

EXCEPTIONAL WOMEN: WE SEE YOU!

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Grade Level: 7-8

School Subject: English Language Arts

A critical examination of literature is a vehicle to enable students to have a voice and communicate reflective thoughts and feelings. Based on my observations, the pervasive occurrence of low self-esteem is rampant in the community of students I serve. Many students are unsure of how to balance school expectations and peer pressure. As a result, I believe this curriculum unit emphasizing African American female writers can be a mechanism for all students to express their identity in various authentic learning opportunities.

Keywords: Achievement Gap, culturally, diversity, culturally relevant, literature, Black joy, socially transformative curation

CONTENT OBJECTIVES

“When you plan for genius and joy, genius and joy show up.”

--Dr. Gholdy Muhammad (Flores & Muhammad, 2021).

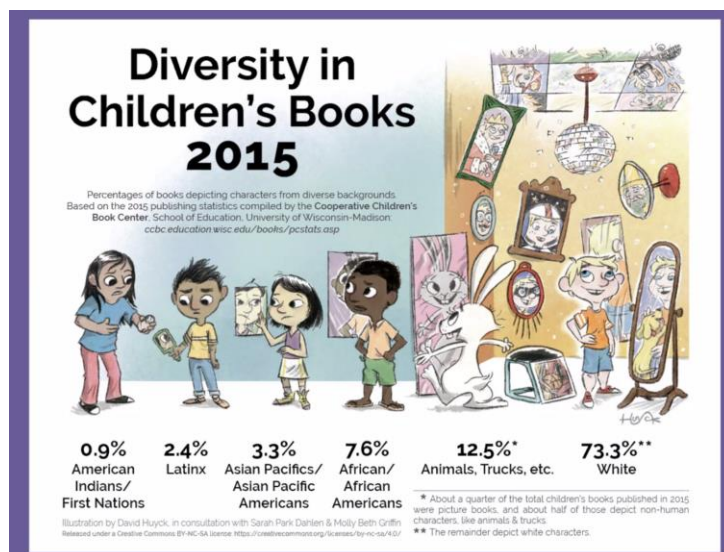
PROBLEM STATEMENT

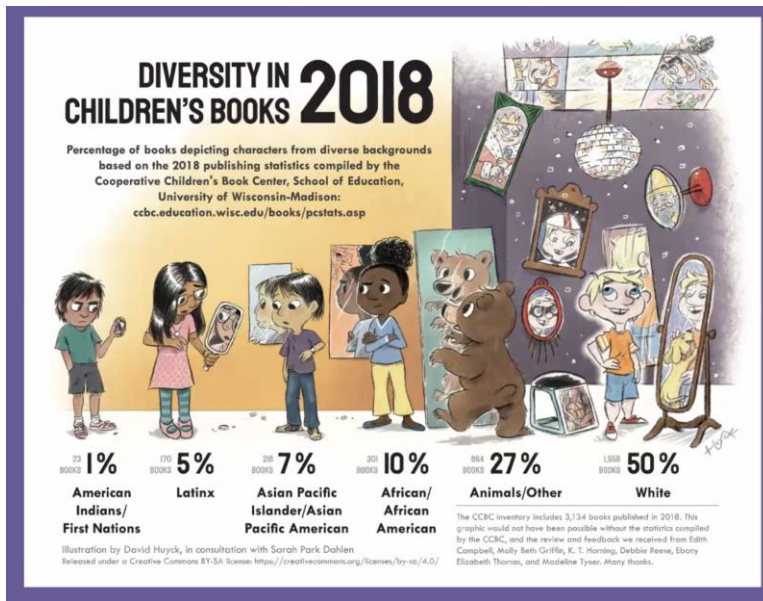
“There is also a tremendous disparity in the publishing industry. The Cooperative Children's Book Center has been tracking statistics on diversity in children's publishing since the 1990s, and their data have told the same story since they started their work. Even though more diverse books are being published than ever before: the number of diverse books published each year still is dwarfed by the number of titles published featuring white, English-speaking, middle-class protagonists as "the norm" and the number of books featuring animals also greatly outnumbers the numbers of diverse books published each year” (Flores, et al.2021).

