

# **Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom Study Guide**

**Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom by Bell hooks**

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



# Contents

<a href="#">Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom Study Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 1.....</a>	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 2 &amp; 3.....</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 4.....</a>	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 5.....</a>	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 5 continued.....</a>	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 6.....</a>	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 7.....</a>	<a href="#">10</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 8.....</a>	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 9.....</a>	<a href="#">12</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 10.....</a>	<a href="#">13</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 11.....</a>	<a href="#">14</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 12.....</a>	<a href="#">15</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 13.....</a>	<a href="#">16</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 14.....</a>	<a href="#">17</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 15.....</a>	<a href="#">18</a>
<a href="#">Characters.....</a>	<a href="#">19</a>
<a href="#">Objects/Places.....</a>	<a href="#">22</a>
<a href="#">Themes.....</a>	<a href="#">24</a>
<a href="#">Style.....</a>	<a href="#">27</a>
<a href="#">Quotes.....</a>	<a href="#">29</a>
<a href="#">Topics for Discussion.....</a>	<a href="#">30</a>

## Plot Summary

One main tenet of the book is contained in the title: the use of education as the intentional activity of empowering and of using freedom. The book comes from the viewpoint of an African-American woman from the South. She experienced both racially segregated and desegregated schooling. She found that the political and social agenda of her black instructors better suited her than the conditions in the integrated environment. She notes that whether as a consequence of being female or minority, or white and male, the main teaching given in integrated schools run by whites was to obey and to respect the authority of 'authority figures.'

The work is a nonfiction book of the twentieth century. It was published in the 1990s, by a woman professor in New York City. Teaching is her day job; she is really a writer and she knew this long before she ever became a professional teacher. This book is dedicated to teaching. Through 14 chapters, an index and an introduction, the author elucidates a number of feelings, findings and theories about education. From the beginning, she asserts that the classroom and the skill of teaching are incredibly important. By the end of the book, teachers and students should both have new awareness and ideas they can implement about how to improve education in the classrooms in which they find themselves.

This book addresses a number of issues surrounding race, gender and class. It is clear in its motivation to dismantle repressive social forms, in this context they are named: white supremacy, patriarchy, and class. Heterosexuality is presumed. In each chapter, issues are addressed as they have appeared before the awareness of the author. Many of her observations, while based in at least one version of the truth, ran into difficulty within the context of racially integrated higher education during her years as a student. The reason for this is that many of them were viewed as possible subversion and rebellion. Her agenda is to educate for liberation. Here, the obvious problem is the relationship of trust, and the lack thereof within the system as one that sets some people up for failure even as it claims to set people up for success.



# Chapter 1

## Chapter 1 Summary and Analysis

Pedagogy is the technical term for teaching. The author Bell Hooks informs readers in the introduction that she believes that for the best teaching, people in either role in the relationship need to accept that there is an element of the sacred in education. When teachers proceed based upon the idea that they are educating for the purposes of nurturing free adults, then the profession is best served, and so are the students. Participation is crucial for the most effective educational process, as far as the author is concerned. She thinks that the best instructional methods encourage the right amount of participation. One vital element of this is to appreciate the value of all of the students within a given classroom, rather than forcing or encouraging students to ignore everyone other than the instructor. In her own experience, the author found that Women's Studies classes provided a greater degree of participatory freedom within the classroom. The author observes and acknowledges racial tensions within the profession. She writes that after all-black schools, with teachers devoted to uplifting the entire race through the nurturing process of education integrated schools seemed as prone to undermine as to facilitate progress.

She believes that nurturing independent thinking is an important part of the educational process. The ways that this tendency, and this motive in students runs into trouble within some of the classroom contexts of higher education are puzzling to her. She dislikes having had the experience that some of her efforts towards increased learning were interpreted as having been rebellious when there had been no such intention. The author reiterates that she observed that the white men professors varied in the extent to which they used participation in their direct classroom teaching methods at the university level. At the same time, she also notes that most successful students by higher education are learning more independently. She notes that teachers do best when they are self-actualizing people. She was disappointed when they seemed to not be this. She also brings up the Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh. She was learning for self-development, and came across this man's works in English. She claims that education is best served when teachers and students alike are all happy and striving for self-actualization.



## Chapters 2 & 3

### Chapters 2 & 3 Summary and Analysis

This chapter, like the others, was originally designed to serve as an essay. The author gives a brief account of her own experience of the racial integration of schools. For her this happened during secondary school. Her perception of it was that the black kids had to get up earlier so they could be bussed farther in order to integrate white schools. She writes that this was primarily disturbing, as she was one of so many who had really liked their previous school. Then, she writes, this integration was followed by continuing segregation. Next, she explains that she did make friends with a white boy-man at her high school. This small feat resulted in a fair amount of drama, and there were extensive discussions just to reach a decision that it would be alright for her to have dinner at his home with his parents. Later in her life, this kind of history reemerged when she writes frankly that her high school's 20th Reunion was the first racially integrated reunion they had.

The author begins this essay writing about how to implement the transformations within the classroom that multiculturalism requires. One major assertion she makes is that education is always political. Even so, there is a tendency amongst the students often times to feel that what they are learning is universal. This is in part to simplify the educational process: to teach someone how to tie their shoes rather than trying to explain how shoe manufacturing and racism and colonialism led to the type of system used to protect the feet against sharp objects. All of those forces also go into whether there are shoes, how to keep them on, and if they require anything like being tied. While this information is all valuable, as far functionality, it is more apt to seem advisable to teach how to wear the shoes and only later explain the rest. This is in part to prevent control problems relating to whether or not to overthrow the cultural domination that led to shoe-wearing and tying in the first place. Bell Hooks best describes the challenges of the aforementioned process when she writes of having meetings. At first, she writes, they tried including both teachers and students at the meetings. The trouble was that this did not work well. As a consequence, the instructors at Oberlin then held meetings that only had teachers present. She explains that there was an effort to make some safe space where individual instructors could speak freely. The difficulty was in what they really said when they actually did. She also asserts that there were definite remarks that could be construed as racist or sexist.



