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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

All Our Voices:
Developing Critical Literacy and Exploring Identity in a Secondary English Classroom

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Arts

in

Teaching and Learning (Curriculum Design)

by

Kristina Doot Whatley

Committee in charge:

Marcia Sewall, Chair
Cheryl Forbes
Caren Holtzman

2014

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2014

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

All Our Voices: Developing Critical Literacy and Exploring Identity in a Secondary
English Classroom

by

Kristina Doot Whatley

Master of Arts in Teaching and Learning (Curriculum Design)

University of California, San Diego, 2014

Marcia Sewall, Chair

AOV focuses on building critical literacy skills by using two kinds of writing: narrative reflections and academic criticisms. The writing encourages students to critically analyze their own experiences, and then contextualize those experiences among a greater sociopolitical context. Students read “Their Eyes Were Watching God,” a novel about an African-American woman on a search for happiness, and supplementary non-fiction texts in order to define and analyze their own identities, although any number of

texts could have been used. When students were discussing and writing about themselves, they wrote for an audience of their peers, and when students were discussing and writing about others' identities, they wrote for a community of academics. This ability to switch registers for specific contexts is a necessary skill in the English classroom.

The curriculum culminated in a project in which students created a video exploring their multiple identities. Participating students generally mastered only one register—formal or informal—and approximately half were able to critically analyze their own identities and experiences. However, almost all students complicated their concept of academic identity, defining a scholar as someone who questions and seeks answers rather than someone who merely succeeds in school. Student progress in the academic register after the implementation of the curriculum suggests this changed self-concept could be a precursor to academic achievement.

I. INTRODUCTION

I began my teaching career at a small high school in the 9th Ward of New Orleans, Louisiana. The school had been taken over by the state's Department of Education in an effort to turn around failing test scores. Despite knowing the statistical odds facing my students, I thought that enthusiasm and a knowledge of best practices would begin to remedy the years of inattention my students received in a system where 20% of the teachers were unable to pass a basic skills test (Newmark & De Rugy, 2006). Instead, I found a classroom where my students were reading at an average of six years behind grade level. I found a disorganized administrative system that led to the turnover of six principals in eight months. I found students who frequently missed meals, had faced devastating and violent traumas during Hurricane Katrina and the chaotic years that followed, and who had few emotional resources to handle their pain. I found an average attendance rate of under 75% of the class, frequent fights, and a large number of students disengaged from school. I wasn't prepared for the large number of my students who were only coming to school under court orders after returning from incarceration.

The system failed an entire community of children. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was intended to ensure "fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education," and to "[meet] the educational needs of low-achieving children in our Nation's highest-poverty schools" (NCLB, 2002). However, across that district the school reforms implemented were a one-size-fits-all standardization of decontextualized lessons designed to improve scores on state tests. The curriculum didn't reflect my students' rich

cultural heritage, and the skills taught didn't offer my students a chance to succeed.

Veteran teachers would remind me that New Orleans was an isolated case, and almost nowhere else in the country could the institutions fail such a large group who had been in the educational system since birth.

When I moved to California, my students were more frequently on grade level, with support for emotional disturbances, language issues, and structures in place to increase contact with families and the community. The high school in which I teach has not only been deemed "academically acceptable" according to school performance standards, but has been lauded in its ability to drive its lower-performing students to academic success. I began teaching the intermediate and early advanced levels of the English Language Development (ELD) program and several sections of senior English. The majority of my students perform well, and the students who recently immigrated to the country improve quickly and are eager to learn.

However, my long-term English Learners (ELs), many of whom were born in the country and have spent their lives in the educational system here, have stagnated. I see many of the same problems I saw in my students in New Orleans: disengagement, low attendance rates, and correspondingly low test scores. Unlike my first students, these are from an academically acceptable school system with supports that should be able to meet their needs. When I ask them why they struggle in school, most say it's boring. They say that they can already read and speak English, so what we do in English class isn't "useful." While these students are quite competent in the social function of English, they

don't include the English taught and used in the classroom in their conception of "real English," and are therefore unmotivated to learn and master it. And in some regards, they're correct. Very rarely do their classes engage in what they consider to be real problems, with what they experience everyday. But without an internalization of the markers of academic success—the language, the skill set, and the mindset of what is traditionally viewed as "scholarly,"—these students will continue to lack access to higher-level education. Their academic stagnation is indicative of a much larger problem of our institutional struggles to affect the real change needed to close the achievement gaps. It seems that teachers either need to develop innovative ways to motivate students to adopt the language and codes of school, or else change the school itself.

The language that we use is intricately connected to our conception of who we are as social and cultural beings (Wolfram and Shilling, 2006). However, school typically privileges only one culture—its own. Students who don't use the language and follow behavior expectations, often difficult to interpret, get left behind. In this paper, I suggest that students will not amend their definition of "real English" to include academic language—the diction, semantics, syntax, and pragmatics which comprise the language used in educational settings—until they are asked to critically engage with it within the context of their own experiences and complex cultural identities. This includes allowing students to use their own way of speaking and writing while engaging with the material. Additionally, students need to have a critical awareness of how their choice of identities, as well as the identities imposed upon them, shapes their access to opportunities. For

growth to happen, curriculum must be made more relevant to students in both content and skill. I propose that by using Vygotsky's socio-cultural approaches to learning, situating discussions of identity, power, and access within students' own experiences and in their own discourse registers, teachers can empower all students to control their education. I propose that when this change happens, academic achievement will follow. In the Spring of 2012, I applied this framework to a secondary English curriculum focused on equity and access through the study of various genres of texts.

II. ASSESSMENT OF NEED

The achievement gap—the disparity in academic achievement between non-white and socio-economically disadvantaged students and their affluent White counterparts—is well documented. Barton (2005) outlines several factors which contribute to this gap: school factors such as curricular rigor, teacher efficacy, school safety, class size, and access to technology, and environmental factors such as parent involvement, primary language, socioeconomic status (SES), hunger, and family literacy. For the past ten years, researchers have focused primarily on the correlation between SES and academic achievement, noting that low SES correlated with delayed language skills (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008), lowered proficiency on numeracy tasks (Coley, 2002), and high rates of dropouts at the secondary level (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008).

Lee (2010) argues that the data correlating SES, race and ethnicity, and academic achievement does not follow predicted trends. He points to a rise in SES among black families without a corresponding rise in academic achievement. He also argues against environmental factors being a primary cause of the disparity. For example, while minority students have greater access to advanced classes than ever before, there has still been no correlating closure of the achievement gap. He continues to argue that past research has assumed that factors equally affect members of racial and ethnic subgroups throughout different points of time.

The original studies of the achievement gap focus primarily on the differences between White and African-American students. This is problematic for several reasons:

first, it does not account for specific ecological differences among populations that are not White or African-American, and it does not account for differences within racial groups (Carpenter 2006). This is why long-term English learners were allowed to stagnate where newcomers have made progress; based on the data, researchers have made too general assumptions about the benefits of school reforms to all subgroups.

Cultural Identity and Achievement

While some educators like to believe the school has a monopoly on the education of students, students also learn through what Cortes (1979) dubs the “societal curriculum”—the experiences and social influences that students interact with outside the walls of the academy. He later describes the powerful role that media has in shaping cultural identity, whether or not learners “are aware that they are learning from the media, and whether or not they recognize how their previous experiences—including their media experiences—may be influencing the meanings that they consciously or unconsciously construct from their interactions” (Cortes, 1997, p. 169). He continues to assert that the media provides distorted frameworks for organizing cultural information, such as the link between African-Americans and violence. If students are passive consumers of these detrimental representations, they cannot engage with the “media-based multicultural knowledge, beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes that students bring to school” (p. 180). Therefore, in Cortes’s opinion, it is not enough for schools to help students define their cultural identities; they must also provide opportunities to reflect upon the identities placed upon them through the media and social interactions.

This perceived disconnect between what happens at home and what happens at school has been linked to lower rates of engagement and achievement in school.

Research into identity formation suggests that motivation is not enough to account for the differences in achievement levels between white and minority students (Cross, 1991).

White (1984) argued the following:

Black children see unemployed and underemployed high school, trade school, and even college graduates every day throughout the Black community. They recognize that no direct correlation exists between academic success and either social or financial advancement. From their perspective, then, it makes little sense to concentrate on academic achievement when there is little assurance that their efforts will pay off.
(p. 122)

There are groups of adolescents who are constantly bombarded with images of members of their culture not succeeding even with an education. Many of them are therefore placed in an unfortunate predicament: assimilate to the culture of power, the culture of school, or internalize the representations projected on them. The issue is not motivation, but rather that struggling students might not see an equivalence between academic achievement and their cultural definition of success. Welch (1997) calls this the “Lana Turner Syndrome,” in which success is determined only by the financial success one achieves, and achievement is only attained through being discovered. This idea suggests that even if a student is skilled academically and motivated to achieve in school, his or her motivation lies in being found in the right place at the right time, and with little internalizing of himself or herself as a scholar. Without that intrinsic academic identity,

students will find themselves more vulnerable to systemic or institutionalized forms of racism (Welch, 1997).

This phenomenon has been documented in many minority communities. Ogbu (1987) delineated the ways in which there was a mismatch between cultural and academic identity in Mexican and Puerto Rican populations in American schools: 1) the content is foreign and not able to be reinforced at home; 2) the method of instruction is different from cultural models of passing down knowledge; 3) schooling can lead to students setting unrealistic goals without teaching students to achieve them; 4) schools can emphasize values in direct conflict with students' cultural identity. While this mismatch is exacerbated by primary language differences, Holly's (2005) work in modern American dialects reminds us that the mismatch can occur even in students with oral social proficiency in standard English. Fergus (2004) acknowledges that even the mismatch between cultural and academic identity alone is not enough to account for the achievement gap, and that ecological factors such as poverty, minority status, and legal status matter more in matters of student engagement and account for the level of academic variability among Hispanic students. Welch (1997) confirms this in the African-American community.

While the majority of this discussion has been on ethnic cultural identities, it is necessary to recognize that even within seemingly privileged cultures, students may choose to identify with a culture that creates a distance between themselves and academic achievement. Damico (1975) conducted a study in a Southeastern high school, in which

she looked at the correlation between test scores, student grade point average (GPA), and student peer groups. She found a higher correlation between peer group and GPA than between test scores and GPA—that is that peers influenced student achievement in school more than any supposed innate ability. If a student belongs to a peer group that is disengaged from school, it is likely that they will also disengage. These students face the same choice as the ethnic groups that academically underachieve. They must choose to reject their social identity, distancing themselves from their friends, or internalize that social identity, distancing themselves from school. Therefore, having students critically engage with both the positive and negative aspects of their chosen social identities is good for all students—not just those who are underrepresented.

Conclusion

Because of the complex interweaving of social curriculum, academic curriculum, social identity, and academic identity, curriculum needs to reflect the lives of the students. If, as some believe, schools are designed to force students to choose only one identity (social or academic), those students who do not see schools reflecting their lives will reject the codes of academia. However, by critically examining their multiple identities, students could potentially feel their cultural identities validated while still leaving room for the incorporation of skills necessary for academic success. I propose that this issue might be remediated through culturally additive curriculum, which allows students to critically reflect on traditional binary representations.

III. REVIEW OF RESEARCH ON VOICE AND CULTURAL LITERACY

As a result of the needs of increasingly diverse classrooms, many research studies have been conducted on the interactions of cognition and culture. Vygotsky argues that the two are dependent and reinforced by each other and all our learning is socially constructed (1986). Therefore, the social interactions occurring during the school day are equally important, if not more so, than the materials presented. As described in Chapter 2, literature also suggests that when pedagogy does not reflect a student's culture, the student may be less successful in school. However, many discussions of culture in the classroom have been limited to discussions of culture as race or ethnicity. Tharp, Estrada, Dalton and Yamauchi (2000) point out that there will always be individual variations within a group of people. Rogoff (2003) continues that most people participate in many cultural groups. Gonzalez (1999) further suggests that limited definitions of culture in the classroom creates a static definition, and can further stereotype or simplify perceptions of that culture. Schools can perpetuate these simplistic understandings.

Defining Self-Concept and Identity

A conversation about culture in the classroom needs to begin with how students choose to identify themselves. Self-concept, for the purpose of this paper, is defined as students' perceptions of themselves as shaped by their experiences and interpretations of the world around them (Shavelson, Hubner & Stanton, 1976). When adolescents develop self-concepts, they make inferences about their place within larger socio-cultural groups,

and interpret sets of behaviors for how they should behave or perform in certain contexts. It is important to note that self-concept is complex and multifaceted. For example, a student may view herself as intelligent in a writing course, but have a negative self-concept of her intellectual abilities in a math course. Experiences with other cultural groups can help an individual further develop their self-concepts, as they begin to associate their individual experiences with larger communities. This cross-cultural exposure can lead to group identification, which is dependent upon recognizing the boundaries between cultural groups (Giles & Johnson, 1991). Therefore, developing cultural identity is most likely to occur through interactions between diverse groups.

Academic identity, or academic self-concept (ASC), is a student's self-concept of themselves as a scholar, or as having the skills and behaviors necessary to be successful in school (Vaughn, 2001). However, as mentioned in Chapter 2, academic identity can clash with other cultural self-concepts, particularly that of racial identity. Racial identity is emphasized more so than other cultural identities, because it has clear external markers like skin pigmentation, religion, and language. These create recognizable cultural boundaries (Arroyo & Zigler, 1995). Arroyo and Zigler build off of Ogbu's (1984) work, interpreting that those students with strong academic identity essentially become *raceless*, believing the negative stereotypes of racial groups but not applying them to their own self-concept. They conducted a study of a culturally mixed group of adolescents that asked students questions about their opinions of school, their peers, and themselves. High achieving students of all races reported high degrees of racelessness,

and felt alienated from their peers. However, the same students who reported racelessness also reported higher levels of anxiety and depression. Arroyo and Zigler concluded that students of all races “often feel they must choose between fulfilling their academic goals and establishing relationships with peers” (p. 904), but that the African American students in particular were harmed by rejecting their cultural identity.

Therefore, the solution might be to create an academic environment in which 1) students develop consciousness of their multiple cultural identities, and 2) students are taught to critically question representations of cultural groups—including their own. Arroyo and Zigler’s research suggests that as long as school environments create systems in which students must choose between their identities and academic achievement, students will suffer either socially or academically. High performing students rejected their racial identity, but reported higher rates of anxiety and depression. Students who felt accepted by their peers reported higher rates of self-efficacy. If educators can design systems to remedy the academic-social disconnect, than perhaps students will be able to create a stronger sense of academic identity without losing their cultural identity.

Culture and Critical Literacy

In his theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), Vygotsky proposes that learning occurs when a student engages with a peer or mentor whose understanding surpasses his or her own (1978). The student is therefore able to reach an understanding that would have been impossible individually. Freire’s (1970) concept of critical literacy is rooted in this idea, but takes a more political approach to learning. For the purpose of

this paper, critical literacy is defined as "learning to read and write as part of the process of becoming conscious of one's experience as historically constructed within specific power relations" (Anderson and Irvine, 1993, p. 82). The key differences between Vygotsky's ZPD and Freire's idea of critical literacy is that Vygotsky envisioned ZPD as a relationship between an expert and a novice. Freire, on the other hand, envisioned critical literacy as an extension of this, where all members are using their experiences to co-construct new, mutual understandings of the world. Whereas Vygotsky's ZPD is linear, with the novice building knowledge, critical literacy is circular.

Advocates of critical pedagogy therefore promote teaching students critical literacy as a way to challenge and critique the simplistic cultural understandings that schools can unfortunately perpetuate. In the secondary English Language Arts classroom, teachers promoting critical literacy create opportunities for their students to interact with texts that reflect the realities of power relations within specific contexts. From there, students learn how to contextualize their own experiences within a greater social and historical framework. For students to gain critical literacy, they must not only question the world around them, but their experiences and themselves. In his discussion of critical literacy, Freire notes:

At its best, a theory of critical literacy needs to develop pedagogical practices which in the battle to make sense of one's life reaffirm and further the need for teachers and students to recover their own voices so they can retell their own histories and in so doing "check and criticize the history [they] are told against the one [they] have lived. (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 15)

By noting that students need to “recover their own voices,” Freire implies the importance of allowing students to develop these understandings using their own languages.

Register Use in the Classroom

Likewise, in their discussion on creating critical literacy projects in the classroom, Anderson and Irvine (1993) note that language choice is a key issue in determining how students disseminate their critical understandings. To value more formal language could potentially cut off a route of communication to the marginalized communities. Wolfram and Schilling (2006) further discuss the connection between culture and language, which is that the language we use is intricately connected to, and helps create, our cultural identities. While research draws primarily from socio-cultural theories of secondary language acquisition, the same connections can be made between identity, culture, and dialect. The way that we view ourselves, and the way that others view us, is connected to the dialect, or words and speech patterns that we use. O’Neal and Ringler (2010) note:

Some of us speak marginalized or stigmatized dialects and languages, while others speak the valued form, yet most of us communicate effectively in our subgroup...what makes one [dialect] better than another is purely a value judgment. (p. 48)

Notably, O’Neal and Ringler discuss how our definition of English Language Learner might need to include learners from marginalized or stigmatized dialects, instead of interpreting informal dialect use as evidence of language deficiency. However, as they discuss, those students using the regional dialect are able to effectively communicate to an audience of their peers.

By building off O’Neal and Ringler’s assertion that learners from marginalized dialects be included in the definition of English Language Learner, it can be argued that research and frameworks targeting English Language Learners can benefit more students than just those whose primary language is not English. Cummins (1979) introduced the designations of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) in order to challenge the accepted timeline of English Language acquisition. BICS refers to conversational fluency, typically developed through face-to-face contact, while CALP refers to the language and ideas used in school settings. Cummins (1980) analyzed teacher referrals in a Canadian school system, and found that teachers and psychologists often interpreted a student with BICS but not CALP as being cognitively deficient instead of linguistically. This misinterpretation led to the inappropriate placement of language learners into remedial programs.

Cummins (1981) elaborated the BICS/CALP distinction into language that was context embedded or reduced, and cognitively demanding or undemanding, as

demonstrated in Figure 1.

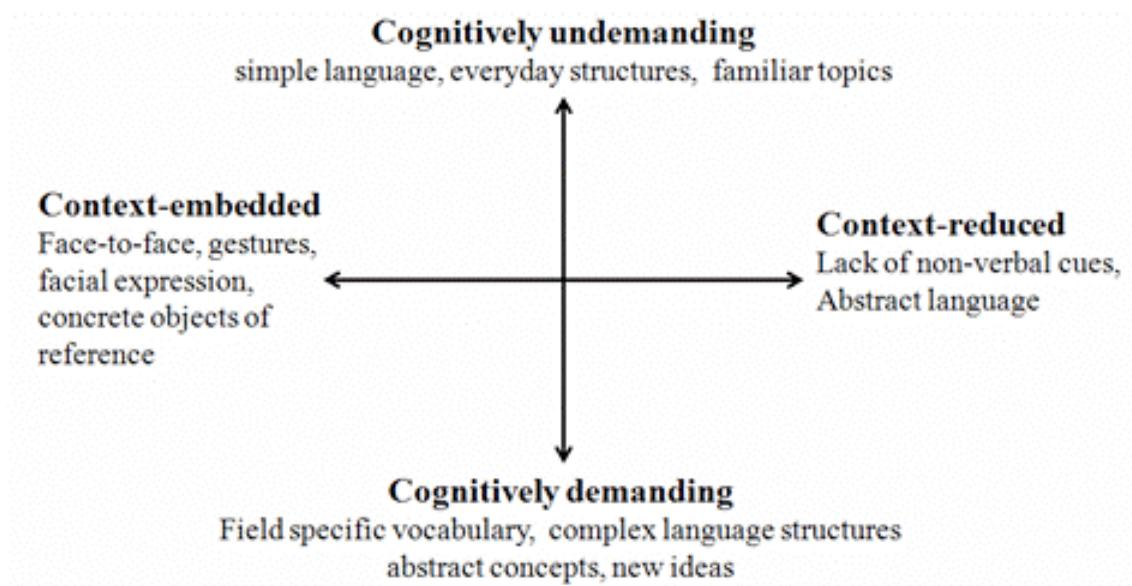


Figure 1: Cummins BICS/CALP Continuum.

Context is defined as not only the external cues such as gestures and visuals as listed in Figure 1, but also by the internal cues brought to the task like prior knowledge, interest, or motivation. BICS is usually context-embedded and cognitively undemanding, whereas CALP is usually context reduced and cognitively demanding. Therefore, to most efficiently develop skills in CALP, a task might either become more cognitively demanding or context-reduced, but not at the same time.

However, Cummins is quick to note that there is no cross-disciplinary consensus regarding language proficiency and academic development (2008). He advises the distinction between BICS and CALP to be used as a tool for creating learning environments that maximize the literacy development of socially marginalized students.

He recommends engaged reading in the academic language, opportunities for collaborative discussions about said texts, and writing authentically in order for language learners to consolidate academic learning and express identities (Cummins, Brown & Sayer, 2007).

Based off Cummins's framework, students will struggle to access academic language without using the informal register to create context. Bunch (2005) expresses this idea, arguing that there is danger "in reifying academic language, measuring it, and then claiming that linguistic minority students are unable to participate in the settings which use it because they have not yet mastered its discrete features" (p. 378). In a study of the linguistic functions during a humanities lesson, he found that while his language minority students did not use the academic register, they were still able to master complex academic content. If the informal register had been purposely limited in this classroom in order to privilege the academic, there would be a risk in labeling the students cognitively deficient rather than linguistically deficient. Additionally, the activities to promote the acquisition of the new content were in a social context. Students were discoursing and co-constructing their understandings. Because the task was socially contextualized, so was the language used to communicate it.

Understanding Voice

Correa (2008) argues that one of the main reasons that students struggle in higher education is that students are unprepared to adopt the correct disciplinary voice. Minority

students and students learning English understandably struggle the most. O'Dell (1995) accounts for this by observing that typically high school writing classes follow a one-directional approach towards the university freshman composition class. He notes:

This trend makes great sense; if students are to develop as writers, they have to do what writers do—drafting, learning from peers, revising—rather than work on decontextualized exercises. But in another respect, this trend is problematic: it assumes that current literacy practices of freshman composition and of the larger academy should be taken as a given, that they comprise a goal toward which students should be moving (p. 44)

He continues to assert that most teachers are unaware of the grade level of writing tasks, and therefore student instruction in the academic voice cannot be taken as a given, particularly in low-income districts where teachers are typically less experienced and less professionally developed.

As a response, colleges and universities have developed writing centers. Correa (2008) followed students through one of these programs, and noted that despite direct instruction in the academic voice, minority and ESL students still struggled. During interviews, she found that many of these students had experienced most of their instruction in more informal, narrative writing. When the same students wrote their understandings in an informal voice, they were able to communicate content knowledge, and were then more likely to attempt adoption of the academic voice during revisions. She concluded that one of the failures of the writing program was that it didn't "encourage [students] to see that the texts they read and wrote as a reflection of particular ways of thinking and seeing the world of the discourse communities they represented" (p.

204). Direct instruction in the academic voice was not in itself enough. Rather, she suggests that to adopt the academic voice, students need an understanding of voice in multiple contexts.

About academic writing, O'Dell argues that "many academic literacy practices often allow--even invite--students to read passively, trying to extract meaning from a text rather than construct it. The reading and writing students do outside school often requires them to read more assertively and more critically" (p. 50). This quotation illuminates a frustrating cycle in teaching academic writing, particularly in adopting the academic voice. Because students are entering college unprepared for academic writing, teachers are emphasizing writing which they feel will support students in a freshman writing class to the detriment of the writing students might do outside of school. However, it seems that the "outside" writing—using a writer's voice more sensible for cultures other than school—is what builds the critical skills necessary for students to be successful in academia.

