

Police Free City: Writing Emancipatory Visionary Fiction

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Abstract

With the COVID-19 pandemic and nationwide #BlackLivesMatter uprisings, much of what has been considered “normal” in the United States has been called into question. In the face of this context, the goal of this unit is to guide students through the process of creating emancipatory, visionary fiction that imagines a future Philadelphia without police. The unit begins with an exploration of the “dark fantastic cycle”, as defined by Dr. Ebony Thomas, and looking at its implications on the imaginations of young people (and all of us) through the lens of *The Hunger Games*. Moving forward, students are introduced to the concept of “visionary fiction”, and analyze examples from Octavia Butler and Janelle Monáe, which they will use as models for their own work. After exploring the history of policing in the United States and Philadelphia, we investigate the conceptual underpinnings of police abolition. Students will then consider how our society approaches “crime”, and how we might take on different approaches if we reframed using “harm”. With this context in mind, classes will create a common world for their future Philadelphia without police and then expand on their own visionary narratives by creating characters, settings, and Novums to bring their future world to life.

Content Objectives

Classroom Context

Envisioning a future beyond our current conditions is difficult as adults and professionals. It can be doubly hard for adolescents, especially those who bear the brunt of societal oppression and find themselves daily in underresourced schools and overpoliced communities. I teach at a small, nonselective high school in North Philadelphia. A majority of our students are Black, but we also serve a significant number of Latinx students. We have a few students with other racial identities - White, Asian, or Indigenous.

This was my 5th year teaching in my current context. During my time in our Humanities department, I have come to find the most engagement and quality work when I teach narrative writing. While the writing students produce is most often rich, detailed, and engaging, it is also most often hyperrealistic. In this unit, I want students to see how they can think and write about substantive issues that matter to them while pushing the bounds of their creativity. I hope that looking at and creating works of visionary fiction will help students get there.

In the Spring of 2018, I worked with colleagues and community partners to plan and teach a Humanities unit in our African-American History-based course called “Black to the Future” or “Survival Guide for the Future”. This unit was taught around the time when *Black Panther* was released in theaters, and was planned in collaboration with artist Li Sumpter who has a major interest in disaster preparedness. Through engagement with *Parable of the Sower* and a variety of afrofuturist texts, students ultimately created their own vision for what Philadelphia would be like in 2049. The resulting project, [Survival Guide for the Future](#), showcased work students produced during the unit - journal responses, “go bag” infographics, afrofuturist cards, and fashion designs.

Last time around, I set a year for their futuristic work (2049, 31 years in the future like *Parable of the Sower* was from when it was written) and also said that this work must take place in Philadelphia (or whatever Philadelphia is like 2049). Beyond that, students were mostly free to create and explore characters and situations of their choosing. While this produced some excellent work, the quality varied widely - especially in terms of their way of envisioning a future. While some students grounded their work in an “If this goes on...” vision of the future, others fell back more on tropes they’ve experienced in science fiction. Students also really struggled to situate their work in a geography of future Philadelphia. For most groups, the place did not feel specific. Almost universally, the vision of the future was profoundly dystopian.

I plan to use this work as inspiration for students as we move into this year’s version of the unit, but also hope to push the bounds of what we’re asking students to think about when we talk about the future. In creating this type of work with students, I wanted to guide students through thinking and creation that was more balanced than what we did in 2018. I want students to bring their experiences and perspectives to the class, while also deepening and expanding their understanding. I want to find a way for students to use their own vision and creativity, while also creating work that resonates with what their classmates are creating. I want to find a way for students to acknowledge and interrogate the harsh realities we are facing and their impact on the future, while also envisioning hope and joy in their work. I tried to keep these types of balance in mind while I created this unit.

Impact of COVID-19 on Unit Direction

When creating a unit that is examining how students think about the future, it is not possible to ignore the global pandemic that has engulfed our world. This has impacted the life of people around the world, and has profoundly impacted the lives of many of our students. Arundhati Roy described the pandemic as a “portal”, writing: “Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next.” The question that she raises is about what type of world will result after COVID-

19: Will it mirror the oppressive structures of today's society or will it "imagine another world"?

It is hard to know what the world will look like when I teach this unit. Even if we have returned to school, it is becoming increasingly clear that things will not feel (or be) "normal". There is even a possibility that this unit will need to be taught online. As I considered this unit, I tried to take into consideration these changes that COVID-19 have brought. It is also important to acknowledge that this will have been a difficult and traumatic experience for many students.

I have created this unit acknowledging as much of the current context as possible, but also approach it with the understanding that much of what is written here may change by the time I teach this unit.

Impact of Nationwide Uprisings on Unit Design

Between the time I wrote the previous section and the submission of this unit, nationwide protests and uprisings erupted after the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor.

In the wake of these uprisings, the ideas of police and prison abolition, both in schools and society, have come to the forefront of national conversations in a way they weren't before. The work of abolition is futurist, speculative, visionary work. It is about imagining a world without something that is so pervasive in our communities today. Leading abolitionist thinker Mariame Kaba wrote in the New York Times, "People like me who want to abolish prisons and police... have a vision of a different society, built on cooperation instead of individualism, on mutual aid instead of self-preservation."

Before abolition came to the forefront of national conversations, I struggled to find a way to ground this unit while still giving students freedom to explore in ways that they wanted. While police and prison abolition is a specific topic, its implications are expansive. Kaba, in an interview with the Justice in America podcast, cited the work of Ruth Wilson Gilmore, saying that abolition is "a practical organizing strategy that asks you to think about all the different ways in which the systems that we currently have shorten people's lives." Gilmore, in an interview with the podcast Intercepted, said "What we want is for the money to be spent, to enhance, and support human life so that it can flourish in a way that doesn't destroy the planet." Both thinkers frame abolition as being less about getting rid of something and more about thinking about what we can do instead.

The idea of getting rid of police and prisons, and envisioning the possibilities and challenges of that world, has become a driving force in my unit. This context, both nationally and in Philadelphia, will be used to frame students' creation of futuristic work.