# Chapter 4

## Chapter 4 Summary and Analysis

The author distinguishes between her normal self, Gloria Watkins, and her pseudonym, or 'literary subpersonality' who is called "bell hooks." This latter name does not have capital letters even on the cover of the book. The unspoken humility involved, or the results of having been beaten down and undermined? What she does in this essay is highly creative. She is playing both parts of a dialogue. She does this as a means of describing Paulo Freire, who is one of her important intellectual influences. During the dialogue, the two viewpoints discuss the ways that Paulo's work has been helpful. The conversation also involves ways in which the same thinker has been experienced as hurtful and harmful. This conversational technique also permits the author to share 'inner dialogue.' Much of the process that women readers go through when using the works of 'dead white men thinkers' involves this type of sifting - separating what was beneficial and useful from what doesn't serve the process of liberation and group development.

Main concepts in this chapter include 'subject' and 'object' as roles, and as perspectives. There are various fields in academics where this has a greater or lesser effect. The role of subject, carries with it great power and import when theories of knowledge are laid out. Paulo Freire necessarily wrote with the biases of himself and his time. For women, then, participation in his thought and his theories requires a great deal of modification. One of the challenges for women, is to extend the experience of being the subject of a discourse into the academic realm. In truth, this reflects how much work women still have to do to bring the entire gender forward in terms of intellectual process and establishment of traditions which can be maintained. The author also mentions dishonesty: she includes the use of dishonesty as something that 'cuts both ways' with respect to 'progress.' Some deceptions can be used to alleviate psychological distress associated with painful histories. Here the author repeats one of her most important tenets in the entire process. This is about education for liberation. When people have been operating under systems of oppression, then finding ways to release the sense of dominance and oppression become primary. Normally, there is a long process during which matters of control for the sake of order come into play. Oppression is sometimes intentionally exploitative and evil, but in other instances the real problem is that there is a need to find better ways to align social forces - groups of people and individuals for the purposes of superior team work. This is incredibly important for the sake of individual and group processes at diverse levels of human society.



# Chapter 5

## Chapter 5 Summary and Analysis

The author introduces readers to her own personal history. This is invaluable in order to best understand the nature of her own theoretical and practical work. Her parents were a couple and they were trying to make it so that the mother could stay home with the children. There were seven of these 'little people' in the family. She writes that her parents were, as far as she could tell, trying to live a patriarchal ideal. Doing so, she felt, forced the family to forgo further resources, particularly material and financial ones.

Next, the author explains to readers how much she felt like an outsider within her own family. She wanted to belong; she wanted this very much. Even so, she frequently met with conflicts within her family. She questioned her father's right to dish out discipline and violence even though he was not the one who was present the majority of the time. She informs readers that she simply felt that she was punished whenever she questioned what she views as the patriarchal order.

Chela Sandoval is introduced as an important Latina theorist. Her work is described as having some mystique and a possibly puzzling or unexpected power. Hooks explains that Chela Sandoval is certainly a feminist theorist. She writes that feminist theory is more complex than might be predicted and that it normally finds formulation and makes headway when it is related to group social structures rather than being limited to the works of an individual. It is also the case that Chela Sandoval's work has sometimes made it into publication, although, hooks implies, not with the proliferation and extent of success that she or others might have hoped for. At the same time, she also writes that Chela's influence is more widely felt than many may be aware of.

In this chapter she overtly faces issues of race within academic atmospheres yet again. She sees that there is an attitude of white supremacy - domination and control systems run by white people, particularly white men. She notes that the relations of race and the bonding between white women within the academy in contrast to the ways that she was able to relate with white peers as a woman of color created a noteworthy difference.

## Chapter 5 continued

### Chapter 5 continued Summary and Analysis

She writes of how creating and endeavoring to share her growing theoretical work was often criticized. She felt that the 'white men' were in control of what constitutes 'good theory' and 'good work' and 'what most demands attention.' She felt that there was a basic problem wherein theoretical work proposed by 'colored women' might not be properly assessed.

Readers can see that part of this is about setting standards and part of it is about holding to them. When standards have been set that automatically insist that feminist theory or the work of colored women will be excluded, then obviously there is a problem with the systems that control the very criteria for inclusion. At the same time, while the author expresses legitimate misgivings and anxieties it is also true that there are times when to achieve higher quality results, tighter controls must be used. The methods used to achieve such compliance or conformity are not uniform throughout the culture, and there is substantial diversity within various subcultures. The author does not explain how this affects what is done to achieve this type of progress. Again, the author explains that the interracial atmosphere admits of many new opportunities but also created difficulties because progress was endangered by exposure to undermining forces.

One problem is that of collusion with their own opposition. This dramatically affects what they can do. So too does exclusion. Women's Studies and feminist movements face one set of restrictions if women are limited to the use of resources and social systems created and run by women. In daily life, women typically have great access to a tremendous amount of the results of male effort: sewage systems and roads being cases in point, and often enough the very shelters in which women live. Bell Hooks informs readers that the psyches of women are often rather fragile, and that even participation in Women's Studies course work for the purposes of personal and mass scale liberation can also seem to undermine. Racial and class differences are also important within the effort to create and to sustain theories.





# Chapter 6

## Chapter 6 Summary and Analysis

Bell Hooks has explained that the bulk of feminist writings has come from privileged white women. This reality contains a specific set of presumptions. These assumptions are not necessarily found in all of the social classes. This simply indicates that when conducted extensively, the work of women in building theory and implementing feminist theories will be great in both quantity and intensity.

