



***Re-Defining the American Dream:  
Using Multicultural Literature to Revise the Ideals that Shape our Nation***

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:  
English/American Literature/Grades 11-12

**Keywords:** *The Great Gatsby*, American dream, *The House on Mango Street*, Langston Hughes, America: The Multinational Society, immigration, Ishmael Reed, identity, culture, urban America

**Teaching Standards:** See [Appendix 1](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

**Synopsis:** The American dream is a common theme that shows up in a variety of American literature. It is at the heart of the novel *The Great Gatsby*, a required novel for most high school students. This unit will pair the dream of Gatsby with writings from diverse authors, such as Ntozake Shange, Sandra Cisneros, Ishmael Reed, Langston Hughes, Nikki Giovanni, Junot Díaz, and Jayne Cortez. Students will be asked to explore the concept of the American dream by using the texts provided for class discussion. Students will consider the obstacles to achieving the American dream and the role of race and ethnicity on the journey to reaching success. Students will analyze the impact of location on the concept of the American dream – is it only possible to achieve success in a city? Students will form their opinions through activities such as keeping a daybook, participating in gallery crawls, and discussing key concepts in a Socratic Seminar. Finally, students will write a personal essay that describes their vision or dream for their life, the obstacles they might encounter along the way, and the ways in which they will overcome their obstacles by following the lead of their role models.

*I plan to teach this unit during the coming year in to 30 students in English III/Grade 11.*

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## **Re-Defining the American Dream: Using Multicultural Literature to Revise the Ideals that Shape our Nation**

*Elizabeth Craig*

### **Rationale**

America is known as the land of opportunity and prosperity. In America, it is commonly believed that the key to success is hard work. The mantra is that those who work hardest, with a certain amount of natural talent and ability, become the most successful. The most successful Americans become the wealthiest. Therefore, every American has the opportunity and the possibility of wealth and prosperity, as long as, they put forth the right amount of perseverance and hard work, paired with a slight amount of innate ability. This dream permeates our culture. However, it collides with the reality many minorities and low-income people living in America face. How can it be that it only takes hard work to move up the social ladder when the “Average Freshmen Graduate Rate” (AFGR) for African-American students was 66.1% and the AFGR for Hispanic or Latino students was 71.4% during the 2009-2010 school year, according to data from the U.S. Department of Education (1)? In comparison, the AFGR for White students was 83%. If the American dream is possible, why is there a significant gap between the graduation rates of minority students and White students? There is a disconnect between the dream of possibility and success for any hard-working American, and the reality that minorities face more obstacles than White Americans. In some cases, these obstacles can be insurmountable. This unit will explore the dream, and the obstacles that prevent people from achieving the dream.

As a teacher, I see the challenges and barriers faced by low-income students. I also see the hoops they have to jump through in order to attend college. As a result of these obstacles, the American dream has been re-imagined by diverse authors and artists who live different lives than the Jay Gatsby’s of the present. Our core text is *The Great Gatsby* for our “American Dream” unit. However, it would be a disservice to my students to only teach this limited vision of the American experience. Therefore, we will include other American perspectives of authors such as Langston Hughes, Nikki Giovanni, Sandra Cisneros, and Jayne Cortez.

The “New York Times” published a map of the United States in July 2013 that showed the chance a child raised in the bottom fifth of income levels rose to the top fifth. In Charlotte, the chance for that child is 4.3%. Comparatively, the chance for that child in New York still remains a measly 9.7% (2). Returning to the American dream concept that anyone can pull himself or herself up by his or her bootstraps, this map shows that there

are challenges and obstacles that prevent impoverished individuals from experiencing these opportunities.

I teach American Literature to students who live in a low income and under-resourced community. The challenges and obstacles faced by my students reflect the NY Times map of income level. This reality applies to students who are immigrants, as well as, students who live at or below the poverty line. The primary, quintessential text that illuminates the American experience remains *The Great Gatsby* as it did twenty years ago. However, it ignores the diverse voices that truly encompass America. I intend to use this text as an anchor, to compare diverse texts to and therefore broaden my students' perspectives of the American dream. As we read and analyze these texts, my students will rewrite the American dream to include diverse perspectives and experiences – including their own.

