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Curriculum Project, EDPL 834

Overview

As curriculum is developed across grade levels, many developers and teachers alike assume that students “grow out” of picture books. In this assumption, they also assume that students are less desiring or impacted by photographic content. The opposite perspective can be argued for all students, but especially for Black female students. Images are needed to reinforce positive self efficacy, self love and personal connection to heroism and leadership. Throughout the course of an entire high school term, Black females are 90% less likely to encounter a Black female heroine in literature curriculum. Conversely they are 100% more likely to encounter specific portrayals of “White female beauty, intelligence and impact” across the curriculum. These interactions or lack thereof, have dramatic effects on the female psyche of Black female students. In educating the whole child, traditional social studies and language arts curriculum must include a varied and deliberate showing of Black female protagonists and historical narratives.

Historically the gender roles and social constraints for girls have manifest in the books children read. By incorporating a wide spectrum of texts including a wide spectrum of Black female voice, attitudes, actions, dreams and success in history and modern day society- we gives girls permission to construct their identities own their own terms, free from sexism, racism, classicism; and to ultimately grant them power to change the world they live within. The curriculum developed will provide secondary teachers and students a host of literary materials, by which they can unveil and grapple with the issues of identity development, cultural efficacy and historical foundations for Black female Americans, through a social studies/ history classroom context. The concepts covered within this curriculum are listed below:

- The portrayal of female leaders throughout history
- Exploring the historic portrayal of Black females across traditional media- in film, in literature and in art (2D and 3D form)

Teachers will approach five main concepts through historical and fictional narratives.

Various mechanisms were imposed within society to define for Americans- who Black people were. In a segregationist and proslavery society, these mechanisms and definitions were generated to serve a purpose- arguably to normalize improper definitions of Black people/ women as inferior “humans,” to perpetuate negative realities and to offer a basis to rationalize unfair treatment of Black people, and by extension- Black females. These mechanisms and definitions have been created and sustained through traditional mediums of film, art and literature. Across all spectrums, the Black female has been locked into three lights- that of the “Mammy,” the “Jezebel” and the “Sapphire.” These images, created during colonial times, still exist today. This curriculum will cause students to identify these mechanisms and to think critically about who and what systems of belief and economy, they serve.

“The Mammy,” is stereotypically, dark-skinned, overweight, caregiver, and asexual. This caricature evolved post Civil War as “only very few wealthy white men could utilize black hand as in house servants, rather than field hands.” “The Jezebel,” is portrayed as a female who is tan to light-skinned, of mixed race, and sexually appealing, who uses her body to compel financial luxuries or favors. As an extension of slavery, the characterization of mixed-raced “mulattos” bred the Jezebel image. “The Sapphire,” is characterized as a dominant and pushy female, typically thrust upon women with brown to dark complexion. She tears down black men as much as she can. She has a host of children with different males but none are seen because she wants to be in control. She displays a matriarchal characteristics such as head of the household, no man around, or a castrate male. She is too lazy to work and more

than willing to take free services. All in all, these depictions were created in history, but are still enduring, and thus still binding the identities of Black female youth. It is hopeful that through exploration, they might be given the information to inform their realities; and then be compelled to see themselves and others differently.

Traditional secondary school schedules follow either a typical 7 period day or a 5-6 block schedule program. This curriculum can be utilized in an afterschool setting, or integrated within either a language arts or social studies course design. The curriculum is to be used in conjunction with historical text, as a method for incorporating differentiated instruction- so that students might not only learn the historical information but also apply its contents to their personal belief systems for self and cultural efficacy.


Activities

Week 1: "Who said it was a Man's World:" The portrayal of female leaders throughout history


Objectives: This session will focus on the identification of Black female role in the civil rights movement, from Slavery into the late 1960's. This session will allow teachers and students to identify and discuss the roles of Harriet Tubman (Moses), Miriam Anderson, Phyllis Wheatley, Rosa Parks, Coretta Scott King and participants in the Freedom Schools.

