

***Tipping the Scale in our Favor:  
The Exploration of Social Injustice  
through the Lens of Fictional Characters***

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This curriculum is intended for:  
A Novel study grades 5-6

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

**Synopsis:** This curriculum unit introduces the concept of social injustice and activism to students through the lens of fictional characters who have been subjected to some form of social adversity. Before students delve into the fictional component of the units, students will develop their understanding of social justice and subsequently injustice through the use of non-fiction writing, documentary clips, and speeches. After expanding their foundational awareness of key concepts, students will then explore the extent to which the rights of fictional characters in the novel *The Skin I'm In* by Sharon Draper have been compromised. Ultimately, students can expect to obtain a deeper understanding of the multifaceted nature of social injustice and the role they may take to counteract it. The culminating project will be their creation of a work of art that reflects their own multifaceted nature as it relates to a character in one of the novels with a content area that focuses on literature and comprehension. Using novel studies to advance student awareness of social politics allows for cross-curricular connections to be made.

*I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to*

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

## Introduction

### Rationale

Growing up in a lower-income household in inner city New York, my knowledge of my lack of rights was defined from an extremely young age. I was raised to understand that my own reality was not the same reality as that of the white, middle-class families that lived within miles of my own home. After attending a charter school that featured teachers who practiced transparency in the art of explaining educational equity, or lack thereof, I understood even more so the importance of maximizing my educational experience. Along with that experience, came the reality that despite attending one of the top performing schools within the area, I was still receiving an education second par to those of my richer counter parts. Undeterred and driven by the knowledge that a proper education would be my key to success, I continued to work actively to give myself the opportunity to change my circumstances.

A huge part of my own escape from the harsh environment where I grew up was rooted in reading. With each book I picked up, I was able to import myself into the worlds of characters whose lives danced across the pages. As I continue my career in education, one idea has become overwhelmingly obvious -- reading as a form of freedom or escape is a pastime unbeknownst to students today. Through this unit, students should come to the realization that literature can be therapeutic when looking to cope with harsh realities of the world around them. As students jump into the worlds of these timeless characters, they will watch as they struggle with identity, grief, and handling peer-pressure. As an educator in today's climate, I believe we shy away from presenting our students with the truth out of fear of how they'll respond. But our students are more resilient than we give them credit for. By enrolling in this course, my goal was to find a way to (re)instill a love of reading in my students that also creates more well-rounded and global citizens.

I chose to center my curriculum unit on this novel because of my desire to raise awareness about the timeless issues that the characters face, specifically racism and discrimination. Although *The Skin I'm In* was published over 20 years ago, the relevance of the issues faced by its main character, such as bullying on the basis of race and economic status, is still apparent. In working exclusively with exceptional children, I countlessly bore witness to the false and often damaging stereotypes and stigmas surrounding students with learning disabilities. I hope that by working with *The Skin I'm In*, children can see the lasting impact of bullying on identity and self-identity. Maleeka faces discrimination for her dark skin color as well as discrimination related to race, gender, and socioeconomic status in her daily life. Hopefully, by giving my students characters they may be able to relate to will also provide an environment in which they are primed to learn more about their right to be free from discrimination and how to identify and respond to discrimination in reality.

My biggest hope is that this unit will allow me to effectively place culturally-relevant content in the hands of students. Culturally responsive teaching is "a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart

knowledge, skills, and attitudes<sup>1</sup>.” When students feel the socio-cultural connection to the content put in front of them, their ability to master the standards associated with that work is expedited. As an educator responsible for the lives of students who show up to class every day, I feel obligated to remain culturally competent. By enrolling in this CTI Seminar, I sought to heighten my global awareness and to receive content that would allow me to present a culturally-relevant curriculum to students. Culturally relevant teaching goes beyond giving a child an article or text depicting a wrong done to an anonymous person; it must also provide that child with the confidence and tools to then seek out a solution to that wrong. Ideally, it should light and fuel the fire within a child to create social change. Their exposure to these two texts and the activities that accompany them will improve their global citizenship.

Tipping the Scale in our Favor: The Exploration of Social Injustice through the Lens of Fictional Characters will offer resources that can be used to teach the concept of racism, which often takes the form of colorism, prejudice, and stereotypes in a kid- friendly way. Additionally, the nature of racism is so embedded in socioeconomic conditions that exploring one without the other would be a disservice. Students’ foundational understanding of the key terms will spearhead an investigation of the novels *The Skin I’m In* portray an array of social injustices relevant to the youth of today. In *The Skin I’m In*, students will come face to face with the implications of Maleeka’s bullying (racial and social class standing). In turn, students can participate in reflection about their identities and misperceptions of others that will drive their own campaign to combat the damaging impact misperceptions can have on others.

