

The Influence of African Americans in Science Fiction
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Overview

Star Trek, *Time Machine*, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* and the *Bicentennial Man* are all dynamic science fiction novels that have captured our imagination and questioned our own theories about the reality of futuristic science. These books have challenged us to take a glimpse at the future and ponder, whether these events could ever happen? Will humanity resort to spaceships and live in various quadrants in space? Is time travel possible? Is there life beyond Earth? Truly science fiction has a way of stimulating our intellectual thought.

This curriculum unit is designed to introduce my students to science fiction written by African-Americans. Our focus will be Octavia E. Butler, Samuel R. Delaney and Levar Burton. We will analyze how these science fiction writers address issues from a historical as well as present day perspective while at the same time analyzing concepts that pertain to the physical realm of science.

This unit is for students between the ages of 16 - 18 and presently taking physics in grades 11 – 12. This unit will cover a span of 6-8 weeks per book and will be read in class on designated “Strive for 25” reading sessions.

Rationale

Because of my adoration for science and African-American literature, I have decided to explore uncharted territory: African-American science fiction writers. My goal is to introduce my student to this exciting and intellectual genre and the contributions that African-American writers have made to it over the last 40 years. We will analyze *Parable of the Sower*, written by Octavia Butler, an African-American writer who is noted for fusing together African-American history along with futuristic societies and intellectual exploration of the alien perspective. Taylor-Guthrie defines Butler as “a writer by vocation and not merely profession: She writes because she must.” (Galenet 1) She said that Butler questions issues that have spurred her intellectual curiosity, whether it is of scientific, sociological or psychological nature. Taylor-Guthrie praises Octavia Butler for being the only woman among the four most prominent African-American science-fiction writers, a group that includes Samuel R. Delaney, Steven Barnes and Charles R. Saunders. Jablon writes that this classification of fantasy literature “calls attention to a new interpretation of reality” as it “tries to force the readers to accept the proffered interpretation of reality and revise their worlds to fit this interpretation.” (Galenet 2) In an interview with Potts, Octavia explains how she’s writing about social power. She focuses on the possibilities of living behind walled communities, illiteracy, global warning and lots of other things. She said that she wanted to give her characters a chance to work on solutions to say, “Here is the solution!” (Galenet 7) In her discussion with Johnson she said that her book has less to do with biology and more to do with current events and an extension of current events.

Butler addresses the idea of urban migration. The South has once again returned to a chaotic state. Not as a gruesome as slavery but the conditions for living for all of humankind are horrendous. Urban Migration, an event that has taken place throughout the history of America started primarily between 1915 - 1930, especially for African Americans. People were looking to escape the wretched conditions of the South to a better way of life in the North. Historically, the North has always been considered a safe haven. The North has always had the reputation as being “resourceful” and having “opportunities” that the South could not offer. As it appears in the *Parable of the Sower*, history has repeated itself. Lauren and many others are trying desperately to make their way up North with hopes of starting a better life.

We will also read *Babel-17* written by Samuel R. Delaney, noted for being a speculative science fiction author who intellectually captivates his audience by the structure of his scientific thought and by how he addresses human nature. McLemee contends that *Babel-17* belongs to one of the hoariest subgenres in science fiction but the heroine turns out to be a talented young poet who has to destroy the Invader’s secret weapon: a language that does not use the first person pronouns, “You” or “I.” Kelso raises a question that states, “What if people constructed reality using a language without concepts of “I” or “you”? (Galenet 1) One would ponder how we would exist without the “I” or “you” in a language. We use these two words throughout our daily lives. How would life exist without these words. If this were case, what we would use in exchange?

