As part of a quinmester program, this course, "The Black Novelist in America," extends an opportunity for the student to take a personal and intellectual journey into the hearts, souls, minds, and emotions of black people. The range of subject matter includes: (1) distinction between the novel and other literary forms; (2) internalization of black folk heritage as a contribution to American literature and music; (3) demonstration of awareness of the contributions black novelists have made to the development of American literature; (4) examination of the impact of the Harlem Renaissance on the black conscience and the literary world; and (5) evaluation of major black writers and their works. Teaching strategies are arranged under performance objectives, all aimed toward bridging the identity gap among young black students and other Americans and toward opening new and exciting avenues for communication. (HOD)
AUTHORIZED COURSE OF INSTRUCTION FOR THE

QUINMESTER PROGRAM

DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DIVISION OF INSTRUCTION• 1971

LANGUAGE ARTS
The Black Novelist in America
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THE BLACK NOVELIST IN AMERICA

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English, Contemporary Literature

Written by Dave Boone
for the
DIVISION OF INSTRUCTION
Dade County Public Schools
Miami, Florida
1972
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COURSE-TITLE: THE BLACK NOVELIST IN AMERICA

COURSE DESCRIPTION: An indepth examination of works of James Baldwin, Richard Wright, William Melvin Kelley, Gordon Parks and others.

I. PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

A. After extensive reading and discussion, students will identify the special characteristics and problems of current Black novelists.

B. Presented with opportunities to investigate the Black folk heritage, the Harlem Renaissance, and the effect of both upon the Black conscience and the literary world, students will recognize the influence of these cultural forces upon the development of American literature and the Black novelist of the 70's.

C. Using their accumulated critical abilities, students will evaluate the contributions of major Black writers.

II. COURSE CONTENT

A. Rationale

An objective investigation into the background of the Black novelist and his major contributions to the development of the American novel, to culture, and to American literature is critically needed today to bridge a serious identity gap among young Black students and other Americans and to open new and exciting avenues of communication. This quin extends an opportunity for the student to take a personal and intellectual journey into the hearts, souls, minds, and emotions of Black people.

B. Range of subject matter

1. Distinction between the novel and other literary forms

2. Internalization of Black folk heritage as a contribution to American literature and music

3. Demonstration of awareness of the contributions Black novelists have made to the development of American literature

-1-
4. Examination of the impact of the Harlem Renaissance on the Black conscience and the literary world

5. Evaluation of major Black writers and their works

III. TEACHING STRATEGIES

A. Objective A. After extensive reading and discussion, students will identify the special characteristics and problems of current Black writers.

1. Show students the film, The Novel - What It Is, What It's about, What It Does and discuss their reactions.

2. Have students write an original definition of a novelist and then compare it with that of an authority.

3. Ask students to investigate the place of the novel as it relates to other literary forms.

4. Discuss with students what makes a novel immortal. Why do novels like Huckleberry Finn, The Invisible Man, Great Expectations and others seem timeless?

5. Have students prepare a list of the elements of the novel and specify the importance of each element in the total development of the novel.

6. Have students demonstrate their understanding of the three general kinds or categories of the novel -- the romantic, the psychological, and the social by placing each novel read or studied in class into its proper category.

7. Ask students to discuss in small groups the question: upon what does the success of a novel depend?

8. Have students determine when a novel is autobiographical and when it is not.

9. Ask students to distinguish between a novel and an essay. They will properly identify The Fire Next Time.

10. Arrange small group discussions in which students will analyze the term "Black novelist" and synthesize their points of view into a working definition.
11. Invite a guest lecturer to explain how The Black Rage can be associated with the Black novelist.

12. Have a group of students explain how Margaret Mead and James Baldwin: A Rap on Race may revolutionize the writing of novels.