### School Demographics

Albemarle Road is well-known within the Charlotte community for its service of extremely diverse populations. Recent school data suggests that our school contains the second largest population of ELLs (English Language Learners) and ESL (English as a Second Language) in the Charlotte Mecklenburg school system. For the 54 % of the school’s population that identifies as Hispanic or Latino, Albemarle Road has become home. Our teachers work tirelessly to create an inclusive community that celebrates its diversity and encourages multicultural awareness. As one walks through the door of Albemarle Road, one can expect to see countless pieces of student artwork that reflects the school’s diverse student population. As you walk the halls and venture in and out of classrooms, the extent to which the school has become a cultural melting pot of teachers, staff, and students collaborating seamlessly with one another is clear.

In addition to Albemarle Road’s growing population of minorities is the school’s exponentially growing number of exceptional children. My formative years in teaching were shaped by my exclusive work with this student population, and my adoration and respect for them has remained. I am driven to by their resilience and commitment despite all the odds against them.

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<sup>1</sup> Rajagopal, Kadir. "Chapter 1. Culturally Responsive Instruction." How Student Progress Monitoring Improves Instruction - Educational Leadership. Accessed December 03, 2018. <http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/111022/chapters/Culturally-Responsive-Instruction.aspx>.

## Unit Goals & Student Learning Outcomes

While the expected outcomes expressed here will account for *The Skin I'm In*, the extent to which those outcomes can and will be duplicated is contingent on whether or not one chooses to use both texts. The goal of this unit is to simply provide an introduction to concepts associated with human rights. According to the United Nations that must include "training and information aiming at building a universal culture of human rights through the sharing of knowledge imparting of skills and molding of attitude directed towards

1. Strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms
2. The full development of human personality and sense of its dignity
3. The promotions of understanding, tolerance, gender equality and friendship among people/groups
4. The promotion of people centered sustainable development of social justice<sup>2</sup>

By the end of the unit, students will know and be expected to explain what a human right is as well as how racism, prejudice, and colorism often contribute to violations of those rights. Students will also be able to identify how those rights (or lack thereof) impact the characters within *The Skin I'm In*. Their culminating project will require them to engage in the act of contesting such violations by creating a piece of art (mask or book) that reflects their awareness of the multiple dimensions of self and Maleeka. By comparing the differences in how the world views Maleeka to how Maleeka views herself students will be able to understand the role society can have on one's identity. In doing so, students will demonstrate mastery of power standards RL 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, and 6.9. While this unit will only address these specific standards, the text can be used for RL 6.1-9 with proper planning.

## Understanding the Importance of Teaching Human Rights to Children

Through this course I was able to expand my understanding of culturally-relevant teaching practices. As I explored sites offering relatable content, I gained insight into the wide range of ways that educators can expect to improve student engagement. Often times, engagement is thought to be this individualized action plan- which can be daunting task for teachers who work with larger populations. However in this case, I found that introducing the concept of rights, specific to them as children sparked universal engagement. Regardless of interest, students felt empowered by the knowledge that they had rights created just for them. Following this through with opportunities for students to continue to explore those rights opens up an entirely new realm of thinking.

As an educator, it's quite easy to understand the gravity of the circumstances that surround the students we serve and the role their experience plays in altering the trajectory of their lives. In carrying out the human rights curriculum, students literally have the opportunity to

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<sup>2</sup> "WHAT IS HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION?" Human Rights Education Handbook: Effective Practices for Learning, Rights, and Change. Accessed November 19, 2018.  
<http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/edumat/hreduseries/hrhandbook/part1B.html>.

enact change, and in doing so students are provided with the chance to think critically about the world around them. Teaching human rights is bigger than the conceptual practices one has to offer for the 8 weeks that we work through the text. Instead, it should be looked at as the first step in a life-long process of understanding one's identity. Identity is defined as "the distinguishing character or personality of an individual or the relation established by psychological identification." In using this curriculum to teach human rights, educators can expect to be successful in introducing the concept of identity as they read *The Skin I'm In*. Perhaps most importantly will be their evaluation of self. Students will assess discrepancies in how the world views them, and what they see as their true selves and how the world's perception of them may be a misunderstanding. The novel's recurring theme of bullying and issues with self-esteem is portrayed through the main character Maleeka's endurance of bullying by antagonist Charlese. By the end of chapter two, students have experienced two separate encounters with bullying and colorism. Taking the time to define colorism is an extremely important step to take as a prerequisite: frame their first encounters with it by explaining the differences between racism, prejudice and colorism. Although the issue is not often brought to mainstream attention, a quiet culture of colorism, which is an ideal "that privileges light-skinned people of color over darker in areas such as income, education, housing, and the marriage market<sup>3</sup>" still lingers. As students read the opening chapters of this text, whole class conversations involving the nature of her bullying sets a necessary stage for understanding the tragedy of her plight. Part of the reason for such mindsets is the continuous perpetuation of pre-civil rights era values through legislation.

