



Hidden Bias: Does It Describe Who We Are?

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:
**Seventh and Eighth Language Arts, Freshman English I Ninth grade, and
American Literature/English III Eleventh grade**

Keywords: African American Literature, Hispanic Literature, literary terms, video interpretation, poetic critique, stereotypes, bias, culture, multicultural

Teaching Standards: See [Appendix](#)

Synopsis: This unit is about using a variety of African American and Hispanic literature in a seventh grade Language Arts class. This unit is for both honors and standard plus students. The focus is on bias and particularly on how a hidden bias can define who we are to outsiders. Students will look at bias and stereotypes to determine who they are, and whether their biases and stereotypes are interfering with attempts to define themselves. We examine poetry, novels, and nonfiction texts set mainly in the urban environments. Students will learn a variety of note taking skills used in the Spring Board program that our school has adapted. They will use *RUNNERS*, *THIEVES* and *SOAPSTone*. Students will have mini lessons and quizzes throughout the unit over poetry and literary terms. Novel choices are *The Watsons Go to Birmingham-1963* and *The House on Mango Street*. Students will have a culminating activity in which they will create a video interpretation of a chapter from their assigned novel. Once the students have completed their video interpretation, they will edit their chapters and combine them together to create a film of the novel. Parents will be invited in for a movie night to view the student made films.

I plan to teach this unit during the coming year in to 115 students in seventh grade honors and standard plus Language Arts.

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Jennifer Marie Ladanyi

Rationale

Who am I? Where do I fit in? These are two main questions that every middle school age student has going through their mind at any time during the day. The desire to fit in is nearly consuming. They can barely focus on the required schoolwork, and are always worried about what others are saying about them. They also have a hard time connecting to anything. They want to connect to everything they can get their hands on. They can't see themselves in anything that is important in the educational world. They are very unsure about themselves and the choices that they are making. They are so focused on living in the now that they forget to think about what is best for them in the future. So at this age level, I think it's important to bring in literature that they can relate to it. Not just literature, but also included advertisements since they are at the age group where many companies focus their advertisements on. Many students do not and/or cannot see a connection between literature and their lives because all we as educators focus on is passing the end of the grade level test. When we try to focus on literature that the students would like we fear that the administration might reprimand us, or that we will be branded as outcasts. In order to help students make a connection and to improve understanding literature, we need to continue to push the boundaries of what everyone wants us to teach. Our goal should be to teach the students how literature can be a function and reflection of reality. With the use of children's books and young adult books, I want the students to remember that there are other people who have been where they have been and survived.

With the use of multicultural literature, students will be able to make more connections to themselves and their environment. By starting with children's literature, students will be able to make connections to the setting, plot and theme of the story. I feel that students will be able to see themselves in the lessons that the characters are learning and remember what it was like to be young again. Many students act like adults and forget that they are twelve and thirteen years old. By reading young adult literature, I want them to see that there are characters like them, meaning there are characters who grew up with the same problems, situations and home lives as they did. With the inclusion of African-American and Hispanic literature, I want all students to see that they can relate to African-Americans and Hispanics, and it's okay to see that connection to them.

As I was talking to my African-American and Hispanic students, I asked them if they thought Bailey was a diverse school. They said no. Many of them felt that they had

no one who looked like them to look up to in the school faculty. It's sad but true. The majority of the teaching staff at Bailey Middle School is Caucasian with three Hispanic, or Spanish-speaking teachers, and four African-American teachers. During the conversation, my African-American female students questioned why African-Americans called are black when they are not black, but brown, milk chocolate, mocha, or various other shades of brown. After listening to their conversations and frustrations, I asked what they thought we, as teachers or together as a school, could do to improve diversity on campus. They could not give me answers or any suggestions on what the staff can do for them. I believe, though, that reading and introducing African-American and Hispanic authors, new and old, my students will see that they are not the only ones who feel the same way, and will be express their feelings in a healthy outlet like writing, music or art.

Background

I teach seventh grade Language Arts at Bailey Middle School in Cornelius, NC. It is located in a suburban area of northern Mecklenburg County with a population of 1600. I teach about 105 students every day for four class periods at about 70 minutes for each class period. My classes consist of one honors level class and three standard plus level class. The standard plus classes are a mixture of students who are on and below grade level. Some of the students have a 504 plan or are ESL students. The honors class consists of students who are on and above grade level. This unit is for all my levels of seventh grade Language Arts, but it could be modified for English II and English III. Bailey Middle School is a predominant white upper and middle class community. Many of our students have not been overly exposed to African American and Hispanic literature. I hope this unit will provide a connection for our African American and Hispanic students, and also give our Caucasian students a wider range of authors to consider reading. For the unit, I plan to start with a survey of what students know about bias and culture, and their own culture first. I want the concentration to be on how culture and literature can affect the history of their being. We will do this through the study of a collection of children's literature, short stories, poetry, advertisements and a nonfiction essays.

