

The hate u give analysis



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Abstract

The novel *The Hate U Give* was chosen as the focus of this paper to bring to light the issues of police brutality, identity, and many others as approached by a young high school student. It is necessary as an educator to delve deep into this information to further understand my students needs. By developing this understanding, I will be able to tailor my educational methods to increase the experiences and learning opportunities of all my students, no matter their situation at home.

The Hate U Give Empathic Project

The Hate U Give is a novel by Angie Thomas. It is told from the perspective of a sixteen-year-old girl named Starr. The story centralizes around a police shooting of a young black man and the resulting struggles that Starr goes through from being a witness to the event. Using the struggles that Starr experiences as a teenager such as identity, belonging, and speaking out I will address how they can affect students in my classroom. Once there is a greater understanding of how these students are being affected, I will then be able to develop strategies to further understand them and work to make their educational experience exceptional.

Overview

Sixteen-year-old Starr Carter is attending a party in Garden Heights with Kenya, one of her best friends with whom she shares an older half-brother, Seven. At the party Starr reconnects with Khalil, a close childhood friend. There is a shooting that takes place, after Khalil offers to give Starr a ride home.

While in the car, Khalil explains rapper Tupac Shakur's definition of the phrase Thug Life as "The Hate U Give Little Infants Fucks Everybody." A police officer pulls Khalil over. One-Fifteen (the police officer's badge number) demands Khalil get out of the car, searches him, and then tells him to stay where he is while he walks back to his patrol car. Khalil opens the car door to ask if Starr is okay, and One-Fifteen shoots and kills him.

After the shooting Starr overhears her parents, Lisa and Maverick, arguing with Lisa's brother Carlos, a police officer, about Khalil's shooting. Carlos reveals that he is on the same force as One-Fifteen and defends his colleague's actions, questioning why Starr was in the car with a "drug dealer."

On Monday Starr returns to Williamson Prep School (predominately white population.) Starr doesn't tell anyone there about her witnessing the shooting. Things are tense with Hailey, her oldest friend at school, and have been ever since Hailey unfollowed Starr's Tumblr after she posted a photograph of Emmett Till. Starr runs into her white boyfriend Chris but avoids him when he tries to reach out to her. I wonder what it would feel like to have all of these feelings about "white vs. black" and have to put it all away depending on who you are around.

Starr and her mom Lisa arrive at the police station for Starr's interview with detectives about the shooting. The detectives questioning alludes to Khalil being a criminal and it is upsetting. As a teacher I see this as a great opportunity to note how important it is to never assume anything when

something goes wrong. These cops didn't care about that, but it is worth noting.

Khalil's name appears on the news, along with the title " Suspected Drug Dealer." We are introduced to Starr's other Williamson friend Maya. Maya is an Asian-American. They ask Starr about Khalil, but she denies knowing him.

At Khalil's April O'Frah addresses the church and says she is with Just Us for Justice, an organization calling for police accountability. She tells the church that Khalil was unarmed at the time of his death. King, a local gang leader and Kenya and Seven's father, arrives and lays a gray bandana across Khalil's body, signaling he was a King Lord (a member of King's gang).

That evening, protests erupt in Khalil's name throughout Garden Heights. The police appear on television to say they have no reason to arrest One-Fifteen and mention an unnamed witness who spoke to investigators.

Maverick and Starr go to the family grocery store and find DeVante, a local teen and King Lord, hiding from King. DeVante asks Maverick for help to get out of the gang, and Maverick agrees. Maverick's character has already begun to establish himself as the " educator" that this community needs. With DeVante he meets him where he is at and wants to help him get to a place of success. Starr learns Khalil's case will be going in front of a grand jury. In preparation she and her parents meet with April O'Frah, who reveals that One-Fifteen allegedly mistook a hairbrush in Khalil's car for a gun. She encourages Starr to use her voice to help Khalil. All of these role model characters throughout the novel bring out great points that I want to expand upon and teach to my students.

DeVante explains that Khalil only started selling drugs to pay back his mother's debt to King. This continues the conversation that every student's situation is different. It makes me think about how often I have assumed the worst in a student when they weren't achieving the way I believed they should be.

Starr goes to Maya's house with Hailey and they watch a television interview with One-Fifteen's father. Starr is outraged when he portrays his son as a victim. Hailey expresses sympathy for One-Fifteen, which angers Starr. After Hailey storms out, Maya confesses that Hailey has made racist comments to her too. She and Starr form a "minority alliance" to hold Hailey accountable for her prejudice.

Starr does an interview with a major television network; in which she gives an account of the Khalil she knew and expresses her thoughts on the way the media has handled Khalil. Starr opens up to Chris about her life in Garden Heights.

Someone shoots and throws a brick at the Carters' house the night before Starr testifies in front of the grand jury. The next day, Starr begins her testimony in front of the grand jury. She remembers during the testimony how important it is that she use her voice for Khalil.

Two weeks later, Hailey tells Starr that the cops did the world a favor by killing Khalil and ridding the world of another drug dealer. The two get into a physical fight.

