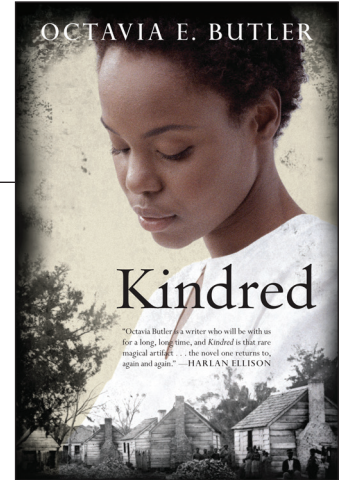




Kindred

by Octavia E. Butler

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Reading Level: 8.0



pre-reading

Octavia Butler's novel *Kindred* is a tremendously engaging text for students; the narrative structure and ethical dilemmas make a close reading of the novel, through multiple critical lenses, very accessible to students. In order to build on traditional Formalist and Reader Response textual analysis,¹ students can be encouraged to examine *Kindred* for its postmodern structural experimentation; to consider the novel's contribution to the slave narrative genre (even though the work is fiction)²; or to examine the text through the lens of Postcolonial Theory.

day 1: suggested pre-reading homework journal*

Homework Text: Read and annotate pages 27–32 in “Introduction: On Fiction,” by John J. Clayton.

Journal: Respond to the following questions in your journal:

Part 1: Incorporating ideas from the section “Theme, Model, and Vision,” explain the difference between theme and message. How is fiction realistic? What does it mean to use a reading “lens” or “filter” according to your homework reading?

Part 2: Incorporating ideas from the section “A Dark Vision of Literature,” explain what happened to our happy ending. How is the human condition represented in literature? Define Modernism and identify writers (whom you have read) that “fit” into this definition—be sure to explain your reasoning.

further pre-reading discussion questions

1. What kinds of experiments have writers of fiction in the 20th century carried out? Why?
2. What is the value of literary experiment?

The answers to the above conceptual questions are not simple, but considering these larger concepts about the postmodern literary period will support class discussions throughout the reading and analysis of the novel; for example,

¹ There are several excellent text books for introducing literary theory into the high school classroom: see the supplemental texts list.

² Robert Crossley's critical essay, included in the study guide on page 265, is an excellent resource for students, which discusses the novel as part of the slave narrative genre.

* Sections of this essay would also be a very good pre-reading selection.

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how this late 20th century novel contributes to the slave narrative genre and engages its readers in a critical conversation about race, justice, humanity, and history.

Day 1 Common Core

CCSS.ELA-W.9-10.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 Determine a central idea of a text and analyze 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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.3 Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.8 Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.

day 2: *Kindred*, “The Prologue” & “The River”

In his critical essay, Robert Crossley quotes an interview with Octavia Butler in which she states, “Fiction writers can’t be too pedagogical or too polemical”; Crossley goes on to write that “the route [Butler] pursues to her readers’ heads is through their guts and nerves, and that requires good storytelling, not just a good set of issues” (274). Essential questions:

1. What is the purpose of Butler’s literary experiment?
2. Why is she writing a first-person slave narrative in the late 20th century? What “lens” is she using?
3. What does she want her 21st century readers to think about and consider? If she only wanted us to think about the atrocities of slavery, then there would be no need to have her protagonist travel back and forth through time.

journal writing

Prologue: The purpose of a prologue is to provide necessary backstory for the novel which cannot be told in any other way. Often, it serves to provide a general background or to set the stage for the drama to come.

In Medias Res: In medias res is Latin for “into the middle of things.” It usually describes a narrative that begins, not at the beginning of a story, but somewhere in the middle—usually at some crucial point in the action.

Given the above literary terms and their definitions answer the following questions:

1. What is the purpose of this prologue? Be specific.
2. What effect does the use of *in medias res* have on the audience, as the story begins?

activity: subtexting “The River”

When you subtext, you are attempting to get into the mind of a particular character in a story by understanding the context, plot devices and characterization. Read the text aloud as a class and then at each of the moments listed below put the book down and begin writing your subtext.

Subtexting is written from the 1st person point of view.

