

Disrupting the Tyranny of “Too Muchness” in the Selection of Curriculum for Queer Literature for Ethnic Studies

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Abstract

In this review of young adult queer youth of color literature, we utilized three frameworks to guide our work to develop critical ethnic studies curriculum and pedagogy: Gutierrez’s (2019) too muchness, Misawa’s Queer Crit (2012), and the Liberated Ethnic Studies (2020) values and principles of Ethnic Studies. Through analysis of *The Lesbiana’s Guide to Catholic School* by Sonora Reyes, *Felix Ever After* by Kacen Callender and *All Boys Aren’t Blue* by George M. Johnson we provide teachers with a teaching guide for each of the three books that celebrates the too muchness (Gutierrez, 2019) at the intersection of race and sexuality.

Introduction

Utilizing the lens of too muchness, we began to review young adult queer youth of color literature because we find there is a need to provide guidance for teachers to selecting Ethnic Studies text with emphasis on queer identities. Many times we find that Ethnic Studies educators are forced to choose between one’s racial versus sexual identities instead of embracing and cultivating our intersectional identities. We chose the following LGBTQIA+ young adult literature: *The Lesbiana’s Guide to Catholic School* by Sonora Reyes, *Felix Ever After* by Kacen Callender, and *All Boys Aren’t Blue* by George M. Johnson.

Our review project employed three frameworks to guide our work: Gutierrez’s (2019) too muchness, Misawa’s (2012) Queer Crit, and the Liberated Ethnic Studies (2020) values and principles of ethnic studies. Too muchness asks educators to fully embrace our queer youth of color while, Queer Crit focuses our attention on analytic frames to consider curriculum and pedagogy, and the 7 Cs grounds us in a critical form of Ethnic Studies teaching and pedagogy. All of these guided our review of queer youth of color literature for the Ethnic Studies classroom.

Theoretical Framework

Too Muchness

We center the concept of “too muchness” because society tends to bury, silence and ban the narratives of queer identities that are deemed too much (Gutierrez, 2019). Gutierrez (2019) explains his concept of too muchness as “connections between racial justice projects and studies of gender and sexuality” (p. 8). It is not enough to simply include texts that center both race and sexuality, rather, Gutierrez states that the intersection of the two births identities that are undefinable and must be allowed to be too-much: “continuously consider race, gender, and sexuality as multiple and overlapping analytical frames, drawing from and contributing to the overarching area of queer of color critique in education” (p. 9).

Too muchness “signal[s] an abundance of identity (overflowing identities), when and where a body is in relationship with multiple labels and categorical markings—a body that houses multiple, unyielding identities” (Gutierrez, 2019, p. 15). There is a danger in using multicultural or acritical forms of ethnic studies to consider the intersection of race and sexuality because those frames can diminish our students into one or the other, racialized or queer, never both. We must thoughtfully choose the models we employ to support queer youth of color to fully embody their too much identities as they experience them.

When attempting to normalize families in texts, often there are “missed opportuniti[es] for the book to start introducing children to contexts of power and discrimination through which lesbian [and queer] families navigate” (Gutierrez, 2019, p. 30). Many books present the white heteronormative perspective even when queer characters are included, leaving critical ethnic studies concepts unaddressed. For example, in a queer family of color or being a queer person of color, power relations such as whiteness must be addressed and critiqued when sharing and learning about queer populations. Likewise, Brockenbrough et al. (2015) contends queer of color critique “. . . insistently seeks to unveil the social and historical forces that have produced [queer of color] marginality . . .” (p. 34).

Queer Crit

We will center queer young lit within the 7 Cs because it allows too muchness and Misawa’s 6 components of Queer Crit. When considering curriculum and pedagogy that centers race and sexual and gender identities, we employ Misawa’s (2012) Queer Crit perspective to guide our project. Queer Crit employs Critical Race Theory (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) as applied to sexual orientation and has six components (see Table 8.1). Utilizing Queer Crit in the selection of young adult texts and development of accompanying curriculum and pedagogy helped us to “challenge conventional ideology on its treatment of race and sexual orientation” (p. 243). Each of the six components of Queer Crit are realized in the three books we review below. Misawa explains that Queer Crit has six components: (a) the centrality of the intersection of race and racism with sexual orientation and homophobia; (b) the challenge to mainstream ideologies; (c) the confrontation with ahistoricism; (d) the centrality of experiential knowledge from narratives; (e) multidisciplinary aspect of a variety of narratives; and (f) social justice perspective to eliminate oppression.

