

## Book Approval Request

Course and grade level: English IV CP (12th grade)

Text	Possible Parental Concerns	Cultural Responsiveness
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>Parable of the Sower</i> by Octavia Butler</b></p> <p><b>Summary:</b> Set in California between 2024-2027, <i>Parable of the Sower</i> is a prescient novel that demonstrates not only the environmental disasters there may be in store, but also how said disasters can be exacerbated when humans have forgotten how to empathize.</p> <p>Lauren, a young Black woman aged 15-18 over the course of the novel, lives in a gated community in southern California. The community is a stronghold against the rampant arson and violence in the rest of the state, fueled mostly by a never-ending drought and desperation born of severe poverty.</p> <p>When the walls of her community are torn down, though, Lauren is displaced along with two other survivors from her neighborhood. Having prepared for this situation already, Lauren begins to lead her fellow survivors northward, where there may be land and water. She picks up and absorbs other displaced travelers along the way, people who are attracted to Lauren’s collectivist ideals. As they travel, Lauren also composes verses of her own religion, Earthseed, a take on humanity that emphasizes adaptability to change and empathy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● descriptive physical violence (throughout) + fairly frequent mentions of sexual violence (mostly in the first third of the novel) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Address by:</b> warning and allowing students to skip certain scenes / passages; utilizing small group work and possibly creative writing assignments to “write out” the disturbing passages</li> </ul> </li> <li>● creepy relationship between protagonist + much older male <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Address by:</b> identifying the relationship outright as creepy (the novel itself mentions this, too) + use it as a discussion point: why would this character / this author make such a bizarre choice in partner?</li> </ul> </li> <li>● references to drug abuse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ novel very clearly discourages “hard drugs” / drug abuse, particularly when it comes to what people do under the influence</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Black female author, with Black, disabled, female protagonist + a full cast of characters of color.</li> <li>● the protagonist is admirable; a young Black woman that students can aspire to. Interrupts the general “master narrative” about Black lives.</li> <li>● combines stories of adversity with Black / Brown brilliance, empathy, resilience, innovation, etc. Too many of the stories we read of Black / Brown characters are of suffering only; this story has a much better balance.</li> <li>● sex-positive content emphasizes sex as <i>mutual</i>, consensual connection / pleasure.</li> <li>● research does show that <i>talking through</i> problematic topics is more effective in getting kids to make good choices than by <i>avoiding</i> the topics</li> </ul>

<p><b>Description of course connection:</b> Much of the course's content this year focuses on coming into one's own and developing one's unique voice. Lauren is the perfect example of this in action: she is able to break away from the rest of her community philosophically, thinking and acting in a way that makes the most sense by her values, which ends up saving her when her community is destroyed. She is a fantastic example of how thinking critically for oneself is a crucial skill in the "real world" or the "unknown," which is what students are also heading toward.</p>		
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