Many authors have praised Delaney’s work. Malmgren said that *Babel-17* is one of the most celebrated of such fictions. He writes that, “Although not a single word of the invented language *Babel-17* appears in the novel, its centrality is indicated in the title itself. The novel systemically interrogates the function of alternative languages the relation between language and reality, the problematics of communication, and the linguistic possibilities of science fiction in general.” (Galenet 3) He also states that *Babel-17* is a novel in which strangers desperately learn how to communicate with one another, in which Rydra Wong searches for a language that will go “the depth” of words. Because Rydra holds the key to this language barrier, Stone-Blackburn described her as a person with unique talents and psychological motivation.

Lastly, Levar Burton has won the hearts of many with this breath taking performance in *Roots* and his dynamic role of Geordi La Forge of the Enterprise in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. His book, *Aftermath*, truly demonstrated how talented he is as a science fiction writer and scholar of African-American culture. His book parallels the plight of survival for humanity through a tough and devastating transformation of America. Critics have called *Aftermath*, “workmanlike” and the fictional

universe “less credible.” A *Publisher’s Weekly* reviewer said the novel was “terribly earnest and straightforward, humane and caring a moral message”. *Library Journal* Susan Hamburger complained that *Aftermath* had a television-show-like format with shallow characters and Roland Green of *Booklist* wrote that *Aftermath* has the awkwardness of a first novel but nonetheless he felt that Burton already mastered the art of keeping readers turning pages.

Burton does an excellent job of fusing together the parallels between his experience as an actor in *Roots* and his characters in *Aftermath*. He shows the ongoing will to survive amongst the exploitation and mistreatment of minorities and the fall of humankind.

Parable of the Sower

In Octavia Butler’s, *Parable of the Sower*, she introduces us to Lauren Olamina, an empath who is determined to survive despite her unstable living conditions. This book was written as a diary of the incidences that take place in Lauren’s life from her 15th birthday until she turns 18 (July 20, 2024 – October 10, 2027). Lauren is the daughter of a Baptist minister who has strong reservations about the teaching of her father’s baptist God and his existence. In order not to relate to religion on any level she discovered her own higher power – Earthseed. Through Earthseed she has created her own God with the ultimate notion that God is change. Jablon writes that Lauren contrasts the Earthseed with the Tibetan and Egyptian Books of the Dead by saying that there may already be a book of the living, but she doesn’t care. The book explores the nature of God and the role of humankind. It is her own book of Psalms. Little did she know that this belief system would sustain her through the horrible times that have invaded this country.

The city, Robledo, California, was once middle class neighborhood. The homes were beautiful, streets were well paved, and gardens bloomed with flowers. There was peach, orange, lemon and apples trees in just about every backyard. The neighborhood was filled with school-aged children who enjoyed being children-running foot-loosed and fancy. The adults were not just parents to their own but embraced the whole community. They worshipped together, hunted together, looked out for one another. There was a real sense of community and peace.

By the year 2024, something devastating has happened. The city is destroyed. The community is gone. People are living in desperate conditions behind walls that separate them from outsiders and intruders. Johnson asks, “To what end will we go to defend ourselves from each other? At what point

does political activism and organizing fail, defeated by conditions we try not to imagine, even though we live with the seeds of that chaos today? Is anything new possible?" (Galenet 4) Truly Johnson is concerned with the state of America and how its survival in Butler's work.

The outside is desolate, dreary, a death trap and a forbidden sight. Corpses lie on the ground mutilated. People walk around with infested limbs and sores and are dirty. There is no hope for them. They live like vagabonds wandering and wondering whom they can steal from, rape or kill. To leave the wall is a deadly consequence to stay inside the wall is insanity.

This once affluent community is now surrounded by a wall about 3 ft high sealed by Lazor wire and pieces of glass. This wall represents protection. Everyone inside of this wall has a duty to protect one another. They patrol their streets at night in shifts and there's a mandatory policy that fifteen-year-olds are to be trained to use a gun.

