



Black and British: Re-Imagining British Literature

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:
12th Grade Honors English IV

Keywords: Citizenship, Traditional, Diversify, Code-Switching, Whiteness, Poetry, Canon

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

Synopsis: This unit focuses on disrupting the text and the canon by diversifying the traditional British Literature Curriculum and accentuating the limits of teaching a single story. Specifically, the texts in this unit explore assorted ideas of citizenship and ownership of individual and group identity. Students will read texts that are non-traditional for the course and further explore the idea of citizenship and the role it plays in the presentation of diversified literature. In order to complete this unit successfully, students will need to have a firm grasp on how to decipher various themes presented in a text and the deeper meaning behind them. Activities in the unit will enable students to analyze numerous texts and make connections among details, ideas, and events, while always supporting with textual evidence. The goal is to challenge ideas of citizenship as well as showcases a variety of authors, by adding black voices to curricula conventionally dominated by white males. The culminating activity will require students to challenge ideas customarily presented in a classroom, and to examine and explain what they believe to be their personal citizenships. They will complete a digital multimedia narrative as a presentation of their literary acuity, self-citizenship findings and arguments.

I plan to teach this unit during the fall semester of the 2020-2021 school year to approximately 55 12th grade Honors English IV students.

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

Introduction

By Kimberly Palmer

From *The Danger of a Single Story*
TED Global
Chimamanda Ngozi

The Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti writes that if you want to dispossess a people, the simplest way to do it is to tell their story and to start with, "secondly." Start the story with the arrows of the Native Americans, and not with the arrival of the British, and you have an entirely different story. Start the story with the failure of the African state, and not with the colonial creation of the African state, and you have an entirely different story... When we reject the single story, when we realize that there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise (Adichie 2009).

Rationale

"Ms. Palmer, I don't want to sound weird... but do we only read about dead, white men the entire semester?". One of my students asked me this and I stood quiet. I was quiet because this student hit the nail on the head. In British Literature, we generally only read literature by dead, white men. It is true; people are able to learn more when we find interest in or is able to relate to what is being taught. My role as an educator goes beyond the generic curriculum provided to me each year. Although generic, it is only appealing to a small percentage of my students, leaving many uninterested and bored. It is important for me to create an atmosphere for students to grow, and I mean all of my students. I want my students to be able to attain something from British Literature, aside from Shakespeare.

The primary texts for this unit come from African-American, West Indian, and Black British poets and authors. They serve as complementary texts for the "traditional" curriculum provided by the district. All of the texts will focus on the minority experience and culture, as it ties into a more "traditional" British Literature setting. Some of the things covered are the linguistic phenomenon of code-switching as it applies to Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, the legend of the Flying African as it relates to magical realism, and how artists like Beyonce and Drake to put a modern and relatable spin on famous literary poems. In this unit, we will be exploring the idea of disrupting the "traditional" canon, and integrating texts that should also be the face of this specific genre of literature, rather than the "single story" of British Literature. We will also explore how the concept of citizenship can have varying meanings, depending on the individual, as well as the impact citizenship has had on African-American, West Indian, and Black British poets and authors as they have historically navigated a white, male-dominated genre. A major goal of this unit is for the students to be able to decipher the various themes presented in a larger work and analyze the underlying meaning as they apply to the work as a whole. My hope is that acquiring these skills will be much easier for my students if they have used them to interpret works closer to their own culture and lived experiences. Students will need to engage in discussion and continually be analyzing what they are reading, as an individual, with a partner, in a small group, and as an entire class. The epigraph above, taken

from *The Dangers of a Single Story*, highlights why I find it important to give students the opportunity to have the exposure to more than the single story that is generally presented to them in a school setting. Acknowledging that there is more than the story presented, allows us to gain a better understanding of the various cultures and people around the world.

Demographics

Merancas Middle College High School (MMCHS) is located in the Northeast Learning community of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School system. The school opened in the fall of 2017 and is Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools' fourth Middle College program. MMCHS is an honors program that consists of grades 11-13 and gives students the opportunity to earn college credit during their junior and senior years, as well as one additional year in which students can work towards an Associates Degree or two years of transfer college credits. MMCHS is a Cooperative Innovative High School located on the Merancas Campus of Central Piedmont Community College. The enrollment is limited to 300 students. All courses are Honors or Advanced Placement level. All students are required to enroll in a minimum of four courses per semester, including high school and college courses.

Based on the statistics for the year of 2018-2019, there are currently 163 students enrolled. 44.8% are white, 35.6% African-American, 10.4% Asian, 6.7% Hispanic, and 2.5% Multi-racial. We have one principal, one career and development coordinator, and one counselor. We currently have four staff members who teach the students of Merancas Middle College High School. All teachers are certified and 75% of the teacher at MMCHS have Masters Degrees. 25% are National Board Certified. MMCHS consists of a science, mathematics, and two English teachers. All students must take English 4/AP Literature and Composition through MMCHS in order to graduate, due to the Senior Exit Project. English 3 can be completed at the student's home school, depending on their time of enrollment. MMCHS uses the Common Core State Standards for all subjects.

Objectives

This unit is comprised of components from six larger units. The components could be taken and put together to be one unit, or added into larger units to add diversity to the lessons, as I did. Each in class activity is made to take place over the course of one 75-minute virtual lesson. The longer, project based activity will last the duration of the semester with the dedication of four 75-minute class periods to work and two 75-minute class periods for presentations. Some classes may need more guidance and time to grasp a concept, which would naturally lengthen the lesson. More importantly than that would be the objective that the unit is to meet. Regardless of the time length, by the end of the unit, students should be able to perform the Common Core Objectives and 21st Century Skills stated in Appendix 1.

