A stylized graphic header with a black background. It features two white, rounded rectangular boxes containing text. The left box contains the text "BETWEEN THE WORLD AND ME" and the right box contains "TA-NEHISI COATES". Between the boxes is a white equals sign. The background is decorated with white polka dots and red brushstroke-like patterns.

**BETWEEN
THE WORLD
AND ME**

**TA-NEHISI
COATES**

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE GUIDE

BETWEEN

**TA-NEHISI
COATES**

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**THE WORLD
AND ME**

INTRODUCTION

USING THE RESOURCE GUIDE

This Resource Guide was crafted to integrate the book and the stage production of Ta-Nehisi Coates' "Between the World and Me" into the classroom curriculum. Each lesson in the Resource Guide references themes discussed in the book. Lessons and activities are aligned with [Common Core Learning Standards](#) and can be used to link to English Language Arts and Social Studies curricula or as a stand-alone.

While the lessons were written for grades 9 – 12, they can be adapted for an older or slightly younger population. Hands-on learning and collaborative group activities allow students to work closely with one another and with the lesson facilitator while providing opportunities to make connections between societal issues raised in Coates' writing and their own personal experience. Lessons vary in levels of [Norman Webb's Depth of Knowledge \(DOK\)](#) so that learning is accessible at various student levels. Lessons and activities are differentiated for a variety of student populations.

LESSONS

- ◆ Day 1: Race, the Child of Racism
- ◆ Day 2: The Dream
- ◆ Day 3: The Body

Each lesson is structured to provide:

- ◆ Essential questions
- ◆ Objectives
- ◆ *Do Now*, *Main*, and *Assessment* activities
- ◆ Differentiation
- ◆ Quotes from the book

The Guide provides a list of supporting resources and references. These include literature and poetry, film and video, works of art and music, as well as a review and an interview with Coates. These resources and references can also be accessed through an [interactive digital blog](#). Here, visitors are invited to consider events and people relevant to "Between the World and Me" and to share their own thoughts on the book or the production.

BETWEEN

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COATES

“But race is the child of racism, not the father. And the process of naming “the people” has never been a matter of genealogy and physiognomy so much as one of hierarchy. Difference in hue and hair is old. But the belief in the preeminence of hue and hair, the notion that these factors can correctly organize a society and that they signify deeper attributes, which are indelible—this is the new idea at the heart of these new people who have been brought up hopelessly, tragically, deceitfully, to believe that they are white.” p. 7

ABOUT THE BOOK

In a profound work that pivots from the biggest questions about American history and ideals to the most intimate concerns of a father for his son, Ta-Nehisi Coates’ “Between the World and Me”, offers a powerful framework for understanding our nation’s history, the idea of race, and current crisis. Structured as a letter to his teenage son, it moves from Baltimore’s West Side to Howard University to New York City to Paris, addressing what it means to inhabit an African American body in today’s America.

Ta-Nehisi Coates is a national correspondent for The Atlantic, and a distinguished writer in residence at NYU’s Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute. His 2015 book, “Between the World and Me”, was a #1 *New York Times* bestseller and the winner of the National Book Award . His most recent book, *We Were Eight Years in Power: An American Tragedy*, is a collection of his essays on the Obama presidency and its aftermath. Since 2016, Coates has written *The Black Panther* comic book and has recently begun writing Marvel’s *Captain America* comic book, of which the first issue is slated for release July 4, 2018.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Produced by the Apollo Theater in collaboration with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts Co-Commissioned by the Apollo Theater and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, “Between the World and Me” will have its theatrical world premiere at the Apollo Theater April 2—3, 2018.

Book by Ta-Nehisi Coates
Developed and Directed by Kamilah Forbes
Original Score by Jason Moran
Dramaturgy by Talvin Wilks
Dramaturgy and Adaptation by Lauren Whitehead



Ta-Nehisi Coates, (photo by Gabriella Demczuk); Kamilah Forbes ; Jason Moran, (photo by Patrick McBride)

THE WORLD
AND ME

BETWEEN

TA-NEHISI
COATES

DAY ONE

Race, the Child of Racism

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- ◆ Why does Coates think racism created race?
- ◆ What examples does he use to support his claim?

