

University of Alberta

English Language Arts 30-1 Reimagined: A Teacher Resource for Incorporating Critical Pedagogy in the
Classroom

by

Melanie Martine Musaasizi

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Abstract

This document serves as a professional resource for 30-1 English Language Arts teachers in Alberta. This resource focuses on incorporating elements of critical pedagogy in the classroom. Through four curated units, this resource offers theoretical and practical tools for weaving themes of social justice, critical thinking, and ethics of care into the classroom. By fostering a dynamic and interactive learning environment, this resource equips educators with the tools to inspire a new generation of well-rounded and perceptive readers and writers.

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English Language Arts 30-1 Reimagined:

A Teacher Resource for Incorporating Critical Pedagogy in the Classroom

The premise of secondary English Language Arts (ELA) courses in Alberta transcends mere instruction; it interlaces the beauty and virtuosity of literature while also teaching students the nuanced utility and mastery of language development (Government of Alberta, 2003, p. 1). These two noble goals build the framework of the ELA Alberta Program of Studies (Government of Alberta, 2003). The exploration of story through novels, poems, plays, images, and films is transformational in nature — students enter the fictional world of various authors and experience climactic battles, glorious victories, tragic losses, and cathartic epiphanies with diverse protagonists. As an ELA teacher, I have found walking with students through the discovery and power of story far outweighs any material reward. Nevertheless, as students explore their interpretations, ideas, and thoughts of the literature, the dialogic nature of ELA classrooms becomes a space for contending with topics of morality, justice, history, and identity. Through discursive exchanges and critical/personal responses to texts, students are propelled on a journey of self-discovery as they grapple with their place in the world, while simultaneously investigating the societal fabric which constructs their very identity. Therefore, it is through the medium of story students are empowered to challenge their preconceived notions and critically examine the structures which shape their society. Considering the aforementioned points, I have developed a professional resource for English Language Arts 30-1 teachers which will offer practical and educational strategies that incorporate the transformational ideas of critical pedagogy into the classroom. In developing this resource, my hope is ELA teachers may continue to make the classroom the most transformative space for students (hooks, 1994). A sanctuary where students can actively question their positionality, history, power dynamics, and

resiliency. In doing so, students will be equipped with the tools needed for navigating the complexities of the world outside the classroom — the world they will have a hand in building.

Defining Critical Pedagogy

Instead of outlining the essence of what critical pedagogy consists of, I would like to begin by clarifying what it is not. Critical pedagogy rejects passivity, refusing to adhere to the banking model of education where the student is an empty vessel waiting to be filled by the teacher's knowledge (Freire, 1970). Critical pedagogy also rejects apolitical approaches, recognizing all educational processes are inherently political (McLaren, 1995). By examining the power dynamics within education, critical pedagogy enables students to think more critically about their positionality within the educational system. Lastly, critical pedagogy is far from static; it is a dynamic process which infuses real-world experiences and stories that foster empathy and understanding, inciting an awareness of the injustices prevalent in society (hooks, 1994).

In the forward of Freire's (1970/2005) acclaimed book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Richard Shaull (2005) wrote:

There is no such thing as a *neutral* educational process. Education either functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation in to the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, *or* it becomes “the practice of freedom,” that means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (p. 34)

Shaull (2005) powerfully asserted education cannot be neutral. Shaull's (2005) words emphasize the core objective of critical pedagogy: to foster transformation and freedom through education. By offering teachers practical strategies to incorporate elements of critical pedagogy in the

classroom, students will explore the intersections of race, power, and gender within societal structures through storytelling. Students will become skilled in critically engaging with the various systems of oppression which make up their society while challenging the role they play in its reproduction (Patel, 2022). Through these efforts, students can foster a sense of hope and agency, realizing change is truly possible. Therefore, this resource uses the term critical pedagogy as an umbrella term, encompassing one's ability to recognize, examine, question, and reflect on the ways in which oppressive structures and power operate within society (see appendix) (hooks, 1994; McLaren, 1995).

Structure of the Resource

The following resource is divided into four theme-based units: (a) Consciousness Raising – Identity and Positionality; (b) History Reimagined through Counter-Stories; (c) Questioning Power; and (d) Heroes, Hope, and Resilience. Each unit consists of an introductory overview highlighting key aspects of critical pedagogy. This is followed by a curated list of possible texts suitable for reinforcing the thematic concepts. Additionally, a sample lesson plan is included to offer educators a concrete example of how these ideas can be effectively taught in practice. It is important to clarify this resource presumes prior knowledge and familiarity with the requirements of an 30-1 English Language Arts course. It does not provide explicit instruction on teaching methodologies specific to this course, such as Personal Response to Texts (PRTs), Critical Analytical Response to Texts (CARTs), or the specific requirements outlined in the Government of Alberta ELA Program of Studies (2003). Instead, it focuses on elements of critical pedagogy and offers suggestions for texts and sample lesson plans to complement and enhance existing teaching practices within the context of ELA 30-1.

