



Born Naked: Gender Roles in Literature and Life

Curriculum Unit 20.01.11
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"We're all born naked, and the rest is drag."

- RuPaul Charles

Unit Overview

This unit prompts students in a twelfth-grade English class to question and challenge the roles and expectations that are placed upon them by society based on gender identity. By exposing the inconsistencies and contradictions inherent in a binary division of genders, our studies and discussions during this unit will push students to consider that gender identity and labeling need not determine an individual's behavior, educational pursuits, or career path. Students will use a combination of contemporary and canon literature to reinforce the concepts that we will investigate. Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* and Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* will serve as anchor texts for students.

Rationale

Although the concept of gender has been challenged in mainstream culture in recent years more than ever before, many high school students still subscribe to the notion that an individual must identify as a man or a woman, or a boy or a girl. These binary divisions are reinforced in educational settings as early as preschool, when students may be asked to line up or separate according to gender. Even casual language often reinforces this binary, as students are likely to hear announcements over the PA addressed to "*ladies and gentlemen*," or a teacher greeting them with a "*Good morning, boys and girls*." At the same time, an increasing number of young people identify as genderfluid, genderqueer, or agender, and in the interest of empathy and compassion, it is crucial that we as teachers validate the needs of these students, who are already more likely to face bullying and harassment than their genderconforming colleagues. Crucially,

marginalization of these students comes not only from their peers, but also from policies in place at many schools, so showing adult support for trans and gender-nonbinary students is of particular importance.

The selection of anchor texts for this unit is of particular importance, as both *A Raisin in the Sun* and *The Color Purple* are considered part of the literary canon, but can also be seen as progressive examples of challenges to gender norms and stereotypes. Reading these texts through a critical lens of gender studies can reveal the authors' suggestions of the possibilities for transcending gender expectations, as well as the constrictions that individuals may feel due to the way they are "supposed to act." Furthermore, the women portrayed in these texts are complex, dynamic, and engaging, and therefore stand in contrast to many female characters that readers may encounter in other canon texts. The fact that both texts feature prominent, strong Black women is also of utmost importance, since female students of color are largely underrepresented in my classes, and these students will likely benefit from seeing protagonists with whom they may identify.

As a white male teacher who identifies as straight and cisgender, I understand that many of my students' experiences are very different from my own. I feel that this adds another layer of necessity to exposing my students to the stories of marginalized groups in order to validate their experiences.

Classroom Context

I teach in the English department at the Engineering and Science University Magnet School, which comprises grades 6-12. Students at my school have rigorous STEM criteria that must be met for graduation, and every year they participate in competitive engineering and science events. With such a heavy emphasis placed on the STEM subjects, I feel the need to design my instruction in such a way that students see the humanities as equally important to their other core classes. Often, English is the only non-STEM class that my students have in a day, and I want them to see this as an opportunity for organic discussion and self-expression that may not be as available in their other academic courses. Furthermore, my school has implemented a variety of strategies to increase socioemotional learning across all classes, in order to cultivate an atmosphere of respect and healthy communication. Consequently, one of the consistent underlying goals of my classroom is to foster empathy and community among my students.

Additionally, it is important to note that male students in my school outnumber female students substantially in all grades. Of the total population of my school in 2020, male students made up 68%, while female students made up 32%. Racial demographics are also important to consider: the student population in my school is predominantly non-white, which is necessary to keep in mind when selecting texts for use in the classroom. In recent years, my school has made a conscious effort to incorporate an increasing number of texts that represent a variety of cultural voices, which we feel is a crucial step in engaging students whose identities are underrepresented in the traditional literary canon.

Teaching Strategies

The activities in this unit incorporate a variety of academic strategies. One of the elements most necessary to make this unit successful will be to allow students to make meaningful connections between the material we study and their own experiences with gender. Therefore, discussions throughout this unit will often begin with students making a text-to-self connection or sharing a memory from their childhood. By engaging with classroom material in this way, students will inevitably recognize experiences and perspectives that are common, regardless of gender identity. This will serve not only to enhance student engagement, but also to contribute to a sense of safety and community in the classroom.

