



Examining National Identity and Relationships through *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Adichie

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:
High School English Courses
High School Social Studies Courses

Keywords: Identity, Civil War, Nigeria, Biafra, Nationalism, Relationships

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

Synopsis: Students will explore the themes of national identity and human relationships during a time of conflict as represented in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Students will consider what elements make up one's identity as well as how humans relate to one another. Students will also be guided through a literary as well as historical analysis of Nigeria's history to learn about how personal markers of identity can lead to national conflict.

I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to 200 students in the International Baccalaureate Program.

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Katie M. Willett

Unit Introduction

In most American schools, the history of Africa is predominantly taught through the lens of the transatlantic slave trade and its subsequent development into the practice of chattel slavery in the United States. Students learn that the “poor” Africans were taken from their homelands and enslaved on American plantations. There is little discussion about the actual people who were enslaved and the cultures from which they came. This practice implies that the African history starts with the arrival of white Europeans and fails to consider the complex societies and cultures that were present on the African continent. If there is any additional content in the curriculum that includes the African continent, it tends to focus on Africa as a whole, potentially implying to students that Africa is a monolithic place, where individual countries don’t matter and cultures are all the same. At best, the curriculum covers the scramble for Africa, again focusing on the arrival of white Europeans and the decision to “carve” up Africa. There may be some emphasis on the philosophy of African self-determination post World War II, but the history texts cover little on the recruitment of Africans to fight in World War II, implying that Africa was backwards and not involved in the world conflict. Africa may well again enter the curriculum with the famines of the 1990s, however it will depend if teachers have enough time left in the semester to include this content.

These narratives are usually found in required World History and American History courses at the secondary level. As most of these are survey courses, many teachers indicate that they don’t have enough instructional time to devote to anything outside of this perspective, nor are there readily available resources that provide context to integrate a different narrative into the curriculum. Even in high school English classes, there is little to no inclusion of African literature and poetry. English curriculums tend to favor predominantly Western, white authors such as Shakespeare, the Brontë sisters, and Mark Twain. By excluding text that would allow students to explore various parts of world literature, we do our students a disservice. Including African text in the American curriculum would allow students to better develop a sense of international-mindedness and prepare them to consider multiple perspectives.

American media has also reinforced the one-dimensional view of Africa. Images of starving children with swollen bellies and flies surrounding them are regular features of commercials. The African landscape is depicted as only being the savannahs and grasslands where elephants, lions, and hyenas roam. Disney’s *The Lion King* reinforces this stereotype of the African geography and its popularity indicates that a lot of people view this single story. The headlines often use buzzwords such as “tribalism,” “ethnic conflict,” or “rebellion” intended to portray African conflicts as those who are uncivilized engaging in unreasonable fighting. All of this continues without delving into the more complex issues that surround the individual and national issues that are more complex than being reduced to a single story.

By ignoring the complexity of the historical situations and ethnic identities, this single story continues to perpetuate the deficit myth that surrounds modern day Africans and those of African descent. It ignores Maya Angelou's declaration that we are more alike than unlike. It can often result in a parent or guardian questioning the relevancy of a teacher's choice in teaching African literature, as why would their child ever need to understand such a simple topic that isn't relevant to the American schema.

This unit is designed to assist educators in providing diverse text and lessons that examine one of the complex histories of the African continent by reading Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*. This novel is told from multiple points of view including diverse characters. The characters are predominantly Nigerian, though they have complex identities beyond "just" being Nigerian. Some identify as university educated, others as the economic leaders, still others as the only hope for Nigeria. The characters are young and old, African and European. They grapple with their own identity allegiances as Nigeria gains independence from the United Kingdom and then a series of coups and new governments arise. The characters have to consider if they are more "town" or "bush," more Christian, Muslim, or polytheistic. There's the age-old struggle within family relationships, as parents, children, aunts and uncles must consider where they fall on ethnic, economic and social lines. The novel considers the diversity of cultures within Nigeria as the coups become more and more violent and the relationships between the Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa collide. Just as the United States must grapple with the diversity of cultures and government, so too does Nigeria.

Rationale

The International Baccalaureate Program offers students a rigorous curriculum that promotes international-mindedness with the hope of producing caring global citizens. Myers Park was the first public high school in North Carolina to offer the IB Diploma Programme (DP) in 1992 and was the first public or private school to offer the IB Middle Years Program in 1994. There is a strong tradition of international education at Myers Park High School. Students who successfully complete the requirements for the DP Programme are eligible to receive an international diploma, which can be used as entrance qualifications to universities around the world.