Unit 1: Consciousness Raising – Identity and Positionality

“Close your eyes. Concentrate on your breath. Remember that you were not always earthbound. Every living creature, every drop of water and every sombre mountain is the by-blow of some bloated, dying star. Deep down, we remember wriggling through the universe as beams of light.”

— Haisla/Heiltsuk author Eden Robinson, *Son of a Trickster* (2017)

Overview

The *Consciousness Raising – Identity and Positionality* unit aims to get ELA 30-1 students to begin exploring concepts of identity, positionality, and power dynamics through the process of self-reflection and introspection. Aligned with the first general outcome of the ELA Program of Studies (2003), which emphasizes the exploration of thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences, this unit combines literary texts with critical reflection to enable students to gain insights into their own social locations, power, and privilege (Freire, 1970). The framework for this unit draws on the work of Paulo Freire (1970) and bell hooks (1994), both educators, theorists, and social critics. Freire (1970) and hooks’s (1994) address the pivotal role of self-reflection in comprehending identity as a site of power.

A pillar of thought in Freire’s (1970) work is the idea of problem-posing and critical discussion of both texts and personal experiences. This unit aims to actively engage students in the provided texts, while encouraging them to critically examine their own lived experiences. Freire (1970) emphasizes the significance of acknowledging one’s own position in society and avoiding the temptation to exempt oneself from the analysis of oppressive structures. By having students consider their own identity and societal positions, they can begin to dismantle previously held assumptions about justice and oppression. Through the study of texts like *Yellow Woman, Borders, Americanah*, students can explore the interplay between culture, identity

formation, and the influence of education as a form of indoctrination (Freire, 1970). An essential objective of this unit is to foster students' critical awareness, enabling them to develop a deeper understanding of themselves and their place in the world. Consequently, this understanding will lead students to understand the concept of intersectionality and how various social identities intersect to shape individual experiences.

In *Teaching to Transgress*, hooks (1994) highlights the importance of recognizing the intersectionality of identities. Every person embodies social identities that intersect and shape their experience of power and oppression (Da Costa & Da Costa 2019). Moreover, these identities are not necessarily static entities, but socially constructed through nuanced and complex human experiences (Da Costa & Da Costa 2022). hooks (1994) discerns power operates within identity categories and how certain identities are privileged while others are marginalized. Therefore, it is through the reflective nature of reading and writing where students can begin to critically examine their own identities and their implications within societal structures (hooks, 1994; Tristan, 2013). As students study the authors and characters in the short stories and poems outlined below, they can begin to question their own locations and positionality furthering their critical awareness (Freire, 1970; Hamdi, 2022). The texts provided for this unit are specifically designed to offer students different angles in developing their ability to self-reflect of their own identities, while simultaneously assessing those of the characters present in the stories. Outlined below is Table 1, a suggested list of texts for unit 1, followed by Figure 2, a sample lesson plan offering a practical way of implementing critical pedagogy in the classroom.

Table 1*Suggested Texts for Unit 1*

Title & Author	Genre	Relevant Themes	Assessment Suggestions	Suggested Targeted Learning Outcomes
“The American Embassy” by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009)	Short Story	Role of culture in identity formation	Personal Response	1.2.1
“Stillness” by Richard Wagamese (from <i>Embers</i> Anthology) (2016)	Collection of poems/ meditations	Self-reflection, Self-compassion, Identity within land	Creative Response	1.2.2
“Yellow Woman” by Leslie Marmon Silko (1981)	Short Story	Mythology and reality, role of belief/culture in identity development	Critical Response, Analytical Assignment	2.1.2
“Time to Hear Ourselves Think” by Dick Allen (1996)	Poem	Concept of time, reflection, listening to ourselves amid a busy world	Personal Response	1.1.1 4.1 4.2
“Borders” by Thomas King (1993)	Short Story	Indigenous sovereignty, colonialism, identity, resilience	Creative Response, Research Project	1.1.2 3.1 3.2
<i>Americanah</i> by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2013)	Novel	Finding oneself in a new culture, grappling with disillusionment, identity, reflection, impacts of colonization, history of slavery	Literature Circles, Socratic Seminars, Critical/Analytical Response (CART essay)	2.1.1 2.3.1 2.3.2

Note. This table offers suitable texts that relate to the content in Unit 1.

^a Targeted Learning Outcomes are hyperlinked to the official Government of Alberta, Program of Studies Webpage (2003).

Figure 2

Sample Lesson Plan for Unit 1

Unit 1 (this 50–60 minute lesson would ideally be done towards the beginning of the unit to get students thinking about the unit’s thematic concept of self-reflection and identity)

Targeted Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

- [1.1.1.a](#): draw from a repertoire of effective strategies to form tentative understandings, interpretations and positions
- [1.1.1.b](#): experiment with a variety of strategies, activities, and resources to explore ideas, observations opinions, experiences and emotions

Pre-lesson (hook)

- Quick Write: set a timer and have students write about a time where they felt very “still/quiet” in their mind. It may be during a family vacation, while journaling, or driving. Get them to think of a time where they felt their mind slowed down and they were not overwhelmed by their thoughts. If comfortable, share your personal experience (hooks, 1994).
 - If students are comfortable, have a short sharing time, have students respond to each other’s reflection in smaller groups.

