Unit of study: racial discrimination expressed through creative writing

**Rationale:**

Given today’s recent events, many forms of expression have developed in order to protest against the system of oppression created by today’s society. Events such as mass shootings, systemic racism created by the police whose main job is to protect and serve but instead choose violence as the answer has caused an uproar across the nation. For decades now the police has tarnished their “protector” image through the murder of George Floyd, who was strangled by an officer for almost ten minutes as he shouted “ I can’t breathe”. Other events such as the “incident” in which the police raided and fatally shot Breonna Taylor six times in her own home with a no-knock warrant. Other incidents involving recent police shootings such as the shooting of Daunte Wright, a 20-year-old Black man in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota after being pulled over for an expired license plate tag. The officer however, after running his name through the system found that he had a warrant and proceeded to arrest him, and in an attempt to escape, officer Kim porter yelled “taser” but instead shot him fatally with her gun.

Works of literature such as To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee depict the reality of what should have been antiquated times of racism across the united states are taught across the nation. The text explores the perspective of a six year old scout, who experiences first hand racism as her father, Atticus as he defends a black man in court against a racist family who accuses him of raping Mayella Ewel. Outside of canonical literature, schools have begun to look to modern day music to express the dissatisfaction in today’s system of oppression. Artist Kendrick Lamar’s hit “Alright” has been looked at in various college campuses, including San Jose State University. The song describes the hatred that white america has towards the black

community. The chorus of the song “we gon’ be alright, do you hear me we gon’ be alright” depicts harsh realities. The first being the police, who will assume they will walk away freely with little to no repercussions after killing in cold blood. The other side being a call to the black community, to set their differences aside and unify against the common foe in this case being systemic racism.

This unit of study is designed to examine racism’s influence on any literature or creative work. By the end of this unit of study, the goal is for students to be able to identify the forms of oppression present within the judiciary system as well as be able to understand and be more aware of injustices committed on the african american community in hopes to lessen the presence of racism in the justice system.

**Introducing the text:**

1. **Watch Jordan Peele’s “Get Out” clip** [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T31h3L\_egm8**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T31h3L_egm8)

**\*warning some sexual references and strong language involved**

The clip from Jordan Peele’s Get Out, shows Chris, a black man as he goes to his new girlfriend’s house party. Upon his arrival he is immediately the center of attention because everyone begins to watch him in awe. Chris is being objectified by the party goers, with one even saying “Black is in fashion”. Another continues to objectify him by completely examining him almost as if he were an item for sale. The clip shows how despite america has “moved” on from times where slavery was legal

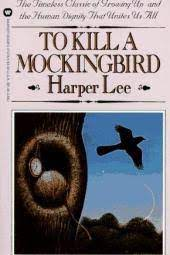
1. I would have my students watch the first clip and then have them jot down what they noticed. I would have them break up into groups and dissect the clip and look for what is the underlying message behind the actions of the characters as they objectify Chris. The students will be asked to share on their interpretation of chris’s objectification in the scene
2. As a launching point into the unit, I would have the students write in a journal which will have several entries as my students read To Kill a Mockingbird. With the experience from the launch activity the students will be asked to write about their experiences with racism if they are comfortable or if they are aware of racism and what has caused it to resurface in the light of recent events.

2. **Listen to childish Gambino’s “This is America”**

****

1. The students would be asked to look at the lyrics and identify any hints at racist motives in the lyrics. Have them write about their own interpretations of what the lyrics are trying to say about modern America

