



## Africana Futurist Narratives and Hope for a Brave New World Beyond Walls

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This curriculum unit is recommended for: 12<sup>th</sup> Grade English Language Arts

Keywords: Afrofuturism, Africanfuturism, Anthropocene, climate justice, climate migration, inclusive community, intersectionality, eco grief, empathy, hope, speculative fiction

Teaching Standards

[Appendix 1](#)

Synopsis

This curriculum unit, which analyzes the multidimensional features of climate change, climate displacement, and migration, endeavors to promote critical reading, writing, discussion, and thinking about the complexities of climate migration using Africana futuristic narratives as the inspiration for exploring themes of care/empathy and creation/recreation in order to re-vision a just and inclusive global community. Students explore these themes through an analysis of Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* and Nnedi Okorafor's *Zahrah the Windseeker*. In doing so, they will observe and evaluate how race, class, and gender intersect with the impacts and perceptions of climate migration both in literature and in real life. They will develop problem solving and coping strategies for navigating the complexities of eco-grief, anxiety, fear, hopelessness, and hopefulness. Ultimately, this unit aims to initiate engagement and action around the climate issues of greatest concern to students. The unit will culminate with students writing their own climate narratives. These narratives will include students' visions of a just society that places care for the earth as the chief concern.

*I plan to teach this unit throughout the month of February during the 2021-2022 school year to approximately 37 high school seniors. I give permission for the Charlotte Teachers Institute to publish my curriculum unit in print and online. I understand I will be credited as the author of my work.*

## Introduction

Lauren Oya Olamina is a young African American girl caught in a recurring dream sequence at the beginning of Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*. In the dream, she is a precocious seven-year-old living in Southern California. Her youthful consciousness is heightened by the "massive looming presence" of a neighborhood wall that preys upon her like a "crouching animal," threatening her sensibilities.<sup>1</sup> The wall is a significant symbol in Lauren's life. It is supposed to protect the neighborhood from drug addicts, the unhoused, and those severely disadvantaged; however, for Lauren, the wall is a source of an anxiety that persists in her dreams and in her wakefulness. In her wakefulness, Lauren is an observant fifteen-year-old whose heightened sensibilities allow her to perceive the complex interactions of those in her community more clearly than her elders.

Anxiety is an ever-present reality for Lauren throughout the progression of the novel, which is set in the 2020s. In addition to grappling with the anxieties and insecurities that are consistent with adolescence, Lauren is diagnosed with hyperempathy syndrome, a disability that heightens her awareness of others' pain, misery, or pleasure.<sup>2</sup> The syndrome is a delusion in that Lauren does not actually share the pain of those around her. Instead, she responds to the pain that is presented before her. Her hyperempathy is the result of her mother's drug addiction during pregnancy. Hyperempathy is a point of tension between Lauren, who understands the utility of being sensitive to other people's pain, and Lauren's father, who believes she can simply refuse to give in to it. There is a certain degree of irony in the realization that Lauren's father, a Baptist minister, is willfully detached from the grief that surrounds his family, while Lauren is so deeply attuned to it and is labeled as disabled because of it. As a result of her ability to share in others' pain, Lauren develops a different worldview, one that results in a revolutionary, forward-thinking, change-oriented theology that contradicts her father's Baptist beliefs as well as her stepmother's desire to a return to a society marked by bright lights, consumerism, and a tradition. Lauren's new way of living in a world decimated by catastrophic climate events is called Earthseed. It is built on the understanding that "God is change."<sup>3</sup>

Parallels can easily be drawn between Butler's futuristic predictions of the 2020's and our modern-day realities, especially as they relate to differing generational perceptions of climate change and its impact on indigenous communities, other communities of color, and the poor. Like Lauren, who must constantly endure the pains associated with hyperempathy, the Climate Generation, which includes late Millennials and Generation Z or iGen., is vulnerable to climate anxiety, which may manifest in varied ways including pre-traumatic stress disorder, solastalgia, and eco-grief according to Sarah Jaquette Ray, an environmental studies professor.<sup>4</sup> Ray's book, *A Field Guide to Climate Anxiety: How to Keep Your Cool on a Warming Climate* (2020), is based on observations over a period of ten years. Ray analyzes these observations using an interdisciplinary approach, drawing from psychology, sociology, social movements, and

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<sup>1</sup> Octavia E. Butler, *Parable of the Sower*. Vol. 1. (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 1993), 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Sarah Jaquette Ray, *A Field Guide to Climate Anxiety: How to Keep Your Cool on a Warming Climate* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2020).

environmental humanities.<sup>5</sup> Ray's scholarship and the work of other humanities scholars highlight the ways that climate change is an interdisciplinary concern that requires the input and participation of professionals from all spheres of knowledge in order to develop workable solutions.

To reiterate, climate change and the related issue of climate migration are not solely scientific concerns. University of California at Irvine Ecologist Steven Allison and Humanities dean Tyrus Miller assert that "modern climate change is a human problem caused by the collective behaviors of people – mostly the wealthy – around the world...Science is essential for understanding climate change, and technology is critical for solving the problem. But the IPCC report spends little more than 10 pages on climate ethics, social justice and human values."<sup>6</sup> Their purpose for pointing out the ways that human values and social justice influence climate change is to explain further how the humanities delineate the cultural forces driving climate change and to suggest that the role of humanities professionals is to understand and articulate art, history, and literature in order to ascertain how people understand their society.<sup>7</sup> Ultimately, humanists' queries are meant to pose uncomfortable questions and to challenge others to think about the common good and sacrifices that are made in the process of achieving it.

As an English Language Arts teacher who has a profound love for teaching in a humanities field and engaging high school students in challenging conversations about real-world problems, I have observed some of the characteristics Ray delineates in *A Field Guide to Climate Anxiety*. I also agree with the assertions Allison and Miller make regarding the role of humanities, which includes literature. Recently while reading and discussing an informational text about the Parkland shooting and the students' efforts to turn their tragedy into gun reform, I asked my English IV Honors class to identify the most urgent problem in the world today. I also asked them to pose a solution to the problem they identified. As we discussed student concerns, the issue of deforestation emerged more than once. The sentiment among students was one of hopelessness. One student lamented, "The problem is so big, and people just want to make money. So why should I try to make a difference when the people with money are going to continue to destroy the environment? I will never see it in my lifetime." Others agreed. The conversation left me a bit perplexed, but it also increased my commitment to assist students in unpacking their feelings of helplessness to find meaning, hope, and actionable solutions to the problems they see in the world.

By exploring themes related to climate change, climate migration, climate justice, and the science behind them, I hope that students can perceive the relevant connection between speculative fiction and rethinking the possibilities of achieving a global nonviolent ethic of care in the real world in the decade of the 2020s. As Walidah Imarisha, one of the editors of *Octavia's Brood*, argues, "Whenever we try to envision a world without war, without violence, without

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Steven Allison and Tyrus Miller, "Why Science Needs the Humanities to Solve Climate Change," University of California at Irvine, 2021. Accessed: November 13, 2021, <https://uci.edu/brilliant/research/climate-change/science-needs-the-humanities-to-solve-climate-change.php>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

prisons, without capitalism, we are engaging in speculative fiction.”<sup>8</sup> Analyzing speculative fiction while also re-visioning a diverse, nonviolent global ethic of care becomes a disruptive act that potentially sets human reality on a course that is different from that which is projected. Teaching speculative fiction is an equally disruptive act. In its most effective iteration, teaching makes the tools of inquiry and transformation accessible to all students. With the proper contextualization and with a carefully constructed communal space, such tools will aid students in advocating for their own safety as well as the safety and well-being of others.

## **Rationale**

This curriculum unit, titled *Africana Futurist Narratives and Hope for a Brave New World Beyond Walls*, introduces high school seniors to the complex, interdisciplinary realities of climate change and climate migration as they intersect with other racial, economic, and political factors. The migration of diverse peoples across borders is an especially controversial issue that becomes even more tenuous when such migration is attributed to climate change. My reasons for teaching this unit are both personal and professional. My professional passion is to foster critical thinking and discussion about issues that exist in the real world. I desire to make literature relevant to students’ lives—as applicable as it has been to my own as a guide for navigating change, difference, and an ever-evolving society. Climate change and environmental justice are two concerns that I have sought to address in my personal life. These issues have also unexpectedly made their way into the classroom discourse as students have expressed their disillusionment with deforestation, urban development, materialism, feelings of helplessness, and hopelessness.

## **School Demographics**

West Charlotte High School is a historically and predominantly Black comprehensive high school in historic West End, Charlotte, North Carolina. Known as the “Dub C Mighty Lions,” West Charlotte High School teachers, staff, and administrators aim “to promote and support student learning in a safe, diverse community where students, staff, and parents actively commit to academic excellence and personal responsibility.”<sup>9</sup> The school’s history reflects the resilience, pride, and determination of both students and the surrounding community. However, maintaining the spirit of pride and hope against seemingly insurmountable odds stemming from the systemic, oppressive intersections of race, class, ability, gender, and gender identity, remains a challenge for students, faculty, and staff alike.

