



Using Afrofuturism to Re-Vision My Place in the World

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Introduction/Background

Letter to My Future Students on the Precipice of Creating an Alternate Universe¹

Dear Student:

I ask you to consider the stories you have been told about the African American or Other (character). Do you ever think about why the character is depicted in this manner? Do you think the author contemplates his or her storytelling? Is the storyteller able to present a story objectively? Have you ever felt the impact of a point of view? When the impact was negative, was it due to the story told or an erroneously depiction of what you have identified as characteristics of you? In the development of this curriculum, my aim is not to create a series of history or science lessons for you. Instead, I just want to share with you, as others have shared with me--the power of words. My sharing is in the spirit of Sankofa, for there is great wisdom to be gained by looking back as one goes forward. It is my belief that by knowing one's past, one can forge a stronger future. I wish to alert you to the danger of the single story.²

I recognize that you are just starting out on your independent literary journey and there are many things that you have yet to explore and perhaps may not have even speculated about. On that note, I'd like to think that this journey is an excursion where you will think and question the foundations of those things you may consider "givens." I want you to learn, appreciate and recognize what makes you you and be on the lookout for those depictions that devalue you.

As a teacher, I watch and interact with you. I know that you can be destroyed by internalizing detrimental messages. I appreciate your potential power as you take possession of a derogatory concept³ and transform it into a "friendly salutation" but I wonder about the wisdom of the decision. I'd like to discuss how you freed yourself from the power of a derogatory reference, if you acknowledge that there are limitations to who can salute you in this manner and who cannot. Would you make the same choices if you knew the stories that I have come to know?

So, let us read, write and explore together. Let us travel back and forth in time examining old and new stories and the ways they are told. Your teacher and fellow learner

Rationale

I was intrigued by the popularity and the means by which the movie, *The Black Panther*, explored the idea of justice within a fantastic land of Wakanda--loosely based on Africa. Science fiction allows for the impossible. It may have scientific possibility or may be filled with mysticism, spirituality or an attempt to make sense out of a myth.⁴ Generally, science fiction is a “tool for imagining possible futures and technologies.”⁵ It can give us a vision of a desirable future or show what to avoid. In either case, it inspires us to strive for a better tomorrow. Science fiction can be the vehicle to drive us into lands where we have never set foot and yet which—because they are cognitively linked to the world we do know and are invested with our actual longings--seem like home.⁶ It allows us to be in the past, present and a utopian future simultaneously. As a genre, Vint states it is difficult to define exactly what science fiction is.⁷ She offers instead a list of motifs such as alien encounters, robots and other created beings, travel through time or outer space, apocalyptic or perfected futures, posthuman descendants, and Artificial Intelligences that serve to signal or mark a work as science fictional. She states that it is the cultural power of these icons at work that help create mythologies that help us grasp the experience of human life in a world dominated by scientific thinking. In this curriculum, I wish to extend this intrigue to exploration of utopias within the genre of science fiction--specifically Afrofuturism.

Afrofuturism is an intersection of imagination, technology, the future and liberation.⁸ Ingrid LaFleur is quoted as defining it as a “way of imagining possible futures through a black cultural lens.”⁹ Others have said it serves as a “philosophical compass” that “emerged in response to the transformation of African peoples through the oppressive forces of discrimination and out of a nexus of migration, international and domestic social movements and conflict, influences of technology, and black music, religion, and literature. It can establish a counternarrative and delegitimize the institutions of dominant’s power while allowing the nondominant ‘s ability to collectively imagine or organize for an alternative future.¹⁰ I saw it as a way of challenging my students away from visceral responses of “This book is whack!” to language development and creation empowerment.¹¹ I believe the genre, Afrofuturism contains sufficient cultural relevance for students to shift from a placid acceptance of a literary world voyage where they internalize not being valued or seen to a world of their own creation. A world where they are not only comfortable saying “I think the character/author presented a limited or racist view of the “Other” character because.....”or “If the character/author had said/done this __ then there would have been a place for the “Other” that was not offensive or limited.” In this capacity, students are empowered to take over narratives and manipulate social constructs reconfiguring them both to fit their vision of a utopian just world.

I teach at a K-8 magnet school with a focus on architecture and design/science in New Haven where over 65% of the students qualify for free lunch and my English Language Arts classes are filled predominantly with middle school students of color: Mexican, Puerto Rican, Dominican, African, African American, Caribbean American, East Indian, and Laotian. And at the risk of sounding like a cliché, my English Language Arts curriculum from the district and the state is filled with mandates and standards for my students to master (and I won’t mention the effects of mandatory standardized testing). Nowhere in this language arts curriculum is race listed as an implied or explicitly stated concept that should be taught. Do I as an educator need to address the concept of race when a chosen text does not explicitly bring up the topic? Is there a need to expand literature analysis to include the Critical Race Theory for middle schoolers?

In my current teaching world--a reality driven by standardized testing data and insufficient resources for books and supplies, my analysis of this false dichotomy is a resounding yes. To discuss race is not only efficient but also beneficial to my student's social and emotional learning. As an educator, to not discuss race in the classroom may be irresponsible. For instance, as educators, we often use/reuse "good literature" from "free sources." Such works we may classify as "classic." We make choices based on a works' artistry, longevity, universal appeal, or relevant themes. We make judgments or decisions from our lens as to whether to use texts or not based on student accessibility and often forget to calculate the costs of such use to our students who are looking for themselves and a place in the world through literature. We forget that even though our sources for "good literature" may be "free," there is a cost. Oftentimes, the cost is the lack of diverse voices and the one dimensionality or negative representation of people of color. As we share literary experiences with our students, if we fail to discuss race in our critical thinking inquiries about what it was like to live in a particular time, place, or condition, we run the risk of creating false impressions of the world, our student's place within it or assist them in their search for identity.