Lauren has hyperempathy. She feels both pain and pleasure. If someone gets shot and she sees it, it's as if she got shot. If someone cries, she cries. If someone got struck with a bat, it is as if she got struck. Only her family knows this secret. Lauren inherited this hyperempathy referred to as "organic delusional syndrome" from her drug addicted mother. Her mother abused a drug, a small pill or Einstein powder called Paracetco while carrying Lauren. Her mother died while giving birth to her. Consequently, her father and stepmother have raised Lauren. Her father protects and sympathizes with her. He's a baptist, gun-toting minister who is all about protecting his community and family. He realizes that protection from the outside is pertinent for survival.

The space program is very much an option. Life on Earth is unbearable and unsafe. Life on Earth represents the epitomy of "survival of the fittest". Mars has become a better place to live however it must be terraformed. Simply put, life on earth is Hell. Living conditions inside the wall are horrendous. Seven to eighteen people could live in a 3-bedroom house. All families and generations have resorted to living together. The more people, the less likelihood of getting robbed, raped or killed. The water system is scarce and polluted. It cost more to drink water than to buy food. By the way, \$1,000 dollars will only feed you for a week and a half. It only rains once every seven years, therefore, peach, banana and apple trees are a high priced commodity. Because of the lack of water, vandals set fire to any and everything. They are taking this drug, pyro, which is stimulated by watching fires and to add insult to injury you have to pay a high price for the fireman to put out the fire and the

police if you need their assistance. As a result many people just let their homes burn and never report a killing or theft.

The presidency is in shambles desperately trying to restore the Earth to normalcy. And once again, the South looks like a homeless shelter, while the North a condominium. Everyone's talking about migrating to the North. Supposedly, there are more jobs, food and water at cheaper prices. However, people die trying to enter other states. If you are not from Pennsylvania, you will not be allowed to enter Pennsylvania, no exceptions, no excuses.

Lauren no longer believes in her father's God. She identifies a God-Is-Change belief system and calls it Earthseed. She believes that the universe exists to shape God and God exists to shape the universe. She believes that somewhere outside the wall, life could be better. She contemplates running away to the North. She's packed a survival pack just in case they have to flee in a moment's notice. The inevitable does come to fruition. The outsiders climbed the wall and set every house on fire. While people were running out, they were being shot and killed, set on fire, raped and robbed. Lauren managed to escape. Her family didn't. She is now forced to live on the outside: she is forced to live a nightmare.

Babel-17

In Samuel R. Delaney's, *Babel-17*, Captain Rydra Wong is on a mission to decrypt the Babel-17 language and stop the next Invasion. Rydra Wong is not from the Earth. Her father was a communications engineer at Stellarcenter X-11B just beyond Uranus and her mother a translator for the Court of Outer Worlds and both were killed in an Invasion. She speaks seven Earth languages and understands five extraterrestrial tongues and she's telepathic. She was the most highly qualified individual for the job. Her first mission was to find a crew that was capable of not only guiding her to Specelli but also stopping the invasion if need be. Her crew was comprised of not only living people but disincorporate people (dead people who were brought back to life) as well. She had an Ear, Nose, and Eye observers (disincorporate sensory observers) whose main function was to use their senses to the fullest. They had major roles on this expedition.

This mission was not as easy as planned. They encountered a lot of obstacles along the way. A Ver Dorco took them off course. He was a baron who was interested in their mission and Rydra. He showed how he cloned spies TW-55's and humans. He cloned the strongest spy force ever. He also had some of the deadliest weapons that he devised. He was assassinated while eating dinner with Rydra's entire crew. Once she escaped from that ship back to hers, Jebel Tarik captured her. This is where the mystery of Babel-17 begins to unfold.

Tarik governed this spaceship. He has an assistant Butcher. Butcher was an ex-convict who escaped from Titin. Most of the people working on this ship have a past that is unspoken. However, the Jebel Tarik was one of the ships in the Specelli Snap that patrolled and kept the Invaders in their place because they protected the Alliance. They were able to detect if ships were Alliance or Invaders.