According to the most recent available data obtained from the U.S. Department of Education’s Center for Educational Statistics, West Charlotte’s enrollment was approximately 1376 students in grades 9-12.<sup>10</sup> 99 percent of students enrolled at West Charlotte are students of color from a

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<sup>8</sup> Walidah Imarisha, ed. *Octavia's brood: Science fiction stories from social justice movements*. (AK Press, 2015), 3.

<sup>9</sup> “West Charlotte High School,” Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools, Accessed November 13, 2021 <https://schools.cms.k12.nc.us/westcharlotteHS/Pages/Default.aspx>.

<sup>10</sup> “Search for Public Schools - School Detail for West Charlotte High School,” National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Home Page, a part of the U.S. Department of Education, accessed November 13, 2021, [https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/ipedsdata/schoolsearch/school\\_detail.asp?ID=370297001285](https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/ipedsdata/schoolsearch/school_detail.asp?ID=370297001285).

variety of heritages. 81 percent of the student body is African American.<sup>11</sup> Approximately 252 students are in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, particularly engaging students enrolled in AP English Literature and Composition. During the 2021-22 school year, I plan to teach this unit to approximately 37 West Charlotte seniors in three sections of AP English Literature & Composition. The unit will be presented during the Longer Fiction II section of the AP planning document, which will occur around February. I will teach AP Literature for the third consecutive year.

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 (AP) courses, International Baccalaureate courses (IB), and Career College Promise (CCP). Students in these classes represent all levels of preparedness; therefore, the unit that I develop must include adequate scaffolding to assist students who may exhibit gaps in knowledge or those who may be unfamiliar with AP curriculum. One positive aspect of my AP Literature enrollment for the 2021-22 year is prior relationship and interaction with the majority of those enrolled. After reviewing the current roster for each section, 33 of 37 students currently enrolled in the targeted AP Literature sections are students I taught during the junior year in AP Language and Composition, which mainly focuses on rhetorical writing and strategy. I believe the preexisting relationships I have with these students will be beneficial for grappling with the complex subjects the literature raises and for motivation as we continue to adjust to evolving COVID-19 guidelines.

## **Unit Goals**

The following learning goals and objectives will guide the content of this unit:

- To understand how climate change and migration have been communicated, critiqued, and reframed over time by many practitioners and interests.
- To define and explain essential climate-related vocabulary.
- To analyze the relationship between climate migration semantics and narrative structure.
- To analyze and evaluate Africana speculative fiction from both Africanfuturist and Afrofuturist perspectives.
- To analyze how race, class, gender and other intersectional lenses affect the impact and perception of climate change and migration.
- To develop strategies for navigating the complexities of living as a member of the “climate generation,” namely eco-grief, anxiety, fear, hopelessness, or hopefulness.
- To examine personal perspectives regarding climate, community, and change.
- To integrate insights obtained from reflections with climate change/migration and problem-solving activities.
- To create personal climate narratives that draw upon principles of characterization and climate.

## **Content Research**

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

## *Climate Change and Displacement*

In the United States, climate change is an issue of heated debate due to political opposition; however, ninety-seven percent of scientists agree that climate change is a reality.<sup>12</sup> The most recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report (first draft 2021) has recently underscored the need for aggressive climate action by asserting that climate change is real. The situation is urgent because the threshold for curtailing catastrophic climate effects is rapidly approaching. According to the report, the planet will reach warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2040.<sup>13</sup> The language used in the report is definitive about this reality, asserting that "scientific evidence for the warming of the climate system is unequivocal" and that the human element in climate change is certain.<sup>14</sup> Scholars from a variety of disciplines agree with the finding that human-induced climate change is adversely impacting the Earth's balance, altering human ways of living around the globe. As ways are altered, people are displaced, and migration becomes one of the most viable options for survival. The brief description of the literature utilized for this unit elucidates this shared belief as well as highlights the ways that climate change and climate induced displacement disproportionately affect marginalized communities.

In "Does Climate Change Cause Migration," Ilan Kelman maintains that the intersectional dimensions of climate displacement—which affect people who have been displaced in the past, present, and those who will be displaced in the future as climate-related catastrophes increase in frequency and intensity—must be addressed.<sup>15</sup> The dimensions of climate migration operate in complex ways that are not limited to linear conceptions of time and space or cause and effect. Kelman critically deconstructs the features of climate migration and displacement to articulate a framework that considers the multiple factors that are in play. Kelman contends that "phrases such as 'climi-gration', 'climate change refugees' and 'climate migrants'" play into environmental determinism, further underscoring a linear, cause and effect relationship between climate change and involuntary migration.<sup>16</sup> This linear effect is problematic to Kelman because people choose to leave their homes for a variety of reasons. Climate might not be the most prominent reason, and migration is only one option in a variety of options they may consider.<sup>17</sup> The ability to migrate generally requires some level of resources, with migration studies showing that for forced migration, even in the midst of war and other disasters, the poorest and most marginalized populations tend not to be the first ones to migrate because they lack the resources to do so.<sup>18</sup> The most marginalized and vulnerable members of a community are left with the dire option to die in the community that has been devastated by climate disaster or potentially die as they seek to relocate.

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<sup>12</sup> "Scientific Consensus: Earth's Climate Is Warming." Global Climate Change. NASA, September 22, 2021. <https://climate.nasa.gov/scientific-consensus/>.

<sup>13</sup> The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), "Sixth Assessment Report," <https://www.ipcc.ch/>.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ilan Kelman, "Does climate change cause migration?" In *Refuge in a moving world: Tracing refugee and migrant journeys across disciplines*, edited by Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (London: UCL Press, 2020): 123-136.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 125.

Shweta Jayawardhan makes observations similar to Kelman as she examines climate disaster cases in the U.S. Gulf Coast, Bangladesh, and Somalia. Jayawardhan's research explores the interrelatedness of vulnerability and climate-induced displacement, suggesting that a correlation exists between socioeconomically vulnerable peoples and those who are displaced as a result of climate factors. The relationship between vulnerability, economics, and climate is consistent in both developed and developing nations; climate-related displacement affects vulnerable populations disproportionately. Jayawardhan asserts further, "Climate change alone does not displace people; it exacerbates social vulnerability which contributes to displacement."<sup>19</sup> Such social vulnerability renders a refugee framework insufficient for addressing the needs of those displaced by climate disasters. Framing climate displacement as a "refugee crisis" incites urgency, but it is not useful for understanding the complexity of the climate displacement dilemma, one significant problem being that gaps in legal protection exists for environmentally displaced people.<sup>20</sup> Policies need to address the underlying socioeconomic conditions of marginalization that create displacement by taking a human rights based approach instead.

### *Octavia Butler and Science Fiction*

Known as the pioneering "grand dame of science fiction," Octavia Butler created futuristic fictional worlds where African Americans and other people of color were protagonists. Butler's approach to science fiction was markedly different from science fiction written by her white male predecessors and contemporaries. She, unlike those writers, was able to employ science fiction as a means for articulating the interrelatedness of class, race, gender and the environment while also crafting a compelling futuristic narrative.<sup>21</sup> Butler's science fiction is incredibly prescient when one considers the depth of foresight she exhibits in *Parable of the Sower*, published in 1993 and the sequel *Parable of the Talents*, which was published in 1998. Though she penned the novel in 1993, the events and attitudes she forecasts in the 2020s are eerily accurate to events occurring in 2021.

In Butler's dystopian depiction of 2024, climate instability has led to food and water scarcity. Drugs, murder, and unchecked corporate greed and other issues are people's daily reality. Institutions have collapsed and violent crime abounds. "Protected" within a walled community, fifteen-year-old protagonist Lauren Olamina and her family live in constant fear and anxiety that these catastrophes will directly invade their lives. In the process of learning how to navigate her reality, Lauren rejects the ways of her father and establishes a new religion called Earthseed, which is based on the concept of Change. As Lauren predicts in an opening dream sequence, the walled community in which she lives is attacked. She escapes to Northern California with other climate migrants as they search for water, food and stable housing. Lauren is instrumental in establishing her new religion and a community made up of those who have become displaced

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<sup>19</sup> Shweta Jayawardhan, "Vulnerability and Climate Change Induced Human Displacement, Consilience," *The Journal of Sustainable Development* Vol. 17, Iss. 1 (2017), 104.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 105.

