

Poem used: “Invocation” by Ariana Brown

- Designed for upper elementary/early middle school students of color in fourth through seventh grade, with emphasis on girls, especially Black girls. Consider teaching this a small group unit with your female students of color. You might consider making this a special before or after school invitation for girls.
- Please plan to spend at least five, 30-45 minutes, sessions with this unit.
- Providing TEKS Grade 5 ELA:
<http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter110/ch110a.html> - 110.7

Materials:

1. A copy of Ariana Brown’s Poem, *Invocation*, for each student (Poem provided in LPs) (The Spanish poem text is available for download in the Teacher Poems PDF at <http://www.arianabrown.com/resources.html> for \$1 USD.)
2. Video of Ariana performing *Invocation* ([Link to Invocation](#))
3. Chart Paper for Anchor Charts
4. Individual Writer’s Notebook for each student
5. Markers/Pens/Pencils
6. Art Supplies for Artistic Response in Notebooks and Mural or Sculpture (final project) (e.g. paint, brushes, clay, cut paper, etc.)
7. Please visit these websites for picture book recommendations to supplement unit:
 - a. [Black Is Beautiful: 12 Children’s Books on Loving and Caring for Black Hair by Black Authors](#)
 - b. [7 Awesome Kids Books On Natural Hair And Brown Girl Beauty](#)
 - c. [Broadening the Story: 55 Picture Books Starring Mighty Black Girls](#)

****Please note, some of these titles are clearly written for younger girls, but we believe that many, many picture books are wonderful resources for upper elementary and middle school grades. Please consider using two or three of these titles to support your discussions during this unit. These texts can offer students an opportunity to make text-to-text connections between Invocation and the picture books.****

TEKS Objectives (5th Grade ELA)

(1) Developing and sustaining foundational language skills: listening, speaking, discussion, and thinking--oral language. The student develops oral language through listening, speaking, and discussion. The student is expected to:

- (A) listen actively to interpret verbal and non-verbal messages, ask relevant questions, and make pertinent comments;
- (B) follow, restate, and give oral instructions that include multiple action steps;
- (C) give an organized presentation employing eye contact, speaking rate, volume, enunciation, natural gestures, and conventions of language to communicate ideas effectively; and
- (D) work collaboratively with others to develop a plan of shared responsibilities.

(2) Developing and sustaining foundational language skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking--beginning reading and writing. The student develops word structure knowledge through phonological awareness, print concepts, phonics, and morphology to communicate, decode, and spell. The student is expected to:

- (A) demonstrate and apply phonetic knowledge by:
 - (i) decoding words with consonant changes, including/t/ to/sh/ such as in select and selection and/k/ to/sh/ such as music and musician;
 - (ii) decoding multisyllabic words with closed syllables; open syllables; VCe syllable; vowel teams, including digraphs and diphthongs; r-controlled syllables; and final stable syllables;
 - (iii) decoding words using advanced knowledge of syllable division patterns;
 - (iv) decoding words using advanced knowledge of the influence of prefixes and suffixes on base words; and
 - (v) identifying and reading high-frequency words from a research-based list;

(3) Developing and sustaining foundational language skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking--vocabulary. The student uses newly acquired vocabulary expressively. The student is expected to:

- (A) use print or digital resources to determine meaning, syllabication, pronunciation, and word origin;
- (B) use context within and beyond a sentence to determine the relevant meaning of unfamiliar words or multiple-meaning words;
- (C) identify the meaning of and use words with affixes such as trans-, super-, -ive, and -logy and roots such as geo and photo; and
- (D) identify, use, and explain the meaning of adages and puns.

(4) Developing and sustaining foundational language skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking--fluency. The student reads grade-level text with fluency and comprehension. The student is expected to use appropriate fluency (rate, accuracy, and prosody) when reading grade-level text.

Upper Elementary/Early Middle School

(5) Developing and sustaining foundational language skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking--self-sustained reading. The student reads grade-appropriate texts independently.

The student is expected to self-select text and read independently for a sustained period of time.