Lesson (teach-model- explain)

- Read together excerpts from Richard Wagamese (2016) poems on “Stillness” paired with Dick Allen’s (1996) poem “Time to Hear Ourselves Think”. Annotate imagery, senses (especially sound), and shift in Allen’s poem. Have students make connections between both authors. Lead into critical inquiry and discussion about the role of self-reflection in our lives (use previous diploma 30-1 prompt (June 2023) as an example). How can one’s self-knowledge contribute to understanding our thought patterns, actions, strengths and weaknesses? How do Allen and Wagamese each approach self-reflection differently? Are there similarities? Differences? What does self-reflection look like in your own life based on the quick write done at the beginning of class? What does it take to know ourselves? How can we really know ourselves? What makes up our identities? Facilitate a large class discussion or break into smaller groups and address the questions above.

Formative Assessment

- Creative Assignment: get students to imagine they were the main character in a novel. Have students create a mind map outlining the characteristics associated with themselves as the protagonists of their own story. This will enable you to formally assess the targeted outcomes while also gauging how students are engaging in understanding self-reflection and identity.

Note. This is an example of a lesson that could be taught within Unit 1.

Unit 2: History Reimagined through Counter-Stories

“The truth about stories is, that’s all we are”

- Cherokee author Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories* (2005)

Overview

In an immersive journey through the *History Reimagined through Counter Stories* unit, students will explore alternative narratives which defy the stronghold of the *dominant narrative* (Shipley, 2020). Guided by Indigenous authors and activists, students will discover stories of Canada in a new light. In the continued journey towards truth and reconciliation, students will engage in dismantling their preconceived notions of Canada’s history and begin to unlearn the dominant narrative which they have been taught through history books. Students will uncover the multifaceted layers of Canada’s history, revealing indigenous heroes and activists, stories of talent and fortune, and the ongoing process of healing and reconciliation. Nevertheless, it is crucial to keep in mind the idea presented by Alfred and Corntassel (2005), authors of *Being Indigenous: Resurgences against Contemporary Colonialism*:

There is a danger in allowing colonization to be the only story of Indigenous lives. It must be recognized that colonialism is a narrative in which Settler’s power is the fundamental reference and assumption, inherently limiting Indigenous freedom and imposing a view of the world that is but an outcome or perspective on that power. (p. 601)

In studying various counter-stories, students will remove the settler reference point of colonization from the narrative and begin reading stories that do not place settler colonialism and settler futurity (see appendix) at its center (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Madden, 2019).

The framework for this unit is built upon Madden's (2019) examination of the role played by *counter-stories* in the process of decolonizing and fostering truth and reconciliation (see appendix). According to Madden (2019) "truth and reconciliation education should examine the relationship between subjectification and colonial relations of power" (p. 298). Coined by Solorzano and Yossa (2002), the term *counter-stories* refers to narratives shared by individuals on the margins which diverge from the dominant societal narrative. By engaging in these counter-stories, the notion of settler futurity begins to lose its strength, allowing space for the assertion of indigenous sovereignty. Madden (2019) outlines four categories of counter-stories: refusal, resistance, resilience, and restorying/resurgence (pp. 298-299).

Refusal counter-stories focus on the Indigenous community's deliberate refusal to engage in the colonial project which shaped Canada (Madden, p. 298). Resistance counter-stories present narratives highlighting how individuals and groups have actively participated in resisting the dispossession of Turtle Island (Madden, p. 299). Meanwhile, resilience counter-stories demonstrate stories of strength, where individuals and groups have "overcome systemic assault on indigenous ways-of-knowing-and-being" through the revitalization of traditional cultural practices (Madden, p. 299). And lastly, restorying and resurgence counter-stories depict narratives of healing and recovery from the trauma inflicted by the Residential Schools (Madden, p. 299). By teaching students the significance of counter-stories, they will develop the ability to challenge the dominant narratives found in popular literature. Furthermore, the skills acquired in this unit will equip students to critically contend with the third unit, which delves into the questioning of power.