For the focus of this unit, students will be looking at multicultural texts that are set in urban areas that focus on African-American and/or Hispanic characters. They will then create their own video interpretation of *The House on Mango Street* or *The Watsons Go to Birmingham-1963* and present it to our team families for a movie night at our school. Our school has four or five teams pre-grade level at our school. As we work on our readings and video interpretation, students will have a choice of writing a poem or short story to go along with the video interpretation. Students will also write a poetic critic. Before students can focus on their writings and video interpretation, the students must examine culture, multicultural, diversity, bias, prejudice, and stereotypes and why it is important to them. We will begin by looking at what culture means literally and how it

affects us. By definition, culture is “the quality in a person or society that arises from a concern for what is regarded as excellent in arts, letters, manners, scholarly pursuits, etc.”¹ Culture can be found in literature, graphic and performing arts. In order to understand culture, I will need to provide an etymology about the word multicultural. Multicultural is “representing several different cultures or cultural elements.”² By breaking down what the two big words mean and the history behind them, we can focus on what it means to us. For a visual representation, I will have students design their perfect pizza. After they design their perfect pizza, we will assign cultures to different items on their pizza like Italian sausage would represent Italians, cheese would represent Americans, and so forth. By looking at the students’ perfect pizza, we can see the visual representation of multiculturalism in our own lives.³

After looking at our pizzas, students will need to look at the other side of things. Even though this is fine and dandy like perfectly wrapped gift, we need to look at the other side of things, the negative side. Our students are bright enough to know that all things are not a pretty, perfect, little picture. They know that there is a negative perspective on many different aspects in life. So it is important to include stereotypes, bias, prejudice, and discrimination because all these terms are a part of who we are. “A stereotype is an exaggerated belief, image or distorted truth about a person or group- a generalization that allows for little or no individual differences or social variation.”⁴ Many of our students see stereotypes on a regular basis either through mass media or passed on through their parents.⁵ At an early age and by what we learn from our parents and other adults, we pick up on prejudices and discrimination. By definition, prejudice “is an opinion, prejudgment or attitude about a group or its individual members.”⁶ Sometimes it could be a positive prejudice but in our delivery can refer to a negative attitude.⁷ The other term “discrimination” can be defined as a “behavior that treats people unequally because of their group members.”⁸ We see this on the evening news programs every night. We see it through hate crimes that often begin with negative stereotypes and prejudices.⁹

In this age of technology, we are able to find more resources and information today than many were able to do twenty years ago. As I listen to my students in their everyday conversations with each other and staff members, it is evident that they are picking up their information from a variety of resources. Students are more willing to question about something they heard on television or read on the internet than question what their parents or teachers said. By looking at multicultural literature, it will give students an opportunity to question what is real to them. It will help to educate what is behind what they already learned know about other cultures. My students will become consumers of multicultural children’s literature as well as multicultural young adult literature. With the use of the two very different writing styles, students will be able to understand, or even remember something, about how culture makes up their physical and emotional being.

Since we will be looking at how setting affects African-Americans and Hispanics,

students will examine how the setting of the story can influence how we think about individuals. “It takes a village to raise a child” comes to mind. By looking at how a family helps to raise and mold the siblings and talking about the make-up of families, it will help to carry on traditions and that cultural normalcy that will be important to the lessons that shape their lives and this unit. We will take a careful look at how the urban setting affects us today. We will look at why people from all countries want to live in an urban area. Many families of all different cultural backgrounds move to Charlotte every year, but why do they move to Charlotte? (Insert percentage here) What draws families to the larger cities? Also once they move into an urban area, what happens to traditions? Will they still continue with their traditions or do families adapt to a more local way of life? For this part of the unit, we will focus on nonfiction text and reliable news sources. I want them to inspect local articles as well as national and international articles. By investigating local, national and international articles and news reports, the students can make a comparison on how other cultures in urban setting are perceived by others and why they are perceived that way. They will find out what the attraction is to the urban settings.

This now brings up another major issue to cover, the issue of stereotypes. Although the news reports claim to be unbiased, they are still one sided, as they aim to persuade an readers to believe in the so- called truth. Every day our students stereotype themselves or are stereotyped within their own cultural group and within the make-up of the classroom or cafeteria. Oddly enough, some like it because it gives them the attention that they are looking for, but in reality, they really do not like being stereotyped. They begin to feel bad about themselves and become more and more silent or violent in the classroom or hallway. So how do we breakdown stereotypes? I will show clips from a television program from the History 2 Channel entitled “America’s Secret Slang.” Each clip gives a short mini lesson on where many commonly used stereotypes come from and what the real meaning behind the word is. This will be a fun way for students to learn about what the terms they use today really means. This will open up the minds on what they are really saying to each other. Hopefully, they will realize that is it silly to stereotype someone especially when they hear that they are calling someone a bucket of maple syrup! Hopefully, they will also see how harmful stereotyping can be.

