



Let Me Tell You How It Really Is: Using Satire to Correct Media's Misrepresentation of Minority Cultures and Oppression

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:
English Language Arts, grades 9-12

Keywords: identity, social, media, misrepresentation, oppression, minority, culture, satire, English, critical, analysis, marginalized, humor, stereotype

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

Synopsis: This curriculum unit will focus on different ways in which writers effectively communicate serious, sensitive, and necessary information through various forms of satire. Students will analyze several media that strategically use satire to challenge the misrepresentation of marginalized, minority, and oppressed cultures. This first focus of the unit will be on the students' discovering and exploring the complexities of their own identities and how they are represented in media. This will be done through structured research, and critical analysis of pop culture. Throughout this process, students will be able to deconstruct stereotypes within their own cultures, and those of other cultures. After students formally report how they have grown from their research, they will then be given the task to use humor and satire to correct media's misrepresentation of 1-2 aspects of their identity, culture, or oppression. In order to prepare for this second focus, students will analyze how other authors have executed this task without compromising the significance and severity of the issues being addressed. This unit will teach students to be critical and responsible consumers of media, while also becoming confident in their own abilities to be activists on pervasive societal issues.

I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to 32 students in 9th Grade English.

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Introduction

It is well-researched that humor and other forms of satire are effective coping, healing, and enlightening strategies. With there being so much media that misrepresents minority culture, and not enough media challenging the oppression toward those cultures, it is necessary for young people to become aware, and to stand in that gap. Further, with North Mecklenburg High School having magnet programs, we attract students from a large variety of backgrounds. It has been my experience that many of these students have minimal awareness of the complexities of their own identities, let alone those of people unlike them.

Rationale

The Critical Media Project defines Media Literacy as “the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create media in a variety of forms.” This is essentially what this unit aims to do- teach students how to consume and create media. Below is a quote taken from the [Site Overview section of criticalmediaproject.org](https://criticalmediaproject.org), and captures the intentions behind the present curriculum unit:

“Understanding the intersection between media and issues of identity -- like gender, race, class and sexuality -- is central to our approach. We argue that the media plays a key role in helping to shape the way these identities are formed and enacted in society -- throughout history, today and into the future -- and that understanding identity is an important step in understanding ourselves and the world around us. We live in a world characterized by cultural diversity, and this project represents an opportunity to explore cultural diversity through the always important lens of media.”¹

Therefore, this unit is designed for a culturally diverse group of 9th grade English Language Arts students. These students will first be challenged to explore the complexities of their own identities, and how different aspects are represented in media. The second focus of this unit will be on analyzing how humor and other forms of satire can be effectively used to expose, cope with, heal from, deconstruct, and accurately educate the fallacies of media-driven stereotypes.

School/Student Demographics

North Mecklenburg High School (North Meck) houses three magnet programs: International Baccalaureate Programme, World Languages, and Career and Technical education. It therefore has a student body that is more diverse than typical in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS). Though this is a statistic for which most of the faculty is proud, simple observation shows a clear divide between the students in the magnet programs and those who attend North Meck as their

home school. Thus, certain indicators placed on students in each of these groups have seemed to hinder connections from forming between students within and outside of these magnet programs. It is sensible to assume that this translates into the students' lives and relationships outside of school—fostering an us versus them worldview. Creating a different microcosm within my classroom, one in which each person is seen as an individual rather than a representative of a misinterpreted generalized group, has the potential of establishing new norms across the school, and sparking a sense of activism within my students to do the same in their communities.

Over the past ten years, the number of students enrolled at North Meck has continued to fluctuate between 1500 and 2500, however, the percent of students receiving free or reduced lunch has remained to be over 50% since 2012. Additionally, the most recently published data regarding the racial makeup of North Meck students reveals 59% African American, 19% White, and 16% Hispanic. The chart below was taken from schooldigger.com, and visually describes a peculiar shift in racial demographics between the years 2010 and 2011. The number of students enrolled at North Meck during these two years decreased from 2161 to 1726, and the number of Black and White students shifted from 577 Black, 817 White in 2010 to 1327 Black, 600 White in 2011. Since then, the ratio as well as the socioeconomic status of our families have remained fairly consistent.²