The author's book is quite important at this point. She has produced a work that includes a framework that includes a tremendous amount of kinds of analysis that are natural and important for women. Much of the material is about articulating difference: the differences between women and men in general, the differences between women of one class to traits typically found in close association with members of another class. Racial distinctions and even the reality that the class divisions amongst minority groups do not have all of the same characteristics as those found in another group. One example of this, is that for women- the characteristics associated with being middle class or even high class are not entirely the same as those traits found in men of the same group. One of the most straightforward examples of this is how, while for a man a high paying career, excellent manners, participation in certain forms of sports - anything involving the keeping and use of horses tells people something, and a family are often signs of success.

A woman of the same class might be indicated by having a husband, perhaps children, not needing to have a career at all - it may even be viewed as a symptom of financial failure if she needs to be gainfully employed. Here, women's progress and class issues have entirely different interpretive frameworks for a given outcome. When a wealthy woman works by choice, while married or when not married then this is a form of progress. When she is able to be well paid and to handle a lot of responsibility then this is also a sign of women's progress. "Her husband made her earn money" is not inherently a feminist observation. "Her husband supported her inherent career efforts" is a feminist statement.



# Chapter 7

## Chapter 7 Summary and Analysis

Amongst poorer women, the need or expectation to earn money as adults has long been common. For people such as these, amongst both the men and the women, the great road of progress is often the achievement of work that is actually enjoyable, desirable or otherwise liked. For these folks, while some have had the good fortune of being able to do work they like and to have fun they like to, many have had very restrictive work options. The restrictions for women were often enough more severe than those of men, but that doesn't mean that the men had all the choices in the world on an individual or class basis. Often, feminist critiques of the male situation have overlooked the reality of men's protracted efforts to unity, order and liberation. Given that, for the author, she has professed early on that her own career path has been deeply effected by issues of gender, class and race.

Those women who have participated extensively in higher education will recognize rather rapidly how significant her work is. Much of what she is articulating within the book makes perfect sense. Women who have been educated in atmospheres set up and run by men on male systems will fell incredible when they read this book and find that this is so obviously a woman's mind. Rather than trying to work through translating the work from the male vantage point into something that makes sense as an individual woman, the reader will find that this sameness of gender creates a comfort level that she may have learned to make herself 'unused to.' Male atmospheres have often intentionally or unintentionally barred this type of discourse. Often enough the lack of interest or unwillingness as an intellectual woman 'to be heard' by male colleagues has been painful. At its best, however, it is like not wanting the dishes of someone who lives in a different house and who has not hired one to do it. This is women's work; not so much the dishes as this genuine effort that "bell hooks" has made here and managed to get published is a perfect example of work women need to do in order to build a solid female intellectual tradition. Similarly, Sigmund Freud explicitly wrote that women are the ones who need to develop female psychological theories and practices- that as a man, he 'did what he could' but what he could was absolutely limited by his own maleness.' One token of progress amongst women, is in developing in such a way that women do conduct this type of work and more to uplift the entire gender.

# Chapter 8

## Chapter 8 Summary and Analysis

The author writes about some of her moving experiences. During these times, silence regarding matters of class, race and of gender ended. She writes of having found it possible to make space for others to speak. She refers to some of the limitations of language, and of the effects of limited education on an individual's power to give verbal expression to their thoughts. The simple act of having created space where these matters were discussed openly was viewed as some type of success.

Bell Hooks writes about dismantling white supremacy and patriarchy. While she writes about dismantling hierarchies she does not write about what would replace these. She writes of the need for sensitivity to the situations of all those people who are facing very oppressive conditions. They might well seek ways to get through this. In this case she was writing of girls. Of course, this does not make impossible for boys and men to learn from it to. One of the main challenges to release of oppressive conditions is the question of results. It is one thing, when the results will be a society that is more fair and just and even more functional and prosperous because the abilities of more individuals are being harnessed by the society. When the level of cooperation needed for a forward thinking vision for a community or society is present, then the liberation of previously oppressed subgroups within the population will be a joy. Even so, given the pains and resentments that may occur, to do so may take some time - generations possibly. When the release of oppression will result in nothing but chaos and the return to a 'dark age' for the civilization in which it occurs, then it is would be advisable to perpetuate the systems of oppression.

Bell Hooks writes about dominance. During this chapter she does delve into the discourse surrounding problems created by oppression and white supremacy and patriarchy. She writes of liberation, and of uplifting of people. These goals do not seem unreasonable in and of themselves. The next step that her work points to, in terms of free women, and a society that respects all races, is the need for visions. Women need to move forward with the social equivalent of mission statements. There needs to be progress for the whole: this includes how to make and to keep peace with former oppressors. This includes the need to recognize systems of dominance based upon legitimate authority: experience.



# Chapter 9

## Chapter 9 Summary and Analysis

This chapter permits the author to elucidate more of her ideas. While readers may not agree with everyone that she has written it is quite a breath of fresh air in terms of clarifying a number of ideas which women have been thinking for quite some time. She has found a way to make it so that her work has managed to get out anyways. There is something about this book that is symptomatic of both success and failure. The failure is that this work of nonfiction has not been published by a university publishing company. If she is lucky, then her publishing contract is just as good as it would have been with a university publisher. If there really hadn't been some kind of problem with the higher educational system, then her work would have come out through them. Much of the contents are an effort to describe what subtle and overt dynamics might have contributed to why this book has not been published by a university press. Readers are right to feel that this tells them something.