13. Have students prepare brief biographical sketches of prominent Black authors. They may wish also to prepare a bulletin board display. Novelists may include:
   a. James Baldwin
   b. Ralph Ellison
   c. William Melvin Kelley
   d. Richard Wright
   e. Margaret Walker
   f. Chester Himes
   g. Gordon Parks
   h. Frank Yerby

14. Have the students invite an authority to the school to give a lecture entitled, The Black Novelists, Past, Present, and Future or one on any other topic of interest.

15. Have the students conduct a Harris-type poll in the school and community of adults, high school students, and college youth to determine their familiarity with outstanding Black writers and their works. The class might construct an original checklist or set of questions or they could use materials from the quarter course "Variations on Black Themes".

16. Have students research the attitudes held by popular magazines and major publishing houses concerning Black authors and their works. What change, if any, has been reflected over the years?

17. Have students make a list of the names of publishing houses which publish the works of Black novelists. (Example: Mnemosyne, Miami, Florida)
18. Ask two student leaders to direct a discussion in which their classmates will propose and defend reasons why novelists like Richard Wright, James Baldwin, William Melvin Kelley, Frank Yerby and others felt that they had to leave America in order to practice their profession, publish their works and be judged as novelists, not Black novelists compared with other Black novelists.

19. Suggest that students get an overview of the stances and perspectives of Black novelists. In order to do so they might scan segments such as the following:

   a. The prologue to Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man*

   b. The chapter "Notes for a Hypothetical Novel" in James Baldwin's *Nobody Knows My Name*

   c. Chapter one of Richard Wright's *Native Son*

20. The students will listen to a recording of Gordon Parks' *A Choice of Weapons* and discuss their reactions.

21. Take students to the library to investigate the background of Gordon Parks' *Learning Tree* or any other Black novelist and one of his works. Have them set up committees to produce a program on the order of "This Is Your Life" to be held for selected English classes.

22. Have students investigate the many roles of Gordon Parks. (Producer, novelist, father, husband, director, photographer, citizen, etc.)

23. Have students make a documentary on one of the major Black novelists on the order of TV's *The Black Journal*.

24. Have students investigate the symbolism of the following titles of novels.

   a. *A Choice of Weapons*

   b. *Jubilee*

   c. *Black Boy*

   d. *The Outsider*
e. Another Country
f. Native Son
g. The Invisible Man
h. The Third Generation
i. Manchild in the Promised Land
j. The Learning Tree
k. A Different Drummer
l. The Street

25. Suggest that students familiarize themselves with "monuments" -- street, schools, churches, statues -- commemorating a Black person. Are any of these honoring novelists? Students might erect a monument to a favorite Black novelist in the form of a mural, a piece of sculpture, an original dance, music, or a piece of written work.

26. Group students in triads to learn how to use the Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature, using copies checked out from the library, or invite a librarian to explain it.

27. Show students the film, How to Write Your Term Paper. Discuss it briefly, then study the guidelines for writing the research paper in a handbook. Teachers might also adapt activities from the quarter course "Writing a Research Paper." Some suggested topics are:

a. Black Voices Crying in the Wilderness of Humanity
b. Right On: Soul Comes to the Novel
c. Harlem Renaissance Revisited
d. A New Frontier of Black Literary Culture
e. A Fountainhead of Black Culture
f. Picasso and Early African Artists: A Comparison
q. Protest Voices: Spirituals

h. Black English

28. Direct students to gather data to prove that the Black novel is a vital and essential part of the cultural process of America.

29. Suggest that students compile a scrap book entitled "The Contributions Made by Black Novelists to the Modern Day Novel."

30. Have the students, after investigating, discussing and analyzing the meaning of "the Black experience, write essays giving the term a personal interpretation.

31. Have students analyze Saunders Reddings' statement that, "Negro writing in the United States has been from first to last a literature of necessity."

32. Have the class synthesize the problems confronted by the Black novelist and demonstrate an understanding by suggesting solutions.

B. Objective B. Presented with opportunities to investigate the Black folk heritage, the Harlem Renaissance, and the effect of both upon the Black conscience and the literary world, students will recognize the influence of these cultural forces upon the development of American literature and the Black novelist of the 70's.

