

# MASTER'S THESIS

To what extent may the superhero film *Black Panther* promote intercultural competence in the English classroom?

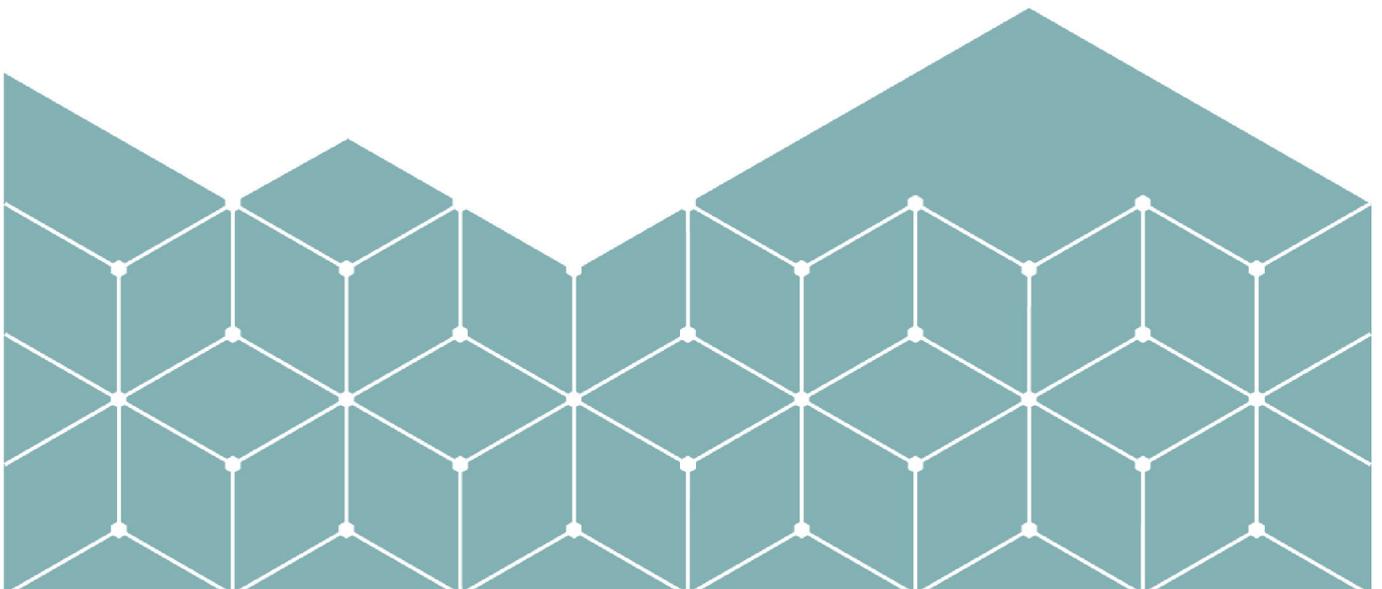
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## Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to explore to what extent the superhero film *Black Panther* may promote intercultural competence in the English classroom at the upper secondary school level. Developing intercultural competence is a central value in the English subject curriculum, emphasizing the importance of preparing the students to interact with people with multiple identities from various cultures. Studies show that film can be an effective tool to promote intercultural competence and is also supported in the curriculum. *Black Panther* is selected due to its portrayal of cultural diversity and addressing identity in the legacy of colonialism.

Through qualitative methods, the research study presents and discusses findings that highlight the themes that emerge from the film analysis and are employed in the teaching project: identity and belonging, cultural representation and diversity, women's roles, protectionism, colonialism, and globalism.

The research study analyzes and discusses classroom observations, focus group interviews, and written short-answer tasks and essays. The findings are viewed considering Byram's model of intercultural competence and postcolonial theory to investigate to what extent the superhero film *Black Panther* may promote intercultural competence in the English classroom.

The findings suggest that the students, through pre-viewing activities, have gained knowledge of African American history and issues related to identity. In addition, they seem to appreciate diverse cultural expressions, and working with the film has raised awareness of that positive representation can be empowering. These findings indicate that *Black Panther* has contributed to promoting intercultural competence and can be of value to other classroom settings. Suggestions are identified for further developing the teaching project.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

In an increasingly globalized world, where most countries are multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multilingual, intercultural understanding is more important than ever. People will encounter different cultures and ways of living both at home and abroad (Byram, 2020). Therefore, it is essential to develop intercultural competence to interact effectively with others and to ensure a shared understanding of that people are complex human beings with multiple identities. The intercultural dimension is a central component of the English subject curriculum in Norway that acknowledge, in addition to linguistic competence, that learners need intercultural competence to prepare them for interacting with people from other cultures. Thus, the learners can build “the foundation for seeing their own identity and others’ identities in a multilingual and multicultural context” (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p. 3).

One approach that can be conducive to fostering the development of intercultural competence is the use of film. Research has shown that fictional and authentic texts such as film can offer a gateway to new perspectives of different cultures and be a resource in intercultural learning (Barrett et al., 2014; Bland, 2018; Hoff, 2013; Kramsch, 2011; Pegrum, 2008).<sup>1</sup> A film that has received considerable attention since its release is *Black Panther* (Coogler, 2018), a superhero film set in the fictional African nation of Wakanda. The film has been praised for starring an almost exclusively black cast, its portrayal of African culture, its representation of strong female characters, and for addressing how the legacy of colonialism has impacted the identity of diasporic people. Although research has been carried out analyzing the themes addressed in the film, little research has investigated to what extent *Black Panther* may promote intercultural competence in the English classroom in Norway. Therefore, a teaching project has been developed for a vg1 class program for general studies in upper secondary school, using the film *Black Panther* where the intercultural themes in the film are viewed in light of postcolonial theory.

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<sup>1</sup> This thesis draws on a project outline and literature review submitted as part of an obligatory master course in “Methods and project” at the University of Gothenburg (Dahl, 2021).

### 1.3 Aim and Research Question

This thesis aims to investigate how teachers can use film to develop students' intercultural competence, and more specifically:

**To what extent may the superhero film *Black Panther* promote intercultural competence in the English classroom?**

The purpose is to use *Black Panther* as a tool to provide a broader understanding of black history and issues related to identity. The film addresses themes such as colonialism and identity and calls attention to how the practices of imperialism and colonialism impact the identity of diasporic people. A superhero film may be an untraditional choice to depict themes related to intercultural understanding. However, the goal is to develop the students' intercultural competence by showing how cinematic representation of diversity can prompt a better understanding of others, stimulate curiosity about other cultures, and simultaneously have the students reflect on their own cultural backgrounds and identity. This thesis will therefore investigate to what extent *Black Panther* may be a resource to helping students understand how ancestry and diasporic experiences relate to identity and raise awareness of whether the film can be viewed as a resource of resistance for black people.

### 1.4 Outline of Thesis

This thesis is composed of six main chapters, each with its sub-chapters. The first chapter provides an introduction, which includes the background for the thesis, the aim and research question, and the outline of the thesis. The second chapter establishes the theoretical framework for the study. The first part focuses on the cultural component of foreign language teaching and intercultural competence. Then, what one needs to consider when using film to facilitate intercultural learning. The second part presents an explanation of colonialism, diaspora, and postcolonialism before the issue of identity is elaborated on and considered how it relates to postcolonial theory. The chapter also includes a description of the concepts Pan-Africanism and Afrofuturism. Chapter three presents the didactic framework employed for the study, including the curriculum for the English subject, information about the participants in the study and learning aims. The remaining part of the chapter provides a summary of the story of *Black Panther* with an analysis of the intercultural concepts present in the film with references to specific scenes and the theoretical framework provided in chapter two. Chapter

four describes the methodology, the research methods used for the study, the procedure, and the material used in the analysis. The second part of the chapter presents the teaching plan. The fifth chapter analyzes and discusses the findings of the study before a summary and conclusion follows in chapter six.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

This chapter presents the theoretical framework on which the teaching project is based. First, cultural content in foreign language education will be accounted for, before Byram's model of intercultural competence will be explained. Second follows a discussion of how films can be used to facilitate intercultural learning. The final sub-chapters contextualize how colonialism affects dispersed peoples' identity with references to key concepts and central contributors in postcolonial theory.

### **2.1 Cultural Content in Foreign Language Education**

Teaching about cultural issues has a long tradition in foreign language education. Traditionally, the focus was on providing learners with knowledge about the history, arts, and literature of a specific country or specific countries. This knowledge about aspects of culture is often referred to as "big C culture" (Dypedahl & Lund, 2020, p. 12). In the 1960s and 70s, there was a shift to developing learners' practical language skills that would be useful in everyday communication situations with native speakers, such as common cultural practices, beliefs, norms, attitudes, and values. The emphasis on understanding the "way of life" of a target country is often described as "small c culture" (Dypedahl & Lund, 2020, pp. 13-17; Brevik et al., 2020, pp. 217-218). However, in the 1980s and 90s, the communicative approach significantly developed foreign language education. The emphasis was to develop the learners' ability to use language in context in socially and culturally acceptable ways (Dypedahl & Lund, 2020, pp. 13-19; Byram et al., 2002, p. 7). This entails that to understand something that is said or written; one must understand and interpret the context in which it occurs. In other words, it was recognized that language and culture are intertwined (Dypedahl & Lund, 2020, p. 14). Therefore, alongside the focus on communicative competence, the

notion of intercultural competence was developed as an integral part of foreign language education (Dypedahl & Lund, 2020, p. 19).

Culture can be understood in many ways. It can be both big C topics and small c aspects of a culture's way of life. How one understands the context of a communication situation and sees the world is initially based on the language one has learned, upbringing, and background. (Dypedahl & Lund, 2020, pp. 14-16). However, as Barrett et al. (2014) state, groups of any size, for example, nations, ethnic groups, cities, and neighborhoods, may have their own distinctive cultures. Therefore, people belong to and identify with multiple cultures simultaneously (p. 14). Cultural affiliations are fluid and dynamic, changing with people's interests, situations, and time. One such affiliation is often nationality, but affiliations may also be related to, for example, family background, gender, and religion. People's cultural affiliations are complex, which means it is difficult to define culture to fixed traits or one identity that apply equally to one group of people or nationality (Dypedahl & Lund, 2020, p. 17). In addition to the multiple ways people relate to their affiliated cultures, cultures are dynamic and change over time due to political, economic, and historical developments and interactions with other cultures (Barrett et al., 2014, pp.14-15).

Learning about aspects of culture and developing the learners' awareness and understanding of that individuals have complex identities may help them better understand others from different backgrounds with different attitudes, beliefs, customs, and values than their own. Interacting with individuals or a group of people who have different mindsets and cultural affiliations perceived differently from oneself is called an intercultural encounter (Barrett et al., 2014, p. 16). To interact and communicate successfully with people from different cultures both at home and abroad, one needs intercultural competence.

## **2.2 Intercultural Competence**

The skill of successful interaction with people from different cultures is described as intercultural competence, which is defined as "the ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities, and their ability to interact with people as complex human beings with multiple identities and their own individuality" (Byram et al., 2002, p. 10). Byram et al. (2002, p. 11) state that acquiring intercultural competence is a continuous process as cultures and people's identities are dynamic and constantly changing. In the context of foreign

language education in Europe, Byram's (1997) model of intercultural competence has been the most influential. According to Byram et al. (2002), intercultural competence can be understood as a combination of *attitudes*, *knowledge*, *skills of interpreting and relating*, *skills of discovery and interaction*, and *critical cultural awareness* applied in interaction with people from other cultures (pp. 12-13). Byram et al. (2002) explain *attitudes* as the foundation of intercultural competence, which entails the intercultural speaker's curiosity and openness to take an outsider's perspective and being able to decenter and relativize one's own set of values and beliefs (p. 12). The next component, *knowledge*, requires knowledge about other people and one's own group, how social groups and identities function, and the concepts and processes involved in intercultural interaction. It includes, for example, knowledge about the concepts of prejudice and stereotype and how they impact interactions. This entails that one needs to understand that people affiliate with different cultures and have multiple identities (Byram et al., 2002, p. 12). Since it is difficult to anticipate exactly what knowledge is needed in various intercultural encounters, the third dimension, *skills of interpreting and relating*, means one needs to observe, interpret, and compare aspects of cultures and relate them to each other. This means one can better take another person's perspective and understand how misunderstandings might occur (Byram et al., 2002, pp. 12-13). Furthermore, the *skills of discovery and interaction*, refers to the ability to acquire new knowledge about other cultures, integrate that with what one already knows, and use this in real-time communication and interaction (Byram et al., 2002, p. 13).

Finally, the fifth component, *critical cultural awareness*, involves awareness of one's own as well as others' cultures' values, and the ability to evaluate and critically reflect upon and see how these values influence the view of other people (Byram et al., 2002, p. 13). In other words, an interculturally competent person can see the world from different perspectives and understand that his or her way of viewing the world is culture dependent. Language learning today should prepare learners for responsible global citizenship and engagement in contemporary issues in the world (Risager, 2020, in Byram, 2021). Therefore, one can argue that critical cultural awareness also has a political dimension.

### **2.3 Film as a Tool to Facilitate Intercultural Learning**

Research shows that literary texts such as films can be a resource and play a key role in intercultural learning. First, films that expose learners to different perspectives of the world

and classroom activities before, during, and after the film that encourage reflection and interpretation can raise their critical cultural awareness (Svenhard, 2018). Second, films provide an opportunity to explore other places, conflicts, and tensions related to diversity in contexts in the past or present that can lay the foundations for self-reflection and openness (Barrett et al., 2014, p. 44). Third, films reflect the society in which they are made, depicting social problems, different worldviews, cultural values, and norms. Thus, they simultaneously mirror and interpret the present time (Björk et al., 2014, p. 196). Students may be introduced to the stories another culture tells about itself. Film can be a good tool to “read the world” through the lenses of other cultures (Pegrum, 2008, p. 146). Lastly, the students are exposed to authentic language in context, which may lead to more openness towards other cultures and varieties of English (Björk et al., 2014, p. 195).

One should not underestimate the motivational aspect of students’ learning. Films are experienced as a welcome change to written texts. Roell (2010) points out that “Films combine pleasure and learning by telling a story that captures and holds the viewer’s interest” (p. 2). Becoming immersed in other people’s worlds can help students relate and become more conscious of their own cultural background (Björk et al., 2014, p. 196). Furthermore, films appeal to the viewers’ feelings. If there is an emotional connection and the learners can empathize with the characters, participating in classroom discussions and sharing their interpretations can seem less intimidating (Dypedahl & Lund, 2020, p. 91; Roell, 2010, p. 2). Barrett et al. argue that the most effective learning for developing intercultural competence occurs in activities that engage the learners intellectually and emotionally (2014, p. 30). Because learners’ motivation and engagement are key factors in developing intercultural competence, addressing learners’ interests should be considered when selecting appropriate material. Studies have shown that students desire more relevant cultural content (Bloemert et al., 2019; Göbel & Helmke, 2010; Hoff, 2019). Therefore, one can argue that popular films can provide students with material to reflect on as well as they can practice visual and critical literacies. Bland (2018) argues that practicing visual and critical literacy in interpreting literary texts in different formats and media, e.g., film, must be included in English language teaching. Addressing the connection between English language teaching in school and the students’ world beyond school can be empowering (p. 11). Moreover, using films that students might already be familiar with can show that teachers are interested in the “cultural capital” (Bourdieu, 2019, in Hoff, 2019, p. 451) students possess, which may increase their engagement and motivation. Provided that the students are given relevant tasks before, during,

and after viewing a film that encourage engagement, improve analytical abilities, and expand their views of other cultures, they can simultaneously reflect on their own identity and culture's diversity. A method suggested for engaging the students to become active viewers when working with film, is the viewer-response approach developed by Teasley and Wilder (1997). The method encourages interpretation, reflection, participation, and provides opportunities for classroom discussion and developing students' writing skills (Teasley & Wilder, 1997, pp. 6-7). Pegrum (2008) argues that through exploration and reflection, one builds the skills needed for intercultural interaction and global citizenship (p. 146). Thus, film can promote conversations across cultures.

However, there are important considerations teachers need to make when deciding to use film as a tool in language teaching. First, one needs to remember that films are works of fiction and an interpretation of reality (Björk et al., 2014, p. 195). Second, the story of a film reflects how the director has interpreted reality based on their identity and cultural background, and a political agenda the director may have. The story is from a particular point in time within a specific context (Hall, 1990). Therefore, all texts are situated, and interpretations are partial (Pegrum, 2008, p. 146). Pegrum (2008) suggests that students should be introduced to films that enable them to see that the culture studied is as diverse as their native culture(s). Thus, the films chosen should provide both mainstream and marginal voices (p. 146). Film can be a key to exploring issues related to history, racism, diversity, and identity in the past or present. Belton (1996) notes that films "not only serve as texts that document who we think we are or were, but also reflect changes in our self-image" (cited in Pegrum, 2009, pp. 147-148). In a similar vein, Hall (1990) argues that cinematic representation can be an imaginative rediscovery of identity and a retelling of the past (p. 393).

## **2.4 Colonialism**

Colonialism is defined as "the conquest and direct control of other people's land" by another power (Williams & Chrisman, 1993, p. 2). Although earlier civilizations had colonies, the rapid expansion of territories by European nations over the last 400 years is closely related to the practices of *imperialism* (Ashcroft et al., 2014, p. 40). Said (1993) suggests imperialism can be understood as "the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory; 'colonialism,' which is almost always a consequence of

imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory” (cited in Ashcroft et al., 2014, p. 40). The expansion of European colonialism coincided with the emergence a modern system of economic exchange, known as capitalism (Williams & Chrisman, 1993, p. 2; Ashcroft et al., 2014, p. 40). The colonies represented access to new markets and sources of raw materials controlled by the European world powers at the time. The colonizing nations controlled the colonized through the economically, culturally, and socially unequal and unfair distribution of power (Ashcroft et al., 2014, pp. 41-42).

The ideology of race was established to defend the practices of colonization and was a crucial part of the naturalization of inequality in intercultural relations. After the development of the transatlantic slave trade from the late sixteenth century onwards, race itself, racism, and racial prejudice were a justification for the treatment of enslaved peoples of Africa (Ashcroft et al., 2014, p. 41). In what is known as the Middle Passage, millions of Africans were forcibly uprooted throughout West Africa and West Central Africa and shipped across the Atlantic to work as enslaved laborers on agricultural plantations (National Museums Liverpool [NML]), n.d.). The enslaved people were dispersed across the Americas and forced into slavery. As a result, people of African descent are spread throughout the American continent, something that is called the African Diaspora (NML, n.d).