<sup>21</sup> Fiza Pirani, "Who Is Octavia Butler? Google Honors 'Grand Dame of Science Fiction,'" *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, June 22, 2018,

<https://www.ajc.com/news/national/who-octavia-butler-google-honors-grand-dame-science-fiction/phdGivL1ncF4yS9lOYds4K/>.

refugees. She believes that space travel is imperative in order for humanity to reject the behaviors and mindsets that eventually created the climate crisis. In *Parable of the Talents*, Butler's foresight remains as she continues Lauren's story, elaborating on the ways that she influences the generations that succeed her. The year is 2032. A Texas Senator and Presidential Candidate named Andrew Steele Jarret appeals to the masses to vote for him, opining, "Our doors are open to every nationality, every race! Leave your sinful past behind and become one of us. Help us to make America Great Again!"<sup>22</sup>

### *Okorafor's Contribution to Africanfuturism*

Butler's Afrofuturist narratives have proven useful and necessary for re-visioning a society driven by Black narratives with Black well-being and community. She is progenitor to many Black science fiction writers, providing inspiration also to Nigerian American science fiction novelist, Nnedi Okorafor, author of *Zahrah the Windseeker*. Okorafor encountered Butler's *Wild Seed* as she was writing *Zahrah*, her debut novel and the alternative text for this unit. She recounts the following experience while writing her narrative:

I had just begun writing about an angry Nigerian woman in pre-colonial Nigeria who'd been run out of her village because she'd developed the ability to fly. I was one of two people of color in the writing group, and I was uncomfortable about workshopping my story. Plus, I'd never read a purely speculative story set anywhere on the continent of Africa that addressed womanhood and patriarchy bluntly. When I look back, it's clear to me that I discovered Octavia right when I needed her. Reading *Wild Seed*, a story that featured an ageless shape-shifting Nigerian woman, blew my mind. And there is nothing like seeing a story in print that is similar to what you are trying to write. In many ways, reading *Wild Seed* proved that what I was writing was okay, that people like me could be a part of this canon. This was a very big deal to me.<sup>23</sup>

Though Okorafor looked to Butler and the Afrofuturist tradition for inspiration and guidance, she encountered problems as a Nigerian American attempting to apply an African American framework that relied upon the historical trauma of enslavement. Due to a gap she perceived in orientation, Okorafor departed from the Afrofuturist narrative after being told repeatedly that her narrative as a descendent of African immigrants does not fit the framework of stolen Africans in the USA. She coined AfricanFuturism, which she defines as "similar to Afrofuturism in a way that Blacks on the continent and in the Black Diaspora are connected by blood, spirit, history, and future."<sup>24</sup> It is important to draw attention to this subtle difference in perspective that highlights an area of critique, particularly as Afrofuturism pertains to literature.

There is a clear difference in perspective between Butler's *Parable of the Sower* and Okorafor's *Zahrah the Windseeker*. While both novels feature a teenage protagonist, *Parable's* Lauren lives

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<sup>22</sup> Octavia Butler, *Parable of the talents: A novel*. Vol. 2. (Seven Stories Press, 1998), 24.

<sup>23</sup> Emily Temple, "The Grand Cultural Influence of Octavia Butler," Literary Hub, July 2, 2019, <https://lithub.com/the-grand-cultural-influence-of-octavia-butler/>.

<sup>24</sup> Nnedi Okorafor, "AfricanFuturism: Disrupting Science Fiction," Igbo Conference, June 18, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zTOSalzZQ9Y>.



in a society characterized by destruction and decay. Zahrah Tsami, by contrast, lives in the Ooni Kingdom, a technologically advanced society in which plants are used to develop technology and the people live in harmony with nature as neighbors. Like *Parable's* Lauren, who is different as a hyperempath, Zahrah is born "dada" or with dadalocks, shiny, light green vines interwoven into her hair.<sup>25</sup> Those born dada are believed to have special powers; things are said to go haywire when they enter rooms. In contrast to Lauren's dad, who wanted her to suppress her hyperempathy, Zahrah's family reassures her that her dadalocks are not a sign of rebellion or a curse. Instead, they are an indication of wisdom.<sup>26</sup> Okorafor's characters, though different, find affirmation by embracing their natural identities unhampered by Western influence.

In 2017, Okorafor delivered a TedTalk in which she spoke about the importance of Afrofuturism to issues of migration. During the talk, she argued, "This idea of leaving but bringing and then becoming more is at the heart of Afrofuturism."<sup>27</sup> The values she espoused speak directly to the issue of migration, the ability to move to another place to learn and develop while also acknowledging the tools that are brought to the new place of learning are unapologetically enough. Okorafor contends further, "African science fiction's blood runs deep and it's old, and it's ready to come forth, and when it does, imagine the new technologies, ideas, and sociopolitical changes it'll inspire."<sup>28</sup>

African futurism is useful because it equips students with the necessary tools for change. It aids them with problem solving abilities, the kind needed to navigate the issues of a new age. Unlike Afrofuturism, AfricanFuturism maintains a direct connection to African culture. It is free from the Western gaze and the preoccupation that Afrofuturism often exhibits. Because of the distinctions between Afrofuturism and Africanfuturism, I have chosen in this unit to embrace the term "Africana" to cover both narratives in the conversation. "Africana" is a broad, multidisciplinary term that refers to all persons and things African and of African descent. It also refers to African culture including books and other artifacts.<sup>29</sup> I have chosen to use the terminology "Africana" to address the tension between Afrofuturist narrative and African futurist narrative.

Africana futurism in all its iterations presents the possibilities of a brave new world. It centers Africa, the African Diaspora, and women as sources of wisdom and strength who are instrumental in humanity arriving at this place of justice. By re-centering the focus to Afrocentric ways of knowing, understanding, and caring, novels such as Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* and Nnedi Okorafor's *Zahrah the Windseeker* defy the anti-Black and exclusionary assumptions white male Western writers tend to hail as norms. The absence or secondary presence of Black folks in traditional science fiction is problematic in that it suggests Black folks are either unconcerned or simply not involved in the leadership and care needed to shape futurist

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<sup>25</sup> Nnedi Okorafor, *Zahrah the Windseeker* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2008), vii.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, viii.

<sup>27</sup> Nnedi Okorafor, "Sci-fi Stories that imagine a future Africa." Ted Talk, November 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mt0PiXLvYIU&t=17s>.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Lucius Outlaw, "What is Africana philosophy." *Philosophy in multiple voices* (2007): 109-144.

society. Undermining these assumptions is beneficial in an academic setting such as West Charlotte High School.

### *Climate Narratives and the Climate Generation*

What Butler and Okorafor reveal to us in their writing is that the climate change conversation permeates every aspect of society including literature and education. One reason the public education classroom is affected by climate change and migration is because students today bring a keen awareness of climate concerns to the classroom. Sarah Jaquette Ray, in *A Field Guide to Climate Anxiety*, highlights the characteristics of the contemporary student who exists as a part of the “climate generation,” a demographic burdened with the bleak forecast of a climate change altered future. The characteristics Ray identifies for the climate generation include a deep resentment for inheriting the problems of former generations and an inability to address a problem that they have foreseen for some time.<sup>30</sup> Unlike previous generations, the environmental politics of the climate generation are cultural, not merely a facet of science or technology.<sup>31</sup> The climate generation has a profound ability and responsibility to reimagine how the world can be organized. Ray suggests the generation must articulate a story that will rise above “self-erasure and hatred for humanity, vanquish myths of powerlessness, reject the seduction of denial, and turn away from the distractions of consumable happiness,” focusing instead on collective resilience and adaptation in reframing a just environmental movement.<sup>32</sup>

Ray’s charge to the climate generation to develop narratives that reimagine how the world can be organized can be achieved through the application of speculative fiction. This unit applies the Afrofuturist and Africanfuturist narratives of Octavia Butler and Nnedi Okorafor in order to reimagine a society that places care for the earth as the highest priority. The term “Afrofuturism” was first coined by Mark Dery, who in 1993 wrote “Black to the Future: Interviews with Samuel R. Delany, Greg Tate, and Tricia Rose.”<sup>33</sup> In “Black to the Future,” Dery contends that science fiction “mirrors the subaltern position to which blacks have been relegated throughout American history.”<sup>34</sup> The implication of this statement is that science fiction is the ideal genre for Black people because it provides a means for achieving that which has been stolen. Dery explores the ways that science fiction is potentially problematic for Black peoples, raising the question, “Can a community whose past has deliberately rubbed out, and whose energies have subsequently been consumed by the search for legible traces of its history, imagine possible futures?”<sup>35</sup> At the heart of examining this question is a critique of the way narratives have been traditionally constructed in the Western world. They are driven by the male imagination, which relies heavily on images of “pistol-packing” characters who are preoccupied with violence.<sup>36</sup> Afrofuturist narratives subvert these images, re-visioning a world with humane priorities.

