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<p><i>The Adventures of Sir Balin the Ill-Fated</i> by Gerald Morris Houghton Mifflin Books for Children, 2012, 94 pp., \$14.99 ISBN: 978-0-547-68085-9 Fantasy</p> <p>On the day of Balin's christening, he was pronounced ill-fated. He would be the noblest knight in England who would also bring misfortune and calamity to all. He would also bring down two kingdoms and destroy the knight he loves the most. Young Balin lived by the prophecy, avoiding contact with King Arthur or his brother Sir Balan, only to find fate helping him in defeating the evil and saving the good. In the end, he decided that he would make his way.</p> <p>This story of a knight is filled with dark and absurdist humor. It features brotherly love between Sir Balin and Sir Balan. It has a warm, happy ending with a surprising twist. Linda Sun Hong Kong</p>	<p><i>The Ballad of Jesse Pearl</i> by Shannon Hitchcock Nameelos, 2012, 140 pp., \$9.95 Historical American Fiction ISBN: 978-1-608-98142-7</p> <p>Using a rural dialect of North Carolina, Hitchcock exposes readers to family life and traditions in the early 1920s. Fourteen-year-old Jesse Pearl plans to become a teacher during a time when women are expected to marry. She still hears her deceased mother's voice encouraging her to continue her education. Unfortunately, Jesse must put her dreams aside to care for an older sister who suddenly comes down with tuberculosis. With that comes the sudden responsibility of caring for all of the males in the family—her father, her sister's husband, and her sister's newborn son—and "traditional women's work" is not Jesse's forte. To complicate matters, Jesse has real feelings for a local boy who is also interested in her, but who has a nemesis who gets her nose in Jesse's business in more ways than one. This debut novel is packed with much to think and talk about and is a nice addition to the growing collection of charming Southern YA literature; the author will present at the ALAN Workshop in Boston. Joan Kaywell Tampa, FL</p>
<p><i>The Bell Bandid</i> by Jacqueline Davis Houghton Mifflin Books for Children, 2012, 174 pp., \$15.99 ISBN: 978-0-547-56737-2 Realistic Fiction</p> <p>Evan and Jessie always spend their Christmas at their grandma's and ring the New Year bell with the rest of the town. This year, there has been a fire at grandma's house and the bell has gone missing. Moreover, grandma is suffering from memory loss and sporadically forgets who Evan and Jessie are. Evan and Jessie struggle to understand her condition, but they realize this holiday season is going to be rough.</p> <p>The traumatic fire turns out to be a transformational event for this family. When one family member is in trouble, others jump in and help. Evan takes up the job of reconstructing grandma's house while Jessie solves the mystery of the missing bell. They work together, take care of each other, and restore peace at their grandma's house. Linda Sun Hong Kong</p>	<p><i>Brianna on the Brink</i> by Nicole McInnes Holiday House, 2013, 170 pp., \$16.95 Realistic Fiction/Identity ISBN: 978-0-8234-2741-3</p> <p>Brianna has never felt like part of a family. Her mother kicked her out on her sixteenth birthday, and now she lives with her sister, who pays more attention to her loser boyfriend than Brianna. At least at school, Brianna feels like she fits in. She has worked hard to be a popular, bad-girl cheerleader who everyone respects. All of this changes when Brianna has a disastrous one-night stand with a man she didn't know was married to her English teacher.</p> <p>Left deserted by her family and friends in the wake of her mistake, Brianna learns to accept help from the teacher she hurt so badly. Through this experience, she learns to let down her guard and become a part of a real, loving family. Brianna may teeter on the brink of bad decision making and its consequences, but she learns how to catch herself before she falls. Laura Cockman Fishers, IN</p>

