Dismantling Internalized Anti-Black Racism in Shakespearean Literature Instruction

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This curriculum unit is recommended for: 12th Grade English Language Arts

Keywords:
intersectionality, internalized racism, advanced placement, literature instruction, anti-racist pedagogy, Shakespeare, Othello

Teaching Standards

Synopsis

This unit focuses on dismantling internalized anti-Black racism as a goal of antiracist literature instruction in a predominately Black public high school setting. As a subliminal system that rewards or penalizes people of color for their complicity to racist ideas, policies, and practices, internalized racism persists as a form of structural oppression that is present in the classroom among Black students and Black teachers alike. Therefore, the goal of this unit is three-fold. First, the unit provides tools and resources for Black teachers to vigorously uncover, eradicate, and subvert detrimental, racist ideas they have subconsciously accepted and propagated in English literature instruction. Second, the unit aims to foster students' critical engagement regarding notions of race, racism, and antiracism through providing safe spaces for dialogic exchange and storytelling. Using Shakespeare's *Othello* as the guiding text, students will analyze themes of racial stereotype and assumption through the Critical Race Theory (CRT) framework of intersectionality, exploring further the varied ways that internalized anti-Black racism has affected their perception of literature and their worldview in general. They will apply tenets explored to the construction of their own stories through the genre of their choosing. In applying a narrative approach to antiracist pedagogy, the unit fulfills the third goal: to expand students' perception of literature from that of white men's writings to a more inclusive vision of literature as stories that reflect those disparities within the human experience that are to be challenged and transformed.

I plan to teach this unit November 4th-December 2nd of the 2020-21 school year to 40 high school seniors. I give permission for Charlotte Teachers Institute to publish my curriculum unit in print and online. I understand I will be credited as the author of my work.

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Introduction

 "In a racist society, it is not enough to not be non-racist, we must be anti-racist" - Angela Davis.

The curriculum set forth in this unit is the result of a specific interaction with a student in my Honors English IV classroom during the Spring 2020 semester. The exchange occurred just prior to dismissal due to COVID-19. While teaching a lesson on William Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice* in February, a Black male student asked me a surprising question. "Since Othello was a Moor," he began, "and we know from the play that he was a Black man, did a Black actor play the role when Shakespeare first produced it in 1604?" I paused for a moment before answering, taking note that I felt somewhat put off. "No," I answered, "The first actor played the role in blackface. A Black actor would not play the role until some 200+ years later." As I was sharing this information with the class, my mind wandered to all of the topics the class and I could have discussed along the lines of his question—the history of blackface, Black representation in theatre and film, stereotypes and racist perceptions in Othello that persist today—and I realized why I was wrestling with a persistent nagging in my gut. I had deprived the class of something more meaningful than a discourse on *Othello*. They needed a real-world connection to the literature that was grounded in the Black experience, both its challenges and triumphs.

The uneasiness in my gut persisted. For the remainder of the day (and for the days that followed), I pondered why I did not expect any of my students to raise the question about a Black actor playing the role of Othello, especially given that the class was 85% African American. My reflections brought me to an internal acknowledgement of the ways that I have intentionally toned down my voice, my perspective, and my expectations as a Black woman teaching English literature and writing. The act of toning down was a survival mechanism I developed some years ago due to an experience in what I perceived to be a chilly educational setting at a predominately white higher education institution. I learned not to expect much and not to push for much critical engagement regarding race from white students in that setting. It was safer to do so given the backlash I had encountered from some parents when discussing issues of diversity. I now recognize that my efforts to downplay both my Blackness and womanishness were fueled by unchecked internalized racism and sexism. I did not want to suffer the consequences of teaching as my authentic self.

I have also noticed that Black students in my classes are aware of how racism has impacted them and their families personally, but when it comes to other groups such as Latinx students, Asian students, LGBTQIA+ students, immigrant students, and female students, they do not generally

make the connection between their generational trauma and the need to empathize with others who are also affected by white supremacy and privilege, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, and other forms of oppression that operate in similar ways. Their lack of connection is problematic; personal oppression can easily become the bridge for understanding another's struggle. For this reason, I believe it is imperative to reference intersectionality as a lens for analysis. High school seniors are more than capable of understanding how intersectionality works. I hope to challenge students to think more critically about what they can get out of the educational experience when they approach it with the understanding that it is flawed but still useful. They know this intuitively already, but processing these realities through discussions and reflective journaling might liberate them from the sense that they are being lied to or are being forced to accept a set of beliefs that suppose their inferiority and that stand in contradiction to their lived actualities. Most of all, I hope that the students in my classroom are able to unpack and reject internalized racism.

School and Student Demographics

Established in 1938, West Charlotte High School is a historically and demographically Black comprehensive high school located on Senior Drive in Charlotte, North Carolina. Known as the "Dub C Mighty Lions," the spirit of West Charlotte is one of resilience, pride, and community. 2018-2019 data obtained from the National Center for Education Statistics provides a glimpse into West Charlotte's unique position among schools in the Charlotte Mecklenburg system. It calculates the enrollment for West Charlotte High School at approximately 1332 students. Of those 1332 students, 672 students are male and 660 are female. The school is also composed of 99% students of color from a myriad of heritages that have been historically marginalized and underrepresented. To support the academic development of all students and to ensure access to a variety of opportunities that will prepare students for postsecondary study, West Charlotte offers Advanced Placement courses (AP), International Baccalaureate courses (IB), Career College Promise (CCP), and the LIFT Academy, a nontraditional success program targeting incoming freshman.