Strategies

As previously stated, I teach Language Arts all year, I would start this unit around the beginning of the second quarter that way we can build on previous knowledge of literary terms and devices from the past years. One of the main focuses, or skills, in seventh grade Language Arts is how we make inferences while we read a given text. Another focus for seventh grade Language Arts is making connections to literature which goes in hand with making inferences. Making inferences is a weak skill for my students so many of the activities and strategies will have that focus in mind. I will build on what students already know, or may not know, about African American authors and Hispanic authors.

We will also build on note taking skills that they will need in the future educational settings. Many of my students do not know how to take good notes. They are used to a teacher or tutor telling them that if something needs to be bold, highlighted because it is important. They have no idea why they are highlighting a term or idea. They don't understand why it is important to the text. They are just doing it because that's what they were told to do or they like to use highlighters. In the first week of school, I will teach my students how to do Cornell notes and how to use guided notes. We have been working on using different graphic organizers to take notes on such as a fill in the blank handout that guides the students in the reading of an informational text and helps them see what the important items are in the selection. For learning the elements of fiction, it will be a good way for them to pick apart each element of fiction and reflect on what elements help to make a piece of writing a good piece of literature. Students will complete a self-evaluation questionnaire to see how they would grade themselves in the learning process for the notes of the day. For the group work activities, the self-evaluation questionnaire will help to let me know who works well together in a group and who completed the work. The self-evaluation will help me to gauge them in what they understand or don't understand and how the groups are working or are not working.

The strategies that I will use to utilize instruction:

- Think-pair-share
- Bubble Mapping
- Fruyer Model
- Cornell notes
- Socratic seminar
- Analyzing literary elements
- SOAPStone and THIEVES
- Peer editing and review
- Gallery Walk
- Fish Bowl
- Literature Circles

Students are required to keep a three ring binder for my class. Some of the work will be done in their binders individually and also in groups or partners. This is an easy way for students to keep the information organized and to keep themselves organized. They put everything they receive from me, and the work that they do in class into the appropriate sections of the binder. This also helps the students to review the material on an as needed basis. At the end of the unit, students will remove everything from that unit and put it into individual writing folders. The students keep the writing folders in the classroom. The folders are a collection of all the writings, tests, quizzes and class work assignments. I can also use the writing folder pull writing samples of individual students if a student is failing or class placement for the next year.

Supplies need for the whole unit:

Computers or iPads- if they are not available, copies of the survey
Individual copies of the bubble map and Frayer model- one on each side of the paper
Butcher Paper to draw an enlarged bubble map and Frayer model
Post-It notes
Markers
Notebook paper
Pencils or pens
Spring Board textbooks or copies of the *Spring Board* textbook
Print out or projection of African American advertisements
Copies of the poems “Thank You Ma'm”, “Curtains,” and “Poem for the Young White Man Who Asked Me How I, an Intelligent, Well-read Person, Could Believe in the War Between the Races”
One book of each title: *Shades of Black: A Celebration of Our Children, I Love My Hair!*, *The Skin You Live In*, *Sam and the Tigers: A Retelling of ‘Little Black Sambo’*, *Jazz Baby*, and *Sunny’s Adventures*
Class sets of *The House on Mango Street* and *The Watsons Go to Birmingham-1963*
IPads or digital cameras for recording video interpretation

The common core standards that are implementing in this unit are from the reading standards for Literature, informal text and writing. The reading common core standards that are used as follows:

- Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from text. (RL1.1 and RI1.1)
- Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text. (RL1.2 and RI1.2)
- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone. (RL2.4 and RI2.4)
- Compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style. (RL2.5)
- Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text or script, evaluating the choices made by the directors or actors. (RL3.7)
- Analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events. (RI1.3)
- Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or

- viewpoints. (RI2.6)
- Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums. (RI3.7)

The writing common core standards used are as follows:

- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content. (W1.2)
- Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sentences. (W2.3)
- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (W3.4)
- Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or typing a new approach. (W3.5)
- Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others. (W3.6)
- Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. (W4.9)¹⁰

Activities

Day one and two: Students will take an online survey about hidden bias to see what the students know and what they perceive bias. The survey will come from Project Implicit. Project Implicit is a project that was developed by Harvard, the University of Virginia and the University of Washington “to measure unconscious bias.”¹¹ The importance of giving the students a hidden bias survey is to see how they prejudge others and how they see themselves in the bias. It will raise some questions within themselves like is this how everyone sees me, should I really care or should I just be myself? I am promoting changing one’s self because of a hidden bias, but I am promoting a learning and understanding of what has been in our society for a very long time. We will take the survey in class using the computer lab or school chrome books. The reason behind this being an in class assignment is so that I can help them with any questions that they may have on different bias that are presented during the survey. Also, it will give us a chance to have a whole class discussion for standard plus students and small group discussions for the honor students. It will be easier to make the connection with data if we can have our discussions after the students completed the survey. We have the data right in front of us as opposed to them not doing the assignment at home or forgetting to bring in the print out of the data from the survey. If we are unable to get the chrome books, this will become a homework assignment and the students will print off the results and bring them

back the next day.