The Standards and Critical Literacy

As a reaction to multicultural school reforms, a corps of prominent scholars (e.g. Bloom, 1989; Ravitch, 1990) charged that multiculturalism was damaging education and social cohesion. This might be true when multiculturalism is reduced to racial identities; as mentioned in the research on cultural identity, racial identity is one of the easiest to create superficial boundaries in self-concept. However, if students are asked to negotiate

their racial identities among larger trends of national and global identities, then they become critical producers of identity.

Ravitch also challenges that multicultural curricula is “intellectually weak and addressed minority student achievement in damaging ways by appealing mainly to self-esteem rather than hard work and academic challenge” (Duncan-Andrade, 2008, p. x). The detractors of multiculturalism pushed accountability systems based on state standards, and schools began developing curricula that standardized skills, facts, and traditional discipline-based concepts.

However, teaching critical literacy does not need to be at odds with state standards, as those against multicultural education suggest. A critical pedagogy of the standards would be one in which students construct knowledge instead of consuming it, and all the skills would be contextualized “within the context of exploring things that are important to them in their community and within the larger society” (Duncan-Andrade, 2008). To understand how texts dialogue with each other, students must understand cultural trends, philosophical and political movements. To communicate their understandings, they must have a solid grasp of how to communicate to various audiences in different modes. None of these aspects of critical literacy are at odds with the standardization of knowledge and skills, but they must be taught within culturally relevant contexts and ask students to perform their understandings in authentic ways.

Conclusion

Based on the needs of my students, and the research on identity and critical literacy, an effective pedagogy should contain the following elements: 1) opportunities for students to reflect and define their cultural experiences and identities; 2) opportunities which develop critical literacy skills; 3) opportunities for students to write in various registers, and 4) opportunities to develop an understanding of voice. As evidenced in the next chapter, much of the current curricula includes either a superficial examination of identity and voice, or ignores it entirely.

IV. REVIEW OF EXISTING CURRICULA

Based on the research summarized in the previous section, an effective curricula would include the following components: content would be contextualized within student experiences allowing them to explore and define their cultural identity, texts would be examined from a critical framework, writing instruction would occur in both the formal and the informal register, and students would adapt their writer's voice appropriate for the context of their readers. Traditional secondary English curricula ask students to comprehend and analyze texts. More conservative schools pushing standardization will typically do this through de-contextualized passages and close-readings, which ease the ability to standardize and assess knowledge. Other schools will require students to read whole or excerpted literature and ask students to write literary analysis essays examining the themes of the books. There are three curricula that were provided to me by the district in implementing the unit: the Holt English Literature Textbook (Beers and Odell, 2003) Patterns, a rhetorical reader and guide (Kirsznner and Mandell, 2010), and the Prestwick-House teaching unit for *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (2009). Table 1 summarizes the components of each, and whether the curriculum contains the elements listed above. A more in-depth discussion of each curriculum follows.

Table 1: Summary of Curriculum

Features	Patterns	Prestwick-House Inc. Teaching Unit: Their Eyes Were Watching God	Holt literature
Asks students to reflect on and define cultural identity	Yes	No	No
Develops critical literacy skills	Somewhat	No	Somewhat
Multiple register use	Somewhat	No	No
Develops understanding of voice	Somewhat	No	Somewhat

Patterns for College Reading and Writing: A Rhetorical Guide

Patterns (Kirsznner and Mandell, 2010) is a collection of texts, guided questions, and writing activities designed to be used in introductory college writing courses, or as an advanced textbook for college-bound secondary English students. It begins with the writing process, then moves to models of formal writing patterns (narration, description, exemplification, process, cause and effect, comparison and contrast, classification and division, definition, and finally argumentation). Each chapter contains an introduction, models with guided questions, and then related writing activities. Many of the selections provided could be useful for discussions of culture and identity. Each selection includes

a background of the author, historical or social context of the text, comprehension questions, questions on purpose, style, and related writing assignments.

For example, the exemplification chapter includes a reading from Brent Staples called “Just Walk on By: A Black Man Ponders his Power to Alter Public Space.” This would be a useful reading in examining issues of identity, gender, race, and power relations between cultural groups. This particular article does include a journal entry that asks readers to consider whether they have ever been perceived as threatening. This question does allow students an opportunity to contextualize the new material within their own experiences. The guided questions direct students towards a structural analysis of the text: there are questions to guide comprehension, an understanding of style and structure, and an understanding of purpose and audience. The questions in the purpose and audience section, such as “Is [Staples’] thesis stated or implied?” and “What preconceptions does Staples assume his audience has?” (p. 240) begin to address issues of critical literacy. The questions provide a framework for understanding how other authors craft their works for particular audiences.

However, while the curriculum adequately fosters critical reading skills, and occasionally encourages students to situate readings within their own experiences, the writing activities seem haphazard and poorly scaffolded. There is one informal writing assignment (“Journal Entry”) in response to each text. The purpose of these assignments is for reflection, and is not intended for an outside audience. Additionally, there are

generally three “writing workshop” prompts in response to each text. For example, the prompts related to Staples’s piece are:

- Use your journal entry to help you write an essay using a single long example to support this statement: “When walking alone at night, you can (or cannot)” be too careful.
- Relying on examples from your own experience and from Staples’s essay, write an essay discussing what part you think race plays in people’s reactions to Staples. Do you think his perceptions are accurate? Make sure that you document Staples’s words and ideas and that you include a works-cited page.
- How accurate is Staples’s observation concerning the “male romance with the power to intimidate?” (8)? What does he mean by this statement? What examples from your own experience support (or do not support) the idea that this “romance” is an element of male upbringing in our society? (Kirsznner and Mandell, p. 241)

While these prompts have the potential to elicit strong examples of critical reflection, they are written only in the formal register. Formal writing uses Modern Standard English. Most importantly, English Learners might encounter difficulty in the ambiguity of the audience, as Correa (2008) describes. For example, the second prompt seems to suggest a need for narration embedded into the expository writing. Without proper scaffolding, students will struggle with adopting the appropriate voice for the qualifications of the assignment. Additionally, none of these writing tasks echo the authentic writing tasks that Odell (1995) encourages to foster development of voice.

Overall, *Patterns* provides a good starting point for the development of critical literacy and examination of cultural identity. It contains relevant texts, contextualizes the texts within student experiences, but does not provide much writing scaffolding.

Prestwick House Teaching Unit

The Prestwick House teaching unit for *Their Eyes Were Watching God* provides support for content knowledge, but little support for critical literacy. Additionally, there is no opportunity for students to reflect on their own experiences or connect the text to their own lives.

The summative assessments for the unit include a multiple choice essay test and 28 essay and discussion questions. Of the 28 questions, only one addresses issues of power and identity, and it only asks students to consider the character's viewpoint: What does Janie think is God's opinion of the white man's treatment of blacks? What does Janie think is God's opinion of the black man's treatment of black women? The other questions prompt students to consider symbolism, narrative devices, or character motives with no consideration of larger themes. These types of questions might be useful as a starting point for discussion, but give neither teachers nor students any guidance in eliciting higher critical thinking.

The teaching unit begins with goals, essay and discussion questions, and then provides guided questions for each chapter of the book. The guided questions are primarily comprehensive in nature, and provide little structure for any analysis, let alone critical analysis. For example, a typical question might ask students about cause and effect in the story, like: Why was Janie excluded from the mule's funeral? The unit is not useful to any study of critical literacy.

Holt Textbook

Beers and Odell's Holt Literature & Language Arts: Essentials of British and World Literature (2003) is a comprehensive overview of British and World literature, beginning with "The Anglo-Saxons" and ending in "The Modern World: 1900 to the Present." The curriculum is aligned to California State Standards, and the information is organized by historical era.

Each unit begins with an overview of the historical era, introduces several texts from that era, and ends with a formal writing assignment. The texts included are representative of what is considered the Western Canon- what is traditionally viewed as "good" or "foundational" literature. Unfortunately, these texts usually represent the historical viewpoint of only those communities in power, and the selections in the textbook seldom challenge the status quo, unless pertinent to the historical era (for example, Women's Rights during the Eighteenth Century). There are no activities designed to ask students to critically question why the texts represent only one sociocultural perspective.

Each text is accompanied by comprehension questions, literary analysis questions, and a writing assignment. The questions typically involve what O'Dell termed students extracting meaning from a text instead of constructing it. For example, a representative interpretation question is "In 'To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time' and 'To His Coy Mistress,' what do Herrick and Marvell say about time and its effects on youth and beauty?" or "The image of the sun appears in both poems. How does each poet use the reference to the sun? How would you paraphrase the last two lines of Marvell's poem?"

(p. 271). Questions like these do not encourage a critical reflection of the meanings of the poems. The formative writing assignments are typically analytic, such as comparing and contrasting two texts, or describing the function of literary elements.

The summative writing assessments at the end of each unit of study are designed only to strengthen academic voice. For example, students write a literary essay in the second unit that analyzes three works from a literary period to discover how they reflect trends of the time they are written. The activities to strengthen disciplinary voice include writing thesis statements, elaborating on evidence, and organizing ideas. Students do not critically engage with the authenticity of the assignment, nor are they given any context to the purpose of the writing task.

Conclusion

Patterns provides a useful starting point for an examination of cultural identity. It can be easily adapted to a more comprehensive study of identity and voice, but does not provide a wide range of genres to practice these skills. The Prestwick-House *Their Eyes Were Watching God* unit (2009) does provide a new genre, but is severely lacking in its relevance to student lives. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (2009) is rich in examinations of identity, power, equity, and access, but students are never asked to dialogue with the text, and therefore miss a valuable opportunity to negotiate space through building critical literacy. The Holt textbook is comprehensive in its historical

overview, but provides only superficial opportunities to critically examine the texts, and provides little instruction in register switching or understanding disciplinary voice.

Because none of the curricula provided to me were sufficient by themselves in addressing the needs of my students, I developed the All Our Voices curriculum.

V. ALL OUR VOICES: AN INNOVATIVE CURRICULUM

“All Our Voices” is a secondary English language arts curriculum that I developed to empower students by asking them to critically examine the links between language, race, culture, and identity, and produce a multimedia presentation that illustrates those understandings.

To use the curriculum, teachers should pair fiction and expository texts that address societal power dynamics in history and current events relevant to the students’ lives. Students then use fiction to connect to and examine their own cultural identities through narrative writing, and respond to and analyze the authors’ works through both informal and formal registers. For example, I paired Zora Neal Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (2009) with texts on illegal immigration, racial profiling, and affirmative action, but there are myriad combinations. A more extensive list of suggestions can be found in the appendix.

Finally, students critically examine their multiple identities, especially in how they relate to power and access. For their performance task, they create a gallery of visual and linguistic samples illustrating their various cultural identities. Students are highly encouraged to critically examine the extent that race, gender, and SES affects or does not affect their lives. To analyze themselves, they need to think and respond critically to various genres illustrating culture and identity, including the required texts, visual imagery, media clips, and their own cultural experiences.

Overview of All Our Voices

The Voices curriculum focuses on building critical literacy skills by using two kinds of writing: narrative reflections and academic criticisms. Narrative reflections are assignments in which students essentially tell a story about a particular event or person in their life, and reflect on the significance, and in which a more informal register could be appropriate. Academic criticisms, however, are written for an academic audience, and include a structured analysis of a text read in class. To write each effectively, students pay attention to their writer's voice as it relates to the purpose of the writing assignment. Students read "Their Eyes Were Watching God," a novel about an African-American woman on a search for happiness, and supplementary non-fiction texts in order to define their own identities. When students are discussing and writing about their own identities, they write for an audience of their peers, and when students are discussing and writing about others' identities, they write for a community of academics. This ability to switch registers for specific contexts is a necessary and often overlooked skill in the English classroom. The curriculum culminates in a project in which students create a video exploring their multiple identities.

Assumptions about Teaching and Learning

I believe that activities in the classroom need to be as authentic and relevant as possible. Many times in secondary English classes, students will read excerpted and decontextualized pieces with no connection to their own lives. They are then asked to comprehend and analyze the figurative language, symbolism, structure, and style of the author. In my classroom, shorter writing pieces ultimately become pieces of a larger

writing project so that students will hopefully see the value in all writing assignments. Additionally, secondary English classes rarely encourage students to use their own cultural languages to reflect on their own experiences. By not allowing the informal register to play an important part of the classroom, students whose cultures are further from the mainstream are at a disadvantage.

I also believe that students need to negotiate meaning collaboratively. I combine small group discussions, whole group discussions, and various writing activities that require multiple viewpoints. We also use technology and social media to encourage collaboration in planning and understanding.

My final assumption is that for students to be successful 21st century citizens, they must be able to respectfully talk about issues of identity and power struggles. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (Partnership, 2013), a national organization that advocates for the skills necessary for the United States to compete in a global market, indicates that students will need an awareness of global issues and civic literacy to participate in global affairs. One of the keys to global awareness is defined as “learning from and working collaboratively with individuals representing diverse cultures, religions and lifestyles in a spirit of mutual respect and open dialogue in personal, work and community contexts.” In my teaching experience, many students either avoid important discussions of race, class, and gender because they feel uncomfortable, or discuss it in a way that is unintentionally disrespectful. Through this unit, I want them to be able to use the appropriate terminology, and recognize their own biases towards other cultures.

Goals

The curricular activities of All Our Voices are designed to allow students to define their changing identities, and increase their awareness of how identities influence power relations in literature and life. To do this, they must develop critical thinking skills. For the purpose of this unit, I am defining critical thinking skills as the ability to recognize the viewpoints of others. This involves comprehending and analyzing texts, connecting their ideas to their own lives and experiences, and communicating those ideas in an appropriate and authentic way. The goals are rooted in the Common Core Standards for Language Arts (2010), the California English Language Arts content standards (2007) but are also designed to address the relevance of the standards to students' lives. Table 2 summarizes the curricular activities that relate to each goal, with a discussion of the specific features following.

Table 2: Curriculum features aligned by goal

Curriculum Feature	Goal 1: Students will critically analyze power dynamics	Goal 2: Students will analyze their identities	Goal 3: Students will choose an appropriate register
Narrative reflections		√	√
Novel study	√		
Social issue study	√		
Critical analysis	√		√
Video Project		√	√
Class discussions	√	√	√

Goal 1: Students will critically analyze the power dynamics in fiction and non-fiction texts.

During All our Voices, students read Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (2009). They analyze the book for messages it sends about the power relations between genders, classes, and races. They then read expository texts about social issues regarding illegal immigration, the status of public education, and affirmative action. Students then talk about each text in groups through teacher-guided reading and

questioning, after which they write academic responses. Because academic analyses are meant for a community of academics, they use academic language when writing.

Goal 2: Students will understand that their identities are “historically constructed within specific power relations” (Anderson and Irvine, 1993, p. 82).

Students are asked to discuss and write about how their own experiences connect to the novel and non-fiction pieces. They begin each class with a question chosen to contextualize the discussion in how the issues in “Their Eyes Were Watching God” relate to their own lives. They are also asked to write several identity narratives, in which they tell the story of how they come to understand what it meant to be part of a certain culture (that is how they have come to understand what it meant to be a “woman,” a “Chicano,” or part of the lower socio-economic class, or the implications of being part of privileged cultures). Finally, they create a video analyzing their various identities and discussing the implications of those identities.

Goal 3: Students will use a discourse register appropriate for a task and goal.

When students are talking about their own lives, they write clearly for an audience of their peers. This means limiting generalizations, and using descriptive and accessible language. When students are conducting critical analyses, they write for a community of academics. This means using specialized and complex vocabulary, an objective tone, providing specific evidence for their ideas, and formatting their evidence in an

academically accepted way. Even the video project is an extension of choosing an appropriate register: teenagers today communicate through multimedia (through songs, social media, video, and images). By creating a video for their peers, they must also consider how their visuals and audio files send a message as much as the content does.

Constructs

Table 3 summarizes how each curricular features aligns to the constructs outlined in Chapter 3. As evidenced in Table 3, most curricular activities address issues of culture, identity, register, and writer's voice simultaneously. I developed these features to address as many constructs as possible in response to the research of the interconnectedness of culture, identity, and language use. A discussion of how the features align with the constructs follows after Table 3.

Table 3: Curricular features aligned by construct

Curriculum Feature	Culture and Critical Literacy	Register Use	Self-Concept and Identity	Developing a writer's voice
Narrative reflections	√	√	√	√
Novel study	√	√		√
Social issue study	√	√	√	√
Video Project	√	√	√	√
Class discussions	√		√	

Culture and Critical Literacy

Research involving critical literacy influenced the development of many of the activities in “All Our Voices” (AOV). Critical literacy is an element of social justice in which students reflect on a text from the perspective of alternate viewpoints. In particular, students reflect on the nature of the power dynamics of different cultural groups inherent or absent in literature and non-fiction. To do this, students also need a complex understanding of culture and its components. Developing critical literacy involves students learning to read a text as a cultural artifact—one that either challenges or reinforces power structures. Students will have academic discussions and respond to texts in journals and a formal literary analysis essay.

Because critical literacy necessitates addressing multiple viewpoints, activities are structured in a way to encourage debate. Collaboration is seen primarily during discussions, where students were forced to clarify meaning, be conscious of word choices, and provide examples in conversations when their ideas were unclear. Other collaboration activities include using online forums and chatrooms on the internet to develop controlling theses for essays, and creating class databases of audio, video, and visual files that students can use to create their videos.

Register Use in the Classroom

Research shows that students need to be able to write, read, and speak in the academic register to be successful in school (Hakuta, 2000; Thomas, 2002). However, Bunch (2005) also notes the danger of privileging the academic register in the classroom and further disadvantaging those students whose home languages are further from standard English. Additionally, in privileging the academic register in the classroom, students run the risk of losing the ability to communicate effectively with members of their home cultures. This may defeat the purpose of teaching students to communicate for social action. Therefore, AOV takes a more comprehensive approach to writing instruction. Students write in multiple registers and do targeted revision exercises depending on their goal for communication. Students pay particular attention to the development of an authentic voice—the expression of emotion, personality and personal connection in their writing.

Self-Concept and Identity

Adolescents shape their identities through their experiences (Shavelson, 1976), exposure to different cultural groups (Giles and Johnson, 1991), and inferences based on media portrayals (Cortes, 2005). A strong academic identity is important to academic success (Vaughn, 2001), but many times academic identity comes at the expense of cultural or social identity (Arroyo and Zigler, 1995). Arroyo and Zigler also note that a strong cultural identity can correlate with higher degrees of efficacy. Therefore, I wanted

to create experiences within AOV to allow students to reflect on their identities, both self-defined and imposed by society.

First, AOV contains activities in which students write identity narratives. They select a label like White, poor, or male, and reflect on what experiences or people helped shape their conception of both the positive and negative aspects of that label. After writing several of those, they write academic narratives in which they consider the label “academic” or “scholar” through the same process. By asking students to consider their academic identity in conjunction with other cultural identities, the curriculum illustrates to struggling students that being a scholar originates from adopting certain codes rather than from a supposed innate intellectual ability.

Secondly, activities in AOV ask students to consider how their chosen identities shape their opportunities and access to success through the study of novels and non-fiction texts. While my students read “Their Eyes were Watching God” (Hurston, 2009), and non-fiction texts concerning racial profiling, illegal immigration, and affirmative action, the curriculum can be implemented with many other texts. Suggestions are included in the Appendix. The students then express their understandings of their identities by creating a video at the end of the curriculum.

Developing Voice

O’Dell (2005) and Correa (2008) illustrate that to develop an academic voice, students need an understanding of voice in multiple contexts. Additionally, direct

instruction in academic writing alone does not prepare students for authentic writing. Students need to be able to adjust their language register according to the audience and purpose of the writing piece. In this curriculum, I want students to recognize the various contexts and audiences to whom they would communicate an understanding of power dynamics. They must use academic conventions when discussing critical lenses, because their imagined audience is a community of academics. When they are writing narratives, I want them to communicate to an audience of their peers. Because they are relating their personal experiences, they should use details that would help put their readers in the mindset of being there. When they are writing to clarify their own ideas, the format and language will change depending on personal preference—some might write bullet points, some might write without regard to grammar or punctuation, and some might follow normal English conventions. All of these various writing tasks will be collected in one journal.

Curricular Activities

Students negotiate the meaning of the different texts in three primary ways: discussions, writings, and through multimedia. There are two types of discussions: student-led small or whole group discussions, and teacher guided. The students write every day in journals, the assignments ranging from short pieces designed to process the readings to longer narrative reflections, and then write a critical analysis paper. All writings follow the stages of the writing process, and include peer revisions. Finally, they individually create a video that synthesizes and evaluates the issues discussed

throughout the unit. Table 2 (p. 31) illustrates how each of these features incorporates the four constructs outlined in Chapter 3.

Conclusion

The activities and features outlined in this chapter reflect my interpretation of the constructs that I feel could help students master the content and skills outlined in the California State Content Standards while exploring their cultural identities. In the first phase of the curriculum, the students anticipate the themes and texts and connect them to their prior knowledge. In the second phase, students use a novel concerned with a search for identity to begin defining their own identities, while exposing themselves to the academic register used when talking and writing about those identities. In the third phase, students read non-fiction texts to examine how their identities shape their understandings of social issues. In the final phase, students create a video to communicate their understandings of their own identities and how those identities affect their opportunities and access. The following chapter reflects the challenges and successes in implementing such a curriculum.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION

The difficulty with designing curriculum to include conversations about identity, culture, and the experiences of diverse groups, is that it is almost impossible to anticipate the direction the conversations will take. As a result, the original design plan of the All Our Voices curriculum is very different from what is included in the materials in the Appendix. The critical thinking required, as well as the difficulty of some of the texts, required more scaffolding than I had originally intended. Additionally, I was surprised by some of the viewpoints my students shared during the curriculum, and was sometimes surprised by the unity of their opinions. When the majority of the class already had a strong opinion of a social issue, it was difficult to get conversations addressing both sides of the argument, even when texts with alternate viewpoints were provided. Finally, trying to trace the subtle changes in political views and self-concepts over the course of two months was difficult as students frequently wavered in their opinions of themselves and their world. This chapter reflects the changing and complex nature of the intended curriculum.

Implementation Setting

The School

All Our Voices was implemented in a medium sized, suburban high school in Northern San Diego County. North County High School (NCHS) enrolls approximately 1,500 students. The population is comprised of 45% of Hispanic or Latino students, 40%

Caucasian, and 15% African-American, Asian, or American Indian backgrounds. In the past two decades, the district has moved from a rural, agricultural community to one of the fastest growing metropolises in Southern California. There is are gated community where students from more affluent backgrounds live, but the majority of the families are still from agricultural backgrounds. Forty percent of the students are considered to be of low socioeconomic status. The school has both a robust AP program and a robust sheltered program for English learners or students with learning disabilities. In the sheltered program, students attend electives with the general population, but attend core classes with teachers who are specially trained in providing the linguistic or cognitive scaffolds needed to access the content.

The Classroom

All Our Voices was implemented for eight weeks of the spring semester during a twelfth grade college preparatory English Language Arts (ELA) class. The course is designed to focus on rhetoric and American studies, and many of the assignments are shared with their Government class. The class was comprised of 39 students, which matched the demographics of the school. Fifteen percent were designated either English learners or were recently reclassified. As the school has both Honors/Advanced Placement and sheltered and remediation levels of ELA, the students in the college preparatory class had a wide range of abilities but were not performing at either extreme end. Of the 39 students, 22 will attend a two or four year university in the fall, 3 will

enter the military, and 10 of the remainder intend to eventually attend a two or four year university but have no concrete plan. Part of the consideration for the curriculum was the 19 students who were not planning immediately to attend college or university; while they needed to be prepared in case they eventually matriculated, they also had the immediate need of being able to communicate effectively to excel in the non-academic world.