My Learning Environment

During the 2020-21 academic year, I am teaching 40 West Charlotte seniors in two sections of AP English Literature and Composition. AP English Literature and Composition is a college-level literature analysis course intended to develop and deepen students' critical reading, writing, and interpretation skills. As students examine literary concepts such as character, setting, structure, perspective, and figurative language, they examine the ways that writers effectively use language to create meaning and foster purpose. This is my second year teaching AP English Literature at West Charlotte, and the curriculum I have designed for this unit is based on the experiences I had with students in AP English Literature and English IV Honors classes that I taught last year. The curriculum can be applied to any senior-level English class. Classes in my

learning environment are currently taught on a year-round, A/B schedule for forty minutes of synchronous time and thirty-five minutes of asynchronous time.

Rationale

This curriculum emerges from my position as a Black woman educator. While preparing it, I have other Black women teachers in mind, though all teachers can benefit from the information shared in this document. Black women teachers comprise approximately five percent of the U.S. teacher workforce (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Youth of color make up 50 percent of the U.S. public-school population (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2017) and Black students make up approximately 16 percent of the school population nationwide (DeRuy, 2016).

One might assume that Black teachers are immune to racist practices and are automatically qualified to teach about dismantling racial discrimination and oppression. One might also assume that a predominately Black educational environment is free of racist policies, instructional practices, and ideas. Though research supports the idea that students of color benefit significantly from the representation, insight, and knowledge that teachers of color model in their classroom interactions (Egalite, A. J. & et. al., 2015), the education that teachers of color provide can still be racist in orientation. As a presence that is endemic in the foundation of the nation, racism, which is founded on an idea of white supremacy, is a poison that all have been made to drink. Black teachers (and other teachers of color) have also ingested the toxic elixir of racial inferiority and have supported racist structures, beliefs, and practices, and have perpetuated them, sometimes knowingly and other times unknowingly. According to Kohli (2013), such internalized racism has a profound impact on students, resulting in low self-esteem, poor perceptions of family and community, and poor school performance. It is important to note that internalized racism does not just affect Black or African American teachers and students; it carries a range of consequences across the spectrum of communities of color according to Kohli et. al. (2006).

Despite the intersectional challenges students and their families are encountering with COVIID-19 and remote learning, I aim to make the virtual learning environment a safe, productive "place" where marginalized perspectives are received and engaged as normative experiences. This is particularly important given the other injustices that coincide with COVID-19—the disproportionate numbers of Black and Brown peoples infected and affected, the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor, and civil unrest due to police brutality. Many of my students do not perceive English literature to be relevant because they generally do not see their lived realities reflected in its cannon. However, I aim to demonstrate through this unit that students of color can find utility in Shakespeare's *Othello* when it is taught from a perspective that centers Black excellence as both normative and celebratory. Furthermore, students of color can connect Othello's characterization, conflict, and overarching themes to their real-world experiences with intersectional marginalization characterized by internal/external conflicts, and misrepresentation.

Curriculum Unit Goals

I approach this curriculum unit with the assumption that all literature, despite the author and time, can be used to explore questions of inequitable treatment, otherness, and exclusion. It involves more than teaching; it includes other facets such as classroom culture, management, and differentiation. For pedagogy to be truly anti-racist, internalized racism must also be addressed. To undertake the task of dismantling anti-Black racism (including its internalized manifestation), students will apply concepts of antiracist thought and intersectionality to their analysis of the Shakespearean play, *Othello*. The focal literary concepts explored in this unit are characterization, plot, and conflict. Students will gather evidence from the text to support their perception of Othello's character, his motives, his intent, and his insecurities. In a similar way, students will explain examples of both internal and external conflicts that emerge, ultimately leading to Othello's demise. In doing so, they will establish their own positions regarding the overarching essential question, "Does literature (including drama) reflect and reinforce the disparities of society or does it challenge them?" At the conclusion of the unit, students will write a defensible interpretation of the play featuring a line of reasoning that suggests the play is either a play about racism or it is a racist play. Central to their analyses is the progression of Othello as the tragic hero. Is his tragic end the result of his unreasonable jealousy or are other social and emotional factors related to racism/internalized racism at play?

Content Research

If students are to develop a critical lens when analyzing covert and overt manifestations of racism and internalized racism in *Othello*, they must first acquire a working knowledge of racism's history, its varied forms, and its related terms. Race is a slippery, convoluted idea that few willingly aim to unpack. Understanding how it works on both the micro and macro levels requires the ongoing commitment to equip oneself with the tools and strategies needed for consistent challenging of racial inequality and discrimination. As Donna K. Bivens contends in *Flipping the Script* (2005), race is a constantly evolving social construct that is based on skin color and other surface features. It has no real basis in biology and is not an indicator of intellectual superiority. This is despite the multiple efforts of white supremacist ideology to prove otherwise. As a second point, Bivens maintains that the notion of race has evolved over time with other groups of color being able to move in and out of whiteness and to compete for limited access to the benefits of whiteness, which further reinforces patterns of competition between groups. The idea of race has no real biological justification and is not an indicator of intellectual superiority. Anti-Black racism presumes that skin color is a predictor of intelligence. It is "the belief that there is something wrong with Black people, that we are not full human beings." (Carruthers, 2018, p. 26).