1. Play several musical selections such as a Strauss waltz, a piece by Gershvin, and a blues selection or a spiritual. Ask students to listen carefully to note contrasts among the compositions. They might conclude that some are measured and formal while others move freely and almost intuitively.

2. Play a number of spirituals. Ask students to listen carefully to the words. What themes are portrayed? What emotions expressed? What literary devices are utilized? How does the music contribute to the total effect of the words? Ask students to find specific examples of colloquialisms, idioms, epic qualities, and liturgical elements.

3. Refer students interested in spirituals to the following books:
   b. Krehbiel. Afro-American Folk Songs
4. Play the works of a variety of Black recording artists: Leontyne Price, Aretha Franklin, Mahalia Jackson, Louis Armstrong, Marian Anderson. What characteristics of personality and technique have made these individuals famous? Students might suggest other performers who have made significant contributions to American culture.

5. Have students cite specific customs and practices from contemporary life that denote expanding cultural ties to Africa.

6. Ask students to view television programs, films, and travelogues for evidence of a growing American interest in and appreciation for African heritage.

7. Have students compile a list of famous biblical and/or historical Black figures who have been revered by generations of people. (Examples: Queen of Sheba, Aesop, Alexander Dumas)

8. Construct a literary time line for an overall view of Black authors in America: 1619-19-

9. Have students write an expository composition or a creative expression on the meaning of folk heritage.

10. Plan a Black festival of arts.

   a. Ask students to bring in their favorite recordings by Black artists.

   b. Arrange to display Black artwork.

   c. Have students prepare and make available to other students an annotated bibliography of books in the school library pertaining to Black culture.

   d. Stage a fashion show featuring Afro-American styles.

   e. Present an Afro-American dance revue.

   f. Dramatize a phase of Black culture and present it to classes or in the evening for the community.
g. Make posters, murals, etc. depicting Black historical figures and events.

h. Prepare soul food dishes.

11. Write the words "Harlem" and "Renaissance" on the chalkboard. Ask students to discuss the connotations of each. What concepts emerge when the two words are used together? (A student might want to research the history of Harlem as a locale.)

Take students on a tour of Harlem during the 1920's to meet some prominent literary figures gathered at "The Dark Tower" A'Lelia Walker Robinson's mansion. Gathered there are Countee Cullen, Zora Neale Hurston, Claude McKay, Langston Hughes and Jean Toomer discussing three primary themes (repudiation of white supremacy, critique of the white world, critique of the black world) from one of three stances (militant, reflective, quiet, and sensitive; or amused and satirical). Suggest that students read several works by these authors to experience the Black identity of those who participated in the New Negro Movement: The Harlem Renaissance.

12. Show students the film strip The Harlem Renaissance and Beyond.

13. Have students examine Margaret Walker's poem "For My People" p. 22 An Anthology of Black Literature: Right On as an example of writing for a new audience and expressing a new consciousness.

14. Investigate the possibility of sidewalk, street, or wall art as an outlet for Black cultural expressions of the 70's.

15. Have students investigate the Writers Project of WPA and its role in encouraging the literary talents of Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison.

16. Have students brainstorm to define stereotype.

17. Ask students, after defining stereotype, to investigate how stereotyping has been a blight on the literary conscience of the Black novelist and has weakened the impact of his works.
18. Because stereotyping and other means of distorting have misled readers about the Black novelists and their contributions, have each student investigate an author's works and synthesize his findings independently.

19. Ask students to evaluate Ellison's characterization in "Flying Home" The American Experience and determine whether the characters are life-like or whether they seem stereotyped in any way.

20. Ask students to read Herman Melville's "Benito Cereno" p. 8 Introduction to the Novel and analyze and defend Melville's characterization of Babo, the slave.

21. Discuss terms related to the oral tradition: minstrel, ballad, symbol, folk tale, dialect, humor, narrative, allegory, rhythm, human interest. Ask students to recall stories told to them in childhood and familiarize them with the idea that this is an ancient global habit. For what reasons were these stories told? Students might suggest that in addition to pure entertainment some were didactic (Aesop's Fables) while others were expressions of the hopes and fears of a people.