The 7 Cs

The Guiding Values and Principles of Ethnic Studies (Liberated Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Consortium, 2021) (see Table 8.1), also known as the “7 Cs,” are the heart of an authentic Ethnic Studies curriculum and pedagogy in K-12 schooling. They are the decolonizing teaching goals that develop critical consciousness in our students, and ultimately, are intended to build the anti-racist world that is the goal of Ethnic Studies. The 7 Cs are utilized by educators to guide Ethnic Studies curriculum and course development as well as classroom pedagogy. For example, an Ethnic Studies lesson should address at least one of the 7 Cs. Although Ethnic Studies centers on racialized groups, Ethnic Studies embraces the intersectionality of identities. In this article we provide Ethnic Studies educators a guide to consider course materials that center race, but also sexual and gender identities.

Table 8.1. “7 Cs” of Ethnic Studies (Liberated Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Consortium, 2021)

Cultivate empathy, community actualization, cultural perpetuity, self-worth, self-determination, and the holistic well-being of all participants, especially Native People/s and people of color
Celebrate and honor Native People/s of the land and communities of color by providing a space to share their stories of struggle and resistance, along with their intellectual and cultural wealth;
Center and place high value on pre-colonial, ancestral, indigenous, diasporic, familial, and marginalized knowledge;
Critique empire and its relationship to white supremacy, racism, patriarchy, cisheteropatriarchy, capitalism, ableism, anthropocentrism, and other forms of power and oppression at the intersections of our society;
Challenge imperialist/colonial hegemonic beliefs and practices on the ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized levels;
Connect ourselves to past and contemporary resistance movements that struggle for social justice on the global and local levels to ensure a truer democracy; and
Conceptualize, imagine, and build new possibilities for post-imperial life that promotes collective narratives of transformative resistance, critical hope, and radical healing.

Selection Process

When choosing LGBTQ+ young adult books to teach Ethnic Studies we ask, first, “Is the book written by queer people of color or Indigenous people? Remember, “Nothing about us, without us, is for us.” We wanted to find texts that empowered too muchness (Gutierrez, 2019), which would validate queer authors and characters of color. Even if the author shares the identities of queer people of color that is the subject matter of the book, educators must ensure that the book promotes their self-determination, liberation, and development of critical consciousness. Further, the content of the book must explicitly address or easily connect to the content and concepts of ethnic studies.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ See the LESMCC glossary , the 7 Cs (2020) and the 5 Ss for examples of authentic ethnic studies concepts.

Once it is determined that the book is a good candidate for inclusion in an ethnic studies course, the educator can identify the values and principles of Ethnic Studies (the “7 Cs”) that this book illuminates in order for the class to have in-depth conversations about the intersectional identities (i.e., race and sexuality and gender identity) of the characters in the book. If the book alone does not promote the development of critical consciousness in young children, or the knowledge and capacity for actions that challenge and transform dominant structures of oppression (Cammarota, 2016), the teacher must facilitate this with projects and questions that build this capacity in students. Finally, the educational activities that the teacher develops should engage students in reifying (i.e., making real, concrete) ethnic studies content and concepts by operationalizing the Ethnic Studies content and concepts with examples and actions.

The format of each book review and accompanying curriculum guiding questions is as follows: a short introduction of the major Ethnic Studies themes of the books, a chart with key teaching ideas organized by the 7 Cs and aligned with the six aspects of Queer Crit (Misawa, 2012) and overall general questions to help build Ethnic Studies concepts. Each book review and curriculum is formatted slightly differently while maintaining an analysis through the 7 Cs. When we identify the 7 Cs we are describing what values and principles the book characters or author are displaying. The teaching ideas and the questions we provide are meant to help students enact these values and principles (7 Cs).



Figure 8.1. *The Lesbiانا's Guide to Catholic School*, by Sonora Reyes.

The author of *The Lesbiانا's Guide to Catholic School* is Sonora Reyes, a Queer Chicana who attended Catholic school. This story is not based on the author's own life; however, the book is based on her experiences in Catholic school and those of her friends.

