



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2007 Volume I: Adapting Literature

The Color Purple's Three-Fold Adaptation: Examining Protagonists and Media through a Self-Reflective, Critical Lens

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by Ané Nyoka Ebie-Mouton

Introduction & Inspiration

My matriculation through the University of Illinois-Urbana under Joanna McClay and Kay Holley exposed me to a course of study quietly nestled within the college of communications formally entitled Performance Studies. The Performance Studies discipline was also lauded as Literary School of Oral Interpretation. This is the place where I found my academic and artistic niche that served as the foundation of my teaching practices as a theatre, reading, and now literacy educator. I have been well aware of how performative embodiment cultivates an intimacy with literature that fosters a transcendental and vested understanding of the text. With this as my inspiration, I want to use my twenty-five year old relationship with Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* from its original literary inception to its adaptation from movie to musical to facilitate an in-depth understanding of the themes that run through the story, while illustrating how adaptations keep the work alive and timeless.

Intention

This curriculum unit will increase my preparation for a literacy rich fifth-grade classroom environment with performance by enabling me to flesh out and structure my curriculum in a way that creates a concrete connection between the in multiple installations of *The Color Purple* and the real world in which my students live. The particular things I will illustrate are the interpretation of the original story and societal issues it stirred up, one dealing with depictions of African-American males, and perceptions of African-American female beauty. I also want to use the work to highlight the cathartic nature of journal writing. I wish to examine how Oprah Winfrey's production of the Broadway adaptation cultivated a wave of newfound awareness, appreciation and investment in live musical theatre for African-Americans. She established a thread from past to present between the themes of self-esteem, generational curses, and illumination of gifts with her recent announcement of Fantasia Barrino, the season three *American Idol* winner, as the headliner, a pop culture icon who has significance for female youth in our nation, across race and class lines. Fantasia Barrino's pursuit of her dream as *American Idol* was controversial and vindicating. Fantasia's life circumstances that made for

such an unlikely road to becoming an *American Idol* have much in common with Walker's conception of the protagonist Celie. My girls especially need to have exposure to the Fantasia's factual and Celie's fictive life.

Exposure will enable them to recognize the efficacious and powerful connection this *American Idol* and literary protagonist share, validating their own real world experiences. These characters and their intertwining stories will be studied and embraced, interpreted through performative adaptation, and communed with as a vehicle by which their own voices will emerge. It is my hope that the curriculum unit will enable me to clearly chart an effective course by which this vulnerable yet life-changing experimentation can take place.

For the purpose of this unit, I will be exploring the following literary, film, and performance mediums: Alice Walker's Pulitzer Prize winning book, *The Color Purple*, Steven Spielberg's film *The Color Purple*, and *The Color Purple Musical*, specifically with Fantasia starring as the second, most current Celie. These works will be examined in concurrence with Fantasia's autobiographical novel, *Life is Not a Fairy Tale*.

Research & Rationale: The What and the Why

My research has several dimensions. The first dimension is an in-depth comparative study of the life of pop-culture icon Fantasia Barrino and Celie, the fictive protagonist in *The Color Purple*. I realize my students will not care about Celie or her story within the literary context of *The Color Purple*, but by establishing her connection to a real-life pop culture icon who lives in the foreground of their personal experiences (I know they will care about Fantasia), I can cultivate an appetite for in-depth character study. The second dimension of my research will entail a comparison of the books chronicling each of these women's lives and the film adaptations of these books. The third and final dimension of my research will entail an examination of the three media in which the story of *The Color Purple* can be found and the implications of the characteristics of each medium for adaptation.

First, I will facilitate an in-depth study of the lives of Celie and Fantasia, specifically within the broader context of Fantasia's autobiographical account, *Life is Not a Fairy Tale*, and the book and film *The Color Purple*, in which Celie is the major female protagonist who serves as the first person limited omniscient narrator (CPFG). My perusal of both books and *The Color Purple* film have revealed some critical similarities that I believe my male and female students will have a vested interest in exploring. I will explore these similarities, categorizing them under one of three motifs: *Self-Esteem*, *Generational Curses*, and *The Illumination of the Gift*.

Self-Esteem

Self-Esteem is an issue many African-American youth, especially young girls, contend with as they see iconographic images of what it means to be beautiful, with no trace of themselves in these images. We have come along way, with ads such as "Dove" promotions that emphasize the diverse imperfect faces and bodies that promote the profound beauty of everyday women, and with artists like India Arie and Pink who use music as a political tool addressing America's unhealthy perceptions of beauty, especially as it relates to black women. We still, however, have a long way to go. Fantasia experienced and still battles with many self-esteem issues, like her facial features and body image, as well as her battle to overcome illiteracy. Celie had the same battle, and it is important to examine the similarities and differences in their experiences and responses.

Fantasia confesses early on in her autobiography that her self-esteem was terribly low, due to her looks. This

low self-esteem was instilled and self-perpetuated at a very early age: "When I was a child, I was always so skinny and had big lips. People teased me about it all the time. I used to go home to my mother and cry and tell her that everyone thought I was ugly. It's lonely when you feel you're not good enough (Fantasia, 30)." Fantasia's early revelation of her distinctive features reminds me of the famous literary legend, Maya Angelou, who also had a life-long battle with her body image, its inception being in early childhood. The following excerpt is from Angelou's autobiographical book, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, the first and most famous of a six-part autobiographical series. Angelou begins her story with this anecdote, at her childhood church with her giving an Easter speech at the age of six years old. Angelou's self-consciousness and nervousness causes her to forget her speech, and a subsequent loss of bodily functions, at which time she escapes from her context to imagine how much better her existence would be as the complete antithesis of how God created her:

Wouldn't they be surprised when one day I woke out of my black ugly (nightmare of a) dream, and my real hair, which was long and blond, would take the place of my kinky mass that momma wouldn't let me straighten. My big beautiful baby blue eyes were going to hypnotize them, after all the things they said about "my daddy must have been a Chinaman" because my eyes were so small and squinty. Then they would understand why I had never picked up a Southern accent, or spoke a common slang, and why I had to be forced to eat pig's tails and snouts. Because I was really white and because a cruel fairy stepmother, who was understandably jealous of my beauty, had turned me into a too big Negro girl, with nappy black hair, broad feet and a space between her teeth that would hold a number-two pencil. If growing up is painful for the Southern Black girl, being aware of her displacement is the rust on the razor that threatens the throat. It is an unnecessary insult (Angelou, 1-2).

The above excerpt is a critical inclusion in this section for the benefit of my colleagues all around the world, as I believe in the importance of exposing an epidemic of negative self-esteem that pervades black females at a very early age. Since Celie is a fictive character, I don't want a dismissal of the reality that this disease which affects the most famous and influential African-American women in American history. Fantasia discloses this in her reference to Oprah Winfrey who, despite being told she could never make it on television because her face was not pretty enough, is now one of the most powerful people in the world, owning the most successful and sustained daytime talk show in American history, coupled with her other successes as producer, actress, and magazine editor.

