

RE-MIXING SHAKESPEARE

Curriculum for
Documentary Film
Romeo is Bleeding

1st Edition



BLUESHIFT
OFF THE SCREEN, INTO OUR LIVES

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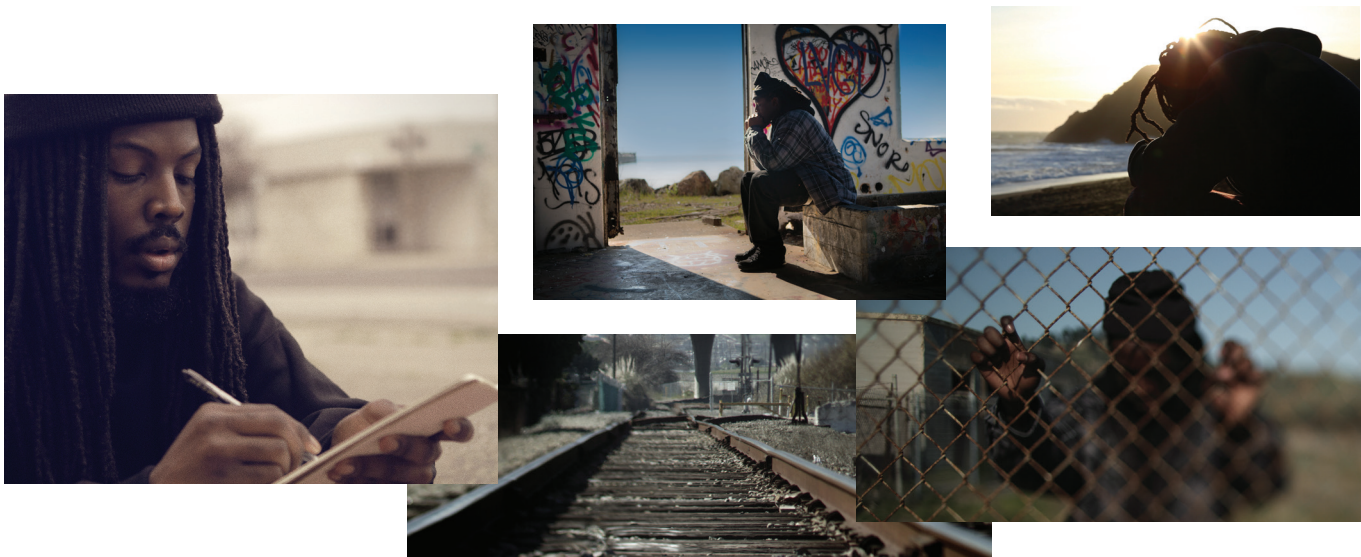
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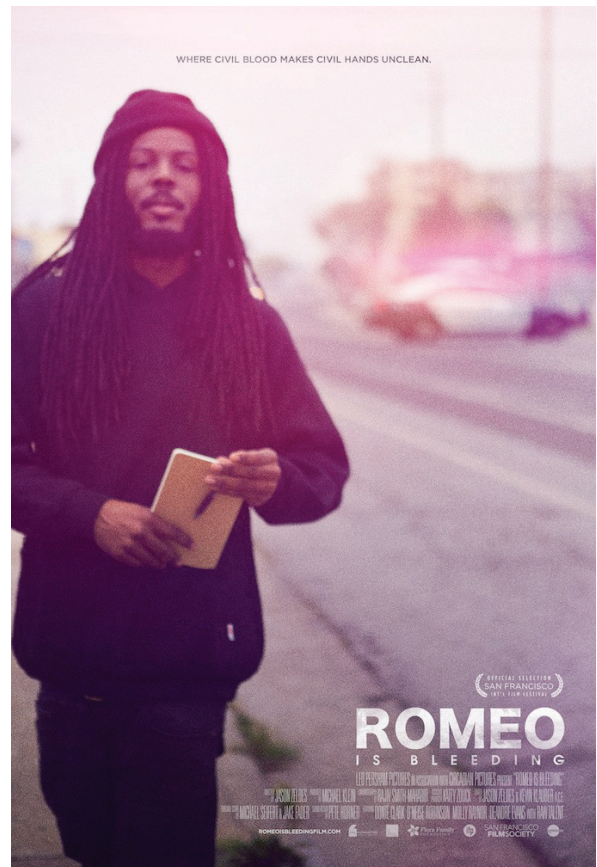
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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THE FILM: *ROMEO IS BLEEDING*

As the nation wrestles with policing methods, racial profiling and curbing gun violence, *Romeo is Bleeding* shows viewers a world where the arts offer a powerful alternative and safe social space to face these challenges. The full length documentary film follows one year in the life of Donté Clark, a young man and Spoken-word artist and poet from Richmond, California as he leads a cast of high school students from a local arts program to re-write and perform an adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*. Rather than perform the classic text, these students use Shakespeare as a mirror of their own community's long standing turf war between North and Central Richmond - a city contending with years of turf violence, lack of economic prosperity, trauma and loss. Using their own words, and through their own lens, the students create and perform a new play titled *Té's Harmony* that delves deep into the complex socio-economic, cultural and historical issues driving the violence in their community and affecting their everyday health and safety. Their journey is a reminder of the importance of developing and supporting the voices of youth and allowing art to stand as an outlet of self-expression, a tool for youth empowerment and social change, and an inspiration in a community facing ongoing violent conflict.



ABOUT THE CURRICULUM: RE-MIXING SHAKESPEARE

The wrap-around curriculum supporting the documentary film *Romeo is Bleeding* was initially conceived for courses reading Shakespeare's classic tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*. This objective remains a priority with the integration of core topics and skills applicable in English Language Arts courses. The film team soon realized the timeless and universal themes within the plays and film were also rich for other disciplines seeking to address current issues of privilege, power, education, community violence, poverty, trauma, loss, reconciliation and forgiveness. The entire project also offers educators a tremendous opportunity to reflect upon their own classroom practices while highlighting the important role arts and artists have played in social movements across time.

There are ample curriculums written to support educators in their teaching of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. We hope you discover in the three pathways created for Re-mixing Shakespeare something different, uniquely current and engaging for students to connect the past to their present lives and be inspired by the work and voices of students from Richmond, California. Each pathway is guided by the following questions:

- **How can literature from the past connect to my life today?**
- **How can creating art be a tool for understanding and empowerment?**
- **How can art address racism, oppression and disparity?**

BEFORE VIEWING THE FILM



LETTER FROM FILMMAKERS: JASON ZELDES AND MICHAEL KLEIN

During the process of making *Romeo is Bleeding*, we learned an incredible amount from Donté and the students of Richmond Artists with Talent, or RAW Talent (since the making of the film, RAW Talent has merged to become the performing arts program of the RYSE Youth Center)¹. We watched for months as the students adapted a centuries-old-text in an effort to understand their world and their place in it. We witnessed a vulnerability in their words and performances that required a level of bravery we had never seen before. Living and working alongside RAW Talent, we realized the power of self expression - and the volume with which you can speak when you're side by side with your friends and you really mean what you're saying.

When we saw Donté perform the finale of *Té's Harmony* on stage for the first time, it was clear that his city - Richmond, CA - was starving for this kind of expression. Richmond, and cities nationwide just like it, are eager to reclaim and reshape their narrative, and who better than the youth to lead the charge? As RAW Talent has proven, there is a huge opportunity to take the passion behind the violence that plays out in the streets and channel it into something beautiful like music, dance, or poetry.



Channeling lived experiences into cathartic expression is what this curriculum is all about. Whether it's to grieve for the loss of a loved one, or to express the Shakespearean agonies of being a teenager, these pages are meant as a tool to allow oneself to tap into their inner voice and interact with their world in a healthy and communicative way.

Watching Donté and RAW Talent develop *Té's Harmony* helped us to believe in our voice and the value of telling our own stories, and we hope that this can be the same kind of experience for students far and wide. Soak in the movie, feel the emotions, find your fiercest method of communication, and tell your story loudly - because the world is ready to hear you.

Letter from Donté Clark

To My Beloved Family,

First off- I love you. I thank y'all just for being greater than the situations that we come from. It takes a brave soul to dare to want to be better than your circumstances. Just with that fire, I love you and I respect you. 'Cause its in you and not on you - you hold the power to change your reality. Nobody can give you that power - that's something you're born with. You have to find it within yourself. Everything outside of you is a tool for how you do that.

You are not alone in your struggle. The process of writing (or any art form) and sharing leads to self-discovery and community building. Going through that struggle and having the courage to document it and put it out into the world is how you 1) identify self and 2) build the kind of community you're looking for.

By processing your trauma and creating something, you take what you're going through and turn it into what you want to see - not just portraying your reality, but using your imagination and creativity to voice what you want to see, what changes need to happen in your life and your community. This is one of the most important jobs we have - to document experiences accurately with sympathy, empathy, and passion. Its up to us to tell our stories - only you can capture your lived experience.

There is no age to intelligence- that has to be a choice. There is no excuse for you not to get involved- everybody has a talent. You may not be the writer- you may be the director, the photographer, the light designer, a good promoter to outreach in the community. Everybody has a role to play, a talent that can be used.

I love you. Love is action, it's not a feeling. It's what you do. Love is a choice. Whatever choices you make play out in your actions. Love and fear can't exist together- it's one or the other. You have to practice love- it's small things, it's a day-to-day, choice-by-choice practice. If each choice you make isn't out of love, there's an opportunity to reconcile that with the next choice you make.

This is a lifestyle, for me at least- from when you wake up until you lay down. The more you know, the more responsibility you have. This is an ongoing process- try not to overthink, do what's in your heart, put it out there creatively, learn from it, then jump to the next one. Your purpose in this life is to love and show love, so if what you create is out of love it's gonna work, period.

I hope to meet you one day. If you want to meet me too, let your teacher know to reach out to us- maybe we can make it happen! If not in your class, I'll meet you one day. Somehow. Until then, I love you.

Donté Clark aka DonBlak

Letter from Molly Raynor

Dear Educators,

Thank you choosing to use our film and curriculum in your classroom. We hope it will be an entry point for critical conversations around language, literature, systematic oppression, violence, trauma, and healing. Teaching a classic text and following a curriculum without ever stopping to critically question it is easy, but putting in the extra effort to make it relevant to your students' lives; to break open space for honest dialogue- that is more challenging, more time-consuming, more risky. I promise you this: it is life-changing work. We appreciate you.

A little background on me that isn't in the film- I started RAW Talent (now the RYSE Youth Performing Arts Program) because when I was fifteen, spoken word poetry changed my life. It all began when I met my sophomore English teacher Jeff Kass at Pioneer High School in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Jeff was nearly fired every other day for his "alternative teaching methods". He would have us run up and down the hall yelling quotes from classic literature, he showed us contemporary poetry that spoke to our lives, he challenged us to open up, get personal and take risks with our writing. Jeff invited me to come to his spoken word workshops after school and pushed me to compete in the local poetry slam, so I started writing, performing, traveling and teaching workshops at a young age. I transformed from a shy, passive girl into a confident, outspoken young leader in my community.

But while I (a middle-class white girl) was thriving, several of my friends- all young, black men- dropped out of high school. I remember seeing their essays peppered with red marks, telling them their language was wrong. No one ever taught them the different grammar rules between Standard English and what some refer to as Black English or Ebonics. Their teachers simply called it a mistake, reinforcing the message that their language and therefore they, were inferior.

For youth of color who grow up in homes where Standard English is not their mother tongue, language can become a prison at school. Their bodies are policed in the street and their words are policed on the page. Their histories are white-washed and marginalized in class, and if they try to speak up about any of this they are often further silenced and criminalized. How can we expect students to care about our lesson plans if we don't care about their lives?

One of the subjects of the film, Nyabingha Zianni McDowell, shared, "I never had a class in school where I was able to be my full self and express my experiences- I got the message to "leave my drama at the door" and never given the opportunity to say how I really felt. I was angry because no teacher ever asked how I was doing outside of school, so I felt misunderstood. It would have been so powerful if our teachers had even just asked how we were doing, started class with a check-in instead of diving right into the lesson. My biggest challenge to you all is to create opportunities for your students to share their lives and feelings, and make it feel safe enough for them to be honest and open. If you ask students to leave our "drama at the door", you're actually asking us to leave lives at the door, but if you find a way to weave our cultures and struggles and passions into your curriculum, we can be our full selves in your classroom."

Regardless of race and socio-economic status, we all want to feel seen and celebrated, to feel humanized by a more holistic approach to education. Making space for critical questioning and creative expression in our curriculum is one way to re-center our students' lived realities in the classroom. Standard grammar rules are thrown out the window and students have the poetic license to play with language, to explore their experiences, emotions and identities.

Of course all of this is easier said than done. I was an English teacher for three years so I remember how difficult it was to make space for creativity with the pressure of grades, testing, and standards looming over my head. I felt like my success as a teacher was measured by how many of my students got A's. But whenever I felt discouraged, I remembered Jeff and how he stayed up late at night creating curriculum to fit his particular students needs, how he risked his job every day to make his classroom a space we wanted to come.

One teacher can change hundreds of lives. I am so grateful to all of you educators working to create empowering spaces for you students. There's nothing easy about this film, about this kind of teaching, or about our students' lives. A truly safe classroom for students often does mean a challenging space for teachers. We hope this film and the curriculum that goes with it helps to make that challenge worthwhile.

Love,
Molly Pershin Raynor
RAW Talent Co-Founder
RYSE Performing Arts Program Coordinator

FOR THE EDUCATOR

Many students may wonder why they read the works of Shakespeare or how his writings are relevant to their lives today. Donté Clark, the protagonist in the film *Romeo is Bleeding* said:

The first time I read *Romeo and Juliet* I was probably 15 or 16 in high school and it didn't really make sense to me. I didn't understand the language, different words had different meaning back then and it didn't seem like it had anything to do with me or my life. I didn't give two craps about it. Now that I am 22 I realized it isn't just about love, it's about my life. This is what is going on in my community-racism, hatred, exploitation. We don't see it as a star-crossed lovers situation. I wanted to tell this story. Why are our "families" at odds?²

The *Re-Mixing Shakespeare* curriculum asks students to reflect deeply on Donté's perspective and engage in exercises that inspire and develop their voices in relationship to their community, their neighborhood, family and school. Three pieces of content are the foundation for this curriculum - Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, the modern adaptation of this play *Té's Harmony* and the documentary film of their process, *Romeo is Bleeding*. The film asks students to situate themselves in the experience of reading Shakespeare for the first time and reflect upon Donté's experience and context of alienation and confusion. Alongside lessons directly applicable to the teaching of *Romeo and Juliet*, the curriculum draws inspiration from the young artists in the film who individually and in community find new meaning in the classical text while navigating issues such as poverty, community violence, loss and trauma alongside love, friendship, and the hope found through the process of self-expression and creating art.

Several priorities underlie the curriculum's development. The first is to disseminate an accessible and relevant classroom curriculum deepening student engagement with the timeless themes within Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. By pairing the richness of the classical text with a contemporary adaptation educators are offered an invaluable opportunity to stimulate student engagement as they wrestle with a challenging text. The resources also cross multiple disciplines strengthening units within Social Studies, Sociology, Art, Theatre and more. As the young artists shared their lives and wisdom through the film, we gain insight to the capacity for art and storytelling to bridge time and setting and empower all students, young and old, to carry their voice and their imagination to their communities in new, meaningful and creative ways.

For purposes of organization, the curriculum is outlined into three discipline pathways:

INTERDISCIPLINARY/MEDIA STUDIES, **ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS**, and **SOCIAL STUDIES**.

INTERDISCIPLINARY/MEDIA STUDIES PATHWAY

With the prevalence of media in our students lives, this interdisciplinary pathway offers educators the opportunity to deeply engage in media literacy and textual analysis of a full documentary film. The two lessons and activities included in this section support ELA and Social Studies units. These lessons are well suited for higher level ELA courses including AP English Literature and Composition, Film or Media Studies as well as supporting any Social Studies unit using contemporary media and social issues.

ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS PATHWAY

Because of the many opportunities for learning in an ELA classroom, this pathway is grouped into several flexible but distinct strands.

- **Strand One: Classic Text, Modern Interpretation: Teaching *Romeo and Juliet* with *Té's Harmony* and *Romeo is Bleeding*.** For ELA units reading *Romeo and Juliet*.
- **Strand Two: Capturing our Lived Experiences - Teaching Social Justice Literature, Spoken-word poetry and Community Theatre.** For ELA units seeking to use Spoken-word poetry and performance.
- **Strand Three: Community Theatre.** For ELA units writing scripts and performing community theatre.

Duration and Assessment: Because it requires time for students to engage deeply with Shakespeare, connect to the universal themes through a modern adaptation and view excerpts of documentary film chronicling this process, it is difficult to assign accurate class periods for each lesson with the range and variety of course schedules that exist today. For this reason, it may be helpful to envision the ELA strands within Re-mixing Shakespeare with the following duration and assessment options in mind:

- **Strand One: An eight week, Portfolio based unit.** If you do cover all lessons in the ELA Strands, several writing assignments are included to assess student learning. Students can also include a series of self-reflections and peer-reviews from their reading of *Romeo and Juliet* and comparing selected scenes from *Té's Harmony*, or reflections from the documentary *Romeo is Bleeding*.
- **Strand One: A six week, Analytical Essay based unit.** This includes a full reading of *Romeo and Juliet*, comparing selected scenes to *Té's Harmony*, and viewing excerpts from the documentary *Romeo is Bleeding*. Following a reading and analysis of the three different texts, students will respond to assigned writing prompts with an analytical essay comparing and contrasting the classical text to its modern adaptation.
- **Strand Two:** Following a reading and analysis of these texts, students will create, practice and perform their Spoken-word poem. The final assessment will be portfolio of the final drafts of their writing exercises and their final Spoken-word poem. (Geared for Strand One)
- **Strand Three:** Have students write a review of the performance they create based on the scenes or play they write. They could also keep an actor's journal that charts their process and shows evidence of self-assessment.

