



# LIBERATED ETHNIC STUDIES

MODEL CURRICULUM CONSORTIUM

## Black is Beautiful

Time: Three 25-30 minutes sessions

Grade Level: 7-12

### Purpose (What will students learn from this lesson?):

- Students will understand how colorism (prejudice that favors people with lighter-skin tone/color) affects them and others.
- Students will understand that colorism unfairly favors white people.
- Students will understand how to identify colorism in themselves, their classroom, classroom materials, and in society.
- Students will understand how to challenge and reframe colorism.

### Unit Enduring Understandings Alignment:

- We understand and critique the relationship between white supremacy, racism, anti-Blackness, anti-Indigeneity, xenophobia, patriarchy, cisheteropatriarchy, capitalism, ableism, ageism, anthropocentrism, and other forms of power and oppression.
- We understand and challenge all forms of oppression and their manifestations by conceptualizing and enacting transformative projects of agency and resistance.
- We understand that while studying forms of oppression, it is also critical to engage ourselves in developing critical consciousness, reclaiming hope and healing.

### Lesson Guiding Questions:

- What does colorism look like?
- What happens when there is colorism in our society?
- How does colorism help white people?
- How can we stop colorism so white people are not unfairly favored?
- How are colorism, anti-Blackness, and white supremacy linked?

**Essential Skills:**

- I can define and identify colorism in a variety of contexts.
- I can effectively use the reciprocal reading strategy with a partner or n=in a group of 4.
- I can research and industry and identify colorism and collaborate to devise a plan to resist that industry’s colorism.

**Cultural Wealth (Yosso, p. 78):**

- ***Aspirational capital:*** We have hope that we have the strength and inner beauty to stop colorism in school and in the world.
- ***Familial and resistant capital:*** We can ask our friends, family, and community for help in speaking up about and making plans and taking action to stop colorism.

**Ethnic Studies Principles Alignment:**

- *Principle 1:* cultivate empathy, community actualization, cultural perpetuity, self-worth, self-determination, and the holistic well-being of all participants, especially Native People/s and people of color.
- *Principle 5:* challenge imperialist/colonial hegemonic beliefs and practices on the ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized levels.

**Standards Alignment:**

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1

**Materials:**

<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Digital Article <u>“Lighten Up”</u> by Ronald Wimberly (2015). (Note: This digital story contains an abstract but cartoon drawing of a bare-breasted woman).</li><li>2. <u>Photo of child choosing between two dolls</u> and <u>link to compilation of clips of the Clark Doll Test</u> (one with darker, one with lighter skin)</li><li>3. <u><a href="#">Reciprocal Reading Strategies Bookmark</a></u></li><li>4. A selection of picture books and/or cartoon characters or with examples of colorism and disruption of colorism AND/OR a slidedeck with images and</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>6. Computer/LCD projector/Internet access</li><li>7. Electronic whiteboard and dry erase markers or chart paper and markers.</li></ol>
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<p>examples of colorism and positive portrayals of darker skin tones.</p> <p>5. T-chart.</p>	
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**Modifications, Accommodations, Resources for Multilingual Students:**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Modify the slidedeck to respond to the needs of your classroom. Add photos and examples that are familiar to your students and that will be responsive to your students.</b></li> <li>● <b>Pairs of students use the <a href="#">Reciprocal Reading Strategies Bookmark</a> to make difficult vocabulary and concepts accessible. Pair bilingual students with emergent bilingual students if possible.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>You can shorten or lengthen this lesson to 2-3 days depending on how long your class is able to maintain focus and engagement.</b></li> <li>● <b>Preview the key vocabulary terms below before beginning the lesson utilizing the ideas presented.</b></li> </ul>
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**Critical Vocabulary:**