(6) Comprehension skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts. The student uses metacognitive skills to both develop and deepen comprehension of increasingly complex texts. The student is expected to:

- (A) establish purpose for reading assigned and self-selected texts;
- (B) generate questions about text before, during, and after reading to deepen understanding and gain information;
- (C) make, correct, or confirm predictions using text features, characteristics of genre, and structures;
- (D) create mental images to deepen understanding;
- (E) make connections to personal experiences, ideas in other texts, and society;
- (F) make inferences and use evidence to support understanding;
- (G) evaluate details read to determine key ideas;
- (H) synthesize information to create new understanding; and
- (I) monitor comprehension and make adjustments such as re-reading, using background knowledge, asking questions, and annotating when understanding breaks down.

(8) Multiple genres: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts--literary elements. The student recognizes and analyzes literary elements within and across increasingly complex traditional, contemporary, classical, and diverse literary texts. The student is expected to:

- (A) infer multiple themes within a text using text evidence;
- (B) analyze the relationships of and conflicts among the characters;
- (C) analyze plot elements, including rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution; and
- (D) analyze the influence of the setting, including historical and cultural settings, on the plot.

(9) Multiple genres: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts--genres. The student recognizes and analyzes genre-specific characteristics, structures, and purposes within and across increasingly complex traditional, contemporary, classical, and diverse texts. The student is expected to:

- (A) demonstrate knowledge of distinguishing characteristics of well-known children's literature such as folktales, fables, legends, myths, and tall tales;
- (B) explain the use of sound devices and figurative language and distinguish between the poet and the speaker in poems across a variety of poetic forms;
- (C) explain structure in drama such as character tags, acts, scenes, and stage directions;
- (D) recognize characteristics and structures of informational text, including:
 - (i) the central idea with supporting evidence;
 - (ii) features such as insets, timelines, and sidebars to support understanding; and
 - (iii) organizational patterns such as logical order and order of importance;
- (E) recognize characteristics and structures of argumentative text by:

[This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.]

Upper Elementary/Early Middle School

- (i) identifying the claim;
 - (ii) explaining how the author has used facts for or against an argument; and
 - (iii) identifying the intended audience or reader; and
- (F) recognize characteristics of multimodal and digital texts.

(10) Author's purpose and craft: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts. The student uses critical inquiry to analyze the authors' choices and how they influence and communicate meaning within a variety of texts. The student analyzes and applies author's craft purposefully in order to develop his or her own products and performances. The student is expected to:

- (A) explain the author's purpose and message within a text;
- (B) analyze how the use of text structure contributes to the author's purpose;
- (C) analyze the author's use of print and graphic features to achieve specific purposes;
- (D) describe how the author's use of imagery, literal and figurative language such as simile and metaphor, and sound devices achieves specific purposes;
- (E) identify and understand the use of literary devices, including first- or third-person point of view;
- (F) examine how the author's use of language contributes to voice; and
- (G) explain the purpose of hyperbole, stereotyping, and anecdote.

(11) Composition: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts-- writing process. The student uses the writing process recursively to compose multiple texts that are legible and uses appropriate conventions. The student is expected to:

- (A) plan a first draft by selecting a genre for a particular topic, purpose, and audience using a range of strategies such as brainstorming, freewriting, and mapping;
- (B) develop drafts into a focused, structured, and coherent piece of writing by:
 - (i) organizing with purposeful structure, including an introduction, transitions, and a conclusion; and
 - (ii) developing an engaging idea reflecting depth of thought with specific facts and details;
- (C) revise drafts to improve sentence structure and word choice by adding, deleting, combining, and rearranging ideas for coherence and clarity;
- (D) edit drafts using standard English conventions, including:
 - (i) complete simple and compound sentences with subject-verb agreement and avoidance of splices, run-ons, and fragments;
 - (ii) past tense of irregular verbs;
 - (iii) collective nouns;
 - (iv) adjectives, including their comparative and superlative forms;
 - (v) conjunctive adverbs;
 - (vi) prepositions and prepositional phrases and their influence on subject-verb agreement;
 - (vii) pronouns, including indefinite;
 - (viii) subordinating conjunctions to form complex sentences;
 - (ix) capitalization of abbreviations, initials, acronyms, and organizations;

Upper Elementary/Early Middle School

- (x) punctuation marks, including commas in compound and complex sentences, quotation marks in dialogue, and italics and underlining for titles and emphasis; and
- (xi) correct spelling of words with grade-appropriate orthographic patterns and rules and high-frequency words; and
- (E) publish written work for appropriate audiences.