Blackness is continually linked to stereotypes of laziness, criminality, dishonesty, ignorance, unintelligence, oversexualization, and rage. Unfortunately, these perceptions also persist in majority African American settings as well due to internalized anti-Black racism, a presence that

persists when African Americans and other people of color "develop ideas, beliefs, actions and behaviors that support or collude with racism… Internalized racism is a systemic oppression in reaction to racism that has a life of its own" (Bivens 2005). It is more than internalizing negative stereotypes and prejudices imposed on one's own race. According to Kohli (2014) it is "a phenomenon that, like racism that impacts all communities of color; can be triggered by cumulative exposure to racism; and results in the conscious or unconscious acceptance of a racial hierarchy where the culture, values and beliefs of the dominant culture are prioritized over the culture values and beliefs of racial minorities (p. 68).

Internalized racism is the result of white supremacy. bell hooks (1992) links its origins to "systems of domination, imperialism, colonialism, and racism" that "actively coerce black folks to internalize negatively perceptions of blackness, the be self-hating" (p. 338). Because its origins emerged with colonialism, imperialism, and racism, internalized racism is deeply embedded in the fabric of American life and the raced world at large. It persists in Black communities "even though legal racial apartheid no longer is the norm in the United States;" society has been "cultivated to uphold and maintain institutionalized white supremacy" (p. 340).

Seeking to understand the psychological effects of racism, Frantz Fanon wrote his seminal work *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967). In it, he indirectly refers to internalized racism when he suggests, "As painful as it is for us to have to say this: there is but one destiny for the black man, and it is white" (p. iv). This process achieving whiteness involves economic factors and the internalization of his inferiority. His work highlights the historic complexity of race throughout the African Diaspora. He psychoanalyzes the dynamics of race in the French Caribbean. From this experience he witnessed the ways that the dominant culture associated Blackness with impurity and the ways that dark-skinned people accepted this association, holding contempt for their Blackness and desiring whiteness.

Even before Fanon's observations about the ways that racism is detrimental to the Black psyche, Carter G. Woodson (1933) argued in *The Miseducation of the Negro* that the educational system in the United States was structured to instill a sense of inferiority into Black people. He opines, "The same educational process which inspires and stimulates the oppressor with the though that he is everything and has accomplished everything worthwhile, depresses and crushes at the same time the spark of genius in the Negro" (p. 4). The educational system extinguishes the spark of Black ingenuity as it "drills" thoughts of inferiority into its Black students with "every class he enters in almost every book he studies" (p 5).

To survive the violence and brutality that white supremacy and racism have imposed both externally and internally, Black people have developed coping mechanisms. For this reason, it is important that students understand examine more than the struggle against racism. They must also understand the concept of masking for survival and understand the genius that has emerged from the trauma. The story of lived Black reality has been hidden in many respects. As bell hooks states, "Collectively black people remain silent about representation of whiteness in the black imaging. As in the old days of racial segregation where black folks learn to wear the mask, many of us pretend to be comfortable in the face of whiteness only to turn our backs and give expression to intense levels of discomfort" (p. 341). To explore this theme of wearing the mask, of hiding the trauma that racism and internalized racism imposes, students will analyze Paul

Laurence Dunbar's "We Wear the Mask" (1986) and Maya Angelou's adaptation "We Wear the Mask" (1987). Students will discuss how these poems apply to the experience of Blackness in society today.

Though all people of color experience the damaging effects of racism and internalized racism, anti-Black racism is a distinct experience. Sharon Park of dosomething.org observes, "Being Black in America is not the same as being any other race in America . . . internalized racism and anti-Blackness within each of our individual communities has long perpetuated white supremacy and the continued violence against the Black community . . . To stand in solidarity with our Black community means we must be actively anti-racist and not simply not racist." Ibram X. Kendi explains why the concept of being "not racist" is problematic. "Not racist" suggests that neutrality exists in the struggle for racial equality though neutrality is impossible. Those committed to antiracist work in any sphere should understand that only two options exist: racist or antiracist. Claims of being "not racist" are merely a façade for racism, and racism can only be dismantled once one recognizes that problems and inequities emerge with power imbalances and racist policies, not with groups of people (p. 9). Any practice or idea that assumes one group is inferior to another is a racist practice or idea. Racism, according to Kendi, is a system is a "collection of racist policies that lead to racial inequity" (p. 20). These racial inequities are justified and reinforced by a series of racist ideas. Segregation and assimilation are two types of racist ideas. Both are founded on the idea of white, Eurocentric superiority. Racist ideas are detrimental to people of color because they make people of color think less of themselves. This in turn which makes people of color then more vulnerable to racist ideas (Kendi, 2019, p. 6). Students of color are among the vulnerable Kendi describes.

Students will have access to Kendi's (2017) *Stamped from the beginning: The definitive history of racist Ideas in America* to develop their understanding of race as an institutional and structural reality. A free audio version is currently available on Pandora with a free trial. To make the connection between anti-Black racism and internalized anti-Black racism, students need to understand how racism works structurally in their current realities. They perhaps know some features of it intuitively, but resources such as Ijeoma Oluo's *So you want to talk about race* (2019) provides an accessible description of what racism and racial oppression systematically look like today in school systems. She is particularly adept at explaining the school to prison pipeline and the resentments students of color harbor while at school. Oluo's examination of the astronomical numbers of Black and Brown youth who are pushed from public school systems into the prison system can be related to the characterization of Othello. Just as Othello was pathologized by jealous character's seeking revenge, students of color often are victims of the pathologizing as zero tolerance policies and the increased presence of security and police on school campuses.