SOCIAL STUDIES PATHWAY

Like Shakespeare, Donté Clark and the young artists in Richmond write and create art within their historical and cultural context. While one priority of the *Re-mixing Shakespeare* curriculum is to connect students to a classical text in new and meaningful ways, the film also amplifies the critical circumstances over time that gave rise to the turf wars plaguing Richmond and so many other communities.

The suite of lessons included in the Social Studies pathway can be used as stand alone lessons or integrated into the ELA units. As in each curriculum it is difficult to assign accurate class periods for each lesson with the range and variety of course schedules that exist today. Because of the interdisciplinary connections within the film, it may be helpful to envision integrating the Social Studies lessons with the already existing units in mind:

- American History unit on the Great Migration;
- American History unit on Industrialization in the United States;
- American History unit on the Civil Rights movement;
- Economics unit/California History unit: examining the legacy and history of industrial development in Northern California.
- Media literacy unit examining how to “read” documentary film as texts.
- Sociology or Contemporary Social Issues courses including:
 - » Environmental studies;
 - » Law enforcement, police brutality, criminalization and murder of young men of color and “community policing model;”
 - » School to prison pipeline, mass incarceration and the privatization of prisons;
 - » Gender stereotyping and objectification-examining young women of color
 - » Race and urban planning-understanding the policy and legacy of redlining, law enforcement policy related to zip codes and poverty.

NATIONAL STANDARDS

To fulfill current expectations of the national standards, Re-mixing Shakespeare is aligned to the following Common Core State Standards for 9th and 10th grade English Language Arts and 9th and 10th grade Literacy in History/Social Studies. The full text of standards is included in Appendix I.

- Reading: Literature-Key Ideas and Details: CCSS ELA-Literacy RI 9-10.1 and 9-10.2
- Reading: Literature - Craft and Structure: CCSS ELA-Literacy RI. 9-10.3 through RI. 9 - 10.7 and RI.9 - 10.9
- Writing: Text Types and Purposes: CCSS ELA-Literacy W.9-10.3
- Language: Conventions of Standard English: L.9-10.1 through L.9 10.6

Each lesson includes the following elements:

Objective: Short overview of the goals of the lesson

Guiding Questions: Big picture questions that frame the overall lesson.

Opener: A brief entry exercise to the topics or themes covered in the lesson.

Focus of Study: Primary activity for student inquiry and investigation. Included in this section may be direct references to *Romeo and Juliet*, *Té’s Harmony* and *Romeo is Bleeding*.

Writing Exercises: Suggestions for student demonstration of understanding and skills that may be later chosen for student portfolio.

FOSTERING SAFE AND INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS: WHERE THE PROCESS BEGINS

The film *Romeo is Bleeding* is an emotionally difficult film. It tells the story of young people who live with violence, loss and trauma as part of their daily life. Themes of racial divides, privilege, poverty, environmental injustice, racial profiling, and gun violence surface throughout the documentary which may trigger strong emotions and feel challenging for students to discuss in a shared learning space.

To insure success with this curriculum, educators will want to consider strategies that can support an emotionally safe, inclusive and constructive classroom environment that recognizes that life outside of school also affects the relationships and learning inside the class. Such environments include a class where discussions of sensitive themes are open and honest while being mindful of assumptions and stereotypes that can surface from the film, from other students or from their own community. It also includes a community where students take ‘safe risks’ with one another. What is a safe risk may look different from one classroom to another, based on the norms that already exist within a class or for a community together for the first time.

More and more schools across the nation are recognizing how social and emotional learning, or SEL, and the overall internal health of their students deeply affects their success, achievement and happiness. The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines SEL as the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. Social and emotional skills are critical to being a good student, citizen, and worker, and many risky behaviors (e.g., drug use, violence, bullying and dropping out) can be prevented or reduced when multiyear, integrated efforts are used to develop students’ social and emotional skills. This is best done through effective classroom instruction, student engagement in positive activities in and out of the classroom, and broad parent and community involvement in program planning, implementation, and evaluation. As students continue to navigate a more complex, economically challenging and globally connected world, it is vital that they have the confidence, skills and practice to thrive in such diverse communities.³

In the film *Romeo is Bleeding* we witness how Donté and Molly create and support a safe space for sharing which invites students to bring their emotional experience into the classroom. Here are some suggested topics to discuss to set up a space for safe risks:

Meaningful sharing: In the writing exercises, students will get the most out of the lessons if they write about something true and important to them, reflect upon their own outlets for self-expression and what gives their writing its power. Students don’t need to share their deepest secrets, but writing about something that has meaning to them will make for better writing and richer classroom discussions.

Confidentiality: To build trust within the learning community, students can discuss what and how they will share with others outside the room. For example, when referring to another student’s spoken word piece they may decide to share the “plot but not the characters,” sharing what excited or interested them without saying specifically who they are talking about. For example, “A student wrote the most amazing piece about what it meant to her when she bought her first pair of shoes with money she’d earned herself.”

Personal Sharing: This curriculum asks students to reflect on their own lives and their own communities as social divisions are found within every community. Familiarizing the class with the characters in the film will help them make personal connections in their own communities, build their capacity to reflect on their own voice, and how, if they were to re-create *Romeo and Juliet* or any other text, it would take form in their own community.

Playful trust: There will be varying levels of comfort and skills in trusting one another and sharing their personal writing. It is vital to create a classroom climate where everyone's voice in the room is heard. For example, learners might agree to snap in appreciation for sharing instead of clapping, a sign of validation and appreciation that will sound the same for everyone.

Sensitivity about language: Thinking intentionally about the language to use in reference to teaching the film ahead of time, such as the names of characters and neighborhoods referenced, will be helpful to model. Avoiding generalizations, for example "The Black guy with locks," might accurately describe Donté, but may also feel disrespectful, or describe a student in the room at the moment. There may also be a tendency to distance themselves from the subjects in the film by referencing "Those people," or "Them." Teachers can help by asking students to be specific about to whom they are referring, and asking them to think critically about whether their ideas are generalizations or specific to this example. It is the responsibility of educators to respectfully address "in the moment" when generalizations, disrespectful terms or derogatory language is used in order to stand as a model insuring the classroom remains safe for all students. When film clips are integrated into individual classroom lessons, names of the characters will be listed as a reference for student use to help alleviate this possibility.

Being aware of who is in your learning community: The themes of race, class and segregation in the film are timely, relevant and can be emotionally sensitive. Each theme may be particularly challenging in a cross-community setting, bringing up personal and highly sensitive issues. As part of creating a safe and inclusive classrooms, it is important to acknowledge the discomfort openly and collectively agree and commit to being inclusive of all voices in the room and what to do when these norms are compromised.

Teachers can utilize a variety of tools for inclusion including:

- Writing down answers before discussions. This helps prepare students who feel less comfortable immediately speaking out as they'll have time to formulate their responses.
- Breaking into small groups for discussions and sharing out to the class if they so choose.
- Asking all students to speak only for themselves when they express an opinion. This can help alleviate pressure in a mixed group where there may be only a few individuals from a certain race or group. It is also important to acknowledge that no one person can speak for an entire population. For example, instead of, "we all think turf wars are dangerous," students will be asked to say, "I think turf wars are dangerous."

CREATING SYSTEMS OF SUSTAINABILITY

Educator Jeff Andrade Duncan has spoken out about an often overlooked but critical point affecting many youth being raised in urban cities - the long-term physical and psychological effect of exposure to sustained violence, trauma and loss or what he identifies as Complex Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD.) In East Oakland where Duncan lives and teaches, Complex PTSD includes navigating and surviving in urban communities in which violence, trauma and loss occur again and again throughout the most formative years of childhood. Acknowledging and considering this climate and these circumstances is a necessary context to scaffold for students in order for them to fully grasp the context of *Romeo is Bleeding*.

To respond to Complex PTSD, Duncan explains his school community created a model called a "System of Sustainability" in order to support his students, systems to allow them to thrive as well as remain productive and happy members of their community. As the setting of *Romeo is Bleeding* is in neighboring Richmond, Duncan's model introduces language and a proven successful approach to address and analyze the documentary, the play *Té's Harmony* and the relevancy of a play such as *Romeo and Juliet* for students coming of age in urban centers today. We invite educators and students to view Jeff Andrade Duncan's TED Talk. (<http://tinyurl.com/JeffDuncanTEDx>)

INTERDISCIPLINARY/ MEDIA STUDIES PATHWAY

ID, L1: “Reading” Documentary Film as Text

OBJECTIVE: In this lesson students will develop skills to view and analyze a documentary film actively. More often than not, students view excerpts rather than travel the entire narrative arch of a documentary film. This lesson offers educators an opportunity to focus student learning across the entire narrative of the documentary film *Romeo is Bleeding*. In particular, students will analyze the film and Donté Clark’s journey in the film in relation to Joseph Campbell’s *The Hero’s Journey*.

John Golden, a high school English teacher who has used documentary films for years, offers his rationale for using documentary films to teach critical media literacy:

[T]here are a number of reasons why you might want to show a complete nonfiction film. Maybe the topic of the film coincides with your curriculum, or maybe you want to examine a filmmaker’s ability to construct reality and manipulate an audience...

Every one of these is an honest reason for wanting to show a complete film, but the most important consideration to keep in mind is that, just as you would never allow students to read *Romeo and Juliet* straight through without stopping for discussion, you should not do this with a complete film ... [S]tudents need an opportunity to talk about a film, review key parts, and hear from you and their peers. Also, students have been watching documentaries for years, but they have been asked only to copy down facts that the film presents. They need to be actively engaged - through directed note taking and discussion - by looking at how the filmmaker has constructed the reality that he or she is presenting.⁴

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- What is a nonfiction documentary film?
- What choices do documentary filmmakers make in constructing their narrative?
What intentional choices did the filmmakers for *Romeo is Bleeding* make to weave together a personal journey set within a complicated setting?
- How do I “read” a nonfiction film? In other words, how does the film tell its story?

OPENER: Introducing Documentary Film

Explain to the class that just as there are different genres of fiction films-horror, comedy, romance, action, fantasy, etc. - there are different genres and stylistic choices in constructing a documentary film. Introduce this further by projecting the following terms given to describe and classify different approaches to documentary filmmaking.

EXPOSITORY

OBSERVATIONAL

INTERACTIVE

REFLEXIVE

Divide the class into small groups and ask each group to brainstorm possible defining elements and conventions used with each of the different classifications given.

After sharing out their discussion, clarify and include any missing elements to each of the modes explored by relying on the definitions below. There is a great deal of fluidity between these approaches and filmmakers often use and mix many of these techniques throughout their project. The purpose of attaching terms to these choices is simply to help students build a greater fluency with the language used to analyze and classify the stylistic differences and choices as documentary films are constructed.

FOR THE EDUCATOR

Expository: Expository films are often the most familiar to students as they involve a filmmaker explaining a topic to their audience. Often this includes history and information on the topic, interviews, scholars and experts on the topic. The goal of this mode is to give the audience a deeper knowledge and insight on a topic.

Observational: As the term suggests, the observational mode suggests that the filmmaker is a “fly on the wall” and tries to disappear without notice within the film, neither interacting with the film’s subject nor conducting interviews and keeping editing to the minimum. Very little B-roll or outside sounds are introduced into the film. Very often this type of film is referred to as direct cinema and while this mode is very often expository, they differ stylistically in how the story is captured.

Interactive: Diverging very much from observation, the interactive mode has the filmmaker actively involved in the lives of their subjects. At times we hear the filmmaker asking questions of their subjects or even seeing the filmmaker in the film itself. The interactive mode can adopt many different styles including cinema verité (cinema truth).

Reflexive: The fourth mode introduced describes a documentary which aims to question the inherent difficulties and ethical considerations within the creating of a documentary film. Educator John Golden states, “In short, a reflexive documentary will often pull back the curtain of documentary filmmaking and give the audience a glimpse of the inherent difficulties in trying to capture a universal truth.”⁵

FOCUS: Viewing the complete documentary of *Romeo is Bleeding: The Hero’s Journey*

Stylistic choices are one important choice made by filmmakers. But these choices stand next to others. When asked what inspiration he relied on in creating *Romeo is Bleeding*, Director Jason Zeldes turned to *The Hero’s Journey* by Joseph Campbell.

Depending upon the reading level of your students, either read aloud this short essay outlining the hero’s journey and pausing and checking for understanding after each stage explained, or have students engage in a close reading of using the following steps:

- Read the text slowly at least twice;
- Get the gist of what a text is about;
- Circle words you aren’t sure of and try to figure them out;
- Reread, annotate, and underline key vocabulary;
- Use the text to answer questions;
- Gather evidence (quotes) from the text
- Talk with each other about what you think it means;
- Read again to summarize or answer specific questions

Introduce the visual map of *The Hero's Journey* (See **Handout I**). Explain to students that will be using this model of a graphic organizer to chart the journey of Donté Clark as they view the entire documentary *Romeo is Bleeding* over approximately three viewing periods.

Each suggested viewing time is approximately 35:00 run time with specific discussion questions included per day. Depending upon the length of your class period you may choose to vary the length of viewing.

Day One Viewing. DVD Chapters #1-12 [(00:08-34:08) Stop after the line “They call me Richmond”]

Discussion Prompts:

1. What do we learn about the setting in the opening scenes of the film?
2. What can we infer about what is positive in performing Spoken-word poetry?
3. What are the challenges revealed in these young artists lives?
4. Why was *Romeo and Juliet* chosen as a play? What is the purpose of their using this classic tale?
5. How does the historical context and the environment of Richmond matter?

After this first day of viewing, have students discuss in small groups words heard or observations made regarding the “hero’s journey” for Donté Clark. Students can rely on the visual map supplied or construct their own as they chart this journey over the course of the film. Following each day of viewing, de-brief the film portion used that day, discuss the prompts and allow time for students to chart the steps Donté has followed in his own hero’s journey.

Day Two Viewing: DVD Chapters #13-21 [(34:08 - 1:05:20) Stop after the line “Fine is good”]

Discussion Prompts:

1. What are the origins of the conflicts in Richmond? What occurred in Richmond?
2. What do we learn about the process these young artists engaged in during their creation of *Té’s Harmony*? What were the challenges? What were the inspirational points for these writers?
3. What do we learn about the role of the police in this portion of the film? What is the relationship between these young artists and law enforcement?
4. How is gender discussed in this portion of the film?
5. What do we learn about the role mothers and fathers have in these young artists lives?
6. The final scene of this second day of viewing ends with an exchange between the characters of Té and Harmony. What do you hear her express in her opening monologue?
7. What reflections are you left with at the end of Day Two of viewing?

Day Three Viewing: DVD Chapters #22-29 [(1:05:20-1:33:08) Watch through the end of the film]

Discussion Prompts:

1. In what ways do we witness loss, grief and trauma in this portion of the film? What role does art play as they experience these emotions?
2. One powerful scene in the documentary takes place in the Alameda County Juvenile Detention Center. Looking at Joseph Campbell’s *Hero’s Journey*, where can you situate this moment in the film in the span of this journey?
3. Where does the performance of *Té’s Harmony* sit in the span of the *Hero’s Journey*?
4. In the final scenes of the play the line “But tonight we choose life” received a standing ovation during the performance. Donté Clark goes on to express his emotions with words such as resurrection and love. Describe in your own words the ending scene of this documentary. What do you believe are the larger messages the filmmakers and the young artists hoped to convey to audiences?

ID, L2: The Ethics of Documentary Filmmaking ⁶

OBJECTIVE: This lesson allows students discuss the range of ethical considerations documentary filmmakers face in the process of creating, filming and editing their films. The term ethics is used in this lesson not in a moral capacity, but rather as a set of rules and code of professional conduct that a group of professionals follows in their respective field, in this case documentary filmmaking. The conversation on the ethics of filmmaking is extremely important as students gain greater fluency and literacy in both media analysis as well as media construction and production.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- What moral issues are important in documentary filmmaking?
- Can someone (a filmmaker) outside a culture or community accurately and ethically depict another culture or community? Why or why not? What would need to be accomplished in order to accomplish an accurate depiction?
- What possible consequences may surface when these issues are overlooked, dismissed or ignored?



OPENER: Competing Rights - Four Corners

Around the room post the following four signs in four corners of your room-Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. Explain to students that they will reflect upon their opinion, take a stand in the corner that best represents their response to the statement and then be prepared to discuss and justify their stance to others in their corner or to the larger class.

1. The filmmaker has the right to tell their story in the style, tone and manner best suited to the material and in the way that meets the filmmaker's purpose.
2. The subject of a documentary film has the right to have prior knowledge of the purpose of the film and how the filmmakers intends to use their story.
3. The audience has the right to be fully informed when material in the documentary is constructed.

After allowing students to discuss their perspectives on these three statements, inform them that while each of these statements could be interpreted as a competing "right", they are all "rights" upheld as ethical standards nonetheless. In other words, the filmmaker, the subjects in the film and the audience each hold an important role.

FOCUS: Ethical and Moral Dilemmas and Decisions in Documentary Filmmaking

Organize students into small discussion groups. Explain that you will be presenting a handful of actual dilemma's that have been faced by filmmakers in some fashion. While the exact may have been altered, the job of the students is to discuss and weigh the many ethical considerations and moral dilemmas present in each scenario. Remind students tat there is not a "correct" or "incorrect" answer but to help facilitate a process of weighing multiple perspectives, competing interests and ethical and moral issues. Each small group will need to come up with an answer to each dilemma and be able to articulate their justification for the decision.