Depending on when the students take the survey, we have a discussion on what culture and bias means, what it means to them, and how it makes them feel. Also, I want them to think-pair-share with a partner on how to improve cultural awareness in the school and in the classroom. Think-pair-share is when the students independently write down ideas on a given topic then share and discuss their ideas with the person next to them. Then the pair shares parts of their discussion with the whole class.¹² Students will report back to the rest of the class what ideas they came up with. A few students may say that we are a culturally diverse school because they have one or two African-American or Hispanic students in their classes, but that is not the case or the picture of a diverse school. So, we will then have to break down and define what diversity means and how it relates to culture.

Students will have a choice of completing a bubble map or the Frayer model to define the words culture, multicultural and diversity. Students will write a sentence or two on post-it notes with a partner. Then place the post-it note on the bubble map or Frayer model that will be posted in the front of the classroom. A bubble map is when you write the term that needs to be defined in the center. Then the students brainstorm ideas, words or phrases that come to mind when they hear the term to come up with the definition of the word.¹³ The Frayer model is different from the traditional bubble map. With the Frayer model, students will word in the center of the paper. In the upper left hand corner, students will provide the definition of the word. In the upper right hand corner of the paper, students will provide facts and/or characteristics of the word. In the lower left hand corner of the paper, students will provide examples, types or synonyms of the word. In the lower right hand corner of the paper, students will give non examples or antonyms of the word. The completed bubble maps and Frayer models will be placed all around the room. Once the pair has down a definition or explanation of the terms, the students will place the post-its on the bubble map or Frayer model. With their partner, students will complete a quick Gallery Walk to see what others said about the terms. Students will place an exclamation point on the definitions that they like and a question mark on the definitions that they have questions about or just need more explanation. We will connect this discussion with the discussion about how to make our school and classroom more cultural diverse. Each student will also receive a puzzle piece. The students will take the blank puzzle piece home and decorate it with symbols that represent their culture. They will have two days to decorate their puzzle piece and bring it back to class. Each class will put the puzzle together. The puzzle will represent all the symbols of all the cultures on my seventh grade team and how the students fit together like a puzzle. The students will write a one to two paragraph reflection on the activity and keep it in their notebooks. The outcome will be to understand how cultures can come together like a puzzle. The difference would be that a culture, be it that they fit together like a puzzle, don't really fit together. We all have to work to overcome differences and figure out similarities.

Day three and four: For the next two days, I want the students to see how advertisements shape how we are persuaded to buy a product because it will enhance or change us to fit in with society. We will use our *Spring Board* textbooks, unit two, to help us guide through this activity. We will define academic vocabulary terms such as bandwagon, testimony, etc. from this unit. The academic vocabulary will help in our discussion about African-American and Hispanic advertisements.

Before we dive right into the African-American advertisements, we will discuss how advertisements are geared to tweens and teens. Our goals for the next two days students will be to recognize and analyze the influence of others on one's choices, to write an expository paragraph, to recognize the role that advertising plays in the media, and to consider factors that affect consumer choices. Students will complete a pre-write activity where they answer questions like "How do advertisers attempt to influence consumers?" and "How do purpose and audience shape the content in a persuasive text?"¹⁴ After students complete the pre-write for the articles, we will have a whole class discussion on the responses to the questions. Before we read the articles, students will preview the text by reading the title and headings and by skimming the tables. As we look at the given tables, students will describe how the tables are used in the text and what kind of information is it conveying to the audience. We will read the following articles from our Spring Board textbook: "Today's Youth Look to Advertising as Much as Their Friends When Making Purchase Decisions," "From Ramp to Riches," and "Facts about Marketing to Children." Each one of these articles points out how tweens and teens play a major role in today's consumer world.¹⁵

