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Wakanda: Opening the High School Classroom to Afrofuturism

Carrie M. Mattern

Carman-Ainsworth high school, matterncarrie@gmail.com

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Wakanda: Opening the High School Classroom to Afrofuturism

Cover Page Footnote

Thank you to C-AHS class of 2023. You challenged me to show up as the best version of myself every day.

Wakanda: Opening the High School Classroom to Afrofuturism

Carrie Mattern

What you know ‘bout Missy E.?’ Jam yelled from the back of the classroom as I paused the video and gave her my best teacher look, the one that we all have when we are challenged by a student we truly care for, and a look Jam has come to know well the last four months of sharing a space together every day (Thigpen, 2022). There was a quiet pause.

“Oh, that’s right,” she followed, “you did grow up around here in the nineteen hundreds, huh?” I balked at the use of centuries, but slowly nodded nonetheless.

“Yes, Jam,” I sighed as I started the video back up. We were watching a compilation of music videos that all featured

Afrofuturistic music artists.

It was early in our Afrofuturism unit, and I realized that my students needed another visual to help guide their thinking as they analyzed choice texts for qualities of Afrofuturism that we had begun reading the week prior. As we watched the Missy Elliott video, *Sock it to Me*, I was reminded again by my students how much responsibility I have as a white educator of Black, Indigenous, and Students of Color (BISOC) to continue to

As we watched the Missy Elliott video, *Sock it to Me*, I was reminded again by my students how much responsibility I have as a white educator of Black, Indigenous, and Students of Color (BISOC) to continue to disrupt their whitewashed curriculum the best I am able, and to also decenter my whiteness as I work to disrupt the canon.

disrupt their whitewashed curriculum the best I am able, and to also decenter my whiteness as I work to disrupt the canon.

Enter Afrofuturism.

Afrofuturism, or the “speculative fiction that treats African-American themes and addresses African-American

concerns in the context of 20th century technoculture — and more generally, African-American signification that appropriates images of technology and a prosthetically enhanced future,” was a term coined in the early nineties (Dery, 1994, p. 180). The work of Afrofuturism had been happening for centuries prior, especially if one considers the gospel songs and the languages created by Black folx who were enslaved by white owners as a sort of reimagining of their surroundings and futures. In addition, the Mother of Afrofuturism herself, Octavia Butler, had been writing in the genre decades prior to Dery’s naming. From various resources including Dery’s initial interviews and articles, our class settled on the use of Ytasha L. Womack’s definition stating that Afrofuturism is “an intersection of imagination, technology, the future, and liberation” (Womack, 2013, p. 9). This more current definition, led by Black scholarly work, combined with our earlier understanding of Crenshaw’s intersectionality (1991), helped senior students grapple with such a new concept.

This Afrofuturism unit is the follow up to another culturally relevant unit, *Deer Woman: An Indigenous Cultural Response to Trauma*, that I teach to seniors in the fall semester. Both are framed as an invitation to learn from racially diverse authors that are often erased from the high school canon, yet also as a persistent, objective reminder that why this work exists is as important as the literary works themselves. As a white educator of predominantly BISOC, I am not the expert nor centered in class, but the guide learning alongside the students as well as one who is sharing information rather than co-opting a lead role about a culture that is not my lived experience. This framing also helps students write or begin to process their own traumas (e.g., COVID, isolation, online school, racism, Flint water crisis, Flint school closures) using the lineage of how various cultures have reimagined the future or cultivated a reimagined future without the oppression as Afrofuturism does.

To begin the unit, I asked students if they have heard of Afrofuturism before, or if they think they know what it

means. Many predicted meanings by breaking down the word into its parts. I usually hear the muttering of something about Black hair from a corner of the room. This gets others involved in predictions and ideas; allowing the space for verbal brainstorming work to occur is critical. As hooks writes, “Seeing the classroom always as a communal place enhances the likelihood of collective effort in creating and sustaining a learning community” (hooks, 1994, p. 8). It also helps guide the learning to establish prior knowledge because students often know more than they (and we) think they do about particular topics. Many of them already come to class experiencing Afrofuturism whether in film, music, or literature and just did not know what it was called, and that it has a name.

Thank you, Ryan Coogler.

Figure 1
Kaylan, M. (n.d.). *Lost in the Island*.



Note. This Afrofuturism collage was used as one of the initial pieces to study in the introductory portion of the unit.