As a part of the program, students are required to complete courses in six subject areas and when in the DP Programme, must sit for Standard Level (SL) and Higher Level (HL) exams in addition to meeting all the courses required for graduation by the State of North Carolina. In addition, students must complete an Extended Essay and Creativity and Service Learning component to be a part of the program. IB students must also take a course titled the Theory of Knowledge (TOK) in which they explore how and why we build the knowledge we have. The course also suggests that students question why we think certain ways about certain topics. This easily lends itself to considering incorporating African literature into the content.

Myers Park's IB teachers are all trained by the IB Organization (IBO) and they align their curriculum to the Common Core Standards, North Carolina Essential Standards and to the IBO standards for their subject areas.

It is important that IB students are exposed to diverse authors and texts. This unit is designed for an English or Social Studies classroom and can be modified for any subject area or

event, particularly the IB's Theory of Knowledge course. I have included this unit as a special event to host during the celebration of International Education Week sponsored by the US State Department. International Education Week typically occurs in November and encourages schools to highlight different aspects of various cultures to encourage students to learn more about the world around them.

Recent data shows that as of 2017, students of color made up the majority of students enrolled in North Carolina public schools.¹ As aforementioned, there is little room in the North Carolina curriculum for opportunities to explore minority history. There is also a nation-wide push to include culturally relevant teaching practices in American schools. One of those practices is to include text that is written by non-white, non-European authors. Chimamanda Adichie's work fits this description.

School Information and Context

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools District is the second largest school district in North Carolina and is the eighteenth largest in the United States. It has approximately 147,000 students enrolled. Of the 21 high schools in the district, Myers Park High School is one of the largest with just under 3,700 students enrolled.

Myers Park was founded in 1951 in the heart of Charlotte, North Carolina. It is a large school campus that recently underwent construction and has two new buildings, the Language Arts (LA) Building and the Science, Engineering, and Technology (SET) Building. The campus is centered around a quadrangle park that is described as the "quad." The quad has park benches and picnic tables where seniors can sit during lunches and teachers can bring their classes to work. Myers Park is a comprehensive high school that serves students from 9th through 12th grades and employs approximately 200 teaching staff and 50 support staff.

Myers Park offers multiple academic programs to allow students to tailor their educational experience to fit their own needs. The school provides rigorous course offerings in several different academic programs including honors level classes, Advanced Placement (AP) courses, the International Baccalaureate (IB) Program, and College and Career Promise. Students can also take courses in Career and Technical (CTE), English, Social Studies, English as a Second Language (ESL), Fine and Performing Arts, Mathematics, and Army Junior Reserve Officer Training (A-JROTC).

North Carolina's Department of Instruction has moved towards evaluating schools by issuing School Report Cards. The most recent report card gave Myers Park a grade of B and determined that the school exceeded expected growth. Departments divide the teaching faculty and many teachers plan in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Approximately 70 teachers also make up the IB staff and participated in professional development through the International Baccalaureate Organization.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools has a long history with segregation and desegregation of its schools. The 1971 *Swann vs. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools* Supreme Court case upheld the district's busing plan to desegregate its schools. This practice included busing students around the county to integrate its schools and lasted until the 1990s, when another Supreme Court case

ruled against busing. This continues to be an issue for CMS as neighborhoods tend to be de facto segregated and the push for neighborhood schools has resulted in schools not reflecting much diversity. There have recently been calls from community members for the school board to address this matter.

Myers Park's student demographics break down as follows:

American Indian: 0%

Asian: 2%

Black: 25%

Hispanic: 10%

White: 62%

More than one race: 1%

Female: 49%

Male: 51%

Free/Reduced Lunch: 27%

In an effort to support student learning, the school has followed the procedures that are set out for the majority of the CMS district in providing each student with a district-issued Chromebook that students are allowed to take home with them and use for the year. The Chromebooks will be collected at the end of the school year and are expected to be used to complete classroom and state assessments. CMS has invested in Canvas as the Learning Module System and Myers Park encourages all teachers to publish courses on it. Many teachers also use the Remind app and Myers Park also uses the Punch Alert app for students and staff to be able to communicate possible emergencies. Punch Alert also allows school administration to communicate information that pertains to all students. In addition, most classrooms have a Promethean or Smart Board to support student learning.

Unit Objectives

This unit will accomplish the following objectives:

- Students will be able to explain how one's personal identity forms.
- Students will be able to explore the connections of the human experience by reading poetry.
- Students will be able to identify key geographical characteristics of the African continent and of Nigeria specifically.
- Students will be able to explain a brief history of Nigeria.
- Students will be able to read the novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* and explore the character development through the lens of personal and national identity.
- Students will be able to compare and contrast the American Civil War to the Nigerian Civil War.