As students reach activity 3, they continue to explore the effects of the Brown vs. Board of Education's call for desegregation. In reading *Little Rock then and Now*, they will be forced to confront the reality that despite the fact that laws had been implemented to support change, very little change has actually occurred. This unit is about bringing to every student's attention the importance of relentlessness in activism. Activism requires persistence and time- which is why it was intentional to include texts that hearing that despite the efforts of famous activists before them, student still have a role to play in reaching equality

Despite living in the post-civil rights era, America's public education system still reflects an extremely segregated society. Cities like Little Rock, which was considered a "relatively progressive upper south city with moderate leanings on the issue of integration" piloted the desegregation of schools in the wake of the Brown vs. Board of Education decision. As look to determine how far our nation has come, looking at cities such as Little Rock as a measure of that success. On paper, everything should have worked out perfectly: integrating schools means children have the opportunity different cultures, children from various communities have the opportunities to receive the same education as their peers. In reality, very little had actually changed. The Superintendent, Virgil T. Blossom, in typical fashion set up a desegregation plan in 1955, but his "rigid screening process and transfer provisions assured that, for the most part, segregation would still be upheld in the city<sup>4</sup>." By failing to properly tear down the

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<sup>3</sup> Hunter, M. (2007), The Persistent Problem of Colorism: Skin Tone, Status, and Inequality. *Sociology Compass*, 1: 237-254. doi:[10.1111/j.1751-9020.2007.00006.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2007.00006.x)  
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/action/showCitFormats?doi=10.1111%2Fj.1751-9020.2007.00006.x>

<sup>4</sup> "Doctors Kenneth and Mamie Clark and "The Doll Test" in the 1940s." *Vintage Everyday*. March 05, 2017. Accessed November 09, 2018. <https://www.vintag.es/2017/03/doctors-kenneth-and-mamie-clark-and.html>.

institutionalized systems of oppression that had marginalized minority groups, he had failed to actually provide equal education opportunities for the future generations. Equality in education demands more than tokenism: choosing a few select schools to integrate cannot reverse the long-standing values that have permeated through American Culture so instead of taking Blossom's actions as the beginning steps, politicians sought to circumvent that by setting up laws that upheld segregation and subsequently maintained racist values. Simple research brings to light the fact that "corrupt housing policies and the creation of expensive predominantly white private schools maintained many of those structures<sup>5</sup>." Unfortunately what's happened in Arkansas can be said for cities and counties across the US. Even here in Charlotte one can plainly see how zoning lines, and busing routes have maintained segregation.

While the information may be hard present to students, the light at the end of this lesson come from presenting students with the opportunity to act on those injustices. Students, no matter how small have rights and part of choosing to teach human rights is being comfortable with the reality that they have the right to know, and it is part of our duty to tell them. With social media now offering unfiltered access to news coverage and content, children of today are exposed to ideas and experiences that their predecessors could not have imagined and while this can be daunting it also suggests that the age at which students are capable of having conversations pertaining to things such as race, discrimination, and identity can be lower. Through my experience students take on a level of confidence after realizing they have rights protected under laws, confidence that motivates continued exploration of topics politics that pertain to race, prejudice, discrimination and identity: Choosing to teach human rights simply ensure that their perceptions of said issues aren't frames

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<sup>5</sup> "Doctors Kenneth and Mamie Clark and "The Doll Test" in the 1940s." Vintage Everyday. March 05, 2017. Accessed November 09, 2018. <https://www.vintag.es/2017/03/doctors-kenneth-and-mamie-clark-and.html>.

## *The Doll Test in Brown v. Board of Education*



As students explore this unit they can expect to be presented with other historical moments events such as the Brown vs Board of Education decision catalyzed by the historical Doll Test experiment. In order to catalyze student engagement, students will engage in a mini-lesson focused on “The Doll Test”. The short informational text explores the 1940’s series of experiments known as “the doll tests”, conducted by psychologists Kenneth and Mamie Clark which were designed and conducted to determine the psychological effects of segregation on African-American children. Through this experiment Kenneth and Mamie presented children with two dolls of different races and asked them to determine which characteristics belong with which doll. Questions such as “Which dolls is good”, “Which doll is bad?”, “Which doll is pretty?” or “Which doll is ugly?” revealed that White and Black children tended to favor white children. In other words, when students were asked which doll was bad, they almost unanimously pointed to the black doll. Ultimately, The Clarks concluded that “prejudice, discrimination, and segregation” created a feeling of inferiority among African-American children and damaged their self-esteem”. Their studies found that although a bias towards lighter-skinned dolls was unanimous, the extent of this varies by age group:

- 3 years of age – lighter and darker dolls almost equally preferred
- 4 years of age – lighter doll preferred by 76% of the children
- 5 to 7 years of age – lighter-doll preference levels off and then declines<sup>6</sup>

In the wake of the trial, Clark was asked to testify in front of the Supreme Court and explain his findings: The influence on the Supreme Court’s decision can be seen in its declaration that “to separate [African-American children] from others of similar age solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that

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<sup>6</sup> "Doctors Kenneth and Mamie Clark and "The Doll Test" in the 1940s." Vintage Everyday. March 05, 2017. Accessed November 09, 2018. <https://www.vintag.es/2017/03/doctors-kenneth-and-mamie-clark-and.html>.

may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone<sup>7</sup>.”

After learning about the test and its impact on the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision, students will watch a modern version of the experiment recreated. Surprisingly, the results are essentially the same: decades later and little has changed. Children part of the study continue to identify lighter-skinned dolls as “good” and darker-skinned dolls as bad. From this, two important inferences can be made: Racial bias is still a huge problem facing our children today, and relying on schools systems to promote equality is not enough. Our students, who are the results of that bias have a right to be made aware of the systems put in place against them, and using text such as *The Doll Test* and *The Skin I’m In* to introduce that injustice is a means of doing so.

Following these activities, students should be given time will complete be after reading questions centered on building their foundational knowledge of race, racism, prejudice, and discrimination. After completing those questions, which can be seen below, students should participate in allow for a brief turn and talk followed by a class discussion- for students who struggle with participation, turn and talks this can build confidence in their answers. The exposure to children their own age sharing such controversial responses to the questions typically sparks heated commentary- use this to your advantage as you introduce *The Skin I’m In*.

1. According to paragraphs one and two, what was the original purpose for the doll test?
2. What major court case uses the findings to support desegregating schools?
3. What did the results of the test reveal about the self-esteem of African American children?
4. Along with black children, what race is also negatively impacted by segregation?

*How do these experiences relate to Human Rights Education?*

Both Activity 2 and 3 indirectly raise the question of how well had the rights of the children effected by the Brown vs. Board of Education decision been protected. Questions such as “*How well has the American government protected the rights of minority children’s right to a quality education in the past*” and “*Has America done a better job of addressing those needs in modern day society?*” undoubtedly begin to raise as students work through the unit. Human rights education has to go beyond teaching about Human Rights and what those violations may look like in the real world, and require them to evaluate their own perceptions of self and the impact racial bias can play- this is where the summative assessment comes into play As an agent for change, taking the extra step to push students to think critically about their own actions, and actions-steps for their school communities propel them towards activism.

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<sup>7</sup> "Doctors Kenneth and Mamie Clark and "The Doll Test" in the 1940s." Vintage Everyday. March 05, 2017. Accessed November 09, 2018. <https://www.vintag.es/2017/03/doctors-kenneth-and-mamie-clark-and.html>.



## Instructional Implementation

At Albemarle Road every school day consists of 6 blocks, each one hour and seven minutes long; of those six blocks, I teach for 5 of them. With class sizes that average at twenty, I have had the ability to build meaningful relationship with students through my use of targeted small-group instruction. Instead of standing in front of the classroom, telling them about topics such as human rights and inequality, I present scenarios to students and allow them to come to their own decisions. When it comes to content, this approach holds as well: minimizing the amount of time I spend teaching and maximizing student inquiry. During third block, which is divided into two sections, a targeted group of students has been assigned to me in order to focus on “power standards” in which they need remediation. While in the past I have worked almost exclusively with Exceptional Children, this school year I was asked to take over for a general education teacher moving to a different grade-level. Despite that, I still have a large number of students who have scored below grade level (level 1 and 2). Yet, the percentage of my student population that previously scored at or above grade-level is higher than ever before. As I developed this unit, the shift in demographic has forced me to re-evaluate the level of difficulty of activities I initially planned.

This year I have attempted to shift the classroom dynamic towards a more inquiry based learning (IBL) approach. By the time students are in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, learning experiences should be less about recalling definitions, and more about applying their prior knowledge to complex texts. With inquiry based learning, students learn to take ownership of their learning experiences. While traditional classrooms feature teacher centered instruction, IBL poses questions or real-world problems, and scenarios to help students learn through their own investigation. By using this approach, student engagement and investment in learning improves drastically. This is because instead of standing in front of the classroom feeding them information topics such as human rights and inequality, they are presented with scenarios and coming to their own decisions. When it comes to the Common Core, this approach holds as well: minimizing the amount of time I spend teaching and maximizing the amount of experiences students have leads to greater mastery of concepts. The biggest struggle with this approach is the push-back from students who are used to being told there is only one right way, they tend to lack the confidence in their ability to figure things out on their own – ultimately students come to realize that there is more than one right way to get an answer and seek out understanding on their own.