Activity: Teacher will provide a mini lesson on the role of women in slavery and the civil rights movement (which specific attention to the aforementioned female leaders). After the mini-lesson, students will brainstorm and list all the roles that come to mind. After students have compiled a group list, the list will then be used to create a t-chart for roles and corresponding


leaders throughout history. Student will then be broken into groups of 3, assigned 1 picture book depicting a female role or a historical heroine.


 Tree of Hope & Freedom School, Yes by: Amy Littlesugar

 Phyllis's Big Test by: Catherin Clinton

 Rosa by: Nikki Giovanni

 Moses by: Carole Boston Weatherford

 Coming Home by: Jacqueline Woodson

 When Miriam Sang: The True Recital of Miriam Anderson by: Pam Munoz Ryan

Upon reading, students are to answer the questions:

Activity 1: As a group read the story and answer the corresponding questions.

What message (cultural lesson) did you gather from the story? How did seeing the role players (protagonists and antagonists) make you feel? Did you connect with her (main protagonist)?

What is her role? What are the implications of her playing this role? What type of character must have been necessary to play out the role? Are there persons today she reminds you of? What lessons did you learn from her? What lessons do you hope to teach the next generation?

Activity 2: Create a short picture book, with yourself as the protagonist/ historical female leader of your time- overcoming a cultural obstacle you see facing your community. Develop a plot, rising action, climax and conclusion to illustrate one way you think you and or society can overcome- and succeed in an area important to you. Be sure to address specific areas of sexism, classism and or racism encountered. Include pictures (either drawings or collage) to illustrate your story.

Week 2: *Exploring Black females in traditional media spaces- in film*

Objectives: This session will focus on unveiling the stereotypes in society that serve to limit the participation of Black females in America. These stereotypes will be introduced, tracked through history and discussed in the modern sense of their existence. Students will be made aware of the cultural foundations for many of the stereotypical roles and occupations prevalent in modern day media.

Activity 1: Teacher will provide a mini-lesson the depictions of Black females in the media, starting during the slavery era, extending through the civil rights, up to today as “the Mammy, the Jezebel, or the Sapphire.” Students will watch “Gone with the Wind” and analyze the depiction of Hattie McDaniel's character. Students will journal their responses to the questions: Who is Hattie McDaniel's character, what role does she serve in the movie? How does the depiction make you feel? Who created the depiction of Hattie's character? Is Hattie's depiction the same or different from the female protagonist? How are they the same or different? Are the similarities or differences real- in real life? If not, are they made to appear to be, and why or why not? Students will also watch “Birth of a Nation” and analyze the depiction of Lynda Brown as the mulatto housekeeper, and the depiction of Black females in “Amos and Andy” clips, and respond to the aforementioned questions. After the journaling is complete across multiple class sessions, students are to complete Activity 2.

Activity 2: Students are to locate a 15-20 minute clip featured on www.youtube.com of modern day movies that feature one of the stereotypical depictions of Black females in the media. The links for the youtube clips found should be inserted in an email and sent to the Instructor so that he or she can compile the clips into 1 PowerPoint presentation to put on a Movie Viewing Day. On Movie Viewing Day, students will document/journal the movie shown the character featured and the stereotypical role portrayed. They then will journal and analysis

of the character or characters featured within the clips. Students are to also capture the name of the production company that produced the movie, the director and the total gross sales for the movie. Based on the information provided, students are to brainstorm related media- TV shows, movies, music videos that are produced by the same entities to discuss how media may or may not work to push stereotypes upon the community, and to also question why this push may be occurring, and to finally brainstorm ways by which they could counter the images/stereotypes in their own lives.

Week 3: *Exploring Black females in traditional media spaces- in literature*

Objectives: This session will explore Black female protagonists in canonical literature, and also in contemporary fiction. In extending the conversation about the portrayal and depiction of Black females in the media, students will contemplate the extension of the Mammy, Jezebel and Sapphire characterizations into literature.