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<sup>30</sup> Sarah Jaquette Ray, *A Field Guide to Climate Anxiety: How to Keep Your Cool on a Warming Climate* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2020).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>33</sup> Mark Dery, “Black to the Future: Interviews with Samuel R. Delany, Greg Tate, and Tricia Rose,” in *Flame Wars* (Duke University Press, 1994), 179-222.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

## Instructional Implementation

The unit design assumes the unit will be delivered in twelve, ninety-minute face-to-face lessons (approximately four weeks), which alternates on an A/B day class schedule. The *Parable of the Sower* will be explored as the main text. *Zahrah the Windseeker* is a secondary text that will be incorporated simultaneously for students who demonstrate difficulty with reading fluency and comprehension. Each week will explore a different theme from the novels and will involve discussions exploring how those themes are relevant to the contemporaneous context. To assess student comprehension and to engage critical thinking, students will maintain a journal throughout the unit and will respond in writing to a variety of assignments including Do Now activities, “write” station activities, and exit tickets. Guiding questions and related readings will be provided.

The following structure will be implemented:

- **Do Now (10 minutes):** The opening activity may involve writing a reflective response, reviewing a video on Chromebook, or completing a survey/anticipation guide.
- **Student-friendly objectives** will be reviewed to provide students with the “Why?” or “What do we want to accomplish?”
- **Direct Instruction (10 minutes)**
- **Reading (20 minutes)**
- **Writing (20 minutes)** Students will maintain a journal of ideas and responses and will write in those journals each class period. As the culminating activity, students will use their journal responses to produce their own climate narrative.
- **Discussion (20 minutes)**
- **Exit Ticket (5-10)**

## Assessments

- **T-Chart Analysis**
- **Parachute Project\*** Students will begin working on their projects on day one. Each section will design a parachute and will decide how it will be used to inform the public about climate migration. Students will determine the design and the audience.
- **Personal Climate Narrative**

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## WEEK ONE

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Theme: Border Wall Anxiety

**Week one, lesson plans 1-3**, examine the ways that walls function to create boundaries of security and also separation. Students will explore both literal and symbolic meanings around walls and will examine how walls may create anxiety and/or alienation. Examining language around United States-Mexico border controversies over the years, they become acquainted with the idea of borderlands, a concept directly addressed in Okorafor’s *Zahrah the Windseeker*. The first week covers the first seven chapters of *Parable of the Sower* and the first nine chapters of

*Zahrah the Windseeker*. These three lessons introduce the characters and central themes of the texts as well as essential vocabulary. The aim of the first three lessons is to provide the context for the selected narratives. Concepts covered will include historical, social, and literary terms: climate change, climate migration, Anthropocene, Holocene, eco grief, dystopia, epistolary plot and empathy. In exploring these themes and concepts, the first week will reinforce learning standard RL (Reading Literature) 11-12.5: Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact. The epistolary format of *Parable of the Sower* will be juxtaposed with the first-person linear narrative presented in *Zahrah the Windseeker* to examine how narrative structure communicates ideas as strongly as diction and characterization.

### **Week One, Lesson 1**

**Do Now:** Both of the following statements are true.

*Walls protect.*

*Walls divide.*

Which statement do you think is truer? Write one paragraph (5-7 complete sentences) explaining why. (taken from [Gonchar](#) 2019).<sup>37</sup>

**Read/Watch:** [Border Wall or Levee? South Texas South Texas immigration advocates and environmentalists see a border wall.](#)<sup>38</sup>

**Write:** Reflect in writing on the following passage:

*July 20, 2024*

*The neighborhood is a massive, looming presence nearby. I see it as a crouching animal, perhaps about to spring, more threatening than protective. But my stepmother is there, and she isn't afraid. I stay close to her. I am seven years old. (Butler p. 5).*

**Alternative Text:** *We'd had to lie this time, telling our parents that we were going to the library. As punishment, we couldn't go anywhere except the library. But we were really going into the Forbidden Greenery Jungle, and we had only a half mile to go as we passed the last building. There was no wall between the outskirts of Kirki and the jungle. For decades, the people of Kirki had tried to build one. The forbidden jungle simply wouldn't allow it (Okorafor p. 77).*

What are the benefits and the drawbacks of building walls?

**Direct Instruction:** Direct instruction begins with a KWL analysis chart to gauge student knowledge and perception of the term "climate refugee." What do we know about climate

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<sup>37</sup> Michael Gonchar, "Deconstructing the Wall: Teaching About the Symbolism, Politics and Reality of the U.S.-Mexico Border," *The New York Times*, Jan. 6, 2019. Accessed November 10, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/06/learning/lesson-plans/border-wall-lesson-plan.htm>.

<sup>38</sup> Uriel J. Garcia, "The Federal Government Calls It a Levee. South Texas Immigration Advocates and Environmentalists See a Border Wall," *The Texas Tribune* (The Texas Tribune, September 3, 2021). <https://www.texastribune.org/2021/09/03/texas-border-wall-levee/>.

refugees and the factors that cause migration? What do we want to know? At the conclusion of the direct instruction segment of the lesson, students will share how their perceptions remain the same or have changed as a result of the lesson.

**Discuss:** Do you think nations should have walls or fences separating countries? Do you think neighborhoods should have walls to distinguish themselves as separate communities? Explain your answer.

**Exit Ticket:**

What was your perception of the term “climate refugee” before the class began? Has it changed? How has it changed or why does it remain the same?

**Week One, Lesson 2**

**Do Now:** The Tip of the Iceberg Exercise (Adapted from [“Facing History and Ourselves”](#)).<sup>39</sup> List every word, problem, or concept you think about immigration in the “tip” area of the iceberg.

**Read/Review:** [Andreas Rutkauskas’s Borderline](#), a photography project featuring images captured at the border between the United States and Canada.<sup>40</sup>

**Write:** Reflect in writing on the following passage:

July 20 2024: *I drift toward the doorway. Cool, pale light glows from it. Then I slide a little to the right; and a little more. I can see that I’m going to miss the door and hit the wall beside it, but I can’t stop or turn. I drift away from the door, away from the cool glow into another light. The wall before me is burning. Fire has sprung from nowhere, has eaten in through the wall, has begun to reach toward me, reach for me. I drift into it. It blazes up around me. I thrash and scramble and try to swim back out of it, grabbing handfuls of air and fire, kicking, burning! Darkness (Butler p. 4).*

**Alternative Text:** *I shivered as Dari told me about the failed project he’d read about on the net. He said that when they rebuilt the wall, this time using wood, voracious termites gnawed at it until it fell down. When they rebuilt the wall using metal, insects that had no scientific name dissolved it with acid produced in their thoraxes! These insects glowed a bright orange during the night, and for days, the wall kept nearby residents awake with its light. Eventually the metal wall melted. The wall looked as if it were on fire. It was Papa Grip who put a stop to all the wall-building efforts (Okorafor p. 77).*

In what ways do walls limit community?

**Direct Instruction:** The brief lesson provides an introduction to unit vocabulary: climate change, climate migration, Anthropocene, Holocene.

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<sup>39</sup> “Iceberg Diagrams.” *Facing History and Ourselves*. Accessed November 14, 2021. <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/iceberg-diagrams>

<sup>40</sup> Andreas Rutkauskas, “Borderline.” Andreas Rutkauskas, 2016. <https://www.andreasrutkauskas.com/borderline>.

**Discuss:**

Take a moment to go back and compare the images of the US-Canada border you reviewed in today's do now exercise to the images you reviewed last class period of the US-Mexico border. What differences do you notice? What do you think accounts for those differences?

**Exit Ticket:**

Complete the underwater portion of the iceberg. What factors have influenced immigration policies of the years? What factors have influenced people's migration either within the borders of the United States or from another country to the United States? (Adapted from "[Facing History and Ourselves](#)").<sup>41</sup>

**Week One, Lesson 3**

**Do Now:** Imagine a world without borders or national barriers. How might relations between different peoples and nations be different?

**Read/Watch:** [Immigration Timeline \(PBS\)](#)<sup>42</sup>

**Write:** Reflect in writing on the following passage:

*July 20, 2024*

*A lot of our ride was along one neighborhood wall after another, some a block long, some two blocks, some five...Up toward the hills there were walled estates--one big house and a lot of shabby little dependencies where the servants lived. We didn't pass anything like that today. In fact we passed a couple neighborhoods so poor that their walls were made up of unmortered rocks, chunks of concrete, and trash. Then there were the pitiful, unwalled residential areas. A lot of the houses were trashed--burned, vandalized, infested with drunks or druggies or squatted in by homeless families with their filthy, gaunt, half-naked children. (Butler p. 10)*

**Alternative Text:** *"It's not the Ooni way to do battle with nature," [Papa Grip] said that year during his annual address to the town, "If the jungle does not want us to put up a wall, then we must listen to it, for it's our neighbor and one must respect his or her neighbor." And so there was no protective wall. The buildings just ended, the grass began to grow higher, then the trees started (Okorafor p. 77-78).*

How does Lauren's description of the wall reflect how society thought about walls in the narrative? Can you relate these ideas to how walls are perceived in today's society? In Zaharah, what is the relationship between humanity and nature? Why is a wall not appropriate for her fictional society?