Have students read or listen to Negro animal folktales. (Talley's Negro Folk Rhymes) What heroic characteristics does the protagonist have? Explain how he uses various forms of intelligence to surmount seemingly insurmountable odds. In what specific ways are elements of the story symbolic?

Have students identify one or more current social problem and/or a specific aspiration or apprehension of a particular group of people. Using animals, write a short narrative to depict the problem, hope, or fear.

Give students a stereotyped description of a Black novelist and have them analyze why the description is stereotyped.

23. Have students investigate the personal philosophies of the following writers and weigh their beliefs as cultural forces on the expressions of specific Black novelists:

a. Malcolm X
b. Eldridge Cleaver
c. Martin Luther King
d. Leroi Jones
e. Phillis Wheatley
f. Harriet Tubman
g. W. E. B. DuBois
h. James Weldon Johnson
i. Langston Hughes

24. Consider with students why Charles A. Chesnutt, William Wells Brown, and Frank Yerby are important novelists in the development of American literature.

25. Ask students to write their definition of a protest novel. Discuss their ideas and have them identify the basic elements.

26. Have students evaluate the results of the attention called to social and economic problems that existed in America after World War I by William Faulkner, John Steinbeck and Eugene O'Neill.

27. Ask students to cite situations and conditions written about in Wright's and others' novels that no longer exist in our society today.

28. Have students critically discuss hypothetical solutions to the following Black literary problems:

   a. Elimination of the idea that every novel written by a Black is a novel of anger, rage, hatred, and protest.

   b. Elimination of the process of comparing the Black writer with other Black writers.

   c. Elimination of the act of labeling, comparing, and grouping.

   d. Elimination of biased treatment by publishers of books by Black writers that deal with mixed relationships.
29. Have students discuss in small groups the contributions Charles W. Chesnutt, Sutton Griggs and Paul Lawrence Dunbar made to the development of the Black novel.

30. Have students research the early Niagara Movement and the founding of N.A.A.C.P. Measure W. E. B. DuBois' influence (which spanned almost a century) on Black identity.

31. Have students investigate and analyze the history and development of the Black novel in America.

32. Have students, after completing activities related to Black novelists, demonstrate understandings gained from these activities by identifying the role of the Black novelist in the 1970's.

33. Ask students to write analyses of the Black novelist, his status, and his contributions to American literature.

34. Have students discuss authors who have emigrated to other countries. For what reasons have such Americans as T. S. Eliot, W. E. B. DuBois, Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein, Richard Wright, Eldridge Cleaver and Henry James left America?

35. Suggest that students construct a chart depicting literary prizes for excellence won by Blacks.

C. Using their accumulated critical abilities, students will evaluate the contributions of major Black writers.

1. Have students begin the compilation of a dictionary of terms used in the novels by Blacks. This might be illustrated by artists in the class.

2. Play a recording of Gordon Parks' The Learning Tree and have students discuss their reactions.

3. Have students identify the main characters in The Learning Tree and discuss the main conflict in the story.

4. Have students discuss the point of view in the story The Learning Tree.

5. Ask students to re-evaluate the meaning of the word "theme" as applied to the novel.
6. Have students identify the theme in The Learning Tree and discuss its universality or non-universality.

7. Have students carefully consider the elements in the story and discuss critically whether or not The Learning Tree has in it elements of universal scope.

8. Have students, after reading Gordon Parks' The Learning Tree, propose plans for presenting it as a musical.

9. Have students, after reading Chester Himes' The Third Generation, write a short resume of its plot.

10. Ask students to discuss roles of the main characters in The Learning Tree and The Third Generation and infer why these particular characters were selected to play these roles.

11. Have students examine the main conflicts in The Learning Tree and The Third Generation and discuss the dramatic impact of "passing" for white in the books.

12. Arrange students in small groups to compare and contrast elements of universal scope in The Third Generation with those in The Learning Tree or another novel by a Black writer.