Historical Background and Content

Geography

Located in Western Africa, Nigeria is the most populated country on the continent. It borders the countries of Benin, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. Its southern border is coastal, with the port cities of Lagos, Port Harcourt, and Calabar on the Gulf of Guinea. This geography played a role in the transatlantic slave trade in the European colonial period. The discovery of oil in 1956 also played a large role in the Biafra conflict.

Ethnic and Religious Groups

Nigeria's diverse ethnic and religious composition is a source of both pride and contention for the country. It is diverse in terms of ethnic groups where the majority of the country is made up of Hausa and Fulani (29%), Yoruba (21%), Igbo/Ibo (18%), Ijaw (10%), Kanuri (4%), Ibibio (3.5%), and Tiv (2.5%), though even those figures can be debated depending on one's ethnic identity.² It should be noted that there is a portion of the country, about 12%, that does not identify with any of these ethnic groups.³ Of special interest, particularly to this curriculum unit, is the religious affiliation found in Nigeria. Fifty percent of Nigerians identify as Muslim, 40% identify as Christian and 10% identify with animism/traditional beliefs.⁴ The differences of ethnic identities and religious affiliations play a large role in the formation of identities in the novel. The majority of these many ethnic groups and religious affiliations are found in specific geographical areas, which will also play a large role in the novel.

Colonization and Nigeria

Modern day Nigeria hails from a history that included various indigenous governmental structures. The northern part of Nigeria was heavily influenced by the Arab world and the majority of people there converted to Islam. The primary ethnic group in the north were (and are) the Hausa-Fulani and they had created large governmental units that were organized around the military.⁵ Generally speaking, the southern part of Nigeria was divided along dominant ethnic lines with the Yoruba living in the southwest and the Igbo living in the southeast.⁶ These two groups were primarily influenced by the British and therefore identified far more with Christianity. This division was made even clearer under British rule. In the 1800s, the British pushed their way into Nigeria with the European land grab described as the "Scramble for Africa." Britain practiced indirect rule over Nigeria through military force and negotiation with willing Nigerian leaders. The British would often use village leaders to accomplish what they wanted to happen; this established a *quid-pro-quo* system of governance among Nigerians.⁷ The British viewed Nigeria as a sphere of influence and were interested in developing economic spoils from the country. As a result, the British ruled in two separate zones, north and south. The southern regions of Nigeria received far more interaction than the north with the British and indeed with Christian missionaries. The British encouraged the cultivation of palm oil and cocoa in the south and peanuts in the north. Each of these three regions continued to be exploited by the British.

Civil War: The Emergence of the Republic of Biafra

After World War II, there were growing calls for independence among most of Africa's still-European colonized nations and Nigeria was a part of that wave. Nigeria gained its independence from the British in 1960, though still claimed a part of the British Commonwealth until 1963, claiming Queen Elizabeth II as the ceremonial head of state. Nigeria's first republic government was a coalition between the Nigerian People's Congress, a party that was dominated by northern Nigerians, and the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons. Although it was considered a federal system of government, with each of the three major regions and ethnic groups represented, there were sharp differences and tensions between the Hausa and Fulani, Igbo, and Yoruba.

Nigeria's diverse population and concentration of ethnic groups in certain geographical areas has led to conflict since independence in 1960. Although the country is home to many different ethnicities, Nigeria's three largest ethnic groups are made up of the Hausa-Fulani in the north where they predominantly practice Islam, and the mostly Christian Igbo in the east, and the Yoruba in the southwest dominated the political field during the 1960s.⁸ There was a military coup in January of 1966 which overthrew the government led by Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. The coup didn't solve any issues, but instead resulted in heightened tensions that led to massacres of the Igbo in western and northern regions of Nigeria.⁹ In June and July of the same year, there was a counter coup led by the Hausa and installed General Ykubau Gowon as the new Head of State and led a military government.¹⁰

There continued to be distrust and political unrest in Nigeria that eventually led Lieutenant Colonel Odumegwu-Ojukwu, governor of an Igbo-dominated eastern region, to declare that the state had seceded from the Nigerian government to create the Republic of Biafra on May 30, 1967.¹¹ Nigeria pursued war and established an embargo of the Biafran State. Both Biafra and Nigeria conducted military offensives and the war quickly devolved into a stalemate. The blockade resulted in a worldwide humanitarian disaster where the majority of the people in the region were starving.¹² Biafra reported that Nigeria was conducting a genocide against Biafra to win the war and sought international assistance.¹³ It is estimated that nearly one million people may have died as a result of the hunger and disease that the blockade brought about.¹⁴ The war continued to be bloody and brutal but in the end, with reinforced aid from the British, the Nigerian government was able to launch Operation Tail-Wind that ultimately had Ojukwu leave for exile; Biafra surrendered on January 15, 1970, ending the war.

