

Exploration of Black Voices in Literature

-Twinsburg High School proposal for elective course beginning 21-22 school year-

Daneé Pinckney

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Course Description

This is an elective literature course examining the history and culture of African Americans in the United States beginning with early African literary tradition and onward through the modern African-American experience in an interdisciplinary design. The course addresses the literary and artistic contributions of early Africans and African-Americans to American culture. Students will recognize the range and variety of the writing of African-Americans throughout history and into contemporary literature and will be able to identify the ways that this literature responds to historical and social events. Through close consideration of verbal and literary modes, including, but not limited to: African retentions, oral traditions, signifying, folklore, and music, the course will explore the creation of the unique African American literary voice, and how it has affected both African Americans' understandings of themselves, as well as the ways in which they have historically been understood in the American popular imagination. In an effort to critically map the genealogies of this tradition we will be interrogating not only the historical and political contexts of the works, but also the ways in which issues of gender, sexuality, and class specifically inform the works. Critical thinking, reading, writing, and oral presentation skills are emphasized. (*Open to 11-12 grade students*)

Course Textbook for consideration:

The Norton Anthology of African American Literature Third Edition

ISBN: 978-0-393-91155-8

<https://wnorton.com/books/9780393911558>

Essential Questions of the Course

What can it mean to be black in America?

How do social constructs influence black experiences?

In what ways have the voices of blacks in this country been silenced?

What are the benefits of knowing more about black history and black culture?

How could black stories be best told across the nation?

How have events and beliefs in my community influenced black experiences?

Units of Coverage

Quarter 1

Unit 1: Early African Kingdoms and Atlantic Slave Trade

Emphasize difference between nationality, race and ethnicity

Literature and Supplemental Works: "Al Bakri Describes Kumbi Saleh and Ghana's Royal Court"

Utendi wa Tambuka (The Story of Tambuka) Swahili Epic Poem

Oral Tradition (orature, griot)

Trickster Literature: Anansi the Spider (Ashanti people of Ghana), Ajapa the Tortoise (Yoruba tale from Nigeria) Brer Rabbit

"ROOTS" film based on Alex Haley's novel

Unit 2: Slavery in the United States

Literature and Supplemental Works: "Equiano's Travels: The Interesting Narrative Of The Life Of Olaudah Equiano Or Gustavus Vassa The African"

Heart of Darkness Joseph Conrad

Harriet Jacobs' "Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl"

Frederick Douglass' "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave"

Negro Spirituals various compositions "Run to Jesus"

"Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral" by Phillis Wheatley

Henry "Box" Brown Washington Post Article

"Campbell Family Letters" Hannah Valentine, etc.

Frances Ellen Watkins Harper various poetry

Standards Covered: RL.11-12.1-2, 4, 6-7; RI.11-12.1, 3, 4, 6; W.11-12.2, 4, 5, 6, 9-10; SL.11-12.1, 4; L.11-12.1-6

Quarter 2

Unit 3: Civil War and Reconstruction

Rise of Jim Crow

Literature and Supplemental Works: Booker T. Washington "Up from Slavery"

W. E. B. Du Bois, "Souls of Black Folk"

David Walker "Appeal, in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World"

Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart Maria W. Stewart

Behind the Scenes; or, Thirty Years a Slave and Four Years in the White House

Elizabeth Keckley

Charles Chesnutt, "The Goophered Grapevine"

Paul Laurence Dunbar, various poetry

James Weldon Johnson, *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*

Gospel and Secular Ballads various compositions

Imperium In Imperio By Sutton Griggs

"Not a Man, and Yet a Man" Albery Allson Whitman

"We Wear the Mask," "Sympathy," and "The Haunted Oak," Paul Laurence

Dunbar

The Marrow of Tradition Charles W. Chestnutt

Sketches of Southern Life various poems Frances Ellen Watkins Harper

Standards Covered RL.11-12.1-6; RI.11-12.1, 3, 4, 6-7; W.11-12.2, 4-10; SL.11-12.1, 2, 4, 6; L.11-12.1-6

Quarter 3

Unit 4: The Rise and Fight of the Black Middle Class

Redlining, Segregation and Desegregation

Literature and Supplemental Works: Alain Locke, "The New Negro"

Claude McKay various poetry

The Burning: Massacre, Destruction, and the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921

by Tim Madigan

"The Lost Village In New York City" Daisy Alioto

Zora Neale Hurston, "Sweat," "How It Feels to be Colored Me," "Characteristics of Negro Expression"

Passing Nella Larson

Warriors Don't Cry: A Searing Memoir of The Battle to Integrate Little Rock's

Central High by Melba Patillo Beals

Richard Wright, "Blueprint for Negro Writing," "The Man Who Lived Underground"

Native Son

Ralph Ellison, "Richard Wright's Blues," *Invisible Man*,

Jazz and Blues various compositions

"Voices on the Hill" (Twinsburg Heights Documentary)

Amiri Baraka, *Dutchman*

A Lesson Before Dying Ernest J. Gaines

Go Tell It On the Mountain James Baldwin

The Street Ann Petry

Standards Covered RL.11-12.1 1-6, 10; W.11-12.2; W.11-12.3; W.11-12.4; W.11-12.5; W.11-12.6; W.11-12.10; SL.11-12.1-6; L.11-12.1-6

Quarter 4

Unit 5: Contemporary Issue of Blacks in America

Literature and Supplemental Works: Paule Marshall, "Reena"

Alice Walker, "Everyday Use"

After Tupac & D Foster Jacqueline Woodson

Dear Martin Nic Stone

Various poetry by Nikki Giovanni

Various poetry by Maya Angelou

Toni Cade Bambara, "Raymond's Run"

Robert Hayden various poetry

"Recitatif," *Songs of Solomon*, *The Bluest Eye*, *Beloved* Toni Morrison

Gwendolyn Brooks, various poetry

James Baldwin, "Sonny's Blues," "Going to Meet the Man"

"13th" film by Ava Duvernay

R&B and Hip Hop various compositions

Such a Fun Age by Kiley Reid

What Is Not Yours Is Not Yours By Helen Oyeyemi (alternative)

Black Leopard, Red Wolf Marlon James (fantasy)

We Cast a Shadow by Maurice Carlos Ruffin (satire)

Alice Randall "The Wind Done Gone" (satire)

Voices of the Hill: A Twinsburg Documentary (2016) Directed by Carla LynDale Carter. With John Curry.

Standards Covered: RL.11-12. 1-6, 10; RI.11-12. 1-2, 7; W.11-12. 1-2, 4-10; SL.11-12.1-6; L.11-12.1-6

Grammar

Throughout the course, students will explore various aspects of African American Vernacular English (AAVE). The aim is not to teach students how to use AAVE, but rather to acknowledge and celebrate its usage. AAVE is an informal dialect spoken by many African Americans in The United States that has and is too often referred to as lazy or broken English. On the contrary, AAVE has its own distinct set of phonological and syntactic rules that are aligned in many ways with the rules of other dialects. Linguists estimate that AAVE is spoken by 80-90% of African Americans. Those who speak AAVE are described as “bidialectal”, meaning they slip easily in and out of AAVE and Standard American English (SAE) dialect. Otherwise known as code-switching, black speakers switch between a more Standard English and AAVE, and the extent of AAVE’s use is regulated by circumstances such as communication partner, environment, or topic.