If the main target audience of the book is viewed as being 'black women, especially Americans' then the majority of the market will be outside of universities. Still, this is probably just some sort of excuse. The population of colored people in America has grown near to 50 percent. While not every type of 'non white' is the same, the compilation of minorities has grown so much that within the next 50 years, the inclusive 'white people' category is going into the minority. The composition of the American population is going to be a reconfiguration of that cliché melting pot of minorities so often written of. Each region has its own demographics and types of people. This includes what constitutes 'the main minorities' within any given location. One new experience for American blacks will be 'how it feels when your minority is not the main one.' Strange as it sounds, this is true. In some parts of the nation, the dominant minority group is the Hispanics, but despite this American blacks have a special status within the society; these freed people are often the descendants of forced immigrants. There are other places in the United States where the predominant minority people are East Asians. You find places where there are so many African-Americans that the idea that this is a racial minority seems patently false while in other states such people are truly hard to come by.



# Chapter 10

## Chapter 10 Summary and Analysis

The author begins this chapter by setting up the tensions between white women and black women. She observes that the gender gap between white women and black men was mediated, and perhaps at times ameliorated by sexual attraction and interest. She notes that the women of the two races were frequently seen as and treated as being in mutual sexual competition. She writes that she believes that this has caused white women to behave defensively and to intentionally protect and perpetuate racial differences in status in an effort to protect their privileges and domains within the range of their limited powers.

She then goes on to make some effort to describe the connection between white men and black women, both within the context of slavery and in the context of freedom. Here, she asserts that for white women, there was a problem in not being able to prevent white men from sexual involvement with black women. This is more so the case during the times of slavery but typically only applies to white slave holders. It is perhaps worth noting that the bulk of the white population was probably too poor to own slaves, and if any not many. This class difference is not so much discussed but is apt to be at least as relevant as the major class distinction between people with the wealth to keep horses and those that don't. Automobiles may have blurred this demarcation, but for some reason it seems to continue to hold true even in the age of the automobile. Black women, the author states, were only more vulnerable to white men than were white women. As a result, there was greater fear of being positioned into being forced to tolerate abuse, sexual or nonsexual at the hands of white men. This had a different counter-condition. This other position was that it was possible for some black women to include white men voluntarily, perhaps with enthusiasm and in some cases true love.

The author also addresses issues of status, which are also known to play into the dynamics. The painful truth is that within a white dominant, patriarchal culture, women's attachments to a given man can be a means of improving social status more readily than such is the case for men. For blacks, within this class context, a white partner can be a source of 'improved status' for the black partner. As a consequence, there are many people today who still feel that sexual relations across racial boundaries are taboo, whereas for others, this is not the case. Few black men can have a relationship with a white woman without being at least accused of doing so in order to gain social status - regardless of whether or not it is true. Likewise, black women can be accused of the same should they be genuinely interested in black women, or a black woman.



# Chapter 11

## Chapter 11 Summary and Analysis

The author explains that she has taught feminist courses, women's studies classes and black literature courses for over a decade at the time of writing this book - the work was published in 1994 by Routledge. She introduces the situation so that readers of various races and social classes have a better opportunity to understand the way that diversity plays into the situation. She shows that there are great differences in expectations in terms of the types of students she teaches. When the majority of students were black, she was able to develop an accurate perception of their expectations and was able to teach to meet them. When faced with mainly white students, typically feminists, she found that the basis from which they were working was noticeably dissimilar. She then informs readers that in classes that contained a large contingent of white women students, their interest in feminist theory was often also intimately associated with protecting or improving social conditions for bisexuals and homosexuals. This was not typically the case for black students. Finally, black authors and feminist authors were not automatically one and the same. Many of her students of color were suspicious of feminism or women's progress; they viewed the white perspective as rather dubious and were skeptical that the agenda would be sufficiently relevant to them. There were stereotypes that either black women were more severely oppressed than white women, or else that black women had been liberated long before white women were. Part of this involves differences in family and money. More poor women worked, and earning money was viewed as one means of achieving liberation. For this reason, white women might perceive or fail to perceive that black women were more liberated.

She then writes a bit about her students and interactions with them. Noteworthy was that many of the male students were feeling 'pushed' by the women they knew to develop greater awareness of gender issues, and to look at the problem of sexism in society. Next, she learned that many black men, especially young ones already felt that they were so hurt by racism there wasn't much left. Already feeling that they had been pushed to the bottom, the thought that women had additional problems that needed to be addressed was initially overwhelming. The 'great leap forward' that she received as a peace gesture from a black male student was par music that openly opposed the practice of rape.

Finally, she writes about including students in these courses. A certain amount of recruitment was necessary. There was anxiety amongst the students about speaking openly and even militantly on these issues. She found that it was harder to teach those who were suspicious. Lastly, she observed that those who did make the effort to do these things, to navigate through the challenging psycho-social terrain were better equipped in the end, to deal with the challenges related to race and to gender.



# Chapter 12

## Chapter 12 Summary and Analysis

The next stage of development is that of the creation and organized expression of feminist scholarship. One main factor is that bell hooks is very grateful for something. She is thankful that it has become safer for women, including black women to perform the work necessary. Feminist theory, she explains in this chapter, has actually come to be respected. It is now possible for women including black women to devise theoretical frameworks. This makes effective discussion and efforts in the field of feminism possible.

The author hopes that this work will create the possibility of an unbiased perspective on the black American female situation. She cites that there does seem to be feminist backlash within the culture. This backlash does pose an actual problem. The difficulty is that it seems to have undermined something. She hopes that women will persevere despite this.

This particular chapter is ten pages in length. It indicates the middle of the book. Much of the work being done could be conducted in a segregated or integrated atmosphere. In the cases where either type of setting would thwart the progress, the most effective conditions should be used. This way the work can move forward. She writes extensively on the patriarchal structure within the all black context. Within this framework, the main problem she faced was actually sexism. She has told readers early on that violence was used within her childhood home. Thus, her fear of men in the form of her father as a sometimes protective but sometimes violent figure. This makes her anxieties relating to women's progress more visceral than they might have been in a context where the women provided the bulk of the discipline. She writes that for her, patriarchal structures existed in her home, in her church and in her community at large.