<b>CRITICAL VOCABULARY</b>	<b>Definition and Rationale for choosing this word, phrase, or concept</b>	<b>Idea for pre-teaching or front-loading the concept.</b>
<b>colorism</b>	Skin tone bias that manifests in people and institutions privileging lighter skin-toned people.	Show an image of different skin tones and discuss the definition with examples of who would be treated better based on skin tone. That is in the slide deck provided.
<b>power</b>	the ability or capacity to direct, influence, or determine behavior (social, political, economic, etc.) via authority and control.	Ask students to identify who has power in the classroom, school, and city and ask them to provide an example,

		working backwards into this definition.
<b>privilege</b>	a special advantage or benefit not enjoyed by everyone. Within systems of power, privilege is often inherited and is informed by one's identity.	Explain that privileges (for this meaning of the word) means good stuff you get that you didn't earn (for example, assuming a white person is the store owner instead of a black person being the store owner).
<b>bias</b>	An unreasonable tendency, feeling or opinion that favors one thing, idea, person, place, or group over another.	Ask students to identify their favorite sports team, social media platform or musician. They have an unreasonable bias towards them. Use the word "bias" to describe who they favor.

## C1: Cultural Ritual and/or Energizer

Title: Sitting in Our Beauty

STEP	DESCRIPTION	TIME
<b>Step 1</b>	Sit in a circle on the floor or in chairs. <b>Land Acknowledgement:</b> We remind ourselves that we are sitting on the land of the <a href="#">(Indigenous Land)</a> in [City, State]. We do this to remember and how we can respect the people of this land past and present.	<b>2 minutes</b>
<b>Step 2</b>	<b>Ancestor Acknowledgement.</b> We think about and bring those who have come before us to help guide what we do everyday. Is there someone you know about that you bring with you in your heart today? Share with the class who you bring with you	<b>1-2 minutes</b>

	to your learning today and why?	
<b>Step 3</b>	Describe to students: There is beauty inside of all of us. For example, when a friend is in a bad mood and you get them to laugh or just sit with them, you are showing them the beauty of your heart. When you text a friend a post you know they will like, the generosity inside of you is obvious to them. When you watch a movie and it reminds you of something important to you, you are feeling your inner beauty. When you think of someone in your family that you love, you are experiencing beauty inside of you. If you are comfortable, close your eyes. You can leave your eyes open if you want. Quiet yourself and focus on your breath. Think about something that makes your inside beautiful for 60 seconds and then I will ask you to open your eyes.	<b>2 minutes</b>
<b>Step 4</b>	Tell students to open their eyes. Invite a few volunteers to share how they are sitting in their beauty and what makes them feel beautiful on the inside or smile on the inside.	<b>5 minutes</b>
<b>Step 5</b>	Explain that today we are going to be talking about how our inner beauty can be hurt by something called colorism.	<b>1 minute</b>

## C2: Critical Concepts

### Title: How does colorism work in comics?

STEP	DESCRIPTION	TIME
<b>Step 6</b>	Ask: What does the word color mean? Ask students to share what the word color makes them think of? Invite a few volunteers to share what the word means to them. Ask, then, what do you think colorism is? Share the definition on chart paper or on the slide deck: "Skin tone bias that manifests in people and institutions privileging lighter skin-toned people." In other words, it means: <i>Getting better treatment and better stuff the lighter your skin is.</i>	<b>5 minutes</b>
<b>Step 7</b>	Show an image of a child looking at two dolls. This is a famous study: The Clark Doll test. Explain that when the youth was asked which one is prettier, she pointed to the doll with white skin when asked which was bad, the Black doll. Explain that this is an example of colorism - treating or thinking about another person as better or prettier when they have lighter skin. Time allows, show a few minutes of Clark Doll Tests <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkpUyB2xgTM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkpUyB2xgTM</a> <b>There are Spanish speaking youth at the end of the video compilation.</b>	<b>3-10 minutes</b>
	Invite students to read the comic page in the slidedeck aloud.	<b>5 minutes</b>

