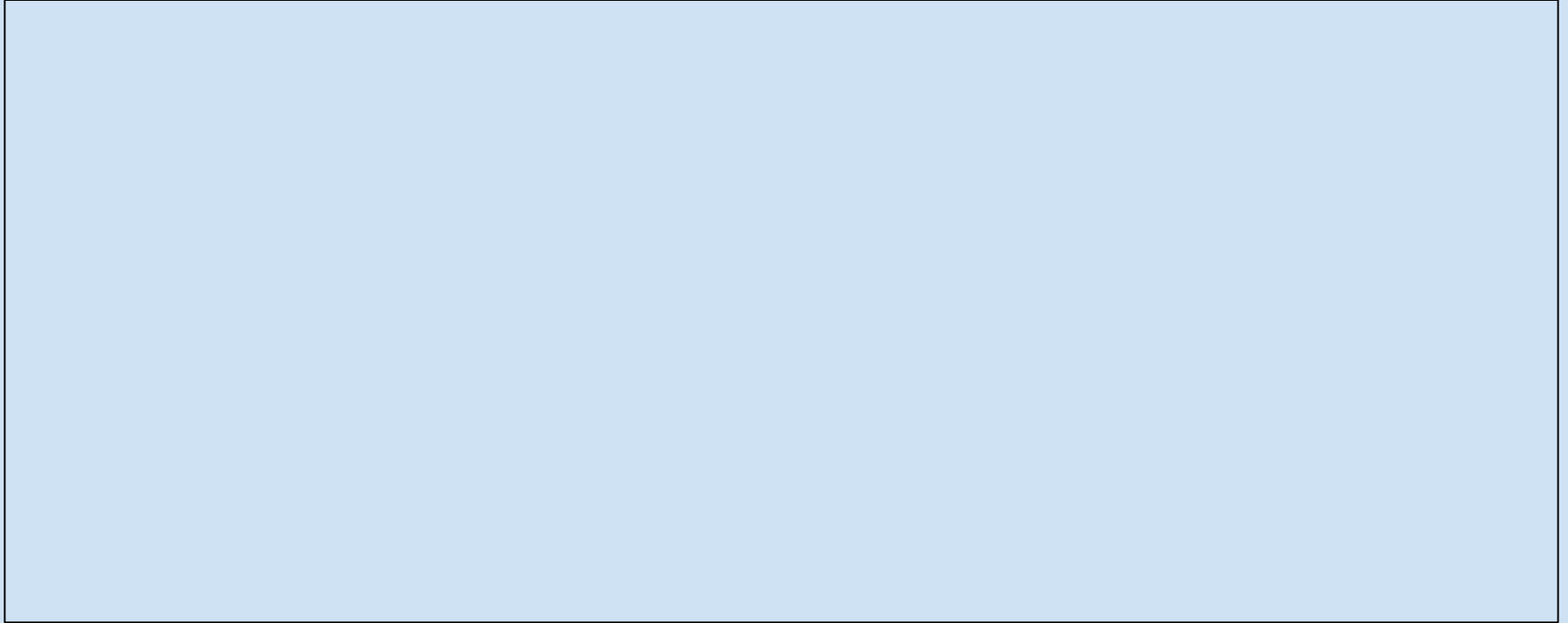


Black English
African American
Vernacular English
(AAVE)

Unit 1

Day 1

What is Black English? What Are Its Characteristics?



Opening Questions

1. What is a language?
2. What is the purpose of language?
3. What is Standard English? Why is it considered standard or proper?
4. How could the devaluing of non-Standard English lead to a system of inequality?
5. What is Black English?
6. Is Black English “standard?” (appropriate for academic and work spaces)
7. What is the connection between Black English and slavery in the United States?
8. How do you think language was used to control enslaved people in the United States?
9. What would it be like to be forbidden from using your mother tongue (native language)?

Black English Unit Opening Questions

Black English Questions

Step 1

In your groups, answer the questions assigned to you on your slide.

Step 2

Select a speaker to share your answers.

Step 3

Listen carefully and record answers to the questions you were not assigned.

Days 2 and 3

Text Reflection Questions

Think about the part of the text we have just read/viewed. Use the following questions to help you reflect on what you are learning.

1. What are you noticing?
2. What are you wondering?
3. What are you feeling?
4. What are you beginning to think now that you were not thinking before?

Born on the Water (Before 1619)

“What Grandma Tells Me”

“They Had a Language”

**“Their Hands Had a
Knowing”**

“And They Danced”

1. What are you noticing?
2. What are you wondering?
3. What are you feeling?
4. What are you beginning to think now that you were not thinking before?