(12) Composition: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts--genres. The student uses genre characteristics and craft to compose multiple texts that are meaningful. The student is expected to:

- (A) compose literary texts such as personal narratives, fiction, and poetry using genre characteristics and craft;
- (B) compose informational texts, including brief compositions that convey information about a topic, using a clear central idea and genre characteristics and craft;
- (C) compose argumentative texts, including opinion essays, using genre characteristics and craft; and
- (D) compose correspondence that requests information.

(13) Inquiry and research: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts. The student engages in both short-term and sustained recursive inquiry processes for a variety of purposes. The student is expected to:

- (A) generate and clarify questions on a topic for formal and informal inquiry;
- (B) develop and follow a research plan with adult assistance;
- (C) identify and gather relevant information from a variety of sources;
- (D) understand credibility of primary and secondary sources;
- (E) demonstrate understanding of information gathered;
- (F) differentiate between paraphrasing and plagiarism when using source materials;
- (G) develop a bibliography; and
- (H) use an appropriate mode of delivery, whether written, oral, or multimodal, to present results.

Invocation

by Ariana Brown

you were once teenage purveyor of the white girl gospel—
zealous pupil of the hot comb, of oily neck and folded ear,
but before that, you were young. you were asked questions
about your dead father and your hair. your first conversation
with god, faithless. child of the singing forehead. child of the
frustrated wrist. your mother yelled because you fell asleep
on your aunt’s pillows and now the whole couch smells of you.
child of amorous pomade. everyone can tell where you’ve been.
even bus windows remember your name. child of the curl that
stole the wind’s fury. how could everything about you not be
bursting? child of the busted chongo. child of the broken brush,
splitting anything weak in half while still blushing for a gentle
hand. you are your own lesson in commitment. child of royalty,
of the silk scarf before bed. defender from the cotton resurrected
each night to steal you back, every pillowcase a looming field of
ghosts. child of the rained out funeral. child of grocery bag protection.
at age twelve, washing your own hair is your first act of humility.
listening to your blackness, your first mode of resistance. child of
the eloquent scalp, which negotiations did you lose today? how many
times did you lift your hands in ceremony to unravel and partition?
tell us how you learned to fix, fluff, and plait; to wind and plow.
how you were late for class and work doing so. how you skipped
breakfast. how you tended. how you greeted a new ancestor in
the mirror and let their moans trickle and slither down the length
of you. how each strand circles back to its own beginning. child
of inheritance, rejecting gravity & its theorems. the eternal resilience.
when the weather catches you unprepared, you curse each
raindrop undoing your labor with its disrespectful weight—but
unlike anything else in the world, when smothered in water,
submerged in a substance thick enough to kill you, nearly
drowned and gasping—you rise, and refusing invisibility,
grow to the size all benevolent gods are.

For a Spanish translation of this poem, please visit www.arianabrown.com/resources.html. Video of this poem is available on YouTube.

To purchase Ariana’s book of poetry, *Sana Sana*, please visit <https://www.gameoverbooks.com/product-page/sana-sana>. For bulk orders, please visit <https://www.spdbooks.org/Products/9781732498686/sana-sana.aspx>.

[This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.]

Day 1, Introduction, *How do I see myself?* (45 minutes)

Have students write their responses in their notebooks. Remind them that no one will read their responses, so anything they write is completely confidential.

Teachers, please use a timer, and give your students about 5 minutes to respond to each question as a quick write. We recommend providing the students each question one at a time.

1. Write your own definition of the word “beauty.” (5 minutes)
2. What part of your body is beautiful? (5 minutes)
3. What are some things about your body you wish you could change? (5 minutes)
4. Why do you wish you could change those things? (5 minutes)
5. Please list some people that you think are beautiful. Explain why you see them as beautiful. (5 minutes)

Have the students share parts of their responses with a partner (turn and talk). Again, please remind them that they should only share what they wish to share – or the big ideas that they are thinking now.