Challenge Dominant Narratives

Using critical inquiry and dialogic reflections, students will develop a critical understanding of the concept of *dominant narrative* (Shipley, 2020). Postcolonial professor, Edward Said (1978), critiqued the Western production of knowledge through the binary entrapment of the *West and the Rest*. Much of the West's perception of the rest of the world comes from narratives stemmed in histories of imperialism, colonialism, and dispossession (Said, 1978; Shipley, 2020). Said (1978) contended the perpetuation of this dominant narrative, renders the rest of the world a homogenous *other* constrained through a smattering of false stereotypes, racism, and shallow misrepresentation. While some students may readily dismantle their ignorance surrounding the dominant narrative that has come from settler-centric pedagogy, others may encounter challenges in extricating themselves from the white, hetero, euro-centric, colonial, capitalist paradigm, requiring a profound sense of humility (Patel, 2022). However, the transformational potential lies in the exploration of counter-stories (Madden, 2019). By reading stories of refusal, resistance, resilience, and restorying students can actively observe their own power and question their participation in the reproduction of the dominant narrative (Patel, 2022). Through these counter-stories, alternative possibilities begin to emerge, allowing students to reimagine history and discover new ways of thinking and being (Simpson, 2017). Leanne Simpson (2014), a Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar write “[r]ebellion is the act of refusing to participate in dominant power on dominant terms, and instead working to create alternative ways of being and thinking, alternative cultures, alternative modes of existence” (p. 9). In this unit, students will explore Robinson's (2017) novel *Son of a Trickster* in conjunction with songs from Downie and Lemire's (2016) album *The Secret Path*. This album tells the story of refusal from

the perspective of Chaney Wenjack, a boy who tragically lost his life while trying to escape Cecelia Jeffrey Indian Residential School (Downie & Lemire, 2016).

Figure 3

Suggested Texts for Unit 2

Title & Author	Genre	Relevant Themes	Assessment Suggestions	Suggested Targeted Learning Outcomes
<i>Son of a Trickster</i> by Eden Robinson (2017)	Novel	Resilience through exploration of Weegit and restorying counter-story through characters of Maggie and Jared	Literature Circles, Socratic Seminars, Critical/Analytical Response (CART essay)	2.1.1 2.1.2 2.1.3 2.1.4
Various Songs from Secret Path album by Gordon Downie & Jeff Lemire (2016)	Songs/ Poetry	Refusal counter-story in rejection to participate in residential school	Creative Response / Group Project	5.2.1 5.2.2 3.1 3.2
Speaking to Memory: Images and Voices from St Michael's Indian Residential School (2013)	Art Exhibition/ Visual	Resurgence counter-story through visuals in healing from trauma	Personal Response	5.1.2 5.1.1

Note. This table offers suitable texts that relate to the content in Unit 2.

^a Targeted Learning Outcomes are hyperlinked to the official Government of Alberta, Program of Studies Webpage (2003).

Figure 4*Sample Lesson Plan for Unit 2*

Unit 2 (this lesson would ideally be taught towards the end of the novel study *Son of a Trickster*)

Targeted Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- [2.1.2.b](#): analyze the relationships among controlling ideas, supporting ideas and supporting details in a variety of texts
- [2.1.3.b](#): assess prior knowledge of contexts, content and text forms; and explain how it contributes to new understanding

Pre-lesson (hook)

- Think-Pair-Share: Students will think about the two main characters in their novel study of *Son of a Trickster*. They will choose either Jared or Maggie. Once they have chosen, they will take a few minutes to think about how the characters storyline is one of either refusal, resistance, resilience, and restorying/resurgence (Madden, 2019). Once they have thought about it, they can find another student who has chosen the same character and discuss which type of counter-story this character embodies. Then they will share their findings with the class.

Lesson (teach-model-explain)

- Lead a character analysis with another character from the novel (ideally either Weegit, Sarah, Mrs Jaks, or Nana Sophia). Show students the relationship between the controlling ideas and supporting details as they contribute to this particular character's storyline. Address which type of counter-story they embody. How does Robinson's (2017) characters play into the larger representation of Canada's history?
 - Have students conduct a character analysis of either Jared or Maggie. While Jared represents a counter-story of restorying and/or resilience, Maggie can represent aspects of refusal and resilience. Have students identify ideas, examples, characteristics that provide context to their understanding. Have students address Jared and Maggie's stories in the wider context of Canada's history. Is Jared or Maggie also a motif of resilience, how so? Facilitate a classroom discussion.

Formative Assessment

- Have students write a draft body paragraph for a CART (Critical Analytical Response to Text Essay). This will prepare them for the CART they will write at the end of the unit. Have students anchor their support in the concrete examples and interpretations in the text.

Note. This is an example of a lesson that could be taught within Unit 2.

Unit 3: Questioning Power

“Truth is a seed planted deep
If you want to get it you have to dig.”

- Metis author Katherena Vermette, *River Woman* (2018)

Overview

The *Questioning Power* unit will center around critical thinking and critical dialogue. One of the main goals of the ELA program of studies (2003) is for students to respond to texts in a critical, personal, and creative manner. Through close reading, annotation, context analysis, and reference strategies, students will engage in a dialogue with Shakespeare’s (1604) *Othello* to critically analyze the author’s and character’s positionality and power. Additionally, students will refine their skills in constructing well-crafted critical responses to texts drawing on knowledge gained from the previous units.