Because internalized anti-Black racism persists as a subconscious reward/punishment system of embedded power structures instituted to suppress, exclude, demean, deauthorize, and degrade nonwhite peoples (and especially African Americans) to a subordinate status that ensures their domination through acceptance and participation, and anti-racism aims to reject, subvert, and dismantle the power structures that center whiteness as the inherently superior human experience, then anti-racist pedagogy endeavors to ground educational instruction in the dignity and affirmation of people of color as equally legitimate experiences to be studied. To effectively

ensure the dignity and affirmation of Blackness as a fully human, equally legitimate experience, anti-racist pedagogy must center the experiences (both the suffering and the triumph) of Black peoples in the framework of instruction. In my classroom, which is predominantly composed of students of color, antiracist pedagogy involves a critical assessment of anti-Black racism and internalized racism as they manifest in educational instruction and as they persist in inter- and intra-racial relations among students. The tool for critically investigating the multidirectional ways that anti-Black racism colludes with other oppressions is intersectionality.

CRT and Intersectionality

Since my unit challenges the traditional Western cannon by centering critical reading, writing, and speaking skills in the balanced experience of Black joy, ingenuity, and struggle, an exploration of CRT is essential to equip students with a basic understanding of how race and power are socially constructed. According to Dixson & Anderson (2018), in the educational sphere in particular, CRT has evolved significantly over the past two decades and is currently defined by six main areas of challenging ideas and racially oppressive systems: 1) Racial inequity in education as the result of a system of achievement that is based on rivalry; 2) Education policy and practices as the construction of racial inequity and the preservation of normative whiteness; 3) Refusing to buy into the dominant narrative and assumption of people of color inferiority and white superiority; 4) Refusal to subscribe to ahistoricism (analyzing race apart from history) and understanding the historical relationships between current educational inequity and the longstanding history of oppression; 5) Engaging in intersectional analyses that both recognizes and identifies the ways that other features of identity intersect with race 6) Agitating and advocating for redress of educational inequities.

Intersectionality is a concept that emerged from CRT. It is a theory first articulated and coined by legal scholar and Black Feminist, Kimberlé Crenshaw, who in "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex" (1989), provides an analytical framework for voicing the multidimensional, multidirectional oppressions that are inherent in the lived experiences of Black folx. Intersectionality aims to reconceptualize power in non-dominating ways that promote a just society, and for the purposes of this unit, intersectionality is useful for reconceptualizing power dynamics as they relate to anti-Black racism in literature instruction. Intersectionality is a means for analyzing and critiquing inequality. It requires placing discrimination dialogue at the intersection where the most disadvantaged are positioned and giving the most marginalized priority in voicing their experiences in the conversation. Doing so enables the actualization of community by "restructuring and remaking of the world where necessary." Remaking the world can only happen when teachers and other educational leadership is committed to remaking the classroom into a community that is truly affirming to the experiences of all students irrespective of race/ethnicity, gender, class, sexual identity and orientation, ability, and so on. The classroom should also be a supportive, safe community where students can inquire, explore, and evolve in their thinking and in practice.

Instructional Implementation

Five of ten lessons are presented in this curriculum unit. They are built on a variety of instructional strategies that are meant to engage students in fast-paced, rigorous learning despite the abbreviated instructional format in a full remote setting.

Lesson Plans (Appendix 2)
- Essential Questions
- Relevant Vocabulary
- Warm Up Exercises
- Close Readings of selected excerpts/In Class Read Alouds
- Think Alouds and Questioning

Activities
1. Warm Up (Do Now) exercises to activate background knowledge and connect new concepts to previous lessons.
2. Anticipation Guide: Given during the first lesson to capture student attitudes toward themes addressed in the play.
3. Journaling: Beginning at lesson four, students will undertake the dual task of writing about and reflecting on the progression of Othello's character development in the play while also considering the dynamics of racism/internalized racism in their lived realities. Students will write four journal entries in response to the guiding questions that are aligned with each lesson. (Appendix 3)
4. Discussion Posts: Discussion posts will be utilized as exit tickets and as assessments.

Assessments
1. 50/50 Discussion Post: Students will use journal entries to craft a detailed discussion board post in which they write a defensible interpretation in response to a prompt of their choosing from a list of five. (Appendix 4)
2. Othello Characterization Project (Appendix 5)

Standards

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) determines the common core standards for English Language Arts. Although the AP English Literature & Composition is designed to prepare a student for successful completion of the College Board examination as demonstrated by a score of 3 or higher, I have correlated the AP competencies with NCDPI's standards, making this unit applicable to any senior level English class. Both NCPDI and AP standards require that students demonstrate an ability to write defensible claims supported by sound reasoning, textual evidence, and critical analysis. The goal in preparing a unit that addresses general ELA standards along with AP standards is to equip students from all backgrounds to adequately demonstrate the requisite reading, writing, speaking, and critical thinking skills needed for college matriculation and/or workforce training.

Though the multifaceted work of this unit covers a variety of standards, it will mainly focus on the following three:

The following Common Core English Language Standards will be covered in this curriculum:

RL 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 12.2
Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

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

Lesson Plans

Lesson One

Essential Question(s):
What is love? Is it an action? An Emotion? A commitment? Something else? Can a person murder someone s/he truly loves? Explain your answer. Students are provided with an opportunity to discuss this question at the beginning of the unit.

The Learning Objectives:
- I can explain the historical context of Othello.
- I can identify literary devices in drama.
- I can identify Act I themes and relate them to contemporary life.

