, talk about it, write about it” (Harrison, p.6). Still a third text chooses to define the medium first, and let writers refine their message within the boundaries of the form. In How to Write Short Stories: Easy-to-follow, practical instruction for composing--and publishing--short fiction with Sharon Sorenson, “A short story is a narrative. It tells about imaginary events that happen to imaginary people, and the events lead to a crisis which is resolved at the end. As an imaginative literary form, the short story varies from author to author” (Sorenson, p.3). All three of these texts, available through the Free Library of Philadelphia, refer to prestigious and lesser-known models from which to draw inspiration. For the purposes of teaching music-inspired short story writing to primarily African American students at University City High School in West Philadelphia (though as mentioned earlier, the experience of music is universal), I have chosen a personal favorite, “Sonny’s Blues” by James Baldwin. Just as “Sonny” discovers he has a voice through Jazz music, the goal is that students find they have a voice through writing, in some ways about anything *but* the music playing into their ears every day. Instead, in this Unit we look to the music of the soul, from which all music comes.

### Weekly Lesson Plan

<b>Teacher:</b> Sydney Coffin	<b>Grade/Subject:</b> 12th grade/English 4
<b>Time/Period:</b> 45 minutes	<b>Dates:</b>

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>Instructional Goals and Objectives</b>	Given a work of short fiction, swbat develop a creative response with their own work of fiction, beginning with setting and background (Sonny’s Blues p.17-26)	Given a work of short fiction, swbat develop a creative response with their own work of fiction, continuing with character and plot (Sonny’s Blues p.26-34)	Given a work of short fiction, swbat develop a creative response with their own work of fiction, continuing with rising action and climax (pp.34-44)	Given a work of short fiction, swbat develop a creative response with their own work of fiction, continuing with falling action and resolution (pp.44-end)	Given rough drafts of short fiction, swbat peer-review each other’s work so far
<b>Activities Aligned to Goals and Objectives</b>	<b>1.4.11-12.M</b> = Write narratives to develop real or imagined	<b>1.4.11-12.M</b> + <b>1.4.11-12.N</b> = Engage & orient the	<b>1.4.11-12.M</b> + <b>1.4.11-12.O</b> = Use narrative techniques such as dialogue,	<b>1.4.11-12.M</b> + <b>1.4.11-12.P</b> = Create a smooth progression of	<b>1.4.11-12.Q</b> = Write with an awareness of the stylistic aspects of writing.-use parallel structure. -use

<p>List activities that will be implemented in order to accomplish the instructional goals.</p>	<p>experiences or events. <b>1.4.11-12.R</b> = Demonstrate a grade appropriate command of the conventions of standard English grammar &amp; spelling</p>	<p>reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple points of view , and introducing a narrator and/or characters.</p>	<p>description, reflection, multiple plot lines, and pacing, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters ;use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, settings, and/or characters.</p>	<p>experiences or events using a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome; provide a conclusion that follows from what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.</p>	<p>various types of phrases &amp; clauses to convey specific meanings and add variety &amp; interest. - Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary, and techniques such as metaphor, simile, &amp; analogy to manage the complexity of the topic.</p>
<p><b>Instructional Strategies</b></p> <p>List the strategies being highlighted for each activity, including any differentiation based on assessment data(Explicit instruction and modeling; guided practice independent practice;</p>	<p><b>1.(5 min) Do Now</b> = What are the elements of a story? Why is each part important? <b>2.(10 min) Direct Instruction</b>= inform students of the reading, and give a brief explanation of your own</p>	<p><b>1.(5 min) Do Now</b> = what is the problem between Sonny &amp; his brother? Predict how it will be resolved. <b>2.(10 min) Direct Instruction</b>= model fluent reading and discuss the</p>	<p><b>1.(5 min) Do Now</b> = How would YOU end the story Sonny’s Blues? <b>2.(10 min) Direct Instruction</b>= discuss the separation and distance between the two brothers as James Baldwin’s soul</p>	<p><b>1.(5 min) Do Now</b> = <b>2.(10 min) Direct Instruction</b>= Demonstrate a plot diagram and how the story has (more or less) followed the traditional pattern of narrative, with the key to the</p>	<p><b>1.(5 min) Do Now</b> = retrieve your own work on a short story; complete the top half of the graphic organizer on why you wrote what you did (an author’s statement) <b>2.(10 min) Direct Instruction</b>= describe how to use and how important the peer editing process is <b>3.(15 min)</b></p>