After they understand how they play a major role in the consumer world, we will look at African-American advertisements from the 1930s-1950s. We will look at "Sweet Georgia Brown Vanishing Cream" (skin cream for African-Americans) and "Golden Brown Beauty Preparations"¹⁶. By viewing these advertisements, students will begin to see how African-Americans and Hispanics would try to blend into what was acceptable in society, and at that time, it was to lighten their skin tone and to straighten their hair. Students will then look at advertisements that are focused on African-Americans and Hispanics today. They will compare and contrast the advertisements to see if African-Americans and Hispanics are focused on the same issues in society as in the 30s and 50s or have they changed. They will create a Venn diagram to visually explain the differences and similarities in the advertisements. A Venn diagram is drawn with two overlapping circles that are connected in the middle. In the overlapping center, students write down all the similarities of the advertisements. Inside the two circles, students will write the differences of both advertisements. One circle will represent the advertisement from the past and the other circle will represent the advertisement from the present. Students will complete the Venn diagram in small groups of six students.¹⁷ After the Venn diagrams are completed, we will hang them up around the room and complete a gallery walk. After the gallery walk, they will write a one paragraph reflection. In the

independent reflection, they will focus on the similarities and differences that they saw in the gallery walk. They will also reflect on how does or how would it make you feel to be told that how you look is unacceptable in your own community. What would you do or say? Would you stay true to who you are or try to mimic the advertisements in order to fit in with what society says it right?

Day Five and Six: After we discussed what is cultural, multicultural, diversity and melting pot, I feel it is important to talk about stereotypes and define what a stereotype is and how it affects a person. We will do a free write to get the students focused on the topic of stereotypes. Students will be asked to write down a definition and everything they know about the word stereotype. Then they will write down all of the school appropriate stereotypes that they can think of and what they mean. As a class, students will be asked to share their responses. If students are reluctant to share with the whole class, students can share responses with a shoulder buddy. After we share responses, we will view a three-part series entitled “America’s Secret Slang.” Each segment talks about the history of popular slang and, for some slang words or phrases, how it turned into a stereotype.¹⁸ Students will use Cornell Notes as they watch the segments. They will note the words, where it came from, what does it mean, what is the history behind the word, how is it used today, and what is the definition of the word according to today’s society. After we view the segments and review the notes, students will be paired up with a partner. Students will create a graffiti poster with a given stereotype. In the center will be the given stereotype. Around the word its self will be words that describe and define the given stereotype. I will also have students include antonyms on their graffiti poster. Students will present their graffiti posters to the class.

Day seven and eight: Before we move into our novel study and Hispanic literature, we will look at the poetry of Langston Hughes, Lorna Dee Cervantes, Sandra Cisneros and Nikki Giovanni. In September, we read “Thank You Ma’m” by Langston Hughes. So the students will already have the background information about him and how he is considered to be one of the founders of the Harlem Renaissance. We also went over the background information on Maya Angelou to introduce her as an influential African-American women author. We viewed an interview that she did with Anderson Cooper in August 2013.¹⁹ In the interview she talked about the Civil Rights Movement, whether or not she feels that the Movement has made a difference on today’s cultural society and the fact that she knew Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks. I thought that it was important for the students to see that an African-American has a great influence on society. Also to see how she help to make changes from them similar to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.²⁰

I will review how to read a poem with students before we start reading poetry. I will provide the students with background information on Nikki Giovanni. We will read “Nikki-Rosa” by Giovanni. After reviewing the background information on Langston Hughes, we will read “Mother to Son.” I will give some background knowledge about

Sandra Cisneros before we read “Curtains” as a class. “Curtains” came from her book entitled *My Wicked, Wicked Ways*. We will look at how the Cisneros and Hughes poems are connected. They are connected through the migration north and moving into the urban setting. They are also connected by living the out their own perception of the American dream and how the wishes and dream are fulfilled. We will then look at “Poem for the Young White Man Who Asked Me How I, an Intelligent, Well-Read Person, Could Believe in the War Between the Races” by Lorna Dee Cervantes. This poem came from her book *Emplumada*. I will give brief background knowledge about Lorna Dee Cervantes. With her poem, I want to bring back the idea of how diversity can affect all of us. With all the poems, we will look at the speaker, theme, symbols and connections to the world and self. I can connect to African-American poetry more than common poets that we cover. I don’t know if it’s the rhythm the poet make or the fact that I can connect to the images that they are painting for us, but I want my students to be able to develop that connection.

We will read the poems aloud as a class. I feel that poetry should be read aloud because students need to hear the rhythm and dialect of the poems. We will focus on the dialect used, theme, speaker, and visual imagery that is created. We will also look at similes, metaphors and personification. I will conduct a quick survey of each class to see what the students remember about figurative language elements. Instead of orally surveying the class, I may give a short poem and ask the students to identify the metaphor, simile and personification in the poem. This will be something I will give to my honors students because I know they already know the definitions and can easily identify the figurative language in a poem. With my standard plus students, I may review the terms orally then use the short poem to see if they can identify them.