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<sup>41</sup> "Iceberg Diagrams." Facing History and Ourselves. Accessed November 14, 2021. <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/iceberg-diagrams>.

<sup>42</sup> Andrew Becker, "Frontline/World Mexico: Border Timeline." PBS. Public Broadcasting Service. Accessed November 14, 2021. <http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/mexico704/history/timeline.html#>.

**Direct Instruction:** Historical and social contextualization of climate migration continues along with terms embedded into the lesson: eco grief, dystopia, epistolary plot and empathy. This lesson provides the direct segue into *Parable of the Sower*.

**Discuss:** Evaluate current practices that are used to enforce border security in the United States. What are the strengths and weaknesses? Propose at least two solutions to the problems you identified.

**Exit Ticket:**

What were two memorable concepts, facts, or details you learned from the lesson today? Post your response on the Parking Lot. Do not forget to include your name.

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## WEEK TWO

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Theme: Hyperempathy--Is it a Disability or is it a Necessity?

**Week two, lessons 4-6** will cover characterization as the lessons analyze chapters 8-13 in *Parable of the Sower* and chapters 10-13 in *Zahrah the Windseeker*. Specifically, the concept of a Bildungsroman, a sensitive character who searches for answers as she simultaneously comes of age, will be examined. Students will be challenged to make connections between the Bildungsroman, youth affected by climate and migration, and themselves. They will be asked to consider the ways they can initiate change in those issues/situations that concern them most. They will also consider their limitations, the ways that individuals and/or society have placed boundaries on what they can do (through ability, social status, race, gender, etc.). Asking this question is meant to establish a connection between limitations, empathy, and a desire for ensuring access for all. For example, Lauren's hyper empathy in *Parable of the Sower* is central to her characterization as a leader who feels the needs of those who are otherwise invisible. Similarly, Zahara is born with dadalocks, a distinctive characteristic that results in isolation for those in the Ooni Kingdom who have them. As the characters in each narrative develop, students will demonstrate mastery of standard 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). To analyze and compare methods of development, students will complete a comparative T-chart (Appendix 2). Completing the chart will require them to analyze quotes from either story, to develop their understanding of what those quotes say about the character, their environment, and their response to it.

### Week Two, Lesson 4

**Do Now:** Do you think it is possible to care too much? Write one paragraph (5-7 sentences) explaining your answer.

**Read/Watch:** [“Can You Have Too Much Empathy?”](#)<sup>43</sup>

**Write:** Reflect in writing on the following passage:

July 21, 2024

*I can take a lot of pain without falling apart. I’ve had to learn to do that. But it was hard, today, to keep peddling and keep up with the others when just about everyone I saw made me feel worse and worse...My brother Keith used to pretend to be hurt just to trick me into sharing his supposed pain. Once he used red ink as fake blood to make me bleed. I was eleven then, and I still bled through the skin when I saw someone else bleeding (Butler p. 11).*

**Alternative Text:**

*My cheek was warm from Dari’s warmth, which radiated through his green pajamas. He still wore the glass luck charm Nsibidi had given him. It glowed a faint green. I looked at his serene face. I wasn’t used to seeing him like that. He was usually smiling broadly, making jokes, telling stories based on history, and laughing loudly. Tears slowly dripped sideways down my face and onto his clothes. It was at that moment that I made my decision. It was like a seed sprouting, slowly growing and taking over my mind (Okorafor p. 116).*

What do you notice about this excerpt? What do you wonder?

**Direct Instruction:** Definition of a Bildungsroman. Examination of how the Bildungsroman functions in coming of age stories and particularly in *Parable of the Sower* and *Zahrah the Windseeker*. How do the decisions of the characters facilitate their growth and development?

**Discuss:** “Lauren Olamina has hyperempathy syndrome, an illness that gives her the delusion that she feels both the pain and pleasure of those around her. Do you think it is significant that this is a congenital disease she contracted because her mother was a drug abuser? How has this illness made Lauren different from those around her? Why was she unable to tell anyone about it? Why do you suppose it is significant to the story that she has this illness?”<sup>44</sup>

OR

Discuss Zahrah’s decision to risk her life to save her friend. Is her decision to save Dari rational? Is it appropriate given the circumstances presented in the story?

**Exit Ticket:** What were two memorable concepts, facts, or details you learned from the lesson today? Post your response on the Parking Lot. Do not forget to include your name.

### **Week Two, Lesson 5**

**Do Now:** Lauren writes the following statement in her journal on July 31, 2027.

In order to rise  
From its own ashes  
A phoenix

<sup>43</sup> Reynolds, Marcia. “Can You Have Too Much Empathy?” Psychology Today. Sussex Publishers, April 15, 2017. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/wander-woman/201704/can-you-have-too-much-empathy>.

<sup>44</sup> Butler, *Parable of the Sower* (Study Guide), 342.



First  
Must  
Burn. (p. 153)

Write one paragraph explaining what these words mean.

**Read/Watch:** [The Most Shocking Second a Day Video](#)<sup>45</sup>

**Write:** Reflect in writing on the following passage:

*July 31, 2027*

*Last night, when I escaped from the neighborhood, it was burning. The houses, the trees, the people: Burning. Smoke awoke me, and I shouted down the hall to Cory and the boys. I grabbed my clothes and emergency pack and followed Cory as he herded the boys out. The bell never rang. Our watchers must have been killed before they could reach it. Everything was chaos. People running, screaming, shooting. The gate must have been destroyed. (Butler p. 133)*

**Alternative Text:** *The moment the door shut, I leaned close to Dari's ear and whispered, "I'm planning something," I glanced behind me. "Don't worry. Maybe I'm too afraid to fly, but I'm brave enough to save your life...So there I was, all alone, less than a mile from the forbidden jungle. I wished I'd had a chance to talk to Nsibidi before leaving, but there was no time" (Okorafor p. 118).*

How does the protagonist in your story describe the experience of having to leave? Consider their word choices, description of the setting, and their intentions.

**Direct Instruction:**

How stories humanize. The lesson will focus on how words and imagery are constructed in literature to stir empathy. Principles will be applied to Butler and Okarfor's work to determine the effect of the authors' word choices and structure.

**Discuss:** Read the following article on the *Psychology Today* website: [How to Put Yourself in Someone Else's Shoes](#).<sup>46</sup> How does "The Most Shocking Second a Day" video help you to understand what it is like to be displaced due to war or other factors?

**Exit Ticket:** What were two memorable concepts, facts, or details you learned from the lesson today? Post your response on the Parking Lot. Do not forget to include your name.

**Week Two, Lesson 6**

**Do Now:** Why do people migrate? Post at least three reasons for the word cloud.

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<sup>45</sup> Save the Children, "Most Shocking Second a Day Video," YouTube (Save the Children UK, March 5, 2014), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RBQ-IOHfimQ>.

<sup>46</sup> Paul Thagard, "How to Put Yourself in Someone Else's Shoes." *Psychology Today*, November 27, 2015. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hot-thought/201511/how-put-yourself-in-someone-else-s-shoes>.

**Read/Watch:** [What if Manhattan](#)<sup>47</sup>

**Write:** Reflect in writing on the following passage:

*I put clothes and shoes into a salvaged pillowcase, looked around for blankets, and couldn't find a one. They must have been grabbed early...With my pack on my back and the pillowcase in the left arm, resting on my hip like a baby, I walked down the driveway to the street. I kept my right hand free for the gun still in my pocket. I had not taken the time to put on the holster (p. 161-162).*

**Alternative Text:** *"I wasn't carrying a lot, just a small blanket, some food and water, a lighter, my bottle of rose oil for my hair, my daily vitamins, soap, two toothbrushes, and a few other things. I wore green pants with a large mirror on the hip and a caftan with mirrors around the collar that I'd taken from the suitcase of clothes in Dari's hospital room. I wanted something of his to bring along" (p. 124).*

What items does the character of your selected excerpt take with her? What do those items say about what is important to the character?

**Direct Instruction:**

A continuation of the previous lesson's discussions. How do stories humanize? How do words give insight into the human experience? Principles will be applied to Butler and Okarfor's work to determine the effect of the authors' word choices and structure. Students will be asked to consider the sacrifices climate refugees must make when moving involuntarily.

**Discuss:** [Take turning reading Time magazine's Beyond the Walls: Why the Global Forces of Migration Cannot be Stopped](#).<sup>48</sup>

**Exit Ticket:** What were two memorable concepts, facts, or details you learned from the lesson today? Post your response on the Parking Lot. Do not forget to include your name.