OBJECTIVE(S):

- ◆ Students will interpret text and formulate an argument supporting or rebutting Coates' statement: "But race is the child of racism, not the father." (DOK 2 & 3)
- ◆ Students will apply concepts from related activities to develop a logical argument on the idea of race. (DOK 4)

COMMON CORE LEARNING STANDARD(S)

- ◆ RH-2 : Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

DO NOW: PRIVILEGE & RACE

- ◆ Have students count off by 3's
- ◆ Hand out; green wristbands to the 1's, red wristbands to the 2's and blue wristbands to the 3's then have students put them on
- ◆ Hand out 3"x5" cards to class
- ◆ Have students list the numbers 1-6 on front of cards

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS

We're going to play a game. You must follow the rules of the game in order to play.

Here are the rules:

I'm going to show you a slideshow of 6 items.

Write down the names of these items next to their number if you know the answer.

No one is to speak the answer out loud. If you call out an answer all of your answers will become invalid. Any questions?

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If you're wearing a blue wristband [raise your hand] you can only answer even numbered questions. If you're wearing a red wristband [raise your hand] you can only answer odd questions. And if you're wearing a green wristband you can answer all of the questions. Any questions...?

Present slideshow [images should be tailored to fit class]

Tally scores and process experience

Describe how that game made you feel?

How might you feel if you had a different color wristband?

(15 minutes)

MAIN ACTIVITY: SMALL GROUP TEXT ANALYSIS

The author, Ta-Nehisi Coates writes: "But race is the child of racism, not the father."

What do you think he means?

How could the game we just played relate to this quote [ideology]?

- ◆ Divide class into (3) three groups using wristbands
- ◆ Handout one quote below from the text to the three groups
- ◆ Each group to interpret their quote and prepare a statement of how it relates to "But race is the *child* of racism, not the *father*."
- ◆ Give groups (10) ten minutes to prepare with help of classroom teacher and other activity facilitator.
- ◆ Have each group choose a spokesperson/people to read quote to class and another to read statement **(15 minutes)**

QUOTES

- ◆ "But all our phrasing—race relations, racial chasm, racial justice, racial profiling, white privilege, even white supremacy—serves to obscure that racism is a visceral experience, that it dislodges brains, blocks airways, rips muscle, extracts organs, cracks bones, breaks teeth. You must never look away from this. You must always remember that the sociology, the history, the economics, the graphs, the charts, the regressions all land, with great violence, upon the body." p. 10
- ◆ "At the onset of the Civil War, our stolen bodies were worth four billion dollars, more than all of American industry, all of American railroads, workshops, and factories combined, and the prime product rendered by our stolen bodies—cotton—was America's primary export." p. 101
- ◆ "The enslaved were not bricks in your road, and their lives were not chapters in your redemptive history. They were people turned to fuel for the American machine." p. 70

DIFFERENTIATION

- ◆ Group members have specialized tasks such as scribe and spokesperson to accommodate different student engagement styles.

ASSESSMENT

- ◆ Have spokesperson from each group share responses and discuss as a class. **(15 minutes)**

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DAY TWO

The Dream

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- ◆ Why does Ta-Nehisi Coates believe *The American Dream* is harmful to Black people?
- ◆ Why does he use the term “people who believe they are white”?

OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Students will interpret text and make observations on the use of the terms *The American Dream* and *The Body*. (DOK 2)
- ◆ Students will analyze text and images in order to construct an argument of their own. (DOK 3 & 4)

COMMON CORE LEARNING STANDARD(S):

- ◆ RH-2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

DO NOW: GALLERY WALK

- ◆ Place the following quote on the board:

Historians conjured the Dream. Hollywood fortified the Dream. The Dream was gilded by novels and adventure stories. Pgs. 102—103

- ◆ Place 6-8 images, (suburban homes, people in front of nice cars, working class people, fast food workers, smiling families, etc.), around the room and have students walk and view all images. After students have returned to their seats, hold up the images one at a time and ask students to stand if they think the image represents the *American Dream*. Discuss each image. **(10-15 minutes)**

