

American Women's Literature: Voice, Identity, and Ethnography

Rachael Hittinger
Pittsburgh Student Achievement Center

Index

Overview
Rationale
Objective
Strategies
Classroom Activities
Annotated Bibliography
Appendix- Content Standards

Overview

This unit is intended to be used in the twelfth grade English curriculum in the Pittsburgh Public Schools; it was specifically designed for students in an alternative school setting. Throughout this unit students will read, analyze and discuss the female voice in American Literature in the context of the race and gender divide that has shaped the nation. Teachers and students will read a speech by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, an essay by Patricia Collins who is and can be a black feminist, a number of short essays by Alice Walker, and an essay on Black History Month by Tayari Jones. This unit is an opportunity for students to consider the issues of gender and race equality from different perspectives, and specifically through the writing of females in our society. Students will participate in group discussions and will use the texts read to support their statements. Though this unit is designed to supplement the twelfth grade English curriculum, the unit can be used with most high school grades, and can be used to practice reading and writing skills tested in the state standardized tests (PSSA).

Rationale

The twelfth grade English curriculum in Pittsburgh studies identity and place with an emphasis on African American cultural and political history. Students read Invisible Man, by Ralph Ellison, as well as a number of essays by Booker T. Washington, W.E.B DuBois, Marcus Garvey, and Richard Wright. This unit is followed by a focus on how place impacts identity with an emphasis on how urban renewal

impacted Pittsburgh's black communities. During this unit students read informational articles about urban renewal and black history in Pittsburgh, as well as a number of short stories, non-fiction pieces and poetry that take place in Pittsburgh. Students spend much of this unit reading the non-fiction book titled Brothers and Keepers by John Wideman.

Both of these books focus heavily on the impact of place and history on black men's lives. I feel it is important to broaden this unit to hear the feminine voice as well. I recall watching an interview of Alice Walker, in which she discussed how women battled for the civil rights movement and were battling at the same time for women's rights within the black community. Alice Walker writes beautiful stories about love, redemption and healing. This unit will include some of her essays and short stories, as well as the stories of other women whose writing may expose students to a broader range of viewpoints.

The current curriculum is heavily geared towards the male perspective. I have created a brief unit that will be taught between the two units mentioned above in order to provide a female perspective on identity, specifically within the social context of the civil rights movement and African American identity. During this unit students will be introduced to important historical voices, and hopefully the females in my classes will find a voice that represents their experiences and views. Between the two units I have noted above, and reading the violent and bloody Macbeth, there is no reading in 12th grade English that focuses on a female protagonist or author. I would like the students in my class to be presented with a broader spectrum of voices with the hope that students will walk away with a more complete understanding of history and literature from diverse perspectives. My hope is to broaden minds, and hopefully engage some students who may be disinterested in the male centric reading in our current curriculum.

The pieces we work with are often emotionally depressing and can leave readers feeling angry, confused, or hopeless – some of them intentionally so. Alice Walker's essays can be contrasted with the readings from Invisible Man to show a hopeful, guided, or simply different perspective.

My intention is to expose students to black female writers and community leaders throughout American history, and to provide a way to channel the excitement and energy that reading politically motivated novels brings about. I would like the students to read and understand historical literature from both male and female perspectives and to come away from the reading feeling empowered to create change or to see the world in a more positive light – depending on what is most appropriate.

At the beginning of this unit, students will have read extensively about the social atmosphere after the civil war through the perspective of black male authors. This unit will extend and deepen student thinking and comprehension as they are introduced to a small number of female writers. This is not meant to be a comprehensive study of many women, but rather an introduction to the female voice and identity via a few feminist political writers throughout American history.

English four students read Invisible Man, by Ralph Ellison along with historical, nonfiction documents that show how African American History influenced the author- including W. E. B. Dubois, Booker T. Washington, Richard Wright, and Marcus Garvey. This brief unit will introduce students to a range of female voices, with an emphasis on essays written by Alice Walker. The students will read about and discuss the role of women before and after the Civil War, with a specific focus on the writing of Alice Walker, an African American political activist and author.

Students will begin by reading a speech given by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a satirical, persuasive essay arguing for suffrage for women. Cady Stanton's early activism was egalitarian, calling for the abolition of slavery. When the war concluded and black men gained the right to vote, Elizabeth and others in the feminist movement were disappointed and outraged (for a deeper study of this topic read the chapter titles "Missed Connections: Abolitionist Feminism in the Nineteenth Century," from Elizabeth Cady Stanton: Feminist as Thinker). Although the speech students will read says nothing against black men or women, it is important to share with students the failure of the feminist movement at the time to promote the rights of black women and other minority groups. The speech, "Subjection of Women," is a witty and compelling argument for women to gain the right to vote. It is an example of a persuasive essay.