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## WEEK THREE

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Theme: Climate Migration and Community

**Week 3, lessons 7-9** will continue emphasizing standard RL 11-12.3, the development of Lauren and Zahara. These lessons will cover chapters 14-19. Discussion questions will examine the ways that the environment (setting) impacts characterization. Potential questions include: (1) How does Lauren's hyper-empathy shape her vision of Earthseed and her conception of community? (2) What shapes Lauren's empathy? Is it merely the result of her "disability," or does Butler provide additional clues in Lauren's characterization? Likewise, in *Zahrah the Windseeker*, students will analyze the relationship between the environment and Zahrah's

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<sup>47</sup> Hamdi Foundation, "What If Manhattan...," YouTube, December 16, 2014, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vc\\_VNvD9B3c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vc_VNvD9B3c).

<sup>48</sup> Haley Sweetland Edwards, "A Close Look at Migration and the People Risking Everything," Time (Time, January 24, 2019), <https://time.com/longform/migrants/>.

development. (1) How does the advanced botanical technology in Okorafor’s AfricanFuturist novel compare to the role of technology in Western sci-fi narratives that portray technology as harmful to society? (2) How does Okorafor’s vision of a future that involves the use of flowers as currency and futuristic architecture with windows crafted from a transparent *tree*. How does Zahrah’s development evolve as she interacts with animals in the forbidden jungle?

### **Week Three, Lesson 7**

**Do Now:** A major theme in both Parable of the Sower and Zahrah the Windseeker is how and when to trust people in our lives. How do you learn to trust? How much do you have to know about a person to trust that person?<sup>49</sup>

**Read/Watch:** [So You Think You Can Stay](#)<sup>50</sup>

**Write:** Reflect in writing on the following passage:

*We had seen a man robbed--a chubby guy of 35 or 40 who was walking along eating nuts out of a paper bag. Not smart. A little kid of 12 or 13 snatched the nuts and ran off with them. While the victim was distracted by the little kid, two bigger kids trapped him, cut his pack straps, dragged the pack off his back and ran off with it. The whole thing happened so fast that no one could have interfered if they wanted to. No one tried (Butler p. 181-182).*

**Alternative Text:** *I slowly and achingly sat up and looked at the tree. The woodwit was nowhere in sight. The beehive however, was still there, covered completely with bees, including the place where I had taken the honeycomb chunk. They acted as if I weren’t there, their buzzing unanimated and monotonous. It took me a minute to realize it, but when I did, I patted my hands around my body. I was OK. I could feel the change. The poison wasn’t gone. It wouldn’t be gone for months. But I was alive and going to live. I stood up, stretched my legs, and rubbed the side of my head (Okorafor p. 176).*

Compare both passages. What ideas do they have in common? What differences do you notice?

**Direct Instruction:** The lesson will address aspects of setting including time and place, where and when.

**Discuss:** [Climate Migration and Climate Finance](#).<sup>51</sup> How many people will be displaced by climate in the future? What regions in the United States will be affected the most? What can be done now to delay climate impacts and to prepare for more climate migrants?

**Exit Ticket:** What were two memorable concepts, facts, or details you learned from the lesson today? Post your response on the Parking Lot. Do not forget to include your name.

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<sup>49</sup> Butler, *Parable of the Sower*, 345.

<sup>50</sup> “So You Think You Can Stay - Youtube,” So You Think You Can Stay? (Norwegian Organization for Asylum Seekers), accessed November 15, 2021, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E0vd-8pAl\\_g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E0vd-8pAl_g).

<sup>51</sup> Sarah Bermeo, “Climate Migration and Climate Finance: Lessons from Central America,” Brookings (Brookings, November 19, 2021), <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2021/11/19/climate-migration-and-climate-finance-lessons-from-central-america/>.

## Week Three, Lesson 8

**Do Now:** Could a climate disaster happen in North Carolina? Take a moment to search the internet for information about climate risks and North Carolina. Do the same with Charlotte. In what ways might we be affected by climate in the future?

**Read/Watch:** [North Carolina Climate Threats](#)<sup>52</sup>

**Write:** Reflect in writing on the following passage:

*I bought three of the cheap, multipurpose sleepsacks--big, tough storage bags, and the preferred bedding of all the more affluent homeless. The country was full of people who could earn or steal food and water, but could not even rent a cot. These might put a sleepsack between their bodies and ground. The sacks with their own strapping, fold to serve as packs during the day. They're light, tough, and able to survive most abuse. They're warm even if you have to sleep on the concrete, but they're thin--more useful than comfortable (Butler p. 175).*

**Alternative Text:** *There were wild light-bulb trees that glowed all sorts of colors at night and short fat current trees (I made sure not to get too close to these trees. The electrical currents they produce will make all the muscles in your body cramp up if you just brush against one). I even saw a wild CPU plant! Now I know what plants are like when free of human manipulation (p. 186).*

Describe the environment of the character. What challenges does the environment present to the character? How does she navigate around those challenges? How does this story highlight the challenges climate migrants face?

**Direct Instruction:** Students will be introduced to setting as a feature that determines significant details of the plot and conflict.

**Discuss:** [Syrian Refugee Crisis](#)<sup>53</sup>

Write about all of the reasons you have for agreeing with this text. What examples could you offer in support of the argument, from the text or your own experience. What examples do you have that would go against what the author is saying?"

**Exit Ticket:** What were two memorable concepts, facts, or details you learned from the lesson today? Post your response on the Parking Lot. Do not forget to include your name.

## Week Three, Lesson 9

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<sup>52</sup> "North Carolina's Climate Threats," Back to the map, October 28, 2016, <https://statesatrisk.org/north-carolina/all>.

<sup>53</sup> USA for UNHCR, "Syrian Refugee Crisis: Aid, Statistics and News," Syrian Refugee Crisis: Aid, Statistics and News | USA for UNHCR, accessed November 15, 2021, <https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/syria/>.

**Do Now:** What is a climate refugee? Is the term accurate given everything you have learned, or is it problematic? Explain your answer.

**Read/Watch:** [The Problem--Climate Refugee](#)<sup>54</sup>

**Write:** Reflect in writing on the following passage:

*Wednesday, August 4, 2027*

*Today we stopped at a commercial water station and filled ourselves and all our containers with clean, safe water. Commercial stations are best for that. Anything you buy from a water peddler on the freeway ought to be boiled, and still might not be safe. Boiling kills disease organisms, but may do nothing to get rid of chemical residue--fuel, pesticide, herbicide, whatever else has been in the bottles that peddlers use. The fact that peddlers can't read makes the situation worse. They sometimes poison themselves (Butler p. 201).*

**Alternative Text:**

*"I chose to come here," I said in my calmest voice. "I left my home, my friend, and I packed my things. I walked into the jungle. I have been bitten, stung, and poisoned. A whip scorpion and a Carnigourd have tried to eat me, panthers have contemplated making a meal out of me, wild boars have tried to tear me apart, spiders have tasted me, wild dogs have chased me. I've survived all the way (Okorafor p. 247).*

Do climate migrants really have a choice to move? Why or why not?

**Direct Instruction:** Characters' interaction with the environment. Introduction to writing your climate story.

**Discuss:** [See Refugees through New Eyes](#).<sup>55</sup> Discuss the factors that play into how "refugees" are discussed in media and depicted in literature.

**Exit Ticket:** What do you now know about refugees or immigrants that you did not previously know?

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## WEEK FOUR

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Theme: Space Travel and a Brave New World of Collaboration

**Week four, lessons 10-12,** are the concluding lessons for the unit. The final units focus on complexity. They will cover chapters 20-25 of *Parable of the Sower* and chapters 20-29 of *Zahrah the Windseeker*. Complexity is defined as the way that several literary techniques work

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<sup>54</sup> "The Problem--Climate Refugees," Climate Refugees, accessed November 15, 2021, <https://www.climate-refugees.org/why>.

<sup>55</sup> UNCHR Central Europe, "See Refugees through New Eyes - Bulgarian Anti-Xenophobia Campaign," YouTube (UNHCR Central Europe, November 25, 2014), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ivdlkExrZLc>.

collectively to create the theme(s) of a literary text. The four techniques explored in these lessons include irony, imagery, tone, and juxtaposition. In exploring these themes, students will demonstrate mastery of standard 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.” The central question to the unit is “How do the novel(s) ultimately communicate the dangers/possibilities of a brave new world that considers a just community/environment for all?” Students will answer the central question by creating a narrative of their own. Narratives will be compiled and shared. Students will determine the actions that emerge in response to their reflections and the narratives they compose in the culminating activity.

### **Week Four, Lesson 10**

**Do Now:** Is space travel necessary for the advancement of humankind? Do you believe that it is a waste of time and/or resources? Explain your answer.