Using Critical Race Theory (CRT) lens is one strategic way an educator can assist middle schoolers develop language that can be used across the disciplines in response to text for both content and context. Students need to be equipped with a lens by which they can access and question texts on their own. They need a methodology for examination of text that allows them to critically analyze "well-constructed" and "not so well"¹² text for its racial undergirding and its corollary intersectionalities. It is easy for them to discern hateful text when it is written as graffiti or a string of epithets hurled at a group based on individual characteristics or group membership. But it requires a deeper awareness to analyze these aspects of text when they appear "normal" and part of "good" literature. Showing students the power of CRT will provide them with a tool they can use for analyzing text and provides an opportunity to discuss the impact of race or how the lack of race in literature impacts them. All students benefit from learning how to critique literature and not worry about being penalized for expressing their realities.¹³ We as educators can serve as change agents by requiring conversations about race that allow for an opportunity to develop language and ways of critical thinking.

CRT is a theory of knowledge that distinguishes belief from opinion that was originally developed by legal scholars to address the effects of race and racism in the legal system. It has been extended to examine literature. The main tenets of Critical Race Theory¹⁴ are:

- a. Race and racism is so embedded in our lives and institutions in the United States that we don't see it as aberrational;
- b. White and "other" interest convergence--people of color will not achieve racial advances until deemed important by middle- and upper-class whites (until those advances intersect with the economic interest of whites);
- c. Each group has a unique voice to share its story or counter-story--a story that questions the foundations or premises of a story being told; and
- d. Whiteness is a property--being white in the United States has its privileges--as a member of a dominant group (whites) have benefited from different racializations of the "other."

Culturally relevant teaching is a term created by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) to describe a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes.¹⁵ By teaching students how to analyze text using CRT lens, teachers would assist students develop tools to explore, discover, and analyze text for the construct of race within literature.¹⁶ ,¹⁷ By learning and implementing the tenets of CRT, students will develop a means for examining the

intersectionality of race with gender, class, sexual orientation, and national origin within text. Students will explore how authors and artists use language and images to define, develop, ascribe value to gender roles, sexual orientation expressions, present utopia, and self v. societal projections, perceptions, experiences, and external and internal responses to “otherness.” Using literature as a segue or a microcosm of our world, this curriculum could serve as a guide to understanding that the fluidity of the concept of race as defined by both legal and social constructs. Teachers and students would be able to share in discussions critiquing text in its social context, providing contexts for understanding, sharing their lived experiences and learning about their respective cultural wealth. In this role teachers would not only meet district and state curricular requirements but also as bridge builders between students’ home and school lives. Teachers would be further developing students’ higher order thinking by asking students to make connections to text, self and the world around them.

Objectives

Essential Questions

How do social constructs such as race shape literature?

Can literature serve as a vehicle for social change?

Is utopia attainable? At what cost is it worth attaining?

Enduring Understandings

Race is a social construct and racism is embedded in American institutions.

Counterstorytelling is necessary for understanding, feeling and interpreting marginalized voices.

Utopia may only be attained when the interests of all converge.

Analysis of Race using a CRT lens requires Higher Order Thinking Skills

This curriculum seeks to use multiple literacies such as visual, critical, scientific, informational, digital and media to engage students and empower students to observe, investigate, analyze, evaluate information. It asks students to notice, wonder, question narratives and create counternarratives for voices that may not have been heard in the stories they read. It asks students to not only read literature but create future literature comprised of voices they found to be underrepresented or misrepresented in their analysis of text.

As a teacher of language arts, I do not have many sacred cows. I am akin to the students Donoghue refers to in his article, *Three Ways of Reading* where I view frameworks for interpretation as “constructed” rather than “innate, natural, or otherwise privileged” and see any one of them as employable as the other.¹⁸ This curriculum provides another framework for interpretation of literature. Using CRT to analyze text affords the

reader greater freedoms to entertain or discuss concepts and ideas arising from or tangent to the reading. Such (reading) analysis of literature by middle schoolers is on par with the complexity of higher order thinking. It requires students to decipher race as a social construct within the text. Such text analysis causes students to reflect on how race's construction within (story) moves the story along its trajectory. Throughout this process, students need to make connections to the world of the text and to both the student as an individual and a member of the larger world.

This curriculum is not designed to turn language arts classes into history or science classes, but it does require some entry into such disciplines in an effort to provide students with sufficient background knowledge to appreciate many of the references or significance of such references. One of the drawbacks of coming of age in a post Obama era is the student lack of cultural currency or misperception that much of the civil rights rhetoric appears to have been achieved. Concepts like race ("whites discriminated against black, and Hispanic people"), eugenics ("Eugene who?"), slavery ("something bad that white people did to black people a long time ago"), Reconstruction (what?), Jim Crow (who?), civil rights movement ("Rosa Parks refusing to sit in the back of the bus and was arrested"), Martin Luther King ("delivered *I Have A Dream* speech" and "was assassinated") and Malcolm X ("a Muslim arch rival of Martin Luther King who was assassinated") either have not discussed with them as an academic conversation or was glossed over with such a broad stroke that they do not have much in terms of a foundation of information in which to launch from. Other students may be leery to join conversations due to personal issues of "the sole member" of the dominant group, personal immigration or family status. Hence, for many of my students their primary or present oriented concerns seem to center on their identity, what others are doing, "fitting-in" and technology. The potential dangers of straying too far in the direction of science or history may cause a loss of from the objectives of the curriculum. If the curriculum is presented solely in a language arts class setting it should be done with "samplings" --excerpts of nonfiction background information with sufficient context to provide background information and enable independent inquiry.