Visionary Fiction

When I taught the first version of this unit in 2018, *Black Panther* had just been released and “Afrofuturism” was getting a lot of attention. In naming this unit, we fully embraced the use of the term Afrofuturism, which I think was an appropriate way to engage students in the moment. In [an essay by Nnedi Okorafor](#), she describes Afrofuturism as a term which is being used to describe her but that she feels doesn’t present an accurate definition of her work. She describes her approach as Africanfuturism, which she says is “less concerned with ‘what could have been’ and more concerned with ‘what is and can/will be’”. It acknowledges, grapples with and carries ‘what has been’.” She also describes Africanfuturism as centering Africa, rather than centering or privileging the West, as she says Afrofuturism does.

Naming is important, and while we will still investigate Afrofuturist work, I’ve decided to use a different framing this time around. I am planning to embrace the concept of “visionary fiction”, as described in the Introduction to *Octavia’s Brood* by Walidah Imarisha. She describes this concept as including “all of the fantastic, with the arc always bending towards justice” (4).

In my personal reading and watching, I am drawn to science fiction work that falls in the “If this goes on...” category like *Parable of the Sower* or *Black Mirror*. This work takes current trends in society and technology and looks ahead to show the world that would exist if those things continued. This strikes me as running counter to the concept of visionary fiction, and I struggle to think about how to reconcile the two. While visionary fiction emphasizes a future bending towards justice, this type of work often shows a future bending towards more and more total dystopia.

I think that part of my attraction to this type of work comes from privilege. I know that injustice runs deep, but I don’t often directly face it. For many of the students we serve, however, a city bending towards dystopia is all too real. We are living in the midst of a global pandemic. Philadelphia has the highest poverty rate in the largest 10 cities in the United States, and nearly half of those who live in poverty live in deep poverty. While 25% of Philadelphia’s citizens are poor, around 37% of our children are (Pew Charitable Trusts). In the neighborhoods of North and West Philadelphia where most of our students live, these numbers are even starker.

As of July 18, 227 people have been murdered in our city this year - a 26% increase from this time last year, and the highest number at this point in the year in recent years. In 2018, 6,446 people went to the emergency room in Philadelphia for drug overdoses, and more than 900 died. Our students bear the brunt of these issues too - and often live in communities where gun violence and addiction are prevalent. Reflecting on my practice, I find that envisioning what will happen if these issues go on is not a particularly useful exercise for people facing these conditions day-in and day-out.

Compounding these conditions is the profound changes in daily life brought by COVID-19 and stay-at-home orders, and its disproportionate impact on Black, Latinx, and Indigenous communities. As of July 18, 1,665 Philadelphians have died of COVID-19, and 52% of those who died were Black.

It would also be a mistake to imagine the lives of my students and their communities and families as being full of despair. There is much joy, creativity, and ingenuity that they bring to bear. With many of the exacerbated issues we face in our city, I am looking to strike the balance of having students create work that speaks to our reality, but also explores hope for a brighter future.

For a long time in this process, I struggled to figure out how to frame futurism in a more visionary way. I was initially thinking about how much this version will be an “If this goes on...” future or how much it will be a vision that “bends towards justice”. I wanted to blend the two, but struggled for a long time to figure out just how that might happen. By centering police and prison abolition in this unit, I think I will adequately be able to get students to lean into this current moment in their work while also encouraging them to bend towards justice.

Another aspect I am planning to incorporate this time around is making more explicit the connections and differences between our current world and the future students envision. Through this course, I learned a new term, “Novum”, which I think will help bring this out for students. In her article from *English Journal*, Stephanie Toliver quotes Science Fiction scholar Darko Suvin who defined a Novum as “an important difference added to or infused with the author’s known world”. She went on, “Novums are essential to SF stories because they exist at the intersection between reality and speculation. It is the ‘new thing’ that students create to alter the world” (56). By embracing this term, I will ground the work that students are creating in the theory around Science Fiction while striking balance with a concrete name to use for their abstract creativity.

The Dark Fantastic Cycle and Imagination Gaps

In thinking differently about how students envision the future, Dr. Thomas encouraged me that I also needed to think about imagination. In addition to the real-world oppression that impacts the way students think about the future, the types of futuristic media they watch and read also plays a role. In *The Dark Fantastic*, Thomas highlights deep issues with the way that stories based in the fantastic are told, and the impacts of whiteness on that telling.

In her introduction, Thomas writes: “Even the very act of dreaming worlds-that-never-were can be challenging when the known world does not provide many liberating spaces” (2). She goes on to describe “imagination gaps” that exist in literature for young

people, often excluding characters of color or leaving them stereotyped, marginalized, or caricatured. Thomas describes this as a “mass failure of the collective imagination” for adults which may be the cause of racialized literacy disparities among young people.

Through this work, Thomas takes a critical race counterstorytelling approach to the fantastic by centering characters of color. She says that, if we don’t take this approach to work in the fantastic, “the default position is to allow those who are used to seeing themselves as heroic and desired the power and privilege of naming, defining, and delimiting the entire world and everything that is in it” (22-23). Without interrogating these works through this lens, we allow whiteness to continue to be seen as the “norm”, and compound the imagination gaps that already exist.

Thomas frames her work around a cycle of the “dark fantastic” faced by characters of color, viewed as the “Dark Other” in storytelling that explores the fantastic. The first phase is spectacle, where the reader marvels at the Dark Other. This can be the case if there are characters of color in a story, or even if they are absent. The next phase is hesitation, where the audience is unsettled by the presence of the Dark Other - recognizing that “she is not supposed to be there” (26). This leads into the third phase, violence. At this point, the Dark Other is subjected to violence in the text, which often results in death. But even with death, the Dark Other is not freed from the story, but is stuck in the fourth phase of haunting. Thomas, citing Toni Morrison’s *Playing in the Dark*, argues that that there would be no fantastic storytelling without the Dark Other. Most stories that are fantastic in nature repeatedly cycle back through the first four phases of this cycle. This often creates dissonance for readers of color who find themselves identifying with the “monster” in these stories.

