ON STAGE
JAN. 27-FEB.13, 2015

The Color Purple
Based upon the Novel written by ALICE WALKER
Book by MARSHA NORMAN
Music and Lyrics by BRENDA RUSSELL, ALLEE WILLIS, AND STEPHEN BRAY

PARK SQUARE THEATRE
Study Guide

A new offering from our
3M STUDENT SERIES

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CONTENTS

The Play
4. A Letter from Oprah Winfrey
5. Plot Summary
7. Meet the Characters
8. The Epistolary Novel

Historical and Social Context
10. Celie’s Home
12. A Timeline of Race Relations in America
16. Gender Roles in The Color Purple
18. The Evolution of the Blues in African American Infused Music

Pre-Play Activities
21. Tossing Lines
23. Pre-Play Text Analysis: Scene To Read Aloud #1
25. Pre-Play Text Analysis: Scene To Read Aloud #2
30. American Dialects: How do They Affect our Perception?

Post-Play Activities
35. The Novel vs. The Script: A Scene from the Novel Omitted from the Play
42. Post-Play Discussion Questions
Dear Students,

From the moment I read Alice Walker’s Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Color Purple* over 20 years ago, I knew it would be a powerful force in my life. As you may know, when I’m passionate about something – especially a great book – I want to share it with as many people as possible. So, I used to pass out copies of the book to friends and strangers alike with the hope that they’d read it and experience what had touched me so deeply.

Nearly two years after I discovered the book, I got the opportunity to play the role of Sofia in the feature film version of *The Color Purple*. For me, it was one of the greatest experiences of my life. Courage, redemption, love and hope – I learned so much from this story!

Twenty years later, I’m blessed to be a part of the team presenting *The Color Purple* on the Broadway stage – it’s a full circle moment in my life. It makes me so very proud to know that it will reach a whole new generation and an even wider audience.

I hope that you enjoy every step of your exploration of *The Color Purple*. I know you will be enlightened as well as entertained and perhaps it will become a powerful force in your own life.

Blessings,

Oprah Winfrey

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Act One: In 1911 fourteen-year-old Celie and twelve-year-old Nettie play a hand clapping game. A church choir, acting as a chorus to the dramatic action, sings. They explain that Celie is pregnant by her father for the second time. After she gives birth in a shed, her father takes the baby from her. When she wonders if Pa has killed her two children, Nettie assures her that he has given them away instead. The scene ends with Celie praying to God for help.

At Pa’s store Celie teases Nettie about boys while Pa talks to Mister. After Mister’s second visit to the store, Pa gets him to admit he wants to marry Nettie. Pa refuses and bargains with him to marry Celie instead. Celie reluctantly goes with Mister to protect Nettie from the marriage so she can stay in school. When Celie doesn’t move fast enough for him, Mister beats her with a riding crop. Pa says he can do this because she’s his wife now.

At Mister’s house Celie becomes a drudge, keeping house, doing fieldwork, and caring for Mister’s wild children. Unexpectedly Nettie appears and asks to stay with them because Pa is after her. Although initially Mister agrees to the arrangement, when Nettie refuses his advances, he throws her out and vows that Celie with never see or hear from her again.

Five years pass and Celie has had no word from Nettie. Mister’s son Harpo, now 17, is in love with Sofia who is a strong, willful woman. When Mister refuses to let Harpo marry her, he follows Sofia anyway. Celie is awestruck by Sofia’s power over him. Three years later Sofia’s independence has worn on Harpo and makes him furious. When he reveals this to his father and later to Celie, they both tell him that he should beat Sofia. When Sofia learns that Celie has taken this view, she is outraged and leaves him, swearing that she’ll never let a man beat her.

In 1922 Harpo is turning his home into a juke joint, and Mister arrives to see the progress. He is reading a letter from his mistress, Shug Avery, a beautiful blues singer with a wild reputation. She writes that she will be coming into town. When Shug arrives, she is exhausted and ill. She stays with Mister and Celie, bossing Mister around and letting Celie care for her. Mister’s father, Ol’ Mister, shows up and criticizes Mister for loving Shug, an easy woman. His words cause Celie to ask to Mister about why he never married Shug if he has always loved her. Mister feels threatened and reminds Celie how ugly she is before walking out. Celie then sews Shug’s dress and helps her prepare for her upcoming performance at Harpo’s juke joint. Shug tells Celie that she is beautiful and wonderful; Celie has never heard this before.

Shug’s blues singing brings down the house at Harpo’s juke joint. Sofia is there with a new boyfriend, Buster. But the passion between Harpo and Sofia is still evident, and when Squeak, Harpo’s new girlfriend, and Buster see them dancing together, a brawl ensues. Shug and Celie leave the juke joint and on the way home Shug reveals to Celie that she’s planning to go back on the road. Celie is heartbroken, and both women discover the deep love they share. As a final gesture, Shug hands Celie a letter from Nettie in Africa and says that she’s found a pile of others that Mister has been hiding.

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Act Two: Minutes after the previous scene, Celie is reading through hundreds of Nettie’s letters that Mister has hidden from her. As she reads, the adult Nettie appears and tells her about her life after leaving Mister’s house. She went to Africa with the minister and his wife who adopted Celie’s babies. The missionaries were welcomed by the Olinka people, but some of the African women eventually criticized Nettie for teaching their children and being unmarried. When Shug interrupts Celie’s reading to say good-bye, Celie says she wants to kill Mister for keeping the letters hidden all these years. Shug talks her out of it.

Celi returns to the letters and Nettie continues with the tragic accounts of war and the destruction of the Olinka by Europeans. In her final letter, Nettie is unsure where they are going or where they will be safe. Her image fades as Harpo calls upon Celie, bringing her back to the present. He tells her that Sofia has publically and rudely refused to be the maid of the white mayor’s wife and as a result has been beaten, blinded in one eye, and thrown in jail. He asks Celie to care for her, and as Celie cleans Sofia in her cell, a guard comes to release Sofia to the “care” of the mayor’s wife where she will, after all, work as her maid. After Sofia is removed, Celie starts a letter to Nettie, not knowing if it will reach her.

In 1937 42-year-old Celie is preparing for Easter. Shug arrives with her new husband in their new Packard. Shug discovers a disheartened Celie who is questioning whether or not God has been listening to her prayers because she still has no news of Nettie. As they talk, Celie reveals that she would like to live with Shug, and Shug embraces the idea. At Easter dinner the next day, Celie announces to the entire family that she is leaving Mister to go to live with Shug. Mister tries to stop her and tries to intimidate her; instead, she curses him and assures him that he will be a failure with her gone.

After Celie leaves, Mister’s house is hit by lightning and he ends up outside on the road alone. As he lies there, people comment about his abusive, selfish nature instead of helping him. When Harpo finally shows up to help him, Mister notices how Harpo and Sofia are mending their relationship and getting along better. Mister considers how to make amends for all the wrong he has done in his life.

In 1943 Celie is still writing Nettie unanswered letters but is enjoying living with Shug. She gets unexpected news that Pa has died and that he wasn’t her real father after all. The store and home belonged to her mother and are now Celie’s. Shug talks her into going back to claim them. She does so and opens a business where she can sell the popular pants she sews. Meanwhile, at Harpo’s house he and Sofia are making their marriage work, and Mister is learning how to be kind to others. When Shug says she has the itch to move on again, Celie is saddened but knows that she is strong and no longer needs someone else to make her happy.

For July 4th, 1945 Mister has organized a big celebration and picnic at Celie’s house. Unexpectedly, some strangers approach. It is Nettie with Celie’s children, recently returned from Africa. They have been allowed back into the country only because Mister has gone to the government to vouch for them. Their joyous reunion affirms to Celie that God has heard her prayers after all.

Note to teachers: The play is true to the book. In order to demonstrate the theme of redemption, incest is referred to and situations of domestic violence, and racism are included to show how people can overcome horrible circumstances to achieve love and faith.
Meet the Characters
The Color Purple

Celie is a poor, unloved pregnant girl who moves from a violent, incestuous family into an abusive marriage. She is used and unappreciated by all those around her until she meets Shug Avery. Through the support and love of Shug, she ultimately discovers her own worth and strength and is able to rise above those who have tried to beat her down.

