



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
2023 Volume I: Histories of Art, Race and Empire: 1492-1865

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## **Racialization: Past and Present**

Curriculum Unit 23.01.08, published September 2023  
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“Our bodies are gardens, to which our wills are gardeners”- (*Othello*, I.iii.313-314)

“How can I not know today your face tomorrow, the face that is there already or is being forged beneath the mask you are wearing, and which you will only show me when I am least expecting it?”- Javier Marias

## **Introduction and Teaching Situation**

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There is a great confusion in America today that is hard to arrest with words. This is not a new concern. It has been this way for years. We are tired of surviving cultural and national disorientation. *What is the cause of this confusion? What makes Americans compete against our neighbors, dissect our friends, and arraign ourselves in the presence of impossible standards—composite shadows of who we are “supposed” to be?* This anxiety isn’t new, but it is plausible. Soon our students will be facing a new epoch of history, potentially unarmed and defenseless to handle the new challenges of the world ahead of them.

A confused nation can make reactive decisions out of desperation to forge a path. Historically, decisions by the American government put teachers (and citizens!) in precarious positions. When the World Trade Center was destroyed by Al-Qaeda in 2001, teachers were implicated in a challenging moment in American history where they were charged with the task to sort through personal feelings, warhawk propaganda, and burgeoning Islamophobia that shaped a generation of Arab and Muslim students. Dr. Amy Zegart, a then-new professor at UCLA, described the weight of responsibility teaching after the September 11th attacks as:

I didn’t have answers that day about why American intelligence agencies couldn’t stop al-Qaeda. It was far too soon to know what had gone so wrong, and why; the search for answers would end up driving my academic research for the next decade. But I had questions, and history—I had studied surprise attacks and past intelligence failures. Together, my colleagues and I did the only thing we knew how: We tried to make sense of the world, to begin searching for explanations for something that seemed inexplicable.<sup>1</sup>

We don't have to wait for the pressure of a national tragedy to feel crushed by the weight of responsibility as teachers. Islamophobia, orientalism, and racism certainly defined the Aughts, just as Coronavirus has shaped our decade. However, we as educators do have agency to resist. Epistemic disobedience is a principle that is necessary for providing a decolonized view of history, rewriting narrative, and polarizing national anxieties to new synthesis. Epistemic disobedience is "a strategy to reject or delink from Eurocentric notions of objectivity, claims to transparency, and the fantasy of writing from an all-knowing position, or "zero point epistemology"<sup>2</sup>. Epistemic disobedience as a principle of pedagogy creates a tandem casket in order to bury the trope and the stereotype. It can midwife new, empowering interpretations of present realities that the past has given us.

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I am a proud teacher at Overbrook High School in West Philadelphia. Overbrook has a legendary history amongst Black Philadelphians, as it is famed for incubating the talents of Wilt Chamberlain, Will Smith and Guion Bluford. Many Black Philadelphians approach the school's past with passionate mythologizing in relation to Philadelphia's checkered history of educational segregation. When the top school in the city, Central High School, prioritized the needs of white students, Overbrook was colloquially known as "Black Central". In present circumstances, much has changed. Based on the 2022-2023 Student Enrollment and Demographics, there are 389 students that attend Overbrook High with 70% of students residing within the catchment area.<sup>3</sup> 25% of students have an IEP, and 1% of students who are English language learners.<sup>4</sup> The ELA data for Keystone standardized testing reflects that 15% of students scored proficient.<sup>5</sup> While there are not any reliable data points to detail race, I teach at an overwhelmingly Black school.

While this curriculum unit can be used by anyone, I write this curriculum unit with fellow Black educators in mind. We are teaching under trying political circumstances as demagogues are hunting educators who teach so-called "Critical Race Theory." This unit may put some of us front and center in this war against Black history. I hope that this curriculum unit will impart courage and some clarity while living in a factionalized nation divided by its own history. James Baldwin in his famed conversation with poet Nikki Giovanni provides the *raison d'être* for many Black educators who had modeled epistemic disobedience as a part of their pedagogical genetics (even before the language was reified and recognized in academia): "A teacher who is not free to teach is not a teacher. If I assumed the responsibility, then I got to be free to teach"<sup>6</sup>. Whenever I lead conversations about race and difference in my classroom, many students make the assumption that race and racism has existed since the beginning of time. The naturalized acceptance of racism as a natural fact is evidence of their internalized powerlessness and oppression. If I cannot talk to my Black class about race, difference, and power, I run the risk of enabling helplessness and betraying my profession. I am in no position to contribute to the tome of the flowery poetics of "liberation" and "freedom". Fortunately, they are commonplace. But it is important that as we are under (literal) attack in our classrooms, that we love our students, trust our instincts, and hold our history close.