An ideal presentation of the curriculum is a collaboration with the disciplines of social studies and science. Combining the content areas--literature, science and social studies creates opportunities to create deeper understanding of the multitude of concepts that may be foundational to CRT and referenced in Afrofuturistic text. Students would be afforded greater access (translated in terms of both class time) to content knowledge experts allowing formulate narratives or counternarratives that are textually richer.

Central to this curriculum is the idea of race as a social construct and racism as a determiner of one's life choices. Race, according to Aronson, is "a way of explaining human difference and organizing people into categories."¹⁹ Aronson asserts that it rests on four assumptions: a) physical differences matter, b) these differences in our bodies cannot change, c) these differences are inherited and d) each group has a distinct level of brain power and moral refinement; thus they are naturally and unchangeably ranked. The definition of race and racism is accordance that studied by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva where he states races are invented social categories.²⁰ He states that "(a)fter the process of attaching meaning to a 'people' is instituted, race becomes a real category of group association and identity" and it is this process where race as a construct becomes socially real and reenacted in the everyday life in encounters in all sorts of situations and spaces.

Racism, which Bonilla-Silva sees as more detrimental than race is about practices and behaviors that produce a racial structure. This structure is responsible for the production and reproduction of systemic racial advantages for some (the dominant racial group) and disadvantages for others (the subordinated races). Racism as a form of social organization places subjects in common social locations. As subjects face similar experiences, they develop a consciousness, a sense of "us" versus "them." Bonilla-Silva postulates that

although the content of racial categories changes over time through manifold processes and struggles, race is not a secondary category of group association. He stresses that even though race as a construct may change over time and vary from society to society, they are meaningful categories. Categories that allow racialized societies to exist and a) provides for the existence of racial inequality, b) provides interracial interaction rules, c) forms the basis for actors racial subjectivity, d) shapes and influences the views of the dominant actors, and e) claims a universality that hides the fact of a racial order that benefits a racial group. (This is the distinguishing power of race and racism. Racism of individuals cannot be the basis for maintaining racial inequality.)

Looking at race within literature, this curriculum examines what Toni Morrison describes in her book, *Playing the Dark* as the “Africanist Other.”²¹ She postulates that the black presence is central to understanding our national literature. This “Other” presence--this blackness is not necessarily representativeness of an African people but a signifier of both connotative and denotative readings or misreadings, assumptions and views of what they have come to mean. She argues that just as our nation formation need to codify itself and speak in ways that allowed for racial disingenuousness and white frailty so too did literature. Many of the metaphors and symbols that literature uses to reference the “Africanist Other” was developed during this nation’s formation, and the period during and after slavery. She argues that writers had to develop language that allowed for the congruency of freedom of whites and slavery.

Reflectively, I agree with Morrison when she states it is easier to see the power of the “Other” through writing than it is as a reader. Hence, this curriculum focuses more on the creative writing aspect that requires a synthesis of ideas and implementation of written literary devices that students glean from their reading and viewing reflections. Some of the literary devices Morrison cites were useful to writers include: 1) economy of stereotype--a type of shorthand that is nonspecific, 2) Metonymic displacement--figures of speech that replace the “Africanist Other” with other things for which they have become closely associated, i.e., color coding (counts on the readers’ complicity to be effective) , 3) metaphysical condensation--allows the writer to transform social and historical differences into universal differences, e.g. allowing for correlations between people and animals allows the writer/reader to distance himself, 4) fetishization--category used to denote savagery, used to establish erotic fears or desires where they don’t exist, 5) dehistoricizing allegory--if the history of the “Africanist Other” is made to be so vastly different, it serves to close the “Other’s” history before it has an opportunity to develop, and 6) patterns of explosive, disjointed, repetitive language--where there is a loss of control within the text that are due to the text’s attention to the objects of its attention rather than the story.²²

For a complex topic such as race, a multidisciplinary exploration of the construct can be most impactful for the student. For instance, to highlight the use of this curriculum I feature science fiction texts that use the motif of time/time travel (also known as temporal relocation) and where race is explicitly presented within the story’s context or is absent or misrepresented. The texts included: two major classic written texts a short story by a.) H.G. Wells’ *The Time Machine* (published in 1895 a period shortly after Reconstruction, after the publication of Darwin’s *Origin of the Species* (1859) and after Darwin’s cousin, Sir Francis Galton’s work on eugenics, *Hereditary Genius* (1869), a short story where a professor time travels to the future to see the effects of evolution,) and b.) Octavia Butler’s *The Kindred* (a novel where an African American female protagonist of an interracial marriage time travels from her present period of June 1976 to the past--a plantation of her ancestors in Virginia), a contemporary humorous short story, Whoa! by Rita Williams-Garcia, of an African American male teen who speaks to his slave ancestor gathering water from a plantation well from his humidifier basin that had been a gift from his grandmother and film clips from book based science fiction written works. Given the multitude of issues raised by the texts, a myriad of points of view and layers

of concept construction can be explored simultaneously. For instance, in science, students would explore time travel, the DNA or genetics of race, evolution and eugenics, while simultaneously, in social studies, exploring colonialism, the economics of slavery, Reconstruction, labor migration, the ethics of technology, or genetic engineering, and in language arts generating questions from literature as to the veracity of the text, literary devices used by the author to convey connotative and denotative meaning, author bias, voice and social constructs employed to convey to the reader images or conduits of societal understanding.

