

**“Reading as Writer: Critical Creative Race Thinking Following Toni Morrison’s  
*Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*”**

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*Teachers Institute of Philadelphia, Spring 2022  
Taking up the Mantle: African American Women Writers After Morrison*

**Abstract**

This curriculum unit is intended to be taught in an honors track eleventh or twelfth grade English classroom. The unit should last about six weeks; three weeks for the whole-class text, two weeks for the independent reading transfer of skills, and one week dedicated to the cumulative argumentative essay assessment. Though there are many parts of this unit that can be modified, the central focus should be on Toni Morrison’s topics in need of critical investigation from her literary essay *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. Students will be asked to read as writers, noting how American Africanism impacts the finest writers of American literature, as well as how our own identity affects our own narrative writing. Additionally, students will use these skills to grow as readers, writers, thinkers, and citizens in a global society.

**Keywords**

African American, Toni Morrison, playing in the dark, whiteness, blackness, imagination, critical race theory, queer theory, teacherless writing workshops, reading as a writer, third space, intersectionality, hybridity, English language arts, literary criticism, *The Crucible*, *Recitatif*, American literature, cultural identity, American Africanism, Africanist.

**Unit Content**

In the Spring of 2022, a group of fellows joined Dr. Herman Beavers, the Julie Beren Platt and Marc E. Platt President’s Distinguished Professor of English and Africana Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, for a Teachers Institute of Philadelphia seminar titled “Taking up the Mantle: African American Women Writers After Morrison.” Fellows sought to “understand the nature and scope of Toni Morrison’s literary legacy, not only as novelist, but also as a literary critic, and a social commentator” and, from there, to “consider African American women’s writing in the 21st Century”, particularly “how do these books figure into discussions driven by political conservatives who are seeking to eliminate discussions about the racial history of the US from public school curricula, including banning books and developing legal

methods to prevent teachers from teaching Critical Race Theory?” (Beavers 1). Discussions were held on Morrison’s lecture and critical essay *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* as well as her later novel *Home*; connections were made to current racial tensions in America and the works of modern African American women writers of novels, short fiction, poetry, and drama. These discussions, held between working educators across the spectrum of learning levels, struck at the heart of racial themes in literature with an astute focus on how the study of such literature manifests in the minds of students, parents, and various communities throughout the country. Fellows grappled with the problems facing non-white communities and how the conservative desire for race-neutral public discourse is silencing not only the realities of American history but also the imaginations of students by limiting the freedom of speech presented in texts that seek to address the darker realities of American freedom, often, not coincidentally, written by marginalized people.

Regarding Ralph Ellison’s acclaimed novel *Invisible Man*, Toni Morrison famously said “‘Invisible to whom?’ Not to me” (Als). Representation and cultural responsiveness are surely in a state of crisis in education, most recently in the debate over critical race theory and the perennial act of banning books deemed offensive to white folk. The implied invisibility of my students of color when they are the majority demographic in the school is the most jarring aspect of teaching in an urban classroom. It is baffling that students can be invisible in their English classroom where I am sometimes the only white person in sight. My students must wonder why this white man in the room keeps talking about the importance of telling black stories. Aren’t these students surrounded by rich black characters, stories, and moments in their home life when free from the white gaze of my literary discussions? Yes, but this richness seldom finds its way into their classroom. Students are asked to leave their experiences at the front entrance metal detector before entering a classroom where, following the required learning matrix, they are indoctrinated by a European education. Not only do I want to provide authentic, complex black literature to my 11th grade English classroom, but I also seek to center the focus of our study on black culture, not as a marginal culture in the master narrative, but as a complete culture with rich history, present, and future. Therefore, we will surely need to study black literature as intimately as a white classroom turns to Shakespeare, but this leads to another issue: the endless jigsaw puzzle of matching diverse students to appropriate content facilitated by predominantly white instructors. Therefore, students need specific tools that can be applied to a study of literature across any demographic: how does the imagination of the writer impact the story being crafted? By focusing on reading texts through the lens of a writer, students will be able to build deep reading analysis while sharpening their writing abilities.

The importance of explicit discussions of race must be amplified. There is a looming desire to revert to some notion of race-neutral discourse that wedges itself in anti-CRT speech. American history shows that great pains were made to ignore racial conflicts in literature by using “a vocabulary designed to disguise the subject [and that] the

consequence was a master narrative that spoke *for* Africans and their descendants, or *of* them" (Morrison 50). Recent events prove that the modern world "does not become raceless or will not become unracialized by assertion [and that] the act of enforcing racelessness in literary discourse is itself a racial act" (Morrison 46). The seminar and Morrison's essay highlight the neglect of minority voices in literature, and thus in education and scholarship, and the need to address this concern by making explicit the deep connections between American culture and race. By studying the American Africanist persona in literature—defined by Morrison as "the denotative and connotative blackness that African peoples have come to signify, as well as the entire range of views, assumptions, readings, and misreadings that accompany Eurocentric learning about these people"—we can draw connections to America's inability to confront its dark other as well as the need for Bhabha's Third Space intervention to challenge "our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary Past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People." (Morrison 6-7; Bhabha 54). It is this "alliance between visually rendered ideas and linguistic utterances" that "leads into the social and political nature of received knowledge as it is revealed in American literature" that may also

reveal that the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an *international* culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*. To that end we should remember that it is the 'inter' – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *inbetween* space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture. It makes it possible to begin envisaging national, anti-nationalist histories of the 'people'. And by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves. (Morrison 49; Bhabha 56)

This intellectual project can be reified for the high school English classroom by reading as writers, by making clear the complicated and paradoxical work of writers, and by familiarizing students with the Third Space of cultural discourse. Artists live in the Third Space—they translate (as well as "clarify, explicate, valorize, transform, and criticize") You and I culture; "especially writers involved in the founding of a new nation" (Morrison 49; Bhabha 53).

Two ideas that were bounced around in one of our seminar discussions were *joy* and *pain*. Students are saturated with trauma in black stories, but complexity and conflict are central to all novel fiction. How can we frame novel studies of black stories in a way that allows for the exploration of the complexity of humanity, and that does not feel focused on black pain?