Because this unit is founded on concepts that may be controversial among high school students, constructive discussions and debates will serve as frequent opportunities for students to reconcile what they have learned in the past with what they are learning now. In some instances, students will respond to an open-ended prompt that addresses gender in some way. For example, students might respond to the question, *Why are there fewer female students than male students in our school?* In these cases, students will respond with their own ideas and opinions, which will form the basis for an in-depth classroom discussion. At other times, students will be asked to examine a perspective that may not be their own and defend that position with valid reasoning. In these “forced debates,” students often develop a more empathetic attitude toward other perspectives.

The work that students produce during this unit will take a variety of forms. Although an independently written argumentative paper will be the final demonstration of students’ learning, they will also have opportunities to collaboratively create projects such as podcasts and multimedia presentations. Each of these assignments will allow students some choice over what they create, in order to allow each student to work to their strengths.

Providing my students with some freedom over the texts they use in their responses has been an effective means of generating responses that are insightful and authentic. Although the core texts for this unit, *The Color Purple* and *A Raisin in the Sun*, are intended to be read by all students, a variety of supplemental texts will also be incorporated throughout. Students will have access to poetry, novels, nonfiction articles, and speeches that are all connected by the same central idea, and each text may appeal to a different set of students. Providing students with a wide variety of texts also allows for the teacher to set up literary discussion circles throughout the unit, in which students may be grouped homogeneously or heterogeneously, depending on what activity best suits the class. For significant tasks throughout the unit, students may be prompted to cull evidence from a number of texts of their choosing that they feel most comfortable discussing.

Over the course of their exploration, students will have opportunities to work collaboratively and independently. I have found it useful to begin units with full-class instruction before transitioning to small-group and independent learning. This model allows students to engage in a learning environment that is predictable but also varied, and that addresses the diverse needs of individual learners. At the end of each segment, students work either individually or collaboratively to demonstrate their learning through a project, as mentioned above.

Unit Description

From the earliest days of their education, students are expected to recognize gender as a concrete, defining element of a person's identity. Preschool students are often divided into separate groups for boys and girls, and are routinely addressed as such. From primary grades through high school, students are subjected in their classrooms to activities and conversations that are based on this understanding of gender, assuming that people subscribe to one label: *boy* or *girl*.

By establishing gender as a binary system, and by assuming separateness between the opposite ends of this binary, schools are (however unintentionally) reinforcing the notion that a person's capabilities and their role in society are determined largely by gender. While the social consequences of gender are undeniably real, I feel that students should be aware that gender roles and expectations are human constructions, and they are therefore malleable. This unit attempts to deconstruct some of the ways that gender dictates society's expectations for individuals' behavior by examining literature in which gender plays a substantial role.

Enduring Understandings

The following underlying principles are reinforced throughout this unit:

- Gender is a social construction, but its consequences are real.
- Expectations and established social roles based on gender are subjective.
- An individual's gender identity may not align with their assigned sex, and may change over time.

Essential Questions

Students will address these questions repeatedly throughout the unit:

- What is gender?
- To what extent does gender determine an individual's behavior?
- To what extent can people reject the roles given to them by society?

Scope and Sequence

Part One: Unit Introduction

It is important for the teacher to keep in mind that some of the foundational ideas presented in this unit may contrast from what students already believe or have been taught. For that reason, it might be helpful to begin by introducing students to the concept of cognitive dissonance. It is a familiar experience for many teachers to encounter students who resist new ideas on this basis, but introducing students to it as a concept with a name might help alleviate some tensions and provide explanation along the way. An example that may clarify this concept for students is learning the scientific truth of biological evolution after an individual has been raised to believe in creationism (although admittedly, this example may not be welcome in every classroom). Opening with a discussion of cognitive dissonance will let students know that it is acceptable in the classroom to be uncomfortable absorbing new ideas, and it can also prompt metacognition as students monitor their own

acquisition of new information. Additionally, for some students, knowing up front that some of the material in the unit may challenge their preconceptions can be alluring and serve as a meaningful hook before our formal studies begin.

