

9:18



BTWAM 22-2...



You will use this document to compose your thoughts on *Between the World and Me*. Please color code your entries to indicate the different sections of days of writings in this document. Each time you are asked to respond to a journal prompt, please add to this document rather than create a new one.

February 1st

Part 1: Identify two of the following themes from Coates' book to which you are most drawn:

- The Body
- The Dream
- Education and Inquiry
- History
- Identity

Part 2: Describe your initial reaction to *Between the World and Me*. Any thoughts, feelings, dis/agreements, or questions you have?



Between the...



### *Between the World and Me* Annotation Assignment

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8. Some conversational/personal responses.



### Themes in Between the World and Me

#### The Black Body

"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 always remember that the sociology, the history, the economics, the graphs, the charts, the regressions all land, with great violence, upon the body" (10).

Throughout Coates' novel, he returns to the idea of the Black body, discussing this topic in specific and nuanced ways. How does Coates define and describe the Black body throughout the book? What does Coates mean when he refers to the idea of losing his own body?

Explain the validity of Coates' argument about the Black body as disposable?

#### The Dream

"The Dream thrives on generalization, on limiting the number of possible questions, on privileging immediate answers" (50).

First of all, what is "the Dream" (is it the American Dream as we typically know it or something else)? How did the dream come to be over the course of American history? Explain Coates' juxtaposition of "the Dream" with "the Struggle." How does this placement develop his position about accessibility and opportunity in America?

What is Coates' main argument regarding "the Dream" and is he right? Why or why not?

#### Education

"But the laws of the schools were aimed at something distant and vague. What did it mean to, as our elders told us, 'grow up and be somebody'? And what precisely did this have to do with an education rendered as rote discipline?" (25).

"Literacy for freedom" is a concept foundational to the African American liberation tradition. Identify the types of literacy Coates received or pursued. How does Coates describe the American education system? What are the problems Coates identifies in the education system?

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#### History

"You must struggle to truly remember the past in all its nuance, error, and humanity. You must resist the common urge toward the comforting narrative of divine law, toward fairy tales that imply some irrepressible justice. 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" (70).

A significant concern Coates addresses in the text is that of American history, specifically how historical facts are recounted and/or omitted and the purpose of this manipulation of truth. Who does Coates seem to believe controls the historical narrative and what does he purport are the consequences of that control?

Explain Coates' problem with America's position on retelling history. Explain your



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Coates spends a significant amount of time discussing the complexities of race and identity in America. What does Coates say about the tendency of American history to discuss slavery as a mass of people rather than individuals who suffered the atrocities of being enslaved? How did this affect the identity of Black Americans?

Describe Coates' primary statement regarding identity and your position about his argument.



9:19



Between the World...



*Between the World and Me Pre-reading*

1. What do you understand from the "Unequal Opportunity Race" video?
2. What do you think it means to be systemically aware?
3. Describe your understanding of systemic racism.
4. Do you think racism is a pervasive problem in America? Why or why not?

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## Mrs. Woods AP Lang class External Inbox

@gmail.com

Sun, Feb 5, 8:51 PM (15 hours ago)

to me

Hi Mrs. Barnhardt,

First, I appreciate you looking into this matter regarding Mrs. Woods AP Lang class. I also appreciate my anonymity. This past week, my teacher presented two videos titled "The Unequal Opportunity Race" and "Systemic Racism Explained." Prior to showing these video clips, Mrs. Wood spent 20 minutes expressing her personal opinion, telling us she felt these videos to be true. Hearing her opinion and watching these videos made me feel uncomfortable. I actually felt ashamed to be Caucasian. Mrs. Wood told us these videos set the stage for the book, "Between The World and Me" by Ta-Nehisi Coates. These videos portrayed an inaccurate description of life from past centuries that she is trying to resurface. I don't feel as though it is right because those videos showed antiquated history. I understand in AP Lang, we are learning to develop an argument and have evidence to support it, yet this topic is too heavy to discuss.

Thank you!

Thoughts?

Thank you for your response.

Reply

Forward

To: [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

I will be sending one to you in the morning

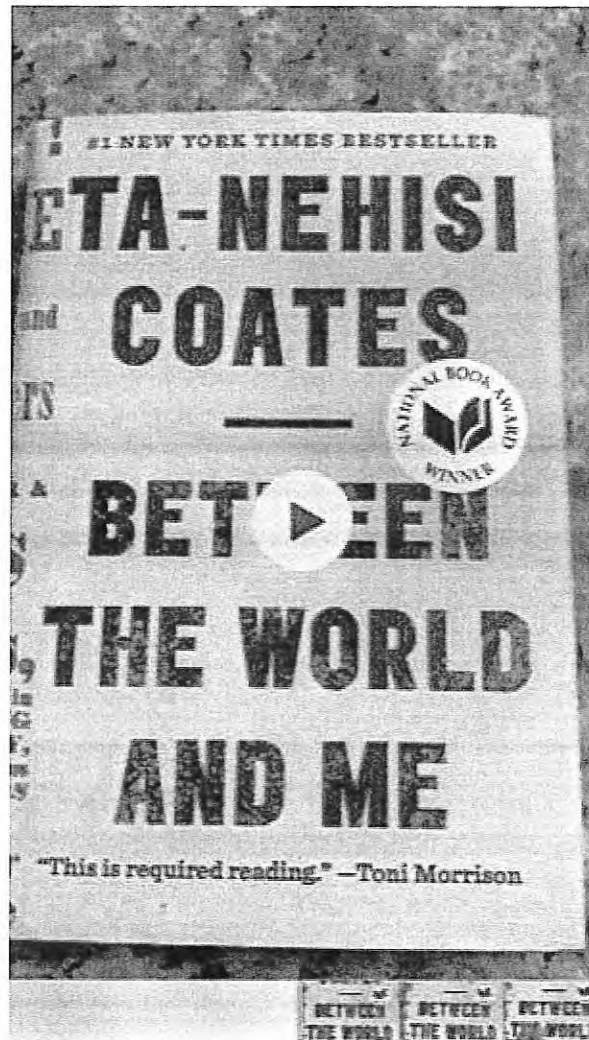
Thank you,  
[REDACTED]

----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Sun, Feb 5, 2023 at 9:35 PM

Subject: [REDACTED]

Last Wednesday (February 1st), Mrs. Wood introduced a new assignment to us. Before she had even introduced it, she had said something along the lines of "hopefully I don't get fired for this", which made me feel quite nervous for what was about to come next. Mrs. Wood then proceeded to show us two videos about systemic racism (one about two boys and the other about a marathon race). I was incredibly uncomfortable throughout both videos, and was in shock that she would do something illegal like that (I am pretty sure a teacher talking about systemic racism is illegal in South Carolina). She then made us write about our understanding of what systemic racism was, and assigned us a book called "Between the world and me" to read and eventually, write an argumentative essay on. I have been reading the book, and the author (Ta-Nehisi Coates) is, along with his grandfather and father, a Malcom X fanatic (someone who preached violence against whites), believes that everything bad that has happened to him stems from the "whiteness" of America, and thinks that "destroying the black body" is America's heritage (which is so extreme to me). I feel as though I am reading hate propaganda towards white people. I feel, to an extent, betrayed by Mrs. Woods because I feel like she has built up this idea of expanding our mind through the introduction of controversial topics all year just to try to subtly indoctrinate our class under the guise that she is trying to "get us to think about different points of view". I am all for expanding your horizons and thinking outside of the bounds that you, your parents, your peers, etc have set for you, but for a teacher to try to teach this in a classroom is completely wrong and illegal.



9:19



Between the World...



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## Themes in Be...



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A significant concern Coates addresses in the text is that of American history, specifically how historical facts are recounted and/or omitted and the purpose of this manipulation of truth. Who does Coates seem to believe controls the historical narrative and what does he purport are the consequences of that control?

Explain Coates' problem with America's tradition of retelling history. Explain your support or disagreement with his position on this topic.

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### Themes in *Between the World and Me*

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**From:** Elizabeth Barnhardt  
**Sent:** Fri, 3 Feb 2023 12:38:44 -0500  
**To:** ebarnhardt@lexrich5.org  
**Subject:** CHS Parent Complaints/Curriculum  
**Attachments:** IMG\_6773.jpg, ATT00002.txt, IMG\_6772.jpg, ATT00004.txt, IMG\_6771.jpg, ATT00006.txt, IMG\_6770.jpg, ATT00008.txt, IMG\_6769.jpg, ATT00010.txt, IMG\_3946.jpg, ATT00012.txt, IMG\_3947.jpg, ATT00014.txt, IMG\_3948.jpg, ATT00016.txt

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Between the World...