<p><i>Bruised</i> by Sarah Skilton Amulet Books, 2013, 288 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Identity/Romance ISBN: 978-1-4197-0387-4</p> <p>Sixteen-year-old Imogen hides under a table at a local diner when an armed robber appears; a young man huddles nearby. The police subsequently kill the thief. Although a black belt in taekwon do, Imogen blames herself for the death, since she believes she covered in fear and forgot her skills. She finally meets Ricky, her ally at the café; they embark on a journey of recovery together. Imogen is filled with anger and guilt; she yearns for a physical fight to prove she is no longer a victim. Ricky wants her to teach him martial arts while Imogen's motive is to defeat him. Their romance somehow develops, but Imogen's bitterness threatens to destroy it.</p> <p>Imogen's dark sense of humor encourages the reader to root for her as Skilton's traumatic tale unfolds through flashbacks and in the present world of nightmares, vengeful rages, and psychosomatic illness.</p> <p>Judith A. Hayn Little Rock, AR</p>	<p><i>Call Me Oklahomal!</i> by Miriam Glassman Holiday House, 2013, 123 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Realistic Fiction/Humor ISBN: 978-0-8234-2742-0</p> <p>On the first day of fourth grade, Paige decides that she doesn't want to feel like a little mouse anymore. She is going to be gutsy and spunky and she is changing her name to Oklahomal! Her teacher says that there are many possible selves in everyone, and Paige sets out to find her Oklahoma self. Her obstacles, though, are the mean girl Viveca, her hyperactive cousin Cordelia, dark and terrible stage fright, and many other things. Paige realizes that becoming a brave person doesn't happen overnight. It's all the little changes that count—she stands up to Viveca, tries cauliflower, and plays the piano for the entire school. As her new name Oklahomal catches on, she decides that she is happy being Paige; there is nothing she can't do as Paige.</p> <p>Linda Sun Hong Kong</p>
<p><i>Eleanor and Park</i> by Rainbow Rowell St. Martin's Griffin, 2013, 288 pp., \$17.99</p> <p>Romance/Identity ISBN: 978-1-250-01257-9</p> <p>Eleanor is the new girl in 1986 Omaha; Park reluctantly allows her to sit by him on the school bus to save her from harassment by his cruel classmates. Park is small and Asian, which might make him the butt of jokes; however, his taekwondo training gives him credibility. His mom is Korean, and his dad married her when he was in the Army; handsome and athletic older brother Josh seems to be the favorite at home. Eleanor, who is gawky and red-headed, has just been allowed back home by her alcoholic and abusive stepdad Richie. He has beaten Eleanor's mom into submission while the four young siblings cower in silence.</p> <p>A poignant romance, originally based on comic books and punk rock, slowly develops for the truly star-crossed misfit couple. The two play out a familiar, yet suspenseful, drama told from their alternating viewpoints—a spellbinding young adult romance.</p> <p>Judith A. Hayn Little Rock, AR</p>	<p><i>Enrique's Journey</i> by Sonia Nazario Delacorte, 2013, 240 pp., \$17.99</p> <p>Nonfiction ISBN: 978-0-385-74327-3</p> <p>An adaptation for young readers of Nazario's original 2006 adult work, the book is subtitled "The True Story of a Boy Determined to Reunite with His Mother." Based on a series of Pulitzer Prize-winning articles, it is a disturbing, yet uplifting, story.</p> <p>During Nazario's lengthy research, she met 17-year-old Enrique in a Mexican migrant shelter. She retraced his 1600 mile journey that included traveling atop freight trains. Movingly, she reveals the desperation and determination that marks Enrique's desire to find the woman who deserted him. When he was five growing up in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, his mother Lourdes fled to the US for work so she could send money back; she encourages him to be patient and that they will reunite soon. After 11 years, the disillusioned boy joins thousands of other immigrant children who followed similar paths to find the love they are missing. The reconciliation is bittersweet as the plight of illegal aliens threatens to destroy a dream.</p> <p>Judith A. Hayn Little Rock, AR</p>

<p><i>The 5th Wave</i> by Rick Yancey Putnam, 2013, pp. 480, \$18.99</p> <p>Yancey delivers a dystopian, post-apocalyptic thriller featuring a kick-butt heroine. Aliens have come to destroy Earth's inhabitants through a series of ever-worsening Waves. Once an ordinary high school girl with a crush on a guy who doesn't know she is alive, Cassie Sullivan is now struggling for her own survival while seeking her younger brother, who vanished when children were transported out of a refugee camp. Packing a Luger and M-16, she dodges her relentless pursuers, including unyielding drones and ruthless snipers. Evan Walker rescues her from freezing to death after she is shot, and the two experience moments of closeness. Five-year-old Sammy is imprisoned at Camp Haven, a massive concentration