She directly refers yet again to another obvious challenge. The racial concerns and tensions between black women and white women. During this chapter, she explains that under conditions where the gender difference had been established and racially integrated the racial distinctions and attendant problems became more pronounced. The perspective, often mediated by class and other cultural distinctions reasserted themselves within an all female context. The experience of white women was often enough a mixture of being in some respects very similar but in other ways markedly different. Part of the challenge was what white women experienced in regards to race themselves. One woman might have been in an anti-racist context whereas another might have actively struggled with elders against racism. Yet another might have fallen under the delusion that racism has ceased to exist. Still, many others were simply indifferent to racism and attendant problems and of course there were also those who were racist - either through complicity or actively and intentionally.





# Chapter 13

## Chapter 13 Summary and Analysis

Here the author writes about pedagogy itself. The need to combine theory with practice is definitely addressed. Here, dialogue is listed as one of the most important ways that students and teachers can help to implement improved strategies. The two of them also converse regarding a philosophical issue. Asserting holistic presence, in opposition to the 'idea' and attitude of dualism - a mind/body dichotomy is shared by them. The presence of the teacher in the classroom is important. The entirety of the teacher is meaningful. At the same time, both of these people also readily admit that for them it was important subjectively that their personal identity was not bound up with their work as teachers. There are implications both about educational needs and about the practices involved. She expresses that one problem is when works by blacks or women are included but without any attendant changes in pedagogy.

The author discusses how her preconceived notions and the lack thereof affected how she subjectively related to teaching. She shares that she felt the absence in her own mind of ideas about what she would be like as a professor freed her up to pursue this in a manner that she invented at the time that she did it. For Ron, the purpose of higher education was to secure job training. He claimed that he never even considered being a university professor but it happened anyways. Also, he had no particular preference for the more educated people.

After this she began a critical exchange with a white male friend known as Ron Scapp. She writes of their perceptions of status and social ranking that stemmed from whether they worked or studied at private academic institutions or state ones. The private ones were viewed as being more prestigious whether the role was one of student or faculty. She writes that the backgrounds of the two held both similarities and differences. Their races and gender were very different. The woman's background was rural whereas Ron had been raised in an urban environment. She clarifies that this appreciation of their commonalities and their differences were helpful during their discourse. For both of them, who are committed and enthusiastic teachers, the need to validate their profession was significant to them.

Finally, she addresses the matter of liberating practices within a classroom environment. She informs readers that she was able to learn from her students that they had learned compliance. This ability and willingness to comply, however, often covered their true feelings or values. This caused her to realize that the students may have simply been complying to liberating educational practices just as they complied to more traditional tactics.





# Chapter 14

## Chapter 14 Summary and Analysis

The author introduces how the use of language has influenced learning processes. The dominance and subdominance of discourse within and outside of academic environments is directly addressed in this chapter. Many of the students do feel that they have valuable input. However, many of them feel that they are not allowed to speak freely. It is also often the case that there is a particular strain of dominant discourse. They also often feel that the instructor prevents their 'voices' from being heard. This creates a level of illusion within the environment: part of the truth may be shared, but there is other truth that must be hidden or repressed.

The teacher also addresses the strange position that instructors find themselves in. Often enough, the teachers are more of their own situation of subdominance to those authorities which have hired them to carry out a given task: teaching the students. As such, they themselves feel confined to certain standards and have a very limited set of actions of behaviors that they can exhibit. This is naturally and automatically involved when there are concerns regarding pedagogical practices. The selection that teachers have to use certain instructional methods is itself limited. Where and how to teach, as well as who they may be able or permitted to teach has a great effect upon both teachers and students. Given this, the context used has the limitations of those systems that have successfully been organized to address the particular needs of the bulk of the student population.

The next chapter is devoted to class issues. The first observation she makes is that for decades class was very much an issue but it was not discussed. In fact, she writes about how her class consciousness shaped her own perception of education. Lower classes of people were expected to tolerate a greater degree of 'being silenced' than were those of more privileged backgrounds. The teachers and the students may intentionally or inadvertently perpetuate a variety of characteristics imposed by class practices and expectations.

The author thanks her feminist environments as being the first time that she actually had the opportunity to openly discuss and confront 'class' as an issue. She gives some expression of how it is that class is in part economic, but not entirely. Various values and other elements are also involved in determining this.



# Chapter 15

## Chapter 15 Summary and Analysis

The body comes into play at this time. She writes that within educational environments it is often the case that the individuals are restricted in their activities to a rather extreme extent. To directly address the significance of the bodies of the teachers and the students is to address another issue. In many cases, the change in teachers would require alternative changes in technique.

During this chapter, she openly discusses sexuality. She was affected by this in a number of ways. There were times when it was her own sexual feelings towards another that caused problems. She cites one case where others observed that she had been influenced by her sexuality - she had feelings for a student. This was effectively addressed with her. She writes of how her own consciousness was raised by her growing awareness of her own behavior. She admits to readers her own naivete about her response to the discovery that she was more harsh to one of her students because of having erotic feelings for him.

She also discusses the other side of this type of situation. The reality is that she also discovers that she was naive in her relations with male professors. She had assumed that the atmosphere was going to have been 'de-sexualized' when in fact this had not been the case. She writes that she was sometimes disturbed when she found out that some of her professors were attracted to her or that she could experience this from the other side or as mutual.

Sexuality can be used in the pedagogy of adult students more readily than readers may imagine. However, the way that it affects circumstances comes into play in multitudinous ways. She writes that it is important that the sexual element of situations not be denied. At the same time, she assures readers that there is a dutiful expectation for educators that they will harbor a very special safe type of love for all of their students. In this regard, the process of education itself is used as a means of expressing affection. This is a form which works well for some people but does not necessarily work that well for others.