By steering away from a mainstream, colorblind approaches to classroom discussions of race, this multidisciplinary approach allows students to determine whether literature can serve as a microcosm of society. Looking at text not only from its four corners but also the context in which it was generated can be a revelatory experience and informative process for students who are beginning text analysis. Students are better able to make connections between the disciplines and use such insights in the development of their interpretations or reinterpretations for an ideal society.

Teaching Strategies

This curriculum seeks to engage and empower students by providing opportunities for students to go beyond discovering information on their own to contemplating what could be. They are asked to read and analyze multimodal texts with the purpose of looking for the voice of the “Other” and express themselves in counternarrative storytelling in the “traditional” sense or digitally when those voices are not heard. It asks students to view media, listen to music and examine visual images to discuss the social construction and presentation of concepts and ideas. It attempts to be culturally relevant in accordance with a study conducted by Talpade and Talpade (2014),²³ where culturally relevant pedagogy for African American Gen-Y students includes technologically related strategies intertwined with those of the traditional past. For example, the use of storytelling as a teaching strategy, and the inclusion of non-verbal expressions along with digital storytelling for presentations, emerged as one of the most relevant strategies for African American students of Generation Y. Talpade stated that their research was further supported by Pero Dagbovie’s argument that educators must recognize the visually oriented learning style of African Americans and use such mediums for learning and teaching.

This curriculum is inquiry-based learning. It asks students to generate questions about the construction and meaning for concepts presented in or by texts. It asks them to identify what societal shorthand language is being used? How does meaning impact identity of those considered “Other?” Students are asked to discuss and debate interest convergence when a marginalized voice is misrepresented or not heard in literature, film or nonfiction. It asks students to drive the research about concepts of science and social constructs, collaborate with peers and teachers while they develop their awareness of what they are learning and when they need new information. Teachers are asked to fill in knowledge gaps or skills, scaffold learning activities so that students get the explicit information at a time when they can use it to make connections and build on prior learning or knowledge.

In *Making Just One Change*²⁴, the authors offer a great strategy for teaching students to ask their own questions. The Question Formulation Technique (QFT) strategy asks student to a) produce their own questions, b) improve their questions, and c) prioritize their questions. I have often used this technique in heterogeneous student groups with much success. I have found that all my students benefit from the process

no matter what level of question generation they fall in. My past student reflections noted the process was “really” judgment free brainstorming, removed ambiguity from what had originally been considered a great question and helped focus what aspect of a topic was most interesting to research.

Reading/Film Viewing

Using a critical race theory lens, students will be asked to detail in their individual journal and a group(class) journal reflections of how they:

- a. analyzed text;
- b. discovered constructs of race used in the configuration of characters of color;
- c. determined the impact of such constructs on the text’s narrative; and
- d. altered fictional narratives to create or re-create a new narrative or counter-narrative.

Writing/Production Outcomes

Students are enlisted to engage in a mission²⁵ of discovery, reflection, research, “revision” and then record such findings and reflections in journals.

Final Project

Students are asked to use their journal compositions of reflections, analysis of texts, research and visual images for a culminating project in the spirit of Sankofa-looking back in the past for history that will help you to go forward in the future. Students will be required to create an “Afrofuturistic” narrative or counternarrative giving stage to a marginalized voice. Students will need to go to the “scene of the crime” or the point of silencing in order to create/recreate their utopian world. They will need to respond to the phrase: “If race or X (where X is an -ism that the student is free to substitute) is a social construct, then let’s go back into the past and find out what we can use to inspire and make the changes to race (or X) or other conditions surrounding the -ism to address the current problem and create my envisioned utopia.” The presentation of the narratives may be a “traditional” written writing of a utopian story that includes one of the science fiction motifs: alien encounters, robots and other created beings, travel through time or outer space, apocalyptic or perfected futures, posthuman descendants, and Artificial Intelligences or a visual/digital narrative exhibition of the counter-narrative. Student narratives or counternarratives must address convergence of interests and the costs paid to achieve their utopian world.

Classroom Activities

The classroom activities are centered around various principles of inquiry-based learning. The following is an example of a fictitious quarter of instruction based on five 45-minute classes a week. The lesson plans do not represent an exhaustive Critical Race Theory analysis of any single literary text. The presentation of the materials: movie clips, videos, short stories, novellas, novels and nonfiction article may be extended or shortened by deletion, out of class work and/or showings of entire movies.

Additionally, many of the older works may be attained online without a fee on such projects as Gutenberg.org, YouTube, and librvox.org. A limited number of movies may be found through various science fiction blogs,

YouTube or are available for free or reduced amounts through paid subscription services such as Amazon Prime and Netflix.