#### **2.4.1 Diaspora**

Diaspora refers to “the voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homelands into new regions” and is a central historical fact of colonization (Ashcroft et al., 2014, p. 61). For Gilroy (1994), diaspora is not just a word for movement but suggests flight or coerced displacement rather than a freely chosen experience (p. 207). Diasporas are produced by regimes of political domination and systems of economic inequality which evoke the specific trauma of forced displacement, such as the violent history of African slavery (Clifford, 1994, p. 319; Chiang, 2010, p. 36). According to Chiang (2010), diaspora can be understood as a consequence of imperial dominance. The displacement of people because of slavery, indenture, and settlement entails a geographical dispersal and refers to the identity, memory, and home such displacement produces (p. 36). A diasporic identity emerges from a shared history of dispersal, the collective memory of the lost homeland, alienation in the host country, and a desire for an eventual return (Clifford, 1994, p. 305; Chiang, 2010, p. 36).

Similarly, Gilroy (1994) contends that diaspora identity caused by dispersal and reluctant scattering is focused on the social dynamics of remembrance and commemoration (p. 207).

#### **2.4.2 Postcolonialism**

The term *postcolonialism* was initially used by historians after the Second World War, referring to the period when previously colonized countries gained independence. However, since the late 1970s, the term has been used to refer to the field of critical academic study and analysis that addresses the effects and impact of European imperialism and colonization on cultures and societies (Ashcroft et al., 2014, pp. 168-169). Nevertheless, as Williams and Chrisman (1993) argue, postcolonialism is far from a unified field of study. The degree to which the former colonies can now be considered post-colonial is variable and debatable (pp. 3, 273). For example, Mishra and Hodge (1991) stress that postcolonialism is not a homogeneous category, and they voice their concern at the inclusion of white settler colonies like Australia in the same debate as postcolonialism in Black nations that had a distinctly different and more difficult route to independence. Furthermore, McClintock (1992) argues that postcolonialism is prematurely celebratory. According to her, if one sees beyond the historical development from colonial to post-colonial, there is still an international imbalance of imperial power. She claims that the United States' "imperialism-without colonies" in the forms of financial, military, and cultural influence can have an impact as massive as any colonial regime (pp. 295-296). Arguably, McClintock's claims still hold, Bhabra (2007) argues that although political power is transferred to the formerly colonized, institutional, economic, and cultural contexts of Western hegemony largely remain in place (see Ward, 2020, p. 16). However, the following sub-chapters will focus on a central theme in postcolonial theory, the study of how colonization has affected the identity of the dispersed peoples.

#### **2.4.3 Identity in the Legacy of Colonialism**

For many postcolonial theorists, Frantz Fanon remains a point of reference (Williams & Chrisman, 1993, p. 274). Fanon was a French West Indian philosopher and psychiatrist born in Martinique under French colonial rule. During the Algerian war for independence against France in the 1950s, Fanon worked as a psychiatrist and witnessed first-hand the

brutality of colonial rule (Dini, 2017). His books *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) explore the psychological impact of colonization on the colonized and colonial racism (Sikuade, 2021).

“What does the black man want?” Fanon asks in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Fanon examines the effects of colonial racism and how black citizens are treated as inferior to whites. To be considered human, they must act white; blacks are forced to wear the “white mask” (Dini, 2017). Fanon (2021<sup>2</sup>) argues that the black man is a victim of white civilization p. 136) and “a toy in the hands of the white man” (p.103). He states, “The black man possesses two dimensions: one with his fellow Blacks, the other with Whites. A black man behaves differently with a white man than he does with another black man” (2021, p. 13). The black man feels inferior; not only does he have to be black, but he must also be black in relation to the white man (Fanon, 2021, p. 79). Being black implies acting white and imitating white people, thus blacks are hiding their true identity behind a white mask (Beyers, 2019, p. 7). Bhabha (1986) explains that the “otherness” of the self is inscribed in the deep psychic uncertainty of colonial identity (p. 116). The feeling of shame and otherness will affect a person’s self-respect and mental health. Fanon notes that the stories children read are written by white men for white children, where the evil, the savage, and the wild are represented by the black or Indian. Just like white children, black children will identify with the white hero and adopt a white man’s attitude (Fanon, 2021, pp. 106-108). Consequently, black children denounce their racial identity (Dini, 2017, Section 2: Ideas). To return to Fanon’s question, “What does the black man want?” Fanon (2021) answers, “I acknowledge one right for myself: the right to demand human behavior from the other” (p. 165). Fanon explains that man’s human worth depends on the recognition by the other and being treated as an equal human being.

*The Wretched of the Earth* is more politicized. Fanon elaborates on the nature of colonialism, which he describes as not only content with ruling a dominated country. “Colonialism is not satisfied merely with hiding a people in its grip and emptying the native’s brain of all form and content. By a perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it” (Fanon, 1967, p. 36). Fanon (1967) argues that colonial exploitation drives the native to organized revolt (p. 46). Fanon’s ideas inspired the Black Power movement in the United States in the 1960s, and the leader of the Black Panther

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<sup>2</sup> Fanon’s book *Black Skin, White Masks* was first published in 1952.

Party, Huey Newton, insisted that revolutionary violence was necessary to defeat the legacy of colonialism (Bhabha, 1986, p. 113; Johnson & Hoerl, 2020, p. 272). Although Fanon is known for justifying violence, he attempts to show “a jagged testimony of colonial dislocation”, according to Bhabha (1986, p. 114). Discussing the legacy of Fanon, Goozee (2021) argues that Fanon provides a connection between politics and psychiatry by demonstrating the individual’s experience and trauma and the psychological impact of colonialism. Many of Fanon’s ideas and practices as a psychiatrist are still relevant today and were precursors to what today is known as recovery and rehabilitation psychiatry for any marginalized group (Sikuade, 2021). Perhaps most importantly, Fanon foreshadowed what became central themes in postcolonial theory.

The binary relationship between Self and Other in the process of identity formation in colonial relations and the colonial Other is explained in Said’s book *Orientalism* from 1978 (see Doran, 2019, pp. 98-99). Said’s *Orientalism* is considered a seminal contribution to postcolonial theory (Doran, 2019). *Orientalism* focused on *colonial discourse*, how, through various textual forms and negative descriptions of the Other, the West claimed superiority (Williams & Chrisman, 1993, pp. 127-128). According to Said (1978), Orientalism is a sign of European-Atlantic power over the Orient, with the idea that European culture and identity were superior to non-European peoples and cultures (p. 134). The Oriental people were considered uncivilized, uncultured, strange, and “other.” They were seen as problems to be solved or taken over (p. 145). Orientalism can be seen as a Western style for dominating and having authority over the Orient (Ashcroft et al., 2014, p. 153). By creating a “us” and “them” binary, the East, or the Orient, was removed from the possibilities to represent themselves.

Other postcolonial theorists have challenged the ideas about colonial identity and the binary separation between the colonizer and colonized. Issues of domination do not only exist between the imperial power and the colonized but also within a nation. According to Spivak (1988), in her essay “Can the subaltern Speak?”, the subaltern groups (of “inferior rank”), especially women, peasants, and ethnic minority groups, were denied a voice in the decolonization process and national liberation movements in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Spivak argues that nationalist movements were elitist dominated in complicity with the colonizing power ignoring the needs of voiceless subalterns (Spivak, 1988; Doran, 2019; Ashcroft et al., 2014, pp. 198-201). To Bhabha, nationalism was overshadowed by globalization (see Niazi, 2021, p. 540). Bhabha argues that cultural identity emerges in a “third space” in a cross-cultural

exchange which impacts both the colonizer and the colonized in a process of hybridization (for a discussion of this, see e.g., Doran, 2019, p. 99; Ashcroft et al., 2014, pp. 108-109).

#### 2.4.4 Diaspora and Identity

The diaspora experience...is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite difference; by *hybridity*. Diaspora identities are those which constantly are producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference (Hall, 1990, p. 402).

Hall (1990) argues that one should think of identity as an ongoing "production" that is never complete. It is an ongoing process constituted within representation (p. 392). According to Hall (1990), there are at least two ways of thinking about cultural identity. First, cultural identity can be understood as a collective "one true self" uniting people with a shared history and ancestry, where cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes. Furthermore, Hall notes that one should not underestimate the importance of how cinematic and visual representation offers an imaginative rediscovery of the experiences of all enforced diasporas (1990, pp. 393-394). Such texts, Hall argues (1990), are resources of resistance and identity that can help people understand the rift of separation and loss of identity integral to diaspora experiences (pp. 393-394).

Second, there is a different view of cultural identity, states Hall (1990). Although one should recognize similarities, there are also significant and profound differences. It is difficult to speak about "one experience" or "one identity." The enslaved people who were separated from Africa were from different countries, tribes, languages, and gods (Hall, 1990, pp. 394-395). Each experience is unique; cultural identity, in this sense, is a matter of "becoming" as well as "being." Hall (1990) states, "It belongs to the future as much as to the past" (p. 394). He argues that cultural identities are fluid and not fixed to the past but transform and are affected by history, culture, and power (1990, p. 394). Hall discusses Caribbean diasporic identity and states that while people share the traumatic experience of enforced separation from Africa, which unifies people, Jamaicans, and Martiniquans, for example, have different identities. There is a doubleness of similarity and difference (Hall, 1990, p. 396). Although the peoples are unified in the shared history, the difference is a part of these people's cultural identity.

In a similar vein, Barker and Jane (2016) argue that Gilroy, in his work *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993), sees diaspora identities as being in motion rather than existing in absolutes (2016, p. 305). On the one hand, there is the brute Pan-African thought of absolute identity (Gilroy, 2008, p. 5) which does not count for the plurality of black culture (Evans, 2009, p. 256). On the other hand, the cultural identities of black Britons, black Americans, and black Africans are different (Barker & Jane, 2016, p. 305). For example, Gilroy considers cultural expressions such as music made in different local socio-political contexts to produce hybrid identities (see Barker & Jane, 2016, p. 305; Evans, 2009, p. 256). According to Evans (2009), Gilroy aims to move the discussion of black political culture beyond binary national and diasporic perspectives, trying to show that national identities are part of a global network of interactions where national identities interplay with localized cultural forms (p. 256). The term “double consciousness” in Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic* is borrowed from W.E.B. Du Bois, an American intellectual, Pan-Africanist, and civil rights activist, who introduced the idea of double consciousness in *The Souls of Black Folk* in 1903. Du Bois referred to the identity conflict in the African American individual between what was “African” and what was “American” (see Bruce, 1992, p. 301). In *The Black Atlantic*, Gilroy, who is British, discusses the idea of “double consciousness” as a way of negotiating between being both black and European (see Evans, 2009, p. 255). Clifford (1994) argues that diaspora signifies transnationality and movement and defines local, distinctive community struggles in historical displacement contexts (p. 308). Clifford (1994) states that diaspora discourse articulates what Gilroy (1987) calls *roots* and *routes*. On the one hand, roots articulate the shared histories of enslavement, racist subordination, cultural survival, hybridization, resistance, and political rebellion. On the other hand, routes define the unique community struggles in historical displacement contexts (Clifford, 1994, p. 308).

#### **2.4.5 Identity and Representation**

Hall (1990) discusses the practices of representation in film from the Caribbean diaspora’s perspective. He points out that the representation is “from a particular point of time, from a history and culture which is specific” (p. 392). What is mediated always implicates a specific experience within a context. What needs to be recognized, Hall (1996) argues, is the extraordinary diversity and the distinctness of the historical and cultural

identities and experiences of black subjects (in Chen et al., 1996, p. 444). According to Hall (1990), visual and cinematic representation can be an imaginative rediscovery of identity and a retelling of the past. He refers to Fanon, who called it passionate research that rehabilitates self-contempt and resignation (p. 393).

On a similar note, hooks (1991) describes the situation for many African Americans in modern America as a collective condition of continued displacement, alienation, and despair (p. 224). hooks (1991) states that the psychological state shared by many is of yearning and struggle in the quest to “find ways to construct self and identity that are oppositional and liberatory” (p. 426). For example, rap music has enabled black youth to find their critical voice. According to hooks (1991), music can be the future location of resistance struggle (pp. 426-427). hooks (1991) notes that one should recognize the multiple experiences of black identity that make diverse cultural productions possible (cited in Barker & Jane, 2016, p. 312). Furthermore, Gilroy (1991) argues that popular culture and music can capture the complexity of the African diasporic experience. Finally, as Hall (1996) states, black cultural production should open up for engagement in differences in the complex cultural roots. Recovery of the ancestral past needs to be seen through the present, which can initiate critical discourse about themes and forms of representation (pp. 444-445).

## **2.5 Pan-Africanism and Afrofuturism**

Pan-Africanism can be understood as “the idea that peoples of African descent have common interests and should be unified” (Kuryla, 2020). According to Malisa and Nhengeze, Pan-Africanism is a philosophical, intellectual, and political movement that historically has sought to promote the idea of a liberated and united Africa after slavery and in the encounter with modernity. At the core of Pan-Africanism is promoting consciousness of Africa as the ancestral home for black people and an understanding that people of African heritage have shared similar experiences of colonialism, slavery, and racial oppression (Malisa & Nhengeze, 2018, p. 2). In the context of *Black Panther*, influential African American leaders are Huey Newton, the leader of the Black Panther Party who was, prominent during the civil rights movement in the US., and Cleonora Hudson Weems, who coined the term “Africana womanism” in the late 1980s. Africana womanism is a theory that focuses on the achievements of women of African descent (University of Missouri, n.d).

Afrofuturism is most useful to view as “a constellation of ideas, approaches, and strategies, present in many genres, art, film, music,” and black speculative fiction (Babb, 2020, pp. 97-98). The term, coined by Mark Dery, encompasses science fiction seen from a black cultural perspective (Babb, 2020, p. 97). It is an aesthetic mode that comprises a wide range of artists united in offering an intersectional way of projecting black futures rooted in Afrodiasporic experiences (Marco, 2018, p. 3). Merging the past, present, and future, Afrofuturism uses stories “about the past and the present to reclaim the history of the future” (Yaszec, 2013, cited in Thames Copeland, 2021, p. 4). Most importantly, as Faramelli points out, Afrofuturism can function as a vehicle for critical thought (2019, p. 4).

The collective experience of displacement, the recognition of Africa as the ancestral home for black people, and the yearning for ways to rehabilitate one’s identity and restore self-respect with a vision of what the world could be, are elements that are present in *Black Panther*.

### **3. The Didactic Framework**

This chapter will first present the point of departure for the teaching plan which is founded in the national curriculum for the English subject. Next follows a description of the participants for whom the teaching plan is developed for. The remaining part of this chapter will introduce the story of *Black Panther* by first providing background information about the film and Marvel Studios. The following sub-chapters will highlight intercultural issues in the film based on the key theoretical concepts which were covered in chapter two, with special attention to identity, cultural representation and diversity, female agency, colonialism, protectionism, and globalism.

#### **3.1 The Norwegian Curriculum**

The relevance and importance of intercultural competence is emphasized in the national curriculum for the subject of English. English is a central subject when it comes to cultural understanding, communication, education in general, and identity development. Furthermore, communicating and connecting with others shall develop the students’ understanding of different ways of living and thinking, and make them realize that their

worldviews are culture dependent. The ability to interpret the world can promote curiosity and engagement and help prevent prejudice (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p. 2). The English subject aims to give the learners the foundation for communicating with others regardless of cultural and linguistic background, both at home and abroad (The Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training, 2020, p. 2). In addition, the interdisciplinary topics, *Health and life skills* and *Democracy and citizenship*, acknowledge intercultural issues. For example, in the topic *Health and life skills* it is stated that the ability of the students to express themselves in situations that require linguistic and cultural competence can give students a sense of achievement and confidence about their own identity. Furthermore, the topic *Democracy and citizenship* refers to that learning English and experiencing different societies and cultures, can open up for new ways of interpreting the world (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p. 3).

One way of developing intercultural competence is to expose students to linguistic and cultural diversity in the encounter with texts. The concept of text is used in a broad sense in the curriculum and may encompass spoken or written texts, printed and digital, graphic and artistic, formal and informal, fictional and factual, and contemporary and historical texts (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p. 3). Through critical reflection in the encounter with texts, learners can build “the foundation for seeing their own identity and others’ identities in a multilingual and multicultural context” (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p. 3). Therefore, one can argue that using film that deal with intercultural issues may promote the development of learners’ intercultural competence and align with the aims of the English curriculum of 2020.

### **3.2 Participants**

The project is developed for upper secondary school students enrolled in a Vg1 class in the program for general studies. The participants live in a city with 25 000 inhabitants and attend the program subject Music, Dance, and Drama. The students at the school are recruited from neighboring municipalities and other municipalities in the region. The participants are between the ages of 16 and 17 in a class of 26 students. The school has a diverse student body, with students from various nationalities, ethnicities, and cultures. Most participants in this class are ethnic Norwegians; however, one has a different ethnic background, and two have a parent from another nationality than Norway. About 20 percent of the participants in

the class live in lodgings away from their homes. At the time of the project, the participants have been in the same class for seven months and are used to collaborating on performance projects. The impression is that they know each other well, and there is a good learning environment for group and class discussions. The participants' levels of English proficiency range from average to above average. They have their own laptops and use the digital learning platform, *It's learning*, which is an integral part of their subjects and school work.

### **3.3 The Story of *Black Panther***

*Black Panther* is a superhero science fiction film based on a character with the same name. *Black Panther* was created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby and first appeared in a Marvel Comics book series in the 1960s. The film is directed by Ryan Coogler, who wrote the screenplay with Joe Cole, and it was brought to the scene by Marvel Studios and its parent company, Walt Disney Studios. Marvel Studios produce films based on Marvel comic book characters, including Spider-Man, The Hulk, Iron-Man, and Captain America. *Black Panther* marked a change in what is referred to as the Marvel Cinematic Universe, as it was the first superhero film that featured a black superhero, had a predominantly black cast, and a black director.

*Black Panther* follows Prince T'Challa, who returns home to the fictional African kingdom of Wakanda after his father, King T'Chaka's death, and reclaims the throne by winning a ritual combat against the leader of the Jabari Tribe, M'Baku. Through a traditional ritual after the crowning ceremony, T'Challa is transported to the "Ancestral Plane," where he meets his father T'Chaka's spirit and states his intentions of becoming a good king like his father and previous Black Panthers. T'Challa, as the new king and protector of Wakanda, vows to safeguard Wakanda's sovereignty and interests from outside threats.

The film's opening scene introduces the mythical story of Wakanda's creation. A meteorite containing the powerful mineral vibranium struck the continent of Africa and affected the plant life around it. The panther goddess, Bast, led a shaman warrior to a heart-shaped herb he ingested, which granted him superpower strengths, becoming the first king and Black Panther. The tribes that settled in Wakanda agreed to live under the king's rule, except the Jabari Tribe, who isolated themselves in the mountains. Through centuries, Wakanda became a technologically advanced nation due to its possession of vibranium. The

nation is untouched by colonialism, isolated, and poses as a third-world country to the rest of the world.