## Rationale and Content Objectives

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In our present moment, image and narrative are sites of struggle. Organizing reality, meaning-making, and history will be one of the greatest and necessary tasks that our transitioning society will have to undertake in order to make the world a better place. It is now commonplace for young people to challenge the violence that

is held secret in museums, to become curious about the origins of language, and to center marginalized voices in everyday conversations and burgeoning, “radical” political projects. The call for representation in common media reflects a generation that dreams for a *more* inclusive society, but has since recoiled against formulaic taxonomies that have been leveraged by their conservative detractors. In order to include the marginalized in a way that is equitable and fair, it is assumed that the artist-narrator must flatten the character’s social identities and tendencies, cut out and mitigate social faux pas when these identities are in conflict. Characters must meet the norms of liberal “language idealism”.

In modern media, it is easy to tangent a character’s racial and sexual world, voyeur their mental hurdles, and come to a relative understanding of what the adverse circumstances that a character is navigating. The metamodernist narrative device that has proliferated over the past decade, seems to have been a strong diversion against “liberal” trope and audiences are moving beyond the pastiche of “enlightened inconclusiveness” and generative ambiguity that post-modern media had provided before. In short, people are looking for honest and real resolution, even if it is relatively unlevelled or “rough around the edges”.

While metamodernism has helped us to recognize our present-day, working-class protagonist, much has been left to be desired with understanding and embodying the reality of the past of the subaltern, the slave, and the Native steward, beyond living as distant, historical objects. The task of this curriculum unit is to hold space for the drama of the narrative while allowing my students to build relationships with the characters who are centered in the stories while avoiding the narcissism of character study. The task of the curriculum is not against identity politics, it is against identity resulting in narrative reductionism, and I am hoping that through serious intellectual study and personal reflection, students will be able to grapple against the reality of an American society that is self-aware but hypocritical enough to recognize that we are not in a “post-racial” society while modern media does everything in its power to “hide the bones” found in white supremacist narrative superstructure. In short, I want to channel “intersectional” theory and colonial discourse theory in order to inspire students’ critical thinking about American culture, history and identity.

In this unit, I am going to explore how settler-colonial ideas created the landscape of difference and conflict in Shakespeare’s play *Othello* (c.1603) and the novel *There, There* by Tommy Orange (2018). Settler colonial ideas deform the humanity of the characters in the play; however, these deformities will not be the only point of contact with characters in these works. It is important that my students understand how colonization is the background for not only the characters, but for the characters’ actions, choices and decisions that they eventually make. While these works of literature are situated by different time periods, settings and artistic styles, they are conjoined by Christopher Columbus’ violent colonization of the Americas. That act of colonization is the genesis of the logic of difference and otherization that is commonplace (and still largely unconscious) in our social discourse and interpersonal relationships. I am hoping that with this historical foregrounding, students will be encouraged to be more reflective in how colonization impacts their relationship to the environment and their “media diet”, and to become more critical of what can subtract their own inherent humanity. This unit will be divided into two parts: past and present.

### **Past: Othello and Paired Works of Art**

In the “past” section, the classroom will examine the play *Othello* (c.1603) by William Shakespeare. The paintings used in order to supplement the learning environment will be *The Miracle of the Relic of the True Cross on the Rialto Bridge* by Vittore Carpaccio (c.1496), *Altarpiece with St. James in the central panel from the Chapel of the Alcazar of Segovia* (c.15th century) and *The Return of Othello, ‘Othello,’ Act II, Scene II* by Thomas Stothard (c.1799).

## **Miracle of the Relic**

Guiding Questions: How does the visual language of the painting highlight the people who are respectable or of high status in Venetian society? Which people look out of place or could be considered “outsiders”? What is the main element that creates community in this painting? What do you think is the main element that creates community in the city of Philadelphia?