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**From:**  
**Sent:** Wed, 8 Feb 2023 15:58:03 +0000 (UTC)  
**To:** scfreedomcaucus@gmail.com; SCSupt Ed  
**Cc:** Rebecca Hines; Jay Kilmartin; Charlene Wessinger; Beth Carrigg;  
coreyallen0226@gmail.com; justice@palmettostatewatch.com; Matt Hogan; ksnipes@lexrich5.org;  
Theovertonreport  
**Subject:** CRT Assignment - Lexington Richland School District 5

Good Morning All,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am citizen of Lexington Richland 5 and my daughter is a former student. It was brought to my attention the assignment given by Ms. Mary Wood at Chapin High School in her AP Language Class last week by some concerned parents. It is my understanding that the parents of the children who brought this to our attention attempted to resolve with the principal but Mr. Ames (the principal) allowed for her to give the lesson one more day.

Ms. Woods frankly told her class something along the lines of "hoping she doesn't get fired for this"... no teacher prefaces a lesson with this unless they know they are doing something that is wrong. Ms. Woods opened up with two systemic race videos and this was a precursor to the book which they would be discussing. This is not Ms. Woods first rodeo and she is well aware of what she is doing and has continued to be controversial for whatever reason.

I will attach both videos, the assignment, the book (Between the World in Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates), and two emails from children in her class to a sitting school board member.

First this absolutely violates Proviso 1.93 Partisanship Curriculum:

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Second issue is this topic/incident needs to be added to the next board meeting agenda, February 13th. The public deserves to know what is happening in our schools. The public needs to see how our elected board responds to this type of material being discussed with high school students against current state law and just simply that it is propaganda. As a citizen and parent I feel this situation isn't receiving the attention it should be as Ms. Woods father sits on the board. Mr. Mike Satterfield. The excuses are

already rolling bc it is Black History Month. I am confident you can teach lessons about Black History without propaganda and without flat out ignoring the law. Not to mention any time you make students so uncomfortable they don't want to go back to class there is a HUGE problem and it is totally unacceptable.

Honestly there should not be any questions on whether this should be discussed at the next board meeting. I ask that you encourage our board officers: Rebecca Blackburn Hines (Chair), Matt Hogan (Vice Chair), Kimberly Snipes (Secretary) to do the right thing and add this to the next board meeting agenda. I also ask that you look into Proviso 1.93 and the material that was presented to Ms. Woods class and see if there were any violations of state law.

Thank You.

### The Unequal Opportunity Race



**The Unequal Opportunity Race**

### Systemic Racism Explained





**Systemic Racism Explained**



## Mrs. Woods AP Lang class

External

Inbox

[redacted]@gmail.com

Sun, Feb 5, 8:51 PM (15 hours ago)

to me

Hi Mrs. Barnhardt,

First, I appreciate you looking into this matter regarding Mrs. Woods AP Lang class. I also appreciate my anonymity. This past week, my teacher presented two videos titled "The Unequal Opportunity Race" and "Systemic Racism Explained." Prior to showing these video clips, Mrs. Wood spent 20 minutes expressing her personal opinion, telling us she felt these videos to be true. Hearing her opinion and watching these videos made me feel uncomfortable. I actually felt ashamed to be Caucasian. Mrs. Wood told us these videos set the stage for the book, "Between The World and Me" by Ta-Nehisi Coates. These videos portrayed an inaccurate description of life from past centuries that she is trying to resurface. I don't feel as though it is right because those videos showed antiquated history. I understand in AP Lang, we are learning to develop an argument and have evidence to support it, yet this topic is too heavy to discuss.

Thank you!

Thoughts?

Thank you for your response.

Reply

Forward

[redacted] is sending one to you in the morning

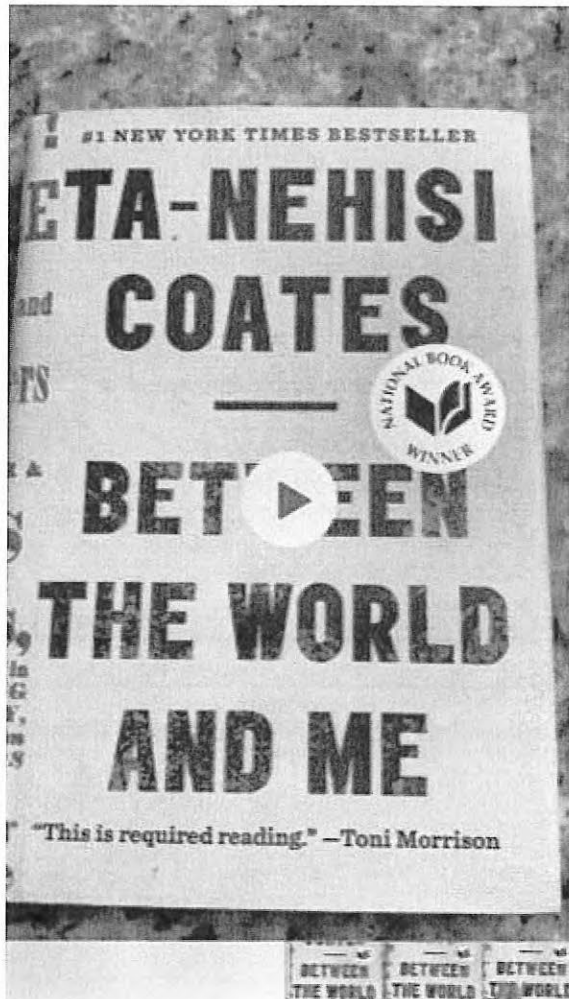
[redacted]

Forwarded message

Date: Sun, Feb 5, 2023 at 9:35 PM

Subject: [redacted]

Last Wednesday (February 1st), Mrs. Wood introduced a new assignment to us. Before she had even introduced it, she had said something along the lines of "hopefully I don't get fired for this", which made me feel quite nervous for what was about to come next. Mrs. Wood then proceeded to show us two videos about systemic racism (one about two boys and the other about a marathon race). I was incredibly uncomfortable throughout both videos, and was in shock that she would do something illegal like that (I am pretty sure a teacher talking about systemic racism is illegal in South Carolina). She then made us write about our understanding of what systemic racism was, and assigned us a book called "Between the world and me" to read and eventually write an argumentative essay on. I have been reading the book, and the author (Ta-Nehisi Coates) is, along with his grandfather and father, a Malcolm X fanatic (someone who preached violence against whites), believes that everything bad that has happened to him stems from the "whiteness" of America, and thinks that "destroying the black body" is America's heritage (which is so extreme to me). I feel as though I am reading hate propaganda towards white people. I feel, to an extent, betrayed by Mrs. Woods because I feel like she has built up this idea of expanding our mind through the introduction of controversial topics all year just to try to subtly indoctrinate our class under the guise that she is trying to "get us to think about different parts of view". I am all for expanding your horizons and thinking outside of the bounds that you, your parents, your peers, etc have set for you, but for a teacher to try to teach this in a classroom is completely wrong and illegal.



9:19



Between the World...



*Between the World and Me* Pre-reading.

1. What do you understand from the "Unequal Opportunity Race" video?
2. What do you think it means to be systematically aware?
3. Describe your understanding of systemic racism.
4. Do you think racism is a pervasive problem in America? Why or why not?



## Themes in Be...



"Literacy for freedom" is a concept foundational to the African American liberation tradition. Identify the types of literacy Coates received or pursued. How does Coates describe the American education system? What are the problems Coates identifies in the education system?

What is Coates' primary argument about education and its role in equality? Is he justified in this stance? Explain.

#### History

"You must struggle to truly remember the past in all its nuance, error, and humanity. You must resist the common urge toward the comforting narrative of divine law, toward fairy tales that imply some irrepressible justice. 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" (70)

A significant concern Coates addresses in the text is that of American history, specifically how historical facts are reexamined and/or omitted and the purpose of this manipulation of truth. Who does Coates seem to believe controls the historical narrative and what does he purport are the consequences of that control?

