

Un-Zombied and Magically Black: A Kaleidoscope of the African American's Supernatural World

*Wendi Mungai Umoren
Tilden Middle School*

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Overview: Hocus Pocus

The complexity of the supernatural world as it is manifested in African American culture can be found in countless works of literature and film. Throughout the past five decades specific images have been interwoven in the fibers of American society. Hollywood developed a myriad of stereotypes ranging from the African American's fear of the "unexplained" to their wicked involvement in the underworld. When traditional ancient African religions are mentioned, the spiritual foundation of the religion is first distorted then mocked or vilified. One example can be seen in the Disney film *Prince of Egypt* during the song "Playing With the Big Boys" as ancient Egyptian deities are boldly depicted as evil forces. Within the first twenty minutes, it becomes clear to the viewer that the ancient polytheistic religion of Egypt is ridiculed and not taken serious by many of the film's characters. Disney casts two comedians (Martin Short and Steve Martin) to provide the voices for the clown-like priests, Hotep and Huy. The "rituals" performed by the priests resemble fancy magic tricks with serpents, special powders, smoke filled rooms and funhouse style mirrors. As Ancient Egyptian tradition is undermined throughout the film, young audiences are shown Western monotheism as the benevolent choice over Eastern polytheism. The message of good vs. evil/ Christianity vs. "paganism" is deliberate and leaves a child who does not have accurate prior knowledge to accept negative viewpoints of African culture.

In the popular Disney film, *Princess and the Frog*, young members of the audience witness as the African traditional religion, Vodou, is depicted as a malevolent system of practice. The West African word "vodun" means "spirit" and is a combined set of beliefs and practices from various African ethnic groups such as Yoruba, Fon, Congo, Ibo, Dahomean, Hausa and Mandingo brought to the Americas by the Africans captured in the slave trade. In the film, the menacing Dr. Facilier uses the powers of "Black Magic" to summon *loas*, which for the sake of the film are *all* evil spirits and cause suffering to innocent people. Grimacing African masks and angered spirits are in the background further implicating the sinister nature of the religion. As Dr. Facilier sings "Friends on the Other Side", movie viewers watch as he dances in and out of shadows

conjuring tricks to manipulate innocent people's lives. The "Other Side" signifies the underworld and Dr. Facilier shows children what happens to those who follow this "forbidden" religion as he reaches his demise in a cemetery. In the recent past, zombie films of Hollywood also provided misrepresentations of Vodou, causing many Americans to associate candles, rag dolls and chicken bones with the root of the religion.

Stereotypes can have an inadvertent affect on a child's self-esteem, and academic performance, leading a child to feel inadequate as a human being. Learning to embrace what is part of culture instead of bearing shame can build positive connections with a child and help him/her form a deep engagement with the learning environment. The images that surrounded us by can be a determining factor as for how we view ourselves. There have been numerous studies that prove that people do not perform as well when they are being stereotyped. Professor of psychology, Michael Inzlicht, led a study on the lasting effects of prejudice and published his findings in the August 2012 issue of *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. Through Inzlicht's study, it was discovered that the participants who faced negative stereotyping were more likely to be aggressive, less likely to make quality decisions and had a tendency to have unhealthy eating habits. His conclusion was that people who face negative stereotypes have fundamental difficulties with self-control.

This unit will delve into the impact of internalizing stereotypes in literature and film. We will view the Blaxploitation films *Blacula* and *Sugar Hill* of the 1970s and compare them to the reemergence of similar style films such as *Candyman (1992)* and *Skeleton Key (2005)* to determine if the same stereotypes continue to exist in each of the films. *Blacula*, which is one of the very first blaxploitation films, tells the story of Mamuwalde, an African prince whom Dracula turns into a vampire during the slave trade era. Other than the fact that this was the first film which casted an African American as a vampire, I chose the film *Blacula* for a variety of reasons. One reason is the lack of authenticity and misrepresentation of Africa's culture as it adapts to European mythology. The main character, Mamuwalde, is an African prince during the 1700s wearing European clothing and speaking English as well as a Cambridge scholar. He requests Dracula's assistance to end the slave trade, which in turn infuriates Dracula. During the opening scene as the white Count Dracula transforms Mamuwalde into a vampire, Dracula shows that he has the ultimate power and control over Mamuwalde's fate as he locks him into a coffin. Movie viewers witness the ironic twist of events, as the African prince who wants to end slavery becomes a slave himself. I find this scene to be symbolic because it is where Mamuwalde is emasculated; his manhood is stripped as his wife helplessly watches before her death. Count Dracula renames him Blacula and curses him and his wife with bloodshed and suffering for eternity. Students will understand the concept of foreshadowing used in both literature and cinema as they see Mamuwalde awaken in the 1970 era as Blacula. Blacula's character is doomed and becomes evil as he takes countless victims in a hopeless attempt to regain strength, dignity or control over his own existence. Scholar Edward Guerrero considers *Blacula* a film that reinforces the negative view that society already has on African American people. I believe it is essential to analyze Blacula's choice of victims, since a large amount were African-American women. Interestingly, when Blacula became hungry for blood his groomed hairstyle would change to an Afro with bushy side burns. Why does the character appear to have

more African characteristics when he transforms to his monster state? I would like to learn the answer to the question: How does the African American child perceive this particular theme on a subconscious level? Race and gender in *Blacula*, or rather the relationship between African American men and women is significant, since African American filmmaker, William Crain, directed the film. The class will have an in-depth discussion on the gender, racial and social messages conveyed following the viewing of this film. Have African Americans accepted the stereotypes of society and Hollywood to be authentic representations? Students will have opportunities to respond to these questions in student discussion groups.

The film *Sugar Hill* begins with an African American couple spending time in a nightclub called Haiti, enjoying a “voodoo” ritual for fun. Their life changes when the woman, Diana “Sugar”, learns her boyfriend is killed by drug dealing gangsters. She seeks revenge on the murderers by going to a voodoo priestess/queen, Momma Maitresse for help. The help that Momma Maitresse offers is a team of voodoo zombies and the god of the dead, loa Baron Samedi. Africa is further implicated when the zombies are said to be of the bodies of dead slaves from Guinea. It is notable that as the main character leads a double life as she avenges her boyfriend’s murder, her physical style and personality change. She is the conservative and mild mannered Diana with straightened hair during the day while she works, however she becomes a bold outspoken Sugar with a full Afro when she teams with zombies to find justice. Similar to *Blacula*, the film director of *Sugar Hill*, Paul Maslansky chose to use the hairstyle and hair texture of his main character as a direct connection to rage or violence. I would ask students to explain the writer’s choice for the duality and ask if they have experienced situations when they felt a need to change their appearance and behaviors for a certain setting in the real world. Although the film shows the “bad guys” getting attacked by heroic zombies, the misrepresentation of Vodou continues the trend of classic stereotypes of African based spirituality portrayed in many Hollywood films.