Warm Up:
To activate background knowledge and build anticipation about reading Othello, students will answer the following twelve questions, which gauge their attitudes about themes presented in the play:

1. Seeking revenge always turns out well.
2. Every woman should be strong and independent.
3. Love weakens the strongest men.
4. The most valuable asset in the world is a good name (or reputation).
5. A tarnished reputation can never be be repaired.
6. Evil and danger are always obvious; an observant person will see them coming before they are a real threat.
7. Imagination is worse than reality.
8. People of color have a harder time in society.
9. It's my fault if someone deceives me.
10. People are either good or evil. There is no middle ground.
11. The worst kind of enemy is a former friend.
12. Jealous partners love hard and are protective.

Vocabulary:
1. Tragedy
2. Tragic hero
3. Moor
4. Hubris
5. Cuckold
6. Race/Racism

Direct Instruction:

The first lesson of the unit covers the historical context of the play. It summarizes the scope of Shakespeare's plays, explaining the general differences between comedies, tragedies, and histories. It highlights the ways that Shakespeare departed from tradition in his approach to characterization and structure. Significant time is spent introducing the concept of the tragic hero. As the final point of examination, the lesson addresses the presence of Africans in London by the time that *Othello* was first performed in 1604. The class is informed that the first Black actor does not play Othello until over 200 years later, and that the general attitude toward Africans in London was one of fear and distrust.

Guided Practice:
After a brief description of characters, the class will read Act I, Scene I aloud, pausing for moments of questioning and thinking aloud as the teacher asks questions to assess understanding.

Independent Practice:
Students will read Act I, Scenes 1-3. As an activity, they will annotate Scene I, highlighting unfamiliar words, key themes, language revealing Othello's character (though the eyes of Iago, Roderigo, and Brabantio, and summarizing important details.

Lesson Two

Essential Question(s):
How does literature (and specifically drama) reinforce or challenge racial or gender stereotypes?

The Learning Objectives:
- I can explain the function of a character changing or remaining unchanged.
- I can identify and describe how details reveal a character's perspective or motive.

Warm Up:
Shakespeare wrote Othello around 1603. The first known performance of the play was November 1, 1604 at Whitehall Palace in London. There was already a significant presence of African immigrants in England by 1604, but a Black actor would not play Othello until May 1825 (FW Aldridge). Prior to 1825, all actors playing Othello wore blackface. Based the context shared last period, how do you think Shakespeare's Othello challenged or supported racial stereotype in those days?

Students reflect for two minutes; they submit a typed response as a private message in the chat box. The teacher will read some of the responses and cold call others to explain their responses. To promote dialogue between students, the teacher will ask students if they agree with a particular response. Students must justify their positions with material from the previous lesson or quotes from the play.

Vocabulary:
1. characterization
2. static vs dynamic character
3. round vs flat character

4. major vs minor character
5. protagonist vs antagonist
6. soliloquy

Direct Instruction:
The second lesson of the unit explores characterization. The bulk of the lesson is devoted to explaining vocabulary terms, distinguishing between static characters and dynamic characters, round versus flat characters, major versus minor characters, and comparing character motives/inner thoughts to real-world human interaction.

Guided Practice:
After a detailed comparison of the play's characters and definitions reflated to characterization, the teacher reads Iago's soliloquy, "I Hate the Moor." Students are directed to analyze Iago's motives based on what he reveals in his soliloquy. The goal is to trace the progression of their ideas about Iago to determine how and/or if he changes. This exercise will prepare them for a more detailed analysis of Othello.

Independent Practice:
Students will construct a discussion post a responding to the following question: How would you describe Iago's character in the opening Act? How much do you believe him when he suggests that Othello has slept with his wife? How do his interactions with Roderigo and Brabantio support or betray his explanation of his own motives? Students must also respond to one peer's post by either asking a question or building on the peer's observations.

Lesson Three

Essential Question(s):
How does literature (and specifically drama) reinforce or challenge racial or gender stereotypes?

The Learning Objectives:
- I can explain the function of a character changing or remaining unchanged.
- I can identify and describe how details reveal a character's perspective or motive.

Warm Up:
Summarize what you believe to be the most important points of Act I, Scene I.

Vocabulary:
direct characterization
indirect characterization
foil
archetype

Direct Instruction:
Lesson three begins with a summary of Act I, Scenes 1-3. After the summary, the focal point shifts to characterization part two. The definition of characterization is reiterated, and the terms

introduced in the previous lesson are summarized in order to draw a connection to direct and indirect characterization. Students examine excerpts from popular literature to identify direct versus indirect characterization. To assist with analyzing direct characterization, students are introduced to the acronym, PAIRS: (P)hysical Appearance, (A)ction, (I)nner Thoughts, (R)eaction, (S)peech.

Guided Practice:
The teacher introduces literature excerpts from literature to show direct and indirect characterization. While reading excerpts to students, the teacher asks students to identify how the passage reveals indirect or direct characterization.

Independent Practice:
Students return to Act I, Scene I where they read the exchange between Iago, Brabantio, and Roderigo. After reading the brief excerpt, students submit their answers to the following questions: Based on the dialogue between these three characters, what can we infer about each of them? What do we know about Othello?

Lesson Four

Essential Question(s):
How does Shakespeare use conflict to drive the movement of the plot in Act I, Scenes 1-3?

The Learning Objectives:
- I can explain the function of a character changing or remaining unchanged.
- I can identify and describe the role of conflict in moving the plot of a narrative.

Warm Up:
In one complete sentence, explain the role you think conflict plays in plot progression.