“Wakanda is a prime example,” Ash said confidently (Frederique, 2022). Like any good English teacher, I replied with: “Tell us more.” Ash went into details about the futuristic world of Wakanda and the costume design (Frederique, 2022). I shared a little about *The Bible*, Hannah Beachler’s 515 page design book that my former student, one of Coogler’s assis-

tant’s, Ammar Mohammad shared with me at Career Day earlier this year. The students were in awe and immediately began googling to see if there were any images from *The Bible* online. They also found Ruth Carter’s video acceptance speech for her Oscar for Black Panther’s Best Costume Design in 2019. As we spent a few minutes researching, I pulled up the focus of our work for the next three weeks on the slide and focused the class with this quote: “Without community there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her oppressor” (Lorde, 1984, p. 112). This quote serves as a foundation for the work we do day to day in class and the work we do in community with others.

Unit Overview

Teacher Selected Texts included in the Afrofuturism Unit, asterisk denotes the choice texts:

- Saul Williams’ poem, *Obm* (1998).
- Various music videos/artists in class (Missy E., Janelle Monáe, Sun Ra, etc.).
- Art from *Lost in the Island* (Michel, 2018).
- Excerpts of Octavia Butler’s *Kindred* and *Parable of the Sower* (both graphic novels also available in class)* (1979, 1993).
- Tunde Olarian’s “Little Brown Mouse” from *Octavia’s Brood** (2015).
- Semaj Brown’s *Black Dandelion** (2019).
- Tracy K. Smith’s *Sci-Fi** (2011).
- Douglas Kearney’s “Afrofuturism”*(2014).
- *Pumzi* a short Kenyan film (Kahiu, 2010).
- *Kindred* trailer (FX); I elected not to show this mini series due to triggering historical scenes and graphic imagery, plus it did not follow the text (Bravo, 2022).
- Reginald Betts poetry as models of Blackout poems from *Felon* (2019).

Aside from offering these texts to students, I knew foundational work needed to happen for the whole class prior to more independent practice and analysis with their choices. So, in conversation with Black scholars to synthesize my learning, I created this reference guide to help students contextualize what elements of Afrofuturism might look like in literature

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or media for our English 12 unit (*Afrofuturism: The World of Black Science Fiction and Fantasy Culture*).

Afrofuturism Checklist

- Contains elements of a variety of genres: science fiction, fantasy, magical realism. This genre blurs line between reality and fantasy: an element of magic is included & not defined-similar to the Indigenous curtain (Reese, 2017), historical fiction, Afrocentricity where Africans are viewed as subjects rather than objects or items owned by colonizers, and non-Western cosmologies which helps explain the universe creation through a different lens than typically taught in religion
- Reclamation: claiming something back or reasserting a right that was taken away by colonization, enslavement, and/or oppression
- Black liberation (the act of freedom): Is the character free or fighting for liberation?
- Revisioning the past (often through allusions & symbolism): How is the past being reflected upon?
- Predictions of the future through a Black cultural lens: How does the future look with Black folx leading, organizing, and creating without any threat from colonizers? What does the future look like if entire nations and tribal peoples were not colonized?

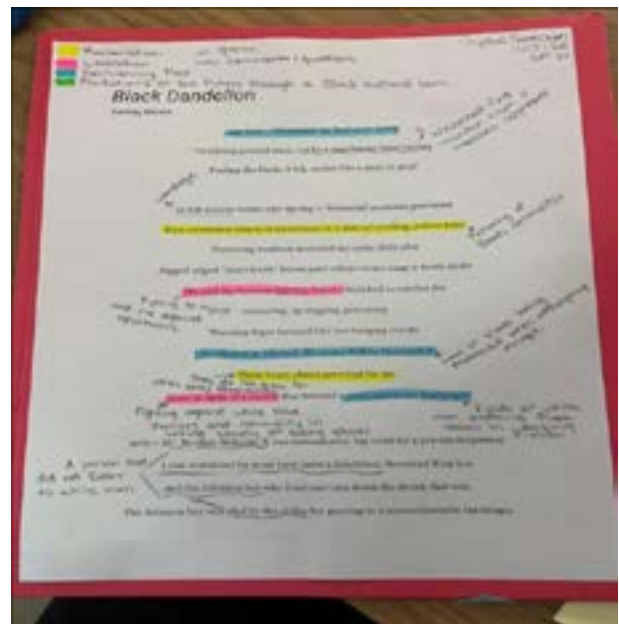
While this checklist provides a foundation, students are reminded of the nuance within each text and that it would be up to them to basically decide if Afrofuturism exists in the literature.