As with any war, resources were a driving factor in Nigeria fighting to keep Biafra as a part of its country due to the large oil resources that were discovered in the area. This war took place during the geopolitical reality of the Cold War, and there were distant foreign actors who took part in the conflict. The British tended to support the Nigerian government with weapons, as it did not want to see the fall of a country they helped to create.¹⁵ Other countries attempted to relieve the humanitarian crisis found there, most notably the French Red Cross. This conflict brought to light the importance of ensuring that all aid workers and those seeking medical help were protected from attacks.¹⁶

Chimamanda Adichie was born seven years after the end of the Biafran war, but her family was largely impacted by the conflict.¹⁷ Both of her grandfathers were killed in the war and Adichie herself has commented that she “grew up in the shadow of Biafra.”¹⁸ There are parallels to this sentiment in the United States. Although the American Civil War was fought over one hundred years ago, that conflict continues to make up a part of the American identity. This can be seen in the current debates surrounding the appropriateness of the monuments to confederate soldiers, which are located predominately in the American South. There are still those, born significantly after the American Civil War, who still claim heritage to fallen Confederate (and sometimes Union) soldiers. There is also persistence in some places to display the Confederate Flag as a symbol of one’s southern heritage, despite the fact that this flag never represented the Confederate States of America as a whole. Just as Adichie explores the impact of the war upon her identity and what it means to be Nigerian, so too do Americans explore the legacy of the American Civil War through literature.

Adichie’s novel provides her readers an opportunity to explore the complex history of Nigeria and to learn about how its national identity can also form a personal identity. Her characters interact with the real world and Adichie works to incorporate the human encounters during the Biafran war to make consider contextualize the historical implications (Hodges, 2009).

***Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie¹⁹**

Summary

This novel was originally published in 2006 and takes place in Nigeria during the Nigerian Civil War, to which Adichie’s characters refer as the Biafra War. The novel is character-driven, but the story is told through the actions of these characters, though it is officially narrated through the perspectives of Olanna, Ugwu, and Richard. It is through the character development that the reader explores the role and impact of one’s own national and personal identity within the context of a national political agenda. The characters’ personal transformations mirror that of the Nigerian state, as Nigeria must consider what impact its colonial identity has upon the future of its government.

Characters

Adichie’s work focuses on character development to explore the actions and impact of the Biafran War. She includes diverse perspectives including characters who identify as Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa, as well as wealthy business owners, university professors, poor village people, military generals, Christians, Muslims, and those who embrace indigenous religious practices. Part of what makes this novel compelling is that the ethnicities and class cleavages do not overlap. There are Igbo who are university professors and Igbo who are poor villagers. This wide range of perspectives introduces the reader to the multiple identities that are present in the book and the tension that results from competing identities.

Adichie chooses three diverse characters to narrate the novel. The reader is able to meet the beautiful Olanna who is Igbo and originates from a family that has accumulated wealth due to its close business ties to the government. She frequently visits her poorer relatives who live in the north and often feels a closer tie to them. At the beginning of the novel, Olanna dates a Muslim man and expresses positive and warm feelings for him through the end of the novel, even when atrocities that involve his ethnic and religious background are revealed. Olanna also enters into a partnership with her boyfriend, Odenigbo, a professor who espouses revolutionary ideas and wishes to throw off any legacies of British rule. She is constantly confronted with what her identity should be. Is she tied to the legacy of colonial rule through her family, is she connected to the poorer people of Nigeria, or is she too a revolutionary, ready to die for her country's ideas?

The second narrator is Ugwu, a houseboy for Odenigbo. His aunt secures him this privileged position so that he can move from poverty in his village to bring money to his family. At first, Ugwu is shocked that "Master" would not finish all the food in his meal, especially leaving meat on the bones, and finds the things "Master" focuses on to be quirky indeed. However, Ugwu quickly adapts to Odenigbo and his group of "revolutionaries" who meet at the house to discuss politics and writings. Odenigbo ensures that Ugwu receives formalized education and Ugwu grows immensely during his tenure with Odenigbo. He observes the political changes and the Biafran war as someone who has had the opportunity to climb up the social ladder and discovers that sometimes it's not easy to know where one should serve.