Maverick throws Seven a part to celebrate graduating during which Iesha, Seven's mother, arrives and says that King is intending to harm them. Starr, Chris, and Seven find DeVante at Iesha and King's house. Iesha distracts King as they escape. Iesha is a character you knew from the beginning to be "bad" but in this moment you learn that she is trapped by King. This moment serves as her opportunity to do what is best for her children and get them away from King. I can't imagine what it would feel like to be trapped in a way that you can't get out. I hope as a teacher I find ways to allow my students to thrive no matter their situations at home.

The grand jury decides not to indict One-Fifteen and riots erupt throughout Garden Heights. At the protests, Starr, Seven, DeVante, and Chris see April O'Frah, who again tells Starr that her voice is her biggest weapon. Starr climbs atop a patrol car and begins a chant to honor Khalil's life. Police tear-gas the protestors.

Starr and her friends get a ride to the family store. While inside, it is set on fire. Maverick arrives and opens the back door so everyone can escape. King pulls up across the street and when the police and a firetruck arrive, Maverick tells them King started the fire. All of the neighbors join in to go against King. Maverick gains respect for Chris upon learning that he stayed with Starr all night through the riots. DeVante agrees to turn witness on King if it will mean putting him away for good, echoing the claim that his voice is his strongest weapon. I like to think that these concepts are contagious to students. Once one student realizes how important they are, it will move from student to student. I believe this is what classroom culture is all about.

A few weeks after, The Carter family has moved to a new house in a safer neighborhood. The family goes to see the remains of the store. Mr. Lewis, their neighbor whose shop was also ruined, says he is retiring and wants Maverick to take over his shop, so he can expand and remain a good influence on Garden Heights. Kenya and Starr reconnect. Starr thinks about all the people killed by police brutality and promises to keep speaking up for racial justice.

Real World Context

Thomas's novel highlights the modern protest movement Black Lives Matter, which grew in response to real-world incidents of police brutality. Four main moments from history are relevant in this novel. The events involved the deaths of Oscar Grant, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, and Emmett Till. (Black Lives Matter, Friedersdorf) Thomas was specifically inspired by Oscar Grant, an unarmed black man who was killed in 2009. " In Thomas's novel, Starr says that she " can't breathe" following Khalil's shooting, speaking about the death of Eric Garner; Garner was an unarmed black man killed after being put in a chokehold by a police officer, and his last words, " I can't breathe" are referenced here. The fact that officials leave Khalil's body in the street calls to the treatment of Michael Brown, a black teen shot and killed by a white officer in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014; Thomas's novel also draws upon the historical legacy of the Civil Rights movement. On her blog Starr posts a photograph of Emmett Till, the fourteen-year-old black child lynched in 1955 after allegedly harassing a white woman. Maverick makes his children memorize teachings from the Black Panthers, a political party founded in the

1960s to defend minority communities from police violence, and he has a photograph in his store of party co-founder Huey Newton.” (Ross, 2018)

Synthesis of Themes. Through the entire novel the idea of racism and police brutality is prevalent. I believe it is important to make myself familiar with these issues and how they can affect the students I will be teaching. In the article *Police Brutality and Black Health* Sirry Alang makes a lot of references to psychological stress that can occur from witnessing horrific events. The Hate U Give directly connects to a lot of the same events that Alang is referencing as well. She says that these events “ might elicit historical memories of lynching¹³and can bring about collective anger, grief, and hopelessness. Defending the character of loved ones after the police have killed them can also be excruciating, eliciting more negative emotions. Although warranted, these emotions might be damaging to individual mental health and might elevate distress at the population level.” (Alang, 2017). This kind of information makes me think deeply about how much stress my students may go through in their own lives. They may not all suffer police violence, but the amount of racism that can occur is unimaginable, no matter how little. A priority of mine will be to understand that these things can happen and to foster a safe environment where my students understand what racism is and how they can avoid racist behaviors.

From the beginning of the novel the main protagonist suffers from not finding her identity. This is a huge issue that I know many ethnic students will struggle with. Teaching my students how to identify with who they are internally will be a focus of my classroom. “ It is assumed that in a society where racial-group membership is emphasized,

the development of a racial identity will occur in some form in everyone. Given the dominant/subordinate relationship of Whites and people of color in this society, however, it is not surprising that this developmental process will unfold in different ways.” (Tatum, 1992). The identity crisis in the classroom is further expanded upon when ethnic students are surrounded by white students and expected to fit into a mold that is similar. It is important to be sensitive to these different ethnicities in relation to each student. According to Tatum “ there are five stages in the process, identified as Preencounter, Encounter, Immersion/Emersion, Internalization, and Internalization-Commitment.” (Tatum, 1992). In my opinion, the preencounter is where most problems occur. This is the stage that the students need to “ maintain the fiction that race and racial indoctrination have nothing to do with how he or she lives life.” (Tatum. 1992). Students need to separate the negative fictions associated with race. A teacher needs to focus their efforts in to making students understand that no matter who they are they can be successful. There is no such thing as “ destiny” when it comes to learning. In continuing with the idea of culture I agree with Sheets who says, “ to be effective as a teacher, you must understand and acknowledge the critical role culture plays in the teaching-learning process.” (Sheets, 2005). Diversity Pedagogy Theory (DPT) is a set of principles that point out the natural and inseparable connection between culture and cognition (Sheets, 2005). The principles that Sheets talks about are building blocks to foster a learning environment that is fitting for all ethnicities of students. It is the teacher’s responsibility to understand their students’ cultures so that they can be a more effective teacher. Sheets says that for a teacher to instruct and evaluate students of different ethnics they must understand six things.