### **Demographic Background**

I teach at Harding University High School, which is located in West Charlotte. The 2011-2012 school report documents that economically disadvantaged students make up 79% of the student population (3). 72% of our students are African-American and 20% of them are Hispanic or Latino. Harding University High School is also a partial magnet school with an International Baccalaureate component. In addition to IB class offerings, Harding offers a number of Advanced Placement classes. In 2011, Harding experienced a school merging that included West Mecklenburg and Waddell High Schools. Harding is classified as a Title I school. It became classified as a Title I in 2011 after the merger of the schools. Our 2011-2012 school report card records 71% of our students passing the End-Of-Course Tests in English I. 62.4% of African-American students passed the EOC in English I, and 58.9% of Hispanic or Latino students passed the EOC.

Prior to teaching *The Great Gatsby*, the students in my American Literature class will have already read texts from the American canon. We begin with *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller to represent our early American Literature writing. From there we head to American Romanticism and read excerpts of Thoreau and Edgar Allan Poe. Romanticism leads straight into Realism, where we focus on Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, and Frederick Douglass. Finally, we arrive at the “Dynamic America” unit where we read *The Great Gatsby* and examine American ideals and the American concept of success.

My class follows the same daily or weekly routine. We begin each class with a warm-up that consists of the following categories: *Read into the day*, *Write into the day*, or *Turn your grammar on*. These warm-ups either connect directly to the objective or skill to be learned for the day, or they connect with the theme of the lesson. Throughout the unit, majority of the warm-ups will be *Read into the day* so that students can compare their daily readings of The Great Gatsby with the experiences of minority Americans and immigrants. From there we head into the mini-lesson for the day, which takes up about

15 to 20 minutes. The remainder of the class is student collaboration and student independent work. Class ends with an exit ticket or a student reflection. My main homework assignment for my students is an *Article of the Week* or *AOW*. This is a current event article that seeks to keep students informed about the world around them. As we revise the American dream, the *Article of the Week* will correspond to the themes of our texts such as identity, sacrifice, dreams, success, and community. This unit will include all the components of a typical lesson plan.

### **Objectives and Essential Questions**

The unit will be centered upon the following Essential Questions:

Weeks One and Two: *How can I examine my own beliefs of identity and culture through the works of other authors?*

Weeks Three and Four: *What is the American dream, and how do people strive for it?*

Week Five: *What are the obstacles to achieving the American dream?*

Week Six: *In what parts of America is achieving the success of the American dream more likely: urban or rural?*

Week Seven: *What role models have achieved the American dream through hard work, determination, and perseverance?*

This unit will follow the objectives outlined by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Humanities Curriculum Guide for English III. It will include objectives for reading informational texts, reading literature, writing, and speaking and listening.

### **Reading Informational Texts**

Students will be able to cite evidence from the texts using both basis comprehension of what the text says explicitly and making inferences. Students will follow the standard citation rules when citing evidence from the text. Students will use their evidence from the text in order to present analysis of the text's central idea, the author's purpose, the author's argument, and the structure of the text. As students are reading informational texts, they will be able to distinguish between what the author says objectively, and what the author writes subjectively. This will allow students to determine an author's point of view and purpose. Students will make connection between texts of different genres by comparing and contrasting main points, organizational patterns, and diverse perspectives. Students will analyze how the author uses particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of texts to develop the main idea or main argument. Students will analyze the author's craft throughout an informational text by examining their figurative words and

phrases that are used in the text, the sentence structure or syntax of a text, and the author's tone. These objectives will be instrumental in allowing the student to achieve the literary goal of this unit.

The informational texts that we will read this unit include "America: The Multinational Society" by Ishmael Reed, excerpts from *The Audacity of Hope* by Barack Obama, excerpts from *My Beloved World* by Sonia Sotomayor, "In Climbing Income Ladder, Location Matters Most" from the New York Times, and "The American I Believe In" by Colin Powell.