We believe this book can cultivate youth's critical consciousness if they critically read questions and dialogue with one another using the 7 Cs as a guide. Students can follow Yamilet's journey

from coming out to hiding her sexuality and identity to then being comfortable in her own skin. The book also follows how her brother, Cesar, is socially constructed as straight to some and gay to others. We also meet her friend Bo who is comfortable in her own skin and stands up for her rights. Yamilet admires Bo's comfortability and strength of being out and being comfortable with her sexuality. Nevertheless, Yamilet has a positive self-image of her culture but not her sexuality. On the other hand, Bo has a positive self-image of herself in terms of her sexuality but struggles to understand her own culture since she was adopted by White parents. This intersectionality is an important point of discussion. Yamilet suppresses her too muchness even though she looks up to Bo's too muchness. Bo's character embodies too muchness and is confident in her identity as she confronts anyone who critiques her being. Hence, in the book we witness Yamilet's negative self-image which, ultimately, is then transformed to fully accepting all of herself, embracing her too muchness and the societal consequences she does not want.

One way we can teach this book is by focusing on the 7 Cs:

- **Cultivate** through **Challenge** because the purpose of this section is to cultivate in youth a healthy sense of self through challenging because the teacher will have to engage in critical dialogue about the Yamilet's internalized oppression. In order for one to have a healthy self-image they need to challenge their internalized hate: Why does a term like internalized oppression even exist? How is it manifested in each of us? How do we work through those negative self-images to accept oneself?
- **Critique:** In this section, we want students to begin to critique systems of oppression (i.e., patriarchy, homophobia, racism, etc.) and institutions of oppression (i.e., family, school, policing, courts , immigration, religion, etc.). We want students to begin to critique intersectional oppression in order to develop their intersectionality lens with attention to too muchness.
- **Challenge:** In this section, we want to have students think critically about liberatory moments (which are moments where we challenge oppressive, biased behavior or oral statements and engage in a critical conversation with the people involved in order to shift their oppressive closed-minded paradigms). In the book we witness many interpersonal oppressive moments which students can have a critical dialogue about and conceptualize how to transform these moments into liberatory ones. For example, throughout the book we see there are missed opportunities by the teacher character in the book to engage in a liberatory moment where we can critically analyze behaviors, opinions versus facts, and oppressive oral statements. These moments can lead to critically conscious shifts in behavior and being more thoughtful with one's words. It can help give youth the language needed to stand in solidarity with others.
- **Conceptualize:** In this section, we want youth to imagine what a world/classroom would look like if we stood in solidarity with one another. We want youth to think about ways they can stand in solidarity with others and also build a solidarity movement against these institutions and systems of oppression.

Table 8.2. Discussion Questions, Themes & Activities

Characters	Cultivate through Challenge	Critique	Challenge	Conceptualize
<p>Yamilet (Yami) Flores Latinx 16 year old girl in her 1st year in Catholic School (Slaten)</p>	<p>Throughout the book take notes on how Yamilet is shifting in the ways she defines and sees herself.</p> <p>Throughout the chapters, take notes on how Yamilet sees herself from hating herself for being gay to coming out seven times to then being in the closet again to finally being okay with who she is. What in her journey made her accept herself?</p> <p>Why is she fearful of coming out? What is the journey she must go through in order to find herself? How is Yami being socially constructed by her mother? In chapter 6, when Yamilet introduces her boyfriend Jamal her mother says, "I'm happy you finally got a boyfriend! After all these years, I was starting to think you were gay!" p. 103. How does Yami feel?</p> <p>Why does she feel like others see her as a predator?</p>	<p>Schooling What are the stories told about Rover (public school) and Slaten (private school)?</p> <p>What is the difference in demographics from both schools?</p> <p>What differences do you notice about policing?</p> <p>Familia and Immigration What does it mean for a parent to be deported? How did Yami feel and how did she deal with her father being deported? How did their lives shift?</p> <p>Racism How was she stereotyped at Slaten? In chapter 3, Yamilet is asked "Where are you from?" and then someone shouted she would be the next one to get an abortion. How did she deal with this? How would you have dealt with it? Why does she</p>	<p>What does Yami know about social justice and protest?</p> <p>How does her father influence her belief on social justice?</p> <p>What social justice moments do you notice in this book? (Note when people challenge oppressive behavior) Social justice moments are usually when people challenge interpersonal oppression.</p> <p>What are your thoughts on the Pledge of Allegiance?</p> <p>Why does Yamilet refuse to stand for the Pledge?</p> <p>Why does she not answer Jenna when she asks her where she is from?</p> <p>Why did she respond that she is from Phoenix Arizona?</p> <p>In chapter 3 she stands up to a</p>	<p>In Lak'ech Ala K'in The philosophy of In Lak'ech Ala K'in is introduced in Chapter 3. What do you think of this philosophy?</p> <p>Why does Cesar say In Lak'ech instead of saying the same? Do you think it means the same or more than this?</p> <p>What does the In Lak'ech philosophy mean to you?</p> <p>How do we live a life rooted in the philosophy of In Lak'ech?</p> <p>Solidarity When did Yamilet stand in solidarity with others? How and Why?</p> <p>How does Yamilet stand in solidarity with her mother? Why is this an act of solidarity with her mother? How can you stand in solidarity with a loved one?</p> <p>What were the missed opportunities</p>