Though Thomas analyzes many examples of this cycle in this text, I will emphasize her discussion of Rue from *The Hunger Games*. Thomas’ conclusions about Rue’s character, her role in the story, and the perceptions of fans underscores much of the complex and contradictory nature of what I am working to address in this unit. Thomas lays out how Rue’s role in the narrative fits within the dark fantastic cycle, and how, ultimately, her innocence is transferred to Katniss, who goes on to lead the revolution in Panem with less and less acknowledgement of Rue’s role as the story moves along. Thomas notes, “Essential qualities such as goodness, beauty, innocence, and truth have been so often racialized as White in literature and media that ascribing these qualities to other groups is seen as transgressive” (60). This explains both why Suzanne Collins chose to transfer Rue’s innocence to Katniss through her death, and why there was so much racist outrage online when Amandla Stenberg, a Black multiracial actress, was cast as Rue in the film.

As we move forward in the unit to explore police abolition, the concept of innocence is one that will come up again. By looking at the example of *The Hunger Games*, I will be able to ask students to think about how race constructs innocence (and

so many other things) in the media we view and read. Thomas writes, “Understanding how race and innocence are constructed in and through texts is vital, for the ways that young people read, write, and think are shaped by the participatory culture associated with stories like *The Hunger Games*” (61).

Thomas notes that it is very rare that a narrative reaches the fifth phase of the cycle: emancipation. At this stage, the Dark Other is freed from the previous four phases of the cycle. But Thomas says that these narratives are often less popular than narratives that stay within the first four phases, because (White) audiences often resist them as being less realistic or enjoyable. Thomas writes, “Therefore, would-be storytellers must somehow liberate the Dark Other from her imprisonment and impending doom, not only in the text itself, but also in the imaginations of his or her readers” (29). As I develop this unit for my students, I am thinking about how I can engage them in this liberatory work.

I see a strong connection between Thomas’ rarely reached emancipation stage and abolition. To even consider a world without police, students must think beyond what is so normal and ordinary in our society, and imagine a future that is profoundly different.

Octavia Butler & Janelle Monáe’s Visionary Work

For students to create their own emancipatory work in a world where those texts are uncommon, it is important to provide students with strong examples. For this unit, I decided to focus on the work of two powerful Black women who created visionary futuristic work in different eras, using different modes of expression: Octavia Butler and Janelle Monáe. While each has an extensive body of work, I decided to focus on one piece from each for this particular unit: *Parable of the Sower* for Butler and *Dirty Computer* for Monáe.

In her introduction to *Octavia’s Brood*, Walidah Imarisha writes, “Butler explored the intersections of identity and imagination, the gray areas of race, class, gender, sexuality, love, militarism, inequality, oppression, resistance, and - most important - hope” (3). As I try to think of a way for students to balance a look at harsh realities with the creation of visionary, emancipatory work, there is no better example to start with than Octavia Butler.

Published in 1993, *Parable of the Sower* tells the story of Lauren Oya Olamina in a vision of a future California in the 2020s that is both profoundly different from the world we are facing now, and also eerily similar. Lauren lives in a community surrounded by walls, like all the other communities in her part of the world. Violence and chaos lurk outside the walls, and eventually engulf her community. As Lauren moves outside of the walls and tries to survive, she brings together a band of fellow survivors to form a community centered around a religion that she is in the process of creating: Earthseed.

In 2020, Damian Duffy and John Jennings released *Parable of the Sower: A Graphic Novel Adaptation*. As I explore the text with students, I will be using this adaptation - both to make the work accessible and to emphasize the narrative and aesthetic aspects of visionary fiction. While this adaptation is very tied to the original narrative, Duffy and Jennings bring her narrative into full relief with their illustrations that ultimately deepen the meaning of the original text.

In a 2013 interview with *Bust* magazine, Janelle Monáe said: “I thought science fiction was a great way of talking about the future. It doesn’t make people feel like you’re talking about things that are happening right now, so they don’t feel like you’re talking down to them. It gives the listener a different perspective.” While this quote was during the time of her Cyndi Lauper and Metropolis work, it has come to fruition with her *Dirty Computer* album and emotion picture (or film).

For years, Monáe has explored her version of Metropolis, a dystopian society powered by enslaved androids. Occasionally, like in the video for “Many Moons”, a rebellion springs up among the androids and there appears to be a moment of freedom. However, their enslavement continued on the following album. On *Dirty Computer*, the revolution finally comes to fruition.

The story focuses on Jane, who is taken captive by Droid Control. They attempt to wipe her consciousness and memories using Nevermind gas - the most prominent example of a Novum in this piece by Monáe. In the process, we see Jane’s memories in the form of vivid, queer music videos. While some of these appear to be in the past, there are repeated references to “Are you sure these are memories?”, implying that these also likely include visions of the future.

Throughout the film, we recognize that the woman who is leading her through this indoctrination is also her lover in the memories depicted throughout the film. Ultimately, Jane and her two lovers, Zen and Ché, are able to break free from Droid Control with Jane’s leadership.

There is a deep connection between the work of Butler and Monáe, who has listed Butler as one of her major influences. Aja Romano wrote for *Vox*, “Monáe borrows from Butler a focus on reclamation and restoration of the past as a path to both claiming individual identity and living with and within an oppressive society.” In both works, there is a focus on the importance of identity and the past in moving towards a more just future. The work of both of these women looks hard at the oppression and violence that are rampant in today’s society, while bringing in an emancipatory vision of hope grounded in identity and history.