A possible solution to alternating the central perspective of conflict, as well as addressing the cultural responsiveness issue of students of color being instructed by white teachers,

might come from Peter Elbow's *Writing Without Teachers*, where teacher and students engage in writing workshops together. Everyone in the room is treated as a writer. Everyone is tasked with writing for personal goals and social reasons. All writers know that some of what a writer does is only meant for his or her own benefit, but some writing must be shared with readers. There is no greater metaphor for "the pact of interpretation," no greater need for "the intervention of the Third Space of enunciation," than the writer's attempt to "translate and negotiate" meaning to his or her reader (Bhabha 53-55). In a writing workshop, everyone engages in writing, reading, and interpreting.

A simple prompt that achieves the desired purpose would be the three-step process of writing a first-person personal narrative, followed by the second-person comments on the individual reader responses, and culminating in a third-person, Third Space discussion of the text to gain some group consensus on the material. This could be paired with Self-Other-Third writing prompts where writers are asked to write personal narratives, followed by narratives directed to a simulated second person "other," and finally reflective essays in order to read texts as a writer. This allows writers to write about their own feelings and ideas, imagine the perspectives of others, and finally, after much reflection and discussion, synthesize these perspectives into a new narrative. The rewards of an intense teacher-free writing workshop of this caliber will be an improvement in writing, reading, critiquing, speaking and listening, synthesizing, and ultimately empathizing.

This unit, designed for an honors upper-level secondary education English course, will attempt to reify concepts in Morrison's *Playing in the Dark* and Homi K. Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* by tracking and analyzing the creation of literary blackness and whiteness in early American literature through a Third Space lens. By following Morrison's topics for a critical investigation into the cultural implications in early American literature, and by understanding the "hybrid identity" of American culture, students will read deeply from the American canon, reflect on the text from a variety of perspectives, and ultimately make connections to the modern world (Morrison 51-53; Bhabha 55). Students will understand that literary whiteness and blackness are constructed and evaluate what this "racial ideology does to the mind, imagination, and behavior of masters" (Morrison 12). Students will understand that though "the subject of the dream is the dreamer," paradoxically writers have the ability "to imagine what is not the self, to familiarize the strange and mystify the familiar" (Morrison 15, 17). Students will understand that reading as a writer illuminates the imagination of the writer as if revealing the brush strokes beneath the surface. Students will understand that the act of writing is intensely personal with very public implications; writing is both expression and communication. Students will note that conflict is a necessary element of literature, as it is of life, and analyzing pain in texts allows readers to navigate trauma safely. Finally, students will understand that communication in the modern global world is "translation and negotiation" requiring the creation and comprehension of a public "hybrid identity" (Bhabha 55).

To connect this unit to the School District of Philadelphia learning matrix, it may be placed within Collection 6: The Modern World, which features Harlem Renaissance poetry and Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. The modern drama could foster a profound analysis of Tituba to “analyze the strategic use of black characters to define the goals and enhance the qualities of white characters. Such studies will reveal the process of establishing others in order to know them, to display knowledge of the other so as to ease and to order external and internal chaos” (Morrison 52-53). It is important to note that a wide range of texts can be substituted for this unit. Morrison uses Poe, Hemingway, Faulkner, and other American writers, most notably Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, as texts in which to employ her literary analysis. Admittedly I initially hoped this unit would center its focus on black authors, though by anchoring analysis to white writers' interpretations of the Africanist presence, we allow for a study of race. I do hope that this unit, by centering on rich, authentic African American stories, will offer compelling reasons for studying Africanist personas in the white imagination.

### Teaching Strategies

Critical reading through the lens of narrative writing will be a unique task for students; this unit is recommended for upper grades, possibly honors level. If the recommendation above is followed and the unit is placed within Collection 6 this will also be at the end of the year for eleventh grade high school students where they should be demonstrating advanced grade level independent reading skills. In order to best scaffold student learning, I will be pulling reading resources from Kelly Gallagher's *Deeper Reading* and Kate Roberts's *A Novel Approach*; I will use Peter Elbow's *Writing Without Teachers* and Heather Killelea McEntarfer's *Narrative Insights* to inform the narrative writing workshops. As educators are aware, pedagogy is adaptable; feel free to substitute other strategies that are useful for reading analysis and direct writing instruction with a focus on the author's craft and motivations. Students will be able to:

- write personal narratives, narratives to a simulated second-person “other,” and reflective essays in order to read texts as a writer.
- read as writers in order to practice this skill independently.
- analyze character motivations with evidence from the text in order to support inferences about the author's motivations in writing them.
- evaluate the effectiveness of writing as both a form of personal expression and an act of communication in order to write in a globally connected society.

The general structure of the unit will follow Roberts's timetable of about six weeks: three weeks dedicated to a whole-class novel study, two weeks dedicated to a choice reading assignment where we transfer the skills learned in the whole-class novel study, and one week dedicated to a culminating activity. For the purposes of this unit, I will use *The Crucible* as the whole-class text, focusing on how Arthur Miller uses elements of drama and the Africanist character Tituba to “define the goals and enhance the qualities of white

characters” as well as self-reflexively meditate on American identity through a study of major themes in American literature “—autonomy, authority, newness and difference, absolute power—” and how each of these “is made possible by, shaped by, activated by a complex awareness and employment of a constituted Africanism [Tituba]. It was this Africanism, deployed as rawness and savagery, that provided the staging ground and arena for the elaboration of the quintessential American identity” (Morrison 52-53, 44). A study of many early American novels could be substituted for the whole-class study, particularly *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* as a notable banned book, important to our discussion of critical race theory, as well as having a framework for analysis by Morrison herself. Melville’s “Benito Cereno” would also be quite interesting. For the purposes of the independent book club model, I might suggest texts by African American authors to challenge the American Africanist persona. If we deviate from Roberts’s model of personal choice in the book club model, students may select Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*, “Recitatif,” or James Baldwin’s “Sonny’s Blues,” or something more modern like the drama *Fairview* by Jackie Sibblies Drury or Ayana Mathis’s *The Twelve Tribes of Hattie*. For simplicity’s sake, I will describe a scenario where Morrison’s short story “Recitatif,” with its racially unspecified characters, is the assignment.