13. After reading A Different Drummer, have students discuss and evaluate its plot. Two student leaders using questions they have designed might lead a large group discussion.

14. Have students write short compositions analyzing the theme and describing the setting of A Different Drummer.

15. Have students write an essay justifying and defending Tucker Caliban for salting his farm, killing his animals, and burning his house.

16. Ask students to propose reasons why Tucker Caliban, Bennett Bradshaw and other Blacks in A Different Drummer did or did not think, talk, and behave Black.
17. Divide the class into triads and have each triad discuss a situation in which Tucker Caliban found himself. One member of the triad will be selected to roleplay Tucker's part and the other two members will try to figure out just what Tucker Caliban symbolized in the role playing situation and finally what he symbolized in _A Different Drummer_.

18. Have students write a composition analyzing the mythical characteristics of _A Different Drummer_.

19. Students will write a critical evaluation of William Melvin Kelley's _A Different Drummer_ as an artistic achievement.

20. Have students set up an auditioning committee to select a troupe to record _A Different Drummer_, decide on materials needed, select the proper physical facilities for recording, record, and begin building a library of tapes on the Black novelists and their works.


22. Have students analyze James Baldwin's "Autobiographical Notes" p. 316 _Black Voices_ by Abraham Chapman and interpret their meaning.

23. Ask students, after reading Baldwin's _The Fire Next Time_, to discuss in small groups the meaning of protest writing. The students will also recognize the aim of protest writing.

24. Suggest that students read as an outside project Baldwin's _Another Country_.

25. Suggest that students make slides of selected scenes from Baldwin's _Go Tell It on the Mountain_ to be presented as "An Afternoon with James Baldwin, One of America's Major Novelists." Extend an invitation for parents to view the program.

26. Have students study and evaluate Margaret Mead and James Baldwin: _Rap on Race_. They might video tape selected scenes.

27. Have students debate the question of comparing a Black novelist with a white novelist.
28. Invite a guest lecturer to speak on a topic such as "How Do Black Novelists Compare with Other Major Writers of America?"

29. Show students the film, Aesop's and Thurber's Fables and ask them to give their reactions.

30. Suggest that students read the books listed below and differentiate between the handling of white and Black characters in books written by white writers and those in books written by Blacks.
   a. The Liberation of Lord Byron Jones, Ford
   b. The Soul Brothers and Sister Lou, Hunter
   c. Of Mice and Men, Steinbeck
   d. Gone with the Wind, Mitchell

31. The student will investigate the question: What is the major difference between Black writers such as Baldwin, Ellison, Wright, Kelley, Himes and others such as Faulkner, Twain, Hemingway, and Melville?

32. Have students discuss how the theme in Benito Cereno compares with themes in books that they have read by Black writers. Why is or is not the theme universal?

33. Ask students, after reading works by Melville, to discuss how he compares with James Baldwin, Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison or other major Black novelists.

34. Have students identify and role play stereotyping used by Black and white novelists. In addition students might participate in an integrated panel discussion based on the topic: "Why there must be literary standards."

35. Ask students to explain in a short essay what a Black novel is and prove that it is different from novels which are written by white novelists.

36. Ask students to write a paper demonstrating the strengths of a Black novelist and comparing him with a white contemporary novelist.
37. Suggest that students read Richard Wright's *Native Son* as an outside assignment and write a critique in which they judge him as a stereotyped writer.

38. Refer students to Wright's "Fate of Bigger Thomas" p. 163 The International Library of Negro Life and History-Introduction to Black Literature in America. Ask them to discuss and evaluate it.

39. Have students, after reading and evaluating the main conflict in Wright's *Native Son*, analyze the purpose of Bigger Thomas in the story.

40. Ask students to read Wright's *Black Boy* and discover the central conflict of the story.

41. Discuss with students how major events in *Black Boy* are foreshadowed in the novel.

42. Have students discuss the literary merits of *Black Boy* and relate incidents presented in the novel to actual life situations.

