

Storytelling for Freedom: How Black speculative stories can give us hope for a better future

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Content Objectives

Abstract

Students at Science Leadership Academy are provided with an excellent project based curriculum that encourages student voice and freedom of expression, however, the texts students read in English class often feature dark and depressing stories. This curriculum unit seeks to solve this problem by introducing students to the concept of visionary fiction, an alternative to dystopian fiction, in addition to empowering stories written by writers of color.

Problem Statement

As a teacher of 10th and 12th grade English at Science Leadership Academy at Beeber, I have the opportunity to inspire the next generation of critical thinkers, leaders and change makers, however, the school's curriculum severely lacks inspirational content. Many of the texts students are given feature characters that are over traumatized, and their stories teach the mostly Black student population at my school to expect and grow comfortable with despair. On top of that, the literature texts offer a very limited perspective of Black people that does not allow my Black students to see themselves reflected in many speculative stories. Taking the seminar with Dr. Thomas has opened my eyes to the ways that Black characters are othered and silenced, through her teachings and also her book *The Dark Fantastic*. I'd like to teach a unit that shows my students how Black people have been able to survive various forms of oppression and find freedom, joy, and empowerment through speculative storytelling, which exists in many forms such as rap, poetry, and traditional literary stories.

In the present day climate of the pandemic of Covid-19, which has dramatically altered the school year for students across the country, and has forced me to become an online instructor, it has been incredibly important for me to remind my students of the power of storytelling. In the midst of uncertainty, sadness, and grief, each week my students have read and discussed various stories that have given us hope and joy that has been much needed in this time. I am grateful for the ability of stories to connect, educate, and inspire. It is my hope that through this unit I can continue to affirm and inspire my students through Black speculative storytelling, a topic I'm sure many of them have never been exposed to, which shows its relevance even more. Below are more details on the context of my school.

SLA Beeber is a unique school. It is an inquiry-driven, selective high school that draws students from all over the city of Philadelphia. SLA Beeber, founded in 2013, is the second campus of Science Leadership Academy, which was founded in 2006. Both schools operate with the same mission which is to provide

a vigorous, college-preparatory curriculum with a focus on science, technology, mathematics, and entrepreneurship. Students at SLA learn in a project-based environment where the core values of inquiry, research, collaboration, presentation, and reflection are emphasized in all classes. (SLA homepage)

At SLA Beeber students are taught to view learning as a science, as they apply the core values, adapted from the scientific method, as an approach to all of their classes.

Another thing that makes SLA Beeber stand out amongst other schools in the district is the amount of freedom and technology students are given. Every student is provided a laptop, where project-based learning occurs through the most up to date digital applications. Classes are 65 minutes long, which gives students more time to spend engaging with their teachers and the class material. Students also have a 65-minute lunch period, the longest of any school in the district, so that students and staff can have time to decompress and enjoy their lunchtime. Many students come to SLA Beeber from schools where the rules ranged from strict to downright oppressive, with policies regulating student dress code, monitoring student movement through hallways, and restricting their freedom of expression. In contrast, at SLA Beeber there is no uniform policy, the dress code is simply to dress in a way that is respectful to the community and others; students are free to work in the hallways and are often hanging out there during their lunch periods, and creative expression is highly encouraged. On any typical day you might see a few students riding their skateboards in the hallways before class starts, there is a game room where students are allowed to play video games during lunch; overall there's a feeling of ease and comfort that SLA Beeber is a place where students are given the freedom to learn with advanced technology and be themselves while doing it.

Staff at SLA Beeber also enjoy a particular kind of freedom, where staff are able to plan project-based curriculum using whatever texts or methods of our choosing. As a High School English teacher, I love the freedom to design units around any literature texts, and it's nice to know that I don't have to follow a district mandated curriculum that tells me exactly what and how to teach, as is the case at other schools. Despite this freedom, the English curriculum created over the years by teachers at SLA Beeber is in dire need of innovation. The main problem I've observed is that the texts students are required to read mostly feature stories that are dark, depressing, and overly dramatic. Students often read about a character who experiences and overcomes one traumatic event after another, which leaves students wondering why they only read stories with heavy themes.