The conceptual framework for this unit draws on the influential work of cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1973) and his essay, *Encoding and Decoding in Television Discourse*. In his essay, Hall (1973) outlined how communication, such as television broadcasts, can be interpreted by the decoder in three distinct ways: the dominant (preferred), the negotiated, and the oppositional codes. Hall (1973) presented a nuanced and intricate model of communication which acknowledged the social aspect of meaning-making during both the encoding phase (by the communicator) and the decoding phase (by the receiver) (Musaasizi, 2023). Hall’s (1973) encoding/decoding model prompts us to consider the interplay between the social process of representation and the exertion of power (Musaasizi, 2023). According to Hall (1973), meaning is not inherently fixed, but rather encoders act within a social framework which encompasses widely accepted notions of what is deemed *correct*. Hall (1973) referred to this as the dominant/preferred code (p. 274). As social structures often aim to perpetuate existing power

dynamics which regularly reproduce social hegemony, encoders may anticipate that receivers will decode messages using preferred code. However, decoders are also influenced by their lived experiences, allowing them to negotiate or oppose the established code (Hall, 1973, p. 270-274; Musaasizi, 2023). Consequently, Hall (1973) stated:

It is possible for a viewer to perfectly understand both the literal and connotative inflection given to an event, but to determine to decode the message in a globally contrary way. He detotalizes the message in the preferred code in order to retotalize the message within some alternative framework of reference. This is the case of a viewer who listens to a debate on the need to limit wages, but who “reads” every mention of “the national interest” as “class interest”. He is operating with what we must call an oppositional code. One of the most significant political moments is the point when events which are normally signified and decoded in a negotiated way begin to be given an oppositional reading. (p. 274)

By applying Hall’s (1973) ideas to an educational context, specifically within the realm of storytelling as a mode of communication, students will develop their ability to extract meaning from texts through negotiated and oppositional decoding methods. In the context of studying Shakespeare, students will employ Hall’s (1973) framework to engage in questions of power, race, gender, and class status, fostering critical dialogue and analysis. Which in turn, will further decolonize their minds (Hamdi, 2022).

As students delve into the interpretation of stories through the lens of negotiated and oppositional code, they will gain insight into the powerful forces which have shaped our current society. Building upon the critical analysis skills cultivated in the first two units, they will begin to grasp the intricate interplay between colonialism, capitalism, and development (Shipley,

2020). Scholars such as McMichael (2010), Rodney (1972), and Melamed (2015) emphasize the intertwined nature of these forces, which collaborate to undermine traditional knowledge and education systems.

It is crucial for students to recognize that oppression, poverty, and injustice are not inherent personal failings related to skills, experience, or education (McMicheal 2010). Rather, they are manufactured outcomes resulting from systems designed to favour a privileged few at the expense of marginalized many (Rodney, 1972). Melamed (2015) succinctly captured this reality:

Capital can only be capital when it is accumulating, and it can only accumulate by producing and moving through relations of severe inequality among human groups - capitalists with the means of production/workers without the means of subsistence, creditor/debtors. Conquerors of land made property/the dispossessed and removed. These antinomies of accumulation requires loss, disposability, and the unequal differentiation of human value, and racism enshrines the inequalities that capitalism requires. (p.427)

This unit endeavors to guide students through engaging exploration of characters and their lived experiences, specifically focusing on positions of power within the broader context of oppression (Freire, 1970). Through the critical exploration of *Othello*, *Flowers*, and various poems, students will begin to question the ways in which power hides, operates, and oppresses.

Figure 5*Suggested Texts for Unit 3*

Title & Author	Genre	Relevant Themes	Assessment Suggestions	Suggested Targeted Learning Outcomes
“Flowers” by Alice Walker (1993)	Short story	Perspective shift, hate/brutality, loss of innocence	Critical Response	4.1.1 4.1.2
Sonnet 66 by Shakespeare (1609)	Poem	Injustice of the world, weariness, class-based inequalities	Creative Response	4.1.2
Othello by Shakespeare (1603)	Play	Racism, power, injustice, jealousy	Critical Response	2.2.2. 2.3.1 4.1.3
Sonnet 94 by Shakespeare (1609)	Poem	Social hierarchies, exploitation of the weak	Personal Response	5.1.1
We built a life from nothing” White settler colonialism and the myth of meritocracy” by Sheelah McLean (2018)	Non-fiction	Racism, dominant narrative, questioning power through merit	Critical Response	5.1.2

Note. This table offers suitable texts that relate to the content in Unit 3.

^a Targeted Learning Outcomes are hyperlinked to the official Government of Alberta, Program of Studies webpage (2003).

Figure 6

Sample Lesson Plan for Unit 3

Unit 3 (this lesson would ideally be taught towards the end of the unit)

Targeted Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

- [3.2.2.a](#): reflect on and describe strategies to evaluate information sources for credibility, bias and for quality; and select, monitor and modify strategies to evaluate source and detect bias
- [3.2.3.a](#): form generalization and synthesize new ideas by integrating new information with prior knowledge

Pre-lesson (hook)

- Mind Map & Think, Pair, Share
 - Students will spend 10-15 mins creating a mind map of their family history, anything they know about, write it out. (see example below). Once students are done, they will share what they have created with a partner, some may volunteer to share in a larger group.
 - this activity will segway into the ideas present in the non-fiction piece by [Sheelah McLean “We built a life from nothing: White settler colonialism and the myth of meritocracy”](#)

Lesson (teach-model-explain)

- Read out loud as a class the McLean’s (2018) article, stopping to clarify as needed. Before facilitating a class discussion, have students write out their understanding of the *myth of meritocracy*. Have students identify elements in the text that may or may not connect with their own family history. Facilitate a classroom discussion evaluating reactions and responses considering the previous work done through this unit. Students should be able to identify the dominant narrative and the power and privilege associated with those that settled in the prairies in the late 1800s to early 1900s.

