

1. Greening Your Curriculum 101
2. Amani Wazwaz, African American Literature 230
3. Literature and "Real Life": *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, and Hurricane Katrina
4. Explain significant historical contexts of various African American literary texts. Analyze multiple perspectives on and responses to oppression, injustice and lived experiences. Compare and contrast various methods of survival. Analyze historical and literary representations of race and racism. Demonstrate research skills to explain historical and cultural backgrounds and to respond to key questions about the literature.
5. Critically analyze African American depictions of home, connections to the land, and responses to racial and environmental hardships. Compare and contrast various methods of survival as depicted in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *Beasts of the Southern Wild* and compare them to real life stories that occurred during Hurricane Katrina. Analyze historical and literary representations of race and racism in the news reports during Hurricane Katrina. Demonstrate research skills to explain historical and cultural backgrounds and to respond to key questions about the literature.
6. Critically analyze African American relationship to the land as it is depicted in written text, film and nonfiction reports.  
Communicate interpretation using visual media in order to reach a wide audience.  
Evaluate different methods of the struggle for survival and relate it to actual stories of survival.  
Reflect on own skill sets in the face of environmental challenges.  
Serve community.
7. Students will be given the opportunity toward the end of the semester to work on a service learning project. They will keep a journal to communicate how they would personally respond to environmental disasters. In this journal, they were share how they see the literature personally connecting with their lives.

8. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, and Hurricane Katrina

Step 1 of the Project:

We spent the first part of the semester studying how significant it is to study African American relationship to the land. As Paul Gilroy argues, because Africans were forced out of their homes, they developed a unique Black Atlantic culture which combines elements of different African and newly learned cultures. The Black Atlantic cultures, we learned, were a strong attempt at social sustainability and survival.

In *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, we learned that promoting sustainability meant searching for land where ex-slaves can be protected and attaining literacy. Our class has thus been dedicated to locating and evaluating the different attempts at social sustainability.

For Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, you will continue to examine ways that African Americans sought to promote sustainability and survive in various environments that presented challenges. Especially presenting a challenge to the main characters in this novel is the hurricane. Please especially pay attention to Chapter 18, which dramatizes the hardships faced by this hurricane. You will be selecting a key image, passage, metaphor, and or theme in order to investigate and analyze particular methods of survival. You will create a visual representation of your interpretation of one of the subjects or themes of your choice and on one page, present a clear and focused argument.

On the day this project is due, we will go around the classroom and each of you will contribute to explaining the meaning behind different segments of the text. Please consider the following questions for your project. I welcome other suggestions to add to the following:

1. What does it mean to the African American characters to occupy an All African American town?

2. What is the meaning of the Everglades in the lives of African Americans?
3. What is the meaning of the Everglades in the lives of the Seminoles ?
4. Why isn't the warning of the Seminoles heeded?
5. Why isn't the warning of the other African American characters heeded?
6. Did the main characters have the proper skill sets to survive?
7. Why do you think Hurston personifies the hurricane?

For instance, Hurston writes: "The monstropolous beast had left his bed....He seized hold of his dikes and ran forward until he met the quarters; uprooted them like grass and rushed on after his supposed-to-be conquerors, rolling the dikes, rolling the houses, rolling the people in the houses along with other timbers. The sea was walking the earth with heavy heel.... it came muttering and grumbling like a tired mammoth just the same."

8. Why do you think Hurston spiritualizes the response to the hurricane? For instance, at one point, she writes, "They seemed to be staring at the dark, but their eyes were watching God." She repeats this fascinating image of silence and watching God in other parts as well.
9. What is the symbolic significance of the chaos presented in the text?
10. What is the significance of the depiction of the bigger houses and the regular modestly build workers' homes?
11. What role do racial issues play in this environmental hardship?
12. What Black Atlantic culture was part of the Everglades?
13. What new type Black Atlantic culture developed as a result of the hurricane?

On the day this project is due, we will go around the classroom sharing ideas and using the visual to present our analysis of one significant aspect of the text.

We will display your visual projects in the Literature Meets Art exhibit in order for the themes to gain a wider attention.

### Step 2 of the Project:

In order for the above project to have a greater meaning, for this next project, please research the ways that Hurricane Katrina was covered in the news and research real life stories of hardship and survival. Pay special attention to the theme you worked on for your first project and explain how it compares and contrasts with the ways it was depicted in news reports for Hurricane Katrina. For instance, if your first project was about racial issues, examine the ways that racial issues played a part in news reports on Hurricane Katrina. If you examined what the land meant to African Americans in the Everglades, research what these various towns meant to the actual people who lived there.

You will compare and contrast what happened in the literature with what happened in life decades later in order to see how the methods of survival have changed and the role of representing African Americans.

Once again, you will create a visual to complement your first visual. This way, you can show how the literature compares and or contrasts to what happened in real life. When you display your work, your *Their Eyes Were Watching God* visual will be next to the Hurricane Katrina visual.

### Alternate Assignment - for another semester?

We will compare and contrast the above mentioned themes with *Beasts of the Southern Wild*.