### Reading Literature

Similar to the objectives for reading informational texts, students will need to cite evidence from the text to explain what the text says directly, and what the text says implicitly. Students will need to determine a theme, and explain its development throughout the text using specific details. One of the objectives of reading literature is the analysis of characters. Students will be able to identify complex characters in a fictional text and explain how those characters develop throughout a text. Students will describe how characters interact with other characters in a text, and how specific protagonists drive the action of the plot. Students will finally analyze the development of the text's themes and the author's purpose through syntax, diction, figurative language, character, and structure of their text. This will allow the student to respond to the literary essential question.

The fictional texts will be focusing on include poems by Nikki Giovanni, Langston Hughes, Jayne Cortez, and Ntozake Shange. We also read excerpts from *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros and *Drown* by Junot Díaz.

### Writing

Students will have two different writing tasks and objectives throughout this unit. The first writing task will occur weekly throughout the unit. Students will be required to analyze literary, informational, and visual texts. They will be able to analyze the author's purpose, point of view, and argument. They will also be able to analyze the author's craft --- the author's use of syntax, diction, and structure to illuminate their main ideas and major themes. As students develop their own analysis, they will need to communicate their analysis with relevant evidence that supports their analysis. They will be able to organize their analysis to fit their purpose. In addition, they will use academic language or vocabulary, varied sentence structure, and transitional expressions to convey their analysis to a specific audience for a specific purpose.

The second writing task that students will complete is a reflection of their own American experience and ideals. They will be able to use the informational, literary, and

visual texts of the unit as a springboard for their own understanding of their individual or societal American dream. Students will be able to communicate their vision of their life through a personal essay that describes their vision or dream for their life, the obstacles they might encounter along the way, and the ways in which they will overcome their obstacles by following the lead of their role models.

### Speaking and Listening

A key component of this unit will be students' participation in discussions. Students will be able to prepare discussion topics by analyzing specific texts. Students will be able to lead a small group, and eventually, a class discussion about their specific topics or questions. During a discussion, students will be able to be inclusive to their classmates and their classmates' thoughts and opinions. Students will be able to consider and respond to their classmates' diverse perspectives. As students respond to their classmates' thoughts, students will build on their own ideas, as well as, challenge them. Students will be able to use professional etiquette during discussion, including, being respectful to one another, providing one another with plenty of time to complete a thought, allowing every voice to have the opportunity to speak, and at times, understanding when their discussion time is over.

### Language

The Language objectives for this unit will focus on the writer's craft. Students will be able to understand the concepts of parallelism and active voice, and practice these concepts in their writing. They will also understand the effect that varied sentences and syntax can affect meaning of a text and keep the reader's interest.

### Teaching Strategies

#### Daybook or a Writer's Notebook

Student will need a place to store their daily writings and reflections. We use the daybook in the class to keep records of our thoughts and feelings. We also use the daybook for brainstorming and starting points for our future writing pieces. The daybook serves as a "junk drawer" where we keep questions, fragments of writing, quotations, lists, observations, handouts, notes, song lyrics, ideas, and discussion topics.

#### Anticipation Guide

The anticipation guide allows students to consider and contemplate the complex ideas before reading any of the texts. This allows students to examine preconceived notions and ideas. Anticipation guides will be referred back to frequently throughout the unit in order to determine whether or not student thinking has changed based on new literature and

information, or if it remains the same. My hope is that many preconceived ideas are challenged as we analyze the diverse perspectives behind the redefined American dream.

### Think-Pair-Share

This strategy is will be used almost daily throughout the unit. Students will be provided with time to think (and time to jot down their thoughts) and then they will be required to pair up in partners and/or small groups to share their ideas. Students will need to practice the speaking and listening objectives we have learned during this time in order to ensure that this strategy is effective.

### Gallery Crawl

Students will have the opportunity to share their thoughts, feelings, and opinions with the class in a variety of ways throughout this unit. One of these ways will be in a gallery crawl. The gallery crawl strategy requires students to document their work, and then present it to the class. It is presented to the class in a low-pressure manner by being hung up on the wall. Students will move around the room to view the various works of their classmates. They will write comments on post-it notes for each gallery crawl piece of work and attach them to the wall.

### R-A-F-T (Role – Audience – Format –Topic)

The RAFT strategy allows students to view an experience or topic through another person's perspective. It also requires them to practice writing for a specific audience, in a specific format, about a specific topic.

