



Mirror, Window, Blueprint: Identity, the Other, and Social Constructs in African American and Hispanic Literature

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:
8th grade English Language Arts

Keywords: African American, Latino, Hispanic, Literature, Setting, Character, Conflict, Society

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

Synopsis: This unit is designed for use in the eighth grade English Language Arts curriculum and is meant to be used in the second semester of the school year, after students have built a base-level of knowledge of literary elements such as character, setting, and conflict. This unit uses complementary pieces of African American and Hispanic literature that explore the themes of identity, social and cultural boundaries, and belonging. These selections have been specifically chosen around narratives of immigrant and urban life with the purpose of exposing students to multiple perspectives and providing a basis for literary analysis based on reflections of identity, understanding others, and interpreting social constructions.

I plan to teach this unit during the coming year in to 60 students in 8th grade English Language Arts.

I give permission for the Institute to publish my curriculum unit and synopsis in print and online. I understand that I will be credited as the author of my work.

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Stefanie Carter-Dodson

Introduction

Literature can serve many functions for a reader. At times it can be cathartic, revealing aspects of ourselves. At times, it can be revelatory, exposing us to new ways of thinking about life and the world. This unit situates the urban setting as a foundation for deeper exploration into the impact of socially-constructed environments on the human experience. Through complementary selections of African American and Hispanic literature, students will extrapolate basic literary elements such as character development and conflict to an understanding of the powerful effect of social environments on the formation of identity. In doing so, students will conduct a thorough literary and social analysis of parallel and divergent trends represented in literature and life.

Three modes of layered analysis are employed to assist students in breaking apart experiences into individual and collective phenomena—the window, the mirror, and the blueprint. Students will learn to identify facets of themselves, the Other, and social constructions in narratives that echo the reality of living. Though the processes of literary analysis are guided, the ultimate outcome of student understanding is intended to be discovery based. A large portion of activities are dedicated to development of inductive and divergent thinking.

Content Objectives

This unit is designed for use within the eighth grade Language Arts curriculum and is intended for use at the end of the school year, after students have mastered literature and informational standards and can work toward complex inquiry of interrelated concepts. By the end of this unit, students will be able to articulate and prove ways in which literature provides an understanding of humanity and society. The unit will be taught for approximately 3 weeks.

In accordance with the Common Core State Standards, the opening concepts Language Arts curriculum include plot, character, conflict, and setting. At the onset of this unit, my students will already understand that setting is integral to the development of both the conflict and the characters in a narrative. As an aspect of spiraling curriculum, which revisits concepts multiple times with increasing complexity, this unit begins with a more complex approach to these same three concepts. The content of this unit is aligned

with CCSS standards RL 8.3, characterization and character motivation, and RL 8.2, development of theme through characters setting, and plot.

As a way of introducing the unit, essays from *This I Believe: The Personal Philosophies of Remarkable Men and Women* will serve as introductory pieces to demonstrate how people and “character” (in this case, belief systems) are influenced by culture and environment. In each of these selections, the individual has been profoundly affected by an aspect of their setting, and the belief statements in the essays articulate this correlation. After modeling through these brief selections, the unit continues with excerpts from novels and short stories. Analysis of literary texts will focus on the formative impact of setting on character and conflict.

As students work with literary texts, they will be introduced to two psychosocial aspects of literature: the mirror and the window. Initially, students will work with a “mirror” analysis. Literature can allow readers a way to see identity reflected back to them. Readers can connect with sympathetic characters and relatable circumstances as a way to deepen understanding of their own lives and experiences. This type of connection-based analysis is explicitly taught to readers from elementary grades through secondary schooling.

Though my students are quite comfortable with this first mode of psychosocial analysis, the “window” analysis requires an abstraction of perspective that will likely prove challenging. When readers engage with texts that reveal significant departures from their accepted worldview, they are peering through a window at another way of life. Through this analysis, the reader is able to broaden their worldview through vicarious contact with the reality of the Other. For the purpose of this analysis, the Other will be defined as individuals or groups who are perceived as different or outside of one’s social and cultural affiliation. Understanding of lives outside of ones’ social group provides a broader, more empathetic perspective.

The final level of analysis requires the highest level of abstraction. In the Blueprint Analysis, students will explore how socially-constructed identities, and the norms that are a part of the implicit behavior contract of social living, become imprinted on both the individual and the environment. Social identities create boundaries within the urban landscape physically, as neighborhoods are segregated into ethnic, racial, and socio-economic enclaves. Similarly, less tangible social boundaries exist through the hierarchy of culture. In this analysis, students will learn to see the “map” of social interaction, boundaries and norms.