Students' Prior Instruction

The majority of the students' instruction had been in rhetorical analysis, using the *Patterns* (Kirsznner & Mandell, 2010) and the Holt, 6th Edition (Beers & Odell, 2003) textbooks. During the previous units, we had read 1984, Macbeth, and Into the Wild, supplemented by shorter thematically-connected expository pieces. The units were scaffolded along Bloom's Taxonomy, shown in Figure 1, with the beginning of the year focused on the foundations of rhetoric, including identifying speaker, purpose, arguments and fallacies, and rhetorical techniques. The unit of study directly proceeding AOV focused on rhetorical analysis. Students were asked to not only identify the elements of rhetoric, but also analyze how each piece contributed to the overall meaning of the whole text. Therefore, AOV functioned on the next higher level of Bloom's Taxonomy, which was synthesis. Students were asked to use all their previous knowledge to garner meaning from multiple texts.

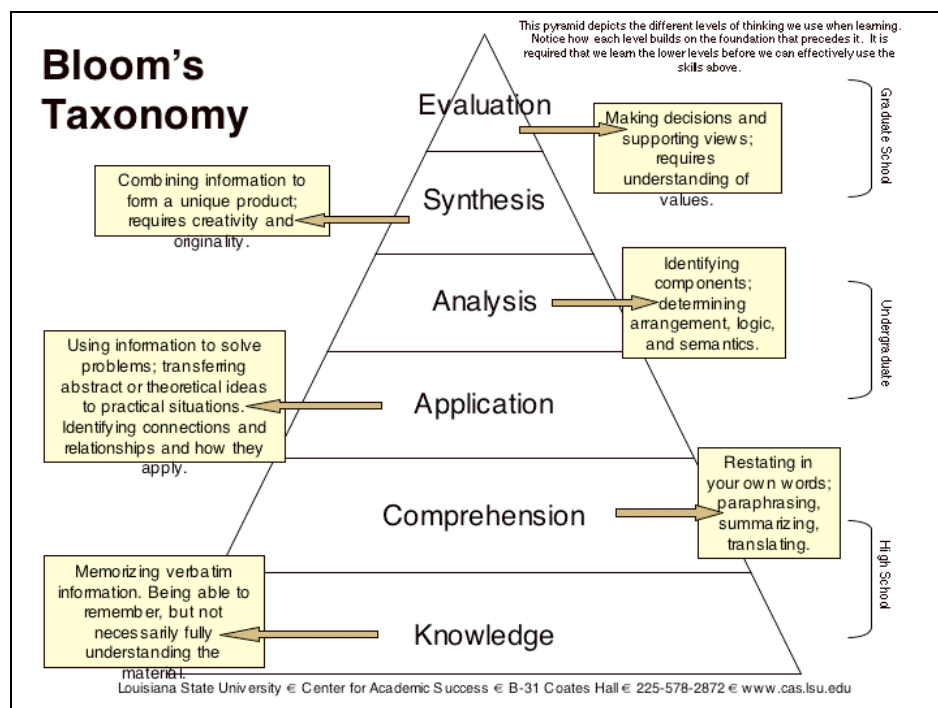


Figure 2: Bloom's Taxonomy of Higher Order Thinking. (LSU, 2012)

Requirements of NCHS's Comprehensive Curriculum

While teachers at NCHS are given a lot of freedom in how they choose to structure their classes, the district does provide guidelines for text selection, focus standards and pacing. To ensure all teachers are implementing a rigorous curriculum with fidelity, all students are given a multiple choice benchmark exam, and write an in-class multi-paragraph essay on a thematically pertinent topic. Table 5 is an excerpt from the pacing guide, and outlines the parts of the curriculum mandated by the district.

Table 4: NCHS Unit Pacing Guide

Theme: Equality and Diversity			
Core Curriculum	Essay Prompt	Supplementary Materials	Assessments
Teachers choose one novel related to equality, freedom and diversity: “Their Eyes Were Watching God”, or “Huck Finn”	Shared prompt: (given in Govt.) “America is the land of freedom, opportunity and equality.” Defend, challenge, or qualify. (EAP style prompt)	Selections: Racial Profiling-Cal State curriculum Hurston expository text Social CM/Satire pieces – rhetoric text – ex. “The Lottery” by Shirley Jackson Human Rights article (Holt)	Shared Proficiency Essay #4 (week 14) Research paper – Controversial topic in govt. (4-5 pages) Response to Fictional Literature (WA 2.2) – i.e. How the novel portrays the American Dream Spring Benchmark #3 (week 13)

I chose the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (TEWWG) (Hurston, 1998) over Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn* because I felt it better addressed issues of privilege and language. Additionally, I viewed TEWWG as more conducive to talking about multiple cultural identities, as the protagonist defines herself in different ways throughout the novel. I used the California State Racial Profiling module, (California State University, 2007) which contains a newspaper article about the use of racial profiling and several writing exercises that ask students to analyze the writer’s stance on the issue and communicate their own understandings of racial profiling. I substituted the other

supplementary selections with newspaper articles and media clips from current events and selections from *Patterns*, our rhetoric textbook. The students were required to write a formal literary analysis paper, but I adapted it to focus on critical lenses instead of formal. A formal reading of a text looks at the piece as independent of its author and social setting, and focuses instead on looking for patterns and cohesion in style and meaning. An in-depth discussion of literary lenses can be found in Phase 1 of this implementation chapter.

All Our Voices: Activity Sequence

The implementation of the project included four phases. For the first week, I worked with students on assessing and building prior knowledge and anticipating the texts that we read in the next two phases. In the second phase, students analyzed Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and examined how she constructs issues of language, identity, and power within her novel. This took place over two weeks. In the third phase, implemented over the course of one week, students synthesized contemporary expository texts that connect with the themes developed in the novel. In the fourth phase, students created a video exploring their own changing identities. The video was created and assessed over two weeks. The entire curriculum took eight weeks to implement.

During the implementation, students kept their writing in a journal that I later collected and evaluated. I took field notes during small group conversations and would record my reactions to the day's discussion directly after class during my lunchtime. The

formal essay and the video were evaluated with a rubric, which is included in the Appendix.

Phase One: Assessing and Building Prior Knowledge

Before students began *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, a complex text which relies on an understanding of dialect, cultural language, and a sophisticated structure which slowly reveals the main character's identity, I needed to ensure they had working definitions of culture, identity, and a beginning understanding of the way in which language shapes our identities. The activities over the first week centered on this purpose.

To build critical literacy, students needed a vehicle for communicating this literacy. After introducing the scope and sequence of the unit, I introduced the critical reflection journal. I had originally intended for the journal to have a three-part structure: a quickwrite, an academic response, and a critical reflection. However, while I was implementing I found it far more useful to vary the kind of writing I assigned them each day. This was due to the amount of time it took to complete all three of the original types each day, which I quickly learned was overwhelming, and which did not leave time for any revision.

Activity 1: Defining Identity

Students entered the class the first day of Phase One to the following three quotations written on the whiteboard:

- “An identity would seem to be arrived at by the way in which the person faces and uses his experience.” –James Baldwin
- “Through others we become ourselves.” –Lev Vygotsky
- “Nothing of me is original. I am the combined effort of everyone I’ve ever known.” –Chuck Palahniuk

Each of these quotations asks students to consider what it is that creates identity: their experiences or the people around them. In their journals, students responded to one or more of the quotations and considered: what is the author trying to say about how we define ourselves? Do you agree or disagree with the author, and why? After five minutes of writing, the students discussed their reflections within their groups, and then I called on a representative from each group to share what they talked about. The majority of the students said that their experiences are what form their identities.

We then worked towards defining the vocabulary we would need to discuss issues of identity and access. Each group was assigned one or two words from this list to research, define, and share with the class: culture, race, ethnicity, gender, sex, class, heritage, prejudice, stereotype, discrimination, representation, assimilation, appropriation, and third space. As preparation to the unit, I completed each writing exercise I asked students to complete, and I also selected the words that showed up in the assigned texts and seemed necessary to me to discuss issues of identity and culture. These groups of words were the ones that seemed the most pertinent to the discussions we would have over the unit and showed up in my own writing. Additionally, in previous conversations

I found that many students had heard these words but lacked a clear understanding of what each was. These terms would allow us to speak in more complex terms about issues of culture, power, and identity.

On the back of an index card on which I had marked each word from the list above, I included a quotation or two defining that word. The groups worked towards a paraphrased and student friendly definition for a word or two, which they then shared with the class. The class collected the definitions in their journals. During implementation, I realized that it would be also useful to define words that were specifically for the different critical lenses, like patriarchy, hegemony, dichotomy, and other words specific to the different frameworks. These words appeared in the models of academic writing I provided for the students, but I had never explicitly defined them. It would have been useful for the students to know those words up front. The revised list of useful vocabulary words can be found in the Appendix.

For homework, students wrote “Where I’m From” poems, adapted from George Ella Lyon’s poem of the same name (Lyon, 1989), which can be found in the Appendix. This was the second time this year students had written these poems. The first time, we followed Lyon’s traditional structure, and students wrote them collaboratively as a community building activity. This time, students individually identified the markers of various aspects of their identity: for example, to illustrate my identity as a woman, I might include items like “lipstick” or “high-heels,” because these are things that I associate only with being a woman.

Finally, students reflected in their journals about the following questions: Why do you think we need to have a strong idea of who we are? Is it important to communicate our idea of ourselves to others? Why or why not? One student echoed the thoughts of many of her peers when she wrote, “There is so much misinformation out there about what we should be. When we don’t know who we are, people can take advantage of us. When we don’t communicate who we think we are to them, then we remain invisible and powerless to change that.”

Activity 2: Exploring Language and Identity

The next day, students entered the class and responded to the following questions: Does the way we talk and the things we say shape how we think about ourselves? Have you ever felt judged by someone based on the way you speak? They then shared in small groups, followed by a whole class discussion.

Next, we read Amy Tan’s personal narrative, “Mother Tongue.” Tan, a first-generation Chinese immigrant, classifies the different kinds of language she uses in various contexts. Her mother, a Chinese immigrant, speaks in “broken English,” and frequently requires Tan to speak for her. Tan writes about what she gains and loses by switching between these different language registers. Students read silently in class, and annotated the text for information about the different registers she examines. I asked questions for students to analyze the style, structure, and rhetorical techniques she uses to

communicate her message, which are included in the appendix on p. 137-138. After discussing with their groups, I called on students randomly to share with the class.

After that, we used Tan's text as a model for introducing basic discourse analysis. For their final project, they needed to be able to analyze their own use of language in different cultural spheres, so this activity introduced that skill which would be developed over the unit. Students completed the discourse analysis graphic organizer, included in the appendix on p. 139 which asked them to consider the following things:

- the function in which language is used (for example, to describe, to convince, to explain, to gossip)
- the topics that speakers of that language address (like philosophy, customs, appearances, or functions)
- what speakers *don't* talk about in that register
- distinctive characteristics of speech patterns, like short sentences, figurative language, loaded diction, or religious appeals
- the effect of that register on an outsider.

We listened to various clips of different cultural groups to help elicit student responses.

Finally, I pointed out the journal itself is an example of using multiple discourses: conversational or informal discourse when a student is connecting or reflecting on their own knowledge and experiences, and academic discourse when joining in an academic

conversation. They then reflected in the journals on how their ideas about language and identity changed over the course of the activity.

Phase Two: Novel Study

Their Eyes Were Watching God, by Zora Neal Hurston, is a novel about a young African American girl, who is forced into an early marriage by her grandmother during the Depression. She then gets married several more times, each one exposing her to a different culture, and each one helping her define herself. By the end she has defined and is comfortable with who she is, despite being exposed to hardship and racism. The structure of the novel allows the reader to define Janie's identities while she is in the process of defining them herself.

While reading the novel, we focused on the following critical lenses for our discussions about the characters: Feminist/gender theory, Marxist/social class theory, and Postcolonial/race theory (see the Purdue Online Writing lab for more information). Gender theory examines representations of gender and the power dynamics between men and women. Class theory, or Marxism, examines representations of the upper and lower class, as well as the power dynamics of those with money and those without. Postcolonialism seeks to deconstruct the ways in which cultures are subjugated through the "othering" of a more powerful culture. I used this as my foundation for discussing race, although traditional postcolonial theory deals solely with cultures in colonized nation-states. A more comprehensive list of critical lenses with more in-depth

explanation can be found at the Purdue Online Writing Lab (Literary Theory, 2012). We focused each of these lenses on a section of the novel.

Students were expected to complete the reading at home. I assigned daily reading comprehension quizzes to hold students accountable for the work. Students who struggled with reading (particularly my long-term English Learners) were allowed to use reading notes on the quizzes. Their reading notes could also be applied for extra credit. This has worked successfully in other units in that once students start bring notes they pass the comprehension quizzes. For those students who initially were not passing, I was able to have targeted conversations about the type of information they should know when reading (for example, who the characters are, what they did in the reading). That targeted reading intervention had been successful in making sure all of the students were at least functioning at the comprehension level of Bloom's Taxonomy (see Figure 1), so we could focus on analysis in class.

Each day the students came into class with a question on the board that connected to the reading. They responded to it in their journals and then shared in their small groups. They then completed an activity, such as a graphic organizer, a discussion, or a group visual designed to help them analyze the story. Next, they responded to a question about the text writing their responses for an academic audience. Finally, they reflected on a question linking the book to current events and completed a written discussion to be read by their peers. By having students complete the reading at home, more class time was available for discussion, collaboration, and writing activities.

While previewing the novel, I realized the students were resistant and disconnected from the story because of the dialogue. The characters speak in an African American dialect that could be interpreted as grammatically incorrect, and illustrates the characters' lack of education. Two students in particular were hostile towards the story. Both had moved into the class from Advanced Placement Literature, and were well-read, intelligent, and previously very receptive to both the materials and the activities I had chosen. When I asked why they were so resistant towards the novel, they agreed that they needed to read challenging works with "good" English, and that TEWWG was not an example of good literature. By describing the book as not having "good" English, they were illustrating how biased they were towards language that was not mainstream English. It was interesting to note that the parents of both students had immigrated—one from Mexico, one from Japan—but that neither student spoke their parents' primary language. In later narratives, both revealed that their parents had strong ideas of what it meant to be a "good" American, and had worked hard to ensure their children had typical American upbringings. I realized that in order to engage these particular students, I was going to need to frontload our conversation on what makes "good" literature and introduce the critical lenses earlier in the unit than I had planned. This change is reflected in the sequencing of the activities in the Appendix.

Activity 3: Introducing Critical Lenses

On the third day, the students entered the class and found the question “What makes a book good or valuable?” written on the board. They responded silently for five minutes in their journals. Then, through small-group discussion, they developed a list of elements as a group that all “good” books have. An example of one group’s list was:

- A plot that has momentum and suspense
- Believable and complex characters
- Accessible vocabulary—not too hard, not too easy
- Imagery and sensory details to help the reader visualize the story
- A powerful theme
- Figurative language and symbols to tie the theme together

I explained that each of the elements they listed were from the perspective of the *structural lens*. In this perspective, a reader looks for the cohesion in the book and asks how the organization contributes to the meaning. I explained that this is the perspective that most English teachers use to teach novels, but that there are other ways to read a text and find meaning.

In order to clarify the purpose of using alternate critical lenses, I gave students a handout with the rationale and explanation of the three lenses we were going to use in the unit: gender theory, Marxism, and New Historicism. The handout also included an analysis of the Brothers Grimm version of the story “Cinderella,” examined by each lens.

This discussion that followed took longer than I expected. Many of my more advanced students were still resistant to looking at themes of gender, class, race, and culture in the text. I recorded the following conversation between three students during a whole class discussion in response to the critical lenses:

Student 1: We know that black people were treated horribly. We know that until recently women didn't have a lot of power. What's the point of reading about it? Everything's changed now.

Student 2: I agree. All it does is make people upset about what the country used to be like.

Student 3: Yeah. In college they're going to expect us to read Shakespeare and [stuff]. We need to be reading more of that. (Audio Transcript, 2 March 2012)

We spent a while discussing as a whole group the importance of recognizing viewpoints other than the ones that traditionally get told. I reminded them that as critical thinkers they must be able to recognize how other people might find a text valuable before they evaluate its worth. By the end of the discussion, the more resistant students conceded that they were “not going to like the book” but to read it as a puzzle to see why someone else would like it. To tie the discussion back to the previous days, I ended class by questioning the issue of dialect that prompted the activity to begin with.

- Why does Hurston use dialect, knowing that using it instead of standard English (like in “Black Boy” or “Raisin in the Sun,” both of which students read next year) would alienate many of her readers? What value is there in using it?

If there was time, I would have done an activity where student groups analyzed a children's book through each critical lens, but I needed time for students to take the reading quiz. An example of the lesson that I would have liked to include is in the appendix.

Activity 4: Reading and Analyzing “Their Eyes Were Watching God”

On the fourth day, students entered the class and completed the following two activities in their journals: “(1) In your own words, tell me what gender theory is, and what sorts of things gender theorists look at in a text. (2) Based on your reading so far, what is the nature of gender in the book?” The first activity reviewed the lesson from the previous day, and the second activity gave me a preliminary idea of how much skill they had using the lenses before the lesson.

I put the academic criticism question on the whiteboard: “How does Hurston use literary elements to make a commentary on gender and gender relations?” I planned on leading them through small group discussions on how the narration, the characters, and the symbolism contribute to our understanding. I wanted them to understand that in the narration, Hurston uses three different genres of writing in the first six chapters that comment on gender. However, when I asked them to reread the opening paragraphs, and discuss what genre Hurston's language sounds like, I heard no students talking. This is unusual for my class. I reviewed the definition of genre, and asked them to try again. There was still no discussion.

In the opening of the novel, Hurston's language sounds epic, almost as if she's telling a folktale or a myth. To provide more support, I pulled out the words and phrases that contribute to this tone like "the Watchers" and "dreams mocked to death by Time" and "These sitters had been tongueless, earless, eyeless, conveniences all day long. Mules and other brutes had occupied their skins," and asked again what the effect of these words were. Students still did not talk. I asked, "How do you feel when you read that section? Does it remind you of a children's book? A science fiction story? A humor piece?" Still no answer. Because the objective wasn't necessarily to analyze the language, but more to talk about how the language contributed to our understanding of gender, I told them what I thought and gave my rationale. This kind of teacher explanation is very rare in my class, and I was frustrated that I was unable to ask the right questions or provide the right scaffolding for students to get there on their own.

There were several things I think might have contributed to the lack of conversation. This was the first time I had asked them to connect their knowledge of rhetoric to their contribution of larger themes. I think that by posing a difficult question at the beginning of the conversation, many students felt intimidated and scared to share their opinion. Had I only asked them to analyze the language, I think they could have done it, and I could then add on the piece about gender to lead the students to a more fruitful conversation. The lack of conversation made me more cognizant of when and how to structure the questioning for more effective discussions. I also wonder if there was still reluctance towards the novel from the previous day's conversation.

When we moved on to analyze the language of two other sections of the book, I still heard no talking in the groups. Because my students were typically comfortable sharing in small groups, I realized that the problem must be that they did not feel comfortable enough with the book yet to share their opinions of it. I had barely begun to ask questions about gender, culture, or race, and rhetoric analysis was something the majority of the class had succeeded at earlier in the year. It was frustrating to feel like I was backpedalling. I decided to extend the activity to another day to review the basics, and try the analysis again.

The next day, I reminded students of where we had left the conversation: that Hurston uses narration to show that Janie's idea of happiness and self-fulfillment is based on her search for a romantic partner. I put the following question on the board: "Is it a problem that Janie's happiness is dependent on someone else? Or is this normal?" Students responded in their journals, and then discussed in small groups. The students seemed much more comfortable than the day before and quickly shared their opinions. During the discussion, many groups came to the consensus that it was normal to an extent because everyone wants to find love, but that she put herself in danger when she wouldn't leave her husband who physically abused her. The students' comfort with discussion confirmed my impression from the previous day. The way that I had asked the question was too challenging. By asking a more specific question, in language that they were more familiar with, they seemed more able to access the content.

The students then filled in a literary analysis graphic organizer. I used this particular organizer because the students had used it in the previous unit when they were doing rhetorical analyses of speeches. They were very successful when they used it a previous time, so I thought that keeping the format the same would help them feel more confident. I provided a list of literary elements to apply to the organizer, and reviewed the terms. I reminded them that while speechmakers use techniques like repetition, figurative language, or anecdotes to illustrate ideas, novelists use tools like characters, events, or symbols to make certain statements. By connecting the novel to non-fiction, which my students felt comfortable with, I saw a lot more participation than I had previously seen. A representative from each group shared their responses, so each group could contribute to a complete graphic organizer.

To transition to the reflection, I asked students to focus on the symbol of Janie's headscarf, which her husband forces her to wear because he doesn't want other men looking at her hair. I asked them if they thought that men still exercised this kind of control over their significant other. Most said that Americans didn't, although many fundamental religious cultures did, like Islam and the Mormons. That transitioned perfectly into our visual analysis for the day. I showed them these two images, displayed in Figures 2 and 3:

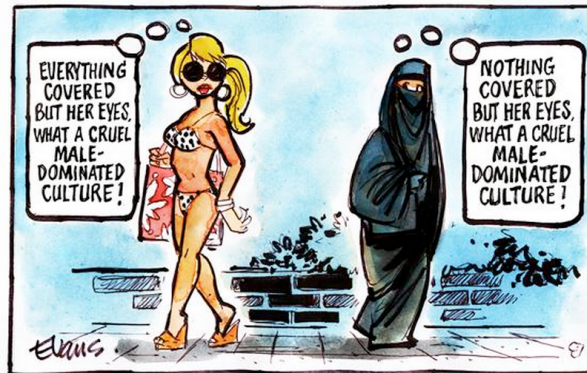


Figure 3: Visual Illustrating Gender Roles – A (Evans, 2008)

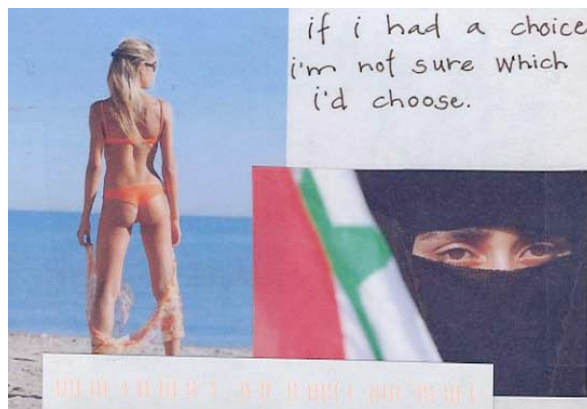


Figure 4: Visual Illustrating Gender Roles – B (Anonymous, 2008)

I asked, “What argument does the artist seem to be making about how women choose to dress?” After small group discussions, a female student shared: “I think what the artist wanted to say was that Americans think that those robes [the burka] is a symbol of female oppression and patri—patriarchal? control, but seriously? I don’t wear a bikini for my girlfriends.” Another female student disagreed, saying “I wear sexy clothes because it makes me feel good...that’s for me, not for anyone else.” A male student responded, “That’s totally untrue! You dress that way because you know Rob [the student’s

boyfriend] likes it,” to which she replied “...but it’s still my choice. I choose to do what makes him happy.” This conversation illustrated a few things: the first student stumbled but did try to use the terms like *oppression* and *patriarchal*. The second student brought up the point that individuals are free to *choose* to participate in oppressive structures, something that a few female students picked up on in their narratives of gender. Finally, the conversation had the potential to become very personal and confrontational, as it almost did between the last two students. Luckily, they were good friends, but if they hadn’t been, the tone could have quickly changed to one of disrespect. This was my biggest fear in implementing a curriculum that relied so much on personal experience and controversial topics.