Students will be able to:

- Decipher the various themes presented in a larger work and analyze the underlying meaning as they apply to the work as a whole.
- Demonstrate understanding that “opinions” about literature are different from “arguments” based on textual evidence.

- Demonstrate understanding that the aim of persuasive argumentation about literature is to discover what the text means, or what the narrator/implicit author is saying about the human action he/she represents.
- Demonstrate understanding that the meaning of literary texts applies to their own lives, i.e. literature itself, since it is a representation of human action, is a means of understanding the human condition.
- Demonstrate understanding that discovering what the text means involves analysis of literary elements (tone, diction, detail, structure, syntax, purpose, character, plot, setting, etc.), which then becomes the “evidence” to support persuasive arguments about that text.
- Construct persuasive arguments about literature based on textual evidence, in both oral and written form.
- Contribute to discussions, both by listening and responding, using persuasive arguments based on textual evidence.
- Recognize and analyze the various African-American, West Indian, and Black British poets who produce literature that disrupts the traditional views of what constitutes as British literature.
- Gain a deeper understanding of citizenship and the various types of citizenship which one may belong to, as well as the effect citizenship and identity may have on everyday life.

My classes have a fairly diverse population. I have three Honors English IV- British Literature classes in the fall and three AP Literature and Composition classes in the spring. My numbers vary from semester to semester; however, each class generally doesn't go over 24 students. The enrollment for my school is limited to 300 students; 100 juniors, 100 seniors; 100 thirteenth year students. For the current semester I have a total of 45 students who spread over the three blocks that I teach. In the spring, I usually have fewer students taking the AP course. I wrote and taught my Curriculum Unit simultaneously. This enabled me to test out each activity and all of the texts, prior to finalizing them for the unit. The majority of the students that I have had can challenge themselves more, but need the push to do so. The classes that I taught for this Curriculum Unit were very open to being challenged with more rigorous work, which surpassed the reading and writing levels they possessed. I had one student who had a 504s and I had no IEPs this semester. There were no behavioral issues that need attention. All students that were present in my class were ready and eager to learn. All of the factors mentioned play a role in how I designed the unit plan. Every semester I have had diverse classes. One thing that my students of different races have often shared with me, from different races, was that they get tired of reading poetry from “old” or “dead white men”. I couldn't deny that the curriculum I was given to teach, doesn't incorporate much diverse readings for English IV- British Literature. I wanted to incorporate more into my lessons to keep them engaged, interested, and more exposed to a variety of literary voices. My topic is more realistic to students' lives. When we are out and about the world isn't made of only “old white men”, so I don't believe that their reading shouldn't be either.

Content Research

Overview of Unit Specific Terms and Phrases

Citizenship

When one hears the word citizenship, often we think of the term as having a singular meaning. Although we actively participate in numerous groups where we can claim our “citizenships”, we often don’t think of the term in that manner. Politically these two types of citizenships, better explained can be recognized as “state citizenship” and “democratic citizenship”. With state citizenship, people identify their citizenship as having a formal or legal status to a nation/state. With social citizenship, one finds themselves in numerous groups or more social and societal statuses (Stewart 1995).

Traditional Curriculum

Traditional British Literature Curriculum is dominated by literature written from a “Eurocentric perspective, primarily white male authors and poets (Power Carter 2007). This allows students to be taught only a single story as well as maintains a traditional way of thinking. Teaching British literature with this traditional curriculum does not expose students to any voices of color within and outside of the text, particularly those of Black British authors. As an educator of a course that is filled with a traditional approach to literature, it is important to have students question what is being presented to them in order for them to truly learn. When course curriculum is dominated by Whiteness, Black students are negatively positioned. There is constant negotiating whiteness withing said curriculum, exposing the fact that these students are historically underrepresented and constantly “marginalized by Whiteness in the curriculum” (Power Carter 2007).

Disrupting the Authoritative Text

Disrupting the authoritative text is crucial to curricula, as it incorporates literature and amplifies minoritized perspectives, as well as bringing a more accurate understanding to light. Literature is often used to better understand people and time periods, which for African-Americans is difficult because our history is “often incomplete” and “inaccurate” (Ebarvia 2019). Although some schools make attempts to add more “diverse” texts into the curriculum, the system of power in itself isn’t changing and there is no recognition as to why those voices were originally marginalized. In schools across the country, African-American, Latinx, and Indigenous students are severely underrepresented in higher level academic courses and the texts being provided to them (Ebarvia 2019). For educators, disrupting the text goes beyond diversifying the curriculum that provided, but is a start to ending the underrepresentation and misrepresentation of minorities in literature and history. Colleen Donnelly discusses the importance of “disrupting students’ notions of authoritative texts” by placing other texts of importance into an interdisciplinary context (Donnelly, 2011). In doing so, students are able to be more engaged in critical thinking, which in turn takes them beyond their own personal beliefs. This is creating the 21st century thinking that will be crucial in students’ future lives.

