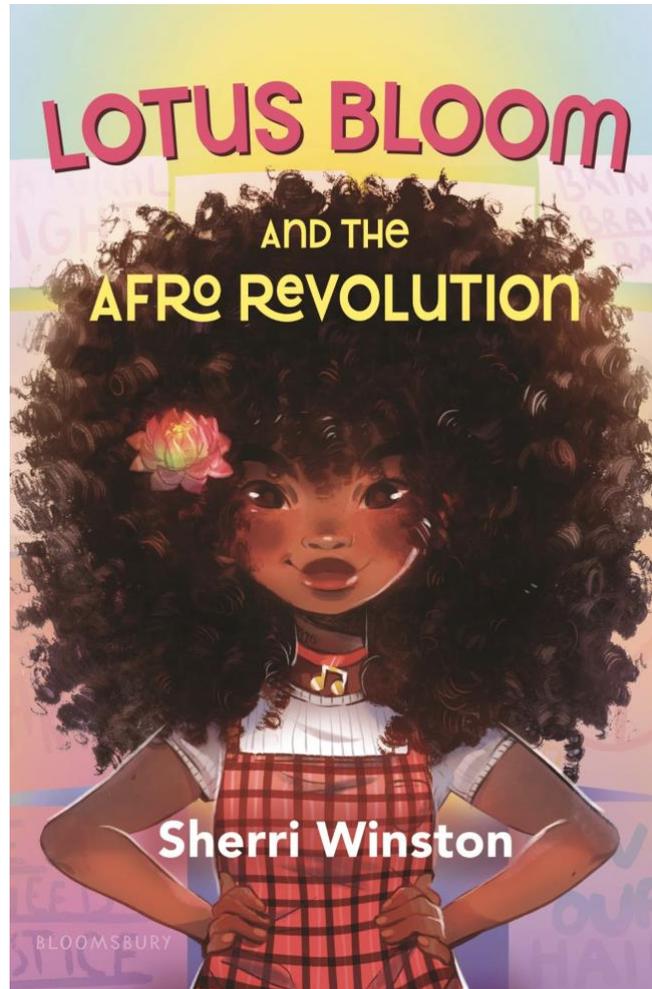


Lotus Bloom and the Afro Revolution
by Sherri Winston



"The Rules We Live By"

A "Before Reading" 7th Grade Lesson Plan

By Alexis Block

Created for University of Colorado Boulder's 2022 Children's Book Festival. Open Education Resource available <https://www.colorado.edu/event/bookfest>

Project summary

This lesson plan serves as a “before reading” lesson for Sherri Winston’s *Lotus Bloom and the Afro Revolution*. The purpose of this lesson is to prepare students to begin reading this novel by formulating their own opinions surrounding some of the themes and topics the book will later present to them. Using the best literacy practices of “collaboration” (between teacher-student and student-student) and “relevance” (the clear and inherent applicability to their own lives) (Morrow & Gambrell, *Best Practices in Literacy Instruction*, 2019), this lesson will engage students meaningfully in the social construct of “rules” and how it affects their everyday lives. Students will connect these themes to their own experiences, and use those experiences as a basis for a collaborative argument activity in a four corners format surrounding hard to answer, contentious statements like “The rules I am given in my life are always fair”, “Rules are made to keep people safe and happy”, and “The people who make the rules always have the best interests of the majority (the most people in a group) in mind”. Students will then use the activities they do in this lesson to predict what the story *Lotus Bloom and the Afro Revolution* might be about. The pre-reading strategies introduced in this lesson support students’ comprehension by teaching them to activate their prior knowledge and bring their own experiences into the narrative. In doing so, the text becomes not only more relevant to them, but this process also aids them in understanding the opinions or biases they may already have about the subject matter before entering into the text. It also predisposes them to the subject matter beforehand, so they are not encountering that subject matter for the first time while they are reading (which often causes issues in comprehension of the narrative as a whole).

Intended Audience

This lesson was specifically adapted for 7th grade students as the book follows a girl who has just entered **7th grade**. This lesson plan could also be adapted for 6th graders, especially nearing the end of the year for students who will be entering 7th grade soon themselves. This lesson is formulated to take about **45-50 minutes in total**, though could be shortened or lengthened depending on the fruitfulness of conversations and discussion.

