

VIEWING GUIDE FOR bell hook's *Cultural Criticism & Transformation*

PART I: ON CULTURAL CRITICISM

Why Study Popular Culture?

(The Power of Critical Thinking)

What does bell hooks mean by “Popular Culture is where the learning takes place.”? How does this relate to Althusser?

How can Critical Thinking lead to Transformation?

The Power of Representation

Gender Politics & Representation

Racial Politics & Representation

Motivated Representations : (Motivated by what? To do What?)

WHY WHITE SUPREMACIST CAPITALIST PATRIARCHY?

White supremacy : Whites hold power/supremacy over minorities

Capitalism :

- An economic system whereby those who control capital (corporations) control the labor force. Workers sell their time for wages, turning their lives into a commodity: waged labor. This labor contributes to the increased profit of the corporation.
- Consumerism is valued above all other values.
- Commodification: turning people & images into products to be consumed

Patriarchy : Men hold power over/dominate/silence women

What does bell hooks mean by this statement:

“The term racism keeps white people at the center of the discussion,

‘*White Supremacy*’ evokes a political world that we all frame ourselves in relationship to.”

How does popular culture reinforces each of these discourses of power:

How does popular culture perpetuate this matrix of power?

What is an **Enlightened Witness?**

Transformation = Critical thinking & Literacy (traditional and media literacy)

media literacy:

the ability to read & interpret images in the context of social relations of power in which they exist.

PART II: DOING CULTURAL CRITICISM

In this section bell hooks takes us through a close analysis of several popular culture texts.

As you watch her doing cultural criticism, ask yourself:

- How does each popular culture text stand for MORE than meets the eye?
- Specifically, how does each of these texts embody the relations of power she identified above (White Supremacy, Capitalism, Patriarchy)?
- Think of a popular culture text from your daily life. Do a close reading of it and examine how it perpetuates the dominant ideology of White Supremacy, Capitalism, & Patriarchy.

hooks' examples:

- Hoop Dreams
 - the OJ Simpson trial,
 - the film KIDS,
 - Spike Lee,
 - Madonna,
 - Rap Music (authentic expression of market construct?),
 - Color Coding Black Female Bodies
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- What is Commodified Blackness?