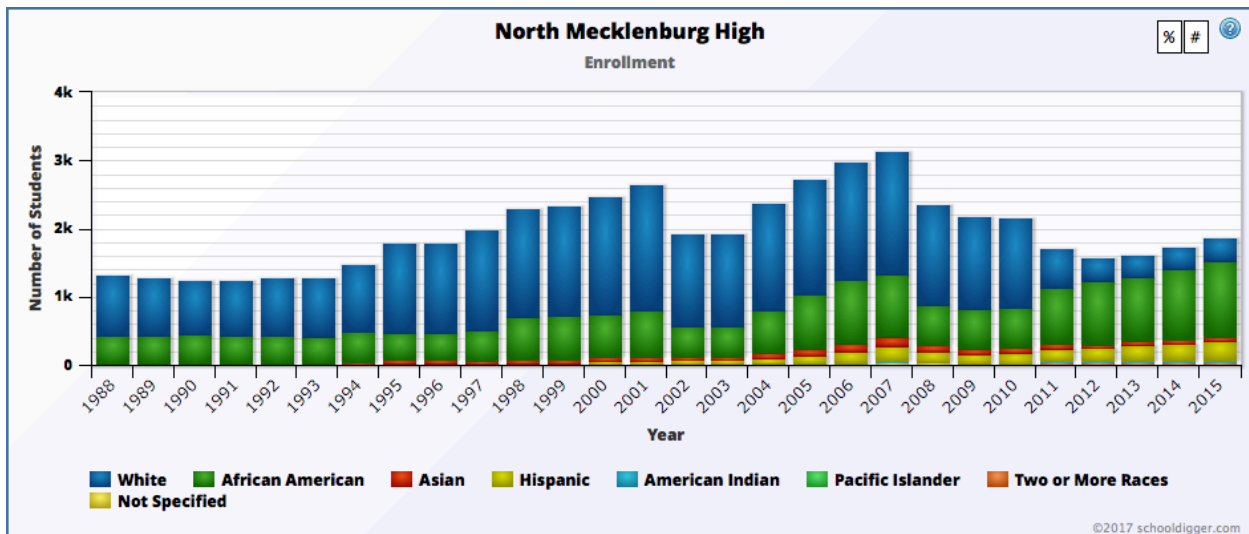


Figure 1: schooldigger.com, *North Mecklenburg High Enrollment*, September 7, 2017³

My standard-level English 1 class is comprised of 30 students, 20 boys and 10 girls. Students are Black, White, Asian, Hispanic, bi- and multi-racial. The reading level of eight students has been identified to be above grade level, four students on grade level, and fourteen below grade level (four students were not present the day the assessment was given). Additionally, this class also has two students in Individualized Education Programs, two with 504 Plans, and three English Language Learners. With this data, it is imperative that my lessons and activities be differentiated to ensure understanding on all levels. The demographics of my students also provide an ideal environment to execute this unit.

Unit Goals

At the beginning of the unit, students will participate in several activities that will allow them to begin understanding their culture, identity, and placement in society. Among these activities will be a privilege walk, a modified version of “Never Have I Ever” that highlights privilege and oppression, and a class analysis of Jane Elliot’s Blue Eyes/Brown Eyes Exercise. After the students have placed ample effort into understanding their own identities, they will assemble a culture box. This box will include items that represent aspects of the students’ identities in categories such as race/ethnicity, family origin, language, birth/formative years (e.g. adopted, twins, etc.), food, home life, and beliefs.

In addition to their culminating project, once per week, students will analyze a different text that has effectively used humor and satire to confront stereotypes and oppression. They will then write a short essay describing what cultural issue was being challenged, or what cultural norm was being celebrated. In this essay, students will explain why exposure to that issue or norm is necessary, how the writer creatively exposed us to it, and why it was effective. After the writing portion of the day, there will be some sort of discussion about their analyses. This may be a whole group discussion facilitated by the teacher, a Socratic seminar, small group breakouts, etc.

During the unit, students will also be analyzing other forms of media that may or may not use satire to illuminate the horrors and oppression that are faced by other cultures. We will watch documentaries, listen to podcasts, and read short stories such as Sherman Alexie’s “Indian Education”.

The culminating project for this unit is for students to create their own trailer for, or episode of, a satirical sitcom centered on an under- or misrepresented aspect of their identity. Examples given to the students will include shows about a little White girl from the deep south, a gay boy who displays conventionally feminine characteristics, a first-generation Mexican teenager, an Asian student attending an urban public school, etc.

The ultimate purpose of this unit is to equip students to be activists within their social groups. By focusing on satire, I believe students will be able to address serious and prevalent issues in a manner that is receivable by their peers.

Content Research

Before mass media, stereotypes were generally perpetuated by exaggerating and generalizing experiences with people of other cultures. However, today several media outlets have the agenda to categorize certain minority groups with repelling, inferior, and oftentimes sub-human descriptors. In the 1986 documentary, *Ethnic Notions*, Marlon Riggs breaks down how anti-Black prejudice has historically been fueled by purposeful exaggerations and distortions of Black features by creating characters such as Uncle Toms, Sambos, Mammies, Coons, Brutes, and Pickaninnies.⁴ These images were perpetuated via entertainment, advertisements, household artifacts, etc., and therefore became the widely recognizable, accepted, but totally inaccurate depictions of Black Americans. Because of the pervasiveness of these engrained images, today,

Black Americans are still associated with these stereotypes – loyal and faithful servants, carefree and irresponsible, untamable savages, or undesirable misfits to beauty standards. Though these indeed are not the norms, when Black Americans do not fit into one of these categories, they are typically “othered”, and regarded as exceptions.

Similar is the case for other marginalized groups in America. Sherman Alexie, a Native American writer and comedian, said in an interview,

“...cinema, which is where all the negative imagery, all the inaccurate imagery of Native Americans, comes from. So, for a Native to be working in that genre...writing an honest, truthful story about an experience but also satirizing myself and my process in it, with a capitulation to the colonial forces of Hollywood.”⁵

Eddie Huang, an Asian American writer shared similar grievances. In a 2015, New York Magazine, ran an article in which Eddie Huang shared a conversation between him and the executive producer of *Fresh Off the Boat*, the television show inspired by his memoir:

“It’s not your story anymore. Get over it. The kids ARE NOT going to a Gravediggaz show! This is a HISTORIC network-television show inspired by your life, and it’s going to get Americans. It’s never going to be the book; it’s never going to be. And you know what? Orange chicken gets America really excited about Chinese people in airports.”