Black British Literature

It is important to take note of the depiction of Black people in English Literature from Shakespeare to contemporary popular fiction. However, attention is often taken away from the existence of West Indian and Black British authors and poets. In Shelia Sandapen's *Being Black, Becoming British: Contemporary Female Voices in Black British literature*, she discusses how women from Caribbean descent form and "reform" their identities as immigrants or first-generation Britons. She also examines why their stories are valuable and "essential" to the contribution of Black British Literature. Black British authors are perceived as outcasts to a traditional take on literature and forced to assimilate into a white, dominant community (Sandapen 2009). *Being Black and British* relates directly to the idea of citizenship, as there is a construct of uncertain belonging. When looking at various works of literature by Black British authors, there is often common themes of belonging, identity, returning to a homeland, etc. Black British authors have dealt with these issues and integrate them into their work. These authors "destabilize" the idea that a "pure" cultural identity exists and that "homogenous national literary" traditions are indeed possible (Fernandez Rodriguez 2003).

Dangers in Teaching a Single Story

As children, we are often taught a single way of thinking or the singularity of the events of a story or historical event. What this can demonstrate is the impressionability and vulnerability of black people in "the face of a story, particularly as children" (Adichie 2009). Mainstream culture and society teaches the masses to believe a single story, which is dangerous to the mind. Due to the presence of a single story, black people, as children, may not see themselves in literature. A mental and societal shift has to occur in order to have black people and culture exist in literature that is seen as traditional or white, male dominated. Adichie said, "I went through a mental shift in my perception of literature. I realized that people like me, girls with skin the color of chocolate, whose kinky hair could not form ponytails, could also exist in literature" (Adichie 2009).

Three Contemporary Conceptions of Citizenship

Citizenship is one of the fundamental institutions that structures human relations. A person's environment is what can affect the concept of citizenship (Cao 2015). Going even deeper into the meaning of citizenship, there are three different contemporary conceptions of citizenship and belonging: a formal conception, a participatory conception, and an existential conception (Bagnall 2010). With the formal conception of citizenship, it is based on the rights and duties of citizenship or the individual values put upon the citizens. In the participatory conception, the focus shifts more to what it means to engage as a citizen. Lastly, the existential conception hones in on the experience of being and belonging as a citizen (Bagnall 2010). These different views on citizenship all boil down to belonging. Specifically belonging to one or more groups of people.

Whiteness in Curriculum

Whiteness is often the foundation that guides the various designs of instructional curriculum. Often, when trying to diversity curriculum, it generally takes a "surface-level" approach (Sayles-Hannon 2009). With this, students are left without any connections to what they are learning and

cannot relate to and understand as a result. Teachers of color are faced with the task of creating curriculum that is looked at as non-traditional in a predominantly white teaching context. Students who are provided the opportunity to resist the “traditional narratives and voices of the cannon” are able to develop and increase sense of consciousness about the curriculum they have been learning from, their entire lives. Students are then able to create their own literary citizenship and demonstrate “discipline-specific agentic identity” (Dyches 2018).

Challenging Ideas of Citizenship

When it comes to contemporary conceptions of citizenship, the words citizenship and belonging are used to identify a single concept. Of the three types of citizenship described, the existential conception is what the focus will be on. This type of citizenship focuses on what it means to be a citizen in relation to what is experienced by individual people or collectives. This focus is on belonging to and being a citizen of one or more different communities (Bagnall 2010). This term perfectly represents and describes embracing one’s community or communities and the obligations a member may have. These communities can be whatever communities an individual finds to be important, which can be ethnic, interest, locale, state, regional, global, and more (Bagnall 2010).

To be a non-citizen in the existential concept of citizenship means one can be alienated or outcasted from the community. This can happen when there is a failure to identify with it or simply failing to take any responsibility for it. Whether people realize it or not, this idea of belonging is what representative of development in society. This sense of belonging is what “bonds” people to various communities (Bagnall 2010). Just like in education, being a citizen or member of these communities involves lifelong learning in order to continually strengthen the sense of belonging that we desire. Expanding upon the existential concept suggests that belonging to a certain group or having citizenship may be developed at any moment or period in one’s lifespan. In the same, it can be destroyed by moving or switching communities. This will change the expectation that an individual has for their community, as he/she grows older or changes ideas and perceptions about different things in life. More often than not, existential qualities of belongingness can be boiled down to having a set of measurable skills that enable one to be a particular sort of person. This can in turn lead to the levels of one’s citizenship being assessed and at times targeted.

Individual and Group Identity

Personal or individual identity refers to the individual differences one has that are unique from a group of people. Social or group identity refers to the qualities that one may have that enables them to be a part of a larger group. Individual and group identity show the distinct relationship between the self and the collective (Serino 1992). Individuals act dually in themselves, showing it is possible to exist in both and represent oneself in differing social contexts. Identity plays a large role in the classification of citizenship. At times people may reject their citizenships due to various reasons, but one being how they identify themselves. A large citizenship group that people are forced and self-categorized into is race. Although our racial identity is one that was forced upon us, because race is culturally constructed rather than biological, some people who

may be more ambiguous looking can almost choose their identity and in turn their citizenship. People switch between individual and group identities.