MAIN ACTIVITY

- ◆ Play two videos of actors reading the passages given below. Define key words and have students give initial feedback to passages. Have students count off and work in groups of (4) four. Hand out large print copies of the passages below to groups; one quote to half the class, the second quote to the other. Have groups make observations about text and create a “list of inquiry” for anything they have questions about or find interesting. **(15-20 minutes)**

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QUOTES

- ◆ “[forgetting]...is yet another necessary component of the Dream. They have forgotten the scale of theft that enriched them in slavery; the terror that allowed them, for a century, to pilfer the vote; the segregationist policy that gave them their suburbs. They have forgotten, because to remember would tumble them out of the beautiful Dream and force them to live down here with us, down here in the world. I am convinced that the Dreamers, at least the Dreamers of today, would rather live white than live free.” p.143
- ◆ “White America is a syndicate arrayed to protect its exclusive power to dominate and control our bodies. Sometimes this power is direct (lynching), and sometimes it is insidious (redlining). But however it appears, the power of domination and exclusion is central to the belief in being white, and without it, “white people” would cease to exist for want of reasons.” p. 42

DIFFERENTIATION

Group work allows students having a difficult time with text to listen and participate on a level of their own.

ASSESSMENT

Have two categories written on smartboard; “The Dream” and “People Who Believe They Are White”. Have groups share out and scribe responses under the different categories. Finally, have students physically draw connections on board with arguments of how categories relate. **(10 minutes)**

DAY 3

The Body

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- ◆ What does Coates mean by “the black body”?
- ◆ Why might Coates have structured [written] this book as a letter to his son?

OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Students will synthesize an argument using source materials on the Black Body. (DOK 4)
- ◆ Students will apply the concepts they’ve learned to create their own letter of advise. (DOK 4)

COMMON CORE LEARNING STANDARDS:

- ◆ W-1(e) Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.
- ◆ RL-7 Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment.

DO NOW: LISTEN AND REFLECT


- ◆ Play video of [Nina Simone’s version of Strange Fruit](#) and provide [the lyrics](#). Have students jot down what they heard and analyze lyrics. Share out as a class. **(10-15 minutes)**

MAIN ACTIVITY

- ◆ Watch Ta-Nehisi Coates’ speech about fear, violence and the black body. Hand out various quotes from “Between The World And Me” about the black body and have students read them aloud. Discuss as a class. Put first writing prompt on smartboard: “Why do you think Coates wrote this book as a letter to his son?” Give time for written response then give second writing prompt: “Write a short letter (1-2 paragraphs) to a younger person about what you think they should know about America.” This letter can be to a fictitious person and may be about school, community, police, friends, etc. It may be written in prose (paragraph) or poetry form. **(20 minutes)**

QUOTES

- ◆ “Here is what I would like for you to know: In America, it is traditional to destroy the black body—it is heritage.” p. 103
- ◆ “Not being violent enough could cost me my body. Being too violent could cost me my body. We could not get out.” p. 28

- 
- ◆ “You cannot forget how much they took from us and how they transfigured our very bodies into sugar, tobacco, cotton, and gold.” p.71
 - ◆ “To acknowledge these horrors means turning away from the brightly rendered version of your country as it has always declared itself and turning toward something murkier and unknown. It is still too difficult for most Americans to do this. But that is your work. It must be, if only to preserve the sanctity of your mind.” pgs. 98—99
 - ◆ “But you are a black boy, and you must be responsible for your body in a way that other boys cannot know.” p. 71
 - ◆ “I kept thinking about how southern Manhattan had always been Ground Zero for us. They auctioned our bodies down there, in that same devastated, and rightly named, financial district. And there was once a burial ground for the auctioned there. They built a department store over part of it and then tried to erect a government building over another part.” p. 86

DIFFERENTIATION

Students can choose their preferred writing format. The use of audio and written text to support different learning styles.

ASSESSMENT

Have students who feel comfortable share their work with class. All students hand in their letter writing. **(10 minutes)**

SUPPORTING RESOURCES & REFERENCES

LITERARY WORKS

***The Fire Next Time* by James Baldwin**

(Inspiration, Themes, Style)

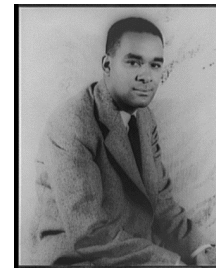
Coates' inspiration for writing *Between the World and Me* in the form of a letter. *The Fire Next Time* addresses the themes of race, racism and the Black Body.