Introduce this exercise using the following directions: "Imagine that you are a documentary filmmaker facing the following situations. What would you do and why? What are the range of ethical considerations you would need to weigh?"

- In the course of filming an interview, your subject uses a derogatory term in reference to another group. (This could be a racist, homophobic, xenophobic term.) In other interviews and conversations with this subject, he/she never used this language. After viewing the footage, the interviewee asks you to remove their use of this term. Do you take it out?
- You are doing a film about the effects of poverty and homelessness in the United States. One family you have been filming for some time has recently had their electricity cut off due to a not paying their bill over a series of months and is about to be evicted. While you are not wealthy, you could help them out of this immediate crisis with some financial support. What do you do?
- In the course of a very emotional interview with a film's subject you as the filmmaker begin to cry. On this day you only had a single camera and it was not directed at you. After the interview is over you think back on this moment and think it could be a powerful addition to the film. You ask your camera person to turn the camera onto you and film. While it takes a moment, you are able to start crying again and after editing this scene could easily be included and it could seem as though you were crying during the actual interview. Considering the fact that you did cry at that moment, is it appropriate to reenact and then include such as scene?
- In a film about teen drug use, one of your subjects offers to show you how he/she takes heroin. Knowing that this type of drug use is illegal, dangerous and physically and psychologically harmful, would you agree to film this knowing that he/she will continue to use drugs in this manner?

After the groups have had a chance to discuss each of these dilemmas, open up the class and discuss the range of considerations that surfaced, the decision that their group came to and their justification for each decision.



SUGGESTED ASSESSMENT FOR AN INTERDISCIPLINARY/ MEDIA STUDIES PATHWAY

In the documentary we hear poet Luis J. Rodriguez share the following introduction to the production of *Té's Harmony*.

I just want to say a few words. How honored I am to be here. How wonderful it is that the community is out to see these young people again. To see them for who they really are and not what the media says they are. But to see the beauty they bring to the world. Because if we don't bring out the beauty of the youth it will turn to violence.

To capture the depth of student learning after a careful analysis of *Romeo Is Bleeding*, students will now have an opportunity to choose a social problem in their community and create their own short, student produced film. The process leading up the final product is as important as the final polished product. Several sample curriculums outlining different pedagogical approaches to creating student produced documentary films are attached below. This offers tips for storyboarding, choosing music, creating cards as well as editing.

Because of the interdisciplinary nature of this project, this assignment can easily be adapted to demonstrate student learning and skills for an interdisciplinary unit as well as a culminating project for the ELA or Social Studies Pathway.

Many students may choose to create their film on a mobile device. If this level of technological access is shared across the class, setting up a shared Google Site to upload, share and archive their projects would offer a great platform for collaboration. It may also be fun to create a class film festival in which all student films can be shared over time.

Producing Documentaries with Students

Rock Your World- Producing Documentaries - Created by Creative Visions Foundation
A Curriculum for Digital Media Making - Sponsored by Apple Inc.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS PATHWAY

STRAND ONE

ELA1, L1: Classic Text, Modern Interpretation: Teaching *Romeo and Juliet* Today

OBJECTIVE: This lesson will help students gain a better understanding of the themes and conflicts that arise in *Romeo and Juliet* through pairing it with a modern adaptation (*Té's Harmony*) and excerpts from a contemporary documentary chronicling this process (*Romeo is Bleeding*). Students will engage deeply with the three different texts and have the opportunity to analyze the universal themes from Shakespeare which remain relevant and find expression and meaning across genres and time.

We recommend using the 2014 Cambridge School Shakespeare: *Romeo and Juliet* for use in the classroom as it features engaging discussion prompts and activities throughout the entire play. It may also be helpful to show the 30 minute animated version of *Romeo and Juliet* that is part of Ambrose Video Shakespeare: The Animated Tales. This short adaptation of Shakespeare offers an effective summary of plot, summary and characters.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- What are universal literary themes?
- How are themes and conflicts within texts expressed through author's tone, choice of language, setting or set of characters?
- In what ways does genre shape how and what you understand from texts?

STUDENTS WILL:

- Read, analyze and compare and contrast texts.
- Work in small groups to identify common themes from different genres of texts.
- Discuss and organize themes into common groupings across texts.

OPENER: Read the following quote with students.

"That is part of the beauty of all literature. You discover that your longings are universal longings, that you're not lonely and isolated from anyone. You belong."

- F. Scott Fitzgerald

Individually in journals, or in small groups have students discuss their interpretation of this quote. Discuss what pieces of literature they connected with as a student and why they found personal meaning in these texts. Share a few aloud in class.

Transition to introduce the term of literary theme. What understanding do the students have about this term? Define theme and how it often reflects the underlying meaning and messages within a text that the author aims to convey. Discuss the process of identifying themes with students and how these discussions leads to one's own individual interpretation of the piece of literature, or literary analysis.

If literary theme is a new term, or if the process of interpreting texts is unfamiliar, take a moment to outline some commonly used tools to identify and discuss themes found in literature.

FOCUS: Comparing with Shakespeare

Introduction: The works of Shakespeare are accepted as classics in literature. While taught and performed to this day, some students find the language from this time very difficult to understand and an alienating experience. One priority for the *Re-mixing Shakespeare* curriculum is to create a learning experience that allows all students to create their own bridges of understanding and to find meaning across many texts such as Shakespeare.

(1) **Themes:** Begin by watching the Opening of *Té’s Harmony* (Included on Educational DVD)⁷ followed by *Romeo is Bleeding* DVD Chapters #1 & 8 [0:06-4:34; 17:45-20:02]⁸ Ask students to pull the themes from the film that stood out and add these words to the current list of themes.

Brainstorm as a class the themes they heard expressed in either of these film excerpts and list on the board.

Comparison 1: Close Reading (See **Handout A**).
Working in small groups, have students read the Prologue from *Romeo and Juliet* and write down three or four themes that emerge from the opening of the play.

Read the Prologue in *Té’s Harmony*. Repeat the same analysis exercise. Compare the two lists from both excerpts and choose several themes that are similar and several that differ. Create a list of those words on a white board.

As a class, ask students to group words into broad categories such as “Society,” “Emotions,” or “Experience” and add any words they notice as missing.

Here is a sample list of themes that may surface from a student reading:
Themes: (group into categories)

Society’s Challenges	Emotional Experience	Resilience
Turf Violence	Trauma	Art as Coping
Violence	Loss	Mentorship
Incarceration	Grief	Role modelling
Racism	Catharsis	Community coming together
Policing	Empowerment	
Segregation	Honor	
Gender	Revenge	

(2) **Language/Tone:** Returning to the Prologue, have students select words or phrases from *Romeo and Juliet* and from *Té’s Harmony* that are reflective of the time and setting of the play. Allow students to discuss their interpretations of the language chosen by both authors and the possible range of meanings. You may also elect to read Donté Clark’s “A Playwright’s Journey” from Strand 3, Lesson One in which he discusses his intentional use of language in item #10.

(3) **Genre:** One of the guiding questions posed for this lesson is “In what ways does genre shape how and what you understand from texts?” Discuss with students the definition of what constitutes a tragedy or a comedy in a Shakespearean play. If students have already read the entirety of *Romeo and Juliet* they will know that tragedies end with death. Donté, however, has his characters “choose life” in the closing scene of *Té’s Harmony*.⁹ (See **Handout E** to read the closing scene of *Té’s Harmony*.) You may choose to bookend a reading of the Prologue and reading of the ending scene as an exercise exploring genre. Alternatively you can save the closing scene of *Té’s Harmony* (**Handout E**) until you complete the full reading of Shakespeare.



Setting the Scene: Extending the Comparisons: (See **Handout B**)

Handout B includes scenes from *Té’s Harmony* that mirror an analogous scene from *Romeo and Juliet*. The scenes selected include:

- Prologue
- Act I, Scene 4
- Act I, Scene 5 (two excerpts)
- Act II, Scene 2
- Act II, Scene 8

As you proceed with a full reading of Shakespeare, you will have the opportunity at particular junctures to have students engage with a modern adaptation of the text and a handful of scenes that Donté Clark identified as a “mirroring of text.” Prior to comparing the selections, teachers will find suggested discussion prompts in the “Setting the Scene” section.

Strand One: Final Assessment: Ted Sizer states in the introduction to *The Right to Literacy in Secondary Schools* by Suzanne Plaut, “Literacy ... is the fuel for freedom.” Plaut herself goes to say that literacy is “a social imperative ... [which] enables students to have a voice, take a stand, and make a difference. In other words, it gives them power.”¹⁰

This element of “power” is woven throughout the ELA lessons in Re-mixing Shakespeare and serves as the foundation for students engaging with writing a reflective essay using the following essay assignment.

ESSAY: COMPARING ROMEO & JULIET AND TÉ'S HARMONY

At the close of *Té's Harmony* the Narrator, joined later by
Té and Harmony, ask:

But could there be another ending to this story?
We know what you were expecting - a tragedy,
The classic tale of star-crossed lovers who take their lives,
The classic tale on Channel 5 News of Richmond youth,
Ugly as the scarred back of our ancestors
Can you feel it?
It's time to heal
Time to reclaim the city of Pride and Purpose - our Richmond
We know you were expecting us to choose death

Narrator, Té and Harmony: [*Together*] But tonight, we choose life.

With *Té's Harmony* declaring a counter narrative to Shakespeare's tragic ending, reflect upon and write an essay arguing why you believe playwright Donté Clark rejected the classic narrative arc and choose an alternative ending.

In preparation for this assignment have students re-read the ending from *Té's Harmony* from **Handout E** as well as Act II, Scene 5 from *Romeo and Juliet*. Emphasize that their essays should, in some form, include their reflections on mainstream vs. counter narrative and narratives from youth of color.

Step 1: Re-read the excerpt from Act II, Scene 8 from *Té's Harmony*. (See **Handout E**.) If helpful return to viewing *Romeo is Bleeding* [DVD Chapter #28 (1:23:40-1:29:09)] followed by a short discussion.

Step 2: Have students discuss in pairs or small groups the following before beginning their final essays...

- How do you understand the differences in endings between *Romeo and Juliet* or *Té's Harmony*? What were the significant factors contributing to the decisions of *Romeo and Juliet* and the decision of Té and Harmony?
- How do we define the idea of a mainstream narrative? What is a counter narrative?
- Why did the young artists intentionally choose to change the ending from a tragedy? Why is this change significant for their story?
- What role does the ending of a play have in the overall arc of the narrative?
- Explore the significance of the “you” and the “we” in the stanza from *Té's Harmony*.

STRAND TWO

This suite of lessons is inspired by the work of the young artists in *Romeo is Bleeding* and includes themes of voice, writer's purpose and audience, the development and use of language, writing and performing Spoken-word poetry and community theatre. Each can be fully integrated into any unit reading *Romeo and Juliet* or implemented independently.

ELA2, L1: The Purpose of Self-Expression

OBJECTIVE: Authors draw from others artists, their own past and the world around them to inspire their work — like *Romeo and Juliet* and Richmond, California were inspirations for Donté Clark and the young artists he worked with. In this lesson students will consider different forms of self-expression as a means to share their lived experiences. With a particular focus on writing, students will engage with informational texts to reflect on what inspires them in order to build a context for understanding the artists in *Romeo is Bleeding*.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- How do I express myself?
- What types of self-expression reflect my creativity, feelings and experiences?
- Why is writing one important and effective form of self-expression?

STUDENTS WILL:

- Reflect upon their own forms of self-expression
- Reflect upon their writing process

OPENER: Why create art?

Have students respond to the following prompts in their personal journals:

1. When I want to express my creative and joyful thoughts or my dreams I...
2. When I want to express my anger or frustration I...
3. When I think about writing and creating a piece of art to express myself, the first thing that comes to mind is...

Share and Discuss:

- Have you had the opportunity to reflect on your own art or forms of self expression?
- Do common choices or differences emerge within the class?
- What was surprising or challenging about these questions?

FOCUS: Why Writers Write

Brainstorm as a class all the reasons why people choose to express themselves in different genres of writing including fiction, non-fiction, plays, poetry, song lyrics, movie and theatre scripts, diary entries or essays from magazines and journals. Clarify for students the distinctions between these forms of writing if necessary. Similarly, as writers are creating for the purposes of an audience, it is important to also have students reflect upon why they read.

Ask:

- What drives the impulse to write?
- What is shared amongst different genres of writing?
- What may be the reason a writer chooses one genre of writing over another?
- Why do readers read?
- What genre of literature do you choose to read? Why?

Watch: *Romeo is Bleeding* DVD Chapter #4 [8:25-11:48] and discuss, “How did the subjects in the film talk about why they write?”

In small groups pass one quote out to each group. Have small groups discuss the meaning of the quote and then present the quote and their groups’ interpretation to the class.¹¹

In many ways writing is the act of saying, I, of imposing oneself upon other people, of saying listen to me, see it my way, change your mind ... I write entirely to find out what I’m thinking, what I’m looking at, what I see and what it means. What I want and what I fear. ... What is going on in these pictures in my mind?

- Joan Didion, *author*.

When I’m writing, I am trying to find out who I am, who we are, what we’re capable of, how we feel, how we lose and stand up, and go on from darkness into darkness. I’m trying for that. But I’m also trying for the language. I’m trying to see how it can really sound. I really love language. I love it for what it does for us, how it allows us to explain the pain and the glory, the nuances and the delicacies of our existence. And then it allows us to laugh, allows us to show wit. Real wit is shown in language. We need language.

- Maya Angelou, *author*.

A lot of the kids - they need to get this stuff out - they can’t focus on school because there’s so much in their lives, [*writing and poetry*] is something that can help them deal with their basic needs. We listen to them ... they get to write about it - that’s healing. You can address it, get toxic stuff out, connect with people. Some people can deal with trauma by writing about it... Some people writing helps them grow more socially conscious about what’s happening in the world, who they are, identity, history, culture, how they talk to men and women. Helps them cope.

- Donté Clark, *Spoken-word poet and performer*.

When I sit down to write a book, I do not say to myself, “I am going to produce a work of art.” I write it because there is some lie that I want to expose, some fact to which I want to draw attention, and my initial concern is to get a hearing. But I could not do the work of writing a book, or even a long magazine article, if it were not also an aesthetic experience.

- George Orwell, *author*.

Stories are for joining the past to the future. Stories are for those late hours in the night when you can’t remember how you got from where you were to where you are. Stories are for eternity, when memory is erased, when there is nothing to remember except the story.

- Tim O’Brien, *author*.

I tell my students one of the most important things they need to know is when they are their best, creatively. They need to ask themselves, “What does the ideal room look like? Is there music? Is there silence? Is there chaos outside or is there serenity outside? What do I need in order to release my imagination?” ... I know how I feel. My feelings are the result of prejudices and convictions like everybody else’s. But I am interested in the complexity, the vulnerability of an idea. It is not “this is what I believe,” because that would not be a book, just a tract. A book is “this may be what I believe, but suppose I am wrong ... what could it be?” Or, “I don’t know what it is, but I am interested in finding out what it might mean to me, as well as to other people.”

- Toni Morrison, author.

Writing Exercise 1: Why I _____ or How I _____

Students will now have the opportunity to create any piece of art that expresses why or how they individually create art. Choices can include a poem or prose on why they write or draw, or make music or work with clay or find expression in photography. If a student does not create any type of art, have them identify and write about another passion such as sports, video games, cooking or even working at a job.

The title should be “Why I _____” or “How I _____” with the blank filled in with any verb that describes what they are doing (paint, work, play the guitar, etcetera.) The piece need not follow any particular essay format but instead be a piece of writing of substance and meaning and express this important part of a student’s life.

ELA2, L2: Where Are Our Voices?

OBJECTIVE: In this lesson students will explore the term “voice” and be able to analyze the different elements of voice including use of language and syntax. Students will explore and critique the environments in which their own voices are heard and the privilege and opportunities available for audiences to hear a range of voices. Students will also have the opportunity to connect this examination of voice and privilege to their reading and analysis of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Té’s Harmony*.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- What is a writer’s voice?
- What is distinctive about my “voice”?
- What elements of a writer’s voice reveal details about their identity, their community and their lived experiences?

STUDENTS WILL:

- Reflect upon different ways their voice can be expressed
- Read and analyze poetry created by youth that draws upon their life experiences
- Discuss and connect poetry to their own life

OPENER: Read the following quote out loud to students.

“If you are silent about your pain, they’ll kill you and say you enjoyed it.”

-Zora Neale Hurston

Discuss with students what the author Zora Neale Hurston may be communicating in this statement? Who could be the “they” she refers to?

Transition to students doing a free-write exercise by responding to the following prompts:

“I feel most free to express my true self when ... ?”

“I feel least likely to share my authentic self with my peers when ... ?”

*Note: Assure students that this free write will remain private.

FOCUS: Expanding and Exploring Our Voice

Ask students to discuss their definitions of creative expression. Explain that one perspective of creative expression is to be in community with peers and mentors who support and allow you to explore your voice. RAW Talent (now part of RYSE Youth Performing Arts Program) in Richmond and Youth Speaks in San Francisco are two organizations featured in *Romeo is Bleeding* that foster creative expression. As you share their guiding principles listed below, discuss your students’ understanding of each principle and how each connects to their lives and their learning both inside and outside the classroom. Are they familiar, new or seem particularly challenging? Why?