Instructional Implementation

Teaching Strategies

Introduction to Black British Literature

This is the first assignment that introduces students to the concept of Black British Literature. The assignment has different elements that tie it together as one. The students complete three portions:

- The Danger of a Single Story
 - o The lesson starts out with a TED Talk of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie discussing and calling out the danger of examining literature through a single background, culture, and/ story. After the video, students (as a whole group) discuss how, what the author said contradicts or confirms their own beliefs on a single story.
- Poetry from Warsan Shire
 - o Next is the introduction of the British author, Warsan Shire, who is responsible for some of the famous lyrics heard in Beyonce's *Lemonade* album. Students listen to and read about her background, as well as listen to her read one of her poems. While reading and analyzing the poem, students jot down five words or phrases from Shire's poem that stood out to them.
- Poetry from Derek Walcott
 - o Students then read about the life of West Indian poet, Derek Walcott. After learning about him, students analyze two of his famous poems, one being "Sea Grapes". Students are to jot down a total of ten words or phrases that stood out to them.
 - o Lastly, students created a poem of their own by taking a total of ten words or phrases that stood out to them, taken from both of the poets' work. They are able to present their poems, explaining the new meaning and themes present. Also, they explain why they chose the words/phrases that they did from both poets.

Goldilocks Poetry Assignment

The purpose of the Goldilocks Poetry Assignment is to expose students to poems of varying difficulty levels in order to assess their comprehension and analytical skills, as well as provide an opportunity for newly discovered interest in poetry. This is a during-reading strategy that provides students with three poems written by an African-American, a Caucasian, and a West Indian poet. As a class, we will read each poem aloud and discuss the analysis process. Next, individually, students will rank the poems as "too easy", "too hard", and "just right". Following their ranking, students will all explicate the poem that they found to be "too hard".

Poetry Dig

The purpose of the Poetry Dig is to dig deeper and analyze a poem that was read on the surface level by explicating it. The explication includes all of the elements of TPCASTT (title,

paraphrase, connotation, attitude, shift, tone, title), as well as identifying and analyzing the speaker, the setting, diction, and poem breaks. In addition to this, students do background research on the author and terminology used in the text that may have historical content that is relevant to and important in the understanding of the poem. This assignments also enables students to have the opportunity to understand how legends/myths are tied into poetry, specifically the Legend of the Flying African and what flying symbolizes.

Student Led Socratic Seminar

The purpose of Student Led Socratic Seminar is to get students to interact with the text and their peers with the teacher as a facilitator, rather than leader of discussion. Students engage with the unit text at this point and are advised to come up with three open-ended questions related to the first half of the text, for homework. Once in class, students are placed in a circle. One student is chosen, or volunteers, to begin. The leading student asks one of the questions he/she has chosen to write and each student in the circle will answer. Once everyone has answered, the next person in the circle goes. However, with this student's question and those students to follow, their peers choose and volunteer to answer. Once it is the last person in the circle's turn, again, each student will respond to their question. The teacher's role is to listen and evaluate the student responses, while ensuring healthy conversation is occurring.

Teach Your Peers

The purpose of this activity is to allow groups of students to be the teachers, rather than the students, of various themes assigned. In small groups, students are assigned a theme related to the unit text. Their job is to create a group lesson plan, create their student resources (quizzes, assignments, power points, games, etc.), and actually teach their peers in a 30-minute time block. Students are responsible for rating their peers (in the group they worked with) and following the provided rubric, prior to presenting.

Poetry and Song Comparison

The purpose of this activity is for students to be able to compare and contrast modern day music (or poetry- depends on how you look at it) to poetry from the Renaissance time period. For this activity, students compare Drake's *Hotline Bling* to Sir Thomas Wyatt's "Thy Flee From Me". Both the poem and the song describe and complain about a loved one who has left them. Both men describe how a love interest has moved on and is seeking love somewhere else, leaving the author/artist distraught.

Senior Reflection Project

The culminating project for this unit is the Senior Reflection Project. Students begin working on this project at the beginning of the semester when the idea of citizenship is introduced to them. They continue working on the project throughout the semester and present at the end. There are various checkpoints throughout the duration of their work time in order to check for understanding. The Senior Reflection Project has six different components:

- "Citizenography"

- Borrowed from the leader of the African-American Poetry and the Idea of Citizenship Seminar, this assignment was adopted into my classroom and is meant as a tool to get my students thinking about the ideas and feeling we each have about citizenship – how we learned about it, what it is to us and to others, the multiple forms it can take, its positive, negative, and sometimes contradictory elements. This serves as the students’ introduction to the idea of citizenship.
- “Code Switching” Personal Narrative
 - The purpose of this assignment is to allow students the time to explore and discuss their code-switching story and the relation to their citizenships. This assignment is used as an introduction to the lessons using *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer. Students were given five reasons as to why people code switch, while the teacher shares some personal code-switching experiences, matching the reasons. Then, in pairs, students read an article titled *Sorry to Bother You, Black Americans and the Power and Peril of Code-Switching*. After, they are to come back to the whole group with a few takeaways from the text. Lastly, students are given the personal narrative assignment in which they are to write, voice record, or film their code-switching narrative to be shared with the class.
- “Poetry Connection”
 - This assignment enables students to explore poetry, especially poetry about identity and citizenship. Students are able to examine poetry that is considered classic, modern, famous, anonymous, armature, etc. The main goal of this study is for students to explore poetry, connect to poetry, recognize poetic innovation, and aspire to write their own poem.
- “I Am” Poem
 - This assignment enables students to write about themselves in an “I Am” poem. This type of poem is one written BY you and ABOUT you. The “I Am” poem allows students to express how they feel, hopes, thoughts, dreams, things that bring joy and so on. Students are asked to incorporate ideas of citizenship in their writing.
- “Digital Scrapbook”
 - Students are asked to create a story of their memories using digital images, clip art, videos and PowerPoint/Google Slides. Images are placed in sequential order and enhanced using descriptive text captions. Students will reflect on what they have learned about citizenship throughout the semester and share their knowledge with the school community.
- “Who Am I” Speech
 - Tying together all of the things they gathered throughout the semester about identity, students are to write a speech about who they are! It is expressed to them that they aren’t just their names or the things they like to do. Students will explain their different citizenships, how their citizenships relate to those around them, and what they’ve learned about their citizenship or how their ideas have changed since the start of the project.