Given the moderate Lexile level and short length of the text, *The Skin I'm In* can function as both a guided reading novel and as an independent reading book that students are responsible for reading through without the accompaniment of a teacher. However, given the nature of the unit, the teacher will need to set up chapter checkpoints, which can be found in Appendix 4 so that the class can collectively complete the activities without risk of confusion. For example, Teachers who choose the guided reading approach, will need to prepare the activities to align with the day of the week they'll be finished with the chapter. Regardless of the approach, *The Skin I'm In* can serve as the foundation for supplemental articles.

Ideally, this unit would be carried out using the guide provided. As the unit begins, students should complete Activity 2 in week 1 where the irony of Maleeka's bullying because of her race is illuminated. This will be an intense week in regards to new concepts since they will

also be learning about the Doll Test, colorism and racism. In the weeks that follow, instruction will be based off of the individualized needs your students. Since this unit does not cover every standard that they will be tested on, weeks two through four can be used to address those. During Week 3, students should reach Chapter 16 and witness Maleeka’s verbal and physical assault by two passersby on the street. While there are repeated acts of bullying throughout the story, this one truly stands out: it’s a breaking point for Maleeka as well as the students which is why I chose to have the Declaration of Human Rights Activity take place here. It is also important to keep in mind that since scholars will be forced to comb back over the entire story they’ve read so far in order to check for human rights violations, getting too far into the text could make this task daunting for children. Activity 4 ,which calls on scholars to evaluate “story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution”, should happen at the very end of *The Skin I’m In*, it’s during these chapters that Maleeka is pressured into breaking into her school to vandalize a classroom- in the moment she chooses wrongly, and gets caught mid-act. After being threatened with silence by Charlese, the conflict continues as Maleeka alone faces expulsion; it’s not until the very last chapter that she has the courage to stand up for herself and admit that she was forced into it by Charlese. This moment marks the start of Maleeka acknowledging the beauty and power she has within her. A similar experience takes place for protagonist Star in *The Hate U Give*, students reading Chapters 10 and 11 will witness the shift in mindset as star struggles with finding her own voice in wake of her close friend’s murder at the hands of police. By the end of this Activity, educators should feel comfortable presenting the Culminating Activity to them.

## Introduction to the Curriculum Unit

### *Activity 1*

The following activity can be used at any point during your exploration of *The Skin I’m In*, however, its message will ring clearer right around chapter three and four, as Maleeka reflects on countless incidents of being targeted by her peers and unapologetically vocalizes her frustration for their sharp criticism of her skin color and economic standing. By this point students are aware of what colorism, and prejudice is and have begun to empathize with Maleeka’s character. As they examine the multi-faceted nature of race outlined within this lesson, their antipathy of characters like Charlese and John-John should amplify. This lesson will satisfy North Carolina standard RL 6.9 which requires students to be able to “compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres (e.g., stories and poems; historical novels and fantasy stories) in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics<sup>8</sup>.” In order to address that, students will watch the TedX video “Race is Just an Illusion” by Nina Jablonski and/or Episode 1 of the *Race and the Power of Illusion* series. While the TedX video on race can be slightly complex, providing students with the questions prior to beginning the video give students a task to complete as they watch and c Each will have basic comprehension questions that can be found in the resource sections of this unit. The video does use scientific jargon that may be confusing to students. In order to alleviate confusion, allow students to review questions prior to watching. One to two minutes should suffice. Allow students to answer questions as they watch, and then provide additional time to finish. To tie the reading back to this theme or self-image and the standard, students will explain

how Charlese and John John's perspectives are flawed.

### *Activity 2*

Activity 3 satisfies the human rights component of the unit by asking students to determine whether or not human rights violations have occurred for certain characters. I would suggest engaging in this activity after reading Chapter 16 because in this chapter Maleeka is verbally and physically assaulted by two young boys as she returns home. The shocking nature of the event will pair well with the activity. In order to yield the best results, I would suggest reading this chapter whole class and taking the time to introduce human rights to students prior to this activity. As a precursor, teachers should plan to carry out a mini-lesson to introduce the Universal Declarations of Human Rights. Students will be expected to determine whether or not Maleeka's rights have been violated using the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the accompanying sheet that can be found in the resource section of this unit.

For example, Article 2 states

The child shall enjoy special protection, and shall be given opportunities and facilities, by law and by other means, to enable him to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity<sup>9</sup>.

