

# TWISTED

## EDUCATOR MATERIALS

### WHO CAN USE THIS BOOK AND GUIDE?

High school educators may find *Twisted* and the accompanying resources useful in the following ways:

- to support a whole-class assignment
- to support small-group work
- as part of a unit of study about self-expression, memoir, and/or Black voices

#### **A Note About Language**

There are a few instances of curse words and a racial slur within *Twisted*.

### CORE LESSON PLAN

Depending on how the book is being taught, students could be asked to respond to these questions about the whole text or about a smaller assigned section, such as a few chapters.

#### **Comprehension Questions:**

- In writing or discussion with a partner, summarize the text.
- What is the central idea of the text?
- What facts does the author share about himself in the text?

#### **Analysis Questions:**

- Why do you think the author wrote this text? What was his purpose?
- What claims does the author make in the text? How does he support these claims?



## DISCUSSION TOPICS

- On page 11, the author describes himself as a “little brown suburban robot.” Why do you think he describes himself this way? Do you agree with this assessment? Why or why not?
- The author explains that it took him a long time to decide to have dreadlocks. Why did Ashe take so long to make this choice? Have you ever made a decision that took a long time to make? What was it? Why did it take so long to decide?
- On page 29, the author makes the distinction between something that is a “favorite” and something that may be “best.” How does the author differentiate between these two ideas? Do you think these two words (“favorite” and “best”) mean the same thing, or are they different to you as well?
- One topic explored in *Twisted* is the connection some people make between a person’s appearance and profession (for instance, saying that someone looks “professorial”). How do such judgments impact people? Consider both the person making the judgment and the person being judged. What factors contribute to such judgments?
- On page 67, Ashe says that he has “always admired nonconformists.” What does it mean to be a nonconformist? What are the benefits and challenges associated with conformity and nonconformity? On page 217, the author notes that conformity is not only something that comes from external pressure but can also come “from within.” How does Ashe support this claim? Do you agree? Why or why not?
- On page 104 the author asks, “What does it mean to think in terms of ‘getting away’ with hair and attire?” Discuss this idea as a class. In what situations might a person or group consider this question?
- On page 160, the author states, “Identity is not substitutive. Identity is additive.” What does Ashe mean by this? How does he support this assertion? Do you agree with Ashe? Why or why not?

## CONNECTIONS TO STANDARDS

CCS Standards for ELA:

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.1:**

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.2:**

Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.3:**

Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.

## RESEARCH TOPICS

- Research the history of hair styling and popular hair styles from different eras. How have people expressed themselves through their hair?
- Research the history of Rastafari. How did it originate and how has it changed over time?
- On page 36, the author talks about evidence of dreadlocks in ancient cultures. Choose one of the cultures discussed and gather more details about this hairstyle within that culture.
- Investigate the ways that people have been discriminated against or denied opportunities because of their hair. For example, consider school dress codes as they have been applied to hairstyles.
- Research a way other than dreadlocks that religious or cultural expression or observance is shown through the way people wear their hair. How is that hair choice seen by people from within and outside that religious or cultural group?
- On page 86, the author references the work of Madam C.J. Walker. Research Walker and explain her accomplishments and impact on others.

## CONNECTIONS TO STANDARDS

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.5:**

Analyze in detail how an author's ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text (e.g., a section or chapter).

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.6:**

Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1:**

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.7:**

Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

## WRITING TOPICS

- On page 22, the author states “Race is always a factor, in everything.” How does Ashe support this claim? How do his life experiences lead him to this assertion?
- On page 25, Ashe explores the idea of “cultural chaos.” What does he mean by this? What are some other examples that could fall under the category of “cultural chaos”?
- On page 60, the author writes, “I love black hair...because it can be ‘read’ three related ways: the aesthetic, the political, and the interpersonal.” Analyze this assertion, explaining what is meant by it and how the author supports it in the text.
- At various points in the text the author discusses his “war with The Pure” (p.99). Explain what Ashe means by “The Pure” and why he struggles with this concept.
- On page 145, the author contemplates being an *iconoclast*. What is an iconoclast? Based on what the author shares about his life and thoughts, do you think he is an iconoclast? Why or why not?
- On page 185 the author says, “I wish I could shrink myself to tiny size and stroll my head like I walk the earth.” Write a paragraph in which you imagine yourself as either much smaller or much larger than you actually are. Describe your observations of the world.