As they stay aboard Jebel, Rydra gets closer to Butcher. She is teaching him how to use "I" and "you" in a sentence properly. Rydra learns that Butcher had a case of amnesia. The truth is that Butcher was part of an Invasion that occurred on Titon but his memory was deprogrammed. He is really Ver Dorco's son, Nyles. Ver Dorco wanted his son to be one of the Alliances most powerful spies and sent him into Invader territory to cause confusion amongst them. They captured him and erased his memory because they knew that he was still the controller of the best fleet of spies known to man, the TW-55. His father knew this secret as well. All of this information was unveiled at the Alliance Headquarters on Earth. Finally, Rydra told them the language behind Babel-17 was primarily an English translation, which meant one-who-has-invaded. While thinking in Babel-17 you would destroy your own ship, blot it out with self-hypnosis so you don't discover what you have done and have no way of trying to stop yourself. Ultimately, leading to the further destruction of others and you.

Aftermath

In Levar Burton's, Aftermath, four people are soon to be joined for one purpose: Hope and Equality. The book starts out with Leon Cane. He was a scientist who worked for NASA. He was the reason NASA was discontinued. He studied weather patterns and realized that every time a space shuttle was launched the global weather patterns were shifted. Releasing this evidence to newspapers and then its leakage to the government halted the NASA program. The government wanted to focus its energies on space and not the race riots that had ensued across the United States. As a result, Leon's home was burned to the ground and his wife Vanessa and daughter Anita died. From that moment on, Leon felt that he had lost everything. Because of the hurt he packed what he had left and headed for Pennsylvania only to be railroaded at Atlanta. Chaos was in the air. The first black president, Lawrence Everett was assassinated. The African-Americans, Latinos, Mexicans, Asians and every minority group rioted leaving cities in ruins. Needless to say, Leon only made it as far as Atlanta and was forced to leave on the streets, homeless.

Rene Reynolds, a doctor, had discovered a way to cure Parkinson's disease and cancer. Using a Neuro-Enhancer, she would hook her patients up to a device that would stimulate the regions of the brain that lie dormant. This activity increased the body's natural ability to fight infection and disease while promoting a process of regeneration as well. She presented this evidence to a group of doctors and wanted them to sponsor her or even form a partnership where they could patent this machine and help save many more lives. However, they met her with skepticism. She did not tell them the side effect of this machine was enhanced mental telepathy. She used this machine to gain this telepathy as well.

One evening she decided to go to her office. The police escorted her because the night was not safe. After all, she lived behind a razor-barded wall that protected her once suburban community. Truly, the squatters would have killed her in the night. Once in her office, she heard a sudden noise. Someone had burglarized the building. The alarms did not sound and there were two men there to sabotage her. Running for her life, she ran into the alley where she fell into a homeless guy. She was shot with tranquilizers. Upon falling into the

homeless guy, who happens to be Leon, she hands him the disks, which contain all of the information on her discovery. He, in turn, runs for his life. Unable to find a computer, he cannot access the stuff on those disks.

Leon begins to hear a voice cry out for help. Rene is telepathically trying to reach him to let him know that she is in Chicago. That is where the kidnappers took her. At first, he ignores this message, dismissing as his wife calling out to him or his going mad but then he surrenders himself to the calling and takes off for Chicago. He risks his life to board train that many were getting trampled under, nonetheless, he arrives in Chicago. He's determined to find this voice.

Jacob Fire Cloud, a descendent of the Hopi Indian Tribe and a Lakota medicine man, is waiting for a vision from his ancestors. He had based his life on the prophecies from the sacred Hopi tablets. He's looking for guidance. One night the Great Spirit sent him a vision from the ease of the White Buffalo Woman but this time she was Black. He knew that this was the vision that he had needed to restore hope to this people. This vision was where the voices were coming from. He knew that prophecy would have revealed itself if this woman had not have come. The prophecies warned that if the four races did not live together as brothers, the Great Spirit would grab the earth and give it a shake. Jacob got his vision and was headed for Chicago.