PROBLEM BACKGROUND

The American dream for whom? “AMERICANS WANT TO BELIEVE that ours is a land of opportunity where no matter what a persons’ starting point, those who work hard---and their kids---can “make it. For much of the twentieth-century economic growth made that dream a reality for generations of Americans” (Duncan & Murnane, 2014). Even after the landmark Brown v. Board of Education case when the United States Supreme Court ruled that segregation was unconstitutional on May 17, 1954, the achievement gap in 2022 remains! Historically, for students from economically disadvantaged environments, specifically African-American students reading and math levels are disproportionately lower than their white classmates. Recent 2019 data collected by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reported Black students are 15% proficient in reading compared to 41% of White students. The achievement gap sinks in when you examine my school data, Cook-Wissahickon elementary. For example, first-grade Black students are 15.40% reading proficient compared to 65.20% of White students. Consequently, I believe one solution is incorporating culturally relevant literature as a first step toward eliminating the achievement gap.

“Culturally relevant literature is important because it can lead students to academic achievement, create educational equity and critical consciousness within a classroom community, and teach all students to take on a global perspective and understand cultural competence” (Quimet, 2011). Therefore, teachers require professional development and appropriate resources to implement rigorous, relevant instruction to address the needs of students who have been historically marginalized. Culturally responsive literature, equity, and the achievement gap are intricately connected. The disturbing “Diversity in Children’s Books” (statistics compiled by the Cooperative Children’s Book Center, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison) images emphasize the urgency to implement changes. As educators, we can no longer remain idle regarding the apparent inequity within the educational system.

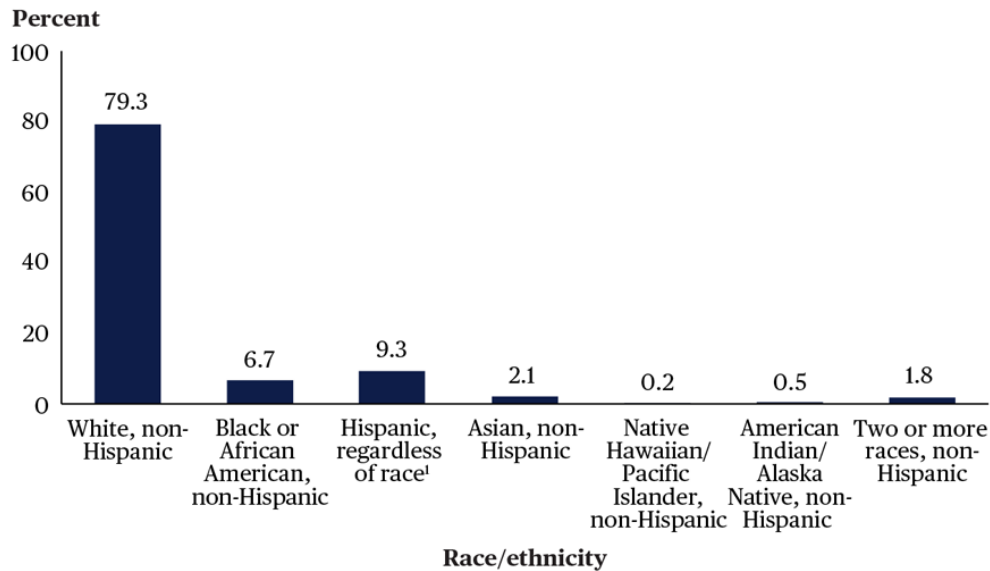




The above charts prove that inequity is embedded in the curriculum at an early age. What subliminal messages are disseminated when students do not see themselves represented in the literature. “Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign. But stories can also be used to empower, and to humanize. – Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie argues that when there’s only a single story about a group of people, it robs them of their dignity. The single story reduces people, rendering them incomplete, flat, one-dimensional. As a result, it becomes difficult to recognize equal humanity in the characters of a single story” (Ferris, 2020).

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING

It is blatantly clear effective change will not occur unless classroom teachers are fully vested in the process. Before we can define culturally responsive teaching, I think it is essential to explore the historical facts and the current statistics that led to the curriculum crisis. First, “the lack of teacher diversity today is rooted in systemic factors that have long served as barriers to recruiting and retaining more Black teachers in schools. The landmark *Brown vs. The Board of Education* Supreme Court ruling in 1954 changed the educational landscape for students across the country. Implementation of this major legal decision, however, failed to ensure desegregation happened equitably, and led to a major loss of Black educators across the country, particularly in the South” (Center For Black Educator Development, 2021). Second, teacher cultural diversity is dismal compared to the number of culturally diverse students attending public schools. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), “In the 2017–18 school year, 79 percent of public school teachers were White and non-Hispanic (FIGURE 1). About 9 percent of teachers were Hispanic (of any race), and 7 percent were Black and non-Hispanic.” See figure 1.