It is also important for my colleagues to recognize this struggle for young African-American girls. While not dismissing the fact that their white counterparts experience similar struggles, African-American females struggle with their inability to change their skin color to meet the iconographic image of what it means to be beautiful, which still essentially, in American society, means being white. Since being white is impossibility, achieving the closest thing to it is more often than not the order of the day. This comes in a package with being fair skinned with long, or at least finely textured hair, small, "neat" facial features. Fantasia discusses that her efforts to look sexy for the man who eventually sired her daughter, were quelled by his interest in another girl whom she could never compete with, whose features included "long wavy hair, light skin, and thin pink lips (Fantasia, 63)."

The Color Purple film opens with a pre-pubescent Celie's stepfather, who has raped and impregnated her twice, commenting, "Celie, you got the ugliest smile this side of creation." Celie immediately responds with a straight face, covered mouth, and lowered head. In the book, when Mr. __ makes a second trip to the house, persisting in his request of taking Nettie, Celie's younger, "prettier" sister, for his wife (in the movie he only

comes once), Celie's stepfather again refuses to relinquish Nettie, but once again offers Celie by responding, "She ugly. . . But she ain't no stranger to hard work. And she clean. And God done fixed her (Walker, 8)". When Celie describes intercourse with Mister to Shug as an impersonal event when Mister "do his business, get off, [and] go to sleep (Walker, 77)," the movie corroborates this and more, depicting Mister never looking at her while having sex with her, and then at the sight of young Celie grunting with disgusted disdain, "*Jesus!*" at which point he dismounts her, rolls over and goes to sleep. Very early on in the book and film, the precedent is established by the men in the story that Celie is hard on the eye. These same men are the men who exercise authority over her, one of which is her stepfather, the other, her husband.

The interesting tie between Fantasia (Fantasia, 119) and Celie is that while it is the men in their lives who are instrumental in tearing down their self-esteem, it is the women in their lives who help restore it. It is Shug who, after time spent getting to know and see Celie as a human being, sincerely declared that Celie had a pretty smile. In doing this, she stopped Celie's bad habit of covering her mouth with her hands when she smiled, a tendency she developed as a young girl in response to her stepfather's scorn. For Fantasia, it is her mother through much prayer and long-suffering who gets it through Fantasia's head that God made no mistakes in the way crafted her. Her mother's reinforcement coupled with her own knowledge of God creating her in His image, empowers Fantasia to begin seeing herself as God sees her: "I love myself, even if I'm not skinny or perfect. I am happy-finally. With God in my life, I always see that I am beautiful-even when others don't. I even love my lips now. Once I began to love my lips, everyone else did too. . . This is how God made me. That was his plan for me to finally see that His gifts are not always punishments. (Fantasia, 120-1).

This evolution in thought is important for my students to understand, because people often see us the way we see ourselves. I want to show ways in which this change is what opened the doors for Fantasia's lips to go from being a curse to her trademark. She was endorsed by MAC, a popular make-up company with two lip-gloss shades created with her namesake (Fantasia, 125). Her endorsement with American Rags yielded a line of jeans that dons a silver-studded outline of her lips on the back pocket. What's more, she now complements her autograph with a sketch of her lips (Fantasia, 126).

Yet even with this new healthy paradigm shift in her self-perception, Fantasia, like all the women who have gone before her, is still on the journey to uncompromisingly embracing her unique, and distinctive beauty. Even after the world had shown Fantasia their unrequited love for her, by giving her more than 65 million votes—more than any in the history of the show, and even more than George Bush, the president of the United States, was able to garner (Fantasia, 106). Fantasia still confesses that even with her success, she is self-conscious about her well-defined facial features:

I would drive up to shows in different cities-places that I had never seen before- and there would be *American Idol* signs all over the place. Small children would be crying from their excitement, and their mothers had to calm them down by stroking their heads. I noticed little girls had gotten their hair cut to look just like mine. Mothers were running with their babies just to get close to the car I was in. I would shrink in fear of what they would do when they saw me. I wasn't worried they would hurt me, I was worried they would be disappointed when they saw me in person. What if I didn't look like I did on TV? What if my lips were even bigger then they thought? What if they thought I was too ugly to be the American Idol? What if they had made a mistake by voting for me (Fantasia, xi)?

The above excerpt will assist me in teaching my students to reflect on the fact that even once we have come to a revelation of love for ourselves, the journey never stops, as it is something that always has to be

nurtured. Our deliverance from the infirmity of unhealthy self-concept can be laden with setbacks. Yet, this does not mean we are not free.

It is important for my students to examine and compare these female characters within the broader context of their stories, as an intimacy with the characters will foster real world implications for their life decisions. It also a viable foundation for character development in a context where kids can be cruel to each other. When kids are able to examine these protagonists' stories and how their low self-esteem primarily came from external forces, I believe it will sensitize them to the importance of being kind to one another, and change their predisposal to insult to that of, at a minimum, not saying anything at all if they have nothing positive to say, knowing the future ramifications of such insults.

Illiteracy: The What

Another thing that inhibited Celie and Fantasia's self-esteem was illiteracy. The film, more strongly than the novel, illustrates the weighty issue of Celie's illiteracy and addresses it with the necessary care that communicates literacy as Celie's lifeline. The movie depicts that while Celie does not overtly express any feelings about this, there is a clear distinction between the way she and Nettie are treated. Nettie is allowed to attend school everyday while Celie is kept illiterate, worked and sexually objectified as if she is animal, with all injustices pitted against her without the slightest regard for her feelings. When Nettie comes to live with Celie and Mister as a result of their stepfather's numerous attempts to rape her after Celie left, the sisters are well aware of the fact that Nettie's tenure at their home is limited because Mister will eventually try the same thing. In the movie, when the sisters are hanging sheets in the yard, we find the first of Mister's many flirtatious overtures with Nettie juxtaposed with his harsh demands on Celie:

Mr. __: You shoal look pretty today Nettie. Celie, the boy be needin' his supper (Celie leaves).
Shole is a pretty dress you have on.

That night when the girls are by themselves, Nettie in fun starts mocking Mister, clearly illustrating the marked difference in the way he treats Celie and herself:

Nettie: Oh Nettie, you have such nice skin, and such soft beautiful hair, mm and you smell so good when I sit close to you. And your teeth!

Celie: He talk about your teeth?

Nettie: About how bright they shine! Celie (with a mean authoritative voice)! My boy want his supper! The kitchen needa cleanin', the cow needa milkin', my shed need a mendin'. My pants need a fixin' my shoes needa shinin' and my children needa feedin'. And when you good n' tired, I'm gone climb on top of ya and do my business for you can say amen!

Celie then proceeds to tell Nettie that she would have to leave soon before Mister starts to come after Nettie. The girls begin their hand slapping routine as they engage in the following dialogue:

Nettie: Nuh unh! What would I do if I couldn't talk to you?