# Characters

## Bell Hooks aka bell hooks

This is the author of the book. She is a contemporary American black woman. She views her own position as being that of a writer who was forced into teaching. The reason for this is that she is a girl and she was smart, so others created the expectation that she would be a teacher. During her efforts as a university professor, which is an advanced form of the teacher, she was able to make headway as a writer.

Bell Hooks is actually the author's nom de plume. Normally, she spells it "bell hooks." The absence of the capital letters may be symbolic. The publication and popularity of a work can boost an author's ego, but the effort itself emphasizes the message not the author. As such, perhaps her own identity, in the normal sense if altered when she writes, or perhaps it is simply less intimidating to submit a manuscript under an assumed name.

The author as bell hooks is a persona of her own devise. Gloria Watkins is the author's actual name in the mundane sense of the term. She is a Southern woman teaching in the North, in New York City. During the course of the book she shares a number of important details of her life in direct relation to how they shaped some of the ideas presented in the book. The most important of these came to her as part of a benevolent legacy: that of education for liberation.

## Thich Nhat Hanh

This is another author. This one is a male. He is Vietnamese. He is also a Buddhist monk. He has somehow been able to write and to become published in English. His works have grown quite popular. One reason for this is that he is willing to reach out to non-Buddhists. As such, both Buddhists and nonBuddhists have been able to embrace a number of valuable teachings. In the case of the non-Buddhists, they have proven to be a great source of funding. Through this form of openness, fund raising difficulties have been surmounted in a spirit of friendship and mutual support.

The teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh have extended far and wide. The author of this book refers to him and to his writings on more than one occasion. There is more than one reason for this. One of the reasons is simply that bell hooks and Thich Nhat Hanh are contemporaries and that both have succeeded in having some of their writings published. Another reason is that one of the main motives for what they have written in both cases, is to benefit humanity over and above being financially responsible workers.

This man is not the center of the author's work. However, he is referred to more than once. It is apparent that the author has integrated what she had read of his writings. They share some of the same spiritual and cultural milieu. At the same time, much of their lives are kept separate. In general, this man is known for being viewed as gentle,



placid and quietly determined: these are features which are often viewed as feminine, in the best rather than the worst sense of the term.

## **Paulo Freire**

This is an important theorist of pedagogy. The Brazilian teaching expert is mentioned repeatedly during the first chapters of the book as having been one of the major inspirations for her work as a teacher. Chapter 4 is devoted to this man. The author once meets him and is relieved that he responds to her respectfully instead of subjecting her to more of the inappropriate treatment she has all too often faced as an outspoken black American feminist in Academia.

## **Foucault**

This is a 20th century French thinker. While esteemed as a philosopher internationally, this man had a specific set of tasks. He provided extensive and in-depth analysis of societal institutions within France, and to some extent with the intention of making the results able to improve the implementation of reforms and other improvements. He recognized the value of social systems, and seems to have applied a degree of analytical prowess to institutions previously unparalleled in known history.

## **Chela Sandoval**

This is one of the feminist theorists that the author mentions. This woman is a Latina American. There has been some difficulty in her developing a steady reputation as a repeatedly published woman. The author strongly suggests that her work is highly valuable despite this discernible trouble. The majority of references to her come earlier in the book. She is just one of the women conducting meaningful, and important work as part of the greater project to develop self-articulation in women's thought as part of embracing female power, our intellectual capacities and a written tradition as intellectual women.

## **Jane Gallop**

This thinker is referred to later in the book. Her book *Thinking Through the Body* is mentioned, and a citation is made from it.

## **Stanford University**

This location is mentioned in chapter 13 of the book. It is referred to as a location where there is an important Women's Studies department. The author admits that it was quite a struggle to get women's studies accepted and taken seriously within the greater



totality of the individual and mass culture of universities. One of the places where this happened, which was itself quite a victory, was at Stanford.

## **Diane Middleton**

This thinker is referred to in chapter 13 of the book. She is cited as one of the inspirational people who supported the endeavors to create things such as Women's Studies programs. The author notes her as having motivated her to continue in her efforts.

## **Michele Wallace**

This is another American black woman thinker presented in this text. This is one of the women thinkers who emerges within the black community. They asserted their efforts there, often tentatively and with anxiety regarding the results. As such, this is one of the contemporary pioneers of women's liberation who could speak within the context of 'same race circumstances.'

## **Ntozoke Shange**

This is another black woman writer written of in chapter 13 of the book. She is mentioned together with Michele Wallace as one of the people who blazed new territory in the arena of women's theorizing within the American black culture.



# Objects/Places

## Books

This may seem trite, but in this case, the existence of the published book used to create this summary is a triumph in itself. This is normally the case with publications, but in this case, the victory is a signifier of progress pertaining to a specific agenda. Womens liberation and progress within human civilization, especially America is a main goal and process. This is one of those cases where the goal is not so much an endpoint but constitutes a process in its own right.

## University

The author was a tenured college professor when this book was written and published. She writes extensively about higher education. It both helped and harmed her, as far as she could accurately describe it. Gender and racial integration practices, which were supposed to help, often caused her troubles that she insists she did not even experience in an all black atmosphere. At the same time, it is thanks to her experience and training in higher education that furthered her ability to produce and to teach theories and to nurture womens' progress in higher education. She has also felt empowered in that she has been able to not only take her own training to the next level, but has been able to give students assistance that might not have been available a few decades earlier.

## Interracial relationships

These are used both literally and as symbolism by the author. It does matter which gender of which race, as issues relating to sexism are integral to women of all races. The symbolism is not precisely identical going either way.