[Handout](#)

Born on the Water (1619-June 19, 1865)

“Stolen”

“The White Lion”

“Point Comfort”

“Tobacco Fields”

“How to Make a Home”

“The Tuckers of Tidewater Virginia”

“William Tucker”

“Resist”

1. What are you noticing?
2. What are you wondering?
3. What are you feeling?
4. What are you beginning to think now that you were not thinking before?

[handout](#)

Born on the Water (June 19, 1865-Present)

“Legacy”

“Pride”

1. What are you noticing?
2. What are you wondering?
3. What are you feeling?
4. What are you beginning to think now that you were not thinking before?

[handout](#)

Born on the Water Author and Illustrator

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a7O65KE_QLw

Day 4

Which of these are most familiar to you? Rank the English varieties from most to least familiar.

Chicano English Varieties

Asian English Varieties

Standard American English

Black English

Spanglish Varieties

British English (English spoke in the United Kingdom-England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland)

What Are the Features (Characteristics) of a Language? In other words what are the components of a Language?

A Language must have...

1.

2.

3.

4.

What Are the Features (Characteristics) of a Language according to Linguist (people who study language)?

- Language has a grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, syntax (the way to form sentences).
- Language is the expression of ideas by means of speech-sounds combined into words. **Henry Sweet**
- Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system...of symbols. **Edward Sapir**
- Only humans have the ability to use language to communicate the advantageous and the harmful, the right and the wrong. **Aristotle**
- A system used to communicate meaning. **Michael Halliday**

True or False? Agree or Disagree?

1. All spoken languages are equal in linguistic terms.
2. All spoken language changes over time.
3. Grammaticality and communicative effectiveness are distinct and independent issues.
4. Written language and spoken language are historically, structurally, and functionally fundamentally different creatures.
5. Variation is intrinsic (natural) to all spoken languages.

Found in Rosina Lippi-Green's *English with an Accent* (1997)

What is Black English (AAVE) According to Scholars?

“Black English comprises multiple ways of speaking that have, for centuries, been a means of survival, solidarity, and resistance for enslaved and the descendants of enslaved Africans spanning at least three hundred years” (Greenfield, 36).

Black English is used in many places—by novelist, playwrights, poets, preachers, pray-ers, comedians, actors, screenwriters, singers, toasters, rappers, and ordinary folk (Rickford and Rickford 2000).

Black English is the “spoken soul” that is in harmony with its speakers as “a symbol of identity” and by “touching some timbre within and capturing a vital core of experience that [has] to be addressed *just so*” (Greenfield, 37).

Days 5 and 6

Where Did Black English Originate?

[*African American English Through the Years*](#). Dr. Lisa Green

Words you need to know for for watching this video.

- **Creole:** A creole is believed to arise when a pidgin, developed by the adults for use as a second language, becomes the native and primary language of their children.
- **Pidgin:** Pidgins are languages that grow out of necessity when groups that don't share a common language much interact with each other. Pidgins are a mixture of words from different languages, and feature a simpler grammatical structure and smaller vocabulary.
- **Dialect:** The form of a language that is spoken in a particular area.

Complete the notes [handout](#).

Pidgin English

What does Pidgin English sound like? Here is an example of Nigerian Pidgin English.

How to Speak Pidgin English

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=soRXAbUiVoo&feature=share>

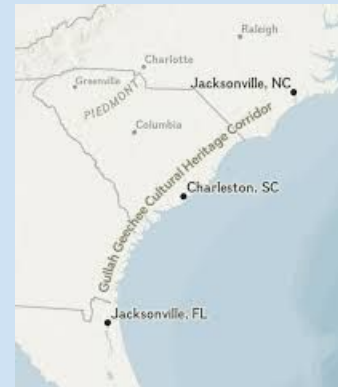
Gullah Geechee Language Practice

Gullah Words:

<https://gullahtours.com/gullah/gullah-words/>

How to Construct a Basic Gullah/Geechee Sentence:

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/EKgsdtmLJWU>



Talking Black in America

Watch the video [Talking Black in America](#)

vernacular—the language or dialect spoken by the ordinary people in a particular region.

linguistics—related to language

creole— a mother tongue formed by the contact of two languages through an earlier pidgin stage.

Pidgin English—a mixture of English and local languages which enables people who do not share a common language to communicate.

dialect—A dialect or language variety is a particular form of a language that is specific to or associated with a region or social group (e.g., Southern American English, Chicano/a English)

formal register—the formal register is more appropriate for professional writer and letters to a manager, stranger, or elder.

informal register—the informal register (also called casual or intimate register) is conversational and appropriate when writing or speaking to friends and people you know very well. Here is where slang is used.