Amy Ladue, a nine or ten year old orphan, was determined not to live in the shelters of St. Louis. A fierce earthquake ripped through St. Louis killing 50,000 people. It was so bad that it shifted the pattern of the Mississippi River. The river now flowed north instead of South. Befriended by a rich white man, she was almost raped. She called him a zebra because he had a dark patch in the middle of his head. There was surgery that only the rich could afford that involved the grafting and fusing of African-American skin onto Caucasians so that they could be protected from the depleting ozone thus stopping skin cancer. He tried to rape Amy but she escaped. Amy was about to be caught by the police for bashing the rapist in the face when she jumped off a bridge onto a coal barge headed upriver to Missouri. She wandered to a church to pray for what she had done when she encountered Sister Rose. Sister Rose took Amy to her home, bathed her and fed her. Amy could have spent the rest of her life with Sister Rose but in the middle of the night a voice called out to her for help. Amy thought that it was her mother calling her. The voice said it was in Chicago. Amy left in the middle of the night searching for the voice, searching for her mother. She was headed for Chicago.

On the road to Chicago, Amy meets up with Leon. Leon is cooking fish and Amy approaches him. He offers her fish, they eat and Leon finds out Amy has also been hearing a voice. Only she thinks it is her mother. Determined to keep her out of danger he keeps Amy with him. They both have one goal in mind, Chicago.

As they begin their long walk to Chicago, they notice a truck on the road. It is not an ordinary truck but looks like a government truck. As the truck passes by, they both feel the voice calling them. Amy darts out in the middle of the road hollering, "mother." Leon tries to stop her because he realizes Rene is in danger on this truck. Another truck comes along the same road, following the voice. It's Jacob Fire Cloud. He and Danni, the truck driver, stop. After settling their dispute, they all realized they were after the same thing, the voice calling to them. They followed the truck to a place in the middle of the country, secluded. As it turns out, this place is a factory for Skinners. Skinners were men who hunted and murdered people of color. They sold their

skin for illegal medicine and skin grafts. Rene was among this gruesome crowd. They were determined to rescue her. Their rescue attempt was successful but tragic. In the conclusion, Danni adopted Amy, Leon and Rene went back to live on the South Dakota reservation and Jacob Fire Cloud became one with the Great Spirit.

Objectives

The goal of this curriculum unit is to accomplish four major things. First, to aid in a written mandate by the Pittsburgh Public Schools that states that students must read 25 books a school year (at least 3 books per class across the curriculum). Second, that they will be able to relate science written from an African-American perspective to what they have learned in the physical sciences. Third, that my students will gain a greater appreciation for African-American science fiction writers. Lastly, that they have a desire to read more science fiction that will stimulate their intellectual abilities.

Strategies

These books will be read throughout the school year. Before each book is read, there will be a formal introduction of the history of each author. Each reading session will be a class period, which is forty minutes. During this reading session, the students are expected to keep a record of vocabulary words that they do not understand from each chapter. The purpose is to build their vocabulary, which perhaps will assist in the preparation for their SAT's. They will also keep a one-page journal for each chapter. This activity will enhance their writing skills for the mandated PSSA tests. At the same time, we will engage in a discussion after every designated reading session to reflect, give feedback and analyze what has happened in the book thus far. We will highlight the scientific theories and concepts discussed in these chapters and their relevance to physical science. At the end of each book, students will gather in groups of 3-4 to complete and present a collage of the book. This activity will enhance their communication skills and their creativity. These lessons and activities were designed to fit the National Teaching and Learning Standards that were adopted for the state of Pennsylvania (See Appendix A).

Classroom Activities

For the book, *Parable of the Sower*, *Babel-17* and *Aftermath*, the students will follow the schedule below. The students will be required to check out this book and finish this assignment throughout the week. Their journals will be due and checked each week.