## The South

In this case, this is a generalized reference to Southern states in the United States. There are known to be different ways found in the Southern states contrasted to the Northern states. The author cites conditions in the South in a manner that may confront 'Yankees' with unexpected bias and objection. Her experience in racially segregated schools was quite good - undermining the sense of confidence in the integrationist agenda as the pathway to equality and justice in American society. She did not like integrated environments as much as she felt she was subjected to worse conditions when not in an all minority atmosphere.



## **The North**

This work makes only a specifically contextualized reference to this region of the United States of America. Within the limited context of this book, the significance of the North is that it is one of the ways that New York is categorized and characterized. It is where the woman works as a college professor.

## **Toni Morrison**

This woman can be used as an example of a woman whose work can be used in an English Department without directly bringing up issues of class, gender or race. Her work is referred to in chapter 13.

## **Ron Scapp**

This is a philosopher. This man is cited as an ally of the author's. He is a white man who's respect and help was greatly appreciated.

## **Gloria Anzaldua**

This woman is another of the black theorists working in favor of women's progress. She is also mentioned in chapter 13 of this book.

## **Sam Keen**

This individual is also mentioned late in the book. This man is the author of *The Passionate Life*. This is the chapter on eros, erotica and pedagogy.

## **Judith Rollins**

This woman is the author of *Between Women*. She is mentioned in chapter 7 of the text.

## **Henry Gireaux**

This man is one of thinkers that are referred to in chapter 7. There are writings about work in this chapter, particularly women's bad experiences with tolerating unpleasant behavior from employers.



# Themes

## Racism

Here, racism constitutes more than mere side-effects of being relatively rare. Rather, racism is the intentional dislike of a given race, or group of races and the intentional creation and enforcement of regulations that keep those of a particular races in the lower classes of the society as a whole. The means of doing this can be simple, or complicated. Racism in this book, focuses upon a very limited form of it. However, the one looked at is the dominant form found in the United States: here the concern is about the relations between American whites and American blacks. While blacks are far from the nation's only racial minority, this group is the dominant one and has a unique history.

The author does include some examination of issues regarding race that address the concerns of other minorities such as the Latinos. There is at least one important theorist from this group cited in the book. Racism is viewed in the book as a problem to be analyzed and then dismantled.

Segregation and integration are looked at in this work, but the author admittedly restricts how she views these on the basis of how these were involved in her own life. The information that she provides is important. It is also limited. Part of the whole agenda she has, is to create broader awareness of how diverse the perspectives are and to make sure that there is at least some diversity represented within the body of published and accessible knowledge.

## Women's Progress

One major theme of the author's is to proactively facilitate women's progress. This is on behalf of the whole gender. One benefit of the author's work is that she helps to clarify ways of difference between the women of particular races or classes within the shared context of America. Her labor is only that of a theorist, seeking to nurture the intellectual written tradition of women, and of Americans. This is a contribution to the establishment even whilst it seeks to alter the establishment so that it can be a home to such a one as herself. She suffered because there were those who supported and those who opposed the ways that she wanted to contribute.

This is part of a lengthy process. The author refers mainly to the most contemporary women's movement. This is helpful because in reality there have been previous efforts at women's progress for centuries, with some success. One way that this manifested was to improve education. For women, the educational system has been integrated. While the author does discuss this, but the reality is not exactly as one would have thought. For bell hooks, the main focus of her discourse about education was that of racial segregation and integration. However, within the context of higher education, her work involved concerns that made gender difference one of the issues well worth





contending with. For this reason, much of the coursework that covered specifically female issues was shunted into Women's Studies departments. This was a triumph that was hard won. The reason had to do with their having been too much difficulty with simply integrating female perspectives within an atmosphere that had been dominantly male. This has dual consequences. Many female students felt more at ease within an all female scenario which would naturally undermine the possibility for success within an established male atmosphere. However, it was possible to find a way to assert this material within a context that was somehow both 'safer' for women and at the same time: actually there and open for discussion rather than hidden. Women's Studies, like Black Studies are two of the ways that individuals have sought new ways to incorporate variations in the student body within the structure of an organization that had been all male.

The author recognizes that the present state of affairs is far from the end of the process that is needed. At the same time, this is an effective set of 'next steps.' The work of bell hooks succeeds at recognizing the sometimes painful truth that there is a great of work for women to do, in terms of educational, intellectual and sociological development that has not been performed within the context of present day North American society. The changing tides of patriarchy and matriarchy and the situations that are in between the two have further shaped the actual conditions that this body of work has emerged from. The author also acknowledges and is grateful to those men who have allowed this to happen, who have had more of a view to fairness in favor of oppressive mechanisms.

## **Education for Liberation**

One of the author's main intentions is to nurture others. While the method is different, her intention is to foster the healthy forms of independence within women and men students. The work is not truly meant to exclude male students. However, the focus is actually upon women and because of this, much of the process has taken place without men. The absence of men was viewed primarily as a symptom of their lack of interest in the truth for women. While this can be quite painful it is also the case that it is important enough that women need to do this regardless of whether or not there are men involved.

Men and boys who are interested are welcome to find out more. This book enables men to learn more about the state of affairs for women. Through the use of a book, they can access this information whether or not any women or girls are directly present. One of the benevolent hopes for this set of procedures is that education for liberation will turn out to be a 'win win' situation rather than an alternative 'win lose' or 'lose lose' scenario. Many of the differences in female and male culture are present out of necessity whereas others have been artificially created in order to secure lines of power and money.

The book is part of a body of knowledge that extends the effort of education for liberation into higher education. At the same time, it is perhaps beneficial that the work is able to be disseminated more widely. The reason being that while more women,

including minority women are active in higher education, many have been shut out more by funding than ability. For these people and some who are simply younger the presence of the book on the open market makes it possible for women and men of any color to find out more even if they are not presently intimately associated with a higher educational institution.