“Then what did you buy my book for? Just make A Chink’s Life ... With Free Wonton Soup or Soda: A reverse-yellowface show with universal white stories played out by Chinamen.”

“You have no idea what you’re talking about. This show is on the AMERICAN BROADCASTING CHANNEL. It’s the holy grail! Network television! Just say the line, man ...”

*Complete silence.*⁶

Though both of these authors effectively used satire to tell their stories, address stereotypes, and redefine what it is to be Native American and Asian American, they both experienced intense pressure to water down their material and make it more digestible to an audience who has already developed inaccurate prejudices of their ethnicities. Eddie Huang even stated later in the same magazine article that after 18 months of attempting to make the TV version of his memoir more authentic, he finally had to come to the understanding that he, “wasn’t the auteur, the writer, the actor, or the source material. [He] was the viewer.”

My argument and rationale for developing this unit is that this idea translates to all marginalized cultures. False stereotypes have turned marginalized and oppressed people into the viewers, rather than the authors of their own memoirs. So much so, that many of people have even internalized and come to believe what/who media tells them they are. This is why it is essential that young people from all backgrounds learn to be responsible and critical media consumers. Especially with the dominating influence of social media on today’s society, we are

all bombarded daily with overwhelming amounts of media messages, many of which are not factual or realistic. This fact added to how impressionable our students are, can result in them being grossly misguided on the “truths” of others.

Instructional Implementation

This will be a three-week unit that will closely resemble the International Baccalaureate (IB), Middle Years Program (MYP) teaching model. Though I plan on teaching this unit to my fourth block standard-level class, I also instruct four sections of 9th grade MYP English classes, and therefore use the same planning strategies for all of my classes.

The IB unit planning model requires the incorporation of one key concept, three or fewer related concepts, and one global context into a Statement of Inquiry, which the students will use as their home base during all aspects of the unit. Key concepts are terms that are explored across curricula (English, math, science, etc.) because, though they are relevant, reach beyond the classroom. Related concepts are terms that are more specific to each subject, but still reach beyond the classroom. Global context terms are concepts that connect students in my class to their peers across the world. My IB-structured unit will conclude with a summative assessment task, which will measure the level of my students’ understanding of unit’s objectives, inquiry questions, and statement of inquiry.

Considering the focus of my unit, the key concept that I have chosen to incorporate is *culture*. The related concept I will be using is *self-expression*. Lastly, my global context will be *identities and relationships*. Thus, my unit will revolve around the following Statement of Inquiry: *Our self-expression is rooted in the way in which our culture, identities and relationships have been portrayed by media.*

Further, the IB model suggests that during my unit students explore factual, conceptual, and debatable questions in order to give shape to their understanding of the unit objectives. These are listed below:

Factual Questions:

- What are the different forms of self-expression?
- How is my culture represented by media?
- What is satire?

Conceptual Questions:

- What is my identity and how does it interact with others?
- Why does media portray my culture the way that it does?

Debatable Questions:

- Is our self-expression molded by the way media portrays us?
- Does the media purposely perpetrates stereotypes?

Teaching Strategies

The IB Programme model separates unit tasks into learning activities, formative assessment tasks, and a summative assessment. Learning activities are the day to day assignments that prepare students for mastery of the concepts, and their assessment tasks. Formative assessment tasks have several goals, the main of which are to understand where students are in their comprehension of unit materials, and to prepare students for their summative assessment. These tasks are developed by first determining the Approaches to Learning (ATL) Skills that are necessary for the unit. ATL Skills break down how specific learning activities are linked to broader, transferrable skills, called the ATL Skill Clusters. The five IB ATL Skill Clusters are Communication, Social, Self-Management, Research, and Thinking.

The primary ATL Skill that I would like my students to demonstrate during this curriculum unit is Social. The reason I have chosen this skill is because of the personal responsibility and leadership required to be media literate, and because of the empathy required to dismantle personal biases and become social activists. Therefore, my learning activities, formative assessments, and summative assessment will be rooted in students becoming more socially aware, responsible, and productive.

Classroom Lessons/Activities

Identity Activities

These activities will help students become more familiar with who they are as individuals, where society has placed them in its hierarchal structure, and how they tend to interact with individuals with opposite identifying factors.

- **Privilege Walk:** This is an activity that is geared toward a group of students who are mature and can be trusted with the vulnerability of their peers. My fourth block class fits these criteria. Even still, I will set my expectations prior to going outside to complete the activity by stating the following,

“This is an activity during which I am asking you to be vulnerable. However, you may participate to the extent of your own comfort. If you do not wish to participate, you do not have to. If you do want to participate but a question comes up that you do not want to address, you do not have to. I need everyone in this class to understand that there is nothing funny about this activity or any of the questions that I will ask. If you are unable to be mature during this exercise, I have prepared an alternate writing assignment (located in [Teacher Resources](#)) that you will complete instead. This is a powerful activity that asks you to step outside of your comfort zone and confront some of your life experiences. Some questions may provoke some emotion in you that you were not expecting to show, but I ask that you just go with it. At the end of the activity, we will debrief silently, and then as a class. Are there any questions?”