After the mini lesson over figurative language and background information about the poets, we will move into the reading of the poetry. We will read all four poems aloud one time. Then I will break up the students into four groups, one group per one poem. The students will have a graphic organizer to help them analyze the poem and create questions to pose to the class. I will give the students Bloom’s Taxonomy questions starter to help think of good, quality questions. In their groups, they will need to come up with six questions, one question per category from the question starters handout.

Once the students are done formulating their questions, we will form a fishbowl or inner/outer circles. We will review the process of how a fishbowl works to make sure everyone remembers how we conduct the questions and responses. In a fishbowl, students will discuss the findings and student created questions with others. One group will form the inner circle while others from a circle around them. The outer circles responsibility is to listen, respond and evaluate the inner circle’s poem. Students will only get about ten minutes before we switch inner circles. Each group will get an opportunity to be the inner circle. The inner circle will make notes on the outer circle’s responses and share with the whole class. The inner circle will have two people from the outer circle to

share findings and questions with. After students have finished the fishbowl, students will write a quick reflection about one of the poems that learned about that day.²¹

Day Nine: Students will take a short quiz over the poetry terms that we discussed while we were reading the poems. Students will write a poetic critique based off the poems that they read from the previous two days. The poetic critique will be based off the Sandra Cisneros and Langston Hughes poems. This will be an in class writing activity due at the end of the class period. Students will write about the similarities and differences between the two poems. They will discuss the theme of dreams being fulfilled and will need to pull out references from the text to support the theme of the text. An important skill that I have been working with my students on is going back into the text to support their ideas. They can tell me what theme is but they struggle with where it says that in the text and using the text to back up their thoughts. After they have wrote about the theme of the poems and the similarities and differences between the poems, students will need to make connections to the poems. They must have two connections in their criticism. They can choose from connections from: text to self, text to another text, or text to a current event. The current event can be a local event or a national event. This connection will allow students to bring in nonfiction, mass media text to help with their connection. If students feel a connection to the text because they have migrated to the United States or to a larger city to fulfill a dream of a better life, this will give the students a chance to write about their connection to the piece without being judged. For the text to text connection, students will have to write about how they connected the poems with another book, short story, poem, or song of their choice. Their poetic critique will be a minimum of two pages long.

Day ten, eleven and twelve: After getting all the terms and definitions that we will be using as we move along this unit out of the way, we begin looking at African-American children's books. The big question I want students to focus on is can we see ourselves in an African-American story. Which life lesson(s) from the story can apply to all of us or just to African-Americans? The goals that I want the students to achieve from this point on to the end of the unit will be "to make connections between texts and your own life, to analyze, interpret, and evaluate a novel on a variety of levels and for a variety of purposes, to read with fluency and apply appropriate language conventions in oral reading, discussion, and writing."²² First we will compare and contrast an African-American children's book with one from a popular children's author *One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish* by Dr. Seuss book. I choose Dr. Seuss because at some point in a child's life, they have read or heard a Dr. Seuss book. So why not bring back some good memories of reading children's books to the teenagers. Integrating children's books in a unit can help students understand the importance of the life lesson or the theme of another related novel. We will discuss who each book is aimed at and why or what makes it appropriate for a particular culture of children. We will look at the illustrations of both books to see how it helps to tell the story or describe who the book truly intended for. Also, I want the students to describe how the pictures help to represent

African Americans or does it do the opposite and not help describe African Americans. We will identify the theme of the story and what lesson we are supposed to learn from the theme of each book. After comparing and contrasting the two books, we will break up into literature circles to dive deep into the text and create ownership to their literature circle and to the text. Literature circles will be determined by test scores and writing scores. Each group will have a high flyer and a struggling student with average students mixed in.

Students will have a choice of six different children's books. The groups may choose from *Sunny's Adventures*, *Sam and the Tigers: A Retelling of 'Little Black Sambo'*, *Jazz Baby*, *I Love My Hair!*, and *The Skin You Live In*. With the chosen children's books, students will analyze the setting, theme, plot, genre and characters. Students will have to provide evidence from their book. They can directly quote or paraphrase their results. They will also have to create illustrations for each part of the elements of fiction. Students will create a graphic organizer to help investigate the story. They will choose between a pie chart, bubble map, Venn diagram or fishbone map. Students will complete their graphic organizer and present their answers to small groups. Each group will have a reporter that will report the group's answers. The groups will move from group to group and take notes on the children's books. Students will ask questions that they formulated in their groups to ask the reporters about their book. Students will have about ten minutes at each station to take their notes and ask their questions. Some classes may need less than ten minutes at each station, so I will adjust the time after the first two rotations are complete. Students will complete a self evaluation grading themselves and the group on the completed activity.