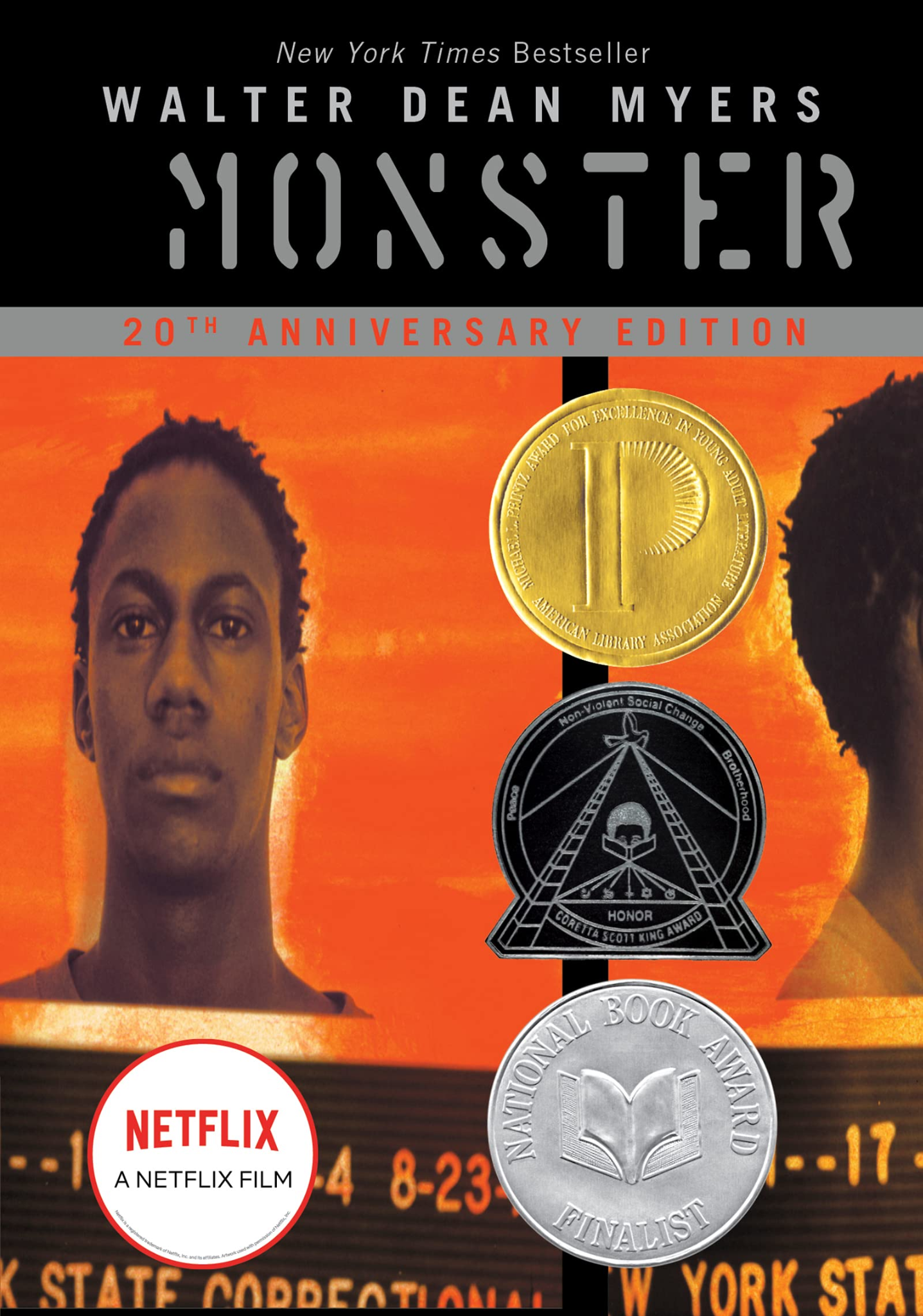
**Centerpiece work:**

****

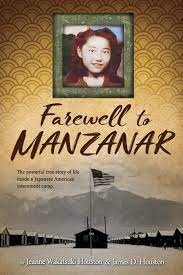
The centerpiece work for this unit is the canonical text, To Kill a Mockingbird written by Harper Lee. The novel focuses on a scout, the young daughter of Atticus, and her father Atticus as he defends Tom Robinson, a black man, in court against Mayella Ewel who claims he raped her. The novel follows through Scout’s point of view in order to to portray the novel in a neutral setting without any bias. The novel portrays racism through a point of view of a child in order to depict the loss of innocence as the scout tries to understand the full gravity of the case.