Nettie is Celie’s younger, prettier sister who intends to finish her education. While she is young, Celie protects her from Pa and Mister’s sexual advances. Nettie disappears from Celie’s life to become a missionary in Africa where she educates children and witnesses European violence against her African community.

Shug Avery is a beautiful, free-spirited blues singer who has rejected her father’s religious upbringing. She is both admired and reviled for her free and easy lifestyle. Her reputation has prevented Albert (Mister) from marrying her, and makes it hard for her to settle down. She has a deep love for Celie and helps her realize her own beauty and worth.

Pa is the abusive stepfather of Celie and Nettie. He impregnates Celie and gives away her two children. He is willing to marry his daughter off to a violent man and endorses her husband’s right to beat her.

Mister/Albert is Celie’s husband. He marries her so she will care for his children, work his fields, and keep his house. He has loved Shug Avery a long time but has not married her because his father would not allow it. He is a severe taskmaster and not well liked by his family or his workers.

Harpo is Mister’s oldest son who falls in love with Sofia and marries her despite his father’s objections. Because he believes others when they say Sofia should be a submissive wife, he beats her when she resists him. After they are reconciled, he learns to accept her independence.

Sofia is the strong-willed wife of Harpo who will not accept that a man has the right to beat his wife. She is also willing to speak up for herself against a white woman. For this she is beaten down and is forced to submit to the racist expectations of her community.

Squeak is a young waitress in Harpo’s juke joint who has aspirations of becoming a blues singer. She has a relationship with Harpo when he is estranged from Sofia.

Ol’ Mister, a former slave, is Mister’s rigid and judgmental father who prevented Mister from marrying Shug because she was a loose woman who would lure Mister away from the farm.

By Jill Tammen
HUDSON HIGH SCHOOL, RETIRED
Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple* is an epistolary novel. The term epistolary, drawn from the word "epistle" ("letter"), means that the novel is made up of letters and diary entries. We read letters written to Celie by her sister Nettie in Africa, and letters written by Celie directly to God.

One of the advantages of writing a novel using this form is that the reader experiences the voices of the characters directly, reading their thoughts in their own words. This style can also give a sense of mystery to the story, since events may not be related fully (since we are seeing only one character’s point of view and only learning what that character knows), and may not be presented in chronological order.

The epistolary style has a long history, reaching all the way back to the Bible: the letters written by the Apostle Paul are a major part of the New Testament. The first epistolary novel is generally agreed to be *Pamela*, by Samuel Richardson, published in 1740.

By the 1700s, the level of literacy in the general public was increasing. Letter writing was popular, and many manuals were published instructing writers in the proper form and etiquette of letter writing. (These kinds of manuals are still published today, giving correct forms of address, and even suggestions for the content of a wide variety of business and personal letters.)

The letter form was also used in writing for a broader audience, such as travel essays, which were popular with a public curious about the wider world. Samuel Richardson got the idea to use letters as the basis for his novel *Pamela* while he was writing a letter manual. This style became popular because letters were an easily recognizable form of communication: reading a character’s letters made that character seem like a real person.

The form was used by authors throughout the eighteenth century, in novels such as *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* by Choderlos de Laclos. Laclos began to play with the “mystery” aspects of the form, giving the account of the story’s events bit by bit, presented out of order. This made the reader naturally curious, reading further to put all the pieces of the story together. (In 1985, author Christopher Hampton adapted the novel for the stage. The play ran successfully in London’s West End and on Broadway, and was filmed under the title as *Dangerous Liaisons*. Other film adaptations of Laclos’ novel include *Valmont* and *Cruel Intentions*.)

By the turn of the nineteenth century, the epistolary style was becoming less popular. Jane Austen originally wrote *Pride and Prejudice* using the epistolary form, but then changed her mind. She rewrote the story using a different device—the third-person omniscient narrator: the reader is told the story by a narrator who is not a character in the action, and who has access to the inner thoughts of all the characters (“omniscient” means “knowing all”).

The epistolary style is still used today: some modern examples include Helen Fielding’s novel *Bridget Jones’ Diary* and *P.S. I Love You* by Cecelia Ahern. Other epistolary novels use e-mails in place of letters: *P.S. He’s Mine*, by Rosie Rushton and Nina Schindler, and the companion works *Blue Company* by Rob Wittig and *Kind of Blue* by Scott Rettberg.

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Adapting a novel into a play or musical presents certain challenges: the playwright usually cannot use narration or description. He or she has to primarily use dialogue—what the characters say to one another. In musical, songs can also reveal the characters’ inner thoughts. Because the epistolary novel is made up entirely of the characters’ own words and thoughts, it is related more closely to theater than other types of fiction.

The fact that the novel *The Color Purple* is made up of letters is important also because the letters themselves are a crucial part of the story. When Celie finds the letters Mister has hidden, she not only discovers that Nettie is alive and still cares about her, but she also begins to break free of Mister’s domination.
The Color Purple takes place in a rural Georgia community near the town of Eatonton, where Alice Walker, the author of the novel, was born. In 1865, at the end of the Civil War, Congress passed the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, which prohibited slavery, freeing the slaves throughout the South. This was known as “Emancipation.”

In Georgia, there were more than 400,000 slaves. It took until the end of 1865 for Northern troops to spread the news of Emancipation to every corner of the state. Some Georgia freedmen (the term for the newly emancipated slaves) immediately went to the major cities, Atlanta and Savannah, looking for a new way of life. Others traveled throughout the South, seeking to reunite with family members from whom they had been separated. Others opened schools or established churches. And some took their freedom in small steps, finding out what it was like to be able to take a few hours off from work during the day, or to enjoy a stroll wearing one's best clothes in the town streets.

As former slaves adjusted to freedom, Georgia society was in chaos. Northern officials assumed that whites and blacks would transition easily from the master-slave relationship to an employer employee relationship. This was not the case; plantation owners wanted blacks to stay in their same powerless position, accepting the same conditions that they lived under during slavery. The freedmen, however, refused to work the same long hours for little or no pay. Tensions were high as each side tried to become used to a new relationship with the other.

As part of Reconstruction, the political and societal reorganization of the South after the war, freedmen were promised land. In Georgia, former slaves were granted 40-acre parcels, mostly near the coast. Only about 80,000 acres of land was distributed in this way, and some of it was taken away after crops were harvested. Only those new landowners who had court decrees supporting their claim were able to keep their land.

For those who did not have property of their own, the white landowners created a system which was a new form of slavery: sharecropping. Black farmers (and some poor whites) would be granted the right to lease a portion of white-owned farmland, working the land in exchange for a share of the profit when the crop was sold. They were supplied by the landowner with all the seeds, food, and equipment they needed; the cost would be taken out of their profit at harvest time. When the black farmer brought in his crop (usually cotton), the landowner would determine that he was a few dollars short of repaying what he owed. The next season, the farmer would begin by owing that money, and would come up short again, until the amount owed to the landowner was so great that it could never be repaid.

Seeing that owning property was the only road to prosperity, black farmers did everything possible to gain ownership of their land. By 1910, black farmers owned almost one fourth of the farms that were worked by blacks (the rest being sharecroppers). In The Color Purple, Mister is among this fortunate class of farmers who owned his land. Georgia was not an extremely wealthy state; seeing blacks gaining in economic power made many whites determined to hang on to what power they still had by any means possible. The Supreme Court, in the...
1896 Plessy v. Ferguson decision, held that it was not inherently unconstitutional for black citizens to be excluded from accommodations designated "white only." In the wake of this landmark case, which upheld a Louisiana law forbidding blacks from riding in the same train cars as whites, the doctrine of "separate but equal" came into practice: the races could be separated as long as the facilities were equal in quality. In fact, what was provided for African-Americans was almost without exception inferior. Blacks could not eat in white restaurants, swim in the same pools as whites, or use the same restrooms. Not only could blacks not ride in the same train cars, they could not even be in the same waiting areas in the train stations.

Whites also sought to disenfranchise blacks – to deprive them of their voting rights. A poll tax was instituted; many blacks were too poor to pay to vote. When blacks were able to pay a poll tax, a literacy test was added. Primaries were "white only." By 1920, a very strong anti-black feeling existed all across the South. Membership in the Ku Klux Klan (a white supremacist organization) began to grow throughout the region.