Classroom Lessons/Activities and Assessment

For each unit listed, the implementation of African-American, West Indian, and Black British poets and authors are used as a means of enhancing the generic curriculum already provided and enriching the lessons by disrupting the authoritative text.

Culminating Project

Lesson/Unit Standard: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.4

Project Focus

- The culminating project for this Curriculum Unit is the Senior Reflection Project. Students begin working on this project at the beginning of the semester when the idea of citizenship is introduced to them. They continue working on the project throughout the semester and present at the end. There are various checkpoints throughout the duration of their work time in order to check for understanding. The Senior Reflection Project has six different components: Citizenography, Code Switching Assignment, Poetry Connection, I Am Poem, Digital Scrapbook, and “Who Am I” Speech.

Introductory Unit: Magical Realism

Lesson/Unit Standard: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.5

Unit Focus

- The goal of this unit is to introduce students to the reading and writing expectations to be anticipated throughout the course. *The Metamorphosis* is used as a gateway to discussing Magical Realism found in the novellas, poems, novels, and short stories covered in the course. In conjunction with *The Metamorphosis*, another element we cover is mythology, as another fun way to discuss magical realism and how it is seen in different parts of the world.
- Authoritative Text(s): *The Metamorphosis*; Daedalus and Icarus; “Icarus”
- Texts used to go beyond the single story: “Daedalus, After Icarus”; “O Daedalus, Fly Away Home”; Excerpt from *The Horse and the Olive*

Lesson 1: Mythology

- Watch TED Ed Video summary of Icarus and Daedalus
- Read: *Icarus and Daedalus*
- Goldilocks Poetry Assignment
 - “Daedalus, After Icarus”; “O Daedalus, Fly Away Home”; “Icarus”
 - As a class, we will read each poem aloud and discuss the analysis process. Next, individually, students will rank the poems as “too easy”, “too hard”, and “just right”. Following their ranking, students will all explicate the poem that they found to be “too hard”.
- Poetry Dig
 - The purpose of the Poetry Dig is to dig deeper and analyze a poem that was read on the surface level by explicating it. The explication includes all of the elements of TPCASTT (title, paraphrase, connotation, attitude, shift, tone, title), as well as

identifying and analyzing the speaker, the setting, diction, and poem breaks. In addition to this, students do background research on the author and terminology used in the text that may have historical content that is relevant to and important in the understanding of the poem.

- “O Daedalus, Fly Away Home”

Lesson 2: Mythology and Magical Realism

- Excerpt from “The Horse and the Olive”
- 6 Criteria of Magical Realism Assignment
 - Students will review the six different criteria to determine if a text is truly magical realism and match them up with the Excerpt from “The Horse and the Olive” by James Baldwin

Culminating Project Assignment

- Citizenography

Unit 1: Anglo-Saxon- Monsters, Heroes and Exile

Lesson/Unit Standard: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2

Unit Focus

- The goal of this unit is to ease students into a more in depth examination of British Literature and the dangers in telling a single story. The authoritative texts are from the Anglo-Saxon period, specifically the epic and riddle.
 - Authoritative Text(s): *Beowulf*; “The Wife’s Lament”
 - Texts used to go beyond the single story: “Backwards”; “Sea Grapes”; “Love After Love”; TED Talk- *The Danger of a Single Story*

Lesson 1: The Danger of a Single Story

- Watch TED Ed Video: *The Danger of a Single Story*
 - While students watch, they will jot down at least 5 takeaways and/connections to what is being discussed in the video.

Lesson 2: Black British Poets

- Read and watch biography about Warsan Shire who wrote some of the famous lyrics from Beyonce’s *Lemonade* album
- Read “Backwards” by Warsan Shire
 - After listening/reading, students will go back over the poem and jot down their five favorite words or phrases
- Read short biography about Derek Walcott who was a Saint Lucian poet and playwright
- Read both “Sea Grapes” and “Love After Love”
 - After reading, students will go back over the poem and jot down their five favorite words or phrases, three must be from “Sea Grapes”
- Poetry Puzzle
 - Students will use any combination of five of the ten (total from both poems) words they have highlighted to draft an original poem or a prose paragraph that shows their understanding of the experiences of the two poets as members of a minority group.

- Their writing goals are to demonstrate that they have understood the poets' meaning in the works as a whole and thoughtfully express their understanding of poet's craft.

Culminating Project Assignment

- Students are to select a component of their choice to complete.

Unit 2: Medieval- Stories that Shape Us

Lesson/Unit Standard: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4

Unit Focus:

- The goal of this unit is to focus on reading and responding to works of the medieval period in English Literature. There is also a focus on the evolution of the English language and the relationship between Old, Middle, and modern English.
 - Authoritative Text(s): *The Canterbury Tales*
 - Texts used to go beyond the single story: 'Sorry to Bother You', *Black Americans and the power and peril of code-switching*; Letter to Rev. Samson Occom by Phillis Wheatley; Excerpts from Telling Tales by Patience Agbabi

Lesson 1: Code Switching

- Background notes on Geoffrey Chaucer
 - Discuss how he wrote in English, rather than French which was the popular language of the time
- Discussion: Five Reasons Why People Code Switch
- Partner Reading and Discussion
 - 'Sorry to Bother You', *Black Americans and the power and peril of code-switching*
 - Students will write down three takeaways that they discussed with their partner about the text and the topic of code-switching

Culminating Project Assignment: Code-Switching Assignment

- Students will reflect on how they may be practicing code-switching in their daily lives. They will share their story involving code switching/shifting using the media of their choice.