Lesson 1:

Introduction to Critical Race Theory

Activity Description

What is Critical Race Theory?
 Overview of the tenets of Critical Race Theory?
 1. Race/Embedded racism
 2. Interest convergence
 3. Whiteness as property
 4. Group Unique Voice
 Socratic Discussion questions:
 • To serve as the key question or to interpret the text
 • To move the discussion along
 • To bring the discussion back to students in closing
 • Debriefing questions

View 4-minute YouTube video on Critical Race Theory (CRT)
 • Record in Individual and Group Online Journal definition and the tenets of Critical Race Theory
 Resource: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jj9hk3dMUAW>
 a. Race/Embedded racism
 • Definition of race as both a biological and social construct.
 • Differentiate between individual and systemic racism: View Race Forward@ videos on systemic racism topics of immigration, employment, government surveillance
 Resource: Race Forward intro video to Jay Smooth's videos <https://www.raceforward.org/videos/systemic-racism>
 Immigration: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2PeXNJYBM2s>
 Employment: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fM07um4L-Y>
 Governmental Surveillance: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CjI59-h6ZHE>
 Incarceration: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0B2LUGByb8>
 b. Interest convergence
 • View YouTube video/PPT on interest Convergence examples
 Resource: Interest Convergence examples <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Hv6PaMIIYY>
 c. Whiteness as property
 • Background: View "How Studying Privilege Systems Can Strengthen Compassion": Peggy McIntosh at TED at Timberlane Schools and using the adapted worksheet of the privileges that McIntosh identified discuss the concept of white privilege
 • How did McIntosh consider her skin color to be an asset?
 • What were some of the assumptions, unearned advantages, or privileges that she discovered that she had inherited and possessed about being a member of a dominant group called "white?"
 • What were some of the assumptions that she had internalized that she discovered that her nonwhite peers could not take for granted or were routinely challenged by?
 • Is the unearned white privilege permission to escape or dominate a less powerful group of people?
 • Students should record in their individual journals examples of white privilege they may have encountered or experienced
 Resources: Peggy McIntosh TEDtalk (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e-BY9UEewHw>)
 Worksheet <http://hd.ingham.org/Portals/HD/White%20Privilege%20Unpacking%20the%20Invisible%20Knapsack.pdf>
 Facilitator Notes https://www.wcwonline.org/images/pdf/Knapsack_plus_Notes-Peggy_McIntosh.pdf
 d. Group Unique Voice
 • Dominant Narrative (2 minute) video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NqeFP4IKVGs>
 • Digital Poetry Counternarrative video 3 minutes (provides examples of counternarrative images to stereotypes of identity)
 Resource: Dominant Narrative (2 min.) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NqeFP4IKVGsT>
 The Danger of a Single Story by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie TEDtalk (19 min.) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg>
 Counternarrative video <http://theadamsclan.com/index.php/tag/counternarratives/>

Lesson 2:

The Time Machine by H.G. Wells

Activity Description

Using Critical Race Theory, close read *The Time Machine* by H. G. Wells
 Resource: The Time Machine by H. G. Wells <https://www.fourmilab.ch/etexts/www/wells/timemach/timemach.pdf>
 Audiobook
<https://librivox.org/the-time-machine-by-hg-wells/>
 Differentiate the following literary genres: science fiction, fantasy, myth, and utopia?
 Resource: http://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/mary.warner/Engl112B_handouts/LFTYA_Chapter_7.pdf
 Is time travel/temporal relocation science or science fiction?
 Resource: Dr. Ronald Mallett
<https://www.nbcnews.com/leftfield/video/time-travel-this-physicist-wants-to-build-a-time-machine-1261960259539>
 Characteristics of the Victorian time period, Industrial Revolution, determinism, imperialism, and colonialism
 Resource: https://shepherd.glk12.org/pluginfile.php/21489/mod_resource/content/0/Imperialism_in_Africa_DBQ.pdf
 Provide basic concept information of the evolutionary work of Charles Darwin, On the *Origin of the Species* and development of Social Darwinism and eugenics.
 Resource:
<https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/post-darwin-social-darwinism-degeneration-eugenics>
 Discuss the elements of the story such as characterization (of Weena, Eloi and Morlocks), setting (time period when novel takes place—incorporation of then current ideologies of the time), point of view (who is telling the story), conflict (cause and effect of societal actions on the future as perceived by the Time Traveler), plot (what are the major events that occur within the story?), and theme

How do writers communicate to readers' attitudes, beliefs expectations and myths that may be part of a writer's society to the reader in telling a story?
Traditional Analytical Approach to Close Reading
 Analyze *The Time Machine* using Critical Race Theory? Socratic Discussions to Questions in small groups
 • Recording group responses in Individual/ Group Online Journal

Compare and contrast the 1960 and the 2002 movie versions of *The Time Machine* using CRT
 Rewriting the Counternarrative

- Record in Individual Journal
- How may a writer include aspects of his time period in a literary text?
 - Cite evidence from the text and record in Individual Journal

Students are to analyze and respond to the following excerpts to generate evidence to support the tenets of a Critical Race Theory analysis of the text.

Guiding questions for Chapters 1-5:

- How is race (gender) used to depict a hierarchy within the future race?
 - White males as possessors of knowledge and having access to knowledge, controllers/conductors of the course of society
 - Savage or "Negroes" used as the base standard by which to judge level of depravity or ignorance
 - Morlocks considered dark, sinister figures, known to lurk in the dark, dangerous, deviant development from the subterranean, servants to the Eloi
 - Eloi, descendants of the white race, the Capitalists, access to money, controllers of property
 - Female considered childlike, treated like a pet
- How was white privilege depicted in the Time Machine?
 - Time Traveler surrounded by white men who have access to power and knowledge
 - Strategic thinker for the group, Fighter, Protector, Leader and Rescuer of women
 - Driven to master his environment (thrive and dominate) and determine his fate
 - Both his world and "future world" are assessed from his frame of reference
- Where there any points of interest convergence?
 - When Weena was endangered, Time Traveler sought to protect her from the Morlocks
- Was there a counter narrative?
 - No, any oddities that countered his assessment of the Morlocks was minimized—i.e., the taking of or tinkering with the Time Machine, seen as insignificant, his location of the time machine was considered a surrender or a response to his battle victory

Chapter 1-3:
 How is a civilized man "better off" than a savage?