As a culminating activity, students will engage in an inquiry project in which they will find an example of short fiction that can be used as the basis for the layered window, mirror, blueprint analysis. The analysis will be developed in writing, then formatted into a visual presentation. Finally, students will act as presenters and participants in a Mirror,

Window, Blueprint conference in our school library, where the classes will convene as an academic community. The students will have an opportunity to circulate, making notes on the work of their peers, then will be placed into small caucus discussion groups, which will be student-facilitated.

Background

I teach at a middle school in a high-poverty neighborhood in Northeast Charlotte, with 92.2% of the student population designated as economically disadvantaged. Enrollment for the 2013-2014 school year is currently recorded as 1, 085 students. According to the most recently published Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Progress Report, the racial/ethnic composition of the school is 60.1% African American, 33.3% Hispanic, 3.1% White, 2% Asian, and 1.4% other.

Though I teach both inclusion and honors-level classes, due to the high level of abstraction in this unit, it will only be taught in my honors-level classes. 2013-2014 is the inaugural school year for implementation of honors courses at my school. The students were selected for eligibility into Honors Language Arts based on a passing score (as determined by a score of 3 on a scale of 1-4) on the sixth grade End of Grade test in conjunction with an application submitted by the student. For this reason, the composition of the honors-level classes varies greatly in ability, with a range in reading lexile from 429-1407. According to the Common Core grade-level conversion for lexile, this places my honors students on spectrum of reading ability that ranges from fourth grade to twelfth grade. Four students have been identified as Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AIG) and receive Differentiated Education Plans.

Teaching Strategies

In determining teaching strategies for this unit, my primary goal was to incorporate methods of increasing cognitive complexity. In this unit, students must make connections between multiple texts, and reconstruct and extend existing schema as they go beyond application of skills and learn inductive and divergent modes of thinking. Specifically, the methods of Hilda Taba have been used as strategies for the teaching of *thinking* in addition to discipline-specific content. Conversely, because this unit is designed for students exhibiting a range of reading ability, a secondary emphasis will be placed upon differentiated reading strategies.

SCAMPER: Brainstorming and Divergent Reorganization

Brainstorming is essential to the development of divergent thinking. As part of the brainstorming process, fluency, or the proliferation of ideas, is encouraged. Once students have accumulated a large quantity of ideas with which to work, the SCAMPER method

scaffolds re-organization of information in novel ways. I have adapted this method for use with this unit. The guiding questions provide a framework for students to re-think their interpretations of multiple texts.

- Substitute: What are the alternatives to the outcomes of circumstances in the text?
- Combine: What circumstances are similar across texts? Even if circumstances are not direct parallels, are there small instances of similarity?
- Adapt: What could you change within the series of texts that would make the circumstances similar?
- Modify: What could you change to make them dissimilar?
- Eliminate: Look at your lists of adaptations and modifications. Recombine similarities and eliminate irrelevant information.
- Reconstruct: What general motif emerges from this body of information? Translate this motif into a statement that is applicable across the texts.

Interactive Notebooks

Interactive notebooks are a central strategy built into my curriculum. Interactive notebooks are used as a way to keep an ongoing record of notes, key activities, concepts, reflections, and formative writing pieces. Interactive notebooks allow students to engage in reflective learning practices and recursive information processing. As students progress through a unit, they are able to revisit previously learned content and revise or respond to their earlier understanding. The notebooks also provide students with a concrete way to track their progress in fundamental reading and writing skills.

Dialectical Journals

Dialectical journals are double entry journals in which students record significant passages from the text on the left and their interpretations and reflections on the right. This can be a powerful strategy for self-directed, deep inquiry of a text. Teacher-created guiding questions can also be used to direct analysis towards a targeted concept. Coupled with Interactive Notebooks, this strategy facilitates creativity and critical thinking.

Guided Analytical Reading

As students learn to become critical readers of texts, they will need support in learning how to move beyond a rudimentary parsing of the text into a thoughtful analysis. In a guided analytical reading, the teacher models a content-driven analysis that also provokes the students to apply concepts in new ways.