Formative Assessment Option 1

- In pairs, students will conduct a short online research to find an article/blog post/social media post relevant to Edmonton. Once they have found their chosen text, they will decode the narrative in oppositional code, by asking the following questions:
 - What does the encoder (author) want you, as the decoder (reader), to understand about this event?
 - Does the author indicate their positionality or do they attempt to write objectively?
 - Can you find the angle of power within the article? Class interest? Race interest? Who are they truly writing for?
 - Students will end their assignment by creating a T-Chart: the first side of the chart will be for the key ideas/arguments from the perspective the author would like you to understand (dominant code) the second side of the

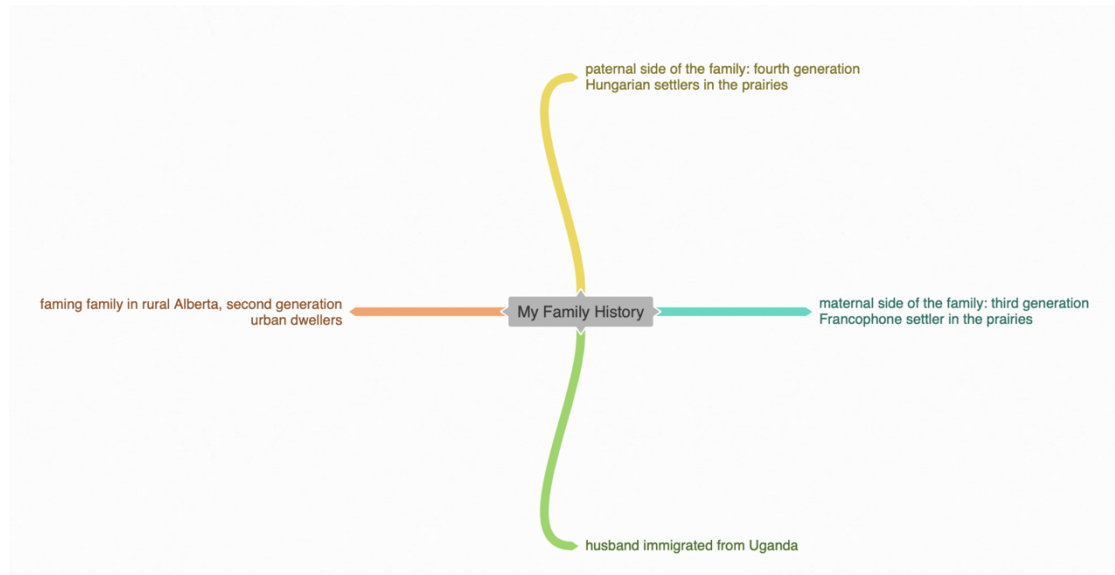
chart will be for the ideas interpreted through the oppositional and/or negotiated code.

- Students will be required to hand in their progress at the end of class, they may be able to continue next class.

If there is extra time, connect back to Shakespeare:

- Students will read Shakespeare's 94th Sonnet and work through the following questions:
 - What is Shakespeare saying about the social hierarchy of his time?
 - What does Shakespeare want the reader to decode from his poem?

*example of family history mind-map



Note. This is an example of a lesson that could be taught within Unit 3.

^a McLean (2018) article is hyperlinked within the lesson.

Unit 4: Heroes, Hope, and Resilience

Out of the huts of history's shame, I rise. Up from a past that's rooted in pain, I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide. Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear, I rise. Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear, I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave, I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise, I rise, I rise.

- African-American author Maya Angelou, excerpt *Still I Rise* (1978)

Overview

The *Heroes, Hope, and Resilience* unit is designed to ignite students' inspiration through a diverse range of texts. Building upon the development of their critical consciousness in the previous units, students will encounter authors who have made remarkable strides in dismantling systemic oppression. This unit is two-stranded. One aim will foster the cultivation of an imagination which begins to envision a future yet to be realized (Wallin, 2010). By challenging students' mindsets, it will expand their understanding of what transformation and change could entail on a macro-level. Students will come to grasp the transience of settler futurity and begin to envision alternate ways of being and knowing, transcending the capitalist/colonial project (Simpson, 2014). The other aim will be to empower students to see transformation in the micro-level, everyday possibilities. Touching on ideas of fostering compassion and empathy, students will grasp that change must first begin within. Through narratives studied in this unit, students are encouraged to believe in the possibility of change, drawing inspiration from both past and present instances of transformative action. The framework for this unit draws on the work of scholars such as Leanne Simpson (2014), Miriam Kaba (2020), and Eve Tuck (2012).