The Privilege Walk is a silent activity during which students confront their privilege head-on. This activity addresses my unit objective of students being able to understand their identity, that of others, and the hierarchical structure of our society in which those identities are placed. To begin, all students stand shoulder-to-shoulder. I will then read a series of statements that direct the students to step forward or backward if the statement applies to them. The “step forward” questions are all related to privilege, while the “step backward” questions are related to oppression. At the end of the activity, students look around to see where they are in relation to their classmates. We will all then go back into the classroom and silently debrief via journaling. For students having a difficult time articulating their thoughts, I will have prompts that can help guide their writing. These prompts as well as the complete list of statements for the Privilege Walk was created by Penn State University, and are located in the [Teacher Resources](#) portion of this document.

- Never Have I Ever: This is a classic game where participants gather and take turns making outrageous statements about things that they have not done. The goal is to see who has done these things, and to be the person who has done the least number of things stated. For example, if I were playing this game with a group of teachers, we would all start out by holding up ten fingers. I may then say, “Never have I ever taught a class without preparing a lesson first.” Whoever has in fact done this would take away one finger.

I have created a modified version of this game for students to play in place of the Privilege Walk. Each student will hold up 10 fingers, and a series of statements that highlight oppression will be made. This can be done along with the Privilege Walk if you believe more work needs to be done around student understanding of their place in the socially-constructed hierarchy of identities. However, because the two activities are so similar in outcome, Never Have I Ever was created as an alternative to the Privilege Walk. Therefore, I will set my expectations using the same prompt outlined in Privilege Walk explanation, and use the same questions prepared by Penn State University, listed in the [Teacher Resources](#).

- Identity Box: This project that has been modified from the Culture Box project developed by Currituck County Schools. The original assignment can be found [here](#). The modified handout outlining the project that will be given to students can be found in the [Student Resources](#) portion of this document.

Students will work outside of class to produce a box that showcases the layers of their identities. This will be one of the first assignments given during the unit so that students can build their knowledge of who they are before getting into how media portrays them. Students will choose at least ten of the following 18 categories to represent in their identity boxes: race/ethnicity, music, parental structure, religion, sexual orientation, ability, education, origins, language, formative years, food memories, home, people, behaviors, travels, recreation, immediate family, and holidays.

Once the assignment is due, students will participate in a gallery walk, during which they can ask and answer questions, getting to know their peers more. There will then be an in-class journaling activity where students reflect on the entire experience—from deciding what to put in their box and how those things represent their identity, to viewing their peers' identity boxes, and how that experience counteracted any assumptions they had prematurely made.

Journaling

As a warm-up activity each day, there will be a prompt for students to respond to in their class journals. Such prompts will include:

- Name the first three stereotypes about your race that you can think of. For each stereotype, explain whether or not you believe it to be true, and why you believe the stereotype exists (i.e. where did it come from?).
- What is your assumption of the person in this picture? Explain in 5 or more complete sentences.

Critical Media Analyses and Reflection Essays

Students will study factual vs. non-factual articles, television commercials, movie roles, gender portrayals, etc., and hold formal, student-led and -directed class discussions in which they critically analyze media. Additionally, each time the class views or reads a text that challenges stereotypes or illuminates marginalization/oppression, they will be tasked to write an informal reflection. Below are examples of videos that we will watch. See the [Teacher Resources](#) portion of this document for explanations and links to each video.

- Jane Elliot's Blue Eyes/Brown Eyes Exercise
- Kenneth and Mamie Clark's "Doll Test"
- Analyze the difference in the use of satire between ABC's *Black-ish*, versus *Fresh Off the Boat*. What is the goal of each television sitcom? How are they different? Why are they different?

Assessments

According to the IB Programme model, my assessment tasks should all have a direct relationship to the inquiry questions, and the statement of inquiry, all of which were established at the start of the unit.

Formative Assessment Tasks

- Mini-Research Project: Students will be given a class period to conduct independent research on how aspects of their identity have been marginalized, stereotyped, and misrepresented in the media. They will then do a brief presentation of their findings to their class. This assessment task has a direct relationship with the statement of inquiry

(Our self-expression is rooted in the way in which our culture, identities and relationships have been portrayed by media.) because it allows students the opportunity to explore just how their cultures, identities, and relationships have been stereotyped in media, thus giving them the space to examine how their self-expression is linked.

- **Argumentative Essay:** This is a problem-solution paper. The aim is for students to build on the information they discovered during their mini-research project. They will be tasked to independently write an argumentative essay about how their identity and culture are being misrepresented by mass media. This assessment task has a direct relationship to the statement of inquiry (*Our self-expression is rooted in the way in which our culture, identities and relationships have been portrayed by media.*) because, similar to the first task which allows the students to explore the stereotyping and marginalization of their culture, they are now given the opportunity to provide their commentary on such injustices. Thus, students are directly exploring the inquiry question. The directions and rubric for this assessment may be found in [Appendix 2](#).

Summative Assessment

The final assessment of the unit will be for students to create their own trailer for, or episode of, a satirical sitcom centered on an under- or misrepresented aspect of their identity. Examples given to the students will include shows about a little White girl from the deep south, a gay boy who displays conventionally feminine characteristics, a first-generation Mexican teenager, an Asian student attending an urban public school, etc. The student handout, which includes the rubric for this assessment may be found in [Appendix 2](#).