Many of my students have been impacted by trauma, whether from their family, community, or as a result of the city where we live. I've had several students experience family deaths this year alone. I do not want to re-traumatize my students when they enter my classroom, especially after returning to class after dealing with a pandemic. Also, teaching for me is a labor of love and political resistance. As a Black woman who made it through Philadelphia's public education system to receive an Ivy League degree at the University of Pennsylvania, to go on to teach at the second campus of the high school I graduated from, it is my duty to teach my students that they too are capable of succeeding beyond the limits put on them by a society that does not value Black or Brown children. I want my students to know what it means to thrive and find success in whatever they choose, whether that is going to college or starting their own business, and I know that a strong foundation of reading and writing skills will be necessary. So I

would like to incorporate the things I've learned in the Dark Fantastic seminar, particularly the concept of Visionary Fiction into my teaching, so that I can inspire my students to envision a better future for themselves and their communities.

In my two years of teaching 10th grade English at SLA Beeber, I've always taught a unit on Dystopian Fiction as a way to have students engage with the school's 10th grade theme of systems. Previously in this unit, students analyzed how authors have written Dystopian Fiction to make a criticism about a current trend, societal norm, or political system. Students read short Dystopian stories from Kurt Vonnegut, as well as *Parable of the Sower* by Octavia Butler, before writing their own Dystopian short stories. Writing Dystopian fiction led my students to think of the worst case scenario of a current world problem, however, I would like to flip that around, and introduce my students to the concept of Visionary fiction so that their writing can produce hopeful solutions to our current world's problems. The concept of "Visionary fiction", is described in the Introduction to *Octavia's Brood* by Walidah Imarisha as the following

Visionary fiction is a term we developed to distinguish science fiction that has relevance toward building new, freer worlds from the mainstream strain of science fiction, which most often reinforces dominant narratives of power. Visionary fiction encompasses all of the fantastic, with the arc always bending toward justice...Once the imagination is unshackled, liberation is limitless. (4)

I believe that introducing my students to this concept will help unshackle their imaginations as stated by Imarisha, and hopefully help them write hope into their own futures.

Reading List

I plan to use a combination of dystopian short stories, one dystopian novel, and excerpts from longer texts in my unit. Although a few of the texts feature dystopian stories, I will use them as a way to introduce students to the concept of world building, that I learned in the *Dark Fantastic Seminar*. This concept was expressed by Adrienne Maree Brown in the outro section of *Octavia's Brood*, and it essentially is a process where people work collectively to dream up a new future that prioritizes putting the most marginalized voices at the center. So after reading the dystopian texts, students will work as a class and participate in world-building that offers up a radically positive and hopeful solution to a current world problem. After reading *Parable of the Sower*, students will write an original short story with a hopeful ending that includes a solution to an education related issue.

The two dystopian short stories I plan to use include, "The Ones who walk away from Omelas" by Ursula K Le Guin, and "The Ones Who Stay and Fight" by N.K. Jemisin. They will be used in the unit to introduce students to speculative fiction that makes a critique on a problem in the world. This will help students see that speculative stories can be political as they draw parallels between our world and the fictional world of the author. I also want to intentionally expose my students to the Black speculative writer N.K. Jemisin. In the past I've used stories from Kurt Vonnegut, including *Harrison Bergeron* and *2BR02B*, however, I'd like to expose my students to more writers of color and also show them Dystopian stories that deal with issues more relevant to their reality, such as racism and various other forms of inequality. I believe that these two stories will meet both of those needs. Please see the next page for the reading list.

Teaching Strategies

Note on Virtual Remote Learning in the 2020-21 School Year

As a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic, schools across the country were forced to close and my school resumed instruction virtually through the Google Hangouts platform. Compared to most schools in the city, my school was prepared for virtual instruction, as our school already provides each student with a laptop and SLA uses Canvas, an online instructional platform. Despite our preparedness for online learning, I still faced significant challenges with reaching all of my students, as some students struggled to attend online synchronous learning classes. Furthermore, it was difficult to engage students on Google Hangouts. Often students would attend class with their cameras off and their sound muted, so it would be hard to assess whether students were actually paying attention and engaged. I also noticed low participation on assignments, particularly for my seniors, who were dealing with grief over the pandemic's ruining their senior year. In the coming year, it is unclear whether the Philadelphia School District will mandate 100% virtual learning. As of now, the school district has released a hybrid plan, which calls for two days of in person instruction and three days of virtual remote learning. There has been a large public outcry against the reopening of schools, and many teachers, parents, and students are arguing for complete virtual instruction. With the uncertainty of what school will look like in mind, I've crafted a unit of teaching strategies that can be carried out in person or virtually. The whole purpose of this unit is to inspire students to imagine a better future for themselves, which is desperately needed as our country is experiencing a health pandemic and uprisings against racial injustices. I want my students, particularly my Black and Brown students who are the predominant population at my school, to walk away from this unit feeling a sense of power and agency as they understand the importance of storytelling and how it can be used to shape their futures.

