

ONE BOOK ONE COLLEGE  
2024 - 2025  
FACULTY GUIDE

"Brilliant, endlessly rich . . . pairs well with *1984* or *The Handmaid's Tale*." — JOHN GREEN, *New York Times*

Parable  
of the  
Sower

With a new foreword from  
award-winning author

**N. K. JEMISIN**

NEW YORK TIMES  
BESTSELLER

OCTAVIA E.  
BUTLER

Front Cover of *Parable of the Sower*

Bravery, Richard, Illustrator. Front Cover of *Parable of the Sower* Octavia Butler, Grand Central Publishing, 2019. Front Cover.



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Lange, Dorothea. "Row of Barracks." *Manzanar National Historic Site*, <https://www.nps.gov/media/photo/gallery-item.htm?pg=53150&id=CA29BBD8-155D-4519-3EED6BD4123560A4&gid=CA29BB4E-155D-4519-3E5456896E1C2E6C>. Accessed 8 July 2023.

# ONE BOOK ONE COLLEGE

## IMAGINE

- Imagine an avenue where you can engage in meaningful conversations...
- Imagine a forum where you feel empowered to speak your mind and where your voice matters...
- Imagine a community space where your presence, talents, and ideas are valued...
- Imagine a program where students, faculty, and staff collaborate and connect with each other...
- Imagine One Book and One Crafton Hills College...

## CRITERIA FOR BOOK SELECTION

- Addresses issues of equity and inclusion
- Relevant to the current student population
- Inspires critical dialogue and an opportunity to test one's own ideas
- Interdisciplinary and accessible
- Has a message that can develop empathy
- Helps build community amongst students and employees

## REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP



Logos of Crafton Hills College, The City of Redlands, Woodbury, University, The University of Redlands, and Riverside City College

Crafton Hills is proud to announce its regional partnership with Riverside City College, The City of Redlands, Woodbury University, and the University of Redlands for the 2024-25 One Book project. Participants will be invited to attend a coordinated events calendar at venues across the region!

## ABOUT ONE BOOK ONE COLLEGE AT CRAFTON HILLS

One Book One College is a college-wide reading initiative with the main purpose of bringing together the Crafton Hills campus community through the reading of a common book.

***The common reading for the 24-25 Academic Year will be Octavia Butler's Parable of the Sower.***

## CHC STEERING COMMITTEE

Sara Butler, Ciera Divens, Ed Ferrari, Kashaunda Harris, Monica Khalaj-LeCorre, Heather King, Eugenia Livingston, Natalie Lopez, Ericka Paddock, Michelle Riggs, Kay Weiss