The overall goal for the *Miracle of the Relic* is for students to make connections between the public life in Venice (the setting of *Othello*) and the public life of contemporary Philadelphia, noting similarities and differences. Furthermore, I want my students to have a deeper understanding of the social identities present in the painting, in order to start thinking critically about what creates social life. These paintings are particularly relevant as there are many public and underground “bazaars” in Philadelphia—whether it is at the canals of the 15th Street Market-Frankford line subway or in the median strip at 52nd Street. These places are sites of autonomy for many hustling and/or otherwise dispossessed Philadelphians to create opportunity for themselves. Many classroom conversations have taken place about how we were halted by an ambitious vendor putting smelling oil on our wrists in the middle of a morning or post-school relay to the next subway bus. Conversations like these create moments of joy in the classroom, and I want my students to understand that idiosyncratic happenings are not only unique in their home city but they shaped the identity of Venice as well. Ironically enough, in the painting the greatest idiosyncratic happening that could happen— a literal miracle by a divine power is not centered in the world of the painting. In fact, it is easy to overlook due to the mass of people near the harbor. The Rialto bridge, which connected the commercial and financial life of Venice, where it was possible to meet people from all parts of the world, sits center-right of the painting. While one may need a microscope to see him, there is a Black gondolier under the bridge. With the acknowledgement of the gondolier requires a tacit recognition of the Mediterranean slave trade and Venice’s complicity in slavery. While the exact origins of many Africans in Venice are unclear in notarial records, it is common knowledge that many enslaved West Africans arrived to Venice via Spain and Portugal and that many enslaved East and Central Africans arrived to Venice via North Africa and the Ottoman Empire<sup>7</sup> . Furthermore, it is of common knowledge that once enslaved Africans arrived to Venice, that they were often forced into domestic servitude which included being a gondolier; however, when they were manumitted, many stayed in their previous role in order to avoid economic precarity<sup>8</sup> . In the midst of diverse crowds, the gondolier serves as a punctum to understand the complicated and intricate social life of Venice and helps students to understand the world that Othello had to navigate.

## **Altarpiece with St. James**

Guiding Questions: Who are the victims in this painting? Who are the victors in this painting? What do you think is the purpose of this altarpiece?

In the *Altarpiece with St. James*, the overall goal is for students to understand the historical importance of religious differences during the 16th century. A lot of times, many American students (and teachers) take for granted living in a secular Christian state where religious differences are pointed sites of social conflict rather than a totalizing force of social disharmony. But awareness of religious differences is necessary in Philadelphia. Philadelphia is known informally as a “Black Mecca” where over 200,000 people are Muslim and about 20% of Philadelphia Public School students are Muslim.<sup>9</sup> Students will be challenged to consider how religious differences between the Christian Venetians and the Muslim Moors (although Othello was a Christianized Moor) helped facilitate a milieu of suspicion and conflict in the play. Academic Daniel Viktus elaborates on how religious anxieties in the play helped situate thematic conflict in *Othello*:

...Othello is known throughout the play as “the Moor” and remains a figure of blackness. Although a Christianized Moor, he retains traces of Islamic identity and serves as a focal point for anxieties about how converts to Christianity might betray their new faith and become an internal threat to Christendom. By placing the character of Othello under the scrutinizing gaze of a color-prejudiced audience, Shakespeare’s tragedy exhibits a tension between, on the one hand, the evangelistic mandate to make Christian converts throughout the world and, on the other hand, persistent ethnocentric fears of a contamination that could allegedly result from efforts to incorporate foreigners within the domestic Christian community.<sup>10</sup>

Understanding the facts presented by the author will help students to balance the role which religion and race are social pressures placed upon Othello. Modern interpretations of Othello largely center race and gender via character study of Othello and Desdemona, but religion still plays a major role in early modern work.

### **The Return of Othello**

Guiding Questions: How would you describe the atmosphere of the painting and how does it communicate who has power in the painting? Look at the body language of the people in the painting, who do you think has status and who do you think is disempowered? Why? What does this painting communicate about the values of Venetian society?