The following should come through in your writing:

- how you think the character is feeling
- the qualities or personality traits the character is displaying that make her/him deal with the given situation in a particular way
- the circumstances that are affecting her or his actions
- what seems to be motivating this character
- how the character reacts to other characters and the key conflicts in the scene

Subtext #1: Dana

“Before me was a wide tranquil river, and near the middle of that river was a child splashing, screaming . . .” (13).³

Try to capture what you think is going on in Dana’s mind based on how Butler has characterized her thus far. Subtext what she could be thinking and feeling that Butler has not given us. If you’re stuck, go through the list above regarding what should come through in your subtexting.

Subtext #2: Unknown man

“‘What the devil’s going on here?’ A man’s voice, angry and demanding”(14).

Who is this man? What is he doing here? What do you think the man is feeling? Thinking? How will he deal with the given situation? How might he react to the other characters in the scene?

Subtext #3: Kevin

“He spun around to face me. ‘What the hell . . . how did you get over there?’ he whispered” (14).

What could be going on in Kevin’s mind and what might he be feeling? How would he deal with the given situation? How would the circumstances affect his actions? What might motivate his actions/decisions? How would he react to Dana in the scene?

Subtext #4: Dana or Kevin

“‘Oh, no . . .’ I shook my head slowly. ‘All that couldn’t have happened in just seconds.’ He said nothing” (16).

Now, choose to write from either Dana or Kevin’s perspective in this situation. This occurrence is unbelievable. What is the character you are writing as feeling? Thinking? What does s/he believe happened? Does s/he believe the other person’s story? Why or why not? Be sure your writing is grounded in what Butler has provided us with thus far in the narrative: context, plot, characterization. Circle One: Dana or Kevin

Day 2 Common Core:

CCSS.ELA-W.9-10.10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

MA.3.A. Demonstrate understanding of the concept of point of view by writing short narratives, poems, essays, speeches, or reflections from one’s own or a particular character’s point of view (e.g., the hero, anti-hero, a minor character).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

day 3: *Kindred*, “The Fire” (computer lab time)**activity: discovering artifacts (see supplemental resources)**

You are going to write to inquire, then research, and thus “discover” what an artifact in the text symbolizes by explaining how and why the artifact is important thus far in *Kindred*.

Journal Part I

Examine your artifact. Based on your reading, what do you think it is? How is it important to the plot? What does it symbolize to the character(s) in the chapter? What does it symbolize to the reader? How is it culturally and historically significant? Does this artifact function as a literary allusion? Explain.

³ Page numbers refer to the 2004, 25th Anniversary print edition of the novel.

Journal Part II

Ask a question. The image you have been assigned is similar to an artifact used in the narrative. What question(s) do you have about the history behind this artifact? In the computer lab, using the school's databases and the key words in your question, research the answer to your question.

Journal Part III

Write a discovery paragraph. You must embed at least one quote from your research in order to support the answer to your research question. Be sure your paragraph addresses what the artifact is as well as its historical relevance.

Day 3 Common Core:

CCSS.ELA-W.9-10.7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA-W.9-10.9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.7 Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.9 Analyze seminal U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (e.g., Washington's *Farewell Address*, the *Gettysburg Address*, Roosevelt's *Four Freedoms* speech, King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail"), including how they address related themes and concepts.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

→ **day 4: *Kindred*, "The Fall" 1-4**

The theme of a book often revolves around the key conflict or paradox. In "The Fall" Butler fully utilizes irony, paradox, and foreshadowing to move the reader beyond the plausibility of time travel and further into the purpose of the novel: Dana's, and the reader's, experience in the early 19th century American South. Be sure students have a good grasp of irony, paradox and foreshadowing.

Paradox A statement that initially appears to be contradictory, but then, on closer inspection, turns out to make sense.

Foreshadowing The use in a literary work of clues to indicate or suggest events that have not yet occurred.