One of Roberts’s chief arguments is to teach skills, rather than books. Skills can be transferred to other texts. During the whole-class study of *The Crucible*, students should be taught how to analyze the author’s craft and how to use critical lenses, in this case, Morrison’s American Africanist lens, Bhabha’s Third Space lens, and a reading as writer lens. Students will learn to use these skills throughout the whole-class novel study through mini-lessons, close reads, small group discussions, and independent writing. Students will be given time to independently demonstrate these skills during the book club portion of the unit when they study “Recitatif.”

For this unit to succeed, students must be competent readers. This unit asks students to dive deeper into reading in order to extract this rigorous understanding. To get to that deeper understanding, that Kelly Gallagher explains as a metaphorical and reflective response, we have to know that our students can read, infer themes, and cite evidence. We want them to be able to understand how the imagination of the writer may signal (or counter) problematic American concepts about race. We will get them there by reading through a critical race lens and we will know they understand the concept by assessing their narrative writing. A goal for reading should be to “move *beyond* the text and consider its implications to them as human beings who live in the world today” (Gallagher 20). To do this, students should be asked to keep a double-entry journal as they conduct their first-draft reading of the text. They should find specific quotes that are insightful; in the right-hand column, they should describe why the quote is meaningful to them and also why the writer might use such phrasing. Students will be asked to use these quotes to reflect on their reading through writing prompts. This is where narrative storytelling and McEntarfer come into play.

Narrative storytelling is the strongest tool the English educator can use to reflect on and interrogate identity. Lev Vygotsky finds the mediating effects of speech and writing as central “in helping us first to externalize and eventually to internalize abilities” (McEntarfer 15). McEntarfer provides a framework where narrative storytelling can be used to externalize (writing) student questioning of identity in order to internalize (thinking) queer inclusivity; queer theory can be harnessed for the purposes of our critical race studies, where intersectionality is key to unlocking truths about identity. Narrative storytelling is enhanced by queer theory, which asks the writer to “interrogate the self” in order to fully analyze the intersectionality of identity (McEntarfer 134). Queer theory is significant because it moves out of topics pertaining simply to gender and sexuality, focusing instead on the full spectrum of intersectionality: race, class, and other identities. McEntarfer tells us that queer theory asks us to question norms about *who* is possible and helps teachers to move beyond simply “teaching about the Other” (122-123).

McEntarfer provides several positions for assignment topics: first-person point of view, self-other positioning, intertextual positioning, and reflexive positioning. Asking students to search “inward” in order to write narratives from the first-person voice provides rare insights, while possibly exposing the disconnect between “outward” beliefs and actual “personal reservations” as we saw when Jill, a student writer, struggled to recognize a transgender woman as a woman, despite her firm stance against homophobia and heteronormativity (McEntarfer 69-70). Though personal narratives offer a reference point, they are far more meaningful if revisited with a reflexive positioning narrative response. The lived experience of the personal narrative must be combined with theoretical understanding to achieve embodied meaning (McEntarfer 76). Kevin Kumashiro states “chances for reflection help students prepare to enter into learning about their own oppressive structures” (McEntarfer 129). The importance of reflexive positioning is displayed by a student-writer named Mike who examines his own actions and beliefs regarding a conversation he had with a gay classmate (McEntarfer 45-51). Mike’s reflection leads to a newfound awareness of how perpetuating heteronormativity harms others and provides an example of how writing reflexively can help students identify implicit bias and resist the pitfalls of stereotypes.

Self-other positioning in narrative storytelling asks writers to “imagine [themselves], in concrete ways, into the experience of a...character” unlike themselves (McEntarfer 74). A student writing in self-other positioning must ask him or herself probing questions, such as when Lynda contemplated “*Who is Johanna besides a trans teen?*” (McEntarfer 77). Arthur Miller, for instance, should be able to answer who is Tituba, other than a “Negro slave” (461). Creating a fully realized character challenges the writer to imagine others as more than just their label.

Intertextual positioning asks the writer to position his or herself with a particular character from a novel or passages from theorist essays. Intertextual positioning asks the

writer “to think about why [he or she] noted” specific passages or authors and what personal connections this might lead to (McEntarfer 135).

The goal of narrative storytelling and positioning theory might be to have students eventually be able to think from the “Thirdspace—a space between self and other” (McEntarfer 16). It is the Third Space that is at the heart of education standards for reading and writing. Critical thinking, contextual reading, interpreting various viewpoints, and informed citizenship exist in the Third Space; through narrative storytelling, students will acquire these skills.

To combat potential setbacks between a teacher being from a different cultural background than his or her students, I would recommend using Peter Elbow’s teacherless writing workshop model to engage in the writing process *with* your students as you navigate and challenge *your own* assumptions. This will show your students that you are willing to engage in the work with them and allows for new relationships to be formed. A teacherless writing class can have a teacher “as long as I [the teacher] follow all the same procedures as everyone else: I too must put in my piece of writing each week; I too must get everyone’s responses and reactions to it; I too must give my own reactions to other pieces of writing” (Elbow viii). Writing is a vulnerable, lonely activity; all writers should write for their own private reasons, write to share with others, and give constructive comments about the writing of others. Writing response prompts can be generated towards themes, conflicts, or craft moments from the homework reading; or true freewriting time can be given to get any and all thoughts down on the page. Following McEntarfer, students should periodically write first-person narratives, reflexive pieces analyzing their own narratives, narratives written to the second-person Other, and intertextual responses to significant quotes from their double-entry journal. All writers will share and respond as readers and writers. Since the writing is on the spot, workshop feedback should not be overly critical, but rather limited to what happened in *you*, the reader, when you read the words *this* time? Elbow provides strategies of pointing to words and phrases that have some sort of pull to you or strike you as weak or hollow; summarizing the main point, feelings, or centers of gravity from the writing; telling the writer everything that happened to you as you tried to read these words carefully, not straying too far into your own subjective reading experience; and, finally, an act of showing by talking about the writing metaphorically (85-92).