Parable of the Sower

(Standards: ST#1,2,4-8 MA#,6 CO#2-6)

Week One	Introduction of Author/ Begin Reading Chapters 1-4 and Write a one-page summary
Week Two	Discussion/ Read Chapters 5-9/ write a one-page summary
Week Three	Discussion/ Read Chapters 10-14/ write a one-page summary
Week Four	Discussion/ Read Chapters 15-19/ write a one-page summary
Week Five	Discussion/ Read Chapters 20-25/ write a one-page summary
Week Six	Discussion/ Select one the Reader Responses to document; give to English teacher for credit towards 25 books/ Turn in Vocabulary list for Word Wall
Week Seven	Work on Collage
Week Eight	Present Collage

Babel-17

(Standards: ST#1,2,4-8 MA,6 CO#2-6)

Week One	Introduction of Author/ Begin Reading Babel-17 Part One: Rydra Wong , Chapters 1 and 2 and Write a one-page summary
Week Two	Discussion/ Read Chapters 3-7/ write a one-page summary
Week Three	Discussion/ Read Part Two: Ver Dorco, Chapters 1-3/ write a one-page summary
Week Four	Discussion/ Read Chapters 4-5/ write a one-page summary
Week Five	Discussion/ Read Part Three: Jebel Tarik, Chapters 1-5/ write a one-page summary
Week Six	Discussion/ Read Part Four: the Butcher, Sections 1-3 & Part Five: Mark T'mwarba, Chapters 1-2/ write a one-page summary
Week Seven	Discussion/ Select one the Reader Responses to document; give to English teacher for credit towards 25 books/ Turn in Vocabulary list for Word Wall
Week Eight	Work on Collage
Week Nine	Present Collage

Aftermath**(Standards: ST#1,2,4-8 MA#6 CO#2-6)**

Week One	Introduction of Author/ Begin Reading Aftermath , Chapters 1 - 4 and Write a one-page summary
Week Two	Discussion/ Read Chapters 5-9/ write a one-page summary
Week Three	Discussion/ Read Chapters 10-15/ write a one-page summary
Week Four	Discussion/ Read Chapters 16-21/ write a one-page summary
Week Five	Discussion/ Read Chapters 22-28/ write a one-page summary
Week Six	Discussion/ Read Chapters 29-31/ write a one-page summary
Week Seven	Discussion/ Select one the Reader Responses to document; give to English teacher for credit towards 25 books/ Turn in Vocabulary list for Word Wall
Week Eight	Work on Collage
Week Nine	Present Collage

During the course of this book, students will work on the following assignments:

Parable of the Sower**(Standards: ST#1,2,4-8 MA#6 CO#2-6)****Assignment #1**

Lauren designed an emergency bag just in case she had to escape the wrath of the outsiders. This bag included money, food, clothing, medicine, weapons, soap, etc.

You are now a part of the Olamina family. You know that disaster can strike at any given time. You were told to gather items that you could use to survive outside the wall if you had to escape. List the items that you would pack and why you packed them. Remember these items can only fit in a pillowcase.

Assignment #2**(Standards: ST#1,6,7 MA#1 CO#2-6)**

You are now an adult. The year is 2025. Write your predictions on the future by answering the following questions. What will your life be like? Do you think this scenario could possibly come to fruition and if so, how will you handle this way of living?

Assignment #3**(Standards: ST#1,2,4-8 MA#1,6 CO#2-6)**

You have been elected President of the U.S. Your job is to restore America to the way it used to be. Your three major areas of concern are: combating the water shortage problem, getting rid of violence on the streets and the source of the pyro drug, making neighborhoods safe again and designing laws to protect citizens. Explain your strategic plan.