Chapter 4:
 What are the implications of being considered a savage for the Time Traveler?
 How does the Time Traveler see himself in relationship to the creatures?
 What is the standard of beauty?
 Who or what do the creatures look like?
 What exactly do you think the "pretty little people" inspire in the Time Traveler? Why?
 Compare and contrast how the Time Traveler describes Weena to how someone describes a pet.
 On what basis did the Time Traveler conclude that "the creatures were fools?" Respond to the Time Traveler's assessment of the "creatures as fools?"
 Explain the Time Traveler's point of view as it relates to the role of hardship, security and freedom in our lives.
 On what basis would you support or not support such a position? How do these concepts relate to the civilized man?
 What do you think of the Time Traveler's assessment of family and the gender roles of the members?
 How do you think this connected to what was happening in the author's London? Industrial revolution and the effect on agrarianism? Population shift from the country to the city?
 What is the Time Traveler's reflections on evolution? Social Darwinism? Human intelligence?
 Has the Time Traveler located a state of equality among the creatures? Or has he found a world where the "weak" are the "strong?"
 Is the Time Traveler citing a progression of where and what will result based on where society places its energy?

Chapter 5:
 Compare and contrast the future world of the imagination and the "real" world encountered by the Time Traveler?
 Are either Utopia?
 What knowledge does the negro from Central Africa possess?
 What is the Time Traveler's societal role toward the "negro?"
 Using the "Central African Negro" as a standard, where does the Time Traveler place this future race?
 Review the 1960 and the 2002 movie versions of *The Time Machine* and record your CRT analysis in your individual journals.
 What effect does the change in cast color for the Elois create in the storytelling of *The Time Machine*?
 What effect did such casting have on the role of the Time Traveler? Analyze the cinematic techniques used to present white privilege and the "Other"
 Did you notice any cultural shorthand references that were not observed in the earlier movie version?
 Compare and contrast the effects on the role of Weena/Moira and her relationship with the Time Traveler in both the novel and the movies.
 Did having a female lead of color change the relationship between the white male protagonist? Explain.
 Resource: *The Time Machine* movie <https://archive.org/details/TheTimeMachine1960>
 Rewrite Chapter 6 of the Time Traveler's descent into the well from the perspective of Weena (sexism or intersection of racism and sexism) or the Morlocks (racism). Consider what aspects of CRT need to be examined in order to present a counternarrative of either Weena or the Morlocks (Race/sex, interest convergence, privileges exhibited by the Time Traveler and the group's voice that the Time Traveler fails recognize).

Lesson 3:**See You Yesterday Activity Description
2019 movie**

Background
Info/Vocabulary
Stop and Frisk
Police Brutality
Analyze *See You Yesterday* movie for elements of CRT
Grandfather paradox- relates to one's ability to influence one's own birth by tampering with the past
Examine the current status of the science of time travel and its use as a literary device
Writing about White privilege

Define and record the meaning of the concepts in Individual Journal *Stop and Frisk* and *Police Brutality*.
Watch Andra Day Stand Up For Something
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2GhY7qXGx-0>
Watch *Walking While Black* 2017 movie trailer
https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6197624/videooplayer/vi2320087321?ref_=tt_ov_vi
Review and analyze the first 7 minutes of *See You Yesterday* movie for elements of CRT and record in Individual Journal.
What do you notice and wonder about the following movie clip?
Does the movie present any stereotypes/conflicts with stereotypes?
In the Group Online Journal record your responses to the following questions:
Is this science or science fiction?
List and explain the impact of the visual clues presented?
e.g., Who is reading what book? (student Steve Hawking's Brief History of Time and teacher--Kindred), Reference/name "Champion" on the soda can to time travel
Review and analyze minutes 7 through 15 of *See You Yesterday* movie record in Individual Journal the following:
Compare and contrast the characters--CJ and Jared's new girlfriend, Sebastian and Jared.
How are Eduardo and Calvin, CJ's big brother portrayed?
Is time travel/temporal relocation possible?
In the Group Online Journal record your responses to the following questions:
How could "time travel" assist an author's storytelling? What are some of the effects on the on storyline?
Review and analyze minutes 15 through 43 of *See You Yesterday* movie record in Individual Journal the following:
Is this Calvin's fate?
In the Group Online Journal record your responses to the following questions:
Should CG and Sebastian change the course of events or is Calvin's death inevitable?
How do you determine the value of a human life? Who should be considered more valuable? What basis or variables should be used to determine human's life value?
Consider what aspects of CRT need to be examined in order to present a narrative of the white police officer or the officer of color becomes aware of is his/her "white privilege. Create a narrative of the police officer accused of wrongfully killing a black teen male.