Candyman, a horror film created thirty years after *Blacula*, has striking similarities. The antagonist is African American Daniel Robitaille who was once a highly respected and well sought after artist in his town during the 19th century. He fell deeply in love with his client’s daughter, a young white woman and impregnates her. Once the forbidden love was revealed, a group of whites brutally attacked and murdered Daniel with the assistance of honeybees. The attackers renamed him “Candyman” and his soul is cursed to an eternity of unrest and gains a murderous appetite. His character is sent through time dimensions to the 1990’s, where he has become part of an urban myth in the Chicago projects Cabrini Green. Candyman’s victims are African American women and children who are vulnerable and broken by poverty. He is a demon-like monster incapable of human compassion other than when he expresses his love and spares taking the life of Helen, a white woman. Students will have opportunities to make comparisons between *Blacula* and *Candyman* regarding both monsters’ choice of victims, the use of time travel, the power whites have over their fate, and the lack of control each villain had over their own circumstance. In discussion and writing, students will respond to how the filmmakers choose to allow the perpetrators (Count Dracula and the angry white mob) no retribution for their crimes against other human beings. In their original state, were Mamuwalde and Daniel considered human or sub-human by their slayers?

Skeleton Key (2005) is set in present day Louisiana with a plot heavily connected to hoodoo (a New Orleans blend of African, Native American and European folk magic). This film was chosen to show students the layers of negative racial stereotypes in a modern Hollywood film as it relates to practices used in the African American community. The heroine is Caroline, a young white woman who is a nurse to an invalid living in a haunted mansion. With a skeleton key, Caroline discovers a secret room filled with dolls, books of spells and magic potions used for hoodoo rituals by the deceased African American servants, Papa Justify and Mama Cecile. Through a series of spooky flashbacks, students will eventually learn that Papa Justify and Mama Cecile were intended to be evil and are considered villains in the story. One flashback shows the two servants using hoodoo spells with the white children of the house and getting caught by the children's parents. There is a scene of a rowdy and festive lynch mob who cheer at the sight of Mama Cecile and Papa Justify hanging lifelessly from a tree and being set on fire. Students will be asked if the lynch mob is considered a group of transgressors or servers of justice by the filmmaker? The classic Hollywood stereotype of the "Mystical/Magical Negro" is relived through Caroline's African American confidante, Jill, as she assists Caroline with her haunted house dilemma. We only see Jill when Caroline is in need of learning the mysteries of Hoodoo and does not have a significant role in the film. According to Ann Hornaday, writer of Washington Post article, "Unlikely Rays of Light Striking the Racial Prism", she considers this particular stereotype harmful since it deprives African American characters of reaching "full personhood, relegating them instead to the story's exotically decorative margins." Usually the "Mystical Negro" has an innate connection to the supernatural and uses his or her wisdom to help non-African American protagonists out of troubled situations. This stereotypical role usually does not help the "Mystical Negro" out of his own troubles and sometimes sacrifices his life or freedom for the sake of others. Examples of the "Mystical Negro" can be further found in films such as *Ghost* (Whoopi Goldberg), *The Green Mile* (Michael Clarke Duncan) and *The Legend of Bagger Vance* (Will Smith). Author Nnedi Okarafor-Mbachu wrote an essay that focuses on Stephen King's usage of the "Mystical Negro" in his novels "The Shining", "The Talisman", and "The Green Mile." Okarafor-Mbachu states in her essay, "Stephen King's Super Duper Magical Negro":

The grand result of the repeated use of the Magical Negro archetype (coupled with the gigantic success of King's novels) is the implication that black people are inferior and expendable, even when they have power to wield, and white people are superior and important, even when they have to rely on the Magical Negro.¹

My concern falls heavily on how the internalization of stereotypes affects the African American child's self-perception of his/her place in society. When the formulaic role of the African American is being depicted as a malevolent force or a harmless, self-sacrificing character that never uses his/her power to improve one's own life, the emotional development of a child is placed at risk. Students will lead discussions based around key questions: How would audience members who have been accustomed to

¹ <http://www.strangehorizons.com/2004/20041025/kinga.shtml>

Hollywood's representation receive horror movies with no cultural and racial stereotypes of African Americans? How may a plot change if African Americans are not placed in these categories? How is the text formed to shape the reader or viewer's reaction? We will study African creation stories and discover how African American literature focuses on matters of time travel, afterlife, and spirituality. Students will be introduced to African folklore, African American literature (*Kindred*, *House of Dies Drear*, *Sweet Whispers*, *Brother Rush* and *Beloved*) and films and clips that focus on the supernatural (*Sankofa*, *Daughters of the Dust*, *Black Orpheus*, *Beloved*, and *Eve's Bayou*), Students will be given the "Big" question: Do African Americans define the supernatural through the lens of Hollywood and contemporary America or do they create their own standard?

Rationale: Ghosts in the Classroom

As a public school ESL teacher in Southwest Philadelphia, I am faced with the daily reminder of the literacy crisis plaguing the African American community. In 2009, the Department of Education reported that the literacy rate of over 50 percent of African American children in the fourth grade nationwide was below the basic skills level and far below average. In the spring of 2014, the Black Star Project reported findings that a mere 10 percent of eighth-grade Black boys in the U.S. are considered proficient in reading. Based on the findings of the National Assessment of Educational Progress and National Center of Education Statistics, millions of young African Americans are unable to comprehend or evaluate text, provide relevant details, or support inferences about the written information they read. The connection between illiteracy, high school graduation, college readiness, career and incarceration is strikingly clear for any educator. The countless articles that are written on the disparity of test scores between African Americans and their white and Asian counterparts support a similar observation: African Americans, on a national level, are not reading. However, the number of articles decreased when the question of the cause for the underlying theme of non-interest in literature is posed. Why are African American children not reading and what are we doing about it? I do realize the complexity of such a question; there are many factors that lead to the achievement gap among African American students. Of course, socio-economics, broken family homes, schools with limited funding and resources play a heavy role in the problem of illiteracy. It is my duty as an educator of an impoverished community to reintroduce reading as not simply a school subject but as a life tool. I intend for my students to go beyond reading the words on a page to analyzing and connecting themes of literature to themes in our everyday world. Reading, overall, will actually enhance students socially as well as cognitively. Psychologist Raymond Mar and professor of cognitive psychology Keith Oatley stated in their work featured in *Perspectives on Psychological Science* that people who read fiction are capable of the most empathy and the ability to hold opinions, beliefs, and interests apart from their own. Gaining an ability to be empathetic and understanding of others will, in my opinion, increase positive interactions within the school and home community.