Courageous conversations are imperative, but sometimes circumventing the elephant in the room appears less confrontational. An article by Educational Leaders accurately identifies a potential dilemma. “We often avoid courageous conversations, even when we recognize that they are desperately needed. They may be needed to challenge and change well-established aspects of teacher culture” (Educational Leaders, 2021). I concur because my goal is to encourage dialogue, not a contentious, defensive meeting that results in little or no improvement. During my research, I discovered insightful equity, diversity, and inclusion interview questions. I think the questions can be framed and presented in a format to generate honest feedback. An inclusive and nurturing school environment is crucial to students’ academic and social-emotional success. Students in economically disadvantaged circumstances begin school in many cases significantly lower academically than wealthier students, highlighting the urgency of implementing viable solutions.

The achievement gap causes are complex and overlapping. An extensive evaluation uncovers the problem involving multiple layers dating back to slavery. Reflecting on enslaved African-Americans who were legally forbidden to learn how to read demonstrates that educational inequity to varying degrees has been ingrained within American society for over 400 years. According to evidence-based research, the most prevalent achievement gap causes are:

- Poverty, income inequality, and lower social economic status.
- Lower quality schools (academics, structural, etc.).
- Less experienced and/or effective teachers.
- Flawed testing and assessment design.
- Systemic racism.

So, what does a culturally responsive classroom model includes? According to Villegas and Lucas (2002), there are six characteristics that will prepare the teacher to be culturally responsive:

1. Socio-cultural consciousness – A teacher’s own way of thinking, behaving, and being are influenced by race, ethnicity, social class, and language
2. Attitude – A teacher respects cultural differences uses curricular and instructional practices related to the cultures of their students.
3. Commitment and skills – A teacher confronts barriers/obstacles and develops skill for collaboration.
4. Constructive views – A teacher believes all students can learn and building scaffolding between what students already know through their own experiences and what they need to learn.
5. Knowledge of student’s life – A teacher learns about the student past experiences, home and community culture to build relationships.
6. Culturally responsive teacher – A teacher’s use of strategies that support a constructivist view of knowledge, teaching, and learning assists students in constructing knowledge, building on their personal and cultural strengths, and examining curriculum from multiple perspective, thus creating an inclusive classroom environment.

COOK-WISSAHICKON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Cook-Wissahickon (CW) Elementary School, located in Roxborough, was built in 1968. There are approximately 428 students enrolled, and 71% of students reside in the catchment. Enrollment by race/ethnicity student group is as follows: White 42%, Black/African American 34%, Multiracial 12%, Hispanic 10%, and Asian 2%. CW is an urban public school that features a small learning environment with an instrumental music program, specialist music classes, and visual art classes. Our students are accustomed to collaborative projects and celebrating the culture of the various ethnic groups. Due to its diverse student demographics, CW has an opportunity to cultivate teachers and students to become responsible, conscientious stewards of the multicultural world we live in today.

RATIONALE – EXPRESS IDENTITY

“As long as the mind is enslaved, the body can never be free. Psychological freedom, a firm sense of self-esteem, is the most powerful weapon against the long night of physical slavery.”---Martin Luther King Jr., 1967

According to Merriam-Webster, “identity” is defined as “1a: the distinguishing character or personality of an individual: individuality; b: the relation established by psychological identification.” Positive identity and self-esteem are undeniably linked! Developmentally, self-expression is a natural adolescent phase when they have

egocentric opinions. Adults would benefit from listening to students and allowing them a voice to share their student perspectives. A critical examination of literature is a vehicle to enable students to have a voice and communicate thoughts and feelings. Based on my observations, the pervasive occurrence of low self-esteem is rampant in the community of students I serve. Many students are unsure of how to balance school expectations and peer pressure. As a result, I believe this curriculum unit with an emphasis on African American female writers can be a mechanism for students to express their identity in various authentic learning opportunities.

Too often, I have heard adults and students express frustration concerning limited or no exposure to a comprehensive African-American history academic experience in all content subjects. In some schools, Black History Month is the only time when some teachers feel obligated to pursue culturally responsive content as a means to check off a box. Also, annually the same names are praised! As a result, students who are referred to as marginalized do not feel validated. Teaching this unit allows me to provide students with a broad perspective in my multicultural school. Students will be able to use their discretion to make objective observations. I am hopeful students will emerge from this educational experience with a renewed sense of hope and knowledge. I want to challenge the stereotypical narrative and provide a powerful landscape to elevate students' critical analysis via various literary sources. Consequently, students begin to reflect and ponder: Who Am I?

