

Race and Beauty in The Bluest Eye

Unit Cover Page

Unit Title: Race and Beauty in *The Bluest Eye* Grade Levels: 10

Topic/Subject Areas: English Language Arts

Key Words: race, media, family, theme, literary analysis

Designed By: Sharonne Hapuarachy Time Frame: 3 Weeks

School District: LAUSD School: Dorsey High School

Brief Summary of Unit (including curricular context and unit goals):

Students will read *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison, exploring themes of race and how media influences our beauty standards and ideas of self-worth. Students will practice reading strategies, language development, and analyze how themes are developed throughout the novel. The culminating task will require students to make thematic connections to other texts and produce essays analyzing these connections.

Unit design status: Completed template pages – stages 1, 2, 3

Completed blueprint for each performance task Completed rubrics

Directions to students *and* teacher Materials and resources listed

Suggested accommodations Suggested extensions

Status: Initial draft (date: _____) Revised draft (date: _____)

Peer Reviewed Content Reviewed Field Tested Validated Anchored

Stage 1 – Identify Desired Results

Established Goals:

- Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2)
- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
- Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.5.)
- Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g. orally)

What understandings are desired?

Students will understand that:

Many outside factors can influence our concept of what is beautiful and can impact our sense of self-worth, especially as people of color.

Characters (and people) are usually not “all good” or “all bad”; dysfunctional behavior often has deeper roots

Writers use a variety of stylistic techniques to engage readers and tell a story from multiple perspectives.

Writing is a process that requires planning, feedback, revision, and publication.

What essential questions will be considered?

Where do we look to define beauty?

How do effective writers hook and hold their readers?

Who or what might impact our sense of worth?

What key knowledge and skills will students acquire as a result of this unit?

Students will know...

The themes explored in *The Bluest Eye*.

The stylistic devices used by effective and engaging writers

Writers use stories to illustrate important issues

Students will be able to...

- Make connections among the themes in the novel to other texts (music, videos, interviews, essays) surfacing the same issues

- Use textual evidence appropriately to illustrate themes

- Apply the writing process to produce a draft, revision, and final draft of an analytical essay.

Stage 2 – Determine acceptable Evidence

What evidence will show that students understand?

Performance Tasks* (Summary in GRASPS form):

You are a music producer responsible for creating a soundtrack for Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. Your audience is a director who wants to make a movie version of the novel. You will work with a production team; each of you will select a song that connects thematically to the novel. For each song, you will write an essay explaining the theme of the song and how it relates to the novel. You will need to present the song (with lyrics), explain the theme, and provide specific examples of how it relates to *The Bluest Eye*.

**Complete a Performance Tasks Blueprint for each task (next page)*

Other Evidence (quizzes, tests, prompts, observations, dialogues, work samples)

1. Thematic Storyboard
 - Students will create a storyboard in which they identify universal themes in the novel, citing textual evidence and illustrations of key scenes.
2. Quizzes: Students will take several quizzes to check reading comprehension of sections assigned to read independently.
3. Vocabulary Development—Each student will complete vocabulary maps of key vocabulary from the book, as well as a personal thesaurus
4. Character Scrapbook – Students will create a scrapbook for one character. The scrapbook will contain journal entries from the character's point of view, letters from other significant characters, and mementos.

Student Self-Assessment and Reflection:

- Students will complete evaluations of their group discussions, including comments on their own and their group members' participation
- Students will complete a self-assessment of their final soundtrack essays using the rubric provided; self-assessment will include a reflection on improvements made from initial draft to final draft.

Performance Task Blueprint

What understandings and goals will be assessed through this task?

- Narratives can express powerful human experiences
- Writing is a process of brainstorming, drafting, revising, and publishing

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details

- Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most

What criteria are implied in the standards and understandings *regardless* of the task specifics?

What qualities must student work demonstrate to signify that standards were met?