Talking Black in America Viewing Guides

<https://www.talkingblackinamerica.org/talking-black-in-america-the-film/tbia-resources/tbia-viewer-discussion-guide/>

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[Chapter 7](#)

Pause to Reflect

1. What has been to most significant idea(s), so far, that you have learned or re-learned about Black English, AAL (African-American Language), AAVE (African-American Vernacular English)?
2. How has your understanding of Black English changed over the course of this unit thus far?

Day 7

“This Is Not a Small Voice” by Sonia Sanchez

This is not a small voice
you hear this is a large
voice coming out of these cities.
This is the voice of LaTanya.
Kadesha. Shaniqua. This
is the voice of Antoine.
Darryl. Shaquille.
Running over waters
navigating the hallways
of our schools spilling out
on the corners of our cities and
no epitaphs spill out of their river mouths.

This is not a small love
you hear this is a large
love, a passion for kissing learning
on its face.
This is a love that crowns the feet with hands
that nourishes, conceives, feels the water sails
mends the children,
folds them inside our history where they
toast more than the flesh
where they suck the bones of the alphabet
and spit out closed vowels.
This is a love colored with iron and lace.
This is a love initialed Black Genius.

This is not a small voice
you hear.



AAVE (African American Vernacular English)

Episode 1 15:33 min

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=oU8MiQAOaZM&feature=share>

Episode 2 9:42 min

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=ZW6FjFuVnXI&feature=share>

Episode 3 10:11 min

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=BgdYX8i4Czc&feature=share>

Episode 4 9:50 min

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=h05KLtylTcs&feature=share>

TENSE	PHASE	EXAMPLE
Past	Pre-Recent	I been bought it
Past	Recent	I done buy it I bought it
Past	Pre-Present	I did buy it
Past	Past Inceptive	I do buy it
Present	None	I be buying it
Future	Immediate	I'mma buy it
Future	Post-Immediate	I'mma gonna buy it
Future	Indefinite Future	I gonna buy it



Days 8 and 9

How Did American English Take Shape?

Trimbur

Cultural exchanges brought on by the circum-Atlantic world (Americas, Africa, Europe)

“The settlement of the English colonies and the War of Independence looked to the historical primacy of Anglo-Saxon origins and linguistics memories of an older, pure English speech” (131).

Benjamin Franklin-Signer of the Declaration of Independence—1706-1790

Born in Massachusetts and died in Pennsylvania.

from Benjamin Franklin's criticism of Pennsylvania Germans in "Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind" (1751)

"Why should the Palatine Boors be suffered to swarm into our Settlement, and by herding together establish their Language and Manners to the Exclusion of ours? Why should Pennsylvania, founded by the English, become a colony of Aliens, who will shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us instead of our Anglifying them, and will never adopt our Language or Customs, any more than they can acquire our Complexion[...]? (234)

What is Standard American English? Who decides the Standard?

What is Standard American English? Who decides the Standard?

- Language of the “educated”
- A form of English supported by the American government and its institutions.
- The grammar of the educated class in London was brought to the US from the early settlers.
- Standard English privileges certain people who speak it and stigmatized people who do not.
- The educated class who lives in New England

Standard English is arbitrary

What is Standard American English? Who decides the Standard? *The Standard English Myth* by Rosina Lippi-Green

A form of English that is most widely accepted and understood in an English-speaking country.

Tends to be based on the educated speech of a particular area.

It is used in newspapers and broadcasting.

The English that with respect to spelling, grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary is uniform though not devoid of regional differences. It is well established by usage in formal and informal speech and writing of **the educated**.

Who are “the educated”?

Who decides the standard? People who compile dictionaries (lexicographer) with the help of professors, politicians, artists, musicians, doctors, engineers, preachers, activists, journalists for assistance with pronunciation.

What Are the Benefits of Teaching Standard English in Schools?



Common Beliefs about Standard English: (True or False)

- 1. Standard English is the language of the university and workplace. If I don't learn it well, I will not get into a good college nor secure a high-paying job.**
- 2. Standard English is the ticket to advancement in this society.**
- 3. It is people's non-standard language practices that keeps them out of college and high-paying job, and keeps them poor and in unequal situations?**

What Are the Problems With How Standard English is Taught in Schools?

One problem with how Standard English is taught to students of color in school is...

“People believe falsely that the home languages of POC are unable to communicate clearly in widespread contexts and are therefore... responsible for POC reduced opportunities in white-dominated, mainstream society” (Greenfield, 49).

Another problem with how Standard English is taught to students of color in school is ...