- Being student centered;
- Providing a safe environment with a platform to freely share their thoughts and feelings on topics that are meaningful to them;
- Create a space space that challenges young people to find, develop, publicly present, and apply their voices as creators of positive social change.
- Allowing students’ realities and culture to be freely included in their academic identities.

Invite students individually or in small groups to dig a bit deeper into what these principles entail by following a close reading protocol explaining creative expression from the Youth Speaks website. There are many protocols for close reading exercises. For the purpose of this opening activity, have students circle words or sentences that are confusing, underline words or sentences that are compelling and note any questions they may have in the margins.

We believe it is critical that young people have opportunities to find, develop, publicly present and intentionally apply their voices. Silence is a powerful thing when chosen, but incredibly oppressive when forced upon...

Traditional classroom-settings embody a narrative-like character where little decision-making relies on the concerns and perspectives of students in the class. Even in a ‘democratic’ class setting, youth may not always feel comfortable exercising their right to speak up or be heard, especially when giving voice to thoughts, ideas, or beliefs that are unpopular. This may leave students feeling alienated and/or discouraged from participating in class. Because traditional educational pedagogy provides nominal opportunities for instructors to validate student perspective, students ultimately assume the role of passive recipients in their own education.

We at Youth Speaks seek to create a safe space where youth feel confident sharing their voice and individual perspective. More importantly, Youth Speaks encourages youth to express themselves using their own vernacular. The idea of “talent” or being “talented” is often viewed as a mysterious force bestowed on a given individual, rather than the result of hard work, practice, and commitment.”¹²

Have students discuss in small groups their reactions to this perspective.

- What words/sentences did they underline?
- What words/sentences were confusing?
- What questions surfaced?

Watch: *Romeo is Bleeding* DVD Chapters #6-8 [11:48-17:45]

- What did you hear each artist share?
- What encourages the young artists to share their authentic selves?

FOCUS: What is a writer's voice?

In small groups pass out several different styles of poems or use other examples from literature, scenes from a plays, op-ed pieces, song lyrics or other poems. (See **Handout C**.) Have table groups read the poems and discuss the following questions:

- What emotions can you identify as being expressed in your example?
- What words or expressions give insight into who the author is?
- In each poem, try to imagine who the author wanted to be reading his/her poems. Who is the audience?
- How might an author's decisions about language influence who reads and understands their work?
- What text-to-text, text-to-self connections can you make after reflecting on these questions?

Small Group Discussion: Individually or in small groups have students discuss the following questions with regard to *Romeo and Juliet* and *Té's Harmony*.

- What is it like to read Shakespeare's language?
- What is it like to read Donté Clark's language?
- Who are the audiences you imagine each was writing for?
- If you are not part of the audience you identified for each, what does it feel like to be asked to read it?
- What might you learn from reading a text that is not meant for you?
- What is it like to read a text that is specifically meant for you?

Next, have students engage in a pre-writing exercise for a piece that they would like to create by answering the following questions reflectively.

- When you think of writing your own piece, who will you be writing for?
- What are words or phrases that are unique to you and your community that you might want to include?

ELA2, L3: Art as Social Space: Spoken-word Poetry

OBJECTIVE: In this lesson students will explore through writing and performance the idea of art as a social space for building community and empowering marginalized voices. Through this process students will explore Spoken-word poetry as a process and performance of their voice, their language and their lived experience. This lesson will reinforce findings that Spoken-word poetry is an effective way of understanding the world of the student and has a transformative power that allows students to reveal the self as well as remaining a rich source of insight and creative development.¹³

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- What is poetry?
- How do writers translate their lived experience and culture into poetry?
- How can Spoken-word poetry serve as a bridge between ‘old school’ and ‘new school’?

STUDENTS WILL:

- Learn about the format of Spoken-word poetry
- Read and listen to different examples of Spoken-word poetry
- Write, receive peer feedback and create their own Spoken-word poem
- Perform their Spoken-word poem (depending upon class and time permitted.)

OPENER:

Show the introductory video referenced in the Endnote from Youth Speaks introducing the process and power of Spoken-word poetry.¹⁴ Ask students to write down the words that stand out to them from the individuals in the video.¹⁵ After experiencing the poem go around the room asking students to say one word about what they felt or heard from the performance. Discuss comments.

FOCUS: Creating a Spoken-word Poem

“Life as a primary text.” This sentence from Youth Speaks website speaks to the principle that literacy is a need, not a want and that it comes in various forms including oral poetry, or Spoken-word poetry.¹⁶

A Spoken-word poem can be about anything, but is often about the lived experiences of the artist. H. Bernhard Hall created a curriculum integrating Spoken-word poetry into classrooms. A doctoral student in education at the time, Hall lists out the following element of Spoken-word poetry as one way of introducing the artform:

- Combines literary, theatrical, cultural, and political elements of the Beat, Black Arts, and hip-hop movements
- Is written with the intent to be performed
- Centers on the author and his or her identities (artistic, racial, gender, sexual, etc.)
- Is judged based on style (performance) and substance (content)¹⁷

For some students, this may be their first opportunity to share their lived experiences publicly and in the company of their peers. Such a performance can be scary, intimidating and vulnerable. Even though time and care have been spent creating a safe classroom community, taking the step to perform amongst peers may still prove challenging. Being mindful of this, there are several strategies that lend themselves to supporting this process.

1. If possible, have individual check-in meetings with each student about how they want to participate publicly. The expectation is for each student to compose and perform a poem. It may be important to scaffold the process of public performance by first providing the opportunity in pairs and small groups and working up to a group performance, but sharing one's poem in class is an important expectation and fulfills a national standard for speaking and listening skills.¹⁸
2. Remind students that this project/process will not be graded based on the public performance but evaluated based on other criteria. (See **Handout B** for a sample rubric.)

There are ample examples of Spoken-word performances on the internet. Begin by watching *Thinking About You* by Mike Taylor for the HBO broadcast of Brave New Voices (<http://tinyurl.com/MikeTaylorBNV>). Ask the students to take note of the following elements:

Style of poem, Tempo, Delivery, Metaphor, Figurative Language, Rhyming

The suggestions below come from Molly Raynor, the co-founder of RAW Talent, now the Performing Arts Program Coordinator at the RYSE Center, veteran English teacher and part of the cast of *Romeo is Bleeding*. Watch members of RAW Talent perform their poems...

- “Chocolate Smile,” Marjé Kilpatrick¹⁹
- D’Neise Robinson, Youth Speaks Grand Slam Finals²⁰
- “Until You Understand Me,” Donté Clark²¹
- Tassiana Willis, Brave New Voices 2013 Finals²²

Writing Exercise 2: (See **Handout D**) Creating your own Spoken-word Poem

After viewing and reading several examples of Spoken-word pieces, have students draft and work in pairs or small groups to revise their poem in preparation for an in class Spoken-word performance.

If a poetry slam is organized for the classroom, **Handout D** can be helpful in assessing student work by providing a roadmap for the process of developing Spoken-word poetry as well as invaluable prompts used by Molly Raynor in her work.

If a full performance during class time is not realistic the following alternative “performance” ideas could be considered.

Have students perform their poems in small groups in class.

Have students videotape their individual performance and upload it to a class, password protected shared site.

Organize a Poetry Slam during an alternative time such as a weekend evening or after school.

Finally, if a full performance is not available for your class, have students revise their Spoken-word piece into a final draft to be included in their Portfolio.

STRAND THREE

ELA3, L1: “Living on Stage”: Creating Theatre for the Community

OBJECTIVE: In this lesson students will read, learn and explore writing a play based on the process generously shared by Donté Clark. As with learning about what inspires and shapes a writer’s voice, a writer’s process for creating is unique to an individual, their life, their community and their lived experiences.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- What is my definition of community?
- How do I support what is positive in my community and work to address the challenges it faces?
- How can theatre and other forms of performance art be a tool for positive social change?

STUDENTS WILL:

- Connect literature from the past to art forms in the present
- Learn about some of the fundamental elements of creating a play
- Learn about the role of art to make positive social change
- Understand how theatre can be used as a process and format to empower youth and communicate their lived experience

OPENER:

Work with the class to create a working definition of the following terms:

A Play, Script, Monologue, Dialogue, Setting, Story Arc, Characters, Scenes/Acts in a play.

Many forms of self-expression are rooted in the lived experiences of the author or artist. Comparing your community and your life to another’s is a natural inclination, but as a young author and artist it is important to value your own voice and the insight your experience offers. While *Romeo is Bleeding*, *Té’s Harmony* and *Romeo and Juliet* are works of art illuminating conflict and violence, they also offer moments of reprieve and love. With this value in mind, have students respond in writing to the following two prompts:

(1) “When I reflect on my community and issues that are either challenging or celebratory, I think of...”

(2) If I were to choose to write a play about my community, I would write about...

FOCUS: Understanding One Playwright’s Journey

Poet, playwright, educator and activist Donté Clark reflected upon his own process for creating the play *Té’s Harmony*. As you read aloud with students or have them read Donté’s process independently, ask them to underline words/phrases that resonate and inspire them and prepare to share these in pairs or in small discussion groups.

“MY PROCESS FOR WRITING A PLAY”

1. LIVE

When brainstorming ideas to flesh out into a staged production, first, I live. Living is the most important piece before I will produce anything. I walk populated streets and I watch people. I watch people sitting on the curbside, families in an ice cream parlor, and those walking the streets aimlessly. I go places, and I watch. I see who interacts with whom and who gets overlooked. Those who are most overlooked are the characters I choose.

2. ENGAGE/EMBRACE

After my people-watching, I engage. I engage with those who I feel are most overlooked. In order for me to care I have to build a relationship with these people. I have to understand their joy by being a part of their day; by making myself available to wear their cries. Embrace.

3. CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

After I watch, travel and engage, I think of the most interesting people I have come across and I combine these characters. They can be characters in the same city, or sometimes I will mix different stories from different cities to see how these people would interact if they had ever met. I take people’s real lived experience and combine it with others to imagine their interactions.

4. PLACE

Now that I have the characters I want to use to tell a story with, I think of a unique place where this story can unfold. As far as *Té’s Harmony*, it was easy because *Romeo & Juliet* laid the foundation. I chose my city, my friends and myself- drawing on our lived experiences made character and plot development more tangible. When choosing locations for the story, I wanted places that are known in my city as landmarks, so that it would be real for those who live there. I specifically chose the ghetto’s most known blocks.

Blood Ties

Whenever talking to people about my city, I’m always asked about gang violence. This bothers me every time. I want to make this piece very clear that I know no gang members. Everyone I associate with is an immediate family members or close to kin.

This is hard for people to believe but not when I examine *Romeo & Juliet*. They were described as the Montagues & Capulets. Two families. Not thugs, or gang members. Two families. When you view it from this perspective you can relate to the characters more and the story is more received. Who wouldn’t want to protect their cousin from an enemy and put their lives on the line? That’s what Tybalt was doing for his cousin Juliet, and Romeo was honoring his cousin Mercutio. Families stick together.

That’s our problem today. This is family on family violence. “Gangs” sound more like you join a group voluntarily to cause chaos in the city. What happens when it’s your father and uncles who are the “criminals?” As a child I have no choice about whom I was born to or what crimes will affect me. With understanding that it forces us to see these individuals as human who are responding to traumatic situations with the best resources they have. You don’t solve family on family violence by locking up the family. But first we have to see each other as family.

5. TIME PERIOD

At this point I have where this story takes place, but when is key. As far as *Té’s Harmony* I chose to tell the story in today’s time because it’s urgent for us right now. But it is also important that we tell a brief story at the beginning of our Fathers to set the tone of the lived experiences we go through today.

6. WHY: WHAT IS THE PURPOSE?

Why I want to tell this story will inspire what entry point I take to start it off. The message (the “why”) should be driven home by the end of the story. Once you understand why you are telling this story, it’s important to drop hints throughout the play to make it juicy.

7. STORY ARC

Before I write the story I map out who will do and say what at a particular point in the story to move it along. That way when I start writing I am not sidetracked and I can focus on dialogue. I then flesh out the beginning, the middle arc (climax) that lands on how I want the story to end, and the resolution.

8. WHO I DO IT FOR

I think about the audience I represent first. No matter who sees this play I think about who I represent, who I do it for. This is where the passion to tell the story will be enough to see you through the process of writing and staging.



9. BE REAL

At this point you have all that you need to start. Always use the exact language and vernacular spoken by the people who your characters are based on. I always cast people that can carry the spirit of these characters- this is important- to cast those who closely identify with these characters to make it real enough to where it doesn’t feel like acting, but living on stage. You want your story to live on and beyond the stage.

10. FEEL WHAT I’M SAYING?

When I was first introduced to *Romeo & Juliet* I thought it was corny. I felt really lame to have to read this story and believed that this particular frame of storytelling was for nerds. It wasn’t until I matured as a person and wanted to further develop my writing skills that I was able to be honest with myself. Truth is, I was afraid of the way that the language was being used in *Romeo & Juliet*. It’s not that I haven’t seen most of the words, but I didn’t understand the context in which the words were being used, and the rhythm threw me off. Most importantly the story wasn’t being broken down in a way that made me feel connected to the characters and able to apply the themes to my lived experiences. I felt silenced.

I realized that language is most important when expressing identity. How people communicate is what distinguishes a culture, defines one’s character- an open door to the soul. So when writing *Té’s Harmony* I wanted to make sure I used as much soul as possible. I wanted to show the beauty in using words that reflect the corners and parking lots that I come from. This way it makes it real for the people who come from there, and it captures the soul of a people when lived on stage or film. It forces people to listen, feel, and try to use context clues to understand just the story like I had to when reading Shakespeare. Sometimes it’s not the words but the way in which it is expressed that captures the message. I believe they call this tonality.

When using the exact words from the community your story represents, it captures the soul of the people, and turns the acting into a lived experience on stage and less of a production. You begin to love the people you are watching.

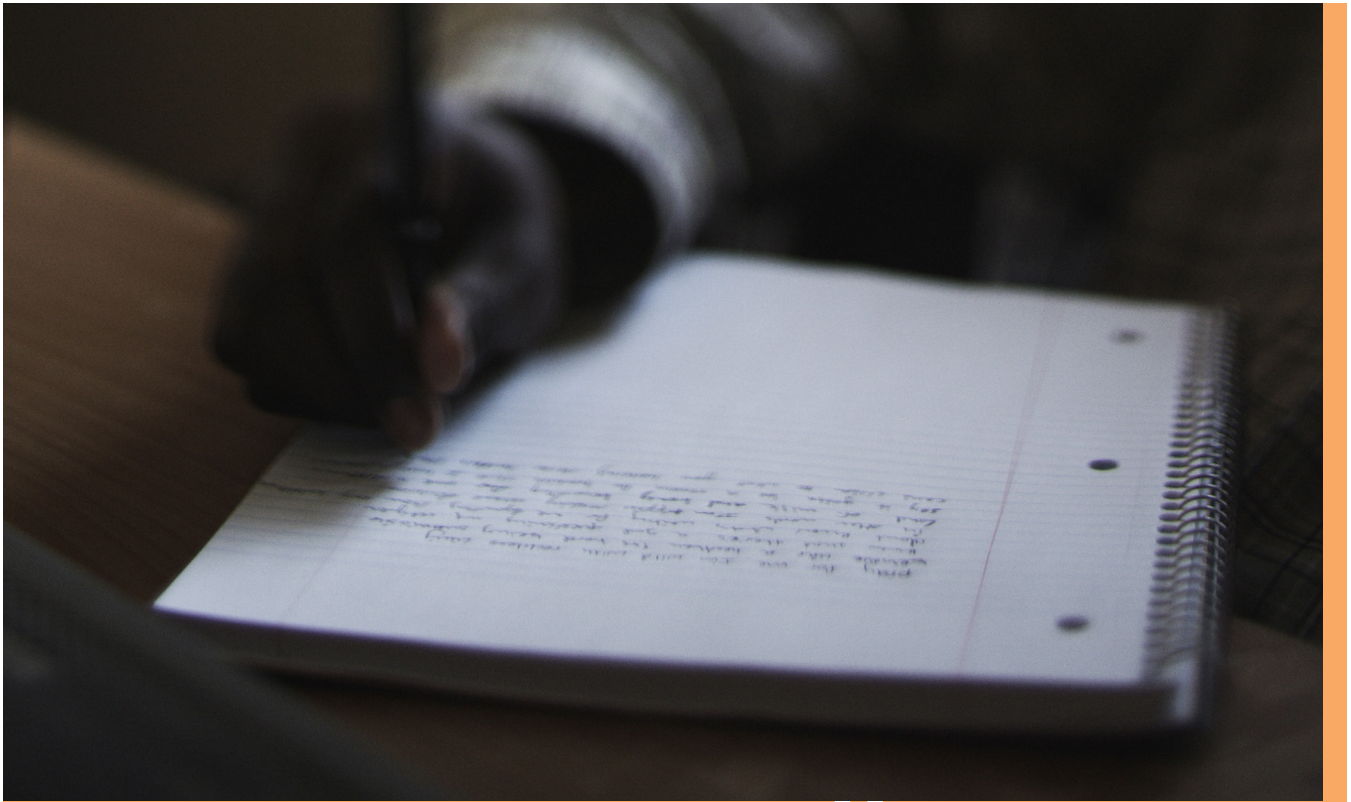
Watch:

1. *Romeo is Bleeding* DVD Chapters #9 & 11 [20:02-25:05; 26:17-27:58]
2. *Romeo is Bleeding* DVD Chapter #28 [1:23:40-1:29:09]

Read:

1. Closing scene from *Té's Harmony* (See **Handout E**.)

Writing Assignment 3: After reading, discussing and listening to the process by which Donté Clark crafted the play *Té's Harmony*, have students write one or more scenes from a play that they could imagine developing over time. Remind student to use the description for “My Process for Writing a Play” as well as the opening letter in this curriculum as an inspiration.