The Unit Process

I start equity versus equality work early on in my classroom to create an inclusive classroom community for the year. Students understand that we all need a variety of things to be successful, and we all do not necessarily need the same things. Another example of a liberated classroom includes choice. Unit texts choices, noted above with an asterisk, included an excerpt from Butler's *Kindred* and *Parable of the Sower* (1979, 1993), the short story, *Little Brown Mouse* by Flint's own Tunde Olarian from *Octavia's Brood* (Imarisha, 2015), "Afrofuturism" by Douglas Kearney (2014), *Sci-Fi* by Tracy K. Smith (2011), and *Black Dandelion* by Flint's own

Poet Laureate, Semaj Brown (2019). This was the independent choice work collection I curated for students to choose from based on my understanding of Afrofuturism. After reading, discussion, annotating, and filling out a Google Form each time they turned in one of their three choice texts from the options provided above, students would not only begin to understand Afrofuturism better, but practice strategies of analysis

Figure 2
(Santillian, C. 2022)



Note. An example of Crystal Santillian's annotations for Semaj Brown's, *Black Dandelion* (2019). Notice her use of the checklist items and varied highlight colors as key for understanding the qualities of Afrofuturism.

and critical thinking. Furthering this concept is that "we must continually claim theory as necessary practice within a holistic framework of liberatory activism," and that mindset worked as a focus for my teaching simply because to learn about liberation takes a liberating space, and if our classroom was not liberated, I knew students would not learn from this unit even if they thought it was interesting (hooks, 1994, p. 69). The Google Form students were provided included the checklist above, as well as a few questions for them to cite examples and include evidence on whether or not their choice reading from the list was a solid example of Afrofuturism. Students filled these out weekly using one source per form.

This assessment strategy allowed students a low stakes reasoning and analysis to make a claim about each text and defend it based on the work prior individually, with partners, or at their table teams. Again, choice is liberatory in classrooms and many seniors noted they had not received much choice throughout their high school careers in other classes so they took full advantage of small group work in my classroom. While the form was in addition to the individual annotation assignment, it provided more feedback for me to make adjustments to my current mini-lessons, as well as changes to this unit in the future. Students were very quick to say, “I need more of the text to make a concrete decision” on particular choices including both excerpts from the mother of Afrofuturism herself. This was my biggest takeaway for next year.

