



Counternarratives and *Hamilton*

A project by Mark McLean



Background

- Dr. Ilten-Gee and I have been building on the idea of counternarratives in New Media for awhile.
- We did a small test run of connecting *Hamilton* with counternarratives in the 20-21 school year.
- Last year, we launched a research project on a larger scale project, incorporating elements of Digital Media Literacy.
- Conclusion: counternarratives represent a wonderful, concrete, messy tool to dive into the complexity of anti-oppressive representation.

Definition of Counternarratives

“Counterstories resist an oppressive identity and attempt to replace it with one that commands respect.

Master narratives are the often archetypal stories ‘found lying about in our culture that serve as summaries of socially shared understanding’ (Lindemann Nelson 2001, p. 6)” (60)

“[I]dentity construction is an ongoing, dialectical, and reflective process. Youth who are oppressed by master narratives are often compelled to develop a counternarrative that depicts them fully, accurately, and fairly” (61)

Question

- What “master narratives,” and possible counternarratives, are you aware of?

The *Hamilton* Project



- Guiding question for the unit: Is *Hamilton* an effective counternarrative?
- The answer kept shifting, and eventually landed on a clear no
 - Sexism
 - Silence on slavery

Student Focus on Sally Hemmings

- Sally Hemmings is only recognized in one line: “Sally, be a lamb darling, won’t you open it?”
- Representation of
 - Historical silence
 - Slavery
 - Sexism

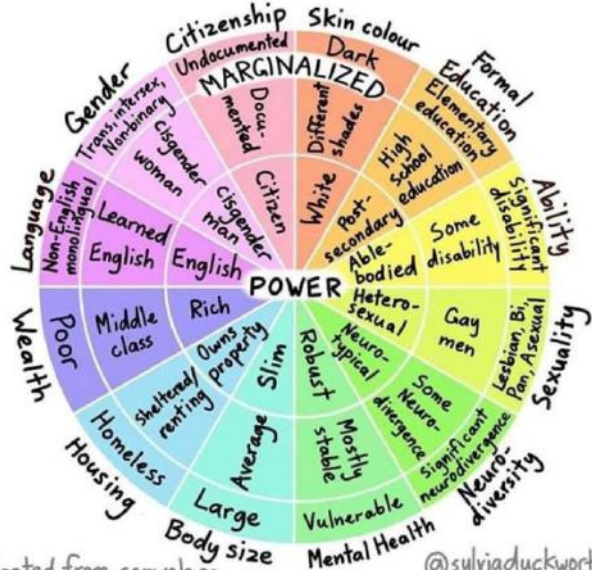


Summary Counternarrative Project

- Full handout can be [found here](#) (feel free to use at your discretion)
- Students chose an original story they wanted to retell (could be a personal one, or one from popular culture) as a counternarrative
- Could be individual or in a group, and could take whatever form they wanted

Helpful resources

WHEEL OF POWER/PRIVILEGE



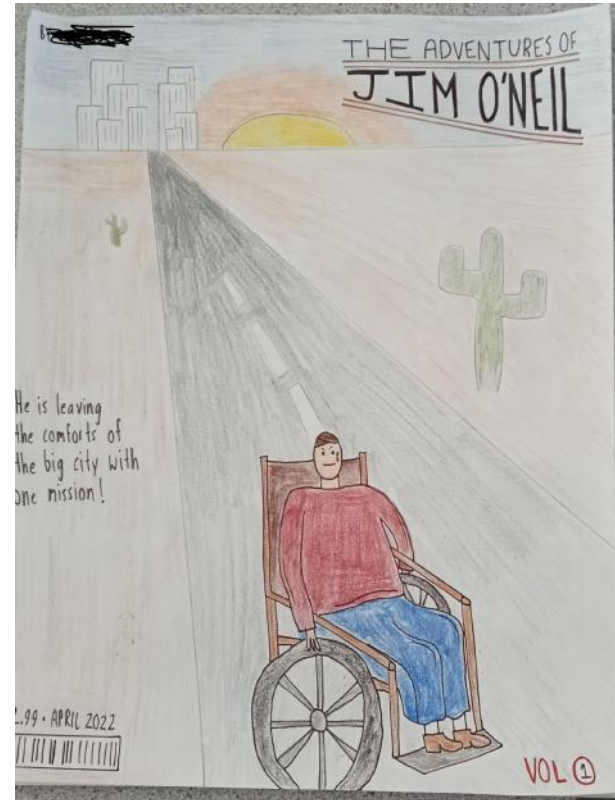
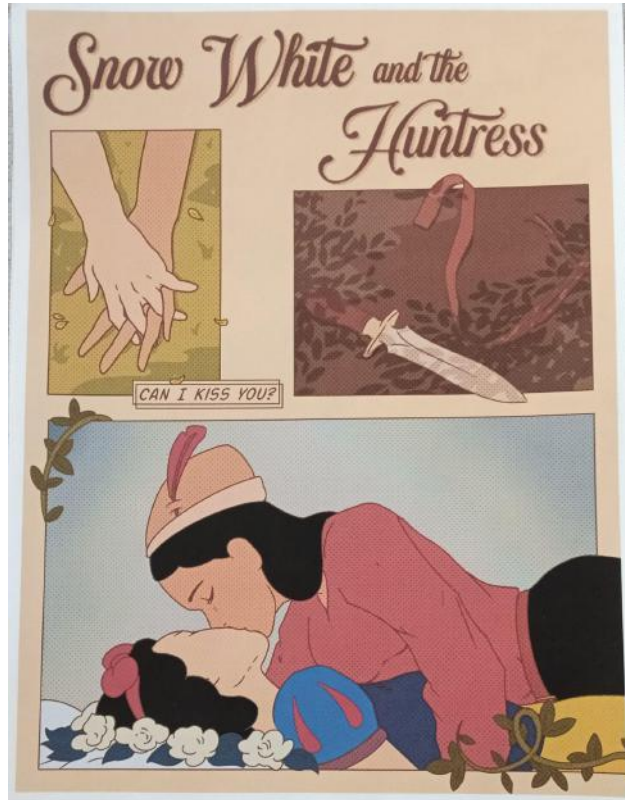
Adapted from ccrweb.ca

@sylviaaduckworth

["The danger of a single story"](#) - TED Talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

["I'm not your inspiration, thank you very much"](#) - TED Talk by Stella Young

Student Examples



What's next

- What can I expand this to?
- How does this fit into my responsibilities around Reconciliation?
- How do I help students identify a master narrative?
- Who is allowed to tell which story?
- This meets many of the criteria of Digital Media Literacy, but how can I encourage thoughtful distribution and invention?