The summative assessment in the IB Programme model is meant for students to thoroughly demonstrate their mastery on all concepts covered during the unit; this includes all of the inquiry questions as well as the statement in inquiry. The ways in which requirement has been fulfilled is outlined below:

- **Statement of inquiry:** *Our self-expression is rooted in the way in which our culture, identities and relationships have been portrayed by media.* Students will be creatively demonstrating how the self-expression of their character(s) is a direct result of how the culture of specific character is expected to be portrayed, as demonstrated by media.
- **Factual questions:**
 - What are the different forms of self-expression? A large part of the student's task is for the character to display multiple forms of self-expression.
 - How is my culture represented by media? Students are creating characters that reflect their culture, and characters will be carrying out how media portrays them.
 - What is satire? Students are creating a satirical television show.
- **Conceptual questions:**

- What is my identity and how does it interact with others? The main character of the students' project will be interacting with others.
- Why does media portray my culture the way that it does? At the end of the students' trailer/script, they must creatively challenge the stereotypes that were portrayed.
- Debatable questions:
 - Is our self-expression molded by the way media portrays us? Students' project may respond to this question either way, depending on their creative vision.
 - Does the media purposely perpetrates stereotypes? After completing their formative assessment in which they researched stereotypes in media, students will have a personal answer to this question, and it will be carried out in this summative assessment.

Appendix 1: Implementing Teaching Standards

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.3](#): Use textual evidence to explain how humor and satire are used to address and challenge a specific issue.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.6](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.3](#): Analyze the author's purpose for creating this text, and determine how humor and satire were used to reach that purpose.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.7](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.3](#): Analyze the effectiveness of addressing stereotypes within an informational text, versus a satirical text.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1](#): Write an argumentative essay about how your identity and culture are being misrepresented by mass media.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.3](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.4](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.5](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.10](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.1](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.2](#): Students will create a script for their own new, hit TV show. Their show is about a misunderstood or misrepresented aspect of your identity. The genre of their show is satire/comedy, and their goal is to reverse those misrepresentations/stereotypes.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.6](#): Students will hold a number of discussions surrounding marginalization, stereotyping, and oppression of various minority groups. These discussions will be in the form of reflections from privilege walks, research, and Socratic Seminars.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.3](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.3](#), [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.5](#): Students will analyze how the directors and authors of several media outlets effectively used humor and satire to address and correct stereotypes within oppressed communities.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.6](#): Students will present the findings of their research on identity, marginalization, stereotypes, and oppression in the media to their class.

Appendix 2: Rubrics

Identity Box Rubric

Identity Box Rubric

| Points | Requirement |
|---------------------------|---|
| _____/20 | 10 items specific to your identity |
| _____/20 | One complete sentence describing why each item is included in the box |
| _____/10 | Creator's full name on the bottom of the box |
| _____/10 | Entire box is covered with artifacts and color (inside and outside) |
| _____/10 | Picture of creator on the box |
| _____/10 | Box displays easily (no three-dimensional, all items securely attached) |
| _____/20 | All items characterize the creator's identity |
| _____/100 Total Points | Student: _____ |

Argumentative Essay Research Paper: This handout will be given to students as the directions to one of their formative assessments, in which they will write an argumentative essay correcting media's misrepresentation of any chosen aspect of their identity.

Name: _____

Block: _____

Argumentative Essay Research Paper

This is a problem-solution paper in which you will build on the information you discovered during your mini-research project. Your task is to write an argumentative essay about how any aspect of your identity and/or culture is being misrepresented by mass media. This issue is limited to the United States (i.e. no global issues). This is an independent paper, meaning you must work alone.

Paper Requirements:

1. Topic must be about an identity/culture media misrepresentation.
2. 1.5-2.5 pages
3. 12pt font
4. Times New Roman
5. Double-spaced
6. Must have in-text citation using MLA format
7. Must be typed
8. Must have 3-4 sources and a works cited page
9. Turned in on Google Classroom

Paper is due: _____

List your topic of choice here: _____

Rubric:

- _____ /25 **Quality of Research:** The paper uses reliable sources and the sources are properly cited. The paper also uses 3-4 sources and there is sufficient information from each.
- _____ /25 **Content:** Topic is interesting and is addresses an identity/culture media misrepresentation. There is a thesis statement and support of the thesis throughout the paper. There is clear and appropriate organization, with effective transition, introduction, and conclusions.
- _____ /25 **Grammar and Mechanics:** Consistent and appropriate voice. Student's voice is sophisticated and there is a precise choice of words. There is evidence of proofreading (i.e. limited spelling errors and/or punctuation errors.)
- _____ /25 **Paper Quality:** Paper is turned in on time, properly formatted, and meets all of the requirements outlined above.
- _____ /100 **Total Grade**

Summative Assessment Handout: This handout will be given to students as the directions to their summative assessment task. It outlines the guidelines for the final project, and provides guidance for them to properly complete the final product.

Name: _____

Block: _____

Media Literacy Unit Final Assessment

In order to demonstrate all that you have learned this unit, you will create your own television sitcom! Your task will be to create your own trailer for, or episode of, a satirical sitcom centered on an under- or misrepresented aspect of your identity.