The center of the novel focuses on the court case as Atticus fights for Tom Robinson’s freedom. This section shows the stereotyping that goes on throughout the daily life of a black man and reflects the struggle that black people face in this day and age. The book also depicts the white bias that America’s judiciary system has which often leads to penalizing more black folk for things that they didn’t do due to a white bias. Despite all of the negativity however, the novel acknowledges the fight for equality despite the overwhelming odds that the jim crow era presented. Atticus stood alone in the courtroom and fought for a black man when at the time no one would and hopefully as students read the novel, they too will understand just how bizarre that would sound in the Jim Crow era.

**Companion Works:**

1. **Monster by Walter Dean Myers** 

Monster follows the story of Steve Harmon, an honors student who loves photography and film. Steve lives a normal life until he runs into king, who is a gang member who slowly gets him involved in his life until one day forces him to take part in a robbery that ends in the death of a store owner. Steve is arrested and taken to trial where he is called a “monster” for allegedly partaking in a crime that he actually was forced into. The reason I would pair this up with my central work is because it offers a modern take on what white privilege is due to the opposing lawyer’s remark about Steve Harmon being a monster and having the court almost believe him.

1. **Farewell to Manzanar by James D. Houston and Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston**

This novel follows the life of a japanese family who are dedicated fishermen at the time of the second world war. After setting sail, the boats are returned to bay after finding out that Pearl Harbor had just been bombed. Due to the scare of Pearl Harbor, any person who is of japanese descent is forced into P.OW. camps which were pretty much labor camps in the west coast. Jeanne recounts her time there and all of the hatred that she and her family received for being Japanese. This novel pairs with T.K.A.M because it depicts racism towards a different group of people as well as stereotyping present in today’s culture.

1. **The Hate you Give by Angie Thomas**

The Hate you Give follows Starr Carter, who witnesses the murder of her best friend Khalil at the hands of a police officer. Throughout the novel, she struggles with finding her voice in order to take a stand against systemic racism found in the police department. This novel pairs up with my centerpiece because it too shows the loss of innocence as a character now has to deal with the weight that racism brings along with it.

**Working through the unit**

1. Each week, the students would write a journal entry with the topics often being discussed in class in small groups. Students would be asked to write about their thoughts, questions, or any parallels found in the novel and today’s modern day society. The students would then talk with their circles and share their thoughts and try to come up with an overarching theme to share with the class.
2. **Discussion groups**:

The students would sit in their respective groups and discuss the topics I gave them. Each group would focus on one topic ( for example, one group talks about themes, others setting and how it reflects a mood, or how the perspective shifts after each narrative is shared.

1. **Weekly writing tasks:**

As a way to help ease the students into the sensitive topic of racism, I would have the students turn in a weekly log aside from the journals mentioned previously. In these weekly tasks I would ask my students to reflect on modern day events, share out any experiences with racism, or write about literary works that deal with racism and try to connect it to the centerpiece work.

**Concluding the Unit:**

Once we have reached the end of the unit, I am hoping that my students will have a more clear understanding of the effect that racism has had on the african american community. With that in mind, I would have them analyze the change in Scout’s mentality as the trial progresses and as she comes to the realization that not everyone is created equal. Another possible topic is to write an argumentative essay on what themes of T.K.A.M are still prevalent in modern day America. The third and last option is to expand on one of their own journal entries. This topic would allow for the students to look back at their jornal and apply amore personal touch to their paper given that it is current events that they are more familiar with.

Works cited

Houston, J. D. (1974). *Farewell to Manzanar*. Bantam Books.

Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird* . Lippincott, 1960.

Myers, Walter Dean. *Monster*. Amistad, 2001.

Thomas, Angie. *The Hate U Give*. HarperCollins, 2017.

