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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2015 Volume II: American Culture in the Long 20th Century

Placing Literature in a Cultural Studies Framework: *The Color Purple*

Guide for Curriculum Unit 15.02.08
by Eric W. Maroney

This unit layers New Criticism with a cultural studies framework to approach the novel, *The Color Purple*. Throughout the unit students define, analyze and compare cultural artifacts that emerge from the period in which Alice Walker is writing. By framing the novel, itself, as a cultural artifact, students are able to apply a critical lens to the text and probe the social and political context of the work, which arises out of a rich political history, caught within the intersection of race, gender and class. Students will consider the social and material conditions of the period Walker is writing in and consider how those realities may have impacted her choices as a writer.

(Recommended for English and U.S. History, grades 11 and 12)

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