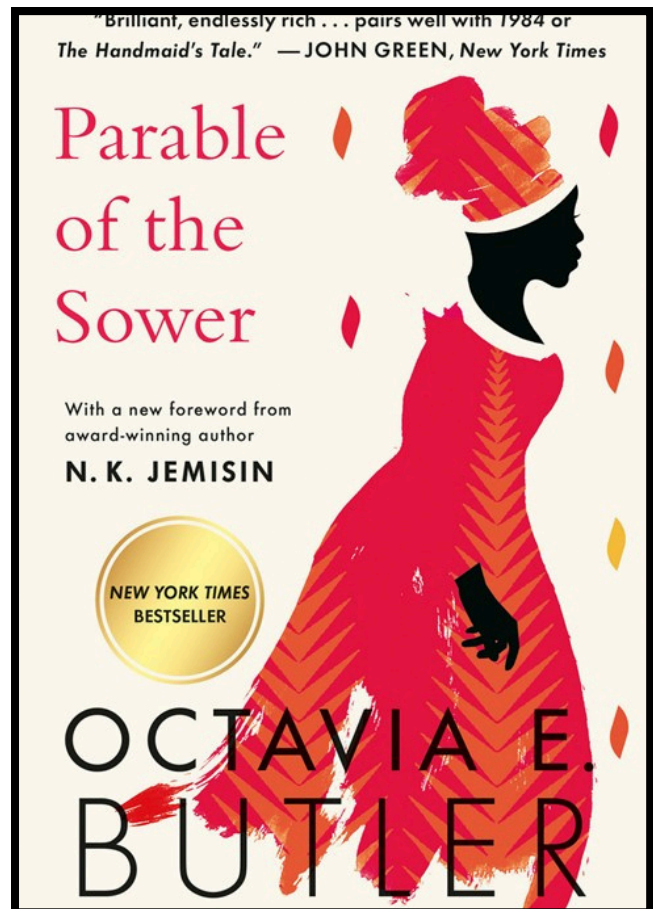


# PARABLE OF THE SOWER

## ABOUT THE BOOK

“When global climate change and economic crises lead to social chaos in the early 2020s, California becomes full of dangers, from pervasive water shortage to masses of vagabonds who will do anything to live to see another day. Fifteen-year-old Lauren Olamina lives inside a gated community with her preacher father, family, and neighbors, sheltered from the surrounding anarchy. In a society where any vulnerability is a risk, she suffers from hyperempathy, a debilitating sensitivity to others’ emotions.

Precocious and clear-eyed, Lauren must make her voice heard in order to protect her loved ones from the imminent disasters her small community stubbornly ignores. But what begins as a fight for survival soon leads to something much more: the birth of a new faith . . . and a startling vision of human destiny” (“Parable Series”).



Bravery, Richard, Illustrator. Front Cover of *Parable of the Sower* Octavia Butler, Grand Central Publishing, 2019. Front Cover.

## FROM THE PREFACE

“Butler does not appear to have intended the *Parable* novels to be a guidebook—and yet they are. That’s true for all of the most powerful science fiction novels: they offer not only accurate visions of the future, but also suggestions for coping with the resulting changes” (N.K. Jemisin “Three Reads,” xii).

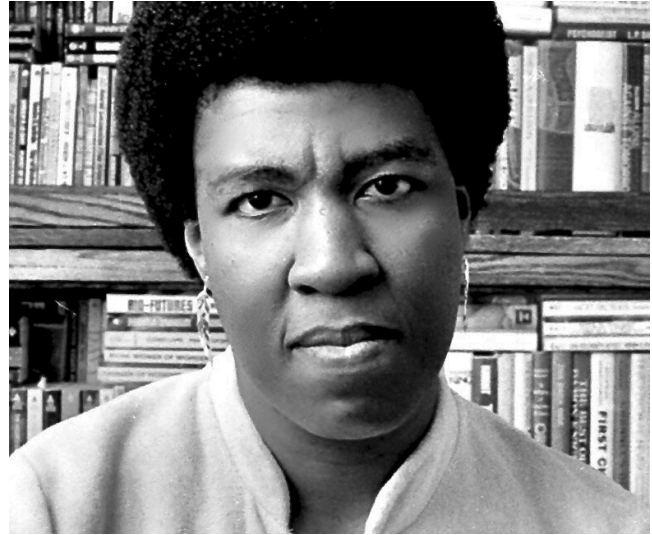
# OCTAVIA E. BUTLER

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Octavia E. Butler was a renowned African American author who received a MacArthur “Genius” Grant and PEN West Lifetime Achievement Award for her body of work. She was the first science fiction author to receive the MacArthur, as well as one of the first Black sci-fi authors and one of the few women practicing the genre. Born in Pasadena in 1947, she was raised by her mother and her grandmother. She was the author of several award-winning novels including *Parable of the Sower* (1993), which was a New York Times Notable Book of the Year, and *Parable of the Talents* (1995) winner of the Nebula Award for the best science fiction novel published that year. She was acclaimed for her lean prose, strong protagonists, and social observations in stories that range from the distant past to the far future. Her stories repeatedly feature women of color as protagonists, setting her work apart from much mainstream science fiction that focuses on English-speaking white men conquering alien planets and saving the world.

## HONORS AND AWARDS

- 2018, Eisner Award for Best Adaptation from Another Medium - *Kindred*, by Octavia Butler, adapted by Damian Duffy and John Jennings (Abrams ComicArts)
- 2012, Solstice Award, Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers of America
- 2000, PEN American Center Lifetime Achievement Award in Writing



“Octavia E. Butler,” The Octavia E. Butler Estate, <https://www.octaviabutler.com/theauthor>. Accessed 8 May 2024.