### Socratic Seminar

This is a full class discussion that is student led. Students will choose the discussion questions and respond to one another's topics. The teacher takes a back seat as students share their perspectives and point of views. The objective is to maintain a thoughtful discussion that includes all students.

### TPCASTT

This is a strategy for analyzing poetry. Students use the acronym TPCASTT before, during, and after reading a poem to annotate the text. The acronym stands for the following: T (Title) P (Paraphrase) C (Connotation) A (Attitude/Tone) S (Shift) T (Title again) and T (Theme). Students closely examine each element of TPCASTT so that they develop a deeper and more meaningful understanding of the poem.

### Jigsaw

Students are assigned a specific task; for instance, a specific selection of text to read and analyze. Students are required to become “experts” on their assignment. After the students are provided with enough time to know their material, they join with other students of different tasks to teach them their specific content. At the end of the activity, every student will have knowledge of every assignment due to their conversations with other students.

### Reader Response Journal

Students choose an interesting, engaging, or key section from a text and write a response to that section. They may also write a response to guiding questions. After they write their response, they pass their journal to another student who responds to their thoughts. From there, the student will write a final comment about the section of text, using both their original ideas and the ideas of their classmates’.

### Classroom Activities

*Week One: How can I examine my own beliefs of identity and culture through the works of other authors?*

In order to begin the unit, students will write a reflection in their daybooks describing their culture. The journal prompt will read: “Describe your identity and culture. What do you believe makes up, or contributes to, your identity and culture?” Students will also read a background article on F. Scott Fitzgerald and articles about “The Jazz Age” and Prohibition. These articles discuss the “Roaring Twenties,” which were a time of recklessness for wealthy Americans living in cities. F. Scott Fitzgerald called it a time when “the parties were bigger, the pace was faster, the buildings were higher, the morals looser” (4). The guiding question for the first week of the unit is *what are the beliefs of identity and culture of The Great Gatsby and the 1920s?* Students will respond to comprehension questions from both articles. They will also complete an anticipation guide prior to beginning reading.

After the background activities, students will read chapters 1-2 of the anchor text *The Great Gatsby*. As students read, they will be able to explain the significance of the narrator and characterize the major characters. They will also compare their lives in Charlotte, NC to the lives of the characters in the novel. Students will identify similarities in the culture of the 1920s, and culture of the present.

During this week, students will read “I Am New York City” by Jayne Cortez. They will also read “senses of heritage” and an excerpt from “for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf” by Ntozake Shange. Both authors are African-American female poets and performers whose work is closely related to music



and jazz. In order to analyze this poetry, students will use the TPCASTT strategy. Students will respond to the essential question *what are the beliefs of identity and culture of these two poems?* Students will show evidence of their understanding in their daybooks by using the TPCASTT strategy. Students will continue to examine their beliefs by writing their own “senses of heritage” poem or “I Am New York City” poem by imitating the authors’ styles. They will either describe their heritage and where they come from or describe themselves through the use of an extended metaphor.

Week Two: *How can I examine my own beliefs of identity and culture through the works of other authors?*

Students will read chapters 3-4 of the anchor text *The Great Gatsby*. As students read, they will be able to explain the significance of the major settings. Students will begin to map the different settings of *The Great Gatsby*. This will be an ongoing setting chart to be used as new settings are introduced throughout the novel. They will also make predictions by analyzing examples of foreshadowing in the beginning chapters.

During this week, students will also read “Nikki-Rosa” by Nikki Giovanni and the following vignettes from *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros: “The House on Mango Street,” “Hairs,” and “My Name.” Similar to week one, students will respond to the question *what are the beliefs of identity and culture of these poems and vignettes?* Following these readings, students will draw an illustration that represents a part of their identity and culture. This may be a symbolic illustration or an actual drawing of what they see as a part of their identity. For instance, students may illustrate a remembrance of their childhood, connecting to the poem “Nikki-Rosa.” Or they may draw something about their physical appearance, connecting to “Hairs.” Then students will participate in a gallery crawl to examine the different cultural illustrations of their classmates. As students walk through the gallery crawl, they will ask questions of their classmates about one another’s culture and identity.