This assessment centers on the inquiry question, and statement of inquiry that we have been focusing on during this unit. All of them need to be addressed within your project. Answer below **how each of these inquiries are addressed in your project** (i.e. *do not answer the questions literally!*) **This document must be turned in with your project to receive full credit:**

- Statement of inquiry: *Our self-expression is rooted in the way in which our culture, identities and relationships have been portrayed by media.*

- Factual questions:
 - What are the different forms of self-expression?

- How is my culture represented by media?

- What is satire?

- Conceptual questions:
 - What is my identity and how does it interact with others?

- Why does media portray my culture the way that it does?

- Debatable questions:

- Is our self-expression molded by the way media portrays us?

- Does the media purposely perpetrate stereotypes?

Checklist of tasks to complete summative assessment:

_____ Determine which aspect of your identity you would like your sitcom to focus on.

_____ Determine which stereotype of that part of your identity you will satirize.

_____ Create character descriptions: describe each character, and why you made them the way that you did (e.g. age, ethnicity, accent, weight, sexual orientation, religion, etc.)

_____ Write the synopsis of your sitcom: What is it about? Who is your audience? What is the goal of your show?

_____ What culture misrepresentation do you want your specific episode to focus on? If you are creating a trailer, what are the three misrepresentations you want to focus on?

_____ Begin drafting your project.

_____ Complete your project, ensuring that you have covered all of the requirements outlined in the rubric below.

Rubric:

_____ /25 **Quality of Project:** The project presents accurate information and effectively uses satire to draw a specific point. The satire is clearly and creatively explained, and proper light is shed on the issue being addressed. If creating an episode, script is at least 5 pages, double spaced. If creating a trailer, movie is at least 2 minutes.

_____ /25 **Content:** Focus of the project is on the misrepresentation of an aspect of the specific student's personal identity. This focus is clear and supported throughout the project.

_____ /25 **Creativity and attention to detail:** Ample effort is displayed through uniqueness, creativity, grammar, attention to detail, and professionalism.

_____ /25 **Project Quality:** Project is turned in on time, thorough, and properly formatted. There is consistent and appropriate voice, and a precise choice of words. There is evidence of proofreading if completing a script (i.e. limited spelling errors and/or

punctuation errors), or thoughtfulness if completing a trailer (i.e. limited video editing errors).

_____ /100 **Total Grade**
Student Resources

Identity Box Handout⁷: This handout will be given to students as the directions to their identity box activity. It outlines the guidelines for the final project, and provides guidance for them to properly complete the final product.

Name: _____

Block: _____

Identity Box Project **English I**

Statement of Inquiry: Our self-expression is rooted in the way in which our culture, identities and relationships have been portrayed by media.

As we continue our discussion about what factors contribute to and influence culture, you will be identifying and presenting key elements of your own culture that address the Statement of Inquiry listed above. After discussing and brainstorming, you will create an Identity Box which characterizes your own culture. When creating and identifying artifacts to include on your box, you should address the following categories.

Required for all (please check off each requirement as it is complete):

- _____ Creator's full name
- _____ Picture of creator
- _____ At least 10 items specific to your culture
- _____ One complete sentence describing why each item is included in the box
- _____ The entire box is covered with artifacts and color (inside and outside)
- _____ Box displays easily (no three-dimensional, all items securely attached)
- _____ All items characterize the creator's culture (no fluff and glitter)

Categories (*at least* 10 of the 18 categories checked/represented):

_____ Race/Ethnicity: How does your family identify racially/ethnically?

_____ Music: What type of music do you most identify with?

_____ Parental Structure: Two-parent home, single-parent home, adoptive parents, etc.

_____ Religion: Do you have any religious beliefs? What are they?

_____ Sexual Orientation: Would you consider your sexual orientation to be a prevalent aspect of your identity?

- _____ Ability: Are any abilities/disabilities (seen or unseen) incorporated into how you identify?
- _____ Education: Does education play a large role in you or your family's identity?
- _____ Origins: Do you know how far back do your family origins go, or where your family's name originates?
- _____ Language: What sayings and/or stories are unique to your family?
- _____ Formative Years: What memories from childhood do you hold dear? How were you raised?
- _____ Food Memories: What are some of your favorite foods? What role does food play in family get-togethers and celebrations?
- _____ Home: What sounds are heard often in your home? What type of music can be heard in your home?
- _____ People: What people have influenced who you are today? Who has helped shape you?
- _____ Behaviors: What role did/do manners play in your upbringing? What behaviors are not acceptable?
- _____ Travels: Does travel play a role in your identity? If so, how have your travels influenced you?
- _____ Recreation: How would you describe family time/get-togethers? What about time spent with friends?
- _____ Immediate Family: Do you have any siblings? Pets? Nieces/nephews? How do they play a role in your identity?
- _____ Holidays: What are some of your family holiday traditions?

Teacher Resources

Privilege Walk/Never Have I Ever Activity Statements⁸: These are the statements that the teacher will use during the Privilege Walk and/or Never Have I Ever activity. Teacher should use discretion to decide which questions are applicable and appropriate for their students, and which are not.