I consider the lack of motivation to be the breakdown in the classroom for the African American student. According to Dr. Veda Jairrels, author of "African Americans and Standardized Tests: The Real Reason for Low Test Scores," says that African American students must increase the time they read for pleasure. If educators begin to

provide literature that recognizes who the student is culturally and individually as well as generationally, the emotional and intellectual needs of the child are met. A child's educational background and experience play a major role in their attitude towards reading. In the early primary grades of kindergarten through second grade the curriculum is designed to teach children how to read. By fourth grade, teachers are teaching their students *through* reading. When the student does not grasp the foundation of reading in earlier grades, learning becomes severely limited and a constant struggle.

Hypothetically, if we were able to time-travel to that first introduction of literature for our African American students who are struggling as readers, what books would we see on display in that classroom's library? Would the classroom be richly immersed in print and positive images of African Americans? Would the educator be creating a culture of reading in that classroom where it was enjoyed? Based on my experience in several first, second and third grade classrooms throughout Philadelphia, the answers to those questions are bleak. Fortunately, I knew one third grade teacher who understood the significance of creating a reading culture and often repeated the phrase "the more you read, the better you read and the better you read the more you read." Students in this particular class achieved reading success and found reading as an enjoyable past time. Frequent reading encourages the proficient reading needed to pass standardized testing (PSSA, Keystone, SATs) and thrive in society. The Scholastic Kids and Family Reading Report: Fifth Edition discovered that one of the factors that determine a frequent reader in children ages 6-11 is having specific characteristics in the books they read. Although the report is solely based on the findings of the frequent reader, I consider the philosophy to be the same for the non-frequent reader. It is natural to connect oneself to characters that have similar traits and cultural backgrounds.

Recently when I searched for lists of popular children's classics, I was faced with a dilemma. With the exception of mentioning four or five African American stories such as Ezra Jack Keates' *Peter's Chair* or *A Snowy Day*, Don Freeman's *Corduroy* and Walter Dean Mosley's *Jazz*, lists were composed of books that did not offer any connection to the reality that many African-Americans face or experience. TIME offers a list of the best 100 books for children, and out of the handful of African American books recommended none depict a successful Black family. The characters in the suggested African American stories were either forming a bond with a pet or an object/toy. The remaining 95 books listed showed cultural norms and positive familial interactions between the non-African American characters. The young African American child is left to wonder: *Where do I fit in?* Towards the end of eighth grade, the maturing African American student often concludes: *I don't fit in.* I believe the omission of African American culture should not be considered a subtlety, since we see there has to be an explanation as to why reading is not a favored pastime for a large portion of African American students. Although there are hundreds of talented African American authors for children, many of their works have not been featured on these lists promoting "quality literature." Well-meaning educators in the Philadelphia school district (close to 60% African American) are stocking their classrooms with more storybooks of talking animals, Dr. Seuss, and white families who live in middle class communities, than stories that show African American children and families. This leaves the African American student with fewer opportunities to maintain a culture of reading enjoyment similar to the

frequent reader. The African American student is often times the ghost of the classroom - he/she is noticed when the mark has been missed or a disruption has been made. In ghost stories and films, apparitions go unnoticed by the world until something bumps in the empty attic or an imbalance causes discomfort.

Motivation becomes achievable when educators' have an idea of their student's interests and culture. The question should not simply be how can educators get students reading, instead we should ask how do we get students to *want* to read? In middle school, I notice science fiction; fantasy and thriller are genres that grasp many of my students' attention. Those who do not read literature may find the same excitement through films and other digital media. Students in my eighth grade seem to gravitate towards books that have been made into motion pictures. I realize the use of film could actually be a clever way to encourage reading. I began thinking of how we could engage in discussions of theme and plot, analyze characters, and compare the purpose of authors to the role of the director. When students read, they must be able to discern more from the text as they make connections between texts and their own ideas. They should grow to be perceptive readers as they come across inconsistencies and generalizations found in some texts. Students can challenge inconsistencies when they are equipped with knowledge of a subject. Once the text is brought to life in the student's mind, reading will become a choice not a chore. Science fiction films such as *Hunger Games*, *Twilight* and *Maze Runner* have appeared causing many African Americans to attempt to identify with characters with which they have nothing in common physically or culturally. When the African American student is given positive replacements to the common stereotypes of film and literature, I believe vocabulary, comprehension and reading scores will increase.

This unit allows the teacher to use two mediums: film and literature, to establish critical thinking and literacy skills necessary for college and career success. Both mediums require students to make predictions, inferences and ask questions. Think about a time you showed an engaging movie to your students. How many of them made comments about the characters' actions (characterization) or blurted out what they expect to happen next (prediction)? When students view films, they may be unaware of the critical thinking skills they are actually using. As they watch the opening scene and are introduced to the characters, students are naturally drawing conclusions and making inferences. They also make connections and ask questions about the story as they view. The meaning comes from the details of the film's plot, mood, theme, conflict and characterization. As educators, we play the significant role of guiding our students as they actively process the message through group discussion, meaningful activities and writing exercises. I must point out, a whole film should not be showed to its entirety during one class period because the experience should be as interactive as possible. The pause button will allow time for students to process the story and engage in rich discussion about the subject. Film viewing must have a purpose and never be a passive activity in the classroom. Film study should be a necessary component of the modern school curriculum. In the age of technology, our students need help shaping their thinking skills as they receive the different messages. They also need to be able to remain in control of these messages. John Culkin, the late media education pioneer, asserted, "We live in a total-information culture, which is being increasingly dominated by the image. Intelligent living within such an environment call for developing habits of

perception, analysis, judgment, and selectivity that are capable of processing the relentless input of visual data...[Because] schools are where the tribe passes on its values to the young, schools are where film study should take place.”

The priceless question is how to get your students to be as willing and excited to read a work of literature as they are when you announce “Movie Time”? How can we shift their attitude of reading when film offers the sensory experience of sound, moving images, color and verbal dialogue that our students are accustomed to? The simple answer: empowerment. Empower your students to be their own directors, film critics and writers. In our culture of mass media, we are well aware of the power of image. Students must realize that at a film’s inception, the images on screen were once notions and ideas transformed into written words. The purpose, after all, is to build readers and thinkers who have self worth. Books give the reader the power to create their own image. Sometimes, young readers lose fluency or are turned off by the sophisticated language and unfamiliar settings that literature offers. However, when students are guided through the complexities of literature and introduced to the magic of being the director to the film in their mind; they are empowered. The silver screen locks us in to a film director’s interpretation of a message and we are unable to see or feel the characters and plot the way our mind’s eye naturally imagines. Being locked in to two hours of images and sound can be especially problematic if the interpretation presented is harmful to a developing mind. A novel, unlike a film, has no time constraints and a reader can take time to build a solid connection with the characters and story being told. A book goes beyond offering dialogue; it gives us the quiet otherwise secret thoughts and feelings of the narrator or other characters in a story. We must point out to students that the film relies on other tools such as voice-overs and camera angles to convey narrator’s point-of-view or lighting and sound/music for the setting of mood. Students must realize, when reading a work of literature, the only necessary tool is their mind.