Finally, students wrote narratives of gender—the story of who or what events influenced their idea of what it meant to be gendered and how those ideas changed over time or are still changing. Most students wrote about the codes they felt pressured to conform to, and then whether they ultimately accepted or rejected those codes, along with who helped them accept or reject them. For example, one of my female students wrote “...I didn’t care, I just wanted to do and act and look like my brother did. As we grew older, I left that part of my life and decided to dress and act more like a girl because it was what my mother wanted. Today, I feel like I’m my own person and don’t base myself on society’s judgments” (student narrative, 18 March 2012).

Students entered the class on the sixth day and responded to the following two questions in their journals: (1) Explain Marxism in your own words. What did Marxists

look at in texts? (2) How easy do you think it is to change your financial status in the USA? To answer the first question, most students still relied on the materials that I had given them during the introduction to the critical theory activity. After writing, the students discussed the questions in groups, and I called on random volunteers to share their answers with the class. The first question was meant to connect to Activity 3, the critical lens lesson, and the second question was to check their understanding of class, class mobility, and class markers. During the second period, much of the discussion centered on stereotypes of rich and poor people. I set up a chart on the board to record their conversations.

Table 5: Summary of Whole Group Discussion of Class

The upper class is/values/looks like... • Entitled • Hard working • Put together • Materialistic	The lower class is/values/looks like... • Lazy • Greasy • Less uptight
--	---

A student then brought up the political implications of stereotypes of class: that because many Republicans thought the lower class was lazy, they were less likely to support legislation that provided a safety net. If Democrats think the upper class is materialistic, they are more likely to support legislation that taxes them. Another student pointed out that it seemed that if people weren't honest about their bias towards rich or poor people, they would be less likely to base their opinion on fact. I was glad that I heard volunteers

arguing about which class was lazier—the upper or the lower. I pointed out that because neither side could agree, the activity showed that the stereotypes were probably not true.

During period three, the class conversation focused more on barriers to social mobility. Many students pointed out that getting rich seemed to be based on luck, and used lottery winners, celebrities and athletes “being discovered” as evidence. The students debated about how much of the upper class had worked hard and earned their money versus had a fortunate accident or had rich families who spoiled them. One student, who shared with the class that at one point he had been homeless when his father was deported, pointed out that it was a lot harder for a rich person to become poor because they had connections to use and an understanding of how to talk and dress, than it was for a poor person to become rich. This turned into a discussion on the things that kept poor people from becoming rich. I listed their ideas on the board, which included parent’s occupations/educations, racism, bad schools, and lack of health care. I was really excited because, during this conversation, students mentioned affirmative action, and the links between class and race, both of which we were going to discuss in depth later in the unit.

We then moved to a Marxist analysis of the text. I modeled how to do a reading with a Marxist lens of Janie’s grandmother, Nanny, who marries her off to a man at 17 years old solely because the intended husband was a landowner. I pulled out quotations that showed Nanny’s attitudes towards money and her experiences that shaped her understandings. I explained to the students that because Nanny introduced Janie to issues

of class, every person she meets after that either confirms Nanny's opinion that financial security is the most important thing, or undermines it.

In light of the struggles the students faced with the previous activity, I decided to have groups focus only on one chapter instead of tackling the whole book so far. Each group was assigned a chapter and given a piece of poster board. In the middle of the poster, students wrote a summary of the chapter. They divided the rest of the poster into three sections, and first did a basic Marxist reading of the chapter, using bullet points to organize their understanding. After that, they did a basic gender analysis of the chapter, and finally a basic structuralist analysis. We hadn't explicitly discussed structuralism, but I explained that structuralists did traditional readings of stories. They discussed how elements like symbols, chapter organization, and figurative language contribute to our understanding of the story. My students were comfortable with structuralist readings, as evidenced by their success during a unit in the fall semester. I told them to include anything that the summary, Marxist reading, and gender reading left out that they thought was important. Ideally, I would have liked to use more time on this activity, but students were getting a good enough gist that I felt comfortable with their ability to do a Marxist reading.

This poster shown in Figure 5, which illustrated an average performance level with regard to both content and thoroughness, still showed a basic critical reading of their chapter. The group pointed out events and descriptions that were pertinent gender theory, Marxism—not Maxism—and structuralism. Most importantly though, they began to link

the characters to bigger themes in the literature. For example, they mentioned that Jody, Janie's second husband, is "top dog" because of his wealth, and that Janie is viewed favorably ("the nicest dressed in town") despite her powerlessness. The posters contained grammatical mistakes and some redundancy that I attribute to the time constraint.

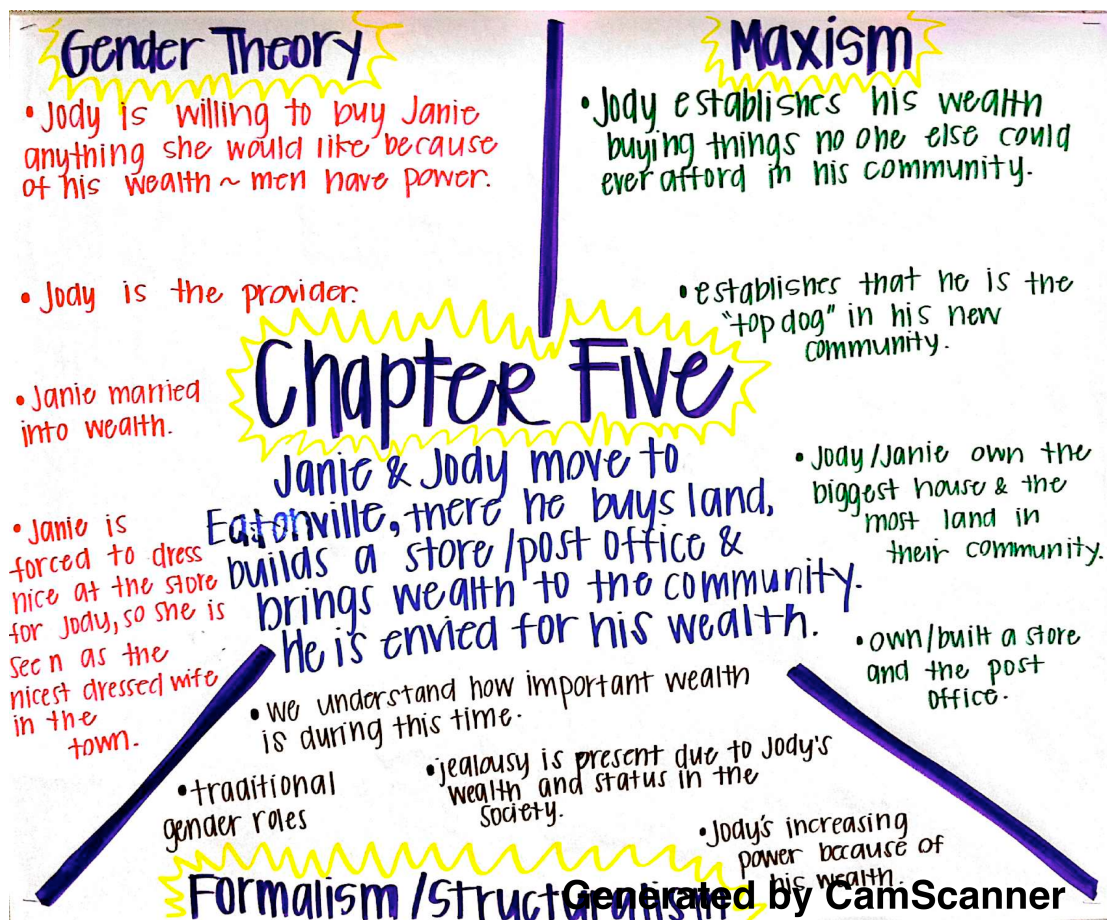


Figure 5: Example of Poster Critical Analysis

I then put the posters up on the wall, had students walk around to examine all of them, and then they wrote an academic paragraph interpreting one character or event through the Marxist lens.

Activity 5: Writing a Formal Critical Analysis Paper

Day seven was held in the computer lab because I wanted the students to have access to technological tools to begin crafting their papers. All the students had access to Moodle, which is an educational social networking website that teachers can use to create classroom forums and chatrooms, as well as upload documents, and provide many other useful activities for their students. We used the forum and chatroom functions to brainstorm their papers on the American Dream (see Appendix for paper topics). The three parts of pre-writing that the lesson focused on were formulating a working thesis, organizing the paper by topic sentences, and finding quotations for their ideas.

When the students entered the classroom, I reviewed how to use the Moodle program and established the expectation that students are working *only* on their papers, and chat room and forum conversations are focused *only* on the assignment, and there is no talking because the chat room is open for collaboration. Students developed a forum post following this format:

1. Working thesis
2. An explanation of how the paper will be organized and what subjects will be examined.

3. An in-depth discussion of one of the body paragraphs, with quotations.

While students were working, the chat room was open for asking questions or asking for help. Students were encouraged to join the chat room at least once with a problem or question. While they were logged in, they were encouraged to help their peers. When they finished, they were required to help their peers in the chat room. The students worked on this activity for about forty minutes.

After everyone had posted their assignment to the forum, students were randomly assigned to respond to another student's post. They checked for logical and formatting errors, and responded to and evaluated the post. They were asked to respond to how interesting/creative/unique the students' argument was and how well they were able to use the text to support their ideas.

It was interesting to monitor the students in the chat room. They used very informal register, similar to the way they text each other on their cellular phones, which relied primarily on "texting shorthand" and the use of icons. Only one student used the chat room in a more formal register, using complete sentences with correct grammar and punctuation. Several students brainstormed and chatted in Spanish about the novel. However, I was disappointed to see that two students were conversing about obscene things in Spanish, not realizing I knew enough to translate what they were saying. When they spoke in English, they were following the expectations that I had provided. I see

this sometimes in other sections—the student’s home language is the language of gossip, and using their primary language creates a kind of distance between them and me. This seems to be representative of the “disconnect” that I discussed in Chapter 2. There is the school language and the things we talk about in school, and then there is the social language and the things we talk about with our friends. By allowing the social language to play a prominent part in this activity, it was as if these two students were no longer interested in “playing school.” I do not think this “disconnect” can be remedied unless the two registers or languages are being constantly integrated in class during the school day. Besides these two students, there was some off-topic conversation, such as asking how a student’s day was, or telling a student to call them later, but it did not seem to interfere with the task at hand. The forum posts became the foundation of many of their critical analysis papers. After looking through other students’ ideas, many students told me they changed their topics when they saw how unoriginal their own theses were. I think allowing students to see paper topics generated by other students created more diverse papers across the class, instead of students appropriating others’ ideas as I had originally anticipated. I advised students to try and put any ideas they had about the topic into a very rough draft at home. Then, we could collaborate on revisions in class.

I had intended to do targeted revision exercises with the student rough drafts. However, the day the rough drafts were due coincided with an unofficial “senior skip day,” which means that the students gathered to go to the beach instead of attending classes. Because the students were not authorized to miss school, the administration

requested that we not allow students to make up the lesson from that day. Eight of 39 students attended class, and of those eight only three had their drafts completed. I pulled those students aside and worked with them as a small group while the others finished their drafts. In the future, I would create a better system to ensure accountability. The revisions are a critical piece of this kind of writing (or any writing), and so there needs to be something in place to ensure that there are drafts to work with. I think that losing this day was quite detrimental to the success of their final projects.

Phase Three: Examining Culture in Contemporary America

During phase three, the class followed the same structures established during phase two. We examined and responded to contemporary visuals and video clips in the very beginning of class, which then transitioned into a critical analysis of the day's text, and then, through both discussion and writing, finally resulted in students reflecting on how the ideas connected to them personally. The purpose of this phase was to connect the book and the project by examining how the inequalities exposed in "Their Eyes Were Watching God" persist in different forms today. Students were able to reflect critically during discussion, but struggled to do so in writing. As a result, the revised curriculum in the appendix includes strategies to support students in writing more expressively (see Appendix p. 155).

Activity 6: Social Issues Study

On day nine, students were asked to respond to the question, “What does it mean to be an American?” I encouraged them to consider several other questions:

- How do we view ourselves as Americans?
- How do others view us?
- Are you American if you live abroad?
- Are there groups of people in the states considered “not American”?
- Is the label American a social or legal marker?
- Who dictates who is American?

Many students recognized that living in the United States was a positive thing, saying things such as “Most of us feel lucky to live here because we have so many opportunities,” and that Americans “strive for a good career and put their education first.” Very few students listed negative responses in their beginning writings on being American.

We then watched a five minute clip from “The Color of Fear” (Wah, 1995). This documentary chronicles the dialogue of eight men from the United States speaking frankly about race relations from their own perspectives. In the clip I showed the students, a White man expressed his confusion as to why communities of color could not comprehend that the world was open to them, and no one was keeping them down. He said that they were all “Americans” and therefore did not need racial labels. One of the

African-Americans then pointed out that as a White man he never had to think about his race before. The other African-American then passionately responded that he was fed up with White people assuming that to be “American” meant to be White.

I chose this clip because I knew from conversations about race during our novel study that many of my students originally agreed with the White man’s viewpoint. The negative response that the people of color had to his comments brought up issues of representation and voice in a way that could only have come out through an earnest dialogue like the one shown in the film.

My students’ reactions to the film were strong. Many students wrote about how much it affected them. One student, a female who was the first in her Mexican family to be born in the states, had started the day by saying an American is defined as a “U.S. citizen who was born in the country with desire to be financially stable.” She wrote later, “My parents are classified as immigrants who have assimilated into the American ideal, but we had to give up our culture to do so. My parents became ‘White’ in everything but color and name. I believe what the African American said is still true, and it’s really depressing.” Her comments show that this student was beginning to critically analyze the labels she used for herself and her family.

We then read “Why Americans Hate this ‘Immigration Debate,’” an expository piece found in the “Patterns” textbook used in our guided curriculum. We analyzed the author’s purpose, audience, style, and techniques. I chose to follow the film clip with this

piece because it is a very convincing argument for different kinds of immigration and assimilation. The author categorizes two categories of immigrants: those who give up their culture to assimilate, and therefore become American, and those who only come for a job with no desire to become American. During small group discussions, students pointed out logical fallacies, like the fact that the members of what the author deemed the “acceptable group” of immigrants had also come for a job, because the American Dream was so closely linked to financial success. One student, the son of a migrant worker, said that he completely agreed with the author. He told us how his father was more concerned with him getting a job than going to school, which would put their family in the second category. However, he was quick to point out that his father was an individual and not representative of the other families he knew in a similar situation.

Next, we read the introductory chapter from “We are Americans: Undocumented students pursuing the American Dream” (Perez, 2009). I chose this text because it offered a counterargument to the ideas expressed in “Why Americans Hate this ‘Immigration Debate’” (Meyer, 2007). Additionally, it relies much more heavily on logical appeals and served as a good comparison to the rhetorical techniques used by Meyer. We analyzed the author’s purpose, audience, style, and techniques.

When we had finished discussing both texts, I assigned a critical reflection of the immigration debate. In the critical reflections, I was looking for students to recognize both sides of the debate in their writing, but make a reasoned argument for one side or the other. Students were given twenty minutes in class to write their first draft. Then, they

traded writings for a peer review. I handed out the critical reflection rubric (see Appendix p. 156-157), and first asked students to highlight evidence that suggests a certain level of critical thinking. Next, students were given a rubric focusing on voice (see Appendix p. 158) and were asked to color code examples of strong and weak voice. The students were given back their writing and asked to revise their papers for both critical reflection and voice.

While students were able to improve their voice and had clearer writing in their next drafts, very few of them showed evidence of critical reflection in their writings. I was surprised by this because during class discussions many of the small group conversations I overheard, as well as the whole group conversations we had, convinced me that they were able to complete the task. Additionally, because we had used the rubric in the revision exercise, I assumed most students were clear on what I was looking for. However, students approached the writing assignment as either a persuasive piece or a problem/solution piece. While their peers correctly identified the writings as showing only levels one or two on the four point critical reflection rubric, the changes that were made were focused more on the style of their writing than on their critical thinking and lines of logic. I later came across Bayer's work on expressive talk, writing, and transactional writing (1990). Based on Bayer's work, I think I did not provide enough opportunities for students to immediately bridge their conversations into informal writing, so they were not able to jump to formal writing. This will be discussed further in the evaluation section, and the activities in the appendix address this issue.

The next few classes focused on the issue of the legality of affirmative action. This was especially timely in that the Fisher v. Texas trials were happening around the time of the unit. In 2008, Elizabeth Fisher brought a case against the University of Texas on the grounds that she was denied admission despite her qualifications because spots were being held for non-White students. At the time of implementation, the legality of racial consideration in admissions decisions was being heard by the Supreme Court.

We began the activity by doing a quick-write, written on the whiteboard, which asked “Do the schools we attend set us up for success?” We then quickly debriefed in small groups. Many students said that degrees were important, but the students who were successful in school “knew how to play the game,” but weren’t necessarily any smarter. Many students also spoke about how they knew college was important, but that they did not think it would give them the skills they needed for a well-paying job. The comments made during this discussion echoed what individuals told me during the forum we had at the beginning of the unit.

I then asked students to spend thirty minutes writing an academic narrative. In it, I asked them to consider the ways in which education had either made them feel empowered or powerless. They considered teachers, classes, school events or clubs, or any other formative educational experiences. In this assignment, I wanted my students to not only refine their narrative writing skills, but also to reflect on their own relationship with academic institutions. Many students expressed sentiments that school has taught

them how to be good at school, but important things were learned elsewhere. Juan, an Hispanic male, wrote:

I can't say one person or class taught me everything I know. My academic knowledge such as math and proper English came from school and classes, however my street-smarts have had to come from elsewhere. I've never been able to delve into issues of racism and identity until I took this class. I think people are more delicate with those issues than I thought. (Student work, 20 March 2012)

Another student, a White female, wrote:

The school system tends to give broad information on a topic and doesn't let you think on your own about a certain subject. This doesn't necessarily mean the school system "takes away" from independent thinking, but creates an obstacle to putting your own thoughts on a topic. (Student work, 22 March 2012)

Next, students traded narratives for peer editing, and used the voice rubric to once again find examples of strong narrative voice and weak narrative voice. They then traded back, and revised. Many students did not finish before the bell rang, so they finished at home.

For the next few classes, we read multiple expository and narrative pieces from *Patterns* (2009) such as Sherman Alexie's "Indian Education," Maya Angelou's "Finishing School," Jonathan Kozol's "The Human Cost of an Illiterate Society," and Bharati Mukherjee's "Two Ways to Belong in America," all of which illustrated the links between education, race, and class. We also examined materials centering on the current debate regarding the legality of affirmative action in college admissions (see Appendix p. 153-154 for resources on studying social issues).

My students had been struggling with synthesizing multiple texts, a skill they needed to succeed on an essay assignment they would encounter later in the curriculum, so I needed them to understand how these writing pieces made arguments that supported, contradicted, or qualified the arguments of other texts. In this activity, one student would take one author's argument and summarize it in a sentence. He or she then passes the paper to the left, and another student adds an appropriate transition such as "likewise," "similarly" or "in contrast to X's idea," before summarizing another author in a sentence. The students passed the papers around their groups, adding as they went until it got back to the original writer, who then edited it for coherence. The point of this activity was to teach students the academic language which connects ideas on the same topic.

On the last day of the activity, I asked them to write a critical reflection regarding their opinions on the issue of affirmative action in colleges and universities. I reminded them to consider the texts we had read as well as their own experiences, and to approach the issue from as many perspectives as possible. I also reminded them that this was *not* an argumentative piece, but instead just a reflection. Once they had completed their writing, they traded papers with partners, reviewed them for levels of critical reflection and voice using the rubrics with which we had previously worked (see Appendix p. 156-157 for levels of critical reflection and rubric), and returned them to the original authors. Students then revised their own paper into a final copy. I discovered in reading these papers, similar to the critical reflection piece they wrote on illegal immigration, that students approached this assignment as an argumentative or a problem/solution piece.

This was a problem because in reflective pieces, I expect to see the kind of personal connection that shows an internalization of the larger issues of race and identity. I found little personal connection in their writing, nor did I find evidence that the students were contextualizing the issue of affirmative action within other historical or social debates.

Phase Four: Communicating Identities in a Multimedia Project

Activity 7: Video Project

In phase four, each student developed a video that illustrated the identities with which he or she most closely associated. The students were introduced to the project by watching and discussing a short news clip that showed the amount of time teenagers spend using media such as video, music, social websites, and the concerns that older adults have about that use. The guidelines of the project were then explained, and I provided a model video illustrating my personal identities as an Italian-American, a Catholic, an academic, a woman, and a military spouse. While watching my video, students were asked to fill out the rubric which I graded them on, so they could evaluate me. I also used the same graphic organizers, websites, and video creating software that they would use so that they could use my work at each step of the project as a model for their own.

For students to be able to create the video, they needed to collect visual and audio clips that they associated with their identities. Students worked collaboratively online to assemble a collection of pictures, music, TV or film clips, or articles which helped them

critically examine their identities. The students stored the media clips online in a forum marked with the different labels they could associate with, such as “white,” “teenager,” “male,” “goth,” etc. When students posted each media file to the forum, I asked them to write a short post explaining why they picked the file and what it illustrated about their identities. This was done over the course of two classes to allow students to bring in their own artifacts, such as personal pictures, linguistic samples, videos of friends, music that can not be found on the internet, or other relevant items. At the end of the first day, I projected examples that were posted in the forum, and we evaluated the elements that made media better or more useful for critical reflection. I tied the assignment back to our exercises on voice, and reminded students that the visuals and audio that they used conveyed a voice as much as their narration. The activity went really well, and on the second day I saw media that was much more personal than on the first day.

Once students collected the visuals and audio clips, they filled out a storyboard to begin to piece them together. They were also asked to write narration connecting the texts in which they analyzed the pieces they had chosen, and they discussed the implications of each self-identification. Unfortunately, I was out of the classroom that day and a substitute teacher instructed the students. Because we had completed some sort of storyboarding activity in each unit of the year, I thought that the students would be able to handle the assignment without my guidance. However, the substitute reported that the students were confused and that she needed to look up the definition of storyboards on the internet. Some storyboards were good, but students did not pay much

attention to the organization of the materials they had collected, and put them in the storyboard in the order they found them, rather than organize them in a more meaningful and deliberate way. Because of time constraints we were not able to return to the storyboarding activity, even though students used them as a draft to begin making their movies. However, after doing a digital storytelling activity with another class, I found it was much more productive to have students write the narration before they added the visuals, instead of adding narration after the visuals.

Students ran into a lot of technical problems while working on the movies. They wanted to be able to work on theirs at home, but found the programs they were using were not compatible with the programs available in the computer labs. To complicate matters further, we used two computer labs at our school, each of which was loaded with different video editing programs. There were a lot of formatting issues, which was frustrating for the students and for me. I finally gave the students the option of doing the video as a PowerPoint if they chose, because all the computers had the PowerPoint program, and I researched and showed them how to add media clips and set up automatic transitions to make the presentation more video-like.

Using the rubric introduced with the teacher model, students watched their partner's video, evaluated it, and provided constructive feedback for what to change before its final, whole-class viewing. Many students completed very rough drafts because of the earlier technology issues, but said they enjoyed seeing other examples during our debrief discussion at the end of class.

I randomly chose the order of the presentations, and did not tell anyone when they were presenting until the first day. I had asked for students to e-mail me their videos before the presentations, but only about half sent them in. I could have had a better system for that or made the expectation clearer. We spent three days showing the videos. Students really enjoyed presenting and watching, and it was nice to get to know some of the students on a more personal level than they had previously shared with the class.