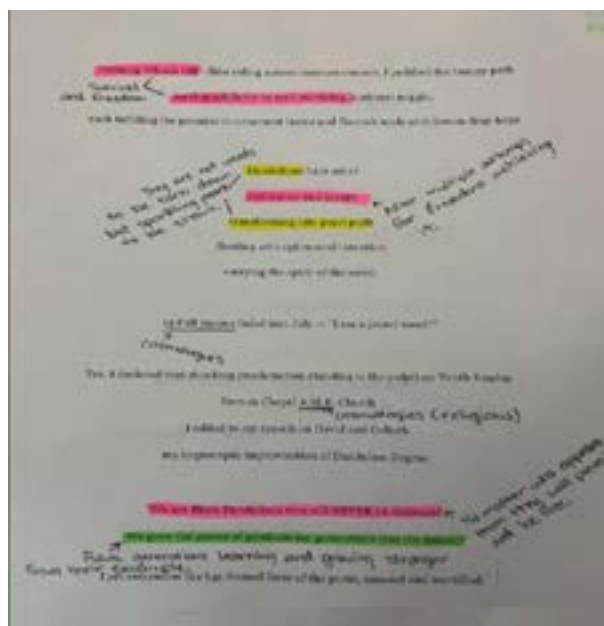
The WHY

Twice throughout the unit, I paused our work to lay down the foundation of why Afrofuturism exists even though this was the focus of the initial lecture. This work is critical in that while Dery named it, Black musicians like Sun Ra and George Clinton, as well as modern artists such as Saul Williams and writers Samuel Delany, Ishmael Reed, and George Schuyler had been practicing it for some time. At times, I would bring in quotes from various activists and Afrofuturists like Detroit poet, Jessica Care Moore and Detroit filmmaker, Dream Hampton who reminds us that: “All social justice work is science fiction. We are imagining a world free of injustice, a world that doesn’t exist yet” (Imarisha, 2015). This quote helped many students contextualize that the work we are doing in class is also linked to the oppression they may have faced in spaces that are harmful and oppressive. Other times, I would mention the history of Black people and how reimagining a world without oppression is the reason why this work exists. Often, I would name familiar people from history like Emmett Till and bring in to the forefront with those facing modern day oppression like Brittney Griner (who was finally released close to the end of our unit in December 2022). These concrete examples also helped students who were struggling with the science fiction aspect as something more concrete and symbolic. It was a reminder that often the justice system does not prevail for Black folk, and taking justice into their own hands, through literature and art, is an act of reclamation and liberation. It makes sense to follow this talk up with Eve Ewing’s poem, *I saw Emmett Till this week at the grocery store* (2018), as an example of both reclamation and prediction of a future where Emmett

Till still is here, still is thriving and still is living his life as an ordinary older Black gentleman shopping in the produce section of the grocery store. This is an additional text I will add to the future unit.

Along with this why for the unit comes the why Afrofuturism exists itself; justice and healing should be framed as the priority in our classrooms since learning from the height

Figure 3
(Santillian, C. 2022)



Note. An example of Crystal Santillian’s annotations for Semaj Brown’s, *Black Dandelion* (2019). Notice her use of the checklist items and varied highlight colors as key for understanding the qualities of Afrofuturism.

of Covid teaching, but educators and, more often, districts themselves, still struggle with this prioritization (Kimner, 2021). This unit fosters a just outcome as well as the invitation to process healing that can happen as students begin to connect the why Afrofuturism exists to what they are creating as youth living through and embodying tumultuous times. In particular for my students, the closures of Flint schools (22 at the time of writing this), effects of the Flint Water Crisis (they were second graders at the height of this epidemic), and effects from remote learning turned hybrid school during the height of the pandemic all contribute to their views of education and how students today see themselves as learners.

Overall Unit

We began with art to discuss and analyze with low stakes group input. I shared various images of Afrofuturistic art and asked the class to get into teams and discuss what they see and what they think Afrofuturism means when applied to art. This practice was courtesy of my co-teacher, Amber Sewell, and her focus on imagery with symbolism as a starting point to invite students into the discussion. After analyzing and discussing, we shared with students the Afrofuturism checklist. After sharing the list, we reexamined the art to discover deeper intricacies of Afrofuturism as a whole class.

Next up was my favorite spoken word artist, Saul Williams. While the art engaged the class, his poem would be the literature used as the attention getter. *Ohm* had to be my first text, and it was used by the whole group because it is a challenging but gripping text. I knew if we started with *Ohm* together, students might feel more confident in their later independent text choices. Many students responded to it quickly and said it felt like what we were looking for in Afrofuturism even though most could not point out the specific examples of Afrofuturism yet. Students said the vibe was most definitely Afrofuturistic. Emma suggested that the planetary beings references was highly Afrofuturistic, as well as the talk of inclusivity in being non binary (Ochidianaky, 2022). These offerings provided hope that we were on the right track to making sense of Afrofuturism together.

The Annotation Process

Students were then invited to read a minimum of three options from the list and analyze in their annotations for Afrofuturism using the checklist. We discussed how the first read might just be annotations about what they notice and wonder, while the next read might incorporate actual digging into the text using the checklist. Students were invited to choose a variety of texts with this unit since I previously learned in our *Deer Woman* Unit that the shorter texts seem to get all the love. In this case, my co-teacher decided one of the choices had to be a Butler piece or Olarian's story due to length. That way students would also get experience with an Afrofuturistic narrative while analyzing the poems that they were more familiar with doing in class (Sewell, 2022). Students were also given the option to choose to read pieces together as a table team, to work in pairs, or as an independent reading practice. One

point to note is that “the classroom should be a space where we’re all in power in different ways,” which is consistent in this unit and how I manage my classroom (hooks, 1994, p.152). Choice provides empowerment and liberation, so this unit centered those strategies. When we empower students with choice, we often see more engagement and more insight than when we assign particular readings.