Celie: We could write!

Nettie: Can you read good enough?

Celie: Naw, I can't say that I do

Nettie: Then I'll just have to learn how to read for the both of us.

Celie: And we'll both learn real hard before he break us apart (Spielberg, CP)!

Celie is illiterate, but both girls declare that she will learn to read and write so they can always be together. Early on, they know literacy is the key to power, and the key to remaining together against every effort to separate them. Mister hears this outside their room and it is easy to perceive that he keeps this in his arsenal for the time he will strike.

The next scene in the film immediately goes to Nettie teaching Celie to read by labeling everything around the house, and making her identify it spelling bee style: "iron. I-R-O-N. Iron!", and getting her to reading literature. They ultimately achieve the goal of teaching Celie how to read before Nettie's inevitable departure due to Mister's relentless, aggressive advances. As a result of the new found bond, they carve a heart in the tree with both their names, and Celie declares, "Now us never be apart."

Me and you us never part, *Nebe dada* Me and you us never part *Nebe dada* Ain't no ocean ain't sea *Nebe Dadda* Keep my sister way from me (Spielberg, *CP*).

Mister finally attempts to rape Nettie on her way to school, and she whacks him in the groin with her schoolbooks. As she runs away, he growls as he lies in his side wracked with pain, "I'll get ya, I'll get ya." The following scene goes to Mister kicking Nettie out, and we witness the very painful, heart-wrenching, coercive separation of the two sisters.

As Mister throws Nettie off the property, a traumatized tearful Celie yells to Nettie to "Write! Write!" And Nettie fervently responds to Celie, "Nothing but death can keep me from it!" And Nettie departs comforting Celie with their covenant chant. As Mister throws rocks at Nettie forcing her off the land, Nettie turns and reiterates to Celie, that only death will keep her from writing to her sister (Spielberg, *CP*).

Mister's forceful threat for Celie to never check the mail for letters from Nettie relegates a sad, tearful Celie to her rocking chair to struggle through decoding the words in an *Oliver Twist* book, as a strong wind in nature signals a passage of time, slipping through the years, revealing a silhouette of an older Celie in this same rocking chair, now fluently reading the story of *Oliver Twist* with an adult female voice. This scene shows how through the years, Celie, understanding literacy as her only way to Nettie, cultivates this most valuable gift Nettie bestow upon her their painful departure.

I chose to include the scene from the movie instead of the book because the movie places much heavier emphasis on Celie's literacy as the key to overall freedom. My students need the movie's explicit treatment of Celie's acquisition of literacy to truly understand how reading and writing was Celie's lifeline to her sister, and ultimately reunited them. It is my hope that exposure to this excerpt of the book, made real by the movie, will make them more reflective about the power and importance of literacy as life. Celie becomes literate as a pre-pubescent, while Fantasia, now a young adult, is still on the road to breaking the chains that have inhibited from experiencing the fullness of life. Fantasia officially dropped out of school in the ninth grade (Fantasia, 36). Her life story exposes illiteracy as handicap, disabling her from taking advantage of the rights and privileges she should have been able to exercise as a mother, citizen, and American Idol.

One way illiteracy affected her self-esteem was in her inability to fill out a job application. Fantasia admits that she never applied for many jobs because she could not read the application, and subsequently, after having had to leave many questions blank would throw the application in the garbage. She points this out because she wishes to illuminate the chain reaction of making one mistake after another, and the life-long ramifications it can have. Fantasia also admits to her vulnerability in her new position because she has to pay people to handle her affairs and trust in their honor because of her inability to read various contracts, scripts, and other paperwork that are placed before her (70). Her inability to read also prevented her from getting a

driver's license (71). Fantasia also illustrates how illiteracy ultimately breeds fear and paranoia:

When I won the car on (American) Idol, they handed me the keys as soon as I stepped off the stage . I was filled with mixed emotions of joy, pride, and the fear of someone finding out that I couldn't drive. I was afraid they would take the car away. I was also filled with dread because holding those keys in my hand meant that it was really time for me to learn to read in order to get the driver's license and to be able to live this new life that was right before me, that I was holding in my hand.

Fantasia's inability to drive resulted in her giving the car she won on American Idol to her mother, and as she depended on people to read her contracts, she also continued to depend on people to drive her around. This an important point to make to my students, because it is a commentary on the fact that even all the money in the world cannot afford us the freedoms that an education can. Before she won American Idol, Fantasia couldn't afford a car. When she could afford her own car, she still could not get it because her inability to read prevented her from taking the written test that served as a requisite for earning a license (71).

Even more than the inhibitions Fantasia experienced as a result of illiteracy, the most painful of all was her inability meet her daughter's simple request of reading her a book. (56). She culminates the feeling of humiliation and pain by the sobering statement, "My life looks like a fairytale in many ways, but you have to remember that life is not a fairytale. I'm an American Idol, which seems like a fairytale, but I can't even read a fairytale to my four-year-old daughter (Fantasia, 71)".

Fantasia ultimately engages in a courageous critical commentary, exposing American society's efforts to paint a picture of infallibility, and in doing so failing to properly address the epidemic of illiteracy in our country. Our pretentious denial of this critical issue has failed her, among many of our nation's youth:

I have managed to fool the world into thinking that I could read (71). The real business is how Hollywood and show business wouldn't want the world to know that illiteracy is real thing that affects a lot of young people, like me. It is one of those ugly things that no one wants to talk about, yet keeping secret just makes a new generation of illiterates.

Generational Curses

Both Celie and Fantasia experience what Fantasia's mother identifies as "generational curses," where for generations the same mistakes are made, or the sins of the parents in some way adversely affect the child. Both Celie and Fantasia experience these curses. While I will briefly address Celie's generational curses, I will more deeply explore Fantasia's, as I believe they will yield a more significant impact on my students.

Celie's generational curses are more covert, in that there is not clear indication that the same things happened to those who went before her. The obvious curse lies in sexual objectification and relegation of women as mules. The sexual objectification begins on the very first page when her father rapes her by telling her, "You gonna do what your mammy wouldn't (Walker, Color Purple, 1)."

Fantasia clearly exposes the generational curses that has beset three generations of women in her family. "Faith is a legacy for many women in my family, as are the legacies of teen pregnancy, being single mothers, emotional and physical abuse, and poverty (Fantasia, 1)."

Looking for your gift can be painful. It's a journey that requires that you go through things. I must

have been looking for my gift for years. Even though people were constantly praising me about my voice, I wasn't listening. I was searching for my gift but didn't know it was as simple as it being my singing voice. I was like a dog chasing her tail. knew it was there, but I couldn't hold it in my hands. So I made mistakes in order to find my gift and find myself. They were big mistakes because I was sittin' in High Point (North Carolina) with nothin' to do, no money, no plans for the future, no role models of people who had left High Point, and only the "borin'" reminder that God and church were always the only thing to do for the rest of my life (Fantasia, 29).