Reciprocal Teaching: Literature Circles

Reciprocal teaching in the form of literature circles is a cooperative learning strategy in which students engage in group discussions and inquiry to analyze literature. Literature circles can be structured or unstructured, depending on the needs of the students. With my middle school students, I use structured literature circles in which every student is given a role within the group. I find that the use of roles keeps students accountable for their learning, increases engagement, and also alleviates the anxiety students may have about collaborative learning since students know exactly what is expected from them. Assigning roles also provides built-in differentiation, directing focus toward a particular skill. In this unit, the following roles will be assigned to students based on targeted areas for growth:

- **Discussion Director:** The discussion director is responsible for guiding the group's discussion of a text by determining the sequence of roles and developing thought-provoking questions for the group. The questions created by the Discussion Director should prompt discourse that focuses on the thematic material of the text.
- **Literary Luminary:** The literary luminary selects salient passages from the text and strategically develops a plan for discussion of those passages. The selected passages can be selected based on exemplary use of literary devices, critical stages of plot or character development, or connections.
- **Summarizer:** The summarizer identifies important events within the text, provides a justification for why this event advances the plot through development of a character, conflict, or theme.
- **Vocabulary Wizard:** The vocabulary wizard records unfamiliar vocabulary that cannot be determined through context and uses a dictionary to define these terms. The vocabulary wizard then revisits the passages from which the vocabulary was pulled, and records the context for the terms

SIFT

SIFT is a Pre-AP strategy for use with fiction texts. Students use SIFT to track the development of tone and theme of in a text. The basic analysis for this strategy is to

identify symbolism, imagery, figurative language, tone and theme. In using this strategy, I find it helpful to provide questions that will facilitate a deeper analysis and provoke students to examine an author's purposeful placement of these stylistic elements.

- **Symbolism:** What major symbols are incorporated in the text? Are there any recurring or related symbols in the text? Is the author's use of symbolism subtle or obvious to the reader?
- **Imagery:** Where has the author included vivid sensory language? What are the most compelling examples of imagery used in the text? Consider the author's placement of imagery. What events, characters, or key details is the author highlighting by this use of imagery?
- **Figures of speech:** Identify figurative language in the text. Does the author use figurative language in dialogue or narration?
- **Tone and Theme:** What word choices has the author made that contribute to the tone of the text? How do the aspects of your SIFT analysis contribute to the theme of the text?

Text Triangulation

Text triangulation is a strategy in which one or more texts are used to assist with increasing or decreasing complexity as needed. Use of multiple texts allows students to access a concept through multiple genres and media, creating more meaningful learning.

Jigsaw

A jigsaw is a cooperative learning strategy that helps introduce new information in an expeditious manner. Students are divided into group of 4-5, depending on the material. Each student will then move into a specialty group where they will become experts in one aspect of the new information. Students from specialty groups then return to their home groups and share the information. This strategy keeps every child engaged and accountable, and also allows for movement within the classroom.

Activities

Activities are organized under Lesson Essential Questions, which progressively build to an understanding of the Unit Essential Question. (How does literature provide an understanding of humanity and society?)

Part One: The Mirror

How do Setting and Culture influence Identity?

Texts:

- Elvia Bautista, *Remembering All the Boys*
- Phyllis Allen, *Leaving Identity Issues to Other Folks*
- Cecilia Munoz, *Getting Angry Can Be a Good Thing*
- Jackie Robinson, *Free Minds and Hearts at Work*
- James Mollison, Photographs from *Where Children Sleep*

In this lesson, students will read selected essays from the *This I Believe* collection and delineate the beliefs of authors and identify factors which may have influenced these beliefs. Students will identify factors using inference and text-dependent evidence. Students will then apply this kind of analysis to a non-linguistic resource, thinking creatively to develop background stories for children in images.

To activate this lesson, students will be asked to identify their core beliefs and consider how this is related to who they are as individuals (identity). Students will share responses, and the class will generate definitions for the following terms: identity, belief system, culture. Students will then view images from James Mollison's book, *Where Children Sleep*. These images depict children from around the world in their bedrooms, with obvious disparities in material wealth and comfort. According to Mollison, the bedroom is a uniquely intimate setting, "inscribed with the children's material and cultural circumstances...[showing] the details that inevitably mark people apart from each other...while the children themselves would appear in the set of portraits as individuals, as equals...just as children."¹ Initially, students will only be asked to describe the setting of these images. Students will be prompted to consider why the conditions in the various images are so different from one another. As part of the discussion evoked by this prompt, the teacher will guide students toward a discussion of culture.

Students will then read one of the four *This I Believe* essays. As students read, they will complete part one of a four-part graphic organizer. After reading, students with the same articles will be paired for discussion and will complete the remaining three components of the graphic organizer. The criteria for this graphic organizer will be:

- 1) What does the author believe?
- 2) In what ways has the setting the author lives in contributed to this belief?
- 3) How have other people contributed to this belief?
- 4) What personal connections can you make between your values and the author's?