- If your ancestors were forced to come to the USA not by choice, take one step back.
- If your primary ethnic identity is "American," take one step forward.
- If you were ever called names because of your race, class, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- If there were people who worked for your family as servants, gardeners, nannies, etc. take one step forward.
- If you were ever ashamed or embarrassed of your clothes, house, car, etc. take one step back.
- If one or both of your parents were "white collar" professionals: doctors, lawyers, etc. take one step forward.
- If you were raised in an area where there was prostitution, drug activity, etc., take one step back.
- If you ever tried to change your appearance, mannerisms, or behavior to avoid being judged or ridiculed, take one step back.
- If you studied the culture of your ancestors in elementary school, take one step forward.
- If you went to school speaking a language other than English, take one step back.
- If there were more than 50 books in your house when you grew up, take one step forward.
- If you ever had to skip a meal or were hungry because there was not enough money to buy food when you were growing up, take one step back.
- If you were taken to art galleries or plays by your parents, take one step forward.
- If one of your parents was unemployed or laid off, not by choice, take one step back.
- If you have health insurance take one step forward.
- If you attended private school or summer camp, take one step forward.
- If your family ever had to move because they could not afford the rent, take one step back.
- If you were told that you were beautiful, smart and capable by your parents, take one step forward.
- If you were ever discouraged from academics or jobs because of race, class, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- If you were encouraged to attend college by your parents, take one step forward.
- If you have a disability take one step backward.
- If you were raised in a single parent household, take one step back.

- If your family owned the house where you grew up, take one step forward.
- If you saw members of your race, ethnic group, gender or sexual orientation portrayed on television in degrading roles, take one step back.
- If you own a car take one step forward.
- If you were ever offered a good job because of your association with a friend or family member, take one step forward.
- If you were ever denied employment because of your race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- If you were paid less, treated less fairly because of race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- If you were ever accused of cheating or lying because of your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- If you ever inherited money or property, take one step forward.
- If you had to rely primarily on public transportation, take one step back.
- If you attended private school at any point in your life take one step forward.
- If you were ever stopped or questioned by the police because of your race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- If you were ever afraid of violence because of your race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- If your parents own their own business take one step forward.
- If you were generally able to avoid places that were dangerous, take one step forward.
- If you were ever uncomfortable about a joke related to your race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation but felt unsafe to confront the situation, take one step back.
- If you use a TDD Phone system take one step backward.
- If you were ever the victim of violence related to your race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- Imagine you are in a relationship, if you can get married in the State of ____ take one step forward
- If your parents did not grow up in the United States, take one step back.
- If your parents attended college take one step forward.
- If your parents told you that you could be anything you wanted to be, take one step forward.
- If you are able to take a step forward or backward take two steps forward.

Privilege Walk Debrief Writing/Discussion Prompts: Use these questions to guide the discussion/journaling after the Privilege Walk/Never Have I Ever assignment. Teacher may decide to use the questions as journal prompts or discussion prompts.

1. What did you feel like being in the front of the group? In the back? In the middle?
2. What were some things that you have never thought of before?
3. If you broke contact with the person beside you, how did you feel in that moment?
4. What question made you think most?
5. If you could add a question what would it be?
6. What do you wish people knew about one of the identities, situations, or disadvantages that caused you to take a step back?
7. How can your understanding of your privileges or marginalizations improve your relationships with yourself and others?

Privilege Walk/Never Have I Ever Alternate Assignment: If teacher decides that the Privilege Walk/Never Have I Ever assignment may be too heavy or mature for their class, this alternate assignment will provide students the opportunity to reach a similar objective.

Spend 20 minutes to answer the following prompt on a separate sheet of paper. You must be writing for the entire 20 minutes.

How is it that people with the same upbringing turn out so different? Explain in 2-3 complete paragraphs.

Critical Media Analysis and Reflection Essay Videos: These are the videos that the students will analyze and reflect upon. Each of them challenge stereotypes or illuminates marginalization/oppression.

[Jane Elliot's Blue Eyes/Brown Eyes Exercise](#)⁹: This is a 12-minute video that demonstrates the irrationality of prejudice by assigning privilege to a class of elementary-aged students on the basis of their eye color.

[Kenneth and Mamie Clark's "Doll Test"](#)¹⁰: This is a 9-minute video that shows children of all races assigning certain behaviors/characteristics to dolls based on their races.

[ABC's Black-ish](#)¹¹: This television show uses satire to highlight what it is like for a Black family to remain faithful to their culture while living in suburbia.

[ABC's Fresh Off the Boat](#)¹²: This television series was adapted from Eddie Huang's memoir, *Fresh Off The Boat*. It follows the experiences of a Taiwanese family that moves to America in the 1990s.

Notes

¹ “overview: the critical media project,” *the critical media project*, accessed September 23, 2017. <http://criticalmediaproject.org/about/site-overview/>.

² “North Mecklenburg High,” *SchoolDigger.com*, last modified September 7, 2017, accessed September 23, 2017, <https://www.schooldigger.com/go/NC/schools/0297001248/school.aspx>.

³ “North Mecklenburg High,” *SchoolDigger.com*, last modified September 7, 2017, accessed September 23, 2017, <https://www.schooldigger.com/go/NC/schools/0297001248/school.aspx?t=tbStudents>.

⁴ *Ethnic Notions*, directed by Marlon Riggs, performed by Barbara T. Christian, George Frederickson, Carlton Moss, 1986, DVD.

⁵ Sherman Alexie, ““Humor Is My Green Card” A Conversation with Sherman Alexie,” *World Literature Today*, by Joshua B. Nelson, July 2010.