Explain Coates' problem with America's tradition of retelling history. Explain your support or disagreement with his position on this topic.

#### Identity

"We did not choose our fences. They were imposed on us by Virginia planters obsessed with enslaving as many Americans as possible. They are the ones who came up with a one-drop rule that separated the "white" from the "black," even if it meant their own blue-eyed sons would live under the lash. The result is a people, a black people, who embody all physical varieties and whose life stories mirror this physical range. Through *The Mecca* I saw that we were, in our own segregated body politic, cosmopolitans. The black diaspora was not just our own world but, in so many ways, the Western world itself" (43)

Coates spends a significant amount of time discussing the complexities of race and identity in America. What does Coates say about the tendency of American history to discuss slavery as a mass of people rather than individuals who suffered the atrocities of being enslaved? How did this affect the identity of black Americans?

Describe Coates' primary statement regarding identity and your position about his argument.



### Themes in *Between the World and Me*

#### The Black Body

"But all our phrasing—race relations, racial chasms, 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 always remember that the sociology, the history, the economics, the graphs, the charts, the regressions all land, with great violence, upon the body" (18).

Throughout Coates' novel, he returns to the idea of the Black body, discussing this topic in specific and nuanced ways. How does Coates define and describe the Black body throughout the book? What does Coates mean when he refers to the idea of losing his own body?

Explain the validity of Coates' argument about the Black body as *disposable*?

#### The Dream

"The Dream thrives on generalization, on limiting the number of possible questions, on privileging immediate answers" (50).

First of all, what is "the Dream" (is it the American Dream as we typically know it or something else)? How did the dream come to be over the course of American history? Explain Coates' juxtaposition of "the Dream" with "the Struggle." How does this placement develop his position about accessibility and opportunity in America?

What is Coates' main argument regarding "the Dream" and is he right? Why or why not?

#### Education

"But the laws of the schools were aimed at something distant and vague. What did it mean to, as our elders told us, 'grow up and be somebody'? And what precisely did this have to do with an education rendered as rote discipline?" (25)

"Literacy for freedom" is a concept foundational to the African American liberation tradition. Identify the types of literacy Coates received or pursued. How does Coates describe the American education system? What are the problems Coates identifies in the education system?

What is Coates' primary argument about education and its role in equality? Is he justified in this stance? Explain.

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"You must struggle to truly remember the past in all its nuance, error, and humanity. You must resist the common urge toward the comforting narrative of divine law, toward fairy tales that imply some irrepressible justice. 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" (70).

A significant concern Coates addresses in the text is that of American history, specifically how historical facts are recounted and/or omitted and the purpose of this manipulation of truth. Who does Coates seem to believe controls the historical narrative and what does he purport are the consequences of that control?

Explain Coates' problem with America's tradition of rewriting history. Explain your



Between the...



### *Between the World and Me* Annotation Assignment

#### **Guidelines for annotations: FORMAT**

Your notes should be handwritten (not typed) and legible, and each note should be linked to a specific passage. Avoid mass underlining/highlighting that is unconnected to notes. You may take notes in any of the following ways:

1. Write notes on Post-its and attach to text.
2. Write notes on looseleaf or in a notebook. Be sure to write the page number of the passage that each note corresponds to. You may organize your notes by topic rather than by page number, but each note should be linked to a specific passage, indicated with a page reference.

#### **Guidelines for annotations: HOW MUCH SHOULD I ANNOTATE?**

Quality is more important than quantity, but I want to see that you are slowing down your reading to interrogate the text, note patterns, theorize about meaning, and add background information on allusions and definitions of unfamiliar words. This is a relatively short book, so I would expect to see notes from a majority of pages.

#### **Guidelines for annotations: CONTENT**

Aim for a variety of notes — see below. Make your notes meaningful to you. Some students find it helpful to develop a “key” or “legend” with a few symbols or color coding to help organize your notes.

1. Analytical/interpretive commentary.
2. Literary or rhetorical elements. Try to go a step further than identifying the element — try to theorize about the author’s purpose in using the device.
3. Questions — especially interpretive/analytical questions that might lead to interesting discussion.
4. Connections to other texts, courses, cultural touchstones, experiences, etc.
5. Connections within the book: echoes, repetitions, patterns. Identify, track, and theorize about the meaning of these emerging themes/patterns that unify the work.
6. Background information on allusions to people, history, literature, etc. Look up the allusion and add a few notes about the reference. For some allusions, you may want to dig deeper.
7. Definitions of unfamiliar words — especially words that don’t have enough context clues to help you make an educated guess about the word’s meaning. It’s not enough to circle words you don’t know — look them up and add a brief definition that makes sense in the context of the sentence.
8. Some conversational personal responses.

9:18



BTWAM 22-2...



You will use this document to compose your thoughts on *Between the World and Me*. Please color code your entries to indicate the different sections of days of writings in this document. Each time you are asked to respond to a journal prompt, please add to this document rather than create a new one.

February 1st

Part 1: Identify two of the following themes from Coates' book to which you are most drawn:

- The Body
- The Dream
- Education and Inquiry
- History
- Identity

Part 2: Describe your initial reaction to *Between the World and Me*. Any thoughts, feelings, dis/agreements, or questions you have?





**From:** Kimberly Snipes  
**Sent:** Wed, 8 Feb 2023 17:21:51 -0500  
**To:** Akil Ross; Ameer White  
**Subject:** Fwd: CRT Assignment - Lexington Richland School District 5

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Rebecca Hines <[rhines@lexrich5.org](mailto:rhines@lexrich5.org)>  
**Date:** Wed, Feb 8, 2023 at 3:08 PM  
**Subject:** Re: CRT Assignment - Lexington Richland School District 5  
**To:**  
**CC:** [scfreedomcaucus@gmail.com](mailto:scfreedomcaucus@gmail.com) <[scfreedomcaucus@gmail.com](mailto:scfreedomcaucus@gmail.com)>, SCSupt Ed <[scsupted@ed.sc.gov](mailto:scsupted@ed.sc.gov)>, Jay Kilmartin <[johnkilmartin@bellsouth.net](mailto:johnkilmartin@bellsouth.net)>, Charlene Wessinger <[cwessinger@lex-co.com](mailto:cwessinger@lex-co.com)>, Beth Carrigg <[bcarrigg@lex-co.com](mailto:bcarrigg@lex-co.com)>, [coreyallen0226@gmail.com](mailto:coreyallen0226@gmail.com) <[coreyallen0226@gmail.com](mailto:coreyallen0226@gmail.com)>, [justice@palmettostatewatch.com](mailto:justice@palmettostatewatch.com) <[justice@palmettostatewatch.com](mailto:justice@palmettostatewatch.com)>, Matt Hogan <[mhogan@lexrich5.org](mailto:mhogan@lexrich5.org)>, [knsnipes@lexrich5.org](mailto:knsnipes@lexrich5.org) <[knsnipes@lexrich5.org](mailto:knsnipes@lexrich5.org)>, Theovertonreport <[theovertonreport@gmail.com](mailto:theovertonreport@gmail.com)>

I appreciate your email.

Please understand that I share the concern. As a parent, if my child brought forth a similar situation, I would also want to demand answers.

However, as a board member, there are legal and policy standards that we are obligated to follow. First, we cannot discuss specific employees and their personnel situations. We have one employee – the superintendent. We do not have the authority, under policy guided by statutes, to investigate or discipline other district employees. Because of our quasi-judicial roles, we must refrain from being personally involved with talking specifics about a teacher/employee/student situation that may warrant a disciplinary action. If protocol isn't followed, the board members involved would have to be recused from any decisions/conversations relating to the situation. Due process requires that the district administration follow protocol when a complaint is made, and any potential disciplinary action is taken. While I had not been contacted by parents or students on this issue, and I haven't seen some of the emails below or any other excuses, I have heard from another board member about the concerns, including a demand for this to be put on executive session at the next meeting. As of the time of that request, the district was not aware of this situation, and it is my understanding that proper protocol has now been initiated and this specific situation and any violations relating to it are being addressed/reviewed. As such, the district administration must be given the sufficient opportunity to investigate the facts and make a determination before any conversation relating to this situation can be discussed – whether in executive session or in general session.