Following the reading, students will revisit the images from *Where Children Sleep* and develop a background story for one of the children. In developing this storyline, students will use the criteria from the graphic organizer as support for generating ideas.

How can setting cause conflicts of identity?

Texts:

- Julia Alvarez, *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* (Part 2: *Daughter of Invention*)
- Domingo Martinez, *The Boy Kings of Texas* (Chapter 10, *The Mimis*)

The second lesson in part one will explore the ways in which setting can result in conflicts of identity. In order to understand this concept, students will need to for a broader understanding of setting. Aside from immediate cultural and physical surroundings, of the existence dominant culture provides another formative aspect on individual identity. As a way of making this tangible, students will create a setting map. The setting map will consist of a series of concentric circles. In the center, students will describe their immediate setting (school). Students will then describe their neighborhood, city, state, and country in the outer rings. Individual responses will be compiled into a class exemplar, and students will be prompted to consider the societal aspects (including the concept of dominant culture) of each layer in the setting map. After the group discussion, students will be asked to respond in writing to the following questions:

- 1) What happens when a person has to learn to live in a new setting?
- 2) How does dominant culture affect identity?

Students will record their responses in their interactive notebooks, using a two-column format. After the lesson, students will revisit this writing prompt to reflect upon and revise their responses.

The texts used in this lesson include characters who are resistant to prescribed identities. In the excerpt from *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, Laura and Yoyo struggle to reinvent themselves after moving from Trujillo-era Dominican Republic to New York City. In excerpt from *Boy Kings of Texas*, twin girls attempt to reinvent themselves by eschewing the mannerisms of their Hispanic family and embracing the popular culture persona of the “valley girl.” Students will read the excerpts using literature circle strategies. Students will then use the SCAMPER strategy to explore the parallels and conflicts within the texts. This will be done in literature circle groups, so that students brainstorm collaboratively. To facilitate collaboration and encourage fluency of ideas, students will use a large poster paper to record their responses. The goal for this activity is for students to identify a similar motif in the texts without being guided. By deconstructing and reconstructing the texts with this method, students will

come to an understanding of social pressures, clashes of culture, and intricacies of belonging that form a motif for the two texts.

To summarize the lesson, students will revisit the dialectical journal responses. After reflecting on their responses, students will compose a “what-if” scenario. On a folded piece of paper, students will write a paragraph about how their identity has been impacted through setting. On the opposite half of the page, students will compose a paragraph about how they would be impacted if they were to move to a new setting. This will allow students to make a personal connection with the themes of the texts.

Part Two: The Window

How can identity create the conflict of The Other?

Texts:

- Sandra Cisneros, *House on Mango Street (Those Who Don't)*
- Pat Mora, *Legal Alien*

At this stage of the unit, students will be asked to consider how identity and group affiliations--cultural, ethnic, economic—result in the creation of “The Other.” The chapter *Those Who Don't* from Sandra Cisneros's *House on Mango Street* will provide an introduction to this concept. In this chapter, the narrator talks about people who mistakenly drive into her neighborhood and their negative attitudes toward the residents. The narrator explains that what looks dangerous and foreign to the outsiders is misinterpreted, then provides context and normalcy to the neighborhood by naming the residents. In the end, though, the narrator admits that “all brown all around, we are safe. But watch us drive into a neighborhood of another color and our knees go shakity-shake and our car windows get rolled up tight and our eyes look straight.”ⁱⁱ This is a short chapter, roughly one half of a page, which lends this text well to an activating strategy. Students will read this chapter independently to open the lesson, then respond in a dialectical journal. The definition for The Other will then be provided, and students will identify an example within the text.

The frank discussion of racial otherness in this chapter provides an excellent starting point for students to consider how our constructions of identity can be exclusionary and keep us isolated. As a way of quantifying the idea of racial isolation in cities, students will participate in a gallery walk in which they will view Racial Dot Maps from the Coop Center. These maps depict racial segregation in American cities in a color-coded, point map based on 2010 census data. After the gallery walk, students will brainstorm other criteria that can come into play in the formation of otherness.