# Style

## Perspective

The author spends a significant amount of time articulating her perspective. The reason is that she is one example of a group that is typically called 'under represented' in the over all culture. She is an American woman. She is a black woman. She is a feminist. She has knowledge of both the South and of the North. She was raised in the South and she teaches for her profession in the North.

The author comes from a fortunate background in that her family and teachers were benevolent. She notes that because she was often in an all-black atmosphere there were codes of conduct and issues relating to status and to gender that were made clear without direct involvement in racial issues with white. She writes that her parents used corporeal punishment and that her father was typically the one with the responsibility of dispensing the harshest of the punishments. The school teachers taught the agenda of liberation and of uplifting the entire race, one member at a time.

The author believes that she was raised in patriarchy. In patriarchy the men are assumed to be or are forced to be the leaders and have both he burdens and privileges associated with familial, social and political duties. In matriarchy, lines of descent, political, social and religious duties along with leadership are typically located amongst the women. Regardless of whether a society is patriarchal, matriarchal or more egalitarian in its structures, women and women and men are men. Some aspects of gender roles change whilst others do not, but what is may be interpreted with a different attitude. She believes that she was a victim of sexist practices as a consequence of the patriarchal social order in which she was reared.

## Tone

The tone of the work is uplifting but 'heavy.' It is 'heavy' because it deals with concerns that are pretty common for progressive black American women. Many of the concerns she brings up will be relevant to all women and to anyone interested in a fair and just American society, male of female and of whatever skin color or class. She writes of issues that have long been well known but the publication of such ideas had been limited or shunned altogether.

The tone of the work is 'groundbreaking' in the sense that the author is managing to get some of the important initial work for the long-term development of women's theories. This is just one more step in the project to build and to sustain a progressive body and working tradition of female intellectual knowledge, history and scholarship. The work often strikes readers as personal. There are a few reasons for this: one is that it is. The author readily acknowledges that her simple efforts to be self-inclusive within an academic tradition proved to be treated by her elder male teachers as somehow



'rebellious' in nature. She openly acknowledges gratitude towards male and female peers and greatly appreciates those times when she felt that given men professors, including white ones treated her with the respect that she deserves instead of being derogatory or otherwise demeaning and disrespectful of her.

The work is a mixture of an introduction to theorists of feminist and women's movements. This is blended with personal accounts; the author shares her perspective overtly in order to better show how it relates to her analysis for political and sociological intellectual purposes. For readers who are male or transgendered, this account may be quite eye-opening in that it is not what they are used to. For women, the reception or perception of it as familiar and unfamiliar will depend upon the experience of the women reading it. Those who's experience is quite different, be it due having been raised in matriarchal subculture with a greater yet eroding patriarchy, or having had parents who functioned as an affectionate and strong team, or some other combination of good and of bad experiences with their own gender, class and race combination, will experience heightened awareness. What matches and what is certainly not uniform through their own experience will be evident.

## Structure

The book is set out in a rather straight forward order. The Table of Contents is followed by the Introduction and a sequence of chapters. The author takes readers through a journey. It an intellectual sojourn based predominantly in facts. The author does a good job of showing how intellectual theory, academic politics and personal conditions mingle in the creation of circumstances. The holistic nature of the project is highly relevant to the procedure that is used.

The author introduces readers to her own subjective history, situation and biases that shaped her development and mental conditions. Her success, as indicated both by her profession and by the book at hand, its very existence as a published item really is the mark of a victory. Readers who have never attempted such a thing may not understand what is involved. She lays this out, however, to help readers to appreciate what is going on, whether they are 'in the know' or not.

Theoretic frameworks for how women can make progress as a gender and as individuals within society require underpinnings. The work is used in part to create conditions within which it will be more possible for other women to add to the labor that she has made, after the manner of how a building is put together in order, normally involving the work of many.



## Quotes

"This has been just as true for nonwhite teachers as for white teachers" (p. 35).

"And though these black women did not openly advocate feminism (if they even knew the word) the very fact that they insisted upon academic excellence and open critical thought for young black females was an antisexist practice" (p. 53).

"Let me say that I wrote *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* when I was an undergraduate" (p. 53).

"And in the ensuing dialogue I was told that I had not been invited to the various meetings for fear I would disrupt discussions of more important issues by raising feminist critiques" (p. 55).

"...Paulo intervened to say that these questions were crucial and he addressed them. Truthfully, I loved him at this moment for exemplifying by his actions the principles of his work" (p. 55).

"...in the presence of Paulo...I spend hours alone with him...Seriously, Thich Nhat Hanh teaches that a certain milieu is born at the same time as a great teacher. And he says: 'When you [the teacher] come and stay one hour with us, you bring that milieu with you'" (p. 56).

"...that is a true gesture of love" (p. 56).

"In my real position growing up I had seen black males in positions of patriarchal authority, exercising forms of male power and supporting institutionalized sexism" (p.120).

"This acceptance came only when white women began to show an interest in issues of race and gender" (p. 121).

"When the contemporary feminist movement first began, feminist scholarship and writing by black women was groundbreaking" (p. 121).

"It seemed that individual women active in feminist politics were often caught between a rock and a hard place" (p. 122).

"To provide a model of possibility, I chose to engage in dialogue with Ron Scapp, a white male philosopher, colleague and friend" (p. 130).



## Topics for Discussion

Education for freedom: describe this concept and practice. Defend it or oppose it.

Integration of schools. Cite benefits and criticisms of this.

Implementation in pedagogy: why is participation so important in pedagogy?

What are your favorite ways to improve teaching that you have learned in this book? Give at least one reason why you favor them.

Why is transgression used as a teaching tool?

Are you a minority in any way, within the context of this culture? If so, what is it and how has it affected you?

Which is your favorite chapter/essay? Explain why if you can.

Why is it so important that women develop feminist theories?

Do you feel your race plays into what you view as the top priorities of the women's movement? Explain your answer.