Film adaptations will be used within this unit to help students understand the process of transferring written work into a feature film. Toni Morrison’s Beloved is a remarkable novel to use because of the strong supernatural elements as it pertains to African American culture and history. Morrison uses bold, sensory details to create imagery for her readers. Beloved, set after the American Civil War, is inspired by the true and tragic story of Margaret Garner, a woman who escaped slavery in Kentucky with her family but was soon captured in Cincinnati, Ohio before reaching their destination in Canada. She slashes her two-year-old daughter’s throat, killing her in an attempt to save her from returning to the doomed life of slavery. The story begins with the chilling words:

*124 was spiteful. Full of a baby’s venom. The women in the house knew it and so did the children. For years each put up with the spite in his own way, but by 1873 Sethe and Denver were its only victims.*²

² Morrison, Toni. Beloved. New York: Alfred Knopf. 1987.

In Morrison's novel, the unsettled spirit of the two-year-old daughter haunts the protagonist, Sethe and her daughter, Denver. The community is aware of the hauntings and Sethe's role in the killing, and therefore avoids her home, 124 Bluestone Road. Sethe is a lonely woman tormented by memories of her past and the sudden angry disturbances of her deceased child. Denver is sullen and introverted with only one friend, her spirit sister. Unexpectedly, a long time friend from the old slave plantation, Paul D, comes upon Sethe's home after not having seen her for 18 years. He senses the ominous presence the moment he enters Sethe's doorway. As time continues, Sethe and Paul D begin a romance leaving Denver lonelier and the spirit angrier. Paul D exorcises the home and Sethe feels a sense of relief. Days later a mysterious young woman, slightly older than Denver, appears in front of the house. The woman says her name is Beloved, which is the only word Sethe could afford to put on her dead daughter's tombstone years earlier. Once Sethe invites Beloved into the home to stay, a series of supernatural events follow leading to Sethe's rediscovery of life and Denver's healing.

Beloved is more than an imaginative "ghost" story because it focuses on the history and trauma of slavery for African Americans. The book does not follow a set chronological order and reverts to characters' memories several times. Teaching a non-traditional novel like Beloved can be made into an exciting literary journey if presented with enthusiasm, creativity and interactive exercises. Lessons must be well paced to allow full comprehension of this novel, especially when explaining author's style. I predict that students will be intrigued by the point-of-view shifts (third person omniscient, third person limited and first person) Morrison uses. Challenge students to explain why Morrison choose to do have the first person voices of Sethe, Denver and Beloved heard so intimately in the second half of the novel. Discuss, discuss, discuss! You will be amazed at how your students analyze the plot, theme and characters. The film adaptation can be showed during the reading in segments to have students note the contrasts between both mediums and avoid confusion as they read the novel. They will be able to see how this three hundred-page novel is squeezed into two hours. Students will point out several differences in the film such as how many characters from the slave plantation, "Sweet Home" has not been included in the film. The horrors faced on slave plantations were skimmed over and not detailed the way Morrison has in her book. Certain dynamics were completely left out and students can ponder if those deleted elements were helpful or harmful to the adaptation. The film director's choice to use special effects to enhance the supernatural may appeal to young viewers unlike adult film critics. Ask students what they think the author thought of the film adaptation to continue to connect reader to both author and director. They may find it odd that Toni Morrison was not a fan of the special effects used in the film!

This curriculum unit, designed for eighth grade (ages 13-15), will provide a platform where my students may connect their world to literature and film as analytical and creative thinkers. We will complete the unit in 30 days during English/Language Arts. Each class will be approximately 50 minutes long. The unit should be used in the second half of the school year to ensure the students have a firm understanding of literary elements (characterization, setting, point of view, author's purpose, figurative language, plot and conflict). It is necessary for the students to have basic listening and speaking

skills for this unit since they will have discussions and give presentations. Students are required by Common Core Standards to learn how to analyze genres of fiction. Students will be able to recognize the devices used in written works of fiction, such as, the expository phase, protagonist and antagonist, plot and climax, foreshadowing and suspense, which are also found in films. According to John Golden's "Reading in the Dark: Using Film as a Tool in the English Classroom" in a publication by the National Council of Teachers of English, students can apply the concepts of literary analysis through viewing film.

The curriculum unit will implement the Common Core and PA Core standards followed by The Philadelphia School District through (1) Supporting writing from sources (i.e., using evidence from text to inform or make an argument) so that students use evidence and respond to the ideas, events, facts, and arguments presented in the texts they read, (2) Students reading and responding to works of literature—with an emphasis on comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and making connections among ideas and between texts with a focus on textual evidence, and (3) Students write for different purposes and audiences. Students write clear and focused text to convey a well-defined perspective and appropriate content. As the unit unfolds, students should gradually begin to discern more from what they read and become aware of inconsistencies and bias in both texts and media. With the help of this unit, students will be challenged to use their problem solving, critical thinking and analytical skills as they prepare for life outside of the classroom. After the unit, my eighth grade students will realize that media can be used not only as a source of entertainment, but also as a source of useful information. They will have the opportunity to publish and present information using media. They will have practice using resources to gather information for research. In preparation for high school and college, students will learn comprehension strategies to use before, during, and following a reading of a novel or a viewing of a film.

Objectives: Finding Roots

Students will research creation stories from Nigeria (Yoruba), Congo (Efe), Egypt (Kemet), Tanzania (Nyamwezi), Mali (Fulani), South Africa (Zulu), Ethiopia (Oromos), and create a comic book or use multimedia to produce a visual interpretation of a chosen story. They will also read the Greek myth *Orpheus and Eurydice* before viewing the film *Black Orpheus* in order to analyze how the film incorporates African religion and the choice of the film's director, Marcel Camus, to maintain or change the storyline from the original. (CC.1.3.8.G) (CC.1.4.8.B)(R.L.1.9.8.A)

Compare and Contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style. Students will compare/contrast the protagonist, Dana from Octavia Butler's novel *Kindred* to the heroine, Mona (Shona later in film) in Haile Gerima's film *Sankofa*. Students will summarize the key details and events of a fictional text as a whole. They will discuss and then write about their conflicts (inner and external). They will also identify and discuss how time-travel is used in both novel (*Kindred*) and film (*Sankofa*). Students will compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the different structure of each text contributes to the meaning and style. (CC. 1.3.8.E) (CCSS.RL 8.5) (R8.A.1.5.1)