Babel –17**Assignment #1****(Standards: ST#2,5,6 MA#1-,6 CO#2-6)**

You have been assigned the task of creating a language that confuses Invaders and spies. Develop and design a language pattern that can be used for combat. Include the translation. You can use symbols, words, numbers, etc.

Aftermath**Assignment #1****(Standards: ST#1,2,4 MA#1 CO#2-6)**

In chapter 5, there are some parallels that are made between the book, *The Parable of the Sower* and *Aftermath*. Design a chart that highlights the similarities that are present in both books.

Assignment #2**(Standards: ST#1,2,4-8 MA#1,6 CO#2-6)**

In the movie, *Roots*, Burton was captured and enslaved. Explain in a one-page essay how Burton makes the connection between his movie role and chapters 26 and 28 of this book.

Bibliography

Butler, Octavia E. *Parable of the Sower*. New York: Warner Books Inc., 1993.

This novel traces the life of Lauren Olamina and the trials and tribulations she encounters trying to survive in a chaotic world with hyperempathy.

Burton, Levar. *Aftermath*. New York: Warner Books Inc., 1997.

This novel unveils the quest of three people trying to locate Dr. Reynolds, a telepath in the midst of a dying society.

Delaney, Samuel R. *Babel-17*. New York: Vintage Books, 1994.

This novel explains the journey of Rydra quest to unveil the Babel-17 language and save the planet from another Invasion.

Periodicals

These sources were obtained by *Contemporary Authors Online*. The Gale Group, 2000. Booklist, November 1, 1996, p. 459.

Bookwatch, March, 1997, p.8.

Kirkus Reviews, December 1, 1996, p.1707.

Library Journal, December, 1996, p. 152.

Publishers Weekly, December 9, 1996, p. 64.

Galenet Literary Database

These are a list of sources that were taken from the galenet literary database. This database provides the reader with contemporary literary criticism on selected authors.

Carl Malmgren. "The Languages of Science Fiction: Samuel Delaney's Babel-17." *Extrapolation*, Vol. 34, No.1, Spring 1993, pp. 5-17.

Danille Taylor-Guthrie. "Writing Because She Must: Octavia Butler's Stories, Essays." *Chicago Tribune Books*, March 31, 1996, p.5. Reproduced by permission.

Madelyn Jablon. "Metafiction as Genre." *Black Metafiction: Self-Consciousness in African American Literature*, University of Iowa Press, 1997, pp. 139-65. Reproduced by permission.

Octavia Butler with Stephen W. Potts. "We Keep Playing the Same Record': A Conversation with Octavia E. Butler." *Science-Fiction Studies*, Vol. 23, Part 3, No. 70, November, 1996, pp. 331-38. Reproduced by permission.

Rebecca O. Johnson." African-American, Feminist Science Fiction." *Sojourner: The Women's Forum*, Vol. 19, No.6, February, 1994, pp. 12-4. Reproduced by permission

Scott McLemee."Black, Gay, Pomo, Cyberpunk." *The Nation*, October 28, 1996, pp. 60-2.

Sylvia Kelso. "Across Never?: Postmodern Theory and Narrative Praxis in Samuel R. Delaney's Neveryon Cycle." *Science-Fiction Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 2, July 1997, pp. 289-01.

Internet Resources

<http://voices.cla.umn.edu/authors/OctaviaButler.html>

This site provides a bibliography of Octavia Butler's works, criticisms and other sites that provide information about her works.

<http://hubcap.clemson.edu/~sparks/Octav2.html>

This site provides criticism, biological information and works about the author and related links.

http://www.twbookmark.com/books/37/0446675504/reading_guide11578.html

This site provides a profile, bibliography and selected reading group guides for Octavia Butler's work.

http://www.uic.edu/depts/quic/history/samuel_delaney.html

This site provides autobiographical information about Samuel R. Delaney.