**Read/Watch:** UN chief criticizes Jeff Bezos and Richard Branson for 'joyriding to space while millions go hungry on Earth'<sup>56</sup>

**Write:** Reflect in writing on the following passage:

*Tuesday, July 30, 2024*

*One of the astronauts on the latest Mars mission has been killed. Something went wrong with her protective suit and the rest of her team couldn't get back to the shelter in time to save her. People here in the neighborhood are saying that she had no business going to Mars, anyway. All that money wasted on another crazy space trip when so many people here on earth can't afford water, food, or shelter (Butler p. 17).*

**Alternative Text:** *In that moment, I was sure. It was if something clicked in my brain and I was ready. I was immediately energized. I relaxed, and before I knew it, I shrugged off the darkness, my blood pressure dropping as my body calmed. The elgort's trunk touched my ear again, this time more firmly, I knocked it away. Then, as if I had always done it, I took to the sky. Yes, I knew how to fly. I could fly (Okorafor p. 260).*

Free write one page, pointing out the themes expressed in your passage.

**Direct Instruction:** Writing Your Climate Story: Envisioning the Future

**Discuss:** You have read the views of the characters in the novel and people in the real world. You have also learned more about Octavia Butler's technique. What are the benefits of space travel, and can those benefits be accessible to those who are marginalized? Why/why not?

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<sup>56</sup> Grace Kay, “Un Chief Criticizes Jeff Bezos and Richard Branson for 'Joyriding to Space While Millions Go Hungry on Earth,’” Business Insider. Business Insider, September 21, 2021. <https://tinyurl.com/yufzbe26>.

**Exit Ticket:** What were two memorable concepts, facts, or details you learned from the lesson today? Post your response on the Parking Lot. Do not forget to include your name.

### **Week Four, Lesson 11**

**Do Now:** [How Space Travel Can Reduce Poverty](#)<sup>57</sup>

**Read/Watch:** [Mars' Perseverance Landing Site Named after Science Fiction Author Octavia E. Butler](#)<sup>58</sup>

**Write:** Reflect in writing on the following passage:

*Sunday, August 15, 2027*

*I think Travis Charles Douglas is my first convert. Zahra Moss is my second. Zahra has listened as the days passed, and as Travis and I went on arguing off and on. Sometimes she asked questions or pointed out what she saw as inconsistencies. After a while, she said, "I don't care about no outer space. You can keep that part of it. But if you want to put together some kind of community where people look out for each other and don't have to take being pushed around, I'm with you" (Butler p. 223).*

**Alternative Text:** *I'm not born to die like this. The thought echoed in my emptying mind. I'd been shy, introverted, lived my life up to the last few weeks cowering from the world. When people made fun of me, I would go home and hide in my room. I was born with a strange ability, and once again, I cowered from it. But look at how I've survived in this place, I thought. I'm not born to die like this! (Okorafor p. 260).*

How is your selected excerpt an indication of the protagonist transitioning to leadership and self-awareness?

**Direct Instruction:** Writing your climate story: What is your conflict and climax?

**Discuss:** According to Lauren, "The Destiny of Earthseed is to take root among the stars." She feels that we must go "beyond Mars. Other star systems. Living worlds." Are you curious about what's out in space? Do you think we should be exploring other worlds? Do you think we should be trying to live on other planets?"<sup>59</sup>

**Exit Ticket:** What were two memorable concepts, facts, or details you learned from the lesson today? Post your response on the Parking Lot. Do not forget to include your name.

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<sup>57</sup> Thomas Brodey, "How Space Travel Can Reduce Poverty," BORGAN, September 28, 2021, <https://www.borgenmagazine.com/space-travel/>.

<sup>58</sup> Elizabeth Gamillo, "Mars' Perseverance Landing Site Named after Science Fiction Author Octavia E. Butler," Smithsonian Magazine (Smithsonian Institution, March 12, 2021), <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/illustrious-science-fiction-author-octavia-e-butler-honored-perseverance-rover-landing-site-180977223/>.

<sup>59</sup> Butler, *Parable of the Sower*, 344.



## Week Four, Lesson 12

**Do Now:** How is change a constantly lived reality for migrants?

Changes

The galaxies move through space

The stars ignite

burn,

age.

cool,

Evolving.

God is Change.

God prevails. (Butler p. 225)

**Read/Watch:** [Why People Migrate](#)<sup>60</sup>

**Write:** Reflect in writing on the following passage:

*As bad as things are, we haven't even hit the bottom yet. Starvation, disease, drug damage, and mob rule have only begun. Federal, state, and local governments still exist--in name at least--and sometimes they manage to do something more than collect taxes and send in the military. And the money is still good. That amazes me. However, much more you need of it to buy anything these days. It is still accepted. That may be a hopeful sign--or perhaps it's only more evidence of what I said: We haven't hit bottom yet (Butler p. 328).*

**Alternative Text:** *"I've...I've learned so much about myself, what I am capable of, about the world...you know, things. I'm stronger than I thought. Much stronger. I'm no longer afraid of heights..."*

*The Greeny Gorillas will tell their children: There once was a quiet, shy girl who discovered she wasn't so shy or quiet. Who discovered that she could do whatever she put her mind to. She learned this when she and her friend were playing in the forest and got attacked by an elgort. Her friend was scared that he fainted. They will tell a colorful story about how the girl fought that elgort, jumping on its back and strangling it with her bare hands! (Okorafor p. 264).*

What does your selected excerpt reveal about change? Can change be good and bad at the same time? Explain your answer.

**Direct Instruction:** Writing your climate story: Determining the end of the future.

**Discuss:** What are the measures/policies that governments can adopt to solve the challenges of climate-related human migration? Conduct an internet search. Work collaboratively with your group to develop a list of ten measures that would address the barriers imposed on climate migrants.

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<sup>60</sup> "Drivers Revisited. Why People Migrate," Mixed Migration Centre (Danish Refugee Council, January 30, 2019), <https://mixedmigration.org/articles/drivers-revisitedwhy-people-migrate/>.



**Exit Ticket:** Now that the unit is coming to an end, reflect on all that you have learned. How can you contribute to resolving climate change or climate migration issues?

## Appendix 1

### *Teaching Standards*

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

RL 11-12.2: Determine two or more themes 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 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).

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

RL 11-12.5: Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to construct specific parts of a text contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its effect on the reader.

SL 11-12.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

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.

W 11-12.1: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

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.

W 11-12.4: Use digital tools and resources to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

## Appendix 2

### Student Materials (Activity Forms)

#### T-Chart Analysis

Parable of the Sower by Octavia Butler

Or

Zahrah the Windseeker by Nnedi Okorafor

Directions: Complete this t-chart as you read the assigned chapters under week two. Provide **three quotes for each section.**

<b>Section of the Story</b>	<b>What the story says...</b> (Important quotes, ideas, events)	<b>My thinking about this...</b> (What questions does it raise, feelings, notable irony or contradictions)
<b><i>Example</i></b>  <b>I</b>	“Three guys came over the wall and crowbarred their way into the Cruz house. The Cruz family, of course, has loud burglar alarms, barred windows, and security gates at all the doors just like the rest of us, but that doesn’t seem to matter. When people want to come in, they come in.” (Parable of the Sower p. 116)	This quote reminds me of a saying I heard: “Locks are for the honest.” It is another way of saying that security measures are never enough to stop robbers from robbing. The society has taken many measures to ensure that communities are walled. People have bars on their windows, alarm systems, and people guarding the grounds, but it is not enough. This is ironic, and it seems to be a waste of time and resources.
<b>I</b>		
<b>II</b>		
<b>III</b>		
<b>IV</b>		
<b>V</b>		

## WRITING YOUR CLIMATE STORY

The “Your Climate Story” assignment is written in a personal essay format and will be used to convey the issues that are most important to you when addressing climate change and migration. Your story should include the following components:

### **An introduction:**

- Identify one moment in your life when you realized that climate change was directly affecting your world. What emotions did you feel? Why did you feel them?
- When you think about climate change and what it means for you, your family, and the future, what emotional responses do you have?
- What climate change issue do you think is most important? Why?
- What is your vision for the state of the world in the future?

### **Body Paragraph 1:** Value #1

Include facts/figures, personal experiences that inform the audience of what is happening, what it means, and why we should care.

### **Body Paragraph 2:** Value #2

Include facts/figures, personal experiences that inform the audience of what is happening, what it means, and why we should care.

### **Conclusion (with proposed action):**

- How can you make your vision for the future a reality?
- What are you calling on others to do to support the ideas you have presented in your essay/story?

## Appendix 3

### *Teaching Resources*

**Becker, Andrew. “Frontline/World Mexico: Border Timeline.” PBS. Public Broadcasting Service. Accessed November 14, 2021.**

**<http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/mexico704/history/timeline.html#>.**

Becker outlines a timeline of U.S. immigration and border policy, citing tensions between the United States and Mexico over a sixty year span. The timeline begins in 1924 and concludes with policies instituted in 2008, under the Obama administration.