The unit will take place over the course of eight weeks. There will be three phases of the unit. The phases will travel through time by starting at the root of it all, Africa, and end with the future in mind with an emphasis on Afro-futurism and Visionary fiction. The specific methods used in the unit include using *Video*, *Journaling*, *Collective World Building*, *Creative Writing*, and *Reading*.

Phase 1- The power of storytelling: Griots, Rap & Poetry. This phase will last for two weeks and in the first phase students will learn about the power of storytelling by examining its oral origins, through learning how oral storytelling has been carried out by West African griots for centuries. Students will watch a short video that will explain how griots serve as a community's historian, recording all of the major events, births, deaths, and marriages of a people. Griots originated in West Africa in the region where the present day country of Mali is located. The Malian word for a storyteller is jelli, yet when translated to French, the word is griot, which these community storytellers are widely known as. Students will then connect their knowledge of oral storytelling of the past to oral storytelling of the present by examining rap songs, watching spoken word poetry videos, and listening to songs that tell stories. Students will then come up with their own oral storytelling creative piece that will describe their origin story, where they and their families come from and the strengths and positive traits they are proud to

have from their upbringing. Students will have a choice to come up with either a rap, a song, or a spoken word performance. Students will write their creative piece online through using Google Classroom, and extra credit will be given to students who choose to present their work in class, which will hopefully incentivize participation if instruction is carried out virtually.

Phase 2- Speculative fiction- Speculative short stories & Parable of the Sower. This phase will last for three weeks. Students will learn about the characteristics of speculative fiction, while specifically focusing on Dystopian fiction. They will first read the short stories “The Ones who walk away from Omelas” by Ursula K Le Guin, and “The Ones Who Stay and Fight” by N.K. Jemisin in the first week and analyze it for characteristics of Dystopian literature. Students will also analyze how both stories are making a critique of the inequality in our world through the writers’ imagined speculative worlds. From there students will begin reading Parable of the Sower by Octavia Butler, and will analyze the protagonist’s way of dealing with her Dystopian reality for the remaining two weeks. While reading the novel, students will complete online reading reflections as well as participate in online discussion boards on Canvas, that will encourage them to process their thoughts and reaction to the story in writing. Students will be asked to place themselves in Lauren’s shoes and will write what they would’ve done if they were in a similar situation. Their reading reflections will be used to help them start to imagine themselves in a speculative world, with agency and power. The reflections will help the students also start thinking of the kind of speculative world they’d like to create for their final assignment, which will be their own Visionary fiction story.

Phase 3- Visionary fiction. In this final phase students will continue reading Parable of the Sower until completion, however, they will also read about the concept of visionary fiction as explained in my above problem statement. This phase will take place over 3 weeks. Students will wrap up Parable of the Sower and read about visionary fiction in the first week, and will use the remaining two weeks to write their original visionary fiction stories. Because visionary fiction is meant to center those most marginalized in our current society, students will be given the following prompt to reflect on: How do we write stories that have a hopeful future for Black people and the most marginalized in our society? Students will then participate in a collective world building session where we will work as a whole class to create the fictional world that all students will use in their original stories. We will come up with a fictional land (in our discussion) and give it a name, as well as list all of the characteristics of the society. Students will draw inspiration from the short stories we read earlier in the unit, “The Ones who walk away from Omelas” and “The Ones Who Stay and Fight”. I will record their thoughts on a Google Doc that will be shared with the entire class. Afterwards, students will work individually write a speculative story that addresses a problem in our current education system, such as inequality, unsafe school buildings, police in schools, underfunded schools, etc. Students will be given freedom to be as creative as they want in dreaming up their speculative story with the only requirements that the ending must be hopeful, and it must offer a solution to the problem.

Classroom Activities

Lesson on Origins of Storytelling
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Objective: SWBAT understand the origins of storytelling and practice oral storytelling

Teacher/Content Area: English Language Arts, Grade 10

Standards: ● CC.1.2.9-10. F, Standard - CC.1.2.9-10. L, Standard - CC.1.4.9-10.M
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3. D, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1

Guiding Questions:

- What makes storytelling powerful?
- How did people tell stories before the invention of paper and writing systems?
- How have Black people used storytelling through various mediums (oral storytelling, songs, poetry, rap, journalism, etc.) as a way to find hope for a better future?