Written Lesson Plan

Student Learning Goals and Assessments
<p>Learning Goal: Students will formulate and present their opinions surrounding complicated questions about the constructs of rules in a whole class discussion.</p> <p>Connected Colorado Curriculum Standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly. (CCSS: SL.7.1)● Introduce claim(s), acknowledge alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically. (CCSS: W.7.1a)
Materials and Resources
<p><u>Technology Materials</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Projector<input type="checkbox"/> Cables (HDMI)<input type="checkbox"/> Lesson Slides <p><u>Printed/Physical Materials</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Four Corners signs (one of each reading “Strongly agree”, “somewhat agree”, “somewhat disagree” and “strongly disagree”)<input type="checkbox"/> Student notebooks and pencil
Learning Activities
<p><u>Initiation</u> Individual Silent Free Write and Discussion: (~12 min)</p>

1. Introduction to the text and pre-reading strategies:

Students should be informed that they are going to be starting the new book, *Lotus Bloom and the Afro Revolution* as a class. Students should know that the lesson they are doing today will help them think about the book in the future, and it is important to do some before reading exercises when you start a new book. Doing pre-reading prepares students with some activation of their background knowledge so that they can have better comprehension and can better relate to the material of the novel.

2. Free writing activity with prompt “What are the rules that you have to follow?”:

As both a way to prepare students for the content they will be discussing in class and also as a way to transition into a language arts setting, students will complete a free write following the prompt: “What are the rules that you have to follow?”. Before writing, students should be provided with the dictionary definition of a “rule”, as shown on the slides provided. Knowing this base definition, students will then be given the prompt and should be instructed to start writing for a period of about 5 minutes, filling the paper with as many ideas as they can and really trying to write the whole time.

Students should be informed that they will not have to share all of what they write down, but will be asked to share some of what they wrote both with a partner and later with the class. Students' answers would hopefully be individualized and include a wide variety of different types of rules due to the open nature of the dictionary definition. Because of this, prompting answers should ideally be avoided (for example, prompting, “I have to follow the law when I drive” yourself might make students narrow down their answers).

That being said, examples can be provided if students seem to be struggling to write ideas of their own. The teacher is also encouraged to walk around and briefly monitor student responses, and prompt with different types of rules if needed (for example: “Maybe think about some rules that you follow in your life that are not exactly explicit - rules that aren’t written down for you, but that you just know”).

3. Turn and Talk: Share free write and discuss “Are the rules that I follow in my life fair?”:

After their writing time is finished, students should be instructed to turn and talk with their

partners. Students should be instructed to share some of their ideas and try to find similarities and differences between the rules that they follow. They should also start to think about the question, “Are all the rules that I follow in my life fair?” and share some beginning ideas with their partners as well. It might help to clarify as a class what exactly “fair” means to them. Students should be informed that each group will be expected to share one takeaway from their conversations with the whole class, whether that be the similarities or differences they follow, or what they agreed or disagreed with in beginning to think about that prompting question.

4. Whole class share out around big takeaways from both free write and turn and talk

After given some collaboration time, students will do a whole class share-out with their big takeaway. Optionally, the teacher may ask all students for one rule from their list and can write that rule on the board for everyone to see so that they can refer back to them in the following debate. Teachers can also write big ideas on the board to keep student discussion going and keep students engaged.

Differentiation elements:

When brainstorming, students can express these ideas however they feel necessary. Students who struggle with writing might be encouraged to draw their ideas, or may even go into the hall and brainstorm verbally, perhaps using their phone’s speech-to-text process, so they can later retrieve the ideas shared in the verbal brainstorming. This writing exercise is not going to be collected, but instead serves as a way for the students to get started thinking about the rules in their lives as well as serve as a touchstone of evidence for their later class debate.

Development

Four Corners Activity: (~25 min)

Students will engage in a four corners activity. Teachers should prepare students with directions for the activity before the activity starts so that students are not moving as the teacher is trying to explain.

Four signs should be posted in opposite places of the classroom, relatively far apart. Students will be given a neutral statement (see list below) and will have to decide whether they “Strongly agree”, “strongly disagree”, “somewhat agree”, or “somewhat disagree” with that statement. After deciding, students will move to the sign with the stance that they have decided on. For the purpose of this activity, students may not stand in between stances, and they must choose *one*. Once students are

done moving, the teacher will instruct students to discuss amongst themselves. Why did they choose their position? What is their *reasoning* or what is their *evidence*?