During the course of the whole-class novel, the teacher may fluctuate between direct mini-lessons on reading as a writer, pulling prompts for the class to respond to, evaluating author effectiveness, navigating conflict as pain, and analyzing the author’s craft. Towards the end of the novel, students will select samples of personal narratives, “other” responses, and/or reflexive/intertextual writing responses to edit. These documents will be submitted with the final argumentative essay. A final Socratic Seminar will be held, after smaller more informal small group discussions on the topic, that

explores the whole-class text's author's imagination, particularly how the conflicts and themes impact that imagination.

For the second portion of the unit, the Independent Reading Workshops, students will spend two weeks reading a novel-length contemporary text of their choice, or in this case, "Recitatif" with a reduced time of one week. They will demonstrate mastery of the skills learned previously by maintaining an annotation system, writing in response to their readings, and discussing the author's effectiveness in small group discussions. In-class sessions will feature daily small-group collaborative work engaging in discussions of themes and author craft, response writing, and writing workshopping. Groups should stay the same and can be selected early on. The teacher should provide direct mini-lesson refreshers on reading as a writer, pulling prompts for the class to respond to, evaluating author effectiveness, navigating conflict as pain, and analyzing the author's craft. Students will then spend one week writing an argumentative essay. Write an argument to answer the following questions: How do these texts define the challenges an individual or group may face in modern society? How effective is the writer at expressing these challenges to a global society (Beers 410)? Students should reflect on their writing from the whole-class text, their independent choice reading, and reflect on this work in the final essay.

In terms of assessment, McEntarfer provides insight into gauging student development by using positioning theory to monitor progress in narrative storytelling. Positioning operates around a triangle: Speech and Other Acts, Position, and Storyline. Queer theory asks students to accept more storylines than the ones offered by grand narratives. Teachers can monitor students' progress, in accepting more storylines than the ones offered by grand or master narratives, by analyzing where students position themselves in this final essay written in the Third Space. How has the student writer's positioning grown over the course of writing and reflecting? This work in the classroom should allow for greater cultural empathy for all while recognizing "that such work is not, and never will be, finished" (McEntarfer 83).

There is a lovely metaphorical connection between Peter Elbow's emphasis on free writing, the writer's need for editing, and the Third Space intervention that asks us to grow as human beings. Looking at ourselves as imperfect writers allows us the chance to think about our own biases, the biases of others, and to revise those behaviors. When we free write, Elbow tells us that we are embracing chaos and disorder so that we can produce writing that can be edited, and, in this process of growing and cooking, "a person grows more often by means of letting something go than by taking something in... Thus the crucial event in growing is often the beginning of a relinquishing: seeing the shabby side of an old idea or perception for the first time" (45-46). By analyzing the white gaze in American literature, "such studies will reveal the process of establishing others in order to know them," and how white writers have attempted "to display knowledge of the other so as to ease and to order external and internal chaos" (Morrison 52-53). But even

that connection proves problematic, as if the white writers, maybe even colonizers, needed to edit out blackness to invoke order in their own lives, much to the sacrifice of black characters and citizens. Perhaps being cognizant of these paradoxes will allow student writers to grow, heal, and establish themselves as yet another new American identity; one that truly embraces the totality of life, liberty, and the elusive pursuit of happiness.

**Final Note:** I would be remiss if I did not allow for writers the same complexity and intersectionality that society must allow its individuals; for this, Morrison's final comments in *Playing in the Dark* have been attached in full. This unit, nor Morrison's project, attempts to take a position "on the quality of a work based on the attitudes of an author," nor does it seek to "[immobilize] their complexities and power and luminations," but instead asks for all—readers and writers—to be more diligent and "to notice [the] disrupting darkness before [our] eyes" (90-91).

### **Classroom Activities**

#### **Sample Lesson 1: Characterization of Tituba in Act One**

##### ***Objectives:***

Students will be able to define American Africanism in order to analyze how the characterization of Tituba in Act One might "enable white writers to think about themselves? What are the dynamics of Africanism's self-reflexive properties" (Morrison 51)?

##### ***Common Core State Standards Addressed:***

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.11-12.3 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.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.

##### ***Materials:***

- Morrison's common linguistic strategies employed in fiction to engage the serious consequences of blacks

- Characterization graphic organizer
- *The Crucible* Act One
- Elbow's teacherless writing workshop feedback strategies, giving the movies of your mind

***Procedures:***

Prior to class, students should have been assigned to read Act One independently while maintaining a double-entry journal of text quotes and why they were pulled to them.

Display the definition of American Africanism: Morrison's term for "the denotative and connotative blackness that African peoples have come to signify, as well as the entire range of views, assumptions, readings, and misreadings that accompany Eurocentric learning about these people" (6-7). Have students handwrite this definition in their notebooks, they will reference it throughout our discussion of the play.

Turn and Talk: Discuss this definition with a partner to clarify its meaning.

Say: Today we are going to focus on the Africanist character Tituba. You will use the characterization graphic organizer to analyze the author's intentions when creating this character. Note how the author provides characterization directly (stage direction) and indirectly (dialogue, actions) using the STEAL (Speech, Thoughts, Effect on Others, Actions, Looks) mnemonic device. As you gather evidence, apply Morrison's definition of American Africanism to Tituba.

Questions to deepen discussion:

1. How is Tituba described when she is first introduced?
2. How does Tituba sound compared to the other characters?
3. Why do you think Tituba receives no exposition prose but most of the other characters do?
4. What do you think will happen to Tituba after Act One?

After students have had time to gather evidence and discuss their findings with a partner or small group, display Morrison's common linguistic strategies employed in fiction to engage the serious consequences of blacks.