Vocabulary:
Conflict
Internalized racism
Microaggression

Direct Instruction:
The objective of the lesson is to examine the various kinds of conflict that may appear in a narrative. Students examine examples of internal conflict and external conflict. Six types of conflict are explored: Human (or character) vs. Self, Human vs. Human, Human vs. Society Human vs. Nature, Human vs. Supernatural (God, fate, etc.), and Human vs. Technology

Guided Practice:
The teacher and students analyze the following quote by Brabantio:

Act I, Scene II (283-300)
BRABANTIO.
O thou foul thief, where hast thou stow'd my daughter?
Damn'd as thou art, thou hast enchanted her,
For I'll refer me to all things of sense,
(If she in chains of magic were not bound)
Whether a maid so tender, fair, and happy,
So opposite to marriage, that she shunn'd
The wealthy curled darlings of our nation,
Would ever have, to incur a general mock,
Run from her guardage to the sooty bosom
Of such a thing as thou—to fear, not to delight.
Judge me the world, if 'tis not gross in sense,
That thou hast practis'd on her with foul charms,
Abus'd her delicate youth with drugs or minerals
That weakens motion. I'll have't disputed on;
'Tis probable, and palpable to thinking.
I therefore apprehend and do attach thee
For an abuser of the world, a practiser
Of arts inhibited and out of warrant.—
Lay hold upon him, if he do resist,
Subdue him at his peril.

After reading the excerpt aloud, the teacher asks students to identify insults and accusations.
Using clues from the passage, students are to determine what they think the real source of the
conflict is and to explain why using examples from Act I.

Independent Practice:
Students return to Act I, Scene I where they read the exchange between Iago, Brabantio, and
Roderigo. After reading the brief excerpt, students submit their answers to the following
questions: Based on the dialogue between these three characters, what can we infer about each of
them? What do we know about Othello?

Students also begin journaling. At the end of the unit, they will have written four different
journal entries. Journal entry one guides students in the process of understanding who they are in
relationship to the family, school, and society at large.

Lesson Five

Essential Question(s):
How do conflicting, sexist views of women drive the plot in ways similar to racist views?

The Learning Objectives:
- I can explain the function of a character changing or remaining unchanged.
- I can explain how different types of conflict move the plot.

Warm Up:
In the real world, conflict is caused by differing values, expectations, or perceptions about the world. What is the real source of conflict surrounding Othello's marriage? In your response, consider views of Moors, views of women, views of interracial marriage, views related to class and status.

Vocabulary:
Intersectionality
Sexism
Misogyny
Classism

Direct Instruction:
The idea of class is much more distinct in England than in the U.S. Social norms during Shakespeare's time dictated that people marry within their class or others of acceptable status. Brabantio was a senator and a member of the ruling elite, which means that Desdemona came from a high position in Venetian society. Consider then the ways that race, class, and gender, intersect in this narrative. Intersectionality is introduced. This word was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe the ways that multidimensional oppression intersect.

Guided Practice:
In what ways an understanding of class and race intersectionality change how we understand the characters actions, insecurities, and motives?

Independent Practice:
Students continue their journal entries.

Journal Entry Guiding Questions

Directions: Over the course of the next ten days, you will write four journal entries that express your thoughts about *Othello* and the background readings we will explore. The purpose of these journal entries is to understand how we think/feel about ourselves in relation to the world, and to examine how our perceptions affect our interpretation of literature. As a larger question, we will explore whether literature affects how we see the world or if how we see the world affects literature. In the end, your journal entries will help you to understand your perspective. They will guide your 50/50 discussion post and will help you with the final assignment for Unit 3, which is a character analysis project.

Your journal entries will be graded based on your use of standard grammar, capitalization, and punctuation. To stretch your writing beyond our beginning assignments, paragraphs should be 8-10 sentences in length and should follow the following format:

1. Open with a claim or a clear position that comes to mind when you are reading the guiding questions.
2. Use vocabulary from supporting readings (i.e. anti-racist, assimilationist, segregationists, divergences, etc.) to explain your thoughts and positions
3. Refer to the guiding questions below to direct your thoughts.
4. Explain, explain, explain.

Guiding Questions

Journal Entry 1
- How do you define your identity?
- When were you first made aware of the idea of race?
- Who has helped to shape your understanding of your identity?
- In what ways do different parts of your identity intersect?
- How would you define yourself as a West Charlotte student?
- What is your perception of West Charlotte's legacy and its standing as a school?
- What do you think of when you think about Shakespeare?
- How do you think your identity affects your understanding of Shakespeare?
- Do you think that Shakespeare should be a requirement for senior English classes? Why/why not?

Journal Entry 2 (Pick one character to analyze)
- How do you perceive Othello as a character?
- How do you perceive Desdemona as a character?
- How do you perceive Iago as a character?
- How do you perceive Roderigo as a character?
- How do you perceive Cassio as a character?
- How do you perceive Emilia as a character?

- What does the dialogue in the play reveal about your character's racial attitudes? Gender attitudes?
- How do your character's actions reflect ideas from some of our other texts such as "We Wear the Mask (Dunbar), Stamped from the Beginning, and/or Maya Angelou's mask poem?

Journal entry 3
- What does Othello suggest about Blackness? Whiteness?
- What does Othello suggest about women's roles in society?
- What role does violence, jealousy, greed or other related evils play in the movement of the plot?
- What examples can you find in the play of conflict/dynamics that are present in our world today?
- Is Shakespeare as brilliant as scholars say? Why/why not?