T'Challa's wish to continue Wakanda's isolationistic policy is challenged by his love interest, Nakia. She argues that with Wakanda's access to resources and technology, they must provide aid and refuge to those in need. T'Challa's and Wakanda's isolationism and nationalism are further challenged when the villain in the story, Erik "Killmonger" Stevens, emerges. Flashbacks to Oakland, California, in 1992 reveal that Killmonger is the son of the Wakandan Prince N'Jobu. N'Jobu was murdered by his brother King T'Chaka because he planned to distribute vibranium to fund black liberation throughout the world. Killmonger, abandoned in the USA after the murder, returns to Wakanda as an adult to claim his birth-given right to the throne, become the next Black Panther and fulfill his father's radical plans.

Killmonger defeats his cousin T'Challa in ritual combat and hurls him over a waterfall to a presumed death. Killmonger assumes the throne, and Nakia, Princess Shuri (T'Challa's sister), Queen Ramonda (T'Challa's mother), flee to the Jabari Tribe for help. They find T'Challa, rescued by the Jabari, alive and in a coma. T'Challa is revived with the heart-shaped herb and regains his superpower abilities. T'Challa, Shuri, and Nakia return to Wakanda to stop Killmonger before he can distribute Wakanda's resources. Okoye, the general of Wakanda's all-female army, fights alongside T'Challa, and Killmonger's forces are overpowered. T'Challa fatally injures Killmonger, who turns down the offer to be healed, stating he prefers death like his "ancestors that jumped from ships." T'Challa can again take the mantle as king and Black Panther.

At the end of the film, T'Challa acknowledges Wakanda's global responsibility and establishes an outreach center to be run by Nakia and Shuri in Oakland, in the same neighborhood Killmonger was raised. Shortly after, T'Challa holds a speech at the United Nations revealing Wakanda's resources to the world, thereby rejecting the previous kings' protectionist policy.

### **3.4 Analysis of the Intercultural Themes in *Black Panther***

Several scenes and aspects of *Black Panther* illustrate issues relevant to promoting intercultural competence. The following section will present the themes with references to specific scenes in the film and the theoretical framework in chapter two.

### 3.4.1 Identity and Belonging

A central theme in *Black Panther* is knowing one's identity and where one belongs; what can be called home? The recurring question throughout the film is, "Who are you?" Identity, recovering knowledge of self, home, and a sense of belonging are related to Afrodiasporic experiences and are central themes in Afrofuturism (Harris, 2020). The complexity of identity that Du Bois refers to as "double consciousness" is epitomized in Killmonger. On the one hand, Killmonger's identity is shaped by the surroundings he grew up in a deprived area in Oakland, California. As an African American, Killmonger feels alienated and not treated as an equal human in the place he calls home. The individual's experience, the shared traumatic history of enforced separation, and the deep psychic uncertainty of colonial identity leads to a feeling of inferiority and being an Other, which ultimately drives the native to a state of rage and organized revolt (Fanon, 1967). Killmonger's father, N'Jobu, has been radicalized by witnessing racial injustice. He says, "Their leaders have been assassinated. Communities flooded with drugs and weapons. They are overly policed and incarcerated." (1:05:59). It is no coincidence that the scene which shows N'Jobu and the Wakandan spy Zuri plotting what seems to be a revolutionary intent, takes place in Oakland in 1992. The television in the background shows scenes of the arrest and beating of African American Rodney King that led to riots in Los Angeles the same year (02:16). Killmonger carries with him his father's vision of liberating black people around the world using vibranium as a tool.

On the other hand, N'Jobu, through telling his son the story of how Wakanda was formed, teaches Killmonger that Wakanda is home; this is where he can trace his ancestry and where his father and forefathers were born (00:00:05), illustrating that a diasporic identity emerges from the collective memory of a lost homeland and the desire for an eventual return (Clifford, 1994; Chiang, 2010). Upon arrival in Wakanda, Killmonger is confronted at the border by the leader of The Border Tribe, W'Kabi, with the question, "Who are you?" Killmonger proves his identity as partly Wakandan by showing his imprinted identity mark of vibranium inside his lips. Yet, after he is asked the same question, "Who are you?" when he stands before the Tribal Council and reveals that he is the son of N'Jobu and acknowledges his Wakandan identity, he is treated as an outsider, an Other (1:15:39).

The duality of Killmonger's identity and his feeling of non-belonging is illustrated in the scene where he visits his father's spirit in the Ancestral Plane after he has defeated T'Challa in ritual combat. Killmonger is not brought into the Ancestral Plane of previous

Black Panthers; he is taken back to Oakland. His father tells him, “I should have taken you back long ago. Instead, we are both abandoned here.” (01: 25:17). When Killmonger returns from the Ancestral Plane, he orders the garden of the heart-shaped herbs to be burned. These are an essential part of Wakandan culture, granting superpower strengths to the Black Panther and providing connection to the ancestors. Arguably, burning the heart-shaped herbs and the ancestral shrine depicts Killmonger’s anger, his sense of abandonment, his lack of belonging, and his loss of ancestral roots. The scene implies what many African Americans feel about the separation from Africa because of the African diaspora, a loss of connection with their ancestors (Babb, 2020, p. 106). Bashonga (2021) suggests it points to “a ruptured relationship with home,” which creates confusion, anxiety, and fear of not belonging anywhere (p. 8). One can argue that the loss of connection with ancestors alludes to what Fanon wrote about in *Black Skin, White Masks* in 1952, where he described the separation as “the jagged testimony of dislocation” (see Bhabha, 1986).

In contrast, T’Challa does not share Killmonger’s experiences of racism. Being of royalty and having grown up in a secluded and protected Wakanda, he initially does not understand Killmonger’s desire to arm oppressed people. Killmonger’s notions of identity are based on race and his experiences as a black man in America. In contrast, T’Challa identifies with Wakanda’s national culture passed down through generations and his identity as the leader of *his* people. He appears oblivious to the needs of others outside Wakanda. Their different notions of identity are depicted in the scene where Killmonger stands before Wakanda’s tribal council:

**Killmonger:** Y’all sitting up here comfortable, must feel good. It’s about two billion people all over the world that looks like us. But their lives are a lot harder. Wakanda has the tools to liberate them all.

**T’Challa:** Our weapons will not be used to wage war on the world. It is not our way to be judge, jury and executioner for people who are not our own.

**Killmonger:** Not your own? But didn't life start right here on this continent? So ain't all people your people?

**T’Challa:** I am not king of all people. I am king of Wakanda [...] (1:14:23).

The scene illustrates that for Killmonger, race is the shared and most important form of identity for black people across the world, which is the tenet of Pan- Africanism, the unity of people of African descent. On the other hand, for T’Challa and the Wakandans, the overriding symbol of identity is the nation-state and protecting its wealth (Bashonga, 2021, p. 7).

However, this interaction and previous conversations T'Challa has had with Nakia, where she has argued that Wakanda must provide access to technology and refuge to those in need, affect T'Challa, causing him to question Wakanda's protectionism. According to Faramelli (2019), Nakia's idea of liberation is closer to Fanon's Pan-Africanism, a form of African solidarity and unity that crosses racial lines (pp. 11-14). T'Challa develops a consciousness of being black and adopts the idea of helping oppressed black people and people in need. He confronts his father and ancestors' spirits in the Ancestral Plane when he is revived after being rescued by the Jabari Tribe. T'Challa cries out, "You were wrong! All of you were wrong! To turn your backs on the rest of the world! We let the fear of our discovery stop us from doing what is right!" He acknowledges that Killmonger is "a monster of our own making" (01:37:22). T'Challa realizes he should take on responsibilities beyond the ones he has in Wakanda and how former kings have ruled. He questions the isolationist traditions of his ancestors and acknowledges that the Wakandans should be a part of a larger collective of solidarity with the oppressed and especially the people of the African diaspora.

### **3.4.2 Cultural Representation and Diversity**

*Black Panther* is a film rich with images and symbols which portray traditional African cultures past and present. The mythology of how Wakanda was formed is introduced in the opening scene. The viewer is being prepared for beliefs, experiences, symbols, rituals, and metaphysical aspects of Wakandan culture that are important to its people (Kennedy, 2018). A child (Killmonger) asks his "Baba" (N'Jobu) to tell the story of "home." The panther goddess Bast leads a shaman-warrior to a heart-shaped herb bestowed with vibranium power, equipping him to be the first Black Panther. The presence of the goddess is visible throughout the film, in the mouth of the mountaintop cave that overlooks Wakanda, in the Ancestral Plane where panthers prowl alongside the former kings, and in T'Challa's panther suit (Faithful, 2018, p. 6). Bast is mentioned on several occasions, "Glory to Bast," and when T'Challa is in the care of the Jabari Tribe, Queen Ramonda calls upon the ancestors and Bast to revive him. The presence of religion and belief in a supreme being without Christian influence (as Wakanda has never been colonized) can also be found in character M'Baku, the leader of the Jabari Tribe. M'Baku, who has not been a part of Wakandan society, prays to a different God, Hanuman, in the ritual combat at the beginning of the film (00:24:33). One can understand this as an allusion to what Hall (1990) describes, the dispersed peoples were from

different countries, languages, and gods, emphasizing the differences in these people's cultural identity.

The belief in a supreme being, or God, is closely connected to ritual, spirituality, and traditional healing in the Wakandan society. According to Thabede (2008), the departed occupy a prominent place in African religions. People who die become ancestral spirits who can communicate with the living, and a way to remember the deceased is by performing rituals (p. 239). Gill (2019) also points to the tradition of communicating with ancestors as a heavily rooted tradition in African communities. Thus, rituals, ceremonies, diversity of religious life, and connection with ancestors depict that these elements are an integral part of Wakandan society and the culture's collective values and identity.

After the ritual combat with M'Baku, guided by the shaman, Zuri, T'Challa drinks a potion of the heart-shaped herb, goes into a transitional state, and is taken to the Ancestral Plane to communicate with his father's spirit, illustrating that the connection to ancestors is strong. They are who you seek for guidance and wisdom. The presence of ancestors is also shown when T'Challa says, "I am Prince T'Challa, son of King T'Chaka," (00:26:41). Additionally, when Killmonger is asked by the elders in the Tribal council, "Who are you?" He answers, "I am N'Jadaka, son of Prince N'Jobu" (01:15:40). Furthermore, in a scene before the coronation ceremony, T'Challa's mother tells him, "He is with us, and it is your time to be king" (00:15:12), giving prominence to the belief in the presence of ancestors.

One can also see the diversity of African cultures displayed through the characters' costumes. Each tribe has a unique style of clothing representing its cultural tradition and heritage. For instance, headdresses, jewelry, robes, and masks were inspired from tribes like the Surma and Mursi tribes from Ethiopia, the Zulu tribe of Africa, and the Maasai people of East Africa (Campbell-Phillips et al., 2019). According to the costume designer Ruth Carter, she was inspired by various tribes and regions in Africa when creating the costumes. She states, "That was a kind of way of bringing our past forward and showing it in a way that was mystical and futuristic in a superhero film that you have never seen before" (*Vanity Fair*, 2019, 13:34). There is an Afrofuturistic reference, *Black Panther* looks to the past, while simultaneously commenting on the present and future conjuring with the vision of an uncolonized African nation. One can argue that the extraordinary diversity and distinctness represented is an imaginative rediscovery of identity and retelling of the past as Hall argues (1990). The diasporic people were from different countries, tribes, languages, and gods. Although the people have a shared history, the different and unique experiences emphasize

the diversity and distinctness that are a part of these people's cultural identity (Chen et al., 1996).

The music score for the film is created by the Swedish composer Ludwig Göransson who collaborated with African artists using traditional African instruments, rhythms, and beats to make the music (*Genius*, 2019). The African sounds are evident in scenes where T'Challa is present (0:12:08; 0:20:19; 01:17:13). The beating of drums, chanting, and dancing are a part of the rituals, as shown in the ritual combats. The music played in Shuri's laboratory is contemporary African music. In other words, the music complements the action. In contrast, when the location is Oakland, or Killmonger is in the scenes, rap music is playing, indicating where the characters belong (01:48; 01:29:30). The exception is the scene where Killmonger chooses to die rather than be healed and locked up, one can hear the African beats and music. T'Challa takes Killmonger's arms and lay them across his chest in the shape of an X, the same gesture the Wakandans use when they greet each other while uttering the words "Wakanda forever" (1:57:20). One can interpret the scene as Killmonger is no longer seen as an Other, he is recognized as a Wakandan.

Diversity is also represented in the variety of English spoken in the film. As a mark of authenticity, the Wakandan characters have lines spoken in the South African Xhosa language and speak with a Xhosan accent, departing from a "generic African accent" often used in other films (Faithful, 2018, p. 6). Killmonger speaks African American Vernacular English that conveys his identity. In addition to the spoken language Xhosa used in the film, Wakanda has its own written language that draws on African indigenous writing systems (Osei, 2020, p. 383). For instance, throughout the film the location cues inform where a particular scene takes place. The locations are translated from Wakandan to English rather than the opposite. Thus, the power given to English, the colonial language, is reversed. In the futurist Africa, the power of the indigenous language is reclaimed (Osei, 2020, p. 384). Another element that can be seen as reclaiming the past is the visualization of architecture. The architectural designs, from the mud huts of the Border Tribe to the urban and futuristic capital, the use of natural materials, bright colors, and circular forms have a traditional and authentic African appeal (Osei, 2020, p. 385). Osei (2020) argues that incorporating indigenous architectural designs is a futuristic imagining of a prosperous place while simultaneously a sign of resistance to Western-inspired design adopted after colonialism (p. 386). The projection of a black future blended with references to the past and present is a central feature of Afrofuturism.

The representation of the diversity of African culture can serve as a means of the recovering the ancestral past seen through the present (Chen et al., 1996). hooks (1991) describes it as a yearning to find ways to construct self and identity that are oppositional and liberatory, something that can be seen through the female characters in the film. O'Connor (2022) notes that *Black Panther* forges a relationship between hero and community that is reclaimed and reshaped to honor collective effort (p. 92). In contrast to the role women had in the post-colonial era where the subalterns were denied a voice in the nationalist movements (Spivak, 1998), *Black Panther* draws on the role of women in pre-colonial Africa who were instrumental in their communities (Osei, 2020, p. 387).

### **3.4.3 The Women of Wakanda**

Although Wakanda is indeed a Kingdom, a patriarchal and traditional society, women play key roles in the narrative. They are not at the helm and do not rule; nevertheless, they support and collaborate with T'Challa, who turns to the women for advice and guidance, and they work together to preserve Wakanda and its people ensuring that the community and what is best for the group is put first.

Okoye is the leader of the all-female guard, the Dora Milaje. They protect the Royal family, and Okoye has pledged her allegiance to the throne no matter who sits upon it. Her conflictedness is evident in her facial expressions when Killmonger is on the throne. She deems him “not fit to be king” and demonstrates her independent thinking and loyalty to Wakanda when she is faced with choosing sides at the end of the film. She and the Dora Milaje go against Killmonger to stop his plans of sending weapons out of Wakanda. Shuri, T'Challa's sister, the princess of Wakanda, is a technical genius and the head of Wakanda's technological division. Her innovations fuel T'Challa in his fights against enemies. She oversees Wakanda's weaponry, communication, and intelligence systems and develops updates on their systems. She has a pivotal role in T'Challa's fight to reclaim the throne. Nakia is T'Challa's love interest, a polyglot, and a Wakandan spy working in covert operation around the world. She is the one that first questions Wakanda's isolationism, which sparks a change in T'Challa's view of Wakanda's policy. Nakia denies T'Challa's proposal about staying in Wakanda stating, “I've seen too many in need to turn just a blind eye. I can't be happy here knowing there's people out there who have nothing” (00:34:03). Before

Killmonger burns the garden of heart-shaped herbs, Nakia is the one who retrieves the herb which ultimately saves T'Challa's life.

Finally, Queen Mother Ramonda is the anchor of the family, the nurturer, and the supporter of her children after her husband's death. She encourages T'Challa in the ritual combat against M'Baku, screaming to him, "Show him who you are!" (00:26:23) when he is on the verge of losing the combat. She brought T'Challa back to life with Nakia and Shuri when he was near death. The prominence of female agency is also visible in the royal council where four of eight members are women, showing that women are in leadership positions and vocal in the affairs of Wakanda (Osei, 2020, p. 387).

*Black Panther* has been celebrated for portraying and representing strong, powerful, and independent women (Allen, 2018; Marco, 2018, pp. 8-9; Thames Copeland, 2021). They empower T'Challa in the struggle against Wakanda's number one enemy, Ulysses Klaue, an international weapons dealer who collaborates with Killmonger to steal vibranium. Thames Copeland (2021) argue that the women of Wakanda display the characteristics of an African woman as described in "African womanism," the term coined by Hudson-Weems in the 1980s (p. 6). Among these characteristics are that the women are self-namers, self-definers, family-centered, and in concert with males in struggle.

Coogler says there was an emphasis that the Wakandans should have natural hair (*Vanity Fair*, 2018, 1:18). A natural black hairstyle is, for example, hair that is coiled, curled, worn in locs, cornrows, knots, braids, or afros. According to Rooks, natural hair for black people became a symbol of pride and civil rights during the civil rights era in the US in the 1960s (in Jones & Meyer, 2019). Faithful (2018) argues that the hair of the women in Wakanda is an example of legitimizing a natural form of blackness (p. 5). One scene shows Okoye as a self-definer who will not adhere to Western beauty standards of having straightened hair. In a scene at a casino where T'Challa, Nakia, and Okoye are trying to extract Klaue, Okoye is wearing a wig as a disguise. However, she feels uncomfortable and unnatural and ultimately throws it away, using it as a weapon instead (00:46:54). Historically, black people have been discriminated against for wearing natural hair. Thus, the film comments on current issues related to discrimination against natural hairstyles that are connected to racial, ethnic, and cultural identities (BBC, 2019). In March 2022, the US House of Representatives passed the CROWN Act (Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair) prohibiting natural hair discrimination that black people have experienced in workplaces and schools (Taylor, 2022; Bartow, 2022).

*Black Panther* depicts that Okoye, Nakia, the Queen Mother, and Shuri are women that challenge typical gender roles. They are independent, brave, and oriented toward their communal role, family, collaboration and toward complementing their male counterparts (Thames Copeland, 2021, p. 16). One can assume that the women's roles in the film can prompt discussions on gender equality, cultural identity, and perceptions of beauty, which can catalyze reflection for students in a Norwegian classroom.