“People believe falsely that by changing the way POC speak (diminishing the racially identified markings in their language), others’ racist [prejudices] will disappear” (Greenfield, 49).

What Ultimately is the Problem? *“Is it the Language that I Speak or Nah?”*

Question

Are racist practices of American institutions (banks, universities, health care systems, legislatures, housing etc.) responsible for inequalities?

OR

Is it the language I speak that is holding me back or is it the body who is speaking the language?

Hmm

How Does Standard English Create a System of Inequality?

If Standard English excludes languaging practices of people of color, practices that have historically been used as tools for resistance, and automatically includes language practices of privileged, mainstream, white people (remember not the poor white people), then our society has created a system of inequality.

“A system of inequality in which people of color are expected to be bidialectal or bilingual as a condition to be taken seriously as communicators, whereas privileged white people...always already speak a language of power” (Greenfield, 43).

The Idea of a Standard Language is Flawed

“The only standard languages—languages with finite boundaries...are dead languages” (Greenfield)

Language is constantly changing. Standard English implies that Language is an entity, locked with secure boundaries, but this is not true according to linguists.

Day 10

CCCC Resolution

“We affirm the students' right to their own patterns and varieties of language -- the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style. Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers, and immoral advice for humans. A nation proud of its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialects. We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language” (CCCC 1974).

“Should Writers Use They Own English?” Dr. Vay

[Excerpt from the this essay \(paragraphs 1-4\)](#)

Yes this piece was published!

4a's Notetaking.

Translation Exercise: “Should Writers Use They Own English?”

1. Break up into groups of four.
2. Decide who will read each paragraph. There are 4 paragraphs.
3. Translate your paragraph in Standard American English.
4. Compare the translation to the original. Which version express ideas most effectively?

Translation Exercise: “Should Writers Use They Own English?”

1. What do you notice?
2. Who could be the audience for each version? (Give evidence to support your answer)
3. Is one version better at communicating ideas? Black or standard English? Explain

Day 11

Who is James Baldwin?



Born: August 2, 1924, [Harlem, New York, NY](#)

Died: December 1, 1987, [Saint Paul de
Vence, France](#)



Brilliant mind of the 20th Century



Expatriate

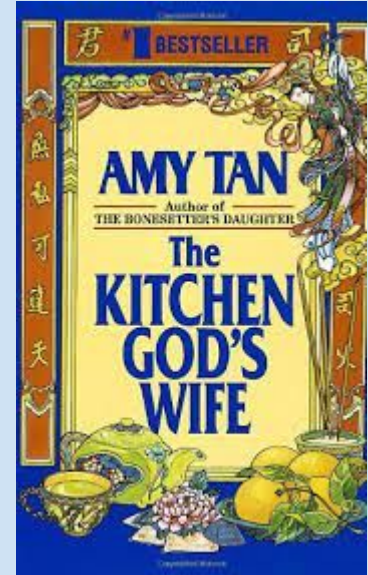
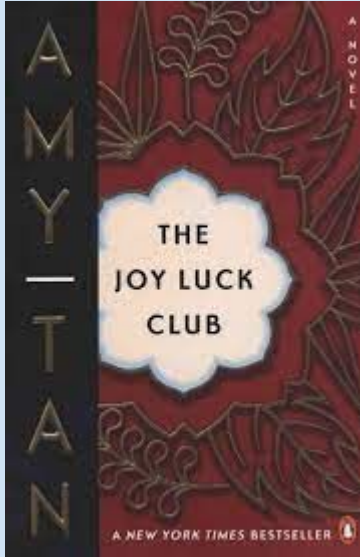
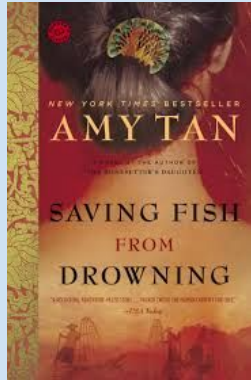
“If Black English Isn’t a Language, Then Tell Me, What Is?”

How to read this:

1. Number paragraphs
2. Read your assigned paragraphs
3. Write Main Ideas on the poster paper

Day 12

Who is Amy Tan?