Students will establish a context and point of view as they read excerpts of Virginia Hamilton's *House of Dies Drear*. They will analyze how specific lines of dialogue or incidents in a story propel the action, reveal traits of a character, or lead to a decision. Students will interpret the use of literary elements within the story such as plot, theme, and tone. They will also watch the film (PBS) of *House of Dies Drear* and analyze how the filmed production stays faithful to or departs from the text. (R.L.8.3) (1.3.7 .C) (CC.1.3.8.G)

Students will distinguish essential and insignificant information across texts through a variety of media in order to identify bias and propaganda. Students will view a series of film clips (*Blackula*, *Sugar Hill*, *Ghost and Candyman*) and full-length film (*Skeleton Key*) that portrays stereotypes of African-Americans. They will identify visual and sound techniques and pay close attention to the design elements (camera angles, lighting, music) in various media, and explain how they carry or influence messages. (1.2.8.C)

Students will evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums (e.g. print or digital text, video, multimedia) to present a particular topic or idea. They will read selected chapters from Beloved and watch clips of the film adaptation. They will write a review of the film and interview questions for either the author, the director or any fictional character in the story. Students will also research the history of American slavery and choose a historical African-American figure to write a (two to three page) narrative with a supernatural element. Students will determine Morrison's point of view or purpose in Beloved and analyze how she acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints (CC.1.2.8.G, CC.1.2.8.D, 1.4.8.C, R8.A.1.5.1)

Strategies: Potions to Dispel the Spell

Graphic Organizers

- (K-W-L Chart/ What do you Know, Want to know, and Learned)
- Venn Diagram

(At the start of the unit, students will be asked to define the supernatural based on their prior knowledge and experience. Students will also give their expectations of the subject. Their responses will be used for the closing of the unit in order to identify the various forms of stereotypes used in film. They will use Venn Diagrams to compare and contrast literature to film adaptations as well as films and literature with similar themes)

Students Use Digital Tools:

Students will use their cell phones, laptops/computers, and camera to create a pod cast, digital storyboard, and film scenes

Students use social media

Students will create a blog and share their ideas and opinions about books and films viewed in class.

Gathering information for research

Students analyze a film and book:

As students read a work of literature that has been written more than fifteen years ago, students may write down ideas of how to appeal to today's film audience without losing the meaning of the plot. They can also discuss what type of issues they may run into showing a particular scene and ways to resolve the problem. Have students see how the director addressed the issues in the adapted films watched in class after the reading. The class will express if they think the director detracted from or improved the written work.

Students articulate ideas in writing

Students present ideas as dramatic performances

Outside resources (guest speaker):

- A professional African storyteller
- A librarian from the Free Library to explain how to use resources at the library prior to trip

Field Trip:

- African Film festival
- Free library
- African American Museum in Philadelphia
- Lest We Forget Black Holocaust Museum of Slavery (Philadelphia)

Viewing Log:

Students will keep a log as they view all films.

Prediction

Reading/ Film Viewing Log

Storyboarding:

Students will give a graphic representation of selected chapters from readings

Journal:

Students will journal their emotions and views of films and works of literature in their “Deep Thoughts” book (cover designed by student)

Letters to Author/Director/Character:

Leveled Question Chart (Level One Fact Based, Level Two Interpretation of Text, Level Three Connects to the Outside World)³

Character Analysis File

Soundtrack

Students pretend to be a producer of a film to a story being read in class and choose a musical selection

Classroom Activities: Magic Unfolds

Class Activity Lesson One: Before the Before

Objectives: Students will discover beliefs and practices of Africa as they research and study creation African stories from Nigeria, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Egypt, Congo, Mali and South Africa. They will learn about the oral storytelling tradition and create a dramatic production of one story that they researched.

Materials: Chart Paper, Three Different Color Markers, Map of Africa, Globe, Laptops or Desktop Computers, African Music, 3x5 index cards, Pencils, Creation Myth Charts, Photographs of ethnic groups being researched (traditional styles), Notebook paper, “Deep Thoughts” Journal, Projector/Interactive Board, Rubric for PowerPoint presentation (in Appendix)

Step One (Introduction): The purpose of “Before the Before” allows class to give homage to Africa and her strong influences on the world today. Many students have distorted views and information of Africa so it is important to be accurate and positive as you bring awareness to students. Teacher will prepare students for the lesson with, a blank chart paper, and a globe map of Africa. Hold the globe and spin the globe as you ask the Big Question: **How did the world begin?** Students will first respond in their journal for five minutes before sharing in discussion. For creative effect dim lights and play a CD with sounds of nature (water, birds, etc.) and soft music from around the world (including not excluding African music) as you share information. Allow students time to think and discuss as you write down their responses. Some may provide stories they were told and some may even have their own original ideas. Ask them what they know of Genesis. (Read short version if necessary) Make this interesting; ask them questions that

³ Golden, John. *Reading in the Dark: Using Film As a Tool in the English Classroom*. Urbana, Illinois. National Council of Teachers of English. 2001.

will provoke thought and discussion. Explain that throughout the world people have attempted to answer the question of life since the beginning of time. Tell them since no one knows the true answer of how the world began, we call the explanations people give as Creation myths. Give them the origin of the word myth which comes from the Greek word *mythos* (true narrative) and is related to the Greek word *myo* (to teach or initiate into the mysteries). The word was not used to represent a falsehood in ancient times, instead as a true account passed through the generations. Play Fulani chant (Sweet Honey and the Rock) and find out what your students know of African cultures and their belief system. Have them write a few sentences on a blank index card of what they know or believe to know. Collect cards. Point to the several countries in Africa that students will focus and research for creation stories. Distribute photographs of ethnic groups. Explain that creation myths give insight on the culture and belief system of a people. Although there may be similarities, students must understand that all the cultures of Africa are uniquely different. Students must also understand the ancient oral tradition of storytelling is how African people continued these stories from one generation to the next. Student's voices will be used for this lesson in a creative way.

Step Two: Have students get in small groups of four. Give each student a creation chart. They will view two creation stories (Zulu and Yoruba) on video. Teacher will give a guided instruction as to how to put the correct information in the Creation chart. The following questions will be on the chart: How does this ethnic group describe the creation of the world? Who created the Earth in this story? What was the reason for creating the Earth? Why were people created? What role do animals play in the Creation story? How can the view of how the Earth began contribute to the people's view of land, God and treatment of other human beings? Teacher will next use a Venn diagram for the information from the creation chart on both cultures to recognize the similarities and differences of both stories. Students are expected to give responses in a collaborated format.