#### **3.4.4 Protectionism**

Wakanda is a nation that prospers because it has hidden its resources from the rest of the world and is practicing a protectionist policy. The late Chadwick Boseman, the actor who portrays T'Challa, stated in a discussion about the film and playing T'Challa; "I actually am the enemy. It's the enemy I've always known. It's power. It's having privilege" (Boseman, in Liao, 2018). He asserts T'Challa as "born with a vibranium spoon in his mouth." Boseman describes the "reality" of the situation for the fictional kingdom of Wakanda, a nation that has chosen to stay hidden from plain view, posing as a third-world country to the outside world, thereby hiding and protecting its resources and wealth. Wakanda is a futuristic utopia, uncolonized, practicing a self-imposed isolationistic and protectionist policy to safeguard its citizens and its wealth. Faithful (2018) claims, "prior to reckoning with Killmonger, T'Challa is an isolationist in the tradition of his ancestors, committed to maintaining the national secret (p. 10). This is the "Wakanda forever" doctrine T'Challa pledges to when he takes the throne, vowing to become a "great king" just like his father. T'Challa is of royalty, of the privileged, in power, and seems at first oblivious to the legacy of colonialism and slavery, the suffering of the oppressed and people in need. His view of the world is based on a privileged upbringing in Wakanda's hidden paradise, having a nationalistic allegiance; he wishes to protect its resources and people (Bucciferro, 2021, p. 175; Griffin & Rossing, 2020, p. 205).

#### **3.4.5 Colonialism**

In contrast to T'Challa, Killmonger's views are shaped by underprivilege and the social injustices he has experienced. He wishes to continue his father's plan to arm oppressed people worldwide and aid people whose "leaders have been assassinated" (01:05:55). Killmonger collaborates with the white South-African arms dealer, Ulysses Klaue, who is

introduced as his partner when they are working together trying to steal African artifacts made of vibranium at a British museum (00:15:28). Bucciferro argues the scene refers to the history of colonialism as Klaue feels entitled to natural resources (vibranium) and steals for personal gain (2021, p. 175). Furthermore, one can interpret the scene as an allusion to the fact that Western museums are in possession of historical artefacts that were taken in the colonial era (Hunt, 2019; Palmer, 2023). Before leaving the museum, Killmonger claims a mask resembling an Igbo mask, a reminder of that tribes' history of victimization by the transatlantic slave trade (Faithful, 2018, p. 9). When Killmonger first appears before the tribal council, he accuses the Wakandans of turning a deaf ear to the people "who are your own" (01:14:56). Once in power and on the throne, his intentions are imperialistic and colonial, according to Faramelli (2019, p. 8). In the scene where Killmonger has assumed the throne, he declares, "I know how colonizers think, so we're gonna use their own strategy against them. The world's gonna start over, and this time we're on top. The Sun will never set on the Wakandan Empire" (01:30:16), echoing the British colonial dream, "The sun will never set on the British Empire."

The terms "colonialism," "imperialism," and "slavery" are not mentioned specifically in the film. However, as Wakanda has chosen to hide in plain sight keeping its resources from the outside world, this can be understood as the nation is thriving because it has not been colonized. Arguably, Klaue's description of the Wakandans as "savages" (1:15:03) evokes the negative descriptions of the Other, a Western style of dominating and claiming superiority over the Orient (Said, 1978). Apart from Klaue, the other white character in the film is CIA agent Ross, who operates on behalf of U.S political interests attempting to prevent Klaue from selling vibranium on the open market for profit. Ross is fatally injured when Killmonger extracts his accomplice Klaue from custody. Ross is then brought to Wakanda to be healed. Especially Shuri is skeptical of T'Challa's decision to bring an outsider to the secret capital and refers to Ross as "colonizer" (1:09:23). Ross informs the Wakandans that Killmonger has worked in a special U.S. operation unit responsible for assassinations and overthrowing foreign governments. The film implicitly comments on what McClintock describes as the United States' "imperialism without colonies," a form of military, financial, and cultural influence that can be as massive as any colonial regime (1992). The first reference to the transatlantic slave trade is introduced in the film's opening scene through the father's narration of how Wakanda gained access to vibranium. "While Wakanda thrived, the world around it descended into chaos" (01:09). The statement is accompanied with an image of

Africans held in chains being led toward a European ship (Ward, 2020, p. 15). The second reference is when Killmonger states, “Just bury me in the ocean with my ancestors that jumped from the ships. ‘Cause they knew death was better than bondage” (1:58:00).

According to Faithful, this can be understood as Killmonger identifying with the slaves and claims them as his symbolic, spiritual ancestors (2018, p. 11).

### **3.4.6 Globalism**

Killmonger is a product of his experiences of racial discrimination in Oakland. His approach to help and liberate oppressed people across the world is by imperialist action using vibranium as a resource to achieve global conquest. In contrast, T’Challa is an isolationist who wishes to maintain Wakanda’s protectionist policies as his forefathers. However, Nakia is the one who suggests that liberation is not limited to race. Wakanda should open up to the international community and provide aid and access to Wakanda’s resources to help those in need. She is the diplomat who has experience in international relations from her work as a War Dog, a Wakandan spy. Nakia proposes a “third space” that breaks with Killmonger’s and T’Challa’s opposing worldviews (Faramelli, 2019).

Both Killmonger and Nakia influence T’Challa’s moral obligations and sense of duty. T’Challa breaks with Wakanda’s protectionism, which at the end of the film results in the opening of a social outreach program in Oakland, the same neighborhood Killmonger was raised, to be run by Nakia and Shuri. In the closing scene, where T’Challa holds a speech at the UN, he opens up Wakanda to the rest of the world, consequently taking on a global commitment to international solidarity stating that “We must find a way to look after one another as if we were one, single tribe” (02:06:20). One can understand the statement as a vision of equality and global commitment that can be achieved through collective effort.

## 4. Methodology

This chapter seeks to outline and explain the research method selected to help answer to what extent may the superhero film *Black Panther* promote intercultural competence in the English classroom. The study as a whole is qualitative (see sub-chapter 4.2). First, in order to discover whether *Black Panther* may promote intercultural competence in the English classroom, a discussion of theory and previous research were covered in chapter 2. Additionally, the teaching project is based on a close analysis of the film *Black Panther* in chapter 3, which forms the foundation of the teaching project. Second, to find out whether the use of *Black Panther* has promoted intercultural competence, findings from pre-viewing activities will be analyzed, and written material produced by the students after the viewing of the film will be presented and analyzed. In addition, the findings from focus group interviews will be analyzed and discussed.

### 4.1 Material

The responses from the pre-viewing activities and post-viewing will be presented and discussed in light of the theoretical and didactic framework in chapter 2 and 3. First, the pre-viewing activities include the responses from plenary discussions about intercultural concepts such as culture, identity, stereotyping, and prejudice, and an activity where the students fill out an identity chart. Furthermore, knowledge the students may have about the African continent and black history will be presented and discussed. Second, the post-viewing activities, which include the students' responses to short-answer tasks about the intercultural themes of identity and belonging, the role of Wakandan women, and colonialism addressed in the film. These responses were written after a plenary discussion about the film. Although the students had made notes on their viewing guides in accordance with the viewer-response approach, these were filled out to varying degrees. Therefore, the material analyzed will be the short answer questions that address the above-mentioned themes. A selection of the answers that had the most responses will be used in the analysis. Third, findings from focus group interviews are included in the analysis. Finally, a selection of responses from students' essays will be analyzed and discussed.

## 4.2 Method

To investigate to what extent the film *Black Panther* may promote students' intercultural competence in a Vg1 class in upper secondary school, it was decided that a qualitative approach would best serve this purpose. The decision to use qualitative methods is that a significant advantage of this approach is that classroom learning is viewed holistically (McKay, 2006, p. 6). The method is beneficial since it involves a limited number of participants. Another advantage is that the method may include data from methods such as classroom observations, interviews, and written texts (McKay, 2006, p. 74). These qualitative methods can offer an effective way of understanding participants' experiences within a specific classroom context. However, there are certain limitations associated with the use of qualitative research. Firstly, since the number of participants is quite low and the study is conducted in a local condition and context, and designed for one particular class, the degree of generalizability and applicability to other contexts has limitations (McKay, 2006, pp.14-15). Secondly, the responses that are analyzed and discussed are selected by the teacher. However, the teaching project may provide relevant insights into to what extent the film *Black Panther* may contribute to promote intercultural competence and may adapted and used in other English as a second language classrooms.

Prior to the teaching project, permission was given by the school administration to conduct the teaching project. The participants were provided with information about the project and its purpose and signed a consent letter (Appendix 1). The individual's participation was voluntary, and answers would be anonymized. The names of the students used in the analysis are fictitious. Two of the students did not want their contributions to be a part of the study. The participants could withdraw from the project if they chose to, without any consequences.

## 4.3 Interviews

The week after responding to an essay task, eight students are asked to participate in focus group interviews where they discuss questions related to intercultural themes in *Black Panther*. The interviews are semi-structured in nature and conducted in two sessions with four students in each group (one student was absent). The sessions last approximately 45 minutes per group and are conducted in a vacant classroom. Before the interviews, the students are

asked if they want to conduct the interview in English or Norwegian. The students are all volunteers and choose to carry out the interviews in English. Interviews offer an opportunity to discuss aspects of the film in a more quiet and focused setting than in the classroom, and that the students have- and appreciate the opportunity to discuss and share their opinions more elaborately. The participants are informed about the topic for the interview, which is to mainly focus on how they have seen cultural representation and diversity in the film. However, one can also address other topics that may come up in the conversation. The teacher is passive, only interfering with prompt questions if necessary. The responses from the participants are based on the teacher's notes of key phrases and major points said and transcribed shortly after the interviews are conducted with the conversations fresh in mind. According to McKay (2006), the advantage of note-taking during the interviews is that it may seem less intimidating for the participants than a recorded interview. However, the limitation of this approach is that one does not have an objective word-for-word record of what is being said (pp. 55-56).

#### **4.4 The Teaching Project**

Cultural understanding, all-round education, and identity development are central values in the English subject curriculum in Norway. When learners know and understand different ways of living and thinking and can see that their view of the world is culture-dependent, they will develop their intercultural understanding (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p. 2). As mentioned in Chapter 3, the concept of text is used in a broad sense in the curriculum. Through critical reflection in the encounter with texts, the students can build the foundation for “seeing their own identity and others’ identity in a multilingual and multicultural context” (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p. 3). The teaching plan for the intercultural project focuses on the following specific competence aims for the Vg1 program for general studies, which states that the learners should be able to:

- read, analyse and interpret fictional texts in English,
- explore and reflect on diversity and social conditions in the English-speaking world based on historical contexts,
- discuss and reflect on form, content and language features and literary devices in different cultural forms of expression from different media in the English-language

world, including music, film and gaming.(The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, p. 12).

#### **4.5 The Viewer-response Approach**

The viewer-response approach developed by Teasley and Wilder (1997) suggests dividing a film into meaningful “chunks” using viewing guides with open-ended questions for each chunk. The approach applies principles from reader-response theory in literature, and encourages the students to interpret, discuss, and make predictions about what they notice while viewing a film, thus they become more active and engaged viewers (p. 2). Using strategies from the reader-response theory, the students’ interpretations are validated and embraced. The teacher is not the expert and does not have the right answers but is one viewer among viewers who has the role as guide to clarify and facilitator helping students develop as empowered readers of a film (Teasley & Wilder, 1997, p. 48). For students to develop as empowered readers, the teacher’s role is promoting students’ engagement with the text (film), clearing up misreadings, and “encouraging clear thinking and articulate responses” (Teasley & Wilder, 1997, p. 49). While the students are watching the film, they are making notes on their viewing guide, which are shared and discussed for five to ten minutes after each chunk is watched. When the film is watched in its entirety, at least one class period should be used to discuss the film as a whole. (Teasley & Wilder, 1997, pp. 49-50). The final activity suggested by Teasley and Wilder (1997), is giving the students a writing assignment based on their viewing guide responses and the classroom discussion. This may include a personal or analytical essays, or imaginative writing (pp.67-69).

According to Teasley and Wilder (1997), there are several advantages to watching a film in class and then discussing it. Firstly, it is a joint experience for the students and the teacher. Secondly, the most obvious advantage of the viewer-response approach is that it engages students to be active viewers. When they are given time to think and make notes after each chunk of the film is watched, and then discuss, builds confidence, and draws the shy students into the classroom conversation (pp. 54-55). Thirdly, when the students are encouraged to share their interpretations and express their reactions, it is enriching for both students and teachers (p. 50).

## **4.6 The Teaching Plan**

The teaching plan lasts four weeks, including pre-viewing, while-viewing, and post-viewing activities. The English subject has five weekly lessons, organized in the current setting as a double lesson (90 minutes), while the second is a triple lesson (135 minutes). Prior to viewing the film, the class have a preparation period of two weeks. First, intercultural concepts such as culture, stereotypes, prejudice, are introduced to ensure that the students have knowledge of these concepts before watching the film. Second, the students are introduced to the history of colonization and enslavement, learn about the civil rights movement, and the Black Lives Matter movement. This includes using PowerPoint presentations related to the above-mentioned themes (Appendices 4 and 5), engaging in group and class discussions, reading a factual and a literary text, and doing individual tasks that require reflection as well as exploring and finding information.

When the film study starts the students are provided with viewing guides dividing the film into four parts. The viewing guide contains photos from selected scenes and with questions for comprehension and reflection about the intercultural themes. The students take notes after each chunk is shown. Their notes are the basis for group and class discussions after the film has been viewed in its entirety. Then, the students reply to short answer tasks related to the intercultural themes addressed in the film. As the final activity, they write a longer text which require a more analytical and interpretive approach. In addition, the week after the film has been viewed, focus group interviews are conducted where two groups of students have the opportunity to share their views on the intercultural themes in the film. What follows is an overview of the weekly teaching plan with a description of the topics covered, the learning aims, and the methods and activities employed in the teaching project.

### **4.5.1 Pre-Viewing Activities Week 1 and 2**

The learning aims in the first week are that the students gain an understanding of key intercultural concepts such as culture, identity, values, stereotypes, and prejudice, give examples of hidden and visible elements of a culture. Furthermore, they should give examples of how communication is different in various cultures. First, the students are asked to think about and note how they understand “culture” individually. Next, they discuss with their peers before sharing their interpretations in class. After the sharing in class, the teacher shows an

illustration of Hall's Iceberg model (Appendix 3) and has the students reflect upon visible and hidden elements of a culture. The next activity is to read the text "Cultural Complications" in the coursebook "Interactions" (Anderson et al., 2020, pp. 138-143). The text serves as a springboard for a class discussion, and reflecting on how communication is different in various cultures and understanding the intercultural concepts.

The PowerPoint presentation (Appendix 2) works as a tool for repeating the intercultural concepts and for the students to reflect on how one's values and attitudes may influence an intercultural encounter. According to Byram (2021), one category of knowledge that one brings to an interaction is knowledge about the concepts of "stereotype" or prejudice," the processes involved, and how these impact interactions at the individual and societal level (pp. 46-47). The illustrations in the PowerPoint (Appendix 2) are used to have a bird's eye view of how people from other cultures perceive Norwegian culture and what one might consider "stereotypically" Norwegian, or stereotypical or prejudiced opinions of other cultures. In addition, the students should understand how one's background influences one's worldview. Byram (2021) argues that if one questions one's attitudes and has the ability to reflect on one's stereotypes and prejudices and "decenter," one develops "critical cultural awareness" (pp. 45-46). The activity in the latter part of the lesson is that the students fill out an identity chart (Appendix 3), which they later share in groups. The identity chart illustrates the many cultures everyone belongs to and can assist the students in reflecting upon which cultures have shaped their identity. The activity aims to develop the students' knowledge of that cultural affiliations are multiple and complex. According to Byram et al. (2002, p. 9), one can avoid stereotyping if one can perceive a person as an individual rather than a representative of a country or a nation.

The first week of the teaching plan aims to develop the students' intercultural competence by demonstrating that culture and identity are intertwined and enabling them to understand that people's cultural identities are multiple. An awareness of one's own culture and other cultures can promote curiosity and openness toward otherness, which Byram et al. (2002 p.11) claim is the foundation of the intercultural competence.

## **Week 2:**

The second week of preparation pays attention to the knowledge component of intercultural competence. The goal of the activities in week 2 are that the students acquire

knowledge about the historical context of colonization and the history of African Americans to understand better the various aspects of the film and current issues related to racism. As Byram states (2021), one category of knowledge is knowing about general societal and individual interaction processes. The other category of knowledge involves knowledge about one's own social groups and cultures and similar knowledge of different groups and cultures (p. 46) The teacher asks the students what they know about Africa to challenge and discuss stereotypical views they may have in class before transitioning to studying the maps of Africa. To activate the students' prior knowledge, the teacher shows a map of Africa before and after colonization. The students are first asked what they notice about the maps, then if they know which European powers had colonies in Africa. What happened to millions of Africans during this era? Where were they taken? Why? The questions aim to direct the students toward African Americans' past and present. The students look at photos of Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr. to relate their previous knowledge about African Americans (Appendix 5), from slavery to the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment and emancipation and the Civil Rights Movement, to how this relates to contemporary issues in US society.

The next activity involves having the students make a timeline of key historical events in black history in the US based on a factual text in their textbook, "Black Americans" (Anderson et al., p. 153). In addition, they are asked to use the internet to investigate incidents regarding Rodney King, Trayvon Martin, and George Floyd. The activity aims to provide context and understanding of the allusions in the film to colonialism, slavery, and the riots in Los Angeles in 1992 after Rodney King's arrest. Furthermore, it can help the students better understand the characters' actions in *Black Panther*. The last activity of the week is reading an excerpt from the novel *The Hate U Give* (Thomas, 2018) The excerpt gives the students an insight into the racism and police brutality many African Americans face today and provides context to Killmonger's background, who grew up in a community that was overly policed and struggled with similar problems. The excerpt also introduces the students to the Black Panther Party.

In addition to the knowledge component of intercultural competence, the lessons in week 2 of the teaching project aim for the students to practice the skills of interpreting by relating existing knowledge about Africa and African Americans and the skills of discovery by acquiring new knowledge about the topic.

### 4.5.2 Film Study Week 3

The lessons in the third week of the intercultural teaching project are used studying the film. The film's running time is two hours and 12 minutes, which means all five lessons this week will be devoted to the film study. The main aims of this week are that the students know why *Black Panther* marked a change in the Marvel Universe, and that they develop their skills as active viewers and can identify, interpret, and critically reflect on the intercultural themes in the film. To provide context about the Marvel Universe, the teacher uses the PowerPoint (Appendix 6) as an introduction. Although many students are well acquainted with Marvel films, this is unfamiliar territory for some students. The introduction serves as an opportunity to involve and engage the students' prior knowledge. The students are invited to share and discuss which is their favorite Marvel film and reflect on what makes *Black Panther* different from other superhero films. By bringing up films many are familiar with, the students can draw upon their peers' cultural capital in the discussion (Hoff, 2017) while calling attention to why *Black Panther* marked a change in the Marvel superhero universe.

