

Camille Acker: *Mambo Sauce* – Exploring the challenges of modern Black identity

Rita Reinheimer-Wolf



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In dieser Einheit analysieren die Lernenden die Short Story „*Mambo Sauce*“ von Camille Acker in ihren inhaltlichen, sprachlichen und formalen Facetten. Dies beinhaltet eine intensive Auseinandersetzung mit den beiden Protagonisten Constance und Brian einerseits und den Merkmalen der Erzählspektive andererseits. Mithilfe vielfältiger Methoden werden inhaltliche und emotionale Zugänge zu der Kurzgeschichte für junge Leserinnen und Leser geschaffen. Hierbei erarbeiten die Lernenden auch, wie sie ihre Leseerfahrungen auf ihre konkrete Lebenswelt und ihren jeweiligen Kontext übertragen können.

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Competences and skills:

By working with the materials and the short story *Mambo Sauce*, students enhance their **reading skills**. Furthermore, they practise their competences in explaining and **analysing texts** when working closely with extracts from the material. This way, they also improve their **writing skills**. Students' **speaking competences** are strengthened by giving short speeches on specific topics, sharing and exchanging ideas in small groups with fellow students and by carrying out a role play.

Overview:

List of abbreviations:

A Analysis**CH** Characterisation**D** Discussion/debate**IN** Interview**PM** Placemat**RC** Reading comprehension**T** Working with a text**C** Comment**CT** Creative task**G** Group work**MC** Multiple choice**PR** Presentation**RP** Role play**W** Writing

Topic	Material	Methods/skills
1: What is this story about? – An approach to the topic	M1–M3	A, D, G, RC, T
2: The different challenges of Brian and Constance's relationship in <i>Mambo Sauce</i>	M4–M5	A, RC, PR, RP
3: Who is Constance?	M6–M8	CH, D, G, T
4: Who tells the story? – An analysis of the viewpoint and its effect on the reader	M9–M11	A, D, G, RC, W, T
5: The short story, <i>Mambo Sauce</i> and the film	M12	A, CT, G, PR

M2 Worksheet – What happens in the story?

Working with the excerpts

1. Think-Pair-Share: Read the excerpts from a short story. Then establish a chronological order of these excerpts that seems plausible to you.
2. Get together with a fellow student explaining your decision to him/her.
3. Then, discuss with him/her a possible general topic that the short story might deal with.
4. With the rest of the class, collect your ideas and explain your choices.

Reading comprehension

5. Read the short story *Mambo Sauce* by Camille Acker and fill in the grid below about the major actions.



What?	Where and when?	Why?

Speaking

3. Prepare a three-minute-speech on Brian and Constance's relationship and perform it in front of a smaller group of students.

Role play

4. Imagine that Brian and Constance turn to a marriage counsellor because of their problems. Get together in groups of three students to prepare the counselling session. You can use the information on the role cards during the preparation.
5. Perform the talk at the marriage counsellor in front of the class.

Counsellor:

Start the conversation and inquire about the reasons for the session.

Encourage the two partners to have a fair share in the conversation.

If the atmosphere during the talk gets too aggressive or hurtful for one of the partners, intervene politely.

From time to time, sum up the main content of the statements made by the two partners.

Towards the end, ask Brian and Constance about their future wishes and goals for their relationship.

Brian:

Describe your situation in general.

Explain why you feel hurt, angered, disappointed or frustrated in your relationship. Focus on your emotions.

Mention your criticism regarding Constance. Focus on what happened.

Say what you expect from Constance in the near future.

Say what you yourself are willing to do in order to improve your relationship.

Constance:

Give your point of view about the situation in general.

Explain why you feel hurt, angered, disappointed or frustrated in your relationship. Focus on your emotions.

Mention your criticism regarding Brian. Focus on what happened.

Say what you expect from Brian in the near future.

Say what you yourself are willing to do in order to improve your relationship.

Topic 4: Who tells the story?

Info sheet – Narration in literature

Literary term	Definition
mode of presentation	The way the writer narrates events.
panoramic presentation	The narrator tells the story in a condensed form, summarising in a few sentences or on a few pages the events that have occurred over a longer period of time.
scenic presentation	The narrator describes an event in detail as it occurs. Dialogues are used, thoughts and emotions are depicted, a scene is described etc.
narrator	The person who tells the story in narrative prose (not the author).
omniscient narrator	A third-person narrator with an unlimited point of view. An omniscient narrator can move freely in place and time. He can also enter the minds of the characters as he/she wishes to do. Thus, he/she is in a position to manage the characters like puppets on strings.
third-person narrator	A narrator who refers to all the characters as he, she, they or by their names. A third-person narrator is not a character in the story. This type of narrator can have a limited point of view (similar to a camera) or an unlimited point of view.
first-person narrator	A narrator who refers to himself/herself as "I". The first-person narrator tells the story from his/her perspective. So, he/she can only have a limited point of view (see omniscient point of view).
objective / reliable narrator	A storyteller who is considered to be trustworthy by the reader. The reader may take everything the narrator tells at face value.
subjective / unreliable narrator	A storyteller who is considered to be untrustworthy by the reader. The reader must find out how much of what is told can be accepted. In general, the first-person narrators can be called unreliable because they can give only one perspective on the events and the characters.

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