facility designed to winnow out the weak, convert the inmates, and train killing machines. Who can she rely on when the Others are us and we are them? Will her obsession with a boy from the past doom or save her? Judith A. Hayn Little Rock, AR</p>	<p><i>Frostbite</i> by Richelle Mead, adapted by Leigh Dragoon Graphic Novel / Supernatural Penguin Group, 2012, 152 pp., \$12.99</p> <p>Like other teens, Rose Hathaway goes to school, has a crush, and deals with her embarrassing mom. But unlike most other teens, Rose is a dhampir—a half-human, half-vampire training to become a guardian in the battle between good and evil. Rose's main goal is to protect her best friend Lissa, a vampire princess with the special power to control the spirit element.</p> <p>Protecting Lissa is not always easy for Rose as she navigates relationships with boys, family, and friends. However, when some students leave their safe haven to attack the Strigoi, a group of evil vampires, Rose learns how far she will go to protect her loved ones and how she can use her intellect and powers to fight for good. This graphic adaptation of Richelle Mead's original series tells Rose's action-packed story in both words and stunningly bright pictures for a comprehensive story experience. Laura Cockman Fishers, IN</p>
<p><i>Hereville: How Mirka Met a Meteorite</i> by Barry Deutsch Amulet Books, 2012, 128 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Mirka Herschberg, the eleven-year-old Orthodox Jewish heroine, is back and she's still marching to the beat of her own drum. After being un-grounded for sneaking out at night, fighting a troll, and talking to a witch, Mirka finds herself in trouble again. When a troll summons a destructive meteorite toward the Earth, a witch uses a few strands of Mirka's hair to transform the meteorite into Metty, Mirka's doppelganger. Metty is not only clever, intelligent, and better at basketball, but also determined to replace Mirka. As Mirka plans to get rid of Metty, she starts to understand that being yourself—even if you are silly, goofy, or clumsy—is better than having a perfect copy of yourself.</p> <p>Deutsch's story is colorful and captivating in the way that it incorporates Jewish culture and faith. <i>Hereville</i> places great emphasis on the importance of understanding that everyone is special in their own way. David Chang Chicago, IL</p>	<p><i>Hunter Moran Saves the Universe</i> by Patricia Reilly Giff Holiday House, 2012, 125 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Hunter and Zach Moran might have been the twins who originated the phrase "Double Trouble." Armed with only their wits and good intentions, Hunter and Zach must find a way to intervene before a sinister dentist, Dr. Digilo, sets off a bomb in their town—blowing the whole place to smithereens. The boys juggle nosy parents, tag-along siblings, and the preparations for their town's "Lester Tinwitty Day," all while attempting the save the universe. Everything comes down to last seconds—either before the town's celebration, or before the town will meet its end.</p> <p>Two-time Newbery Honor medalist Reilly Giff writes characters that charm readers who are thrilled to be along on their adventures. Her latest novel lands right in the middle of mountains of mischief and will not leave her audience disappointed. Rachel Marie Morris Brooklyn, New York</p>

<p><i>Hurricane Heat</i> by Steven Barwin Orca, 2013, 162 pp., \$9.95</p> <p>Realistic/Athletics ISBN: 978-1-4598-0213-1</p> <p>It's been five years since Travis's parents died in a car crash and he was separated from his sister Amanda. After Amanda sends a mysterious postcard, Travis ventures to California in hopes of finding his lost sibling. While seeking information, Travis meets Ethan, who discovers Travis's baseball skills and convinces him to join a summer league. Travis instantly becomes a top player and is even gaining attention from scouts. However, when baseball and the search for his sister start to conflict, Travis must decide what is most important for his life and future.</p> <p>As Travis's summer comes to an end, he reaches the peak of his search and baseball season. Although the climactic moment is perhaps underplayed after the built suspense, Travis's struggle of balancing adolescent concerns, baseball, and family becomes a very relatable experience. <i>Hurricane Heat</i> does a sufficient job in establishing the value of responsibility and familial importance.