<p>or before, during and after learning). Include strategies for intervention.</p>	<p>relationship to the story (see mine below) and communicate the value of writing our own stories afterwards, however short or rudimentary; this is the time to raise their consciousness around reading in general and raise the bar on engagement, just as they should attempt to do in their written stories at night <b>3.(15 min) Guided Practice=</b> popcorn the reading in paragraphs, ask probing questions throughout today and the week (see below) gauge each student's comprehension with the</p>	<p>role of music in today's society-how the musician has been portrayed as an outlaw vs a holy servant and vehicle for the spirit; where is Sonny in this spectrum? <b>3.(15 min) Guided &amp; Independent Practice=</b> in small groups, have students read around in a circle; this can be done in teams of up to 5 and should mix proficient readers with those who struggle, as well as with any English Language Learners; pre-teach the vocabulary or provide a cheat-sheet of</p>	<p>and psyche: one tries to follow society's rules (the teacher) and another tries to break free and live outside the confines of society's expectations(the musician) <b>3.(20 min) Guided &amp; Independent Practice=</b> again in the small groups from yesterday, have students read again, allowing them to build confidence and momentum; circulate around the room and assure that everyone is reading a paragraph at a time, taking turns, and writing down confusing words, phrases, or ideas <b>4.(10 min) Review/Wrap-up=</b> ask aloud the Reading</p>	<p>tale a progression of the outsider being brought inside the musician's circle (wait until after reading the final scene in which BOTH brothers are brought in) <b>3.(20 min) Guided &amp; Independent Practice=</b> circulate as students read, listening for anyone who needs help, but relying on peers to help one another (this should be fostered as early as possible in the classroom) <b>4.(10 min) Review/Wrap-up=</b> hold a whole class discussion (or provide a list of questions to the small groups) around some of the</p>	<p><b>Guided/Independent Practice=</b> students work on reading each other's work &amp; editing it collaboratively and independently <b>4.(15 min) whole class discussion =</b> about the homework &amp; writing process: as you send them off into the weekend it's important to rejuvenate their inspiration and motivate them to enjoy the work of writing: exploring themselves, as well as practicing the English language on paper 5.Homework= students should finish their stories at home, stapling the peer review handout to it (if there's time they could have a 2nd student read it) or they can work independently 6.Note: I recommend having students write by hand until the next week, when a hand-written copy can be typed AFTER you've seen the first draft</p>
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	<p>reading logs  <b>4.(10 min) Independent Practice</b>= allow students a break from the pressure of reading aloud at first: have 10 minutes of SSR (Sustained Silent Reading) if this is <i>not</i> (or <i>would not</i> be) effective, continue with group reading with 1-1 pullouts for extra support; make jokes to keep students alert and happy!  <b>5.(5 min) Exit Ticket</b>=respond in Reading Logs</p>	<p>definitions; alternatively, you could use Frayer models  <b>4.(15 min) Wrap-up Exit Ticket</b> = Summarize the plot so YOU will be able to pick up again tomorrow, and so that anyone who missed today could read your notes &amp; understand</p>	<p>Log questions, as students write on a fresh copy of the handout, trying to call on those who struggle as well as those who seem successful, supporting all of them with clear articulation of the answers</p>	<p>themes of the story, as well as paying special attention to specific lines which can point to them, as well as language which shows musical elements  <b>5.(5 min) Exit Ticket</b>= Now that the story has ended, were you surprised? what most caught your attention towards the end?</p>	
<p><b>Resources and Materials</b></p>	<p><b>1.</b>Use any book or model you can to teach writing; I even provide copies of books I've scavenged over the years as resources in</p>	<p><b>2.</b>The School District even has Reading Specialists on staff to help pinpoint a student's learning issues (and help resolve</p>	<p><b>4.</b>You will need copies of Sonny's Blues by James Baldwin, originally published in Going to Meet the Man, a collection of his</p>	<p><b>5.</b>We often think of writing &amp; reading as solitary events, but in practice they can be socially engaging; give your students</p>	<p><b>6.</b>Use a graphic organizer for peer feedback: give them something they have to do in order to show a response to each other's work; this is key.  <b>7.</b> Try writing your own short story this</p>