The third narrator is Richard, an ex-patriate white British man, who has moved to Nigeria due to his seemingly genuine interest in Nigerian art. At the beginning of the novel, he primarily interacts with other ex-pats who sneer at the Nigerian "ways" of doing things and make fun of the "native" peoples. Richard is never completely comfortable with that and as the novel progresses, he moves on to more Nigerian circles until he ends up in a relationship with Kainene, Olanna's twin sister. He learns Igbo and enjoys exploring Nigeria as he finds it, not as he wishes it to be. He is able to watch the Nigerian political crisis from the viewpoint of his partner and provide an "outsider's" perspective of the events that take place as he defends Nigeria.

The other characters go through similar transformations and the reader gets to know them through the lens of the three narrators. Each has a unique perspective on the events leading up to the Biafra War and each take unexpected actions as a result of it. Specific characters to note that students will explore through this curriculum unit: Olanna, Ugwu, Richard, Odenigbo, and Kainene. Through focusing on the personal identity of these characters, the students will also be able to examine the formation of national identity.

Mature Content

Adichie's novel is not specifically written for young audiences. Although she does not go into gory detail regarding some of the specific events of war, she does not shy away from the realities of it. Teachers should be aware of the socio-emotional state of their students prior to assigning certain aspects of the book and ensure that students have access to counseling services. It may also be a good practice to make sure that parents are informed of the nature of the book and have students get permission slips signed. The topics that may be triggers for students include gunfire, rape, childbirth, hunger/starvation, and abuse. A modification may be to assign portions of the novel, rather than the novel in its entirety.

Of specific note is that there is sexual activity described in the novel. The majority of this activity happens between two consenting adults, with the actual acts not described in detail. In fact, much of how the reader knows that it happened is through the character's reflection of what the act means. However, there is one particular episode to note that includes the gang rape of a young woman at the end of the novel. This particular event is also not described in significant detail and is perpetrated by soldiers. This may be a section that the teacher may wish to not include, or to provide notes home to ensure that students and parents are aware of this sensitive topic.

Adichie doesn't shy away from describing the realities of war. The novel's depiction of war provides details regarding gunfire and descriptions of mangled bodies. Of particular note is a scene towards the end of the novel that goes into depth with gunshots and descriptions of mangled bodies in an airport. Hunger was a reality of this war and the process of slowly starving to death is also mentioned and this happens to characters that become really important within the novel.

Historical Connections in the Novel

The novel takes place just prior and during the Biafra War. The characters reflect often on their identities prior to the war and the reactions they have into the events leading up to the Biafra War. Readers are able to explore the philosophical reasons for the war through the discussions of the academics that gather around Odenigbo's social gatherings. The characters all experience the war from different perspectives, and all of them experience the devastating hunger and malnutrition that were present during the war.

Teaching Strategies

Assigning Roles for Group Work

During this curriculum unit, there will be the use of collaborative groups. It will be important that the teacher be sure to assign roles for the collaborative groups. The teacher will need to determine the roles that are needed in each group and explain the expectations for the group roles to the students.

Character charts

Students will use graphic organizers to record information about major characters in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Teachers will need to decide on the purpose of the character charts and be sure to structure the character chart activity so that students know the expectations for how they're used.

Collaborative Groups

Students will be required to work in collaborative groups. This strategy reflects 21st century skills by requiring and encouraging students to collaborate to discuss a relevant solution to a hypothetical problem. Teachers should purposefully pair students with the intent to match their skills and abilities. This can happen in multiple ways with the students choosing their own partners or at the teacher's discretion. Most generally, I like the strategy where the teacher assigns the groups. This ensures that all skills and abilities are matched appropriately. As students work through discussion they will demonstrate and explore global competency skills that require collaboration, effective speaking and writing skills to enhance communication through the entire group. This can be modified for the Academically and Intellectually Gifted, English Language Learners, and Exceptional Children.

Identity Charts

This graphic tool allows students to consider what factors make up their own identity, especially as they consider their national identity and personal identity.

Metacognitive Journal

A Metacognitive Journal has students consider what they see, hear, feel, think and care about from a piece of text. The text could be anything from a reading, podcast, movie clip, etc. Students record their reflections as they move through the text that will assist them in considering how they're thinking about the topic.

Podcasts

Students will have the opportunity to create their own podcast to capture their learning about identity in this novel. Teachers can use several different platforms for students to record their podcasts.

Think-Pair-Share

This strategy allows students to formulate an individual thought and then turn and discuss their individual thoughts with a partner. The idea is that the two partners come to an understanding of the concept directed to discuss by the instructor. Students should then share responses. This strategy allows students to talk and share even when the response is not directed specifically at the teacher.

Classroom Activities

Lesson 1: How do I get my story?

Purpose

Students will explore the factors that influence the creation of their identity.