English/Language Arts Final Assessment

Depending upon your learning objectives and the time spent on the lessons, the following two suggestions are offered as possible models for a final demonstration of student learning for Strand Two and Three.

Portfolio: Over the course of the five lessons included in the ELA section of *Re-mixing Shakespeare* directed Writing Exercises were included in ELA2, L2 (Essay), ELA2, L3 (Spoken-word poem) and ELA3, L1 (scene from a play.) Have students revise each writing assignment in final form and submit as a final portfolio for this unit. Included in this portfolio should also be student self-assessments and any peer-review documentation of their writing process.

SOCIAL STUDIES PATHWAY

INHERITING HISTORY: TEACHING *ROMEO IS BLEEDING* IN SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSROOMS

SS, L1: (High School) Great Migration: From the South to California

OBJECTIVE: The Great Migration is the single largest modern migration of African Americans in American History. This movement profoundly shaped and changed the United States as we know it today yet remains largely overlooked. Why individuals and families leave their homes for another place is complex and personal. Weighing the many factors and framing this lesson as the “push” and “pull” of a decision may be a helpful pedagogical approach.

This two-day lesson can be fully integrated into an American History unit on The Great Migration, adapted for units on American immigration or migration patterns or included in broader Social Studies units focusing on American demographic shifts, economic mobility, environmental impact and industrial growth or the relationship between race, geography and economic opportunities.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- Why do people move from one place to another?
- What might make them move? Why might someone choose a particular place?
- How is migration different than immigration?
- What was the Great Migration in the United States?
- How did the history of The Great Migration shape my community?

STUDENTS WILL:

- Compare and contrast migration and immigration
- Learn and analyze information about The Great Migration
- Reflect and discuss how The Great Migration profoundly shaped the United States.
- Explore how The Great Migration may have affected their own community

OPENER: Working Definitions

Ask students to work in small groups to develop a **working definition** of *migration* and *immigration*, and compare their definitions to terms such as *refugee* and *immigrant*.

A working definition is an exercise to construct the meaning of a word by describing it with familiar words and phrases. It may be helpful to offer several sentences in order for students to use context clues as they brainstorm and synthesize their ideas. Remind each group to assign a reporter in order to share out their final definitions.

As a class identify what is shared and what is distinct about these terms. Discuss the many personal reasons individuals and families may decide to uproot their lives including the relationships between economic opportunity and poverty, political persecution and fear, political persecution and great freedom, as well as opportunities for self-determination.



FOCUS: The Great Migration

(1) Share the following introductory talking points to The Great Migration.

- Between 1915 and 1970, an estimate of more than 6 million African-Americans moved out of the South to cities across the Northeast, Midwest and West.
- This relocation — called the Great Migration — resulted in massive demographic shifts across the United States. Between 1910 and 1930, cities such as New York, Chicago, Detroit and Cleveland saw their African-American populations grow by about 40 percent, and the number of African-Americans employed in industrial jobs nearly doubled.²³

(2) Have students journal or discuss the following prompt:

- What reasons would lead to over 6 million American citizens choose to leave the South, uproot their lives and move elsewhere? List out student responses.

(3) Pass out three passages taken from *The Warmth of Other Suns* by Isabel Wilkerson as well as an interview with the author (**Handout F** and **G**). Using these first person accounts and interview, find evidence from the texts to answer the prompt:

“Why African Americans choose to migrate from the South to other parts of the United States?”

(4) Watch *Romeo is Bleeding* DVD Chapter #13 [30:55-34:08] explaining how The Great Migration affected Richmond.

Ask students, “How did the migration from the South shape the community of Richmond?”

(5) Depending on access and time, share one of the following interviews with Isabel Wilkerson, the author of a tremendous text on the Great Migration, *The Warmth of Other Suns*.

- **Audio:** NPR Fresh Air interview from September 10, 2010 (25:00)²⁴
- **Video:** There are many interviews online about this book. The one included is excellent both for the conversation and for its brevity for classroom use.
13 min: Tavis Smiley²⁵ (Note: load prior to scroll past commercial)

Writing Exercise: Have students create a chart that outlines the “push” and “pull” factors that they have learned about The Great Migration. One format to follow could resemble the following:

	Major Events	Push Factors	Pull Factors
1930s			
1940s			
1950s			
1960s–today			
Class Notes			

Next have each student select a piece of evidence that illustrates their most significant new learning about The Great Migration and explain this example in a short essay.

SS, L2: Why Geography Matters: How where you live shapes how you live

OBJECTIVE: Students will learn about community mapping and engage in their own mapping exercise to think critically about their community, compare and contrast the ways communities are structured and reflect upon the many factors influencing neighborhoods and life experiences.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- How does history shape my current community?
- How do the physical aspects of a community impact the people who live there?
- Why is understanding the geography of a school, neighborhood or community important?

STUDENTS WILL:

- Learn about the exercise of community mapping
- Engage in mapping their own community
- Reflect upon the assets and challenges within their community

OPENER:

Watch several video clips that expand on the myriad of issues facing Richmond:

Clip 1: Officer describing the physical boundaries of North and Central Richmond
[*Romeo is Bleeding* DVD Chapter #13 (30:55-34:08)]

Clip 2: Chevron fire [*Romeo is Bleeding* DVD Chapter #12 (27:52-30:50)]

Clip 3: “Chocolate Smile,” Marjé Kilpatrick¹⁹

As a class, discuss what they heard about the community of Richmond from these clips? The following questions may be helpful:

- How does living in an industrial zone, such as an oil refinery, factory, electric plant, etc., impact residents close by?
- What is it like for the residents of the unincorporated parts of Richmond to not be counted as part of the city?
- What physical aspects of the Richmond map contribute to the city's conflicts?
- How are race and class reflected in the Richmond maps?

Read: Blog Report about Richmond's efforts for youth involvement in city planning.²⁶

- After reading through the report, what questions do you have?

FOCUS: Community Mapping

Identifying and mapping the physical, cultural, economic and political aspects of our communities is often the first step in understanding its current struggles and success. Through an exercise titled “community mapping” students will explore how and why neighborhoods developed or declined, why industries are where they are, and why communities live where they do.

Split students into small groups to create a community map. There are many tools to draw from to help students engage in this activity. Ask them to include major geographic features, as well as residential, industrial, commercial and other kinds of neighborhoods.

Have groups present community maps to one another, including their understanding of how the different features impact people who live nearby. It may be helpful to develop a peer review feedback process for students to stay engaged with each presentation. (See [Handout H](#) to access possible models to use with students.)

After the conclusion of their presentation, ask groups to compare their community map to what they heard about the community of Richmond.²⁷ After students are able to share in groups, have each student individually reflect in writing with the following prompts in mind:

- What was similar between their community and Richmond?
- What was different?
- What new information did you learn about your own community? What was surprising to you?
- If you were to identify one or two issues to change within your community, what issue would it be? What are the possible avenues you could explore to making a positive difference?
- What personal skills would you draw upon to address this community issue?
- Reflect upon Donté's use of art, poetry and theatre to respond to his community. If you were to sit down and talk with Donté about his choices, what are two questions that you would like to ask?

SS3, L3: Contemporary Social Issues – Race, Privilege and Power

OBJECTIVE: In this final lesson in Re-mixing Shakespeare students will have the opportunity to examine the critical social issues addressed specifically within the film *Romeo is Bleeding*. The documentary celebrates student voice and the creative process. It also offers a sobering and honest portrait of the ongoing loss and trauma as a result of ongoing turf wars and police brutality occurring in Richmond, California. Unfortunately, Richmond is not unique in this regard, but the creative work of the young artists within the documentary deserves our full attention and offers each of us the opportunity to be inspired by the talents of Richmond's youth.

The art created within *Romeo is Bleeding* delves deeply into the complex socio-economic, cultural and historical issues driving the violence in their community and affecting the everyday health and safety of its members. By watching short clips of the film, students will analyze the relationship between the social issue and its expression in several art forms. In doing so, students will reflect upon how their lived experiences are an essential component to self-expression, and social activism and social change. Students will also have an opportunity to research and demonstrate their understanding of a chosen social issue and propose creative and realistic solutions.

As author and poet Luis J. Rodriguez states in the Foreword to *Té's Harmony* :

The arts save lives. The arts are the best antidote for violence, disconnections, depressions and alienations...

Anyone who has been young knows that alienation is one of the big traits of adolescence. Doing one's art - whether in music, dance, writing, theatre, painting, and more - and to be properly seen and appreciated by others can make all the difference in the world.²⁸

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- What is the relationship between race, power and privilege?
- How does the history of a community shape its identity?
- What are different ways to address current social, political and economic challenges in your community?

STUDENTS WILL:

- Consider and analyze multiple perspectives
- Watch and analyze film as text from *Romeo is Bleeding*
- Conduct independent research on a chosen social issue from the film in their own school and/or community.

OPENER:

If students have not already read the opening letters from the filmmakers Jason Zeldes and Michael Klein, or from two of the central characters in the film, Donté Clark and Molly Raynor, begin the lesson by reading aloud each letter.

Ask students to share what each of these perspectives have in common or how they differ. What are the central messages expressed by each of these artists? What “invitation” did each letter offer? How do each of the letters convey the artists lived experience, their personal background and their particular professional or community role? Do these influences matter? Why?

FOCUS: Race, Power and Privilege

Within the documentary many social issues are directly mentioned or are woven within the narrative. Depending upon your learning objectives (research skills, media literacy, collaboration, presentation etc...) you will choose to organize students and student groups accordingly.

The resources in this lesson offer an introduction to many of the contemporary social issues that surface in the film. Many are deeply emotional and very personal. Seen and heard through the eyes and voices in *Romeo is Bleeding*, the excerpts and suggested resources can serve as a launching point for students to engage in thoughtful and rigorous research projects inspired by the lived experiences of the young men and women who shared their lives and stories in the film.

- Racism, poverty and the environment [DVD Chapter #12 (27:58-30:55)]
Further Resources:
 - (1) Read: Environmental Justice Case Study: West County Toxics Coalition and the Chevron Refinery²⁹
 - (2) Read: Environmental Health News³⁰
- Law Enforcement and Mass Incarceration, [DVD Chapters #21&22 (58:06-1:05:20)]
Further Resources:
 - (1) Watch and Read: Locked Up in America: PBS Frontline series³¹
 - (2) Read: PBS Interview, Michelle Alexander author of *The New Jim Crow*³²
 - (3) Listen: NPR interview with Michelle Alexander³³
- The legacy of violence and Trauma [DVD Chapters #15,17,& 24 (38:54-41:56; 46:03-49:04; 1:09:28-1:13:26)]
Further Resources:
 - (1) Read: The Hidden Cost of Gun Violence³⁴
 - (2) Read: National Child Traumatic Stress Network³⁵
 - (3) Read: Mother Jones article “Black Deaths Matter”³⁶
- Gender stereotyping: [DVD Chapter #19 (50:32-56:30)]
Further Resources:
 - (1) Read: Black Lives Matter needs womanism now³⁷
 - (2) Read: My Feminism Is Black, Intersectional, and Womanist – And I Refuse to Be Left Out of the Movement³⁸
- School to Prison Pipeline-Juvenile Facilities [DVD Chapter #26 (1:17:57-1:21:12)]
Further Resources:
 - (1) Read/website: ACLU School to Prison Pipeline
 - (2) PBS-Tavis Smiley Reports: Fact Sheet-How Bad is the School-to-Prison-Pipeline

Final Assessment for Social Studies Pathway

If available, the final assessment outlined at the close of the Interdisciplinary Pathway could be well suited as a culminating assessment for the Social Studies as well. Revisit this assignment if a student generated documentary scene or film is available and of interest to your students.

If the technology or time to make a film is not available, students could present a storyboard of an imagined social issue documentary film that would address an issue of their choice. After “pitching” the film idea to the class, students could field questions on the issue and/or the chosen film technique. Students could provide a peer review of the pitch and, as a final writing assignment, present a formal proposal of the documentary film project.

HANDOUT A

COMPARISON OF PROLOGUE'S

ELA1, L1: Classic Text, Modern Interpretation: Teaching *Romeo and Juliet* Today

Setting the Scene:

- What is the purpose of the Prologue? What insights do you gain about both plays from the Prologue? Discuss your reflections with a partner.
- In your journal, describe how the mood is conveyed in words or phrases in both plays. What words/phrases stand out?

Romeo and Juliet

Enter Chorus

Chor: Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life;
Whose misadventure piteous overthrow
Do with their death bury their parents' strife.
The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love,
And the continuance of their parents' rage,
Which, but their children's end, nought could
remove,

Is now the two hours' traffick of our stage;
The which if you with patient ears attend,
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to
mend. [*Exit.*]

Té's Harmony

Narrator: Can you hear it?
Whisper of bullets
Have you seen it?
A cautious look over their shoulder
Red rimmed eyes
Do you feel it?
Dirt caked sidewalks
Metallic lock on their life
Have you lived it?
War in the ghetto
Central. vs. North
Richmond wasn't always like this

Back in the 70's
When kids could play from sunrise through night skies
Without the fear of becoming another faded star
Outlined in chalk
Two boys soon found a way to be brothers
Raised on different sides of the tracks

Santiago-
Brought up in Central by a slick talking mother
With a quick tongue and powerful hands
Learned all the tricks of the trade by the age of twelve
With nothing like a role model to stop him from
Scheming and dreaming to be the greatest criminal
To take Richmond's worth

A bus ride away
Godfrey from North Richmond
Taught by a firm-fisted man
To work hard for what you want
He knew everything about the block
He saw the hustle, studied the flow
Soon this young boy would give up school
To make the money his daddy never could at his 9-5
After he flipped his first pound of weed
He told himself
This is how he'd become a man

Surrounded by symmetrical poverty
On separate sides of the tracks
Little boys looked up to them
With exotic cars, money weighing down their pockets
They neck shining just as bright as they wrist

Those hood celebrities
Stomachs growling
Hungry for a bigger bankroll
Each needed a business partner
Santiago got word of Godfrey
Eventually they started making more money
than they parents ever seen
Santiago brought in an old friend to help
along the way
A cool cat named Ray
They bond became tight
Trusting each other with their life

After too many years in that game
Godfrey and Santiago wanted to quite a
start a legit business
After one more lick they'd be set
But their plan got cut short b a gunshot
All these people knew is
Godfrey's life was nearly taken by a bullet
Santiago was acquitted for his attempted murder
And nobody seen or heard from Ray again

Ever since then
This city been broken
Split by them tracks
Central and North
Do you feel it?

*From ancient grudge break to new mutiny
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean*

Who gon' protect the children?
Richmond is on fire
And Lord knows, we all burning.

HANDOUT B

EXCERPTS FROM *TÉ'S HARMONY* TO COMPARE WITH *ROMEO AND JULIET*

ELA1, L1: Classic Text, Modern Interpretation: Teaching *Romeo and Juliet* Today

TO THE EDUCATOR: Because of the wide range of editions of *Romeo and Juliet* in circulation and for the sake of length, the curriculum does not include the full text from Shakespeare. Instead the first few lines and the ending lines from *Romeo and Juliet* (2014 Cambridge School Shakespeare) are given as bookends to mirror the scene fully included from *Té's Harmony*.

Setting the Scene

- Read aloud in class these two scene and then in small groups, discuss their similarities and their differences?
- In both monologues, Romeo and Té hint that something tragic will happen? In your journal identify the words/phrases from the text that convey this possibility and be prepared to share out with the class.

I. Act I, Scene 4, *Romeo and Juliet*

Romeo. I fear too early; for my mind mis-gives
Some consequence yet hanging in the stars
Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
With this night's revels, and expire the term
Of a despised life closed in my breast
By some vile forfeit of untimely death.
But he, that hath the steerage of my course,
Direct my sail! On, lusty gentlemen.

I. Act I, Scene 4, p. 33, *Té's Harmony*

Té: They just don't get it, nobody do
I try to tell them about the dreams I be having
And they don't take me serious but it's true
It's like I be having these visions
Mind crippling my movements with fear
I get this feeling like chips of ice sheets in my gristle
Chill rattling bones as thoughts of short life
Pierce my conscience
The reaper is coming
I see me at my crossroads
Forced decisions lead to compromise
One of us won't make it to the other side of the tracks
Love and war, two battles in one
And only one of those can be won

Setting the Scene:

- In these two scenes the first encounter between Romeo and Juliet and Té and Harmony occur. However, these scenes do not precisely mirror one another. Where do they diverge?
- How does the role of time and setting shape a play? What role did these elements play in shaping the narrative arc in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Té's Harmony*?
- In your journal reflect upon your understanding of the origins of the conflict between the families in either play? What lines can you identify that express this growing tension?
- In your own words, how would you describe the differences and the similarities between the Montagues and the Capulets and the Narfer's and those from Central Richmond?

II. Act I, Scene 5, *Romeo and Juliet*

(begin)

Capulet: Welcome, gentlemen! ladies that have their toes
Unplagued with corns will have a bout with you...

(end)

Tybalt: Patience perforce with wilful choler meeting
Makes my flesh tremble in their different greeting.
I will withdraw: but this intrusion shall
Now seeming sweet convert to bitter gall.