Day twelve and thirteen: We will begin to move into our novel study at this point. Students will read *The Watsons Go to Birmingham-1963* by Christopher Paul Curtis, and *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros for standard plus students. The lexile level for *The Watson Go to Birmingham-1963* is 1000. The lexile level for *The House on Mango Street* is 870.²³ When teaching students that are at multiple reading levels in one classroom it is important to know the lexile levels of your students. Lexile levels help to see what grade your students are reading at and within that grade level how high or low they are.

Students will continue to work on the same goals as the previous day, but we are going to add in specific goals that relate to the novel study. Students will be able to “apply sensory imagery in oral and written form, examine the structure of the novel, generate connections among texts and to oneself, identify characters, setting, and opening situation of the novel, draw inferences from a close reading, provide textual support, make predictions, interpret the consequences of choices the characters make, make connections within and across text, compare and contrast relationships between characters.”²⁴ These goals will continue through to the end of the unit. Students will read their selected novel in class for ten minutes every day and then answer a thinking stem

question. The answer will need to be a paragraph in length. We will also start exploring Hispanic poets. For this poetry part, standard plus students will be responsible for teaching the class their given poem and author. My standard plus students need fewer options to choose from because they tend to focus on all of the choices as opposed to focusing on the task and completing it to the best of their ability. They also need more structure when it comes to projects and presentations. For the honors students, they will be given a list of Hispanic authors and be able to choose an author and a piece of writing from that author. My honors students do not have the same problem as the standard plus students. The students like being able to pick out something that interests them and expanding on the details. This will benefit both levels because it give students a chance to review the material on poems from the previous few days, help them to support their findings by using the text and what they learned about their author and have a leadership role in the classroom. Either way, the students will teach the class about their selected author and piece of writing from that author. Students will be paired up according to whom they selected. I will check out the iPad or chrome book charts for the students so they can research their author.

Students will be given a rubric and guidelines on what they need to cover when they teach the class. They will come up with an activity to enhance the learning about the poem. The activity could be anything from a word search to illustration of lines from the poem/short story.

Day fourteen and fifteen: Students will continue to teach the class their chosen authors and literary work from that author. Students will continue to keep a reading log and writing their stop and jot entries on Monday through Thursday. The stop and jot entries are paragraph starters that the students pick to write about for that day of reading. Categories will range from summarizing, characterization, theme, symbolism, illustration, and inference. We will also continue to read our novels for our novel study. Before the students begin teaching the class, I am going to assign a snail project for their selected novel. I will provide the paper for the students. I will provide written directions and model how to cut and fold the paper.

The snail project is a way for the student to describe the plot, characters, theme and conflict, summarize the book, give an opinion of the book and design an advertisement to sell the book. The cover of the snail will have the book title and author along with a proper illustration. The writing may be computer generated, drawings must be had drawn and colored. They will have sixteen panels to complete where most of them will be written in paragraph form and complete sentences.

Here is what each panel will have:

1. Title Cover panel- This will include the title of the text, author name and cover design.
2. About the author- Using the information provided, students will use complete

- sentences to give background information about the author.
3. Main Character(s)- Provided a description of the character traits of the main character(s) and illustration.
 4. Conflict- Students will describe the conflict of the novel. They will also say if it is internal or external conflict and what kind of conflict the novel is (man v. man, man v. self, man v. nature, man v. society). Provide an illustration as well.
 5. Draw and fill in the plot diagram of the novel.
 6. Describe the culture of the characters and how it helps the narrator to tell the story.
 7. Draw and give a caption of your favorite scene in the novel.
 8. Draw and give a caption of your least favorite scene in the novel.
 9. -13 Draw and give a caption of five important scenes in order that they appear in the novel.
 14. Write a summary of the book. Summary must be one paragraph long.
 15. Write a recommendation for the book. Describe why you would recommend or not recommend the novel.
 16. Create an advertisement for the novel. Think of it in terms as a movie advertisement. Must include the theme and a memorable quote from the novel. Must include a picture, actor's names and rating.

This will be a review of all the terms that we have been using for this unit and will supply another connection to the advertising lesson from the previous days. Students do not have to use the computer to create the images or to type up the sentences and summaries. If they would like to, they may use the computer, but it is not a requirement. I will also provide questions that will relate to each book individually for two or three panels. For example, for the novel The House on Mango Street there will be a panel devoted to the narrator and the importance of her identity, looking at how she sees herself at school, home and within the community. Students will have two weeks to complete the snail.