	<p>How do her classmates at Rover and Slaten view her? Socially construct her? How do Bianca and her mother define Yamilet? How does Bo see her?</p> <p>Identity In chapter 1 Yami breaks the mirror and says she does not like looking at herself in the mirror. What do you think breaking the mirror symbolizes?</p> <p>How does she see herself? What does In lak'ech mean to her?</p>	<p>believe Karen is a racist?</p> <p>In chapter 4, Jenna says "You look so ghetto today" (p. 50). How is this statement racist? What does it mean? Karen then says she looks like a chola? What does a chola look like? Is calling someone a chola racist? Why or why not?</p> <p>Patriarchy How does Yamilet feel about how her mother treats her? How does her relationship with her father change when she comes out?</p> <p>What happens when Yamilet confesses her love for Bianca? How does her relationship with Bianca change and affect Yamilet? How does Bianca's mother treat Yami? Why does Yami want closure with Bianca? Why do you think Bianca calls her? How does Yami react?</p> <p>Police How does she feel about the police ? Why?</p>	<p>student who said she would be the next one to get an abortion? Do you think this was a Social Justice Moment? Why or why not?</p> <p>In chapter 4, when Jenna calls her ghetto she walks away and stays clear of them. She does not want to be by them- Is walking away and not wanting to be friends with people who say racist things an act of social justice? How and Why?</p> <p>Is walking away, stink eye, and silent treatment an act of social justice? How and why?</p>	<p>where she did not stand in solidarity? Why? What could have she done instead?</p> <p>When Yami stood up for herself, what could other students have done to stand in solidarity with Yami?</p> <p>When Bianca told everyone she was gay how could students at Rover stand in solidarity with her?</p> <p>When a peer is called ghetto how can you stand in solidarity with them?</p> <p>How could Yamilet have stood in solidarity with Bo in chapter 3 and 4? Why did she not?</p> <p>How did her mother stand in solidarity with her when she came out?</p> <p>How could her father stand in solidarity with Yami when she came out?</p> <p>How can we stand in solidarity when people come out?</p> <p>How does Emily</p>
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		<p>Religion In chapter 5, What does Catholic guilt mean? How is this oppressive to people/queer Chicanas?</p>		<p>try to stand in solidarity? What could she have done to show solidarity?</p> <p>Was Yamilet's attempt to divert her mother's gaydar by acting like Jamal's girlfriend an act of solidarity with her brother? Why or why not?</p>
<p>Cesar Flores Latinx, Yamilet's brother</p>	<p>Social Construction How is Cesar being socially constructed by others? How does Yami see her brother? Revisit chapters 1 and 3 and how does this change in chapter 6?</p> <p>How did Rover students see him as opposed to Slaten students?</p> <p>How does his mother see him? How does his father see him?</p> <p>Identity How does he see himself? (In Chapter 3, he wears a cross and a jaguar. Why?)</p> <p>What does In lak'ech mean to him?</p>	<p>Familia (Institution of family) / System of Patriarchy</p> <p>How does Yamilet's mother treat Cesar? How/why is it different from the way she treats Yami?</p> <p>How does Yamilet and Cesar's father treat them differently? Why?</p> <p>Hypermasculinity</p> <p>What is hyper masculinity? How is it displayed in the book? By who? Why do the Rover boys chase Cesar? What are they trying to prove?</p> <p>Is there a difference in Slaten? Why? Do you think private school</p>		<p>How could Cesar have stood in solidarity with his sister Yamilet when he went to see his father?</p> <p>What are the ways Cesar stood in solidarity with Yamilet?</p>