Irony A contrast between expectation and reality—between what is said and what is really meant, between what is expected to happen and what really does happen, or between what appears to be true and what is really true.

thought questions:

1. The book calls Kevin and Dana "kindred" spirits (57); how is the way they see the world similar? How does this connect to the title of the work?
2. How is the following quote ironic and why is it significant to the plot's development? "'People don't learn everything about the times that came before them,' I said. Why should they?" (63).
3. Foreshadowing is used extensively in these sections; how will "The Fall" end? What are the clues (you may paraphrase, but include page numbers)? Continue to analyze the narrative structure; what is the effect of the structure on the characters, and thus the readers?
4. How does Sarah's situation represent one of the many paradoxes that exists in slavery? (76)
5. How is the following quote ironic, as well as an example of the key difference between Kevin and Dana in 1819? "I hate to think of you playing the part of a slave at all" (79).

Day 4 Common Core:

CCSS.ELA-W.9-10.10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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).

→ day 5: *Kindred*, “The Fall” 5-8

This section of *Kindred*, “The Fall,” is key to what Octavia Butler is trying to get her readers to think about. Although Rufus’ accident brings Dana (and Kevin this time) back to 1819, he does not play a major role. Instead we learn more about other key players in this story: Tom and Margaret Weylin, Sarah, Carrie, Nigel and Luke to name a few.

activity: group work & journaling

Step 1: Have the class create a web on the board of the 10 most important events in “The Fall,” then number them in order of importance to the plot’s development, 1 being the most important.

Step 2: Journal Writing

- What is the theme of “The Fall” (look back at your pre-reading journal)?

Theme is what controls all the expressive choices a writer makes in a story— what to put in, what to leave out, how to decide on the angle of vision, narrative structure, tone. The theme itself responds to the writer’s vision of life; this vision is based on the writer’s “filter” for reality (social group, class, race, sex, society, etc.). The filter acts as a schema or “lens” through which the writer sees and writes about the world. (Clayton)

- What lens is Butler asking the reader to look through in the following passage?

“‘You might be able to go through this whole experience as an observer,’ I said. ‘I can understand that because most of the time, I’m still an observer. It’s protection. It’s nineteen seventy-six shielding and cushioning eighteen nineteen for me. But now and then, like with the kids’ game, I can’t maintain the distance. I’m drawn all the way into eighteen nineteen, and I don’t know what to do. I ought to be doing something though. I know that’... ‘Just started to teach Nigel to read and write,’ I said. ‘Nothing more subversive than that’”(101).

- Which events make Dana’s reality more “real” for the reader?

Step 3: Think and write critically about “The Fall.”

- **Find a quote . . .** It can be a statement that you have already thought a bit about or something new, but you need to choose a quote that you feel in some way speaks to this section of the book and its purpose. Perhaps it takes up an interesting issue or dilemma that has followed a character throughout the book thus far. Be sure to use supporting evidence.
- **Answer a question . . .** There are pressing ethical questions that are raised in *Kindred*; choose one that has not yet been answered. Fully analyze and explore a question that has been on your mind about the book. Be sure to support your analysis and exploration with evidence from the book.
- **Take up an issue . . .** This book is overflowing with issues that overwhelmingly affect the reader historically, culturally, and socially. Discuss an issue that interests you as it relates to this section of the book, again support your analysis and exploration with evidence from the book.

Day 5 Common Core:

CCSS.ELA-W.9-10.2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCSS.ELA-W.9-10.4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

→ day 6: *Kindred*, “The Fight” 1-10

Reread Dana and Kevin's discussion about getting married in the 1970s. This is a very important section of the book, in terms of Butler's overall purpose. Which racial issues does the conversation raise? How do we see the legacy of slavery in American culture more than 100 years after the Civil War? And now—150 years after the Civil War?

thought questions:

1. What are Kevin and Dana's families' reactions to their decision to get married?
2. Why does Dana's aunt accept her desire to marry Kevin?
3. How has 1819 permanently left its mark on Dana?
4. What realization does Dana have when she regains consciousness on her bathroom floor?
5. Explain why Dana is so disoriented—"It was real"(115), "Nothing was real"(116).
6. What is Dana's ethical dilemma as she is drawn back to Rufus this time?
7. Who is Isaac and why is he fighting with Rufus?
8. How much time has passed and where is Kevin?
9. What will happen to Alice now that she and Isaac are runaways?
10. What are the key differences between what Rufus wants in 1825 and what Dana and Kevin have in 1976?
11. How does Rufus try to justify attempting to rape Alice?
12. Rufus has leverage to control Dana now and he's not afraid to use it, what is it?
13. Why is the marriage ceremony between Nigel and Carrie significant?
14. Dana says that Tom Weylin "wasn't a monster... [he was] just an ordinary man who sometimes did the monstrous things his society said were legal and proper"(134).
15. Why does Dana make this distinction? What bigger statement about society is Butler making?
16. What happened to Luke? What does this incident teach Dana?
17. Why does Weylin essentially own Dana at this point? Explain.
18. How can the conversation Dana and Rufus have about history be part of Butler's purpose? "No it isn't," I said. "That book wasn't even written until a century after slavery was abolished." "Then why the hell are they still complaining about it?" (140-141).
19. Why is Rufus "blackmailing" Dana? Is this manipulation apparent in his personality earlier in the book?
20. How do you feel about Dana's attitude toward Sarah's "acceptance" of begin a slave (145)?
21. How is Rufus' purchase of Alice another paradox of slavery?
22. Dana has deluded herself into thinking she has some sort of control over Rufus. When does she realize that she has none? Explain.
23. Who was the father of some of Sarah's children? How does this impact Dana's earlier judgments and attitude toward Sarah?
24. What is Rufus "buying" from Nigel (155)?
25. When Dana has to explain to Alice that she is now a slave there are several role reversals. What are they? Explain.

Day 6 Common Core:

CCSS.ELA-W.9-10.10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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).

→ day 7: *Kindred*, “The Fight” 11-16

In-class essay comparing and contrasting the characters, Dana and Alice, focusing on “The Fight” chapter.

prewriting journal:

- Read through the thought questions to get started.
- Think about similar experiences these women have had.
- Think about what freedom means to both of them, but keep in mind that their knowledge of freedom is very different.
- Think about the similarities and differences in their relationships with other characters in the novel.

Students will create an original thesis statement, in which they make a claim about why Octavia Butler has made these two characters so similar, but still very different. They must be able to argue this claim and support their argument using evidence from the section. Strive for embedded quotations using MLA parenthetical citation.

thought questions:

1. Why is Rufus' statement “But I'm not going to give up what I can have” (163), so important? What does it show you about him in general?
2. Rufus threatens Dana with an ultimatum regarding Alice, what is it?
3. What is Dana's moral dilemma?
4. Psychologically and philosophically why wouldn't Dana go to Rufus?
5. Why won't Alice run again? What are her other options?
6. What finally makes Dana decide to run?
7. Dana has an important realization when she says, “I crept away from the Weylin house, moving through the darkness with even less confidence than I had felt when I fled to Alice's house months before. Years before. I hadn't known quite as well then what there was to fear. . .” (171).
8. Who betrays Dana and why?
9. After Dana is captured she is unable to go home, why?
10. Again, Butler seems to reverse Dana and Alice's roles; she makes them seem so similar, how does she do this?
11. Why does Dana compare her failed attempt to runaway to Harriet Tubman (177)? What does she realize?
12. Even Liza seems to think Dana and Alice are interchangeable: hurt one to hurt the other. Why is this important?
13. Why does Tom Weylin write to Kevin?
14. Explain the difference between what Dana “gives” Rufus and what Alice “gives” Rufus (180).
15. How does Dana describe Rufus' view of her?
16. Explain the following quote “Slavery was a long slow process of dulling” (183).

17. How old is Kevin?
18. How does Alice show her strength when Kevin comes? Why doesn't she acknowledge Dana's "good-bye"?
19. How does Rufus' reaction to Dana and Kevin leaving bring us back to another moment in the book? Why would Butler do this?
20. At this point who is the bigger monster, Rufus or Tom Weylin?
21. Dana and Alice have seemed to become the same woman to Rufus, how and why?

Day 7 Common Core:

CCSS.ELA-W.9-10.1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-W.9-10.5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

→ day 8: *Kindred*, "The Storm"

activity: enlarging the lens

Step 1: For this assignment, each student selects three short passages from "The Storm" and lists them by page number in their journal. After each page number ask the students to summarize what happens in the section, include key events, actions and details.