Following our preparatory discussion about cognitive dissonance, students will begin their studies by discussing the meaning of gender as a social construct. By clarifying immediately the difference between gender and assigned sex, students will build foundational knowledge that will allow them to recognize how each impacts an individual's experience. Students will be asked to list some of the gender-based expectations that they have encountered in their own lives. This introductory activity will begin with students finishing the sentence: *When I was a kid, a good boy / girl was expected to...* Students will be asked to list their ideas of expectations for each of these gender identities. This will likely provide some fascinating and illuminating discussions as students share their ideas of how children are expected to behave. By keeping the statement general and not necessarily based on individual experience, students identifying as genderfluid, agender, or genderqueer will not be limited from participating in this activity. The teacher might then ask students to complete the same prompt, but this time focusing on adults rather than children (*I learned that a man / woman is supposed to...*). In both cases, contradictions and impossibilities will inevitably be revealed as students share their thoughts and memories, which should facilitate the understanding that gender expectations are subjective, and that they do not allow for a full range of human experiences.

Following this activity and discussion, students should record separate definitions for their own reference to delineate between the terms *sex* and *gender*. Doing so could be accomplished in a small group activity, in which students may work together to articulate a definition of each of these terms in student-friendly language. The teacher may then choose to assist groups in synthesizing these definitions into one, establishing a common language for the class to use moving forward. At this point, it will be useful for the teacher to identify and clarify the term *social construct*, and to point out that society does place different expectations on men and women, but that these expectations are inconsistent and subjective, using the suggestions from our class conversation as evidence.

After defining these terms, students should spend some time, either in small groups or as a full class, discussing where they think the ideas of gender roles came from. In most class conversations, some students will eventually suggest that a hunter-gatherer family structure (or at least the biological designation of motherhood to women) may have led to the designation of separate roles and responsibilities. The teacher should raise the point that many women work *and* have children, and ask the students to consider how this connects to those expectations discussed in the previous activity.

To illustrate the tangible effects of gender roles, it will be useful for students to explore and discuss data on the wage gap between men and women, as well as information about separate treatment of men and women in the workplace. Students should first review current statistics that show evidence of a wage gap, which can be discussed as a class to address any questions or confusion. The Institute for Women's Policy Research features data from as recent as 2018 that will be helpful to facilitate this discussion.

Natasha Josefowitz' "He Works / She Works" will help students identify double standards for women and men. "He Works / She Works" places identical professional habits of men and women side-by-side, along with the very different assumptions that are commonly made in these cases (Example: "HE'S leaving for a better job: HE recognizes a good opportunity / SHE'S leaving for a better job: Women are undependable"). To discuss the implications of this text, students might pair off and discuss whether they agree with one set of the generalizations juxtaposed, and then identify the gender expectations that are suggested for men and women

using a note-taking organizer. When students' notes from these conversations are shared out, it will be interesting to identify how closely their ideas align with the list of gender expectations that were suggested previously.

An additional task that may be beneficial for students, particularly those struggling with the idea of gender as a social construct, is to identify and share a "gender lightbulb moment." The teacher can model this activity, in which students reflect on the first time in their lives that they were made aware of division based on gender. For example, I might share an experience from kindergarten, when I attended a birthday party for a twin brother and sister. After playing together for a short time, the boys in attendance were led outside to play kickball, while the girls were taken to a playroom to play with dolls. I initially went with the girls, because their activity sounded like more fun, but an adult quickly explained to me that the boys needed to play sports. Most students likely have a moment similar to this, in which it becomes clear to them that gender is associated with division and specific, predetermined roles. While students may not all feel comfortable sharing an experience along these lines, some will likely be willing to do so. These personal stories will help us to reinforce the idea that gender is not innate, but rather learned.