In addition, I was inspired by the documentary “Toni Morrison: The Pieces I Am” (Greenfield-Sanders, 2019) featuring Toni Morrison because she exuded confidence and passion, specifically for literature. The documentary ends with Morrison sharing these wise words: “Unsure, willing to hold everything together, but willing to risk... and go far out to sea. Courage. Domesticity. This is what black people mean to me...and still mean to each other. But for me, the history of the place of Black people... in this country is so varied, complex, and beautiful. And impactful. Made a big impact. Nobody could have loved as much as we did...went on with life as much as we did...carried on...and considering the efforts...to make sure we never did. Considering that. It’s amazing” (Greenfield-Sanders, 2019). Immediately, I thought about my exceptional students. How do I motivate students to access greatness?

CONTENT BACKGROUND

Thirteen years ago, I wrote the following statements. “Cultural awareness helps students embrace a positive appreciation and awareness of African American people. Because it is known that many African American students often encounter unique educational challenges, the study of poetry within a historical context can facilitate cultural pride. How do you comprehend your worth if you are unaware of the cultural contributions your ancestors made and continue to make in literature? Unfortunately, students do not imagine these contributions as part of their community, and their limited historical background knowledge hinders them. Through our poetry review, I will

strive to eradicate students' misconceptions and stereotypes" (Brinkley, 2009). Regrettably, in 2022 I am encountering similar student dilemmas, flawed cultural awareness, and low self-expression!

The curriculum unit is intended for seventh and eighth-grade students and should take approximately six-eight weeks to complete. Students will engage in various differentiated instructional activities, with collaboration integral to student learning. Social-emotional learning (SEL) is also addressed throughout the unit to build students' character. The unit will spotlight a diverse group of Black female writers that I hope will inspire students to reflect and analyze their identities. Although some of the literature includes traumatic experiences, I want students to acknowledge the pain but discover the wisdom as they begin to reflect on their circumstances. Consistently, students have expressed a desire to analyze life from a perspective other than agony. The goal is for students to make a connection to humanity while simultaneously embracing Black female writers' profound cultural contributions to literature.

Therefore, the following works of literature were selected to expose students to many unfamiliar Black female writers with distinctive literary styles. It is imperative to choose culturally relevant texts to generate engagement and authenticity. It was vital that students could see themselves represented in the text. I wanted to plant the seed that African American people are not monolithic!

"A Raisin In The Sun" – Lorraine Hansberry

"To Be Young, Gifted and Black" (Lorraine Hansberry's life) -- Robert B. Nemiroff

"Harlem" - Langston Hughes

The journey for the first reading selection was based on a recent visit to New York. I was aimlessly walking in downtown Manhattan, and the banner "Treasures" displayed outside the New York Public Library caught my attention. "Now, for the first time, the Polonsky Exhibition of The New York Public Library's Treasures showcases some of the most extraordinary items from the 56 million in our collections, inspiring and empowering visitors to discover, learn, and create new knowledge—today and in the years ahead" (New York Public Library, 2022). The treasure I saw displayed was Lorraine Hansberry's original writings. "This first page of a draft script features several elements of her view on art and a scene from *A Raisin in the Sun*" (New York Public Library, 2022). My first lesson incorporates the intimate examination of the play *A Raisin in the Sun* because, according to literary critics, the focus on dreams drives and motivates the main characters. Students will ponder the connection between their dreams and identity.

It was a natural progression to select the play and Nina Simone's tribute song, *"To Be Young, Gifted and Black,"* especially with the intense violence occurring around the country, specifically in Black urban communities. "The lyrics invoke the highest demonstration of self-love. Experience has taught us that words can have a tremendous

impact on how the world views blacks compared to other cultures. For this reason, it is imperative to begin the unit with texts that ultimately are unequivocally committed to celebrating blackness and the black family” (Brinkley, 2009).

“brown girl dreaming” —Jacqueline Woodson

“Récitatif” – Toni Morrison

Automatically, the style of narrative verse captured my attention. Next, the simple title written in lower case letters with a descriptive phrase that symbolizes a contradiction since “brown” girls do not have the luxury to “dream.” Let us be honest, how many “brown” girls can “dream” without societal expectations constantly breathing down their necks. “In several ways, the style and form of the novel narrative verse demonstrate how poetry differs from prose. The sentence structure identifies a unique style. The rhythm and flow of the novel move fluidly. Because of the novel’s brevity, students will not become intimidated by the length; instead, they can focus on the content. Students can analyze the text and discover multiple messages” (Brinkley, 2009). I believe students will grasp the power of Woodson’s words.