## PERSPECTIVES ON THE BOOK

“A fascinating exploration of how crises can fuel new religious and ideological movements.” **John Green, *New York Times***

“What ‘cyberpunk’ author William Gibson does for young, disaffected white fans of high tech and low life, Octavia Estelle Butler does for people of color. She gives us a future.” ***Vibe***

“A real gut-wrencher... What makes Butler’s fiction compelling is that it is as crisply detailed as journalism... Often the smallest details are the most revelatory.” ***Washington Post***

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## **REDLANDS FORUM @ ESRI, SEPT 16, 5:30PM**

Faculty from U of R's The Parable Project invite you to learn more about frameworks for exploring Octavia E. Butler's powerful novel and to see the ARCGIS map they've built of the novel

## **MARATHON READ @ U OF R, SEPT 27, 9AM-9PM**

Everyone is invited to participate in a community reading of the novel. Come join students, faculty, and community members as we take turns reading 10 minute sections of the novel out loud, all the way through. There will be snacks and prizes to keep our energy up!

## **ONE CITY, ONE BOOK DISCUSSION @ REDLANDS CONTEMPORARY CLUB, OCT 15, 6PM**

Butler's novel addresses issues we're still wrestling with -- the social inequities of climate change, the importance and fragility of community, and what it means to care for others. Bring your questions, large and small, and join a community discussion of the novel.

## **ONE CITY, ONE BOOK DISCUSSION - GRAPHIC NOVEL EDITION @ SMILEY LIBRARY, OCT 25, 5:30 PM**

When you couple Butler's powerful prose with equally powerful visuals, the result is pretty spectacular. Join for a discussion of the graphic novel adaptation.

## **& MORE TO COME...**

Check the instagram account for updates!



@PARABLEPROJECT24



*Your teachers  
Are all around you.  
All that you perceive,  
All that you experience,  
All that is given to you  
or taken from you,  
All that you love or hate,  
need or fear  
Will teach you--  
If you will learn.  
God is your first  
and your last teacher.  
God is your harshest teacher:  
subtle,  
demanding.  
Learn or die.*



# BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

## CLIMATE CHANGE



Aftermath of the 1991 Mount Pinatubo eruption in the Phillipines

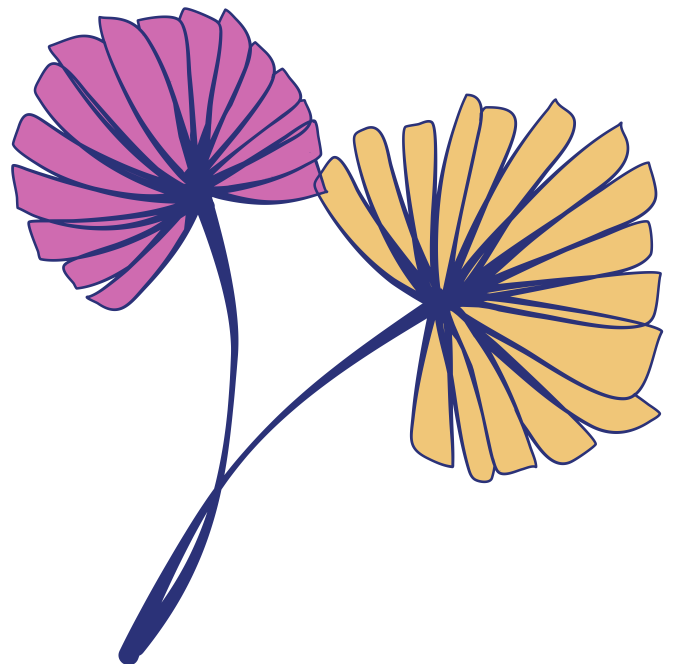
“Somehow she knew this time would come. The smoke-choked air from fire gone wild, the cresting rivers and rising seas, the sweltering heat and receding lakes, the melting away of civil society and political stability, the light-year leaps in artificial intelligence—Octavia Butler foresaw them all” (Miles, Tiya. “How Octavia Butler Told the Future,” *The Atlantic*).