Part Two: A Raisin in the Sun (Full Class Instructional Focus)

After having established a definition of gender as a subjective concept and identifying its accompanying societal expectations, students should begin reading *A Raisin in the Sun*. This is an ideal text to begin our studies, since its opening scene features Walter Lee Younger struggling with his duties as a man, a father, and a husband. After reading the first scene, students should prepare for a discussion in which they seek to identify the reasons why Walter Lee is so frustrated with his job and his life, and what expectations he has for himself due to his various roles.

As the class gets familiar with the characters and conflicts in the play, a discussion of race will be necessary. Because the plot deals with a Black family struggling with the idea of moving into a predominantly White neighborhood in the 1950s, students will benefit from a quick overview of redlining. A variety of resources, specifically the 2018 *Washington Post* article "Redlining Was Banned 50 Years Ago. It's Still Hurting Minorities Today," and the 2019 podcast from *In the Thick*, "The Legacy of Redlining," are helpful for explaining this New Deal practice to students. This will provide historical context for the play and also set students up for a discussion of intersectionality. If time permits and the teacher wishes to enrich students' knowledge of redlining, a role playing activity available from the Zinn Education Project provides an engaging method to understand the history and continuing effects of redlining. Additionally, "The Disturbing History of the Suburbs," an episode from the truTV series *Adam Ruins Everything* may be a useful and engaging (albeit brief) resource for enrichment on this topic.

As they progress through the text, accompanying activities to illustrate and clarify the impact of race, gender, and class will be helpful for students to understand the play's implications. A crucial activity in this regard is for students to complete an "Identity Inventory." The activity asks students to privately fill out information about themselves on a chart. First, the students will be asked to list (without suggested categories) some important things about their identity. An individual may list relationships, activities, social groups, or any other element that makes them who they are. Once they have completed this step, students will complete a separate list of identifying qualities, this time with designated categories. These categories include race/ethnicity, social class, gender, sex, and religion, among others. Once they have completed this section, students will be given a list of discussion questions, which they will address with a partner. The teacher should emphasize that students are not to share anything they feel uncomfortable discussing. The purpose of the

activity is for students to recognize the constituent parts of individuals' identities, and to understand how scales of relative advantage and disadvantage exist along several axes. Following the activity, students will respond with a journal entry, and the teacher will explain that this concept is called *intersectionality*.

The identity inventory can be revisited repeatedly throughout the unit, as it may help clarify the various plights of the characters. It also may be beneficial for students to complete the inventory for a character in the play. This process may help students to recognize how Beneatha Younger's role as a young, single, educated Black woman without children makes her situation different from that of her brother, who is a husband and a father. Comparing these charts for various characters will reinforce the multifaceted ways that societal expectations can be constricting for any individual.

Throughout the class' reading of *A Raisin in the Sun* (and continuing on through the rest of the unit), the teacher may wish to assign podcasts for students to listen to as homework. Many podcasts feature discussions of gender norms and nonbinary categorization, such as *Radiolab Presents: Invisibilia*, *They/Them/Theirs*, and *Gender Stories*. In addition to listening and responding to the content, students will benefit from exposure to the format of these recordings, as they will be required to assemble their own podcasts for the first performance task of the unit.

Because *A Raisin in the Sun* is fairly short, reading the text should be manageable for students over roughly two weeks. In addition to the aforementioned activities, the teacher may ask students to give live performances of various key scenes from the play, or intersperse excerpts from the 1961 film adaptation of the play in order to clarify characters' expressions, deliveries of lines, and various other aspects that students may have trouble recognizing when reading the text by itself. When students have finished the play, a close reading of Langston Hughes' "Harlem" (the poem from which *A Raisin in the Sun* takes its title) will provide a prompt for a culminating discussion. The "deferred dream" in the poem will be considered as it applies to each character, and students will argue the extent to which their aspirations have been realized, and how each has been impacted by the gender roles and expectations he or she is expected to adhere to.