- Thorough understanding of recurring themes across multiple texts
- Support of claims with evidence

- Organized essay connecting themes to other texts
- Oral presentation that incorporates audio and/or visual to accompany content

Through what authentic performance task will students demonstrate understanding?

The student soundtrack will demonstrate understanding of the central themes of the novel. Students will each select a song, and write an essay explaining the thematic connection to the novel. Essays will contain textual examples from both the novel and the song lyrics, and students will present and explain their song selections.

What student products and performances will provide evidence of desired understanding?

- Soundtrack
- Group dialogue
- Journal
- Oral Presentation
- Reflections

- Thematic-connection essay
- Character Scrapbook

By what criteria will student products and performances be evaluated?

- Selected songs connect thematically to themes of the novel
- Rubric

- Essay is effectively organized into an introduction, body, and conclusion
- Essay incorporates textual evidence appropriately (from both songs and novel)
- Essay is revised and edited, demonstrating use of Standard English

Stage 3 – Plan Learning Experiences and Instruction

Note: Teacher may select to read the novel prior to stage 3. Ways to engage with the novel may include literature circles, whole group or individual reading. For the purpose of this unit students may explore key chapters and sections that correlate directly with the learning activity for the day in a close reading/small group discussion format.

Consider the WHERETO elements

- Select varying visual images of men, women and children and ask students to answer in their journal if they believe the person is beautiful or ugly and explain why. Students may engage in this activity in partners or in small group. Teacher may select to use pick-a-stick or other protocol for sharing out of their answers. **H**
- Transition to journal topic: How do we form our opinions about who or what is “beautiful”? Where do we look to define beauty? **H**
- Introduce essential questions and preview culminating task **W**
- Prologue predictions **H**
- Introduce and incorporate Reciprocal Teaching using Summary/Questions/Clarifications/Predictions graphic organizer **E**
- Teach key vocabulary from novel with vocabulary mapping activity (Definition, Synonyms/Antonyms/Sentence/Illustration) and Vocabulary-by-Context chart (Predicted definition based on usage in text→Actual definition) **E**
- Mini-lesson on African-American dialect grammar features; contrastive analysis of passages from *The Bluest Eye* **T**
- Guided discussion groups on Chris Rock’s “Good Hair” clips
- Write-Around (Students write comments and questions on the poems, pass, and then add comments, questions, and responses to others’ comments) on Pat Mora’s “Immigrants” and Nelly Wong’s “When I Was Growing Up” **O, E**
- Socratic seminars on related texts, Pat Mora’s “Immigrants” and Nelly Wong’s “When I Was Growing Up” **O, E**
- Journal entry: Personal experiences of prejudice **W, H**
- Personal thesaurus **E**
- Review key literary terms (**theme, symbol, foreshadowing, flashback**) **E**
- Post-It Note Discussions—Students record and post reactions, questions, surprising events into books and use post-its to guide discussions of the text **H, E**
- Character Scrapbook (Letters, diary entries, and mementos from one character) **E**
- Introduce soundtrack project (provide model, rubric, and preparing-to-write graphic organizer) **E, O**
- Letter to peer revision of soundtrack essays **R**
- Have students select other peers to develop a group design of soundtrack symbolic CD cover **H**
- Self-assessment and reflection on soundtrack project **R**
- Soundtrack presentation **T**