Cultivating imagination for macro-level transformation

Leanne Simpson (2014), a Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar, and Eve Tuck (2012), an Unangax scholar, challenged the notion of societal structures as permanent as they advocated for a shift towards Indigenous Sovereignty. They argue dismantling of our current nation-state systems begins with recognizing the interconnectedness of our oppression and our complicity in perpetuating violence. By embracing our interconnectedness and setting new liberatory goals, we can break free from the assumption our current nation-state and its practices are unchangeable (Arvin et al. 2013; Simpson, 2014; Tuck, 2012; Musaasizi, 2023). Although students may struggle to envision a world beyond their current understanding, this unit aims to broaden their perspective that systemic change has occurred in the past and can occur in the future. Through the film study of *Selma* (2014) students will see the actions of Martin Luther King Jr. and the ways in which his actions and those of his community dismantled segregation. Paired with Simpson's (2020-2022) short films and excerpts from the non-fiction piece *Decolonization is not a metaphor* by Tuck & Yang (2012) students will realize seemingly permanent and neutral societal structures of today are not as immutable as they may initially appear. Students will understand resistance, change, and revolutions are ongoing processes. They will come to realize macro level transformations are not distant or unattainable, but rather in the realm of possibility. By analyzing the historical context of *Selma* (2014) alongside the contemporary artistic and critical academic work, students will cultivate a deeper understanding of the dynamic nature of society and the potential for transformative change. Students will begin to understand transformation on the macro-level is not as far-fetched as it may appear.

Fostering avenues of micro-level pathways of change

There are a myriad of micro-level pathways which lead to transformation. Through thought-provoking texts centered on themes of community, solidarity, empathy, activism, and decolonization, students will engage in profound dialogue on the potential for change and their role in affecting it in their everyday lives (Giroux, 2017). Rather than adhering to the traditional notions of *helping*, the unit encourages students to introspect and challenge their preconceived ideas (Berchini, 2017). While society often promotes tangible and practical actions, such as feeding the homeless or donating money to organizations, this unit aims to transcend that narrative by shifting students' focus inward (Heron, 2007).

In our production-oriented society, it is easy for students to overlook their interconnectedness with others and disregard their role of relationality in bringing about change. Richard Wagamese (2013), beautifully encapsulated the transformative value of interconnectedness in his writing:

I've been considering the phrase "all my relations" for some time now. It's our saving grace in the end. It points to the truth that we are all related, that we are all connected, that we all belong to each other. Not just those who look like me, sing like me, dance like me, speak like me. ALL my relations. [...] We live because everything else does. If we were to choose collectively to live that teaching, the energy of our change of consciousness would heal each of us and the planet. (p. 36)

By centralizing this concept of interconnectedness, students will begin to dismantle categorizations and recognize how their consumer choices and lifestyles can contribute to positively impacting others.

In studying the documentary *Bananaland: Blood, Bullets, and Poison* (2014) in conjunction with the short story *The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas* (1973), students will grasp the significance of cultivating empathy and compassion; realizing transformative change can manifest as a change of mindset, just as much as it can be expressed through practical action. Teaching students the ethics of care through the art of storytelling will reveal transformative change can easily look like a change of thought as much as it can look like feeding the hungry. hooks (1994) argued that through stories, students can cultivate their empathic capacities by enabling them to step into the lived experiences of others, thus deepening their compassion. By fostering heightened levels of empathy and care, students become acutely aware of their own intersectionality and their far-reaching impacts of their actions upon others (Noddings, 1994; hooks, 1994). By deconstructing students' perception of helping, transformation, and change, this unit invites them to see the ongoing process of challenging their mindset. It encourages students to imagine and develop deep capacities for care which, in and of themselves, can be revolutionary.

Figure 7

Suggested Texts for Unit 4

Title & Author	Genre	Relevant Themes	Assessment Suggestions	Suggested Targeted Learning Outcomes
The Rez Sisters by Tomson Highway (1986)	Play	Community, gender, strength, healing	Personal Response	5.1.2 1.2.1
Leanne Betasamosake Simpson Short	Film / Visual Literacy	Indigenous sovereignty, traditional ways of being and knowing,	Creative Response	5.1.2 2.1.1

Films (Various) (2020-2022) https://www.leanesimpson.ca/video-short-film		refusal		
Still I Rise by Maya Angelou (1978)	Poem	Hope, resilience, chance, perseverance	Creative Response	2.2.1 2.2.2
Selma directed by Ava DuVernay (2014)	Film	Justice, racism, activism, community	Critical Response	2.3.2
Bananaland: Blood, Bullets, and Poison (2014)	Documentary	Interconnectedness through food chain, social justice	Personal Response	1.2
“The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” by Ursula K. Le Guin (1973)	Short Story	Moralism, insight into capitalistic way of being	Personal Response	2.1 2.2
“Decolonization is not a metaphor” by Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang (2012)	Non-fiction	Decolonization, challenging settler- futuraity, indigenous sovereignty	Critical Response	2.3 1.2

Note. This table offers suitable texts that relate to the content in Unit 4.