On the other hand, Toni Morrison’s *“Récitatif”* will test students skill to apply the reading strategies to read and comprehend the short story successfully. Students will encounter challenges due to the style, vocabulary, historical context, imagery, and complex dialogue. On the other hand, students may be intrigued by the suspense to decide whose memory is accurate. My goal is to expose students to Morrison, who typically would not engage with her work until high school or college. “Nobody denies the literary merits of William Shakespeare, Jane Eyre, or Charles Dickens. But what happens when the reading list is composed solely of texts written by mostly white, mostly male authors? For white pupils, they are missing an opportunity to see the world from a new and different perspective. But for everyone else, the impact is more profound” (Mario, 2021).

“Say Her Name” –Zetta Elliot

“Happy to Be Nappy” – bell hooks

I knew Zetta Elliot was a literary gem when I attended a 2021 Zoom professional development. Zetta’s intellectual and dynamic presentation was astounding via Zoom. The professional development felt like an in-person meeting. After two years on Zoom, which can sometimes be excessively dull, it was clear that Zetta is a literary force to be reckoned with because of her authentic passion for elevating the innate brilliance of Black children. Zetta is unapologetic for her commitment to Black excellence!

The poems in *“Say Her Name”* are notable on several levels. For example, Zetta’s introduction exemplifies a message of hope. “It wasn’t hard to find inspiration. Every day I saw examples of Black excellence reported online alongside accounts of appalling brutality. I still wrote when I was angry, but the core of rage is pain, which I mean I

turned to poetry because I was hurting” (Elliott, 2020). This is one of the messages that I want to communicate to my students. I know it is cliché, but “hurt people don’t need to resort to hurting each other!” Black people need to eradicate the negative stigma attached to our culture through our actions because history has shown us that Black communities possess solutions. Second, Zetta was encouraged by her sessions with teen writers. “We only had three sessions together in January, but I encouraged my teens to continue writing. I did the same, and by the end of March, two poems inspired by Brooks’s *“We Real Cool”* had blossomed into forty poems about the vulnerability, strength, and magic of Black women and girls” (Elliott, 2020).

I could not resist including *“Happy to Be Nappy”* by bell hooks because of the historical context of Black women and their hair. “Identity” is intricately connected to hair. I believe the sensitive content will generate robust discussions that need to be cultivated in a supportive classroom environment. According to bell hooks, “In *“Happy to Be Nappy,”* hooks writes, she says, of the “joy and beauty of nappy hair. It’s for all kids because we’re a culture that really loves straight hair,” she says. This is a book to say: Kids with kinky hair, no matter who they are, should love themselves just the way they are” (CBS News, 1999). Ultimately, this unit’s primary goal is for all students to embody positive self-esteem and self-love!

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Cook-Wissahickon Elementary School 90-minute daily literacy block will enable me to incorporate the unit for 6 to 8 weeks, equivalent to one grading period. I want to teach lessons that invite students to utilize meta-cognitive skills. I will incorporate hands-on interactive lessons to reach diverse learners that Howard Gardner describes in his book *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, such as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. The unit incorporates a range of learning styles and abilities, an educational approach that Howard Gardner developed. Students arrive in the classroom with numerous strengths and deficits; educators are encouraged to incorporate differentiated instruction as part of the routine learning environment.

READING COMPREHENSION

Mastering numerous reading comprehension skills is a challenging task for struggling learners. Usually, these students are at least one to three years below grade level. My responsibility is to provide students with differentiated instruction to help them close the achievement gap. I will focus on vocabulary and comprehension to facilitate student success in this unit.

Vocabulary: Currently, I experience students who can decode and recall words; however, their comprehension is significantly impacted by the inability to understand both the literal and implied meaning. As a result, the context clues are ineffective. Reading poetry, narrative verse, and a short story will allow me to use shorter text,

whereby students will concentrate on studying complex words. Reading research supports this approach. Teachers “should employ various techniques to ensure that students have repeated exposures to words and to present opportunities for students to make connections between words and concepts.”

Comprehension: Simultaneously, monitoring comprehension is essential, given that students must know what they do and do not understand. Student reflection strategy correlates to meta-cognition since students need to think about why they do what they do. For students to reach a level of proficiency, I need to implement a comprehensive instructional method. First, there is direct instruction to explain and clarify the task. Second, modeling is an integral component of effective teaching. Third, guided practice allows me to direct and assist students as they become reacquainted with the skill. Lastly, the instruction provides scaffolding tools to support students toward independent skill application.

JOURNAL

Students will maintain a reflection journal to document thoughts as they complete the curriculum unit. Students will respond to guiding questions related to literature discussions to record thoughts, feelings, vocabulary, and comprehension progress. Students will improve their written expression and communication skills. They will make a personal connection to areas of interest. Reflective journals will help students to grasp the power of their voice. Students will discover that writing can be a therapeutic mechanism for expressing ideas.

GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS

A picture is worth a thousand words. Graphic organizers illustrate the concepts, and it helps students to read and understand complex text. Consistently, I use graphic organizers to enhance my lessons. My students use graphic organizers to help them focus on specific comprehension skills instead of becoming overwhelmed with many expectations. Graphic organizers provide two benefits. First, they allow students to work in shorter chunks. Second, they allow time to digest new or complex concepts.

COLLABORATIVE DISCUSSION

Large and small group discussion is an integral elements of this unit. First, students will listen to a teacher-selected text, and the teacher will model how to analyze and discuss the text. The teacher will provide students with a list of the comprehension, writing, and specific figurative language skills that will be emphasized. Second, students will read and analyze text in small groups.

COOPERATIVE GROUPS

Establishing cooperative groups as part of this unit will offer positive outcomes for students. Cooperative groups will provide a learning environment where students can help, assist, encourage, and support each other's learning efforts. Students will engage in cooperative groups when they create a poem/story.

ACCOUNTABLE TALK

Incorporating accountable talk in my classroom generated unforeseen benefits. Students who were reluctant to share ideas in a whole group were now engaged in the discussion. Therefore, accountable talk is an important strategy for this unit that allows all students' voices to be heard. Students are grouped in pairs or quads to "turn and talk to their thought partner(s) regarding the assigned questions or task. Accountable talk provides additional opportunities for students to reflect, debate, and learn.

CLOSE READ

The purpose of the close read strategy is to comprehend and analyze a text closely. I have successfully implemented a three-step close reading process. Step one with the whole class is to read the entire text and pause periodically to answer a few text-dependent comprehension questions orally. In step two, students reread the text to answer comprehension questions and cite explicit and implicit text evidence to support their answers. Also, students annotate the text to establish clarity. Step three review the comprehension answers to ensure student proficiency with the text. I consistently remind students that they are applying the "close reading" strategy, which provides critical analysis skills.

TECHNOLOGY: MUSIC & VIDEOS

Music is an ideal instructional tool to emphasize content and immediately engage students. Also, music is a non-violent way to express emotions. Some people use music to help them through life's positive and negative emotional experiences. Listening to your favorite song may improve your mood. Some programs use music therapy to help people deal with traumatic events. During stressful events, music is recommended to soothe or calm the nerves. We can no longer deny the impact of technology in our classrooms. The research, according to Jason Dorsey (2022), proves that it is imperative for teachers to establish methods to help students use technology responsibly in the classroom. "Gen Z are true digital natives. Our State of Gen Z research studies show that 95% own a smartphone, 83% own a laptop, 78% own an advanced gaming console, and 57% have a desktop computer, 29% use their smartphone past midnight on a nightly basis."

ASSESSMENT

Students' overall assessments will be based on a portfolio of a collection of the above assignments and the completion of the lesson plans that follow. The assessment criteria will include rubrics with a score of five indicating outstanding work and a score of one showing the assignment needs improvement. A checklist will be provided to ensure adherence. Student scores for independent work are essential because seventh- and eighth-grade students will soon transition to high school. Sometimes transitioning to high school is difficult because my school is a small learning community; as a result, it is paramount that my students gain confidence and independence.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

LESSON 1: THE AMERICAN DREAM?

Objective: Students will be able to (SWBAT) define and analyze the theme “The American Dream” in order to (IOT) evaluate the relationship to the characters and draw connections to present-day access to “The American Dream.”

Standard: CC.1.3.7.A Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

Materials:

- Texts: “*A Raisin In The Sun*” – Lorraine Hansberry & “*Harlem*” - Langston Hughes
- YouTube Video: “*A Raisin In The Sun*”
- Anticipation Guide-#10 “*A Raisin In The Sun*”
- Journal via a Notebook or Google Doc

Procedures: (National Endowment for the Humanities, 2022).

Students will complete “*A Raisin in the Sun*” anticipation guide to activate prior knowledge, stimulate interest, and solicit perspective before reading the text. Students will select one of the anticipation guide questions and, in the small group, discuss their rationale for the initial response. At the end of the lesson, students will revisit the same question to determine if their perspective has changed.

The teacher will instruct students to type or write the guiding questions in their journals. While reading the play, students will be advised to record reflections.

Guiding Questions: (National Endowment for the Humanities, 2022).

- “What constitutes “The American Dream” and in whose interest does this concept exist?”
- “Why does *A Raisin in the Sun* remain relevant today?”