1. "Economy of stereotype. This allows the writer a quick and easy image without the responsibility of specificity, accuracy, or even narratively useful description.
2. "Metonymic displacement. This promises much but delivers little and counts on the reader's complicity in the dismissal. Color coding and other physical traits become metonyms that displace rather than signify the Africanist character.
3. "Metaphysical condensation. This allows the writer to transform social and historical differences into universal differences. Collapsing persons into animals

- prevents human contact and exchange; equating speech with grunts or other animal sounds closes off the possibility of communication.
4. "Fetishization. This is especially useful in evoking erotic fears or desires and establishing fixed and major difference where difference does not exist or is minimal. Blood, for example, is a pervasive fetish: black blood, white blood, the purity of blood; the purity of white female sexuality, the pollution of African blood and sex. Fetishization is a strategy often used to assert the categorical absolutism of civilization and savagery.
  5. "Dehistoricizing allegory. This produces foreclosure rather than disclosure. If difference is made so vast that the civilizing process becomes indefinite--taking place across an unspecified infinite amount of time--history, as a process of becoming, is excluded from the literary encounter.
  6. "Patterns of explosive, disjointed, repetitive language. These indicate loss of control in the text that is attributed to the objects of its attention rather than to the text's own dynamics." (67-69)

Ask: Which one of these strategies does Arthur Miller employ when presenting the Tituba character? Students may respond by discussing with their group, the whole class, or by writing independently. Arguments can be made for many of the above strategies regarding Tituba, but much traction may be had with "economy of stereotype" or "dehistoricizing allegory" as Tituba's enslavement from her home in Barbados at the hands of Reverend Parris is glossed over in a few lines of stage direction, whereas the other characters, even the peripheral ones, all have pages of exposition to describe their history.

Exit Ticket: Read over your annotations from the homework reading and select one quote to expand upon. Choose one of the following prompts in which to conduct a free write:

1. Self: Do you relate with the quote? Write about a time you felt the same or had something similar happen to you.
2. Self-Other: Are you surprised or confused by the quote? Write about why it is so, or write about a character who feels similar.
3. Intertextual: Why do you think you're pulled to this quote? Explore this and tie it into other texts (books, games, shows) that you're pulled to.

If time allows, you can break into small groups for a writing workshop. Each writer shares a paragraph or so and partners take turns pointing and summarizing, see the slide with instructions. This can also be used as a Do Now at the start of the next class.

Homework: Follow the reading schedule and continue maintaining a double-entry journal.

## **Sample Lesson 2: Self-Reflexive Characterization Study in Act Four “I am no Sarah Good or Tituba, I am John Proctor!”**

### ***Objectives:***

Students will be able to provide a Third Space intervention in order to discuss the author’s imaginative choices.

As a note, this lesson will come after students have finished reading the final act of the play. Up until now, they should have had routine practice reading as writers by analyzing Arthur Miller’s craft moves pertaining to drama (exposition, stage direction, characterization, plot development) and engaging in teacherless writing workshops.

Remember to give students a variety of opportunities to write in the first person with follow-up reflexive positioning, self-other positioning, intertextual positioning, and possibly from the Third Space. Peers should be able to provide workshop feedback with some or no scaffolding.

### ***Common Core State Standards Addressed:***

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.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.3 Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

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.11-12.5 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.

***Materials:***

- Self-Reflexive Character Study: Proctor and Tituba worksheet
- You may choose to use one of the metaphorical graphic organizers or Meaningful Reflection guide to aid the discussion
- Evaluation Rubric for Socratic Seminar
- Effective Discussion Strategies [Slide Deck](#)

***Procedures:***

Prior to this lesson, students should have finished reading Act Four and had time to clarify confusion and discuss final thoughts. It might be helpful to use the Meaningful Reflection worksheet where students are asked to connect a major theme of American literature to the play. Using Gallagher's Theme Layers reflective practice, have students connect one theme to Self, Family, Peers, Community, Country, and Humankind. After this reflection, proceed with the following lesson.

Point students to the final words of Tituba and Proctor's final argument against ruining his good name.

Say: In Act Four, our final look at Tituba and Sarah Good comes from this exchange in their prison cell:

**Tituba.** Oh, it be no Hell in Barbados. Devil, him be pleasure-man in Barbados, him be singin' and dancin' in Barbados. It's you folks' you riles him up 'round here; it be too cold 'round here for that Old Boy. He freeze his soul in Massachusetts, but in Barbados he just as sweet and' (A bellowing cow is heard, and Tituba leaps up and calls to the window.) Aye, sir! That's him, Sarah!  
(IV.i.38-45)

**Tituba.** (calling to the window). Take me home, Devil! Take me home!

**Sarah Good.** (following the shouting Tituba out). Tell him I'm goin', Tituba! Now you tell him Sarah Good is goin' too! (IV.i.38-45, 60-65).

Later, John Proctor rips up his false confession because he does not want to ruin his good name. He says

**Proctor.** You will not use me! I am no Sarah Good or Tituba, I am John Proctor! You will not use me! It is no part of salvation that you should use me! (IV.i.878-882)

You Do: Hold a writing workshop with the following self-other positioned prompt - Imagine Tituba (or Sarah Good) heard Proctor's comment and was allowed to respond to him. Writing from her perspective, what would she say to him? How would she, a wrongfully accused woman, feel about Proctor's assertion that he is more proud than she?

Hold a formal Socratic Seminar in which students are expected to discuss this final moment from the Third Space: Knowing what we know about Miller's use of the Salem Witch Trials as a self-reflexive meditation on the McCarthy Hearings, how does Proctor's statement reveal the author's use of an Africanist character [Tituba] to "limn out and enforce the intervention and implications of whiteness"? How does Miller's "strategic use of black characters [help] to define the goals and enhance the qualities of white characters [such as Proctor]" (Morrison 52-53)?

Students should be able to continue making connections to American Africanist criticism, showing how the author's imagination will not allow for a world where autonomy (freedom and individualism) and distinctiveness are available without some hierarchical differentiation and a need to maintain that difference, as Proctor does by separating himself from the Titubas and Sarah Goods of the world.