^a Targeted Learning Outcomes are hyperlinked to the official Government of Alberta, Program of Studies webpage (2003).

Figure 8*Sample Lesson Plan for Unit 4*

Unit 4 (This lesson would ideally be taught after the film study of Selma)

Targeted Learning Outcomes

Student will:

- [5.1.1.a](#): monitor own use of verbal and nonverbal communication in order to convey respect and consideration, as appropriate
- [5.1.2.a](#): explain how selected works of literature and other print and nonprint texts convey, shape and, at times, challenge individual and group values and behaviors
- [5.1.2.c](#): explain how a text creator's underlying assumptions influence his or her ideas, opinions and selection of supporting details

Pre-lesson (hook)

- Quick Write & Think, Pair, Share:
 - Students will do a timed draft writing piece with the following prompt: What do you think Miriam Kaba (2020) meant when she said, "Hope is a discipline".
 - Once completed their Quick Write, have students turn to a partner and share their thoughts on what they have written.
 - Facilitate a large classroom discussion on students' responses. Remember students most likely will not have any context on Miriam Kaba and her work as an educator, theorist, and abolitionist. Once discussion has run its course, give a brief outline of Miriam Kaba's biography to better locate and situation the context of the quote for the students. This quote will be the overarching idea for the lesson.

Lesson

- Hand out the poem "Still I Rise" by Maya Angelou, have students annotate in groups of two, looking for thematic concepts discussed in previous lesson which introduced the unit (heroes, hope, resilience, activism)
 - Students will do a comparative analysis of elements found in Angelou's (1978) poem with the activism and transformation which occurs within the film Selma (2014).
 - Students will present their findings to the class and hand in a documented analysis of their work.

Summative Assessment

- Students will draft an outline of a personal response they will have to write in the upcoming classes using the prompt: What do these texts suggest to you about an individual's capacity for change.

Note. This is an example of a lesson that could be taught within Unit 4.

Overview

Through the development of this resource, my primary goal is to empower teachers as ambassadors of change within the classroom, utilizing principles of critical pedagogy. As students progress through the four units, they will enhance their ability for self-reflection, critical analysis, questioning, and emotional engagement by applying critical pedagogy strategies to reading and writing exercises. This resource not only offers an introduction to incorporating these concepts into the classroom but provides teachers with a preliminary roadmap for their personal journey of own unlearning, questioning, and critically analyzing the fabric of our society.

Be developing these four units, my aim is to ignite a passion for critical pedagogy among educators. At the core of critical pedagogy lies the essential practice of self-reflection, wherein teachers can assess their own positionality within the broader world. As teachers engage in this resource, they will come to evaluate their own beliefs and biases, noticing how they affect their own classrooms and approaches to learning. It is my sincere hope that this process will empower educators to foster an inclusive and transformative learning environment for their students.

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Appendix

To enhance the efficiency of utilizing this resource, I have included a list of definitions and articles that offer a comprehensive understanding of the terminology used in the context of critical pedagogy. These articles serve to familiarize teachers with potentially unfamiliar concepts. By consulting this appendix, teachers will be better versed to confidently engage in the content of this resource.

Decolonization:

Decolonization refers to an ongoing process aimed at dismantling the historical and persistent colonial structures that have affected numerous regions worldwide. In the Canadian context, decolonization confronts the violence, oppression, genocide perpetrated against Indigenous people, whose lands were forcefully taken by the British and French Imperial regime (Da Costa & Da Costa, 2019). Decolonization is often employed in a metaphorical sense, symbolizing the process of dismantling and unlearning colonial ideologies and practices; however, Tuck and Yang (2012) emphasize that a comprehensive understanding of decolonization necessitates the restitution of actual land.

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Development:

The term development refers to the ongoing process of helping countries advance on an economic, social, and political scale. The goals of development involve eradicating poverty, improving education systems, and increasing the job market. However, in the context of critical pedagogy, development work is understood through the critical lens, recognizing it as a complex phenomenon that can perpetuate forms of colonization. (McMichael, 2017).

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Intersectionality:

Scholar, Kimberle Crenshaw (2019) coined the term *intersectionality*. Crenshaw argues for the importance of considering intersections of race, gender, class, sexuality when considering the human experience and the oppression faced by individuals. The goal of taking intersectionality into consideration is to demonstrate the complex ways that power dynamics and oppression operates within society.

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Settler Futurity:

Settler Futurity refers to the ideology of keeping society rooted in settler colonialism — the process of inhabiting stolen land for the goal of capital gain and economic development. Resisting settler futurity encompasses resisting displacement and dispossession of marginalized people groups. Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernandez (2013) refer to settler futurity as the “continued and complete eradication of the original inhabitants of contested land” (p. 80).

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