Fantasia's lack of direction led to a subsequent disdain for discipline, which led to the manifestation of the biblical proverb: An idle mind is the devil's workshop:

I was so busy chasing B. around, I was messin' up in school. Going to school made it inconvenient for the chase. There were too many rules. I felt like an independent woman in the way I was dressing and in my actions. The people at my school just thought I was a bad kid. The boys at school didn't think of me as a woman-they thought of me as a "ho." I hated to be in school and hated having to be at class at a certain time. Hated the teachers and hated not being able to spend all my time with my boyfriend. I thought that I was grown up and that I didn't need any of this anymore. I felt even stronger now that I was "in love." I was frisky at the time, too. As the older women from church used to say, "I was smellin' myself," kind of like a female dog in heat. My body was hot all the time. I wanted to wear little clothes and get attention from boys. I remember one skirt that I made where I cut the hem so high that I should have been keeping sacred (Fantasia, look up page number).

Fantasia was raped shortly thereafter by a boy at school whose attention she had been trying to garner. She blamed herself for her attempts to use her body to get negative attention: "I could hear my own voice saying, "It's your fault. You was friskin' around (Fantasia, 11)."

At the age of seventeen, due to her father's adulterous relationships, and her mom's subsequent depression and emotional negligence, she moved out of her parent's house to Farmington Apartments, which she likens to "a camp for single, uneducated women and babies (Fantasia, 47)."

As a result of Fantasia's rebellion, all of her lifelines had given up on her, her grandmother deciding to allow Fantasia to see what life was really about, and her mother whom, in the depths of depression from a failing marriage, had given up on herself and therefore was not of the mind to wrestle with her daughter and steer her on the right course (36).

In response to news of her teenage pregnancy, Fantasia mother, Diane Barrino

kept squallin' and started saying, "No, not again. Not again!" I was cryin' because I had disappointed my mother, again. I had left the church, I had left school, and now I was going to have a child, just like she had. It was the very way that my mother had lived her life that I was trying to avoid. Suddenly, all those talks about sex and babies and protection and the things that boys would say to get you to "do it" came floodin' back into my mind. . .In that single moment, standing with my grandmother, my mother, and myself, all young mothers, had stepped into the darkness of what my mother called the "generational curse (Fantasia, 40)."

When Fantasia called B. to let him know of her pregnancy, "He said these simple words, "It ain't mine," and the love of my life, the pastor's son, hung up the phone on me (Fantasia, 40)." Celie and Fantasia's

experiences mirror each other in many ways. Their teenage pregnancies, experiences with domestic violence as well the commonality of their lack of voice unite them in their testimonies of the recursive nature of the oppression, whether inflicted or self-perpetuated, women yesterday and today experience.

Illumination of the Gift: The Key to subsequent Self-Empowerment, and Self-Sufficiency

Both Celie and Fantasia come into themselves with a recognition that their voices matter. Celie becomes empowered to use her speaking voice, and the revelation evokes such a sense of power, that she is able to use her voice to speak blessing and curses over Mr. __ (Spielberg, *CP*). Fantasia ultimately realizes that her gift had been with her all along. This realization of the gift has enabled Fantasia to take it before the world and gain recognition for her gift, and now it yields her the resources to care for her family.

This section is entitled "Illumination of the Gift. . ." because both Celie and Fantasia have had their gifts all along, but because they came so naturally to the point that they were taken for granted, they never saw their gifts as the key to self-empowerment, freeing them from dependence on anyone to survive. Both women have become their own independent artists in their own right. Celie has perfected the art of making pants, and it becomes quite lucrative (Walker, *CP* 215). Fantasia's vocal gift paves the way to never before imagined opportunities.

When Celie's stepfather dies, she inherits the home she grew up in, along with a dry goods store. Her initial feeling was that she did not want anything associated with her cruel, physically, psychologically, and sexually abusive stepfather, who began the hell that Mister continued. Another thing to note and expose to our students is that Celie had the gift all along, but she never realized it as a gift, just something she enjoyed doing that came naturally to her. This epiphany was probably deferred by mental slavery created by Mister's verbal abuses that would always remind her that she had nothing of value to offer the world, while all the while, it was at her fingertips. It is Shug in the book, who praises Celie for her magic pants. Celie, from the beginning had been making comfortably fitting pants, among other things, for Shug. After experimenting, with Shug's encouragement and support, on various shapes and patterns for pants, Celie finally perfects her craft, she herself declaring, "then finally one day, I made the perfect pair of pants. . . Miss Celie she (Shug) say. You is a wonder to behold. . .she run round the house looking at herself in mirrors (Walker, 215)." At this point, it still does not click for Celie, who has just left Mister, and is staying with Shug until she gets on her feet, that this may be her bread and butter. This is reflected in her response to Shug's praise:

You know how it is when you don't have nothing to do, I say, when she brag to Grady and Squeak bout her pants. Sit here thinking bout how to make a living and before I know it I'm off on another pair of pants. By now Squeak see a pair she like. Oh, Miss Celie, she say. Can I try on those? She put on a pair the color of sunset. . .She come back out looking just fine. Grady look like he could eat her up (Walker, 215-6).

By investing in her gift, Shug, an entrepreneur herself, making her living as a singer with her own band, shifts Celie's paradigm about the value of her ability to make pants, and helps Celie realize she has a gift:

The next week I'm in and out spending more of Shug's money. . .Shug want two more pair just like the first. Then everybody in her band (made up of all men) want some. Then orders start to come in from everywhere Shug sing. Pretty soon, I'm

swamp (Walker, 216) .

Shug and her band are marketing Miss Celie's pants just by wearing them, and the demand in gets intense. Yet, Celie cannot envision her passion as her ticket to financial freedom. In another conversation with Shug, she laments:

You know, I love doing this, but I got to git out and make a living pretty soon. Look like this just holding me back. She laugh. Let's us put a few advertisements in the paper, she say. And let's us raise your process a hefty notch. And let's us go ahead an give you this dining room for your factory and git you some more women in here to cut and sew, while you sit back and design. You making your living, Celie, she say. Girl, you on your way (Walker, 217).

Shug encourages her to take this inheritance, which would instantly make her a home and business owner. It is also Shug who encourages her to convert the dry goods store into a business for making pants (*CP*, 249).

I believe the pants shop to be a metaphor for the idiom "who wears the pants in your house?" Ms. Celie is finally—after a long and difficult journey of intra-racial slavery and objectification under Mister's rule—wearing the pants now. She is controlling her own fate, producing her own revenue, owning her own business, making pants in prints and sizes that are befitting of both men and women the same. In the movie, Harpo expresses his bafflement at how Celie can make the same pants to fit him as she does to fit Sophia, his more robust wife. Celie escorts him in the fitting room with the same pair of pants and responds, "just gonna have to try 'em on and see (Spielberg, *CP*)!" I believe that in having Sophia and Harpo wear the same pants, Spielberg and Walker collaboratively create a metaphor for Celie's revelation that women have as much of a right as men to pursue their dreams and follow their destiny, by identifying their gifts and sharing them with the world. When it comes to maximizing their potential, women have as much right to "wear the pants" as their male counterparts. Celie realizes this as the way for ultimate female self-empowerment, and a preventative measure for the potential consequences she faced of having to depend on a man to survive. Miss Celie's wearin' the pants now!