</p> <p>Aly Martin Nashville, TN</p>	<p><i>In Too Deep</i> by Norah McClintock Lerner, 2013, 218 pp., \$17.99</p> <p>Mystery/Juvenile Delinquency ISBN: 978-0-7613-8318-5</p> <p>Robyn moves to a sleepy town up north with her friend Morgan. The town seems pretty safe when they first arrive, but Robyn notices the townspeople's anxiety about a home for at-risk youth. It's a spot for teenage boys who come from troubled families and is run by controversial Jerry Wilson, who teaches the boys auto repair and self-discipline. Robyn believes that Jerry's boys are polite and helpful after they help her to fix her car, but her boyfriend, Nick, believes that someone at Jerry's place killed his friend's brother. Robyn decides to help, writing an article for the newspaper as a cover for her investigation. She finds out too much and is in danger. Finally, murder looms, with Robyn, Nick and Morgan targeted as the victims. McClintock keeps her narrative and sentence structure simple, making her story accessible to less skilled readers.</p> <p>Wenjing Luo China</p>
<p><i>Island of Thieves</i> by Josh Lacey Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011, 228 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>Action/Adventure ISBN: 978-0-547-76327-9</p> <p>Two things come easily to Tom Trelawney: getting bored and getting in trouble. When his parents need somebody to take care of him while they go on vacation alone, only his mysterious Uncle Harvey is willing to take in such a troublemaker. But Uncle Harvey is a troublemaker, too. As soon as Tom arrives at his house, Uncle Harvey whisks him off to Peru to seek out a long-lost treasure.</p> <p>As he searches for secret treasure, Tom learns secrets about his own family. He is also able to help Uncle Harvey find the treasure through his knowledge of history. <i>Island of Thieves</i> links historical theory with action-packed adventure in a way that leads readers to speculate about how what they have learned about the past may impact their present and how they can discover secrets about their own histories.</p> <p>Laura Cockman Fishers, IN</p>	<p><i>Lauren Yanofsky Hates the Holocaust</i> by Leanne Lieberman Orca, 2013, 227 pp., \$12.95</p> <p>Teen/Romance ISBN: 978-1-4598-0109-7</p> <p>Lauren Yanofsky, as the name suggests, loathes the Holocaust, despite her Jewish background. With a father who studies the Holocaust and a family history affected by the Holocaust, the Holocaust has a way of constantly popping up in Lauren's life. However, when Lauren's would-be boyfriend parakes in a game that involves wearing swastikas and pretending to be Nazis, Lauren immediately runs into a personal conflict. Lauren is forced to consider if she can really date a guy who is insensitive to her past and if she should tell someone about the game.</p> <p>With her relationship on the line, Lauren must decide whether to do the right thing or suppress her heritage. Throughout her personal dilemmas, Lauren learns more about her past, and more importantly, more about herself. She struggles with tough decisions even as she struggles with the challenges of growing up. With the conflict of love versus beliefs, Lauren has to make mature decisions about how she is going to live her life.</p> <p>Spencer Hoddson Nashville, TN</p>

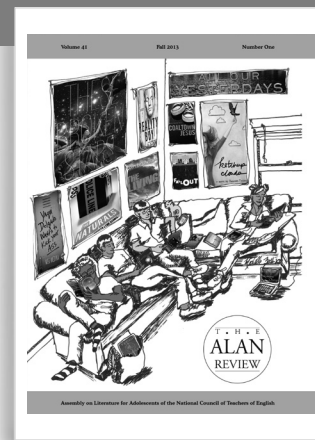
<p><i>The Lives We Lost</i> by Megan Crewe Hyperion, 2013, 288 pp., \$13.28</p> <p>Crewé's suspenseful second novel in The Fallen World series opens with heroine Kaelyn discovering a potentially lifesaving vaccine developed by her deceased father, a renowned scientist in their island community. As a deadly pandemic sweeps across North America, she rallies her friends on a journey to the mainland in search of researchers who can reproduce the healing medicine and rid their world of devastation once and for all. Their harrowing adventure brings them face to face with violence, desperation, and their worst fears, and reveals the tension between morality and survival in apocalyptic times. Kaelyn displays courage and incredible selflessness in the midst of overwhelming danger, all the while struggling with what to think about the crumbling world around her. <i>The Lives We Lost</i> blends many elements of a great story—secret romance, anticipation, and characters with depth.