In such a deeply divided society, some black citizens found it easier to establish all black communities, usually organizing around the church. In cities like Auburn and Atlanta, black communities grew, as more and more rural farm workers migrated to the city in search of other jobs.

When the Great Depression struck in the 1930s, rural Georgia was hit hard. The cities did not fare as badly because of the developing industries like paper milling. President Roosevelt instituted programs for the unemployed such as the Civilian Conservation Corps, or CCC. Georgia Governor Eugene Talmadge would not hire blacks for the CCC program, until Roosevelt forced him to by threatening to withhold all aid money from Georgia.

By the 1940s, the end of the time period covered by *The Color Purple*, the Georgia economy began to recover, along with the rest of the country, as production geared up for the beginning of World War II. In *The Color Purple*, Mister and his family would have been considered fairly prosperous in the African-American community. Mister has enough property to afford to have men working for him. His son Harpo, as the owner of the local juke joint, would also have made a relatively good living. Women’s options were fewer: most worked in domestic service as cooks or maids (as Sofia is ultimately forced to do). Almost half of the white families in the South employed a black woman in their household. Only a very few African-Americans worked as ministers, doctors, or teachers, as Nettie plans to do.

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A Timeline of Race Relations in America

1865 – At the end of the Civil War, the 13th Amendment, the first of the Reconstruction amendments, abolished slavery. In response, Southern states began adopting black codes.

1866 – The Ku Klux Klan was founded in Pulaski, Tennessee.

1868 – The 14th Amendment guaranteed the rights of citizenship to “all persons born or naturalized in the United States,” including the former slaves who had recently been freed.

1870 – The 15th Amendment was ratified to ensure that no citizen could be denied the right to vote based on “race, color, or previous condition of servitude” (i.e., slavery).

1877 – Radical Reconstruction ended with Rutherford B. Hayes’ removal of the last military troops from the South.

1891 – This year marked the first peak of mob violence against African-Americans with 230 lynchings reported.

1896 – Jim Crow laws were tested by Homer Plessey after his conviction in Louisiana for riding in a “whites only” railway car. Plessey took his case to the Supreme Court, but the justices voted in favor of the Louisiana Court and established the legality of segregation as long as facilities were kept “separate but equal.”

1909 – The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was founded by W.E.B. DuBois and Ida B. Wells in an effort to attain social, political and economic equality for blacks.

1911 – Events of the novel, The Color Purple, begin.

1918 – During what was called “Red Summer,” more than 25 race riots took place and 100 people were killed.

1920s – In the early 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan experienced an increase in membership. By the middle of the decade, estimates for national membership ranged from three million to as high as eight million, and Klansmen dominated state governments in Indiana and Oregon.

1931 – The arrest of the “Scottsboro Boys” launched a series of trials, convictions, and incarcerations that lasted until the last surviving accused man was pardoned by Alabama governor George Wallace (October, 1976).

1943 – Events of the novel, The Color Purple, come to a close.

1948 – President Truman issued an executive order outlawing segregation in the U.S. military.


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A Timeline of Race Relations in America
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1955 – Rosa Parks refused to move to the back of a Montgomery, Alabama, bus as required by city ordinance. With Martin Luther King providing leadership, a boycott followed and the ordinance was declared unconstitutional.

1957 – The Arkansas governor called in the National Guard to block the “Little Rock Nine” – the nine black students who were attempting to integrate Little Rock High School. President Eisenhower sent in federal troops to ensure compliance.

1960 – Four black college students started sit-ins at a segregated lunch counter in a Greensboro, North Carolina restaurant. This event triggered many similar nonviolent protests across the South.

1960 – Harper Lee’s To Kill a Mockingbird was published and she won the Pulitzer Prize shortly thereafter.

1961 – Freedom Riders travelled from Washington, D.C., into Southern states to protest segregation in interstate travel. Additionally, a movement began to challenge the literacy tests and poll taxes that prohibited blacks from voting in Southern states. This climaxed with the voter registration drives of Freedom Summer (1964).

1962 – President Kennedy sent federal troops to the University of Mississippi to quell riots so that James Meredith, the school’s first black student, could attend.

1963 – Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech to hundreds of thousands at the March on Washington. The same year, a church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama, left four young black girls dead.

1964 – Congress passed the Civil Rights Act declaring discrimination based on race illegal. This was the first significant civil rights legislation since Reconstruction.

1965 – Thousands marched from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, to demand protection for voting rights.

1966 – Edward Brooke, R – Massachusetts, was elected the first black U.S. senator in 85 years.

1967 – Thurgood Marshall was the first black to be named to the Supreme Court.

1968 – Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee.

1983 – Alice Walker won the Pulitzer Prize for her recently published novel, The Color Purple.

1992 – The first race riots in decades erupted in Los Angeles after a jury acquitted four white police officers for the videotaped beating of African American Rodney King.

2005 – Congress issued a formal apology for its repeated failure, despite the requests of seven presidents, to enact a federal law to make lynching a crime.

By Liz Erickson
ROSEMOUNT HIGH SCHOOL
Civil Rights Activists

Booker T. Washington
1856-1915

Booker T. Washington’s autobiography, *Up from Slavery* (1901), begins with the following: “I am not quite sure of the exact place or exact date of my birth, but I suspect I must have been born somewhere and at some time.” He knew only that his mother was a black woman and his father was her slave master.

Washington was nine years old when the Civil War ended. He desperately wanted to get an education, but his family needed his income. They compromised: He worked from 4-9 a.m. in the salt mines, went to school, then returned to work for another two hours. When he began his formal education, he – known all his life as simply “Booker” – took the surname Washington because our first president was the “most honorable man” he knew of.

Later, Washington helped establish Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. At Tuskegee, he pushed newly freed slaves to learn vocational skills, and develop strong work habits and moral character. Washington felt that blacks should not demand immediate social and political equality, but rather they should be patient and wait to press for civil rights once they had proven themselves economically. He believed that once they did so, racism would gradually fade away.

The turning point in his life was the invitation to speak at the Atlanta Exposition in 1895. That a black man had been invited to speak was highly controversial, and he knew that the audience, comprised mainly of white Southerners, expected him to look foolish. Instead, he crafted a masterful speech. He enlisted the support of whites by arguing that blacks could either help lift up the South or drag it down. After his *Atlanta Compromise* speech, Washington was generally recognized as the leader of his people – the successor to Frederick Douglass, who had died just seven months earlier. Additionally, he was well regarded by chief members of the Republican Party and served as an advisor to Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft. Booker T. Washington remained the head of Tuskegee Institute until his death on November 14, 1915, at the age of 59. He was buried on the campus of Tuskegee University near the University Chapel.

W. E. B. Dubois
1868-1963

W.E.B. DuBois was born into a free black family in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. In 1884 he graduated as his high school’s valedictorian. Four years later, he graduated from Fisk University with three academic degrees and was the first black American to receive his PhD from Harvard. Armed with advanced degrees, he became a professor of history and economics at the University of Atlanta. Additionally, he was an author, playwright, and poet; he published 21 books and hundreds of essays. He was content in the world of academia until he witnessed a brutal lynching and was compelled to take action.

In July 1905, he and others launched the Niagara Movement, a call to opposition against racial segregation and disen-
Civil Rights Activists
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franchisement. This is considered the first civil rights movement in America. Later, he founded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and was the director for 24 years and editor of its magazine, *The Crisis* (his evaluation of race relations in America).

Dubois had a far more confrontational style than his predecessors in the fight for civil rights. He urged blacks to be assertive, to agitate, and make demands. He advocated for the “Talented Tenth”—the most exceptional men and women of every race—to play a vital role in lifting up blacks beyond the expectations set by Booker T. Washington. Dubois believed that blacks should strive toward higher education and more respected careers and share in the high culture of literature, music, and theater.

In 1962, frustrated and angry at the slow progress being made toward black equality, Dubois renounced his U.S. citizenship and moved to Ghana, in West Africa. One year later, at the age of 95, he died on the eve of Martin Luther King’s March on Washington.