Like Celie, an arduous journey preceded the revelation of her gift. At a young age, Fantasia knew that her gift of song was inextricably tied to her relationship with God, which she refers to as her "first love affair": "I was anointed. That anointing made me see that music was my gift. Back then, church and music and God were all connected as one. By recognizing that God was within me when He gave me my voice, I finally knew I was special (Fantasia, 20)." "All I knew was that I was a singer and that meant everything to me—even when I was five. Singing was the only place I ever wanted to be (Fantasia, 11). She never came to the realization however, that her gift also "place her before great men (Bible)" until her aunt—an influential female in her life,—pushed her into going for it, getting her all the resources and information she would need to take a shot at pursuing her dreams. (get page number and maybe a quote fro the book). Celie and Fantasia also have this in common: They both had a woman in their lives to help them realize their gifts.

The Color Purple Film Adaptation: The Antithesis

This section entails an examination the Oscar-nominated film and Spielberg's artistic genius that Walker relished. She often preferred his choices over her own and respected his license and preferences, among them not using her screenplay, explaining, "I understood how difficult it is for a creative person to stick to one way of doing things (*SR*, 35)." I will also address issues with the film that Walker attributes in part to a lack of audience maturity and a subsequent lack of willingness to address the issues of human fallibility that we as a nation, being so caught up in pretentiousness and appearances, refuse to acknowledge.

For the purpose of this unit, I must edit both the book and the film. Primarily due to issues of suitability and depth of content, I will only address the specifics of the film's adaptation of the book to the point of the conclusion of Celie's childhood, and for the purpose of identifying a film technique that advances the story, the film's depiction of first few minutes of her adulthood will be examined. I will however, mention certain scenes that occur later in the movie because they show the reflective perspective of Alice Walker, At the high-school level, teachers may consider going beyond this initial portion, exposing students to more of the film, which is more mature in content. Classroom Activity number two entails a student analysis of film snippets and how they each convey the three themes of Self-Esteem, Generational Curses, and Illumination of the Gift, as well as negative male depictions.

Alice Walker's *The Same River Twice: Honoring the Difficult*, which features her personal reflections on the making of the film adaptation of *The Color Purple*, is the foundational text for my exploration of the film. This very private, privileged and profound exposure to what Walker identifies as a "labyrinthine river of high-risk collaborative creativity, private illness and public praise and censure (33)" emphasizes the pivotal role Oprah Winfrey played in the journey *The Color Purple* has taken from that of Pulitzer Prize winning book to film. It also foreshadows how influential Winfrey would be in the perceived redemption of this work through her interest as main producer of its current musical adaptation, featuring Fantasia Barrino. Walker admits that her collaboration on the filming of *The Color Purple* was inept due to personal life challenges. These included her mother's and her own illness, and a slowly but surely failing personal relationship, often rendering her present on the film set in body, but absent in mind and spirit:

He (Steven Spielberg) says I am "otherworldly." That I always seem to be somewhere else. That there is something apparitional about me. That I am "very haunting." . . . I realized that Steven intuited that I was extremely fragile while our film was being made, walking some days as if in a dream; as, perhaps, many of the cast and the crew also sensed. For even though I was present on the set at every moment I could drag myself from my couch, I was also not there. As I watched each scene unfold I felt more like a spirit than a person. Sometimes a couple of the male characters would move my director's chair to a new location, with me on it. Whoopi and Oprah, Danny and Akosua, Margaret and Willard, carried on splendidly; I sat under a tree and offered speech lessons and tarot readings, painfully conscious of my fuzzy thinking and blotchy skin, my soul-deep exhaustion and an almost ever-present nausea. I was unequal to the task of pointing out to Steven every "error" I saw about to be made, as my critics later assumed I should have, or even of praising the exquisite things he constantly thought up, which moved me to tears each evening as we watched "dailies." This pained me; I felt it an unexplainable and quite personal failing (Walker, SR, 30).

Notwithstanding her collaborative impotence, Walker could not help but praise the actors for their personal ownership of the work:

My inability to speak up further prostrated me. I was moved by the way the actors themselves often saved the day, and of how receptive Steven was to them. I was amazed to see how true to the character Oprah and Margaret played Sofia and Shug; and how incredibly sweet and gracious they were as themselves. I cheered inwardly to see Whoopi stand toe to toe one day with Steven and insist that Celie would not age the way he was envisioning her, but would look more like colored women do as they age. A matter of posture and gait, not of wrinkles and a white wig (Walker, SR, 30-1).

The above commentary clearly insinuates that had she to do it again, there would be many things she would

have voiced her opinions about, which may have changed the course of the film's perceived message. Because of the film she has been accused of lesbianism (which she doesn't deny so much as resent as though lesbianism were something to be ashamed of) and misogyny, particularly directed against black men. Her work was disparaged for being injurious to black heterosexual relationships, destructive to the black community, and eclipsing the more significant and uplifting literary contributions of her black male counterparts. Notwithstanding the condemnation, Walker, as revealed in *The Same River Twice*, has been able to process and reflect on the overall experience—much of which was wonderful, some of which presented opportunities for improvement—and has become what she believes to be a better person for it. Her journey has solidified her belief in the integrity of her original work. She now sees her Pulitzer Prize winning work migrating into many subsequent labyrinths that have rendered it timeless, situating it among other canonized literary classics, a more accurate reflection of her vision, a story rich in cultural elements exclusive to the black Diaspora, and whose universal content would be embraced by people across race, class, and gender lines.

Almost twenty-five years after the making of the film, Winfrey wielded her personal influence as one of the richest, most powerful people in the world to celebrate all facets of the story, and in doing so, inadvertently redeem in many ways, Walker's original vision for the performative film adaptation of the book. Winfrey personally invested in the musical, in collaboration with Quincy Jones, the music composer for the film and collaborative producer of the film and musical. This collaboration has produced fervor and renewed excitement about the story, especially now through the magic that can only be experienced in a Broadway musical.

Some of the negative critiques Walker received from the African American community include the black vernacular speech her characters use in the book and movie. Walker insists that this choice was a celebration of her existence, reminiscent of her mother's speech, which she describes as "always fresh, honest, straight as an arrow describing anything. When I was on the set of *The Color Purple*—and as the controversy raised even over whether my characters "degraded" black folk speech—it was this kind of speech that I tried to make sure the actors expressed (SR Walker, 25)."