Lesson 4:**Kindred
by Octavia Butler****Activity Description**

Background
Info/Vocabulary
Slavery
Middle passage
Interracial marriage/relationship
Race
Rebound racism- where someone suffers the impact of racism because of their relationship with someone of color, married white woman to a black man who is not hired for employment suffers economically due to shared household
Rewriting the Counternarrative

Using Critical Race Theory, close read and identify elements of CRT in *Kindred*.
Guiding questions for *Kindred* should include:
Compare and contrast how the tenets of CRT were presented in antebellum Maryland and the 1970's Maryland.
Discussion topics may include:

- What might be an advantage of combining science fiction and neo-slave narrative realism?
- Novel framing two birthdays: Dana's birthday (June 26, 1976 and the nation's bicentennial July 4, 1776)
- What are the implications of Dana repeatedly being mistaken for a man and her identity of a black woman?
- Is Kevin a victim of "rebound racism" because of his marriage to Dana? Does it make him more aware of his white privilege? Explain.
- Compare and contrast oppression as a white woman by her white husband to that of a female black slave
- How does time traveling to antebellum Maryland assist Dana and Kevin understand race/racism in 1970's?
- Examine the interracial relationships of Kevin and Dana, Alice and Rufus, Rufus and Dana
- Discuss the grandfather paradox and how it relates to Dana.
- Discuss the concept of rape as it relates to a slave and a free woman.
- Discuss the complicity of Dana and the rape of Alice. How does her role in the rape assist her in understanding herself and her ancestors? What do you believe might have gone into Dana's "cost analysis" for the decisions she made for the actions she took concerning Alice and Rufus?
- How does the author show a growing sense of identity of a contemporary African American woman by placing her in a historic time? What effect does this growth in identity affect Dana's contemporary life? Her life in antebellum times?
- How does the author present Dana's coming to terms with her past assist her in her present?
- How does confronting his past assist or hurt Kevin?
- What is the significance of dismemberment for Dana? Cost and damage of time travel to her identity and her history?
- Discuss the author's use of allowing a present day character "experience" a historic action—Dana watching the "whipping" of Alice's husband/lover and her own beating.
- What role did the author want Dana to serve when she had her time travel to antebellum Maryland?
- Do you think it was coincidental that the author had Dana going back and forth to a white male (Kevin/Rufus)? What purpose might that have served? Was it effective?
- How does the author show the intersection of race and sex in *Kindred*? Provide examples and discuss their simultaneous effect on the respective characters of Tess, Sarah, Dana and Alice?

Create an antebellum love story of a black slave and a white woman. Consider what aspects of CRT need to be examined in order to present such a counternarrative (Race/sex, interest convergence, privileges and the group's voice).

Lesson 5:**Afrofuturism and
Speculative Fiction Activity Description**

Using Critical Race Theory, close read and identify elements of CRT of a series of Afrofuturistic and/or speculative fiction short stories.

- *Whoa!* by Rita Williams-Garcia (present day college freshman African American male student able to communicate with slave ancestor and shares with him things that are going to come)
 - *22XX* by Jelani Wilson (military attempts to weaponize biracial college sophomore final school project of academy of Mars orbiting moon of Phobos when college professor secretes him away to another academy of another planet)
 - *Come Home to Atropos* by Steve Barnes (ethics raised by memo about continuing an "euthatourist" advertisement campaign account directed at white upper class market promoting a racist and stereotypic (of their choosing) Caribbean/South American paradise last vacations, offers a new chattel system where the slave is actually the master and provides the captors with unlimited food, shelter, and entertainment while they enjoy their last day free from the oppression of their diagnosis)
 - *Sweet Dreams* by Charles Johnson (narrator audited by Dept. of Dream Revenue as a result of discrepancies of what was paid and what was owed and discovers that those who dream always pay more)
 - *The Magical Negro* by Nnedi Okorafor Mbachu (Thor is pursued by savage black beasts when the Magical Negro appears and gives him the secret of the amulet around his neck but the Magical Negro is shot in the process and the Magical Negro then waves his hand and Thor plunges to his death and the Magical Negro responds to the sky he is going to get beat up anymore)
 - *Othello Pop* by Andaiye Reeves (year 2032 it's legal to get high but illegal to run a free library for those diagnosed with melanin, affected females are discarded at birth, surprise inspection by Shield (police equivalent) leads to a drop off of an illegal female at drug store)
 - *Angels + Cannibals Unite* by Greg Tate (members of a collective in New York feast on the body of angeloid body of Chris and enjoy states of bliss)
 - *Can You Wear My Eyes* by Kalamu ya Salaam (husband has his wife's eyes surgically implanted upon her death by a drunk driver only to blind himself in less than two weeks as a result of seeing himself as a woman)
- Using student interest as a guide, students are asked to reflect and explore music, visual images, past readings, research, topics of present interest/study, journal entries (both individual and group) that relate to historical problems that continue to haunt our current existence. Students are asked to remedy such historical and current day challenges in a creative narrative written in an Afrofuturistic vein. Students are asked to go back to the past and re-imagine a time before the trauma or the problem's conception in such a way that it instructs our current day and commence the building of a better future. Students are asked to craft a remedy or forge a new identity free of racism or any of the other isms permeating within our current systems. The narrative should give voice to silenced or unheard voices and highlight aspects of interest convergence. Students should not be confined or constricted by ideological constructs of a genre or the lack of historical documentation for an "Other's" experience. Instead students should be allowed to present "representational voices," modify tropes, disrupt assumptions and paradigms and retell stories that demonstrate the enduring effects of the problem of race (or other -isms) emphasizing that such experiences should not be relegated to the past but their presence needs to be continually be addressed presently.

