

**Materials Adaptation & Evaluation Assignment:
Addressing Racism and Social Justice Issues**

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Part I: The context, learners and material

I am using the Literacy Program of Santa Cruz County as my teaching context for this assignment. This local non-profit provides free English language tutoring. There are no restrictions on who can apply for tutoring sessions. Most of the students are Novice level adult English language learners. The majority are women, L1 Spanish, and they usually have completed high school in their home country, but rarely any college. I am very familiar with this program as I was a tutor for five years and a tutor trainer for three years. Tutoring sessions are generally one-on-one sessions for an hour or two per week. Reasons for wanting to improve their English are often either for work or for better communicating with their children's teachers. In addition to the specific language functions and vocabulary needed to meet their objectives, tutors also spend a considerable amount of time working on General English. For that reason I have chosen to evaluate a chapter from the general English textbook, Touchstone 2, from Cambridge University Press.

PART II: Evaluation of the material

2.1. Evaluating the material from the teacher's perspective

This textbook is aimed at advanced beginners studying ESL in North America. The theme of the Unit I have chosen (Unit 11) to adapt is "Appearances". Unit objectives are to describe someone's physique: hair, height, weight, eye color. Age and complexion are not addressed. A second goal of the unit is to understand both recorded and print descriptions of appearances. Thematically, the chapter jumps around a bit starting off in a white-collar office, then going to airport arrivals, next in the park, then talking about celebrities and past beauty trends. Sort of an 'anything goes' approach as long as the activity can elicit a response about physical descriptions. This, of course, means that no subject is treated in depth. There is evidence of some attention to representing diversity, but it is inconsistent. Some pages are exceedingly Eurocentric and arguably present a very middle-class view of North America.

2.2. Evaluating the material from students' perspectives

I believe that from a student's perspective it would be difficult to feel invested in such superficial content. It is most definitely out of touch with the lives of students in the Santa Cruz Literacy Program, most of whom are working class. Their jobs range from fieldworkers in Watsonville, to restaurant cooks across the county, to landscape gardeners, child and elder care professionals, and housekeepers. Not only are none of these professions represented in this chapter, but

neither are there many images of Latinx faces. There are far more white faces than one would ever expect to find in an American ESL classroom. Additionally, the themes in this unit do not address the most pressing survival skills Literacy Program students need: calling 911; financial literacy; dealing with healthcare emergencies; talking to the educators at their child's school; getting a driver's license; and finally, applying for US citizenship. I think student engagement could definitely suffer if the entire book is as vapid as much of this chapter is.

A final thought on the student perspective, this book definitely seems to approach ESL as a bank of knowledge that the tutor will pour into the student's head without requiring much original thought or asking for much personal input. It does not value the cultural knowledge the student brings to the table and does not encourage the teacher to value their student's experience either.

2.3. Evaluating the material in terms of praxis

As I began to point out when discussing the student's perspective, the social justice praxis is virtually non-existent aside from visual tokenism: a few people of color and a few non-white sounding names. The unit material as it stands promotes the bias that women worth our consideration are white or at least pale-complected, thin, young, upper middle-class and long-haired. This obviously excludes the learners in my teaching context, who although young (and often long-haired) are otherwise not represented. Ironically, the invisibility that many Latinx immigrants suffer in the real world is echoed in the materials: no blue-collar workers represented; no photos of Latinx persons with obvious Native American heritage and no glimpses of complexions darker than light brown. The cultural reality promoted is one of Eurocentric world travel, entertainment and grooming. There are some positive aspects to the unit. As previously mentioned, the authors have made an effort to include some POC generally throughout the chapter, however, not in a representative manner in the two activities I have chosen to adapt. There are some useful formulaic phrases to practice that would be useful in social settings. The unit is colorful and integrates interpersonal speaking, semi-authentic listening comprehension, reading and a bit of writing about personal experience.

Part III: Adaptation

The two activities I chose to adapt seem to me to be the least inclusive and diverse of the chapter, both visually and in terms of the language content. For example, in the first activity I have adapted, students are meant to listen to two women talking about the six pale-complected, thin, young, upper middle-class and long-haired actresses pictured and guess who is being talked about. Next, learners are supposed to play a guessing game with a partner by coming up

with a celebrity to talk about without saying their names and having their partner make guesses as to who they are describing. I have chosen to eliminate the listening exercise and jump straight into the guessing game. I have also taken the opportunity to remove any awkward pacing issues as students cast about for ideas of people to describe by providing a diverse selection of celebrities and notable people to talk about. I have made a point of selecting diverse celebrities most Americans would know. I have attempted to include as many community representatives as possible in order to present a more equitable and balanced perspective: Black, white, Latinx, men, women, straight, LGBTQ, old, and young.