Use the evaluation rubric to keep track of student discourse.

### **Sample Lesson 3: Socratic Seminar Connecting Whole-Class Novel to Independent Reading**

#### ***Objectives:***

Students will be able to analyze the author's motivations using characterization in a short story in order to discuss how this text defines the challenges an individual or group may face in modern society.

As a note, this particular lesson will come close to the end of the independent reading workshop. For the purposes of this unit, we are assuming we have assigned a short story, "Recitatif," for independent study; but we can also swap this text out and allow students to select their own reading assignment. This portion of the unit is about demonstrating mastery of the skills we learned in the whole class novel unit, so it is not necessary that all students read the same text. The unit guide for independent reading workshops suggests that students spend 2-3 weeks reading a novel-length contemporary text of their choice. They will demonstrate mastery of the skills acquired in the previous unit by maintaining an annotation system, writing in response to their readings, and discussing the author's effectiveness in small group discussions.

In-class sessions will feature the following:

- Daily small-group collaborative work engaging in discussions of themes and author craft, response writing, and writing workshopping. Students should be grouped according to skill level and maintain the same peers throughout this unit.
- Direct Mini-Lesson Refreshers on reading as a writer, pulling prompts for the class to respond to, evaluating author effectiveness, navigating conflict as pain, and analyzing the author's craft.

The unit will culminate with independently writing the final argumentative essay, tying both texts together.

***Common Core State Standards Addressed:***

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.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.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.3 Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

***Materials:***

- Effective Discussion Strategies [Slide Deck](#)
- Defining Characterization handout and graphic organizer
- Evaluation Rubric for Socratic Seminar

### ***Procedures:***

Prior to the lesson, students should have read “Recitatif” by Toni Morrison, maintained a double entry journal, and completed a characterization graphic organizer on one of the main character: Roberta and Twyla. Directions for the characterization assignment:

- Choose one of the main characters to track. As you read “Recitatif,” track characterization text evidence using the graphic organizer.
- What does the STEAL device show you about the character? Why do you think the author chose to show the character this way? What purpose does the character achieve for the writer?

Direct Mini-Lesson: Open the lesson with a direct mini-lesson refresher on effective discussion strategies. All students must share and advance the conversation with their peers. As they actively listen, the teacher can be floating around the room to listen for proper comment sentence starters like “Yes, and...”, “Yes, but...”, and “No, because...”.

Small-Group Collaborative Discussion: Students will be tasked with discussing their characterization assignment with their small collaborative group. At this time, instructors should present a question about the race of the two main characters: Is Roberta white or black? What about Twyla? How do you know? The question is significant since, in Morrison’s own words, “The only short story I have ever written, ‘Recitatif,’ was an experiment in the removal of all racial codes from a narrative about two characters of different races for whom racial identity is crucial” (xi). A discussion on not only how students determined race in the story, but also on why the author chose to obscure this piece of characterization, should provide a fruitful conversation at this stage in a unit rich with race theory. Assign students to take notes on their conversation.

Writing Workshop: This should be a timed free write, between 10-20 minutes. Read over your notes from the discussion about the characters’ race. Pick one of the following positioning prompts to respond to.

1. Self: Do you relate to the quote? Write about a time you felt the same or had something similar happen to you.
2. Self-Other: Are you surprised or confused by the quote? Write about why it is so, or write about a character who feels similar.
3. Reflexive: Why do you think you came to the assumptions that you did? Do you think differently now than you did initially? Why is it complicated to separate race from certain descriptors?
4. Third Space: Why did the author choose to leave the race of the main characters ambiguous? How is this significant to the conflicts and themes of the story?

Inform the students that during the next class, we will be hosting a formal Socratic Seminar. The prompt will be to explore the writer's imagination, particularly how the conflicts and themes impact that imagination. Additionally, to prepare for the final argumentative essay, students should synthesize what they've learned throughout the unit to answer how these texts (*The Crucible*, "Recitatif") define the challenges an individual or group may face in modern society? How effective is the writer at expressing these challenges to a global society?

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## **Appendix 1: Standards**

### **Common Core State Reading Standards Addressed:**

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.11-12.5 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.

### **Common Core State Writing Standards Addressed:**

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.11-12.10 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.

**Common Core State Speaking and Listening Standards Addressed:**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.3 Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

## Appendix 2: Morrison's common linguistic strategies employed in fiction to engage the serious consequences of blacks

### Common linguistic strategies employed in fiction to engage the serious consequences of blacks

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"But the literature has an additional concern and subject matter: the private imagination interacting with the external world it inhabits. Literature redistributes and mutates in figurative language the social conventions of Africanism. In minstrelsy, a layer of blackness applied to a white face released it from law. Just as entertainers, through or by association with blackface, could render permissible topics that otherwise would have been taboo, so American writers were able to employ an imagined Africanist persona to articulate and imaginatively act out the forbidden in American culture" (65-66).

Morrison goes on, following James Sneed's comments on Faulkner's racial divisions (66-65), to "list some of the common linguistic strategies employed in fiction to engage the serious consequences of blacks"

1. **"Economy of stereotype.** This allows the writer a quick and easy image without the responsibility of specificity, accuracy, or even narratively useful description.
2. **"Metonymic displacement.** This promises much but delivers little and counts on the reader's complicity in the dismissal. Color coding and other physical traits become metonyms that displace rather than signify the Africanist character.
3. **"Metaphysical condensation.** This allows the writer to transform social and historical differences into universal differences. Collapsing persons into animals prevents human contact and exchange; equating speech with grunts or other animal sounds closes off the possibility of communication.
4. **"Fetishization.** This is especially useful in evoking erotic fears or desires and establishing fixed and major difference where difference does not exist or is minimal. Blood, for example, is a pervasive fetish: black blood, white blood, the purity of blood; the purity of white female sexuality, the pollution of African blood and sex. Fetishization is a strategy often used to assert the categorical absolutism of civilization and savagery.
5. **"Dehistoricizing allegory.** This produces foreclosure rather than disclosure. If difference is made so vast that the civilizing process becomes indefinite-taking place across an unspecified infinite amount of time-history, as a process of becoming, is excluded from the literary encounter. [Read on for examples from O'Connor, Melville, Poe, and Syron]
6. **"Patterns of explosive, disjointed, repetitive language.** These indicate loss of control in the text that is attributed to the objects of its attention rather than to the text's own dynamics." (67-69)

### Appendix 3: Characterization graphic organizer

#### Examples of Indirect Characterization from *The Crucible*

Character:

What does Arthur Miller **directly** say about this character's personality?