	the classroom, or take a class trip to the school or local library from time to time	them) 3. In the Planning & Scheduling Timeline (either online or in old paper copies) are various resources	work, but widely anthologized in other sources.	frequent opportunities to talk about their work, the problems associated with it, as well as time in which to find solutions.	week and communicate your own frustrations and challenges, as well as how you resolved them.
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- *Reading Log: Responding to Literature (below)* Generic Fiction Questions:

1. What does the main character (*Paul or Sonny*) value? How do you know? Cite evidence to support your thinking.
2. Analyze the main character's attitude toward the theme. Cite evidence to support your analysis.
3. What motivates the main character? Give 2-3 examples to support your thinking.
4. Chart how the main character's attitude changes from the beginning of the story to the end. What are the factors that bring about or contribute to change?
5. What is the central conflict of this work? What central events in the story either help shape or reveal this conflict? Cite evidence to support your conclusion.

*Week 3: Lesson Plans Overview (Monday to Friday)*

While I will not go into a specific step-by-step lesson plan for the third week of this unit, I will provide an indication of where I would like to see it go. Having finished reading Yusef Komunyakaa's "Buddy's Monologue" rigorously as a whole class and "Sonny's Blues" in small groups and with some fundamental structures, the third week offers the opportunity for more flexibility and freedom. Students should be given the option of reading a third short story with a focus on Jazz, and I suggest a choice between "Medley" by Toni Cade Bambara and "Monk's Silence" by John Edgar Wideman, both found in Sascha Feinstein's *Jazz Fiction Anthology* (see bibliography below). With these two stories, as well as a possible third in Langston Hughes classic, "The Blues I'm Playing," students can move towards the ultimate goal of completing a synthesis essay on common themes in three of the stories.

Synthesis essays satisfy one of the major paradigms of the twelfth grade objectives in the School District of Philadelphia: finding common themes and correlations between multiple texts. In fact, finding a common thread that unifies a student's understanding around a central idea in literature represents a high level of achievement for any age in any school district, and in any society. The new Common Core State Standards in Pennsylvania support this assertion, based upon their emphasis on Writing--1.3: "making connections among ideas and between texts" and 1.4: "Students write clear and focused text to convey a well-defined perspective and appropriate content." As a companion to the short, fictional readings, I believe students of this particular unit of study would benefit from a variety of additional non-fiction texts that further deepen the student's understanding of an author's purpose. A primary skill for any student of literature (and by extension, of life) is the ability to make and support inferences about a text (or from their own

experiences), as well as the ability to derive knowledge from the immediate or even sometimes obscured context surrounding any random information across which they might come.

Through this unit, my most sincere hope is that students can eventually pursue an argument on a meaningful and communicative level, be it relevant to an issue of literary, social, or personal importance.

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Steinberg, Shirley R. 19 Urban Questions. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2010. Print.

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**Suggested Student Reading List** (*all found in the Jazz Fiction Anthology, edited by Sascha Feinstein, see above in bibliography*)

“The Blues I’m Playing” by Langston Hughes (1934)

“Buddy’s Monologue” by Yusef Komunyakaa

“Sonny’s Blues” by James Baldwin (1957)

“Medley” by Toni Cade Bambara (1977)

“Monk’s Silence” by John Edgar Wideman (1999)

### **Filmography**

Lee, Spike. “Mo’ Better Blues” Brooklyn: A Spike Lee Joint, 1990. Film. If you really want to get into the story of a fictional jazz character in film, see this movie with the class. I believe it opens the door to a larger discussion of the central ideas of the artist as a troubled soul, the instrument as a metaphor for women, and the struggle to create as a symbol for the nature of existence.