At this point, the full-class instruction segment of the unit will conclude with a performance task. For this project, students will be asked to work in small groups to assemble a podcast. This will consist of the students discussing and debating the situations of various characters in the play. Group members will be expected to include information from outside sources that connect to the issues addressed in Hansberry's play, including gender, and also incorporate and edit other media to construct a dynamic recording. The teacher will provide some example outside texts that may be used, but students will also be expected to gather some information and sources independently.

Part Three: *The Color Purple* (Small Group Instructional Focus)

After our study of *A Raisin in the Sun* has concluded, students will begin their exploration of Alice Walker's novel *The Color Purple*. To introduce the text and get used to its structure and dialect, the class will listen to the audiobook track of Celie's first letter to God and write down initial observations in their notes. Following a brief discussion in which any confusion about the beginning of the book may be addressed, the students will read a few excerpts from the novel in small groups. Each group will receive a different letter from Celie to God and discuss what they are able to infer about Celie from her writing. Because the epistolary structure of *The Color Purple* will likely be unfamiliar to most learners, this section of the unit is ideal for students to work in collaborative reading groups.

During our reading of *The Color Purple*, students should maintain a focus on the ways that specific characters'

behavior reflects their gender roles. Students may again refer to our list of socially constructed gender norms, generating additional criteria as they see fit, based on the characters' behavior. Key characters to examine include Celie, Mr. _____, Shug, Harpo, and Sofia. Because these characters all respond to their roles differently, students will develop an understanding of specifically what expectations are being adhered to and defied by each. Characters may be divided among small groups for students to investigate, and groups will share their findings at the end of class.

While reading *The Color Purple*, students will concurrently make entries in a journal in which they consider gender norms and expectations from a variety of angles. In some cases, journal writing prompts will address the novel specifically. Students may be asked to adopt the perspective of a specific character in the book and freewrite from his/her current situation in the book. An entry like this would not necessarily have to focus on gender, but in a small-group follow-up discussion, students might reflect on the ways that gender roles or expectations have impacted the character's perspective as shown in the journal. A possible prompt to initiate such a discussion might be, "How would I [the character] have acted/felt differently if I were a man/woman?" Students' discussions of Harpo, Sofia, and Shug will be especially illuminating in these instances, as these characters tend to defy gender norms, while Celie's and Mr. _____'s behavior and choices tend to be more restricted. Such entries might be revisited and expanded later in the unit, supplemented by extensive text evidence and reasoning to become more thorough analyses.

In order to reinforce our focus on the subversion of gender norms, a journal entry one day might be for students to reflect on their own behavior and describe a way that they defy a stereotypical gender expectation. In order to respect students' privacy (particularly students who may identify as genderfluid, genderqueer, or agender), journal writing need not be shared out, or an alternate writing option could be provided for students to choose.

Throughout our reading of the novel, issues such as education and entrepreneurship will arise, and providing students with current data on these topics will increase the relevancy of the text and prepare students for their performance task. For this assignment, students will work in their groups to research and compile data that correspond to the characters' actions in the novel. In what ways do these characters exemplify or demonstrate evidence against trends in gender roles and relations? For example, a student might look to Celie's personal rebirth designing clothes to determine, based on researched information, her likelihood of success. Students would consider gender, class, race, and education as key factors in their research. The 2018 article "There Are 114 Percent More Women Entrepreneurs Than 20 Years Ago and It's Not Necessarily a Good Thing" from Inc.com may be of particular relevance to students who wish to focus on this specific issue. The information from students' collaborative investigations will ultimately be presented to the class in a format of each group's choosing.