In the *Return of Othello*, the overall goal of this painting is to delve into the binary of body and performance in order to unpack Othello’s stature in his society. This painting portrays Othello’s return to Venice after his victory of the Turks and is styled in the high art that venerates exemplary soldiers<sup>11</sup>. The feature of this painting that is admirable is that it features major characters within the play such as Othello, Desdemona and upon close inspection, a grimacing Iago. It is another work of art which is overwhelmingly crowded, but is more personal than the *Rialto Bridge*. While students would have needed a looking glass in order to understand the layers of drama in the *Rialto Bridge* painting, this painting demands that we not only observe Othello’s actions and heroics, but also coincidentally, the company that he keeps. It welcomes discussion about stereotypes that Othello is labeled by, albeit, he is displayed in a valorous stance. Students will then read essays and excerpts that highlight Othello’s racialization and difference in Venice, as well as early modern and modern representations of Othello. From Orson Welles to Ira Aldridge’s leading role as Othello, conversations about blackface in the media still run rampant today.

### **Present: There, There and Paired Works of Art**

A dramatic contrast will be offered by the “present” section, in which we are going to explore Native American stereotypes and narrative archetypes in *There, There (2018)* by Tommy Orange. The paintings used in order to supplement the learning environment will be the *RCA Indian Head Test Pattern (c.1947)* by Brooks, *Captain Cold or Ut-ha-wah (c.19th century)* by William John Wilgus, and *The warriors making their grand entry into the Medicine Lodge (c.1875)* by Howling Wolf.

#### **RCA Indian Head Test Pattern**

Guiding Questions: When have you felt like a target? What role does the media play when it comes to misrepresenting Native peoples and what were the social consequences of this misrepresentation? What is the author’s attitude about the land and how does it challenge our relationship to it? ”

As much as it can be appreciated as a novelty (and is currently being sold as such), Orange starts frames the narrative in *There, There* through means of the *Indian Head Test Pattern* that used to be shown towards the end of scheduled television programming<sup>12</sup>. Before detailing the history of Indigenous violence in the Americas, he writes about the test pattern:

If you left the TV on, you'd hear a tone at 440 hertz—the tone used to tune instruments—and you'd see that Indian, surrounded by circles that looked like sights through riflescopes. There was what looked like a bullseye in the middle of the screen, with numbers like coordinates. The Indian's head was just above the bull's-eye, like all you'd need to do was nod up in agreement to set the sights on the target. This was just a test.<sup>13</sup>

Orange follows through with the description of the *Indian Head Test Pattern* by elaborating on the first Thanksgivings in America with the poisoning of two hundred Natives and the brutal capture of Metacombet by the captain of the very first American Ranger, Benjamin Church. Detail after historical detail, the symbolism of the rifle sights is more than explicit, however, there are deeper implications of the *Indian Head Test Pattern* that require a cursory understanding of Native American cosmology. Specifically, the Natives' relationship with the land and the complex interrelationship that people have with the land is a defining feature of Indigenous identity and cosmology<sup>14</sup>. Since the *Indian Head Test Pattern* is integral to the prologue, this piece will be introduced before and after it is read. Through guided conversation, students must recognize the contradiction of the "Indian Head" or Native Americans, being acknowledged and visible in the test pattern, however the background or the "land" of the visual text is largely vast, blank, and empty which signifies dispossession and dislocation (a tall task, but not impossible!). However, it also can affirm the idea that "the land is everywhere and nowhere" as per Orange's commentary.<sup>15</sup> Students should be guided to exercise awareness of when Native characters status' of visibility in the context of their individual conflicts as well as their attitudes towards a sense of belonging in their environment.

### **Ut-ha-wah**

Guiding Questions: Describe the demeanor of the subject of the painting, what do you think the artist is communicating about his character? Given what we have learned about the middle ground, which character in the text best represents this painting?