Again, any public conversation regarding any specific employee cannot occur during a board meeting; however, I do respect the request for a public conversation and questions relating to the content of the curriculum. As the board officers made clear in a public board officers meeting (prior to this last-minute request), the district has a few time-sensitive, extremely important matters to discuss that must have priority. If I have learned anything in the two years on this board, it's that rushed decisions always have poor outcomes. Board officers (and other board members) have already indicated that this discussion is important and it will be put on the agenda at a future meeting...as of now, the plan is to discuss this in late March or April. I understand the frustration in timing but I am bound by policy.

In the interim, and because you copied current legislators to this email, I will say this...on behalf of myself and as just one board member – who brought forth the Parental Rights Resolution for District 5, and who was almost censured for trying to address obscenity in the books in our schools– situations such as these are why it is so important for our lawmakers to help local districts by implementing clear and concise legislation relating to curriculum and accountability. I am encouraged by and support conversations of eliminating those gray areas of opinions (as opposed to truth & facts) in curriculum with legislation such as the Transparency and Integrity in Education Act. I am hopeful that local districts, the SCDOE and the General Assembly can work together to create both legislation and policies that remove unnecessary rhetoric and allow for the focus to shift to an honest education.

As always, you are welcome to reach out to me personally to discuss your concerns. I hope you have a blessed afternoon.

Kind regards,

Rebecca Blackburn Hines

On Wed, Feb 8, 2023 at 10:58 AM

wrote:

Good Morning All,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am citizen of Lexington Richland 5 and my daughter is a former student. It was brought to my attention the assignment given by Ms. Mary Wood at Chapin High School in her AP Language Class last week by some concerned parents. It is my understanding that the parents of the children who brought this to our attention attempted to resolve with the principal but Mr. Ames (the principal) allowed for her to give the lesson one more day.

Ms. Woods frankly told her class something along the lines of "hoping she doesn't get fired for this"... no teacher prefaces a lesson with this unless they know they are doing something that is wrong. Ms. Woods opened up with two systemic race videos and this was a precursor to the book which they would be discussing. This is not Ms. Woods first rodeo and she is well aware of what she is doing and has continued to be controversial for whatever reason.

I will attach both videos, the assignment, the book (Between the World in Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates), and two emails from children in her class to a sitting school board member.

First this absolutely violates Proviso 1.93 Partisanship Curriculum:

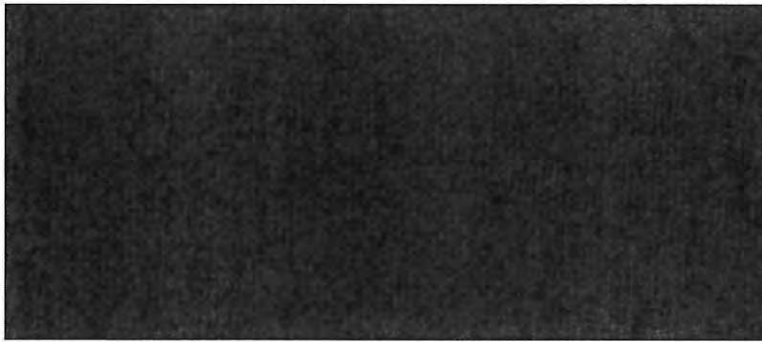
**1.93. (SDE: Partisanship Curriculum):** For the current fiscal year, of the funds allocated by the Department of Education to school districts, no monies shall be used by any school district or school to provide instruction in, to teach, instruct, or train any administrator, teacher, staff member, or employee to adopt or believe, or to approve for use, make use of, or carry out standards, curricula, lesson plans, textbooks, instructional materials, or instructional practices that serve to inculcate any of the following concepts: (1) one race or sex is inherently superior to another race or sex; (2) an individual, by virtue of his race or sex, is inherently racist, sexist, or oppressive, whether consciously or unconsciously; (3) an individual should be discriminated against or receive adverse treatment solely or partly because of his race or sex; (4) an individual's moral standing or worth is necessarily determined by his race or sex; (5) an individual, by virtue of his race or sex, bears responsibility for actions committed in the past by other members of the same race or sex; (6) an individual should feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress on account of his race or sex; (7) meritocracy or traits such as a hard work ethic are racist or sexist, or were created by members of a particular race to oppress members of another race; and (8) fault, blame, or bias should be assigned to a race or sex, or to members of a race or sex because of their race or sex. Nothing contained herein shall be construed as prohibiting any professional development training for teachers related to issues of addressing unconscious bias within the context of teaching certain literary or historical concepts or issues related to the impacts of historical or past discriminatory policies.

Second issue is this topic/incident needs to be added to the next board meeting agenda, February 13th. . The public deserves to know what is happening in our schools. The public needs to see how our elected board responds to this type of material being discussed with high school students against current state law and just simply that it is propaganda. As a citizen and parent I feel this situation isn't receiving the attention it should be as Ms. Woods father sits on the board. Mr. Mike Satterfield. The excuses are already rolling bc it is Black History Month. I am confident you can teach lessons about Black History without propaganda and without flat out ignoring the law. Not to mention any time you make students so uncomfortable they don't want to go back to class there is a HUGE problem and it is totally unacceptable.

Honestly there should not be any questions on whether this should be discussed at the next board meeting. I ask that you encourage our board officers: Rebecca Blackburn Hines (Chair), Matt Hogan (Vice Chair), Kimberly Snipes (Secretary) to do the right thing and add this to the next board meeting agenda. I also ask that you look into Proviso 1.93 and the material that was presented to Ms. Woods class and see if there were any violations of state law.

Thank You,

The Unequal Opportunity Race



**The Unequal Opportunity Race**

Systemic Racism Explained



**Systemic Racism Explained**

Mrs. Woods AP Lang class

External

Inbox



[redacted]@gmail.com

Sun, Feb 5, 8:51 PM (15 hours ago)



to me ▾

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Thank you!

Thoughts?

Thank you for your response.

↩ Reply

➦ Forward

To: [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

I will be sending one to you in the morning

Thank you,  
[REDACTED]

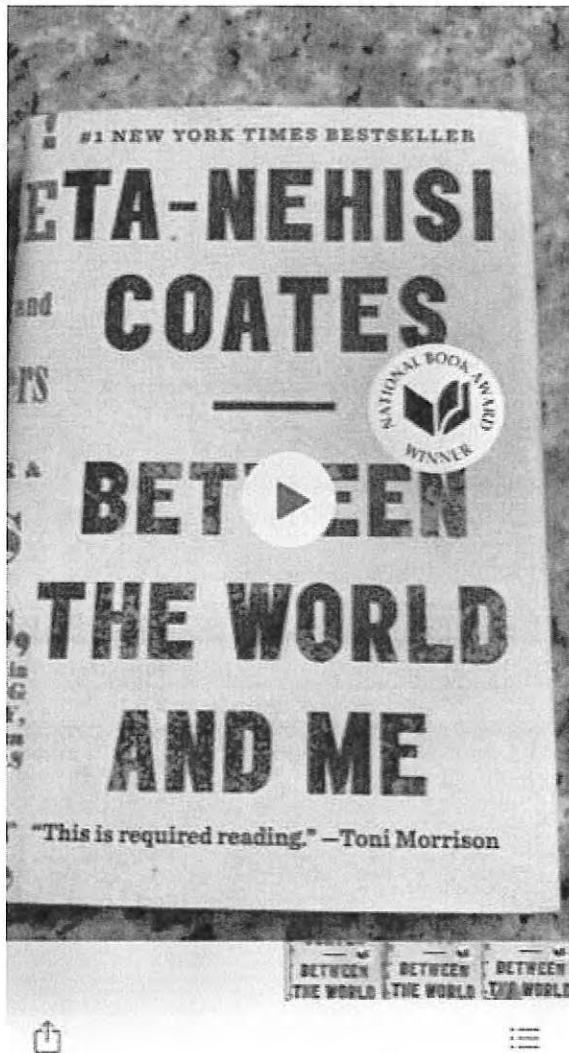
----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Sun, Feb 5, 2023 at 9:35 PM

Subject: [REDACTED]

Last Wednesday (February 1st), Mrs. Wood introduced a new assignment to us. Before she had even introduced it, she had said something along the lines of "hopefully I don't get fired for this", which made me feel quite nervous for what was about to come next. Mrs. Wood then proceeded to show us two videos about systemic racism (one about two boys and the other about a marathon race). I was incredibly uncomfortable throughout both videos, and was in shock that she would do something illegal like that (I am pretty sure a teacher talking about systemic racism is illegal in South Carolina). She then made us write about our understanding of what systemic racism was, and assigned us a book called "Between the world and me" to read and eventually, write an argumentative essay on. I have been reading the book, and the author (Ta-Nehisi Coates) is, along with his grandfather and father, a Malcom X fanatic (someone who preached violence against whites), believes that everything bad that has happened to him stems from the "whiteness" of America, and thinks that "destroying the black body" is America's heritage (which is so extreme to me). I feel as though I am reading hate propaganda towards white people. I feel, to an extent, betrayed by Mrs. Woods because I feel like she has built up this idea of expanding our mind through the introduction of controversial topics all year just to try to subtly indoctrinate our class under the guise that she is trying to "get us to think about different points of view". I am all for expanding your horizons and thinking outside of the bounds that you, your parents, your peers, etc have set for you, but for a teacher to try to teach this in a classroom is completely wrong and illegal.





