



# LIBERATED ETHNIC STUDIES

MODEL CURRICULUM CONSORTIUM

## Black is Beautiful: Colorism

Time: Three 25-30 minutes sessions

Grade Level: PreK, 1, 2

### SLIDES USED WITH THIS LESSON

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

- Students will understand how colorism (prejudice that favors people with lighter-skin 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 classroom/school?
- How does colorism help white people?

- How can we stop colorism so white people are not unfairly favored?

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

- We have hope that we have the strength and inner beauty to stop colorism in school and in the world.
- We can ask our friends, family, and community for help in speaking up about 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. <b>BOOK: <u>Sulwe</u> by Lupita Nyong’o (2019) (ISBN9781534425361)</b></li> <li>2. <b><u>Photo of child choosing between two dolls</u> (one with darker, one with lighter skin)</b></li> <li>3. <b>A selection of picture books and/or cartoon characters or with examples of colorism and disruption of colorism AND/OR a Google slidedeck with images and examples of colorism and positive portrayals of darker skin tones.</b></li> <li>4. <b>T-chart.</b></li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. <b>Computer/LCD projector/Internet access</b></li> <li>6. <b>Electronic whiteboard and dry erase markers or chart paper and markers.</b></li> </ol>
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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</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 sit,</b></li> </ul>
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<p>familiar to your students and that will be responsive to your students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translate <u>Sulwe</u> to the home languages of students in your class with the help of parents, community members, Google translate and either read or provide a copy for students who can read the text in their home language(s).</li> </ul>	<p>listening to a story.</p>
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**Critical Vocabulary:**

CRITICAL VOCABULARY	Definition and Rationale for choosing this word, phrase, or concept	Idea for pre-teaching or front-loading the concept.
colorism	Treating people better the lighter the skin they have and treating people worse the darker the skin they have.	Show an <u>image of a child looking at two dolls</u> . Explain that when the youth was asked which one is prettier, she pointed to the doll with white skin. This is an example of colorism.
prediction	What you think will happen next.	Share the sentence frame: "I think ____ will happen next because ____."

## C1: Cultural Ritual and/or Energizer

**Title: Sitting in Our Beauty**

STEP	DESCRIPTION	TIME
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<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 to your teaching work today and why?	<b>1-2 minutes</b>
<b>Step 3</b>	<b>Cultural Energizer:</b> Describe to students: There is beauty inside of all of us. For example, when a classmate is sad or cries and you sit with them, you are showing them the beauty of your heart. When you sing a silly song with your friends, the creativity inside of you is there for everyone to see. When you listen to a story and you can see beautiful pictures in your heart, 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: "What is colorism?: Sulwe's Story

STEP	DESCRIPTION	TIME
<b>Step 6</b>	Ask: What does the word color mean? Write the word. Invite a few volunteers to share what the word means. Ask, then, what do you think colorism is? Share the definition on chart paper or on the slide deck: "Treating people better the lighter the skin they have and treating people worse the darker the skin they have."	<b>5 minutes</b>
<b>Step 7</b>	Show an <u>image of a child looking at two dolls</u> . Explain that when the youth was asked which one is prettier, she pointed to the doll with white skin and pointed to the darker doll when she was asked who is ugly and naughty.. Explain that this is an example of colorism - treating or thinking about another	<b>3 minutes</b>

	person as better or prettier when they have lighter skin.	
<b>Step 8</b>	Picture Walk: Let's read a story about a girl who was treated worse because her skin was darker. Her name is Sulwe. Let's do a picture walk through the book and quietly think about what we predict will happen (or <i>what we think will happen</i> ) in the book. Turn the pages of the book slowly from beginning to end so that all youth can see the pictures. Ask a couple of volunteers to share their predictions. Offer the sentence frame: "I think _____ will happen next because _____."	<b>5 minutes</b>
<b>Step 9</b>	Read <u>Sulwe</u> , stopping as needed to ask how the story makes students feel? Offer the sentence frame, "I feel ___ when _____ because _____."	<b>15-20 minutes</b>
<b>Slide/ Step 5</b>	Explain that Sulwe was the target of colorism from her classmates and from herself. When Sulwe started to treat herself worse because of her darker skin, she had started to believe the lie that the lighter and whiter her skin was the better she was. Ask volunteers to provide examples from the book and fill in the t-chart. Fill in the chart typing in examples from <u>Sulwe</u> .	<b>10 minutes</b>
<b>Slide/ Step 6</b>	Ask students to share how colorism made different people feel: Sulwe? Sulwe's mom? Sulwe's classmates? Show another example of colorism from classroom materials or the school and/or use the slide deck for an example.	<b>3 minutes</b>
<b>Slide/ Step 7</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 having lighter skin.	<b>2 minutes</b>

### C3: Community Collaboration and/or Critical 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 1</b>	How did Sulwe accept her inner beauty and see Black is beautiful? Ask volunteers to share.	<b>2 minutes</b>
<b>Step 2</b>	Share positive images of darker skin tones. Share books that have positive portrayals of dark skin tones written by women of color that children will be able to read.  Sulwe got help from her mother and from her ancestors to	<b>5 minutes</b>

	understand her inner beauty and the beauty of her darker skin. How can you ask your family for help to stop colorism? Volunteers share ideas.	
<b>Step 3</b>	Explain that in our classroom we will work to stop colorism. Here are some ways we can stop it using these sentence starters. Share the sentence starters (from the slide deck) and choral read them: "In our classroom...we don't make fun of people's skin tones." "...we pay attention to putting people down for their skin color." "...we believe Black is beautiful." "Mx. Teacher, I noticed something about skin color in this book/movie/picture..."	<b>5 minutes</b>

## C4: Conclusive Dialogue/Critical Circular Exchange

<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?	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?
<b>Assessment:</b> How will the students be assessed?	Volunteers share responses they heard from their partner.
<b>Evaluation:</b> How will the effectiveness of this lesson plan be evaluated?	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 Black as beautiful.

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### RESOURCES AND NOTES

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resources</li> </ul> <p>Video of Clark Doll Test over time: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkpUyB2xgTM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkpUyB2xgTM</a></p> <p>Books on Colorism: <a href="https://colorismhealing.com/colorism-books/">https://colorismhealing.com/colorism-books/</a></p> <p>Research on Colorism and Racial Identity Development Wilson (2014): <a href="https://cedar.wvu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&amp;context=library_researchaward">https://cedar.wvu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&amp;context=library_researchaward</a></p>
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- **Princess, Book 1: Save Yourself - Deluxe Edition. Jeremy Whitley & Mia Goodwin. (2015). Action Lab Entertainment.**

**For teachers: 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>

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