Week Three: *What is the American dream, and how do people strive for it?*

Similar to week one, the teacher will introduce the new essential question with a journal prompt. Students will respond to the following question in their daybooks: “What is the American dream?” Then, students will think-pair-share or discuss their responses in small group discussions. Upon completion of their discussions, each group will have to share out the main points of their discussions. The group may come to a consensus on the definition of the American dream, or there may be different American dreams. The different perspectives of the will fuel a class discussion. The class will compare the American dreams of each group to determine possible common threads, as well as, possible differences. After the discussions, students will read and listen to the personal essay “The American I Believe In” by Colin Powell. As students read and listen, they will annotate the text in order to take note of the main theme. Through class discussion,

the students will determine whether or not Colin Powell's idea of the American dream corresponds to their ideas.

Students will begin to read chapters 5-6 of the anchor text *The Great Gatsby*. As students read, they will be able to define symbolism in the context of the novel. They will also identify different examples of figurative language in the novel and explain its impact on the meaning of the text. At this point in the novel, students can begin to respond to the question "What is the American dream according to Jay Gatsby? How does Jay Gatsby strive for it?" As students answer this question, they will consider the sacrifices Jay Gatsby made in order to achieve his concept of the American dream. For instance, Gatsby chooses to change his name in order to reinvent himself for Daisy. Students should compare Jay Gatsby's name change to the name changes of African-Americans, Hispanics, and Jewish people as they desired to achieve the American dream.

Week Four: *What is the American dream, and how do people strive for it?*

This week will require students to begin to combine the first two essential questions, which connect culture and the American dream. Students will read "America: The Multinational Society" by Ishmael Reed to direct their thinking about the connections of culture and American dream. The questions students will consider as they read are "What is Reed's main argument? What examples of the 'blurring of cultural styles' does Reed mention? What examples of the 'blurring of cultural styles' do you see in your own community? What would be the American dream according to Reed? How does Reed's idea of the American dream compare to Colin Powell's? How do Reed and Powell's ideas of the American dream compare to your belief of the American dream?"

Students will continue to read chapters 5-6 of the anchor text *The Great Gatsby*. As students read, they will be able to define symbolism in the context of the novel. They will also identify different examples of figurative language in the novel and explain its impact on the meaning of the text. At this point in the novel, students can begin to respond to the question "What is the American dream according to Jay Gatsby? How does Jay Gatsby strive for it?"

Week Five: *What is the American dream, and how do people strive for it? What are the obstacles to achieving the American dream?*

Students will read chapters 7-8 of the anchor text *The Great Gatsby*. Students will be able to identify elements of Fitzgerald's style as they read. For instance, some elements of his style include long and wordy sentences, heightened vocabulary, repetition, and stream of consciousness. In addition to style, the literary focus of this week will be tone and mood. Students will analyze different chunks of the text to determine the author's tone and the text's mood.

At this point in the novel, it is clear to the reader that Jay Gatsby's American dream is slipping through his fingers. The essential question students will be required to answer is "What are the obstacles to achieving the American dream for Jay Gatsby?" In order to respond to this question, students will complete a R-A-F-T. Their role (R) will be a journalist, their audience (A) will be the American public of the 1920s, the format (F) will be an advice column, and finally the topic (T) will be the obstacles of the American dream. As students write their advice column, they will identify the obstacles of achieving the American dream as experienced by Jay Gatsby.

This week students will also read poems by Langston Hughes, including "The Dream Keeper," "Dreams," "Po' Boy Blues," "I, Too," and "Mother to Son." Students will be asked to describe the theme of each of the poems. They will be required to respond to the question "What are the obstacles of achieving the American dream as described in the poetry of Langston Hughes?" In addition, students will compare the obstacles faced by Hughes to the obstacles faced by Gatsby. The questions for discussion will include, "What role does race play in the achievement of the American dream? What obstacles are the result of racism and discrimination?" The strategy that will be used in the classroom will be think-pair-share so that students can discuss their ideas. Students will also be required to analyze Langston Hughes' style. They will annotate the poems using TPCASTT in order to identify the different aspects of Hughes' style.