Materials:

1. Youtube video on the origins of oral storytelling
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8VlyAb2qaGI&feature=emb_logo)
2. Youtube video on the history of Griots in Mali (Smithsonian Institute)-
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=385&v=OJhFrd05zY8&feature=emb_logo
3. YouTube video of Hiwot Adilow Name poem
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pc6CJ_kUNYc
4. Notebooks or writing paper, or Google Docs

Agenda:

1. Do Now
2. Mini-Lesson on oral storytelling
3. Practice
4. Closing/share out

If instruction is virtual, all of the student writing will take place on a Google doc that will serve as their classwork for the day

Do Now (10 minutes) - What were your favorite stories that you remember from your childhood? These can include bedtime stories you were told from a family member or books you remember reading when you were younger.

Students will have 5 minutes to answer this question in their notebooks, and then they will share in partners, then the class.

Teacher will share how stories are powerful because they have the ability to teach us, help us connect with others, shape our perspective on the world, and stay with us for years after we've heard them. Stories can also be tools to change our world. Today we will examine the origins of storytelling.

Mini-Lesson on oral storytelling (15 minutes)-

Teacher will pose the following prompt to students to discuss in small groups of 3, for 3 minutes. After the 3 minutes are up, teacher will have a representative from at 2-3 groups share.

Prompt: How do you think our earliest African ancestors told stories? What do you think they told stories about and why?

If students have trouble answering the question here are some questions to help them think through the prompt:

- Do you think they wrote stories down?
- What are some things you think they would talk about with each other?
- Who do you think told the stories? Why?

After students have discussed, teacher will play a 2 minute YouTube video that gives an overview of oral storytelling.

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8VlyAb2qaGI&feature=emb_logo)

Following that video, students will watch a 6:28 video on the history of griots in Mali. As they watch they will complete a guided question and reflection worksheet with the following questions:

- Define griots in your own words.
- What do you think are the challenges of being a Griot?
- Would you want to be one, why or why not?
- Who is someone that you would consider a modern day griot?

Afterwards students will share in pairs and teacher will call on few to share to the whole class.

Practice (25 minutes)- Teacher will connect spoken word poetry to oral storytelling. Students will sharpen their listening skills by listening to a spoken word poem and recording phrases and words that stand out to them, as well as their reactions.

Students will listen to a poem by Hiwot Adilow on her name.

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pc6CJ_kUNYc)

After listening to the poem students will then practice oral storytelling with a new partner and tell them the story of their name. Specific instructions are below:

1. Students will select a new partner
2. Each partner will have 15 minutes to write their own poem that tells a story about their name. It can be true or made up (This can be an opportunity for students to practice speculative storytelling) Teacher will pause the students half way through to give tips or guidance after circling the class and seeing how things are going, and then allow students to continue writing.
3. One partner will have 2 minutes to tell their name story poem, while the other partner will listen and write down key words and phrases from what they heard. The listening partner will repeat back to the storyteller what they heard, validating the speaker and ensuring they were listened to.
4. The partners will switch roles and repeat step 3.

Closing/share out (**5 minutes**) - Students will reflect in a class wide discussion on how it felt to tell their name stories verbally orally, and which did they prefer, to tell their story or be a listener and why.

Teacher will close by telling students that by telling their own stories they have the power to shape how the world sees them and remind the world that they are unique, powerful, and they have a voice that deserves to be heard.

Lesson on Dystopian Fiction- “The Ones who walk away from Omelas”

Objective: SWBAT understand the characteristics of dystopian literature

Teacher/Content Area: English Language Arts, Grade 10

Standards: ● CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.10, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1,

Guiding Questions:

- What are the characteristics of dystopian fiction?
- How is our world similar or different to the fictional world of Omelas?
- How can this story be used to spark social change?

Materials:

1. Youtube TED Ed video on how to recognize a dystopia.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6a6kbU88wu0>
2. Digital copy of “The Ones who walk away from Omelas”

Agenda:

1. Do Now
2. Mini-Lesson on dystopian literature
3. Read Short story & Reflect
4. Closing/share out

If instruction is virtual, all of the student writing will take place on a Google doc that will serve as their classwork for the day

Do Now (**10 minutes**) – Imagine a perfect world. Describe what that perfect world would look like in your own words. Think of what kinds of rules would exist in that society.