The painting by Wilgus forces audiences to reconcile with the history of colonization and with essential questions of representation in settings that are considered "middle ground" territory. The concept of the "middle ground" was coined by Richard White in which worlds between the colonized and the colonizer overlap but leave a space where cultures can adapt to new conditions— oftentimes, this allowed a syncretism between Native and European cultures<sup>16</sup>. Students will be guided to analyze elements in Ut-ha-wah's that comes from his Native identity and elements of the painting that seem to have come from European contact. Students will analyze how these elements interact with each other in order to build upon the theme of the portrait. Students will make connections to the main text with characters who have had to have had to have had to survive in "the middle ground" such as Dene Oxedene who is a bi-racial Native character who is tasked with creating a series of interviews in order to please a "diverse" body of grant funders. As a supplemental force through a pairing of the reading by Ariel Moniz "Being Native American in a Stereotypical and Appropriated North America" (2016). True to its title, the second reading breaks down common Native stereotypes that are baked into representations of Native Americans. However, it heavily relies on mass media



productions such as Westerns in order to communicate the point. This article will serve as a nexus for how we understand the twelve voices that oscillate within the narrative in *There, There*.

### **Entry into the Medicine Lodge**

Guiding Questions: How is community displayed in this painting? How did the artist interact with the characters in the painting? Who is empowered or disempowered in the painting? What does this painting comment about community and tradition?"

In the world of *There, There*, it is central to understand the role of the pow-wow as the center of community and the nucleus of conflict and resolution. This painting is a Cheyenne ceremony that depicts a grand festival with congregants around a center pole. From looking at the picture, students will make inferences about the type of ceremony that is taking place in the photo and why it may be necessary for the Cheyenne to maintain this tradition. Furthermore, students will compare and contrast the festivals that have taken place in what was considered New Spain—that is the Matachines Dance (in New Mexico) and the Santa Fe Fiesta. This is congruent with the central setting of *There, There* being Oakland, California, which was considered a part of New Spain. With regards to the Matachines Dance, it was performed by Pueblo and Hispanic communities in New Mexico and happens around Christmas time<sup>17</sup>. There are contested beliefs around the celebration as it is believed to have come from Spain to celebrate how the Catholics overtook the Moors. However, other Natives have interpreted that the *El Monarcha* is representative of Montezuma instead of the Spanish Crown<sup>18</sup>. However, many Hispanics celebrate the festival as a symbol of how their language survives in an English dominant culture. Like the *Entry into the Medicine Lodge*, the center pole is integral to the ceremony, with many people dressed and performing as a king, clowns, and bulls. On the other hand, the Santa Fe festival is much more contentious as the history celebrated colonial violence. The Santa Fe festival traces its history to 1712, and it commemorates the 1692-3 reconquest of New Mexico by Spanish conquistadors after the Pueblo people incited revolution against Spanish draconian Requerimiento<sup>19</sup>. For this particular unit, my students will have to acknowledge that traditions are important, however, we must be responsible for their history in order not to perpetuate historical violence.

## **Teaching Strategies**

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### **Accountable Talk**

In *Othello* and *There, There*, mature subject themes are unavoidable in the text. Students may not know how to have discussions around topics such as domestic violence, drug use, and intramural community violence. Many teachers assume that because many students are exposed to terrible social issues, they will have the language to describe their feelings and hold space for dialogue among other learners in the classroom environment. But these language skills need to be nurtured. Accountable talk starts with the teacher first. Accountable talk creates the space where students and teachers are held responsible to each other as mutual learners in a classroom environment that supports their growth. Accountable talk tolerates disorientation and navigation but does not tolerate ignorance. The best way to create accountable talk is to co-create classroom principles with your students as well as consequences for not aligning with classroom principles. As I teach in a high school classroom setting, consequences are not supposed to be especially punitive but a measure of self-awareness and acknowledgement of breaking the classroom rules is important for creating a classroom

culture. While accountable talk often sounds like “social emotional jargon”, it is critical for student success to understand the relationship between what is said in the classroom is a reflection of themselves. It is also important to uphold the principle of accountable talk when conferencing with students interpersonally. The relationship between public and private speak are parallel and mutually inclusive as far as the teaching strategy of accountable talk is concerned.