In this case, students will first read the declaration, and then infer whether or not Maleeka has been given this privilege. While some students might argue that she has been given the opportunity to develop physically, mentally, or morally, through schooling; others may argue that she has not adequately received protection from her peers by her teachers. I would suggest modelling this using the article above in order to ensure comprehension. After completing this allow students ample time to share their responses with their peers. This Activity is ideal for teachers looking to provide students with the opportunity to practice demonstrating mastery of RL 6.1. After completion, it is imperative that educators require students to come up with a solution to at least one of the Human rights violations. As educators looking to empower students, it is important to provide students with the space and opportunity to enact change for injustices they witness. In this case, giving students the opportunity to think beyond the realms of the classroom, and pose solutions to real- world problems provides scholars with the chance to become activists.

### *Activity 3*

The final activity of this unit incorporates the popular text *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas. My decision to use this text was because of its relevance to political matters children see today as well as the way Thomas addresses activism. The novel focuses on Starr Carter who witnesses her childhood best friend's murder during a routine traffic stop. As she struggles to come to terms with his death she grapples with identity, as she attends a predominantly white private school on

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<sup>9</sup> "Universal Rights of Child." UNICEF. 2003. Accessed November 19, 2018.  
<https://www.unicef.org/malaysia/1959-Declaration-of-the-Rights-of-the-Child.pdf>.

the other side of town, and choosing to act instead of remaining silent in the face of adversity.

While students won't read the entire story, I will ask students to read an excerpt from Chapter 10, 11. In this chapter, star ends up channeling her frustration with the justice system into rallying during a televised protest, which is a huge change from the start of the text where she maintains her anonymity as the witness to Khalil's murder. Using the graphic organizer in the resource section of this unit, students will chart character change from the start of the excerpt to the end and how a character responds to conflict. In turn, students will also be asked to repeat this process for Maleeka, during week 6. . If students have struggled with plot in the past, or you have not covered the standard extensively enough to be confident in their ability to do this independently, you can use *The Skin I'm In* to model and then allow students to work independently with *The Hate U Give*. This activity is ideal for teachers looking to incorporate North Carolina Standard 6.3 and 6.7.

### *Final Assessment*

Their final assessment is a project where students are required to think critically about the inconsistencies in Maleeka's perception of self, compared to how the world seems to see her. There are quite a few times within the book where Maleeka describes herself in a much more positive way than her peers have. For example, she looks favorably upon her Math Skills, ability to recall information, writing skills and the long black lashes she inherits from her father. After answering the question: How does Maleeka see herself compared to how others see her? They will ask themselves the same question. How does their own perception of self, compared to how others view them? I would suggest building time into the lesson for student to ask their peers for their opinions on one another. In Appendix 6, you can find a rubric to grade the project, a direction sheet with guidelines for students to follow, slides explaining the project and an introduction activity for students to guide discussions about the differences in how the world sees us compared to how we see ourselves.

Students will create a mask based on their reflections. I would suggest creating a mask of your own prior to introducing the project in order to give students an idea of what you'll be looking for. Then, allow students to grade your own mask using the rubric. Follow this with a class discussion about what has been done well or what may be missing. This will be your opportunity to ease the minds of students who struggle with art and are concerned about failing because of it.

In the resource section is the poem "We Wear the Masks" by Laurence Dunbar. For this Activity, students should read this poem independently- allow students at least 4 minutes to read the poem independently and jot down any thoughts they have about the poem then turn to a partner to share their thoughts. After this, read the poem aloud and ask students the following questions:

1. What does the line, "We wear the mask that grins and lies/It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes" mean?
2. Why might he think he needs to hide behind a mask?
3. Is the author of this text comfortable sharing their true self? Why or Why not?

After this, students will begin brainstorming ideas for their mask project.

The resource section is divided into two sections: Resources tied exclusively to lessons meant to improve the comprehension concepts related to human rights, and resources tied exclusively to themes relevant to each novel. Ted Talks, can be used stimulate class discussions during the end of unit project. As for supplemental reads, Achieve3000, Teen Biz 3000, News ELA which provide informational texts will work as both supplemental reads, and standard aligned practices. Through my research, Achieve3000 and News ELA have proven themselves to be extremely useful because of their innovative use of Lexile level for users. Ted talks are also viable resources to use when trying to stimulate discussion.

## Appendix 1: Teaching Standards

As stated previously, this literary unit uses novel studies to introduce the concept of human rights and activism. With the use of fictional texts and informational readings, student will demonstrate knowledge of North Carolina Essential Standards in meaningful ways. Students will be tasked with thinking critically about character change and theme as it transfers from text to text.

### North Carolina Essential Standards used

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.1: Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

- Demonstrates in Activity 1, Activity 3, and the final assessment

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.3: Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

- Demonstrated in Activity 4

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.7: Compare and contrast the experience of reading a story, drama, or poem to listening to or viewing an audio, video, or live version of the text, including contrasting what they "see" and "hear" when reading the text to what they perceive when they listen or watch.