### 9. Assessment:

The visual projects and the writing you produce will be assessed based on how well you:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Critically analyze literature
- \_\_\_\_\_ Explain and locate the significance of Black Atlantic cultures

- \_\_\_\_\_ Present analysis in a visual form
- \_\_\_\_\_ Create a dominant argument and present it in writing
- \_\_\_\_\_ Demonstrate the ability to connect themes in literature with "real life"
- \_\_\_\_\_ Demonstrate proper research skills
- \_\_\_\_\_ Compare and contrast different methods of survival
- \_\_\_\_\_ Creatively present findings in a visual format.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Know details of what happened in Hurricane Katrina
- \_\_\_\_\_ Define skill Sets necessary for survival for humans in general and for your own as well

10. I plan to use this assignment in the fall. Next year, I hope to be teaching a honors section of African American Literature and I hope to use this then as well.

<b>Analyzing the Literature in Writing</b>	Skilled level Ready to be shared in the class	Has the potential to be even stronger	Needs more work
<p>Does the writer provide clear and illuminating insights on the meaning of <b>place</b> in the lives of the characters?</p> <p>Has the writer reasonably explained the <b>meaning of sustainability</b> and applied it to the texts?</p> <p>Has the writer defined the <b>meaning of the Black Atlantic</b> in his or her own terms?</p> <p>Has the writer explained how the <b>development of the Black Atlantic contributed to sustainability</b>?</p> <p>Is there an insightful argument of what <b>new Black Atlantic culture</b> developed as a <b>result</b> of struggling against the <b>hurricane</b>?</p> <p>Has the student explained in his or her own terms how <i>Their eyes Were Watching God</i> and <i>Beasts of the Southern Wild</i> are <b>Black Atlantic texts</b>?</p> <p>Has the writer explained ways that racism and social injustice presented more challenges to developing skill sets required to survive an environmental disaster?</p>			
<p>Does the student present a sound, logical and creative interpretation?</p> <p>Are specific characters and their actions analyzed in order to understand the psychological effects of injustice?</p> <p>Are characters' methods of survival analyzed and evaluated for their soundness?</p> <p>Are the meanings of symbols carefully presented to provide insights about sustainability, the Black Atlantic, and the development of skill sets?</p>			

<b>Research Skills</b>	Skilled level	Has the potential to be even stronger and more skilled	Needs more work
How well has the writer met the following criteria:			
Have a wide variety of sources been researched?			
Has each source been carefully examined?  In other words, have the sources been evaluated for their credibility and relevance?			
Has the bias in each source been determined?			
Have personal stories of hardships been consulted?			
Have significant ideas and words been quoted?  Have other significant ideas been accurately summarized?			
Does the MLA works cited page correctly follow standard MLA conventions?			
Does the student writer answer factual and historical questions about Hurricane Katrina in an accurate way once the research is completed?  (Study Guide and exam will be provided)			
Does the writer compare and contrast real life stories and events with those present in the novel and the film?			

<b>Visual interpretations</b>	Strong effort	Good, solid effort	Needs more work
Does the visual have a specific focus or theme related to sustainability, the Black Atlantic, and the development of skill sets?			
Does the visual pair up an important theme from <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> with a similar theme from Hurricane Katrina news reports?			
Is it clear that hard work has been invested in the creation of this visual? Please keep in mind that this project is not a traditional art project assigned in regular Art classes. You are required to express your interpretation using a visual.			
Have the visuals been designed to capture the interest of the audience and to immediately communicate a message about social injustice and sustainability in the lives of African Americans?			

<b>Personal Reflection</b>	Strong effort	Good solid effort	Needs more work
<p>Personal Journals must be submitted on the day they are due.  Each journal should refer to a specific quote or passage.  Each should contain a thoughtful reflection.</p>			
<p>Reflection #1:  What is your relationship to the Earth? Draw a picture to reflect this relationship.</p>			
<p>Reflection #2:  Based on what you have read, what skills do you think are needed to survive a threat like hurricanes, social injustice and racism?  Have much of these skills did Janie, Teacake, and the Seminoles possess?  In what ways did society empower the characters to develop these skill sets?  In what ways could these skills have been better developed?  In what ways did society prevent characters from developing these skill sets?</p>			
<p>Reflection #3:  Were the news reports fair and accurate?  Did you find at least one fair news report?  Was there at least one news report that contributed to social injustice?  Did you find real life stories that reflected incidents depicted in the literature?  What sorts of efforts were there to help people affected by Hurricane Katrina?</p>			
<p>Reflection #4:  What skill sets do you already possess to enable you to face an environmental disaster?  What skills sets can you help others develop to enable them to face an environmental disaster?</p>			
<p>Reflection #5:  What is your relationship with the Earth and its people now that you have worked on this project?   Please create an image to reflect your new thoughts.</p>			

<b>Service Learning Project</b>	Yes	No
Please note, the service learning project will take place two weeks before the class ends.		
The student committed at least three hours to helping others.		
The student contributed ideas about the service learning project		
The student was present on the two days the class met to conduct the Service Learning Project.		
The student reflected on the meaning of non-traditional learning as provided by this Service Learning Project.		
The student provided insights about how our Service Learning Project was contributing to creating a yet another form of Black Atlantic culture		