Whoa! by Rita Williams-Garcia²⁶
22XX by Jelani Wilson²⁷
Come Home to Atropos by Steve Barnes²⁸
Sweet Dreams by Charles Johnson²⁹
The Magical Negro by Nnedi Okorafor Mbachu
Othello Pop by Andaiye Reeves³⁰
Angels + Cannibals Unite by Greg Tate
Can You Wear My Eyes by Kalamu ya Salaam³¹

Resources

Videos/Films

Boseman, Chadwick. *Black Panther*. Film. Directed by Ryan Coogler. Walt Disney. United States. 2018.

Duncan-Smith, Eden, Crichlow, Dante and Astro, Eden. *See You Yesterday*. Directed by Stefon Bristol. New York. 40 Acres & A Mule Filmworks. (2019)

Lincoln, Elmo. *Tarzan of the Apes*. Directed by Scott Sidney. 1918

Taylor, Rod, Young, Alan and Mimeux, Yvette. *The Time Machine* Film. Directed by George Pal. Chicago. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. (1960) <https://archive.org/details/TheTimeMachine1960>

Wells, Simon. 2002. *The Time Machine*. Film. United States.

Music/About Music

Afrofuturism, Janelle Monáe talks "Pynk" Pants, Prince and Afrofuturism | Red Bull Music Academy, September

25, 2018, (96 minutes) Interview of Janelle Monáe ³²

The Defiant SciFi of Janelle Monáe ³³

Afrofuturism video Music³⁴

Afrofuturism Sun Ra YouTube video³⁵

Afrofuturism Sun Ra, George Clinton, Uhura, Missy Elliot, Jimi Hendrix³⁶

Dirty Pants, Janelle Monáe

The Space Is The Place, Sun Ra

Mothership Connection, George Clinton/Parliament

Didn't Cha Know, Erykah Badu

Electric Ladyland, Jimi Hendrix

Planet Rock, Afrika Bambaataa & Soul Sonic Force

Art & Visuals/About Art & Visuals

Chang, Jeff. *Who We Be: A Cultural History of Race in Post-civil Rights America*. New York: Picador, 2014.

Ellen Gallagher at MoMA <https://www.moma.org/artists/7639?locale=en>

Howardena Pindell at Victoria Miro, Autobiography: Water/Ancestors/Middle

Passage/Family

Ghosts, Air, Africa, Japan, Till Birnam Wood Remove to Dunsinane
<https://www.victoria-miro.com/artists/216-howardena-pindell/works/image4418/>

Race

Aronson, Marc. *Race: A History Beyond Black and White*. New York: Ginee Seo Books/Atheneum Books for

Young Readers, 2007.

Prejudice and Discrimination Crash Course Psychology 9:53 minutes by Hank Green https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=89&v=7P0iP2Zm6a4

Genetics, Eugenics and Ethics, Facing History and Ourselves, Eugenics video 12:45 minutes by David Jones describes the history of eugenics <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/video/genetics-eugenics-and-ethics>

Darwin--Evolution Origin of Species³⁷

Evolution full Tilt article by Kolter slavery made economic if not moral sense³⁸

Myth of Race 18:02 minutes Sharad Paul Published on Jul 14, 2016 Sharad, an academic specializing in skin cancer surgery, both in New Zealand and Australia argues that the modern perception of race is wrong. Science and the story of Vitamin D and Folic acid tell their own story about race and skin color. --Closing line-- "The myth of race has not served us well." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8v0ykTrTQEc>

Science/Science Fiction

What is time? Something whose definition is circular is in relation to something³⁹

Game Developers Conference, Moscone, California 2016, (Catacomb Kids) Gamer video featuring Tyriq Plummer https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nEJOktjJqk&feature=player_embedded_urn

Novels and Novellas, Poetry, Nonfiction Books and Anthologies

Barnes, Steven, and Tananarive Due. *Devil's Wake*. NY: Atria Paperback, 2012.

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Browne, Mahogany L., Idrissa Simmonds, and Jamila Woods. *Black Girl Magic*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2019.

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Coates, Ta-Nehisi, Roxane Gay, and Yona Harvey. *World of Wakanda*. New York, NY: Marvel Worldwide, 2017.

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Heartfield, Kate. *Alice Payne Arrives*. NY, NY: Tor, 2018.

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Teacher Resources

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Appendix

Common Core State (Connecticut) Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1

Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.2

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1

Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.2

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3

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

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.3

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

Endnotes

- ¹ Letter to My Future Student is loosely modeled after "My Dungeon Shook." *The Price of the Ticket: Collected Nonfiction, 1948-1985*, by James Baldwin, St. Martin's/Marek, 1985, pp. 334-336.
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- ⁴ Thomas, Ebony Elizabeth. 2018. "Toward a Theory of the Dark Fantastic: The Role of Racial Difference in Young Adult Speculative Fiction and Media." *Journal of Language and Literacy Education* 14 (1). <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,cpid&custid=csl&db=eric&AN=EJ1175839&site=eds-live>.
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- ¹¹ Cunningham, Katie Egan. 2015. *Story: Still the Heart of Literacy Learning*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,cpid&custid=csl&db=e860xna&AN=1080433&site=eds-live>.
- ¹² The artificial separation was a means to accentuate that classic literature may be considered racist text.

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- ²⁵ Mission: Impossible an American television show airing from 1966-1973 about an elite covert operations unit whose missions were subject to official denial in the event of failure, death or capture.
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³² https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ywiik_XEFH8

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