**Bermeo, Sarah. “Climate Migration and Climate Finance: Lessons from Central America.” Brookings. Brookings, November 19, 2021.**

**<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2021/11/19/climate-migration-and-climate-finance-lessons-from-central-america/>.**

This article projects future climate migration trends. It also examines the politics behind forced migration from Central America and allowing Brown peoples access to the United States.

**Butler, Octavia E. *Parable of the Sower*. Vol. 1. New York: Grand Central Publishing, 1993.**

*Parable of the Sower* is the first of a three-part series of novels featuring Lauren Olamina, a fifteen year old girl living in California whose life has been severely impacted by the effects of climate change and devastation.

**“Iceberg Diagrams.” Facing History and Ourselves. Accessed November 14, 2021.**

**<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/iceberg-diagram>.**

This blank iceberg diagram and the related activity lesson outline is designed to help students conceptualize the complexities of problems, particularly to assess what issues are reported in the public domain versus what lies beneath the surface of the issue.

**Gamillo, Elizabeth. “Mars' Perseverance Landing Site Named after Science Fiction Author Octavia E. Butler.” Smithsonian Magazine. Smithsonian Institution, March 12, 2021.**

**<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/illustrious-science-fiction-author-octavia-e-butler-honored-perseverance-rover-landing-site-180977223/>.**

This article examines Octavia Butler’s legacy in light of Mars’ landing site being named in her honor. It highlights Butler’s emphasis on themes related to global warming and climate change in her narratives.

**Garcia, Uriel J. “The Federal Government Calls It a Levee. South Texas Immigration Advocates and Environmentalists See a Border Wall.” *The Texas Tribune* (The Texas Tribune, September 3, 2021).**

**<https://www.texastribune.org/2021/09/03/texas-border-wall-levee/>.**

Published in September 2021, this newspaper article provides a current example of the border wall debate that was heightened under the Trump administration. One central point it raises is the issue of language or rhetoric. Is there a significant difference between building a wall or a levee? What factors determine how border walls and messaging related to walls are framed?

**Gonchar, Michael.** “Deconstructing the Wall: Teaching About the Symbolism, Politics and Reality of the U.S.-Mexico Border.” *The New York Times*, Jan. 6, 2019. Accessed November 10, 2021.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/06/learning/lesson-plans/border-wall-lesson-plan.htm>.

In this article, New York Times journalist, Michael Gonchar proposes activities and approaches to teaching about borders. Gonchar’s aim in creating the lesson is to deconstruct conversations around borders, moving beyond politicization to analyze the meaning of walls as symbols and as literal structures.

**Hamdi Foundation.** “What If Manhattan...” YouTube, December 16, 2014.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vc\\_VNvD9B3c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vc_VNvD9B3c).

This video compares Manhattan to Syria to point out the ways that national coverage varies. If one million people migrated from Manhattan, it would be well known.

**Kay, Grace.** “Un Chief Criticizes Jeff Bezos and Richard Branson for 'Joyriding to Space While Millions Go Hungry on Earth'.” *Business Insider*. *Business Insider*, September 21, 2021. <https://tinyurl.com/yufzbe26>.

This news article provides a real-world example of the debate surrounding monies spent on space travel and the needs of the poor. It will be used to initiate discussion and to encourage a nuanced understanding of the issues in play regarding space travel.

**Marien, Hania, and Miriam Engeler.** “Climate Induced Migration: High School Curriculum.” *Climate Refugee Stories*. Accessed November 15, 2021.

<https://www.climaterefugeestories.com/high-school-curriculum>.

This high school curriculum, published as a part of the Climate Refugee Stories project, provides a multifaceted approach to teaching the intersectional features of climate migration.

**Parachutes for the Planet. The Mother Earth Project.** Accessed November 15, 2021.

<https://motherearthproject.org/parachutes/>.

Parachutes for the Planet is a campaign sponsored by the Mother Earth Project, an organization promoting sustainability and bringing awareness to ways to implement earth care. The parachutes project distributes free, blank recycled parachutes to organizations desiring to spread awareness.

**“The Problem--Climate Refugees.”** *Climate Refugees*. Accessed November 15, 2021.

<https://www.climate-refugees.org/why>.

*Climate Refugees* is a non-profit advocacy and awareness organization. The goal of the site is to draw attention to people displaced across borders due to climate change. Information on the site is useful for engaging the conversation around language. Who are “climate refugees” given that the term is not recognized in international law?

**Parater, Lauren. “7 Videos Guaranteed to Change The Way You See Refugees.” UNHCR Innovation, June 29, 2017.**  
**<https://www.unhcr.org/innovation/7-videos-guaranteed-to-change-the-way-you-see-refugees/>.**

The UNHCR has compiled seven videos that help the public understand the plight of refugees. They are an effort to change the way people think about refugees and to inform them of the struggles refugees face daily.

**Okorafor, Nnedi. *Zahrah the Windseeker*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2008.**

*Zahrah the Windseeker* is Okorafor’s first novel, featuring Zahrah Tsumai, a thirteen year old Oonian. She must overcome her fears of the Forbidden Jungle in order to save her friend and fully embrace her own power.

**Rust, Sara, and Michael Gonchar. “A Lesson Plan about Climate Change and the People Already Harmed by It.” The New York Times. The New York Times, March 22, 2017.**  
**<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/22/learning/lesson-plans/a-lesson-plan-about-climate-change-and-the-people-already-harmed-by-it.html>.**

This site provides suggestions and sample lesson ideas for examining the impact that climate change is having on communities. The goal of the lesson is to teach students how to refute climate change skeptics.

**Reynolds, Marcia. “Can You Have Too Much Empathy?” Psychology Today. Sussex Publishers, April 15, 2017.**  
**<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/wander-woman/201704/can-you-have-too-much-empathy>.**

The article provides a simple description of empathy and explores themes related to hyperempathy. The author assumes that one can have too much empathy; she proposes practical steps for avoiding hyperempathy.

**Ross, Elliot, and Genevieve Allison. *American Backyard*. Baltimore: Gnomonic Books, 2019.**

This resource is a compilation of photographic images taken over a five-month period traveling the 2,000 linear miles of the United States-Mexico border. The images will present a more

nuanced perspective of how the southern border is constructed, challenging also preconceived notions of what borders mean and what they do.

**Rutkauskas, Andreas. "Borderline." Andreas Rutkauskas, 2016.**

<https://www.andreasrutkauskas.com/borderline>.

Rutkauskas photographs 8,891 kilometers of the United States-Canada border, from Tsawwassen, British Columbia, to Campobello, New Brunswick, which according to information taken from the project, is the longest shared land border in the world. The border is monitored by both governments using thermal imaging cameras and recording technology.

**Save the Children. "Most Shocking Second a Day Video." YouTube. Save the Children UK, March 5, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RBQ-IoHfimQ>.**

The video portrays a young refugee child relocating as a result of war.

**"So You Think You Can Stay - Youtube," So You Think You Can Stay? ( Norwegian Organization for Asylum Seekers), accessed November 15, 2021,**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E0vd-8pAl\\_g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E0vd-8pAl_g).

This video, published by Norwegian Organization for Asylum Seekers, is a parody of the reality show, So You Think You Can Dance. It depicts the reality of asylum seekers and the challenging demands they face to prove they are worthy of asylum to other countries.

**Stanley, Tarshia L., ed. "Approaches to Teaching the Works of Octavia E. Butler." Modern Language Association, 2019.**

This resource provides an exhaustive list of Butler's works and secondary sources inspired by her fiction. It also examines various ways that survey respondents (who have used Butler's texts) have paired it with other texts including autobiographies. Finally, the essays presented in this book analyze various conceptual frameworks for understanding Butler's significance. A major point is that millennial students should understand Butler's work because their lives are steeped in technology, and much of writing is technologically centered.

**Thagard, Paul. "How to Put Yourself in Someone Else's Shoes ." Psychology Today, November 27, 2015.**

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hot-thought/201511/how-put-yourself-in-someone-else-s-shoes>.

This article examines the concept of empathy, or the ability to put oneself in another's position. It outlines the ways that humans empathize: analogy, mirror neurons, or embodied simulation. The author argues that empathy is a connection that is made between one's past experience and another's imagined experience.



**UNCHR Central Europe. “See Refugees through New Eyes - Bulgarian Anti-Xenophobia Campaign.” YouTube. UNHCR Central Europe, November 25, 2014.**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ivdlkExrZLc>.

This video addresses discrimination against Bulgarian refugees. Its purpose is to help others identify discrimination and to understand the barriers refugees face when relocating to another country.

**USA for UNHCR. “Syrian Refugee Crisis: Aid, Statistics and News.” Syrian Refugee Crisis: Aid, Statistics and News | USA for UNHCR. Accessed November 15, 2021.**  
<https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/syria/>.

This site provides statistics and other information about the Syrian refugee crisis.

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