Students will read "Symbolism and Cynicism: On Being a Writer During Black History Month," by Tayari Jones. This article will be the impetus for a discussion on the students' thoughts on Black History Month. For those who are working with seniors to prepare a PSSA Portfolio, this article presents an ideal opportunity to complete a 'Response to Nonfiction Essay' for the Portfolio. See appendix A for the assignment.

This essay will be followed by, "Defining Black Feminist Thought" from Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment, by Patricia Collins. This piece discusses who can be a black feminist; and what it means to be a black feminist. This will open the floor for a class discussion on what the author's writing means and whether or not students agree with her assertions. The background information about the feminist movement during the time of Elizabeth Cady Stanton is an important addition to this discussion and functions as an ideal time

to introduce to students the fact that Elizabeth Stanton and other feminists made a specific choice after the civil war to focus on the elevation of white women only.

Having read and discussed what it means to be a black feminist, student will read “The Civil Rights Movement: What Good Was It” an article about the importance of the Civil Rights Movement by Alice Walker. Following these readings students will discuss how her voice and tone is different from that of DuBois, Washington, Garvey and Wright. Though writing many years later (an important distinction to point out when comparing the authors), Alice Walker’s voice and tone is calmer and more optimistic than her male counterparts, while at the same time pointing out the problematic thinking of hippies, and even her dear mother. Alice Walker has been accused of being against black men, and writing her male characters as villains or one dimensional. I have chosen not to include any critiques of any of the female authors as I would prefer that students come to their own conclusions about the authors we are studying.

Students will read three more articles written by Alice Walker, “A Letter to the Editor of Ms.” and “To the Editors of Ms. Magazine,” specifically address the feminist movement. “Beauty: When the Other Dance is the Self,” is a memoir piece about Alice Walker’s childhood. Students will revisit the idea of who can be and what it means to be a feminist based on these articles. They will reflect on any changes of opinion that may have occurred since reading the piece by Collins.

Throughout this unit, students will write in their class journals to take time to think independently about what has been read and will verbalize their thoughts during formal and informal class discussions. The unit is expected to take approximately two weeks and emphasizes discussion and independent thinking.

Objectives

Paraphrasing and Summarizing Literature

Paraphrasing and summarizing what has been read is a low level cognitive function that will ensure that everyone in the room is given time to consider what the meaning and objective is of the literature that was read. This can be done independently in journals, in small groups through think-pair-share, and as a whole class discussion. Throughout the lessons teachers should consider the amount of support students will need for each specific piece when deciding how their students will engage in paraphrasing the literature that has been read. Paraphrasing may also function as a way of holding students accountable for reading outside of the classroom. The act of summarizing and paraphrasing informs teachers as we make decisions in terms of supporting students as the class interacts with literature. As students write or talk

about literature they have read, students are required to *think* about what they have read. This is critical to all future activities and learning that takes place involving the piece of literature. Providing students with historical and bibliographic information about the literature and the author may increase the likelihood of student comprehension. An understanding of student home life, vocabulary, and interests is ideal as teachers present literary pieces in this unit.

Critical Analysis of Content and Form

Having read and expressed the main concepts within a piece of literature, students have been properly supported to engage in some higher level thinking. During this unit, students will engage in activities that require them to form opinions concerning the form of the writing, such as style, tone, and word choice, as well as forming opinions about the content of what was written. Students may be asked to do this informally in journals, in class discussion, and in formal essays.

Using Passages from the Text to Support Arguments and Ideas

It is common during discussions for students to get off topic, or to move into lower levels of thinking. In order to maintain high intellectual standards within classroom discussions, it is encouraged that students be directed to refer to the text when supporting their ideas. Students who agree with the text might begin by expressing an idea or passage from the text, and expound on the idea from their own experiences. When disagreeing with the text, students should present their ideas in terms of how their thoughts contrast with what has been written. In this manner, students maintain a focus on the literature while discussing how the literature is relevant to their lives.

This sort of accountability during whole class discussions supports student thinking as they are preparing to write essays on the topic. Many of my students struggle in introducing passages from texts into their essays. Talking in this manner will give students a scaffold for writing about what they have read, especially when introducing quotations from the text. Referring to the text can also prevent disagreements in class discussions from becoming personally offensive, or escalating into verbal arguments.

Respecting Differing Opinions

Students will learn what it means to “agree to disagree.” In respecting other’s opinions, students must learn to, and practice, expressing their views politely, tactfully, and with great consideration for the experiences and knowledge of their peers. This goal is a bit more elusive and harder to measure than those mentioned above; however, it is a critical part of this unit. The point of reading the pieces is to

open up to students the ideas and perspectives of those who are often ignored or made invisible by the English curriculum and society as well. After all, school is a reflection of what society as a whole would like its members to value and study. Students are meant to consider life perspectives of those who are different from themselves, and to be introduced to literature that represents their own voices – depending on the students’ experiences, beliefs, religion, race, gender, sexuality, culture, and their personal identification within these categories.