9:19



Between the World...



*Between the World and Me Pre-reading*

1. What do you understand from the "Unequal Opportunity Race" video?
2. What do you think it means to be systemically aware?
3. Describe your understanding of systemic racism.
4. Do you think racism is a pervasive problem in America? Why or why not?



9:19



Themes in Be...



"Literacy for freedom" is a concept foundational to the African American liberation tradition. Identify the types of literacy Coates received or pursued. How does Coates describe the American education system? What are the problems Coates identifies in the education system?

What is Coates' primary argument about education and its role in equality? Is he justified in this stance? Explain.

#### History

"You must struggle to truly remember the past in all its nuance, error, and humanity. You must resist the common urge toward the comforting narrative of divine law, toward fairy tales that imply some irrepressible justice. 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" (70).

A significant concern Coates addresses in the text is that of American history, specifically how historical facts are recounted and/or omitted and the purpose of this manipulation of truth. Who does Coates seem to believe controls the historical narrative and what does he purport are the consequences of that control?

Explain Coates' problem with America's tradition of retelling history. Explain your support or disagreement with his position on this topic.

#### Identity

"We did not choose our fences. They were imposed on us by Virginia planters obsessed with enslaving as many Americans as possible. They are the ones who came up with a one-drop rule that separated the "white" from the "black," even if it meant their own blue-eyed sons would live under the lash. The result is a people, a black people, who embody all physical varieties and whose life stories mirror this physical range. Through *The Meecca* I saw that we were, in our own segregated body politic, cosmopolitans. The black diaspora was not just our own world but, in so many ways, the Western world itself" (43).

Coates spends a significant amount of time discussing the complexities of race and identity in America. What does Coates say about the tendency of American history to discuss slavery as a mass of people rather than individuals who suffered the atrocities of being enslaved? How did this affect the identity of Black Americans?

Describe Coates' primary statement regarding identity and your position about his argument.

9:18



Themes in Be...



### Themes in *Between the World and Me*

#### The Black Body

"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 always remember that the sociology, the history, the economics, the graphs, the charts, the regressions all land, with great violence, upon the body" (18)

Throughout Coates' novel, he returns to the idea of the black body, discussing this topic in specific and nuanced ways. How does Coates define and describe the Black body throughout the book? What does Coates mean when he refers to the idea of losing his own body?

Explain the validity of Coates' argument about the Black body as disposable?

#### The Dream

"The Dream thrives on generalization, on limiting the number of possible questions, on privileging immediate answers" (50).

First, of all, what is "the Dream" (is it the American Dream as we typically know it or something else)? How did the dream come to be over the course of American history? Explain Coates' juxtaposition of "the Dream" with "the Struggle." How does this placement develop his position about accessibility and opportunity in America?

What is Coates' main argument regarding "the Dream" and is he right? Why or why not?

#### Education

"But the laws of the schools were aimed at something distant and vague. What did it mean to, as our elders told us, 'grow up and be somebody'? And what precisely did this have to do with an education rendered as rote discipline?" (25)

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9:18



Between the...



### *Between the World and Me* Annotation Assignment

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#### **Guidelines for annotations: HOW MUCH SHOULD I ANNOTATE?**

Quality is more important than quantity, but I want to see that you are slowing down your reading to interrogate the text, note patterns, theorize about meaning, and add background information on allusions and definitions of unfamiliar words. This is a relatively short book, so I would expect to see notes from a majority of pages.

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8. Some conversational/personal responses.

9:18



BTWAM 22-2...



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February 1st

Part 1: Identify two of the following themes from Coates' book to which you are most drawn:

- The Body
- The Dream
- Education and Inquiry
- History
- Identity

Part 2: Describe your initial reaction to *Between the World and Me*. Any thoughts, feelings, dis/agreements, or questions you have?



**Kimberly P. Snipes**

***Board of Trustees, Secretary***

School District Five of Lexington & Richland Counties

e: [ksnipes@lexrich5.org](mailto:ksnipes@lexrich5.org)

[www.lexrich5.org](http://www.lexrich5.org)



**From:**  
**Sent:** Wed, 8 Feb 2023 21:19:50 +0000 (UTC)  
**To:** Rebecca Hines  
**Cc:** scfreedomcaucus@gmail.com; SCSupt Ed; Jay Kilmartin; Charlene Wessinger; Beth Carrigg; coreyallen0226@gmail.com; justice@palmettostatewatch.com; Matt Hogan; ksnipes@lexrich5.org; Theovertonreport  
**Subject:** Re: CRT Assignment - Lexington Richland School District 5

Thank you for your response Mrs. Blackburn Hines,

I absolutely understand discussing personnel in a public meeting and that policy may not allow this. I don't believe this is a personal issue because it doesn't matter who taught it, it's the fact of what was taught. However, I do believe there can be a discussion of the expectations and standards D5 has when it comes to this type of material. There are children who were harmed by this lesson if you read the emails and you say you did. Where is the representation to protect these children?

It happened and needs to be discussed publicly. I believe that late March or April is unacceptable and is totally disrespectful to these children and their parents.

You did lead the "porn in our school" (which is still there) discussion and the Primary Stakeholder Resolution and I am grateful for that.

I hope you will champion this effort as well by not allowing illegal divisive propaganda to be taught in our schools.

Thank You Again,

On Wednesday, February 8, 2023 at 03:08:14 PM EST, Rebecca Hines <rhines@lexrich5.org> wrote:

I appreciate your email.

Please understand that I share the concern. As a parent, if my child brought forth a similar situation, I would also want to demand answers.

However, as a board member, there are legal and policy standards that we are obligated to follow. First, we cannot discuss specific employees and their personnel situations. We have one employee – the superintendent. We do not have the authority, under policy guided by statutes, to investigate or discipline other district employees. Because of our quasi-judicial roles, we must refrain from being personally involved with talking specifics about a teacher/employee/student situation that may warrant a disciplinary action. If protocol isn't followed, the board members involved would have to be recused from any decisions/conversations relating to the situation. Due process requires that the district administration follow protocol when a complaint is made, and any potential disciplinary action is taken. While I had not been contacted by parents or students on this issue, and I haven't seen some of the emails below or any other excuses, I have heard from another board member about the concerns, including a demand for this to be put on executive session at the next meeting. As of the time of that request, the district was not aware of this situation, and it is my understanding that proper protocol has now been initiated and this specific situation and any violations relating to it are being addressed/reviewed. As such, the district administration must be given the sufficient opportunity to

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As always, you are welcome to reach out to me personally to discuss your concerns. I hope you have a blessed afternoon.

Kind regards,

Rebecca Blackburn Hines

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I will attach both videos, the assignment, the book (Between the World in Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates), and two emails from children in her class to a sitting school board member.