Conclusion

I noticed several major things during the implementation of the project, some of which I had flexibility to remedy during the unit and some of which is only reflected in the appendix. First, I had allowed for activities to anticipate the unit as a whole, but didn't provide sufficient opportunities for the students to build interest in the novel. By teaching critical lenses earlier, I was able to build some interest, but students reported at the end of the year that it was still their least favorite novel that we had studied. Had I garnered more interest up front, I think I could have held their interest more. Second, and maybe because of a lack of interest, students struggled to comprehend the novel. I needed to structure in more comprehension activities. Lastly, students were able to reflect critically during discussions about social issues that arose from the novel, but that critical reflection was not transferred into their writing. The changes I made, as well as changes I would make in a future implementation, can be found in the materials in the Appendix.

VII. EVALUATION

Overview of Evaluation Strategies

The purpose of All Our Voices (AOV) was for students to critically analyze different texts examining identities in order to apply those themes to a critical understanding of their own identity. By using different forms of communication to express those understandings, I hoped for students to more strongly internalize the concept of academic identity. To assess the students' progress in critical thinking, academic writing, and negotiation of complex identities, I collected data in multiple ways, as shown in Table 7 below.

Table 6: Summary of Evaluation Strategies

Evaluation Strategy	Goal 1: Students will critically analyze power dynamics	Goal 2: Students will analyze their identities	Goal 3: Students will choose an appropriate register
Student interviews	√	√	
Pre and Post-surveys	√	√	
Reflection journals	√	√	√
Class discussions	√	√	
Multimedia Project		√	√
Field notes	√	√	√
Academic essay	√		√

As Table 7 illustrates, many activities assess all three goals, but Goal 3 is assessed mostly through formative student work. A description of each evaluation method follows.

Student Interviews

To evaluate student attitudes towards school and learning, I held two interview sessions. The first interview was held before the unit began as a small group forum during lunch, recorded, and transcribed. I announced the open forum during class, and individually strongly encouraged certain members of the class to participate due to cultural background, academic history, or candidness during class discussions. Most importantly, the students I strongly encouraged to attend I felt frequently represented the views of students more reluctant to speak. For example, one Hispanic female student was chosen because she struggled through school and attended summer school and night school to recover credit. While she had been transferred in and out of the alternative school in our district several times, she was engaged in discussion and was invested in learning even when she wasn't invested in school. During many discussions, students who would not typically share their views would agree with the above student only after she shared her opinions. Another student, a high performing white male, received many academic honors but was vocally critical towards the "inauthenticity" of school. He also represented the views of many students who I felt might not voice their critiques of school out of fear of not being viewed as "good students." While many students seemed hesitant to share opinions they thought I would disagree with, they would nod in agreement when this student would share. Other students were chosen

along those guidelines: they represented diverse histories and attitudes towards school, and based on previous discussions I felt like they would represent viewpoints that otherwise might not have been represented.

Twelve students attended the forum. I projected questions on the Promethean Board to guide the discussion, but allowed the flexibility to let the discussion continue as students saw fit. The discussion covered issues of identity, the relevancy of school to their home lives and their academic future, and how they internalized what it meant to be a “scholar” or “academic.”

The second discussion, using the same questions, was held at the end of the year to address how the unit influenced these perceptions.

Pre and Post Surveys

While student interviews allowed me to delve into some individual perceptions, I wanted to get an overall sense of how much students identified with certain statements regarding identity, culture, and school. All students were given a forty question survey (see Appendix) where they evaluated the statements on a scale of one to four, with one being “strongly disagree,” two being “slightly disagree,” three being “slightly agree,” and four being “strongly agree.” I was interested in finding shifts in perception after the unit.

Reflection Journals

Student journals were my main source of formative data. Students were asked to bring journals on the first day of the unit, which were collected at the end of each class. This allowed me to read their journals at my own leisure and ensure that all the data was collected in one place. The students responded to questions and texts and did all informal writing assignments in the journal. There were four types of writing assigned throughout the curriculum as shown by Table 7.

Table 7: Summary of Writing Tasks

Writing Task	Function	Evidence of appropriate register
Quickwrites	To connect content to prior experiences To summarize content To generate ideas To build on prior knowledge	Multiple ideas, informal style
Academic responses	To reflect understanding of texts	Use of academic vocabulary Use of academic conventions, such as transitions and an objective tone Use of textual-based evidence
Critical Reflections	To examine multiple perspectives To form judgments	Use of higher order thinking
Narrative Reflections	To connect content to prior experience To examine personal histories of identity	Connection of thematic content to specific people or events

Quickwrites are very brief writing assignments, usually lasting between two and five minutes. Every class would start with a prompt such as “Summarize what Marxists examined in texts,” or “Do you think that Americans have social mobility?” These

prompts were meant to either anticipate the lesson and build on prior content or experiences, or review a previous day's lesson.

Academic criticisms were usually assigned at the end of a lesson. Whereas quickwrites were written in an informal register, academic criticisms were expected to be in Standard English and contain elements of the academic register. In the academic criticisms, students were asked to reflect on themes in the text. I collected several forms of academic responses: collaborative paragraphs, short responses, and longer pieces. I collected criticisms from a variety of topics and lengths to determine how well the students achieved the language goal. Had I only collected a few, it would be unclear whether students struggled with the language, content, or writing endurance. I reduced the data in two ways: through the use of a rubric (included in the Appendix) and by coding the responses by language function. Categorizing the kinds of language function the students were using allowed me to examine their intention in their writing, as well as what cognitive level they were writing at. For example, a student could write a perfectly constructed essay that contained mostly summary, which is a low-level skill. Another student might have a short, poorly elaborated essay that might have scored much lower than the first student's essay, but by coding language function I might find that the majority of the second student's essay is evaluation, which is a more advanced cognitive skill.

Critical reflections were assigned after class discussions of social issues. Students then completed targeted revision exercises, including developing a unique voice and providing strong evidence for their ideas.

Narrative reflections were assigned throughout the curriculum. I asked students to tell me the story of how they came to certain understandings of who they were. Sometimes I gave them a specific focus, like when I asked them to tell me the story of their experiences in school that made them feel empowered and the ones that made them feel powerless. Other times, I would just ask them to tell me the story of how they came to understand what a certain label meant.

Class Discussions

Every day students were asked to respond to certain questions, usually after a quickwrite. The class was divided into groups of five or six students, and I would walk around and transcribe the conversations that I heard. I tried to pick the groups randomly, and would vary the amount of time spent at each group. Many students would perform while I was in front of their group, and I feel the quality of discussion when I was transcribing their conversation was much higher than when they were left on their own unmonitored. To account for this, I would then randomly call on students to share what their group discussed. While groups shared out, I would take notes on the board so we could look for trends and different perspectives in the discussion.

Literary Analysis Essay

After reading “Their Eyes Were Watching God,” students wrote three to four page literary analyses tracing the development of themes of race, class, culture, and gender. Students used their daily writing exercises to expand into a paper on one of five topics. Prompts for the essay are included in the Appendix. I evaluated them based on the strength and organization of their argument, and their ability to follow the conventions of academic writing. I was looking for a clear, argumentative thesis, complex sentences, precise and technical vocabulary, authorial distance, and use of textual evidence. I used a rubric to evaluate them holistically, and then coded the essays for evidence of critical analysis. The categories coded were:

- Examining the meaning of symbols in a text
- Considering the author’s purpose or motive
- Recognizing a one-sided view
- Recognizing a silence, or a character or group of people in a novel who have no agency or voice
- Examining multiple meanings of words or symbols
- Taking a stance which contradicts general consensus (after proving what general consensus is)
- Considering or clarifying the audience’s belief

Multimedia Project

At the end of the curriculum, each student made two-minute video examining different aspects of their identity. I evaluated the videos based on the audio/visual design, their narration, and their ability to critically think about their own identities. To grade them I used a rubric, included in the Appendix. However, for the purpose of the study I was only looking for evidence of the ability to critically analyze their identities, so to disaggregate the data I recorded evidence in a chart with columns for “strong analysis,” “superficial analysis,” and “no analysis.” An example of strong analysis was when a student showed a complex understanding of his or her identity and was able to link perceptions of himself or herself to larger groups of people. Superficial analysis was when they showed preliminary understanding of how other people affected their identities, but it was typically tied only to food or generic symbols, like a hamburger and an American flag to show American identity. Students who showed no evidence to connect to larger socio-cultural or socio-historical communities were recorded in the “no analysis” column.

Field notes

At the end of each day, I took notes of my impressions of how the day went. I recorded comments that stood out to me, general impressions, and the climate of the class. The climate of the class was the general emotional energy of the class throughout the day—tense, energized, listless, defeated, or contemplative. I measured this based on

personal observation of the students' body language, their willingness to participate, and their engagement with the material. This was important to me because the material was not only cognitively but potentially emotionally difficult. By recording the class climate during each activity, I could get a sense of whether the curriculum was contributing to or detracting from the comfort level needed for all students to be successful. These notes helped inform my discussion of the findings.

Findings

Goal 1: Students will critically analyze the power dynamics in fiction and non-fiction texts.

Finding 1: Students were able to critically analyze “Their Eyes Were Watching God.”

Ninety-four percent of all students showed evidence of critical analysis in their literary essays. Figure 6 illustrates the breakdown of the types of critical analysis exhibited, and the percentage of students who illustrated each. Many students showed examples of some or all of the types of critical analysis.

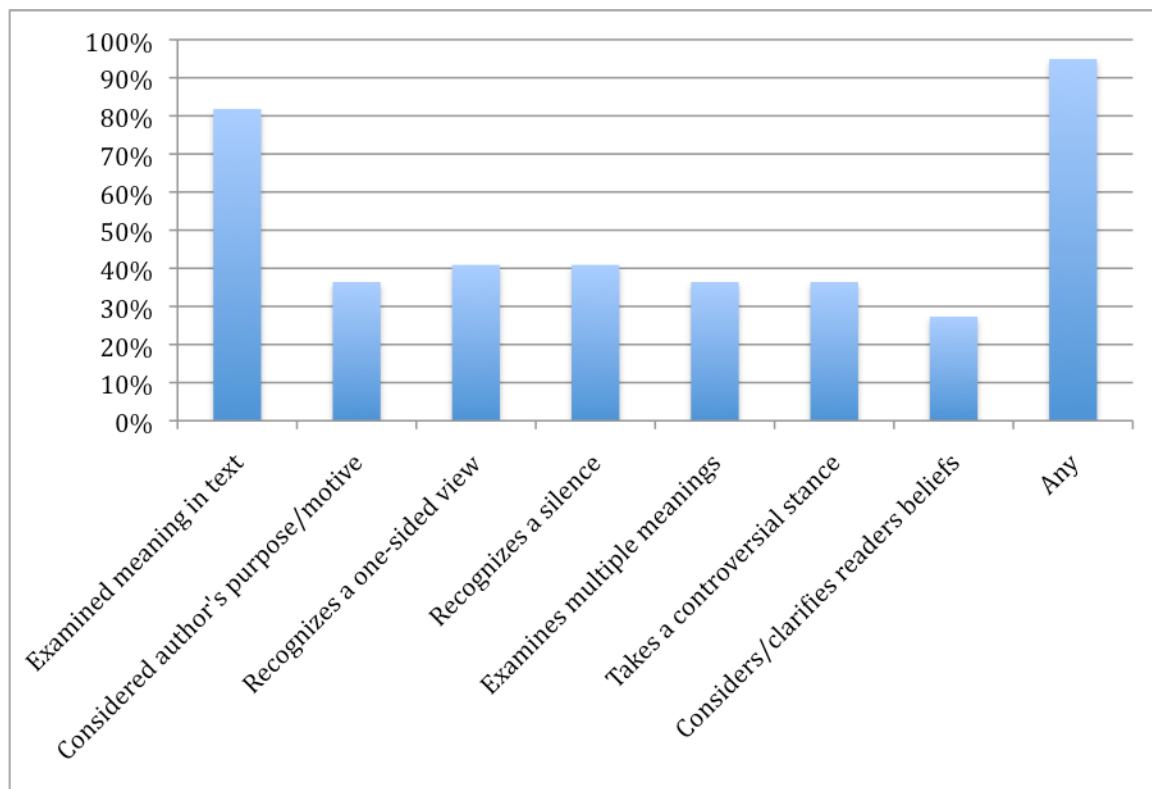


Figure 6: Percentage of Students Using Critical Analysis by Type of Comment

A majority of the students, 81%, examined meaning. These students explicitly connected literary elements like plot events, characters, or symbols to larger socio-cultural themes. For students to be successful, they needed to recognize the elements of the novel, like character, plot, symbolism, and conflict, and be able to evaluate how those elements contribute to our understanding of the text. In this essay specifically, I looked for evidence of students' connection of literary elements to the critical lenses we discussed. Table 8 illustrates responses found within eight student papers.

Table 8: Sample Responses Showing Evidence of Critical Analysis by Examining Meaning

Critical Lens	Literary Element	Sample response showing evidence of critical analysis
Gender Theory	Character	“This sets Tea Cake apart from both previous husbands due to his egalitarian motives and presence of communication in their new marriage.” “In the novel, society’s gender roles skew the ‘masculine’ form of the American dream so that it <i>fits</i> women...the stereotypical nuclear family where the parents are a team running a stable household requires women to buy into the feminine version the dream presents. It requires them to give up personal freedom to buy into the system. This is shown by Janie silencing her voice in order to preserve her relationship.” “Early in the novel, she thought she needed sex to be happy. This put her at risk of being abused.”
	Plot	“Janie’s multiple marriages throughout the novel allow Hurston to make significant comments on the gender and roles of women.”
Marxism	Character	“As a former slave, Nanny values security and wealth over Janie’s true feelings and believes that she needs to marry someone who can provide those things.” “Tea Cake inverts gender roles by being the one to pursue Janie. He desires the security and social status part of the American Dream, and puts himself at risk by gambling to show he’s worthy of Janie.”
Critical Race Theory	Symbol/ Character	“Janie’s hair represents one of her ethnicities, being white. This characteristic makes Ms. Turner go ‘head over heels’ for Janie, because Mrs. Turner worships and praises white people and culture even though she’s black.”
	Plot	“The course of action may be deemed worthy by female empowerment activists, but the plot did not build up a sense of rising from oppression.”

As evidenced in Table 9, successful students were able to connect specific literary elements like characters and events in the stories to greater themes of race, class, and identity. This connection an important aspect of the understanding of the disciplinary voice for writing in the humanities, as it shows that a student understands that elements in texts come to represent larger sociopolitical issues.

Less than half of the students demonstrated each of the other types of critical analysis: considering the author's purpose/motive, recognizing a one sided view, recognizing how characters or groups of people don't have a voice, examining multiple meanings of big ideas, taking controversial stances, or considering and clarifying popular beliefs.

Likewise, 29 of 39 students showed evidence of critical analysis. Quickwrites during class show less developed ideas, like "Jody plays a leading role in Janie's perception of herself as a female," or "Janie is subject to social barriers that keep her from being happy." Class discussions showed similar critical analysis, although much of the small group conversation focused on comprehension.

Student 1: So Jody is always trying to control her...

Student 2: Who was Jody? Was he the one with the mule?

Student 1: No, he was Janie's second husband.

Student 2: The one that she yelled at?

Student 1: Yeah, he's the one that she called old. (Transcription, 1 March 2012)

During the conversation, the first student began to critically analyze what Jody represents, but the second student needed more support to figure out who he was. Other small groups exhibited this same negotiation between analysis and comprehension.

Finding 2: Some students were able to reflect on the power dynamics inherent in expository texts on social issues.

Students showed some demonstration of critical reflection of non-fiction in conversations and in quickwrites, but few were able to demonstrate that same critical reflection in a synthesis of the texts. However, even during small group and whole class conversations, I had to intervene and ask questions to get students to consider opposing viewpoints:

Student 1: I just feel like affirmative action would encourage minorities to be lazy, since they know they can get into college.

Student 2: I agree. I'm Mexican, but I should be getting a scholarship because I worked hard, not because of my race. My problems haven't been any worse than any of my white friends.

Student 3: I mean yeah, there are always going to be racists and you shouldn't not get into a school because of your race, but you shouldn't get in because of your race either.

Student 1: Yeah. That's just as racist.

Teacher: But do you think that all communities feel they have equal opportunities to prepare for college?

Student 1: No, but that's just their opinion.

Teacher: What about the issues brought up in "Indian Education?" (Patterns, p. 135) How many of his problems in school had to do with his

perception, and how much had to do with systematic problems in the school?

Student 3: I guess he couldn't help what classes he was put into...

Student 1: But things aren't like that anymore.

Student 4: I got put in special ed reading courses in Wisconsin because my teachers assumed I didn't know things because I didn't speak English very well. Isn't that the same thing?

Student 2: Yeah, you see that all the time here. Those kids that had to play catch-up aren't going to have the same transcript as, like, the kids that everyone expects to go to college. So I guess I see why affirmative action might be important. (Transcript, 29 March 2012)

This conversation illuminates several key trends: first, the students originally struggled to delineate racist individuals from institutional racism. After teacher questioning, they were able to point out policies that could set back communities from success. That Student 4 was able to give voice to a personal experience steered the conversation away from color blindness to critical reflection from the entire group. If this student had been unwilling to speak, the group could have easily continued with a discussion from only one perspective, looking for evidence to support their ideas instead of critically questioning them. This speaks to the importance of encouraging personal narratives to be used in the classroom.

In quickwrites at the beginning of class, many of the writings looked like the conversations held by the first two students in that conversation. By the end, after several students shared experiences of problems with the law or with other schools, more students were able to make more nuanced arguments. For example, one student wrote at

the beginning of our exercise on affirmative action that “I don’t agree with affirmative action because I believe everyone should be treated equal...its not fair for minorities to get aid and the average person who works and pays taxes gets nothing.” (Student work, 15 Mar 2012). However, after discussion and readings, he writes,

Many argue that if affirmative action is banned, it would reduce diversity at top schools and encourage divisiveness. This argument only accounts for racial diversity, not other kinds of diversity. For example, there are plenty of racial minorities out there who have the experiences and economic status of privileged white students. Are they diverse only because they look different? Isn’t it stereotyping them just as much to assume they had to overcome hardships because of how they look? (Student work, 20 Mar 2012).

This student didn’t change his opinion of affirmative action, but was able to talk about culture instead of just race. He was able to situate his argument in the larger cultural narrative regarding affirmative action, and address multiple facets of the argument while still taking a stance.

However, only a small portion of students exhibited critical literacy in their writings after the discussions. This was incongruent with the kind of negotiation I saw during the discussions, when many students exhibited critical thinking. Figure 7 illustrates the change in evidence of critical literacy in writing before discussion and after.

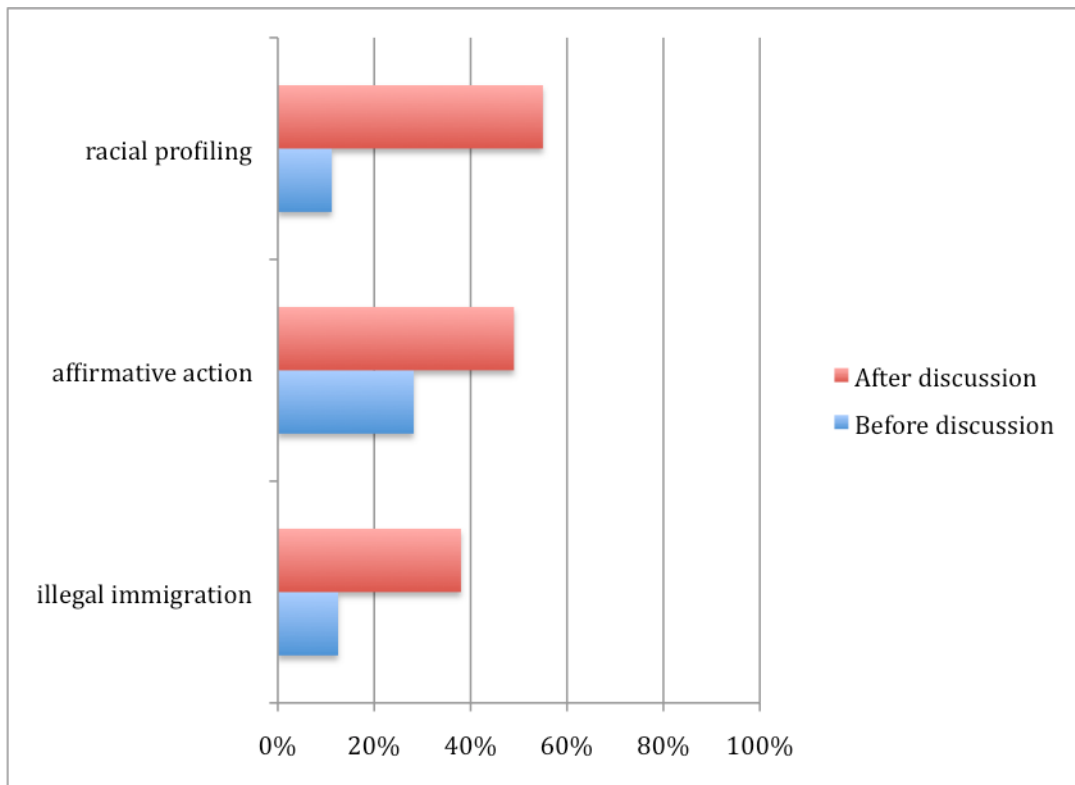


Figure 7: Change in Levels of Critical Literacy

With each study of social issues, the number of students who demonstrated critical literacy in writing rose, although only half the class showed evidence of critical literacy in their final writing assignment on racial profiling. I believe this is due to a lack of appropriate scaffolding in the curriculum between expressive and transactional writing, which is explained further in the discussion section that follows.

Finding 3: Students were able to critically analyze non-fiction texts in discussion, but not in formal writing.

During class discussions on social issues, the data suggests that many students were able to critically analyze non-fiction texts during discussion. The following conversation was recorded in a small group discussion after a reading about illegal immigration.

Student 1: I agree with the author. I hate how there's this group of immigrants in our country who aren't even trying to be American...they're, like, not speaking English, and they send all their money home to Mexico, and they only listen to Mexican radio, and they take jobs from people who would spend their money in America.

Student 2: OMG [oh my god], you're so racist! Not all Mexicans do that!

Student 1: I'm not racist! I'm not saying all Mexicans do that, I'm saying it's a group of them that aren't even trying to be American. It would be racist if I said all Mexicans are lazy, or something like that.

Student 3: I mean, I see what you're saying, but how are they not American? They live here, you say they send their money home, but they still have to buy food and pay rent here...also, when did the author mention Mexicans?

Student 4: They're not a threat to jobs...are you going to work in the fields for your summer job for pretty much no money? No.

Student 1: Ok, ok...and as much as I hate to say it, I did hear somewhere that if we didn't give Mexican workers jobs our economy would be even worse than it is. Even though they might not be America, we still kind of need them...

Student 2: That totally makes them Americans. We, like, couldn't function without them. (Audio transcript, 20 March 2012)

This conversation illustrated a few things: despite oversimplifying who illegal immigrants are and what they do, the group was working towards co-constructing a definition of racism, as well as a definition of American. They seemed to reach a consensus that even if they're here illegally, migrant workers contribute to the American economy and should be considered American. The group was able to help the first student begin to recognize his unfounded biases towards Mexican migrant workers.