### **Activating Prior Knowledge**

Activating prior knowledge is going to be essential to ensuring success for reaching content objectives for this unit. One of the best ways to activate prior knowledge for my students is by doing an anticipation guide of dogmatic statements and having students pick if they agree with the statement or not and then follow through with a rationale why. The dogmatic statements are often aligned with major themes present in the novel (or play). After they complete their anticipation guide, students are directed to go to the left or to the right side of the classroom based on the response to the question. Students are then given the opportunity to explain their stance to other students and other students are allowed to respond. This gives students two different modalities to express their learning while allowing them to receive ideas in a safe learning environment. Due to the politically charged nature of the reading, lessons are often filled with parallel examples of current events or past historical events in Africana social movements to help activate prior knowledge. Activating prior knowledge happens every class but it happens at a higher intensity during the beginning of an instructional unit.

### **Integration of Content Areas**

During the play and the novel, students will be engaging in primary and secondary sources in order to help support their understanding of the literature presented. During the beginning of each of the instructional units, students will be challenged to understand the early history of Venice and of Oakland, California. Students will be charged to think like a historian in order to make sound inferences about the sources that they will be responsible for understanding. Furthermore, by engaging with the art pieces presented as primary sources, they will be able to understand the techniques that the artist used in order to create theme and narrative in an art piece. Through the three-headed snake of English, Art and History, students will be able to have quality instruction in the humanities that they may have not had before.

## **Classroom Activities**

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### **Past: Othello and Paired Works of Art**

#### **Binary Painting Split**

Students will approach the painting *Miracle of the Relic* by splitting the classroom in half and assigning them one half of the painting. For their assigned half of the painting, students will list adjectives to describe the overall “vibe” or milieu of their side of the painting. Students will detail the social class identities present in the painting. Students will have two minutes to complete both tasks. After two minutes are up, students will discuss important details about their side of the painting and the class will come together to discuss how the painting comes together as a whole. Students will then write a short paragraph about the painting and make a prediction of how the theme presented in the painting may align to a central theme in Othello.



### **Socratic Seminar**

Students will come together and reflect on the role of religious identity in society. This is where one's classroom norms and expectations should be reviewed and that the instructor will model instructional language. Students will be given homework beforehand that addresses the history of slavery in Venice. Students will be tasked with generating questions based on the painting, and then one student will be fielding and facilitating discussions amongst students.

### **Collaborative Drawing**

The drawing should happen after students have had direct instruction regarding the painting by Thomas Stothard and after students have read Act II, Scene II of *Othello*. Due to the notorious brevity of Act II, Scene II, students will be allowed to have their imaginations run wild. Students will be expected to pick three details found in Scene II, and vote on one to draw as a class. For example, students may choose 1) War Against Turks 2) Marriage to Desdemona 3) Othello's victory *and* vote to choose one to draw as a class on a wide poster paper. Students will then discuss important details that they have added to the collaborative drawing and why it is important to understand Othello's character for the play.

### **Present: There, There and Paired Works of Art**

#### **Journaling**

Students will journal to the question: "Have you ever felt like a target?". Students will be expected to write for fifteen minutes in a composition notebook and they are encouraged to share their ideas to the class. Any teacher with some good sense should anticipate emotionally charged answers, so it is important to review classroom norms prior to conversation. After journaling and conversation, students will be expected to look at the *Indian Head Test Signal* and read the prologue to *There, There* and understand the history of colonial violence against Native Americans is still happening today. Just as we have created the classroom environment for empathy and understanding, the goal with journaling is to counter powerlessness with shared mutual understanding.

#### **Debate**

Students will take the time to complete a graphic organizer of Richard White's concept of "Middle Ground". Students will reflect on their experiences of living in America and debate on the question: "Does America currently have a middle ground?". Through this conversation, I am hopeful that students will be able to reflect on their social environments and the role that they have in civil society. Many times, students will feel barred from engaging in spaces that were funded and created for them and many students may not have the language to communicate with people who are unfamiliar to them. This debate will be a learning experience for students to learn from each other critical language for communication. Teachers will learn a lot from our students based on the lack of language to communicate constructively.

#### **Create a Tradition**

Students will write the top five values of Overbrook High School and then students will either create an object or find an object to represent the values of Overbrook High School. Preliminarily, students will do research of the tenets of ritual and tradition and their role in society as a writing assignment. Students will then create a tradition that has a ritual (something that repeats) that commemorates a particular point in Overbrook High History, in order to center a particular value. Students will name the tradition and write a two-page reflection

about why this tradition is necessary to improve the fabric of Overbrook High School.