These things are diversity, identity, social interaction, culturally safe classroom context, language, and culturally inclusive content. Studying up on all these topics will allow a teacher to have a classroom that allows effective teaching to take place for all students.

One of the greatest music educators in the state of Texas, Lynne Jackson, has given me countless words of advice. One of the lines that I will never forget from her is when she told me it is our responsibility to teach our students how to use their voices. She said that they must learn how to speak up and communicate for themselves. This would further translate to them using their words as expression throughout their entire life. Starr struggles with this idea in *The Hate U Give*. This is the climax of the novel because at the peak of the book she can outwardly express her thoughts on Khalil and police brutality. “ Young people have unique perspectives on learning, teaching, and schooling; that their insights warrant not only the attention but also the responses of adults; and that they should be afforded opportunities to actively shape their education.” (Cook-Sather, 2006). Students must be granted opportunities to shape their learning. If a student is involved in their own learning, they will be more invested in their outcome. Getting students to understand what their voice is begins simply and becomes more complex as they age. The first step is to get them openly communicating. Answering questions, asking questions, doing what they can to critically think about the things in front of them. Once they develop further, they begin to challenge what they are being taught, further developing understanding for whatever subject it is. Cook says, “ When students speak out on their own behalf, and when what they say matters—indeed, shapes action—student voice becomes

the initiating force in an enquiry process which invites teachers' involvement as facilitating and enabling partners in learning" (Cook-Sather, 2006). The students can cooperatively work with the teacher to foster their own learning. This helps teachers know how to effectively tailor their teaching for each student, without having to poke and prod each student to understand what they are thinking. The idea of a "student's voice" is one that has exponential returns. If they are invested in when they are young, they will continue to grow faster than a teacher can keep up. This is the goal of any education system, to create lifelong learners.

One thing that is important as a teacher to understand is that there is no way of knowing everything each student is going through. An educator must make a point to avoid letting students feel like they are judging them for anything that is outside of their control like struggles at home, etc.

Throughout *The Hate U Give*, Khalil is painted as a delinquent, criminal, drug dealer, and a bad person. The reality of the situation is that everything Khalil was doing was to keep his family supported. A sixteen-year-old kid was doing everything he could to survive. How many students in our classrooms go through these similar struggles? Woolfolk describes culture as an iceberg. This example is everything in a classroom. A teacher only sees a snapshot of each kid every day but must take the time to understand the whole picture. Once a teacher understands the whole picture of each student, they can form strategies on how to best help. "Just as most of the iceberg is out of sight and below the water line, so are most cultural differences out of conscious awareness. It is the out-of-awareness differences that are often the cause of misunderstandings and conflicts." (Woolfolk, 2018). Between

the ideas of culture and judgement, the iceberg analogy can lay a solid foundation on how to approach minorities in the classroom.

Translation. The ultimate focus of this assignment is to determine how to foster an environment where I can satisfy the educational needs of all students. With the context of the novel *The Hate U Give*, its underlying themes, and the backing of research in related areas I believe that I can accomplish my goal. Centralizing my thoughts on the themes focused on earlier of racism, police brutality, identity, culture, and students voice I know I can develop into a teacher that understands how to empathize with my students. The first points I will focus on are making sure to address racism in the context of what takes place in class and the world. I will discuss with my student's real-world events (as appropriate) to teach broader lessons in acceptance and prejudice. Being an excellent role model in behavior and tolerance my students will pick up after me and identify the same way. I will always take time to ask my students lot of questions to further help them explore who they are and what they think about. This will address issues of identity and voice. As a private instructor right now, I spend most of my lessons asking my students questions. I want them to love playing music for themselves and to figure out how to get better by using their own thoughts. This development of their own confidence and self-worth will further increase their ability know who they are. Once they are communicating this way with me, I will tailor my individual teaching to them. I will relate trumpet playing to things they enjoy (sports, culturally relevant music, etc.) I find myself asking what steps can educators take to be inclusive and conscious of student's different cultures/races? The best way I could answer this question

now is to say I am lucky I teach music. Music supplies a vessel to synchronize the learning and achievement of all ethnics. I can use music as a new language for all to learn together. It is this cooperative environment that I will hope to establish with my students. They will learn to empathize with each other and work together to achieve a common goal (performances). The skills I can supply them through instrument performance will be translated to all facets of their life because of the approach I would take. Approaching music as a method of teaching empathy, sensitivity, vulnerability, and expression will be the gift I strive to give my students. It has served me well, and I hope to give my students the same experiences.

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