Ida B. Wells
1862-1931

Ida B. Wells was born into slavery in Mississippi in 1862. Shortly after her birth, her family, as well as all other Southern slaves, was freed by the terms of the Emancipation Proclamation. However, living in Mississippi as African-Americans, they faced racial prejudices and were restricted by the black codes that were quickly put into place following the war.

While her parents made education a priority for their children, she had to drop out of school at the age of 16 when tragedy struck her family. Both of her parents and one of her siblings died in a yellow fever outbreak, leaving Wells to care for the surviving children. Shortly after, she and her siblings moved to Memphis, Tennessee. While on a train ride from Memphis to Nashville, Wells was asked to give up her seat to a white man and move to the section designated for African-Americans, even after having purchased a first class ticket. She refused and when the conductor tried to remove her, she “fastened her teeth on the back of his hand.” Wells was forcibly removed from the train and soon filed a discrimination suit against the railroad company. She won her case—a $500 settlement—in a lower court, but the decision was reversed in an appeals court.

Another pivotal event took place several years later. In 1892, Ida B. Wells’ friend Thomas Moss and two other African-American men were lynched in Memphis. Moss and the others were defending themselves and their business against attacks by white vandals, and ended up shooting several of the perpetrators. The three were arrested and taken to jail, but before they were given a chance to be tried for the charges, a lynch mob murdered them. Both of these incidents inspired Wells to write copious editorials about the injustices of race relations in the South and to work tirelessly for the anti-lynching crusade.

In 1895 she married Ferdinand Barnett, a prominent Chicago attorney, and was thereafter known as Ida B. Wells-Barnett. While the couple eventually had four children together, Wells remained committed to her social and political activism. The year after she was married, she helped organize the National Association of Colored Women. In 1909, she helped found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Although Ida B. Wells’ activism tapered after building her family, she continued her fight for black civil and political rights and an end to lynching until shortly before she died of kidney disease on March 25, 1931.

Sources:
http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/booker-t-washington
http://www.naacp.org/pages/naacp-history-w.e.b.-dubois
http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/civilrights/il2.htm
http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/civilrights/il2.htm

By Liz Erickson
ROSEMOUNT HIGH SCHOOL
The Color Purple, both the novel and its film version, ignited many discussions among readers and viewers concerning what the story says about the relationships between men and women. Critics claimed that the characterization of Mister was an attack on African-American males, while others maintained that there were a variety of male-female relationships, which depicted a range of truthful human behavior.

The Color Purple raises many questions about traditional gender roles: that is, how does society expect men and women to act? What qualities are considered "masculine" and "feminine"? What limits does society place on the ways men and women can act?

Southern society in the nineteenth and early twentieth century was divided in many ways: wealthy and poor, white and black, male and female. Each division had one side with power, and one that was relatively powerless. This created incredible tension at every level of society.

The South’s population was primarily rural. Extended families had to stay together, since a lot of work was required to keep any household running. The family structure was patriarchal, meaning that men were considered to be the heads of the household. Men did the majority of the farm work, took care of family finances, the building of the family home, and defending the family property, if necessary. The women were expected to care for the children, prepare family meals, wash clothes, clean house, chop wood, and carry water. Women often bore children every year, leaving them weaker and more vulnerable to illness. Women often died in childbirth; a man would frequently marry twice or three times, because a woman was needed to care for his children.

Large families were valued because the mortality rate was high. Many children did not survive to adulthood, so couples had as many children as they were able to. If family members survived to old age, they were kept as part of the extended family, helping to care for young children and assisting with running the household.

African-American families in the South had additional pressures. During slavery, families were often not allowed to be together; slave owners separated husbands from wives, and parents from children. Slaves in a household would form their own family units; often these units were headed by the women of the group.

After slavery was abolished, freed slaves reunited their families. The strain of living under slavery took its toll on both men and women: men had to reassert their expected place as head of the family, while women were forced to give up their say in family matters. This was not true of all families, but it was a common situation among those trying to adjust to a new way of living.

By the time that The Color Purple begins, barely two generations have passed since the end of the Civil War. Family patterns have not changed greatly; men and women still have clearly defined roles in the family, and in
Gender Roles
CONTINUED

society.

The central relationship triangle is among Celie, Mister and Shug. Shug, being a blues singer, is freed of the traditional expectations that a woman faces. Some may judge her, but no one expects her to cook the meals, wash clothes, or bring up children. For Celie, it is just the opposite: for most of her life, she is viewed only as someone who cooks, cleans, and cares for others. Mister is expected to fulfill the man’s role – to be the "big dog" – in charge of everyone else in the household. At the time, men were considered free to discipline their wives and children in any way they saw fit, including physical punishment.

In contrast, the relationship between Harpo and Sofia is one in which they both try to define new roles. Harpo is criticized for being unmanly when he lets Sofia have her way; even Celie advises him to beat her to make her submit to him. Sofia is not content to be subservient, and when the situation no longer suits her, she leaves, rather than compromise.

Even Nettie, who has chosen the path of adventure in choosing to become a teacher and missionary in Africa, finds that she cannot escape traditional gender roles: the Olinka tribe have just as strong ideas about the relationship between men and women as Americans do.

*The Color Purple* has many layers of meaning for the audience to explore. It challenges us to reconsider our ideas about the way men and women—people—should treat each other, and the roles that they are given in a family and in society.

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The Evolution of the Blues in African-American Infused Music

Work songs

Africans who were enslaved and taken to America brought the tradition of the work song with them. As they worked in the fields, laborers would sing rhythmic songs that coordinated their movements (swinging hammers or farm implements, etc.). In the musical *The Color Purple*, the song “Brown Betty” is an example of a work song.

Work songs were also known as work calls, field hollers, or arhoolies. They could also serve as communication, as workers shouted down the fields to one another. A sung/shouted line would get an answer in response.

This “call and response” structure is characteristic of many work songs. A lead singer “calls out” a line, and the rest of the group responds. This pattern can be heard in marching cadences used in the military—a sergeant calling out a line, and his soldiers responding in rhythm. “Call and response” can be heard in gospel music as well, and the rock & roll/rhythm & blues music that draws on gospel for inspiration (such as the music of Ray Charles). Work songs and field hollers gave rise to spirituals and the blues.

Audio supplement: Alan Lomax recorded black inmates singing on chain gangs between 1933 – 1959. Many are available on youtube.com. Here are just a few:

“Go Down Old Hannah”
http://youtu.be/0qihABs5sQk?list=RDYTkxHboqRR8

“No More My Lawd”
http://youtu.be/65ewGQiN3SI

“Early in the Mornin’”
http://youtu.be/YTkxHboqRR8

Spirituals

Author, philosopher, and social crusader W.E.B. DuBois wrote in his 1903 book *The Souls of Black Folk*:

They that walked in darkness sang songs in the olden days—Sorrow Songs—for they were weary at heart. And so before each thought that I have written in this book I have set a phrase, a haunting echo of these weird old songs in which the soul of the black man spoke to men. Ever since I was a child these songs have stirred me strangely. They came out of the South unknown to me, one by one, and yet at once I knew them as of me and mine. ...Out of them rose for morning, noon, and night, bursts of wonderful melody, full of the voices of my brothers and sisters, full of the voices of the past... The songs are indeed the siftings of centuries; the music is far more ancient than the words...

CONTINUED...
HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

A “Sorrow Song” was the way DuBois described a spiritual. These were songs sung to express the grief and anguish felt by the African-American slaves. They often drew on phrases and images from the Bible, especially the stories of the Israelites who were kept in slavery in Egypt. In these songs, the slaves released their pain, and tried to have hope for the future when they would be freed. One of the best known of all spirituals, “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot,” also contained a subtle message, encouraging Southern slaves to find their way to the Underground Railroad, the “chariot” which could carry them “home” to freedom in the North.

Audio supplement:
Mahalia Jackson singing “Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho”
http://youtu.be/fYOG_S6ZrtE?list=PL5C722F52BD0DB5CD

Marian Anderson singing “Deep River” live in 1939
http://youtu.be/0L9C4xRL3QE?list=PL5C722F52BD0DB5CD

Robert Sims singing “Glory, Glory, Hallelujah”
http://youtu.be/wCAoVwh5P2U?list=PL5C722F52BD0DB5CD

The Blues
The blues grew out of work songs and field hollers, carrying on the tradition of the West African riots or storytellers, who would sing and recite the stories of their tribe set to music.