Activities

The teacher will introduce the unit by asking students to consider what elements form their identity in a whole class discussion. The teacher will ask the students to write down five words that describe their identity. After an appropriate amount of time, the teacher will ask students to consider what is the number one most important aspect of their identity out of the five words written down. The teacher will then ask the students to take that one word and imagine that was the only thing that anyone else in the world knew about them. For example, a student may have written the word “daughter” and considered that the most important element of her identity. The student will then have to imagine all the other piece of her identity that would be missed because the only thing that people would know about her would be her identity as a daughter. The teacher will ask students to write down what they think the ramifications of this would be.

The teacher will then project an image of a political map of the African continent. Then, the teacher will ask students to call out what they know about the image. The teacher will record the answers on the white board. Expected answers include students talking about Africa as a “country” and mentioning words such as “Egypt, elephant, zebra, etc.” The teacher will then guide the students to take out their metacognitive journals and have them record their thoughts as they listen and watch Chimamanda Adichie’s “Danger of a Single Story” TED Talk. The teacher will debrief with the students after the TED Talk to ask them if their thoughts about Africa are along the lines of a single story.

Lesson 2: The Human Family--Are we really all alike?

Purpose

Students will explore text to evaluate what characteristics make a human, human. Students will also consider the similarities that humans have, regardless of their cultural and ethnic origins.

Activities

The teacher will begin the lesson by using strategies to recall the previous day's lesson. The teacher will then ask students to read Maya Angelou's poem, "The Human Family." The poem posits that all humans are more alike than unlike. Students will be directed to read the poem first by themselves, annotating as they see fit. Students will then share in their collaborative groups what they found interesting about the poem, and what questions they had. Students will be directed to come up with a Generating Interactions between Schemata and Texts GIST statement about what they think the poem is about. The teacher will then guide students to define what makes a human, human. The teacher will then ask students to brainstorm concepts that may cause people to divide. (Expected examples are religion, ethnic origin, gender identity, national origin, and regional differences.)

Lesson 3: Geographical and Historical Exploration of Nigeria

Purpose

Students will explore the geographical diversity of Nigeria and a brief timeline of Nigeria.

Activities

Students will first begin with analyzing a map of the geography of the whole continent of Africa. They will do this by watching a five-minute YouTube clip that models drawing in the geographical features of the African continent. This will help to give students perspective on the diversity of the whole of the African continent. Students will then be guided through an exploration of the geography of Nigeria. The teacher will encourage students to think of the implications of the geographical features with guiding questions. For example, the teacher will ask students what having a coastal border may provide. Another example is that the teacher will ask students why the Nigerian coast may be important to the development of the United States. Another question that that teacher should ask is what implications there may be from the three regions being so different from each other. Students will then be instructed to create a timeline of Nigeria's history based on a short reading provided to the students.

Lesson 4: Comparing Causes of the American Civil War and the Biafra Civil War

Purpose

Students will compare and contrast the causes of the American Civil War to the Nigerian Biafra Civil War to gain an understanding of the major issues presented in the Biafra War.

Activities

Students will receive a worksheet that has two columns. The first column will have information about causes of the American Civil War, and the second will include information about issues that led to the Biafra Civil War. These causes will include issues of sectional tension, political decisions and economic ramifications. Students will have to label each cause as social, political or economic in their collaborative groups. Students will then create a large poster where they create a mind map that represents how the identities of Nigeria may create some of the causes of the Biafra War. Students may choose to compare this to the American Civil War, however, that can be based on teacher discretion. The analysis of the American Civil War is used to trigger prior knowledge of civil wars that more Americans may be familiar with than the Nigerian Civil War.

Lesson 5: Character Identity in *Half of a Yellow Sun*

Purpose

Students will explore the historical event of the novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, by tracking a character's development.

Activities

Students will be assigned to read the novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The teacher can choose whether to use excerpts or the entire novel. If a teacher wishes to read the novel in its entirety, it may be a good idea to set out a reading schedule for students with checkpoints along the way. If a teacher wishes to use excerpts, it may be more helpful to assign specific chapters. Once the teacher has made the decision for how much of the novel is to be read, the teacher can move on to the next step where students will be divided into collaborative groups of six where the major characters are represented. One student should be assigned to each main character: Olanna, Ugwu, Richard, Odenigbo, or Kainene. The last student should take on the role of the "extras" that are present in the novel. Each student will be required to create a character "identity" profile in the form of a "character visual metaphor." On large paper, students will be required to create a body of the character made up of shapes and symbols that represent the character. For example, if one were to create a "character visual metaphor" for Ida Tarbell, they may make where her hand is supposed to be a quill since she wrote for a living. Students who have been assigned the "other" will create Nigeria as a metaphor. Students will then present their creations to their other group members so that they can get to know the characters well.