Journal entry 4
- Re-read your previous journal entries.
- What patterns in thought do you see?
- How would you describe your own position on racial/gender, poverty and other types of discrimination in the world?
- At this point, do you think that Othello is a racist play? Why/why not?

The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice
ACTS I, II, III

READ THE DIRECTIONS CLOSELY

For this assignment, choose ONE question for your thoughtful response. Cite lines at least examples (with quotes) from the play to support your response. Your grade will be based on your critical analysis of the text, sentence structures, and punctuation (50 points). In order to fulfill all the requirements of this assignment, your response will be at least five complete sentences. Points will be deducted for errors in grammar, capitalization, and spelling. First and second person language is also not acceptable (no "I think" "You feel").

2. After you have posted your response, select one of your peers' responses. Respond to his/her post by either raising a new question, by building on something he/she has written, or by challenging his/her statements (but you must use evidence from the text). You will not see your peers' responses until after you have posted a response (50 points).

Please keep in mind that this is a formal assignment--100 points total.

Here is a frame that you can use to start your work.

In _____ (title of the work), _____ (author or character), through _____(the use of a device) _____(strong verb) _____(message or larger theme).

Here is an example based on question 1:

In Act III of William Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice,* Othello demonstrates superior skill in managing literal conflict on the battlefront, but he is incompetent in managing the conflict in his heart. Othello's insecurities, which stem from internalized racism and chauvinism, lead to irrational behaviors that undermine his credibility and ultimately leads to his destruction. His downfall as the tragic hero reveals Shakespeare's message to his audience, which is that unchecked internal insecurity can be fatal…

Questions:
1. Othello has been blessed with an extraordinary ability to lead. He is regarded as a military genius, and his ability to lead in wartime has opened doors of social status and power. However, his position and status does not exempt him from internal or external conflicts and resentments. In a well-developed paragraph, explain how either internalized racism or the racist views/actions of Iago, Roderigo, or Brabantio undermine Othello's reputation or his functionality as a highly competent leader.
2. In Act III of *Othello*, significant conflict emerges regarding a gift, a handkerchief. Choose **one** character (Othello, Desdemona, Iago, or Emilia) and explain the significance of the handkerchief from his/her perspective. What does it symbolize? How does it advance the character's goals or leads to his/her downfall?
3. Acts I and II of *Othello* provide insight into the negative perceptions of women at the time the play was written and first performed. Compare/Contrast how Brabantio treats Desdemona with how Othello treats her in the beginning of the play. What roles do sexism and/or misogyny play in both men's treatment of her?
4. What is the true source of Brabantio's displeasure with Othello's marriage to Desdemona? Is he mad because of the age difference, the racial difference, the class difference, or a combination of factors? Use quotes from the play to explain your answer.
5. How does a student's race, economic status, gender (or the intersection of them) affect the way he/she reads *Othello*? In your response, be sure to identify the central themes of the play. Is this a play about race? Is it a play about gender? What exactly is Shakespeare trying to accomplish. Use quotes from the play, *Stamped from the Beginning*, "We Wear the Mask," or points discovered in your journal entries to support your answer.

Rubric: 50/50 Discussion Post
(50 student/50 peer)

Quality of Work	A: Exemplary 100-90 ON TIME	B: Above Average 89-80	C: Average 79-70	D: Poor 69-60	F: Does not meet standard/ No submission 59 or below
Contribution to the online learning environment	Takes a leadership role in discussion posts. Actively contributes to discussion and raises questions that prompt deeper discussion.	Contributes to the discussion with probing questions and clear, analytical ideas. Encourages and supports peers through online interactions.	Meets the basic criteria for contribution to the discussions. Interacts freely in discussions and encourages others.	Makes a marginal effort to be involved in online discussion.	Student does not contribute the the online discussion
Level of critical engagement and analysis	Critically analyzes the issues presented in the discussion. Contributes major points using evidence from the text to support claims. Clear evidence of reading the class material.	Relates posts to topics discussed while also using information from texts.	Contributes ideas that are related to the discussion points. Supports ideas using examples from the text.	Generally summarizes discussion points with no new ideas or contributions.	
Quality of responses to peers and teacher	Responds to peers thoughtfully and respectfully. Provides supportive and insightful feedback.	Responds respectfully and thoughtfully to evidence and argument of peers.	Responds to peers' points.	Responds generally without evidence from the text to support. Posts are off topic or have little connection to course material.	
Expression of ideas	Writes claims and ideas in clear, concise Standard English with evidence to support them.	States claims clearly in Standard English.	Claims are unclear or are expressed with grammatical errors.	Claims do not meet the standards as outlined by the assignment guidelines	NA

Appendix 5

Name_____ Block: _____

Othello Project

Directions: This assignment will include individual components and group components.

PART ONE

Individual assignment-- Listed below are **four of the major themes** discussed in *Othello.* Each student will select **one character and theme**. Based on character and theme, select quotes from the play and complete the chart below.

> I.   Reputation/honor: discuss how reputation and honor are valued and/or disregarded by Othello, Desdemona, Iago, Emilia, and Cassio.
>
> II.   Jealousy as a motivational force: how does jealousy motivate the actions of the following characters: Roderigo, Iago, Emilia, Bianca, or Othello.
>
> III.   Racism/Otherness: What social comment is Shakespeare making about race? How do the stereotypes, race-based resentments, and jealousy motivate the actions of some characters? Othello Rodrigo, Iago, and Brabantio.
>
> IV.   Sexism/Misogyny: What social comment is Shakespeare making about women? How do views of a women's reliability influence the behavior of characters in the play. Consider Iago, Brabantio, Othello, and Rodrigo.