Walker praises the film for making accessible across the world the women in the story whom she describes as a "sacred feminine," that beautifully and artfully reflects "the infinite possibilities for women (SR, 34). . .," and for herself. A lesson for my students will be a character analysis of all the very diverse women in the story, examining the impact they had on Celie's journey to selfhood.

There are a few other critical bones of contingency that Walker expresses about *The Color Purple* film. The first is what Walker identifies as "Celie's erroneous statement that she has been raped and impregnated by her 'daddy'. . . effectively obscuring the fact that her biological father was forcefully heroic (Walker, SR, 41)." Walker takes issue with the film setting the precedent through Celie's voice that she is impregnated by her real father: "One day my daddy come in and say, you gone do what your mama wouldn't, now I got two children by my daddy, I got a little girl, name Olivia, who he took while I was sleep, and a little boy Adam, whom he took right out my arms. Then my mama died cursin' and screamin' cuz her heart been broke (Speilberg, CP)". In the movie, it is not until her father dies that Celie and Nettie learn that the man they believed to be their father was actually their stepfather. In the book, Celie refers to her stepfather only as "He," this pronoun in caps to reflect her fear, and unconditional deference for the man who mistreated her. The "He" leaves their true relationship ambiguous to the girls until it is revealed through her conversation with his widow.

There is also Walker's feeling it absurd that the movie depicts Mister not knowing where the butter is kept or how a fire is started, and that Spielberg leaves no implication that Mister is forgiven by anyone at the film's conclusion. I believe these depictions perpetuate the negative lens by which Mister is viewed in the film.

Walker also expresses how disturbing it was to see Shug "pretend not to know why Celie can't 'speak up' after Shug leaves her alone with Mister to go back on the road (Walker, SR 41)." We know that Celie is rendered voiceless under Mister's rule and that speaking up would surely have yielded dire consequences. The musical, while tainted with some of its own imperfections, redeems some of these issues, and through its casting, creates the universal contemporary significance in Celie's story.

The Color Purple Musical: The Synthesis

The adaptation of *The Color Purple* story into a musical, a product which I believe to be the offspring of both the novel and film serves, in many ways, as a direct redemptive response to the major criticism of the movie. Walker identifies myriad things about the film that she did not agree with that I believe the musical addresses, starting off as early in the film as the opening musical score, which she believed was more appropriate for a filming of *Oklahoma!* than *The Color Purple* (SR, 21). In the next section, I will identify these details and specifically address how the collaborative artistic direction for the musical modified those things, and what I believe to be the larger implications of these changes. I will also address significant changes that were made that Walker did not specifically mention that I believe markedly impacted the musical.

Walker fashioned Mister's character after that of her grandfather:

But even more calming to my heart, I found again the old imperfect sinner and pagan I love so much, my grandfather. Surely doing his part, after a sorely misguided youth spent in dissipation, confusion, and cruelty, to represent, as a grandfather, an old man, the sacred masculine. It broke my heart that so few people were able to really see him, in the much maligned character of Mister (Walker SR, 34).

In response to the film's depiction of Danny Glover, Walker declares that not only was her grandfather less physically intimidating (Walker describes him as "small and decidedly impish"), but like most humans, he was deeper, more complex: "I always understood there were layers and layers of him: to think of him reduced to one layer, and that of brutality, was a torture I survived only because I knew he would understand it was my intention to render him whole (Walker, River 34)."

The great thing about the musical is that the characters get to have their own voices as they share the human complexities of their character through song. According to Marsha Norman, bookwriter for *The Color Purple*, a Musical, a song for musical theatre can only be sung by a particular person at a selected time in the story at a specific point in the story. Theatre songs need to start when a person's contemplating what to do and at the end of a song, they figure it out. Songs in the theatre have a journey aspect to them (CPFG, 16). In this way the men are better understood in that the audience is able to see the multiple layers of all characters and better understand the motives behind their actions. Furthermore, the men, through reflection in their songs are more clearly seen as proactive change agents in their own metamorphosis as better, more human, empathic men. In the musical and book, Mr. __ changes his ways, Celie forgives him, (now referred to as Albert) and they cultivate a legitimate friendship, even an openness, often consoling each other about their mutual, but forbidden love for Shug.

One critical area in which the musical falls short is in its inattention to the process by which Celie becomes

literate. The musical depicts Celie as unable to read, and then without addressing her ever learning to read, she implores Nettie to write when Mister kicks her off his property. This made me interrogate, "why ask Nettie to write, when she can't read the letters anyway?" This oversight is exacerbated by Celie's receipt of Nettie's letters from Africa, and the musical's amazing depiction of Celie as an active reader and spect-actor of her letters. According to performance theorist Augusto Boal, spect-actorship is generally reflective of any kind of performance in which audience participation is critical to its success. Therefore, the audience does not serve as merely spectators. The key to ultimate catharsis and personal efficacy is participation. We see this spect-actorship in Celie situating herself in the middle of all the action that is occurring in Africa. This spect-actorship on Celie's part is not only a great teaching point in itself, but also a segue to how Celie's active role in her "letter reading" is a reflection of how great writing reflects the effective application of literacy devices.

The vivid colorful imagery in Nettie's letters situate Celie in the middle of their African adventures. This imagery compels Celie to call out in fear and desperation to Nettie and her children when "reading" Nettie's letter about her and the children being caught in the crossfire of political unrest, and participating in tribal dances that she envisions occurring, to a drum she hears, both intensifying with the increasing danger. Notwithstanding the musical's failure communicating Celie's acquisition of literacy as a process, I will use the musical's depiction of the unrequited power of imagination that comes with being literate as a teaching opportunity to reinforce the importance of active reading to my students. I will employ my *Read-Aloud Think-Aloud* anchor charts (in the appendices of this unit), and couple them with anecdotes from the musical to have them assess what comprehension strategy Celie was employing to get the most out of her letters from Nettie. This is one area in which I believe the film trumps the book and musical, unfolding the arduous, yet beautifully dynamic-brain-based process by which Nettie teaches Celie to read and write. It is also a foreshadowing of Nettie's calling as an exceptional educator.

It is also important to note that the musical, perhaps for dramatic value, kept two very critical scenes from the film that are not true to the book. The first was the dramatic departure between Nettie and Celie and the famous Easter dinner scene when Celie curses Mr. __. In the book, the departure is not the tear-jerker portrayed in the film and musical. Also, the confrontation between Mr. __ and Celie does not occur around the dinner table.

I finally wish to engage in a small examination of how Fantasia, the new Celie for *The Color Purple, a Musical*, courageously used her own life experiences, to expose the real epidemics of our nation. For doing so, Barrino faced ridicule and more than conquered it through her season three *American Idol* win, and in becoming America's sweetheart, created a paradigm shift by revolutionizing what it meant to be an American Idol. This subsequently encouraged more people with imperfect lives to pursue their dreams not in spite of themselves, but because the tumultuous journey has made it that much more worth it, exposing how the journey has cultivated an inner strength they never knew they had. These perceived deficits then became incentives to live not conservatively, but in the fullness of life, with a reckless, desperate determined abandon. After all, much like *The Color Purple* protagonist Celie, what had they to lose?