## SOCIAL JUSTICE



A car burns at the intersection of Florence and Normandie avenues — considered the flashpoint of the LA riots — on April 29, 1992. *Steve Grayson/WireImage/Getty Images*

“Published in 1993, Butler’s novel springs from the era in which it was written: from Rodney King and the Los Angeles Riots to the weakening of labor unions and anxiety over the recession, her dystopia is topical and firmly rooted in history” (Stevenson, Mamie, *Parable of the Sower*, Medium.com).





*When no influence is strong enough  
To unify people  
They divide.  
They struggle,  
One against one,  
Group against group,  
For survival, position, power.  
They remember old hates and generate new ones,  
The create chaos and nurture it.  
They kill and kill and kill,  
Until they are exhausted and destroyed,  
Until they are conquered by outside forces,  
Or until one of them becomes  
A leader  
Most will follow,  
Or a tyrant  
Most fear.*

# BLACK TO THE FUTURE



Malcolm Ali/Wireimage/Jabari Jacobs, "Afrofuturism: From the Past to the Living Present," UCLA.com, <https://newsroom.ucla.edu/magazine/afrofuturism>

## WHAT IS AFROFUTURISM?

"It's the story of musicians, artists, writers, philosophers, fashion icons, filmmakers, costume and set designers, actors, activists and academics who have believed in a better future for Black people — and for all people.

Afrofuturism, more concretely, can be understood as a wide-ranging social, political and artistic movement that dares to imagine a world where African-descended peoples and their cultures play a central role in the creation of that world" ("Afrofuturism: From the Past to the Living Present").

"science fiction works that envision futures rooted in African aesthetics and experience. . .grounded on the belief that science fiction helps us see the given with new eyes, thereby to challenge systems of patriarchy, racism, and other injustices." (Vint, Sherryl, Science Fiction)

## WHAT IS SCIENCE FICTION OR SPECULATIVE FICTION?

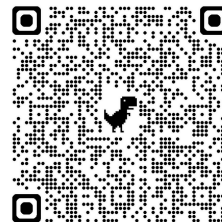
"Science fiction" or SF might conjure images of spaceships and aliens, but the genre can investigate many ways in which scientific developments affect human lives, especially the unintended consequences. It has launched numerous subgenres and other approaches, like "Speculative fiction" - which emphasizes the conjectural nature of authors' work -- or cyberpunk.

At its core, SF has long navigated the pull between engaging with and promoting scientific literacy and using scientific advances as a way to reflect on our current conditions.

Butler was known as a SF writer, and her speculations take us to alien planets (spoiler: not as victors) as well as to the antebellum past (*Kindred*) and the near future (*Parable of the Sower*). Her SF scenarios offer us ways to confront some of our hardest social problems.

## AFROFUTURISM PLAYLIST

Listen to UCLA's Afrofuturism playlist on Spotify.



## OTHER GENRES AT WORK:

In the novel, the protagonist flees the dangers of her home in Southern California, heading North to imagined safety. This is frequently read as replicating **Slave Narratives**, like Harriet Jacob's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861).

Lauren is just 15 when the novel opens, so the book also shares elements of a **bildungsroman** or **coming of age story** as she moves away from her family and finds her own identity.

As she tells the story of their harrowing journey, she also relates the development of the religion of Earthseed, linking the novel to the **spiritual autobiography** as well.

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## CLIMATE CHANGE

By the 1990s, scientists were warning the public about rising global temperatures, chemically polluted water supplies, and diminishing natural resources. This disaster hits closer to home for characters in *Parable of the Sower*, where food and water are scarce, and families grow produce to survive. To Butler, this bleak future looked familiar but not inevitable. She hoped *Parable of the Sower* and its sequel, *Parable of the Talents*, would serve as cautionary tales and inspire positive change. Do you think Butler would still be optimistic about our future? What positive changes do you see in combating climate change? What changes do you think still need to happen? Do you think Butler would still be optimistic about our future?

## ADAPTATION AND PERSISTENCE IN THE FACE OF CHANGE

If the theme of this novel was reduced to a bumper sticker it would be, "God is change." What did you make of this theology? Is Earthseed a system of beliefs that appeals to you? Have you ever considered change as a religious experience?

## RACE, POVERTY, AND SOCIAL POWER

By imagining a resurgence of slavery in the 21st century, Butler challenges the idea that the future will always lead to social progress and improvement.

