



Saint Paul Public Library

Read Brave 2021

Community and Educational Curriculum

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for the

Saint Paul Public Library and the **Read Brave** community and school engagement

SPPL Representatives

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Table of Contents



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PUBLIC LIBRARY

	1
<i>Saint Paul Public Library</i>	1
<i>About Read Brave</i>	3
Grade Levels: 6 to 12, Adult (Community, University or College).....	3
<i>Enduring Understandings</i>	3
<i>Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) Benchmarks and Standards 2020</i>	4
English Language Arts (ELA).....	4
Grades 6-8.....	4
Grades 9-12	4
<i>Introduction to the Read Brave Book</i>	5
<i>The Stars and the Blackness Between Them</i>	5
<i>Text Pairings for this book</i>	6
Gender dynamics in relationships.....	6
Homosexuality.....	6
Solitary Confinement.....	6
African American Authors.....	6
<i>Chapters (Section Review)</i>	7
<i>The Stars and the Blackness Between Them</i>	7
<i>Part 1: Curriculum</i>	8
<i>Part 2: Curriculum: Questions for Higher Order Thinking</i>	9
Writing Prompts and Discussion Questions.....	9
Questions for Classroom and Book Club Discussions	10
<i>Geography</i>	10
<i>Part 3: Curriculum - Writing Prompts</i>	11

About Read Brave

Read Brave Saint Paul is a new twist on the traditional city one-book program.

Rather than a single book, the program revolves around a common theme relevant to our city. All readers — from our youngest children to our elders — are encouraged to engage in the program through reading, discussion, programming, and action. The 2021 Read Brave theme is “*Owning Our Stories: Rising Together for a Better Saint Paul.*”

Grade Levels: 6 to 12, Adult (Community, University or College)

Ages: 13-18 (adults)

To be ready for college, workforce training, work and life in a technological society, community members and students need the ability to gather, comprehend, evaluate, synthesize, and report on information and ideas, to conduct original research in order to answer questions or solve problems, and to analyze and create a high volume and extensive range of print and nonprint texts in media forms old and new. This Read Brave curriculum is designed to be used in grades 6-12 reading, adult library community book clubs, assigned reading, choice reading as a guide to *higher order thinking* (HOT), discernment, and to create research-ready scholars and reading-ready community members that seek out knowledge to become lifelong learners via the written text.

Enduring Understandings

Book: *The Stars and the Blackness Between Them* by Junauda Petrus

- Readers analyze an author’s choice of setting, action, and characters for impact on the reader.
- Community members, adults, and secondary scholars can identify how authors use words to convey an attitude about the subject and evoke a sense of wonder in the reader.
- Community members, adults, and secondary scholars analyze an author’s use of understatement, satire, or sarcasm to point out an injustice or problem.
- Community members, adults, and secondary scholars analyze multiple renditions of a story for their treatment of, and empathy for, a subject.
- Community members, adults, and secondary scholars analyze multiple culture’s view of a subject for their treatment of, and empathy for, a subject.

Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) Benchmarks and Standards 2020

English Language Arts (ELA)

Grades 6-8

Key Ideas and Details

- **6.4.3.3** Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution. (Added by author: Make audio and visual representations of story and characters.)
- **7.4.3.3** Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot). (Added by author: To include: Being able to complete free-writes about a text chapter to show gained knowledge.)
- **8.4.3.3** Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision. (Added by author: To include: Setting, mood, and literary devices used in a text that provide meaning for said text.)