The objective of respecting opinions that differ from our own, with the ultimate and sometimes elusive goal of having an open mind, requires quite a bit of modeling and scaffolding for students. Students may have had practice with this sort of activity throughout earlier grades in the form of morning meetings, classroom meetings, character education, and the practice of using “I statements.” It is recommended that before engaging in open ended discussions for this unit, teachers consider carefully how they will model and scaffold their students in this endeavor.

Strategies

Reading Aloud in Class

Many of the literary pieces in this unit are short essays that can be read in class. There are two reasons for this. The first reason is that this unit is intended to be a brief unit connecting two already existing units within the Pittsburgh Public School Curriculum, thus requiring brevity. The second item I considered in choosing shorter pieces was the population of students whom I serve. Reading aloud in class is one way teachers can support students with low reading abilities or low interest in literature. The students I serve are frequently encompassed by both of these descriptors. Reading literature aloud as a class guarantees access to the literature to those readers who might otherwise struggle to decode the words, and would be unable to engage in intellectual discussions about the content. Reading aloud assists in holding all students accountable for the reading and also serves to support students who have trouble focusing their attention. This aspect of reading aloud can be embellished when the teacher is reading, by the use of *cloze* – in which students are randomly called on to read the next word of text once or twice per page. Teachers in standard high school classrooms may find it desirable to assign much of the reading to be done at home or independently in the classroom.

Rereading With a Purpose

It is common practice to ask students to reread literature. Many readers, young and old alike, resist this practice. It is my opinion that rereading is often most beneficial

when substantial time is allowed to pass between readings, giving time for the ideas and stories to ferment. Rereading a favored novel from my youth feels like visiting an old friend, but it becomes a monotonous task to read the same novel twice in one month unless each time I read it I am looking for something specific and different. There are measurable benefits to rereading. I found reading Macbeth eight times over as I prepared to teach it and as we read it aloud in each of my classes to be exciting. During many readings and discussions with students and coworkers, I came to understand the text, its historical background, and Shakespeare on a level I'd never thought desirable, let alone possible. Rereading is often viewed by students as tedious busy work. It is important to couple re-reading with realistic expectations of what that re-reading will look like, as well as with a specific goal in mind. These goals prepare students for whole class discussions and essay writing. Teachers may ask students to highlight, underline or take notes in their journals as they reread.

Realistic Expectations of Rereading

Students should be asked to reread either a specific section of the piece in order to focus on a concept or idea, or students should be asked to skim through the entire piece looking for specific information to support an idea, or answer a question. If there is a need for students to reread an essay in its entirety, it is recommended that this be assigned for homework, or that the rereading be broken up into groups that will present their findings to the class.

Journal Writing

By implementing journal writing on a daily basis, students are creating a resource that contains both notes and personal reflections that can be utilized while writing the culminating essay. Students will write in their journals their personal responses to the literature read in this unit. This will facilitate success in think - pair - share activities as well as whole class discussions.

Homework

Homework requirements will vary depending on your student population and school or county regulations. Homework assignments should be something students can do independently, and have practiced or done in the classroom before taking the work home. Additionally, homework should be valuable, and helpful to student comprehension. Homework should be reviewed in class shortly after it is assigned and completed.

Think- Pair- Share

TPS is common shorthand for this activity in which students take time to think, which in the classroom often is done in student journal writing, then pair with a peer to share their thoughts before sharing their ideas with the class as a whole. This supports the shy and slower learners in the classroom and holds all students accountable despite the fact that there is not time to have every student share during a brief class discussion. TPS can be an effective support mechanism when preparing for an intensive whole class discussion. It is important that students respect each others' intellectual space during the thinking part of this activity. Teachers should monitor the activity to ensure that students are writing or thinking quietly, to ensure that all learners are able to consider the task without interruption or distraction. Teachers may want to limit and standardize the amount of time given for thinking and student pairing.

Whole Class Discussion

Whole class discussions should be conducted in a setting where all students are facing each other so they can give their full attention to each other. These discussions can be teacher or student guided, depending on the class dynamics and teacher comfort. Whole class discussions are an opportunity for students to express and listen to opinions about literature read in class in response to open ended questions. It is important that the questions be open ended and the idea emphasized that the discussion is not meant to end with a consensus. Discussions of this nature are intended to expose students to varying ideas and perspectives, with the goal of learning about and respecting differing opinions. These discussions require students to support their ideas and opinions using passages from the text. By verbalizing and supporting ideas students are practicing important social skills for life and work. Open ended whole class discussions can help support essay writing when the topic addresses the essay assignment.

Open Ended Questions

Open ended questions are questions that have various acceptable answers. These questions encourage divergent thinking and allow students to incorporate literature into their personal sphere. Open ended questions can lead to genuinely meaningful dialogue between peers and among teachers and students. Literature has long been a political and revolutionary medium. By asking open ended questions, we force our students to consider the relevance of literature. We also open the flood gates to independent thinking, the ultimate goal of education. When students can connect

literature to their own lives, it becomes meaningful. Discussions of this nature provide important opportunities to practice important social and communication skills.