Step Three: Teacher will have the names of all the ethnic groups written on folded index cards. One designated person from each group will pick a card. The group will be responsible for using the Internet and researching the Creation story for that ethnic group. They will have the task of writing the summary of the story, completing the Creation chart, finding traditional music of the culture and designing a power point to recreate the story in an artistic way. Teacher will assist the students with finding music and images to use in the power point.

Closure: Groups will present their power point by taking turns with each slide reading the text of the creation story. The audience will have the job of critiquing/scoring the presentation and completing the Venn diagram (comparing their group's story to the presented story). Teacher will facilitate discussion after each presentation to ensure comprehension and engagement. After all presentations are complete, teacher should ask students the reason for giving the chosen scores to each group.

Homework: Students will write their own creation story in a comic strip format.

Class Activity Lesson Two: Keep Me With You Forever

Objectives: Students will read the Greek myth *Orpheus and Eurydice* before viewing the film *Black Orpheus* in order to analyze how the film incorporates an African religion and the choice of the film's director, Marcel Camus, to maintain or change the storyline from the original. Students will learn how culture is maintained and influenced when people's environment and circumstances change. Students will learn about symbolism as they watch film. They will understand the use of foreshadowing and follow plot as they recognize the literary elements such as plot, theme, characterization and setting.

Note* **Teacher must view film before sharing with class in order to know significant stopping points to hold discussion of plot, characterization and student predictions.**

Materials: Projector, Interactive Board, Chart, Markers, Greek myth (Orpheus and Eurydice) handouts, DVD *Black Orpheus* (film with subtitles), Photographs of Yoruba deities by James C. Lewis, Movie Log (in Appendix), "Deep Thoughts" Journal, CD or YouTube video of Babtunde Olatunji song "Ajaya"

Teacher Preparation Note-* Prepare to discuss the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and the history of Brazil. Outside of Nigeria, Brazil has the highest population of African people. The ancient religions and belief systems of the Yoruba, Ibo, Fon, Mandingo, Angolese, Ewe and Hausa traveled over the Atlantic Ocean through the stolen Africans and survived over the centuries. Since ethnic groups were purposely divided to avoid communal practices and chance of uprisings, Africans began to blend spiritual beliefs. Since Africans were punished (by death at times) for praying to their gods, they hid their practices or pretended to worship the saints of Catholicism when worshipping their own deities or orishas. These spiritual practices were for healing the sick, giving advice, spiritual guidance and protection. Using the passed on wisdom, the priest or priestess would give medicinal herbs to aid in any type of ailments, love spells, bringing harmony, luck, good health and material happiness. The ceremonies all include music and dancing because dancing is considered spiritual and connects a person to the spirit world. Rituals also include drumming, prayers, singing, and animal sacrifice. African spiritual beliefs hold that nature should be highly respected and the ancestors are in the spirit world. The cycle between life and death is considered sacred. Candomble and Vodun are examples of the fusion of African spiritual faiths in the Americas. Unlike the Caribbean and South America, Europeans were successful in the United States with completely stripping the African of the ancient spiritual faiths. **It is essential that teachers deliver the full background of African spiritual faiths since this unit's focus is to remove the misrepresentations and stereotypes that have been planted in students' minds.

Step One (Introduction): Begin with the Babtunde Olatunji "Ajaya" CD and the projected images of the James C. Lewis photographed orishas as you ask the Big Question: **How does a culture survive within another culture keeping the belief system the same?** Have students respond in their "Deep Thoughts" Journal and then begin discussion on what they wrote down. On the board, write the following fifteen words: Candomble, Santeria, Vodun, Yoruba (Ifa), Cuba, Brazil, Nigeria, Haiti, Angola, Atlantic Ocean, Hope, La Amistad, Le Concorde, Wanderer. Ask: What do these words have in common? Give students time to respond. Explain La Amistad, Le Concorde,

Hope and Wanderer were names of slave ships that carried captured Africans from countries such as Nigeria, Ghana and Angola (among several other West African countries). The Africans continued their religious practices such as Yoruba in countries such as Brazil, Haiti and Cuba. Those religions became a blend of different African spiritual beliefs and became known as Candomble, Santeria, Umbanda and Voodoo. Explain that the film, *Black Orpheus*, will show elements of Candomble within the story.

Step two: Tell students a brief background of Ancient Greeks. (They also believed in many gods and goddesses and performed rituals and animal sacrifice.) Focus on vocabulary words: ascended, ghastly and inconsolable. Conduct a Shared Reading of the Greek story “*Orpheus and Eurydice*.” Following the reading, have students get in pairs and give them a table of questions of the story: **How does Orpheus’s talent help him almost get his wife Eurydice back to the living world? How does Hades respond to Orpheus when he seeks his wife? Why did Orpheus feel compelled to turn around before they left Hades? What is the lesson or moral of the story? What is the plot and structure of story (Exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution)?** After students respond to questions give them an opportunity to write a short summary of story using vocabulary words. Next, ask them why they think film director, Marcel Camus, chose to use Brazil as the setting for the adaptation of *Orpheus and Eurydice*? (They should be able to make connections with polytheism and afterlife beliefs in both cultures)

Step Three: Students should be made aware that the film is in Portuguese and has English subtitles. They will be reading and viewing! Give out the Film Response chart and play film. Remember to have at least three or four “commercial” breaks (ten minutes) in viewing film to assist with any questions, give time to respond to the chart and to build anticipation. On the chart questions should include: **How is the relationship between Orpheus and Eurydice different in the film than in original story? What foreshadowing element is used when Orpheus and his fiancé Mira go to the marriage license office? What causes Orpheus to turn around to see his love Eurydice in the film? How is Death symbolized in the film? How is the Underworld symbolized in the film? In which way does the setting support the plot of the film? What is Orpheus’ main goal in both texts and is it reached by the ending? Explain your response. What other significant changes did the director make? How did Orpheus role remain consistent with the original story? How did it change? Explain the symbolism of the descending staircase before Orpheus goes into the Candomble ritual.** After viewing film, find out what emotions the film sparked. Allow students time to naturally discuss the film and story.

Closure: Students will write a film review and design posters to advertise film. They can use paint or markers to create patterns or pictures for their posters.

Homework: Read film reviews of *Black Orpheus* and write down if they agree or disagree with film critics and why. (Two to three paragraphs)

Class Activity Lesson Three: If I Could Turn Back The Hands of Time...

Objectives: Students will compare/contrast the protagonist, Dana from Octavia Butler's novel Kindred to the heroine, Mona (Shona later in film) in Haile Gerima's film *Sankofa*. Students will summarize the key details and events of a fictional text as a whole. They will identify with the internal and external conflicts of two main characters of separate mediums. Students will create a script adaptation or storyboard for a chapter in Kindred. They will film a monologue scene of any character of story using a cell phone to create a "Selfie Video Moment", expressing the conflicts and emotions in a realistic way. Students will also write letters to the characters and questions for the author/ director. Students will have literature circles and read collaboratively in the classroom and independently at home for homework.