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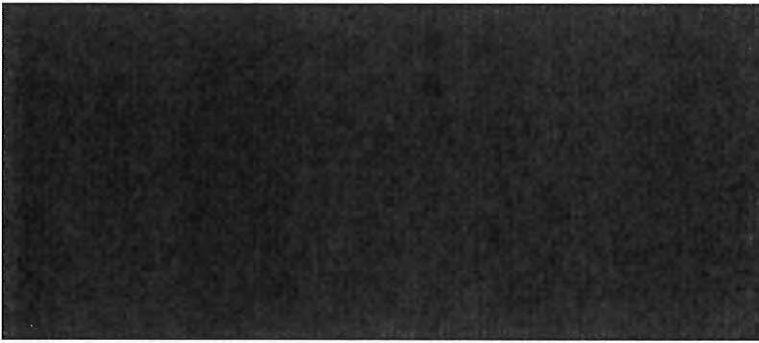
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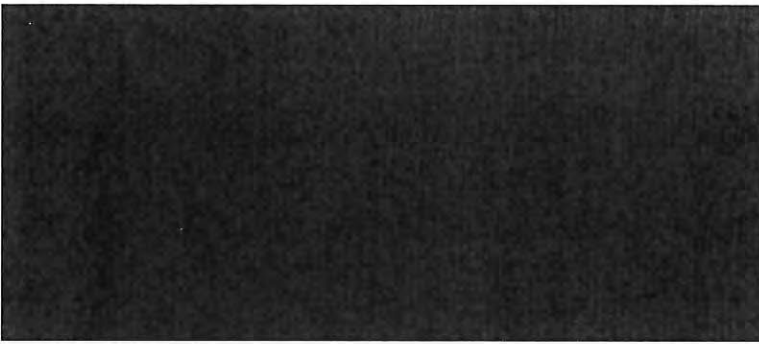
The Unequal Opportunity Race





**The Unequal Opportunity Race**

Systemic Racism Explained



**Systemic Racism Explained**

## Mrs. Woods AP Lang class

External Inbox

[REDACTED]@gmail.com

Sun, Feb 5, 8:51 PM (15 hours ago)

to me

Hi Mrs. Barnhardt,

First, I appreciate you looking into this matter regarding Mrs. Woods AP Lang class. I also appreciate my anonymity. This past week, my teacher presented two videos titled "The Unequal Opportunity Race" and "Systemic Racism Explained." Prior to showing these video clips, Mrs. Wood spent 20 minutes expressing her personal opinion, telling us she felt these videos to be true. Hearing her opinion and watching these videos made me feel uncomfortable. I actually felt ashamed to be Caucasian. Mrs. Wood told us these videos set the stage for the book, "Between The World and Me" by Ta-Nehisi Coates. These videos portrayed an inaccurate description of life from past centuries that she is trying to resurface. I don't feel as though it is right because those videos showed antiquated history. I understand in AP Lang, we are learning to develop an argument and have evidence to support it, yet this topic is too heavy to discuss.

Thank you!

Thoughts?

Thank you for your response.

Reply

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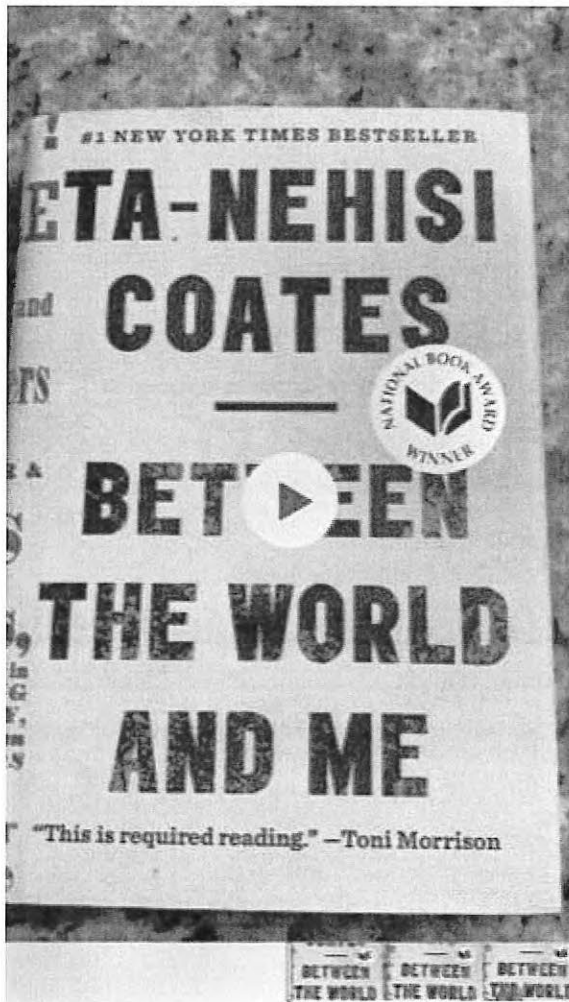
[REDACTED]

Forwarded message

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9:19



Between the World...



*Between the World and Me Pro-reading*

1. What do you understand from the "Unequal Opportunity Race" video?
2. What do you think it means to be systemically aware?
3. Describe your understanding of systemic racism.
4. Do you think racism is a pervasive problem in America? Why or why not?

9:19



Themes in Be...



"Literacy for freedom" is a concept foundational to the African American liberation tradition. Identify the types of literacy Coates received or pursued. How does Coates describe the American education system? What are the problems Coates identifies in the education system?

What is Coates' primary argument about education and its role in equality? Is he justified in this stance? Explain.

#### History

"You must struggle to truly remember the past in all its nuance, error, and humanity. You must resist the common urge toward the comforting narrative of divine law, toward fairy tales that imply some ineluctable justice. 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" (70)

A significant concern Coates addresses in the text is that of American history, specifically how historical facts are recounted and/or omitted and the purpose of this manipulation of truth. Who does Coates seem to believe controls the historical narrative and what does he purport are the consequences of that control?

Explain Coates' problem with America's tradition of retelling history. Explain your support or disagreement with his position on this topic.

#### Identity

"We did not choose our fences. They were imposed on us by Virginia planters obsessed with enslaving as many Americans as possible. They are the ones who came up with a one-drop rule that separated the "white" from the "black," even if it meant their own blue-eyed sons would live under the lash. The result is a people, a black people, who embody all physical varieties and whose life stories mirror this physical range. Through *The Mecca* I saw that we were, in our own segregated body politic, cosmopolitans. The black diaspora was not just our own world but, in so many ways, the Western world itself" (43)

Coates spends a significant amount of time discussing the complexities of race and identity in America. What does Coates say about the tendency of American history to discuss slavery as a mass of people rather than individuals who suffered the atrocities of being enslaved? How did this affect the identity of Black Americans?

Describe Coates' primary statement regarding identity and your position about his argument.



### Themes in *Between the World and Me*

#### The Black Body

"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 always remember that the sociology, the history, the economics, the graphs, the charts, the regressions all land, with great violence, upon the body" (18).

Throughout Coates' novel, he returns to the idea of the Black body, discussing this topic in specific and nuanced ways. How does Coates define and describe the Black body throughout the book? What does Coates mean when he refers to the idea of losing his own body?

Explain the validity of Coates' argument about the Black body as disposable?

#### The Dream

"The Dream thrives on generalization, on limiting the number of possible questions, on privileging immediate answers" (50).

First of all, what is "the Dream" (is it the American Dream as we typically know it or something else)? How did the dream come to be over the course of American history? Explain Coates' juxtaposition of "the Dream" with "the Struggle." How does this placement develop his position about accessibility and opportunity in America?

What is Coates' main argument regarding "the Dream" and is he right? Why or why not?

#### Education

"But the laws of the schools were aimed at something distant and vague. What did it mean to, as our elders told us, 'grow up and be somebody'? And what precisely did this have to do with an education rendered as rote discipline?" (25).

"Literacy for freedom" is a concept foundational to the African American liberation tradition. Identify the types of literacy Coates received or pursued. How does Coates describe the American education system? What are the problems Coates identifies in the education system?

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"You must struggle to truly remember the past in all its nuance, error, and humanity. You must resist the common urge toward the comforting narrative of divine law, toward fairy tales that imply some irrepressible justice. 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" (70).

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Explain Coates' problem with American tradition or teaching history. Explain your



### *Between the World and Me* Annotation Assignment

#### **Guidelines for annotations: FORMAT**

Your notes should be handwritten (not typed) and legible, and each note should be linked to a specific passage. Avoid mass underlining/highlighting that is unconnected to notes. You may take notes in any of the following ways:

1. Write notes on Post-its and attach to text.
2. Write notes on looseleaf or in a notebook. Be sure to write the page number of the passage that each note corresponds to. You may organize your notes by topic rather than by page number, but each note should be linked to a specific passage, indicated with a page reference.

#### **Guidelines for annotations: HOW MUCH SHOULD I ANNOTATE?**

Quality is more important than quantity, but I want to see that you are slowing down your reading to interrogate the text, note patterns, theorize about meaning, and add background information on allusions and definitions of unfamiliar words. This is a relatively short book, so I would expect to see notes from a majority of pages.