Work songs were sung in a group, but the blues were usually sung by one person. Instead of “call and response” between a leader and a group, the blues singer would repeat a line—answering himself or herself.

The blues was based on a simple pattern, usually twelve bars long (although it could be extended easily to thirteen or fourteen bars). A “bar” is a measure of music—usually four beats. The twelve-bar blues uses the three most common chords in a scale, known as the I, IV, and V chords. The blues singer is able to improvise over this basic chord pattern.

The other major characteristic of the blues are blue notes. These are notes that are “bent” or flattened from their pitch, giving the sound of a wail or a cry to the melody.

The blues gave birth to other kinds of music, including jazz, swing, and rock & roll. The same I-IV-V-I progression used in blues is used in many early rock & roll songs.

Audio supplement:
Bessie Smith with Muddy Waters singing “Dixie Moonlight”
http://youtu.be/zCzCUiRtk8U

Billie Holiday singing “I’m a Fool to Want You”
http://youtu.be/iNgy5zDtW-s

Ella Fitzgerald singing “Cry Me a River”
http://youtu.be/2Gn9A-kdsRo

CONTINUED...
Jazz and Swing

Jazz music began evolving from the blues from 1900 onward, reaching its peak in the 1920s, a decade known as the “Jazz Age.” Musicians began exploring more sophisticated harmony than the simple blues chords, although jazz melodies often used the blue notes—the flatted third and seventh notes of the scale. Jazz musicians still improvised most of their parts, just like blues players.

There was a lot of overlap between jazz and the blues—the first recorded jazz song was the “Livery Stable Blues,” played by the Original Dixieland Jass Band in 1917. Many jazz players wrote and recorded songs that were titled “Blues”: “West End Blues,” “Potato Head Blues,” “Basin Street Blues,” and “Gutbucket Blues” were some of the songs recorded by trumpeter Louis Armstrong, who was one of the musicians helping to develop the new jazz style.

In the 1930s, jazz dance bands began to get larger. With more musicians in the group, bandleaders began writing out specific musical arrangements for the players; the only improvisation was in the instrumental solos given to certain members of the band.

This tighter musical style became known as swing, which was popular through the 1930s and 1940s. Swing referred to the way the musicians played with a slight “swing” or bounce to the notes, sliding behind the beat.

Audio supplements:
Louis Armstrong & His Hot Five playing “West End Blues” in 1928
http://youtu.be/pXHdqTVC3cA

Duke Ellington playing “It Don’t Mean a Thing” in 1943
http://youtu.be/qDQpZT3GhDg?list=PL7B8320874B6FC471

Count Basie playing “One O’Clock Jump” in 1943
http://youtu.be/08ijOwx96l8?list=PL7B8320874B6FC471

Preservation Hall Jazz Band playing “Basin Street Blues”
http://youtu.be/Ry2M9HAqxiM

Reprinted with permission from StageNotes
Audio supplements inserted into the original by Park Square Theatre
Objective:
The purpose of this activity is to familiarize students with *The Color Purple* by exposing them to lines spoken in the play. Based on these lines, students are to make predictions about the play’s characters and central conflicts and discuss these predictions. This activity helps students form questions, gain insight, and build excitement for seeing and hearing these lines acted out on stage. “Tossing Lines” serves the students best if completed before they attend the play.

Time Allotted: 20-30 minutes

Materials:
- Tennis ball or hackey-sack
- Slips of paper cut from Tossing Lines on the following page

Procedure:
Cut out the slips of paper printed on the following page and distribute them to volunteers. Give students a few minutes (or overnight, if appropriate) to practice or memorize their lines. When they’re ready, have these students form a circle and give one student the ball. After she speaks her line, the student tosses the ball to another student who speaks his assigned line. Students toss the ball across the circle until all lines have been heard a few times. Encourage students to speak lines with varying emotions, seeking out a variety of ways to perform the lines. If there is time, reassign lines within the group or to other students in the class for another round.

Optional:
Reassign lines within the group (or to other students in the classroom) and continue for another round.

Discussion Questions:
The following questions may be used to guide discussion following the activity.

1. Where and when do you think this play takes place?

2. Can you predict what themes might be present in this production based on the lines you’ve heard? What might be the central conflict? Which lines support your ideas?

3. What do these lines tell you about the characters you will see? What might the characters look like? Do you think the characters are strong? Which lines support your ideas?

4. Based on these lines, what images come to mind? What do you expect to see visually during the production?

Adapted from Peggy O’Brien’s *Shakespeare Set Free* (1993)
Tossing Lines From *The Color Purple*

A PRE-PLAY CLASS ACTIVITY: QUOTES FROM THE PLAY

“All we got here is one pretty girl you can’t never have, and one ugly girl can work like a man.”

“I ain’t livin’ in no street. I don’t stay nowhere they don’t treat me right.”

“No. You ain’t ugly. You the grace of God if I ever saw it.”


“Now look here. I found a bunch of mail for you that Albert’s been hidin’.”

“Celie! The white soldiers came, burnin’ our village, and the villages around us.”

“Sofia fought back, but they got her in jail now and they beatin’ her up every day.”

“Adam and Olivia know that you are their mother. Don’t you worry about them.”

“If God ever listened to a poor colored woman, the world be a different place.”

“Grady and me is leavin’ today and we takin’ Celie with us.”

“Well I don’t want [the house]. I was rape in that house from the time I was 12 years old.”

“Shug Avery not a child raisin’ woman, you know that. She the Queen Honeybee.”

“They kept her just alive enough so she could wash they floor.”

“You black, you poor, you ugly, you a woman. I shoulda just locked you up.”
PA enters the shed [Where CELIE has just given birth]

You done in here?

CELIE

I had a boy baby, Pa. His name Adam.

PA

Well give him to me, then. I’ll get rid of it same as the first one.

CELIE

Please, Pa.

PA

You can’t take care no baby. Now yo Mama’s dead, you got all her work to do plus your own.

NETTIE

I’ll help Celie, Pa.

NETTIE tries to intervene, but PA jerks her away roughly.

PA

You gimme that baby!

CELIE responds quickly to protect NETTIE.

CELIE

Don’t hurt Nettie, Pa.

PA grabs the baby, and leaves the girls alone.

NETTIE

Why you give Pa your baby?

CELIE

He the baby’s daddy. It’s his to decide, I guess. You think Pa kill my babies?

NETTIE

No, Celie. He give ‘em away.
How you know that?

NETTIE

It’s not somethin’ I know. It’s somethin’ I believe. You want me to stay here with you?

CELIE

No. You go on. I just be a minute.

NETTIE leaves.

Song #2A Mysterious Ways

The shed revolves away and the SOLOIST appears again, or is perhaps offstage, this time singing in a more distant, thoughtful way, as if she is a memory. The ENSEMBLE may sing from the wings.

SOLOIST

YOU KNOW THAT SHADRACH, MESHACH AND ABEDNEGO...

CELIE looks up to God.

CELIE

Dear God. I am fourteen years old.
I am-

SOLOIST

WALKED OUT OF THE FIRE
WITH THEIR FAITH AGLOW

CELIE

(Over the SOLOIST.)
I have always been a good girl. Maybe you can give me a sign letting me know what is happening to me. (Norman 8 -10).

Questions:
1. How old is Celie? How old do you think Nettie is?
2. Describe the relationship between Celie and Nettie.
3. Why does the playwright use Southern colloquial language in this scene?
4. What do you learn about the lives of the main characters Nettie and Cellie in this scene?
5. There is a reference to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (from the Old Testament book of Daniel: chapters 1 – 3). Why would the playwright include this reference in this scene? What might this foreshadow?
   What is the purpose of the soloist in this scene?
The family is sitting around a table after a big Easter dinner.

GRADY
Miss Celie, that was a fine Easter dinner. Best potatoes I ever put in my mouth. If I could, I would loosen my belt, sit right down and eat it all over again.

CELIE
There’s one more piece of caramel cake if anybody wants it.