Despite working towards a consensus in conversation, two of the four group members still exhibited a lack of critical literacy during the formal writing assignment which followed the readings and conversations. Student 3, who during the conversation was critical of some of the assertions of the author of the day's text as well as Student 1's opinions, wrote "The process of obtaining citizenship should be a tideous [sic] one not only to protect our country but to also make sure the people who want to come in legally aren't comming to 'harm' us" (student work, 23 March 2012). While the student was able to think critically about her peer's biases, she was not able to deconstruct her own prejudice that foreigners are trying to harm American citizens. This same mismatch between conversation and formal writing occurred with at least one member of every other group recorded for all of the social issue studies.

Discussion

I was surprised to see such different results between the fiction and the non-fiction studies, since previously my students had been more successful in analyzing non-fiction. However, I believe the results had more to do with the structuring of the

activities than with the content itself: while we were studying the novel, I provided opportunities for students to write informally after almost every conversation. I had done that because I anticipated that the students would have more difficulty with the fiction content than with the non-fiction content. The non-fiction study was missing this piece. Bayer (1994) wrote that in order to master content, there needed to be a gradual release from expressive (informal) talk to transactional (formal) writing. In order to bridge the two, students need time to write expressively as well. I had assumed that when students were able to discuss issues in a certain way, they would also be able to write with the same level of cognitive complexity. However, in not giving students a chance to write informally after each conversation, they fell back into older schemas of understanding instead of incorporating the new information in their transactive writing.

Students also still felt the most comfortable talking about the meaning and significance of certain symbols and characters in the fiction texts. While they were able to associate these symbols with greater critical themes, it was still an extension of a structural reading of the text. Students seemed much less inclined to address the author as a cultural being who constructs the reality of his or her work. This jump would be necessary to achieve deeper conversations of literary criticism. This skill cannot be addressed with just one project, but instead should be taught with the same attention as structuralism if students are to become truly critical readers.

Goal 2: Students will understand that their identities are “historically constructed within specific power relations” (Anderson, 82).

Finding 1: Approximately half of the students were able to connect how they identified themselves with power dynamics in larger communities.

Of the 36 videos submitted, 17 students produced a strong critical analysis of their identities, meaning they were able to conduct a deep analysis of at least two of the three identities they examined. Five additional students were able to produce a strong critical analysis of one of their identities. The other 12 students produced weak or superficial analyses. Table 9 provides a breakdown of student mastery by demographic. I did not include socio-economic status (SES) because I did not have the data, and only one student chose to address that aspect in his video.

Table 9: Critical Identity Breakdown by Demographic

n=36	Mastery	Approaching	Unsatisfactory
White	3 (8.3%)	3 (8.3%)	11 (30.6%)
Hispanic	12 (33.3%)	2 (5.6%)	3 (8.3%)
Asian	2 (5.6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Female	11 (30.6%)	1 (2.8%)	5 (13.9%)
Male	6 (16.7%)	4 (11.1%)	9 (25%)

The data in Table 9 illustrates several key points: first, about two-thirds of the White students were unable to show critical analysis in any of their chosen identities. Broken down even further, five of the six White students who mastered or approached critical analysis were male. About three quarters (73%, or 14 of 19) of non-White students

showed mastery in their critical analyses. Two thirds of the females showed mastery, as opposed to one third of the males (31%). Also, whereas females tended to either demonstrate strong critical identity analysis or none at all, the males tended to spread across a broader range of mastery, where the numbers who were able to critically analyze one of their identities were almost equal to the numbers who approached mastery (4 to 6).

Table 10 provides a comprehensive list of the labels students used to describe themselves in their videos.

Table 10: Comprehensive List of Student Identified Self-concepts

Students with strong analysis:	Students with superficial analysis:	Students with no critical analysis:
Hispanic/Indigeno Catholic Female Brother Asian-American Biracial Canadian Mexican-American Chicana/o Musician Atheist Male Dancer Scholar	Military Methodist Mexican-American American Blue collar	Athlete Baker American Christian “Things I like” “Things I do” Female Mexican Hobbies Air Force

The students with strong analysis were able to analyze the markers of the different communities they associated with, as well as situate their identities into the power struggles and histories of that group. I had expected to see that the successful students would be the ones who aligned themselves with sociopolitical cultures, such as ethnicity

or religion, and the less successful students would align themselves with more general labels. Instead, Table 11 illustrates that there was no correlation between mastery and the classification of identity labels.

During narrative writing, all seven of the twelve students who showed unsatisfactory analysis wrote general and unspecific expository pieces on the ways in which society viewed certain identity labels, showing no evidence in their writing of a self-concept of being part of that group. The other five students did write specific narratives, but those identities they chose in the narratives were not identities they examined in the video. While this was not a requirement, the students showing the strongest mastery linked the two assignments.

For example, Amy, a White female, wrote a touching narrative about learning femininity from her single mother. She spoke about how her mother's overt femininity made her vulnerable when it came to dating guys, and how "strange it was, considering she was the strongest person I knew. It was like everything she taught me about speaking my mind and being confident disappeared when she was trying to find a new boyfriend" (student narrative, 16 March 2012). Had Amy included these kinds of details in her video, she would have been successful. However, she instead chose to examine herself as Christian, an athlete, and Irish. In the video, she exhibited no strong connection to any of those identities and therefore produced a very weak analysis. About her Irish identity, she stated "I'm Irish so I always make sure to wear green on St. Patrick's Day. Here's a picture of a leprechaun" (Student video, 3 April 2012). Amy associated her Irish identity

with wearing green and leprechauns, which are stereotypical cultural markers.

Addressing stereotypes does not necessarily prohibit a student from obtaining mastery, but Amy did not critically analyze that stereotypical representation. Additionally, she showed no connection between this stereotype and people or events in her own life.

Finding 2: Students complicated their understanding of academic identity and language.

In the survey given to the class before implementation, 29.6%, or 11 of 37 students, strongly agreed with the statement “Being academic means getting good grades,” which is a common academic self-concept: I am academic because I do well on assessments. In the same survey given after implementation, only 16.9%, or 6 of 36 students strongly agreed. When answers were quantified on a four point scale with strongly agree=4, and strongly disagree=1, the overall score dropped 12 points, from 259 to 247 of 400. This was the most significant change of any other survey question given. The data is illustrated in Figure 8.

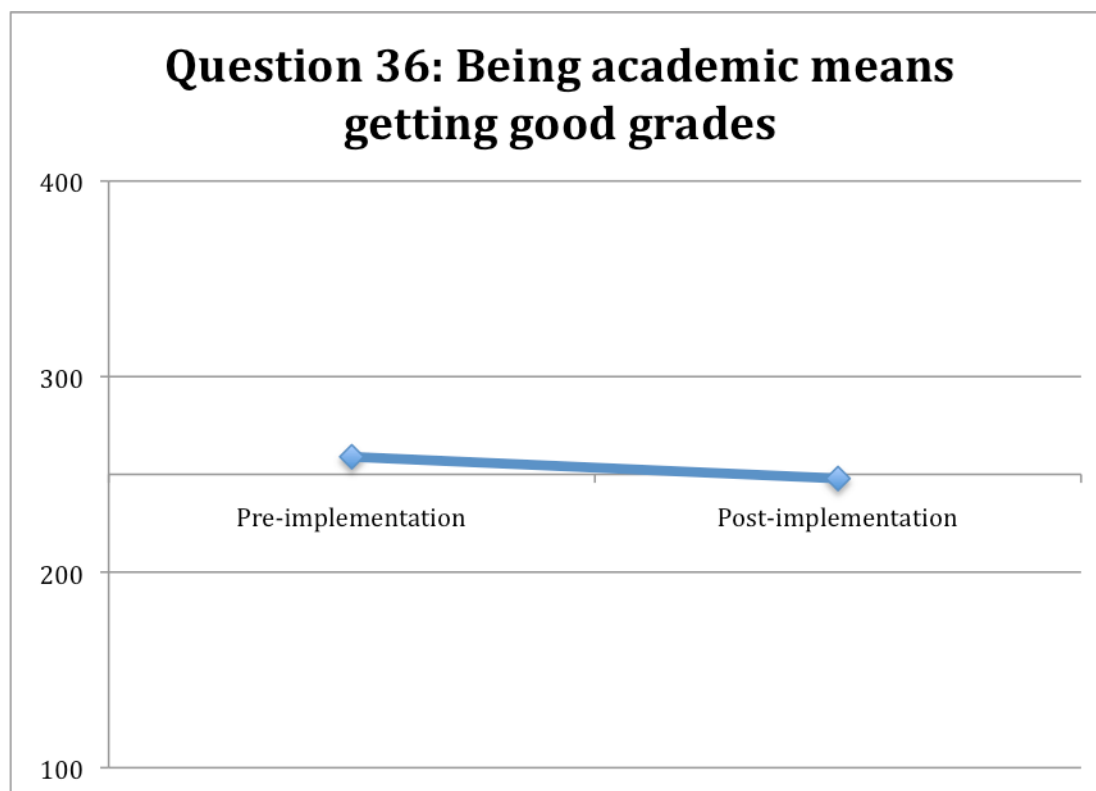


Figure 8: Survey Data

As Figure 8 illustrates, students associated getting good grades with being academic less after implementing the curriculum. Their conception of what it meant to be “academic” was less tied to external markers like grades, and more tied to internal markers like motivation.

Individual student interviews conducted after implementation echoed the same findings. One student told me,

I think the way school is right now, you can be successful if you learn how to take tests, be quiet in class, and hand in essays on time. The problem is...I guess the problem is that when I graduate, even in college, I might not be taking multiple choice tests, you know? And I almost definitely

won't be in my job. But I know plenty of smart kids who just won't play the game and get bad grades. I think I realized that it's not fair that schools sometimes only set up one kind of person to succeed (student interview, 7 May 2012).

In a separate interview, another student agreed, saying:

It's not the stuff we're being taught that we're going to use. Like, who cares about polynomials unless you go into math? But things like learning how to research and work with other people and ask the right questions, those are things that we need. It's like, the most random stuff that we get tested on that we're never going to need (student interview, 7 May 2012).

Both these students echoed the sentiment that they didn't see the correlation between grades, assessments, and academic potential. Figure 7 illustrates that students were moving away between a simplistic understanding of academic identity towards a more complex one that incorporates a wider variety of identities and skills.

Discussion

I was not surprised by the disaggregated results of the analysis of students who were able to recognize the larger socio-cultural contexts of their self-concepts and those who were not. I anticipated my White students would have a harder time contextualizing their identities because I assumed that they may have never had to question their Whiteness before. Despite conversations of historic White privilege, many of my White students were not able to recognize that they are part of a White culture. However, I found it interesting that only one of my White females was able to critically analyze her identity. All of the females in the class were able to contextualize gender, at least superficially, in their narratives, but many of my White females did not identify

themselves as female in their videos. Just as Arroyo (1997) wrote about racelessness, it's possible that my White females also exhibit a kind of genderlessness. It would be interesting to follow up on why they chose not to self-identify as female, but by the time the findings were uncovered it was too late to contact them again. The one White female who was able to critically discuss any of her identities had an African-American grandfather. She identified herself as White, but said in her video: "Because of him, I'm a little more sensitive to race and privilege. I always wonder what my experiences would have been if I looked more like him than like my grandmother" (student video, 3 April 2012). It's possible that this heightened awareness gave her the ability to critically analyze all her identities, not just her race.

The range of labels students used to describe themselves in the videos was also interesting. While the majority of the students who mastered the task connected with specific, historically connected communities (for example, biracial, atheist, Chicana), many students effectively analyzed more general identities (such as brother, dancer, musician). Originally I had considered asking students to produce videos only along lines of gender, religion, race, gender, or socioeconomic status. Had I restricted it to only those labels, I wouldn't have received the richness of analysis that some students produced. For example, Mark, a White male who considered himself an artist, produced an in-depth analysis of the challenges that creative students face in the public school system. He echoed many of these same themes in his academic narrative. This confirmed a strong belief I had when designing the curriculum: that any discussion of

identity and culture has to remain open for students to label themselves. This same student told us poignantly in his video that his grandmother was Japanese-American and was sent to live in an internment camp during World War II. However, because he never knew about her until after her death, he never identified with her ethnicity or her story. He spoke in his video about his guilt over that, but to “identify with a community just because their story is tragic belittles the pain they went through—I mean, yeah, I could probably find Native American blood if I went back far enough, but does that make me Native American?” (student video, 3 April 2012). He said he felt a stronger identity as an artist than as a Japanese-American, or a grandson.

Additionally, the data suggests that a strong identification with any label can affect academic identity formation and achievement. Mark, the same student discussed above, described how even though he came from a privileged background, he struggled in school because he was viewed as “lazy and underachieving, but teachers never provided me a chance to challenge my creativity” (student video, 3 April 2012). Likewise, Evan, another White male, spoke primarily about identifying himself as “a brother first, a student second, and male last” (student video, 4 Apr 2012). Evan stated that because his younger brother struggled with learning disabilities, he felt a responsibility to model how to be successful in school. His motivation to do well did not originate from a desire to succeed academically, but from a desire to be a good brother.

Finally, the results of the second finding appear to have influenced my students more after this project concluded than during the time of implementation. During the

subsequent summer, three students attending a two-year program at a community college asked me for recommendations to an honors program at the school. I had encouraged them earlier in the year to apply, but at that time they were concerned that the more difficult coursework would ruin their GPA (grade point average), jeopardizing their opportunities to transfer to a four-year university. When I asked what changed their mind, all three echoed the same thought: it was going to be more important to be exposed to difficult material than to earn a good grade if they wanted to move to a more challenging environment. One of them said she felt more comfortable with academic writing, so she thought she could handle it with the help of the writing center at her school. This same student had not mastered the academic register during the curriculum, but showed improvement in the following unit of study. Had these students not changed their definition of what it means to be “academic,” it is possible that they would not be taking this academic risk.

Goal 3: Students will choose an appropriate register for a task and goal.

Finding 1: There was little register switching. Students proficient at academic writing struggled to write for an audience of their peers, and students good at writing for their peers struggled to write for an academic audience.

Forty percent of the students scored 16 out of a possible 20 points or higher on the stylistic section of the literary analysis rubric. These students adopted the academic

register proficiently. However, those same students struggled with using a register appropriate for their peer group. Peer revision comments for one such student included “This is boring. I can’t tell why you care” (student work, 15 March 2012). However, the majority of the students who scored poorly on the stylistic section of the literary analysis rubric—84%--received favorable comments from peers during revisions. The other 16% (9% of the entire class) struggled with both academic and informal writing. Table 11 on the following page illustrates the differences between the two groups through two representative students:

Table 11: Case Study of Two Student's Writings

	Formal register	Informal register
Student 1	In the early 20 th century African American women have had trouble finding self-identity and throughout the novel, <u>Their Eyes Were Watching God</u> by Zora Neale Hurston, the protagonist Janie is in search for happiness and is easily influenced by people, which makes her accomplishment tough to reach. At first Janie is developing as a young girl, but with time grows up and stops doing what her grandmother tells her to do because she says she's tired of it. Janie is in search for happiness turns out to be difficult as she faces obstacles being half African American and half White, as time goes on Janie is able to develop into a mature woman and able to find happiness.	Affirmative action allows the lower class and minorities the chance to rise in society. If affirmative action is ruled unconstitutional, the path to success for vulnerable citizens will be blocked. We say American is the land of opportunity: if this is true, allow affirmative action to continue! If minorities are not allowed to educate themselves, we will never move up in society, or be allowed to contribute to this great nation.
Student 2	Zora Neale Hurston's novel, <u>Their Eyes Were Watching God</u> , is representative of the American dream, and the lengths to which some will go through in order to achieve their perception of it. The protagonist, Janie, is an African American woman, living in the oppressive years following the abolishment of slavery in the United States. Her being both a woman and biracial are contributing factors limiting her pursuit of the American dream. Hurston creates a heroine in Janie, who is a distinguishable example of someone who, regardless of various limitations, will do whatever it takes to achieve her own perception of the American dream.	Affirmative action is somewhat unfair, and in some cases, could be considered an offensive system of college acceptance. Affirmative action is defined as the practice of choosing a single student over another due to race. The debate over this ongoing issue has continued over centuries and is representative of many themes in our country.

Both students represented in Table 11 were Hispanic males, and they scored similarly on reading comprehension tests. Student 1 struggled with the academic register: his

sentences are long and confusing, he uses informal diction where he had opportunities to use more formal (“grows up” v. “matures”). Additionally, the main idea gets lost as he progresses from sentence to sentence. However, his writing for his peers is clear and personal. He uses short, definitive sentences, the pronoun “we” to appeal to his audience, and uses features like punctuation to emphasize his ideas. His critical response was well-communicated. On the other hand, Student 2 had a clear grasp of the academic register. He uses complex sentence structure, but there is a clear main idea. He uses phrases like “is representative of,” and “regardless of various limitations.” However, this same precision makes his writing for his peers dry and distanced: he does not make any strong claims, mediating everything by saying “somewhat” and “could be considered.” He discusses definitions rather than personal connections. These same patterns held true for almost all students: those students good at writing for academic audiences struggled when communicating with their peers, and those students who communicated well with their peers struggled at writing for an academic audience.

Finding 2: When adopting the academic register, student writing became more convoluted in meaning.

While academic writing does use more complex syntactical patterns, the clarity of meaning needs to be preserved. However, as students were adopting the academic voice, their writing became more garbled and nonsensical. During conferences with the few students who submitted rough drafts, I would point out these areas:

Teacher: What were you trying to say in this sentence?

Student: I was trying to say that Janie cared too much about sex.

Teacher: Is that what that sentence says?

Student: No, probably not.

Teacher: So why didn't you write what you just told me?

Student: I thought this sentence sounded smarter. The way I said it to you sounds too casual, like it's not right. (Transcript, 26 March 2012).

This conversation shows that though this student knew what he or she was trying to say, adopting the speech patterns of academic writing was so far removed from the way they typically wrote that the clear sentence didn't sound correct. I advised her to simplify all her sentences and recombine them, and she was one of the 40% who handed in a paper where the majority of the writing was clear.

Table 12 illustrates several types of common errors that obscured student's meaning when they tried to adopt the academic language. Structural errors are errors in sentence syntax, ambiguity in a sentence is when words lack references, and diction errors are vocabulary problems.

Table 12: Types of Errors in Academic Writing that Convolute Meaning

Type of error	Student sample	Analysis
Structural	"Hurston uses rhetorical themes in the novel to portrey his Emotions that deal with the poverty that the African Americans endure as well as The segregation that the black community is held by because of there skin color and Culture which leads to many blacks not being able to reach their goal of finding and grasping what they call 'The American Dream'"	By piling on clauses—that deal with the poverty, as well as, which leads to—the main idea of Hurston using rhetoric to portray [her] emotions gets lost
Ambiguity	"Hurston's shows that not only can two different races not like each other, but I believe she did a good job in portraying that even people with races can not like each other."	It's unclear what the student meant by "people with races," but it's possible he or she meant "people within races"
Diction	"Although relationships are alluded to be necessary to having a fulfilling life, Janie's quest for happiness was centrally an self-seeking one."	The word <i>alluded</i> was one of our previous academic target words used incorrectly.

As Table 12 illustrates, while students were beginning to master the academic register, they sometimes lost the meaning of what they were trying to write. The discussion section addresses potential causes and solutions for this problem.

Discussion

First, it was unsurprising that students benefited from collaborative revisions. Especially for a skill such as voice, which requires communicating not only ideas but emotion, identity, and perception, it would seem that revisions from an outside peer would be necessary for improvement. However, it was more surprising that students didn't benefit from this same revision process when adopting the academic register. It's possible that while students had plenty of models of narrative writing, they had very little exposure to academic writing of the caliber that they will be expected to write at as they continue their education. Because they lacked clear modeling, collaborative revisions were ineffective in increasing the clarity in their papers. A possible solution to this can be found in the appendix.

There seems to be a perception in writing instruction that student proficiency is more or less a static thing—the good writers are usually good writers on all assignments, and the struggling writers struggle on all writing assignments. However, this assumption only held true for one student during this project. The data indicates that the majority of students excelled at one register or the other. This has several implications. First, by privileging only academic writing in secondary classrooms, teachers also privilege only a section of their students. Secondly, since research shows that many students who adopt a

positive academic self-concept do it at the cost of cultural identity (Arroyo & Zigler, 1997), it's possible that those students who have mastered the academic register are already starting to lose the ability to communicate with their cultural peers. Therefore, the data suggests the need for a more balanced approach to writing instruction—one that instructs students in the academic register, but not at the expense of the informal.

VIII. CONCLUSION

A friend of mine recently noted that she never felt like a feminist until Twitter reached popularity. Then, all of the sudden she had access to bigotry that she thought lay with individuals, not society. There were her co-workers who felt it was reasonable to charge women more for health care, because men don't have to give birth. There were the politicians who didn't think it was important to include women on a panel to decide federal funding for contraceptives. There were the media correspondents who could only describe female politicians as "bitches," "flaky," or "too submissive." Most telling, as a school psychologist my friend saw teenagers every day who were harmed by the lessons they learned from television, the internet, society, and their peers. This was a woman with seven years of graduate study, but it took Twitter for her to recognize the subversive power dynamics at play in American society.

During the implementation of this project, I found that adolescents are aware of these same cultural narratives exposed to my friend, and they want to talk about them. These issues affect them directly and personally, to the degree that they affect how they conceptualize who they are, but they have no outlet for writing or speaking about it. If they're not taught to think, read, and write about issues of race, gender, economic or social class, they won't be able to advocate for themselves in a system which sets many of them up to fail. The truly unfortunate part is that many of the English Language Arts standards written for high school students could easily be addressed through the critical study of almost any text.

For me, this project had several implications for curriculum design and teacher preparation. First, I feel relatively knowledgeable about culturally responsive curriculum and feel that I am sensitive to discussions of identity and culture. However, even I struggled when trying to implement this curriculum. The difficulty in designing curriculum focusing on developing critical literacy means that the teacher is placed in a vulnerable position: the conversations held in class will expose the teacher's biases and prejudices as much as it will the biases of the students. This makes the teacher more vulnerable, as he or she can no longer be considered an expert on all things, and instead must become a facilitator. This is difficult to do. Additionally, the degree of chaos that can potentially arise in the classroom if conversations and activities are not structured properly is daunting. Teachers need professional development on how to design, question, react, and instruct in these moments in which the group dynamic heads in an unplanned, but fruitful direction.

Finally, I found through this project that I deeply need to question what is "good" or "right" for my students (and myself). I realized that for my students to deconstruct the more negative aspects of academic self-concept—learning how to play the "school" game, subtracting their social selves—I need to set up conditions in my classroom that de-emphasize many deeply ingrained school structures. I need to find a way to hold students accountable for good work without letting grades define their academic success. I need to find a way to allow them to be social adolescents, while still exposing them to the academic codes they need to know to be successful in college and university. And

most importantly, I need to allow them to define and express themselves as frequently as possible, instead of in only a few key places throughout the year.

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STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING READING COMPREHENSION

Overview: While this project doesn't explicitly focus on reading comprehension, students must demonstrate comprehension before they can demonstrate critical analysis. While there are many ways to help students with comprehension, it's important to establish a structured comprehension routine. This provides opportunities for students to internalize the skills they need to make sense of a text on their own. Depending on the comprehension level of your students, some of these activities may need to be modeled and guided during classroom time until students can do it independently. The following are general comprehension structures that can be used independently with multiple genres. I've ordered them from most effective to least effective—based only on my experience in my own classroom. Many of these can be found online, but I've adapted them for what works for me and my students.

STRATEGY 1: DIALECTICAL JOURNAL

In a dialectical journal, students record important information in two or three-sided entries. On the left, they record quotations from the text they find interesting or important. On the right, they record their comments, reactions, or questions to the quotations they chose. The sample below includes an additional column, as it was adapted for an extended study of a novel and is designed to be built on continuously. Dialectical journals encourage students' attention to remain firmly rooted in the text. It also provides a foundation for further analysis. Ideally, you would see the chosen quotations become more pertinent to a critical read as you progress in this unit.