The second activity I chose to adapt was a reading comprehension activity followed by an interpersonal discussion. Not only is the proposed article quite superficial, which does not really lend itself to provoking a lot of interesting discussion, but it also promotes a Eurocentric worldview with the choice of topic: Caucasian hairstyles (and one afro) from the 1950's to the present. Here, I have chosen to keep the objectives the same with a reading comprehension activity followed by an interpersonal discussion, but have opted for a topic that is more likely to provoke students to share their opinions: blackfishing. I have combined two articles that provide a presentation of this social issue in simplified language appropriate for novice learners and scaffolded with photos, which support the message of the text. I introduce the article with photos of Blackfishing and four pre-reading questions to help activate schemata. As learners read there are additional questions to discuss with a partner and then the wider class before getting to the end of the article. These questions allow students to make predictions and weigh in on this controversial issue.

Next, since I eliminated the listening comprehension exercise just before the celebrity guessing game, I have included a Youtube clip of a video blogger talking about blackfishing to provide authentic listening comprehension input.

Finally, I suggest the teacher adds a Language Experience Activity (LEA) for promoting reading fluency. Transformative Storytelling for Social Change(www.transformativestory.org) provides the social justice rationale behind LEA: "A sense of recognition and empowerment is part of what makes someone a citizen who is able to act on his or her own behalf. Personal storytelling can help to build these capacities. " This is an approach to speaking and reading practice that is extremely empowering for students and works very well in small groups or one-on-one settings. The student's own words become the classroom material. Practice reading a familiar text or retelling a familiar tale can help students to build fluency. (Bailey, p.129). It develops a text that is meaningful. (*Why Are Personal and Collective Stories Important for Social Transformation?* | *Transformative Storytelling for Social Change*, n.d.) The student recounts an

incident that happened to them, or a story from their life. The tutor can guide by asking leading or clarifying questions. The tutor takes dictation (transcribes the story) only deviating from the student's words if there are grammar errors or slightly awkward phrasing. For example, if the student says, "He go store" the tutor would use rephrasing and say "Oh, he went to the store?" If the student confirms, the tutor writes down the grammatically correct form.

Once the dictation is complete, the tutor reads the story aloud while the student looks on, checking in that they have written the story down correctly.

Possible Follow-up: LEA Fluency practice: Use the LEA product as a fluency practice activity. After making any adjustments or corrections, the student receives a copy of their story. Next, the student practices reading their story aloud, eventually getting to the point they can just tell this story from their life in English.