Lesson 6: Historical Event Analysis in *Half of a Yellow Sun*

Purpose

Students will explore the historical events as they are represented in the novel through the lens of the characters.

Activities

Students will still be working in their collaborative reading groups. Each group will be guided to choose 5-7 events from the novel. They will then have to describe how each of their characters felt during that event and then connect it to the history of Nigeria. Students will then create a storyboard that describes how these events in the novel connected to the history of Nigeria. Students will be expected to include the elements of national identity, ethnic identities and describe at least two personal relationships between each of the characters on the story board.

Lesson 7: Culminating Activities

Purpose

Students will be able to demonstrate their knowledge on the impact of the formation of national identity and personal relationships.

Activities

Students will be required to work in collaborative groups to brainstorm a culminating activity that will demonstrate their knowledge on national identity and personal relationships. They will be required to either produce a podcast or design an event that will highlight their understanding of this topic. Students will be provided a rubric to ensure they are successful during this process.

Appendix 1: Implementing Teaching Standards

Common Core State Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.8

Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9

Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.10

By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 11-CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.

North Carolina English Language Arts Standards

RL.11-12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

RL.11-12.2 Determine two or more themes of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another

RL.11-12.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly engaging.

North Carolina Social Studies Standards

AH1.H.1 -- Apply the four interconnected dimensions of historical thinking to the American History Essential Standards in order to understand the creation and development of the United States over time.

WH.H.1 -- Apply the four interconnected dimensions of historical thinking to the American History Essential Standards in order to understand the creation and development of the United States over time.

Bibliography

Teaching Resources

Akresh, R., Bhalotra, S., Leone, M., & Osili, U. O. (2012). War and Stature: Growing Up during the Nigerian Civil War. *American Economic Review*, 102(3), 273–277.

This resource discusses the humanitarian impacts of the Nigerian Civil War with specific regards to starvation and disease.

Adichie, Chimamanda. “Danger of a Single Story: TED Talk,” October 7, 2009.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg&feature=youtu.be>.

This is a powerful TED Talk given by author Chimamanda Adichie that explores the idea of what happens when there is only a single narrative to a story. This runs approximately 18 minutes and is a good way to introduce students to considering multiple perspectives about African history.

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. *Half of a Yellow Sun*. London: Fourth Estate, 2017.

This novel explores the origins and results of the Biafra War.

Albom, Mitch. "What's in a Name? Ethnicity or Ego?" Detroit Free Press, October 11, 2015, Sports sec. Accessed September 17, 2019.
<http://www.freep.com/story/sports/columnists/mitch-albom/2015/10/10/raven-symone-black-name/73734706/>.

This article gives an interesting perspective on the names and judgments that are given based on someone’s first name. It may provide some context for thinking about the external factors that shape our identities.

Angelou, Maya. *The Collected Autobiographies of Maya Angelou*. Modern Library ed. New York: Modern Library, 2004.

This provides poetry of Maya Angelou, specifically “Human Family,” and may provide some helpful poems to use with students in this unit as they work to understand empathy and relationships.

Aremu, J. O., & Buhari, L. O. (2017). Sense and Senselessness of War: Aggregating the Causes, Gains and Losses of the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970. *IAFOR Journal of Arts & Humanities*, 4.

This article gives a good description of the causes and timeline of the Nigerian Civil War.

Brookfield, Stephen, and Stephen Preskill. *Discussion as a Way of Teaching: Tools and Techniques for Democratic Classrooms*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999. Print.

This is a resource to provide teachers tools to engage students in dialogue in the classroom. It gives several helpful strategies to both encourage and navigate difficult conversations as well as how to assess classroom discussions.

Dickovick, J. T., & Eastwood, J. (2016). *Comparative Politics Integrating Theories, Methods and Cases* (Second Edition). Oxford University Press.

This textbook provides demographic information on modern as well as historical Nigeria. It also provides a nice concise history of Nigeria.

Ekeh, Peter P. Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17, no. 1 (January 1975): 91.

Ekeh explores Africa's private realm, public realm and social morality. He makes the argument that in Africa there are two different publics. The first public, which he calls the primordial public, is the allegiance one ascribes to one's origins, specifically one's family groupings or tribe. The second is the civic public, or the identity one feels as being a part of a nation. Specifically, the article describes the challenges that face Africans in terms of ideology when developing systems of governance.

Griffin, C. (2015). French Military policy in the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970. *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 26(1), 114-135.