***Between The World and Me* by Richard Wright**

(Inspiration and Theme)

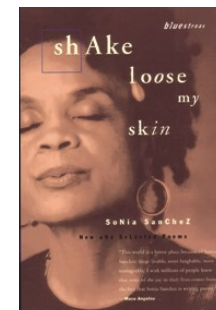
Wright's poem was Coates' inspiration for the title of his book. Wright's poem speaks to the condition of the Black Body and a quote from the poem is used in the preface of *Between The World and Me*.



***The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander**

(Themes)

Alexander writes in detail of the prison industrial complex and how it relates to race and racism. She thoroughly documents policies that created our current criminal justice system and how they lead to the destruction of the Black Body.



***Shake Loose My Skin* by Sonia Sanchez**

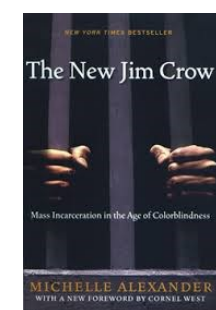
(Themes)

Poet Sonia Sanchez writes about many of the themes in Coates' book but through a feminist lens. Coates includes a poem from Sanchez in the preface of *Between The World and Me*.

***Beloved* by Toni Morrison**

(Themes)

Morrison's novel speaks of the Black Body and Black identity in the United States. Coates' has mentioned that Morrison was the only writer he asked for a review quote.



***Manchild In The Promised Land* by Claude Brown**

(Themes & Counter-Style)

Brown's Best-Selling autobiography chronicles his childhood in an impoverished and violent Harlem. It was praised for its raw and visceral depiction of Black life in America when it was released in 1965 and was seen as a direct challenge to the style of Baldwin.

Richard Wright photo by Carl Van Vechten

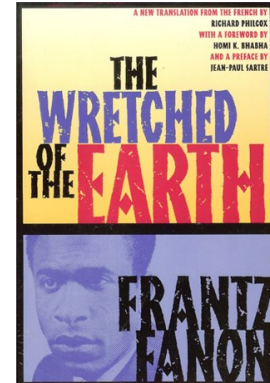
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***The Wretched Of The Earth* by Frantz Fanon**

(Themes & Historical Context)

The Wretched Of The Earth is a discussion on the effects of a colonized people by their colonizers not only from a political or economic standpoint but the psychology that colonizing imposes on those peoples. Fanon taps his research as a psychiatrist in Algeria in the 1950s to document the mental state and emotional condition of the colonized.



***When They Call You A Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir* by**

Patrisse Khan-Cullors & Asha Bandele

(Theme & Historical/Feminist Context)

The founders of the *Black Lives Matter* movement speak on racism, race, culture and feminism. Written three years after *Between The World and Me*, the memoir gives greater historical context to the themes Coates addresses in his book.



FILM

***I Am Not Your Negro* by Raoul Peck**

(Themes & Visual Content)

This Oscar-nominated documentary was created using an unfinished manuscript of Baldwin's as its narrative. Narrated by Samuel Jackson, the film has interview footage and powerful visuals of Baldwin and the time period of which he wrote.



***13th* by Ava DuVernay**

(Themes)

An Oscar-nominated documentary produced by Netflix which documents the history and relevance of the 13th amendment to today's prison-industrial complex. Heavily sourced, this documentary supports many of the claims in *Between The World and Me*.



MUSIC

***Strange Fruit* by Billie Holiday or Nina Simone**

(Themes)

The *Strange Fruit* in the lyrics are the bodies of Black people being hung from the trees. Lyrics can be printed and analyzed for meaning.

Demilitarize the Police, Black Lives Matter photo by Johnny Silvercloud

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VISUAL ART

Kerry James Marshall: Mastry by Kerry James Marshall

(Themes & Visual Aesthetic)

An art book of Marshall's critically acclaimed retrospective that premiered at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2016. Marshall's beautiful large scale paintings, sketches and multi-media work document the Black body and political events as seen by an artist who relishes in the beauty of the culture of Black peoples and also a creative aesthetic.