Exit

II. Act I, Scene 5, p. 34, *Té's Harmony*

[*Harmony, Jazzmine and their friends bust out a dance routine. Té breaks off from his friends and goes over closer to Harmony. Amazed by her beauty and talent, he contemplates approaching her. T-Y, watching from afar, recognizes Té.*]

T-Y: Aye cuz, is that a Narfer?
Oh hell nah, the enemy
They walk think ice'
Unknowing, unaware of
Death's swift hands
Waiting, lurking
Far from sight, thirsting blood
My hatred runs deep
Them ... him
They're all just different shades of the same color
Spilled our blood
Innocence taken,
Just like they took my brother

A dark night, we were exposed by the streetlights hand
Naive children caught in their trap
Then, between silences, it happened
I watched through swollen eyes as he layed on that cold concrete bed
Watched as they killed his light
Beat him 'til he was nothing more than a dimming glow
Like the sun died out
Like broken shards of the moon
A broken piece of me
A bleeding reflection of myself
He was my anchor
He kept me from drifting with the currents
From drowning in chaos
He kep me from falling
From slipping through
The hour's fine glass
He was like gravity
He was the only thing that kept me from disappearing

We drown in puddles of tears
While their hands are painted red with our blood, my brother's blood
Trying to play God can only get you death
And in my ears their final words would be music
His blood painted across walls and concrete floors
Crimson rivers of justice
Blackened flesh framing his lifeless corpse
My hatred runs deep

What if I could stop not only his heart but his very soul?
The fragrance of rotten flesh
Calla lillies wilting six feet under
Tears cascading down empty eyes
A rose bloomed from cracked bones, calcified ivy
Such beauty within death

What if I could drop him into the arms of death?
Watch as he went like feathers beneath the wings of black crows
If I could banish him to that dark abyss- haha-
Hesitation would find me in the arms of joy
My hatred runs deep

Setting the Scene:

- What words in the dialogue between *Romeo and Juliet* and Té and Harmony are evocative of their emotions?
- Choose specific words from the scene that support the emotion described. What are the differences or similarities between *Romeo and Juliet* and *Té's Harmony* in this regard?

III. Act I, Scene 5, *Romeo and Juliet*

(begin)

Romeo: [*To Juliet*] If I profane with my unworhiest hand
This holy shrine, the gentle fine is this:
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss...

(end)

Capulet: Nay, gentlemen, prepare not to be gone;
We have a trifling foolish banquet towards.
Is it e'en so? why, then, I thank you all
I thank you, honest gentlemen; good night.
More torches here! Come on then, let's to bed.
Ah, sirrah, by my fay, it waxes late:
I'll to my rest.

III. Act I, Scene 5, p. 39-40, *Té's Harmony*

Harmony: What's your favorite poet?

Té: Tupac

Harmony: I knew it, and I can see why.

Té: You have one?

Harmony: Nikki Giovanni

Té: Figures. So what's your favorite poem by her?

Harmony: *I was born in the Congo
I walked to the fertile crescent and built
The sphinx
I designed a pyramid so tough that a star
That only grew every one hundred years falls
Into the center giving divine perfect light
I am bad*

Té: “Ego Tripping.” I feel you.

Harmony: You know that’s my girl Nikki G! So what’s your favorite Pac poem?

Té: *Did you hear about the rose that grew
from a crack in the concrete?
Proving nature’s law is wrong
It learned to walk without having feet.*

Té and Harmony: [*Together*] Funny it seems.
But keeping its dreams, it learned to breathe, fresh air.

Té: You know that kind of reminds me of one of my other favorite poets-

*What’s in a name? That which we call a rose,
By any other name would smell as sweet.*

Harmony: Shakespeare? [*Looks at Té like he’s crazy*]

Té: Yea, that white boy deep.

Harmony: Deep? Humph.

Té: What? Y’all sleeping on the big homie. He was a genius ahead of his time.

Harmony: Well, I guess.

Té: So I was thinking that maybe-

[*Enter Jazzmine*]

Jazzmine: Harmony girl! Yo mama looking for you! [*To Té*] Oh, hi.

Harmony: Alright, here I come. [*Hurries away*]

Té: Excuse me, what did you say your name was again?

Jazzmine: Well, mine is Jazzmine, and you are?

Té: Oh, my bad, they call me Té.

Jazzmine: Té-okay, nice to meet you, Té. That’s my sister you was talking to.
Her name is Harmony. I’ll let her know that you said bye and thanks for coming to our
party. You have a safe night.

Té: [*To himself*] Wait, your party? Dang. So that's her Pops.

Ben: There you go. Come on cuz, we gotta get outta here. [*Rushes off*]

Harmony: Aye, Jazz, where did he go? Had he left yet?

Jazzmine: Yea, they're leaving now.

Harmony: Dang, I don't even know-

Jazzmine: His name is Té. I think he is from the Narf side.³⁹
Welp, it was good while it lasted, huh?

Harmony: For real? why was he in Central? Now, but wait, uh-uh.

Setting the Scene:

- From Act 1, Scene 5 we gain insight into a very specific and important detail of the long standing familial and community conflict. What words would you use to describe the specifics of this division? What words in the text offer you this specific insight?
- The use of metaphors in a text is a powerful element evoking a range of responses. Select at least two metaphors from either play and in your own words share with a partner your interpretation.

IV. Act 1, Scene 5-*Romeo and Juliet*

(begin)

[*Exit all except Juliet and Nurse.*]

Juliet. Come hither, nurse. What is yond gentleman?

Nurse. The son and heir of old Tiberio ...

(end)

Nurse. Anon, anon! — Come, let's away; the strangers are all gone.

[*Exit.*]

IV. Act I, Scene 14, p. 76-77, *Té's Harmony*

Jazzmine: Té this, Té that, is Té ok?

Are you okay?

Your heart has been swallowed by the rose of Té's love,

But you have to recall the petals that pump in your veins
You see a flower of a face,
But he has the soul of a slithering snake
Injecting venom in the bodies of our own
Ignorance venom in the bodies of our own
Ignorance is sprouting from your scalp
Like you forgot your roots
Who planted you?
What watered you?
Who shed light on your skin?
You shifting your orbit to this son from the other side
Making this Godfrey your God
But be careful-
Those thorns of a Narf is sharp
And your tongue had the nerve to ask, "is Té okay?"
The girl who used to scream you wall call, "I'm from Central"
Louder than a blood-hungry sergeant
Wants to caress the arms of a Narfer
Who don't do that, Harmony
Don't you know times have changed?
Your tears should weep for the life he has washed away
Harmony he's dead

If you were truly from Central
You would drop the life that dropped your cousin's
Your own cousin ...

Oh, this grief, these woes
Sorrow traps me within the garden of your deceit
Drowning in his ashes
A fool's paradise

If you really cared for me,
The girl who you call sister,
Our connection deeper than blood that binds,
If you cared for your kin who's been there for you,
Then you'd be there for me now
I hope your heart will direct your way through this maze
To choose the right person to protect you,
But until you return to reality
I'm out
I can't do this no more
Bye, Harmony!

Setting the Scene

- Choose one or two lines from each play that you understand as connected in their meaning and be able to explain their connections.

- Light and darkness are often used as contrasting symbols throughout both plays. Identify moments where these symbols are used in the scenes and their possible interpretations.
- The balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet* is one of the most familiar and referenced scenes from all of Shakespeare's tragedies. In *Té's Harmony* we read of a modern interpretation of this scene. What are the echoes between the two plays? What words or phrases are most evocative of the exchange of emotions between the two lovers? Share your reflections with a partner and be prepared to share a synthesis of this discussion with the larger class.

V. Act 2, Scene 2 *Romeo and Juliet*

(begin)

[*Capulet's orchard. Enter Romeo*]

Romeo: He jests at scars that never felt a wound ...

[*Juliet appears above at a window.*]

(end)

Romeo: O blessed, blessed night! I am afeard.
Being in night, all this is but a dream,
Too flattering-sweet to be substantial.

V. *Té's Harmony*, Act 1, Scene 6

[*Harmony is in the women's section, looking at clothes in the mirror. Té thinks aloud as he watches Harmony shipping.*]

Té: Damn, she looks good.
Why not she spread her beauty across the skies and
Shed light to shame the dimming stars
A flame slow to death

I imagine there is no home where her heart is
It's probably miles away from serenity of the suburbs
No white picket fence surrounding Black-Eyed Susan vines
Or orange and purple blooming in a garden
A pathway of polished granite slate that leads to a welcome mat
To greet a weary spirit in search for a resting place in a soul mate

I bet if I knocked no one would answer
'Cause trust don't live here no more
It's no home where her heart is
Just beaten and chipped metal
Reddish brown rust formed
From constant thunderstorms

Probably been awhile since the last time the sun rose in her chest
Or dawned deep enough to reach into the cracks of the concrete
Shine through bullet holes of windows,
Decayed walls, moldy

From the outside you can tell
You can smell that something died inside of her
I wonder what it was that was left to rot in this vacant lot
But if time permits
These hands of my love will renovate
This deserted shack behind her breast
I'll build a mansion of all colors

Harmony: [*Looks at the price tag on a shirt*] \$14.99? That's why I love me some Target!

Té: Mmm, such a voice, honey laced so sweet
To wish that I were the words she speak
Stretch me across long and wide
To cover the grounds she walks on

[*Harmony pick out another shirt and hold it up in the mirror. She begins talking to herself.*]

Harmony: Why Jazz always gotta bust me out? Damn, Té.
In one night I became encompassed in the flesh of his words
Caged by the cadence of his inaudible thoughts
Breathing right into his cryptic trap
I smile
I believe, for a second I can breath his same air
All the while despising every moment of this weakness
Guilt paints sorrowful lullabies in my mind
I went to hate him so bad
Just like I hated the Narfer that killed my cousin
Just like I hated the Narfer I sliced with a razor
From her earlobe to her mouth
Because she thought she could set my patna up
Just like I hated those Narfers that jumped my best friend in front of me
Then tried to make me put a bullet in his head
Because of my loyalty I got two in my chest

She made it
The first words that sang a capella in my head after waking up from a coma
Those words pierced nails into the marrow of my lifeless bones
March 21, 2009-the day I came to, the day I survived
That same day a paret of me died-
The old Harmony
Suffocated by the smoke of white America's pistol
Resurrected by spirituals of my ancestors

I was reborn
I woke up
No longer a slave
That day I woke up
I was saved\

Still, sometimes.
I flash back to my past, whispers
That Narfer is your enemy
Taunting me, testing me
But the words
It takes more strength to be vulnerable
Sing songs in my torn soul
How does a hard girl turn soft
When she's still living in a warzone?

Just like I once hated myself
I want to hate him,
but I can't
Dazed by the swag in his veins and the dream in his eyes
The conviction in his movements erects the secrets in my heart

Damn, how da hell this happen?
The man that breaks bread with my supposed enemy
Snuck into the pores of my freshly paved skin
Tilled the earth beneath this gravestone in my chest
And CPR to the mouth of my desire

Is it true?
Could it be?
Dare I speak these impossible words
This story of love at the crossroads
I want to know how this rose
Planted in acid soil
Has grown to be so health
When all it is surrounded by is
Hate, crack rock, broken bottles and revenge

I want to know how it bloomed so quickly
Blossomed so brightly
With no hesitation
How it found a way to grow in the garden
Of our thirsty, barren hearts.

[Harmony sees Té ducking behind a clothes rack. They chase each other around the rack until Té is discovered.]

Harmony: Té?

Té: Harmony right?

Harmony: Uh, what are you doing here?

Té: I was uh, well you know-i was, uh, -

Harmony: Are you stalking me?

Té: Nah, nah, I was - how are you doing?

Harmony: I'm fine. [*Turns back to mirror*]

Té: Oh, that's good, fine is good. [*Long awkward pause as she looks into the mirror*] That shirt looks nice on you. I could picture you in that. Get some earrings this color and pull your hair up some type of way with some wedge shoes. You'll be right.

Harmony: So you think you know fashion?

Té: I'm an artist; I have an eye for these types of things

Harmony: Yea, and spying on people.

Té: What? Is that what you think? Think I followed you over here?

Harmony: Wouldn't put it past you. [*Puts the shirt back and walks off*]

Té: I didn't even know you was in here!

Harmony: So what are you looking for?

Té: Socks and drawers. It's about time for me to restock.

Harmony: In the women's section?

Té: I was making my way over there. Nah, honestly, I seen you come in and so I thought I'd come over to talk to you.

Harmony: So you were standing there the whole time?

Té: Kind of.

Harmony: So you didn't hear me when I was - [*Té nods his head*] Wow, awkward!

Té: Nah, don't be embarrassed. I think that's cute.

Harmony: No it ain't, you wasn't supposed to hear that.

Té: I'm glad I did. Now I know you're feelin' me. You already know I'm feelin' you, so what's the problem?

Harmony: The problem is I don't know if I want to feel you. I mean how would that look? A Central girl all hugged up with a Narfer?

Té: So you really from Central.

Harmony: Yea, and you're really a Narfer.

Té: Yea, I see what you're getting at.

Harmony: [*Shakes her head*] A Narfer? Why? I mean nothing is wrong with you. You fine. It's just that, that name. A Narfer.

Té: I mean you saying it like it's my name or something. It's just where I'm from, where I was brought up, and I can't change that. Just like you can't change being from the dirty deep. I just know it made us who we are today. And who we are today is what attracted us to each other.

Harmony: Yea, I guess you're right. I mean, it's just a name, huh?

Té: Yes, just a name.

Harmony: And there is nothing wrong with a person's character just because they're from a different neighborhood than you, huh?

Té: Nope, just a name.

HANDOUT C

SAMPLE POEMS

ELA2, L2: Where Are Our Voices?

ODE TO THE FIRST WHITE GIRL I EVER LOVED

José Olivarez

it was kindergarten
& i did not know English
so i could not talk
without being ridiculed

& the teacher did not want me in her class
she was white, too
she said i do not know
how to teach someone
who only speaks spanish

& the kids did not want me in their class
they were white, too
she said i do not know
how to be friends with someone
who only speaks spanish

& i was the only Mexican
& i only spoke spanish
i watched a lot of tv
& everyone was rich & white
my family was poor & Mexican
my family only spoke spanish

& in school i felt so lonely
my loneliness would walk home with me
my loneliness held my hand as i crossed streets
my loneliness spoke Spanish like my family

& this is how i learned to equate
my family with loneliness
how i learned to hate my family
how i learned to hate being Mexican
& i watched a lot of tv
& everyone was rich & white

& what I wanted to grow up
& be rich & white & speak english
on shows like Seinfeld or Friends
on shows with laughtracks, big hair & cardigans

& what i wanted was friends
to walk home from school with me
& what i wanted was a teacher
to give me gold stars like the other kids
& what I wanted was to stop eating welfare nachos
with government cheese

& it was kindergarten
& i loved all the white girls in my class
Robin & Crystal & Jen & all the white girls
whose names i've forgotten

i wanted to kiss them
i thought kisses were magic
& i hoped i could learn English through a kiss
that i could run my hands through their hair
and find a proper accent

i loved white girls
as much as i hated
being lonely & Mexican

lord, i am a 25 year old man
& sometimes still a 5 year old boy
& i love black women & latina women

& i tell them in spanish
how beautiful they are
& they are more beautiful & lovely
than all the white women in the world

i tell them in spanish
how lonely it is to live in english
& they answer with a remix of my name
yo se, yo se, yo se⁴⁰

You can José Olivarez recite the poem by visiting the link below:
<http://tinyurl.com/JoseOlivarez>

ANONYMOUS ASKS:

Jasmine An

“Am I correct in my assumption that you’re an East Asian women?”

The pizza boxes in my kitchen say no.
They laugh and spit garlic and cheese.
Good ol’ American food, they puff their crusts
up in pride and forget how they are Italian.

The soy sauce spilled on my stove says, “Hell yeah.”
Says, “if you’re not Asian, how come ‘comfort food’
means rice and fried tofu? I try ‘n say, “but
what about all those people eating Panda Express
everyday?” But the soy sauce don’t listen.

The survey I do to get a free dollar of print credits asks:

- ☐ African American
- ☐ Asian/Pacific Islander
- ☐ Caucasian
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Native American
- ☐ Other

My neighborhood says, “No way.” Says, “Naw,
you get a Minnesotan accent, and race don’t
really matter anymore, right? And anyway,
only white people live on this street,
who’re you kidding.”

The woman I meet in the gym says, “I love
the Chinese! I teach English
in the Chinese church. You should come
sometimes to meet your people.”

My grandpa says, “Why aren’t you a doctor
like your dad? Gay? Gay? Homosexual?”

Think about our family’s reputation.
Why can’t you be a good grandchild.”
He says all this in Chinese. That language
I’m always ashamed I can’t speak.⁴¹

WHEN THE OFFICER CAUGHT ME

Nate Marshall

what is the age when a black boy learns he's scary?