Before starting to watch the film, the students are introduced to and provided with a viewing guide for the chunk of the film that is going to be watched. The viewing guides have photos and questions for selected scenes with comprehension- and more open-ended questions for reflection related to the intercultural themes in the film (Appendices 7-10) After each chunk is watched the students are given time to take notes before they are encouraged to share their understanding and reflections in pairs, groups and in full class. As suggested by Teasley and Wilder (1997), the reflections of the students are in focus, and the teacher's role is providing assistance and guidance by asking prompt questions for clarification. With open discussions and dialogue one can promote student engagement and give room for a range of responses (pp. 48-49). In relation to Byram's (2020, pp. 48-49) model of intercultural competence, the students are using skills of interpreting and relating, and skills of discovery and interaction. The skills of interpreting and relating in the sense that they build upon existing knowledge in the pre-viewing activities, and the skills of discovery and interaction through the discussions in the classroom where one can build understanding of meanings, beliefs, values, and behaviors seen in the film. In *Black Panther* the students are confronted with diversity and cultures with values and perspectives different than their own. This can enhance their awareness of difference and broaden their views on other cultural practices. The characters' actions are based on their cultural identity and worldview. The questions in the

viewing guides aim for the students to critically reflect on identity in the legacy of colonialism, diversity, isolationism, and globalism. Thus, build the foundation for promoting their intercultural competence.

#### **4.5.3 Post-Viewing Activities Week 4**

The fourth week, as a final activity after viewing the film, a double lesson is used preparing for writing an essay in the last triple lesson of the week. The students use their viewing guides and in groups and class discuss questions related to the intercultural themes addressed in the film. By sharing ideas and interpretations, they can have a better foundation for the written essay task they choose. In addition, they respond to short answer tasks in writing in the latter part of lesson 1. Oral assessment for the teaching project is based on participation and reflections demonstrated during the whole period, while the written assessment is based on the essay they write in the final activity of the week (Appendix 12).

## **5. Results and Discussion**

This chapter presents and discusses the responses from the students in light of the theoretical framework presented in chapter 2. The chapter is sub-divided into two main sub-chapters; observations made in the pre-viewing activities and the data from the post-viewing activities. The findings in the post-viewing include material from the written short-answer tasks, the focus group interviews, and excerpts from a selection of the students' essays. The material analyzed and discussed in the post-viewing activities is divided into sub-chapters that reflect the intercultural themes in *Black Panther*; identity and belonging, cultural representation and diversity, the women of Wakanda, colonialism, and globalism and protectionism.

### **5.1 Pre-viewing Activities**

In the activities in week 1, which focus on gaining knowledge about the concept of culture, the students identify both visible and hidden elements of culture. Among the visible

elements, they mention, e.g., holidays, language, music, and food. Food is discussed as an important part of a culture and an element influenced by other cultures. Pizza and tacos are used as examples of food adaptations from other cultures in Norway today. As hidden elements of culture, courtesy, independence, and personal space are brought up. The students recognize stereotypes of Norwegian and other cultures when looking at the illustrations in the PowerPoint, e.g. “The Norwegian bus stop” (Appendix 2, illustration nr.3), identifying personal space as a common stereotype of Norwegians. In the next activity, the students fill out an identity chart to illustrate how everyone affiliates with and belongs to many cultures. The chart visualizes their multiple identities with various family backgrounds, languages, online identities, interests, political interests, hobbies, origin, passions for music and dance, and instruments they play. Several students express, e.g., that their family, dialect, and homeplace are important to their identity. One student says the extended family with grandparents and cousins is crucial to their identity. A common denominator for most students in class is that music and dance constitute a significant part of their identity.

The observations of the activities in week 1 suggest that the students can recognize visible elements of culture, or what is referred to as big C topics, such as holidays, language, and food. They can also identify hidden elements or small c aspects of a culture’s way of life, i.e., courtesy, independence, and personal space, which indicates an understanding of that the concept of culture encompasses both elements. The students mention food as an example of how cultures can be influenced by other cultures. This suggests that they are conscious of and appreciate that cultures are dynamic and change over time due to interactions with other cultures (Barrett et al., 2014). Furthermore, recognizing cultural stereotypes, such as personal space, is often associated with Norwegian culture, indicate an awareness of and knowledge about how one is perceived by others, what Byram refers to as critical cultural awareness (Byram et al., 2002, pp. 12-13). The students’ identity charts seem to be helpful in recognizing their diverse family backgrounds and interests. Several students express that their homeplace and language are important components of their identity, which signals an understanding of shared, collective values. One can assume that the students’ interest in dance and music in this class suggests an appreciation for diverse cultural expressions. The results indicate that the students have developed their intercultural competence by seeing that culture and identity are intertwined. However, a note of caution is due here since the results are based on the teacher’s observations, notes, and subjective interpretations of the classroom activities.

The second week of pre-viewing activities focuses on the historical context of imperialism, colonialism, and African American history, past and present. Many students know something about colonization. They can name African nations, and they have some knowledge about Apartheid, African wildlife, and that Africa is a continent with valuable natural resources. Several students note that when they hear something about Africa in the media, it is often related to hunger and drought, which provides an opportunity to address stereotypes. The teacher shows maps of Africa before and after colonization. The students notice that the first map shows no formal borders. To activate their knowledge, they are asked if they know which European powers had colonies in Africa before the following maps are shown (Appendix 4, p. 2). They can name Great Britain, France, Belgium, and Portugal as some of the colonizing countries and comment on the straight border lines on the last maps. They are also familiar with the slave trade and that millions of Africans were enslaved and transported to the Americas. In addition, they have knowledge of Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King and that after emancipation, African Americans still had to fight for civil rights. Furthermore, they are well acquainted with the George Floyd case and the Black Lives Matter movement.

Observations in week 2 of the teaching plan indicate that the students have some knowledge of and awareness of historical and geographical aspects of Africa, including colonization, apartheid, wildlife, and that Africa is a continent with valuable natural resources. Furthermore, they can recognize stereotypes of Africa portrayed in media related to hunger and drought. The student can identify colonizing nations and the borders on the map of Africa, indicating they have an understanding of how colonization impacted the shaping of borders in Africa. The students' knowledge about significant persons and events in African American history and recent events in contemporary US society suggest knowledge about that the struggles faced by African Americans today are related to history.

## **5.2 Post-Viewing Activities**

In the following sub-chapters, a selection of responses from the students is presented and discussed. As many of the viewing guides had incomplete answers, the students were asked to respond to short answer tasks after viewing the film. The tasks that elicited the most responses will be presented and discussed.

### 5.2.1 Identity and Belonging

This sub-chapter will discuss and present a selection of the students' written responses to the following short answer task:

**Based on what you know about the shared traditions of a culture, the different values we have, and what shapes the multiple identities everyone has, how do you understand Erik's/Killmonger's identity as African American and partly Wakandan?**

The responses to the task demonstrate that the students have reflected on the double consciousness of Erik's/Killmonger's identity. For instance, Henrik recognizes that Erik's struggle with identity is rooted in his experiences as an African American and the injustices he has faced. In addition, the lack of a stable support community and support system has contributed to his feelings of not belonging anywhere, which can explain his actions and motivations. The interpretation demonstrates an understanding of that ancestry and environment constitute an important part of people's identities:

Henrik: Erik's struggle with belonging is the whole ground base for his actions and villainy. He has knowledge of his roots in Wakanda, but grew however up in the USA, and had rough experiences tied to being African American. A part of him never really settled there, and he was repeatedly reminded of the injustices of the world. This shaped him to the adult version we see in the movie. He knows that he is Wakandan-American but does not feel a sense of home to neither Wakanda nor America, due to the lack of attention- and being seen/acknowledged by them. In addition to the loss of his father, Erik is grown up with a lack of a stable community and support-system. All this together reasonably enough results in his hatred for the world, and his roots (that left him behind). He has no place to call home and does not belong anywhere.

Audun points out that Erik's struggle is not just limited to fiction but depicts a relatable reality for many African Americans today. By addressing the historical context of slavery, he recognizes that separation from one's heritage affects a person's identity. Audun also addresses the impact of environment on one's identity, indicating an understanding of Erik's duality:

Audun: His struggle is not only fictional, because there are a lot of African Americans who feel the same. Not knowing their heritage stems from the fact that when the slaves were brought from Africa to America, the colonizers didn't keep track of them, thereby disconnecting them from

their past entirely. This sets up an inner conflict of identity, whether they should feel more African or American. I think an important aspect of identity is environment and influence, and to Erik this means that he is more American, because he is more used to the environment and culture.

Erik's duality is also echoed in Mari's response. The interpretation suggests Erik being raised in the US, makes him feel more American. However, she acknowledges one should have the right to explore all aspects of one's heritage and cultural identity, indicating both environment and heritage are perceived as important.

Mari: Erik grew up in the US, his mother being American and his father being Wakandan. Meaning Wakanda is sort of part of him, him also being the cousin of T'Challa, and having a right to inherit the crown. But considering he is half American and grew up in America may mean that he mainly identifies as American. But knowing he is Wakandan makes so that he should be able to explore that part of him, and the culture that belongs to it.

Similarly, Elise shows an understanding of Erik's identity and the struggles he is facing because of this double consciousness:

Elise: One can understand Erik's struggle with identity because he has grown up in the US, but he has roots in Wakanda. I think Erik belongs in both in the US and in Wakanda. Cause I think where we grow up plays a big part in who we become but our heritage is also something we should keep close to our heart and is a part of who we are.

The response from Ole highlights Erik's experiences of racism, and feeling different can lead to insecurity, corresponding to Fanon's description of the black man feeling inferior and not treated as an equal human being (Fanon, 2021). When Erik returns to Wakanda, however, he does not get the acceptance he seeks. Consequently, he believes he does not belong in either place:

Ole: We can understand his struggle because maybe he feels like his skin color and ancestry makes him different than the rest of the white population in America. He has probably experienced racism in the past, which could make him insecure about his culture. However, when he visits Wakanda, the people there see him as a villain and are turned against him in a way. I can understand why he maybe believes that he doesn't belong in any of the countries.

Overall, the different responses show that the students understand the double consciousness of Erik/Killmonger's identity. Interestingly, the students choose the name Erik and not Killmonger when they discuss his identity. This might indicate they feel sympathy for the character's struggles and recognize the motivation behind his actions and are conscious of the complexity of identity.

### **5.2.2 Cultural Representation and Diversity**

This sub-chapter presents and discusses the findings of the focus-group interviews, which were conducted in two separate sessions. Although both groups are asked the same question, as the conversation and the interaction between the students unfold, they touch upon both similar and different aspects of the film. The findings below are a compound of the responses from the two sessions. The teacher's notes of the key phrases and major points can be found in Appendix 11. The starting point for both group interviews is the following introduction and question:

***Black Panther* has been celebrated because it critically examines what it means to be black in America and showcases African culture in a way that has not been seen in a superhero film before. How do you see African culture represented in the film?**

The first aspect of African culture both groups bring up is the distinctive and traditional clothing worn by the different tribes. The students' responses show that they have noticed that African traditions have inspired the costume designs and that these are an expression of each tribe's cultural identity. Nora points out that traditional African culture combines modernity in clothing. The students have implicitly identified Afrofuturistic elements, as the costumes are used as a means to look to the past while commenting on the present and future. Similar observations about the costumes are also addressed in some of the essay responses. This may indicate a missed potential in terms of pre-viewing activities and an opportunity to investigate from which tribes and regions the costumes are inspired. Oscar comments on the scene where Okoye throws away her wig and states it is a social commentary on Western beauty standards. Anette explains the hairstyles that are worn are protective, for example, box braids. They both demonstrate knowledge of current issues regarding natural hairstyles for black people, who

face discrimination for wearing natural hair (Taylor, 2022; Bartow, 2022). Anne also observes that the belief in God and ancestors is a part of African culture:

- Anne: I think it's most visible in the clothing and in the interactions between the people. Especially the tribes' clothing was an expression of their identity and where they belonged. We could see this in the coronation of the king, where the strongest got to be king. And the belief in God and the ancestors.
- Nora: You can see it in the clothing. The clothing's metal, the vibranium, shows the modern combined with tradition. The clothing elevates and adds to the characters. High fashion is inspired by traditional African cultures.
- Oscar: I loved the Dora Milaje, the rings they had around their necks, their uniforms, the shaven scalps and when Okoye threw away her wig! That stated a cultural point of view. It's a social commentary to the American and Western beauty standards. They [The female army/The Dora Milaje] didn't have hair for practical reasons.
- Anette: The hairstyles were cool. Some hairstyles are protective, like box braids.

In the exchange that follows, the students are asked if they can elaborate about the belief in ancestors. The students observe that the connection with ancestors is important in African cultures. Anette and Eirik comment that T'Challa and Killmonger go to different places in the Ancestral Plane and point to Killmonger's home in Oakland. Anne compares the connection to ancestors in African culture to Norwegian culture and observes there is a difference. Eirik relates the spiritual connection in African culture to the indigenous people of Norway, the Sami.

- Anette: When T'Challa goes to the Ancestral Plane the first time, it shows him in a peaceful way, but for Killmonger it's more about fear and struggles.
- Eirik: Both go back to important places. I think Killmonger thinks about his home a lot.
- Anne: We don't go back as far when someone dies, and we aren't very spiritual.
- Eirik: I think we can see similarities to the Sami culture. They use drums and a shaman and go far back.

The characters in *Black Panther* speak English with a Xhosa accent and have lines spoken in the South African Xhosa language. One can interpret the students' responses to the

variety of English used in the film as evidence of that they are open to unfamiliar varieties of English. They know that other varieties of English, such as Indian English and Asian accents, often are stereotyped or prejudiced against. The open attitudes expressed by these two students correlate with observations made while viewing the film. There were no negative comments regarding the varieties of English spoken, which complies with what is suggested by Björk et al. (2014), that exposure to authentic language in context may lead to more openness towards other cultures and varieties of English (p. 195):

Anne: The English accent was different. The African English accent was nice. Sometimes English accents are bullied, like Indian accents are made fun of, and Asian accents too.

Oscar: It was natural in the movie, the shifting with Xhosa, it shows other types of Englishes. Sometimes the switching between languages makes sense. Some accents are bullied, especially the unfamiliar ones.

When asked about other aspects of culture that they had noticed, they comment on the scenery, the art, the vibrant city, and the references to African culture. Henrik also identifies a reference to colonialism:

Nora: It showed an untouched society, a country that could develop without Western influence, a modernized Africa with bustling cities.

Morten: I think the music, the soundtrack with black artists where they combined Western music with African instruments shows the cultural references.

Henrik: That the Jabari tribe chose isolation is symbolic of how Africa was colonized, pushing tribes together. M'Baku showed his human side. Although we don't get along, we must cooperate.

The students demonstrate that they have noticed and reflected upon several aspects of African culture depicted in the film, and one can interpret their responses as a recognition of a culture that could develop without Western influence.

### **5.2.3 The Women of Wakanda**

*Black Panther* marks a change in the Marvel superhero universe. Not only because the cast is predominantly black, but additionally because the film portrays strong, independent,

and powerful women who hold critical positions in Wakandan society. The first part of this sub-chapter presents the findings about women's role in the film addressed in the focus group interviews. The latter part includes responses to a short-answer task about the same topic.

The responses indicate an understanding of that the portrayal of women challenges gender roles typically shown in previous superhero films. Anette can see that Nakia questions T'Challa's isolationist policies and, on a global scale, sends a message to the rich countries today, which one may interpret as the student thinks rich countries' resources should be shared. Anne points out that Nakia does not want to stay in Wakanda, which one can interpret as a recognition of her independence and wish to help people in need. Eirik comments on Shuri, who is the technical genius, and who questions T'Challa's decisions. Anne and Eirik, express that women can do the same as men.

- Anette: The women are strong and powerful, showing we can do the same as the "big guys."
- Eirik: Shuri is the smartest and the tech genius, sometimes she is questioning T'Challa.
- Anne: It shows that women are as powerful and smart as men.
- Eirik: Yes, many of the lead characters are women.
- Anne: Nakia, for example. She doesn't want to stay in Wakanda.
- Anette: No, because she has a global responsibility, she wants to help the rest of the world and share Wakanda's resources. I think it sends a message to the rich countries of the world today.

Similar responses are echoed in the students' written answers below. From Ole's perspective, Wakandan women are empowered and important to the culture. Audun states that both genders are equally strong, and Sjur writes that the women fight with Black Panther. Also, Hilde and Tnna's comments reflect that the women are independent, smart, and powerful, and not side characters as in previous superhero films.

- Audun: In this film, the women are portrayed as very strong and a very important asset to Wakanda's security. Previously, women weren't seen as equally strong as their male counterparts, which is very different in *Black Panther* where both males and females are equally strong.
- Ole: The women are empowered and get their voice heard. They are very important to the culture. In previous superhero films, the woman is usually a side character with not a lot of background.

- Hilde: The women in the film are portrayed as powerful and strong. The army is protecting and helping the King of Wakanda and Wakanda. This is different from previous superhero films.
- Tina: The women are portrayed as strong, independent, and smart.
- Sjur: In this movie, the women are more tough than in other superhero movies. They fight with Black Panther, they aren't just there being a hero's girlfriend. I love that they show how women also can fight, and not only sit and watch.

The responses suggest that the students have noticed the importance of collective effort in African cultures and the strength of African women. Their answers indicate that they have noticed that the women display the characteristic of "Africana womanism" as described by Hudson-Weems. The women are in concert with males in struggle, and are self-namers and self-definers (Copeland, 2021, p. 6). Thus, one can argue that the portrayal of women in *Black Panther* can be seen as challenging the typical gender roles in previous superhero films.

#### 5.2.4 Colonialism

The selection of the following responses from the short answer tasks aims to highlight whether the students have understood the historical context of colonialism and how the practices of colonialism have impacted the situation for African Americans today. The students were asked to reply to the question:

**How can understanding colonial history help you understand contemporary social issues in the US and the world today?**

Henrik's response demonstrates the ability to take an analytic approach and place a document, in this case, the film, in a historical context, explaining that the ideology of colonialism can help understand the prejudice and racism in American society today. According to Byram's model of intercultural competence, the student exhibits critical cultural awareness/political education (Byram, 2021, p. 90):

- Henrik: Understanding the situation- and the consequences it brought for the African people during- and after colonization, gives us an ability to explain how the systemic racism in today's society exists in the first place. Do not mistake it for excusing the active problems people experience as a result of racism and slavery; but it can help us

understand how prejudice and people's opinions are so ingrained both unconsciously and determined by for example American people/society. Understanding the impact slavery and colonization has had, helps us realize that for example the Civil Rights Movement, as well as the Black Lives Matter Movement, are really needed and not excessive at all in the previous- and contemporary society.