3.2 Social Justice Objectives

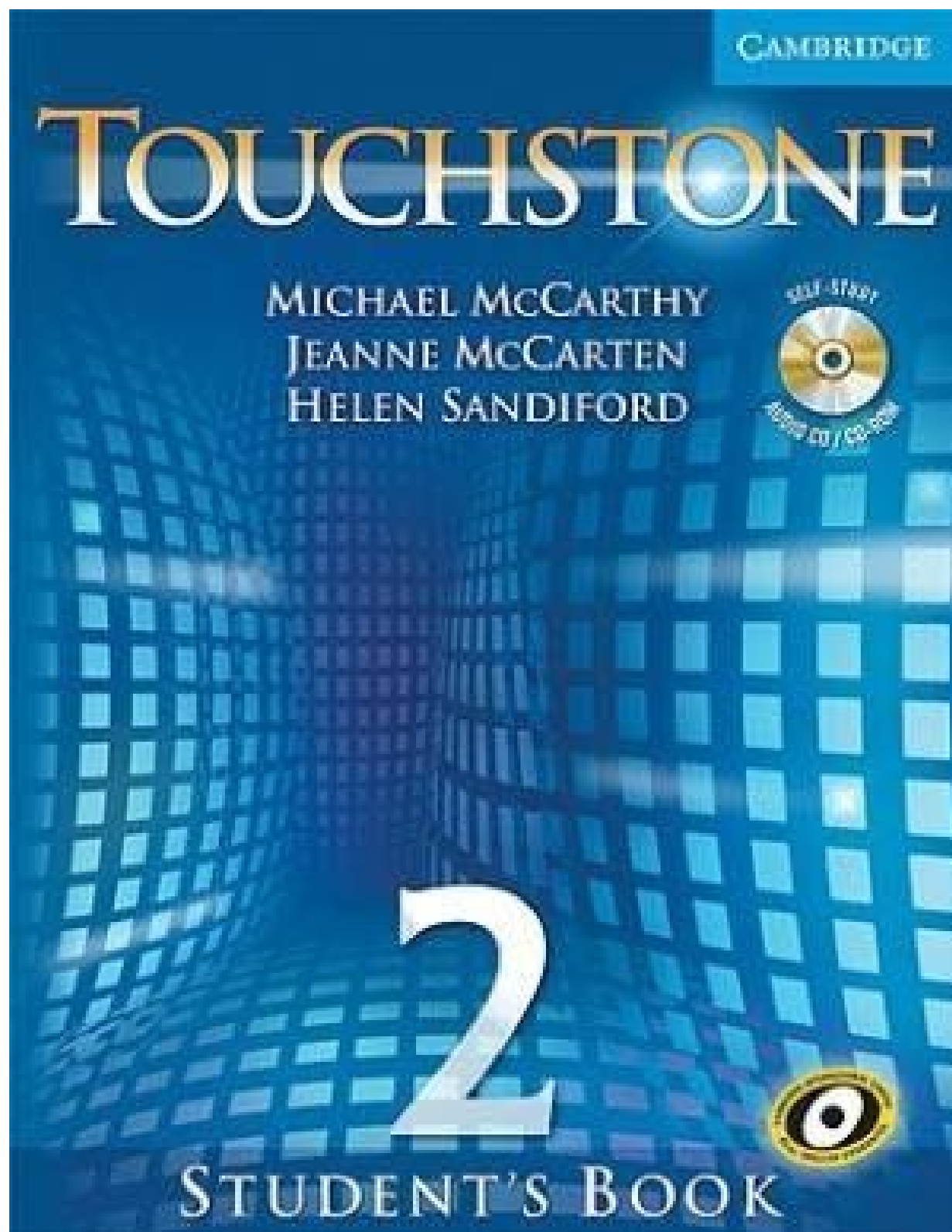
1. SWBAT: define the term 'blackfishing' and discuss it's harmful implications.
2. SWBAT: recount their own personal experiences in racism in the United States and take ownership of their personal story in the form of a written and verbal account (cultures and perspectives.)

3.3 Essential Questions

1. What do our fashion and beauty routines say about our values?
2. How might our fashion and beauty routines impact others in our community?
3. What values are we allowing social media to teach the young people in our community by not questioning the fashion and beauty choices found there?

Part IV: Materials

4.1 Original Materials



2 Strategy plus You mean . . .

You can say **You mean . . .** or ask **Do you mean . . . ?** to check what someone is talking about, or to suggest a word or name.



Do you mean a goatee? . . .
Oh, I know. You mean Max.

What words are these people trying to think of? Respond using *You mean . . .* or *Do you mean . . .* ?

1. A I'm going to buy a pair of those baggy pants with lots of pockets.

B You mean cargo pants.

2. A My brother has long hair, and he wears it in a, um . . .

B _____

3. A My friend has these cute little spots on her nose.

B _____

4. A When I was a kid, I wore those things on my teeth.

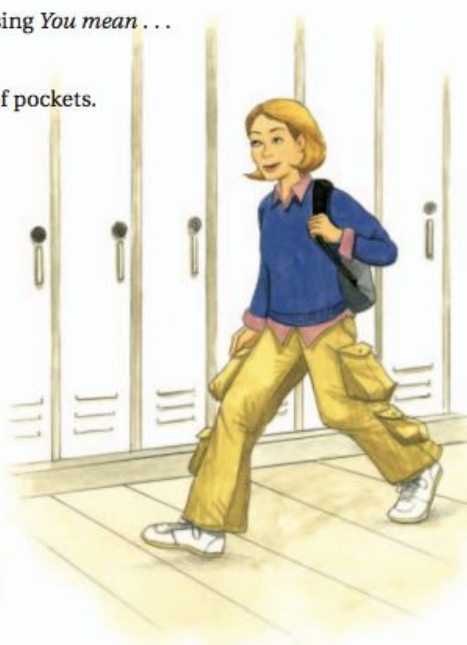
B _____

5. A What's the word to describe a person with no hair?

B _____

6. A What do you call twins when they look exactly alike?

B _____



3 Listening and speaking Celebrities

A Listen to Jan and Liz talk about photos of celebrities in a magazine. Who are they talking about? Number the pictures.