Roberto Nol

Field research paper

04/25/21

Field research and texts to accompany

In my research I found several texts which I could introduce in accordance with the texts presented in the class I was studying. The first and most often talked about in the classroom was the study of Romeo and Juliet’s tragic end. For this text One has to be aware of the necessities for a tragedy and thus understand that this play isn’t going to end well. As the kids began to share out on whether or not they thought that the play deserved a tragic ending I began to see that the relationship that Romeo and Juliet have is similar to that of Jesse and Leslie form the novel Bridge to Terabithia. They both find that when they are together, they can access a world which no one else can really go to. However, at the end the fantasy comes to an abrupt end. Jesse finds out that while crossing over to Terabithia, Jesse falls and loses her life. The reason that I want to pair these two texts is that Jesse’s character is a good launching point for a tragedy. He now has to be the one to carry on after the death of his companion and thus, the harsh reality sets in and the magic is gone. With this my future students will be able to understand the nature of a tragic play where one hopes the characters will live happily ever after. Another text that I saw and was pretty astonished to see was the Song of Solomon by Toni Morrison. In the novel, the reader follows Macon "Milkman" Dead who has lost all of his sense of spirituality and struggles with his self-esteem. He learns about his ancestors who tried to escape back to Africa and thus tries to reconnect with his roots.

A book that I would pair with this would most likely be Matt De La Pena’s Mexican Whiteboy. In the novel the reader follows the story of Danny Lopez a 16-year-old who too is trying to figure out where he fits culturally and to some sense spiritually. Danny tries to find his identity by spending time in two very culturally different regions of San Diego, one being very Hispanic oriented while the other is white. As he comes and goes, he continues to struggle with his identity. He feels as though he is too dark for the white kids and too white for the Hispanics and because of this he feels completely alienated. The reason as to why I chose this book to accompany Morison’s text as teenagers begin to explore their identity. By showing them, it is ok to accept one’s own culture and be aware of their identity, the student will be more open to new cultures and diminish the idea that most people cannot fit into more than one culture.

In conclusion, I have now obtained inspiration for some texts to accompany the average novels taught in school. By offering different types of novels, I can offer new perspectives for my students and with a newer text comes more up to date themes which will allow for future generations to connect with the themes.