We saw varying degrees of literacy happening in the three

Figure 4
Watson, S. (2022)



Note. An example of blackout poems that create a liberated verse or rhyme from an oppressive historical document.

senior level classes that were implementing this unit. I noticed that verbal annotating is definitely something we as educators need to provide time (and offer time/space/incentives/grades) for. There are too few minutes directed toward processing information verbally in high school classrooms. When considering the arrival of Chat GPT (a form of AI) and writing, one mentor of mine said: “What I can say, with absolute certainty, is that classroom discussion is about to catapult into a central role in instruction that it hasn’t seen in a very long time” (Kay, 2023). Discussion work is critical work. Now more than ever. Students in one hour in particular hinged their comprehension on talking through what they read prior to writing down

any annotations. I observed that they read aloud, discussed, then independently wrote their takeaways on their own copies of the text. Their annotations read in their own words but were similar ideas based on prior conversations about what they noticed in the text. They also began to cite one another and their contributions to each other's learning this year based on my reading and sharing of *Not Light But Fire* (Kay, 2018). When students are able to congratulate peers for their contributions to class, the engagement levels deepen.

A brief note on annotating: since this is a senior class, we did not provide any annotation stems or requirements as it is a practice our English department incorporates from middle school through graduation. Most seniors are familiar with the practice whether they choose to annotate in the marginalia of the actual document, or online using color coded highlights and the comments option in Google.

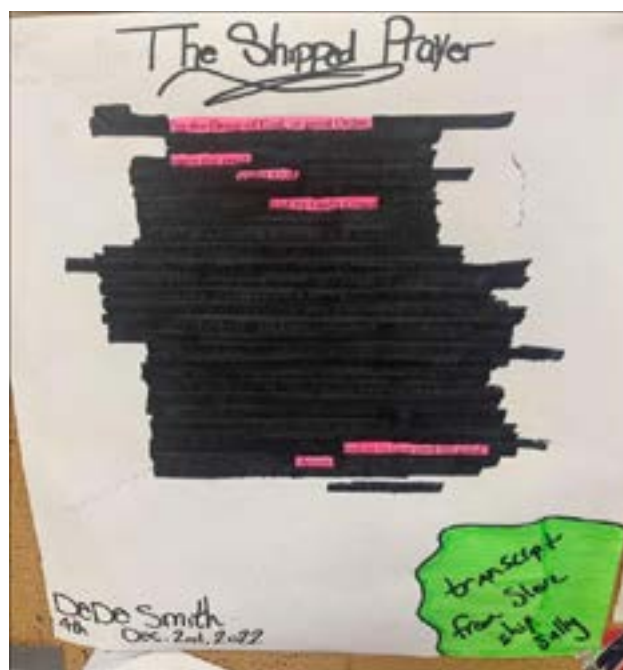
Found Poem

A creative assignment within the unit was to create a found poem or a blackout poem using historical documents as a tool for reimagining what a future might look like if those documents were equitable, inclusive, or removed of the oppression. It was our take on enacting more of the qualities we were asking students to analyze within the realms of Afrofuturism. Reginald Betts' found poems from his imprisonment and the collection *Felon* (2019) were a helpful visual for students with this task. At first, I printed various documents for students to use, such as: the *Declaration of Independence*, Dred Scott case, the *Constitution*, enslaved ship cargo slips, enslaved ship letters from one colonizer to another, copies of old magazines called *UpFront* published by Scholastic, and Thomas Paine's Speech on Virginia Convention. But as we worked, students decided on other documents they wished to use such as the *Pledge of Allegiance*, the National Anthem, and the *Loving v. Virginia* case. This ask would not have been possible had I not set up a learning environment where students were in charge of their level of engagement and learning, rather than a more authoritarian, traditional classroom. We worked through ideas of how to erase the oppression or create a new narrative based on the words we decided to erase or black out. It was a powerful experience and very creative, plus it allowed students to use what they were learning with Afrofuturism: reimagining the future while possibly feeling a bit liberated.

Unit Curation

The final culminating project of this unit was for students in teams of two or four to work collaboratively and create a mini-unit based on songs, poems, articles, movies, and any type of text they thought would work if they took on the role as an educator teaching this unit in the future. They

Figure 5
Smith, D. (2022)



Note. An example of blackout poems that create a liberated verse or rhyme from an oppressive historical document.

were invited to use the texts that we studied in class as well as anything new they deemed “Afrofuturism AF” (their title not mine). Students were invited to choose five texts to create the Afrofuturism Unit and then, as a team, tasked with writing a 75-word rationale for each text choice that justified why each of these texts are considered good examples of Afrofuturism for their unit. I provided an example, as well as information on rationale writing (NCTE, 1994). This collaboration was inspiring. Many students added artists such as Beyoncé, especially with Renaissance dropping last summer; Janelle Monáe, Childish Gambino (plus Donald Glover’s, *Atlanta*), Black

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Eyed Peas, and Kendrick Lamar. This learning also helps me continue building this unit for next year's seniors.