Step 2: Now, choose one of the three sections and complete the following enlarging the lens journal:

1. Explain why this is an important part of the story.
2. Respond personally to this passage. Select several words or phrases in the passage and explain which emotions the words evoke; then continue to explain your personal reactions and/or associations to the material.
3. Reflect more broadly on the cultural connotations the words/phrases may carry, as well as on what this passage tells us about people or the world in general. Make broad, general connections here (hint, hint, Butler's purpose?).
4. Create a symbol or image in pencil, pen, marker, whatever, which shows the meaning you have assigned to the page. Then explain why you chose the symbol/image you did.

Day 8 Common Core:

CCSS.ELA-W.9-10.2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

→ day 9: *Kindred*, “The Rope” and “The Epilogue”

thought questions:

1. Who does Kevin get to bandage Dana's wounds?
 - a. Why won't suicide work to bring her home again?
2. How long has it been in 1976? How long has it been in 1831?
3. Kevin wants Dana to let Rufus die, why can't she?
4. Why is the following quote important? “You know someday, you're going to have to stop dragging that thing around with you and come back to life” (244).
5. How is the following quote part of Butler's purpose? “I'm not a horse or a sack of wheat. If I have to seem to be property, if I have to accept limits on my freedom for Rufus's sake, then he also has to accept limits—on his behavior toward me. He has to leave me control of my own life to make living look better to me than killing and dying' . . . 'If your black ancestors had felt that way, you wouldn't be here” (246).
6. Why did Alice commit suicide? Why did Rufus “trick” Alice? Think critically! What does Dana demand from him?
7. Look up catharsis. When does the process of writing become cathartic for Dana? How could this moment also be part of Butler's purpose?
8. What does Rufus want Dana to do now that Alice is gone?
9. How does Alice's death make Dana's situation more dangerous? How does Rufus reveal the way he sees Alice and Dana?
10. What is the one weapon Dana has that Alice didn't?
11. What does the Epilogue leave you thinking about?

Day 9 Common Core:

CCSS.ELA-W.9-10.10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

→ day 10: Final writing assessment options for *Kindred*

option #1:

While reading the book *Kindred* by Octavia Butler students have been asked several times to think critically about what Butler's purpose is. Why did she write this book? Why did she create the structure she did? What does Butler want her 21st century readers to think about? What “lens” is Butler using? Why is Butler writing a first-person slave narrative in the late 20th century? If she only wanted her readers to think about the atrocities of slavery, then there would be no need to have Dana travel back and forth through time.

In his essay “The Novelist as Teacher,” Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe wrote, a writer “must remain free to disagree with his (her) society and go into rebellion against it if need be. But I am for choosing my cause very carefully.” (42).

Step 1: In the final journal have students reflect on Achebe's quote and the role of the writer in society.

Step 2: Summative expository writing prompt: explain how the purpose of Butler's novel fits into Achebe's description of the writer's role.

Day 10 Common Core, Option #1:

CCSS.ELA-W.9-10.2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCSS.ELA-W.9-10.5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

option 2: first-person family history narrative

Step 1: Have students journal about an ancestor or relative they would "go back" and meet if they could.

Step 2: Homework: What facts can you discover about this ancestor or relative that you could build a story around? If the person is still alive can you get in contact with her or him to learn some details? If the person is deceased do you have other relatives you can talk to in order to get the information you need?

Ask questions that are curious. Sometimes people don't believe that they have lived through or seen anything "important." This is part of your challenge.

Step 3: The next task is to tell a family story from that person's first-person narrative voice. This assignment may seem difficult at first because of the person's historical or physical distance from the writer; however, fiction is often based on fact. This could be a story that was told to you long ago or one that is told to you solely for this project. The topic of this story ought to have something to do with your family history.

- Here, strive to capture the storyteller's voice. Often this is what is lost over time, and this is one of the most important aspects of the story. Think about why first-person family narratives are both engaging and important.
- Butler is allowing her fictional character to tell a first-person slave narrative, which is a first-person family narrative.

Things to focus on . . .

Create a voice that is seemingly from the time period (yes, you must go back in time) and the narrator's actions/statements/ thoughts must be reasonable and convincing (**this voice should not sound like YOU**).

Fully **describe** the story's **setting/time period**, and the story should be **organized** (conflict, complication, climax, resolution) and **well-told** (that means clearly understood by your audience).

