

Representation 2: *Payback Time* by King Cosmos Association for Media Literacy - Study Guide

Introduction:

Payback Time is a song by King Cosmos, a Trinidadian-Canadian calypso artist and teacher. The song is a comment on the centuries-old conflicts between Black and White cultures in the US, and in particular the fact that America's wealth from 1619 - 1865, two hundred and forty-six years, was created in large part by the slave labour of kidnapped Africans. *Payback Time* states that the time has come for reparations, or the transfer of finances from the descendants of masters to the descendants of slaves.

The song is arguably a history and music course in and of itself. We are going to discuss the lyrics and the music together because each influences our understanding and appreciation of the other.

Payback Time is set in the first part of the 21st century and begins when Colin Powell, then the US secretary of state, denies that reparation is necessary. It includes samples of speeches from peace-activist Martin Luther King Jr. and revolution-activist Malcolm X as well as lyrics in African.

Click to download the lyrics:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tt96XrXyQhE&list=PLrHXp53dFdOrdJj383AQAnBRiqorMj54O>

Classroom Activities

Step One:

Read Introductory Notes by *The Association for Media Literacy*

Listen to the song.

Choral reading of the song.

Step Two:

Make up to 10 annotations on this text.

3 - 5 lower-order thinking notes (see * below)

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***Lower-Order Thinking Notes**

Defines unfamiliar words / terms

Paraphrases information clearly

Summarizes information

Lists or identifies steps, reasons, literary devices

Identifies *who, what, where*

****Higher-Order Thinking Notes**

Makes a connection to another text

Makes a connection to a personal experience

Reacts to an idea or event or information

Analyzes an idea, event, character, etc

Explains how a literary device functions in a text

Evaluates an event, action, information

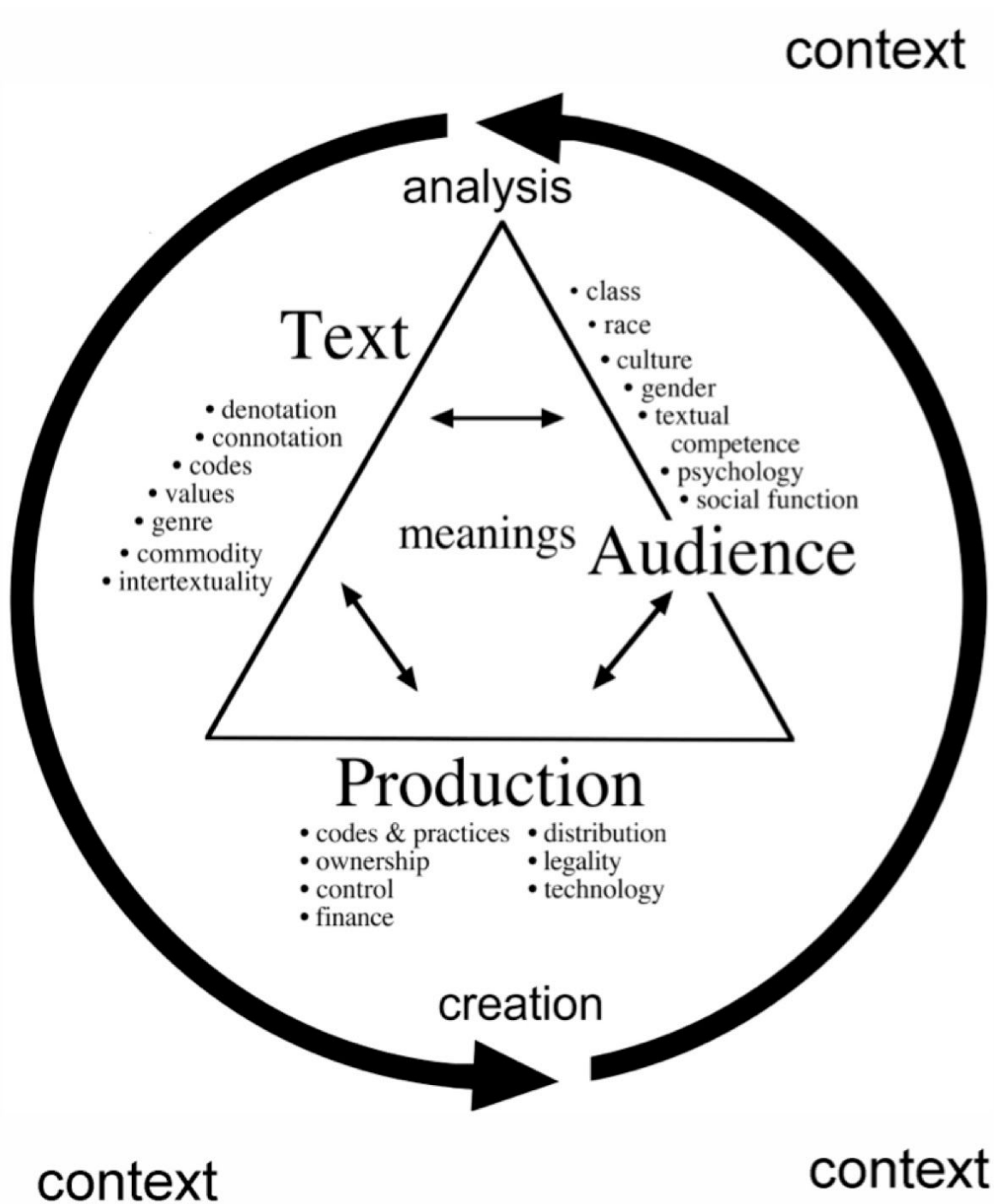
Identifies an opposing view / consequence