#### **Guidelines for annotations: CONTENT**

Aim for a variety of notes — see below. Make your notes meaningful to you. Some students find it helpful to develop a “key” or “legend” with a few symbols or color coding to help organize your notes.

1. Analytical/interpretive commentary.
2. Literary or rhetorical elements. Try to go a step further than identifying the element — try to theorize about the author’s purpose in using the device.
3. Questions — especially interpretive/analytical questions that might lead to interesting discussion.
4. Connections to other texts, courses, cultural touchstones, experiences, etc.
5. Connections within the book: echoes, repetitions, patterns. Identify, track, and theorize about the meaning of these emerging themes/patterns that unify the work.
6. Background information on allusions to people, history, literature, etc. Look up the allusion and add a few notes about the reference. For some allusions, you may want to dig deeper.
7. Definitions of unfamiliar words — especially words that don’t have enough context clues to help you make an educated guess about the word’s meaning. It’s not enough to circle words you don’t know — look them up and add a brief definition that makes sense in the context of the sentence.
8. Some conversational/personal responses.



9:18



BTWAM 22-2...



You will use this document to compose your thoughts on *Between the World and Me*. Please color code your entries to indicate the different sections of days of writings in this document. Each time you are asked to respond to a journal prompt, please add to this document rather than create a new one.

February 1st

Part 1: Identify two of the following themes from Coates' book to which you are most drawn:

- The Body
- The Dream
- Education and Inquiry
- History
- Identity

Part 2: Describe your initial reaction to *Between the World and Me*. Any thoughts, feelings, dis/agreements, or questions you have?





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**Sent:** Wed, 8 Feb 2023 15:08:08 -0500  
**To:**  
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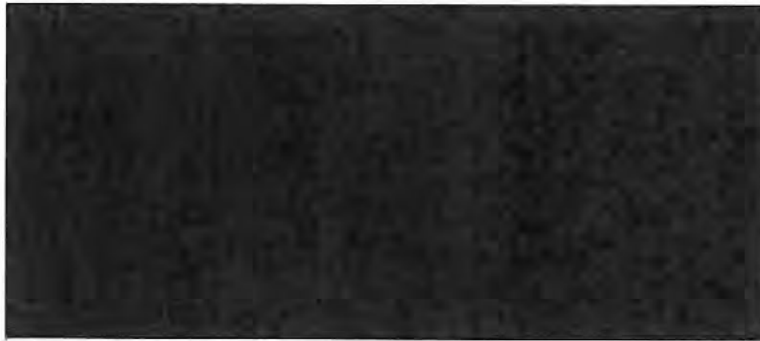
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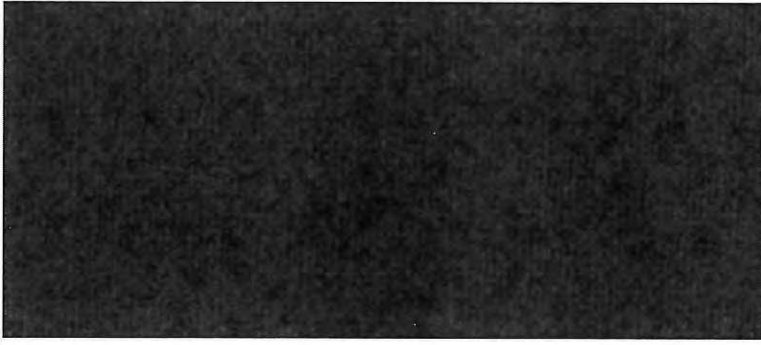
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#### The Unequal Opportunity Race



**The Unequal Opportunity Race**

#### Systemic Racism Explained



**Systemic Racism Explained**



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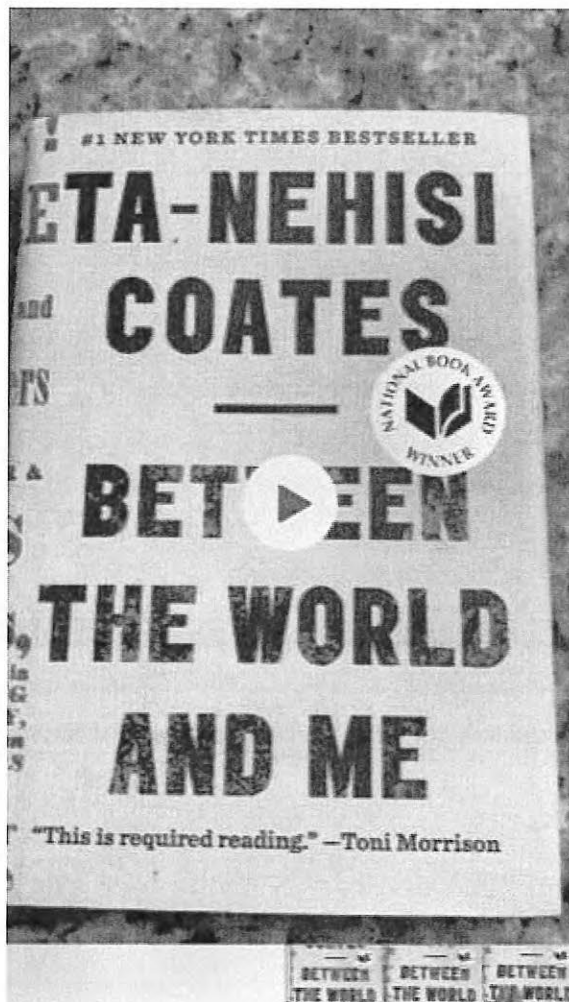
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Between the World...



*Between the World and Me* Pre-reading

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#### Identity

"We did not choose our fences. They were imposed on us by Virginia planters obsessed with enslaving as many Americans as possible. They are the ones who came up with a one-drop rule that separated the "white" from the "black," even if it meant their own blue-eyed sons would live under the lash. The result is a people, a black people, who embody all physical varieties and whose life stories mirror this physical range. Through *The Mecca* I saw that we were, in our own segregated body politic, cosmopolitans. The black diaspora was not just our own world but, in so many ways, the Western world itself" (43).

Coates spends a significant amount of time discussing the complexities of race and identity in America. What does Coates say about the tendency of American history to discuss slavery as a mass of people rather than individuals who suffered the atrocities of being enslaved? How did this affect the identity of Black Americans?

Describe Coates' primary statement regarding identity and your position about his argument.



### Themes in *Between the World and Me*

#### The Black Body

"But all our phrasing—race relations, racial chasms, 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 always remember that the sociology, the history, the economics, the graphs, the charts, the regressions all land, with great violence, upon the body" (18)

Throughout Coates' novel, he returns to the idea of the Black body, discussing this topic in specific and nuanced ways. How does Coates define and describe the Black body throughout the book? What does Coates mean when he refers to the idea of losing his own body?

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"The Dream thrives on generalization, on limiting the number of possible questions, on privileging immediate answers" (50).

First, of all, what is "the Dream" (is it the American Dream as we typically know it or something else)? How did the dream come to be over the course of American history? Explain Coates' juxtaposition of "the Dream" with "the Struggle." How does this placement develop his position about accessibility and opportunity in America?

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"But the laws of the schools were aimed at something distant and vague. What did it mean to, as our elders told us, 'grow up and be somebody'? And what precisely did this have to do with an education rendered as rote discipline?" (25)

"Literacy for freedom" is a concept foundational to the African American liberation tradition. Identify the types of literacy Coates received or pursued. How does Coates describe the American education system? What are the problems Coates identifies in the education system?

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"You must struggle to truly remember the past in all its nuance, error, and humanity. You must resist the common urge toward the comforting narrative of divine law, toward fairy tales that imply some irrepressible justice. 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" (70).

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Between the...



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9:18



BTWAM 22-2...



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**From:** Anna Miller  
**Sent:** Sat, 4 Feb 2023 08:46:07 -0500  
**To:** Neshunda Walters  
**Subject:** Fwd: CHS Parent Concerns  
**Attachments:** IMG\_6773.jpg, IMG\_6771.jpg, IMG\_6772.jpg, IMG\_6770.jpg, IMG\_6769.jpg, IMG\_3948.jpg, IMG\_3947.jpg, IMG\_3946.jpg

Let's discuss ASAP Monday morning to get started on this.  
Anna

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Akil Ross <[aross@lexrich5.org](mailto:aross@lexrich5.org)>  
**Date:** Fri, Feb 3, 2023 at 10:23 PM  
**Subject:** Fwd: CHS Parent Concerns  
**To:** Anna Miller <[ammiller@lexrich5.org](mailto:ammiller@lexrich5.org)>

I will need your help to review this matter in accordance with board policy.