Day sixteen, seventeen and eighteen: As students continue in their novel studies, I will highlight the issue of color and the use of the word "Black" to describe African-American. We will read or listen to a NPR transcript on about how skin color still plays a big role. I will introduce THIEVES to the students. THIEVES is a nonfiction text taking strategy that allows the students to break down the text into smaller chunks for them to examine. It also helps them to see how the vocabulary is used in the passage. It allows them to summarize the passage into their own words. After we have read and discussed the NPR transcript, I will read to them Shades of Black: A Celebration of Our Children by Sandra L. Pinkney. This book discusses the different shades of black children. I want this to break down the labeling of "black" to all African-Americans. I want both the book and transcript to show that African-American are individuals no matter what skin tone they are. We will also look at the nonfiction piece by Langston Hughes entitled "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain". Even though this was published in 1926, I think it helps to bring back the terms of discrimination and

stereotypes. Students will use SOAPSTone to analyze the article. I will review and model how to use SOAPSTone with the students. SOAPSTone is a strategy that helps students analyze a nonfiction text by “discussing and identifying speaker, occasion, audience, purpose, subject, and tone.”²⁵ By using SOAPSTone students will begin to understand the author’s craft in the text.²⁶ Students will write SOAPSTone down the right side of their paper and leave some space between each capital letter so they can fill in each paper of the strategy with text support. Students will be placed into groups to analyze one of the articles and complete SOAPSTone together. Students will present the findings from their article and completion of SOAPSTone.

Day nineteen, twenty, twenty-one and twenty-two: This may take more than three days. We will play it by ear according to how the brainstorming, script writing and storyboard planning goes. Students will begin brainstorming ideas about writing and illustrating assigned chapters of *The House on Mango Street* or *Scorpions*. Students will be given a rubric to follow along and use a checklist to know what they will be graded on. Students will be required to make a storyboard of their chapter and write a script. They must have the storyboard and script approved before they can move into practicing their chapters. We will use class time to write the scripts and make the storyboards. We will also use class time to film the chapters. Some groups may need to use outside of class time to film their chapters. In groups of five, students will make a video interpretation about their assigned chapter. Everyone will help in the writing and planning process. Depending on the chapter, everyone will get a chance to act in their interpretation of the chapter. One group member will be the camera/iPad operator. One group member will be the director/leader. One person will be in charge of props. Another will be in charge of costumes. The last group member will be in charge of writing the script as others help to give lines from the text to put in their movie. Once the group figures out who will do what role, students will begin writing the script and storyboard. While they are planning the scene, students will also need to think about what props and costumes will be needed for their chapter. We will use as much school as we can for the backdrop of the chapters that way when we edit it together, it will have a similar setting throughout the interpretation. When we put all the chapters together, it will make a class video representation of the standard plus or honors novel. Students may edit their chapters to their liking after they have filmed it. Once everyone has filmed their chapters, we will edit each chapter so they fit together like a movie. We will create invitations and invite parents to come into their child’s class for movie day so the parents can see what their child has put together for the movie.

Day twenty-three: Students will be given a novel test to wrap up the unit. Students will be given a review of all the terms and concepts that were covered in the unit. The test will be geared toward which novel the students read and will cover the topics of theme, conflict, setting and characterization. All students will have an EOG (End of Grade) test type questions. Students will be given a story out of the Holt-McDougal Literature textbook. They will have to answer questions that deal with making inferences, making

predictions, questioning the author, and analyzing the text. It will be a matching and multiple choice styled test consisting of 50 questions. The questions will be based off Bloom's Taxonomy.

Appendix: Implementing Common Core Standards

The reading common core standards used are as follows:

- Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from text. Students will complete this goal through small group and whole class discussions. (RL.1.1)
- Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text. Students will use short response and think-pair-share strategies as students read the novel, poems, and children's books. (RL.1.2)
- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone. Through reading poetry, students will determine new words and phrases by using context clues to determine the definition. Students will also use mapping and the Frayer model to determine the meaning of the new words. (RL 2.4)
- Compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style. A big skill in seventh grade is using comparing and contrasting skills to analyze a text. Students will complete a poetic critique and a video interpretation. (RL 2.5)
- Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text or script, evaluating the choices made by the directors or actors. Students will create a video interpretation of a chapter in a novel and discuss how they stayed true to the text. (RL 3.7)
- Analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events. Students will use text to self, text to world and text to text analyze to make connections to the novels, poems, authors, etc. (RI 1.1)
- Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints. By using SOAPStone, students will figure out the point of view of the author and the claims that the author is making in the text. (RI 2.4)
- Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums. Students will discuss why using different mediums can help an author show their voice in many different ways. (RI 3.7)

The writing common core standards used are as follows:

- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content. Students will write a variety of texts to analyze and reflection on information. (W 1.2)

- Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sentences. Students will write a script based off a novel that will be filmed. (W 1.3)
- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. Students will write a poetic critique that will require development, organization and style. (W 2.4)
- Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach. For the script and poetic critique, students will complete a rough draft which they will then revise and edit and rewrite before turning them in. (W 2.5)
- Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others. Students will use peer editing check list and Microsoft Word to produce and publish a piece of writing. (W 2.6)
- Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. Students will use quotes and paraphrases from the text to support their poetic critique. (W 3.9)

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