Audun notes that more knowledge of the past can help in understanding the issues in the world today, which indicates an appreciation of that understanding the past has value in the present:

Audun: Everything that happens today is a consequence of the past. Having more knowledge of the past creates a clearer picture of why the world is like it is.

Sjur relates colonialism to current world issues drawing parallels between British colonial practices in the colonial era to Russian politics today. His interpretation suggests that he can identify that the practices of imperialism still persist in contemporary society:

Sjur: I think that if I know more about how they lived before, we should compare it, and see that we can't live like this. Just think about Russia and Ukraine, what Putin does to the country now, it's exactly what the UK did when they took over other people's countries.

Finally, although Helene does not elaborate as to why understanding colonial history is important, however one may interpret the answer as a recognition of the importance of understanding colonial history:

Helene: Yes, it can, and it is important to know about colonial history.

The students' responses demonstrate various levels of understanding of the impact of how colonial history in the US and the world today. Nevertheless, their answers indicate they recognize colonialism as a theme in the film, and that they see the value in knowledge about colonial history to better understand contemporary issues in society.

### **5.2.5 Globalism and Protectionism**

In the classroom discussion after the film is viewed, the question of why Killmonger and T'Challa view the world differently was addressed, and what makes T'Challa break with Wakanda's protectionist policies. The students argue that they see the world differently because they grew up in different communities. Killmonger has experienced injustice and racism, whereas T'Challa grew up in paradise "with everything he needed at the palm of his hand," as one student expresses. Therefore, T'Challa follows the tradition of previous kings trying to protect Wakanda's resources. However, as another student expresses, "We thankfully see a change in T'Challa's way of thinking."

As for T'Challa's pledge to global commitment, many of the students express in the oral discussion that Wakanda should help people in need and share some of its resources. This is also reflected in their written responses to the question about whether Wakanda should become visible to the world and share its resources: "I believe they should share resources like medical help, but not weapons." Another student writes, "It is important to help others even though they are from a different country." On the one hand, a few students are more reluctant and fear what will happen to Wakanda when they open up to the world. On the other hand, as one student expresses in the group interview, "I think the movie is a critique of Western countries. We are hesitant towards immigrants. It was a switch of the roles and says that we should open up and help. We are all humans and one." However, the students' responses vary, and, in hindsight, the responses may indicate that more time could have been spent discussing global commitment versus protectionism to raise more awareness of the political dimension of global citizenship.

### **5.2.6 Discussion of Results**

The findings in the students' responses suggest that the film *Black Panther* has promoted knowledge about the intercultural concepts and issues related to culture and identity, cultural representation and diversity, colonialism, African American history, the female roles in the film, and global commitment. The students have participated actively in the oral activities with their peers and in classroom discussions. Their responses vary in terms of going into depth about the various concepts. However, the main impression is that they show increased knowledge about the above-mentioned concepts and issues. The viewing

guides proved to be helpful to many of the students, especially for the ones that were unfamiliar with the film and the Marvel Universe. For some of the others who had seen the film before, the viewing guides were filled out to varying degrees. A possible explanation for this is that the viewing guides were perhaps somewhat extensive. Nevertheless, they were useful when focusing on the different parts of the film and in the classroom discussions.

According to Byram's model of intercultural competence, knowledge is a crucial factor. That is knowledge about one's own world and understanding that one has multiple identities, and knowledge about other people and their world (Byram et al., 2002, p. 12). In that respect, the findings indicate that the students have gained knowledge about themselves and other cultures. An interesting observation is that the students showed an interest in the costumes of the tribes, which suggests one could have explored more on this aspect of diversity. Furthermore, several students commented on how the music complements the action in the film. This may indicate a missed opportunity to have further elaborated on the musical aspect. Finally, the students showed an ability to immerse themselves in the characters' dilemmas and expressed sympathy with both Killmonger and T'Challa, as well as with the other characters in the film, and were able to detect nuances in the story.

### **5.2.7 Reflective Writing**

As suggested by Teasley and Wilder (1997), a final activity to summarize the activities done in the teaching project, is to have a writing assignment. The students were asked to respond to one of the following tasks:

1. *Black Panther*. Write a film review.
2. Why do you think *Black Panther* has become a landmark in cinematic history? Discuss.
3. Creative writing. Choose a character from the movie and show the challenges this person is facing and the choices he/she must make. Write a story from this person's perspective.
4. Consider the intercultural themes addressed in *Black Panther*. Discuss, reflect, and provide examples from the movie addressing these themes.

Below are excerpts from a selection of the students' essay. The full essay instructions are in Appendix 12. In addition, the complete unabridged texts can be found in Appendix 13. The excerpts from these five students' responses to the different tasks show that they each address important aspects of the film. In response to task 1, Ole recognizes the significance of having a hero to look up to for all children. Interestingly, his perception alludes to what Fanon (2021) wrote in *Black Skin, White Masks* in 1952, children of color were missing, they did not have a black hero to look up to and identify with:

Ole:           The Black Panther movie is an important installment to the MCU, not just because it builds up on the previous movies, but most importantly because it stars so many persons of color and it gives black children superheroes to look up to. Even if they are just fictional characters, they are still really important.

Responding to task 2, why *Black Panther* has become a landmark in cinematic history, Henrik's response also reflects the importance of representation for marginalized groups. In addition, the student identifies the importance of the film from a human rights' perspective, expressing equality for everyone should be the norm:

Henrik:       I hope that one day, we will not treat films where black people has the main characters otherwise than films with white main characters and stop judging anything by the amount of melanin in the skin. Stop judging people at all for anything. Black Panther was a landmark in cinematic history because it turns the norms of the society around. And that is the most effective way changing the society; turning the oppressed or/and under-represented to the opposite, to show the society that it is possible. One day, it will not be necessary for me to write an essay about the landmark of an African main character, one day justice will be normal.

The third essay task is a creative writing task which asks the students to take the perspective of one of the characters in the film and show the challenges the character is facing and decisions he or she must make. Oscar takes Okoye's perspective, the general of the female army, the Dora Milaje, depicting her inner conflict and painful decision of staying loyal to the throne and the new Black Panther (Killmonger), rather than flee Wakanda:

Oscar:        "I loved him. I love my country too." Nakia says. How could she say that? if she really loved her country she would stay. Try and make the best out of the situation. Cause it was not really up for debate. "Then you serve your country," I say. "No, I save my country." Nakia walks

away with her final words still ringing in my ears. Like an echo. I stay behind. Did I make the right choice? An oath is an oath, I think. And when Nakia disappears out of my field of view, a single tear runs down my cheek. I slowly turn my head up and correct my posture as I whisper the words into the nauseating silence “Wakanda forever.”

Responding to the same task, Siri views the world from Killmonger’s perspective. By using his birth name, Erik, may indicate Siri is acknowledging the human side of Erik and suggests she recognizes his pain of being abandoned as a child in the US, and now being in Wakanda witnessing the sunsets his father talked about. Furthermore, the student is aware of Killmonger’s intentions of helping oppressed black people in the world by sharing Wakanda’s resources:

Siri: I was young when I lost my dad, young. His name was N’Jobu, prince of Wakanda. I was playing outside with my friends. The second I realized something was wrong I ran upstairs, and there he was, laying on the floor. He was dying, from the actions of his own brother. His brother was the king of Wakanda, T’Chaka was his name. My father didn’t really talk much about Wakanda, but he told me about the sunsets, they were apparently magical. The most beautiful sunsets my dad had ever seen. Many years later, and I am finally close to see the sunsets my dad loved so much. As I arrived to Wakanda this boy named M’Kabi was the first to meet me. I made him take me to my cousin, the son of the man who murdered my father. My first plan was to try and make him share Wakanda’s resources with the rest of our people, the black people. But he didn’t have the same thoughts as me, he wanted to keep Wakanda hidden, not to open to the rest of the world, share resources.

Finally, the last example is a response to task 4, which asks the students to reflect on the intercultural themes addressed in the film. Morten refers to a scene in the film (00:15:28) where Killmonger and his accomplice are stealing an artefact made of vibranium from a British museum. He demonstrates knowledge about the current debate about whether Western museums should return historical artefact that were possessed by the colonial powers in the colonial era (Hunt, 2019; Palmer, 2023). The response indicates that he can relate the legacy of colonialism to a current context:

Morten: There was a particular scene in the movie I did not pay much attention to at first, but now realize has some strong symbolism. I am talking about the museum scene. Erik Stevens is looking at all the artifacts, when one of the experts comes up to him and starts telling him about them and where they came from. A white British woman telling a man

of African descent about ancient African items that were stolen by the British colonizers. Erik acknowledges this fact when she tells him about a weapon, she does not know is made of vibranium which she is wrong about where came from. He corrects her saying it is from Wakanda, and she is very surprised to see someone talking back telling her that she is wrong. Later, Erik joins up with Ulysses Klaue to steal the artifact from the museum. You can see this as them taking back what was stolen from them, something that was rightfully theirs.

According to Byram (2021), if one can critically evaluate and interpret a document based on reasoning and reflection by drawing upon one's skills, knowledge, and attitudes, one shows the ability of critical cultural awareness/political education (p. 66). The student's response indicates a development of this component of intercultural competence.

### **5.2.8 Discussion of Results**

The final written assignment's results suggest that the students reflect upon the intercultural themes in the film. They show, for example, the ability to empathize with Killmonger, whose intentions are good, however the means to achieve them are not. Nevertheless, there is an understanding of needing to fight against injustice and oppression. One can argue that what the students' texts allude to are the thoughts of Fanon, who claimed that colonial exploitation drives the native to organized revolt (1967) And as Henrik expresses, human rights, equality, and justice should be for everyone, echoing Fanon's wish when he described what the black man wants; being recognized by the other and treated as an equal human being (2021). Furthermore, when the students are taking the perspective of others and see what influences their decisions, may indicate that they have developed critical cultural awareness. However, a note of caution is due here as these are only a few examples of the students' texts.

## 6. Summary and Conclusion

### 6.1 Summary of Results

In general, it seems that throughout this teaching project the students have gained knowledge of the concepts culture and identity, and become conscious of the fact that they, and others have multiple identities. Moreover, the results indicate that they understand that one's background influences one's worldview, and that individuals have complex identities. Byram (2021) claims that a number of defined attitudes are a necessary condition for successful interaction. They need to be "attitudes of curiosity and openness and readiness to suspend beliefs" one may have of other people's opinions, beliefs, values, and behaviors (p. 45). One also needs to have the ability to "decentre", i.e., to put aside the belief in one's own opinions, beliefs, values, and behaviors, and to see and evaluate these from the perspective of others in interactions (p. 45). It may be the case that the students knowing they were going to study a Marvel superhero film influenced their attitudes, however, the students showed an openness and curiosity toward the intercultural themes studied. They engaged in classroom conversation and demonstrated knowledge of many aspects of colonization and African American history in the pre-viewing activities. While-viewing and after viewing the film, they have reflected on diversity, identity, gender roles, colonialism, globalism, and protectionism.

Thus, one can argue that in the intercultural teaching project, the students have developed the knowledge component, and the skills of interpreting and relating as described in Byram's model of intercultural competence. Furthermore, the results also indicate a development of the skills of discovery through acquiring new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices. Byram describes this component as having the ability to operate this new knowledge through real-time communication and interaction (p. 49). In the present context, it entails the students interacting in the classroom with their peers and teacher. Lastly, the component critical cultural awareness/political education involves the ability to evaluate, identify, and interpret values present in one's own and other cultures through reasoned analysis (Byram, 2021, p. 66). The findings in some of the students' responses suggest that they may have developed this component of intercultural competence.

## 6.2 Conclusion

This thesis has examined to what extent the superhero film *Black Panther* may promote intercultural competence in the English classroom. I have investigated how cinematic representation of diversity can offer a gateway to new perspectives of other cultures while simultaneously having the students reflect on issues related to identity for diasporic people, and their own multiple identities. Mandated in the English subject curriculum, English teachers have a special responsibility to facilitate students' intercultural competence development and to prepare them for interacting with people from other cultures in an increasingly globalized world.

A qualitative research study has been conducted where data has been collected from the class studied through classroom observation, focus group interviews, and written responses from short answer tasks and essays from the participants. The findings in the study have been analyzed and discussed through the lenses of postcolonial theory and Byram's model of intercultural competence. The findings suggest that the students have increased knowledge of African American history and issues related to identity. Furthermore, the findings indicate that the students have demonstrated an appreciation for diverse cultural expressions as depicted in the film. The findings imply that some of the students are able to relate the intercultural themes in the film to current issues in society. Additionally, the student responses reflect the significance of having a hero to look up to and identify with, which suggests that the film has raised awareness of the importance of positive representation, and that pride in ancestry from a rich African cultural heritage can be empowering for black people's sense of belonging and identity. These findings align with previous research that has shown that film as a tool can contribute to developing intercultural competence. Overall, the findings indicate intercultural competence has been promoted, however, it is difficult to measure to what extent. One may see the findings as a step on the way in a continuous process that is never completed.

It must be noted that the didactic framework in this research study is designed for one particular class at the vg1 level for upper secondary school and the findings analyzed are based on a small number of participants. Therefore, the degree of generalizability has its limitations. Nevertheless, the study has offered a didactic framework and demonstrated how the superhero film *Black Panther* can be a resource to promote intercultural competence that may be developed and applicable to other classroom settings. The participants in this study

expressed an interest in cultural aspects such as the costumes of the tribes in Wakanda and the soundtrack in the film, which indicate there is potential for further exploration and implementation of these aspects of cultural diversity in a teaching plan.

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## Appendices

### Appendix I: Informed Consent from Participants

Til elever i ■■■■

I forbindelse med mitt Mastergradsprogram i fremmedspråk, engelsk, ved Høgskolen i Østfold, ønsker jeg i løpet av våren 2022 å bruke elevsvar i ■■■■ i et filmprosjekt om filmen *Black Panther* relatert til interkulturell læring. Dette vil ta form av refleksjonsspørsmål og tekster elevene skal skrive knyttet til filmen. I tillegg ønsker jeg å foreta et fokusgruppeintervju uten lydopptak. Elevsvarene og intervjuene vil være anonymisert i tråd med gjeldende regelverk fra NSD (Norsk senter for forskningsdata).

Deltagelse er frivillig, og bruk av elevens svar i masteravhandlingen er basert på samtykke fra elevene. Eleven kan trekke sitt samtykke tilbake uten å begrunne dette.

Med vennlig hilsen

Elisabeth F. Dahl

Elev: \_\_\_\_\_

Jeg godkjenner at mine svar kan brukes i oppgaven

Jeg ønsker ikke at mine svar brukes

# Appendix 2: Cultures

1



2



3



4



5



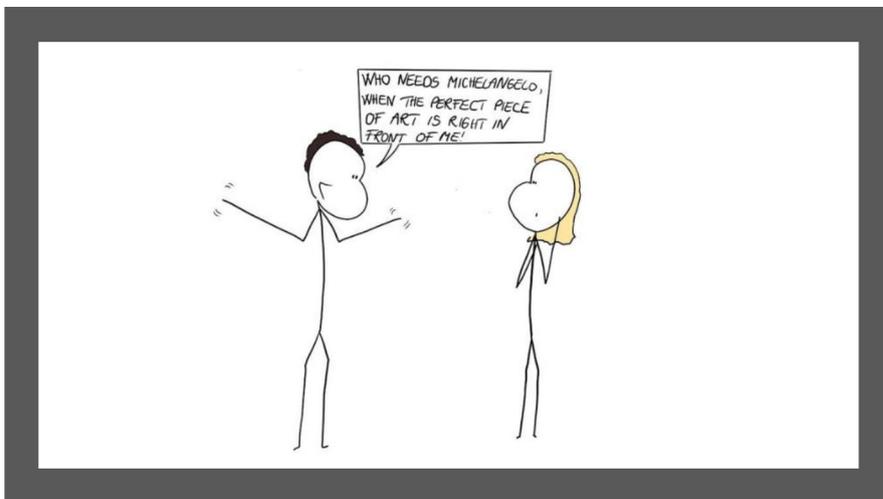
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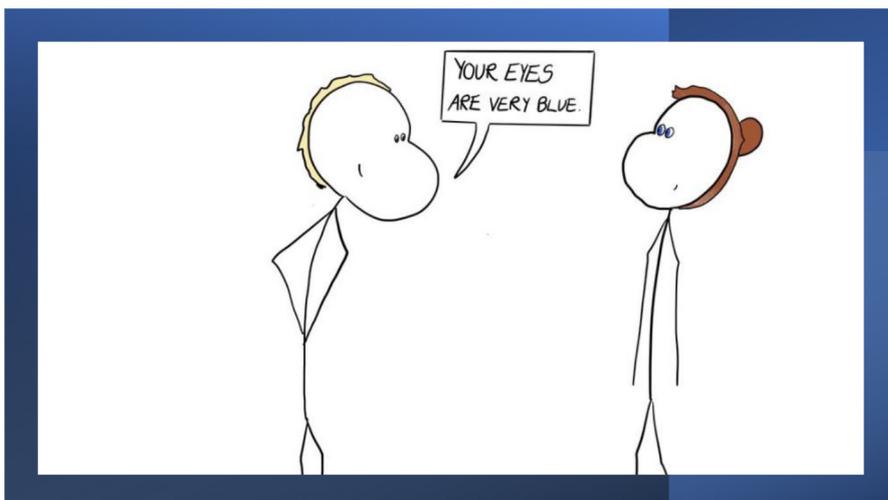
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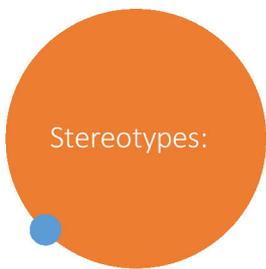


10



- When we meet people from different backgrounds, we meet them as individuals, not as a representative of an entire culture.

11



- Cultural **stereotypes** Judging people based on little or unreliable information, for example  
«All Asian students make good grades.»  
“Germans are well organized and punctual.”  
Stereotypes can be negative or positive.