		<p>young men are less hyper masculine than those in public schools? How? Why?</p>		
<p>Bo Taylor Yamilet's friend, Chinese and adopted by White parents</p>	<p>We meet Bo in chapter 3 when she presents on abortion in a Catholic school. How is this significant?</p> <p>How does Yami see Bo from Chapter 3 onward?</p> <p>How do teachers and students socially construct Bo? How do students in Slaten see her ?</p> <p>Why does Yami say Bo is her favorite? (See chapter 4).</p> <p>Identity How does she see herself?</p>	<p>Catholicism How might Catholicism as a religion oppressive to queer folks?</p> <p>Gay Marriage If gay marriage is legal, why is it problematic for us to debate about whether gay marriage should be legal or illegal?</p> <p>Institution of marriage What are your thoughts on the institution of marriage? How is it oppressive/ or not?</p> <p>Adoption In chapter 6, Yamilet goes to Bo's home, and she sees her heritage plastered all over the house. When Yami is staring at a Chinese painting Bo says "I know what it looks like, but my parents aren't those white people. The orientalist kind who adopt a kid</p>	<p>In Chapter 3, Bo says "Best way to piss them off is by protesting their shitty views while still getting an A. It's my only talent" (p. 41) Is this an act of social justice? How and why? Do you protest people's views? Which ones? Why? What do you say?</p> <p>What is Bo's social justice strategy? What do you think of her strategy? Do you think speaking up makes a difference? Why or why not? How?</p> <p>In chapter 4, Bo protest the topic of debate the teacher chose should gay marriage be legal? Bo protested that she believed that debating a policy that has already been won is unfair. Agree or disagree? Why</p>	<p>How does Bo stand in solidarity with people?</p> <p>Bo says: "I'm not going to sit down while you argue about what rights should or shouldn't be denied to an entire group of people. There are more appropriate topics to debate." p. 59 Do you agree or disagree? How is this an act of solidarity and social justice?</p>

		<p>from China so they can be closer to the culture. Not that I was adopted from China. My birth parents were, like second or third generation” (p. 95). What are your thoughts about this scene? Why?</p>		
<p>General Questions</p>	<p>How have people socially constructed who you are? How do you identify yourself? How would you define who you are? Traditions / values? Culture?</p>	<p>How do you define a system of oppression? How do you challenge these systems of oppression? What are institutions you see as being oppressive? How and why? How would you like to challenge them?</p>	<p>How can we build a social movement around these issues?</p>	<p>How can we stand in solidarity with others? How will you stand in solidarity with others? How do we create systemic solidarity?</p>

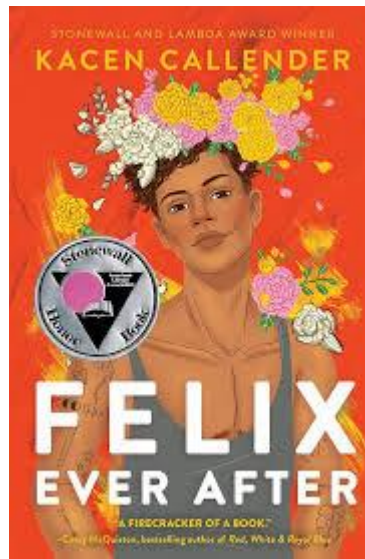


Figure 8.2. Felix Ever After, by Kacen Callender.

Felix is a transgender teen who is still working through identity as a Black and queer person. He lives in a single parent household, being raised by his father, who is trying to adjust and support the transition. Felix goes to a private art school, where his father works several jobs to make sure he can attend. Throughout the book, Felix describes his environment and his struggles throughout his high school journey, and it thoroughly connects to his Black culture and resonates with me as a Black person. His too muchness is displayed through his identities, and throughout the book, there are examples of various characters that challenge his positions, thoughts, and actions as they do not see all of him but expect him to be pieces of his whole self. The book ends in a positive light that shows growth and abundance for Felix and others he interacts with.