On a sheet of chart paper, write the word “BEAUTY.” Together, brainstorm what beauty means to them personally (micro) and what they think beauty means in this society (macro).

Circle check-in (20 minutes)

1. Round I. Circle formation: Students check in, “Tell us your name, and then, on a scale of 1-10, tell us how you’re doing today (1 being not too great and 10 being awesome)”
2. Round II. Brainstorm with students: “What does it mean to be confident? How can you tell if someone is confident or not?” (Make a Chart/Record Ideas)
3. Round III. Students respond in circle: “What can people tell about you just by looking at you? This can be your race, ethnicity, religion, or your interests, level of confidence, etc.”
4. Define and discuss “stereotypes.” What is a stereotype? What stereotypes have students heard? When? Where? Are stereotypes the “truth?” (Make a Chart/Record Ideas)

1. Bodies and Our Relationships to Them (Lecture and Discussion)

a. Resources to Share on Beauty and Society (25 minutes)

- i. Share a picture book from the suggestions listed in the Materials section on page 1. Before reading, plan to share/teach vocabulary from the picture book as necessary. As you read and discuss, bring students’ attention to the three guiding questions:
 1. How does our relationship to our bodies reflect our beliefs about beauty and self-worth?
 2. How does our understanding of beauty relate to race and gender stereotypes?
 3. What can we learn by embracing the parts of ourselves we do not think are beautiful?

1. Begin by having students review their thinking (use chart) from Day 1’s discussion about societal definitions of beauty. The teacher can take this opportunity to bring forward the big ideas presented from the first two days of the unit.
2. Consider reading aloud a second picture book today. Picture book recommendations are provided in the Materials list on page 1.
3. Generative round: Write these questions on chart paper. In small groups of 3, ask the students to reflect on and respond orally to the questions. After 10 minutes of discussion, please invite the students to share as a whole group.
 - a. What are some lies you think are told about beauty? Why do you think these ideas are false/untrue?
 - b. Who decides what is beautiful or attractive?
 - c. Why would someone want you to feel ugly or unattractive?
4. “Invocation” by Ariana Brown
 - a. Have students complete a quick write in response to the following questions their writers’ notebooks.

- I. Can you think of any moments in your life when you were self-conscious about your appearance? Describe how you felt in these moments.
- II. Have you ever believed that something about your body or appearance was ugly? Why did you feel that way? How do you feel about your body or appearance now?

Introduce Ariana Brown. Share: <http://www.arianabrown.com/>

Say: *Ariana will become a member of our community of readers, writers, poets, and activists.*

Plan an introduction to the poem, *Invocation*, drawing from the principles and ideas that the students have foregrounded in the unit thus far.

Vocabulary: Select 3 to 5 words that you would like to introduce and define for the students before reading and listening to *Invocation*.

Watch: [Click here to watch “Invocation.”](#) After watching Ariana’s performance, read aloud *Invocation* to the students. Have a brief discussion about what they are thinking and feeling now.

Provide a hard copy for each student in English and Spanish. Have the students glue their copy into their notebooks.

1. Open the lesson by rereading or rewatching *Invocation*.
2. Ask the students to work in partners to annotate their copy of the poem. Provide these questions as scaffolds for students as they read, discuss, and annotate. Reflection questions:

- I. What is the poem about? Why do you think the author wanted to write this poem?
- II. This poem is an ode, addressed to the author’s younger self. What does the author want to say about her feelings about her hair?
- III. How would you connect the picture books to Brown’s poem “Invocation”? How do you see the concepts of self-love and affirmation working in all of these texts?

3. Have the students come together for a brief whole group discussion. You may consider charting the big ideas students are expressing as a result of their interactions with Ariana’s *Invocation*.

Provide students with a variety of artistic responses to work on in response to Ariana’s *Invocation*

Directions to students:

Create art (see ideas below) in which you celebrate something about yourself that you used to think was unattractive. You can think of this as an ode to yourself. Try to find the beauty, and/or the resilience, in your own body and appearance.

- Poem or Short Story:
- A Mural, Painting, or Collage
- A Sculpture

You may consider offering students the opportunity to work collaboratively on their art.

You may consider adding one or two more days to the unit for further composition and/or art. I encourage all teachers to make time for students to share their work in some manner with each other.