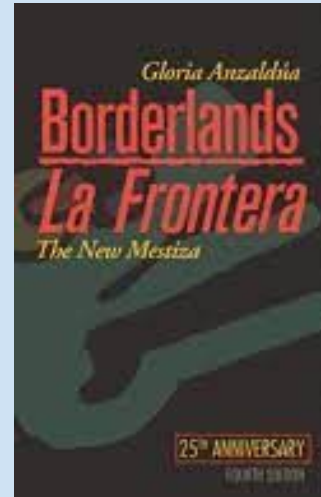
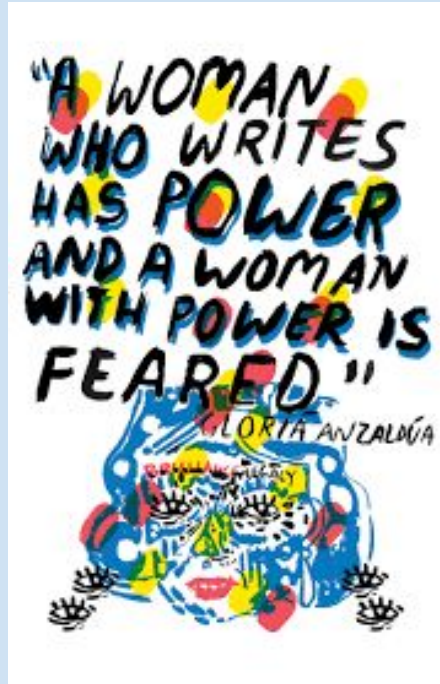
Amy Tan *Mother Tongue*

Text

How to read this:

1. Number paragraphs
2. Read your assigned paragraphs
3. Write main ideas on the poster paper

Who was Gloria Anzaldúa?



Excerpt *How to Tame a Wild Tongue*

Text

How to read this:

1. Number paragraphs
2. Read your assigned paragraphs
3. Write main ideas on the poster paper

What do these three text have in common?



Steps to Follow When Reading a Poem

1st Read	Just read it. Slowly. Out loud if you can. Try to get a feel for what it is about, literally. List one or two subject/topic words for this poem.
2nd Read	What do you notice? Focus on what's CALLING your attention: consider what could be going on in the poem. Underline words or lines that stand out to you.
3rd Read	Annotate in margins when you notice moves the poet makes...use of literary devices, if they stand out to you. What effect do they have on you as you read the poem? Annotate questions that arise while reading.
4th Read	Re-read the poem one last time along with your annotations. Find connections or patterns you notice, as well as tensions. For example, are there words, lines, ideas that seem NOT to fit? What is strange, weird, or off? Why might they be here even though these elements seem not to fit?
After Reading	Read your annotations. Make notes at the bottom of the page to organize your thoughts. What new meaning(s) have you discovered? This step leads to discovering a big idea, or a thematic message that emerges from the poem.

“This Is Not a Small Voice” by Sonia Sanchez

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where they suck the bones of the alphabet
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This is a love colored with iron and lace.
This is a love initialed Black Genius.

This is not a small voice
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Questions for “This Is Not a Small Voice”

This poem consists of three (3) stanzas.

1. What idea(s) does the speaker communicate in each. Do not merely copy words from the poem. Write your ideas in YOUR own words.
2. How does the message in this poem relate to Black English. Consider all that we've learned this term.

Final Reflection Questions

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-cfxj3Hf1ulm_tkzwy1T5K3bsiqe7rU51ksFARZhis/edit

Podcast Assignment

Listen to excerpts from these three podcasts.

- Modern Love “[R We D8ting? | With Krysten Ritter](#)” (Segment: 1:00 - 3:16)
- The Daily “[The Right to Bear Arms](#)” (Segment: 0:00 - 2:36)
- Still Processing “[Take a Knee if You Agree](#)” (Segment: 0:00 - 1:27)

[Take notes](#) on the episode topic (what is being said or discussed) and on the production elements (the various aspects of the podcast that create the listening experience).

Podcast Assignment: Elements of an Interview

Often podcast interviews are prepared, meaning the interviewee has time to think about the questions in advance, and the interview includes multiple questions and takes place in a more formal or at least quiet setting.

In small groups listen to these brief audio clips and take notes on elements and techniques of interviewing.

[Invisibilia: Episode 1: Dark Thoughts](#) (Segment: 0:00 - 2:40)

[The Daily: Fired Over an Instagram Post](#) (Segment: 0:00 - 3:45)

[StoryCorps: Gregory Bess and April Gibson](#) (Segment: 0:00 - 2:36)

Podcast Assignment: Questions about Interviewing

1. What interviewing techniques did you hear?
2. Which ones do you think are the most essential to good interviewing?
3. Which techniques might be most helpful to you in making your podcast?
4. What is the difference between open-ended and closed-ended questions?
5. Which type of questions (open- or closed-ended) make for the better interviews?

Podcast Assignment: Developing Interview Questions

Main Question:

To what extent should Black English be welcomed in academic and business spaces?

Why can it be important to welcome AAVE in academic and business spaces?