Short Essay Response to Literature

Student learning will be assessed by the content and structure of a short essay, 5-7 paragraphs, which makes connections between pieces of literature read while expressing their independent views, and perhaps personal experiences if appropriate. See Appendix A.

Classroom Activities

Introducing the Unit

This unit should be introduced to students as a unit where students will have the opportunity to look at the era and issues that Ellison was writing about in Invisible Man through a different lens, from the perspective of women. The unit will highlight feminist authors attempting to promote social change and equality for women, much like the narrator in Invisible Man hoped to do for black men.

Daily Activities

Every day during this unit students will begin with a quick writing or reading assignment as a warm up in order to access background knowledge or to reconnect to the learning from the day before. Time allotted for this should be no more than five minutes, with one to two minutes to share with a partner using Think- Pair- Share.

Because this unit is designed for an alternative in an urban setting, most of the reading will take place in the classroom, read aloud by the teacher using cloze as a form of holding students accountable for following along. The DL Pattern will be followed during this unit, in which students will read first for understanding (the gist), reread to find important aspects of the writing (significant moments), and reread a third time to study the authors craft. Students will be expected to take notes on this in their reading journals, which can be examined as frequently as the teacher desires. The following schedule of activities is a recommendation that may be altered to fit the needs of the teacher and students.

Day One

Begin by discussing the political nature of writing both fiction and non-fiction. Invisible Man and Brothers And Keepers are examples of writing that are politically motivated. What we write, and what we choose to read, can be considered a political action. In fact, choosing *not* to read a particular book or author's works can be a political statement. While nonfiction lends itself well to political writing, fiction can demonstrate political ideas, as we saw in Invisible Man. During this unit students will have a brief look into the political world of American women writers, with a focus on the feminist movements of the past and present.

Pass out to students a copy of Elizabeth Cady Stanton's Speech titled, "Subjection of Women," from Elizabeth Cady Stanton: Feminist as Thinker (pages 206-218). Before the lesson highlight your personal copy to prepare for cloze. Highlight two or three simple words where you will stop reading and ask a student to read one word (cloze). Define the word subjection for your students (forced submission to control by others) and provide them with synonyms such as oppression or subjugation. Before reading aloud, let students know they will be required to summarize the author's main points in their journals. Read the essay aloud (recommended stopping point is the last full paragraph on page 213). Allow students approximately three minutes to summarize Elizabeth Stanton's primary points in their journals (two – three sentences). Provide students with approximately two minutes to share their summaries using Think-Pair-Share. Follow Think-Pair-Share with a brief discussion as a class; take notes of the primary points of the speech for reference during the rest of the unit.

Have students skim through to find a significant moment, a particularly poignant moment in the writing, or a bit that students find humorous, confusing, or important. If time allows, has students share in Think-Pair-Share.

Homework: Review the literary elements of satirical and persuasive writing. Assign students to reread the speech to study the author's craft. Students will highlight a sentence that was written in a satirical tone, and record the following aspects of the persuasive writing of this speech: Audience, Appeals (emotional, logical, or good character), and the call to action. See Appendix B.

Day Two

As a warm up students will answer in their notebooks the question "Do you think that writing in a satirical tone was a wise choice for this speech? Why or why not?"

Discuss student responses briefly and move on to reviewing the homework. The teacher should be looking for text supported evidence in student answers. Understanding the persuasive and satirical aspects of this piece is important. Take sufficient time in the review to assess whether or not the students understand these concepts and can apply them to the article.

Having read a piece by a white feminist activist during the pre civil war era, we will now move into a selection of text written more recently by a black feminist author. Before moving on, explain that after the civil war Elizabeth Cady Stanton moved away from speaking up for black women, and moved in the direction of speaking only on behalf of white women's rights. There were many political factors involved; however, she was particularly upset that black men were given the right to vote after the civil war but not white women. This bit of information is pertinent to today's reading. Pass out copies of "Defining Black Feminist Thought" from Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment, by Patricia Collins. This is a section of the book in which the author discusses the controversial discussion of who is and can be a black feminist, and what it means to be a black feminist. Read through and consider words your students may struggle with. Be prepared with synonyms (Nexus- connections, ties). Explain to students that this author is working to define who black feminists are and what it means to be a black feminist because she will spend the rest of her book using these terms. Patricia Collins will need readers to have a common understanding of these terms in order to understand her ideas later in the book. Before reading the article, define feminism for students who may be unfamiliar with the term or movement.