In addition to Hughes' poetry, students will participate in a jigsaw to read the following chapters from *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros: "Those Who Don't," "Alicia Who Sees Mice," "Geraldo No Name," "Four Skinny Trees," "No Speak English," and "Mango Says Goodbye Sometimes." Each student will be placed in a group and assigned a chapter to read. In their groups, students will discuss the main themes of each chapter. They will also answer the questions: "What can you infer about the American dream from this chapter? What are the obstacles to the American dream as described in this chapter?" Similar to the Langston Hughes discussion, students will discuss the role of ethnicity in achieving the American dream. For instance, "What obstacles, such as language and discrimination, prevent Hispanic or Latino people from achieving the American dream?" After their discussions, students will form new groups so that every single group has a student who read a different chapter. In their groups, students will present the themes of their chapters, and the obstacles described in their particular chapters. Then each group will use the information from the discussion to respond to the essential question "What is the American dream, and how do people strive for it? What are the obstacles to achieving the American dream?"

Week Six: *In what parts of America is achieving the success of the American dream more likely: urban or rural?*

Students will finish chapter 9 of *The Great Gatsby*. Students will journal about their final thoughts of the novel and their conclusions about the American dream and the obstacles to achieving the American dream according to the novel.

The students will be required to analyze the map of poverty in the United States as featured in the article “In Climbing Income Ladder, Location Matters Most” from the New York Times. Students will need to record their observations in their daybooks, and think-pair-share prior to the Socratic Seminar that will take place this week.

Students will also read the chapter “Negocios” from the novel *Drown* by Junot Diaz. As students read individually or in groups, they will discuss the obstacles faced by the character Ramón as he travels throughout the United States. They will be asked to consider, “Why does he choose to live in the cities?” He begins his journey in Miami, and then moves to New York. “What impact does location have on achieving success?” Students will fill in a reader response journal to respond to these questions.

The focus of this week will be the essential question “In what parts of America is achieving the success of the American dream more likely: urban or rural?” In order to answer this question, the students will participate in a Socratic Seminar. The students will prepare for the seminar by using the previous texts of the unit, including the anchor text *The Great Gatsby*. Students will prepare responses to the essential question prior to engaging in the seminar. They will need to use at least three examples of evidence from two different texts to support their response. Students will also prepare questions for the Socratic Seminar discussion. One guiding question that will be presented to the students is “Why do people, like Ramón, Gatsby, and Nick, choose to migrate to the city?” After class preparation, the teacher will assign a student leader, and then take a back seat as the students discuss the essential question.

*Week Seven: What role models have achieved the American dream through hard work, determination, and perseverance?*

Students will begin class by journaling about their role models. They will be required to describe in detail why they admire the people they look up to – “What are their qualities? What are their actions? What decisions have they made?” As a class, students will generate the characteristics of a positive role model.

Students will read the prologue of *The Audacity of Hope* by Barack Obama. As students read, they will be required to annotate the text and describe Barack Obama’s character. Then they will respond to the question “How *specifically* did Barack Obama achieve his goal of becoming the President?” Students will also read an excerpt from chapter eleven from *My Beloved World* by Sonia Sotomayor. They will annotate the text, and describe Sotomayor’s character. Building off previous conversations, students will

discuss the American dream in context of Obama and Sotomayor's lives. They will also discuss how they achieved their goals despite the obstacles in their way.

Students will then research other American role models who achieved their goals through hard work. Students will be required to write a one-page reflection on the role models they have researched. The reflection will require them to answer the question "In what ways can I follow my role model's example to achieve my goals?"

### **Culminating Writing Task**

Following their research, students will work on their cumulative writing task. Students will complete a reflection of their own American experience and ideals. They will be able to use the informational, literary, and visual texts of the unit as a springboard for their own understanding of their individual or societal American dream. Students will be able to communicate their vision of their life through a personal essay that describes their vision or dream for their life, the obstacles they might encounter along the way, and the ways in which they will overcome their obstacles by following the lead of their role models. In their personal essay, students will respond to the essential questions so that evidence of their learning of the key components of this unit will be clear.

## Notes

(1) Stillwell, R., and Sable, J. *Public School Graduates and Dropouts from the Common Core of Data: School Year 2009–10: First Look (Provisional Data)* (NCES 2013-309rev). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. 2013. Retrieved Sept. 2013 from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>.