12

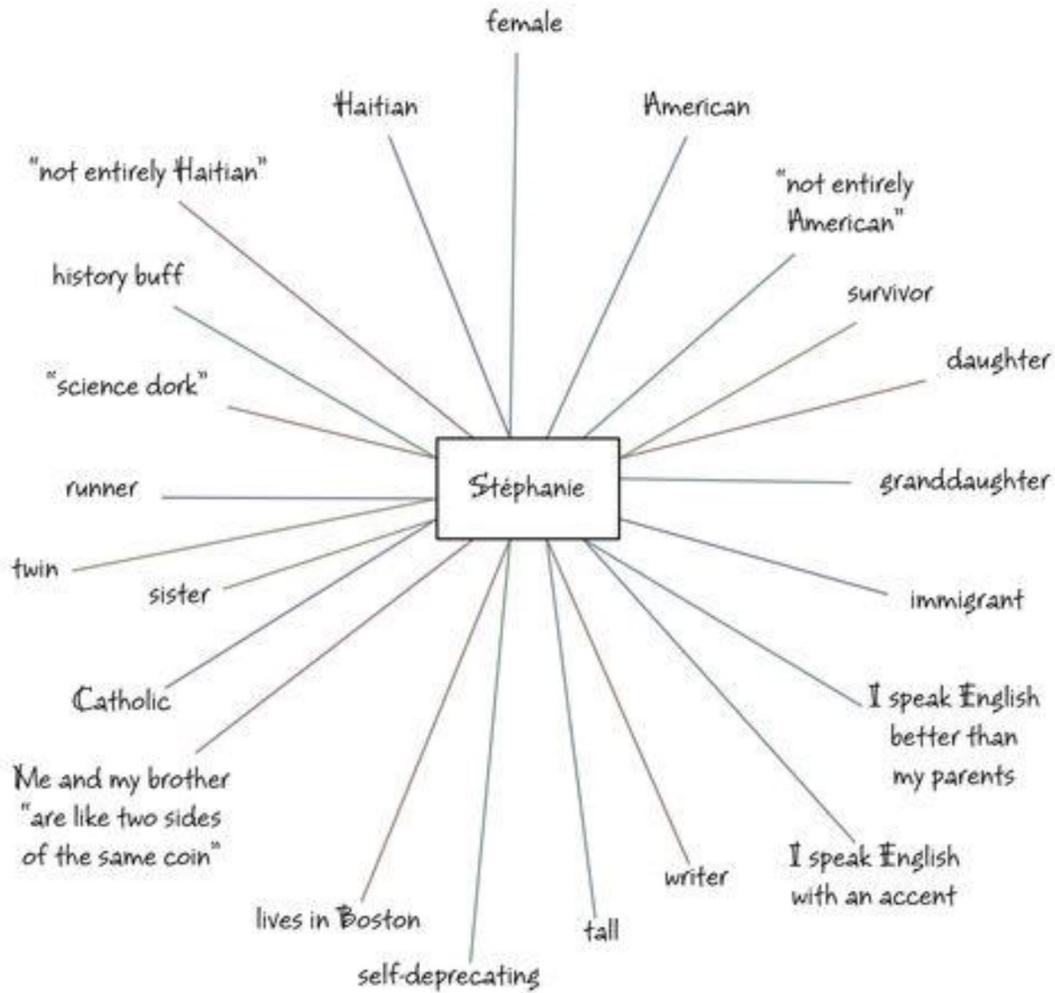


- Irrational feelings and attitudes when we judge people, the result of our judgment is negative.
- Racism

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### Appendix 3: Identity Chart (example)



Source:

Facing History and Ourselves (Nov.2, 2009). *Identity Charts*.

<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/identity-charts-1#materials-downloads>

## Appendix 4: Africa Before and After Colonization

1

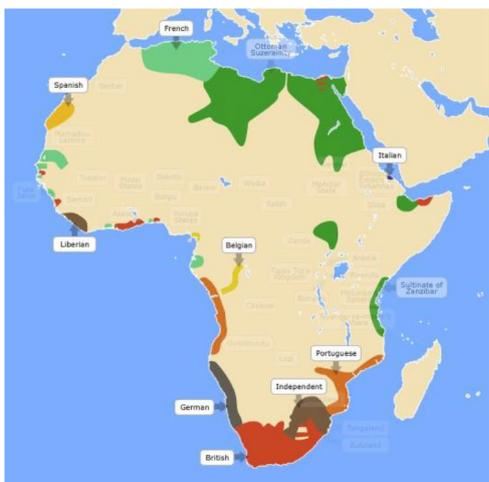


2



- Indigenous African control
- There is little sense of formal borders

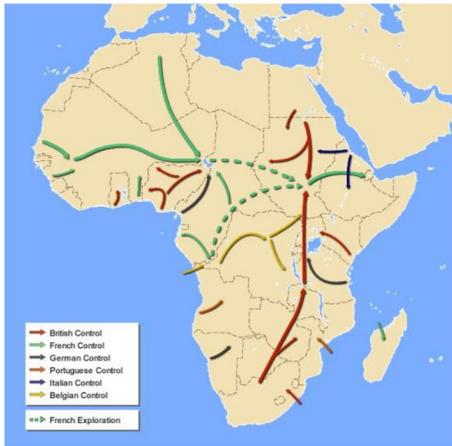
3



16<sup>th</sup> Century

- European competition for control of ports and resources

4



< 1885

- 1885: Berlin Conference, European powers drew borders recognizing their dominion.

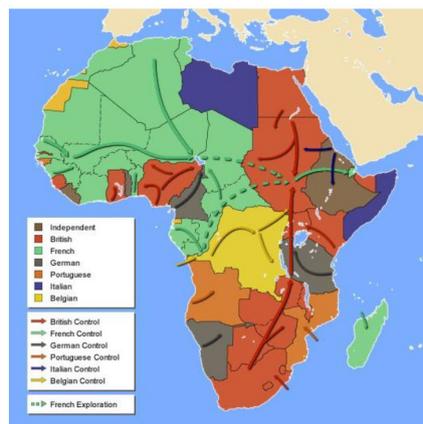
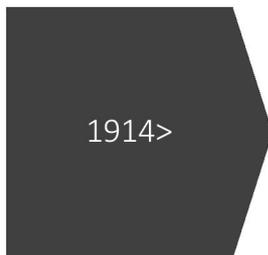
5



> 1914

- European powers explored and established administrative control. Colonialism.

6



Source: University of Oregon (n.d.) *Mapping history*. Retrieved from <https://mappinghistory.uoregon.edu/english/AF/AF01-00.html>

## Appendix 5: Black History



Rosa Parks and The Montgomery Bus Boycott, 1955

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Martin Luther King Jr.

• Washington, 1963: «I Have a Dream»



Rodney King, LA riots in 1992

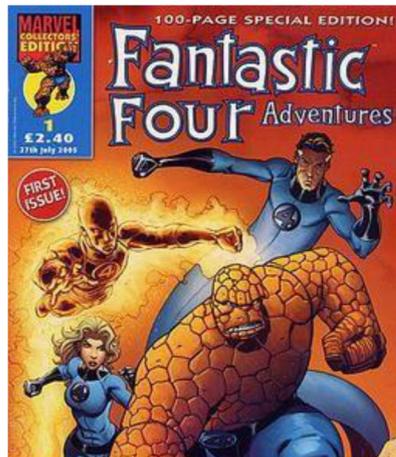


## Appendix 6: The Marvel Universe



Fantastic Four  
Comic Books

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First appearance  
of Black Panther  
in Fantastic Four  
in 1966

---





How is *Black Panther* (2018) different from previous Marvel movies?



## Appendix 7: Viewing Guide Part 1

(0:00- 06:22)

*Black Panther* (2018)

### A Story of Home



«Baba, tell me a story»  
What do we get to know about the history of Wakanda?



Setting: Where and when is this? Why do you think this location is chosen?

What are the two characters we are introduced to planning? What is one being accused of?

## Appendix 8: Viewing Guide Part 2

(06:55-00:40:57)

### Present Day Wakanda



What has happened here? How does the news reporter describe the nation of Wakanda?

### Entering Wakanda

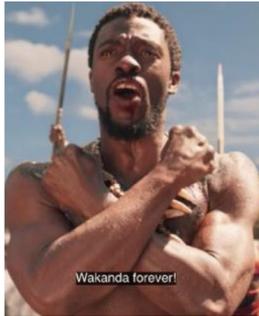
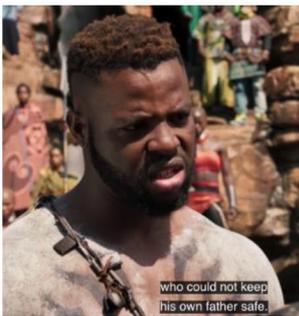


Describe your impression of Wakanda.



Setting: Where is this? What is happening?

The Coronation Ceremony



Describe the scenery and what happens. Name the five tribes and describe their clothing.



Where is T'Challa? Explain why you think he is here.



“I can’t be happy here knowing there’s people out there who have nothing.” How do interpret what Nakia says?

## Appendix 9: Viewing Guide Part 3

(00:40:58- 1:31:20)

### Busan, South Korea



Who is the man to the right?



Why do you think Okoye throws away her wig in the scene at the casino?

## Wakanda:



Why did T'Challa decide to bring him back to Wakanda? How do the other Wakandans feel about the decision?



“Some truths are too much to bear, T’Challa.”  
What truth is Zuri referring to?

## Killmonger before the Royal Council



What does Killmonger reveal about his identity? What does he wish to do?



Why do you think Killmonger decides to burn the garden of the heart-shaped herbs?

## Appendix 10: Viewing Guide Part 4

(1:31:21-2:14:16)



Why do you think the Jabari decided to help the Wakandans?

**T'Challa confronts his father in the Ancestral Plane.**



How do you interpret T'Challa's anger with his father and his ancestors?



What is Killmonger 's wish?



Where are they? Why are they here?

### T'Challa's speech



How do you interpret T'Challa's message to the world?

## Appendix 11: Focus Group Interviews

*Black Panther has been celebrated because it critically examines what it means to be Black in America and for showcasing African culture in a way that has not been seen in a superhero film before. How do you see African culture represented in the film?*

### Group A:

Anne: I think it's most visible in the clothing and in the interactions between the people. Especially the tribes' clothing was an expression of their identity and where they belonged. We could see this in the coronation of the king, where the strongest got to be king. And the belief in God and the ancestors.

Teacher: Do you remember the names of the gods?

Anne : Bast and?

Eirik : Hanuman

Teacher: Yes, can you explain more about the belief in ancestors?

Anette: When T'Challa goes to the Ancestral Plane the first time it shows him in a peaceful way, but for Killmonger it's more about fear and struggles.

Eirik: Both go back to important places, I think Killmonger thinks about his home a lot.

Teacher: The belief in ancestors I quite different from Norwegian culture then, isn't it?

Anne: We don't go back as far when someone dies, and we aren't very spiritual.

Eirik: I think we can see similarities to the Sami culture. They use drums and a shaman and go far back.

Anette: It's all about normalizing, we can be anything, be different.

Teacher: How are women portrayed in the film?

Anette: The women are strong and powerful, showing we can do the same as the "big guys."

Eirik: Shuri is the smartest and the tech genius, sometimes she is questioning T'Challa.

Anne: It shows that women are as powerful and smart as men.

Eirik: Yes, many of the lead characters are women.

Anne: Nakia, for example. She doesn't want to stay in Wakanda.

Anette: No, because she has a global responsibility, she wants to help the rest of the world and share Wakanda's resources. I think it sends a message to the rich countries of the world today.

Anne: Yes, Wakanda is isolated. We all have to do our part. If they don't open up to the world, we don't know what we are doing right or wrong.

Eirik: They don't open up because they want to protect their traditions, like the ceremonies and fights.

Anne: I think that's similar to how many perceive other cultures. That they want to stay protected.

Eirik: We see Wakandan culture through the CIA agent's eyes.

Anne: Yes, we see that the Wakandans are at first hostile toward Ross, but then that changes. I think it shows that we can change our attitudes.

Anette: Like T'Challa, he is affected by the people around him and Killmonger.

Teacher: Were there any other aspects of culture you noticed?

Anette: The scenery was beautiful, the art, and the high-tech buildings in the city.

Anne: The English accent was different. The African English accent was nice. Sometimes English accents are bullied, like Indian accents are made fun of, and Asian accents too.

Anette: The hairstyles were cool. Some hairstyles are protective, like box braids. And the music is an extension of the characters. When we see T'Challa we hear drums, and when we see Killmonger, it's rap music.

### **Group B:**

Nora: You can see it in the clothing. The clothing's metal, the vibranium shows the modern combined with tradition. The clothing elevates and adds to the characters, high fashion is inspired by traditional African cultures.

Oscar: I loved the Dora Milaje. The rings they had around their necks, their uniforms, the shaven scalps, and when Okoye threw away her wig! That stated a cultural point of view, it's a social commentary to the American and Western beauty standards. They [The female army/The Dora Milaje] didn't have hair for practical reasons.

Henrik: I feel it's an opposition to pop culture, showing African culture to the Western media.

Morten: I think the use of music, the soundtrack with Black artists where they combined Western music with African instruments shows the cultural references. It's a way of modernizing traditional music. The bass sounds were empowering.

Henrik: That the Jabari tribe chose isolation is symbolic of how Africa was colonized, pushing tribes together. M'Baku showed his human side. Although we don't get along, we must cooperate.

Teacher: How about the scenery?

- Nora: It showed an untouched society, a country that could develop without Western influence, a modernized Africa with bustling cities.
- Teacher: And the variety of English used?
- Oscar: It was natural in the movie, the shifting with Xhosa, it shows other types of Englishes. Sometimes the switching between languages makes sense. Some accents are bullied, especially the unfamiliar ones.
- Henrik: I think the movie is a critique of Western countries. We are hesitant towards immigrants. It was a switch of the roles and says that we should open up and help. We are all humans and one.
- Oscar: I think representation in movies is starting, but I feel they're still tiptoeing around LGBTQ issues and Asians. There is a need for more diversity, like with Shang-Chi which is mostly Asian. If representation shows stereotypes, it can make matters worse.
- Nora: The movie showed the culture and the traditions, for instance with the heart-shaped herb, it's important to maintain your culture. Killmonger became the villain because he burned the garden because of jealousy and not being accepted. But, still you feel some sympathy for him.

## Appendix 12: Essay Tasks

### «Free-writing» exercise

Choose ONE of the following tasks and write a text.

Remember to include:

- A headline and task number
- A header with your name and class
- Line spacing 1,5
- Times New Roman, 12.
- Use your name when you store the file.
- The basic structure of an essay: introduction-main body-conclusion (Five-paragraph essay structure).

### Theme: Cultures

#### Allowed resources:

Citizens' textbook, all written notes, handouts, etc. Remember to include a reference list at the end of your document, and in-text references when needed. Check [www.kildekompasset.no](http://www.kildekompasset.no) (use APA reference style).

Web- resources:

<https://snl.no/>

<https://citizens-sf.cappelendamm.no/>

<https://www.ordnett.no/>

<https://imdb.com>

Choose **one** of the following tasks:

1. *Black Panther*. Write a film review. Use the structure suggested on *Citizens'* website. <https://citizens-sf.cappelendamm.no/seksjon/t-2573537/leksjon/t-2411816/spa-leksjon-tekst/t-2411817>
2. Why do you think *Black Panther* has become a landmark in cinematic history? Discuss.
3. Creative writing. Choose a character from the movie and show the challenges this person is facing and the choices he/she must make. Write a story from this person's perspective.
4. Consider the intercultural themes addressed in *Black Panther*. Discuss, reflect, and provide examples from the movie addressing these themes.

## Appendix 13: Selection of Student Essays (unabridged texts).

### Task 1: *Black Panther*. Write a film review.

Ole:

The Black Panther – Wakanda Forever

A long time ago, a huge meteor containing a special metal called vibranium hit the African country, Wakanda. This led to a huge boost in scientific evolution in the country, and while the rest of the world went forward like normal, Wakanda isolated themselves and was way ahead in every way. The country also needed a leader. This was the Black Panther.

The main character, T'Chala is the son of the most recent king of Wakanda, T'Chaka. The king died in a terrorist attack, and T'Chala is the one to inherit the throne. This means that he must go through a type of ritual where he must fight for his right to the throne and face the conflicts of being a king. Later in the movie we see Erik Stevens and Ulysses Klaue. These are the bad guys of the movie. There are also some important female roles in the movie. Shuri is T'Chala's sister and a technological genius. She is head of the Wakandan design group. Okoye is a good friend of T'Chala and the general of the armed forces, the Dora Milaje. We also get to know Nakia, which is a Wakandan spy and has had a romantic relationship with T'Chala.

The movie starts with a conflict between T'Chaka and his brother N'Jobu. The conflict takes place in Oakland in 1992. N'Jobu has apparently been stealing vibranium. This led to consequences. Later, we get introduced to T'Chala, which was played by Chadwick Boseman, and we learn a bit more about him and some of his friends. The movie is mostly about T'Chala's challenges of becoming the black panther and also becoming a king and having to rule a country that has been isolated to the world for centuries. However, T'Chala is also challenged by his country's past and his fathers' mistakes. Erik Stevens or Killmonger, which is played by Michael B Jordan, is the main antagonist, but we the movie also focuses on Ulysses Klaue, which is played by Andy Serkis. What is also important with this movie is that it connects well to the rest of the MCU. Wakanda is an important country throughout many of the other movies.

I love the visual effects of this movie. From the big futuristic cities in Wakanda, to the beautiful twilight sky in the astral plane. And the contrast between the Wakandan borders, the city where the king lives and to the mountains where the Jabari Tribe lives. Its is a visually beautiful country. The plot is great, and there is always something that keeps the viewer invested. For example, when we see Eric for the first time, why and how does he know so much about Wakandan history. The movie always has us on the hook. There are of course also negative aspects to the movie. One thing I have noticed throughout the times I have watched it, is that in the fight scene between T'Chala and Killmonger there is a part where the CGI is done pretty badly, but its not like that affects the whole enjoyment of the movie. The movie is still amazing as a whole.

To sum up. The Black Panther movie is an important installment to the MCU, not just because it builds up on the previous movies, but most importantly because it stars so many persons of color and it gives black children superheroes to look up to. Even if they are just fictional characters, they are still really important. Chadwick Boseman, Michael B Jordan and

the others play their roles fantastically and if I would give the movie a dice toss, I'd give it 5/6.

**Task 2: Why do you think *Black Panther* has become a landmark in cinematic history? Discuss.**

Henrik:

For the past six decades, Marvel Comics has ruled the fictional superhero industry. A lot of comics and films have been made, and it is always a great event when a new film is having its premiere. In the very beginning of the Marvel history, the United States was affected by the cold war at every aspect, even in the comics and the films. Therefore, they often had a patriotic angle, as for example in *Captain America*, and more indirectly *The Avengers* as well. *Black Panther* was on the other hand a film filled with patriotism for another nation than the US, a fictive nation on a continent oppressed by the US through hundreds of years – Africa. Fortunately, the society now is mature enough to handle the fact that people of all colours can be good, bad, and heroic, but *Black Panther* was still a controversial film for numerous people.