Materials: Kindred Novel, Notebook paper, "Deep Thoughts" Journal, Chart paper, Markers, Ruler (12 inch), Pencils/Ink Pens, Interactive Board, Projector, Smart Phone (For Video), Song "If I Could Turn Back the Hands of Time", "Sneak Peek" handouts of upcoming chapter, Detailed comprehension questionnaire for each chapter, Reading Reflection Log, New Words Binder (For Vocabulary)

*Note to Teacher- Read the novel and watch Sankofa film in order to answer any questions during discussions. Also there are two parts of Sankofa that will require you to skip. They are about to begin a lot of reading so it is your job to "sell" this concept of reading for pleasure. Keep them at the edge of their seats as they wait to see what is coming next) Send home a letter to parents about the contents of film and novel, get permission and welcome them to be a part of the film screening days in upcoming weeks.

Step One: Have the Big Question for the "Deep Thoughts" Journal written on Chart paper: If you could turn back the hands of time, where would you go and what would you change? Play song. Ask them if they can guess what the next lesson is about? They may assume love and relationships, getting old and nostalgic, who knows? Just be prepared for them not to guess time- traveling back to slavery. Begin the discussion of time travel and allow the ones willing to share their entries. If no one has guessed the question about the next lesson, have clues available, keep this fun and engaging. They are about to begin a lot of reading so it is your job to "sell" this concept of reading for pleasure. Keep them at the edge of their seats as they wait to see what is coming next. Ask them why do some people fascinate and write about time travel? Ask them how many of them would want to go back to slavery times? Tell them they will be introduced (figuratively) to two women who were sent back to the time of enslavement without any warning. One (Dana) was minding her business in her home unpacking with her husband when she was "kidnapped" by time. The film character Mona/Shona was doing a photo shoot and frolicking on the beach of Ghana when she curiously followed a tour group in the Elmina Castle (historic slave holding cell) and was "stolen" by time.

Step Two: Do A K-W-L chart on what students Know, want to know and learn about slavery. Keep the L (learned) section blank for after the novel. Form literature circles and give a group response chart for everyone to write their name and response. Group Questions for Chapter One "The River" Why do you think the author is choosing to let

Dana's husband see her disappear and reappear from the past? How do you think Dana and Kevin feel about each other? Do you think Butler's choice of first person narrative fits the story? Why or why not? Each student must find at least three vocabulary words in chapter that they did not know previously. Copy the sentence with the word being used and challenge students to use context clues and write down what they think the word means. Teacher will move around the classroom to assist groups. Allow time for whole class discussions after Response sheets and Vocabulary sentences are completed.

Step Three: Have students read Chapter Two silently and independently. They will write down their fears, concerns/ questions, predictions, likes, or dislikes in their reading reflection log. What is the pattern of the novel so far regarding Dana and Rufus? How would you respond in that situation? These responses will be written in the journal.

Closure: Students will get a ruler, and a white construction paper. They will pretend to be a film director and turn the chapter into eight scenes using a storyboard. Tell students who are not "artsy" that the focus is not on pretty pictures but them showing understanding of the reading in a creative way. To help them along with their storyboard ask: What would help a viewer understand the scene without reading the book? How can you replace the narration with action or images? What scenes do you consider significant to include and what scenes would you leave out? Remind them to show the emotions of the characters through action, images, and dialogue. Have students explain their choice for their storyboard.

Homework: Students will take home a "Sneak Peek" handout and read Chapter Three "The Fall." Student will write a one-page "Help Me" letter to someone in the present using details from the chapter such as (Kevin returning to the past with her, "Marse" Tom Weylin's suspicion, and Dana's worries of her White husband changing if they remain in the Ante-Bellum South). The letters will be posted on bulletin board for the following week (after editing). Get other students outside the classroom buzzing about the activities in the classroom. Help your school make reading a fascinating experience.

Annotated Bibliographies/Works Cited/Resources:

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<http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/spring94/Foster.html>

Filmography:

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Black Orpheus. Dir. Marcel Camus. Per. Marpessa Dawn, Breno Mello. Lopert Pictures, 1959. DVD.

Blacula. Dir. William Crain. Per. William Marshall, Vonetta McGee, Denise Nicholas. American International Pictures, 1972. DVD.

Candyman. Dir. Bernard Rose. Per. Virginia Madsen, Tony Todd, Kasi Lemmons. Tristar Pictures, 1992. DVD.

Ghost. Dir. Jerry Zucker. Per. Demi Moore, Patrick Swayze, Whoopi Goldberg. Paramount Pictures, 1990. DVD.

Princess and the Frog. Dir. Ron Clements, John Musker. Per. Anika Noni Rose, Bruno Campos, John Goodman. Oprah Winfrey. Walt Disney Studio Motion Pictures, 2009. DVD.

Sankofa. Dir. Haile Gerima. Per. Kofi Ghanaba, Oyafunmike Ogunlano, Alexandra Duah. 1993. DVD.

Skeleton Key. Dir. Iain Softley. Per. Kate Hudson, John Hurt, Gena Rowlands, Joy Bryant. Universal Pictures, 2005. DVD.

Sugar Hill. Dir. Paul Maslansky. Per. Marki Bey, Robert Quarry, Zara Cully. American International Pictures. 1974. DVD.

The House of Dies Drear. Dir. Allan A. Goldstein. Per. Kadeem Hardison, Tichina Arnold, Howard Rollins, Shavar Ross. 1984. DVD.

http://www.glencoe.com/sec/literature/litlibrary/pdf/house_of_dies_drear.pdf

(The House of Dies Drear study guide)

YouTube Videos:

Luisah Teish James Carman's Film: Superconscious

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JLHO4eTfl1M>

(Video Summary: African-American teacher, author, Yoruba priestess and Oshun chief, Luisah Teish explains the spiritual beliefs and traditions of the Yoruba Lucumi. She discusses the similarities between the Christian and Yoruba religious beliefs when it pertains to "ascension". Teish also points out other spiritual beliefs within the Yoruba faith that she believes resonates throughout the world cultures (Native American, Ancient Greek, etc.) Note: Video should be showed after research of creation myth is complete to aid students with comprehension from a documentary of an authentic source.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6C4MoDIndug>

The Zulu Creation Myth

(Video Summary: This video gives an animation of the Zulu creation story. It is less than five minutes long)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hkq5wbZ6LXk>

Creation of the Universe- Yoruba

(Video Summary: This video gives the story of Olurun and Obatala)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cw-tHBLMr4U>

Yoruba Masquerade Dancers Sing Oriki and Dance Bata

(Yoruba dancers and drummers do a traditional ensemble to give homage to the orishas.)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AF_BOwI6zsw

“If I Could Turn Back The Hands of Time” by R. Kelly. This is recommended for Lesson Three during the warm-up before reading *Kindred* and film *Sankofa*.