Fully **develop the narrator and character(s)**; the actions/thoughts/statements of the narrator and character(s) must be reasonably accounted for; create a good sense of who the narrator and character(s) are.

The story **should make sense** and there should be little confusion as to **why you are choosing this part of your family history to tell**.

Day 10 Common Core, Option #2:

CCSS.ELA-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.

MA.3.A. Demonstrate understanding of the concept of point of view by writing short narratives, poems, essays, speeches, or reflections from one's own or a particular character's point of view (e.g., the hero, anti-hero, a minor character).

supplemental texts and resources

Texts

Appleman, Deborah. *Critical Encounters in High School English: Teaching Literary Theory to Adolescents*. 2nd ed. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 2009. Print.

Butler, Octavia E. *Kindred*. Boston: Beacon, 2004. Print.

Gillespie, Tim. *Doing Literary Criticism: Helping Students Engage with Challenging Texts*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse, 2010. Print.

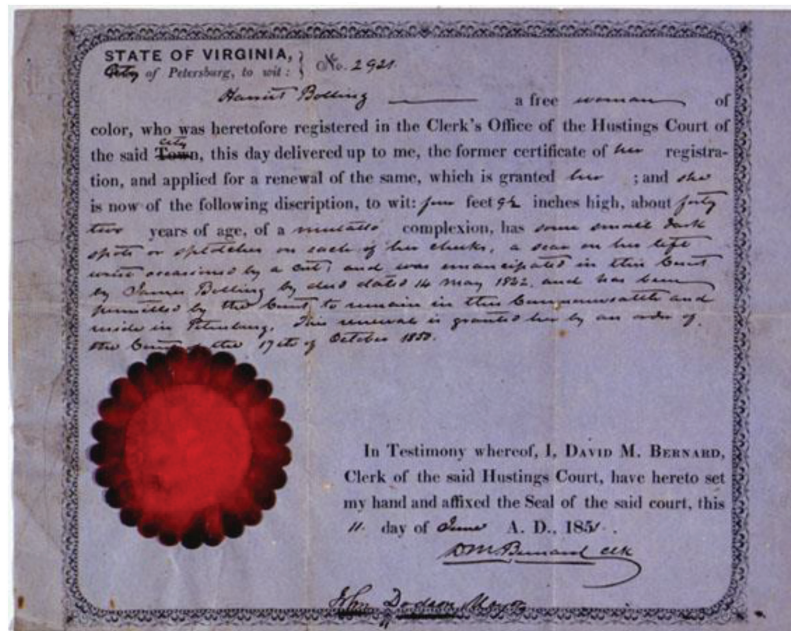
Hooks, Bell. *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston, MA: South End, 1992. Print.

"Introduction: On Fiction." Introduction. *The Heath Introduction to Fiction*. Ed. John Jacob Clayton. 5th ed. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1996. 27-32. Print.

Schade Eckert, Lisa. *How Does It Mean? Engaging Reluctant Readers Through Literary Theory*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2006. Print.