⁶ Eddie Huang, “Network TV Ate My Life: Eddie Huang on Watching His Memoir Become a Sitcom,” *New York Magazine*, January 12, 2015, <http://www.vulture.com/2015/01/eddie-huang-fresh-off-the-boat-abc.html>.

⁷ “Culture Box Project,” *Currituck School District*, accessed October 28, 2017, http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache%3A_HW5leGtHkgJ%3Awww.currituck.k12.nc.us%2Fcms%2Flib4%2FNC01001303%2FCentricity%2FDomain%2F178%2FCulture%2520Box%2520Assignment.doc%2B&cd=7&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us.

⁸ The Privilege Walk [complete], accessed October 28, 2017, <http://edge.psu.edu/workshops/mc/power/privilegewalk.shtml>.

⁹ Ssnidero1, A Class Divided, March 07, 2013, accessed October 28, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=onKVeZaDzWg&t=8s>.

¹⁰ DixonFuller2011, “Doll Test,” *YouTube*, February 07, 2012, accessed October 28, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkpUyB2xgTM>.

¹¹ Kenya Barris, *Black-ish*, performed by Anthony Anderson, Tracee Ellis Ross, Marcus Scribner (2014).

¹² Nahnatchka Khan, *Fresh Off the Boat*, performed by Randall Park, Constance Wu, Hudson Yang, Forrest Wheeler, Ian Chen, Lucille Soong (2015).

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- Alexie, Sherman. ““Humor Is My Green Card” A Conversation with Sherman Alexie.” *World Literature Today*. By Joshua B. Nelson. July 2010. In this interview, Sherman Alexie discusses why he uses humor and satire to cope with the pains of growing up on a reservation.
- Barris, Kenya. *Black-ish*. Performed by Anthony Anderson, Tracee Ellis Ross, Marcus Scribner. 2014. This television show uses satire to highlight what it is like for a Black family to remain faithful to their culture while living in suburbia.
- “Culture Box Project.” *Currituck School District*. Accessed October 28, 2017.
http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache%3A_HW5leGtHkgJ%3Awww.currituck.k12.nc.us%2Fcms%2Flib4%2FNC01001303%2FCentricity%2FDomain%2F178%2FCulture%2520Box%2520Assignment.doc%2B&cd=7&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us. This assignment was originally developed by Currituck County Schools. To complete it, students work to produce a box that showcases the layers of their identities.
- DixonFuller2011. “Doll Test.” *YouTube*. February 07, 2012. Accessed October 28, 2017.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkpUyB2xgTM>. This is a 9-minute video that shows children of all races assigning certain behaviors/characteristics to dolls based on their races.
- “English Language Arts Standards.” *Common Core State Standards Initiative*. Accessed September 23, 2017. <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/>. This resource outlines each of the Common Core Standards that students should know in English Language Arts at the end of 9th and 10th grade.
- Ethnic Notions*. Directed by Marlon Riggs. Performed by Barbara T. Christian, George Frederickson, Carlton Moss. 1986. DVD. In the 1986 documentary, Marlon Riggs breaks down how anti-Black prejudice has historically been fueled by purposeful exaggerations and distortions of Black features by creating characters such as Uncle Toms, Sambos, Mammies, Coons, Brutes, and Pickaninnies.
- Huang, Eddie. “Network TV Ate My Life: Eddie Huang on Watching His Memoir Become a Sitcom.” *New York Magazine*. January 12, 2015. <http://www.vulture.com/2015/01/eddie-huang-fresh-off-the-boat-abc.html>. This article is about, Eddie Huang, an Asian American writer, sharing his grievances on being a marginalized writer. In it, he shares a conversation between him and the executive producer of *Fresh Off the Boat*, the television show inspired by his memoir. This conversation illuminated the intense

pressure that he felt to water down his material and make it more digestible to an audience who has already developed inaccurate prejudices of their ethnicities.

Khan, Nahnatchka. *Fresh Off the Boat*. Performed by Randall Park, Constance Wu, Hudson Yang, Forrest Wheeler, Ian Chen, Lucille Soong. 2015. This television series was adapted from Eddie Huang's memoir, *Fresh Off The Boat*. It follows the experiences of a Taiwanese family that moves to America in the 1990s.

"North Mecklenburg High." *SchoolDigger.com*. Last modified September 7, 2017. Accessed September 23, 2017.

<https://www.schooldigger.com/go/NC/schools/0297001248/school.aspx>. This resource provides thorough and consistently updated data on school demographics and performance.

"overview: the critical media project." *the critical media project*. Accessed September 23, 2017. <http://criticalmediaproject.org/about/site-overview/>. Defines media literacy, and provides resources for educators to implement media literacy into their classroom.

Ssnidero1. A Class Divided. March 07, 2013. Accessed October 28, 2017.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=onKVeZaDzWg&t=8s>. This is a 12-minute video that demonstrates the irrationality of prejudice by assigning privilege to a class of elementary-aged students on the basis of their eye color.

The Privilege Walk [complete]. Accessed October 28, 2017.

<http://edge.psu.edu/workshops/mc/power/privilegewalk.shtml>. These Privilege Walk prompts allow students to confront their privilege head-on by responding to a series of statements that direct them to step forward or backward if the statement applies to them. The "step forward" questions are all related to privilege, while the "step backward" questions are related to oppression.