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Racism, Prejudice, and Finding Your Place in the World

1. Rational

Many would like to believe that America has become a country more tolerant and accepting of others of different races, but the opposite seems to be true in recent years. During the years of the Covid-19 pandemic, there seems to be a surge of racist attacks on both Asians and African Americans. George Floyd and many other attacks on African Americans by police and attacks on Asians by many ignorant people who are afraid of Covid-19 are a few examples. Moreover, the rise of white supremacist groups in America makes it feel like America is going back in time to when racism and discrimination were accepted.

Racism and discrimination is an important topic to teach students so that they can learn how to recognize when it is happening in their lives and how to stand up to racism. A big problem with many schools these days is the censorship of racism. Many parents are fighting so that racism is not taught as part of the school curriculum. This is a major issue as this will make students ignorant to this subject and make it so they perpetuate this cycle of racism and discrimination.

The unit of study that I propose will be focused of racial discrimination, the effects of prejudice and expectations that hinder the development of an individual, and how to find their place in the world. The material that will be used for the class will focus on racism and how it affects the victims and also how they are able to overcome and fight back against racism. The materials that I used serve to teach students that racism is a present issue that they have the power to change and by overcoming it they are able to find their place in the world.

The centerpiece for the lesson is Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. This historical-fictional story is best suited for 9th-12th graders. The story follows an unnamed narrator who is black living in 1930s America. In the story the narrator considers himself invisible and this is a major theme in the story. The racism and prejudice placed onto him makes him feel like he can not be his true authentic self because he feels that he has to fit in with the stereotypes that are associated with his race. My hope with teaching this book to students will help students understand how racism negatively affects others and how to stand up to racism.

2. Introduction the Unit

To start off the unit I will start off with teaching students how to write and format papers. To do this I will have a packet of worksheets that they would hold onto for the entire semester so they can use it as reference.

List of possible worksheets

- Reminders of SSW: It would contain the same points that we learned from this class
- Formating: How I expect students organize their paragraphs
 - Intro: Hook, Topic, Thesis
 - Body: Claim, Evidence, Analysis, Tieback to Claim, (Repeat Evidence, Analysis, Tieback to Claim), Conclude
 - Conclusion: Reflection, Restate Thesis
- Difference between Summary and Analysis
- List of rhetorical devices, how to use them, and how to identify the purpose, tone, and audience
- How to determine if a source is credible

With these handouts I will also be including activities and examples that are related to the topic so students can have hands-on experience in all of these topics. Within some of these activities I would include themes of race and discrimination so that students get accustomed to what this class is focused on. We will be doing all of these worksheets together as a class so students do not get confused.

- Formating: Example paragraphs where students will annotate and highlight each of the different parts of a paragraph
- Difference between Summary and Analysis: Definition of both the terms and side-by-side examples of a summary and analysis of various topics. Students will be presented with an example paragraph and determine if it is summary or analysis
- List of rhetorical devices and how to use them: Taking inspiration from the class that I studied, students will watch the movie *The Great Debaters* in class. During this time there will be a worksheet with quotes from the movie, list of rhetorical devices that can be used, ethos, pathos, and logos, and the purpose, tone, and audience of the scene.

Quote	List of Rhetorical Devices	Purpose, Tone, and Audience	Ethos, Pathos, Logos	Extra space for notes
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Summary of *The Great Debaters*: A drama based on the true story of Melvin B. Tolson, a professor at Wiley College Texas. In 1935, he inspired students to form the school's first debate team, which went on to challenge Harvard in the national championship. (IMDb)
 The reason for picking this film is because of the themes of racism and prejudice present within the film. It follows an African American Debate Club and their struggle with racism in 1935. In addition to this, many of the debates and lines in the film can be broken down and analyzed in this way.

- How to determine if a source is credible: List of ways to determine if a source is credible and an activity where we break down videos covering Critical Race Theory, a hot topic subject that has been misconstrued, and determine if the video is credible or not.

To end the introduction I will have students practice their writing and analysis on poems like “I, Too” and “Let America be America Again” by Langston Hughes and “And Still I Rise” by Maya Angelo. They will write a short paper analysis on the themes present in these poems and turn it in. I decided to format this Unit like this because I believe that having a good foundation in writing will benefit students beyond just this unit and help them in future endeavors. Not only that, it is a way to slowly introduce students to this topic before getting into the main text.

3. Working Through the Text

I will go through the book chapter by chapter together with the students in class. I will make a print out on important quotes and have the students connect it with a theme that is presented in the book. Then they would work as a group and come up with their interpretation of the quote and write about how this quote connects with the theme presented in the book.

Important Quote, Chapter/Page Number	Themes From The Book	Student’s Interpretation	How Does It Connect To The Theme?
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At the end of each day I would have students write a reflection on what they thought about the section we read from the book. This would help them practice getting used to the SSW requirements and get better at writing in general.

4. Going Beyond the Text

Racism is a universal topic and there are many books that cover this topic. By using YA literature students will have an easier time connecting with them compared to *Invisible Man*. By

doing this they will have a better understanding about what racism is, the negative impact of it, and how to fight against racism. Before getting into the main text, I would give a handout that explains their final project and have students pick a book that is related to the themes present within *Invisible Man* so they can work with the book alongside *Invisible Man*.

