

Lesson Plan: The Parable of the Sower

Where does the title “Parable of the Sower” come from? How does the original parable relate to the story in the novel?

What themes from afro-futurism can you find in this novel? Give an example for each of these themes/aspects:

- Internal struggle that focuses on identity:
- Using futuristic stories to address present-day oppression:
- Super powers or god-like features that help define a character:

Describe the characters in The Parable of the Sower.

- Who is Lauren Oya Olamina? What are her strengths? What are her weaknesses?
- What is hyper-empathy? How does it affect Lauren’s decisions? How does it contribute to the development of Lauren’s character?
- Who are the people that join Lauren throughout the novel? What role do they play in developing Lauren’s character and sense of self?

What is the main conflict in the novel?

- What caused this conflict? How does Lauren work to resolve the conflict?
- Is the conflict fully resolved by the end of the novel? Why or why not? How do you know?

Let’s talk about Earthseed.

- What is Earthseed? What are the main beliefs of Earthseed?
- What does Earthseed teach its followers about change? Do you think that this teaching is true? Why or why not?
- What is Lauren’s role in Earthseed? Does she fulfill this role well?
- How does Earthseed contribute to the relationships between the characters in the novel?

Let’s talk about gender.

- At one point, Lauren disguises herself as a man. How does this impact others’ perception of her?
- What was Lauren able to achieve while she was disguised as a man?
- What does this tell you about how society values gender?

Let’s talk about literacy.

- How did literacy/education contribute to the original conflict in the novel?
- How was literacy used as an indicator of class?
- Do you think that education plays the same divisive role in our society today? Why or why not?

Does Octavia Butler write about the past, the present, or the future? How do you know?

*Hint: it can be all three!

Compare and contrast the journal entries and the excerpts from the “Book of the Living.”

- Why did Butler choose to include both of these?
- Why does she change between these narrative styles throughout the book?
- What can the reader conclude about the future (after the novel concludes) based on what information and knowledge she chooses to leave behind?

Do the events of the novel remind you of any current events? Which current events? How are they similar to the events of the novel?

- Is our society responding to these issues similarly to the society in the novel? Why or why not? How do you know?
- How do you think Lauren would respond to the main headlines of today? What would she say or do in response to the issues that we face as a society today?

Videos for a nice summary:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6YI8lsjJA>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6iVGuMyKFgA> (The lead-in to this video is frighteningly accurate these days!)