As students read through the first time, have them record in their journals the various statements of who is and can be a black feminist. What is the final statement the author makes about who is and can be a black feminist? What does it mean to be a black feminist? This selection is particularly difficult, but important. If your students need more support, I recommend highlighting or circling specific sections to assist students in finding these answers. Because understanding this reading will be an important aspect of the discussion on day three students should Think-Pair-Share their answers, followed by a whole class discussion. Students should begin a paragraph in their notebooks defining black feminists. Do they agree with the author? Why? If students do not complete their paragraph it should be done for homework. This paragraph will get the discussion started on day three. For those who prefer not to use this selection of reading, this discussion can be relocated to later in the unit after the students have read the essays by Alice Walker. Alternately, if this article seems to be too intellectual and in depth, teachers may consider the article "The Subjection of Islamic Women," by Christina Hoff Sommers (see the Annotated Bibliography) instead of the selection by Patricia Collins. In this case, the discussion

questions will need to be altered slightly to match the article. This essay is especially pertinent considering the political situation in Iran, and Afghanistan. It is an article that you may want to give to students who read The Kite Runner in the spring.

Day Three

Set up the classroom chairs so that students can see everyone, preferably in a circle. As students enter, check that their paragraph is complete. Students should have the two articles out, as well as their journals. Guidelines for taking turns in the discussion, and disagreeing respectfully should be reviewed. Use the questions in Appendix C to guide the discussion. Remind students that this is a delicate subject, and that the goal here is not to end up in agreement. The goal is to think deeply about what we've read, to hear other people's views and to broaden and support our own ideas. Although this is an open ended discussion, we need to support our statements by referring to the text or brief personal stories that support our thoughts. The reflection questions at the end give students an opportunity to reflect on how successful the discussion was.

Day Four

Begin the class with the warm up journal response to this question, "Do you consider yourself a feminist, an egalitarian, or neither. Why?" Students may discuss their answers in Think-Pair-Share. Read aloud "Symbolism and Cynicism: On Being a Writer During Black History Month," by Tayari Jones. After reading the piece in class, have students summarize the article in their journals. Again students should Think-Pair-Share to discuss what the article was about. Have students reread the text to find a quote (significant moment) that supports or opposes their thoughts on Black History Month. Have a brief whole class discussion follow up where students share what they think about Black History Month in this context. Pass out the Essay Assignment found in Appendix A. Review the requirements and inform students of when it is due. Allow time for some questions. If your students need the support, you may want to provide them with time to plan their writing during class time.

Day Five

Begin with the warm up journal response to the prompt, "Think back to our reading of Invisible Man. What was the tone and mood of the book? Support your statement with events from the text." This question will prime students for comparing the male voices we've read with the female voice of Alice Walker. Explain to students that we will spend the rest of this unit reading short essays by Alice Walker. It is a mini-

author study for the next week. Introduce Alice as a feminist author they may be familiar with. She wrote The Color Purple; she has written poetry. If you care to, you might express that there is some controversy over how Alice Walker writes about men, as her male characters tend to be extremely harmless and kind or extremely brutal and cruel. This is an oversimplification of the debates, but it will serve its purpose for the classroom setting. Pass out copies of “The Civil Rights Movement: What Good Was I.” Explain that as we read, we will be looking to compare the tone and mood of this piece with the tone and mood of Invisible Man. Point out the epigraph on page 118. Tell students they will be asked to explain what that means, and why the author may have chosen it for this piece. Read the piece aloud, using cloze to hold students accountable for reading along.

After reading, have students paraphrase the main idea or purpose of this essay (the gist). Think-Pair-Share the main idea, then have students reread and record three selections (significant moments) from the text that support the main idea of the essay.

Day Six

Begin the lesson with a warm up journal writing about the epigraph from the day before. “What does the epigraph on page 118 mean? Why did the author pair it with this essay?” Think-Pair-Share student responses. Explain that the next two pieces to be read are essays written to editors of a magazine titled Ms. Pass some around the class if you can find some to bring in as samples. Have students record a summary of this short essay. Ms. Magazine can also be found online at <http://www.msmagazine.com>.

Pass out copies of “A Letter to the Editor of Ms.” By Alice Walker. A brief discussion of Frederick Douglass and Shirley Chisholm, and their actions in relation to women’s’ rights will be helpful to students before reading. Shirley Chisholm was the first black female elected to Congress. She fought for important legislation that impacted women’s’ daily lives. She was a strong advocate for women’s’ rights and civil rights. Frederick Douglass worked for human rights for all people during the time of Elizabeth Cady Stanton. They collaborated together for civil liberties for both women and blacks. There is a wealth of resources on these two activists that can easily be found in a quick online search if you desire more information.

After reading the letter aloud, have students record who the audience is in their journals, along with the main purpose of the letter. Have students reread to find three passages (significant moments) that support their concept of what the main purpose of the letter is.

After a brief Think-Pair Share of these supporting passages, have a whole class discussion to discuss the importance of the moment on page 275 when Alice Walker realizes she has a picture of Frederick Douglass but not Harriet Tubman. Why is that important? What does Alice Walker want other black women to do or think about after reading this letter? On page 276, Alice expresses that some people believe silence is a sign of solidarity. What do you think about this comment? What about the fear of lesbians? Alice goes on to say that she met only other women at the conference; she means that it did not matter to her if the women were lesbians. Why do you think she says this?