<http://www.pcc.com/~jay/delany/>

This site provides an introduction to Samuel R. Delaney's work. It provides the reader with a timeline of his works, references, the literary awards that he has won for his works, book reviews, etc.

www.bn.com

This Barnes and Nobles site provides criticism, book reviews and overviews of various authors and their books. It also sells books at discount prices granted you purchase these books off of the internet.

<http://startrek.com/library/bios.asp?id=69064>

This site provides autobiographical information about the author. The various movies and plays that Burton has starred in are highlighted as well as his future projects.

<http://www.twbookmark.com/books/17/0446605018/>

This site provides an overview of the book as well as related sites pertaining to the author.

<http://www.geocities.com/ariann.geo/Books/LBurton.html>

This site provides a book review of this book.

<http://www.twbookmark.com/features/halala/bookshelf.html>

This site provides information about African Americans authors and their works.

Student Readings

Worsley, Dale and Bernadette Mayer. *The Art of Science Writing*. New York: Teachers and Writers Collaborative, 1989.

This book provides the students with alternatives on how to successfully write or critique science books and passages.

Butler, Octavia E. *Parable of the Sower*. New York: Warner Books Inc., 1993.

This novel traces the life of Lauren Olamina and the trials and tribulations she encounters trying to survive in a chaotic world with hyperempathy.

Burton, Levar. *Aftermath*. New York: Warner Books Inc., 1997.

This novel unveils the quest of three people trying to locate Dr. Reynolds, a telepath in the midst of a dying society.

Delaney, Samuel R. *Babel-17*. New York: Vintage Books, 1994.

This novel explains the journey of Rydra and her quest to unveil the Babel-17 language and save the planet from another Invasion.

Materials Needed for Curriculum Unit

Notebook or Journal Book

Scissors

4-6 Cardboard Poster Boards

Magazines

Colored Pencils

Glue

Colored Markers

Newspapers

Crayons

Colored Pens

APPENDIX A

Standards

This curriculum unit focused on the following Standards that are used by Pittsburgh Public Schools.

Science and Technology (ST)

1. All students explain how scientific principles of chemical, physical, and biological phenomena have developed and relate them to real world situations.
2. All students demonstrate knowledge of basic concepts and principles of physical, chemical and biological and earth sciences
4. All students explain the relationships among science technology and society.
5. All students construct and evaluate scientific and technological systems using models to explain or predict results.
6. All students develop and apply skills of observations, data collection, analysis, pattern recognition, prediction and scientific reasoning and conducting experiments in solving technological problems.
7. All students evaluate advantages, disadvantages and ethical implications associated with the impact of science and technology of current and future life.
8. All students evaluate the impact of current and future life of the development and use of varied energy forms, natural and synthetic materials, production and processing of food and other agricultural products.

Mathematics (MA)

1. All students use numbers, number systems, and equivalent forms to represent theoretical and practical situations.
2. All students compute, measure, and estimate to solve theoretical and practical problems using appropriate tools, including modern technology such as calculators and computers.

3. All students apply the concepts of patterns, functions and relations to solve theoretical and practical problems.
4. All students formulate and solve problems and communicate the mathematical processes used and the reasons for using them.
5. All students understand and apply basic concepts of algebra, geometry, probability and statistics to solve theoretical and practical problems.
6. All students evaluate, infer, and draw appropriate conclusions from charts, tables and graphs showing the relationship between data and real world situations.

Communications (CO)

2. All students read and use a variety of methods to make sense of various kinds of complex texts.
3. All students respond orally and in writing to information and ideas gained by reading narrative and informational texts and use the information and ideas to make decisions and solve problems.
4. All students write for a variety of purposes, including to narrate, inform, and persuade, in all subject areas.
5. All students analyze and make critical judgements about forms of communication, separating fact from opinion, recognizing propaganda, stereotypes and statements of bias, recognizing inconsistencies and judging the validity of evidence.
6. All students exchange information orally, including understanding and giving spoken directions, asking and answering questions appropriately, and promoting effective group communications.