Mattern Rationale Example (provided to students as a mentor text)

Kaylan Michel's collage, part of the *Lost in the Island* exhibit, illustrates a strong theme of Afrofuturism due to a variety of reasons found in studying the art. The use of mixed genres from the realistic photograph of the traditionally clothed African woman, moon, and hot air balloon, to the science fiction scenery in the back of multiple moons, a neon planet, and UFO make this piece vividly Afrofuturistic. Along with this use of neon color and imagery, the symbolism of both reclamation and Black freedom are evident with the flight of the balloons and the fact that person is seemingly a warrior of this brave new world or perhaps royalty. This reclamation of power is necessary for Afrofuturism to exist also. Overall, Michel, a Black Queer artist, exhibits Afrofuturism in layers with this collage in a powerful way.

A Student Rationale Example from MeKayla Moore's sixth hour team

See You Yesterday, a 2019 film by Stefon Bristol, is a great example of Afrofuturism to include in this unit plan also because of the time machine they built to go back in time and save the protagonist's brother from police brutality. This can be shown as Afrofuturism because it's an example of us changing the narrative in our story Black folks do not lose their life to the police. It also includes a mixed genre of science and historical fiction because they're using a time machine based off of scientific research and going to an event that actually happens, but they are trying to change the outcome. Furthermore this movie also includes magical realism in the story by using the time travel ability to change the outcome of a life. Reclamation is also shown in this movie by the main character taking back something that was rightfully hers, which was her brother's life, after a cop so wrongfully took that away. We would show this halfway through our AFAF unit to help students visualize a good example of Afrofuturism.

Film Study

Once all of this work had taken place, students were ready for a break from literature which meant a final visual. We de-

cidated to allow students to choose a film that might be considered Afrofuturistic, but one that might be debatable. We easily settled on Nya's recommendation, which was *Soul* (Gadison, 2022). She desperately wanted more feedback on this film since it was one she included in her team's unit plan. As seniors watched and analyzed with new knowledge and the checklist in mind, a lot of debate sparked whole group discussion with the identities of the creators of *Soul*. If they weren't all Black, could it still be considered Afrofuturistic? If the protagonist was a Black man in the film, but took on a white woman's voice, is it considered Afrofuturistic? What about the fact that Joe Gardner, the film's protagonist, embodied a cat instead of his Black body for the majority of the film. How was that reclamation? These questions were discussed in person and as a collective three-class Padlet as we watched and learned along-

Figure 7
Kaylan, M. (n.d.). *Lost in the Island*.



side our students. It was interesting to see what other classes thought of their peer's responses via Padlet. We left it open so they could comment on one another's responses, even if they were not in the same hour of English 12. The collective decided it was not Afrofuturistic, but there were specific scenes and instances in the film that could be. Many students had alterations for *Soul* to make it more Afrofuturistic if they were producing. As a follow up, I showed them the Kenyan short film, *Pumzi*, to provide a concrete example of an Afrofuturist film

to conclude the unit. They thought it was very Afrofuturistic given our checklist and final discussion.

Challenges and Adaptations

The unit overall was more interesting as a teacher who learns and discovers alongside students than challenging. So this section really encompasses what I might do differently next year with seniors. To start, the found poem will be framed differently. Many students were highlighting oppression and racism; not eradicating the white supremacy in the documents they found. Rather than blacking out the racism and white supremacy in the work (for a blackout poem), some students seemingly left that part untouched. My co-teacher and I wondered if it's that students are conditioned to not be able to see the racism embedded into the printed documents because it is normalized so often in history books and history lessons today (Sewell, 2022). This will be intentional with our excerpts next year that we choose for blackout and found poems. We will also model one each using similar documents as the students. This year we just pulled random magazine articles to model the method rather than the content (instead of using the same sources as the students). We didn't want to guide them too much, but many needed more of a visual example with the content than we initially provided.