HARPO senses the tension in the room and tries to change the subject.

HARPO
Sofia, we sure glad to have you back home. Are you sure you don’t want nuthin’ to eat?

(SOFIA
(Mumbles.)
I don’t know.

MISTER
Come on, Grady, Pa. Let’s go outside so Celie can clean up this mess.

SHUG
Just hold your horses, Albert. I got somethin’ to say and I might as well say it now. Grady and me is leavin’ today and Celie is comin’ with us.

MISTER
She’s what?

SHUG
Celie’s comin’ to Memphis to live with me and Grady.

MISTER
She is not.

(To CELIE.)
What's wrong with you?

CELIE
(A moment, then;)
You a low down dog is what’s wrong. It's time for me to leave you and enter into Creation.

MISTER
Over my dead body.

CONTINUED...
CELIE
Your dead body be just the welcome mat I need.

MISTER
(Shocked.)
You talkin’ crazy.

CELIE
(More to the rest of them:)
You took my sister Nettie away from me, you hid her letters for all these years, and she was the only person love me in the whole world.
(To them:)
But my Nettie alive in Africa, and my children with Nettie in Africa, and when they come home, all us together gon whup your ass.

MISTER laughs. SOFIA looks up. HARPO tries to appease her.

HARPO
Miss Celie, let’s just -

CELIE
I’m done bein’ nice, Harpo. Your Daddy made my life a hell on earth. He ain’t nothing but some dead horse’s shit.

Suddenly, SOFIA comes to life and a laugh rumbles up out of her.

OL’ MISTER
(Look who just come back from the grave.)

SOFIA
Dead horse’s shit. Oh yes, Sofia home now. Pass me them peas, Harpo.

HARPO
I got six chirren with this crazy woman.

SOFIA
Five.

SQUEAK and SHUG laugh now. CELIE takes off her apron.

MISTER
What will people say, you running off like you don’t have a house to look after?

SHUG
Why any woman give a shit what people think is a mystery to me.

This makes SOFIA laugh even harder.

MISTER
You’re not getting a penny from me, Celie. Not one thin dime.
CELIE
Did I ever ask you for money? I never asked you for nothing. Not even for your sorry hand in marriage.

SHUG
Come on, Celie. Let’s just get out of here. Sofia take care this.

SOFIA
Oh yes. Sofia born to take care this.

SQUEAK
I want to go with Celie and Shug.

HARPO
And do what?

SQUEAK
I want to sing.

MISTER
You better stop her, Harpo. You ain't my boy letting some girl talk to you like that.

HARPO
She wants to sing, Pa.

SQUEAK
I’m goin’ to Memphis! And I’m gon sing.

SHUG
Come on, Celie.

_They start to leave._

MISTER
_(To CELIE_) You’ll be back. Shug got talent. And looks. All you fit to do is be Shug’s maid. Take out her slop-jar and maybe cook her food. You’re not that good a cook either.

CELIE
You rotten—

CELIE grabs the knife off the sideboard and lunges at him. SHUG grabs CELIE and holds onto her.

SHUG
Don’t say no more, Albert.
Scene to Read Aloud #2
CONTINUED

SOFIA

Don’t do it, Miss Celie.

MISTER

Do it.

SHUG

Come on, Celie.

_SHUG takes the knife from CELIE._

CELIE

I curse you, Mister.

MISTER

Curse me?

CELIE

Until you do right by me, everything and everyone you touch will crumble, everything you even dream will fail.

MISTER

You can’t curse nobody. You black, you poor, you ugly, you a woman. I shoulda just locked you up. Just let you out to work.

Song #24 End Easter Dinner

CELIE

I MAY BE PORE.
I MAY BE BLACK.
I MAY BE UGLY.
BUT I’M HERE!

SHUG

Come on, Celie. Let’s get your things. Grady. Get the car.

_Music continues as SHUG, CELIE and SQUEAK go on out the door. The MEN are in shock._

SOFIA laughs and laughs.

MISTER

She be back.

HARPO

No she won’t neither. Everything she said the God’s truth about you.

CONTINUED...
Questions:

1. What do we learn about the relationship between Celie and Mister in this scene?
2. What are the different reactions to Celie leaving Mister? Who aligns with whom?
3. Do you think Celie will ever come back to live with Mister? Why or why not?
4. Do you think this scene is from the beginning, middle, or end of the play? Explain.
5. After reading the scene, discuss how Harpo is different from his father Mister.
6. What makes this scene so powerful?
7. How has Celie changed from Scene #1?
America Dialects

HOW DO THEY AFFECT OUR PERCEPTION?

Background:

In the introduction to the Director’s script of *The Color Purple*, Alice Walker, the author of the novel, writes:

The characters in *The Color Purple* who speak what I term Black Folk English do so because this was the speech of Southern country people for many generations. It has mostly to do with structure: “What you think bout that?” “How far you all go?” “What cause that drop in the economy?” Etc. Words may be left out of a sentence, yet the sentence makes, perfect understandable sense...

The temptation, when presenting black voices on stage...is to exaggerate what one assumes all poor black people sounded like. In *The Color Purple* this would be a mistake...There is no minstrel quality to the speech of any of the characters, all of whom are serious, full blown human beings, and not caricatures.

It is tempting for playgoers to assume that a dialect spoken by actors is incorrect usage, especially if that dialect is unfamiliar or quite different from the one spoken by the listeners. However, all speakers of English have unique dialects based upon factors such as age, heritage, region, and economic class.

Purpose:
The following resources and activities are designed to help students consider the use of dialect in the play and to recognize that they speak a dialect as distinct as the characters in *The Color Purple*. These may be used separately or together, as time or student interest dictates.

An Author’s Decision About Dialect (15 minutes pre-play and post-play):
1. Before viewing the play, read aloud Alice Walker’s introduction (above) and her explanation about her dialect choices. Ask them to consider:
   - Why did Alice Walker feel the need to introduce the play with an explanation about the characters’ dialect?
   - What does this explanation lead you to expect from the characters in the play?
2. After viewing the play ask these follow-up questions:
   - Was the language effective? Were Walker’s choices appropriate? Why or why not?
   - Should she have changed the dialect in any way? Why or why not?

Listening and Identifying Different American Dialects (20 minutes):
The *Atlantic* video team has created an audio link of regional differences in pronunciation and word choice for several different common items or phrases.

1. Let students listen to the regional different terms using this Audio Map of US Dialects at http://kottke.org/13/11/an-audio-map-of-us-dialects (total time 4:05 minutes).
2. Ask them which words are new to them and which they have heard before.
3. Discuss how they might respond to someone whose use of English is distinctly different from their own.
4. Brainstorm classic Northern (or Minnesota) words or phrases and classic Southern words or phrases that would not be used by people who live elsewhere.
5. Play the audio a second time to see if they can expand their lists.

CONTINUED...
Dialect Research Participation – An Enrichment Activity:
Linguist researchers at Harvard University in the U.S. and Cambridge University in the U.K. have done extensive dialect surveys about the variations in English around the world. Their results are fascinating and include maps of usage, summaries of usage by state, and audio examples of various dialects.

Students can contribute to the data if they wish to participate in the Cambridge study if they are willing to supply some personal information and to take an online survey. Otherwise they can just explore the results. The links below can lead them further into the research.

Harvard Dialect survey results for Minnesota can be found at: 
http://www4.uwm.edu/FLL/linguistics/dialect/staticmaps/state_MN.html following the link to Maps and Results will give them the list of words and questions used to explore the dialect differences.

The Cambridge University study is ongoing. If students wish to view maps of how certain words are used differently in the United States they can do so at: http://www.tekstlab.uio.no/cambridge_survey/

or

If students wish to participate in the ongoing study, they can do so at: 
http://www.tekstlab.uio.no/cambridge_survey/user/register

By Jill Tammen
HUDSON HIGH SCHOOL, RETIRED
The Novel vs. the Script

A SCENE FROM THE NOVEL OMITTED FROM THE PLAY

Objective:
Students will consider the adaptation process of selecting novel passages for performance in a play or musical.

Materials:
Novel and script passages, both included on the following pages.
Further information on the Epistolary Novel article can be found on page 8 of this guide.