<b>Step 8</b>	You can choose students, one to be the princess and one to be the prince. After students read the comic, ask volunteers to share what message they think the comic is telling? [The comic challenges the practice of colorism in society. The comic is challenging the idea that being lighter or “fair” is desirable. It also challenges the idea that girls of color may not be knowledgeable about how they are being oppressed by centering on her education and knowledge of vocabulary and how language is used to oppress.]	
<b>Step 9</b>	Invite students to read the article <a href="#">“Lighten Up”</a> with a partner or in a group of 4. Create breakout rooms for partners or groups to read the digital article linked above. Explain it is written by a cartoonist who did some work for a Marvel Comic when he realized the comic editor was asking him to perpetuate colorism. Direct students to use a <a href="#">“reciprocal reading” strategy</a> for each panel with the reciprocal reading bookmark. Ask a volunteer to be your partner and model the strategy with the first panel.	<b>15-20 minutes</b>
<b>Step 10</b>	When students return from breakout pairs/groups, pose the following questions from the chart on the slidedeck. They can work in pairs to fill in the chart individually and then add to their charts as peers share answers, or the chart can be filled in whole-class with volunteer responses. Pose the discussion questions: 1) Which characters and skin colors/complexions are being questioned?; 2) How do skin colors and race affect the meaning of the stories told in the frames?; 3) What might the race of characters in a story tell us about power and privilege? About bias and beauty?	<b>10 minutes</b>
<b>Step 11</b>	<b>Ask the class:</b> Is colorism fair? Why not? Who is treated the best from colorism? Explain that colorism helps white people the most because they are always treated the best for having lighter skin.	<b>5 minutes</b>

### C3: Cultural Production

**Title: How can we use our cultural wealth (inner beauty) to stop colorism so white people don’t unfairly benefit from it?**

STEP	DESCRIPTION	TIME
<b>Step 12</b>	Next, using the slide deck as a visual aid, discuss what are other areas where there is a light-skinned preference and bias	<b>2 minutes</b>

	<p>against darker skin? Think about things like movies, television, fashion, advertising, music videos or video games.</p> <p>For example, in cosmetics, “The beauty industry continues to grow at an increasingly fast pace, with estimates ranking it at about \$532 billion in 2019. Of this \$532 billion, the global skin lighteners market is estimated to grow to about \$31.2 billion by 2024. And these skin lighteners have been in the market for a long time, physically and emotionally damaging consumers all around the world – especially in the Asia Pacific region.” (<a href="https://digitalbeauty.com/colorism-in-the-beauty-industry/">https://digitalbeauty.com/colorism-in-the-beauty-industry/</a>)</p> <p>Ask students to search “colorism and cosmetics” or “colorism and beauty products” and report what you find, using the “Research and Resist” handout on the next slide.</p>	
<b>Step 13</b>	<p>Explain that students will be researching another industry (business) for evidence of colorism. They will Use the <a href="#">handout</a> to research colorism in an industry or institution and create a comic that challenges skin-tone bias*.</p>	<b>30-50 minutes</b>
<b>Step 14</b>	<p>Next, invite students to share their comic strips and answer the following discussion questions: What industry’s colorism are you resisting? What is your message?</p>	<b>5 minutes</b>

## C4: Conclusive Dialogue/Critical Circular Exchange

<p><b>Connection:</b> How is this relevant to students? How is it relevant to the unit? How do you bring back to the PURPOSE of the unit?</p>	<p>Turn and Talk: Take turns telling your partner (or the person sitting next to you): 1) What do you know about colorism?; 2) How can you stop colorism?</p>
<p><b>Assessment:</b> How will the students be assessed?</p>	<p>Volunteers share responses they heard from their partner.</p>
<p><b>Evaluation:</b> How will the effectiveness of this lesson plan be evaluated?</p>	<p>Throughout the year, prompt students to notice and speak up about colorism. Identify when you notice a student use their cultural wealth and beauty that provides hope for a world that does not favor lighter skin or white people and treats</p>

Black as beautiful and fights anti-blackness.

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## RESOURCES AND NOTES

- **Resources**

Video of Clark Doll Test over time: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkpUyB2xgTM>

Books on Colorism: <https://colorismhealing.com/colorism-books/>

Research on Colorism and Racial Identity Development Wilson (2014):

[https://cedar.wvu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&context=library\\_researchaward](https://cedar.wvu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&context=library_researchaward)

### **Links**

*Background Information:*

An article on the research on implicit skin tone bias and its importance in classrooms, schools, and in society: <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/fall-2015/whats-colorism>

### **For teachers and advanced students**

Read this article to understand how colorism, anti-Blackness and white supremacy are linked: <https://www.bu.edu/antiracism-center/files/2022/06/Anti-Black.pdf>

Lesson Plan Contributors: Tricia Gallagher-Geurtsen and based on

<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/fall-2015/toolkit-for-whats-colorism>