It is important for my students to be exposed to the practical application of this research. In an examination of the various media by which Celie's story is told, am forcing them to become observant, critical, thinkers, and readers. In doing so, their comprehension becomes more intimate and sophisticated.

Strategy 1: Establishing a Hook through the Interactive Read-Aloud

I will entitle the fundamental strategy to be used for the purpose of implementing this curriculum unit "The Hook." The hook will be my way of cultivating interest in *The Color Purple*, through literature first. My thrust to establish a positive correlation between the fictive protagonist Celie and Fantasia will have to reverse chronology and begin with the life of Fantasia. This will be the hook because Fantasia is a pop-culture icon they know, love, and would be interested in learning more about. I will establish this hook through a literacy strategy entitled the Read-Aloud. The Read Aloud entails five essential components: The teacher reads a piece of literature to students. The teacher then models their thinking to illustrate effective examples of a self-directed process by which one can better comprehend the literature. The teacher then directs questions or an opportunity to share their thinking to the students. The students respond to each other in groups of two or more. The students finally produce an authentic product, which requires them to share their thinking with textual evidence corroborating their thoughts. This will be coupled with a reciprocated Think Aloud that reflects their ability to conquer the process of deconstructing the literature through asking the right questions, and conducting effective investigations to draw sound, text-based conclusions.

The first component of the Read Aloud simply entails the teacher reading a piece of literature to their students. The purpose of this component is to model fluent and prosodic reading for students. Fluent reading simply means to read with rhythm and phrasing that very much mirrors that of a conversation. Prosody is expressive, passionate reading. The marriage of fluency and prosody in reading classifies it as "good reading." In a day and age where children do not even come to school knowing nursery rhymes, which should be a child's foundational introduction to speaking with fluency and prosody, the Read Aloud is essential. No matter the age or grade of a student, it is my personal conviction that there should always be time allocated in the classroom for the Read-Aloud. We cannot expect our children to be fluent prosodic readers without tangible models of what it looks and sounds like.

I will conduct a Read Aloud of several pages of Fantasia's autobiography, *Life is Not a Fairy Tale* in tandem with selected passages in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (selected carefully for censorship purposes). I will read these works aloud concurrently for the purpose of having them ultimately waging comparisons between the main protagonists in each book. The second component of the Read-Aloud is the Think-Aloud, the process of modeling and sharing one's thinking.

A think-aloud entails modeling thinking to illustrate effective examples of a self-directed process by which one can better comprehend the literature. As a Performance Studies educator with literature as a foundation, I find the Read Aloud essential, because it is a demonstrative strategy, and requires a high performance element.

Strategy 2: Creating Culture of Student Ownership through Cooperative Grouping

Another strategy comes on the form of empowering students to own their learning by placing them in cooperative groups. The difference between cooperative grouping and group work is that cooperative groups are more structured, holding each student accountable for their own contribution as part of a whole. Student

roles in cooperative grouping activities include, but are not limited to, coach, recorder, reflector, and taskmaster.

Strategy 3: Establishing Intimacy with the Text through Performative Embodiment

My last strategy entails having students memorize an excerpt of any literature examined for the purpose of this curriculum unit. Memorization and oral interpretation of the literature cultivates comprehension as well as fluent and prosodic reading skills. Performing in front of their peers will also build students' speaking confidence before an audience of their peers.

Classroom Activity 1

Objective: Students will take turns in a cooperative interactive Read-Aloud to their peers and use Comprehension Strategies (in appendices) to procure a student-directed, intimate understanding of the work. Students will be placed in cooperative groups comprised of four students each. Each student will take turns reading aloud at least two pages of one or the other book, engaging in a think-aloud employing one of the ten comprehension strategies (perhaps picked out of a hat). The students will then, after each interactive read-aloud initiated by their peer, write their think-aloud on a piece of paper, and then share out. If there is difficulty, one of their peers will help them.

The teacher will go around coaching, conferring with each cooperative group, and suggesting prompts (see the last section of each template in appendix). This is an assessment *for* learning activity, where the teacher leans in, or establishes close proximity to students, listening in to slightly redirect their course of thinking if necessary, or to see if this is a lesson that needs to be re-taught because an overwhelming number of students are not getting it.

Formative assessment can come in the form of students reading aloud and sharing their thinking. They could be assigned to employ any or all comprehension strategies during the think-aloud.

Classroom Activity 2

Objective: Students will be able to process and articulate connections drawn from paired texts.

The teacher will reiterate the three themes examined in the lives of Celie and Fantasia. They will look at the following synopses of clips from *The Color Purple* and discuss in cooperative groups which category the scene falls under and why.

1. Young Celie's first introduction to domestic violence is when little Harpo, in response to the declaration that "this here your new mammy," says, "she ain't none of my mammy," hurling a rock at and busting her head, causing it to bleed.
2. In response to Mister's directive to shut his screaming daughter up, as Celie tries to tame her mangled unkempt hair, Celie tells him, "I can't it hurt's her." He gets up and slaps her across the face, causing her nose to bleed, and replies "don't talk back to me, you do what I tell you." She then covers the daughter's mouth to muffle her screams.
3. As Celie goes to shave Mister in his anticipation of Shug coming, with the drunken comments, two days! My Shug gon' be here, and everything gone be the way it should be. Come on girl cuz' I'm waitin' for you! Right when Celie brings the sharp razor to his neck, he forcefully grabs her hand and threatens, with a sharp eye and tongue, "you cut me, and I'll kill you." This places the fear of God in Celie, shaking with the razor in hand, with Mister glaring upside down at her with a threatening eye.
4. The sound of the approaching mailman takes Celie—in expectation of a letter from Nettie—off course and causes her to cut Mister while shaving him. He has already forewarned her by saying, "Cut me, and I'll kill you." As Mister gets ready to back-hand her, he recognizes the mailman and his expectation of a letter from Shug makes him jovial so that he lowers his hand, running to the mailbox yelling with glee, "Shug, Shug, I'm comin'!" Celie is so grateful for not being hit, warm with anticipation of a letter from Nettie, that she goes into the house and inhales and exhales long and hard.
5. When Celie asks if there is any mail from Nettie, Mister forbids her to touch the mailbox, letting her know that he "fixed" the mailbox so he can tell if it has been tampered with. He then demands his supper when he gets back. Her response is a sad, morose, tear-filled "yes-sa."
6. In another scene we will see our first depiction of Harpo as a scared, brainless, clumsy kid with no backbone, when Mister bursts through the door to inquire whether or not his horse has been saddled yet. Harpo has brought the horse to the porch, but the noise from mister has caused the horse to back away. Harpo nervously and energetically responds with "Yes sir, I'm gittin' to it, I'm gittin' to it, and proceeds to place the saddle on the horses back, not aware that the horse is no longer there. The saddle falls to the ground, and the camera emphasizes the big-eyed intimidated Harpo's blunder.
7. A bit later in the film, when Harpo is irritated that Sophia will not mind, in the midst of fixing the roof, he falls through, a scene that further emasculates him in his efforts to be "the man of the house." Sophia returns to her house-turned-juke-joint after having left Harpo. She makes her grand entrance on the arm of another man, and Harpo again falls, not through the roof, but from the ceiling on the inside of the juke joint, like a monkey falling from a tree, in his futile efforts to hide from and spy on Sophia at the same time.