Part Four: Student Choice (Independent Learning Focus)

For the final segment of the unit, students will spend a few class sessions exploring additional resources that explicitly address gender roles and norms. The teacher will provide students with a list of recommended materials to explore, and students will compile their findings on a note-taking organizer. As they browse the various texts, students should make note of how each addresses the central topic of gender expectations or gender norms. Materials suggested during this portion of the unit include a variety of media.

The short documentary film *Raised without Gender*, available to stream online, follows a parent who identifies as gender-nonbinary raising their two young children in Sweden, where genderneutrality is much more commonplace than in the United States. Both children in the film are allowed to make their own choices

regarding gender labels, toys, and clothes, and students will likely be fascinated by the concept of simply letting kids just *be*, rather than limiting their options for self-expression.

Similarly, the children's books *Sparkle Boy* and *Julián is a Mermaid* both focus on young people who do not conform to gender expectations. Although ostensibly geared toward small children, these books contain complex themes and questions for high schoolers to consider. Many students will likely find these texts valuable as they examine them in the context of the issues we have discussed over the previous several weeks. Additionally, the use of children's books in a high school setting is often a fun and engaging activity for students, allowing these older learners to experience the fond nostalgia of "storytime."

An empowering look at education and women's opportunities can be found in Shabana Basij-Rasikh's TED Talk, "Dare to Educate Afghan Girls." In her speech, Basij-Rasikh tells her story of putting her life in danger by secretly going to school as a child in Afghanistan, defying Taliban restrictions on women's education. The content of this speech highlights gender expectations that will be helpful for students to consider in the context of the unit.

Differentiated Texts

Some learners will inevitably move more quickly through the core reading material than others. Offering a selection of supplemental texts will allow these students to independently apply the concepts and lenses introduced in this unit to other characters. A possible additional text option for these accelerated students is Toni Morrison's *Sula*, which compares side-by-side the experiences of two Black women whose lives diverge drastically. The separate fates of Nel and Sula are largely attributable to their acceptance or rejection of gender norms, and students may apply the same lenses to these characters as they have done with characters in the core novels.

Conversely, a text like *The Color Purple* may be too difficult for those who struggle with reading. For these learners, audio tracks may be helpful to clarify the dialect used in Celie's letters, which can be jarring for some students to simply read off the page. Increasing access to the text for these students can facilitate their understanding of the more complicated themes in the novel.

Students requiring further differentiation may be offered a replacement core text. Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* is a familiar story to many students, but examining it through the lens of gender studies may offer a fresh perspective. Additionally, students' increased comfort level with this text can allow them a more direct route to the more complex and abstract concepts at the core of this unit. *The Hunger Games* has been examined through a gender studies lens many times, but it is unlikely that students have considered this perspective, even if they have read the book previously. Katniss Everdeen's rejection of typical behavior associated with women is central to the book, but students may also examine the way that Katniss is seemingly pushed into a choice between two male partners, each of whom expects her to fulfill a specific (and very gendered) role.

Culminating Activity

Once students have completed their studies of the core texts and the material they have explored independently in the unit, they will produce a full argumentative essay. Selecting evidence from a variety of text (including non-print) resources, students will address the prompt: *To what extent does gender determine a person's behavior?* When responding to this question, students may incorporate evidence from *The Color Purple*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, any of the independent text selections, or other material they may have encountered outside of class (including personal experience). In doing so, students will demonstrate their understanding of how individuals' behavior is restricted by what they feel they are expected to do, and also how a person's decisions can subvert these societal expectations. Students will be provided prewriting organizers to structure their essays, and class time will be allotted for them to work independently and conference with peers and the teacher.

After going through the writing process for this final paper and submitting their essays, it will be useful for students to engage in a reflective activity, which may be a conversation, a written response, or both. To close out the unit, students should think about how the readings, discussions, and activities have prompted them to think differently about gender.