Another interesting challenge was the question that crept up yet was extremely valid: Can art not created by Black creators, but implemented by Black entertainers and society, be considered Afrofuturistic? For example, is Lil Uzi Vert album cover art by St. Louis artist, fvissi (who may identify as white), an example of modern Afrofuturism? Or back to the *Soul* example, which had one Black creator alongside two white producers and directors. Ajhia asked early on in the unit about a show with a white writer but Black producer and Black director (Neyland, 2022). This is tricky. I replied, "It is in the tradition of Afrofuturism, but it cannot be Afrofuturistic due to it lacking a full Black creator, director, or team." I will continue researching and learning so my clarification and explanation continues to honor Black artists and traditions as well as offer my students more foundational knowledge with adding the works of Isaiah Lavender III and Alondra Nelson.

My co-teacher also felt this way, but as two white women, we need to do more to honor the lineage of Black creators who have been doing this work and continue to do

this work. In fact, "teachers must be actively committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being" (hooks, 1994, p. 15). Self-actualization and self-study reflections must happen prior to teaching any new material, but even more so material that centers marginalized, oppressed voices: "Different, more radical subject matter does not create a liberatory pedagogy," especially if the work around the subject matter continues to be framed from a straight, white, middle class perspective (hooks, 1994, p. 148). Additionally, we noted that although Dery was white; he edited the book and coined the name Afrofuturism rather than creating the concept himself. This is one solid reason we can provide as proof that in order to be considered Afrofuturism, Black folx must both be in charge and centered in an Afrofuturistic work.

My co-teacher also noted that students struggled with sci-fi and fantasy in general: "They just don't read enough sci-fi or fantasy to recognize how that sets it apart from dystopian literature. I wonder if we read more sci-fi and fantasy excerpts leading to this unit, they might see how those are not necessarily Afrofuturistic and our options in this unit were" (Sewell, 2022). We did recommend many science fiction and fantasy books by Black authors at the end of this unit because students were invested. Some of those included works by N.K. Jemisin, Namina Forna, and Tracy Deonn. Overall my co-teacher is right; the high school canon does injustice to genres, as well as BIPOC authors and creators.

Extension

Students were also given an extension opportunity with Detroit Public Television. They wrote a concept for a short Afrofuturism tutorial video that would run on the Michigan Learning Channel through Detroit Public TV. They met with a producer and practiced writing a two column script. Then their scripts were reviewed by DPTV, and one group from each class was chosen to be filmed. One student even chose to work as the videographer all day. This experience would not have happened had we worked in a silo. Community building and authentic learning is critical to providing opportunities for students to explore learning outside the classroom (Boardman et al., 2021). This activity also allowed students to work with professionals and explore possible career paths. Videos are linked to the end of the article and also can be found on the Michigan Learning Channel website.

Student Commentary

Overall it is important to end a unit with the students in mind. I overheard a conversation halfway through the unit that fits my teaching philosophy best: two seniors preparing to dig into “Black Dandelion” together at their table (Alzahabi & Griffin, 2022). They gave me permission to use this excerpt as an example of how our class tends to flow.

Alaa: Ya know we never would have learned about Afrofuturism in any of our other classes, right?

Ciara: Yeah but I think we kinda knew a bit of it already and Mattern built on it. Like I knew Black sci-fi was different somehow. It felt like it anyway.

Alaa: Really? I didn’t. I love it because I can see others things now and ask myself, is this Afrofuturism or linked to it somehow? Like that new video from Sza.

Ciara: True. I like how she (Mattern) makes us work hard and think critically, but she literally hands us everything we need to complete the work. Like our checklist for this one we are reading now.

Alaa: Yeah, Ciara, like this is hard work but we have what we need to succeed. It makes it (learning) feel possible.

I would like to imagine that as educators we continue making the work feel possible for students; those possibilities are limitless when including a reimagined look at what the future could be by centering Afrofuturism. As Shuri, Black Panther’s sister, states: “Brilliance at a young age is not always accepted by elders” (Coogler, 2022). We must do more to not only accept youth brilliance; we must curate spaces where their brilliance is centered and reimagines the future.

Project Video: <https://www.michiganlearning.org/labs/labs-project-create-an-explainer/>

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Carrie Mattern is a mother, reader, educator, writer, and organizer. She teaches English 9, English 12, and AP Literature to young adults at Carman-Ainsworth high school in Flint, MI. She is a graduate of Saginaw Valley State University where she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree. She earned her Masters degree at the University of Michigan-Flint in Language and Literacy. Currently she is President of the Michigan Council of Teachers of English.



Walker M., 4th Grade



Charles, 4th Grade