This book is appropriate for young adults in high school, ages 14 and up. There is mention of love, sex, and kissing, but does not use an excessive number of words that may be considered as profanity. It is appropriate for a read aloud, group reading, or individual reading. Ethnic Studies educators should take note that many characters are White, and that should be acknowledged and discussed when reading the book. Felix is the main character; therefore, the story is told from his perspective, which gives a Black LGBTQ+ character a voice. The author identifies as Black, Queer and Trans, which gives power to connecting with and identifying as some of the characters within the book. The author also validates the choice for a book since it is written by a Queer person of color. It is also important to note that the character slightly resembles the author (jawline, skin complexion, size, etc.) when displayed on the cover of the book. This may also contribute to others seeing themselves in a text. The question of skin color could help cultivate a conversation about colorism and what society imparts on us based on color identity.

When providing the idea for reading the text, there are categories where students could take notes and identify specific examples as they read. Thereafter, overarching questions for critical thinking and responses that challenge the readers to think about justice and societal impact on Queer youth of color are presented.

Table 8.3. Ethnic Studies Concept Examples.

Characters	Cultivate empathy, community actualization, cultural perpetuity, self-worth, self-determination, and the holistic well-being of all participants, especially Native People/s and People of Color;	Critique empire, white supremacy, anti-Blackness, anti-Indigeneity, racism, xenophobia, patriarchy, cisheteropatriarchy, capitalism, ableism, anthropocentrism, and other forms of power and oppression at the intersections of our society;	Challenge imperialist/colonial hegemonic beliefs and practices on ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized levels;	Conceptualize imagine, and build new possibilities for post-imperial life that promote collective narratives of transformative resistance, critical hope, and radical healing.
Felix	-Felix is proud of his Black identity and mentions songs, music groups, specific things within his neighborhood that connect to Black experience - Harlem excites Felix because of the queer Black poet connections and influences (mentions poets)	Struggles with identity but know they identify more with he/him and are demisexual. He identifies as Black, and throughout the story -He also experienced a homophobic act where his identity was publicly revealed without permission and the person ‘trolls’ him on social media-telling him that he is a girl.	-Mentions how his other friends are very privileged, and his struggles are different. His dad works several jobs, his parents are divorced -He shares struggles of being Black and having to “prove himself” to get into college. -Had to relocate because of raised rent -Mentions gentrification	-He takes a chance on his artwork, which counternarratives what he originally thought of himself and what he thinks society sees -He explores various colleges and opportunities -He finds love
Ezra	-He displays empathy for the LGBTQ+ community -Through Felix’s story, he showed Ezra not quite understanding the struggles of Black people, but willing to listen and understand	-Identifies as a gay male, experienced homophobia within society -Stood up for his friend Felix when he was outed or when anyone would speak against his identities -Plays the “perfect	-Demonstrates the need to excel in school through art but doesn’t want to use his private school privilege to attend college -He lives on his own as a teen and his parents fund his apartment→ shows	-Enjoys everything about Pride events -Encourages friends to join in festivities -Encourages Felix to pursue his dreams and to identify how he believes compared to what society pushes on him

		little boy” act for his parents and their parties with other high-class people	socioeconomic differences with LGBTQ+ people and what access they have when compared to Felix	
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Questions to further the conversation:

- 1) If the book cover was changed by Felix having darker skin, how would that affect the story or who might pick up the book to read it? Explain.
- 2) Let’s talk about the setting of Felix’s school. In other texts, we have research that shows that LGBTQ+ folks, especially trans and gender creative youth, tend to relocate or choose schools that support them when afforded the opportunities. How might this story have changed if it took place in a public school?
 - a. Do you think the school choice for Felix was helpful or harmful? Explain.
 - b. What factors contribute to school choice? How do socioeconomic circumstances affect the decisions? Discuss how costly and/or choice schools impact social justice.
- 3) What are some examples within the story where culture is identified throughout the book?
 - a. How does this impact the reader(s)?