43. Ask students to generalize from situations presented in *Black Boy* why the characters act as they do. Is it because of historical circumstances, time, or other factors?

44. Suggest that students write one minute radio and TV commercials promoting the sale of *Black Boy*.

45. Have students use a format similar to TV's "All in the Family" and dramatize selected scenes from *Black Boy* and *Native Son*.

46. Have students form small groups to examine Wright's description of social and economic differences between Black and white.

47. Ask students to evaluate Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem* as an important step in the recognition of Black novelists.

48. Suggest that students re-examine McKay's *Home to Harlem* for its literary value and importance in the arena of the literary world.

49. Select chapters of Brown's *Manchild in the Promised Land* and have students propose reasons for Brown's intended purpose in writing the book.
50. Ask students to examine the experiences of the main characters in Graham's *South Town* and record their opinions in a short paper.

51. Discuss in class the American Booksellers Award. Why did *Ellison's Invisible Man* merit the award?

52. Suggest that students analyze each of the following novelists for his individual contributions to the field of novel writing:

   a. Paul Lawrence Dunbar
   b. William Wells Brown
   c. Jean Toomer
   d. John H. Williams
   e. James Baldwin
   f. Ralph Ellison
   g. Frank Yerby
   h. Margaret Walker
   i. Ann Petry
   j. Richard Wright
   k. Chester Himes
   l. William Melvin Kelley
   m. Zora Neal Hurston
   n. William Demby

53. Ask students to discuss Black literary heroes. What are their distinguishing characteristics?

54. Have students discuss in small groups the use of humor in the Black novel or the lack of it.

55. Have students design a crossword puzzle about Black novelists, their works, and their characters.
56. Ask students to conjecture in a short paper the paucity of happy endings in most of the novels written by Black novelists about Black people.

57. Invite a guest psychologist from one of the junior colleges or universities to organize a panel comprised of drama teachers from other schools and himself to discuss the social problem in the Black novel and others.

58. Have students cite specific genres used as vehicles for Black protest over the years.

59. Ask students to cite evidence of the Black novelist as a transmitter of cultural values and interpreter of important aspects of humanity.

60. Suggest that students interview ministers from various denominations to ascertain their views on the treatment of religion in the Black novel.

61. Have students discriminate between negative and positive literary contributions made by the Black writer.

62. Ask students to write letters to the editor of Black World and other literary magazines which chronicle their discovery of the unique characteristics of Black novelists.

63. Have students prepare a chart which measures the contributions made by the Black novelist to American letters.

64. Discuss with students the question: Will unbiased Blackness in literature revolutionize the literary world?

65. Suggest that students read professional reviews of novels studied in class. Using unbiased standards of criticism, have students critique the critics.

66. Have students who discover an interest in a specific author ascertain the title of his other works and do an in-depth study of several of them.
IV. STUDENT RESOURCES

A. State-adopted textbooks


B. Non-state-adopted textbooks


C. Novels


D. Nonfiction


E. Anthologies


F. Drama


G. Films

Aesop’s and Thurber’s Fables 1-12949
American Literature: The Westward Movement 1-04539
How to Write Your Term Paper 1-00532
Huckleberry Finn: The Art of Huckleberry Finn 1-31094
Literature Appreciation: How to Read Novels 1-11790
Novel, The: What It Is, What It’s About, What It Does 1-40059
What’s in a Story 1-11783

H. Recordings for purchase

Richard Wright, Black Boy
Pre-Civil Rights Act era of the South
TC 2030 (S-M) 2-12" LPs
CDL52030 Cassettes (2)

Scholastic Audio-Visual Catalog 1971 906
Sylvan Avenue, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 07632.
The Learning Tree - LC R -75-75120
2-12" LPs

A Choice of Weapons. F S 11010. 2-12" LPs.

The Best of Simple: Langston Hughes. F19789.
(The Spoken Word-English) 12"

Forms of Literary Expression. Series No. U330-
U3301 - The Novel (At the county level)

V. TEACHER RESOURCES