Directions:
As a class, read the two passages. The first passage is taken from Walker’s novel, the second from Norman’s script. Now, discuss the two passages:

1. Compare and contrast these two depictions of the same event. Which work do you find more powerful? Why?
2. What has the playwright done to translate the section in the novel to a scene that can be played on a stage?
3. Is the dramatized scene accurate?
4. Has anything changed or been left out? If so, why has the playwright made changes? Why might a playwright decide to leave parts of the novel out of the play?
5. What is necessary for the scene to convey the same meaning as the original passage? What accommodations must be made in order to create such meaning?
6. In what ways might the director, scenic, sound, costume and lighting designers work to create an accurate representation of the novel passage?
7. In what ways does the epistolary genre make for good drama?
8. Why might the playwright choose to use song in the dramatized scene? Is this effective? Why or why not?
9. Which do you believe is the most effective telling of this part of the story?
DEAR GOD,

For over a month I have trouble sleeping. I stay up late as I can before Mr. _____ start complaining bout the price of kerosene, then I soak myself in a warm bath with milk and epsom salts, then sprinkle little witch hazel on my pillow and curtain out all the moonlight. Sometimes I git a few hours sleep. Then just when it look like it ought to be gitting good, I wakes up.

At first I’d git up quick and drink some milk. Then I’d think bout counting fence post. Then I’d think bout reading the Bible. What it is? I ast myself.

A little voice say, Something you done wrong. Somebody spirit you sin against. Maybe. Way late one night it come to me. Sofia. I sin against Sofia spirit.

I pray she don’t find out, but she do.

HARPO TOLD.
The minute she hear it she come marching up the path, toting a sack. Little cut all blue and red under her eye.
She say, Just want you to know I looked to you for help.
Ain’t I been helpful? I ast.
She open up her sack. Here your curtains, she say. Here your thread. Here a dollar fur letting me use ’em.
They yourn, I say, trying to push them back. I’m glad to help out. Do what I can.
You told Harpo to beat me, she said.
No I didn’t, I said.
Don’t lie, she said.
I didn’t mean it, I said.
Then what you say it for? she ast.
She standing there looking me straight in the eye. She look tired and her jaws full of air.
I say it cause I’m a fool, I say. I say it cause I’m jealous of you. I say it cause you do what I can’t.
What that? she say.
Fight. I say.
She stand there a long time, like what I said took the wind out her jaws. She mad before, sad now.
She say, All my life I had to fight. I had to fight my daddy. I had to fight my brothers. I had to fight my cousins and my uncles. A girl child ain’t safe in a family of men. But I never thought I’d have to fight in my own house. She let out her breath. I loves Harpo, she say. God knows I do.
But I’ll kill him dead before I let him beat me. Now if you want a dead son- in-law you just keep on advising him like you doing. She put her hand on her hip. I used to hunt game with a bow and arrow, she say.
I stop the little trembling that started when I saw her coming. I’m so shame of myself, I say. And the Lord he done whip me little bit too.
The Lord don’t like ugly, she say.
And he ain’t stuck on pretty.
This open the way for our talk to turn another way.
I say, You feels sorry for me, don’t you?
She think a minute. Yes ma’am, she say slow, I do.
I think I know how come, but I ast her anyhow.

CONTINUED...
She say, To tell the truth, you remind me of my mama. She under my daddy thumb. Naw, she under my daddy foot. Anything he say, goes. She never say nothing back. She never stand up for herself. Try to make a little half stand sometime for the children but that always backfire. More she stand up for us, the harder time he give her. He hate children and he hate where they come from. Tho from all the children he got, you’d never know it. I never know nothing bout her family. I thought, looking at her, nobody in her family could be scared.

How many he got? I ast.
Twelve. She say.

Whew, I say. My daddy got six by my mama before she die, I say. He got four more by the wife he got now. I don’t mention the two he got by me.

How many girls? she ast.
Five, I say. How bout in your family?

Six boys, six girls. All the girls big and strong like me. Boys big and strong too, but all the girls stick together. Two brothers stick with us too, sometime. Us git in a fight, it’s a sight to see. I ain’t never struck a living thing, I say. Oh, when I was at home I tap the little ones on the behind to make ‘em behave, but not hard enough to hurt.

What you do when you git mad? she ast.

I think. I can’t even remember the last time I felt mad, I say. I used to git mad at my mammy cause she put a lot of work on me. Then I see how sick she is. Couldn’t stay mad at her. Couldn’t be mad at my daddy cause he my daddy. Bible say, Honor father and mother no matter what. Then after while every time I got mad, or start to feel mad, I got sick. Felt like throwing up. Terrible feeling. Then I start to feel nothing at all.

Sofia frown. Nothing at all?

Well, sometime Mr. _____ git on me pretty hard. I have to talk to Old Maker. But he my husband. I shrug my shoulders. This life soon be over, I say. Heaven last all ways.

You ought to bash Mr. _____ head open, she say.

Think bout heaven later.

Not much funny to me. That funny. I laugh. She laugh. Then us both laugh so hard us flop down on the step.

Let’s make quilt pieces out of these messed up curtains, she say. And I run git my pattern book. I sleeps like a baby now.
Scene from the Script:

*** Please note that the words in all capitalized letters indicate that they are a song, or part of a song which is sung by the character indicated.

HARPO exits. The CHURCH LADIES appear. There is incredible noise from SOFIA and HARPO’S.

DORIS, JARENE, & DARLENE

HE RUN INTO A TREE AND HER NAME SOFIA

AT SOFIA’S HOUSE

CELIE approaches carefully, the house has sustained some big damage. SOFIA sees CELIE.

SOFIA

You told Harpo to beat me? I’m sorry. I love Harpo, God knows I do. But I’ll kill him dead before I let him or anybody beat me.

CELIE

I’m sorry.

SOFIA

I love Harpo, God knows I do. But I’ll kill him before I let him or anybody beat me.

---

Song #10 Hell No!

SOFIA:

ALL MY LIFE I HAD TO FIGHT. I HAD TO FIGHT MY DADDY. 
I HAD TO FIGHT MY BROTHERS, MY COUSINS, MY UNCLE TOO. 
BUT I NEVER, NEVER, NEVER, NEVER, NEVER, NEVER THOUGHT I HAD TO FIGHT IN MY OWN HOUSE!

I FEEL SORRY FOR YOU. 
TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH 
YOU REMIND ME OF MY MAMA, 
UNDER YOUR HUSBAND’S THUMB. 
NAW, YOU UNDER YOUR HUSBAND’S FOOT 
WHAT HE SAY GO. 
WHY YOU SO SCARED 
I’LL NEVER KNOW.

IF A MAN 
RAISE HIS HAND, 
HELL NO! 
HELL NO!

GIRL, CHILD AIN’T SAFE 
IN A FAMILY OF MENS. 
SICK ’N TIRED HOW A WOMAN 
STILL LIVE LIKE A SLAVE 
LAWD, YOU BETTER LEARN HOW TO FIGHT BACK

CONTINUED...
WHILE YOU STILL ALIVE
YOU SHOW THEM GIRL
AND BEAT BACK THAT JIVE

CAUSE WHEN A MAN JUST
DON'T GIVE A DAMN,
HELL NO!
HELL NO!

CELIE
What you gonna do now?

SOFIA
My sisters gon come get me. I think I need me a vacation up on out of here.

CELIE
But Harpo’s your husband. You got to stay with him. I know you love him.

SOFIA
WHEN THAT MAN USED TO TOUCH ME,
HE CLIMB ON TOP AND START TO ROCK ME AWAY.
LORD KNOWS I STILL LOVES HIM,
BUT HE TRY TO MAKE ME MIND
AND I JUST AIN’T THAT KIND.
HELL NO!

CELIE
Sometimes my husband get on me so hard it hurt me all over, but he my husband so I just talk to my
Old Maker. This life’ll soon be over. Heaven lasts always.

SOFIA
What you ought to do is bash Mister’s head open. Think on heaven later. You can’t stay here, girl.
SISTAHS!

SOFIA’S SISTERS appear.

SISTER 1
HELL NO!

SISTER 2
HELL NO!

SISTER 3
HELL NO!

SISTER 4
HELL NO!