Type of Indirect Characterization	Text Examples	Explanation
Speech		
Thoughts		
Effect on others		
Actions		
Looks		

## Appendix 4: Defining characterization handout

# Defining Characterization

**Characterization** is the process by which the writer reveals the personality of a character. Characterization is revealed through **direct characterization** and **indirect characterization**.

**Direct Characterization** tells the audience what the personality of the character is.

- Example:** "The patient boy and quiet girl were both well mannered and did not disobey their mother."  
**Explanation:** The author is directly telling the audience the personality of these two children. The boy is "patient" and the girl is "quiet."

**Indirect Characterization** shows things that reveal the personality of a character. There are five different methods of indirect characterization:

<b>S</b> peech	What does the character say? How does the character speak?
<b>T</b> houghts	What is revealed through the character's private thoughts and feelings?
<b>E</b> ffect on others toward the character.	What is revealed through the character's effect on other people? How do other characters feel or behave in reaction to the character?
<b>A</b> ctions	What does the character do? How does the character behave?
<b>L</b> ooks	What does the character look like? How does the character dress?

**TIP #1:** Use the mnemonic device of STEAL to remember the five types of indirect characterization

**TIP #2:** Use indirect characterization to analyze visual media:

**Film:** Look at how the character dresses and moves. Note the facial expressions when the director moves in for a close-up shot.

**Drama:** Pay attention to the way that the characters reveal their thoughts during a soliloquy.

## Appendix 5: Teacherless writing workshop feedback, giving the movies of your mind

### Giving Movies of Your Mind

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You are not offering theoretical questions about the objective qualities of the writing, but a time-bound, subjective-factual question: what happened in you when you read the words *this time*?

- **Pointing:** point to words and phrases that have some sort of pull to you or strike you as weak or hollow.
- **Summarizing:** a) quickly tell what you found to be the main point, feelings, or centers of gravity. B) summarize into a single sentence. C) choose one word from the writing which summarizes it. D) choose a word that isn't in the piece to summarize.

You can also engage in:

- **Telling:** tell the writer everything that happened to you as you tried to read these words carefully. Be sure to not stray too far from the writing and not too far from your own subjective reading experience.
- **Showing:** Talk about the writing metaphorically (see examples on p. 90-92).

## Appendix 6: Self-Reflexive Character Study worksheet

### Act Four *The Crucible*

#### Self-Reflexive Character Study: Proctor and Tituba

In Act Four, our final look at Tituba and Sarah Good comes from this exchange in their prison cell:

**Tituba.** Oh, it be no Hell in Barbados. Devil, him be pleasure-man in Barbados, him be singin' and dancin' in Barbados. It's you folks'you riles him up 'round here; it be too cold 'round here for that Old Boy. He freeze his soul in Massachusetts, but in Barbados he just as sweet and'(A bellowing cow is heard, and Tituba leaps up and calls to the window.) Aye, sir! That's him, Sarah! (IV.i.38-45)

**Tituba.** (calling to the window). **Take me home, Devil!** Take me home!

**Sarah Good.** (following the shouting Tituba out). Tell him I'm goin', Tituba! Now you tell him Sarah Good is goin' too! (IV.i.38-45, 60-65).

Later, John Proctor rips up his false confession because he does not want to ruin his good name. He says:

**Proctor.** You will not use me! **I am no Sarah Good or Tituba, I am John Proctor!** You will not use me! It is no part of salvation that you should use me! (IV.i.878-882)

1. **Self-Other:** Imagine Tituba (or Sarah Good) heard Proctor's comment and was allowed to respond to him. Write from her perspective, what would she say to him?
2. **Third Space:** Knowing what we know about Miller's use of the Salem Witch Trials as a self-reflexive meditation on the McCarthy Hearings, how does Proctor's statement reveal the author's use of an Africanist character to "limn out and enforce the intervention and implications of whiteness"? How does Miller's "strategic use of black characters [help] to define the goals and enhance the qualities of white characters [such as Proctor]" (Morrison 52-53)? Write a multi-paragraph response or discuss the above prompt in small groups.

## Appendix 7: Meaningful Reflection worksheet

### Meaningful Reflection

A goal for reading, along with recognizing literary devices, should be for students to “move beyond the text and consider its implications to them as human beings who live in the world today” (Gallagher 20). “What does it mean to me?” is a question you should always reflect on after reading a text.

For our American Africanist study of *The Crucible*, I’d like you to consider the major themes of identity in American literature that Morrison suggests. “I want to suggest that these concerns—autonomy, authority, newness and difference, absolute power—not only become the major themes and presumptions of American literature, but that each one is made possible by, shaped by, activated by a complex awareness and employment of a constituted Africanism. It was this Africanism, deployed as rawness and savagery, that provided the staging ground and arena for the elaboration of the quintessential American identity” (44).