Lesson 2: Old Fashioned Code-Switching

- Letter to Rev. Samson Occom by Phillis Wheatley
 - Students will examine the letter written to Rev. Samson Occom by Phillis Wheatley, which carefully words the issues of slavery, demonstrating an old fashion version of code switching

Lesson 3: The Canterbury Tales

- Students will read the "Prologue" to *The Canterbury Tales*, "The Pardoner's" Prologue and Tale, as well as "The Wife of Bath's" Prologue and Tale.
- Telling Tales by Patience Agbabi
 - Students will read excerpts from this text that serve as a modern version to Chaucer's work
 - "The Prologue"
 - "The Pardoner's Tale"
 - "The Wife of Bath's Tale"

- Discussion: Students will use a Venn Diagram to compare and contrast the tales. They will then share their findings and which version they liked better.

Unit 3: Renaissance- Power and Corruption

Lesson/Unit Standard: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3

Unit Focus

- The goal of this unit is to read and respond to literature of the Elizabethan period, specifically the drama, sonnet, prose, and lyrical poetry by writers of the period. There is also a focus on the evolution of the English language as it changed from the beginning of the medieval period.
 - Authoritative Text(s): *Othello*; “Sonnet 130”, “They Flee From Me”
 - Texts used to go beyond the single story: African Americans and Shakespeare; “Sonnet 100”, “Dim Lady”, *Hotline Bling*

Lesson 1: African Americans and Shakespeare

- Listen to the first 10 minutes of African Americans and Shakespeare
 - Students are to jot down five points that stand out to them from the podcast
- Sonnet or Not?
 - Students have gone over the components of a sonnet. As a fun group quiz, students will read over “Sonnet 100” by Wanda Coleman and see if her poem has all of the qualifying components of a Shakespearean sonnet. Students will then quickly analyze the poem for meaning and share with the class.
- Students will then read “Sonnet 130” by Shakespeare and “Dim Lady” by Harryette Mullen, noting the similarities, differences, and their preference in poems. Students will also note the effect the more modern text has on the poem.

Lesson 2: Poetry and Song Comparison

- Students will be broken up into pairs and read “They Flee From Me” by Sir Thomas Wyatt. They will also listen to Drake’s *Hotline Bling* and read over the lyrics.
- Poetry and Song Comparison
 - The purpose of this activity is for students to be able to compare and contrast modern day music (or poetry- depends on how you look at it) to poetry from the Renaissance time period. Both men describe how a love interest has moved on and is seeking love somewhere else, leaving the author/artist distraught.

Culminating Project Assignment

- Students are to select a component of their choice to complete.

Unit 4: Restoration- Systems and Oppression

Lesson/Unit Standard: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.6

Unit Focus

- The goal of this unit is to read and respond to English literature of the seventeenth-century, particularly the social, political, and religious themes. The relationship between

the historical context of the period and its literature as well as the primary movements of the period will be studied.

- Authoritative Text(s): *A Modest Proposal*
- Texts used to go beyond the single story: *Trump Said, 'I Have the Best Words.'* *Now They're Hers*; "Lovers of the Poor"; Clips from *Dear White People*

Lesson 1: Tik-Tok Satire

- Prior to reading *A Modest Proposal* and creating their own modest proposal, students will complete a lesson on the different types of satire before and examine political cartoons. Students will then read *Trump Said, 'I Have the Best Words.'* *Now They're Hers*, pointing out the satire being used. For extra credit, students have the opportunity to create their own satirical Tik-Tok video on a topic that they find to be important.

Lesson 2: "Lovers of the Poor"

- Students will read "Lovers of the Poor" by Gwendolyn Brooks
 - Students will then discuss the following questions in small groups, before rejoining the whole class for a larger discussion:
 - Why do the rich women want to help the poor women?
 - If the poor women weren't poor, do you think the rich women would like them? Why or why not?
 - Do you think these rich women genuinely care about the poor women?
 - How does society affect our thoughts and actions when it comes to other people?
 - What is the satire in the text?

Lesson 3: Dear White People

- Students will watch several clips from *Dear White People* by Justin Simien. Students will then analyze the satirical devices used and discuss the deeper meaning behind the situations being displayed.
- Assignment: Satire Activity

Culminating Project Assignment

- Students are to select a component of their choice to complete.

Unit 5: Romantic- Crushed Identity

Lesson/Unit Standard: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3

Unit Focus

- The goal of this unit is to read and respond to the poetry and prose of the romantic period in English literature and on applying a variety of reading and comprehension strategies. The relationship between the historical context of the period and the literature it produced will be emphasized.
 - Authoritative Text(s): Frankenstein
 - Texts used to go beyond the single story: *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*

Lesson 1: Romanticism Introduction

- Students will take notes on the Romanticism period, the authors to be covered, and learn what a narrative is. At this point, students will be introduced to Olaudah Equiano and get a little background to his life and story.