Imagining Differently

In order to get students to expand the range of their imaginations, I needed to provide students with models of how this work was being done. *Black Imagination*, which was introduced to us in our first session of the seminar, provided a key model for this. I also got recommendations of artists to explore based on my prospectus from Dr. Thomas. To get students, especially predominantly Black and Latinx students, to envision different futures we are pushing back against much of what they watch, read, and experience. This text, combined with the *#GetFreeWrites* from The Dark Noise Collective, will form the foundation of journal responses that students will work on daily throughout this unit - with an excerpt, poem, or song to provide inspiration for their writing.

By asking students to envision a world without police and prisons, I am calling on them to look beyond the bounds of what they often watch, read, and experience. On *Democracy Now*, Angela Davis said, “Abolition is really about rethinking the kind of future we want - the social future, the economic future, the political future. It’s about revolution, I would argue.”

In considering how to get students to think differently about police and prisons, I am using a toolkit created by Critical Resistance, an organization that has been central to the work of abolition for years. In this piece, they encourage folks to reconsider “crime” as “harm” - and to think about how that might change the way we view addressing issues that arise. By looking at media depictions of crime (Who is depicted? What type?) and comparing our societal responses to crime to the ways that we would most like to see harm addressed, this resource Critical Resistance calls for a reframing necessary to enable students to envision a future without police.

Structuring the Thought Experiment

In considering how to structure the process of having my students envision the future, I drew on a number of readings that we encountered during the seminar. I was particularly inspired by Stephanie Toliver’s article in *English Journal* where she described Science Fiction writing as a “thought experiment” for students. She framed a workshop she presented to students as “a fictional laboratory for investigating the world and testing various possibilities” (53). I am looking to take on this same approach as I go through this process with my students.

After reading adrienne marie brown’s “Outro” of *Octavia’s Brood* where she emphasizes collective worldbuilding as a group, then individual story writing from there, I decided to take a different approach to worldbuilding with my classes this time around. In my previous unit, I allowed students to work in groups to create their own independent visions of the future. While this produced some excellent results, the work students produced was also scattered. While some students really grounded their work in extrapolations of real phenomena in Philadelphia, others created more generic visions of

the future. I hope through this collective framing, students will dive deeper and create work that presents a vision for a more just future stemming from our present.

Teaching Strategies

Remote (Virtual) Learning

It is not currently clear what school will look like in Philadelphia, or across the country, next year. What is already clear, though, is that much (or even all) of the teaching of this unit will likely occur in a virtual setting, rather than in-person in a classroom. I am designing this unit so that students can work through it online. Even in virtual settings, group work and collaboration is important. In a more synchronous online setting, this can be done through breakout rooms in Zoom. In a more asynchronous online setting, I have found students to be more adept than me at figuring out how to connect with their peers virtually - either through messaging or video call apps.

Journaling

As we move through this unit, students will journal daily. I will use prompts from *Black Imagination*, as well as #GetFreeWrites and a few original prompts. Each prompt will also have a piece, whether a video or short selection or poem, to help inspire student work. Students can write these pieces in poetry, prose, lists, or sketches. These prompts will be used to build students' thinking around abolition and futures, and will be used to build a portfolio. Each day's class will start with a prompt, sometimes a poem, and time for students to journal. At the end of journal time, there will be some sharing in groups or as a whole class. If we are fully online, students will have the opportunity to share journals through discussion threads.

Voice & Choice

This unit, as with all of the units I design, is grounded in the belief that we need to give students voice and choice when it comes to their learning. This applies to both what they are learning about as well as what they are creating. While this does make managing projects more challenging from a teacher's perspective, it also makes it more engaging from a student perspective.

Consensus Building

As students move into creating their own narratives, I want to strike a balance between their own creative work and collective work. Building consensus is difficult but essential work in true democracy, and I plan to model this process with students in the unit. We will go through a process of brainstorming, sharing in smaller groups and then a large

group, discussing, and possibly rounds of voting in order to come to consensus around the context for a vision of the future that students will use to create their own work. This particular day (or days) of class will be messy, especially if it has to be done online. But practicing this messy work is essential to preparing students for their roles in building a more just society.

Multimodal Learning

In my units, I work to give students an opportunity to engage with material through Reading/Writing, Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic content. I attempt to do this both in the way I design content that I present to students, and also in the way that I ask students to create projects. In virtual environments, the Kinesthetic piece can be a major challenge for students who do not have supplies available at home, but that will at least be an option for students who do.

Mentor Texts

As I am asking students to write and create their own pieces, it is important for them to see models of how this work is done. This is always important, but especially important when we're asking students to think differently about the way they imagine narratives. In this unit, the work of Octavia Butler and Janelle Monáe, as well as the various abolitionists we will read, will serve as models for students of the work they can produce.

Jigsaw Reading

In this strategy, a long text is broken down into smaller chunks and groups of students are assigned to read each section before sharing what they learned with the rest of the class, who will take notes. In person, this strategy would involve students using chart paper to post notes for other students to use after groups sit and work together. Online, this would mean that students would work in a document with their groups that would then be shared with their classmates.

Classroom Activities

01: The Dark Fantastic Cycle (2 days)

Guiding Questions

What is the “Dark Fantastic Cycle” and how does it impact our imaginations?

Materials

- Excerpts from *The Dark Fantastic* (26-29,
- Clip and excerpt from *The Hunger Games*

Standards

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.5
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.7
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.10
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.6
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.10

Objectives

- Define the “Dark Fantastic Cycle”.
- Explain how the cycle shows up in futuristic media we read and watch.
- Propose how we might reach the “emancipation” stage of the cycle with our own work.

Journals (by day)

1. We can’t build new worlds unless we can imagine them. Take a moment to think about all the things that bring you joy. They can be small, or large. No answer is right or wrong. Now think of all the things you think are causing you and the world pain. Listen to Jamila Woods’ song “[Heavn](#)” and reflect on how heaven is being defined in the song. Read Danez Smith’s poem “[Summer Somewhere](#)” and think about the alternate world they are creating in their poems. Write a poem that explores your own idea of heaven on Earth, and how you can arrive there. (from Get Free Writes)
2. What is your origin story? (from Black Imagination)

Activity/Task

As we begin the unit, I want to get students to start asking questions about race, racism, and imagination. To do that, we will begin by reading excerpts from Ebony Elizabeth Thomas’ *The Dark Fantastic* and breaking down the stages of the “dark fantastic cycle”: spectacle, hesitation, violence, haunting, and emancipation. We’ll begin by reading an introductory excerpt defining her use of the term “Dark Other” and discuss its meaning. Then, students will jigsaw the stages of the cycle - reading the short excerpt for each and providing an explanation, and examples, for their classmates.