## Appendix on Implementing District Standards

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Standards are Common Core 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Language Arts for Reading Literature and Informational Text.

11-12.RL.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

Students will read both texts and will complete multiple summative assessments in order to understand basic elements of fiction (e.g. plot, character, setting) in order as well as to investigate important overarching themes in both texts.

11-12.RL.3 Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

Students will analyze the impact of the author's choices when engaging with the RCA Indian Head Test photo. Students will read the prologue of *There, There* and make personal connections to the questions presented to them.

11-12.RL.5 Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

During Act II, Scene II of *Othello*, students will discuss and reconcile the brevity of the scene and how it pertains to Othello's class status in Venetian society. Students will use the painting created by Stothard to help assist student's learning needs.

11-12.RL.7 Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text

Students will watch Orson's Welles' adaptation of *Othello* in order to open discussion about representation and character. Stothard's painting will be used as a contrast between the play, the text and the dramatic adaptation.

11-12.W.3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences

Students will reflect on points of relatability through journaling for both texts. Students will be expected to journal about the choices that the main characters had to make, whether it is related to making friends or having to make hard decisions for the sake of other people. Students will be expected to provide direct examples from both texts.

11-12.W.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-

generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Students will do a research project for rituals and traditions in order to create one for Overbrook High School. Through proposing a tradition, I want students to engage critically about the social aspect of participation and consent when building culture and identity for a polity.

11-12.SL.1.a Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.

Students will have read both texts in full and have engaged with primary and secondary sources before their debate. Students will be taught decorum for holding space for classmates through Socratic seminar.

11-12.SL.2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

Through the collaborative poster, students will be expected to read Act II, Scene II and then “fill in the blanks” as a class. By talking with each other, students will practice making effective predictions and reflecting on the primary values that Stothard had as an artist. Students will also reflect on Venetian society’s values and compare it to the values that they uphold as evidenced in their painting.

## Resources

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### Bibliography for Teachers

DeAngelis, Tori. “The Legacy of Trauma.” *Monitor on Psychology*, February 2019.

<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2019/02/legacy-trauma>. This resource helps students to understand that while trauma is personal and painful, it is also culturally informed. The cultural understanding of trauma as well as our current understandings for it are limited, but it is important for students to understand how dynamics around trauma dialogue.

Dittman, Melissa. “What Makes Good People Do Bad Things?” *Monitor on Psychology*, October 2004.

<https://www.apa.org/monitor/oct04/goodbad>. Amazing resource to help students understand the moral complexities of human beings. While this resource is used for Othello to help us understand his choices, this is a resource that can be used to help foreground students' knowledge with any tragedy.

Freire, Paulo, Myra Bergman Ramos, Donaldo P. Macedo, and Ira Shor. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, NY, USA: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020. This book is necessary in understanding critical pedagogy and progressive education. This book is theoretically dense, but it is also balanced with deep contemplative reflections by Friere based on his prior experience working with the poor. This book is a good start for understanding the psychoaffective habits and contradictions of oppressed people, however it is not to be taken as a totalizing philosophy.

*Indigenous in Plain Sight. YouTube.* YouTube, 2018. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s3FL9uhTH\\_s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s3FL9uhTH_s). This TED Talk is amazing for opening the conversation with regards to visibility and hypervisibility for Indigenous people. There are many touchpoints in the video that the speaker provides that marginalized students can relate to such as family, American culture, and their relationship with school

*Orson Welles' Othello.* DVD. United States: United Artists, 1952. This is a highly regarded version of Othello and I think it is critical that students learn how to engage with the movie. While controversial due to its' use of blackface, students will be encouraged to reflect on the legacy of racial representation in arts and media.

Steinem, Gloria. "Steinem, 'Testimony...,' Speech Text." *Voices of Democracy*, July 5, 2016. <https://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/steinem-testimony-speech-text/>. This resource is to help students understand the struggle for Women's rights in American history. This is an excellent resource for Othello as students may not have a fundamental understanding (or value) of women's rights as minority rights in America. Of course, it is encouraged that students develop an intersectional understanding of race and gender as it pertains to feminism.

