

# Rationale

THE  
HATE  
U  
GIVE

Written by

Wicher Diallo: 1760900



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## Introduction

In the Master of Education (English teacher) program of the HU, students are asked to design a digital project for the literature course 'New Voices'. For this project one of the in class discussed ethnic minorities must be chosen as the foundation for the project. For this project, African Americans were chosen as a target group. The novel *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas is chosen as literary input for the students to explore the modern-day struggles for many 'black' Americans. The targeted audience are Havo 4 (higher general secondary education) and Vwo 4 (preparatory academic education) students. In this theoretical discussion, all important and relevant choices will be discussed and reflected upon by the student-teacher.

## Input

As explained in the introduction, the main source for this project is a Young Adult novel written by Angie Thomas. The deliberate choice to choose a YA novel is made so students can identify and make connections with the characters in the book (Spitz, 1999). Furthermore, heavy topics like police brutality and racism are being made more and more approachable for the target group's age through YA literature (Cruz, 1999).

Another deliberate choice was to give students mostly spoken input. The main theme of this lesson series is 'Speak Up' so in order to let students speak up, they first need to hear others do the same. Without that one may not expect students to find their own voice. However, this does not mean that no literary or textual information is given to the students. The 'Wanna know more?' page is created for students so they can do some research into the themes of the novel. Also, per lesson extra material and links are given to them to improve their knowledge of the different themes and therefore help them with the final output assignment. Even the page of the author may help students to get a better understanding of the main themes. To see if the sources that have been used are at the targeted level, the Lexile analyzer (Smith & Turner, 2016) has been used. In this online tool, a text can be copied and scored on its difficulty.

For all the video input, Edpuzzle or Youtube links were generated. This way students always had the possibility to listen to a fragment again or pause it if that might have been necessary. Which is according to the theory the best way to enhance understanding (Perlmutter, 2019).

## **Link to Civics, History and Drama**

This lesson series can be linked to three other school subjects. So in an ideal world, this cross-curricular project could take place during Black History month for example. However, not in the United States where this is already part of the curriculum but for the students here in the Netherlands.

Because this lesson series touches upon topics like inequality, racism, protesting and the now more than ever booming Black Lives Matter movement, the choice to link this lesson series to civics is made quite easily. Civics is defined as “the study or science of the privileges and obligations of citizens” (MyLO, 2021). Students discuss civil law and civil code, and which role citizens play in obtaining said code. Discussions during the civics class could entail for example if the police are profiling correctly or that students can identify some biases. Also, discussions about equal rights and chances in life could be part of the civics lesson. What they can do themselves to be ‘awoken’ or fight against discrimination are also great discussion topics.

Pivotal moments in (black) history like the civil rights movement, civil war and slavery are perfect topics to link to this lesson series as well. It gives students the background information to properly understand how deeply rooted this problem is in American society. Therefore history is the second subject that should be included in this cross-curricular project.

Because of the common theme of speaking up, it is a must to have the drama department involved as well. How does one lay emotion into a spoken word performance and how can one speak loud and proud? These questions could all be answered by a drama teacher and they could help students to step out of their comfort zone.

## Learning objectives in the upper form

According to the new curriculum for upper form language learning in the Netherlands a language teacher should focus on the following (Curriculum.nu, 2021):

**1. Effective cross-boundary communication:** *“Students learn language skills in English and to further develop this with context. The goal is to promote communication in familiar situations.”* (Curriculum.nu, 2021)

- In this lesson series all lessons are goal-oriented (Goal orientation theory, 2012) which all led to communication-driven output. The discussions during the processing activities help to enhance communication and elicit students their opinions. Therefore, it can be argued that this project helps to stimulate cross-boundary communication.

**2: Creative types of language:** *“Students learn to reflect on different features in texts such as literature. They continue to develop reading and listening skills and their creativity in the use of English and other languages.”* (Curriculum.nu, 2021)

- Due to the use of different media types, like the novel, videos and informative websites, students learn to explore the topic of institutional racism. All materials are offered in the target language and therefore help students to further develop their reading and listening skills. The output assignments help to further develop their creative use of the English language.

**3: Intercultural communicative competencies:** *“Students learn to realize that the culture and identity of the speakers influence communication. They learn to tailor their use of language in the foreign language to the social and cultural context.”* (Curriculum.nu, 2021)

- For this project especially the code-switch lesson helps students to realize that culture and identity play a crucial role in the speaker's communication. They learn as well how to discuss appropriately in a foreign language and that their Dutch directness does not always transfer well into the target language.

4: **Language Awareness:** “Students are gaining a deeper understanding of how languages are structured, work and change and learn to look critically at language use. They become more familiar with how to learn and use languages.” (Curriculum.nu, 2021)

- In this lesson series students mostly learn how they can use spoken language to create change. They learn that a voice and the manner in which words are spoken can indeed change people’s opinions. This already starts in the first lesson when they learn about griots and slam poets, but is also something they learn through Starr’s journey.

5: **Multilingualism** “Students expand their multilingualism and learn to use it purposefully. They gain insight into relationships that languages can evoke and learn to approach languages with an open mind.” (Curriculum.nu, 2021)

- In this lesson series, the focus is of course on English. However, it is a start in developing multilingualism (the use of more than one language, either by an individual speaker or by a group of speakers.). Cause the whole series intends to enhance native Dutch students to enhance their English speaking capabilities, thus contributing to their multilingualism. Because of the facts students learn about the impact of words, they also gain insight into relationships that languages can evoke (or break).