Day Seven

Students respond in their journals to the prompt, “Consider a social activist (living or dead) you admire. What have they done that you think is important?” Think-Pair – Share their answers. Pass out “To the Editors of Ms. Magazine.” Explain that this article is about Israel, Palestine, and the history of oppression that connects black women and Jewish women. As students read, have them paraphrase the main idea of the last three pages – from the bottom of 352 to 354. Ask students the following questions: “What does this selection tell us as readers about Alice Walker’s view of human rights issues?” “How does this statement parallel or complement the statement in the letter yesterday about silence as a sign of solidarity?”

Have students reread and record three significant moments that they find important, interesting, or surprising. Think-Pair –Share students chosen passages. Having read a number of essays by Alice Walker, create a T-Chart to compare Alice Walker’s tone and style to that of Richard Wright, Booker T. Washington, Marcus Garvey, and W.E.B. DuBois (author’s students read in the Invisible Man unit). Create a section for themes, political ideas, moods, and word choice. After creating the chart as a class document, discuss who is most like Alice Walker, and in what way, and which author’s writing is most different.

Day Eight

Students record in their journals their response to the prompt, “Of the authors we compared yesterday, who do you like reading the most? Why?” Think-Pair-Share student responses. Pass out the final essay by Alice Walker, titled “Beauty: When the Other Dancer Is the Self.” Explain that while this is a memoir piece rather than a political piece; it is an essay that gives readers insight into the motivations and thoughts of the author. After the first reading have students record what they have learned about Alice Walker’s personality from this piece. Have students share out in

a brief whole class discussion. Explain that Alice Walker manages to work her feminist view point into the story. Have students reread and find three passages where Alice expresses the idea that women are equal, or should be treated equally throughout the story. Think-Pair-Share.

Day Nine

Students will discuss the pieces they've read in a whole class discussion setting. Arrange the chairs so that all students are facing each other. Remind students of discussion expectations. Explain that this discussion will be the closing moment for the unit, remind students of due dates for their essay. See Appendix D for the discussion questions. You may choose to have one final day in which students may type their essays or peer edit their essays. This last discussion day is a discussion to review everything that students have read, to monitor new thoughts as they progressed in the reading, and to connect to the next unit. If you read the article "The Subjection of Islamic Women," by Christina Hoff Sommers, the questions may need to be altered slightly.

Appendix – C Annotated Bibliography

Teacher reading list

Butler, Cheryl B. The Art of the Black Essay: From Meditation to Transcendence. Ed. Graham Russell Hodges. Routledge: New York, 2003.

This is a collection of essays discussing the writing of W. E. B. DuBois and Alice Walker. DuBois is an author already in the twelfth grade curriculum, and Alice Walker is an author in this unit of study. The essays in this book provide background information for the teacher. The essay on DuBois contrasts the writing of Charles Darwin and that of W. E. B. DuBois on the issue of race, and it is historically fascinating. The essay on Alice Walker discusses her inspiration, her critics, and an analysis of the characters she creates.

Collins, Patricia H., Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment. Routledge: New York, 1990.

This is a highly intellectual book that defines and discusses black feminist thought and issues in America. Selections from this book are ideal for setting up an open ended classroom discussion on who can be a feminist, and what does it really mean to be a feminist and more specifically a black feminist. Pages 19-22 are recommended for student reading.

DuBois, Ellen C., and Richard C. Smith, ed. Elizabeth Cady Stanton: Feminist as Thinker. NYU Press: New York, 2007.

This book has many of Stanton's speeches, as well as an analysis of how and why she chose first to work as an abolitionist, and later to abandon her position of egalitarianism in favor of promoting suffrage for white women. Her Speech "Subjection of Women," beginning on page 206, is a fascinating example of both satirical and persuasive writing. I recommend reading pages 206-213, though depending on your class you may wish to have students read the entire speech, on pages 206-218.

Eldridge, Larry D., ed. Women and Freedom in Early America. NYU Press: New York, 1997.

This book is a collection of essays that discusses a wide variety of issues concerning women from various backgrounds in early American history. A good read for gathering background information for this unit.

Frankel, Noralee, and Nancy S. Dye, ed. Gender, Class, Race and Reform in the Progressive Era. The UP of Kentucky: Lexington, 1991.

This collection of essays gives readers insight into the legal and political movements in early American history that impacted women's lives, and how politics and laws were impacted by women activists. This includes information about child labor laws, education, women's health, lynchings, family dynamics, and free labor.

Gourdine, Angletta, KM. The Difference Place Makes: Gender, Sexuality, and Diaspora Identity. The OSU Press: Columbus, 2003.