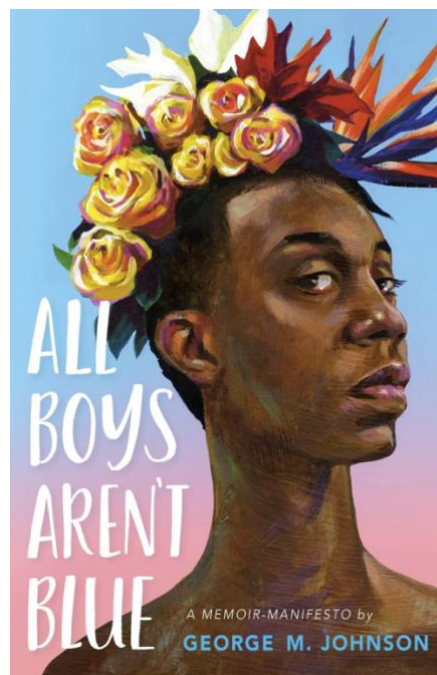


Figure 8.3. All Boys Aren't Blue, by George M. Johnson.

In *All Boys Aren't Blue*, George M. Johnson weaves the threads of uncensored and important stories of his memoir of growing up Black, queer, and male-identifying, gifting us with an unfinished but

stunning tapestry of a journey toward self-love and critical consciousness (Camarrota, 2016). Johnson fully explores his too muchness and the ways in which he struggles with how the world wants to put him in two separate boxes: queer and Black but denies them this violent simplification. Johnson’s introduction makes their purpose clear: “I want the words of my life story to be immortalized . . . the joy and pain, this narrative of triumph and tragedy, this narrative of the Black queer experience that has been erased from the history books” (p. 13). The book is appropriate for an advanced high school Ethnic Studies course as students should be familiar with critical concepts like anti-Blackness, normalization, hegemony, community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005), for example. Educators should also take note that highly sensitive topics such as sexual assault of a child, loss of virginity, sex education, and death are written about in detail. At the same time, these topics, which book banners seized upon, are no less upsetting than the violence against women portrayed in many classic high school literary works or the murder and war crimes students must read about in their high school history courses, not to mention the digital access students have to these topics that can spread myths about sexual health and Black and queer folks. Ethnic Studies educators know that their classrooms must be truthful but also healing spaces and undertaking these topics mandates taking responsibility for the well-being of our students every day. Johnson’s book is an important contribution to queer people of color’s self-determination, liberation, and development of critical consciousness. At the close of the book, Johnson states that writing the book will be worth it “if one person is helped by my story.”

Table 8.4. Teaching Ideas and Guiding Questions

Chapter(s)	Ethnic Studies 7 Cs	Teaching Ideas	Guiding Questions
Intro	Cultivate; Celebrate; Critique	Work with students to identify, define and chart the ethnic studies concepts mentioned and add to these concepts over time, for example, intersectionality, Blackness, gender identity; privilege and oppression etc.	How are a people “erased” (p. 14)? How does Johnson respond to this erasure with self-determination? What does Johnson mean when he says he was “fighting for Blackness” (p. 11)?
Chapter 1	Cultivate; Celebrate; Critique Challenge	Review Tara Yosso’s (2005) concept of <i>community cultural wealth</i> , in particular, familial capital, and invite students to identify their own familial capital.	Answer Johnson’s question, “How many signs of trauma [do] we miss or ignore in Black children?” (p. 30). Identify everyday examples of “a system of assimilation to whiteness and respectability that forces Black people to fit to one mold in society” (p. 31). How did Johnson both deny and build Black joy and queer joy?
Chapter 2	Cultivate; Critique; Conceptualize	Research your name and its origins and meanings. If you could change your name or give yourself an alternate name(s) for different identity or space, what would it/they be and why?	Who has the power to define you? Who should have the power to define you? How did Johnson self-determine his identities?