</p> <p>Rebekah Capps Nashville, TN</p>	<p><i>Maybe I Will</i> by Laurie Gray Luminis Books, 2013, 206 pp., \$14.95</p> <p>ISBN: 978-1-935462-70-5</p> <p>Is an act of sexual violence more traumatizing for a female victim than a male? <i>Maybe I Will</i> shares the story of a teenager who is the object of a nonconsensual sexual act. Sandy's two closest friends turn away when they are needed the most. Other adults do not seem to care or do not believe. Lost, confused, and violated, Sandy turns to alcohol as a numbing agent and best friend. All the childhood dreams and ambitions are diluted.</p> <p>Not only does this story tell one victim's response to sexual assault, it questions the meaning, or lack thereof, of gender roles as Sandy's gender is never revealed. Readers can directly relate to Sandy as they are able to make him/her relevant to their personal experiences. Sandy deals with the assault the same way—the same trauma, the same betrayal, and the same substance abuse—regardless of her/his gender.</p> <p>Anna Lee Minnestrista, MN</p>
<p><i>The Morning Star</i> by Robin Bridges Delacorte, 2013, 288 pp., \$17.99</p> <p>Katerina Alexandrovna, the young Duchess of Oldenburg, dreams of becoming a doctor, not a necromancer. Tsar Alexander will not allow her to attend medical school, so she continues her studies with Tibetan medic Dr. Badmaev. Her love for the Tsar's son, the ailing George Alexandrovich, is threatened by her desire to learn how to cure him. Vampires, werewolves, shape shifters, and wizards populate the Kremlin of Romanov Russia as Katerina's former fiancé Crown Prince Danilo returns. The illicit tsar Konstantin has inhabited Danilo's soul and now seeks the Morning Star, an ancient sword that will enable a necromancer to command a magical army. He also intends to marry Katerina and gain the throne. Kidnapped by Danilo, Katerina seeks the sword in Egypt. Will she wield the Morning Star to save Russia, and will her love for George win out over evil in the final volume of the Katerina trilogy?</p> <p>Judith A. Hayn Little Rock, AR</p>	<p><i>My Summer of Pink & Green</i> by Lisa Greenwald Amulet Books, 2013, 259 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>ISBN: 978-1-4197-0413-0</p> <p>In this sequel to <i>My Life in Pink & Green</i>, 13-year-old Lucy Desberg is ready to spend the summer helping out with the eco-spa her family is building. But her summer doesn't turn out as she had planned. The adults don't need her around to help with the spa, and her sister and best friend always seem busy with their boyfriends. The only person left to spend time with Lucy is Bevin, the spa investor's immature daughter.</p> <p>When even Bevin gets mad at Lucy for trying to give her a life makeover, Lucy realizes that maybe instead of always trying to makeover other people, she should makeover her own attitude. Lucy learns the importance of appreciating other people for who they are. As she strives to be a better friend, sister, and daughter, she offers tips to readers so that they can become the best versions of themselves, too.</p> <p>Laura Cockman Fishers, IN</p>

<p><i>Nantucket Blue</i> by Leila Howland Hyperion, 2013, 304 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>When Cricket Thompson's best friend, Jules Clayton, invites her to Nantucket for the summer, she's expecting a life-changing experience. But then, tragedy suddenly strikes the Clayton household and Cricket's dream vacation disappears. Instead of working on her tan, she finds herself working odd jobs at a bed and breakfast. Just when she thinks that her summer might be a bust, she connects with someone completely unexpected. With this new spark, though, comes a risk, and for the first time in her life, Cricket must decide what she is willing to sacrifice for her own happiness. Leila Howland has woven together a stunning story about the fragility of friendship, the excitement of first love, and the importance of standing up for oneself.</p>	<p><i>Sean Griswold's Head</i> by Lindsey Leavitt Bloomsbury USA Children's, 2012, 304 pp., \$9.99</p> <p>When Payton Gritas's guidance counselor tells her to express her suppressed emotions in a focus journal, she thinks that Miss Marietta might need some counseling herself. But what begins as an annoying assignment quickly evolves into a series of unexpected adventures. And as Payton gets to know her focus subject better (a cute boy named Sean Griswold), she also finds herself learning more about her family and her best friend, Jac. Ultimately, though, Payton will have to learn to face the very incident that sent her into Miss Marietta's office for counseling in the first place. Lindsey Leavitt tells the heartbreaking yet hilarious story of a teen girl navigating the aftermath of a devastating discovery.</p>