This small collection of essays focuses on race, gender and sexuality as it is represented by African and African American Women authors, and a handful of other relevant authors. The discussion is most interesting if you have read the novels and essays Gourdine discusses, however, as literature teachers, there is much to be gained from this little book even if you haven't read the pieces.

Hoff Sommers, Christina. "The Subjection of Islamic Women" 30 May, 2007. The Weekly Standard <http://www.aei.org/issue/26266> (16 May, 2009).

This article represents one perspective of a somewhat hostile discussion among modern American feminists, specifically about the oppression women face in Islamic and developing countries. It is a relevant article that compliments the selection from chapter two of Black Feminist Thought by

Patricia Hill Collins. This article is not listed among student reading as it would require a dynamic combination of teacher, student and classroom environment to make this an appropriate piece to be read in the classroom.

Jones, Tayari. "Symbolism and Cynicism: On Being a Writer During Black History Month." The Believer 6.2 (2008): 63-64.

This article, from the February 2008 volume of The Believer, is a discussion of how some authors feel about being asked to speak during Black History Month, and more specifically an assessment of how this author, Tayari Jones, has come to think about speaking at events held during the month of February.

Walker, Alice. In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens. Harcourt Inc.: Orlando, 1983.

This is a collection of a number of essays written by Alice Walker on her writing, on life, and a number of political and social issues. The articles following the essays are read by students in this unit. "The Civil Rights Movement: What Good Was It" p. 119 -127; "A Letter to the Editor of Ms." p. 273-277; "To the Editors of Ms. Magazine" p 348-354; and, "Beauty: When the Other Dance is the Self" p 361-370.

Walker, Alice. The Same River Twice. Scribner: New York, 1996.

This book is about Alice's personal life and health during the creation of the Color Purple in movie format. It is an insightful, inspiring and thought provoking look at the author's creative process and world view.

Student Reading list

Collins, Patricia H., Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment. Routledge: New York, 1990.

This is a highly intellectual book that defines and discusses black feminist thought and issues in America. Selections from this book are ideal for setting up an open ended classroom discussion on who can be a feminist, and what does it really mean to be a feminist and more specifically a black feminist. Pages 19-22 are recommended for student reading.

DuBois, Ellen C., and Richard C. Smith, ed. Elizabeth Cady Stanton: Feminist as Thinker. NYU Press: New York, 2007.

This book has many of Stanton's speeches, as well as an analysis of how and why she chose first to work as an abolitionist, and later to abandon her

position of egalitarianism in favor of promoting suffrage for white women. Her Speech “Subjection of Women,” beginning on page 206, is a fascinating example of both satirical and persuasive writing. I recommend reading pages 206-213, though depending on your class you may wish to have students read the entire speech, on pages 206-218.

Jones, Tayari. “Symbolism and Cynicism: On Being a Writer During Black History Month.” The Believer 6.2 (2008): 63-64.

This article, from the February 2008 volume of The Believer, is a discussion of how some authors feel about being asked to speak during Black History Month, and more specifically an assessment of how this author, Tayari Jones, has come to think about speaking at events held during the month of February.

Walker, Alice. In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens. Harcourt Inc.: Orlando, 1983.

This is a collection of a number of essays written by Alice Walker on her writing, on life, and a number of political and social issues. The articles following essays are read by students in this unit. “The Civil Rights Movement: What Good Was It” p 119 -127; “A Letter to the Editor of Ms.” p. 273-277; “To the Editors of Ms. Magazine” p 348-354; and, “Beauty: When the Other Dance is the Self” p 361-370.

<http://northbysouth.kenyon.edu/2000/women/Intro%20Page.htm>

This website is a resource for background information about the lives of black women in America during slavery up into the early to mid nineteen hundreds.

<http://www.msmagazine.com>

This is a website for Ms. Magazine. Alice Walker writes two articles to the Editors of Ms. _____ Magazine. It may be helpful to teachers and students to be a little familiar with the magazine before reading the letters by Alice Walker.

Materials for classroom use

Speech From Elizabeth Cady Stanton: Feminist as Thinker

“Subjection of Women,” p 206-218.

Essays From In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens

“The Civil Rights Movement: What Good Was It” p 119 -127

“A Letter to the Editor of Ms.” p. 273-277

“To the Editors of Ms. Magazine” p 348-354

“Beauty: When the Other Dance is the Self” p 361-370.

Selection from Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment

From Chapter 2: “Defining Black Feminist Thought” p 19-22

Article from The Believer volume 6, Issue 2: February 2008.

“Symbolism and Cynicism: On Being a Writer During Black History Month.” 63-64

Appendix – Content Standards Content Standards

Content Standards

1.1.11.D	Identify, describe, evaluate and synthesize the essential ideas in text. Assess those reading strategies that were most effective in learning from a variety of texts.
1.1.11.G	Demonstrate, after reading, understanding and interpretation of both fiction and nonfiction text, including public documents.
1.2.11.A	Read and understand essential content of informational texts and documents in all academic areas.
1.3.11.F	Read and respond to nonfiction and fiction including poetry and drama.
1.5.11.C	Write with controlled and/or subtle organization.
1.5.11.A	Write with a sharp, distinct focus.