- Demonstrated in Activity 1

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.9

Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres (e.g., stories and poems; historical novels and fantasy stories) in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics.

- Demonstrated through Activity 1, 2, and 4

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.6: Explain how an author develops the point of view of the narrator or speaker in a text.

- Demonstrated through Final Assessment.

## Appendix 2

Link to Video: [TedX- Illusion of Skin Color](#)

What does Nina Jablonski find strange about Charles Darwin's The Origin of Species?

- A: Darwin had to publish it himself, because it was so scandalous
- B: Darwin supports both biological evolution and creationism
- C: Darwin was self-taught, and only 23 when he published his work
- D: The book barely mentions human evolution

Our earliest ancestors in equatorial Africa were all darkly pigmented because

- A: They needed protection from strong UV rays
- B: They were more adept at finding food, shelter and mates than their lighter-skinned counterparts, and thus proliferated through natural selection
- C: They carried a mutant gene
- D: A and C

### Appendix 3

Directions: Read through the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. After reading through the assignment and think critically about the experiences Maleeka goes through. Has Maleeka been given all of these rights?

What are your rights?

Principle	The main character been given this right	The main character has not been given this right	What needs to change in order for this right to be provided?
The child shall be entitled from his birth to a name and a nationality.	<b>X</b>		
The child shall have full opportunity for play and recreation, which should be directed to the same purposes as education;		<b>X</b>	<i>There should be a block built into the school day for kids to socialize. If this were the case Maleeka wouldn't have to hide in the bathroom!</i>
The child is entitled to receive education, which shall be free and compulsory, at least in the elementary stages.			
The child shall in all circumstances be among the first to receive protection and relief			
The child shall be protected against all forms of neglect, cruelty and exploitation. He shall not be the subject of traffic, in any form			
Principle 9: The child shall be protected from practices which may foster racial, religious and any other form of discrimination. He shall be brought up in a spirit			



<p>of understanding, tolerance, friendship</p>			
<p>Principle 9: The child shall not be admitted to employment before an appropriate minimum age; he shall in no case be caused or permitted to engage in any occupation or employment</p>			
<p>Principle 6: The child, for the full and harmonious development of his personality, needs love and understanding. He shall, wherever possible, grow up in the care and under the responsibility of his parents, and, in any case, in an atmosphere of affection and of moral and material security; a child of tender years shall not, save in exceptional circumstances, be separated from his mother.</p>			
<p>Principle 5 The child who is physically, mentally or socially handicapped shall be given the special treatment, education and care required by his particular condition.</p>			

## Appendix 4

### We wear the Mask Final Project Rubric (Maximum: 24 points)

*At the end of Unit 1, students should be able to:*

- i. Identify and comment upon significant aspects of texts
- ii. Identify and comment upon the creator's choices
- iii. Identify similarities and differences in features within and between texts.

Achievement Level	Level Descriptor
0	The student <b>does not</b> reach a standard described by any of the descriptors below.
1–2	The student: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>i. Provides a mask that is <b>missing one side, but the side completed does show 2 perceptions.</b></li><li>ii. mask has <b>little detail (less than 3)</b> that show the <b>different perceptions</b> of character and self, but <b>does not exhibit the quality of a summative assessment</b></li><li>iii. <b>Identifies minimal (1) similarity or difference</b> in features <b>between self and character..</b></li></ol>
3–4	The student: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>i. Provides a mask that shows the <b>character and self</b>, but the mask <b>does not include both perceptions on both sides.</b></li><li>ii. Mask is <b>neat and includes a few (3-4) details</b> that show the <b>different perceptions</b> of character and self.</li><li>iii. <b>Identifies adequate similarities and differences (at least 1 of each)</b> in features <b>between self and character..</b></li></ol>
5–6	The student: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>i. Provides a <b>mask that includes <u>two</u> perceptions of character and <u>two</u> perceptions of self.</b></li><li>ii. Mask is <b>colorful, neat, and includes some (5-7) details</b> that show clearly the <b>different perceptions</b> of character and self.</li><li>iii. <b>Identifies significant (<u>2 -3</u>) similarities and differences</b> in features <b>between self and character.</b></li></ol>
7–8	The student: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>i. Provides a <b>mask that includes <u>two</u> perceptions of character and <u>two</u> perceptions of self.</b></li><li>ii. Mask is <b>creative, colorful, neat, and includes many (8-10) details</b> that show clearly the <b>different perceptions</b> of character and self.</li><li>iii. <b>Identifies extensive (<u>4 or more</u>) similarities and differences</b> between self and character.</li></ol>

## **Appendix 5**

### **“The Skin I’m In” Reading Schedule**

Week 1: Chapter 1-7 (pg. 1-37)

Week 2- Chapter 8-11 (pg. 38-60)