- Jonathan Lethem,
"Fortress of Solitude"

2003, the dark of early October.
the slight chill of Midwest autumn
entering our chests, me and darnell
half sprinted across the narrow street.

we crossed at the stop sign
in front of a car ready
for getaway, like every car
in our neighborhood.

the voice shot out, a stray bullet
of accusations. stop.
our jog became a sprint
how could you blame us?

we were young and black
and boys and just learning
that we were terrifying.
we were terrified

at the potential
of older versions
of us hopping out of the car
ready for the come up.

we were avoiding being made the marked.

when the officer caught me
my legs crumpled
like the stubborn plastic wrapper
of rap cd, finally ripped open and free

to lay bare the audio aggression
of young black boyiness.
when the officer caught me
my grape pop tumbled to the crabgrass,

spilled like piss. my fear
of the fear i now evoked
when the officer caught me
i cried. i gulped
answers to his questions
i endured the slip of hand
into pocket, the groping
of birthday money

and the accusations of drugs
this was the first time i used
my magnet school membership
to subdue my scary

it was not the last time.

when the officer caught me
i fell hard into the reality
of being 13 and black
and wild hundred.

my answers to interrogation
of reading torah.
darnell is his 3 year older wisdom,
a witness to my new manhood.

the cop a rabbi of this bar mitzvah
this is how black boys are baptized
into black manhood while they are still
boys and scared and going

to get their backpack from grandma's
crib for school tomorrow and scared
and learning how to steel a sobbing face
into a scary one.⁴²

HANDOUT D

RUBRIC FOR SPOKEN-WORD POEM

ELA2, L3: Art as Social Space: Spoken-word Poetry

“Teaching Strong Writing & Performance; Building Spoken Word Culture in Classrooms & After-School Settings”

By Molly Raynor

Inspired by Jeff Kass’ *Volume Youth Poetry Project* & June Jordan’s *Poetry For the People*

Part I: Overview/Purpose

Personal & Public Creative Expression

Creative writing can serve many purposes, but the two functions of poetry that I find to be the most helpful with high school students:

- Self-exploration and self-expression (individual healing)
- Activism; spreading awareness around social issues (communal transformation)

Our students are at a hard age in a harsh society that’s pushing them and pulling them from all angles. They are trying to figure themselves out as individuals and deal with struggles while fitting in at the same time. A lot of times reading and writing poetry and other creative forms can help them identify and explore both the ugly and beautiful aspects of their lives- what it means to be of their race, gender, religion, sexuality, socio-economic status, etc. Some students are relieved just to find a personal, private outlet for their emotions, while others want to express their feelings to the public and spread their awareness once they form this connection and conscience. Many young people who have felt silenced get on stage and are suddenly, immediately heard.

Benefits of Teaching Spoken Word & Hip Hop

Obviously not every teenager is automatically going to get engaged in your class just because you play them one rap song or spoken word poem. They may not like Hip Hop, for example, but most students of this generation will be excited. Hip Hop and spoken word originated as grassroots movements of resistance against the powers that were fueled by low-income youth of color. So using such art forms with all youth, but particularly youth of color, can be incredibly empowering- it frees student from the confines of “Standard English”, celebrates vernacular and multilingual writing, encourages creativity of ideas and language. Hip Hop and spoken word are not usually taken seriously as literary forms because they come from a history of oral art rather than written word and both are rooted in Black culture, appropriated by whites and commercialized by the media. I would argue that beyond being incredible tools of expression, communication and resistance, Hip Hop lyrics and spoken word poems are literary forms, both in their performed cadence and written structure. For example, traditional rap songs follow a strict rhyme scheme and line number with a chorus or “hook” between each verse.

Bridging the Gap Between Cannon & Contemporary

Rap is “Rhythm And Poetry”, a sonnet set to a beat with modern language. So how do we get the academic world to value rap and get our students to value sonnets? “The Cannon” is important- it represents a part of

history and a strong literary tradition- but it is not the only poetry (or most important poetry) ever written, which is the false belief many of our students have because of the way it is taught. So they come to associate “poetry” with dead white men writing in dated language they usually can’t relate to. Without scrapping classic texts entirely, we must find a way to teach contemporary, culturally relevant writers with the same level of devotion and glorification that we give Shakespeare. I feel that a healthy poetry lesson would use classic poetry as a tool for teaching poetic elements and universal themes while incorporating many other poets, eras and movements, showing the connection between all of them, and challenging students to see their own writing as part of today’s “cannon.”

Part 2: Process & Timeline

We map out our year according to the academic calendar- lesson-planning and prepping during the summer, providing programming September through June, culminating with a public spoken word performance and/or multimedia production in May or June. This means that the youth work on their craft for nine months, leading up to one night- this emphasizes the importance of the process over the final product. Of course we hope the big annual show is a powerful experience for the young people and the community, but the majority of breakthroughs and transformation happen before- during workshops, rehearsals, etc. Here is the breakdown of how we pace ourselves (we have weekly writing workshops but if you work with the same group of youth every day this timeline could be consolidated to a few months.)

September-December: Writing

Weekly writing workshops- each workshop has a different writing prompt and topic (connected to the overarching themes and guiding questions of the semester-long unit), so youth generate a new piece of writing each week, experimenting with different forms, perspectives, techniques, content, etc.

January-February: Revision

After a semester of writing, we ask youth to narrow down their three favorite pieces to revise. We then create a “culture of revision”, where youth bring in copies of one of their favorite poems and the whole group spends 15-30 minutes workshopping it. We usually get through four pieces per workshop, so if you are trying this in a classroom I’d suggest breaking them into small groups. The author uses the week to revise their piece according to feedback and bring a new draft the following week. Each poem usually goes through three to five drafts before its complete, and once it feels finalized, they move onto their next piece.

March-May: Performance

Once the writing is solid, youth memorize their pieces and practice reading them aloud in front of the group. They give each other feedback and continue to strengthen their delivery, leading up to the final performance. If their are group poems or choreographed pieces (mixed with dance, singing, or theatre) we spend extra time on those. Strategies for teaching strong performance are below.

Part 3: Critiquing Writing & Performance

Poetry: A medium for telling the truth.

Poetry: The achievement of maximum impact with a minimal number of words.

Poetry: Utmost precision in the use of language, hence, destiny and intensity of expression.

-June Jordan

Critiquing Vs. Editing: the Importance of Questioning

The first week of revision workshops, we ask the youth “what makes a poem strong? What makes a piece of writing engaging to the reader?” We take their answers (i.e. concrete imagery) and rephrase them into questions (i.e. does this piece have concrete, sensory imagery that the reader can visualize?) We type up the list and distribute it to youth- these questions become the “critique guidelines” for every revision session (see an example below.)

It is really important that the youth themselves become confident revising each other’s work- the more they understand what makes other poet’s writing “strong”, the more they will know how to make their own writing strong. If they are always looking to us as the educators to tell them what they need to change, they won’t become independent writers and readers.

Lastly, despite the urge to slash up a poem the way we often slash up essays with red marks, its critical that we teach youth how to critique, not edit. Ask them questions instead of giving them answers. It is quicker and easier to cross out a line and write “cliche” next to it, but way more powerful to underline it and write a question in the margins asking them for more specific details, trying to get them to dig deeper beyond generalizations. This requires more work on our end and more work on theirs so they may be resistant at first- they’re so used to being told what to do instead of challenged through questioning. This is a culture shift- moving away from editing and towards critiquing comes with growing pains but ultimately turns them into better writers, critical thinkers and teachers to their peers.

The Process: One-On-One or Group Revision Workshops

1. Hand out copies of piece
2. Author reads aloud
3. Everyone reads the piece to themselves and writes comments in the margins using the
4. critique guidelines (questions, positive feedback or constructive criticism)
5. Workshop the piece vocally in the following order:
 - » Clarifying questions
 - » Specific positive feedback (i.e. which lines stood out and why?)
 - » Suggestions/constructive criticism
6. Return all copies to author- author writes a new draft, brings copies to next workshop

Sample Guidelines for Critiquing Spoken Word Poetry (created by Richmond youth, 2011)

1. Why did you write this? What is the purpose of this piece?
2. What is the message? Who is your audience? Is the message clear to your target audience?
3. Are you comfortable with this piece? If not, which parts bother you?
4. What are the strengths of this poem? Which parts are your favorite?
5. Do you focus on one main idea/topic or is this piece all over the place, talking about a million different things? Do the pieces all connect or does it feel disjointed?
6. Are there any parts (ideas, words, etc.) that are repeated? If so, does the repetition strengthen the piece (is it intentional)? Or does it weaken it (unintentional)?
7. Is your writing specific and clear? Do you use imagery that the audience can imagine? Are there parts that are too abstract?

8. Does the rhythm/flow work or are there parts that sound awkward?
9. Is it complete? Does it have a beginning that builds to an interesting, dramatic middle part and then an ending that “lands” the whole poem somewhere fully satisfying for the audience?
10. If you were a stranger reading to this piece, would you care? Would you be confused? Would you feel emotionally moved? Would you be convinced and believe what the poet is saying?

Sample Guidelines for Critiquing Spoken Word Performance (created by Richmond youth, 2011)

1. Does your performance have emotional vulnerability/sincerity- does it move people? Are you tapping into the original purpose of this piece? Are you just saying the lines or really feeling them?
2. Have you developed an authentic flow/delivery/rhythm- is the way you say your words true to you?
3. Do you make eye contact with your audience? Does it feel like you’re speaking directly to them?
4. Is your body language intentional- how do your actions correspond with the words?
5. Variation- do you switch it up (volume, speed) or is your delivery monotone?
6. Do you keep it movin’? *No one will know you made a mistake unless you stop to correct it!
7. Do you enunciate your words? Do you say each line loud and clear? Are you rushing, mumbling, or swallowing the end of your lines?
8. Does your performance have potency, power and confidence? Or are you feeling shaky and unsure?
9. Do you put emphasis on key parts of poem? What are the most important lines?

Part 4: Best Practices for Teaching Strong Writing & Performance

Strategies for Teaching Writing

1. **Show Me, Don’t Tell Me** (inspired by Jeff Kass)
Most poems have a message. Some poets come right out and say it (ex: “the government is evil, the education system is racist, true love exists”). These statements are played out and more importantly, they can have a negative effect on the audience because it feels like the poet is trying to preach at them.

It is usually more effective when a poet can use a story or a series of scenes/memories to imply the message without directly saying it, especially if they appeal to the audience’s emotions (ex: if a poet wants to express their anger about the education system, they could write about their experience in 2nd grade when the teacher told them they were stupid because they couldn’t speak English fluently). Then the audience can truly feel the perspective of the poet, even if their message is something the audience didn’t initially agree with.

2. **Scene vs. Summary**
When you are watching a movie or play, there are different scenes that evoke different emotions by making you feel the way the characters are feeling. If you went to watch a movie and it was just one shot the whole time of the main character facing the camera telling you what their day was like (first I woke up then I made breakfast, then I went to work, now I’m home) you would never go to the movies.

This is the same with writing- when someone just summarizes the event that happened it feels boring, but if they choose a couple *telling* scenes from that event, the reader can pull the pieces together to understand the writer's experience (instead of "first I woke up", the writer could describe waking up- the feelings, the sensations, and why it was so hard to face the day). In addition, if the scenes are descriptive and visual it will pull the reader into the writer's world as if they are watching a movie.

3. Concrete vs. Abstract Imagery

Using abstract imagery (ex: love, happiness, hate, injustice) helps to make writing universal but fails to express what these words really mean. When a poet says "I love the way you look at me", we have no idea what that love or that look feels like for them.

How about "your green eyes open and bloom towards me like every flower I've ever bent to pick" or "when you look at me/I can see the brown speck above your pupil/like the grease stain on the table after I made you fried chicken/after you made me love again". Sometimes pairing concrete and abstract imagery together works well (ex: fried chicken/love) because the concrete image anchors the lofty abstract image.

Strategies For Generating "Show Me Poems"

1. Have youth read an abstract poem and then a poem with lots of concrete imagery. Have them draw what they picture after reading each. Ask them what they got out of the poems and which was easier to visualize, then review the difference between concrete and abstract imagery. Have them reread the poems and annotate for both kinds of language. Ask the student to write a poem about a person in their life using abstract language. Now, have them write a poem about the same person using concrete imagery to capture them. Have them compare and contrast the pieces.
2. Making lists of the five senses (related to topic) before they start writing helps youth integrate sensory details into writing.
3. Ask youth to think of a personal memory related to topic of prompt before they start writing poem and craft the piece around that memory.
4. Have youth write a "train of thought" piece where they write without stopping for 2 minutes straight. Then have them go back and pick the strongest lines/images and start a new poem with those.
5. For the first exercise, stand against a blank wall and have youth "write a portrait" as if they were painting you with their words. They can write in poetry, prose or any style of their choice. For the second exercise, sit down and have them look at the same blank wall. This time they are to create their own character (doesn't have to be human) and describe it with the same detail as the first piece. Have student share both pieces and discuss the difference between writing inspired by a visual aid vs. writing from your imagination- which was harder? Which did they enjoy more? *Prompt by Jeff Kass
6. Try incorporating some brainstorming/pre-writing before prompts, such as:
Sample Writing Prompt
 1. Make a list of concrete things that you would find on your street (ex: trash can)
 2. Make a list of abstract things you would find on your street (ex. love, hate)
 3. Circle your 5 favorite things from each list

4. Write the name of your street or neighborhood at the top of your page
5. Write a piece that paints a picture of street/neighborhood you grew up in and that incorporates all ten words you circled

Strategies for Teaching Strong Performance

1. Show youth videos of numerous performers- compare and contrast, discuss strengths and areas for improvement. *Have them practice critiquing strangers before each other.
2. Have youth watch us (educators) perform and then critique us- we need to model vulnerability if we expect them to be brave enough to take criticism on their work!
3. Have people bring in their favorite poem or rap, memorize it, and perform it. This is good for all youth, but especially ones whose performance might be blocked by their self-consciousness about their writing.
4. Have youth read through their piece and highlight the most important lines to emphasize, make notes to themselves about where to pause, where to be louder/harder or quieter/softer, where to go slow and where to go fast. Encourage them to be intentional about the way they say every line.
5. Have youth shout their poems all at the same time, then whisper them. Have them try saying different parts in different ways to break them out of just one possible delivery, and to make sure they embody the poem, not just regurgitate memorized lines but really feel each line.
6. Have one poet stand at one end of room and line everyone else up on the opposite end. As they perform their piece, everyone physically moves forward when they feel emotionally moved- if they don't they stand still or step backwards. Have the poet try several times until they are able to get the majority of the group to walk towards them- this helps them figure out which parts of the piece are moving people and which parts need work.
7. Have them practice different styles, tones, choreography, etc. with one piece and see which are strongest or if they could do a combination.
8. Have them perform in front of the mirror at home, figure out choreography.
9. Videotape each student and have them watch themselves, self-assess.
10. Figure out strengths and weaknesses with each poet, focus in on one area for improvement- make a plan of action with amount of time you have.

HANDOUT E

CLOSING SCENE *TÉ'S HARMONY*

ELA1, L1: Classic Text, Modern Interpretation: Teaching *Romeo and Juliet* Today

ELA3, L1: “Living on Stage”: Creating Theatre for the Community

Act II, Scene 8

Narrator: Actually
It started far before Ray
1619, the first slave shipped from Africa
They preferred a strong breed
African men not young enough to miss their mothers
And not old enough to carry too much wisdom
The broadest shoulders for the highest bidder
Proved themselves worthy to the master
Loved him with more heart than their lives
Master say and they do
That's when they flip
Master play favorites and everybody get jealous
So they start to stick together with their own kind
Light skinned mulattoes vs. 100% nigger

Do you know how y'all ended up in Richmond?
When we was free but still seen as niggers, 1940s,
Hopin' to find jobs in the Kaiser shipyard
They let us work wit'em
But we couldn't live side by side
We rested on the outskirts of Richmond
Never allowed to live in this town
'Cause white people needed
Their space
We was ignored
Only until they needed us
To work hard ours and push hard steel in factories
They had to protect the children
We wasn't always here

1950s was supposed to be the tie for integration
But as businesses went bankrupt
White folks moved out of a failing neighborhood
And pushed niggas in
We call that white flight
Since then it's been our Richmond

Our Richmond
Once a hot spot for the Black Panthers
Now known for black on black genocide
What happened to our pride?
Crack heads on every corner
Houses leaning left like a hurricane hit hard
How we gon' protect our children?

Keep them from growing up in contaminated schools
Carrying guns between their waist and their belt
Trapped in the government's trap
We can never reset
We can never rewind
We can never bring their lives back

We are the only ones who care if we live or not
And I know ya'll think you beatin' the system
'Cause you making ya own money, and taking care of ya business
With swishers tucked behind your ear
Richmond can't make it nowhere like this

But could there be another ending to this story?
We know what you were expecting - a tragedy,
The classic tale of star-crossed lovers who take their lives,
The classic tale on Channel 5 News of Richmond youth,
Ugly as the scarred back of our ancestors
Can you feel it?
It's time to heal
Time to reclaim the city of Pride and Purpose - our Richmond
We know you were expecting us to choose death

Narrator, Té and Harmony: [*Together*] But tonight, we choose life.

HANDOUT F

EXCERPTS FROM THE WARMTH OF OTHER SUNS

SS, L1: The Great Migration: From the South to California

1

Chickasaw County, Mississippi, Late October 1937

Ida Mae Brandon Gladney

The night clouds were closing in on the salt licks east of the oxbow lakes along the folds in the earth beyond the Yalobusha River. The cotton was at last cleared from the field. Ida Mae tried now to get the children ready and to gather the clothes and quilts and somehow keep her mind off the churning within her. She had sold off the turkeys and doled out in secret the old stools, the wash pots, the tin tub, the bed pallets. Her husband was settling with Mr. Edd over the worth of a year's labor, and she did not know what would come of it. None of them had been on a train before—not unless you counted the clattering local from Bacon Switch to Okolona, where, “by the time you sit down, you there,” as Ida Mae put it. None of them had been out of Mississippi. Or Chickasaw County, for that matter.

There was no explaining to little James and Velma the stuffed bags and chaos and all that was at stake or why they had to put on their shoes and not cry and bring undue attention from anyone who might happen to see them leaving. Things had to look normal, like any other time they might ride into town, which was rare enough to begin with.

Velma was six. She sat with her ankles crossed and three braids in her hair and did what she was told. James was too little to understand. He was three. He was upset at the commotion. *Hold still now, James. Lemme put your shoes on*, Ida Mae told him. James wriggled and kicked. He did not like shoes. He ran free in the field. What were these things? He did not like them on his feet. So Ida Mae let him go barefoot.