Pat Mora's *Legal Alien* will then be used to provoke students into considering what it is like to be the Other. Similarly, how can an individual be part of a community and an Other to that community at the same time? In this poem, the speaker is "American but hyphenated,/ viewed by Anglos as perhaps exotic,/ perhaps inferior, definitely different,/ viewed by Mexicans as alien (their eyes say, "You may speak Spanish but you're not like me")/an American to Mexicans/a Mexican to Americans" ⁱⁱⁱ The speaker has a dual identity as a Mexican American, one which does not allow complete membership in either community. The speaker is simultaneously a member and an Other in two worlds, existing on the "fringes." The poem will be read independently, then aloud as a class. Before the class discusses the poem, students will reflect using dialectical journals.

How do representations of the Other in literature develop a reader's perspective?

Texts:

- Toni Morrison, "Rececitaf"
- Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche, *Americanah*

For this essential question, my classes will begin with "Rececitaf." In this short story, two girls room together in a state-run children's facility. Initially, the girls are wary of each other because one of the children is White and the other child is African American. The girls quickly learn to overcome this instance of "otherness." As the story evolves, the girls must repeat this cycle of rejection and acceptance as they encounter each other in adulthood. This text contains multiple levels of otherness, including divisions among class and social status. The two characters continually navigate what it means to be a part of and apart from a group. This is an ideal text for students to understand the concept of the Other, because the examples are all relatable to their lives. My students understand racism, peer rejection, and social status; these are common to the human experience.

Students will read this text in their literature circles and complete the literature circle roles. After the group discussions, students will complete a window matrix. In this instance, the mirror analysis will facilitate understanding how characters encounter outsider status in a text, not the reader. Students will record which character in the outsider in the scenario, the criteria for insider and outsider status from the group, and the character's reactions.

Once students understand the "windows" that characters in fiction peer through in order to see the world, I want them to consider what it means for them to look out onto another perspective or way of living through literature. First, students will be asked to consider the associations they have with the following words: immigrant, Black, African American. The words will be presented in isolation, so that only one word is revealed at a time. Students will not be asked to share their responses. Rather, they will reflect back upon this activating in a dialectical journal entry after reading. Students will be asked to

consider these terms in preparation for the next reading for this unit, which is an excerpted chapter from *Americanah*. In this text, Efemelu is an immigrant from Nigeria living and studying in Princeton. For many of my students, and many people throughout the nation, the term “immigrant” has become synonymous with Hispanic. Through this text, I want my students to reconstruct the schema they have attached to this word and interpret it more broadly. This text also challenges the narrow view of race and ethnicity through Efemelu’s reflections of what it means to be a Black immigrant, but not an African American. Similarly, Efemelu’s interactions with Senegalese immigrants in a braiding salon make clear to the reader that there is not a homogenous identity for African immigrants.

In approaching this text, I anticipate that my students will have to confront and dispel common misconceptions about immigration, Africans, and possibly black identity in general. This text should truly provide my students with a window to many new perspectives. Because the text is so rich and the process of uncovering latent bias can be intimidating, especially for younger students, I will have my students work through the text independently before we discuss it as a class. I want their initial reactions to be genuine and fluid, so as I read the text aloud, I will encourage students to record their reactions in their notebooks. After reading, students will have a longer opportunity for reflection before the class discusses the window analysis of the text. Students will then revisit their dialectical journal responses from the beginning of the lesson and make revisions or comments.

Part Three: The Blueprint

- Pat Mora, *Fences*
- Toni Cade Bambara, “The Lesson”

The blueprint analysis requires that the reader deconstruct the social boundaries that create conflict within the narrative or within a character. Toni Cade Bambara’s “The Lesson” is a quintessential example of a text in which character vs. society conflict is accessible to the reader. In this story, a group of teenagers from Harlem are taken into the F.A.O.Schwarz by their civic-minded neighbor. She brings the children to the store in order to provide them with a concrete example of inequity—many of the toys in the store are more expensive than the rent in Harlem. Not only does this provide a concrete example for the adolescents in the story, it provides a perfectly-constructed example for my students as well. After reading, students will be asked to track the elements of the story, including the setting, characters, and conflict on the outside pages of booklet foldable. Each component will be cut into strips. Between the pages, the underlying social constructions that effect each of these components will be recorded.

Pat Mora's poem, *Fences*, will be used as an independent practice activity. In this poem, a child watches a tourist beach from behind a fence. Her brother cleans the beach every morning, beautifying it for the tourists. When the speaker's younger sister runs across the beach one day in an act of playfulness, they are reprimanded by their mother. "It's their beach,"^{iv} she tells them. The fence acts as a physical boundary and as a symbol of the social boundary between the speaker's family and the wealthy tourists. Students will read the poem independently, then apply the blueprint analysis to the text using the opposite side of the blueprint foldable from "The Lesson."