Week 3- Chapter 12-15 (pg. 61-84)

Week 4- Chapter 16-18 (pg. 85-103)

Week 5 Chapter 19-21 (pg. 104-120)

Week 6- Chapter 22-25 (pg. 121-143)

Week 7- Chapter 26-28 (pg. 144-158)

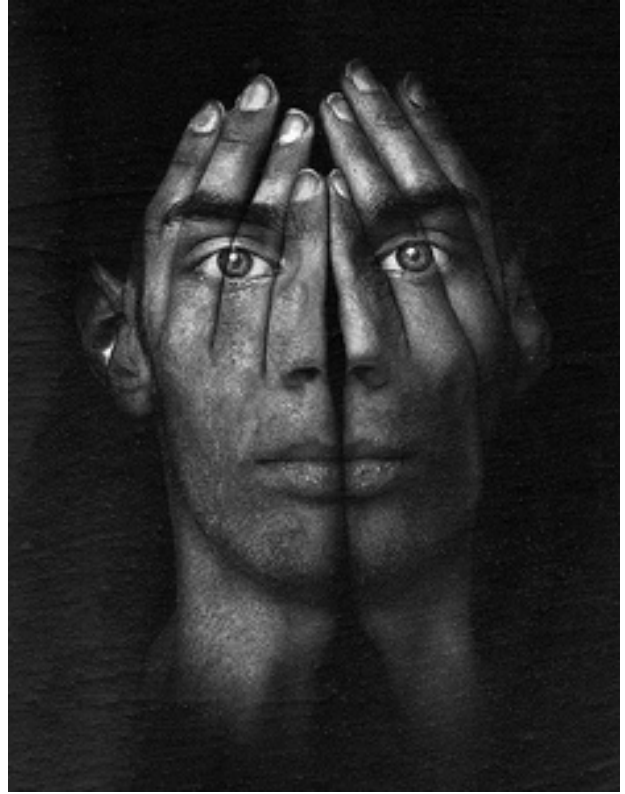
Week 8- Chapter 29-32 (pg. 159-171)

## Appendix 6: We Wear the Mask

We wear the mask that grins and lies,  
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,  
This debt we pay to human guile<sup>10</sup>  
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,  
[5]And mouth with myriad<sup>11</sup> subtleties<sup>12</sup>.

Why should the world be over-wise,  
In counting all our tears and sighs?  
Nay, let them only see us, while  
We wear the mask.

[10]We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries  
To thee from tortured souls arise.  
We sing, but oh the clay is vile<sup>13</sup>  
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;  
But let the world dream otherwise,  
[15]We wear the mask!



1. PART A: Which of the following best describes a central theme of the text?

- A. Identity comes from what we do and are, not what we look like.
- B. Resilience comes in many forms, such as silence, though this silence does have consequences.
- C. Tragedy should be openly mourned and not hidden away.
- D. Social Pressure can turn independent people into just faces in a crowd. 2.

PART B: Which of the following quotes best supports the answer to Part A?

- A. "We wear the mask that grins and lies, / It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes" (Lines 1-2)
- B. "This debt we pay to human guile" (Line 3)
- C. "O great Christ, our cries / To thee from tortured souls arise." (Lines 10-11)
- D. "We sing, but oh the clay is vile / Beneath our feet, and long the mile" (Lines 12-13)

3. Why must the people (the "we" mentioned) wear the mask?

- A. The people wear the mask to protect their faces and themselves.

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<sup>10</sup>. Guile (*noun*) using dishonest methods to achieve something

<sup>11</sup> Subtleties (*noun*) : small details or differences that are important but not obvious

<sup>12</sup> Vile (*adjective*) : extremely unpleasant; wicked or immoral

<sup>13</sup>

- B. The people wear the mask because they are told to by the larger society.
- C. The people wear the mask to keep their identities a secret.
- D. The people wear the mask to hide their suffering.

4. In the final stanza, what does the setting of the "long... mile" contribute to the message of the poem?

- A. The setting of a "long... mile" suggests that the masked people feel lost and cannot figure out which way to go, thus contributing to the message of identity.
- B. The figurative setting suggests that the masked people have been on a long 'journey' (or mile) facing many challenges but still have farther to travel, thus contributing to the message of resilience.
- C. The setting of the "long... mile" is paved with "vile" clay, implying that hiding one's feelings is wrong and thus adding to the message of honesty.
- D. The setting is paved with "vile" clay, implying that the masked people hate the world for making them walk such a "long... mile" and thus adding to the message's demand for change.

Short answer Activity: Does the speaker seem genuine when he recommends wearing 'the mask'? Consider when the poem was written and the tone the speaker uses. Cite evidence from the text to support your answer

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[Doll Test Simulation Video](#)