To close out the first day of this portion of the lesson, I will encourage students to consider questions that Thomas poses in *The Dark Fantastic*: “When might young readers experience moments of dissonance? Specifically, when might young readers of color realize that the characters I am rooting for are not positioned like me in the real world, and the characters that are positioned like me are not the team to root for? How do these readers respond to this absence? Do they assume an assimilationist stance? People are people—I can relate to any character. Do they assume a stance of resistance? This story contains no one like me— therefore, it is not for me” (19).

On day 2, we will dive deeper into the dark fantastic cycle, looking at the example of Rue from *The Hunger Games* and what the depiction of and reaction to her character shows us about innocence. We will begin by defining innocence, and discussing what role students think race plays in perceptions of innocence. We will then consider Rue’s story arc in *The Hunger Games*, and look at some of the reactions to her character. In the end, students will consider how they might rewrite Rue’s arc to have her character find the emancipation stage of the dark fantastic cycle.

02: Visionary Fiction (3 days)

Guiding Questions

What is “visionary fiction” and how might we use it to envision more just futures?

Materials

- [“TIMELAPSE OF THE FUTURE: A Journey to the End of Time \(4K\)” by melodysheep on YouTube](#)
- Excerpt from *Octavia’s Brood* (Introduction by Walidah Imarisha, pages 3-5)
- Excerpt from *Parable of the Sower* (graphic novel adaptation, pages 140-143, 187-203)
- [“Africanfuturism Defined” by Nnedi Okorafor](#)
- [The Parable of the Sower: Crash Course Literature 406](#)
- [Jenelle Monae, Dirty Computer](#)
 - [Jenelle Monae, “Many Moons”](#)

Standards

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.5
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.7
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.10
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.6
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.9
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.10

Objectives

- Define the “visionary fiction”.
- Analyze examples of visionary fiction from Octavia Butler and Janelle Monáe to consider how they reach the “emancipation” stage of the dark fantastic cycle.

Journals (by day)

1. Watch clips (beginning, middle, end) of [“Timelapse of the Future” by melodysheep](#). Reflect: What thoughts, questions, ideas does this long view of the future, and ultimately the end of the universe, raise for you? Write or draw in whatever form makes the most sense to you.
2. Make a list of all the things you need to protect yourself. All the small routines you do throughout the day that are necessary for your existence. Think about all the people you want to protect. Listen to Jamila Woods’ [Blk Girl Soldier](#). Think about the song as a shield of armor, as a protection anthem against police brutality and the violence of white supremacy. Then read Angel Nafis’ poem [Gravity](#). What’s the straw in the poem? The micro aggressions that pile up? What’s the camel’s back? How does Angel protect herself in the second section? Write a poem that serves as a shield or celebration for you or people you care about. (from [#GetFreeWrites](#))
3. How do you heal yourself? (from *Black Imagination*)

Activity/Task

In this segment of the unit, we will dive deeper into the question of how works can reach the “emancipation” stage of the dark fantastic cycle, and construct a new type of futurism.

We will frame this portion of the unit around the idea of “visionary fiction”, with the support of works of afrofuturism and Africanfuturism. On day 1, we will work to define

visionary fiction, and consider how it can be used to reach the emancipation phase of Thomas' dark fantastic cycle. Students will read the introduction from *Octavia's Brood* to define visionary fiction, and then read Nnedi Okorafor's "Africanfuturism Defined" in order to expand the conversation to consider and challenge the role of afrofuturism in the conversation.

On the 2nd day of this portion of the unit, we will focus on the work of Octavia Butler, and consider how it fits into the tradition of visionary fiction. After an introduction to Butler's body of work and her approach, we will focus on a selection from the *Parable of the Sower* graphic novel to explore Butler's vision of hope in a dystopian future through Lauren's community building and the main novum in this selection, "sharing". After briefly setting the stage for *Parable* using clips from the *Crash Course Literature* video, we will look at the moments in when several people became a part of Lauren's growing community, and consider what that tells us about building a vision of safety that emerges from community, not policing.

On day 3, we will consider a more modern manifestation of visionary fiction work in music, looking at the catalog of Janelle Monáe. This day's lesson is inspired by Aja Romano's article for Vox, "Janelle Monáe's body of work is a masterpiece of modern science fiction". The centerpiece of this lesson will be a viewing of Monáe's emotion picture for *Dirty Computer*. As students analyze the film, they will be asked to consider the contrast between the "present" for Jane in Droid Control, and her "memories" shown through the music videos. Students will be asked to consider whether these visions are past or future, and will be asked to reflect on how this queer feminist vision of the future contrasts with the "present" as it is depicted in the film - and how they think this relates to the world today in Philadelphia (and the United States more broadly). In addition, students will reflect back on Thomas' dark fantastic cycle and consider how *Dirty Computer* shows a narrative that reaches the "emancipation" stage.

03: Policing & Abolition (3 days)

Guiding Questions

- What is the history of policing in the United States? In Philadelphia?
- What do the uprisings that occurred during the summer of 2020 show us about this moment in history?
- What would it mean to "abolish the police"?