Activity 1: Students will work in pairs to compile a list of the “top book publishers in the United States.” To meet this end, we will use total sales as a measure to sort and compare publishers. When students have composed the “Top 10 List,” they are also to note whether or not the publisher featured a sort for African American books. If so, discuss the types of books offered- that is which genres of literature do they fall, which authors were featured and the types of plots provided. Include discussion about the overall appeal and photographic characterization of Black female characters as well.

Activity 2: Students will go on a field trip to public libraries and private bookstores. They will attend a public library in an urban and suburban setting; they will also attend a bookstore in an urban and suburban setting. During their trips, they are to record what the layout and posted books communicated to them about Black females. How did they feel about being there? Why they think that is? What types of images did they see? What type of Black female images did

they see, and where were they featured? How many images of Black females did they see (number count)? Are the numbers and layout of the bookstore or library reflective of the interests and characters of Black females/people?

Activity 3: Students will investigate whether or not there are any Black female book publishers. Then, students will go online to learn about Triple Crown publications at <http://www.triplecrownpublications.com/>. They will compare and contrast marketing used by the “Top 10 book publishers” with that of Triple Crown Publications. They will journal responses to the questions, How do the marketing of the Top 10 publishers and Triple Crown make you feel about being a Black female, what depiction are prevalent, and what messages are they sending? In that same vein, in discussion, students will contemplate whether or not Black females participate in the depiction and perpetuation of the stereotypical roles, whether or not these images play a role (positive or negative) and who is or is not benefiting from their prevalence. Students will write letters to 2 publishers expressing their opinions.

Activity 4: Teacher will provide a mini lesson on the history of Aesop’s Fables, and oral storytelling in the African tradition- as a way of spreading a “magical power and beauty” of being Black. Discuss the role of fairy tales in modern culture, as a means for transmitting ideas from one generation from another. Discuss the Black female presence in fairy tales, and discuss what the presence or lack thereof is communicating to Black female youth. Students will be provided a host of traditional and contemporary picture books. Students will be required to compare and contrast the messages generated by the imagery (some featuring only white characters and those multicultural in whole). Books listed below:

 Dancing in the Wings by: Debbie Allen

 Rapunzel & Goldie Locks and the Three Bears & Beauty and the Beast by: John Kurtz

 Princess Grace by: Mary Hoffman

Students will then discuss what these images might mean for Black female girls? And discuss who created these images? Why they may have created the images? And to then speculate why or why not these images are the norm?


Activity 5: Students are to be matched with a group of elementary students to perform a read aloud of the selected texts (ascribed above). After reading they are to ask, and record- how the book made the younger students feel? Whether or not the characters looked like them? Whether or not they identified with the character? And whether or not they believed they could become like the character- a ballerina, a princess, or a queen. Responses are to be written in their journal for future discussion.

Week 4: *Exploring Black females in traditional media spaces- in art (2d and 3d forms)*

Objectives: This session will explore actual artifacts (replicas) of images created during the slavery and civil rights eras to characterize black women. Students will be compelled to ask the questions: What is this photo/artifact telling me about society, what do I feel personally (about self and culture)? What are the messages the authors want viewers to take on and embrace? Who benefits from these characterizations? What suffers from these characterizations? Do they still pervade art/media today? Why are the authors of these images still producing these same images? Do I embrace or reject these characterizations? What does it or will it mean if I reject or embrace these characterizations?

Activity 1: Teachers will provide a mini lesson regarding each artifact. Then students will discuss the meaning, the audience, and stakeholders and the sustainability tied to each image. They will brainstorm ways in which these historical artifacts have been preserved, within contemporary art, and discuss ways in which society might produce counter images.

 R.T. Davis company's "Aunt Jemina"

 Portrayals of commercial ads

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