Julia Roberts



Penélope Cruz



Lucy Liu



Cameron Diaz



Gwyneth Paltrow



Nicole Kidman

B Pair work Talk about celebrities but don't say their names. Before you begin, make a list of names and things to say about each person. Can your partner guess who you are talking about?

A I really like that movie director from Taipei. His movies are very different.

B Oh, do you mean Ang Lee? Yeah, I love his films.

Lesson D *How we looked*

1 Reading

A Brainstorm! How many words about hair and hairstyles can you think of? Make a class list.

spiked hair bleached hair bangs

B Read the article. Which hairstyles do you know about? Which do you like?

Hairstyles through the decades ...

Do you know how people wore their hair 10, 20, or 30 years ago? Look back at the hairstyles of the last 50 years. There are some styles that come back again and again.

The 1950s were the beginning of the "rock 'n' roll" era. In the early '50s, men had short hair, but singer Elvis Presley changed all that when he combed his long hair into a "**pompadour**" and "**duck tail**." The ponytail was a popular hairstyle for young women.

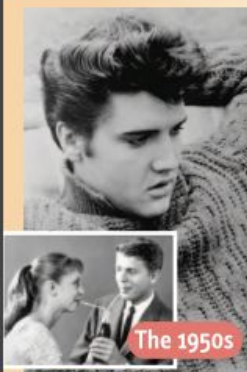
The '60s was the decade of the Beatles, who caused a sensation when they grew their hair long – to their ears! In the late '60s and the early '70s, the "**hippie look**" was in style. Men and women grew their hair very long, and many men wore beards. And the "**Afro**" was a popular hairstyle for African-Americans and anyone with curly hair or "**perms**."

Punk rockers shocked everyone with their multicolored, **spiky** hair in **the '70s**. Then in the late '70s and '80s, the soap opera stars made "**big hair**" popular – women wore their hair very long, curly, and full.

The "new romantic" women of **the '80s** wore hairstyles from the 19th century – **long curly** hair and **French braids**. For many men, the "**mullet**" cut (short on top and long in the back) was the hairstyle to have.

In **the '90s**, **dyed** hair became stylish. Both men and women started changing the color of their hair or adding highlights. Some men began to bleach their hair blond.

What will people say about the hairstyles of the early 21st century? Look around you. Do you see any styles that are really "new"?



The 1950s



The 1960s



The 1970s



The 1980s

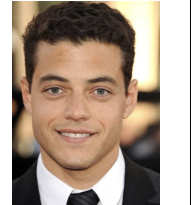
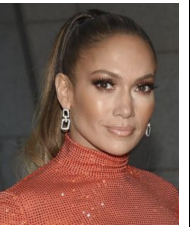
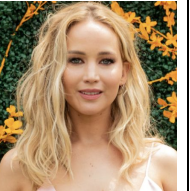


The 1990s

4.2 Adapted Materials

Speaking: Describing celebrities and notable people

With a partner, take turns talking about one of the famous men and women pictured below, but don't say their names. Before you start, make a list of things to say about the people. Can your partner guess who you are talking about?

					
Lupita Nyong'o	Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez	Kate McKinnon	Lucy Liu	Rita Moreno	Oprah Winfrey
					
Keegan Michael Key	Jonathan Van Ness	Rami Malek	Idris Elba	Gavin Newsom	Ed Sheeran
					
Sandra Oh	Jane Fonda	Jason Momoa	Jennifer Lopez	Rupert Grint	Jennifer Lawrence

Lesson D - 1 Reading: Pre-reading: Brainstorm!

1. Are you on social media? If yes, who do you follow?
2. Can you think of any fashion or beauty trends from social media?
3. Here are some photos from Twitter that are making some people angry.