Classroom Activities

Lesson One: Introduction to Gender Roles

Background: This lesson is designed as an introduction to the unit. Students will not have had any specific reading homework assigned in advance of these activities.

Do Now: Cognitive Dissonance

The teacher will write the words *cognitive dissonance* on the board and initiate a discussion with the class. If any students are familiar with the term, they may share their experiences with it. Through this conversation, the class will establish a definition of the term and the teacher will tell them to keep this concept in mind as we discuss the key topics of the new unit.

Activity 1: When I Was a Kid...

Students will be provided a prompt on the board: *When I was a kid, I learned that a good boy/girl was supposed to...*

In their journals, students will copy the prompt and complete one version of the sentence (for *boy* or *girl*) in as many ways as they can. After brainstorming and writing for a few minutes, the teacher will ask for ideas from the class, which will be written on the board or on chart paper. As students share their ideas, it should eventually become clear that some of the criteria are impossible (or at least inconsistent), which the teacher may point out if the students do not recognize it independently. The resulting list of expectations should be explained as examples of gender norms, and these lists may be kept up in the room throughout the rest of the

unit. It will also be helpful for the students to consider whether or not these norms are similar across different cultures.

To close out the discussion, the teacher will explain that individuals' and cultures' varying interpretations of gender expectations means that gender is a *social construction*. Students will write down this term and its definition in their notes.

Activity 2: Memories of Gender Realization

The teacher will write the following two quotes on the board:

"We've begun to raise daughters more like sons... but few have the courage to raise our sons more like our daughters." - Gloria Steinem

"If we don't place the straightjacket of gender roles on young children, we give them space to reach their full potential." - Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Students will first be asked to choose one quote and explain and respond to it in a short freewrite. Volunteers will then share out their responses and interpretations to the class. Once students have shared their ideas, the teacher will ask everyone to think of the first time in their lives that they became aware of gender division between boys and girls. It will be helpful for the teacher to share a personal experience to illustrate this "gender lightbulb moment." When students have had a few minutes to write, the teacher will ask for volunteers to share their memories. The class will then discuss the extent to which individuals' stories are consistent with the list of gender norms that we have established.

Activity 3: Storytime

The teacher will read Robert Munsch's children's book *The Paper Bag Princess* to the class in a simulation of elementary school storytime. As the students listen, they will write down ideas on a graphic organizer: in what ways do the events of the story reflect typical gender expectations for boys and girls? In what ways does the story subvert gender norms? Students will share responses at the end of the story. Finally, the teacher will ask for a full written response to the story: What impressions of gender might a young child get from reading the story? Does the story ultimately reinforce gender roles, or does it challenge them?

Lesson Two: Redlining and A Raisin in the Sun

Background: Prior to this lesson, the class will have read up to the end of Act 2, Scene 3 in *A Raisin in the Sun*, so they should be familiar with the Younger family's dilemma regarding moving to Clybourne Park. For homework, students should have listened to the redlining podcast from *In the Thick* and prepare notes for class discussion. Guiding questions for students to consider while listening to the podcast are listed below. Although this lesson does not specifically address gender roles, the issue of residential segregation in the play is necessary to discuss, and can be connected to gender norms in conversations about intersectionality.

- In your own words, what does *redlining* refer to?
- In your own words, what does *gentrification* mean?
- What is the connection between these two concepts?
- What does the example of the Philadelphia area of Point Breeze illustrate about gentrification and redlining? (Around 21:20 in the podcast)
- What does Richard Rothstein mean when he says, "We can't have it both ways"? (Beginning around the

22-minute mark)

- Respond to Rothstein’s point (around 24:35 - 26:00) about creating integrated communities.
- Explain the points made in the podcast about the Trump administration (beginning around 28:55).

Do Now: Review Podcast

Students will share out their responses to the first three guiding questions as a full class. The remaining questions will be distributed among small groups of students to discuss and then share out to the class.