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Elizabeth Barnhardt <[ebarnhardt@lexrich5.org](mailto:ebarnhardt@lexrich5.org)>  
**Date:** Fri, Feb 3, 2023 at 3:21 PM  
**Subject:** CHS Parent Concerns  
**To:** Akil Ross <[aross@lexrich5.org](mailto:aross@lexrich5.org)>

Dr. Ross,

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Regards,

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Lexington-Richland District 5 Board Trustee

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**Dr. Akil E. Ross, Sr.**

***Superintendent***

School District Five of Lexington & Richland Counties

o: 803.476.8169 e: [aross@lexrich5.org](mailto:aross@lexrich5.org)

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*"We love and grow our students!"*

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**Anna M. Miller**

***Chief of Academics and Administration***

School District Five of Lexington & Richland Counties

o: 803.476.8128 e: [ammiller@lexrich5.org](mailto:ammiller@lexrich5.org)

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*"We love and grow our students!"*



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9:19



Between the World...



*Between the World and Me Pre-reading.*

1. What do you understand from the "Unequal Opportunity Race" video?
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### Themes in *Between the World and Me*

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"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 always remember that the sociology, the history, the economics, the graphs, the charts, the regressions all land, with great violence, upon the body" (10).

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**From:** awhite@lexrich5.org on behalf of "Akil Ross" <aross@lexrich5.org>  
**Sent:** Mon, 6 Feb 2023 13:38:00 -0500  
**To:** Carolyn Ash; Tamara Turner  
**Subject:** Fwd: CHS Parent Concerns  
**Attachments:** IMG\_6773.jpg, IMG\_6771.jpg, IMG\_6772.jpg, IMG\_6770.jpg, IMG\_6769.jpg, IMG\_3948.jpg, IMG\_3947.jpg, IMG\_3946.jpg

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** **Elizabeth Barnhardt** <ebarnhardt@lexrich5.org>  
**Date:** Fri, Feb 3, 2023 at 3:21 PM  
**Subject:** CHS Parent Concerns  
**To:** Akil Ross <aross@lexrich5.org>

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9:19



Between the World...



*Between the World and Me Pre-reading*

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Themes in Be...



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BTWAM 22-2...



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**From:** Mary Wood  
**Sent:** Tue, 7 Feb 2023 22:35:30 -0500  
**To:** Michael Ames  
**Subject:** AP Lang Issue

Dear Mr. Ames,

I am writing to you out of an abundance of concern following a meeting regarding some parents' criticism over instruction in my Advanced Placement Language and Composition class at Chapin High School. AP Lang is a college-level course with standards dictated by the College Board. College Board assesses AP Lang students in an exam consisting of 45 multiple choice questions as well as the composition of three essays: Synthesis, Rhetorical Analysis, and Argument.

At this point in the school year, students in my AP Lang class should be diving deeper into a unit on Argument, which is historically the most challenging portion of the exam. To engage students appropriately, College Board expects teachers to provide challenging materials which offer opportunities for understanding perspectives with which they may not understand or agree. Because the questions and topics vary greatly, students require exposure to a wide-range of themes and issues, and this is a major factor for the selection of texts. Students MUST be able to engage with positions unfamiliar to them, with which they may not agree, and for which they are able to identify nuanced and complex understandings, while making connections with a variety of disciplines and topics.

Further, the materials presented must be aligned with the texts College Board provides in the exam. These are non-fictional and include speeches, letters, essays, advertisements, studies, biographical accounts, etc. Topics covered include those related to science, politics, history, current events, societal issues, culture, race, gender, and more. Thus, the texts we read in class are of the same content. This year, we have reviewed material from Donald Trump, Malcolm Gladwell, Lou Gehrig, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and many others. Though their perspectives are biased, as all are by nature of rhetoric, there has been no challenge until this topic regarding race was introduced.

In my class, we begin the Argument unit with instruction on the skills and concepts required by College Board, lead into pre-reading activities that include videos explaining the racial chasm in America, and enter into annotating a text by Ta-Nehisi Coates, whose book is an autobiographical letter to his son about Coates' perspective as a Black man in America. Before we read the book, students receive guidance that they will engage with a perspective they are likely unfamiliar with, which is the crux of civil discourse, and that the intention is not to sway their own perspective but to learn about someone else's. Authentic argument does not occur when one is engaged with someone who shares their own opinions, but when they apply critical thinking, listening, research, and problem-solving skills to discuss a topic with someone who holds different ideas than their own. Race is a multi-faceted and complex theme which allows for the development of the skills necessary for proper civil discourse.

As race is a theme with varied perspectives, and because alienation of students is a terrible way of ensuring participation in any class, I make every effort to invite all ideas and positions to the table. Teachers' opinions are not appropriate to this initiative; therefore, I am exceedingly cognizant of remaining neutral. Students should feel safe and nurtured in the exploration of this and any subject, and to suggest otherwise is counterproductive to academic success and professionalism in the classroom.

On February 2nd, the day after we began the pre-reading and initial annotation of this text, I received an email from a parent requesting a "conversation" about an "assignment." I responded via email shortly after the request was sent and called the parent after school was over, leaving a message as well as my cell phone number for her to return my call. To this date, I have heard nothing from this parent. On Friday, February 3rd, I received a call from the API for my school, Melissa Magee, asking me about an "assignment" I was teaching in AP Lang, with the information that a separate parent contacted her. On Monday, February 6th, as I was preparing to leave school to care for my children, I was informed I had a meeting with Ms. Magee at 4, which was after the school day and of which I was completely unaware. I remained at school, extremely worried about the nature of this conference, and I was not invited to join Ms. Magee and the secondary education director, Neshunda Walters, until 4:35.

My English department head, Tess Pratt, remained with me, equally concerned for the handling of this unexpected meeting, and when she requested to be present as a colleague aware of the curriculum, she was dismissed. Over the next hour, I was interrogated about my practice, instruction, professionalism, and intentions as a teacher in such a way that felt punitive and accusatory. I was shown board policy with the insinuation that I had acted with duplicity in teaching a controversial topic by not informing school leadership of my plans, even though this book was purchased by the school and I taught it with no complaint the prior year and with the knowledge of the previous API, Bonnie Moskos. Furthermore, as this country celebrates Black History Month, it is troublesome to suggest that teaching material related to racism and a book from the perspective of a Black man in America is controversial.

The decision from this meeting was that I pause instruction of Coates' book, even though time is of the essence in preparation for the Argument essay on the AP exam, and despite the lack of a formal challenge to the text by any of the concerned parents. I have spent countless hours in preparation for this unit, and to revamp instruction on terribly short notice would require extraneous amounts of time for research, planning, and development. Additionally, students will rightly question the removal of material from our intended path of study. All of this can detrimentally impact students' performance on the AP Lang exam and negatively affect the learning climate in a classroom that has, up until this point, seemingly flourished with mutual respect amongst students and a strong sense of educational community.

Moreover, students will determine that material that they do not care to learn can be removed with a simple call from their parents to complain about their teachers. The implications of this are far-reaching and devalue the integrity of teachers and education. At a time when educators are fleeing the classroom because of a lack of respect, this action only validates their intentions to seek employment elsewhere.

In my previous experiences teaching this course, my students have performed exceedingly well. In the 2020 administration, 83% of my students scored a 3 or higher on the exam. In the 2022 administration, my passage rate was 82.6%. To offer perspective, the global passage rate 2020 was 62.1%, and the global passage rate in 2022 was 55.7%. I find it disheartening that a teacher whose passage rate is beneficial to not only her students' academic success but also the district's report card is being treated with such flagrant disregard. We are at a crucial moment in American education. To take the anecdotal accounts of a few students and place them above the integrity of educators is dangerous to academia. In AP Lang, we teach our students the value of understanding a situation with thorough research and discernment before making crucial decisions such as the one made to prevent me from moving forward with a unit of study. I seriously hope the perspectives of teachers are given due credence.

Sincerely,  
Mary Wood