Grades 9-12

Key Ideas and Details

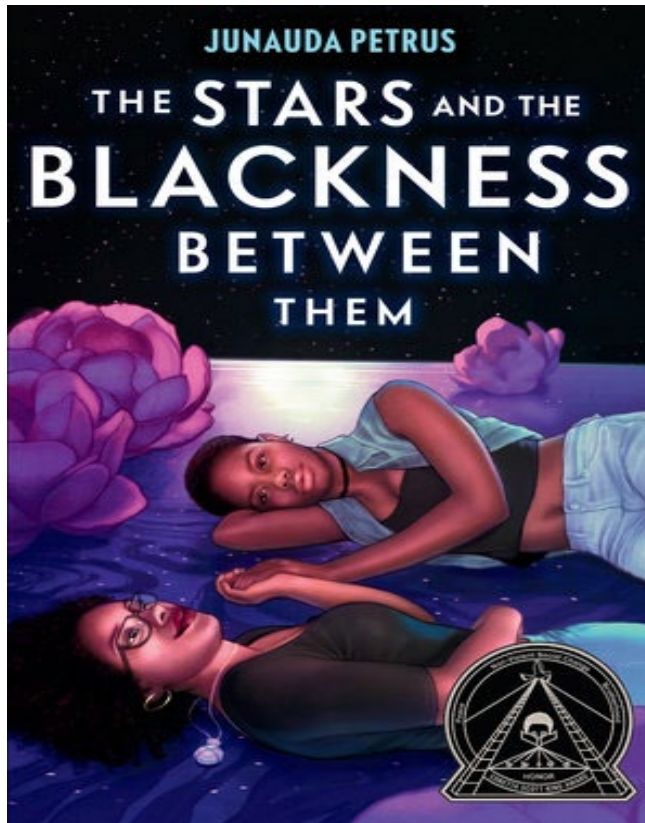
9 and 10

- **9.4.3.3** Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.
- **9.4.4.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

11 and 12

- **11.4.3.3** Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).
- **11.4.4.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)

Introduction to the Read Brave Book



The Stars and the Blackness Between Them

by Junauda Petrus

“Junauda Petrus’s debut brilliantly captures the distinctly lush and lyrical voices of Mabel and Audre as they conjure a love that is stronger than hatred, prison, and death and as vast as the blackness between the stars” (Goodreads, 2020).

Told in two distinct and irresistible voices, Junauda Petrus’s bold and lyrical debut is the story of two black girls from very different backgrounds finding love and happiness in a world that seems determined to deny them both. Trinidad. Sixteen-year-old **Audre** is despondent, having just found out she’s going to be sent to live in America with her father because her strictly religious mother caught her with her secret girlfriend, the pastor’s daughter. Audre’s grandmother **Queenie** (*a former dancer who drives a white convertible Cadillac and who has a few secrets of her own*) tries to reassure her

granddaughter that she won’t lose her roots, not even in some place called *Minneapolis*. “*America-have-dey-spirits too, believe me,*” she tells Audre. Minneapolis. Sixteen-year-old **Mabel** is lying on her bed, staring at the ceiling and trying to figure out why she feels the way she feels—about her ex **Terrell**, about her girl **Jada** and that moment they had in the woods, and about the vague feeling of illness that’s plagued her all summer. Mabel’s reverie is cut short when her father announces that his best friend and his just-arrived-from-Trinidad daughter are coming for dinner. Mabel quickly falls hard for Audre and is determined to take care of her as she tries to navigate an American high school. But their romance takes a turn when test results reveal exactly why Mabel has been feeling low-key sick all summer and suddenly it’s Audre who is caring for Mabel as she faces a deeply uncertain future.

Text Pairings for this book

Gender dynamics in relationships

- [“I Want a Wife”](#) by Judy Brady and [“This is How You Lose Her”](#) (page 13-18). Use of N-word by Latino friends to refer to a Latino - interesting discussion possibilities) by Junot Diaz or [“Sexy”](#) by Jhumpa Lahiri
- Gail Rubin [The Traffic in Women - notes on the Political Economy of Sex](#). 2014. PDF,

Homosexuality

- [“The Bridegroom”](#) by Ha Jin
- [“Gay Revolutionary”](#) by Michael Swift (check content first)
- [“Giovanni’s Room”](#) by James Baldwin

Solitary Confinement

- [“Cell One”](#) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and [this short piece on solitary confinement in The Onion](#)

African American Authors

- [How it Went Down](#) - by Kekla Magoon
- [I am Not Sidney Poitier](#) by Percival Everett,

Are there any texts you have read that remind you of this book? Write the title and author’s below. If not, discover new books that you might want to read after reading this book and write them below:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Chapters (Section Review)

The Stars and the Blackness Between Them

by Junauda Petrus

MLA Citation: Petrus, Junauda. *The Stars and the Blackness Between Them*. New York, Dutton Books, 2019.