<p>Young Adult Fiction/Summer Romance ISBN: 978-1-4231-7919-1</p> <p>Diana Liu Nashville, TN</p> <p><i>Tagged</i> by Eric Walters Orca, 2013, 136 pp., \$9.95</p> <p>Ian Cheevers is enjoying spending his last year of high school with his two best friends, Oswald and Julia. One of his favorite pastimes is to look at the graffiti done by the mysterious "Wiz." However, Mayor Dumfrey begins to fight back against street art because it is illegal. Although Ian believes graffiti is true art, the city rails against illegal artwork that defaces public property.</p> <p>Ian and his friends deal with the illegal nature of guerilla art and whether graffiti is art or vandalism. He hears Mayor Dumfrey's stance on criminalizing graffiti, but also learns about the political powers of art in his Art Appreciation class. Will Ian find a way to make his opinions heard? Will the mysterious Wiz ever reveal his true identity?</p> <p>Candy Lee North Brunswick, NJ</p>	<p>Young Adult Fiction/Identity ISBN: 978-1-59990-911-0</p> <p>Diana Liu Nashville, TN</p> <p>Graphic Novel/Humor ISBN: 978-0-547-63669-6</p> <p><i>Teenboat</i> by Dave Roman and John Green Clarion Books, 2012, 139 pp., \$14.99</p> <p>Teenboat, a high school student with the superpower to turn into a small yacht, wants to be popular so that his crush, Niña Pinta Santa Maria, will notice him. His best friend Joey, a girl with secret superpowers of her own, does not like the crowd he wants to hang out with. They use his boat-transformation powers to take them to international waters to gamble, and they almost trade him away to pirates.</p> <p>Although pirates are always after Teenboat, they seem like the least of his problems as he navigates his first detention, first love, and first job. Dave Roman and John Green present <i>Teenboat</i> as a series of short, comic-book-style issues that build upon each other to show Teenboat's development as a teen and as a superhero. As Teenboat navigates choppy waters and the high school social scene, <i>Teenboat</i> takes readers on a brightly colored, pun-filled journey through adolescence.</p> <p>Laura Cockman Fishers, IN</p>

<p><i>A Soldier's Secret</i> by Marissa Moss Amulet Books, 2012, 387 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Private Frank Thomson of the Second Michigan Volunteer Infantry has his work cut out for him in the Union Army during the War between the States: running from battlefield to hospital as a nurse, delivering letters to his fellow soldiers as mail carrier, and gaining critical information from behind enemy lines as a spy. Yet the anxiety Frank feels going into battle is no match for the anxiety he experiences every day: Frank's real name is Sarah Emma Edmonds. She is masquerading as a man.</p> <p>Marissa Moss's moment-by-moment account of the true story of Sarah Emma Edmonds provides an accessible avenue for adolescent readers to understand the Civil War, the rights of women, and the timeless struggle for equality. Blending historical facts, including photographs and character names, with a fresh voice for Sarah Edmonds, Moss breathes life into her story grounded in history.</p> <p>Laura Cramer Nashville, TN</p>	<p><i>Time between Us</i> by Tamara Ireland Stone Hyperion, 2012, 384 pp., \$17.99</p> <p>Fiction/Romance/Time Travel ISBN: 978-1-4321-6840-9</p> <p>Growing up in 1990s suburbia, Anna Greene is a pretty normal teenager. She goes to school, runs cross-country, and works in her family's bookstore. But one day, everything changes when Anna notices a shaggy-haired boy watching her on an early morning run. One moment, he's there; the next moment, he's disappeared into thin air. Anna is perplexed at first, but once she runs into the mysterious boy at school, she quickly realizes that her life will never be the same again, because Bennett Cooper has a secret—a secret that will not only bring them together, but can also tear them apart. In her debut novel, Tamara Ireland Stone weaves together a captivating story that addresses the classic question of whether or not love can truly stand the test of time.</p> <p>Diana Liu Nashville, TN</p>