1.6.11.A	Listen to others.
1.6.11.B	Listen to selections of literature (fiction and/or nonfiction).
1.6.11.D	Contribute to discussions.
1.6.11.E	Participate in small and large group discussions and presentations.
11.A.1.3.1	Make inferences and/or draw conclusions based on information from text.
11.A.1.3.2	Cite evidence from text to support generalizations.
11.A.1.4.1	Identify and/or explain stated or implied main ideas and relevant supporting details from text.
11.A.1.6.1	Identify and/or analyze the author's intended purpose of text.
11.A.1.6.2	Describe and/or analyze examples of text that support the author's intended purpose.
11.A.2.3.1	Make inferences and/or draw conclusions based on information from text.
11.A.2.3.2	Cite evidence from text to support generalizations.
11.A.2.5.1	Summarize the major points, processes, and/or events of a nonfictional text as a whole.
11.A.2.4.1	Identify and/or explain stated or implied main ideas and relevant supporting details from text.

11.A.2.6.1	Identify and/or describe the author's intended purpose of text.
11.A.2.6.2	Describe and/or analyze examples of text that support the author's intended purpose.
11.B.1.2.1	Interpret, compare, describe, analyze, and/or evaluate connections between texts.
11.B.3.1.1	Interpret, describe, and/or analyze the use of facts and opinions to make a point or construct an argument in nonfictional text.

Appendix A

Name _____ Period _____

Response to Nonfiction Essay

Essay: Having read the article titled “Symbolism and Cynicism: On Being a Writer During Black History Month,” By Tayari Jones, you are to write a 6 paragraph (minimum) essay in response to the article.

Requirements: This essay must be turned in with a rough draft (hand written or typed), a works cited page, this assignment page, and a final draft* in the following format:

Typed in font size 12

Double spaced

Include one quote using MLA format (see Patterns for College Writing for guidance).

*The final draft must show corrections and revisions from the first draft.

Introduction

Your introduction paragraph should contain a brief description of the article, concluding with a thesis statement that expresses your personal views on Black History Month.

Body (four paragraphs)

You should have four body paragraphs; the first two paragraphs should summarize Tayari Jones’ thoughts about Black History Month as expressed in the article. This is your opportunity to express that you have understood what the article was about.

The second two body paragraphs should express and support your opinion (which was initially introduced in your thesis statement). This is your opportunity to express your independent thinking about the topic of Black History Month.

Conclusion

Your conclusion should restate (using different words) your thesis statement, and compare and contrast your views to what was stated in the article. You may wish to conclude with a statement about what you feel authors and librarians (and others who invite guest speakers) should do during Black History Month.

MLA: Use MLA format when quoting or paraphrasing Tayari Jones. Below is a sample of a works cited page.

Appendix C

Discussion Questions # 1

- 1. Let's begin by expressing what it means to be a feminist. Can men be feminists?**
- 2. What are some of the connotations that are conveyed when we hear the word feminist?**
- 3. Who do you think can be a black feminist? Why?**
- 4. What are some of the issues women face today in America?**
- 5. What are some of the issues women face today in the world?**
- 5. Is there a need to differentiate between black and white feminists? What about other categories?**
- 6. Egalitarians promote equality for all people. Do you think that everyone's needs can be addressed by a group that has such a broad focus? Why or why not?**

Discussion Reflection Questions

- 7. What have you learned during this discussion? What new or different ideas did you hear?**
- 8. Were we respectful in disagreeing with each other?**
- 9. Did we take turns well, and support our ideas?**
- 10. What can we do better next time?**

Appendix D

Discussion Questions #2

1. Now that we've come to the end of the unit, do you feel differently about who can be a feminist? Explain the change, or lack thereof, in your opinion.
2. Should there be different feminist organizations to represent women from different cultures? Why or why not?
3. Thinking back to the "A Letter to the Editors Of Ms." Why is it important to remember women like Harriet Tubman?
4. What place do men like Frederick Douglass have in the feminist movement?
5. Would you be comfortable wearing the label of a feminist? Why or why not?
6. Having read the articles by Alice Walker, do you think that the lack of a female voice, specifically black females, in Invisible Man was sexist and or intentional?
7. What are some reasons we might not be given the female voice in Invisible Man?
8. Our next unit is about Pittsburgh. We will be reading a novel called Brothers and Keepers, in which we are told the true story of two brothers, one of whom is in jail. These brothers both have wives, children, and a mother. What are some of the hardships that wives and mothers experience with a son or husband in prison?

Discussion Reflection Questions

8. What have you learned during this discussion? What new or different ideas did you hear?
9. Were we respectful in disagreeing with each other?

10. Did we take turns well, and support our ideas?

11. What can we do better next time?