- Autonomy = freedom, individualism
- Newness = innocence (from what?)
- Distinctiveness = maintaining difference
- Authority and absolute power = romantic, conquering heroism

1. What are the big ideas that you will take away from this text? Do your big ideas connect with one of the four themes above?
  - a. Big Issues
  
  
  - b. Examples in the Novel
  
  
  - c. Examples in Today’s World
  
2. **Theme Layers:** Name a theme from the text and apply it to each layer of the reflection chart. Remember, we know that Miller used the Salem Witch Trials as a metaphor for the unfair treatment he underwent during the McCarthy Hearings, so what does the quote “Proctor. You will not use me! I am no Sarah Good or Tituba, I am John Proctor! You will not use me! It is no part of salvation that you should use me!” say about the John Proctors of the world? The Titubas (IV.i.878-882)?
  - a. Self
  - b. Family
  - c. Peers
  - d. Community
  - e. Country
  - f. Humankind

## Appendix 8: Metaphorical Graphic Organizers that Help Students Analyze: Character

### Metaphorical Graphic Organizers that Help Students Analyze: Character The Iceberg

**Directions:** Pick a character from the text. What's above the water and what's underneath the surface?



**Metaphorical Graphic Organizers that Help Students Analyze: Character Square Peg, Round Hole**

**Directions:** Sometimes a character just doesn't fit in. Consider the societal expectations of a character and the character's needs.



## Appendix 9: Evaluation Rubric for Socratic Seminar

**Standard:** CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1- Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**Description of Assignment:** After finishing a whole-class novel study and engaging in a variety of speaking activities—including small group, whole group, informal Socratic Seminars, and online discussion boards—students will participate in a Socratic Seminar to discuss final takeaways from the book. They will come to the discussion with their books, notes, quotes, and a graphic organizer with at least one significant open-ended question for the group. They are expected to cite evidence when speaking, actively listen, and continue the conversation with sentence stem comments.

**Alternative form of assessment** for students performing below grade level, students w/IEPs (ELs can opt into these assignments as appropriate by ACCESS test scores).

- The Socratic Seminar Brainstorming Graphic Organizer will be considered for their overall grade during the discussion, allowing students to demonstrate the skill of collecting evidence and synthesizing a talking point. This will help if students are not able to effectively present their findings during a moving collaborative discussion.
- Students may be allowed to start the conversation or end it, where they are given uninterrupted time to present their findings before the discussion begins moving.
- A slide deck response assignment accommodation can also be used where students present their information to the group and field 3-5 questions from their peers.

	<b>1 - Developing Proficiency</b>  <i>Student demonstrates progress toward <b>initial</b> foundational skills of the topic.</i>	<b>2 - Approaching Grade Level Standards</b>  <i>Student demonstrates proficiency on <b>foundational</b> skills of the topic.</i>	<b>3- Meets Grade Level Standards</b>  <i>Students demonstrates proficiency on <b>all</b> grade level skills of the topic</i>	<b>4 - Exceeds Grade Level Standards</b>  <i>Student demonstrates understanding and performance <b>beyond</b> proficiency and has exceeded the standard.</i>
Engagement	Not engaged.	Actively listening but rarely or never contributing.	Either spoke too often or too little with varying degree of effectiveness.	Quantity and quality of input was effective.
Analysis	Not engaged.	Comments were vague or absent.	Connections were sometimes general or disconnected.	Thoughtful connections and inferences.
Evidence	Not engaged.	Evidence is overly general, misunderstood, or lacking.	Paraphrased evidence with clear connections.	Specific evidence with page citation.
Active Listening	Not engaged.	Disconnected contributions, surface level discussion.	Continued discussion, but did not always connect to greater good.	Actively listening and responding to peers in ways that advance the conversation.

## Appendix 10: Morrison's topics that need critical investigation

# Topics that need critical investigation

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1. The Africanist character as surrogate and enabler (51). "In what ways does the imaginative encounter with Africanism enable white writers to think about themselves? What are the dynamics of Africanism's self-reflexive properties?"
2. "the way an Africanist idiom is used to establish difference or, in a later period, to signal modernity" (52). Unintelligible dialogue becomes the difference between speech and speechless. Later, black idiom is "appropriated for the associative value they lend to modernism--to being hip, sophisticated, ultra-urbane."
3. "we need studies of the technical ways in which an Africanist character is used to limn out and enforce the intervention and implications of whiteness. We need studies that analyze the strategic use of black characters to define the goals and enhance the qualities of white characters. Such studies will reveal the process of establishing others in order to know them, to display knowledge of the other so as to ease and to order external and internal chaos." Morrison goes on to suggest these studies "will reveal the process by which it is made possible to explore and penetrate one's own body in the guise of the sexuality, vulnerability, and anachary of the other" (52-53).
4. "analyze the manipulation of the Africanist narrative (that is, the story of a black person, the experience of being bound and/or rejected) as a means of meditation--both safe and risky--on one's own humanity" (53). "Such analyses will reveal how the representation and appropriation of that narrative provides opportunities to contemplate limitation, suffering, rebellion, and to speculate on fate and destiny. ... Criticism of this type will show how that narrative is used in the construction of a history and a context for whites by posing history-lessness and context-lessness for blacks" (53).

Appendix 11: The conclusion to *Playing in the Dark* (Morrison 90-91)

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blacked-up, Africanist one, comments thoroughly on an aestheticized blackness and a mythologized one. Both are fantastic. Both are pulled from fields of desire and need. Both are enabled by the discursive Africanism at the author's disposal.

I wish to close by saying that these deliberations are not about a particular author's attitudes toward race. That is another matter. Studies in American Africanism, in my view, should be investigations of the ways in which a nonwhite, Africanist presence and personae have been constructed—invented—in the United States, and of the literary uses this fabricated presence has served. In no way do I mean investigation of what might be called racist or nonracist literature, and I take no position, nor do I encourage one, on the quality of a work based on the attitudes of an author or whatever representations are made of some group. Such judgments can and are being formed, of course. Recent critical scholarship on Ezra Pound, Celine, T. S. Eliot, and Paul de Man comes to mind. But such concerns are not the intent of this exercise (although they fall within its reach). My project is an effort to avert the critical gaze from the racial object to the racial subject; from the described and imagined to the describers and imaginers; from the serving to the served.

Ernest Hemingway, who wrote so compellingly about what it was to be a white male American, could not help folding into his enterprise of American fiction its Africanist

properties. But it would be a pity if the criticism of that literature continued to shellac those texts, immobilizing their complexities and power and luminations just below its tight, reflecting surface. All of us, readers and writers, are bereft when criticism remains too polite or too fearful to notice a disrupting darkness before its eyes.