Prologue

Page 49-56: Mabel

Page 113-116: Audre

Page 57-64: Mabel

Page 117-119: Mabel

Cancer Season (Poem)

Page 64-70: Mabel

Page 71-83: Audre

Page 3-9: Audre

Page 10-19: Mabel

Page 20-34: Audre

Page 35-37: Audre

Page 40--48: Mabel

Virgo Season (Poem)

Page 86-90: Mabel

Page 91-104: Mabel

Page 105-109: Audre

Page 110-112: Mabel

Libra Season (Poem)

Page 122-124: Mabel

Page 125-128: Afua

Page 129-137: Audre

Page 138-142: Mabel

Leo Season (Poem)

Page 143-144: Mabel

Page 145-151: Mabel

Page 152-154: Mabel

Capricorn Season (Poem)

Page 216-217: Afua

Page 218-219: Mabel

Page 267-279: Mabel

Page 280-285: Mabel

Page 286-292: Audre

Page 293-299: Audre

Scorpio Season (Poem)

Page 157-162: Afua

Page 163-168: Mabel

Aquarius Season (Poem)

Page 221-231: Audre

Page 232-234: Mabel

Gemini Season (poem)

Page 302-306: Mabel

Page 307-308: Audre

Sagittarius Season

(Poem)

Page 171-175: Mabel

Page 176-182: Mabel

Page 183-187: Audre

Page 188-200: Mabel

Page 201-204: Mabel

Page 205-210: Mabel

Page 211-213: Audre

Pisces Season (Poem)

Page 236-239: Mabel

Page 240-244: Audre

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Aries Season

Page 247-253: Mabel

Page 254-264: Audre

Taurus Season

The Stars and the Blackness Between Them PLAYLIST (Music)

Main Characters

Sixteen-year-old **Audre (protagonist)**

Audre's grandmother **Queenie**

Sixteen-year-old **Mabel**

Terrell

Jada

Robyn, Afua, and Ursa

Part 1: Curriculum

Book Report Activities 6-12 (and adult/community book club)

The Stars and the Blackness Between Them by Junauda Petrus

The book, “*The Stars and the Blackness Between Them*” provides an opportunity for a rich engagement of the text. Here are some suggested activities for 6-12 classrooms and Community Book Clubs.

1. Character Alliteration

Create original alliteration (repeating the same starting letter or sound) for three characters using each character’s first or last name with a word that fittingly describes the character. **Example:** *Harry spent hairy hours helping Hermione and Hagrid.*

2. Conflicts

Write all the types of conflict that apply to your book and the specific characters or things that were in conflict. Person vs. person/people Person vs. society/most people Person vs. nature Person vs. him/herself.

3. Book Review

Compose a short review and critique offering your overall opinion of the book you read. In an organized paragraph, provide examples and evidence for what you liked or disliked about the book. (Use MLA format for all written pieces.)

4. Original Title and Book Cover

Create a brand-new title for the book you read. Also, design a completely new and appropriate book cover for your book. You may illustrate the most exciting, funny, or emotional part of the book, or make your drawing more profound by adding thematic or symbolic elements to your cover art.

5. Create Character Similes and Metaphors

Create three original similes or metaphors by comparing each character to something unlike him/herself but that makes sense when you explain it. **Example:** [Character’s name] was a/ was like a _____ because _____.

6. Protagonist/Hero Social Media Page

Identify the main character of the story, who the story is mainly about, or the hero. Create a detailed social media page for the protagonist, including five posts this character would share with his/her friends.

Part 2: Curriculum: Questions for Higher Order Thinking

The Stars and the Blackness Between Them by Junauda Petrus

This book, “*The Stars and the Blackness Between Them*” and the pairing text listed earlier provides opportunities for discussion-based discourse about the book, its author (Author's Voice), setting, mood, and themes. Here are some chapter and book-specific writing prompts, higher order thinking leads, and discussion questions to help you do a deep dive to deconstruct the book.

Writing Prompts and Discussion Questions

1. **Question** (*Writing Prompt or Discussion*): In the book *Queenie*, Audre’s grandmother made the call to send Audre to Minneapolis (Minnesota) because of her relationship with Mabel. Remember, Queenie - who might have a few secrets of her own was trying to save Audre...from what?

Before you answer, read the paragraph below; keep in mind the significance of “repeating” and draw out what Queenie is doing by sending Audre away.