Sample:

Date, text title, p. #	Direct quotation from text	Reactions, comments, questions

STRATEGY 2: READING LOG

Similar to a dialectical journal, students record pertinent information in a two or three-sided entry. However, instead of recording quotations, students record keywords or main ideas on the left side, and expand with details in the right column. I've found this strategy helpful for especially confusing and dense texts. It must be extensively modeled so students are aware of how to locate important information. For novels, I teach my students to pay attention to narrative elements: important plot events, details about

characters (or changes in characters), important images, or setting details. For rhetorical texts, I encourage students to pay attention to speaker, occasion, audience, purpose, subject, tone, and rhetorical techniques (SOAPSTone & rhetorical techniques). Again, this needs to be extensively modeled. The downside to reading logs is that this structure doesn't allow students to express their personal connections or misconceptions, and you lose an important motivational tool.

Keyword	Details, elaboration

STRATEGY 3: "THEY SAY, I SAY" READING RESPONSES

Reading responses are less structured, and are more writing intensive than the previous two techniques. Also, because students are required to write in complete paragraphs and sentences, it can be more overwhelming for struggling writers. Because the reading comprehension activities are meant to emphasize reading, students sometimes spend too long on the responses and their reading suffers for it. However, these have proved effective for having a piece of writing to encourage group discussions. When students are allowed to revise these in class after discussion, it can encourage the link between expressive and transactive writing.

Paragraph one is a summary of what students thought the author was trying to say. More advanced students can also include a discussion of how the author got his or her point across, therefore developing attention to rhetorical techniques. Paragraph two is a discussion of how the reading either effects them personally, or connects to the larger picture—other texts they've read, current events, important historical information, etc.

STRATEGIES FOR FACILITATING CLASS DISCUSSIONS

Overview: Critical literacy involves being able to “read” multiple perspectives and responses to a text. This is close to impossible for students to do independently, because they will not have heard different approaches to a text. During class discussions, students use their prior experiences and funds of knowledge to approach the content. The more diverse the class, generally the better these work. However, for discussions to run effectively there must be structures to follow, and students must feel comfortable enough to speak up. There are many ways to structure the conversation, but the effective ones contain the following elements:

1. A chance for students to reflect individually on the discussion topic before sharing. This can be at home before class, or as a quick-write before the discussion.
2. Internalization of academic discourse. Students must know how to take turns sharing their opinions (even stating their opinions), respectfully agree or disagree, ask questions to clarify, use their prior knowledge as evidence, and in the case of large class sizes, a way to record information if they have to wait a while to share their ideas.
3. A way for all students to participate, and a way to hold all students accountable. Small group conversations encourage the most conversation, but the teacher must find a way to ensure that all students are listening and participating. Asking a random student from each group to share what the group discussed is an effective way to do this. However, it will also require the language skills to be able to share a conversation. Sentence stems are included.
4. A personal reflection: this is the step that will bring students from expressive talk to expressive writing, a necessary component to building effective transactional writing.

The following activities contain, or can be adapted to contain, the four essential elements of effective discussion.

JIG-SAW

The Jigsaw strategy (Aronson, 1978) is designed for cooperative learning. The idea is analogous to a jigsaw puzzle in that “pieces” or topics of study are researched and learned by students within groups and then put together in the form of peer teaching between groups.

Students work in groups of three to six to become experts on a particular topic which is based on an overall theme or unit of study. The group members are charged with

learning everything they can about their assigned topics. Each group member participates in the research efforts and becomes an “expert” on his or her particular topic. The students then leave their groups to join “expert groups” to teach about their assigned pieces of the puzzle. Then, the original group comes back together to teach each other what they have learned. Each student listens and takes notes, and at the end of the unit, is accountable for the information shared throughout the class.

Taken from: http://www.litandlearn.lpb.org/strategies/strat_jigsaw.pdf

RECIPROCAL TEACHING

Palincsar (1986) describes the concept of reciprocal teaching:

"Definition: Reciprocal teaching refers to an instructional activity that takes place in the form of a dialogue between teachers and students regarding segments of text. The dialogue is structured by the use of four strategies: summarizing, question generating, clarifying, and predicting. The teacher and students take turns assuming the role of teacher in leading this dialogue.

Purpose: The purpose of reciprocal teaching is to facilitate a group effort between teacher and students as well as among students in the task of bringing meaning to the text. Each strategy was selected for the following purpose:

- **Summarizing** provides the opportunity to identify and integrate the most important information in the text. Text can be summarized across sentences, across paragraphs, and across the passage as a whole. When the students first begin the reciprocal teaching procedure, their efforts are generally focused at the sentence and paragraph levels. As they become more proficient, they are able to integrate at the paragraph and passage levels.
- **Question generating** reinforces the summarizing strategy and carries the learner one more step along in the comprehension activity. When students generate questions, they first identify the kind of information that is significant enough to provide the substance for a question. They then pose this information in question form and self-test to ascertain that they can indeed answer their own question. Question generating is a flexible strategy to the extent that students can be taught and encouraged to generate questions at many levels. For example, some school situations require that students master supporting detail information; others require that the students be able to infer or apply new information from text.
- **Clarifying** is an activity that is particularly important when working with students who have a history of comprehension difficulty. These students may believe that the purpose of reading is saying the words correctly; they may not be particularly uncomfortable that the words, and in fact the passage, are not making sense. When the students are asked to clarify, their attention is called to the fact that there may be many reasons why text is difficult to understand (e.g., new

vocabulary, unclear reference words, and unfamiliar and perhaps difficult concepts). They are taught to be alert to the effects of such impediments to comprehension and to take the necessary measures to restore meaning (e.g., reread, ask for help).

- **Predicting** occurs when students hypothesize what the author will discuss next in the text. In order to do this successfully, students must activate the relevant background knowledge that they already possess regarding the topic. The students have a purpose for reading: to confirm or disprove their hypotheses. Furthermore, the opportunity has been created for the students to link the new knowledge they will encounter in the text with the knowledge they already possess. The predicting strategy also facilitates use of text structure as students learn that headings, subheadings, and questions imbedded in the text are useful means of anticipating what might occur next.

In summary, each of these strategies was selected as a means of aiding students to construct meaning from text as well as a means of monitoring their reading to ensure that they are in fact understanding what they read.

Taken from <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/students/atrisk/at6lk38.htm>

SOCRATIC DISCUSSION

Based on the Socratic method, the primary functions of this strategy are to encourage respectful patterns of dialogue and to gain a deeper understanding of the text.

SOCRATIC SEMINAR is a dialogue, not a debate. It is designed to help students develop higher order thinking skills through discussion, questioning and efforts to define abstract concepts like truth, justice, beauty and equality.

Guidelines:

Socratic Seminar can be used with part of a longer expository text (social studies, health, science) to explore a particular question. It can be used on a short piece as the main discussion. The seminar discussion is based on a text that the entire class has read, and the seminar question comes directly from that text. Depending on the study habits of the students, the teacher may assign the reading as homework or read it together in class. A critical guideline is that, if you have never tried a Socratic Seminar before, during your prep period you might visit a colleague who is having one. Otherwise, read all of the information about this strategy several times. Be aware that it takes several tries with a class before it really starts to fall into place.

Advance Preparations:

1) The ideal size for SOCRATIC SEMINAR is 13-15 students. Since that size is a rare amount in most schools, here are several options for how to set up the classroom prior to a seminar. *Adapt the seminar steps, handouts and procedures to the option you choose.*

- **Option One** — Set up the room with two concentric circles. — The inner circle should have 13-15 desks, including one for the teacher to fill the role of facilitator. The role for students in the inner circle is to discuss the text and the seminar question(s). Leave one empty desk in the inner circle — a hot seat for anyone in the outer circle to come and ask a burning question or to make a burning comment. The person in the hot seat must leave after the comment is made so that another person may come in. — The outer circle should have the rest of the desks set up facing the backs of the inner circle. The role of the outer circle is to observe students in the inner circle as they discuss. Therefore, the outer circle is engaged in analysis of the discussion itself.
 - **Option Two** — Set up the chairs in one huge circle and allow all students to discuss the seminar question(s). Some students feel left out by Option One Socratic Seminar — page 2 above, so Option Two is a possible solution. Its success depends on how much students listen respectfully to a speaker. After discussion of the seminar question(s), all students also participate in the analysis of the discussion process. This option allows everyone in the seminar to see one another and helps to develop a community of talkers and listeners in class. Students are graded on their advance preparation for the seminar, not on discussion. They do not HAVE to talk.
 - **Option Three** — Set up the chairs in one huge circle. Have students count off ONE-TWO, ONE-TWO. Students who are ONE's will discuss; students who are TWO's will observe the discussion, performing the duties of the outer circle in Option One above. No one sits with a back to someone else; a sense of community may more easily be fostered in this setting. When students become more comfortable with the seminar format after 2-3 experiences with it, switch the roles of discussor and observer after 10 minutes so that all students do both during the period. Hint: Observers are assigned someone across from them, not next to them.
- 2) The facilitator/teacher prepares potential questions for discussion. Ideally, the class comes up with the one central abstract question. The teacher has back-up questions ready.
- 3) Students are instructed to read the piece the night before the seminar. They need copies to mark up, or need to use binder paper as substitute space for margin notes. Students are instructed to mark up the piece as follows (see student handout):
- Underline unfamiliar words. Try to figure out what they mean.
 - Write down questions that occur to you about things you don't understand, or about things you want to discuss.
 - Underline things you think are particularly important, and write why in the margin.
 - Write notes about what the reading section makes you think of, perhaps another text or event in your life.
 - Write your personal reaction to the text, whether you agree or disagree with the authors and why.
 - In the margin write a short paraphrase of any sentence or concept that seems more

difficult. This way you will be able to remember it more easily later.

On the day of the seminar — STEPS:

- 1) The room is arranged in one or two circles, depending on which option above that the teacher has chosen.
- 2) Students take up positions in the circle(s), either randomly or by teacher assignment.
- 3) Using the Student Handout on Socratic Seminar, the teacher and students review orally the procedures and roles that will be used.
- 4) For 10-20 minutes the seminar occurs. The time limit depends on the group and how well the seminar progresses. Timing may be more critical during the class' first effort.

Post-Seminar/The Critique:

Choose the seminar critiquing activity that works for you —

- For 10-15 minutes students process in writing how the seminar went. (See handout EVALUATION of DISCUSSION.)
- Ask every member of the seminar to think of both a positive aspect of the seminar and an aspect of the seminar which could be improved. Then go around the circle and ask each person to share one, or both, of their observations. This works with both inner and outer circles as well as a full class circle.
- Combine both the written and discussion methods above. How much you can accomplish depends on how long the period is. Feedback and debriefing works best if it happens directly after the seminar.

Collect the pre-seminar written work, the evaluative written work and tally sheets.

Variations, Other Activities and CIM Spinoffs:

- 1) Before starting the actual seminar, have the entire class write on two questions and then have half the class discuss one question while the other half watches. After 10 minutes or so, switch who is discussing and who is observing and discuss the other question. This will only work if there is enough left for the second group to discuss.
- 2) After the seminar and its debriefing is completed, using the seminar's central question as a topic, have students write an expository or persuasive essay. Take this through the writing process and then turn these writings into CIM speeches.

Taken from <http://www.pps.k12.or.us/files/curriculum/SocraticSemStrat04.pdf>

More information and handouts can be found at

<http://www.authenticeducation.org/documents/WhatSeminar04.pdf>

SAGE & SCRIBE

Instead of passing out worksheets and having students work alone to practice a skill, a teacher can break with tradition by using a Kagan Structure for active engagement. There are many mastery structures to choose from, but let's examine just one—Sage-N-Scribe. Students are seated in pairs with one worksheet. For the first problem Student A (The Sage) tells Student B (The Scribe) exactly what to write or do as the Scribe carries out the

instructions given by the Sage. The Scribe may coach if the Sage needs it, and congratulates the Sage upon problem completion. The students switch roles after each problem so the Scribe becomes the Sage.

Taken from

http://www.cooperativelearning.com/free_articles/dr_spencer_kagan/ASK39-2.php

GRAFITTI/CHALK TALK

Steps or Procedures

Chalk Talk is a silent way to generate ideas, develop projects, check on learning, solve problems, or reflect. Because it is done completely in silence, Chalk Talk allows students to interact visibly and directly with ideas and silently with each other. It encourages thoughtful contemplation, generates questions and ideas, and gives students a change of pace. Chalk Talk can be an uncomplicated silent reflection, or a spirited, but silent, exchange of ideas. It has been known to solve vexing problems, surprise everyone with how much is collectively known about something, get an entire project planned, or give a committee everything it needs to know with no verbal sparring. Chalk Talk can be used in democratic learning to:

- ☐ Generate ideas
- ☐ Develop projects
- ☐ Check on learning
- ☐ Solve problems
- ☐ Reflect

Chalk Talk can also be used as a documentation tool to capture the collective thought processes of the participants. Chalk Talk can be extended for various purposes. For example, participants can use the results of the Chalk Talk to help categorize ideas, prioritize tasks, and allocate responsibilities.

1. The facilitator explains very briefly that Chalk Talk is a silent activity. No one may talk at all and anyone may add to the Chalk Talk as they please. Participants can comment on each other's ideas by drawing a connecting line to the comment.
2. The facilitator writes a relevant question, term, or topic in a circle on the board or newsprint taped to the wall.
3. The facilitator places several markers or pieces of chalk at the board or paper and then hands some out to a few members of the group, *or* the facilitator provides chalk/markers for everyone. With large groups, it can be helpful to limit the number of people who are writing on the board/paper at the same time. Those who aren't at the board/paper should stand or sit in a position that allows them to see what's being written.
4. Participants write, as they feel moved to write. Allow plenty of wait time before deciding the Chalk Talk is over.

5. How the facilitator chooses to interact with the Chalk Talk influences its outcome. The facilitator can stand back and let it unfold or expand participants' thinking by:
 - ☐ Circling interesting ideas to invite comments or note a theme emerging
 - ☐ Writing questions about a participant's comment
 - ☐ Adding his/her own reflections or ideas
 - ☐ Connecting two interesting ideas/comments together with a line and adding a question mark. Active facilitator interaction encourages participants to do the same.
6. Time frame for a Chalk Talk is dependent upon the question, attention span of the participants, and group size. Generally, if no one adds anything to the Chalk Talk in a period of one to two minutes, then the activity should draw to a close, though the facilitator should say, "Are there any more additions?" before closing. Chalk Talks typically last no more than 10-15 minutes.
7. The facilitator, a participant, or the group as a whole briefly summarizes the results of the Chalk Talk, noting significant themes, connections, and questions.
8. In a possible extension of Chalk Talk, the facilitator or group can re-format the results into a list or categories to guide future work.

Taken from <http://www.leagueschools.com/chalktalk.pdf>

SAMPLE PRE-ASSESSMENT: EXTENDED ANTICIPATION GUIDE

Overview: To be able to reflect critically, students should be made aware of their opinions before the curriculum begins. In the extended anticipation guide, students will decide whether they agree or disagree with a comment. Doing so will create an opportunity to create a personal connection to thematic content, which allows them to better access the material and begin to think critically about the author's commentary.

This activity should be done before any texts are provided. The Anticipation Guide should be returned to at the end of the curriculum. Students will again decide whether they agree or disagree with a comment, but this time they will justify their opinions with evidence from the curriculum's texts. This will help guide them from expressive to transactive writing.

EXTENDED ANTICIPATION GUIDE

Directions: Read each question carefully and mark whether you strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), agree (A), or strongly agree (SA). Choose 3 statements and using your own experiences and insights justify your point of view in a paragraph.

1. People should never follow their cultural and social traditions if they don't agree with them.
2. Being able to speak and express ideas is often a sign of being independent.
3. Fulfillment comes from being able to control those around you.
4. People will never find fulfillment in taking part in something they only partially believe in.
5. In most cases, people should always do what their parent or guardian wants them to do.
6. People should always follow their dreams.
7. In most situations people find it difficult to find their own voice.
8. Most people have to live according to their own heart to be happy.

Adapted from laracollins.weebly.com

SAMPLE ACTIVITY 1: WRITING “WHERE I’M FROM” POEMS

Context & Purpose: To analyze identity and culture, students should start connecting their self-concept with specific people, events, and cultural markers. Modeled after George Ella Lyon’s “Where I’m From” poem, students consider what things make up who they are. This is a low-risk and fun way for students to express themselves and examine their cultures.

Overview: Students read George Ella Lyon’s “Where I’m From” poem. Teachers should guide students through the poem, asking them to make inferences about what George Ella Lyon’s life was like and what cultures she belonged to. Ask them what kinds of things make up who she is (i.e. sensory details from her childhood, stories about her family, imagery she associates with her family).

To help students pre-write, give them time to reflect on these questions:

- What places were important to you as a child? What do you remember about them?
- What objects, stories, names, or sayings do you associate with your parents?
- What’s an event that shaped who you were? What details or images do you associate with that event?
- What tastes or foods were significant in your childhood?
- Are there any songs or lyrics that were important to you?
- Is there an object that was significant to you as a child? What emotions are connected to this object?

Encourage students to use the answers to these questions to write their own “Where I’m From” poems.

For struggling students—Feel free to create a more structured template to help guide their writing and focus on sensory imagery

For advanced students—Challenge your students to play around with the form and organization of their poem.

“Where I’m From” by George Ella Lyons

I am from clothespins,
from Clorox and carbon-tetrachloride.
I am from the dirt under the back porch.
(Black, glistening,
it tasted like beets.)
I am from the forsythia bush
the Dutch elm
whose long-gone limbs I remember as if they were my own.

I’m from fudge and eyeglasses,
from Imogene and Alafair.
I’m from the know-it-alls
and the pass-it-ons,
from Perk up! and Pipe down!
I’m from He restoreth my soul
with a cottonball lamb
and ten verses I can say myself

I’m from Artemus and Billie’s Branch,
fried corn and strong coffee.
From the finger my grandfather lost to the auger,
the eye my father shut to keep his sight.

Under my bed was a dress box
spilling old pictures,
a sift of lost faces
to drift beneath my dreams.
I am from those moments —
snapped before I budded —
leaf-fall from the family tree.

SAMPLE ACTIVITY 2: EXPLORING LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY

Context & Purpose: Many students, particularly the White ones, find the use of dialect in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* confusing and off-putting. To understand why Hurston uses it, they must first comprehend it. This activity serves as an introduction to discourse analysis, academic language, and the dialect found in the book.

Overview: Students read and analyze “The Mother Tongue,” to understand that we use different kinds of language in different situations. Using her examples of “broken English” and “fluent English,” students will do a discourse analysis by filling in a graphic organizer. Students will then watch two brief videos on language and identity “Ebonics in the Age of Obama,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bt7O-nHSAp4&feature=related>; and “you talk funny” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mDz-azhNcxM&feature=related>, and complete a discourse analysis for the different cultural groups mentioned. Finally, students will read p. 2-3 to do a discourse analysis of the African-American dialect during the depression found in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

Academic Analysis

To introduce the debates regarding the value of different kinds of language, students read “The Mother Tongue.” Full text can be found at <http://teachers.sduhsd.k12.ca.us/mcunningham/grapes/mother%20tounge.pdf>. Suggest an active reading strategy, like annotating or highlighting the main ideas to hold students accountable for comprehension. Next, ask students to talk in groups about the following questions before sharing out with the class:

- What kinds of English does Tan classify in the text?
- What argument is Tan making about the role of different kinds of English?
- What rhetorical techniques does she use to construct her argument.
- Is her use of language register effective? How would this change if she wrote in only academic or professional English?

Explain that discourse analysis is a way to understand that certain cultural values are hidden in the way that we speak. To do a discourse analysis, we should look at:

1. The *function* of language: When do we use that kind of language? To persuade? To explain?
2. The *topics* of language: what kinds of issues do we talk about using that kind of language? Philosophy? Other people?
3. The *gaps* of language: What do we not talk about? What can we not use that register?
4. The *features* of language: What are the length of the sentences in that register? What kinds of diction do we use? Is there a lot of figurative language, or is straight to the point?

Using both the standard English in the story and the “limited” or “broken” English, model how to complete a discourse analysis for the different kinds of English. Explain

that this is a very basic analysis, but that it shows different cultural values: standard English is used by Tan to explain or clarify in an inoffensive way, and to reach the largest audience possible. Her mother's English shows that family and social relationships are valued, and the language shows more authentic connections between people than standard English, despite its choppy syntax.

Next, use different media clips from Youtube to allow students to practice discourse analysis:

- Northeast dialect v. Southern: "You talk funny"
- "Appalachian dialect"

Finally, ask students to practice discourse analysis on p. 2-3 on *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Ask them: what does this show about the values of the society in the book? Why do you think Zora Neale Hurston chose to switch out of standard English for the dialogue?

Reflection

To encourage student reflection, play the interview found in "Ebonics in the Obama Age," found at

http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=ebonics+obama&oq=ebonics+obama&aq=f&aqi=&aql=&gs_sm=3&gs_upl=1553171157724101157818113110101210101172170315.31810.

Ask students to reflect on the perspectives presented throughout the day:

- Are certain kinds of English better than others?
- How does your choice of English affect your opportunities?
- Has your perspective changed throughout the day?

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS GRAPHIC ORGANIZER					
Directions: Fill in each section with relevant examples from the text you are studying					
Name of text/language sample:					
Character/Dialect	Function of language/Dialect	Topics discussed	Gaps	Features of language/dialect	

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS GRAPHIC ORGANIZER (Key)					
<i>Directions: Fill in each section with relevant examples from the text you are studying</i>					
Name of text/language sample: “Mother Tongue” by Amy Tan					
Character/Dialect	Function of language/Dialect	Topics discussed	Gaps	Features of language/dialect	
Mother- “limited/broken” English	To describe/entertain – story about the gangster	Family connections “he belong to that side local people” Gossip Customs “Chinese Way. Came only to show respect.”	Couldn’t use for business – people interpreted her as “limited”	Short sentences – “Chinese custom. Chinese social life that way.” “vivid, direct, full of observation and imagery”	
Amy Tan- Modern Standard/Academic English	To inform – speaking to the writers	Writing Intellectual ideas	Not used to convey passion – incident with the business man on the phone	Advanced vocabulary; Abstract – “intersection of memory upon imagination” polite	

SAMPLE VOCABULARY LIST

Acculturation
Culture
Class
Commodification
Dialect
Discrimination
Diversity
Empower
Ethnicity
Ethnocentrism
Feminism
Gender
Hegemony
Institutionalized racism
Internalized racism
Norm
Oppression
Patriarchy
Prejudice
Privilege
Sexism
Stereotype

BOOK LIST FOR NOVEL STUDY

Overview: Any novel that examines identity can be used during Phase 2 of All Our Voices. Teachers should consider student interest, reading level, novel length, and population when choosing a novel. While the curriculum allows for quite a bit of flexibility, the most fruitful novels will be from the perspective of only one character, and deal with issues of gender, race, class, and language. This is by no means an extensive list, just novels that in my experience might be useful.

Alexie, Sherman. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*.*

Anderson, Laurie. *Speak*.

de la Pena, Alex. *Mexican WhiteBoy*.*

Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*.*

Courtenoy, Bryce. *The Power of One*.*

Diaz, Junot. *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*.

Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man*.

Guterson, David. *Snow Falling on Cedars*.

Hosseini, Khaled. *The Kite Runner*.

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.*

Kingston, Maxine Hong. *The Woman Warrior**.

Lahiri, Jhuma. *The Namesake*.*

Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*.*

Morrison, Toni. *The Song of Solomon*.*

Myers, Walter Dean. *Monster*.