- What conclusions can you draw when you compare/contrast “The American Dream” in “*A Raisin In the Sun* & Harlem?”
- What judgment would you make about access to “The American Dream” today? Is access better today in 2022 than when *A Raisin in the Sun* premiered in 1959?

The lesson will be presented in a shared reading format to allow the teacher to model the close reading strategy. Students will complete two documents to ensure annotation and analysis are completed.

- “*A Raisin in the Sun*” Character Analysis Chart (National Endowment for the Humanities, 2022).
- “*A Raisin in the Sun*” Discussion & Excerpts for each Act (*A Raisin In The Sun Unit Plan: 21 Lessons*, 2022).

Performance Task: Collaborative Discussion – Students work in pairs to complete the following questions: (National Endowment for the Humanities, 2022).

- Act I – Characterization – “Describe one character's personality and state text evidence to support how Hansberry uses details to bring the character to life?”
- Act II - How does Hansberry further develop her theme subject of dreams in Act II?
- Act III - What is Hansberry’s ultimate message regarding the dreams of African Americans? To what degree does this message resonate today? Explain.

Extension Activity: “*To Be Young, Gifted and Black*” –Robert B. Nemiroff (Lorraine Hansberry’s life) & YouTube Video: “*To Be Young, Gifted and Black*” – Nina Simone - These resources are invaluable, especially when you reflect on the psychological damage that enslavement has imparted on African-Americans. To reinforce the idea of “gifted” will significantly instill the realization of “The American Dream!” Students will read excerpts from “*To Be Young, Gifted and Black*” and listen to Nina Simone’s original recording. Students document what part(s) of the play and/or the song that resonated with them. Students list 10 words that describe “gifted” character traits. Students write at least a one paragraph monologue to themselves about why they are “gifted.”

LESSON 2: “BELIEVING: NARRATIVE, MEMORY, AND IDENTITY” (Columbus City Schools, 2022).

Objective: “SWBAT to analyze language, character, structure, and themes IOT guide students in creating their own narrative and informational compositions. SWBAT cite implicit and explicit text evidence IOT to support their narrative using effective techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured sequence events.”

Standard: CC.1.3.7.D Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different character or narrators in a text. CC.1.3.7.B Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences, conclusions, and/or generalizations drawn from the text.

Material: “brown girl dreaming” –Jacqueline Woodson

Procedures: Source – (Columbus City Schools, 2022) - Sample Lesson 4 (excerpt) the full lesson can be found at

<https://www.ccsch.us/cms/lib/OH01913306/Centricity/Domain/207/BROWN%20GIRL%20DREAMING%20BY%20JACQUELINE%20WOODSON%20TEACHER%20RESOURCE.pdf>

Students write in their journal about a story from their childhood that they remember. Students summarize the story, and speculate on the reasons they remember that particular story. After, writing students break into small groups and share their stories with each other.

Modeling Memory: After the groups share their stories, have a few students share stories that they heard from the class. How accurate was the retelling of the story? Then discuss the importance of accuracy and truth telling in storytelling. How do we know if the recalled event is true and accurate? What do we mean by truth when it comes to a narrative?

Teacher will assign the following Woodson poems:

- *“believing”* pp. 175 & 176
- *“lullaby”* p.58
- *“bible times”* pp. 59-60
- *“the beginning”* p. 62
- *“hair night”* pp. 83-85
- *“grown folks stories”* pp. 98-99
- *“the stories cora tells”* pp. 114-115
- *“one morning, late winter”* p. 134
- *“gifted”* p.169
- *“home then home again”* pp. 202-203
- *“when I tell my family”* p. 229
- *“the stories I tell”* pp. 290-291

Guiding Questions (Columbus City Schools, 2022):

- What are possible stories Woodson is referring to?
- What is the significance of dreaming when it comes to storytelling?
- Why does Woodson’s mother equate storytelling with lying?
- How do stories affect Woodson’s speaker?
- Who or what has inferred a negative reference about your identity? Describe emotions you felt?

Performance Task - Memory: Students reread one of the following poems to respond to the exit ticket prompt. Cite specific details from the poem to support your answer. How does the poem extend the ideas of storytelling in “believing”?

Poems:

- “when I tell my family” p. 229
- OR
- “the stories I tell” pp. 290-291

Performance Task - Identity: Students reread “gifted” to respond to the exit ticket prompt. Cite specific details from the poem to support your answer. How does this poem extend the idea “not good enough?”

Extension Activity: “Récitatif” – Toni Morrison- One theme in “Récitatif” is memory and trauma, which examines how people remember the past differently. Students can compare and contrast Jacqueline Woodson’s poem “believing” to “Récitatif.” Who do you think has an accurate memory: Roberta or Twyla? Students form debating teams. Students cite text evidence to support their position.