***Directions:*** For each lesson you observe, fill out the brief log below. You can copy and paste the chart as many times as needed. This record will allow me to sign off on your pre-professional experience for admission to the credentialization program.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Lesson Focus/Title:** | | | |
| **Lesson Date** | 04/23/2021 | **Lesson Location** | Alief Early College High School |
| **Lesson Duration** | 53 Minutes | | |
| **Brief Reflection (a couple sentences):** How might this inform your own future teaching?  The teacher brough up Romeo and Juliet in order to relate it to the Aristotle tragedy. The teacher moved the kids into groups and gave each group a sheet with instructions to their task. Each team member must try and fulfill their role to complete their task. The teacher gave each team a specific task in order to create different perspectives when each team shared out individually. | | | |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Lesson Focus/Title:** | | | |
| **Lesson Date** | 04/25/21 | **Lesson Location** | Fremont High School |
| **Lesson Duration** | 1 hour 26 minutes | | |
| **Brief Reflection (a couple sentences):** How might this inform your own future teaching?  The teacher covered The Song of Solomon. She had the students try to find symbolism in the text. She had them talk about the theme, their questions on the text, and general opinions. She also had them write in what appears to be a journal. She had each group try to find a symbol in the chapter to share out. | | | |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Lesson Focus/Title** | | | |
| **Lesson Date** | 04/26/21 | **Lesson Location** | Stevenson Elementary School  14220 Ne 8th St  Bellevue WA |
| **Lesson Duration** | 1 hour 13 minutes | | |
| **Brief Reflection (a couple sentences):** How might this inform your own future teaching?  The students had separated into group colors, and with each color was a set of talking points. Each of the cards had a specific chapter in their textbook and the group that I took note of was the group that was covering Lewis and Clarke. The students then talked about a good quality for explorers to have and this made me think of a text to use, which is Island of the Blue Dolphins. | | | |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Lesson Focus/Title:** | | | |
| **Lesson Date** | 04/27/21 | **Lesson Location** | Johnston Senior High School  6501 Northwest 62nd Avenue  Johnston |
| **Lesson Duration** | 34 minutes | | |
| **Brief Reflection (a couple sentences):** How might this inform your own future teaching?  I learned how useful Socratic seminars can be when trying to get students to form a question that develops into a thesis. The instructor had them separated into groups and handed them each a different story. They had to create a question and embed quotes into it in order to show that they are thinking about the text and have read and thought about possible concepts, themes, and even thesis to present. | | | |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Lesson Date** | 04/28/21 | **Lesson Location** | Col Moses Parker School  75 Graniteville Road  Chelmsford MA |
| **Lesson Duration** | 52 minutes | | |
| **Brief Reflection (a couple sentences):** How might this inform your own future teaching?  The teacher first had the kids warm up with an exercise in imagery. She divided them into groups and had each of them try and come up with an item to describe without just giving the name. Then the teacher moved on to talk about the poem “Beowulf”. She goes into a brief introduction of the characters and works with the students to paraphrase the poem and get a better understanding of the imagery. | | | |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Lesson Focus/Title:** | | | |
| **Lesson Date** | 4/28/21 | **Lesson Location** | The Springfield Renaissance School  1170 Carew Street  Springfield MA |
| **Lesson Duration** | 1 hour 7 minutes | | |
| **Brief Reflection (a couple sentences):** How might this inform your own future teaching?  The teacher gave the students a quote from Macbeth to get them thinking about themes and motifs to get them warmed up for their literary circle. She then assigned each a role for the lit circle and begin to work together to define the character of Macbeth, lady Macbeth, and MacDuff. She has them look for quotes in order to ensure that they students are engaged with the text at all times | | | |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Lesson Date** | 04/29/21 | **Lesson Location** | Patapsco High & Center For Arts  8100 Wise Avenue  Dundalk MD |
| **Lesson Duration** | 1 hour 15 minutes | | |
| **Brief Reflection (a couple sentences):** How might this inform your own future teaching?  The teacher started off with an exercise in which students texted their responses to an app in order to get the students comfortable with sharing. The teacher analyses the speech from a graduate with the class and guides them with his key concepts. He then had the students take note of those concepts in order to move into replicating the same style of writing. The teacher continuously questions the students in order to get a deeper response which at the same time opens up the room for discussion. | | | |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Lesson Focus/Title:** | | | |
| **Lesson Date** | 4/29/21 | **Lesson Location** | Patapsco High & Center For Arts  8100 Wise Avenue  Dundalk MD |
| **Lesson Duration** | 1 hour 9 minutes | | |
| **Brief Reflection (a couple sentences):** How might this inform your own future teaching?  The teacher starts class with a warmup in which he asks them about the frustrations of high school in order to get them comfortable with sharing. The teacher then began to go over passages in order to focus on specific goals or themes. The teacher began to point out parallels and then began to expand on them more so that his students will be ableto take note of said concepts | | | |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Lesson Date** | 4/30/21 | **Lesson Location** | South Windsor High School  161 Nevers Road  South Windsor CT |
| **Lesson Duration** | 1 hour 5 minutes | | |
| **Brief Reflection (a couple sentences):** How might this inform your own future teaching?  Before the teacher began to address the novel Beloved by Toni Morrison, he gave some background on her in order to explain some possible character backgrounds. The teacher talks about perspective and gives possible explanations as to the actions of the characters. He set up a Socratic seminar and assigned each group a specific chapter and had the groups identify the strategies that each member should consider when tackling the text. | | | |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Lesson Focus/Title:** | | | |
| **Lesson Date** | 5/02/21 | **Lesson Location** | Online |
| **Lesson Duration** | 1 hour 14minutes | | |
| **Brief Reflection (a couple sentences):** How might this inform your own future teaching?  The teacher had made a word bubble connecting words together with themes. She used the same system in order to ask questions about their novel for example what is evil and can it be justified. By doing this the teacher starts to create a room for conversation and sets up an informal Socratic seminar. | | | |