She warns readers that any progress and human rights legislation can be rolled backward if people in power decide to do so and others let it happen. What elements of US History do you see repeating themselves in our era?

## LITERACY AND EDUCATION

Lauren uses the ability to read and write as a tool for survival—both for physical safety and the endurance of her ideas and dreams. The novel is structured as Lauren's journal, showing how the act of writing helps her understand the world as the plot unfolds. What connections do you see between Lauren's "literacy journey" and your own? How does the ability to read and write help you survive in this world?

*Adapted from Bartelby.com*

## GENDER

Compare the experience of Lauren and her brother Keith or her friend Zahara and other characters. How does Butler suggest gender inflects their experience?

## More Resources

To view more discussion questions access the resources below:

- [Hatchette Book Group, "Reading Group Guide"](https://www.bartleby.com/lit/parable-of-the-sower)  
Adapted from "Parable of the Sower Literature Guide." *Bartelby*, 23 July 2014. <https://www.bartleby.com/lit/parable-of-the-sower>

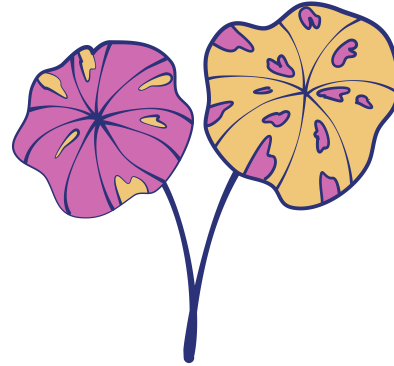
- [Parable of the Sower literature guide at Bartelby.com](https://www.bartleby.com/lit/parable-of-the-sower)

- [Fable Discussion Prompts](#)

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, CONTINUED

## MATH

- Pick an environmental or economic issue from the book. How would you apply statistics in an attempt to address your chosen issue?



## PSYCHOLOGY

- Despite harsh conditions, characters are able to display empathy and trust. Explore how trust and empathy are developed and how they manifest in this book.
- Because of her hyperempathy, Lauren physically suffers along with those she sees in pain. Psychologically speaking, how do we all navigate risks associated with caring about others?

## HISTORY

- Butler’s brand of “mundane science fiction” (telling stories about the future realistically constrained by the present and past) means her stories are heavily influenced by the historical events of her time. She was so influenced by history that she described herself as a “historofuturist” Research historical events of the 1990s and analyze their influence on Butler’s vision of the future.
- The adults in Butler’s novel spend a lot of time talking about the “good old days” that they think are going to return. What different attitudes toward history do you see at work in the novel?

## ETHNIC/SOCIAL STUDIES

- Examine *Parable of the Sower’s* relevance to contemporary events. In what ways does Octavia Butler’s vision of the future ring true today?
- How is the government and economic privatization characterized in the book and what similarities and differences do you see between current political and economic discourse today?

## ECONOMICS

- How are markets reconstituting themselves in the wake of civic destruction?
- Based on the details from the book and historic information about cost of living in the 1990s, can you hypothesize the prices some of the goods Lauren discussed might command? How does this imagined standard of living compare to our current experience?

## More Resources

Harvard’s Gutman Library [Discussion Questions](#)

# ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Please email Sara Butler (sbutler@craftonhills.edu) to be added to the One Book One College Canvas course that has more resources and discussions!



## Land Acknowledgement

Crafton Hills College acknowledges that the land on which it is built is the ancestral and unceded territory of the Maara'yam, commonly referred to as the Serrano people, and the Cahuilla. The Maara'yam (Serrano) and Cahuilla are inherently tied to the land and continue to maintain a symbiotic relationship to its many cultural and natural resources. Yucaipa began as a village established by Maara'yam (Serrano), who called the valley Yukaipa't. This fertile valley provided, and still provides, important cultural connections between the Maara'yam (Serrano) and the landscape.

To this day, the Maara'yam (Serrano) fulfill their Creator-given right and responsibility to steward their ancestral territory, including the Crafton and Yucaipa area, via important partnerships with entities such as Crafton Hills College. Our histories and stories are intertwined in this space, and by sharing them in culturally appropriate ways, Crafton Hills College hopes to honor and celebrate our indigenous neighbors and partners.