*Understanding Race and Religion through Othello. YouTube.* YouTube, 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1hPm2iWrks>. This resource is a great preliminary resource when students are grappling with the beginning of Othello. Students may not immediately understand the importance of religion in the text and how Othello's nationality as a North African is important to creating the milieu of suspicion around him in the play. Students will be challenged to reflect on the role that religion, bias, and difference plays a role in our society today.

*We Hold the Rock. YouTube.* YouTube, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gEmae2PsWJl>. This video is great for adding perspective to Native's political struggle for self-determination in a colonial nation. While it is packed full of information and will need scaffolding, it displays how Natives' fought to turn an infamous prison, Alcatraz, into a learning and community center and how Californian politicians pushed back.

## Notes

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<sup>2</sup> Charlene Villaseñor Black & Tim Barringer (2022) Decolonizing Art and Empire, *The Art Bulletin*, 104:1, 6-20, DOI: 10.1080/00043079.2021.1970479

<sup>3</sup> School District of Philadelphia. "School Profiles." *School Profiles*, <https://schoolprofiles.philasd.org/overbrookhs/demographics>. Accessed 23 June 2023.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> "James Baldwin and Nikki Giovanni 'A Conversation'. Full Broadcast Video." YouTube, September 9, 2022.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y4OPYp4s0tc>.

<sup>7</sup> Lowe, Kate. "Visible Lives: Black Gondoliers and Other Black Africans in Renaissance Venice." *Renaissance Quarterly* 66, no. 2 (2013): 419. <https://doi.org/10.1086/671583>.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, pg 421-22.

<sup>9</sup> Brown, Blondell Reynolds. "Time for Philadelphia Schools to Recognize Muslim Holidays." *The Philadelphia Tribune*, February 6, 2016.  
[https://www.phillytrib.com/commentary/time-for-philadelphia-schools-to-recognize-muslim-holidays/article\\_1bf e17b0-6dd7-5464-bf33-b7b409d3e7d9.html](https://www.phillytrib.com/commentary/time-for-philadelphia-schools-to-recognize-muslim-holidays/article_1bf e17b0-6dd7-5464-bf33-b7b409d3e7d9.html).

<sup>10</sup> Vitkus, D. (2019). *Othello, Islam, and the Noble Moor: Spiritual Identity and the Performance of Blackness on the Early Modern Stage*. In H. Hamlin (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Religion* (Cambridge Companions to Literature, pp. 218-233). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.  
doi:10.1017/9781316779224.014

<sup>11</sup> Altick, Richard D. "Subjects Reflected from Nonliterary Art: Magic, Fairies, Sleeping Figures, Dreams, Amiable Humorists; Domestic Themes.—Suffering Women, Femmes Falales, Coquettes, the Satire of Women.—Horses and Dogs; Shipwrecks, Captivity, Escapes and Rescues, Letter Scenes, Partings, Deaths, Trials and Supplications, 'Discoveries.'" Essay. In *Paintings from Books: Art and Literature in Britain 1760-1900*, 133. Columbus: Ohio State U.P., 1986.

<sup>12</sup> "THE INDIAN HEAD TEST PATTERN." Chuck Pharis web page : The Indian Head Test Pattern Story! , updated April 29, 2017. Accessed July 19, 2023. <http://www.pharis-video.com/p4788.htm>.

<sup>13</sup> Orange, Tommy. "Prologue." Essay. In *There There*, 4. New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2018.

<sup>14</sup> Passalacqua, Veronica, Kate Morris, and James H. Nottage. "Introduction: Twenty-Five Years of Native American Art." Introduction. In *Native Art Now!: Developments in Contemporary Native American Art since 1992*, 9. Indianapolis: Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, 2017.

<sup>15</sup> Orange, Tommy. "Prologue." Essay. In *There There*, 13. New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2018.

<sup>16</sup> Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)

<sup>17</sup> Miller, Angela L., Janet Catherine Berlo, Bryan Jay Wolf, and Jennifer L. Roberts. "The Old World and the New: First Phases of Encounter ." Essay. In *American Encounters: Art, History, and Cultural Identity*, 45. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2008.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Miller, Angela L., Janet Catherine Berlo, Bryan Jay Wolf, and Jennifer L. Roberts. "The Old World and the New: First Phases of Encounter ." Essay. In *American Encounters: Art, History, and Cultural Identity*, 46. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2008.

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