This article details the French involvement in the Nigerian Civil War.

Isaacs, William. *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together: A Pioneering Approach to Communicating in Business and in Life*. New York: Currency, 1999. Print.

This text provides teachers tools on how to promote collaboration with students and discussion strategies.

Hodges, H. (2009). Writing Biafra: Adichie, Emecheta and the Dilemmas of Biafran War Fiction. *Postcolonial Text*, 5.

The article explores the impact of Adichie's work and descriptions of the Biafran War.

Leczna, M. (2017). (Re)Fashioning Biafra: Identity, Authorship, and the Politics of Dress in Half of a Yellow Sun and Other Narratives of the Nigeria-Biafra War. *Research in African Literatures*, 47(4).

This is good article to explain how Adichie was influenced by the Biafran conflict.

Nigeria Country Profile." *BBC News*, February 18, 2019, sec. Africa.
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13949550>

This website maintained by the BBC provides a brief country overview of Nigeria that includes basic facts about politics, geography and a timeline.

Tarantola, D. (2018). Unforgotten Biafra 50 Years Later. *American Journal of Public Health*, 108 (3), 317–318.

This article explores the health effects from the humanitarian crisis during the Nigerian Civil War.

Student Resources

Adichie, Chimamanda. “Danger of a Single Story: TED Talk,” October 7, 2009.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9lhs241zeg&feature=youtu.be>.

This is a powerful TED Talk given by author Chimamanda Adichie that explores the idea of what happens when there is only a single narrative to a story. This run approximately 18 minutes and is a good way to introduce students to consider multiple perspectives about African history.

Adichie, C. N. (2007). *Half of a Yellow Sun* (1st Anchor Books ed). New York: Anchor Books.

This novel explores the origins of the Nigerian Civil War through various character perspectives that explores the hope, promise, and disappointments of war.

Exploring Africa (n.d.) Retrieved from <http://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/>.

This is a wonderful website developed by Michigan State University that would allow students to explore several aspects of the history of Nigeria and other African countries.

Notes

- ¹ From the Color of Ed Conference.
- ² Dickovick, J. Tyler, and Jonathan Eastwood. 2016. *Comparative Politics Integrating Theories, Methods and Cases*. Second Edition. Oxford University Press.
- ³ Dickovick, J. Tyler, and Jonathan Eastwood. 2016. *Comparative Politics Integrating Theories, Methods and Cases*. Second Edition. Oxford University Press.
- ⁴ Dickovick, J. Tyler, and Jonathan Eastwood. 2016. *Comparative Politics Integrating Theories, Methods and Cases*. Second Edition. Oxford University Press.
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- ⁸ Hodges, H. (2009). Writing Biafra: Adichie, Emecheta and the Dilemmas of Biafran War Fiction. *Postcolonial Text*, 5.
- ⁹ Hodges, H. (2009). Writing Biafra: Adichie, Emecheta and the Dilemmas of Biafran War Fiction. *Postcolonial Text*, 5.
- ¹⁰ Hodges, H. (2009). Writing Biafra: Adichie, Emecheta and the Dilemmas of Biafran War Fiction. *Postcolonial Text*, 5.
- ¹¹ Lecznar, M. (2017). (Re)Fashioning Biafra: Identity, Authorship, and the Politics of Dress in Half of a Yellow Sun and Other Narratives of the Nigeria-Biafra War. *Research in African Literatures*, 47(4).
- ¹² Hodges, H. (2009). Writing Biafra: Adichie, Emecheta and the Dilemmas of Biafran War Fiction. *Postcolonial Text*, 5.
- ¹³ Hodges, H. (2009). Writing Biafra: Adichie, Emecheta and the Dilemmas of Biafran War Fiction. *Postcolonial Text*, 5.
- ¹⁴ Lecznar, M. (2017). (Re)Fashioning Biafra: Identity, Authorship, and the Politics of Dress in Half of a Yellow Sun and Other Narratives of the Nigeria-Biafra War. *Research in African Literatures*, 47(4).
- ¹⁵ Dickovick, J. Tyler, and Jonathan Eastwood. 2016. *Comparative Politics Integrating Theories, Methods and Cases*. Second Edition. Oxford University Press.
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- ¹⁸ Lecznar, M. (2017). (Re)Fashioning Biafra: Identity, Authorship, and the Politics of Dress in Half of a Yellow Sun and Other Narratives of the Nigeria-Biafra War. *Research in African Literatures*, 47(4).
- ¹⁹ Adichie, C. N. (2007). *Half of a Yellow Sun* (1st Anchor Books ed). New York: Anchor Books.