Selected character: _____

Theme: _____

Next, review the play. After skimming each Act/Scene, select three to five quotes that demonstrate your character's growth or change. If the character does not grow or change, how are your selected quotes significant to the activities of the plot? In other words, what is the purpose of the character's presence in the play? How does he/she add to the action?

Quoted Text	What does it mean?	How it reveals growth/change Or how does it affect events?

Part II

Group assignment. Groups are determined by *character selection.* Team members will discuss how the character developed over the course of the play, including how themes interact and build on one another. The group will agree to focus on ***one particular theme*** for a visual project. The visual project will follow these guidelines:

1. The selected theme will be directly stated. Group will explain the connection between the character and the theme.
2. Groups will find (or create) visual images that represent their chosen character and theme. They will organize or present those images in a way that represents the character they have selected.
3. Groups will agree on three quotes (or key phrases/words) and incorporate them into the project to capture how the character is characterized.
   Examples of past Shakespeare projects include poems with illustrations, sketches, collages, Prezi, PowerPoint, or "vision boards." This is your time to be creative.

4. Each team member is expected to participate. To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to share in the process, each member will complete a worksheet describing role components in the group. (Teacher will distribute at the beginning of the group component).

Rubric for Grading:

Completion of the Assignment:	10 points
Clarity with theme/character and quotes	30 max
Use of Images and Connections	30 max
Evidence of Contribution to Group Project:	30 max

_____

Total Possible	100 points

Clarity between theme, character, and quotes selected	**Clarity between theme, character, and quotes selected**	**Clarity between theme, character, and quotes selected**
30	20	10
Selected theme is stated clearly and is visually expressed in the project. The project includes an explanation of the relationship between the character and theme.	Selected theme is not clearly stated/or the connection between character and theme is not present, but indirect references are present.	Selected theme is not stated and no references are present to direct the viewer as to the selected theme/connections between character and theme.
Visual Images/Connections Overall Message of the Project	**Visual Images/Connections Overall Message of the Project**	**Visual Images/Connections Overall Message of the Project**
30	20	10
Relevant visual images, word choices and phrases to communicate a coherent idea.	Some relevant visual images, word choices and phrases to communicate a coherent idea. Some connections are not clear.	Images are not clearly connected to the character. Connections are not evident.
Group Participation	**Group Participation**	**Group Participation**
30	20	10
Student shows evidence of participation to the group component of the project by participating in at least two of the components listed on the worksheet.	Student shows evidence of participation to the group component of the project by participating in one of the components listed on the worksheet.	Student does not show evidence of participation

Teacher Resources

Anti-Racist Thought and Practice

Kohli, R. (2014). Unpacking internalized racism: Teachers of color striving for racially just classrooms. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 17(3), 367-387.

Kohli's research explores the process by which teachers of color learn to process and unpack how internalized racism has potentially affected their perception of students. Using Critical Race Theory as a framework, Kohli uses a cross racial approach to analyze internalized racism by interviewing Latina, Black, and Asian women enrolled in an urban teacher education program. Teachers recount their experiences with racism and internalized racism in their own K-12 education; Kohli examines the level of self-work they engaged in as they dealt with internalized racism; and how they felt critical dialogues about internalized racism in their teacher education and how the program was helpful toward addressing racism in the classroom.

Kohli, R., Johnson, R. N., & Perez, L. H. (2006). Naming racism: A conceptual look at internalized racism in US schools. *Chicano/Latino Law Review*, *26*, 183.

In "Naming Racism," the researchers use a Critical Race Theory framework to define and to analyze the persistence of internalized racism in education, noting the ways that pedagogy, curriculum, and limited school resources contribute to the persistence of internalized racism. The researchers offer strategies for breaking cycles of oppression, especially given that the standards of U.S. public schools are generally grounded in whiteness.

Shakespeare and Race

Hall, K. F. (1996). Beauty and the Beast of Whiteness: Teaching Race and Gender. *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 47(4), 461-475.

Hall examines the ways that Renaissance literature is used to reinforce notions of white superiority. She argues instead for the deconstruction of whiteness when reading Shakespeare. The deconstruction of whiteness must not make people of color the focus. The author focuses on how she designed her class to talk about race effectively and beyond superficial levels.

Thompson, A. & Smith, I. (Experts). (June 14, 2016). Teach Him How to Tell My Story [Audio podcast]. Folger Shakespeare Library. https://www.folger.edu/shakespeare-unlimited/othello-blackface.

Podcast refutes a common assertion that Shakespeare was not about race. Scholars discuss the perception of the Shakespearean legacy as positive, but the notion of race as negative. They assert that to study race is to study how people act with each other in a fundamental sense. It is

impossible to study Othello without also undertaking the task of analyzing the way that Shakespeare reversed stereotypes about Blackness.

Folger Library. (16 July 2020). "Sound of Whiteness, or Teaching Shakespeare's 'Other "Race Plays"' in Five Acts." *YouTube*, uploaded by Folger Library, www.youtube.com/watch?v=iBGSh4h-74U&t=960s.

In this video, the panelists examine the role of Shakespeare in teaching about issues of race. They challenge notions of Blackness as raced. All people are raced beings and interpret drama through their experiences. The panelists challenge listeners to consider intersectionality as they consider how race functions. This video examines Shakespeare and race outside of the "race plays." A single play cannot address the issue of race.

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