LESSON 3: “#BLACKGIRLMAGIC”

Objective: SWBAT to analyze their favorite poems IOT to evaluate how texts make connections and distinctions to individuals, ideas, or events.

Standard: CC.1.5.7.A Collaborative Discussion – Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions, on grade level topics, texts, issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Materials: “Say her Name” –Zetta Elliott; Journal

Procedures:

The lesson will be presented in a shared reading format to allow the teacher to continue to model the close reading strategy.

At the end of each poem, students write a word, phrase, sentence, or draw a picture to reflect on the meaning of the poem for them. Students are encouraged to make a musical connection.

With a partner, students exchange their reflections. First, students share their rationale for the comment; What stood out to them? Second, each student responds to the partner's verbal commentary by writing one positive word to support the student's thoughts. The goal is to provide community, respect, and validation for classmates' perspectives.

Performance Task – Students select one or two of their favorite poems from “*Say her Name*.” Complete a poetry analysis sheet (Agua Dulce Independent School District). Students will construct meaning, thereby incorporating higher-order thinking skills. Students are encouraged to express meaning using a preferred media platform such as YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, etc.

Extension Activity: “Happy to Be Nappy” – bell hooks – I was drawn to this book because “hair” in the African-American culture is interwoven in the fabric of Black identity. The historical significance of black hair is profound. “My hair is my confidence. My hair is my beauty. ‘My hair is my pride. My hair is my strength as a black woman. My hair is me...” (Peane, 2017). Students will select various images of black hair in the media. How are the women and men portrayed? What are the implicit and explicit biases? What messages are being communicated? How has your hair evolved? How do you feel about your hair? Would you change anything about your hair? Why or why not? Write an original free-verse poem from the point of view of your hair. The conversation about black hair is vital to eliminate harmful, insulting stereotypes.

LESSON 4: FINAL PROJECT - IDENTITY

Objective: SWBAT will create a 20-page memoir IOT to utilize their literary voice to express their unique identity.

Standard: CC.1.4.7.C Develop and analyze the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples; include graphics and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

Materials: google slides; student work from lessons one through three

Procedures:

The final project will consist of a 20-page book written using google slides. The first ten pages of the book will be a compilation of students’ original “identify” expressions via prose, poetry, or images. Students’ authentic voices are vital! The following statement expresses the significance of cultural identity. “Your cultural identity is critical to your success because it influences how you interpret and react to the world around you. Building an awareness of your identity can help you better understand the unique contributions you have to offer, both personally and professionally, while shedding light on your blind spots”(Brinkley, 2009). Daily, I observe students who are not empowered by their cultural identity.

Teaching this unit provides a space for students to explore, research, and contemplate how they navigate the world. The remaining ten pages of the book will include an analysis of a female writer studied during the unit. Students will answer how societal norms have impacted the writer. A culminating project will require students to present

their project to a grade below them. For example, the seventh grade would present to the sixth grade, or the eighth grade would present to the seventh grade. The presentation space will be set up like a museum. Students in small groups will visit the student presenter. Finally, student presenters will explain and answer questions about their book.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: IMPLEMENTING PENNSYLVANIA CORE STANDARDS

1.3 Reading Literature

Students read and respond to works of literature—with an emphasis on comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and making connections among ideas and between texts with a focus on textual evidence.

CC.1.3.7.A Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

CC.1.3.8.A Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

CC.1.3.7.B Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly, as well as inferences, conclusions, and/or general

CC.1.3.8.B Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly, as well as inferences, conclusions, and/or generalizations drawn from the text.

CC.1.3.7.C Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact and how setting shapes the characters or plot

CC.1.3.8.C Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

CC.1.3.7.F Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in grade-level reading and content, including interpretation of figurative, connotative meanings.

CC.1.3.8.F Analyze the influence of the words and phrases in a text including figurative and connotative meanings and how they shape meaning and tone.

1.4 Writing

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

CC.1.4.7.C Develop and analyze the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples; include graphics and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension

CC.1.4.8.C Develop and analyze the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples; include graphics and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

APPENDIX B: *A RAISIN IN THE SUN* – ANTICIPATION GUIDE

Teachnovels.com. A RAISIN IN THE SUN –Anticipation Guide Retrieved from <https://teachnovels.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Anticipation-Guide-A-Raisin-in-the-Sun.pdf>

APPENDIX C: PRIMARY SOURCE DOCUMENT – LORRAINE HANSBERRY & NYPL SUMMARY