After having some chance to discuss, the teacher will invite a whole class conversation, beginning by asking one student why they are standing where they are standing, and explaining their position. Students should be encouraged to move if they hear a convincing argument from one of their classmates, and changing opinions should be encouraged and embraced! Students should also be instructed in productive ways to debate if they have not already done so (for example: speaking on the ideas rather than the person, directly addressing who you are responding to by name and acknowledging what they said, no interrupting, etc.). After discussion has concluded and many student voices are heard, the teacher can move on to the next question and repeat the process.

Statements for Discussion:

Here are the statements to start student discussion (note that these are also displayed in the linked slides). The teacher does not have to use all of them or can make more, depending on the level of engagement with debate:

- The rules I am given in my life are always fair.
- Rules are made to keep people safe and happy.
- All rules apply to everyone.
- Rules are only fair if they apply to everyone.
- Martin Luther King Jr. once said, “One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws”. (*Discuss what this means as a class, and come up with a simplified version together - something like if rules are fair, you have to follow them. If they are not fair, you have to disobey them for the greater good*). Do you agree?
- The school I go to should be allowed to tell students what they can and cannot wear.
- The school I go to should be able to tell students how their physical appearance should look (hair, makeup, etc.).
- The people who make the rules always have the best interests of the majority (the most people in a group) in mind.
- Certain people get to make rules more than others.
- It is fair that adults get to make rules for children (though children don’t get to make rules for adults).
- We should fight rules that we feel are unfair.

Differentiation elements:

If students need more instruction on debating, they can be offered sample stems for debate. For example: “From my understanding, (student name) is saying this. Am I right?... In that case, I

agree/disagree because...)"

This activity also requires a lot of movement. If movement is limited for students or for your classroom, an alternate activity can be arranged, where students hold up their stance on a whiteboard and move to talk to one or two other students who agree with what they've written. Movement can be removed altogether if need be, and students can instead have four index cards with each stance on them, and move the stance they choose to the front of their desk so that you can see them, or may use an online response tool like [Kahoot](#) which logs those responses.. The sharing between groups would not be possible (i.e. students who all stood in the "Strongly agree" corner can't talk amongst themselves) in this version, though students can still have the opportunity to share their thoughts with the larger class by calling on students at random or calling on volunteers.

Closure (~5 minutes)

Infer and Predict Exit Ticket

After finishing the class debate and discussion, students will be asked to return to their desks to summarize their thinking around rules, responding to the prompt:

"1) Obviously rules are very complicated things. What are you thinking about rules right now following our discussion and writing today? What are some things you agree or disagree with or that you are still having trouble deciding on? Sum up some of the thoughts you've had while doing our activity today.

2) The discussions we've had today will prepare you for some of the discussions that we'll have while reading our new novel *Lotus Bloom and the Afro Revolution*. Thinking about what we've talked about, what predictions or inferences can you make about the book? What do you think it might be about or what might happen in it?"

To answer the second question, students can be encouraged to consider the cover and title of the novel, using the evidence that they might provide to also aid them in making their predictions. What do they notice about the cover and title and how might rules be related?

Differentiation elements:

Students can write this exit ticket physically or will have the space to write it in Google Classroom on a Google Document. If students would like the available help that technology provides (with spellcheck and grammar check), the Google Document option might be better for them. Students can also go into a quiet space and record their thoughts via voice memo on their class computers or phones if they would rather not write.

About Me (The Lesson Planner)

Hi! My name is Alexis Block and I am a first-year graduate student in the School of Education at the University of Colorado, Boulder. I am working towards my Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in Reading/Literacy. Previously, I graduated from CU with a degree in English, while also obtaining my Secondary Teacher Licensure and a minor in Technology Arts and Media. My work has a focus on both creative implementation of technology in the classroom as well as has a strong footing in equity focused instruction. My main areas of focus throughout my college career have been creative pedagogy, digital design, and web development, and I've loved finding ways those passions can intersect. In between projects, I read when I can and spend time with family! If I'm not in the classroom, I'm probably keeping up with my Broncos and playing a pickup game of soccer.

References

Morrow, L. M., & Gambrell, L. B. (2019). *Best Practices in Literacy Instruction*. The Guilford Press.