Materials

- ["History of Policing in America" from NPR's Throughline](#)

- [“Black and Blue” from the Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- [“Black Lives Matter May Be the Largest Movement in U.S. History” from the New York Times](#)
- [Democracy Now from June 1, 2020](#)
- [“After years of pent-up anger, Philadelphia erupts” from the Philadelphia Inquirer](#)
- [Angela Davis on Democracy Now from July 3, 2020](#)
- [“Defund the police: What does it mean, and what would it look like in Philly?” from the Philadelphia Inquirer](#)

Standards

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.4
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.8
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.7
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.9
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.10

Objectives

- Identify the origins of policing in the United States.
- Explain how policing has developed in Philadelphia.
- Analyze what the uprisings in the summer of 2020 showed us about policing in the United States.
- Discuss the meaning of “police abolition” as explained by leading scholars in the field.

Journals (by day)

1. Think back to the first interaction you can remember with the police. What did you learn in this moment? What did you not yet understand? Read Nate Marshall’s poem [“When the Officer Caught Me”](#) and reflect especially on the turn at the end. Think about how this experience shaped the way you interact with the world. Then tell the story of that first time. (adapted from “Get Free Writes”)
2. How do we remember and honor the dead? What forms of grieving have been passed down to you through your family or culture? What ways of mourning has society forced upon you? Which have you created for yourself? Read Fatimah

- Asghar's poem "[For Peshawar](#)" and think about the various ways the speaker engages with grief. What are the challenges of mourning victims whose names you may never know? Write a poem in which you speak to or about the victims of a violence that feels close to you; remember to treat them with great care. (from "Get Free Writes")
3. Often, police officers patrolling particular neighborhoods are not members of the communities they police and know nothing about the people living there. When police officers or the U.S. military commit violence against people, the media never fully represents their humanity. Write a poem in which you introduce yourself in your own terms. Introduce your family, your friends, your community. What are the things that the police (or the military, media, politicians, etc.) should know about you, but would never think to ask? What would it take for a cop to see you or someone you love as human? What, if anything, would change if they viewed everyone they met this way? (from "Get Free Writes")

Activity/Task

This 3-day series of lessons is meant to build students' background on the history of policing (locally and in America), the current moment of uprising in America, and the concept of defunding and abolition of police. These days will mainly be spent constructing notes. For this series of lessons, we will focus on both local and national manifestations of each idea.

The first day's lesson focuses on thinking about policing - first in the United States more broadly, then in Philadelphia. The journal will be used to frame this discussion based on students' own perceptions of policing in their communities. After watching the video and writing down what they learned and questions, students will jigsaw the "Black and Blue" reading about the history of police brutality in Philadelphia - with a group taking on each of the 5 different sections of the timeline. Groups will note 3 key moments from that time period, and also observe trends or patterns which they will share. We will close this day with a conversation, either on a discussion board or as a class, about students' key takeaways about the history of policing in Philadelphia and the United States.

Day 2 will bring in context of the uprisings that took place during the summer of 2020. We'll begin by looking at the New York Times map of demonstrations to look at the size of these protests. Since students lived through this moment, we'll begin by having students share what they know about the uprisings, and what questions they have. From there, we will use the Democracy Now video from June 1, 2020 to establish background from the nationwide uprisings, before using the Philadelphia Inquirer article to think more specifically about how this manifested itself locally.

For Day 3, we will focus on a key idea that was raised in these protests: police abolition. We will begin by listening to Angela Davis speak on Democracy Now for background on police abolition from one of its leading thinkers. Students will write down big ideas and questions that this video raises for them. After a discussion, we will move into looking about how this shows up locally, using the article from the Philadelphia Inquirer. As we close this day, and this portion of the unit, students will reflect on their thoughts about this quote from Angela Davis during the video we watched: “Abolition is really about rethinking the kind of future we want - the social future, the economic future, the political future. It’s about revolution, I would argue.”

04: Envisioning a Future (3 days)

Guiding Questions

What would be the opportunities and challenges of a future without police?

Materials

- [“Yes, We Mean Literally Abolish the Police” by Mariame Kaba in the New York Times](#)
- [“Mariame Kaba and Prison Abolition” from Justice in America Episode 20 \(59:23-end\)](#)
- [Oakland Power Projects](#)
- [“Confronting ‘Crime’, Confronting Harm” from Abolitionist Toolkit by Critical Resistance \(pages 21-23\)](#)

Standards

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.A
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.D
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.4
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.5
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.6
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.7
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.9
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.10
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7

Objectives

- Define crime.
- Define harm.
- Evaluate the framing of “crime” and “harm”, and the role that plays in the systems of punishment we create.
- Construct a shared context for a future Philadelphia without police.

Journals (by day)

1. What would the world be like without police? What other structures could we put in place instead? Read/ listen to Franny Choi’s [Field Trip To the Museum of Human History](#). Write your own poem that explores a world without these institutions, or explores a world where these institutions are considered archaic. (adapted from “Get Free Writes”)
2. Describe/Imagine a world where you are loved, safe, and valued. (from *Black Imagination*)
3. Audre Lorde said, “Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.” Make a list of things you use to take care of yourself, to pamper yourself or to make yourself feel beautiful. Make a list of activities you do to make yourself feel good, things you might do to unwind after a stressful day, things your family or friend group uses to heal themselves and each other. Read [“Ode to Shea Butter”](#) by Angel Nafis and [“Twerking as A Radical Form of Self-Healing”](#) by Danez Smith. Notice the way these authors describe these objects/activities. Write a poem in which you write a praise poem to your method of self-care or healing. (from “Get Free Writes”)

Activity/Task

As adrienne maree brown writes in the Outro to *Octavia’s Brood*, visionary fiction “gives us the opportunity to play with different outcomes and strategies before we have to deal with the real-world costs” (279). In the beginning of this section of the unit, students will revisit what we’ve learned and what they have written so far in the unit in an effort to synthesize some of their visions.

On the first day, we will begin by giving students an opportunity to raise questions about a Philadelphia without police - asking as many as we can. These questions will form the groundwork for the world that students will be asked to create.