## Van den Akker's Spiderweb

Van den Akker created a tool to plan a curriculum. The core and the nine threads of the spider's web refer to ten components of the curriculum that are needed to create and plan student learning. The nine threads and core will be briefly explained down below.

### **Aims and objectives: Toward which goals are the student learning?**

The following goals are created for this lesson series:

1. Students can pinpoint events in the novel where in this case African Americans are treated unfairly.
2. Students can identify events in the novel where African Americans struggle to fit in with either 'Western' or 'African' communities.
3. Students took a stand on whether one should speak up about injustice or not.
4. Students understand and are able to explain why words can have a different impact than was intended by the speaker.
5. Students are able to relate: 1. finding your voice, 2. impact vs. intent and 3. lost culture towards the black lives matter movement, African American literature and the novel *The Hate U Give*.

### **Content: What are they learning?**

Students are learning to look critically at their own prejudice, but also the impact of their words. Furthermore, they learn about the unfair treatment of black Americans and white privilege.

### **Learning activities: How are they learning?**

Students learn through first learning about the African-American community and the background of storytelling. Then students read the book *The Hate U Give*. After that students learn through open discussions about the book and delve into the world of discrimination and unfair treatment.

### **Teacher role: How is the teacher facilitating their learning?**

The teacher is a coach and discussion leader. Also the guardian of the safe learning environment. This is all reached by first laying out the ground rules and during the discussions repeated.



**Materials and resources: With what are they learning?**

They learn by using the material that's been put on the website, but also by reading the novel and maybe watch the film *The Hate U Give*.

**Grouping: With whom are they learning?**

Students learn with each other, from the teacher and other people they talk with about the lesson series.

**Location: Where are they learning?**

In class, but also at home. Every moment they think of their poem or the material they are learning. Because critical thinking and finding your own voice is not only done in the classroom but also as an individual learning process.

**Time: When are they learning?**

Students learn during class through assignments but also outside of the classroom by reading the book and doing extra research on the *wanna know more* page.

**Assessment: How is their learning assessed?**

The learning is assessed through a final assignment in which students perform a spoken word poem. A rubric is created for students to understand on what they are judged upon.

## Justification of chosen activities

For designing this lesson series the systems approach (i.e. breaking down a complex or still vague concept into simple easy to understand units) has been used (Banathy, 1991). Choices have been made for input, process, output, objectives, contents, methods and assessment. In total 5 lessons were created. One lesson to introduce African American literature, followed by three lessons about the different themes of the novel and finally concluded by a final assignment/presentation which should test if the main objective had been reached.

## Planning

This lesson series is carefully planned by using the 5 questions designed by Beach, Appleman, Fecho and Simon (2016), namely:

- Where am I going?
- Who am I going there with?
- How will I get there?
- How will I show them where to go?
- How will I know I have arrived?

Besides that also van den Akker's spider web is used to substantiate the choices made for creating this lesson series.

All lessons followed the same structure and the activities should challenge the students, following Vygotsky's (1978), Zone of Proximal Development, and the Task-Based Learning theory (Ellis, 2018). This meant that the following lesson criteria were created:

- Every lesson should start by introducing the theme or African American literature.
  - o The assignments must correspond with Bloom's (1956) remember and/or understand stage.
  - o A quote from the book is given to strengthen the link between the book and theme.
- The processing exercises should link the theme to student's own interpretations.
  - o The assignments must correspond with Bloom's (1956) apply and/or analyze stage.
- The output assignment should always test the lesson objective in a spoken form.
  - o The assignments must correspond with Bloom's (1956) evaluate and/or create stage.

## **Teaching controversial subjects**

According to Showalter (2000), a teacher must create candor discourse and clear labeling before teaching these hard topics. In other words, one must tell the students up front that they may be offended or upset by the material they are going to read and that it is ok to feel that way. Furthermore, opportunities to respond should be created as well. This lesson series takes both criteria into account by creating the first lesson about African-American literature in which this discussion and warning will take place. Besides that, all lessons include assignments in which students are able to share their opinion. The main theme of this lesson series is 'speak up' for a reason. To help students develop and find their voice, in order to cope with these hard themes and situations. Finally, students will not only look at these fictional situations but also translate this to their own community.

## **Justification**

Because of the careful planning and recognizable structure of all lessons, it can be argued that the activities are suitable for upper form teaching. Furthermore, proper scaffolding is applied so that students can work towards a level just above the level they have already obtained (Vygotsky, 1978). Examples of these scaffolding activities are, the edpuzzle introduction to griots and corresponding worksheet, but also the roses form concrete padlet and code-switch edpuzzle. It can therefore safely be said that all themes are introduced properly.

The second step that leads towards speaking up, are the process activities like the community tree or the unjust situations assignment. In these activities, students are asked to apply or analyze what they have learned from the input given on the website, but also of course from the novel. Here the first steps to ground their opinions are made.

Finally, all output assignments are targeting the students to voice their opinions, based on the input and processing data they have gathered. Examples of this are the vlog assignment in which they speak up about intent vs. impact and code-switching or the community vs. family vlog.

To be ready for their final performance and spoken word assignment, all students have to keep track of what they have learned every single lesson. This is done in the how to pass the course description worksheet. By forcing them to write keywords down every single lesson, students are always put in the position to critically think about their own biases and what they want to add to their poem. To see which criteria their poem should fulfill a rubric is created as well.

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