## CONNECTIONS TO STANDARDS

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.9:**

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2:**

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1:**

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

## CREATIVE CONNECTIONS

- On pages 14-15, the author describes his family getting ready for the day as a “morning carnival” and his son as “subtle as a swinging sledgehammer.” Write a description of a person or place in your life using figurative language.
- On page 18, the author imagines himself as a guest on a television show. Imagine that you are going to be featured on a television program. Write the script for a scene of this show. It could be an interview program or one where you perform as a character in a story.
- Throughout the book the author is in search of his signature style. What is your signature style (or what would you like it to be)? Draw the elements of your signature style.
- On page 155, the author shares his realization that the way Black hair is worn is impacted by regional differences. Choose an aspect of personal style or fashion and create a collage highlighting the way it might be displayed in different geographic areas.

## SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING QUESTIONS

- Does the appearance of your hair impact how you feel? Why or why not?
- The author talks about finding his people (p.10). Who are your people? How do you feel when you are with them?
- The author describes being so focused on dreadlocks that he starts seeing them everywhere. Have you ever been so preoccupied with an idea that you seem to notice examples of it everywhere? What was the idea, and how did it feel to focus on it in this way?
- The author struggles with trying to match his outer appearance to the way he feels on the inside. Have you ever felt this way? When do you most feel that your outside and inside match? When do they least match?
- On page 152 the author says, “I believe most people struggle, either consciously or unconsciously, with being either too conciliatory or not conciliatory enough.” Do you agree? Why or why not? Describe a time when you felt this struggle.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## FILM/VIDEO

**100 Years of Black Hair.** Allure, 2017. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4vd-AP\\_q2r4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4vd-AP_q2r4)

- A look at popular hairstyles worn by Black women in the last ten decades.

**Good Hair.** Directed by Jeff Stilson and produced by Chris Rock. 2009.

- This documentary, focused on the ways Black women have thought about hair, was originally shown at the Sundance Film Festival.

**My Nappy Roots A Journey Through Black Hair-itage.** Directed by Regina Kimbell, Jay Bluemke. 2010.

- Examines Black hair in the contexts of history, culture, and politics.

## BOOKS

**Byrd, Ayana and Tharps, Lori.** *Hair Story: Untangling the Roots of Black Hair in America.* St. Martin's Griffin, 2014.

- An exploration of Black hair throughout history, seen on macro, micro, political, and personal scales.

**Clarke, Olivia V.G.** *Black Girl, White School: Thriving, Surviving, and "No, You Can't Touch My Hair" An Anthology.* LifeSlice Media, 2020.

- A collection of poems, essays, and stories for young readers written by Black girls about their experiences with hair, racism, and growing up in the United States.

**Coates, Ta-Nehisi.** *The Beautiful Struggle: A Father, Two Sons, and an Unlikely Road to Manhood.* Spiegel & Grau, 2008.

- A memoir that tells the story of a Black man—Vietnam veteran and Black Panther—and his work to raise two sons in the United States in the 1980s.

**Dabiri, Emma.** *Twisted: The Tangled History of Black Hair Culture.* Harper Perennial, 2020.

- A memoir that explores one young woman's experience with Black hair and how hair has been used as an avenue for discrimination throughout history.

## BOOKS (CONT.)

**Jones, Saeed. *How We Fight for Our Lives: A Memoir*. Simon & Schuster, 2019.**

- A poetic, coming-of-age memoir about a young, gay, Black man living in the Southern United States trying to find a place for himself.

**Reed, Christina Hammonds. *The Black Kids*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2022.**

- A novel that follows a young, sheltered Black girl during the 1992 Rodney King riots and explores what is “normal” and the question of who is “us” and who is “them.”

**Robinson, Phoebe. *You Can't Touch My Hair: And Other Things I Still Have to Explain*. Plume, 2016.**

- An essay collection from comedian Phoebe Robinson about Blackness, feminism, prejudice, and their place in modern pop culture.

**Thomas, Angie. *The Hate U Give*. Balzer + Bray, 2017.**

- A novel that follows one Black girl's experience with income inequality, discrimination, and racism as she witnesses the effects of police brutality firsthand.

## WEBSITES

**Black Hair Syllabus:** <https://www.blackhairsyllabus.com/>

- A website that offers a great breadth of resources regarding Black hair, from health and wellness recommendations and educational articles to music and media suggestions.

**CROWN Act:** <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/2116/text>

- A proposed act in the U.S. Government that aims to prohibit discrimination based on an individual's texture or style of hair.

**NAACP Legal Defense Fund:** <https://www.naacpldf.org/natural-hair-discrimination/>

- The NAACP Legal Defense Fund's resource page about natural hair discrimination.