YA:

1. *Anger is a Gift* by Mark Oshiro: Sixteen-year-old Morris Jefferies Jr, or “Moss”, to this day is plagued with the trauma of his father's passing six years ago at the hands of Oakland's police brutality and judicial injustices. Now entering his second year of high school, Moss and his classmates face an administration that treats their student bodies like criminals; implementing metal detectors and random locker inspections when students in his English class don't even have enough books for everybody to read! In an effort to reclaim their right to a peaceful environment, the students decide to organize and fight back. In the midst of the chaos, Moss unravels what it means to be black and queer in Oakland; and that if he wants change, he needs to empower himself and his community. (Summary taken from Nam Le Book Talk)
2. *Don't Ask Me Where I'm From* by Jennifer De Leon: *Don't Ask Me Where I'm From* follows Liliana Cruz, a high school student in Boston, as she deals with an entirely new academic and social environment, and navigates the challenges of being one of the only Latinas in her school. When an assignment forces her to examine her heritage, Liliana begins to grapple with questions of cultural identity and the complexities of her family's immigration history. The novel delves into issues of race, privilege, and the search for self-identity in a society that often demands labels, and has relatable features that young adult audiences can connect with. (Summary taken from Evelyn Garcia Book Talk)

3. *How Dare the Sun Rise* by Andra Uwiringiyamana: *How Dare the Sun Rise* is a book written by Sandra Uwiringiyima. She grew up in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and moved around frequently at a young age so she and her family could stay safe from the war going on. While in a refugee camp in Gutumba (a village on the western side of Burundi which is on the border of the Democratic Republic of the Congo), she experienced a horrific massacre of her friends, family, and community, and almost lost her own life at 10 years old. This story is her memoir of going through this tragic experience, surviving, and then moving to the U.S. in 2007 for a new life that included its own set of struggles. In this book, she highlights the beauty of her life in Africa as well as the tragedy. She brings the audience with her as she works her way through the new and unexpected roadblocks in America such as racism and culture adjusting. She finds solace in God, family, and friends, and in speaking her truth. (Summary taken from Alexa Moreno Book Talk)
4. *The Black Queen* by Jumata Emill: The story of *The Black Queen* by Jumata Emill does not necessarily revolve around the queen herself but investigates her murder. Nova has become the first black homecoming queen at Lovelett High School, with a long line of white legacies behind her. The night of her coronation ends up being her last, and she is found murdered in a cemetery that housed enslaved people. The first suspect on the list is Tinsley McArthur, the next supposed queen. During the story, segregation takes dominion over the lives of the teenagers, and the mystery is split into two first-person perspectives. In every other chapter, the audience listens to either Tinsley, a suspicious, privileged, and coddled little white girl, or Dutchess, Nova's best friend, a strong-minded and strong-willed advocate for black lives. Dutchess feels empowered to be a black woman.

She has strong stances on social justice and sees Nova winning the homecoming crown as a win for all the black girls. To investigate Nova's murder, Dutchess has to put her social views to the side and team up with Tinsley. *The Black Queen* offers young adults an exciting high school murder mystery while intertwining topics about the criminal justice system, racial segregation, and white privilege. (Summary taken from Jaden Giacchero Book Talk)

5. *This is My America* by Kim Johnson: The novel is told in the first person perspective in the voice of the main protagonist Tracy Beaumont. When she was younger her father was convicted and sentenced to death for a crime that the Beaumont family knows he is innocent of. Tracy's main focus has been writing letters to justice groups hoping to get her father's case reopened and ultimately prove his innocence. She has been feeling increased pressure since her father has less than a year left before his scheduled execution. She is further frustrated by the feeling that the rest of her family is not as invested in the matter as her. A sense that they are sort of moving on with their lives. This is most evident with her older brother who is being interviewed on television and is receiving a full scholarship to a major university. (Summary taken from Justin Schwoerer Book Talk)
6. *We Are Not Free* by Traci Chee: *We Are Not Free* is set during World War II after the bombing of Pearl Harbor as anti-Japanese sentiment grew in America. The story follows the perspective of 14 Japanese-American youths, ranging from the ages of 14-20. All of them grew up in San Francisco's Japantown and each chapter of the book follows over a 3 year period as different characters struggle with moving to and living in the Japanese internment camps. (Summary taken from Franklin Trinh Book Talk)

7. *Writing My Wrongs* by Shaka Senghor: *Writing My Wrongs* is a memoir that reflects upon a chain of events that happened throughout Senghor's life. In the novel, Senghor's life takes a drastic turn once his parent's divorce; leaving him with a deep sense of abandonment and resentment. Trying to process his emotions, he soon finds himself in the streets of Detroit, where he is introduced to a world filled with poverty, drugs, and violence. A child who once dreamed of becoming a doctor now finds himself behind bars at the age of nineteen, convicted of second-degree murder. (Summary taken from Zuleica-Tania Coronel Book Talk)

5. Ending the Unit

By the end of the unit the students should have a firm grasp of what racism is, the negative effects it has on an individual, and how to stand up against racism. At the end of the unit I will have students do a group book talk on the books they decided to read from the YA Literature section or I will have them write a paper connecting both *Invisible Man* and the book they selected. The students will also write a 150-250 word reflection paper on what they learned and what they have taken away from the class. Students will also submit the packet to make sure that all of the activities assigned in class were completed.

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