Chapter(s)	Ethnic Studies 7 Cs	Teaching Ideas	Guiding Questions
Chapter 3	Critique; Conceptualize	Map three unwritten “rules” each of your home, your school, and your neighborhood. Rank each one on a just/unjust rule scale from 1-5. Discuss. Do you wear a “mask” (p. 64)? When and why?	What does it mean to “code-switch” (p. 57). What are some examples of code-switching and why do people do this? What examples of cultural appropriation does Johnson identify and how do these examples critique racial capitalism? What are examples you can challenge?
Chapter 4	Cultivate; Celebrate; Critique; Challenge; Conceptualize	Make a cartoon strip or meme of someone choosing safety over satisfaction (pp. 77-78) in relation to their racial and gender identity.	Give examples of “homophobia denies queer people happiness” (p. 74). How can Johnson and people in general not be bound by their identities and accept “you don’t have to be either” (p. 80)?
Chapter 5	Cultivate; Celebrate; Critique; Challenge; Connect; Conceptualize	This chapter is about Black studies. Make an electronic poster that represents what Black studies means to you. Use images and or words to portray your message.	Why was Black History Month Black joy for Johnson (p. 85)? Give an example from a traditional history or other class that was “symbolism is a threat to actual change” (p. 92). How can families and communities make sure Black kids “read Black literature and know their heritage in depth”? (p. 97)
Chapter 6	Critique; Challenge	How do you “dive right into the deep end of racism, homophobia, and every other oppression” each day (p. 117)? Draw or write a poem about what this is like for you.	What does Johnson mean when they say, “Find a flaw, deficit, or disadvantage in our community, and I can find a system that oppressed us and made it that way” (p. 116). Offer 3 present-day examples.
Chapters 7-8	Cultivate; Center; Conceptualize	Make a list of support you have and support you want for love and hope in your life.	In these chapters, Johnson talks about his support systems for his oppressed identities. What does it take to get and receive support?
Chapter 9	Cultivate; Critique; Connect	Make a chart with each class or lesson you have had in school this week. Estimate and tally how many times you read about or saw someone with your racial and sexual identities in the curriculum. Compare your chart with your classmates’ charts.	How does this quote relate to the movement for ethnic studies?: “Sometimes you can’t see yourself if you can’t see other people like you existing, thriving, working” (p. 163).

Chapter(s)	Ethnic Studies 7 Cs	Teaching Ideas	Guiding Questions
Chapter 10-11	Cultivate; Critique; Conceptualize	Chapter 9 & 10 are about unconditional love and then sexual violence and abuse. Both have profound effects on people. Invite a licensed therapist to provide support and discuss these topics in class.	Who in your life provides nurturing and unconditional love? How does this person/people sustain you?
Chapter 12-13	Cultivate; Critique; Conceptualize	Small groups act out a short 15-second scene based on Chapters 12-13. Then, revise and reenact the scene in a way that protects the well-being of Johnson.	What boxes are you forced into and how does this affect your “rights, privileges, and access” (p. 223)? Johnson talks about “moments of anti-Blackness” (p. 225). Describe a moment of identity-based oppression that you experienced and how you responded to it.
Chapter 14	Challenge; Connect; Conceptualize	Research and find an example of “how Black folks always created their own spaces when denied access to society by white culture” (p. 248). Make a poster with images and words that identifies the space <i>denied</i> and the Black space created. Include dates, key names and terms.	At the end of the chapter, Johnson proudly defines himself as Black and queer in their own terms. How do you define your identities in your own terms?
Chapter 15	Cultivate; Critique; Conceptualize	Rate both the formal (e.g., school, church) and informal (e.g., internet, friends) the sex education you have received on truthfulness, violence prevention, sex education for queer folks on scales from 1 to 5. Write 3 recommendations to improve school sex education.	Johnson comes to realize “I didn’t have to compromise my identity for the appeasement of others” (p. 280). Write about a time you did compromise your identity and a time you didn’t. What would help you feel confident in your identity?
Afterword	Cultivate; Critique; Conceptualize	This book is banned in several places. Write a letter to someone at one of those places explaining your position about this book. Or research one of the places that bans this book and identify and critique the reasons they give for banning it.	What does the title “All Boys Aren’t Blue” mean? If you could respond to Johnson who hopes this book helps the reader, what would you say?

Questions to further the conversation:

- 1) How does Johnson identify normalization in the book and how does these instances critique anti-Blackness, homophobia, heteronormativity, and gender binaries?
- 2) Johnson explains that their process of coming out was long and can be traced by the different names they utilized. Identify Johnson's different "eras" with at least one example from the book?
- 3) Johnson offers numerous examples of what Yosso (2005) describes as cultural community wealth (CCW). Give at least five examples of CCW including at least one example of familial capital and one of resistant capital.
- 4) Compare how Johnson addresses the intersectionality of race and sexuality with how it is addressed in social media.
- 5) Does this book belong in a Black studies course? Why or why not? Offer at least three examples from the text to support your position.

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