(2) Leonhardt, David . "In Climbing Income Ladder, Location Matters." *New York Times*. N.p., n.d. Web. 1 Aug. 2013. <[http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/22/business/in-climbing-income-ladder-location-matters.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/22/business/in-climbing-income-ladder-location-matters.html?_r=0)>.

(3) "Harding University High School." *School Profile*. N.p., n.d. Web. 23 Nov. 2013. <<http://www.ncreportcards.org/src/schDetails.jsp?pYear=2011-2012&pLEACode=600&pSchCode=405>>.

(4) PBS. "People & Events: The Jazz Age." PBS. [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/monkeytrial/peopleevents/e\\_jazzage.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/monkeytrial/peopleevents/e_jazzage.html) (accessed November 24, 2013).

## Appendix 1: Implementing District Standards

The district standards for this unit are determined by the CMS Humanities Department and published on the CMS website as “English Support Documents.”

### Reading Standards for Informational Texts

These standards apply to the essay “America: The Multinational Society” by Ishmael Reed and the essay “The America I Believe In” by Colin Powell. They also apply to the autobiographies by Sonia Sotomayor and Barack Obama. These standards also apply to the weekly current news articles that students will read throughout the unit. These current news articles are referred to as “Articles of the Week” and will come from current news sources. They will focus on the themes of culture, identity, American dream, and American role models.

RI.11-12.1 Cite 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. Students will need to support any response they provide with evidence from the text.

RI.11-12.2 Determine two or more 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 provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text. Students will need to comprehend the main idea of the text, and explain how the main ideas are developed.

RI.11-12.5 Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging. Students will analyze the arguments made by Reed and Powell, and determine their effectiveness.

RI.11-12.6 Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text. Students will explore the different point of views of diverse authors.

RI.11-12.10 Read and comprehend literary nonfiction.

### Reading Standards for Literature

These standards apply to the poetry, excerpts from *The House on Mango Street*, excerpt from *Drown*, and the novel *The Great Gatsby* we will read throughout the unit.

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.

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. Students will be able to communicate the themes of the texts, and explain how they are developed throughout the text.

RL.11-12.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone. Students will be able to identify examples of figurative language in this unit, and explain the connotation of the words and phrases used in the text.

RL.11-12.5 Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact. Students will be able to experience a variety of texts; therefore, they will be able to compare and contrast the authors' stylistic choices.

### Writing Standards

These standards will apply to the written responses students will compose throughout the unit. They will also apply to the personal essay they will write as a culminating activity.

W.11-12.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. In activities such as "RAFT" and the Reader Response journal, students will have to make an argument about the American dream, and support their argument with evidence.

W.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of the content. Students will write a personal essay that describes their idea of the American dream. They will need to convey their thoughts about the American dream, while informing the audience about what they have learned throughout the unit.

W.11-12.2f Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic). Students will have to conclude the culminating writing task with an effective conclusion that pulls together their thoughts on the American dream.

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. Students will imitate Sandra Cisneros, as well as, Ntozake Shange to show their identity and culture.



W.11-12.3b Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters. Students will reflect on their identity and culture, as they imitate an author's style.

W.11-12.3e Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative. Students will pull together multiple ideas into a conclusion.

W.11-12.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. Students will be able to meet the requirements of the various writing assignments through this unit, including, a RAFT.

W.11-12.5 Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience. The culminating task will require students to complete the writing process in order to submit a polished final essay.

#### Standards for Speaking and Listening

Throughout this unit, students will be responsible for communicating their thoughts and opinions in partner discussions, small group discussions, and full class discussions.

SL.11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. Students will need to actively listen to the ideas of other students, and clearly present their own ideas.

SL.11-12.1a Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas. Anytime students are participating in a discussion, they will need to support their responses with evidence from the text.

SL.11-12.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when indicated or appropriate. Students will need to use formal English during our Socratic Seminar so that they are communicating effectively in an academic setting.

## Resources

Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*. New York: Vintage Contemporaries, 2009. Sandra Cisneros weaves a story of hopes, dreams, and challenges through the eyes of Esperanza Cordero. Cisneros' vignettes are certain to connect to the experiences of students as she describes the coming of age trials of developing an identity. At first glance her writing seems simplistic, but it is rich with figurative language and imagery that brings to life her stories. .

