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Dr. Warner

ENGL-112B Sec 01

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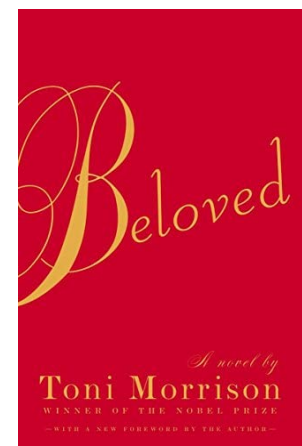
## The Perspective of Colored Eyes— Multi-Ethnic Literature

### **Rationale:**

America is the melting pot of the world. The country was essentially built by immigrants but this isn't reflected within English classrooms where most if not all of the texts read in these classes are by white male authors. While the content covered by these authors are important, there are also much more perspectives to be covered by authors of color, and their narratives are rarely covered within schools presumably due to their ethnicity. This unit aims to cover the perspectives white male American authors may not be able to and to celebrate multi-ethnic literacy.

I want to teach this unit due to the lack of variety in the texts taught to me during high school. Most, if not all of the texts that were assigned to us students were by white male American authors bar one that was by a native African author. I'd always wondered why the school I had gone to, which is extremely diverse in terms of ethnicity, only taught texts by white American authors. The only times students would be able to explore different aspects of cultures would either be through foreign language classes or through history. However, much of the meaningful experiences and narratives can only be covered through texts, and I hope to cover these through the books chosen.

*Beloved* is chosen as the centerpiece of the unit due to it covering the perspective of an emancipated slave that still feels the repercussions



of slavery even years after, a perspective that cannot be reliably emulated by white authors. The novel also covers YA topics such as abuse/violence and dealing with death and loss

### **Into the Unit Week 1:**

To begin the unit, I would start with an activity which asks students to share about the unique things within their racial/ethnic background whether it be things about food, dance, cultural behaviors etc. They would divide into groups and inquire about what one another has shared, and whether what they shared has an influence on American culture, or is unique and separate from American culture. I open with this activity to solidify the unique perspectives of each student. Each student will be asked to write about 300 words about what they chose, which will later be converted into a presentation. I would then inquire about what kind of world it would be if their perspectives were not portrayed/shared, similar to how it is in current English classrooms of which it is generally dominated by white male perspectives. Later, the students would watch ONE OK ROCK's "Renegades" which comments about racial injustices in America as well as other global issues. As a class, we would analyze the video and its messages.



### **Through the Unit Week 2-6**

To continue, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* will be covered and the first two chapters will be read in class (~33 pages). About two chapters will be read during each class period. Readings are done during class time as encouraging students to read outside of class is quite difficult, and even more so when the text such as *Beloved* is as dense and nuanced as it is. During class reading, students will be asked throughout the reading what their interpretations of certain passages are

during the readings. After each class period, a general question will be written on the board such as “Why does Sethe obsess over *Beloved*?”, generally a question that is covered during that class period’s readings to serve as an assessment. As the class progresses through the book, I would like to hold an activity of who is the villain as the book changes antagonists somewhat as the book progresses.

Because the readings of *Beloved* are done in class, students will also be assigned *The Magic Fish* by Trung Le Nguyen. *The Magic Fish* is about a young Vietnamese teen who struggles to communicate with his parents due to the language barrier, but also struggles with being open about his sexuality (goodreads.com). Instead of assigning *Beloved* for students to read, they will instead read the companion text. At the end of each week, students will write their thoughts about what they have read so far and these writings will be submitted (similar to SSWs). *The Magic*



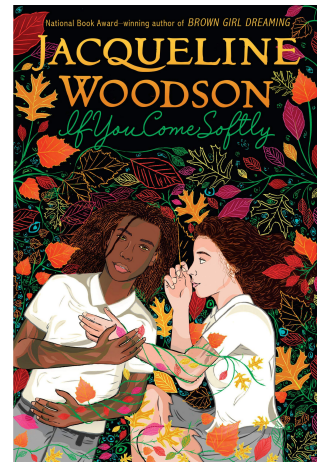
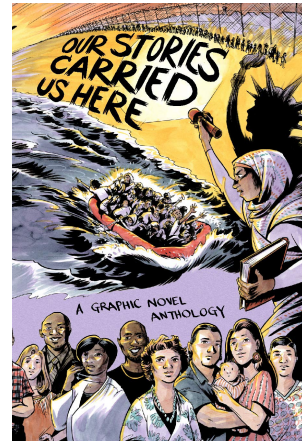
*Fish* is chosen as the protagonist is a teen, which allows for better relatability amongst the students, he is also colored and gay. There are many texts from gay, white authors that are taught in school such as those from Adrienne Rich, but there is barely, if any, texts about gay colored individuals. To further celebrate colored texts/media, students will be asked to do a mini presentation of text/media and how the topic it covers is unique to ethnic/racial background from which it is rooted. This is done as many of the texts covered in English classes are generally very sad and depressing, especially with *Beloved*. To combat this dreary feeling during the unit, the presentation which celebrates the individual traits of ethnic/racial groups aims to bring some happiness in the classroom. At the end of the unit,

students will be asked to write a literary analysis paper on any aspect from *Beloved* or *The Magic Fish*.

### Beyond the Unit

Because the perspectives of colored authors are generally different from authors taught within school, I would recommend:

- *Our Stories Carried Us Here* by Tea Rozman
  - This graphic novel is an anthology from multiple authors who each provide different immigrant perspectives. Each story highlights the struggles of various people immigrating to a new land (goodreads.com)
- *If You Come Softly* by Jacqueline Woodson
  - Ellie struggles with interacting with her family and Jeremiah is the few African Americans that attend the private school, Percy Academy. Both grow fond of one another due to their struggles.
- “Immigrant Blues” by Li-Young Lee
  - “Immigrant Blues” is a poem about racial assimilation and someone who feels they have to hide their native tongue.
- “I, Too” by Langston Hughes
  - “I, Too” is about an African American who struggles to fit in with those around him.



Works Cited

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