### **Teacher Resources**

- Teach Like a Champion (*see bibliography*)
- Planning and Scheduling Timeline, available online through the School District of Philadelphia
- Common Core Standards for Reading and Writing  
([https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:RVqSDjO4q04J:www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/http%3B//www.portal.state.pa.us%3B80/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS\\_0\\_664124\\_1235230\\_0\\_0\\_18/PA%2520Common%2520Core%2520ELA%2520%286-12%29%2520March%25202012%2520DRAFT.pdf+&hl=en&gl=us&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESgx7V2kknTrGu\\_SZh4ZUhf37UeJjrwFSMcZ1LbDl\\_8Bi8qXHHnOtLhDiWnVpCqWtuQshCNJh3DcN450Eu\\_vL0MwlkyxGVZoHwdXrGMQnAdFCtPl\\_MG7IIUXcchgesV4i9bJdBX&sig=AHIEtbRUt9JwoxepYg527Ew4CQAex40YtA](https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:RVqSDjO4q04J:www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/http%3B//www.portal.state.pa.us%3B80/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_664124_1235230_0_0_18/PA%2520Common%2520Core%2520ELA%2520%286-12%29%2520March%25202012%2520DRAFT.pdf+&hl=en&gl=us&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESgx7V2kknTrGu_SZh4ZUhf37UeJjrwFSMcZ1LbDl_8Bi8qXHHnOtLhDiWnVpCqWtuQshCNJh3DcN450Eu_vL0MwlkyxGVZoHwdXrGMQnAdFCtPl_MG7IIUXcchgesV4i9bJdBX&sig=AHIEtbRUt9JwoxepYg527Ew4CQAex40YtA)) (this link will give one the opportunity to access an HTML copy of the document)

## Student Resources

The University City High School Interdisciplinary Writing Program (Reasoning, Writing, and Achievement) Writer's Guide

## World Wide Web Resources

- 1) (<http://wvde.state.wv.us/strategybank/FrayerModel.html>) for the Frayer Model
- 2) (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/thesis?show=0&t=1340395091>) for definitions
- 3) (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FvAHZPoTGX4>) Yusef Komunyakaa Advises Young Poets (2010) from [www.cityofasylumpittsburgh.org](http://www.cityofasylumpittsburgh.org) (3:57) Interview with Elizabeth Hoover

**Standards:** The core curriculum of the School District of Philadelphia has used the Pennsylvania Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening. However, now that Pennsylvania is moving to adopt the Common Core Standards, these assignments are aligned to a draft of the Common Core Academic Standards for English Language Arts, ***dated 2/28/12 8:47am.***

In particular, the following are most of importance:

### 1.3 Reading Literature

Students read and respond to works of literature - with emphasis on comprehension, making connections among ideas and between texts with focus on textual evidence.

#### R11.A-K.1.1.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences and conclusions based on and related to an author's implicit and explicit assumptions and beliefs.

#### R11.A-K.1.1.3

Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama.

#### R11.A-K.1.1.2

Determine and analyze the relationship between two or more themes or central ideas of a text, including the development and interaction of the themes; provide an objective summary of the text.

#### R11.A-C.2.1.1

Evaluate how an author's point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

#### R11.A-C.2.1.2

Evaluate the structure of texts including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the texts relate to each other and the whole.

#### R11.A-V.4.1.1

#### R11.A-V.4.1.2

#### R11.A-C.2.1.3

Evaluate how words and phrases shape meaning and tone in texts.

#### R11.A-C.3.1.1

Demonstrate knowledge of foundational works of literature that reflect a variety of genres in the respective major periods of literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics.

R11.A-V.4.1.1

Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple meaning words and phrases based on grade 11-12 reading and content, choosing from a range of strategies and tools.

R11.A-V.4.1.1

Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

R11.A-V.4.1.2

Read and comprehend literary fiction on grade level, reading independently and proficiently.

and also:

1.4 Writing

Students write for different purposes and audiences. Students write clear and focused text to convey a well-defined perspective and appropriate content.