Cortez, Jayne. "I am New York City." *New Bones: Contemporary Black Writers in America*. Eds. Kevin Everod Quashie, Joyce Lausch , and Keith D. Miller. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2001. 195-196. The narrator compares herself to New York City in order to claim the city as her own.

Díaz, Junot. *Drown*. New York: Riverhead Books, 1996. This novel is composed of a series of short stories, tied together by the immigrant experience of a Dominican family. It describes the struggles experienced by the family as they try to adapt to a new country. For this unit, the students will read the chapter "Negocios," which describes the father's arrival to Miami and journey to New York.

Fitzgerald, Scott F. *The Great Gatsby*. New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1995. This classic American literature novel has been a staple in American high schools since the 1950s. It tells the tale of Jay Gatsby's quest to win over the love of his life, Daisy Buchanan, through wealth and popularity. Jay Gatsby's passion has come to represent the American dream – the idealistic and optimistic concepts of success and wealth. This is the anchor text of the unit, to which more diverse authors' writings will be compared.

Hughes, Langston. *The Dream Keeper and other poems*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1932. This book of poetry focuses on themes of dreams and obstacles, using the rich imagery of Langston Hughes. A number of poems will be used throughout this poem in order for students to explore the challenges to achieving the "American dream."

Giovanni, Nikki. "Nikki-Rosa." *New Bones: Contemporary Black Writers in America*. Eds. Kevin Everod Quashie, Joyce Lausch , and Keith D. Miller. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2001. 355-356. The narrator discusses her childhood. She shares the message that although she was poor, she was still has pleasant memories of her childhood.

Leonhardt, David . "In Climbing Income Ladder, Location Matters." *New York Times*. N.p., n.d. Web. 1 Aug. 2013. <[http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/22/business/in-climbing-income-ladder-location-matters.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/22/business/in-climbing-income-ladder-location-matters.html?_r=0)>. This article is a visual

representation of the challenges of “upward mobility” for people living in certain locations, like Atlanta, GA.

PBS. "People & Events: The Jazz Age." PBS.

[http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/monkeytrial/peopleevents/e\\_jazzage.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/monkeytrial/peopleevents/e_jazzage.html) (accessed November 24, 2013). This article discusses “The Jazz Age.” It describes the rebellious spirit of city-dwellers in the 1920s, in the time between The Great War and The Great Depression.

PBS. "Prohibition." PBS. <http://www.pbs.org/kenburns/prohibition/unintended-consequences/> (accessed November 24, 2013). This article discusses the “unintended consequences” of Prohibition. These consequences included bootlegging, and the creation of a culture of recklessness and excess.

Powell, Colin. “The America I Believe In. *This I Believe: The personal philosophies of remarkable men and women*. Ed. Jay Allison and Dan Gediman. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006. 184-187. This essay describes the vision Powell has of America. His vision is an inclusive America where every individual helps out and supports their neighbors.

Obama, Barack. *The Audacity of Hope: thoughts on reclaiming the American dream*. New York: Crown Publishers, 2006. This memoir describes President Obama’s journey to the White House, despite the obstacles he faced throughout the way. For this unit, we will focus on the prologue which explains how he arrived at the decision to first run for a seat in congress, and then after a loss, decided to run again for the U.S. Senate.

Reed, Ishmael. “America: The Multinational Society.” *We Are America: A thematic reader and guide to writing*. Ed. PJ Boardman. Massachusetts: Thomas Wadsworth, 2008. 362-364. This essay describes the multiethnic face of America. It goes into detail about the diversity found everyday in America, and it imagines the future of America.

Shange, Ntzokeye. “for colored girls who have considered suicided/when the rainbow is enuf” and “senses of heritage.” *New Bones: Contemporary Black Writers in America*. Eds. Kevin Everod Quashie, Joyce Lausch , and Keith D. Miller. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2001. 880-882, 884. Shange’s work focuses on themes of identity and culture.

Sotomayor, Sonia. *My Beloved World*. New York: Knopf, 2013. This autobiography describes the United State’s first Hispanic and female Supreme Court Justice’s journey to her seat. The chapter this unit will focus on shows the obstacles of living in the Bronx as she works for her first job.