Students will have 5 minutes to answer this question in their notebooks, and then they will share in partners, then the class.

Teacher will share how what they just came up with were their own utopias or perfect worlds. In contrast, today we’re going to look at the opposite of those perfect worlds, dystopias. We’re going to discuss dystopian literature, and how writers have used this genre to critique the issues within our society.

Mini-Lesson on dystopian literature (**10-15 minutes**)-

Teacher will provide students with the following definition of dystopian literature:

“A futuristic, imagined universe in which oppressive societal control and the illusion of a perfect society are maintained through corporate, bureaucratic, technological, moral, or totalitarian control. Dystopias, through an exaggerated worst-case scenario, make a criticism about a current trend, societal norm, or political system.”

Teacher will give students 2 minutes to brainstorm and make a list of all the books, TV shows, or movies they know that would fit the definition of dystopia. Teacher will call on a handful of students to share their lists and see how many they are able to name. Students may be surprised to see they know a number of dystopian stories, as the genre has become increasingly popular in young adult fiction recently.

Teacher will then show students a TED Ed video on how to recognize a dystopia.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6a6kbU88wu0>

As students watch the video they will jot down a list of characteristics of dystopia. They will also answer the question: Why do you writers write dystopian literature?

Afterwards students will share in pairs and teacher will call on few to share to the whole class.

Practice (**25 minutes**)- Teacher will provide students with a digital copy of the story “The Ones who walk away from Omelas”. As students read they will complete this digital worksheet.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ee0di8z97xZakgWtnmslGI6ZcPKUtlAPfdJW3dchKqM/edit?usp=sharing>

Teacher will read aloud the first section of the story, and help students answer the first question on the guided worksheet, and help students understand the context of what’s happening in the story.

Students will then have 15 minutes to read the rest of the story silently and independently and complete the worksheet.

After the time is up, students will share in pairs their thoughts and reactions on the story.

Closing/share out (**10 minutes**) - Students will have 5 minutes to complete the final part of the worksheet, if they haven’t done so already. If they have, they’ll add additional text to world connections.

Students will share that aloud with the class.

Teacher will close by posing this question to students, “How can this story be used to spark social change?” After getting a few responses, teacher will end by stating that dystopian stories such as this one have the power to draw parallels to our own world and highlight social issues that need to be fixed. Dystopian stories creatively reimagine our world and show us where we change so that our world does not end up looking like Omelas.

#2 Lesson on dystopian fiction- “The Ones who Stay and Fight

Objective: SWBAT understand the steps writers take to write dystopian fiction, and begin the process of writing their own dystopian short story

Teacher/Content Area: English Language Arts, Grade 10

Standards: ● CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.10, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1

Guiding Questions:

- How is N.K. Jemisin’s story similar or different to “The Ones who walk away from Omelas”?

Materials:

1. Digital copy of “The Ones who stay and fight” by N.K. Jemisin

Agenda:

1. Do Now
2. Read Short story & Reflect
3. Writing practice
4. Closing/share out

If instruction is virtual, all of the student writing will take place on a Google doc that will serve as their classwork for the day

Do Now (**10 minutes**) – What do you think are the top 3 problems facing our society today? Explain why.

Students will have 5 minutes to answer this question in their notebooks, and then they will share in partners, then the class.

Teacher will share how thinking through the current problems facing the world is one of the first steps that writers of dystopian literature do before they write a story that creatively exposes that issue. Today we’re going to read a story that was inspired by “The ones who walk away from Omelas” and yet offers a different outlook.

Reading time (**25 minutes**)- Teacher will provide students with a digital copy of the story “The Ones who stay and fight by N.K. Jemisin”. As students read they will complete this digital worksheet.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qPnyJtkOybdLvHttYNzv7pjmuHnOPEF2UfnRv_rC_Ys/edit

Students will have 15 minutes to read the the story silently and independently and complete the worksheet.

After the time is up, students will share in pairs their thoughts and reactions on the story.

Teacher will engage the whole class in a discussion, asking students “How is N.K. Jemisin’s story similar or different to “The Ones who walk away from Omelas”?”

After that, students will have 5 minutes to complete the final part of the worksheet, if they haven’t done so already. If they have, they’ll add additional text to world connections, similarly to what they did with the first dystopian story.