Activity 1: *Adam Ruins Everything*, “The Disturbing History of the Suburbs”

Students will complete a KWL chart to clarify their understanding of redlining and identify any lingering questions they might have at this point. The class will then watch the short video explaining the practice of redlining. Students will share their questions in small groups, address and take notes on anything that may have been confusing, and report out to the class.

Activity 2: Redlining in Our Lives

Students will individually freewrite and brainstorm to consider the impact of residential segregation in their neighborhoods, or in other communities in which they have lived or visited. Students should consider the racial composition of these communities and how they reflect historical practices of neighborhood segregation. The teacher will then distribute copies of “residential safety maps” from DataHaven for students to examine and discuss in small groups. Students should consider the extent to which these maps from 1937 reflect current neighborhood demographics and share out to the class.

Activity 3: Connect to the Text

Students will spend the remainder of class composing a response in which they discuss how discriminatory housing policies affect the characters and events of *A Raisin in the Sun*. Students may choose between an explanatory format and a narrative one. Students may exercise some creativity if they choose a narrative response, but one suggestion might be a letter from the Clybourne Park Improvement Association to the Younger family explaining why the organization opposes the family moving into the community.

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"Youth & Students." National Center for Transgender Equality. Accessed June 18, 2020.

<https://transequality.org/issues/youth-students>.

Website featuring valuable information and statistics about experiences of young people identifying as transgender and gender-nonbinary.

Teacher Resources

Shabana Basij-Rasikh, "Dare to Educate Afghan Girls" TED Talk:

<https://ed.ted.com/lessons/dare-to-educate-afghan-girls-shabana-basij-rasikh>

Raised Without Gender VICE Documentary: <https://youtu.be/4sPj8HhbWHS>

Adam Ruins Everything, "The Disturbing History of the Suburbs": <https://youtu.be/ETR9qrVS17g>

DataHaven's 1937 Redlining Maps of New Haven, CT:

<https://www.ctdatahaven.org/reports/ct-data-story-housing-segregation-greater-new-haven>

Zinn Education Project Redlining Background and Role-Playing Lesson:

<https://www.zinnedproject.org/if-we-knew-our-history/forgotten-history-government-segregated-united-states/>

"The State of Women Entrepreneurs" (Score.org): <https://www.score.org/blog/state-women-entrepreneurs>

"There Are 114 Percent More Women Entrepreneurs Than 20 Years Ago and It's Not Necessarily a Good Thing" (Inc.com):

<https://www.inc.com/business-insider/more-women-entrepreneurs-today-than-20-years-ago-its-troubling.html>

Invisibilia Podcast: <https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/articles/invisibilia>

Gender Stories Podcast: <https://www.stitcher.com/podcast/alex-iantaffi/gender-stories>

They/Them/Theirs Podcast: <https://player.fm/series/theythemtheirs-a-monthly-non-binary-discussion>

The Gender Wage Gap (2018):

https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/C478_Gender-Wage-Gap-in-2018.pdf

Student Reading List

Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*

Langston Hughes, "Harlem"

Toni Morrison, *Sula* (Extension Text)

Robert Munsch, *The Paper Bag Princess*

Lesléa Newman, *Sparkle Boy* (Extension Text)

Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*

Jessica Love, *Julián is a Mermaid* (Extension Text)

Materials for Classroom Use

- Chart Paper
- Student Journals
- Graphic Organizers: Identity Inventory Activity
- Projector for Video Files
- Video File or DVD Copy of *A Raisin in the Sun* (1961)
- Audiobook: *The Color Purple*

Appendix on Implementing District Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain. Students will use evidence from a selection of texts from the unit to support a claim in an argumentative paper.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

Students will write argumentative papers to synthesize information from a variety of texts from the unit.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.5

Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

Students will create podcasts and multimedia presentations to demonstrate understanding of important concepts from the unit.

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