What makes the *Black Panther* a bit controversial, is not only the foreign patriotism, or the lack of Americans. The film is filled with politics, societal analyses, and critics of the past and the present. It is a hazardous film, that could risk being branded as anti-American propaganda, as it for sure did for some, but I think most people consider it as a progressive film. The name resembles the civil rights organisation and political party *Black Panthers*, who worked and fought for the rights of African Americans in the US in the end of the 1960's, until the beginning of the 1970's. (Jahr, 2021) By using the same name as title for the film, I think it shows that the film itself stands for the same as the *Black Panthers* did back then. Although the film is political, it is not Marvel's first time making a political film or comic.

The importance of the film shows not only the need of African representation in western film industry, but also need for the film industry to seem including, without actually changing that much. Although Marvel now has made a superhero movie with an African American as the hero, the ten Marvel actors with the highest salary are all European descendants. (McCormick, 2022) This once again shows how the popular industry tries to look including to seem more progressive, and gaining popularity and money on that factor, without actually making life better for the oppressed. To compare: a black president with policy of a white president, does not change anything for black people, other than the illusion of inclusion. On the other hand, the film can participate in generating more black patriotism, which can be necessary in the fight of racism.

*Black Panther* was and is a landmark in western cinematic history, mostly based on the already mentioned factors. As every other great progressions in society, it will make it easier doing it again, and again, until it is not a sensation anymore, which is the goal of progress. When it is a landmark and a sensation that a superhero is African, it shows that our society has a long path to walk. It should not be a sensation that a superhero is African, it should be completely normal, and not even a subject for discussion and debate, but all progressions need to start somewhere, and *Black Panther* is an excellent film to push the limits of the society.

I hope that one day, we will not treat films where black people has the main characters otherwise than films with white main characters, and stop judging anything by the amount of melanin in the skin. Stop judging people at all for anything. *Black Panther* was a landmark in cinematic history because it turns the norms of the society around. And that is the most effective way changing the society; turning the oppressed or/and under-represented to the opposite, to show the society that it is possible. One day, it will not be necessary for me to write an essay about the landmark of an African main character, one day justice will be normal.

Sources:

Ida Jahr (2021, June 2), *Black Panthers*, Store Norske Leksikon

[https://snl.no/Black\\_Panthers](https://snl.no/Black_Panthers)

Colin McCormick (2022, February 1), *10 highest salaries of MCU actors*, Screen Rant

<https://screenrant.com/mcu-actors-highest-salaries-movies/>

- Ordnett

<https://www.ordnett.no/>

### Task 3:

**Creative writing. Choose a character from the movie and show the challenges this person is facing and the choices he/she must make. Write a story from this person's perspective.**

Oscar:

Okoye's story

I saw the dawning sunlight reflect on Eric's wet skin. It seemed to shine brighter than the sun itself. All his scars were like little water beetles surfing along the water surface. T'challa struck a blow at him but Eric parried it with ease. They had fought like this for what seemed like hours. But it was over soon. He was going to lose. With the realization came shivers ran down my spine. Just like the giant waterfalls sounding the valley. Eric drove the broken Dory into T'challa's leg. I could hear the scraping of bone against metal. A sound you never really get used to. The crowd gasped. I could feel my Dzilla tightening around my neck. T'challa fell to his side writhing in agony. He stood up again to face Eric. But he just picked him up onto his shoulders. And carried him off to the edge of the cliff. For a second the world stopped. I saw it happening right before my eyes, but I couldn't do anything. That was when the king, the King I had sworn to protect, was thrown off a cliff by an American. The screaming woke me up. The shrieking screams of Shuri, Ramonda, and Nakia. Eric turned towards us and with a smug grin on his face said, "I'm your king now". They all ran. I was left to salute my new king.

Leader of the Dora Milaje that was what I was. A group of women sworn to shield the king. The Dora had protected the throne since the beginning. I failed him. I failed my king. My purpose gone in an instant. But I had a new purpose now. A new king. A king who had never set foot in Wakanda until this day. Nonetheless had royal blood pumping through his veins. He had every right to kill T'challa. But it still felt wrong. I was sitting on the edge of Lion's Peak, a small hill a couple hundred yards from the ceremonial fighting grounds. It was here I went to think. To make sense of it all. The sky was speckled with a million different colors. Yellows, purples, reds and indigos. It was a beautiful evening. And it was so quiet. Not particularly shocking with all that had happened. Wakanda looked peaceful. With the only light coming from millions of candles lit in people's windows. It was beautiful I still couldn't believe it. The images of T'challa's body being hurled off the cliffs haunted me. I had to stop thinking about it. That's why I came here. to escape it all, but it just made me think about it even more. Lion's Peak was where I hid from my father after my mom died. Before her passing he was a kind and warm man. But after he turned cold and grim. Lion's Peak was my safe place. The yellow stone and warm tufts of grass felt more like home than home ever had. I lay down in the soft grass running my fingers through it like fish swimming in a stream. Looking up at the sky pondering. What should I do? Chose my duty or my friend. And what would happen to Ramonda, Nakia and poor Shuri. On second thought I didn't worry about Shuri. She was more capable at surviving than any of us.

Back at the palace I was getting ready to go to the throne room, my mind racing. This choice was the hardest and probably the most important choice I would ever have to make. When rounding a corner, of the unnecessarily long hallway I bumped into Nakia. She looked flustered. She hugged me and I hugged her back.

"Quickly, come with me, we have to leave." she said. I looked at her for a moment. No matter how badly I wanted to go. Just the sight of my sister made me realize what had to be done.

“no” I mumbled unsure. I couldn’t. I swore an oath. I swore by Bast that I would protect the throne. And she had to. I had made up my mind.

“no” I repeated surer of my decision.

“You are the greatest warrior Wakanda has. Help me overthrow him before he becomes too strong,”

“Overthrow?” I replied in disbelief. “I’m not a spy who can come and go as they so please. I am loyal to that throne, no matter who sits upon it.”

Nakia, stops. She looks shocked. I am to. Shocked at my own words. T’challa was my king. But Erik was my king now.

“I loved him. I love my country too.” Nakia said. How could she say that? if she really loved her country she would stay. Try and make the best out of the situation. Cause it was not really up for debate.

“Then you serve your country,” I say.

“No, I save my country.”

Nakia walks away with her final words still ringing in my ears. Like an echo. I Stay behind. Did I make the right choice? An oath is an oath I thought. And when Nakia disappeared out of my field of view. A single tear ran down my cheek. I slowly turn my head up and correct my posture. As I whisper the words into the nauseating silence.

“Wakanda forever”

### Task 3:

**Creative writing. Choose a character from the movie and show the challenges this person is facing and the choices he/she must make. Write a story from this person's perspective.**

Siri:

Erik Stevens

I was young when I lost my dad, young. I found him, laying on the floor in our apartment in Oakland. In that moment I started to plan my revenge, how I would hit back, hit Wakanda in a way that hurt. So, there I was, throwing Wakanda's king down the waterfall, my dear cousin T'Challa. Everything went silent, it was almost like I could hear the thoughts of the Wakandans standing there. I was their new king, they belonged to me now, they would do as I said from now. King Erik, it sounded good in my head.

I was young when I lost my dad, young. His name was N'Jobu, prince of Wakanda. I was playing outside with my friends. The second I realized something was wrong I ran upstairs, and there he was, laying on the floor. He was dying, from the actions of his own brother. His brother was the king of Wakanda, T'Chaka was his name. My father didn't really talk much about Wakanda, but he told me about the sunsets, they were apparently magical. The most beautiful sunsets my dad had ever seen.

Many years later, and I am finally close to see the sunsets my dad loved so much. As I arrived to Wakanda this boy named M'Kabi was the first to meet me. I made him take me to my cousin, the son of the man who murdered my father. My first plan was to try and make him share Wakanda's recourses with the rest of our people, the black people. But he didn't have the same thoughts as me, he wanted to keep Wakanda hidden, not to open to the rest of the world, share recourses. So...

I challenged him, I mean I had the rights to, we were blood related. I wore my dad's "royalty" ring around my neck, I was as worthy as T'Challa to be king. No one could really say anything about the challenge because it was not wrong, not illegal. It was right, I had all the rights to challenge him, whenever I wanted.

The challenge happened the same day, not long after I challenged him. There we were, over the waterfall, getting ready for our fight. In the beginning of the fight I obviously had the lead, I threw him around like he was a doll. Then, at one point he got stronger, started hitting back so it hurt, I am not going to lie, I thought he was winning. However, it would be embarrassing to lose, so I got back on my feet. I fought back, as hard as I could.

So, there I was, throwing Wakanda's king down the waterfall. I won, the king title was mine, the people had no other choice that to kneel before me, I was their new king, their new leader. In my opinion I was a better fit for a king than my cousin, he was weak and selfish, I on the other hand was strong, born to lead and just a better king overall. I wanted to show Wakanda to the rest of the world, share what it had do offer, so that was my plan, open Wakanda to the rest of the world. The people who dared to stand in my way would pay a price for it, I was their king, they had to respect me.

After some planning, we were finally ready to open up Wakanda, share its goods, its resources. We were standing ready to open our country when I saw a familiar face on the field. It could not be I thought in my head, he was dead, I made sure of it, I threw him down the waterfall. A fight broke loose on the field, led by the black panther, T'Challa, my cousin. By the time he reached me I was sure he was exhausted and tired of fighting, but he was stronger than I remembered.

So, there I was, with an open wound through my body, I was dying. My cousin had taken his revenge on me, even though I put up a good fight I still lost. He had taken me up on a hill. We were watching the sunset, it was more beautiful than my dad had told me, it was the most beautiful sunset I had ever seen.

#### Task 4:

**Consider the intercultural themes addressed in *Black Panther*. Discuss, reflect, and provide examples from the movie addressing these themes.**

Morten:

#### The Intercultural Themes of Black Panther

The thing I adore so much about the movie *Black Panther* (2018), is that almost every line and every scene has a deeper meaning. When a movie makes you read between the lines, you get a way deeper understanding of what is going on, and I find myself enjoying the movie a lot more. With this movie, everything from the dialogue to the music and clothes are carefully planned out so that it fits perfectly into the theme of the movie. This movie discusses a lot about identity and culture, as well as it brings up dilemmas from the real world.

One of the cultural themes that is the easiest to notice, is the character of *Erik Stevens/Killmonger*. He represents someone who had everything taken from him, and how someone with nothing might end up. He devoted his whole life to fighting for what he thinks is right. He lied, betrayed and killed to get to his goal. Even taking the life of his girlfriend with no hesitation. The fact that he carries every single person he has killed with him in the form of a tattoo and wears it like a trophy, says a lot about his character. Despite all this, we are still able to feel sorry for him. What happened to him, and his father was a tragedy. Those who left him were wrong. A villain so terrifying but still so vulnerable, takes this movie to another level. His way of seeing the world is objectively wrong, but that does not mean he is wrong about everything. He is furious about the fact that the whole time his ancestors suffered without being able to fight back, Wakanda kept silent because they did not want to interfere. Probably the most powerful nation in the world not helping when their “brothers and sisters” needed it the most makes me a little angry too. I understand the arguments from both sides. Wakanda has a good reason for their choices.

Something that caught my attention the last time I saw the movie, was the different scenes where T’Challa and Erik went to the ancestral place. T’Challa went to a forest with lots of trees where multiple black panthers were lurking. One of them transformed and was shown to be his father. I am guessing the others were his ancestors who also became the Black Panther at one point. What is interesting to me is where Erik went. Obviously, he went to his home in Oakland, California. However, I do not think that is the only reason why the filmmakers wanted him to go there. Oakland was where the Black panther party was founded. I think this is a hint to that the Black Panther means something different to Erik than it does to T’Challa. To Erik, black panther meant some one like him. Someone who has been oppressed and want to fight back. Therefore, when he gains the role of black panther in Wakanda, he does not look at it the same way T’Challa does. Erik feels like he needs to fight back and make the people that hurt him pay. The same way someone that was a part of the black panther party might have felt. The black panther is a warrior made for protecting Wakanda, usually by hurting other people. That is not far from what Erik was doing, only he was trying to protect his entire race of people, yet he is seen as the bad guy.

There are many factors that play in to make the cultural representation in Black Panther as good as it is. From the cinematography to the dialogue is everything crafted with precision to make the experience as good as possible. The first thing I want to address is the music. When the scenes are placed in Oakland, we can hear Hip-Hop music, which fits that community

well. When we go to Wakanda, we hear more native percussive drumming with traditional instruments. The sound managers and composers probably did a lot of research to make it as accurate as possible, and makes the experience even more believable. However, when Killmonger enters and takes over Wakanda, the music changes to Hip-Hop, which signals a change in community and culture and is a brilliant way to illustrate the drastic turn of events. Symbolism is not found only in the music, but also in the clothes. Each tribe has their own tasks, with clothes to match. If you study a little, you can make out what tribe someone comes from simply by looking at their clothing. Some people also have more distinct features like tattoos and shaved heads. These features are worn with honor, and no one feels ashamed and need to cover it up. However, Okoye must put on a wig when they go undercover in Busan. She later throws away this wig as she starts fighting. To me, this is a strong sign of showing identity and being yourself, not following what everyone else does. Through history, black women haven't been known for wearing wigs to cover up their real hair because it was not up to the beauty standard. Of course, a woman like Okoye does not care about such a silly thing. We do not get as much representation from America as we do from Wakanda, but we still see a distinct difference between someone that grew up in the lower class (Erik Stevens), and someone I am guessing came from a family within a higher class (Everett Ross), considering his education and career. We see a big difference in their personality which probably was a result of the environment they have lived in for the most of their lives.

There was a particular scene in the movie I did not pay much attention to at first, but now realize has some strong symbolism. I am talking about the museum scene. Erik Stevens is looking at all the artifacts, when one of the experts comes up to him and starts telling him about them and where they came from. A white British woman telling a man of African descent about ancient African items that were stolen by the British colonizers. Erik acknowledges this fact when she tells him about a weapon, she does not know is made of vibranium which she is wrong about where it came from. He corrects her saying it is from Wakanda, and she is very surprised to see someone talking back telling her that she is wrong. Later, Erik joins up with Ulysses Klaue to steal the artifact from the museum. You can see this as them taking back what was stolen from them, something that was rightfully theirs.

To make a good movie, you do not only have to get the important things right, but also do the little things well. The makers of *Black Panther* really did their job well with this masterpiece. Every aspect crafted with precision to make the movie even more believable and relatable. *Black Panther* is not only a fantasy superhero movie, but a milestone in cinematic history. It is one of the highest grossing movies of all time, and for good reason. The character of T'Challa is a role model for many, and a lot of kids look up to him and can smile about the fact that there is a cool superhero that looks like them. For once, we got a superhero movie with a predominantly African and African American cast. Historically, that has not been very common. This movie discusses a lot of dilemmas and problems in the real world, and makes you reflect on society and question the aspect of one's identity. Even if you are not that into superhero movies, I bet you will enjoy this movie.

Sources: *Black Panther* (Ryan Coogler, 2018)

## Appendix 14: Overview of Teaching Plan

Week 1			
	Topic	Learning goals	Method and Activities
<b>Lesson 1</b>	Culture	<p>After week two, students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain what “culture” is and what is meant by a “national culture”.</li> <li>• Give examples of hidden and visible elements of culture</li> <li>• Give examples of how communication is different in various cultures.</li> <li>• Explain and give examples of stereotypes, prejudice, values, and diversity.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reflect together in pairs and summarize in class.</li> <li>2. Read the text <i>Cultural Complications</i> in groups, and answer questions. Class discussion.</li> </ol>
<b>Lesson 2</b>	Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect on and give examples of how our backgrounds influence our worldview.</li> <li>• Reflect on and explain which cultures they belong to, and what shape their identity.</li> <li>• Gain knowledge of that cultures are dynamic, and that people belong to many cultures that influence their identity.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do the illustrations in the PP (Appendix 2) say about Norwegian culture and other cultures? Discussions in groups and class.</li> <li>2. Students fill out an identity chart (Appendix 3) and share it with their partner.</li> </ol>
Week 2			
<b>Lessons #1 and #2</b>	Historical background	<p>After week two, students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gain knowledge about the historical context of imperialism and colonization.</li> <li>• Reflect on stereotypes they may have about Africa.</li> <li>• Gain knowledge about the history of African Americans.</li> <li>• Gain knowledge about the concepts of racism and police brutality.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teacher introduces a map of Africa before and after colonization to activate the students’ previous knowledge (PP, Appendix 4).</li> <li>2. Students answer questions to “Do you notice anything special about the national borders in Africa after colonization?” “Which countries had colonies?”</li> <li>3. Students identify photos on PP and activate knowledge about key events and persons in African American history (Appendix 5).</li> <li>4. Students make a timeline of African American history based on the “Black Americans” text in their textbook <i>Citizens</i> (Andersen et al., 2020) and use the internet to find information about Rodney King, Trayvon Martin, and George Floyd.</li> <li>5. Students read an excerpt of <i>The Hate U Give</i> (Thomas, 2018), and answer questions.</li> </ol>

Week 3			
	Topic	Learning goals	Method and Activities
<b>Lessons # 1 and #2</b>	Film Study	After week three, students should be able to:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The teacher introduces the PP about the Marvel Universe (Appendix 6). The students share their “cultural capital,” discuss their favorite Marvel film, and identify what makes <i>Black Panther</i> stand out from previous Marvel films.</li> <li>2. Students write notes on their viewing guides and discuss them with their group peers. before summarizing in class.</li> </ol>
	The Marvel Cinematic Universe  <i>Black Panther</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know why <i>Black Panther</i> marked a change in the Marvel Universe.</li> <li>• Develop their ability to be active film viewers using viewing guides.</li> <li>• Identify, interpret, understand, and critically reflect on the intercultural themes present in <i>Black Panther</i>.</li> <li>• share their views and interpretations with their peers and in class.</li> <li>• Demonstrate an increased knowledge of the intercultural themes addressed in the film.</li> </ul>	
Week 4			
<b>Lesson #1</b>	Preparations for the written task.	After week four, students should be able to:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reflect and discuss in class using the viewing guides.</li> <li>2. Write answer to reflective questions about the intercultural themes such colonialism, identity, diversity, women’s roles, in the film after the discussion in class.</li> <li>3. Choose one essay task and write a text (Appendix 12).</li> </ol>
<b>Lesson #2</b>	Essay assignment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen to and follow up on input from others during discussions in pairs, groups, and class.</li> <li>• Use what has been discussed about the film in class in their individual essays.</li> <li>• Create a text in accordance with instructions provided.</li> </ul>	