- As a class we will read/listen to Chapter 1.
- Individual/Partner/Small Group Assignment
 - Individually, with a partner, or small group, discuss the following question and write at least 3 sentences on the running doc.
 - The African society as described by Equiano is truly magnificent. It is sophisticated, hygienic, and civilized. However, this is not the picture that most Europeans would have imagined African societies to be like. Why is it important that Equiano starts out the autobiography by introducing the African society and comparing it to the European society?

Lesson 2-6; 9-14: Equiano Continued...

- As a class we will read/listen to Chapters 2-12. Individually, with a partner, or small group, students will discuss the accompanying questions and write at least 3 sentences on the running doc, per chapter.

Lesson 7: Teach Your Peers Part 1

- Students will be placed in student teaching groups. They will all be assigned poets from the Romantic Period:
 - Blake
 - Shelley
 - Keats
 - Wordsworth
 - Coleridge

Lesson 8: Teach Your Peers Part 2

- It will be the students' job to create a group lesson plan, create their student resources (quizzes, assignments, power points, games, etc.), and actually teach their peers in a 30-minute time block.

Lesson 15: Personal Narrative Writing Assignment

- For this writing assignment, you will write an essay about an incident or experience in your life that has been meaningful to you. Choosing a very specific place or time will help you write the essay. Develop the essay with details that will demonstrate the significance of your experience.

Lesson 16-17: Culminating Project Presentations

- Over the course of two days, students will present the various aspects from their Culminating Project

Lesson 18: In Class Final

- Student Led Socratic Seminar

Appendix 1: Implementing Teaching Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2

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.

- Students will need to be able to read a text and correctly identify the theme over the development.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3

Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

- Students will need to be able to read a text and cite lines from the text that reveals the author's style of writing.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

- Students will be able to write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4

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.

- Students will be able to read determine the figurative and connotative meanings of words and phrases used in the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.6

Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

- Students will be able to analyze and distinguish what is being stated and what is really meant in a satirical work.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.4

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

- Students will be able to present a distinct perspective to an audience.

List of Materials for Classroom Use

Materials for Students and Teachers

Laptop/Desktop Computer

At the time this Curriculum Unit is being written, all classes are held virtually. Both the teacher and students will need a laptop or desktop computer in order to complete all of the virtual classroom activities while at home or when returning to the classroom. Having each student have access to a computer will allow for ease when navigating through the activities provided.

Google Drive/Microsoft Word

Using Google Drive or Word will enable students to have a place to complete assignments as well as organize the digital documents that are shared with them throughout the unit.

Zoom Communication Platform

Zoom Communication Platform is the main platform that will be used throughout this Curriculum Unit. Zoom allows for students to be placed in breakout groups, which works well for partner and small group activities. Zoom also has a great chat box feature that enables students to ask questions while the teacher is lecturing, as well as a recording feature, which is helpful for when students are absent from important lessons.

PDF Novel Copies

While virtual, it will be difficult to provide each student with tangible copies of novels and various texts being used during class. Providing students with PDF copies of each text being used will allow for ease of reading and access. A PDF copy of each text used will be provided.

Microphone Headphones

Headphones are highly recommended for this unit. There will be many listening activities that students will engage with throughout the unit, that are crucial. In order to effectively participate in the lessons while at home, it is recommended that headphones are used in order to block out any outside noise, if available.

Planner/Calendar

There will be numerous due dates for the culminating project that students will complete. It is important that students have a sufficient method of organization for the important dates, being that the culminating project is spread over the course of the semester. This will ensure that once the due dates are given, students have a self-reminder and can advocate for themselves.

Resources for Students

Assignments, Projects, and Reading Materials

Goldilocks Poetry Assignment & Poetry Dig

The purpose of the Goldilocks Poetry Assignment is to expose students to poems of varying difficulty levels in order to assess their comprehension and analytical skills, as well as provide an opportunity for newly discovered interest in poetry. The purpose of the Poetry Dig is to dig deeper and analyze a poem that was read on the surface level by explicating it.

<https://bit.ly/2J2OcgB>

Culminating Project

The culminating project for this curriculum unit is the Senior Reflection Project. Students begin working on this project at the beginning of the semester when the idea of citizenship is introduced to them. They continue working on the project throughout the semester and present at the end. There are various checkpoints throughout the duration of their work time in order to check for understanding.

<https://bit.ly/3jx5GOG>

Warsan Shire Biography

This biography is a short background to the poet and lyricist, Warsan Shire. This will be used to excite students when introduced to a modern and relatable poet. <https://bit.ly/2FWSRPY>

Derek Walcott Biography

This biography is a short background to the life of Derek Walcott. This gives students the opportunity to better understand his life, prior to reading his work. This also give background to the situations that may arise in the texts that will be used in the unit. <https://bit.ly/2TrSaS1>

Satire Activity

- a. Write an analysis of the clips shown from *Dear White People* (1-2 pages), detailing its subject, satirical devices, and deeper meaning.
- b. Now it's time to write your own proposal! Describe a solution to one of society's pressing problems. Make sure it's satirical! Employ the strategies we've studied, and at the end of the piece, compose a reflection detailing why/how you employed which particular satirical strategies.

The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano Chapter Questions

These questions will be used as an end of the chapter discussion tool for students. It is a great resource for questions that will get students to think deeply about what was read in each chapter assigned. <https://bit.ly/2Tq0RMM>

Venn Diagram

This is a simple tool that many educational subjects utilize to compare two things, discussing their differences and similarities. It can be used numerous times throughout this unit to compare and contrast various topics.