Academic Resource for High Order Thinking

Judith Butler’s “Performing Acts and Gender Constitution” examines the author’s concept of “gender acts.” According to Butler, gender is not inherent but rather “an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts” (392). “Gender acts” essentially refers to the way we perform gender; it is not inherent, rather it is constructed. It is not stable and changes come from “the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style” (392). “Gender acts” are behaviors and actions that have been falsely attributed to the body but in reality are socially constructed

Tags: Life Lessons, Relationships, Family, Attraction, Change

2. **Question** (*Writing Prompt or Discussion*): *What feelings did this book evoke for you?*

*Before you answer, read the **paragraph below**; keep in mind the significance of the desires of the id and the super-ego. Think about if the super-ego can stop you from doing certain things that your id may want you to do, what is Audre’s motivation to continue with her relationships?*

Id, ego and super-ego are the three parts of the psychic apparatus defined in Sigmund Freud's structural model of the psyche; they are the three theoretical constructs in terms of whose activity and interaction mental life is described. According to this model of the psyche, the id is the set of uncoordinated instinctual trends; the super-ego plays the critical and moralizing role; and the ego is the organized, realistic part that mediates between the desires of the id and the super-ego. The super-ego can stop you from doing certain things that your id may want you to do.

3. **Question** (*Writing Prompt or Discussion*): **Othering**

The term “Othering” refers to the processes by which societies and groups exclude those whom they want to subordinate (make someone feel they are less than others). Othering creates contrasting

differences that involves producing narratives (stories) and images about a group of people that demonizes or dehumanizes them. It provides the justification to treat these Others as inferior (less than).

Based on the book and the point of view of the author, compare and contrast the term “othering” using this worksheet to explain in your own words with meanings, feelings, and questions you might still have about othering.

Link to “[Othering Worksheet](https://cutt.ly/4hYZwBS)” Please make a copy of this for your file.
(URL: <https://cutt.ly/4hYZwBS>)

Questions for Classroom and Book Club Discussions

- *Did this book seem realistic?*
- *How well do you think the author built the world in the book?*
- *Did the characters seem believable to you? Did they remind you of anyone?*
- *Did the book’s pace seem too fast/too slow/just right?*
- *If you were to write fanfic about this book, what kind of story would you want to tell?*
- *What aspects of the author’s story could you most relate to?*
- *How honest do you think the author was being?*
- *What gaps do you wish the author had filled in? Were there points where you thought he shared too much?*
- *Think about the other people in the book besides the author. How would you feel to have been depicted in this way?*
- *Why do you think the author chose to tell this story?*

Geography



Trinidad and Tobago is a dual-island Caribbean nation near Venezuela, with distinctive Creole traditions and cuisines. Trinidad’s capital, Port of Spain, hosts a boisterous carnival featuring calypso and soca music. Numerous bird species inhabit sanctuaries such as the Asa Wright Nature Centre. The smaller island of Tobago is known for its beaches and the Tobago Main Ridge Forest Reserve, which shelters hummingbirds. Distance from Trinidad and Tobago to Minnesota is **5,091 km.**

Part 3: Curriculum - Writing Prompts

The Stars and the Blackness Between Them by Junauda Petrus

A. Writing and Inquiry Assignments

Browse the layout of the book “The Stars and the Blackness Between Them” check out the ‘section titles’ — and everything in between.

Some topics to address (though you may address more):

- How are the readings organized?
- What does it include, in addition to the chapter titles?
- What might be the value of this “extra” material to a student or an instructor?
- What do you see as possible strengths and/or weaknesses of this text and the way it’s organized?

Support your statements with examples, as needed, to clarify and develop your point.

B. Why are they saying this?

For Paper 2, write an essay in which you explore a tension discussed in **The Stars and the Blackness Between Them**. This should be a tension that relates to a larger conversation in the United States. Explain, for members of our class or book club if this story can relate to anything happening currently in society today?

C. Interview (Peer Group or Book Club)

You will work with a small group to identify an issue in the book (*life-lessons, utilitarianism, etc.*) and choose a knowledgeable person to interview about that issue. Each member of the group will be responsible for asking questions about some aspect of the issue (in other words, you’ll decide on subtopics). You’ll work together to plan and conduct the interview, and then each member of the group will individually write an essay on his or her subtopic. (See course schedule for a more specific breakdown on individual responsibilities and group responsibilities.)

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