SEE SOUNDTRACK CALENDAR

Stage 3 – Plan Learning Experiences and Instruction

Consider the WHERETO elements

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<p>1 For partners or small groups Project varying visual images of men, women and children and ask students to answer in their journal if they believe the person is beautiful or ugly and explain why.</p> <p>Journal: How do we form our opinions about who or what is “beautiful”? Where do we look to define beauty?</p> <p>Predictions based on prologue</p> <p>H</p>	<p>2 Introduce essential questions and preview culminating task</p> <p>Reciprocal Teaching (whole class first, then small groups)</p> <p>Vocabulary-by-Context Chart based on selected text excerpts</p> <p>W,E</p>	<p>3 Use personal thesaurus when Tier II vocabulary is encountered in the selected close reading excerpt</p> <p>E,T</p>	<p>4 Literature Circles close reading analysis of literary elements as they arise (theme, symbol, foreshadowing, flashback)</p> <p>Post-it Note Discussions</p> <p>Reflection</p> <p>H, E</p>	<p>5 Guided group discussion on clips from Chris Rock’s “Good Hair”</p> <p>Reflection</p> <p>H, E</p>
<p>6 Sentence Lifting from selected passage from <i>The Bluest Eye</i></p> <p>E</p>	<p>7 Mini-lesson on African-American dialect grammatical features</p> <p>Contrastive analysis using passages from <i>The Bluest Eye</i></p> <p>T</p>	<p>8 Journal: Personal experiences of prejudice</p> <p>Reciprocal Teaching Groups</p> <p>H,E</p>	<p>9 Write-Arounds on Pat Mora’s “Immigrants” and Nelly Wong’s “When I Was Growing Up”</p> <p>O, E</p>	<p>10 Socratic Seminars on “Immigrants” and “When I Was Growing Up”</p> <p>O, E</p>
<p>11 Character Scrapbook description and rubric given to students. Students begin working on the scrapbook.</p> <p>E,O</p>	<p>12 Introduce soundtrack project (provide model, rubric, and preparing-to-write graphic organizer)</p> <p>E, O</p>	<p>13 Continue work on soundtrack and essay</p> <p>Group design of soundtrack symbolic CD cover</p> <p>H,O</p>	<p>14 Letter to peer: feedback on essay for revision</p> <p>E,R</p>	<p>15 Essay revision</p> <p>T,O</p>
<p>16 Publish final essay submission and practice of</p>	<p>17 Complete and submit the Character</p>	<p>18 Soundtrack presentations</p>	<p>19 Soundtrack presentations</p>	<p>20 Soundtrack presentations</p>

presentations T,O	Scrapbook T	E	E	Self-assessment and reflection on project R,T,O
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RESOURCES

CHARACTER SCRAPBOOK DESCRIPTION

This is a book made by a main character of five journal entries (at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of a page in length), two letters to the character from other characters, and three memorable photos or objects (with explanations of why the character would have saved them), capturing significant events or turning points in the book. Main characters, plot, and themes should be portrayed through your project.

"Mary Jane"

- By Alanis Morissette

What's the matter Mary Jane, you had a hard day
As you place the don't disturb sign on the door
You lost your place in line again, what a pity
You never seem to want to dance anymore

It's a long way down
On this roller coaster
The last chance streetcar
Went off the track
And you're on it

I hear you're counting sheep again Mary Jane
What's the point of trying to dream anymore
I hear you're losing weight again Mary Jane
Do you ever wonder who you're losing it for

Well it's full speed baby
In the wrong direction
There's a few more bruises
If that's the way
You insist on heading

Please be honest Mary Jane
Are you happy
Please don't censor your tears

You're the sweet crusader
And you're on your way
You're the last great innocent
And that's why I love you

So take this moment Mary Jane and be selfish
Worry not about the cars that go by
All that matters Mary Jane is your freedom
Keep warm my dear, keep dry

Tell me
Tell me
What's the matter Mary Jane...

MODEL ESSAY FOR SOUNDTRACK PROJECT

“Mary Jane”

“Mary Jane,” by Alanis Morissette, captures the experience of a woman whose life is on the downswing. It describes someone who can’t seem to get a break, and who lives her life by trying to please other people. Like Pecola, in Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*, Mary Jane gets beaten up on by life. She has small dreams, but her dreams will never come true until she can be happy with who she is.