Roy, Arundi. *The God of Small Things*.

Silko, Leslie Marie. *Ceremony*.

Stockett, Kathryn. *The Help*.

Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple*.

Wright, Richard. *Black Boy*.*

Yang, Gene Luen. *American Born Chinese*.*

SAMPLE ACTIVITY 3: INTRODUCING CRITICAL LENSES

Context & Purpose: Introducing the critical lenses using an easy text will help students to begin to adopt the language and genre of the analytic expository essay writing they might encounter in higher education.

Overview: The teacher introduces the critical lenses: new criticism, Feminist/Gender, Marxist, and Race/Postcolonial. Students read “Cinderella” by Anne Sexton. The teacher guides student comprehension of the poem. The students, in groups, complete a graphic organizer to analyze the poem according to the different lenses.

Recommended grouping: 3-4 students per group. This would be a good opportunity for a jigsaw activity. Students begin by reading the poems in their group, then dividing into four expert groups: New Criticism, Feminist/Gender, Marxist, Race/Postcolonial. Each expert group comes to an understanding of the poem from their particular lens, and then reconvene into the first groups. Each “expert” teaches their lens so that every student has a complete copy of the graphic organizer by the end of the activity. Debrief as a whole class.

“Cinderella” by Anne Sexton

You always read about it:
the plumber with the twelve children
who wins the Irish Sweepstakes.
From toilets to riches.
That story.

Or the nursemaid,
some luscious sweet from Denmark
who captures the oldest son's heart.
From diapers to Dior.
That story.

Or a milkman who serves the wealthy,
eggs, cream, butter, yogurt, milk,
the White truck like an ambulance
who goes into real estate
and makes a pile.
From homogenized to martinis at lunch.

Or the charwoman
who is on the bus when it cracks up
and collects enough from the insurance.
From mops to Bonwit Teller.
That story.

Once
the wife of a rich man was on her
deathbed
and she said to her daughter Cinderella:
Be devout. Be good. Then I will smile
down from heaven in the seam of a
cloud.
The man took another wife who had
two daughters, pretty enough
but with hearts like blackjacks.
Cinderella was their maid.
She slept on the sooty hearth each night
and walked around looking like Al
Jolson.
Her father brought presents home from
town,

jewels and gowns for the other women
but the twig of a tree for Cinderella.
She planted that twig on her mother's
grave
and it grew to a tree where a White dove
sat.
Whenever she wished for anything the
dove
would drop it like an egg upon the
ground.
The bird is important, my dears, so heed
him.

Next came the ball, as you all know.
It was a marriage market.
The prince was looking for a wife.
All but Cinderella were preparing
and gussying up for the event.
Cinderella begged to go too.
Her stepmother threw a dish of lentils
into the cinders and said: Pick them
up in an hour and you shall go.
The White dove brought all his friends;
all the warm wings of the fatherland
came,
and picked up the lentils in a jiffy.
No, Cinderella, said the stepmother,
you have no clothes and cannot dance.
That's the way with stepmothers.

Cinderella went to the tree at the grave
and cried forth like a gospel singer:
Mama! Mama! My turtledove,
send me to the prince's ball!
The bird dropped down a golden dress
and delicate little slippers.
Rather a large package for a simple bird.
So she went. Which is no surprise.
Her stepmother and sisters didn't
recognize her without her cinder face
and the prince took her hand on the spot

and danced with no other the whole day.

As nightfall came she thought she'd better
get home. The prince walked her home
and she disappeared into the pigeon
house
and although the prince took an axe and
broke
it open she was gone. Back to her
cinders.
These events repeated themselves for
three days.
However on the third day the prince
covered the palace steps with cobbler's
wax
and Cinderella's gold shoe stuck upon it.
Now he would find whom the shoe fit
and find his strange dancing girl for
keeps.
He went to their house and the two
sisters
were delighted because they had lovely
feet.
The eldest went into a room to try the
slipper on
but her big toe got in the way so she
simply
sliced it off and put on the slipper.
The prince rode away with her until the
White dove

told him to look at the blood pouring
forth.

That is the way with amputations.
They just don't heal up like a wish.
The other sister cut off her heel
but the blood told as blood will.
The prince was getting tired.
He began to feel like a shoe salesman.
But he gave it one last try.
This time Cinderella fit into the shoe
like a love letter into its envelope.

At the wedding ceremony
the two sisters came to curry favor
and the White dove pecked their eyes
out.
Two hollow spots were left
like soup spoons.

Cinderella and the prince
lived, they say, happily ever after,
like two dolls in a museum case
never bothered by diapers or dust,
never arguing over the timing of an egg,
never telling the same story twice,
never getting a middle-aged spread,
their darling smiles pasted on for
eternity.
Regular Bobbsey Twins.
That story.

CRITICAL LENS GRAPHIC ORGANIZER					
TEXT AND AUTHOR					
	New Criticism	Feminist/Gender	Marxist	Postcolonial/Race	
What aspects of the text lend themselves to this particular lens?					
Cite specific textual passages that support this reading					
If you look through this lens, what themes or patterns are brought into					
If you look through this lens, what questions emerge?					
Do you believe in this reading? Why or why not?					

CRITICAL LENS GRAPHIC ORGANIZER (Key)					
TEXT AND AUTHOR: “Cinderella” by Anne Sexton					
	New Criticism	Feminist/Gender	Marxist	Postcolonial/Race	
What aspects of the text lend themselves to this particular lens?	Connection of Cinderella story to new stories Modern language	References to how women should act and look Violence to bodies	Lots of references to poor, rich, gold, and work	References to Al Jolson	
Cite specific textual passages that support this reading		“they had lovely feet”— “her big toe got in the way so she simply sliced it off”—“cut off her heel “you have no clothes and	“It was a marriage market” “golden dress” “began to feel like a shoe salesman”		
If you look through this lens, what themes or patterns are brought into		1. Women are nothing unless they’re married. 2. Women need to change their bodies			
If you look through this lens, what questions emerge?					
Do you believe in this reading? Why or why not?				This reading is not useful for this lens. There aren’t enough references.	

Literary Theories: A Sampling of Critical Lenses

Literary theories were developed as a means to understand the various ways in which people read texts. The proponents of each theory believe that their theory is *the* theory, but most of us interpret texts according to the “rules” of several different theories at one time. All literary theories are lenses through which we can see texts. There is no reason to say that one is better than another or that you should read according to any of them, but it is sometimes fun to “decide” to read a text with one in mind because you often end up with a whole new perspective on your reading. What follows is a summary of some of the most common schools of literary theory. These descriptions are extremely cursory, and none of them fully explains what the theory is all about. But it is enough to get the general idea.

The Formalist Perspective: The word *formal* has two related meanings, both of which apply within this perspective. The first relates to its root word, *form*, a structure’s shape that we can recognize and use to make associations. The second relates to a set of conventions or accepted practices. Formal poetry, for example, has meter, rhyme, stanzas, and other predictable features that it shares with poems of the same type. The formalist perspective, then, pays particular attention to these issues of form and convention. Instead of looking at the world in which a poem exists, for example, the formalist perspective says that a poem should be treated as an independent and self-sufficient object. The methods used in this perspective are those pertaining to close reading, that is, detailed and subtle analysis of the formal components that make up the literary work, such as the meanings and interactions of words, figures of speech, and symbols.

Gender/Feminist Criticism. A feminist critic sees cultural and economic disabilities in a “patriarchal” society that have hindered or prevented women from realizing their creative possibilities, including woman’s cultural identification as merely a passive object, or “Other,” and man is the defining and dominating subject. There are several assumptions and concepts held in common by most feminist critics:

- Our civilization is pervasively patriarchal.
- The concepts of “gender” are largely, if not entirely, cultural constructs, affected by the omnipresent patriarchal biases of our civilization.
- This patriarchal ideology pervades those writings that have been considered great literature. Such works lack autonomous female role models, are implicitly addressed to male readers, and shut out the woman reader as an alien outsider or solicit her to identify against herself by assuming male values and ways of perceiving, feeling, and acting.

This type of criticism is somewhat like Marxist criticism, but instead of focusing on the relationships between the classes it focuses on the relationships between the genders. Under this theory you would examine the patterns of thought, behavior, values, enfranchisement, and power in relations between the sexes. For example, “Where Are

"You Going, Where Have You Been" can be seen as the story of the malicious dominance men have over women both physically and psychologically. Connie is the female victim of the role in society that she perceives herself playing—the coy young lass whose life depends on her looks.

Social-Class/Marxist Criticism. A Marxist critic grounds his or her theory and practice on the economic and cultural theory of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, especially on the following claims:

1. The evolving history of humanity, its institutions, and its ways of thinking are determined by the changing mode of its "material production"—that is, of its basic economic organization.
2. Historical changes in the fundamental mode of production effect essential changes both in the constitution and power relations of social classes, which carry on a conflict for economic, political, and social advantage.
3. Human consciousness in any era is constituted by an ideology—that is, a set of concepts, beliefs, values, and ways of thinking and feeling through which human beings perceive, and by which they explain what they take to be reality. A Marxist critic typically undertakes to "explain" the literature of any era by revealing the economic, class, and ideological determinants of the way an author writes. A Marxist critic examines the relation of the text to the social reality of that time and place.

This school of critical theory focuses on power and money in works of literature. Who has the power/money? Who does not? What happens as a result? For example, it could be said that "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" is about the upper class attempting to maintain its power and influence over the lower class by chasing Ichabod, a lower-class citizen with aspirations toward the upper class, out of town. This would explain some of the story's descriptions of land, wealth, and hearty living that are seen through Ichabod's eyes.

Postcolonial/Racial Criticism:

Assumptions

1. Colonialism is a powerful, usually destructive historical force that shapes not only the political futures of the countries involved but also the identities of colonized and colonizing people.
2. Successful colonialism depends on a process of "Othering" the people colonized. That is, the colonized people are seen as dramatically different from and lesser than the colonizers.
3. Because of this, literature written in colonizing cultures often distorts the experiences and realities of colonized people. Literature written by colonized people often includes attempts to articulate more empowered identities and reclaim cultures in the face of colonization.

Strategies

1. Search the text for references to colonization or to currently and formerly colonized people. In these references, how are the colonized people portrayed? How is the process of colonization portrayed?
2. Consider what images of “Others” or processes of “Othering” are present in the text. How are these “Others” portrayed?
3. Analyze how the text deals with cultural conflicts between the colonizing culture and the colonized or traditional culture.

Here’s another definition of postcolonial theory:

Postcolonial literary theory attempts to isolate perspectives in literature that grow out of colonial rule and the mindset it creates. On one hand, it can examine the ways in which a colonizing society imposes its worldview on the peoples it subjugates, making them “objects” of observation and denying them the power to define themselves. The colonizers are the “subjects,” those who take action and create realities out of the beliefs they hold to be important. On the other hand, it can focus on the experiences of colonized peoples and the disconnection they feel from their own identities. Postcolonialism also focuses on attempts of formerly colonized societies to reassert the identities they wish to claim for themselves, including national identities and cultural identities. When this lens is used to examine the products of colonization, it focuses on reclamation of self-identity. One thing that postcolonial theory shares with deconstruction is the attempt to isolate “false binaries,” categories that function by including dominant perspectives and excluding the rest, relegating outsiders to the status of “Other.” Colonized people are always seen as existing outside the prevailing system of beliefs or values. As the dominant ideology asserts itself, it creates a sense of normalcy around the ideas of the colonizers and a sense of the exotic, the inexplicable, and the strange around the customs and ideas of the “Other.”

Appleman, Deborah (2009). *Critical Encounters in High School English*, 2nd Edition. Teachers College Press.

Retrieved from <http://www.tcpress.com/pdfs/9780807748923Activities.pdf>

CRITICAL LENS ESSAY PROMPTS: *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Consider the work we've done with examining the book through Feminist/Gender Theory, Marxist, and Postcolonialism/Race Theory lenses. Choose one of the following questions, and write a 3-4 page critical analysis. The final draft should be 12 pt Times New Roman, double spaced, 1 inch margins.

Essay prompts:

1. In 1937, the novelist Richard Wright (*Native Son*) reviewed *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. He argued: "Miss Hurston voluntarily continues in her novel the tradition which was forced upon the Negro in the theater, that is, the minstrel technique that makes 'the White folks' laugh...The novel carries no theme, no message, no thought. In the main, her novel is not addressed to the Negro, but to a White audience whose chauvinistic tastes she knows how to satisfy." How would you answer his criticism?*
2. After years of polite submission to her male counterparts, Janie gains her voice in Chapters 7 and 8. Prior to her defiance of Joe, Janie observes the way Daisy, Mrs. Bogle, and Mrs. Robbins are treated by the men. These three Eatonville women provide caricatures—quick, stereotyped sketches—of what it means to be a black woman in this small Florida town. In what ways do these caricatures highlight a larger disrespect toward women? How do they show Janie's increasing difficulty with the way men judge women?*
3. Look at the relationship between different characters and money, or the search for financial success. This search has been an important part of the American Dream. How does Hurston represent this struggle for financial success? What understanding of class and class differences do we get from reading this novel?
4. Because Janie is part White, she has trouble integrating into either the White or the Black community. Think about the way that Hurston constructs what black and White culture is: how do characters negotiate between the two? How does Hurston create a spectrum of racism?
5. This novel is all about Janie's search for happiness. What is it that keeps her from having what she wants? How does she ultimately accomplish her goals? What commentary is Hurston making about the search for identity and the American Dream?

*prompts found at NEA's The Big Read

Name: _____

Ms. Whatley

Date: _____

***Their Eyes Were Watching God* Critical Essay**

Due: Thursday March 15 at midnight

Your Task:

Write a critical essay in which you evaluate how *Their Eyes Were Watching God* offers a viewpoint that either supports the status quo or undermines it.

Critical Lens: Feminist/Gender Theory Marxist Postcolonial/Race

Critical Lens Essay Rubric

Student needs to work on:

Introduction (10 points)

- | | |
|-------|--|
| _____ | providing a topic sentence that relates to the critical lens. |
| _____ | providing a focused thesis that makes an argument |
| _____ | providing an interpretation of the critical lens. |
| _____ | Identifying the title, author, genre and expressive adjective describing the work of literature. |

Body Paragraph#1 (20 points)

- | | |
|-------|--|
| _____ | restating the title, author and genre of work of literature |
| _____ | providing a thorough description of a literary element from the work of literature. |
| _____ | explaining how the specific scene supports interpretation of critical lens. |

Body Paragraph #2 (20 points)

- | | |
|-------|--|
| _____ | providing a thorough description of a literary element from the work of literature. |
| _____ | explaining how the specific scene supports interpretation of critical lens. |

Body Paragraph #3 (20 points)

- | | |
|-------|--|
| _____ | providing a thorough description of a literary element from the work of literature. |
| _____ | explaining how the specific scene supports interpretation of critical lens. |

Conclusion (10 points)

- | | |
|-------|--|
| _____ | restating the critical lens and summarizing what it means. |
| _____ | briefly explaining how work of literature supports or disproves critical lens. |
| _____ | concluding with a creative sentence that ties the essay together. |

Stylistics (20 points)

- | | |
|-------|--|
| _____ | establishing clearly delineated and indented paragraphs. |
| _____ | adhering to the conventions of Standard English and writing a response reflective of academic rigor. |
| _____ | writing MLA formatted heading in the upper left corner of paper. |

RESOURCES FOR SOCIAL ISSUE STUDY

Overview: There are innumerable cases and social issues that can be pulled into the All Our Voices curriculum. I chose to do racial profiling, illegal immigration and affirmative action based on the interests of my students, and the current events that were making news at the time (such as the Trayvon Martin shooting case and Fisher v. Texas). The most fruitful issues will be the ones in which students are asked to consider their identity and stake in the issue before voicing their opinions. For example, the drone attacks might not have been as pertinent a study in my classroom, but would be an area of rich discussion with students who have parents in the military, or family connections to areas affected.

This list of social issues is by no means extensive. I've also included a list of internet resources that include primary documents to analyze, and lesson plans for specific issues.

Possible social issues: abortion, anti-Muslim and Arab bias, affirmative action, bullying, capital punishment, censorship in schools, church-state separation, climate change, drone attacks, educational inequality, euthanasia and assisted suicide, fast food, gun control, health care reform, immigration reform, obesity, racial profiling, same-sex marriage, sex in the media, social security cuts, stem cell research, wealth inequality, welfare spending, worker's unions

Online resources:

Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility:

<http://www.morningsidecenter.org/teachable-moment/lessons>

The website includes lesson plans broken down by social issues. You can search by area, subject, or grade level. The lesson plans include student readings and discussion questions. The lesson plans I reviewed were nuanced, and offered multiple perspectives of the issues.

CQ Researcher

<http://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/>

This search engine is great for looking for texts about the social issues. My favorite part was that there is a "pro/con" feature for each issue, which paired opposing viewpoints on each topic. The issues were also broken down into specific research questions. For example, under affirmative action, there were questions like "Would Black and Latino students be better off at lower ranked universities?" with articles addressing those specific questions. There is also a way to track new articles being published on current issues. The articles come from credible sources.

Ethics Updates from University of San Diego

<http://ethics.sandiego.edu>

Under the “applied ethics” section, there are links to multimedia pertaining to current social issues. This website is particularly useful for exposing students to how people speak about social issues in academia, as much of it is from and for study in a university. Because the language is more advanced than in some of the other resources, this would be useful towards the end of a social issue study as students are moving into the transactive writing stage.

Pros and Cons of Controversial Issues

<http://www.procon.org>

This is a great website for introducing the social issues, and finding resources to support multiple viewpoints. The website is maintained by a non-profit, and breaks down arguments for and against different controversial issues, along with links to primary resources that support those arguments. There is also a section for educators that includes research on critical thinking, and links to more lesson plans for teaching social issues.

VOICE ACTIVITY LIST

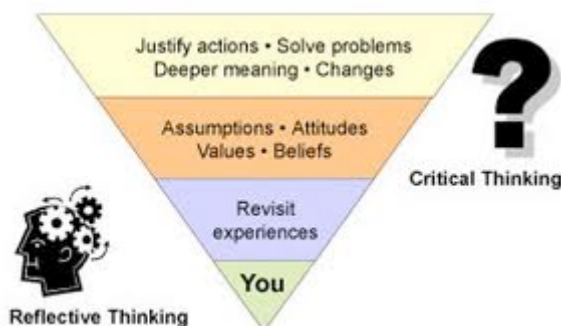
Overview: It's often difficult for a student to find a writer's voice that matches his or personality. However, once the student finds it, he or she is more able to control writing for specified audiences, making the student a much more effective communicator. The following activities are brief and fun creative writing activities that will help students hone in on a style that reflects their personality, while building an attention to how language conveys identity.

1. Playing with personalities: Ask students to complete an easy descriptive task, like write a paragraph describing the classroom. Encourage them to use good imagery and descriptive language. Then, in pairs or groups, ask the students to complete the same task, only pretending they are someone else, like a suburban soccer man, serial killer, thirteen year old girl, or a dog.
 - What details would the personality notice?
 - What kind of vocabulary would they use?
 - Would they use short or long sentences?
 Have students share with the whole class, and be sure to point out the specific language that conveys each personality.
2. Writing to music: I found that when my students listened to different kinds of music while they wrote, their voice changed. Think of an easy writing topic which students will not have to think about but can write for a while on, like what are you looking forward to doing this weekend? Or, how was your summer? Choose four songs with different styles and rhythms, like a classical piece, a bluegrass piece, a jazz piece, and a rap piece. Between each song, give students a chance to finish their thoughts, and then take a short break. This should act like a palate cleanser, but for their brain. The focus is not on *what* the students are writing, but *how*. After the activity, ask them to reflect on how their style changed, and which music they thought helped them have a stronger writer's voice.
3. Personality reflection: Ask students to write a couple adjectives that describe themselves. Then, ask them to of a few adjectives that they hoped other people would use to describe their writing. Then, ask them what kind of food their writing would be. This is usually difficult for them, but also hilarious and thought-provoking. For example, a student who describes her writing as a chocolate doughnut should have a very different style and voice than a student who describes her writing as macaroni and cheese. Ask students to share aloud with the class, and encourage discussions on how each of these foods would "sound."

-adapted from ideas found at <http://menwithpens.ca/writing-voice/>

CRITICAL REFLECTION RUBRIC

A great deal of your time university will be spent thinking; thinking about what people have said, what you have read, what you yourself are thinking and how your thinking has changed. It is generally believed that the thinking process involves two aspects: reflective thinking and critical thinking. They are not separate processes; rather, they are closely connected (Brookfield 1987).



Reflection is a form of personal response to experiences, situations, events or new information. It is a ‘processing’ phase where thinking and learning take place. There is neither a right nor a wrong way of reflective thinking, there are just questions to explore.

Reflection involves revisiting your prior experience and knowledge of the topic you are exploring. It also involves considering how and why you think the way you do. The examination of your beliefs, values, attitudes and assumptions forms the foundation of your understanding.

Levels of Critical Reflection (based on Smith and Hatton, 2005)

Score (out of 4)	Criteria
0	No attempt made at the assignment
1 Unreflective descriptive writing	-Describes opinions or facts with no consideration of alternate viewpoints
2 Reflective descriptive writing	-Attempts to analyze events or actions -One sided in its description of a topic
3 Dialogic reflection	-Considers multiple viewpoints -Steps back from personal opinions -questions the perspectives of topics
4 Critical reflection	-status quo is questioned -topic includes social, political, or cultural considerations

VOICE RUBRIC

adapted from materials found in *Edge: Level C*. Hampton-Brown Publishing.

Score (of 4)	Voice and Style	
4	The writing fully engages the reader, and reflects the writer's personality. The tone reflects the appropriate emotion for each topic. Clearly shows intention.	• The vocabulary is specific and vivid • The sentences are varied and flow together well
3	The writing <i>mostly</i> engages the reader, and reflects the writer's personality. The tone is mostly consistent. Shows intention.	• Most of the vocabulary is specific and vivid • Most of the sentences are varied and flow together well
2	<i>Some</i> of the writing is engaging. The voice and style is not unique.	• Some vocabulary is specific and vivid • Some sentences are varied, but do not flow together well.
1	The writing does not engage the reader.	• The words are often vague and dull. • The sentences lack variety and do not flow together.

VIDEO PROJECT GUIDELINES AND RUBRIC

We understand that we are more than labels and stereotypes. However, we must also understand that we are historically connected to other communities, and that when we make decisions about the labels we choose and the labels that are given to us, we are either continuing power inequalities or challenging them. We do not exist in a vacuum. We need to negotiate our own space.

In order to carve our own “third-space,” we will be creating two minute videos examining our different cultural identities (nationality, race, gender, religion, academic, class, age, etc.) You must choose at least three to examine, and combine images, audio, video, and narration to construct a well crafted argument about who you are. Be conscious of how your choices of pictures, sounds, and words will affect your audience.

TIMELINE

1. Gather cultural artifacts—pictures, videos, music, language, and store it on Moodle in the forum marked “cultural artifacts.” Everyone must submit at least three and analyze the significance of that artifact. What is its effect on the audience? What is the significance to you? Does this challenge or perpetuate power dynamics?

Due date: _____

2. Storyboarding. Using the artifacts as your guide, you’ll create a storyboard with narration to help you plan your video.

Due date: _____

3. Peer review. You are required to present a rough draft of the video to a peer for review, and review at least one other rough draft.

Due date: _____

4. Presentations. Your video must be complete and ready for evaluation.

Due date: _____

RUBRIC

Storyboard	10 pts
Content/Organization	30 pts
Narration	20 pts
Introduction	10 pts
Video editing	10 pts
Audio editing	10 pts
Graphics	10 pts

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