Makes an inference / draws a conclusion

Step Three:

Media Literacy Analysis

Study the Media Literacy Triangle



Review the Key Concepts of Media Literacy that pertain to this media text:

1. The Media Constructs Reality
2. The Media Constructs Versions of Reality

3. Audiences Negotiate Meaning
4. Media have economic implications
5. The Media Communicates Values Messages
6. The Media Communicates Political and Social Messages
7. Form and Content are Closely Related in Each Medium
8. Each Medium has a Unique Aesthetic Form

Media Literacy Analysis Questions

Directions: Assign these questions for group work. Provide large chart paper and markers to each group. Alternately, ask students to work in virtual groups online. Assign each group one set of questions to focus on from the media literacy triangle: text, audience, production. Remind the students that they will present their observations to the class.

Text - What?

1. What kind of text is this?
2. What values are being promoted?
3. Whose point of view do the values represent?
4. Are my values represented? Why or why not?

Audience - Who?

1. Who is the target audience for this text?
2. How might this text include some people while excluding other people?
3. How might I change the text to make it more effective?
4. How might I change the text to make it attractive to a different target audience?
5. How might this text be changing society?

Production - How?

1. Who produced this text?
2. For what purpose(s) was it produced?
3. Who profits from the consumption of this text?

Step Four:

Paragraph Writing

Remember to structure your paragraph by following the SEEES formula.

S - Topic Sentence

E - Evidence 1

E - Evidence 2

E - Evidence 3

S - Concluding Sentence

Question: Why might it be important for people to hear this story about the importance of reparations to Black Americans?

Topic Sentence:

King Cosmos, in his song titled *Payback Time*, is recounting the history of the Black slaves in the United States from 1619 - 1865 to remind us of the “reparations” that are long overdue.

Students are welcome to use this topic sentence. Or, they negotiate a different topic sentence with advice from their teacher.

Extension:

Students might write additional verses to *Payback Time* based on current events (the uneven Police treatment of Blacks, Browns and First Nations, Defund the Police, Black Lives Matter protests, renaming streets, statue defacing, unwanted federal troops in cities, voter suppression, police being disinvited from public schools, RCMP scandals, etc.)