Miss Theenie stood watching. One by one, her children had left her and gone up north. Sam and Cleve to Ohio. Josie to Syracuse. Irene to Milwaukee. Now the man Miss Theenie had tried to keep Ida Mae from marrying in the first place was taking her away, too. Miss Theenie had no choice but to accept it and let Ida Mae and the grandchildren go for good. Miss Theenie drew them close to her, as she always did whenever anyone was leaving. She had them bow their heads. She whispered a prayer that her daughter and her daughter's family be protected on the long journey ahead in the Jim Crow car.

“May the Lord be the first in the car,” she prayed, “and the last out.”

When the time had come, Ida Mae and little James and Velma and all that they could carry were loaded into a brother-in-law's truck, and the three of them went to meet Ida Mae's husband at the train depot in Okolona for the night ride out of the bottomland.

Wildwood, Florida, April 14, 1945
George Swanson Starling

A man named Roscoe Colton gave Lil George Starling a ride in his pickup truck to the train station in Wildwood through the fruit-bearing scrubland of central Florida. And Schoolboy, as the toothless orange pickers mockingly called him, boarded the Silver Meteor pointing north.

A railing divided the stairs onto the train, one side of the railing for white passengers, the other for colored, so the soles of their shoes would not touch the same stair. He boarded on the colored side of the railing, a final reminder from the place of his birth of the absurdity of the world he was leaving.

He was getting out alive. So he didn't let it bother him. "I got on the car where they told me to get on," he said years later.

He hadn't had time to bid farewell to everyone he wanted to. He stopped to say good-bye to Rachel Jackson, who owned a little café up on what they called the Avenue and the few others he could safely get to in the little time he had. He figured everybody in Egypt town, the colored section of Eustis, probably knew he was leaving before he had climbed onto the train, small as the town was and as much as people talked.

It was a clear afternoon in the middle of April. He folded his tall frame into the hard surface of the seat, his knees knocking against the seat back in front of him. He was packed into the Jim Crow car, where the railroad stored the luggage, when the train pulled away at last. He was on the run, and he wouldn't rest easy until he was out of range of Lake County, beyond the reach of the grove owners whose invisible laws he had broken.

The train rumbled past the forest of citrus trees that he had climbed since he was a boy and that he had tried to wrestle some dignity out of and, for a time, had. They could have their trees. He wasn't going to lose his life over them. He had come close enough as it was.

He had lived up to his family's accidental surname. Starling. Distant cousin to the mockingbird. He had spoken up about what he had seen in the world he was born into, like the starling that sang Mozart's own music back to him or the starling out of Shakespeare that tormented the king by speaking the name of Mortimer. Only, George was paying the price for tormenting the ruling class that owned the citrus groves. There was no place in the Jim Crow South for a colored starling like him.

He didn't know what he would do once he got to New York or what his life would be. He didn't know how long it would take before he could send for Inez. His wife was mad right now, but she'd get over it once he got her there. At least that's what he told himself. He turned his face to the North and sat with his back to Florida.

Leaving as he did, he figured he would never set foot in Eustis again for as long as he lived. And as he settled in for the twenty-three-hour train ride up the coast of the Atlantic, he had no desire to have anything to do with the town he grew up in, the state of Florida, or the South as a whole, for that matter.

Monroe, Louisiana, Easter Monday, April 6, 1953
Robert Joseph Pershing Foster

In the dark hours of the morning, Pershing Foster packed his surgery books, his medical bag, and his suit and sport coats in the trunk, along with a map, an address book, and Ivorye Covington's fried chicken left over from Saturday night.

He said good-bye to his father, who had told him to follow his dreams. His father's dreams had fallen apart, but there was still hope for the son, the father knew. He had a reluctant embrace with his older brother, Madison, who had tried in vain to get him to stay. Then Pershing pointed his 1949 Buick Roadmaster, a burgundy one with whitewall tires and a shark-tooth grille, in the direction of Five Points, the crossroads of town.

He drove down the narrow dirt roads with the ditches on either side that, when he was a boy, had left his freshly pressed Sunday suit caked with mud when it rained. He passed the shotgun houses perched on cinder blocks and hurtled over the railroad tracks away from where people who looked like him were consigned to live and into the section where the roads were not dirt ditches anymore but suddenly level and paved.

He headed in the direction of Desiard Street, the main thoroughfare, and, without a whiff of sentimentality, sped away from the small-town bank buildings and bail bondsmen, the Paramount Theatre with its urine-scented steps, and away from St. Francis Hospital, which wouldn't let doctors who looked like him perform a simple tonsillectomy.

Perhaps he might have stayed had they let him practice surgery like he was trained to do or let him walk into the Palace and try on a suit like anyone else of his station. The resentments had grown heavy over the years. He knew he was as smart as anybody else—smarter, to his mind—but he wasn't allowed to do anything with it, the caste system being what it was. Now he was going about as far away as you could get from Monroe, Louisiana. The rope lines that had hemmed in his life seemed to loosen with each plodding mile on the odometer.

Like many of the men in the Great Migration and like many emigrant men in general, he was setting out alone. He would scout out the New World on his own and get situated before sending for anyone else. He drove west into the morning stillness and onto the Endom Bridge, a tight crossing with one lane acting like two that spans the Ouachita River into West Monroe. He would soon pass the mossback flatland of central Louisiana and the Red River toward Texas, where he was planning to see an old friend from medical school, a Dr. Anthony Beale, en route to California.

Pershing had no idea where he would end up in California or how he would make a go of it or when he would be able to wrest his wife and daughters from the in-laws who had tried to talk him out of going to California in the first place. He would contemplate these uncertainties in the unbroken days ahead.

From Louisiana, he followed the hyphens in the road that blurred together toward a faraway place, bridging unrelated things as hyphens do. Alone in the car, he had close to two thousand miles of curving road in front of him, farther than farmworker emigrants leaving Guatemala for Texas, not to mention Tijuana for California, where a northerly wind could blow a Mexican clothesline over the border.⁴³

HANDOUT G

INTERVIEW, ISABEL WILKERSON

SS, L1: The Great Migration: From the South to California

Q: What is the meaning and origin of the title, *The Warmth of Other Suns*?

A: I was reading the footnotes of the Richard Wright's autobiography, *Black Boy*, one day, and discovered a particularly moving passage on page 496, a passage which is a story unto itself. When Wright wrote his 1945 autobiography, the Book of the Month Club insisted that he cut the second half (about the North) and change the title from *American Hunger* to *Black Boy*. He wanted the book published so he conceded to their request. But that left the book without the ending it needed so he hastily came up with an alternative passage. Because he was forced to write quickly and succinctly, the passage summarized in a way he had not achieved in the text itself the longing and loss of anyone who has ever left the only place they ever knew for what they hoped would be a better life on alien soil.

As soon as I saw it, I knew I wanted to excavate it. I felt it was poetry, beautifully rendered but invisible, buried as it was in the footnotes. When it came time to submit the manuscript, I pulled out the most moving phrase for the title, *The Warmth of Other Suns* ... My mother, who migrated from Georgia to Washington, D.C. during the Great Migration, and knew what it meant to leave your own sun for another, believed from the moment she heard it that it should be the title.

The question of the title set me on a course of trying to understand just what the sun means to us, what it gives us and what it takes to defy the gravitational pull of your own solar system and take off for another far away. Richard Wright consciously chose to call the cold North the place of warmer suns. It showed how determined he and millions of others like him were to leave a place that had shunned them for a place they hoped would sustain them, the need of any human being and the gift of any sun.⁴⁴

HANDOUT H

COMMUNITY MAPPING RESOURCES

SS, L2: Why Geography Matters: How where you live shapes how you live

There are many outstanding tools for supporting student community mapping exercises. You may want to refer to the University of California, Y-Plan Toolkit (<http://y-plan.berkeley.edu/>) that has a wealth of resources for student research including census data, mapping of rental income across the country, and demographic shifts.

Another helpful guide is an extraordinary online tool where students can use their phone from Map Your World. (<http://revolutionaryoptimists.org/map-your-world>)

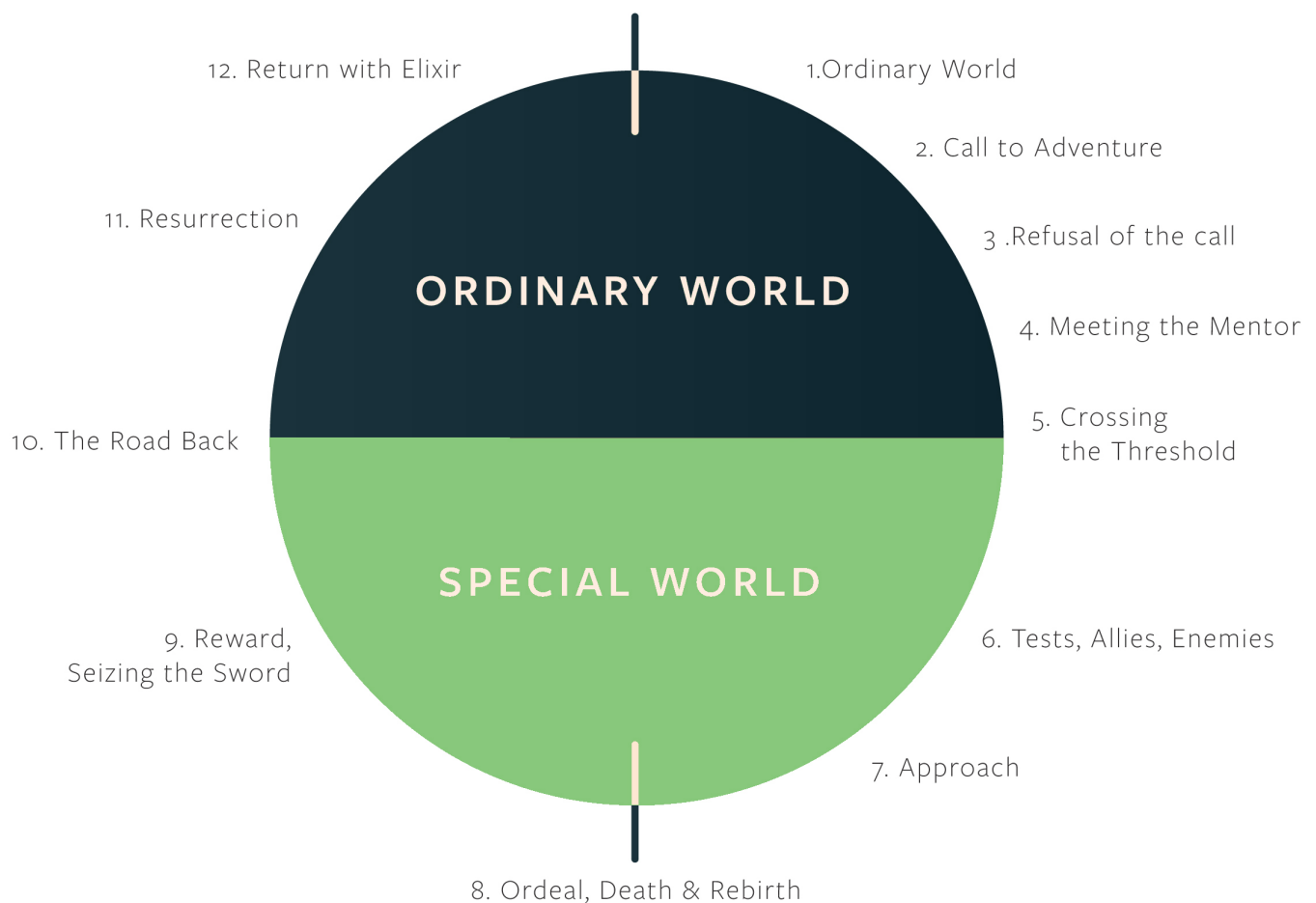
Watch this introductory video introducing their model of community mapping that help students develop, track and share issues they identify as problems. (<https://vimeo.com/24903312>)

HANDOUT I⁴⁵

THE HERO'S JOURNEY VISUAL MAP

ID, L1: "Reading" Documentary Film as Text

The Hero's Journey



APPENDIX I

STANDARDS

READING: Literature-Key Ideas and Details

RL.9-10.1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RL.9-10.2. Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

RL.9-10.3. Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

Reading: Literature - Craft and Structure

RL.9-10.4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

RL.9-10.5. Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

RL.9-10.6. Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

Writing: Text Types and Purposes

W.9-10.3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

Language: Conventions of Standard English

L.9-10.1. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

L.9-10.2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Language: Knowledge of Language

L.9-10.3. Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

L.9-10.4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grades 9–10 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph, or text; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech (e.g., analyze, analysis, analytical; advocate, advocacy).

Consult general and specialized reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning, its part of speech, or its etymology.

Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).

L.9-10.5. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

Interpret figures of speech (e.g., euphemism, oxymoron) in context and analyze their role in the text.

Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations.

L.9-10.6. Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

RL.9-10.9. Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare)

ENDNOTES

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- 2 Interview with Donté Clark. September 15, 2015.
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- 4 John Golden, *Reading in the Reel World: Teaching Documentaries and Other Nonfiction Texts* (Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 2006), 134.
- 5 Ibid., p. 35.
- 6 The content and framework of this lesson is borrowed entirely from John Golden's *Reading in the Reel World*, p. 40-43.
- 7 Opening scene of *Té's Harmony*, found on ro*co Films Educational DVD of *Romeo is Bleeding*.
- 8 *Romeo is Bleeding* education edition DVD, distributed by ro*co Films Educational.
- 9 In Shakespeare's time, tragedy ended in death, while comedy ended in marriage or improved social harmony. In email correspondence with an advisor to Re-mixing Shakespeare, Mary Christel. December 15, 2015.
- 10 Suzanne N. Plaut, *The Right to Literacy in Secondary Schools: Creating a Culture of Thinking* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2009).
- 11 For further quotes and visuals to accompany these pages see:
<http://www.aerogrammestudio.com/2014/03/27/why-i-write-23-quotes-famous-authors/>, accessed November 16, 2015.
- 12 <http://youthspeaks.org/methodology/>, accessed October 16, 2015.
- 13 John and Margaret Issit, "Learning about the world of the student: writing poetry for teacher-student understanding." *Education*, 38, vol. 1 (March, 2010): 103.
- 14 Youthspeaks is another well known Bay Area Spoken-word program. This video can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cuYy0rtC5uo>, accessed November 15, 2015.
- 15 If your school has limited or prohibits access to youtube, the same piece can be found at Edutopia.com. It is important for students to hear and see Spoken-word in action to feel and understand its power. If video is out altogether in your school one alternative is to listen to Mos Def perform a poem, bring a Spoken-word poet into your classroom or ask students in the room who may already have experience to perform.
<http://www.spokenwordz.info/Love-MosDef.mp3>, accessed October 13, 2015.
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- 17 <http://artsanctuary.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/SpokenWord-LearningGuide.pdf>, accessed October 30, 2015.
- 18 It is understood that there are always exceptions for students that need to be respected such as social anxiety or other learning styles which are obstacles for public speaking.
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- 27 <http://www.center-school.org/pa-pirc/documents/CommunityAssetsMapExercise.pdf>, accessed November 15, 2015.
- 28 Luis J. Rodriguez, Foreword to *Té's Harmony*, by RAW Talent (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Red Beard Press, 2013), 11.
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- 39 People from North Richmond.
- 40 José Olivarez, *Uncommon Core: Contemporary Poems for Learning and Living*, (Ann Arbor: Red Beard Press, 2013), 270-271.
- 41 Ibid., 29. Jasmine An is an alumna of the Neutral Zone's Short Story Workshop and one of the founding members of Red Beard Press. She currently studies Anthropology, Sociology, and Creative Writing at Kalamazoo College.
- 42 Ibid., 230-231. Nate Marshall is a poet, rapper and teaching artist from the South Side of Chicago. He starred in the award winning full-length documentary *Louder Than A Bomb* and was featured on HBO's *Brave New Voices*. He is an MFA candidate in Creative Writing at the University of Michigan. Marshall is founder of the Lost Count Scholarship Fund, which promotes youth violence prevention in Chicago.
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Kirsten Kelly
Bakari Kitwana
Ryan Lugalia-Hollon
Nate Marshall
Bonnie Oberman
Robert Polito
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GOOD PITCH ADVISORS

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Sandi DuBowski
Kristin Feeley
Beadie Finzi
Puala Froehle
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Jess Search
Sara Terry
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GOOD PITCH DONORS

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De Cooper
The Dobkin Family
Catherine King
Ken Pelletier
Judy Rice
Ellen Wiggins



BLUESHIFT
OFF THE SCREEN, INTO OUR LIVES



picturemotion



ROMEO IS BLEEDING

THE FILM

A fatal turf war between neighborhoods haunts the city of Richmond, CA. Donté Clark transcends the violence in his hometown by writing poetry about his experiences. Using his voice to inspire those around him, he and the like-minded youth of the city mount an urban adaptation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, with the hope of starting a real dialogue about violence in the city. Will Richmond force Donté to compromise his idealistic ambitions? Or will Donté end Richmond's cycle of trauma?

**“POVERTY TAKES
ON DIFFERENT
FORMS DEPENDING
ON THE LANDSCAPE,
BUT THE NARRATIVES
ARE THE SAME.”**

– Jason Zeldes
Director, *Romeo is Bleeding*



CAST: Donté Clark, D'Neise Robinson, Molly Raynor, DeAndre Evans

DIRECTOR: Jason Zeldes **PRODUCER:** Michael Klein



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