

The Color Purple Interdisciplinary Unit

By ReBecca Hostler

Overview

This interdisciplinary unit focuses on Alice Walker's novel, *The Color Purple*. Intended for high school students, this unit combines language art skills, such as journaling, note taking, essay writing, group discussion.

Curriculum Standards

Students will:

- Apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g. sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, and graphics).
- Adjust their spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, and vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes
- Participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities
- Use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., to learn, enjoy, persuade, and exchange information).

Letter to teachers:

As a classroom teacher, I understand that we have many different schedules and time constraints limiting our teaching of content. Developed according to a "Perfect World" scenario, this unit will fit perfectly into a six to seven weeks time frame, if you can dedicate that time to reading one novel.

However, for those of you who must condense the material, please feel free to pick and choose from the main ideas, lesson plans, and ancillary materials in this unit and modify them, both in form and content, to suit your needs.

I hope that you enjoy studying *The Color Purple* as much as I did. Reading it and seeing the movie again gave me a new appreciation for the book as a fictional means for exploring life during segregation.

Sincerely,

ReBecca L. Hostler

Lesson Plan Menu

I. Reading Activities

Have students read *The Color Purple* in sections, then complete any or all of the activity(ies) corresponding to that reading assignment before beginning the next one, as follows:

1. Chapters 1-47 -- Activities:

- a. **Who is Alice Walker? Internet Scavenger Hunt:** In this one period activity, you will introduce students to Alice Walker, author of *The Color Purple*.
- b. **Location, Location, Location: A Geography Review:** Students study maps and chart the areas that comprise the setting of *The Color Purple* in this short activity. You can also have them briefly study the historical significance of these places.
- c. **Gender Relations during Segregation/Imperialism:** In this student-centered group presentation project, which takes anywhere from five to nine class periods, students develop an understanding of gender relations in the early to mid-20th century in the United States and Africa.
- d. **Class Discussion on Chapters 1-47:** You will have students analyze and interpret the novel thus far and demonstrate their ability to express these observations and conclusions verbally in a large group setting.

2. Chapters 48-56 -- Activities:

- a. **North by South: From Charleston to Harlem:** In this two week Internet research and presentation lesson, students will learn about many of the topics and themes in *The Color Purple*, such as:
 - Inequity in the American segregated educational system under Jim Crow
 - African-American music genres
 - Benefits and drawbacks of a segregated community
 - African-American churches
 - West African culture and its influence in African-American culture
- b. **Class Discussion on Chapters 48-56:** Students will analyze and interpret the novel thus far and express their observations and conclusions verbally in a large group setting. They will also incorporate the knowledge they recently acquired from the lesson, North by South.

3. Chapters 57-81 -- Activity:

Class Discussion on Chapters 57-81: Students will analyze and interpret the information they have read thus far and express their observations and conclusions verbally in a large group setting.

4. Chapters 82-90 -- Activities:

- a. **Parallels between the Changes in the Jim Crow Society and Celie's Personal Growth:** You can use the web links from the lesson plan to develop class notes or assign different readings to different groups. Then, have students examine the events leading to the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement. They can then analyze how relations between whites and African Americans in the South mirrored Celie's relationships as she gained autonomy and freedom.
- b. **Class Discussion on Chapters 82-90:** Students should be able to analyze and interpret the information they have read thus far and be able to express their observations and conclusions verbally in a large group setting.

II. Post-Reading Activities

Finale: Watching *The Color Purple*: Using this post-reading lesson, you provide students multiple opportunities to analyze all they have learned in this unit of study.

This unit was written by ReBecca Hostler, a teacher at Centennial High School in Roswell, Georgia.