It is very likely that students will raise the question of “What do we do about people who commit brutal harm like murder and rape?” We will move into our discussion by

listening to an excerpt from the *Justice in America* podcast with Mariame Kaba. Students will summarize her answer to this question, and discuss their thoughts on the effectiveness of this approach. To go deeper, students will read Kaba's Op-Ed from the *New York Times* and take notes on the opportunities and challenges of a city without police. To close, students will look at an example of an organization creating conditions for a world without police, Oakland Power Projects.

On day 2, we will use resources from Critical Resistance, a leading abolitionist organization, to consider how issues of "crime" are framed in today's society, and how they might be reframed as "harm". We will begin by discussing how "crime" is portrayed in the media, both local news and social media - and to consider which "crimes" are most emphasized. From there, we will read about the definition of "harm". To close this lesson, students will list the ways that they think we should respond to "harm" and the ways the government responds to "crime". They will then reflect on, and discuss, the differences between these two lists, and the implications for a world without police.

On day 3, we will build on our discussions from the first 2 days by creating the context for a future Philadelphia without police that students will use to create their own stories in the coming days, in order to explore the possibilities and challenges of that context. Students should understand this as a process of collective visioning, which will be followed by an opportunity to show their own creativity within these constraints. Inspired by the workshops describe in *Octavia's Brood* and the work of Dr. Stephanie Toliver, we will begin by building a setting: Establishing where we are in time, creating the geography of our future Philadelphia, explaining similarities and differences between that world and our own, and considering some of the conflicts faced by people in that future Philadelphia.

This process will involve considerable consensus making, and will need to be flexibly done by the teacher. It will begin with whole class brainstorming and agreements about when we are in time. From there, individuals or small groups can spend time brainstorming some similarities and differences between the future world and our own, emphasizing what we discussed in the previous 6 days about policing, harm, and abolition, as well as the journals they have written throughout the unit. Groups and/or individuals will then share their similarities and differences with the class and the class will agree on a few that will guide the work of all students. It may take a few rounds of voting, which can be done on Google forms, before the class can reach consensus - so this may spill over into another class period. We will end up with a rough sketch of a vision of the future - with a few main ideas that all students will use as they create.

05: Create Stories in Future Philadelphia (3 days)

Guiding Questions

What characters, settings, objects, and novums might (need to) exist in a future Philadelphia without police?

Materials

- Card templates
- Art supplies: colored pencils, crayons, markers, scissors, glue, newspapers and magazines (for collaging), white paper, various colors of paper
- Virtual card template (for students without access to supplies / remote learning)
- [Survival Guide for the Future project](#) (pages 5 and 6 of the PDF as card examples)

Standards

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.A
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.B
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.C
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.D
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.E
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.4
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.5
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.6
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.7
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.9
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.10
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7

Objectives

- Interpret the collective vision of Future Philadelphia by creating characters, settings, or novums, individually or in groups.
- Assess and select student work for inclusion in a literary magazine or website.

Journals (by day)

Rather than journaling during these days, students will focus their attention to their group or individual writing and creating (described below). As they work through these ideas, they will be encouraged to look back at journals for ideas and language.

Activity/Task

Using the context of a future Philadelphia without police created in the previous days of class, students will have a choice whether to create their own work in narrative form or to create cards, like in our previous [Survival Guide for the Future project](#) (pages 5 and 6 of the PDF). As students write short stories, they will be asked to focus on Characters, Settings, and “Novums” individually or in small groups. All of this work will be grounded in the established context, and should be used to expand on and deepen that vision of the world decided as a class. Students should also be encouraged to think back to the opportunities and challenges of a city without police that were brainstormed earlier in the unit.

For students who decide to create cards, those working individually will be expected to create 2, while groups will be expected to create 4 (with a maximum group size of 4 people). Similarly, written narratives need to flesh out 2 Characters/Settings/Novums if written individually, and 4 if done as a group. This is meant to incentivize students to choose to work collaboratively, but will still allow them to work individually.

On day 1, students will spend their time brainstorming and planning. This should be flexible - and can be done through lists, plot maps, mind maps, sketching, or any other mode that makes sense to those students. Students will be encouraged to review their notes, including journals that they have written, to generate ideas for their creations. They will be encouraged to think outside of the box and show their own creativity, while grounding their work in the context determined by their class and the background on police abolition.

Moving into days 2 and 3, students will use their time to go through a drafting process, get quick feedback on their work from another individual or group, and then revise their work so that it is ready to share within class and beyond. It will be made clear to students from the beginning of this process that the work they create should be ready to be publicly shareable. For students creating cards, they will be able to either draw or collage their work. Because this unit will likely be done online, students will also have the option to use digital design websites to create their cards.

At the end of the unit, students will be asked to share their work with classmates, and expected to take time to engage with the work of their peers. Depending on time, this might be done through mini-presentations or through discussion board posts where students post their own work and others can respond.

In a possible extension of this unit, I will consider creating another literary magazine of work, similar to *Survival Guide for the Future*. Because the last unit was grant-funded, I would consider working with students to create a website instead of a magazine. The process of creating this magazine or website would involve students submitting their best

pieces, including revised journal responses, and groups of students working on curating pieces for the magazine, as well as layout and writing an introduction based on the content of the unit.

Resources

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

When I taught this unit in 2018, we used *Parable of the Sower* as our primary text for students. We used the text to get students to think about the “If this goes on...” style of science fiction, which Butler so often emphasizes in her work. We zeroed in on her treatment of contemporary themes like gun violence, walls, water, and spirituality in her vision of the future. We also used this text to establish parameters for students’ worldbuilding: the book was written in 1993 and started in 2024, and we asked students to look ahead the same number of years (31) to 2049 in their work. While this text certainly engaged students in contemporary issues and thinking about futurism, it also begins with an especially dark vision of our future. It does explore a vision of how society could function outside of the policing structures that exist today. In this unit, I am not using the full text - but I could see how reading *Parable* would fit well before or after this unit.

Duffy, Damian, et al. *Octavia E. Butler's Parable of the Sower*. Abrams ComicArts, 2020.