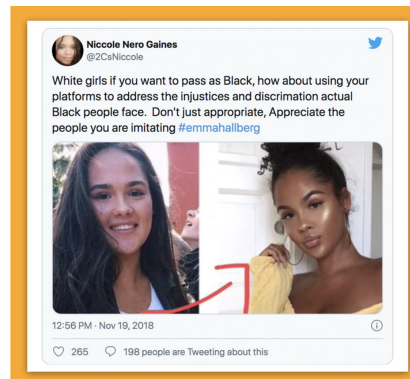
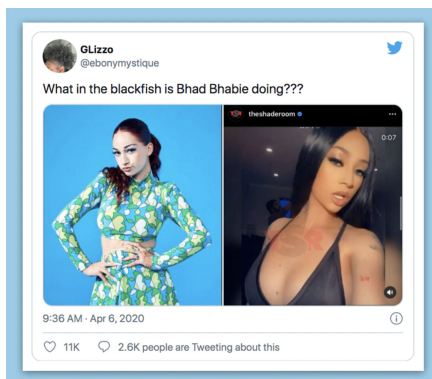


Image source: Twitter

4. Do you see why some people might be unhappy with these women?

Star accused of blackfishing. What is blackfishing?

Why are people on Twitter unhappy with Addison Rae ?

Last week, popular TikTok influencer Addison Rae - who is white - was criticized on social media after she posted a SnapChat story where she appeared to be wearing makeup much darker than her natural skin tone. Some people on Twitter said this is blackfishing.

Image source: Twitter



What is blackfishing? According to El Jones, an instructor of social justice and community studies, blackfishing is when somebody who is not Black (often a white person) takes steps to appear Black or mixed race. For example, they might use makeup, bronzer, tanning to darken their skin. They might use products to mimic Black hair, or even cosmetic surgery.

Stop and Think-pair-share:

Take 2-3 minutes to write your answers to the following 4 questions.

1. What do you think about blackfishing?

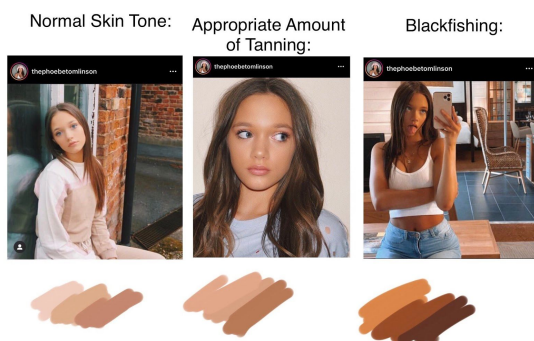


Image source: Twitter

2. **Is getting a tan blackfishing? Is it possible to get too tan? How much tanning is too much ?**
3. **Why do you think people blackfish?**
4. **Why is it bad to blackfish?**

Now, compare your answers with a partner and then with the rest of the class before reading the end of the article on the next page.

Why do people blackfish?

With the success of Black musicians like Rihanna and Beyoncé, people who blackfish might see something to gain professionally or socially. They might see features of Blackness as a commodity-- a way to make money-- that they can adapt in any way that pleases them.



Image source: Twitter

Why is it harmful?

According to Jones, features of Blackness are often shamed and seen as “ugly, ghetto, or unprofessional” when on Black people, but suddenly become desirable and attractive when on a white person. Blackfishing is harmful because the people who do it “want to look like Black people, but they don’t want to live like Black people.” In other words, they want to appear to have Black features without experiencing the racism that comes with being Black. ¹

¹ NOTE: None of the content in **Star accused of blackfishing - what is blackfishing?** is my original thought. In an effort to provide social justice content at a Novice Mid level, I have combined, shortened and simplified content from the following two online articles:

This White Professor Was Caught Pretending to Be Black—But Why Would Anyone Do That? (n.d.). Health.Com.

Retrieved October 20, 2020, from <https://www.health.com/mind-body/what-is-blackfishing>

TikTok star Addison Rae accused of blackfishing. What is blackfishing? | CBC Kids News. (2020, July 8). Kids News. <https://www.cbc.ca/kidsnews/post/tiktok-star-addison-rae-accused-of-blackfishing.-what-is-blackfishing/>

Listening and Speaking: Video clip: YouTube: Is Ariana Grande blackfishing?

Watch the clip (the first 2min24sec) [Is Ariana Grande blackfishing?](#) and answer the following comprehension questions:

1. Is Gigi, the video blogger(vlogger), a fan of Ariana Grande? Does Gigi like Ariana's music?
2. Does she think Ariana is blackfishing?
3. Has Gigi always had the same opinion about Ariana and blackfishing?

Discussion: Cultural perspectives

4. What do you think about blackfishing ? Is it racist behavior? Why or why not?
5. What impact do you think beauty and fashion influencers on social media have on children and teens?
6. **Have you witnessed anyone acting in a prejudiced way?**
7. **Do you see racism in Santa Cruz? In your neighborhood?**

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