Both Mary Jane and Pecola take a great deal of abuse from the world. The first stanza of the song states, “You lost your place in line, what a pity/ You never seem to want to dance anymore.” This line represents an unkind world that constantly takes advantage of Mary Jane. As a result, Mary Jane lives a life of unhappiness. In *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola constantly experiences acts of unkindness, from everyone from the boys at school to her own mother. When she gets surrounded by the boys, they taunt her, singing, “Black e mo Black e mo Ya daddy sleeps necked” (65). Later, after Maureen Peal also mocks her, Morrison writes, “Pecola tucked her head in—a funny, sad, helpless movement” (72). Pecola, like Mary Jane, becomes helpless to defend herself against the world’s cruelty. She also rarely laughs or smiles, just as Mary Jane doesn’t ever want to dance.

Neither Mary Jane nor Pecola accepts herself. The narrator of the song asks, “I hear you’re losing weight again Mary Jane/ Do you ever wonder who you’re losing it for?” Mary Jane loses weight to try and gain acceptance from those around her. Similarly, Pecola dreams of having blue eyes in order to be accepted by a white-dominated world. She goes to Soaphead Church to try to get blue eyes. He sees that she is a “little black girl who wanted to rise out of the pit of her blackness” (174). Both characters believe that somehow being different physically will cause them to be valued by those around them.

Both “Mary Jane” and *The Bluest Eye* show the effects of society’s cruelty on the individual. Mary Jane and Pecola both lose their sense of value as a result of being mistreated and devalued by others. These characters make the mistake of trying to change how they feel about themselves internally by making an external change.

PREPARE TO COMPARE!

CONNECTING THEME(S):

QUOTES	SIGNIFICANCE (What does it mean? What does it reveal about a character? How does it connect to the theme?)
Quote from Song:	Significance of Quote:
Quote from Novel:	Significance of Quote:
Quote from Song:	Significance of Quote:
Quote from Novel:	Significance of Quote:

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SCORING GUIDE FOR SOUNDTRACK PRESENTATION

Category	Scoring Criteria	Total Points
Organization (5 points)	Speaker makes the thematic connection between novel and song clear at beginning of presentation, and authors and titles are named. Supporting points and examples are presented logically, in a way that helps audience to understand the connections. There is a clear conclusion to the presentation that summarizes the overall connection between novel and song.	
Content (10 points)	The speaker clearly explains the thematic connection between the novel and selected song. Supporting quotes from the novel and song illustrate the theme to audience, and speaker insightfully analyzes how they demonstrate the theme.	
Presentation	Speaker maintains appropriate eye contact with the audience	

(10 points)	and uses a clear, audible voice. Standard Academic English is used throughout.	
Score		

The Bluest Eye Soundtrack Essay Rubric

Criteria	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
<p>THESIS STATEMENT and INTRODUCTION The essay has a thesis that clearly explains the thematic connection between <i>The Bluest Eye</i> and the selected song. Introduction mentions the author's name and book title, as well as the musical artist's name and song title.</p>				
<p>CONTENT The essay demonstrates the writer's thorough understanding of the themes of both book and song. Selected textual examples are analyzed thoughtfully, and insightful connections are made between the texts.</p>				
<p>ORGANIZATION The essay is organized and well structured (there is a beginning, a body, and a conclusion).</p>				
<p>PARAGRAPHS Each body paragraph focuses on one specific connection between the novel and selected song, illustrating the connection with aptly chosen textual evidence.</p>				
<p>STYLE Sentences show variety of patterns. The essay is written in a style and tone appropriate to the audience, topic and purpose.</p>				
<p>MECHANICS <i>Few or no errors in grammar, spelling, or formatting.</i></p>				

Student Self-Assessment and Reflections

<p>Give a brief explanation of your soundtrack project, and what you have accomplished</p>	<p>Looking at the rubric and scoring guides, what did you do well? What did you enjoy about the project?</p>
<p>Looking at the rubric, scoring guides, and teacher feedback, what could you improve on next time? What did you not enjoy about the project?</p>	<p>What theme(s) in the novel do you think are most important? Which relate most to your life, and why?</p>