<http://www.ancient-origins.net/human-origins/meaning-word-myth-0061>

Website is helpful in further explaining the evolution of the word “mythos”.

<http://africandigitalart.com/2013/05/yoruba-african-orishas/>

James C. Lewis photographic vibrant interpretation of the Yoruba orishas will be found on this website.

<http://www.slideshare.net/helpwithassignment/how-to-write-a-movie-critique>

This website may be used as a resource to teach how to write an effective film critique.

<http://www.centralvirginiahistory.org/index.shtml>

This is an African-American family database created by the Central Virginia History Researcher (a partnership of local historians, anthropologists, database designers and community residents)

<http://www.gateway-africa.com/stories/>

This resource offers a vast amount of information regarding creation stories from various parts of Africa. Teachers can use this resource to gain background knowledge before teaching the lesson.

<https://storybird.com/educators/>

This resource is useful for students to create a digital storyboard.

<http://edublogs.org/>

This education blogging service helps you create and manage blogs for your class for free.

<http://beyondpenguins.ehe.osu.edu/issue/polar-oceans/podcasts-in-the-elementary-classroom-tools-for-teachers-and-students>

This gives step-by-step guide on how to record and broadcast a podcast for students.

Appendix/Content Standards:

(List of Standards Used in Curriculum Unit)

CC.1.3.8.H

Analyze how a modern work of fiction draws on themes, patterns of events, or character types from traditional works, including describing how the material is rendered new.

CC.1.3.8.G

Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text or script, evaluating the choices made by directors or actors.

CC.1.3.8.E

Compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style.

CC.1.4.8.B

Identify and introduce the topic clearly, including a preview of what is to follow.

CC.1.4.8.C

Develop and analyze the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples; include graphics and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

R8.A.1.5.1

Summarize the key details and events of a fictional text as a whole.

Visual and Verbal Identify, analyze, and discuss the relationship between the visual (e.g., media images, painting, film, graphic arts) and the verbal in more challenging media and explain how the elements support or conflict with each other.

CC.1.2.8.D

Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints. E08.B-C.2.1.1

CC.1.4.8.N

Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters.

CC.1.4.8.B

Identify and introduce the topic clearly, including a preview of what is to follow.

CC.1.4.8.C

Develop and analyze the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples; include graphics and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

CC.1.4.8.B

Identify and introduce the topic clearly, including a preview of what is to follow.

1.3.7.C

Interpret the use of literary elements within and among texts including characterization, setting, plot, theme, point of view, and tone.

1.1.9.D

Demonstrate comprehension of grade level text using before reading, during reading, and after reading strategies such as comparing and contrasting within and among texts, and evaluating an author's purpose and position.

Grade 8: RL.8.3.

Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or *drama* propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

R8.A.2.3.1:

Make inferences and/or draw conclusions based on information from text.

1.9.8.A:

Use media and technology resources to support personal productivity, group collaboration, and learning throughout the curriculum.

R8.A.1.5.1:

Summarize the key details and events of a fictional text as a whole.

CC.1.2.8.G:

Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums (e.g. print or digital text, video, multimedia) to present a particular topic or idea.

R8.A.1.3.2:

Cite evidence from text to support generalizations.

R8.A.1.4.1:

Identify and/or explain stated or implied main ideas and relevant supporting details from text.

R8.A.1.6.1: Identify and/or analyze the author's intended purpose of text.

1.4.8.C:

Write persuasive pieces.

- Include a clearly stated position or opinion.
- Include convincing, elaborated, and properly cited evidence.
- Anticipate and counter reader concerns and arguments.

1.4.8.B:

Write multi-paragraph informational pieces (e.g. letters, descriptions, reports, instructions, essays, articles, interviews)

- Use relevant graphics (e.g. maps, charts, graphs, tables, illustrations, photographs)
- Use primary and secondary **sources**, as appropriate to task.

1.4.8.A:

Write poems, short stories, and plays.

- Apply various organizational methods.
- Include **literary elements** and **devices**.

1.7.8.A:

Analyze differences in formal and informal language used in speech, writing, and literature.

1.5.8.A:

Write with a clear **focus**, identifying topic, task, and audience and establishing a single **point of view**.

Activity Templates:

Prediction Chart

Title of Film/Novel
Prediction

Prediction of Protagonist

Explanation for

Digital Storytelling Rubric (Classroom Activity One)

• Student Name: _____

CATEGORY	20	15	10	5	Subtotal
Point of View - Purpose	Establishes a purpose early on and maintains a clear focus throughout.	Establishes a purpose early on and maintains focus for most of the presentation.	There are a few lapses in focus, but the purpose is fairly clear.	It is difficult to figure out the purpose of the presentation.	
Voice - Pacing Story	Story told on topic, related to images, and from subject matter's point of view. Voice pacing in digital story matches speed and rhythm of pictures and engages audience.	Story mostly on topic, uses images to tell story, occasionally speaks too fast or too slowly for the story line. The pacing is relatively engaging for the audience.	Story on topic, refers to images, tries to use pacing, but it is often noticeable that the pacing does not fit the story line. Audience is not consistently engaged.	Story not on topic, does not match the images, and No attempt to match the pace of the storytelling to the story line or the audience.	
Images and Storyboard	Images create a distinct atmosphere or tone that matches different parts of the story. The images may communicate symbolism and/or metaphors. Storyboard chart used with detail to outline story.	Images create an atmosphere or tone that matches some parts of the story. The images may communicate symbolism and/or metaphors. Storyboard chart used with some detail to outline story.	An attempt was made to use images to create an atmosphere/tone but it needed more work. Image choice is logical. Storyboard chart used but with few details or missing parts of the story to outline story.	Little or no attempt to use images to create an appropriate atmosphere/tone. Storyboard chart not used to outline story.	
Composition	The story is told with exactly the right amount of detail throughout. It does not seem too short nor does it seem too long.	The story composition is typically good, though it seems to drag somewhat OR need slightly more detail in one or two sections.	The story seems to need more editing. It is noticeably too long or too short in more than one section.	The story needs extensive editing. It is too long or too short to be interesting.	
Grammar	Grammar and usage were correct (for the dialect chosen) and contributed to clarity, style and character development.	Grammar and usage were typically correct (for the dialect chosen) and errors did not detract from the story.	Grammar and usage were typically correct but errors detracted from story.	Repeated errors in grammar and usage distracted greatly from the story.	

Final Score: _____