Endnotes

ⁱ Mollison, James. *Where children sleep*. London: Chris Boot, 2010.

ⁱⁱ Cisneros, Sandra. "Those Who Don't." In *The house on Mango Street*. New York: Vintage Books, 1991. 28.

ⁱⁱⁱ Mora, Pat. *Communion*. Houston, Tex.: Arte Publico Press, 1991.

^{iv} Mora, Pat. *Chants*. Houston, Tex.: Arte Publico Press, 1984.

Appendix: Implementing Common Core Standards

Primary Standards Implemented

The following standards comprise the primary focus of the content. The unit requires literary analysis of character, setting, conflict, and character. As part of the analysis, students must be able to cite textual evidence in order to support the conclusions drawn from the texts.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.3 Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

Secondary Standards Implemented

The secondary standards were applied in the activities of the unit. In this unit, students must consider the multiple perspectives in a text in order to make sense out of the concepts of identity and otherness. Comparing across texts was utilized as a strategy to help students glean common themes for the unit.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.5 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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.6 Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor.

Reading List for Students and Teachers

1. Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi, *Americanah*, Chapter 1
2. From *This I believe: the personal philosophies of remarkable men and women*:
 - Elvia Bautista, *Remembering All the Boys*
 - Phyllis Allen, *Leaving Identity Issues to Other Folks*
 - Cecilia Munoz, *Getting Angry Can Be a Good Thing*
 - Jackie Robinson, *Free Minds and Hearts at Work*
3. James Mollison, Photographs from *Where Children Sleep*
4. Alvarez, Julia, *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, “Daughter of Invention”
5. Bambara, Toni Cade, “The Lesson”
6. Cisneros, Sandra, *The house on Mango Street*, “Those Who Don’t
7. Martinez, Domingo, *The Boy Kings of Texas* "The Mimis."
8. Mora, Pat, *Chants*
9. Mora, Pat, *Communion*
10. Morrison, Toni "Receitaf."

Annotated Bibliography

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. "Chapter 1." In *Americanah*. London: Fourth Estate, 2013. 3-18.

Chapter 1 of *Americanah* centers on the experiences of Efemelu, an African immigrant, blogger, and fellow at Princeton. As Efemelu make her way to Trenton to have her hair braided, she navigates multiple scenarios that pose questions about racial, ethnic, and national identity.

Allison, Jay, Dan Gediman, John Gregory, and Viki Merrick. *This I believe: the personal philosophies of remarkable men and women*. New York: H. Holt, 2006.

This collection of essays compiles reflections on personal belief systems.

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- Alvarez, Julia. "Daughter of Invention." In *How the Garcia girls lost their accents*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 1991. 133-149.
This novel follows the experiences of a Dominican family who immigrates to New York City in order to escape the oppressive Trujillo regime.
- Bambara, Toni Cade. *Gorilla, my love*. 1st ed. New York: Random House, 1972.
This collection of short stories includes "The Lesson," which provides the cornerstone text for the blueprint analysis. The author's message is very clear in this narrative, which makes it a strong example to begin with.
- Cisneros, Sandra. "Those Who Don't." In *The house on Mango Street*. New York: Vintage Books, 1991. 28.
House on Mango Street is told from the perspective of Esperanza, ranging from childhood into adulthood. Esperanza tells the story of her family and neighbors, living on Mango Street.
- Martinez, Domingo. "The Mimis." In *The boy kings of Texas: a memoir*. Guilford, Conn.: Lyons Press, 2012. 85-94.
Martinez's memoir details his experience growing up in a Texas border town. In this chapter, his sisters reject the Mexican American culture of the community and attempt to reinvent themselves as the "Mimis," assuming valley-girl mannerisms.
- Mollison, James. *Where children sleep*. London: Chris Boot, 2010.
This collection of photographs depicts the lives of children—from opulence to squalor—through images of their bedrooms.
- Mora, Pat. *Chants*. Houston, Tex.: Arte Publico Press, 1984.
- Mora, Pat. *Communion*. Houston, Tex.: Arte Publico Press, 1991.
- Reed, Ishmael, Kathryn Trueblood, and Shawn Wong. "Rececitaf." In *The Before Columbus Foundation fiction anthology: selections from the American Book Awards, 1980-1990*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1992. 442-464.
The Before Columbus Foundation compiles multi-cultural literature in an effort to redefine the literary canon. For the purpose of this unit, this collection was used to supply Toni Morrison's "Rececitaf."