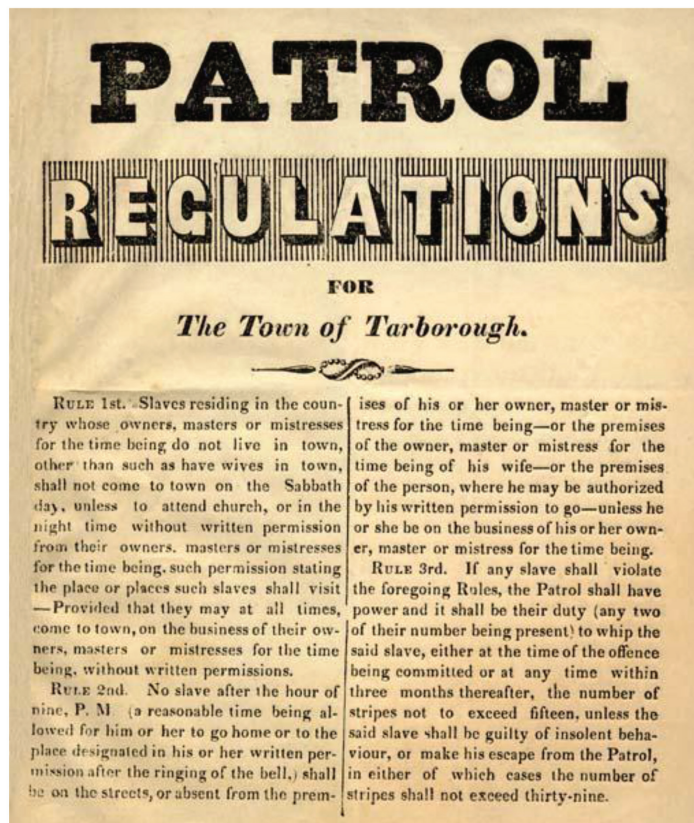
Resources

Day 3: The Fire – Discovering Artifacts



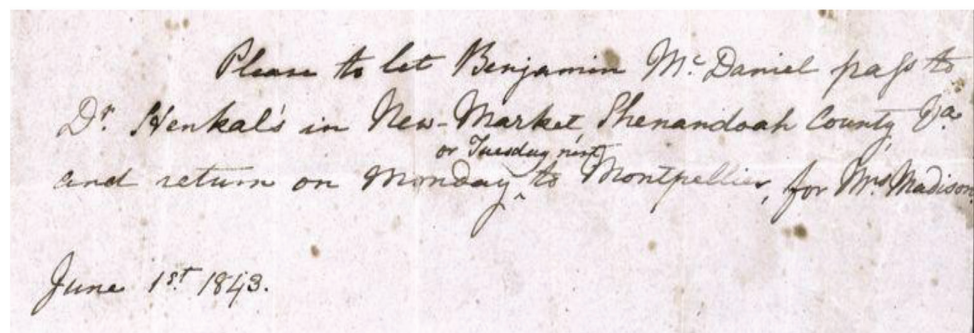
Certificate of Freedom of Harriet Boiling, Petersburg, Virginia, 1851.

"Free Blacks in the Antebellum Period." African American Odyssey. The Library of Congress, 21 Mar. 2008. Web. 21 July 2013. <http://memorv.loc.gov/ammem/aaohtml/aopart2.html>.



Patrol Regulations for the Town of Tarborough

"Patrol Regulations for the Town of Tarborough." Documenting the American South. University Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2004. Web. 21 July 2013. <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/tarboro/tarboro.html>.



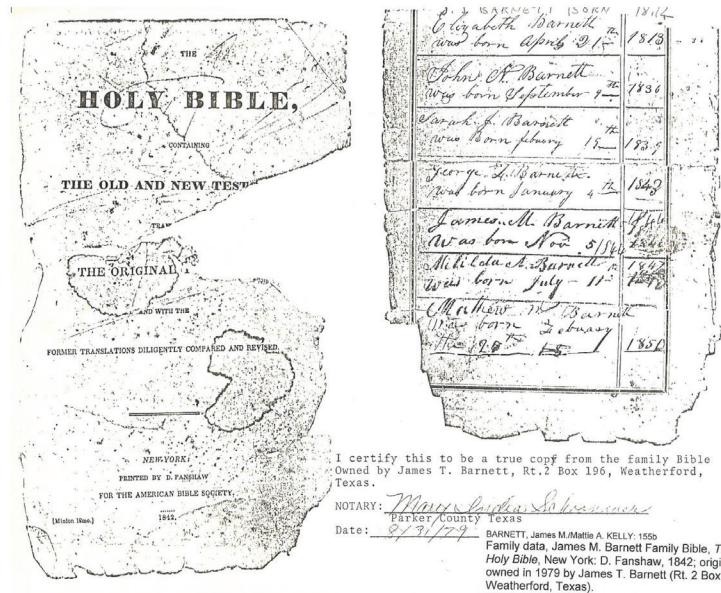
Slave pass for Benjamin McDaniel to travel from Montpelier to New Market, Shenandoah County, Virginia, June 1, 1843.

"Slave Pass for Benjamin McDaniel." NYPL Digital. New York Public Library, 25 Mar. 2011. Web. 21 July 2013. <http://digitalqallerv.nysl.org/nypldigital/dqkevsearchdetail.cfm?trq=1>.