This version of *Parable of the Sower* was released just this year, and was not an option the last time I taught this text. The graphic version brings the text to life, and also makes it more digestible for high school student readers. I will plan to lean on this version of the text as I teach it this time around. In addition to helping to guide students through Butler’s narrative, this version could also serve as a model for student artistic production. We will look at excerpts from the story, rather than reading the entire thing.

Imarisha, Walidah, and adrienne maree brown. *Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements*. AK Press, 2015.

In framing my revised version of this unit, I will draw heavily on the framing set forth by brown and Imarisha in both the Introduction and the Outro to this text. The Introduction defines “visionary fiction” and provides a framework for having people create this kind of work. In the “Outro”, brown describes a workshop model for worldbuilding and story

creation. Both their definition of “visionary fiction” and description of the workshop model for collective worldbuilding heavily influenced my unit design.

Imarisha, Walidah. “How Science Fiction Can Re-Envision Justice.” Bitch Media, 1 Feb. 2015, www.bitchmedia.org/article/rewriting-the-future-prison-abolition-science-fiction.

In this article, Walidah Imarisha, a co-editor of Octavia’s Brood looks at the work of Science Fiction, particularly Octavia Butler, through an abolitionist lens. A helpful resource as you prepare to teach this unit.

Marin, Natasha. *Black Imagination*. McSweeney's, 2020.

In our first seminar meeting, Dr. Thomas had us write using one of the prompts from this book, “Describe/Imagine a world where you are loved, safe, and valued.” This book collects responses to this and two other questions, as well as a series of rituals from the collection’s curator, Natasha Marin. This book is a collection of the voices of “black folks of all kinds” based on an exhibition that was designed to “de-center Whiteness and provide space for healing and validation”. In order to have my students, most of whom are Black, imagine futures, an initial step is to begin to encourage them to decolonize their imaginations. Selections from this text will be used as models as students consider these same prompts.

Purnell, Derecka. “How I Became a Police Abolitionist.” The Atlantic, Atlantic Media Company, 6 July 2020, www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/07/how-i-became-police-abolitionist/613540/.

As I processed calls for police abolition, this piece was especially helpful in framing and understanding the context. As you look to teach content around abolition, I highly recommend this article.

Romano, Aja. “Janelle Monáe's Body of Work Is a Masterpiece of Modern Science Fiction.” Vox, Vox, 16 May 2018, www.vox.com/2018/5/16/17318242/janelle-monae-science-fiction-influences-afrofuturism.

This piece by Aja Romano informed my inclusion of Monáe’s film in this unit, and its framing in the lesson. A helpful piece to read to think about teaching her work.

Roy, Arundhati. “The Pandemic Is a Portal.” Financial Times, 3 Apr. 2020, www.ft.com/content/10d8f5e8-74eb-11ea-95fe-fcd274e920ca.

This piece, recommended by fellow seminar participant Gina Dukes during a class, is helpful in contextualizing the current COVID-19 pandemic and how it relates to our

vision of the future. Though Roy focuses primarily on India in her piece, much of what she writes is directly applicable here in the United States. Particularly, Roy describes the pandemic as a portal, a door between where we currently are and what is coming next. She says that the world that comes after the pandemic could either replicate the oppressive structures of our current society, or could create different structures.

The Dark Noise Collective. “#GetFreeWrites: Writing Prompts on Police Brutality and Racist Violence.” Google Docs. 2016.
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-g9T0yeuFiekLBlieVK6I_rtm4-OkWIDTwBrgjSmxrU/edit?usp=sharing

This is a series of writing prompts, many of which encourage writers to think towards alternative futures. These focus especially on police brutality and racist violence, but have a significance beyond that. A good number of these prompts will be used for journals for students throughout the unit.

Thomas, Ebony Elizabeth. *The Dark Fantastic: Race and the Imagination from Harry Potter to the Hunger Games*. New York University Press, 2019.

A key component of having students imagine alternative futures is encouraging them to think about futuristic and other fantastic work they have taken in previously. As I introduce the unit, I will use selections from this book, including Thomas’ description of the “dark fantastic cycle” and connection of that cycle to *The Hunger Games* and the character of Rue. Ultimately, this unit will raise the question of how students can create work that reaches the “emancipation” phase of Thomas’ cycle.

Thomas, Ebony Elizabeth. “Notes toward a Black Fantastic: Black Atlantic Flights beyond Afrofuturism in Young Adult Literature.” *The Lion and the Unicorn*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2019, pp. 282–301.

This article was recommended to me by Dr. Thomas as an extension of her work from *The Dark Fantastic*, and a look into where her future scholarship will be going. In this article, she focuses on “rethinking the cartographies of our imaginations” (283). Through three young adult works by Black American authors as an opportunity to “restory our painful collective past” (292). This framing is helpful when considering how to approach creating this type of work with my students.

Toliver, S.R., and Keith Miller. “(Re)Writing Reality: Using Science Fiction and Fantasy to Analyze the World.” *English Journal*, vol. 108, no. 3, 2019, pp. 51–59.

In this article, Toliver lays out the five phases she used when teaching a workshop designed to connect Science Fiction and Fantasy writing to reality. These phases were particularly helpful to me as I thought about how to scaffold this work with my students. In addition, Toliver notes the mentor texts that she used in her course and I drew on them

as I considered mentor texts for my students. I thought it was particularly helpful to take on Toliver’s vision of Science Fiction writing as a thought experiment. She also introduced me to the concept of a “novum”, the “new thing” added to the author’s known world in Science Fiction. This put a name to a concept I understood but struggled to conceptualize for students.

Appendix

Content Standards

Reading Literature

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1: 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.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2: Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3: Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.5: Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.6: Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.7: Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.)
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.10: By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 11-

CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

Writing

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.A Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.B Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.C Use 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 (e.g., a sense of mystery, suspense, growth, or resolution).
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.D Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.E Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.5 Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1-3 up to and including grades 11-12 here.)
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.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.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

History/Social Studies

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10).
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.8 Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.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.