Student assessment would come in the form of an essay test where they would get these and other scenarios from the movie, identify which of the three themes are reflected and explain why.

Classroom Activity 3

Objective: Students will learn to create text-to-text, text to self, and text to world connections using all the foundational media studied in this curriculum unit.

Students will be given images from various media in cooperative groups. These will include song lyrics,

quotes, poetry, photos, and images of women and dolls as well as film clips from *The Color Purple*, excerpts from *Life is not a Fairytale*, and from *The Color Purple*, *The Musical*, all of which may trigger thoughts of Celie, Fantasia, or thoughts on the multiple adaptations of "The Color Purple." Specific media I have in mind are Maya Angelou's poem "Phenomenal Woman (Angelou,)," and the musical *The Wiz* (Site). Students will then journal about how these stimuli placing them in the mind of various aspects of our curriculum study.

Assessment of student learning will take place in the form of journal entries in which students will share the connections they have made between various media and the primary works being examined in this unit. Assessment could also take place individually, with the students stating the connections. This in turn would enable the student to exercise daily oral language and the opportunity to clearly express their thoughts verbally.

Appendices

The comprehension strategies are used on the James B. Bonham Elementary School campus in our school-wide commitment to implement Read-Alouds across content areas to improve the fluency, vocabulary and comprehension of our students.

Annotated Bibliography

Angelou, Maya. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. New York, N.Y.: A Bantom book,

published by arrangement with Random House, Inc. 1969.

This story is part one of Angelou's six-part autobiographical series. It is especially useful for this work as it sets the precedent of a negative self-concept, fundamentally due her skin color.

Angelou, Maya. "Phenomenal Woman." *Phenomenal Woman: Four Poems Celebrating*

Women. New York, N.Y. Random House, Inc. 1974

This poem is a celebration of all things concerning Black womanhood. It reflects how there is a community of people who have a different paradigm shift of what beauty is. This paradigm is in dichotomy with what American society coins as what is pretty.

Barrino, Fantasia. *Life is Not a Fairy Tale*. New York, N.Y.: FIRESIDE. 2005.

Life is Not a Fairy Tale is the autobiography of Fantasia Barrino, the third season winner of American, Idol, the popular reality show on television. Fantasia, her stage namesake, shares the awe-inspiring story of her life. As she chronicles her life, from her strong spiritual foundation, to her unhealthy self-perception governing her departure from all things spiritual, Barrino honestly shares the downward spiral her life took, and the hard lessons she has had to learn that has brought her back to her spirituality. It began with dressing promiscuously, to early sexual encounters, to dropping out of high school, and ultimately having a child out of wedlock,

being left to raise her as a single mother. Through the help of her "village," she was encouraged to audition for American Idol, and with her success has been able to recognize her ability to sing as the as a Go-given, anointed gift that would change her life forever.

Spielberg, Steven. *The Color Purple* film. 1985.

This film, which is critical to this unit, is an adaptation of the book. While the film faced controversy, it is lauded as one of the most compelling films of its time. The Color Purple was nominated for four Oscars.

The Color Purple edition of StageNOTES®: A Field Guide for Teachers

www.campbroadway.com/stagenotes/TheColorPurple_StageNotes.pdf

This free PDF is an invaluable resource to any teacher who wishes to study the various media in which The Color Purple Story is shared. It is a great interdisciplinary resource, including lesson plans for teachers across content areas.

Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple*. Orlando, FL: A Harvest book, Harcourt, Inc. 1982.

The Color Purple is a fictive work about a woman's arduous journey to selfhood.

It features Celie, the fictive female protagonist who is examined as a subject of study for this curriculum unit. It won the 1983 Pulitzer Prize for fiction.

Walker, Alice. *The Same River Twice: Honoring the Difficult*. New York, N.Y: POCKET

BOOKS, a division of Simon and Schuster Inc. 1996.

The Same River Twice: Honoring the Difficult is a powerful book comprised of Walker's reflective commentary, essays, journal entries, and her own never-used screenplay all to, in her words, "balance this experience I have felt a need to share what I did attempt (35)." Walker addresses her ambivalence and subsequent lack of significant input toward *The Color Purple* film adaptation as it was being created. Walker confronts the personal life challenges that inhibited a presence of mind that would enable full stake-holdership in the film making process and potentially avoid much of the accusations against the film as negative reflection of Blackness. Walker respectfully and reverentially criticizes Steven Spielberg, celebrating and upholding many of his artistic choices, many of which were a departure from her own, while questioning others, which she believed to be in part detrimental to the story originally told in the Pulitzer Prize winning novel. Moreover, Walker acknowledges that the film has been placed under the scrutiny of American society, which African-Americans are part of the whole, that has not reached a point of maturity and security in itself to celebrate all that we and are not, rendering any exposure that is not flattering, offensive.

Whitaker, Charles. Alice Walker: '*Color Purple*' author confronts her critics and talks

about her provocative new book - Intervie. Ebony, May 1992.

http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1077/is_n7_v47/ai_12290929/pg_2

This article features Walker addressing the major critics of her book: African-American males. It was instrumental to me, as it included how many languages the book had been written in.

White, Evelyn C. *A Life*. 362.

http://books.google.com/books?id=v_Un8p4VfcsC&pg=PA362&lpg=PA362&dq=the+color+purple+book+copies+sold&source=web&ots=1MPzn-4h2i&sig=CJLfdR3yfyU0AjVTz3YKgrkCvxE

This website was valuable, because it features a preview of White's biographical account of Alice Walker's life entitled *A Life*. It is valuable in that it shares critical parts of the novel, and enables one to conduct substantial research on significant junctures in Walker's life, including her writing of *The Color Purple* without ever having to purchase the book, or make an informed decision before purchasing the book.

The Wiz. 1978, Motown Productions and Universal Pictures. 1977.

Starring Diana Ross, Michael Jackson, Nipsey Russel Ted Ross, Richard Pryor Mabel King, and Lena Horne, this classical musical is an African-American adaptation of *The Wizard of Oz*. This musical will be critical to the implementation of classroom activity number three illustrates the Illumination of the Gift. The Lion, Tiger, Scarecrow, and Dorothy had their gifts all along. It was simply a matter of it being platformed when the time was right, after a difficult journey filled with life-lessons and subsequent character building. I wish to establish this precedent in tandem with the critical moments at which Celie and Fantasia discovered their gifts.

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