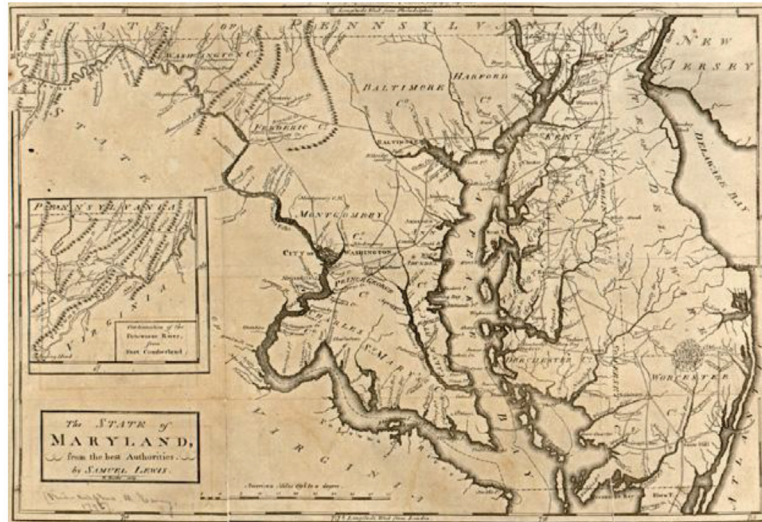


Mount Harmon Plantation originated as a land grant of 350 acres to Godfrey Harmon by Caecilium Calvert the second Lord Baltimore, in 1651. It prospered as a tobacco plantation during the 17th and 18th centuries, growing and exporting tobacco to the British Isles.

"National Scenic Byways Program: Mount Harmon Plantation at World's End." #64015: Mount Harmon Plantation at World's End. National Department of Transportation: Federal Highway Administration, n.d. Web. 21 July 2013. <http://library.byways.org/assets/64015>.



"Bible Pages." Barnett Family Genealogy. WordPress.com, 2008. Web. 21 July 2013. <http://vycurry.wordpress.com/bible-pages/>.



“The State of Maryland, from the Best Authorities” by Samuel Lewis. W. Barker Sculp.

Engraved for Carey's American Edition of “Guthrie's Geography Improved.” David Rumsey Map Collections: Cartography Associates. Cartography Associates, 2010. Web. 21 July 2013. <http://www.davidrumsev.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY~8~1~129~10016:The-State-of-Maryland,-from-the-bes>.

→ day 10: alternative final assignment family history project

“I will tell you something about stories. . . They aren't just for entertainment, Don't be fooled.” —*Leslie Marmon Silko*

“My history is bound up in their history and the generations and the generations that follow should know where they came from to know better who they are.”
—*Jewish immigrant, Minnie Miller*

This project invites you to learn the stories of your own family—immediate and extended. This is one way that our history becomes real, full of shape and voice. The idea is to more fully realize how our history is about the people who lived it versus events that get written down in history books. There is a partnership that is often overlooked.

Project

The project has a basic frame:

- Place your family history on poster board or paper—we will hang these in the class for all of us to read. I encourage you to go back as far as you can on all sides of your family (it makes the project more interesting for you and our class).
- Create an historical timeline that “holds” the 1st person family narrative. It is important that the timeline designates the important people and events in your family history. Think about important locations and “artifacts” for your family. The bible in the book *Kindred* is a good example of an artifact that the character Dana remembers which contains the names of her ancestors: Alice Greenwood Weylin and Rufus Weylin. Take time to ask family members questions—Why is this important to our family? When was this? What else was going on in the world, society, our family when this happened? Who else knows about these events and might have more information?
- Include your first-person family history narrative written in the storyteller's voice. The event it is about must be part of your timeline.

- Include 2-4 photographs of (or copies of—even in black and white) the people you choose to focus on, or people who are in some way connected to what you want to share (create captions for these photos to tie them into your project).

— about this guide's writer

JENNIFER SARMIENTO has taught English and writing for over ten years at the high school and collegiate level. She has a BA from Northwestern University in Comparative Literary Studies, an MA in English and an MS in English Education from Syracuse University. She currently teaches at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School in Cambridge, Massachusetts.