CONTEXT

[Interview With Ta-Nehisi Coates about Fear and The Black Community](#)

An interview with Coates about the creation of *Between the World and Me*. A good supporting document to aid in discussion.

[New York Times Book Review, "Between The World and Me" by Michelle Alexander](#)

Alexander speaks critically of *Between The World and Me* and gives additional context to Coates' work.

[New Yorker Magazine, *Between the World and Ferguson*, by Jelani Cobb](#), August 24, 2014

Cobb discusses the Richard Wright poem and the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri.

Visit the [Interactive Digital Blog](#)

[Common Core State Standards Initiative](#)

[Webb's Depth of Knowledge \(DOK\) Chart](#)

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BETWEEN THE WORLD AND ME

By Richard Wright

And one morning while in the woods I stumbled
suddenly upon the thing,
Stumbled upon it in a grassy clearing guarded by scaly
oaks and elms
And the sooty details of the scene rose, thrusting
themselves between the world and me....
There was a design of white bones slumbering forgottenly
upon a cushion of ashes.
There was a charred stump of a sapling pointing a blunt
finger accusingly at the sky.
There were torn tree limbs, tiny veins of burnt leaves, and
a scorched coil of greasy hemp;
A vacant shoe, an empty tie, a ripped shirt, a lonely hat,
and a pair of trousers stiff with black blood.
And upon the trampled grass were buttons, dead matches,
butt-ends of cigars and cigarettes, peanut shells, a
drained gin-flask, and a whore's lipstick;
Scattered traces of tar, restless arrays of feathers, and the
lingering smell of gasoline.
And through the morning air the sun poured yellow
surprise into the eye sockets of the stony skull....
And while I stood my mind was frozen within cold pity
for the life that was gone.
The ground gripped my feet and my heart was circled by
icy walls of fear--

The sun died in the sky; a night wind muttered in the
grass and fumbled the leaves in the trees; the woods
poured forth the hungry yelping of hounds; the darkness
screamed with thirsty voices; and the witnesses rose and
lived:

The dry bones stirred, rattled, lifted, melting themselves
into my bones.

The grey ashes formed flesh firm and black, entering into
my flesh.

The gin-flask passed from mouth to mouth, cigars and
cigarettes glowed, the whore smeared lipstick red
upon her lips,

And a thousand faces swirled around me, clamoring that
my life be burned....

And then they had me, stripped me, battering my teeth
into my throat till I swallowed my own blood.
My voice was drowned in the roar of their voices, and my
black wet body slipped and rolled in their hands as
they bound me to the sapling.

And my skin clung to the bubbling hot tar, falling from
me in limp patches.

And the down and quills of the white feathers sank into
my raw flesh, and I moaned in my agony.

Then my blood was cooled mercifully, cooled by a
baptism of gasoline.

And in a blaze of red I leaped to the sky as pain rose like
water, boiling my limbs

Panting, begging I clutched childlike, clutched to the hot
sides of death.

Now I am dry bones and my face a stony skull staring in
yellow surprise at the sun....

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ABOUT THE APOLLO THEATER

The Apollo is a national treasure that has had significant impact on the development of American culture and its popularity around the world. Since introducing the first Amateur Night contests in 1934, the Apollo Theater has played a major role in cultivating artists and in the emergence of innovative musical genres including jazz, swing, bebop, R&B, gospel, blues, soul, and hip-hop. Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Billie Holiday, Sammy Davis, Jr., James Brown, Michael Jackson, Bill Cosby, Gladys Knight, Luther Vandross, D'Angelo, Lauryn Hill, and countless others began their road to stardom on the Apollo's stage. Based on its cultural significance and architecture, the Apollo Theater received state and city landmark designation in 1983 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

www.apollotheater.org

APOLLO EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Apollo Theater Education Program extends the Apollo's commitment to enhancing the life of the community. The Education Program focuses on four distinct areas of learning and engagement: residencies, workshops and tours for schools; curriculum materials aligned to state and national learning standards and study guides derived from the Theater's history; career development for teens and adults through the Apollo Theater Academy; and discussions and lectures for the public that highlight the history of the Apollo and its impact on American art, culture, and entertainment.

"Between the World and Me" Educational Resource Guide

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Published by the Apollo Theater Education Program

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