Writing practice (**20 minutes**) – Students will have 10 minutes to write creatively in response to the following prompt:

Ursula Le Guin and N.K. Jemisin both wrote dystopian stories that critiqued problems in our world. Pick one of the problems you wrote about for your do now and spend 10 minutes writing without pausing, describing what the world would look like in 10 years if this issue got worse.

Teacher will monitor students as they write and provide help to students who struggle with how to get started.

After the 10 minutes are up, students will have 5 minutes to share what they wrote in pairs. After the share out time, the teacher will ask students what was it like to write their stories, allowing a few students to share their experience.

Closing/share out (**2 minutes**)

Teacher will close by congratulating students for practicing the habits of dystopian literature writers, and if they liked what they came up with, they can always continue writing! Teacher will remind students that at the end of the unit they will write their own visionary fiction stories that offer a hopeful solution to an education related issue.

Resources

Annotated Bibliography & Reading List

This annotated bibliography contains all of the texts that students will read in class, as well as the videos that will be used for each lesson.

Butler, Octavia. *Parable of the Sower*. New York, Four Walls Eight Windows, 1993.

This dystopian novel will serve as a mentor text for dystopian literature and speculative fiction for students. It will help students learn about character development and world building, which they will use when they write their own visionary fiction stories.

Hope Music Ethiopia. "Amazing poetry by Hiwot Adilow at Brave New Voices 2012." YouTube. 3 Aug 2012. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pc6CJ_kUNYc

This spoken word video will be used during the first lesson on the origins of storytelling. Students will use this as an example for how to write a poem that tells a story about their name.

Imarisha, Walidah, and Adrienne Maree Brown. *Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements*. AK Press, 2015.

This book contains a chapter that explains world building and the concept of visionary fiction, which I will use to introduce students to the idea of hopeful speculative fiction that aims to center marginalized peoples and offer a solution to their problems.

Jemisin, N. K. *How Long 'til Black Future Month?* First edition. New York, NY: Orbit, 2018. Print.

This book contains the short story, "The ones who stay and fight". Students will read this dystopian story in class as a mentor text for their own practice in writing a dystopian story.

Le Guin, Ursula. *The ones who walk away from Omelas*. Mankato, Minn. Creative Education, 1993.

This story will also serve as a mentor text, meant to introduce students to the genre of dystopian and speculative fiction. Students will read this story and look for characteristics of dystopia.

McGuff, Emily. "Introduction to Oral Storytelling." YouTube, 20 Mar. 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8VlyAb2qaGI&feature=emb_logo

This video will be used in class to introduce students to the origins of storytelling by highlighting how primitive cultures told stories orally.

TED-ED. "How to recognize a dystopia- Alex Gendler." YouTube. 15 Nov 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6a6kbU88wu0>

This video will be used in class during the lesson on dystopian literature. The video was produced by the educational TED-ED network, and offers a nice animated video that describes how to recognize a dystopia, while referencing popular works of literature.

The shortie awards. "The Empire of Mali Series: The Griot, Lesson 2." Youtube, 4 Feb. 2009,

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=385&v=OJhFrd05zY8&feature=emb_lo
[go](#)

This video will be used in class during the lesson on the origins of storytelling, as it describes how African griots served as the oral historians of their villages in Mali, West Africa.

Appendix

My unit will implement PA common core standards by providing students with opportunities to enhance their reading and writing skills, as well as their speaking and listening skills each chance they get to present their stories to their peers. Below are the common core standards and their full descriptions, along with how they will show up in my unit.

- **CC.1.2.9-10.F** - Analyze how words and phrases shape meaning and tone in texts.
 - Students will practice this standard as they listen to the spoken word poem in class and determine how the speaker uses words and phrases to shape meaning.
- **CC.1.2.9-10.L**- Read and comprehend literary non-fiction and informational text on grade level, reading independently and proficiently.
 - Students will practice this standard when they read an excerpt from Octavia's Brood on the concept of Visionary Fiction.
- **CC.1.4.9-10.M** - Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events.
 - Students will practice this standard when they write their poem that tells a story of their name, as well as during their dystopian writing practice activity.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.D** - Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.
 - Students will practice this standard when they write their original visionary fiction stories.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1**- Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
 - Students will practice this standard every time they participate in pair and whole group discussions, which are frequently throughout each lesson.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1**- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
 - Students will practice this standard when they read the dystopian short stories and complete guided worksheets that will require them to cite text evidence.

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.10-** By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 9-10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.
 - Students will practice this standard every time they read the mentor texts.