<http://bit.ly/2B9HSwE>

Resources for Teachers

Myths

Icarus and Daedalus

The myth of Icarus and Daedalus tells the story of a father and a son who used wax wings to escape from the island of Crete. Icarus did not listen to his father when he was told not to fly too close to the sun and fell from the sky because the heat melted his wings.

<https://bit.ly/3dXvfY5>

Poems/Songs

“Daedalus, After Icarus”

“Daedalus, After Icarus” is a poem written by Saeed Jones. This poem references Daedalus eventually reach land after his long journey. The poem mocks Daedalus’ only hope he had of saving his son.

<https://bit.ly/2J7v51F>

“O Daedalus, Fly Away Home”

“O Daedalus, Fly Away Home” is a poem written by Robert Hayden. This poem is about a slave that remembers his home, Africa. He recalls a myth that his “gran” shared which referred to the Myth of the Flying African.

<https://bit.ly/2HE7sAA>

“Backwards”

“Backwards” is a poem written by Warsan Shire. This poem covers the themes of love, family, and domestic abuse in a world where a character is walking backwards into the room, erasing the damage done.

<https://bit.ly/3oqtszw>

“Sea Grapes”

“Sea Grapes” is a poem written by Derek Walcott. This poem conveys the message of conflict between responsibility and obsession.

<https://bit.ly/35tdTyw>

“Love After Love”

“Love After Love” is a poem written by Derek Walcott. It focuses on loving oneself, both inside and out. The main theme is becoming whole through self-recognition.

<https://bit.ly/2TrBkTo>

“Sonnet 100”

“Sonnet 100” will be used as a tool to analyze the form of a Shakespearean sonnet. This poem by Wanda Coleman takes Shakespeare’s popular poetic form and makes it her own, tying in her love of jazz.

<https://bit.ly/3mqojpB>

“Dim Lady”

This poem will be used in contrast to Shakespeare’s “Sonnet 130”. It provides students with a fun satirical view of the western standard of beauty, with a modern twist.

<https://bit.ly/31JXip3>

Hotline Bling

This song, by Drake, is about not getting calls from a love interest anyone. Drake is being driven crazy by this and wondering, out of jealousy, if she has a new love interest.

Lyrics: <https://bit.ly/2EBOLfG>

Video: <https://bit.ly/3kuYNyO>

“Lovers of the Poor”

“Lovers of the Poor” is a satirical poem by Gwendolyn Brooks about how people aren’t always genuine with their charity.

<https://bit.ly/31Dzu6c>

Books/Excerpts/Letters

Excerpt from The Horse and the Olive by James Baldwin- Choosing a Name

This excerpt tells the story of how the olive got its name.

<https://bit.ly/3mo5TWs>

Letter to Rev. Samson Occom by Phillis Wheatley

During the time when Wheatley wrote this letter, she was enslaved. She wrote them letter to Occum who was an ordained Presbyterian minister. This letter is an old fashioned look at code-switching.

<https://bit.ly/2FWZqlA>

Excerpt from Telling Tales by Patience Agbabi

Telling Tales is a modern remix to Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales*. Agbabi retells all of the stories in her own poetic style.

- Prologue: <https://bit.ly/3osDkJ1>
- Pardoner’s Tale: <https://bit.ly/3dTJZY4>
- Wife of Bath’s Tale: <https://bit.ly/3jrB8hd>

The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano

This text is the autobiography of Olaudah Equiano. The narrative traces Equiano’s career from boyhood , the Middle Passage, as well as his self-purchase of freedom.

Text: <https://bit.ly/35tnJ3v>

Audio: <https://bit.ly/3mnGMTu>

Articles

‘Sorry to Bother You’, Black Americans and the power and peril of code-switching

This article discusses the movie *Sorry to Bother You* and its use of satire and code-switching to illustrate linguistics acts of African-Americans and white people, which are used as societal tools.

<https://bit.ly/3kdgYZ8>

Trump Said, 'I Have the Best Words.' Now They're Hers

This article, from *The New York Times*, is about a young woman who uses Tik-Tok to create satirical pieces in order to mock the president and the controversy surrounding the things he says.

<https://nyti.ms/31ETc1C>

Videos/Clips/Podcasts

Dear White People

Dear White People is a comedy-drama film that focuses on escalating racial tensions at a fictitious, prestigious Ivy League college. The film and series are both told from the perspectives of several black students at the school. Clips from the show will be used as points of discussion, from the point of view of an African-American, with a satirical foundation. Topics range from not wanting to be seen as “too black” to being racially profiled by an armed campus security guard.

- <http://bit.ly/32hLCbd>
- <http://bit.ly/2B9uNDy>
- <http://bit.ly/2nHaCts>
- <http://bit.ly/2B8gkrA>

TED Ed: Icarus and Daedalus

This video gives students a summary and visual of the myth.

<https://bit.ly/2J0QOeR>

TED Talk: The Danger of a Single Story

In this video, Chimamanda Adichie, argues it is dangerous to only know the story of one group of people. This is dangerous because it creates stereotypes which are not complete when discussing a group of people.

<https://bit.ly/3dV8hkt>

African Americans and Shakespeare

Students will listen to the first ten minutes of this podcast, which gives first-hand accounts of what it is like being a black person that appreciates, performs, or teaches Shakespeare.

<https://bit.ly/3kxNmqe>

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