SISTER 5
HELL NO!

SISTER 6
HELL NO!

SISTER 1
HELL NO!

SISTER 6
HELL NO!

SISTAHS!

ALL SISTERS
HELL NO! LET’S GO!

CONTINUED...
GONNA BE YOUR ROCK.
GONNA BE YOUR TREE,

SOMETHIN’ TO HOLD ON TO
IN YOUR TIME OF NEED.

GIRL, YOU TOO GOOD
FOR THAT MAN!

DAMN THAT MAN

GONNA TAKE YOU AWAY

TAKE MY HAND SISTA,
YOU GOT TO GO.

DON’T BE NO FOOL.
DON’T WASTE NO TIME.

ANY MAN WHO HURTS YOU
AIN’T WORTH A DIME.

WELL, HE WON’T KNOW
‘TIL YOU GONE

SHE BE GONE

WHAT HE THROWIN’ AWAY.

HE BE WRONG SISTA
YOU GOT TO GO!

_The SISTERS sing to CELIE._

GIRL, YOU TOO GOOD
FOR THAT MAN.

LET ME TAKE YOU AWAY

SISTA

AH, TAKE YOU AWAY

SISTA

SOFIA

CONTINUED...
LET ME TAKE YOU AWAY...

SISTA

YOU GOT TO LEAVE SISTER

SISTA
SISTA, YOU GOT TO SAY...

YOU GOT TO SAY, YOU NEED TO SAY,
YOU BETTER SAY, YOU OUGHT TO SAY

...HELL....

HELL, HELL, HELL, HELL, HELL, HELL...

NO!

CELIE watches SOFIA, her SISTERS and CHILDREN roll out of sight toward the road.

CELIE

Dear God..............

(Norman 31-35).

WORKS CITED


Purpose

This activity is designed to expose students to a wide variety of examples of African-American visual culture using online primary documents. Students are directed to specific images and to one video. The accompanying questions ask students to imagine how these images might inspire other individuals to draw, to write, to travel, or to design a playbill for *The Color Purple*.

Time 45 – 55 minutes

Preparation

Print copies of the student worksheet on the following pages. Reserve the appropriate number of computers necessary for the type of procedure you’ve chosen.

Procedure

This activity is designed as an independent student activity with each student having a computer in a computer lab setting; however, it could also be used in the following ways:

As a paired activity with two students working as a team to complete the worksheet and sharing a computer in either a lab or a classroom.

As a group activity with each student group sharing a computer in either a lab or a classroom.

As a classroom activity using a teacher’s computer to project the images and students completing the worksheet independently.

Areas of study

This activity is appropriate in the following curriculum areas:

Language Arts

Social Studies

Studio Arts

Theater
Go to http://www.artsconnected.org/resource/164654/african-american-photography-2014

Click on PRESENT (under Item Actions on the right side of the screen). The page titled African-American Photography 2014 is your home screen for the following slides.

Click on NEXT (bottom right of page) to advance to slide 2/8. View the images of Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and Charlotte Forten by clicking on their images.

If Cecilia and Nettie’s grandmother had been born into slavery in Georgia, photographs like these free African-American women might have inspired her. In their Envisioning Emancipation: Black Americans and the End of Slavery, Deborah Willis and Barbara Krauthamer state, “...portraits of prominent black writers and orators, for example, had public and private value as reflections of black accomplishments, pride, and dignity.” Which photograph of a freed black woman do you think would have inspired Cecilia and Nettie’s grandmother the most? Explain.

Click on NEXT to advance to slide 3/8. View photographs of Susie King Taylor (who “nursed wounded Union soldiers for four years and three months without pay”), a washerwoman for the Union Army and a wife of an African American soldier.

Which one would you pick for your model for a sketch you would draw of Celie, Sofia, or Nettie? Explain.

Click on NEXT to advance to slide 4/8. Then click on the link titled “The National Portrait Gallery’s Ayuba Suleiman Diallo exhibition” and then click on DIALLO’S STORY (top of page) to listen to the video about his life.

While listening, pretend you are Nettie. During your African travels you come across William Hoare’s portrait of Ayuba Suleiman Diallo, 1763. Take notes on the video.

CONTINUED...
Enhancing Cultural Context Through Visual Images

POST-PLAY ACTIVITIES

STUDENT HANDOUT

After listening to the video about Diallo, click on the tab BEN OKRI ON DIALLO (top of page) and read about the poem inspired by the painting of Diallo. Then return to slide 4/8 and view the images of slave children from Virginia and New Orleans.

Again pretend you are Nettie. After learning about the poem inspired by the painting of Diallo, you have decided to write a poem inspired by photographic portraits of former child slaves in America. Which photograph inspires your poem? Why?


Which photograph from the exhibition might have inspired Nettie to go to Africa? Explain.


Many of these photographs of middle class African-Americans were taken by Thomas E. Askew in Atlanta, Georgia. Which photograph do you think could have been Shug Avery? Explain your selection.

Click on NEXT to advance to slide 7/8. View the Robert E. Williams Photographic Collection: African-Americans in the Augusta, GA Vicinity (Richmond Co.) c. 1872-1898 from the Digital Library of Georgia.

Pretend you are the graphic designer for a theatrical company that is going to stage The Color Purple: The Musical About Love. Which photograph from this collection would you use as source material for your playbill? Why would you choose that image to represent The Color Purple?
1. The church ladies serve as a chorus of commentary on the characters’ lives in the play. For example, it is through their opening song that we learn the father of Celie’s baby is Pa. What other information do we learn from them later in the play? Why do you think the playwright chose to make the chorus, church ladies instead of some other group?

2. What role does prayer play in Celie’s life? In the life of her community? Is this a religious play? Does it promote a moral message? Can one have morality without religion? Explain.

3. As the story begins the audience is led to believe that Celie’s babies are a product of incest. What was your initial reaction to this? How or what do you feel about Celie? Later, the audience learns the man who raped her was not her biological father. Does this change your perception of Celia? If so, why?

4. What is the difference between strength and resilience? Can you have one without the other? Who demonstrates strength in the story? Who demonstrates resilience? Justify your answers with examples from the play.


6. Shug Avery and Sofia are strong women who resist the dominance of the men in their lives. But they each pay a price for their independence. What does each woman sacrifice for her outspoken nature? What does each woman gain?

7. Often in musicals, songs are used to reveal a character’s inner thoughts and feelings. In Act II, Mister sings:

   I GOT PLENTY TO BLAME. MY DADDY BEAT ME, FOR MY OWN GOOD HE SAY. MY FIRST WIFE GOT KILT WHEN SHE RUN AWAY.

   MY KIDS IS ALL FOOLS, MY CROPS IS ALL DEAD ONLY WOMAN I LOVE WON'T LIE IN MY BED. A BLACK MAN'S LIFE CAN'T GET ANY WORSE 'LESS HE WASTIN' AWAY

   UNDER MISS CELIE'S CURSE. SO TELL ME HOW A MAN DO GOOD WHEN ALL HE KNOW IS BAD?

   What does this song reveal about Mister? Is Mister making excuses or does his past really play a part in the way he has treated others? Does being abused render abuse? Does Mister deserve forgiveness? Why or why not? Does Mister truly change? Cite examples from the play in order to support your answers.

8. In the latter part of Act I we are introduced to the character of Shug. What emotions does Celie feel as she meets Shug? Do you believe Celie feels jealousy or envy in this initial meeting? Justify your answer. Consider the bathtub scene. How is this a metaphor for the relationship that will develop between the two women?

9. Consider the relationship between Celie and Shug. Does Shug rescue Celie or does Celie rescue Shug? Justify your answer.

10. Celie finds a bit of salvation by making pants. Why do you think that Walker chose pants as the item Celie made? What might these pants represent? In what way are pants a metaphor for the transformation in Celie?

11. Celie matures from an insecure, downtrodden drudge into a confident, independent woman. What key incidents in her life help her overcome the circumstances of her horrible childhood and early marriage?

12. Shug says to Celie, “Sky over our heads, birds singin’ to us. I think it piss God off if anybody even walk by the color purple in a field and not notice it. He say,’look what I made for you.’” Why do you believe the author chose the title she did for this story?
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Thank You