

## Lesson 13: Race

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What's on for today and why:

Race is an issue that really can't be ignored when reading this novel, but the real question is does race really matter? What is Golden really trying to say about race and how do we know?

What to do:

1) Ask the students if race is an issue in the novel, since the answer will be a yes (if it isn't you should convince them that it is) ask for some examples of when race becomes a real issue. List them on the board. There should probably be at least these things on the list: black women in college, familial relationships, and black/white romantic relationships.

2) Go to each issue individually and ask for examples from the novel that display each one. Ask the students if they think that the book would be any different if the three main characters had been white instead of black? This should spawn another conversation that will probably take up the rest of the period (though you should do your best to steer it in the direction of why is Golden addressing the race issue and what is she saying about race in our society)?

3) For homework ask each of the students to write a narrative as someone else that deals with either race or gender.

How did it go?

Students usually have a great deal to say on the subject of race. You need to let them go and only step in when someone is saying something harmful or straying a little too far from the subject at hand. If people are a little hesitant talking about racial issues you may want to lay down a few ground rules (i.e. no derogatory names, and keep all examples centered in the novel). Although we'd like to think otherwise some students may be a little racist and we don't want them to bring personal experience into the discussion (though this is probably the only time all semester I would say that.) The homework will allow them to be a little more free in their expression without anything too controversial being said in an open forum.