<p><i>Towering</i> by Sarah Skilton HarperTeen, 2013, 304 pp., \$17.99</p> <p>Fantasy/Romance ISBN: 978-0-06-202417-6</p> <p>Flinn continues her series of revamped fairy tales in this contemporary version of Rapunzel. As in the original, Rachel with her long golden hair is imprisoned in a tower in the woods, this time rural Slakkill, NY. Seventeen-year-old Wyatt has come to the isolated community to recover from the death of his best friend and sister. He stays with his mom's acquaintance, elderly Mrs. Greenwood, whose daughter Danielle mysteriously disappeared years ago. Wyatt hears Rachel's heartrending songs and follows her voice; their meeting eventually fulfills a prophecy that will help solve the mystery of Dani's disappearance. The two lovers are destined to remove a curse grounded in modern society's drug culture that has threatened the area for years. Enough of the fantastic is coupled with the tenderness of young love amidst the threat of impending violence—a magical read for fans of the genre.</p> <p>Judith A. Hayn Little Rock, AR</p>	<p><i>Whatever Doesn't Kill You</i> by Elizabeth Wennick Orca, 2013, 202 pp., \$12.95</p> <p>Drama/Mystery ISBN: 978-1-4598-0083-0</p> <p>Jenna Cooper was born into tragedy. A few days after her birth, her father was murdered and her family began a tailspin that ended with her mother locked away in a nursing home, her sister addicted to alcohol, and her brother desperately trying to keep what was left of the family intact.</p> <p>When Jenna finds a photo of her father's murderer, Travis Bingham, staring back at her in a newspaper article announcing his release from prison, she becomes determined to find him and give him a piece of her mind. Despite friends and family urging her to move on, Jenna remains unwavering in her pursuit of Travis and begins to discover that the story behind her father's death contains a bevy of buried secrets that could compromise her relationships with her loved ones.</p> <p>Rachel Wilkinson Nashville, TN</p>

<p><i>When You Wish upon a Rat</i> by Maureen McCarthy Amulet Books, 2012, 288 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Fiction/Middle School ISBN: 978-1-4197-0161-0</p> <p>What would you do if you were given the chance to perfect your life with three wishes? For Ruth Craze, an overworked and misunderstood eleven-year-old, changing her life sounds like a fabulous idea. What she really wants in life are more responsible parents, less obnoxious brothers, and true friends. So when Rodney the Rat, a stuffed animal from her favorite aunt, offers her the chance to create the perfect life with three wishes, Ruth jumps at the chance. But as Ruth quickly discovers, wishes don't always work out the way you think they will, and soon she finds herself amidst a whole new set of misadventures. Maureen McCarthy weaves a charming tale that will leave readers asking themselves what they might wish for if they ever come across their own Rodney the Rat.</p> <p>Diana Liu Nashville, TN</p>	<p><i>The Wild Book</i> by Margarita Engle Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012, 121 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Poetry/Historical Fiction ISBN: 978-0-547-58131-6</p> <p>In Fefa's small community in the Cuban countryside, reading and writing poetry is the main pastime. But Fefa is diagnosed with dyslexia, called "word-blindness" by her doctor. Fefa's mother believes Fefa can overcome her problems with words. She gives Fefa a "wild book" where she can practice writing. Fefa thinks of her book like a garden where she can plant words and grow her reading and writing skills.</p> <p>Reading becomes an especially important skill when kidnappers ravage the countryside, leaving ransom notes for children. When a threatening note appears in Fefa's house one day, she must figure out who sent it before the writer kidnaps her siblings. Based upon author Margarita Engle's grandmother's childhood in early twentieth century Cuba, this novel in verse explores what it is like to overcome fear from both the outside and the inside.</p> <p>Laura Cockman Fishers, IN</p>
<p><i>William and the Lost Spirit</i> by Gwen de Bonneval & Matthieu Bonhomme Graphic Universe, 2013, 160 pp., \$9.95</p> <p>Fantasy Fiction/Adventure ISBN: 978-1-4677-0807-4</p> <p>William de Sonac is unwilling to accept the death of his father. To make matters worse, his sister, Helise, disappears in the middle of the night to find their father's murderer. William makes the difficult decision to leave his mother and accepts the call to adventure, in hopes of saving his beloved sister.</p> <p>William befriends a rugged troubadour and an amiable goat as he desperately searches for the mysterious "far-off lands" where his father may be. He encounters fickle kings, barbarous bandits, and vicious monsters. Only when William is badly injured does he find a way between the different worlds. Eventually, he wakes beside his sister, and the two of them ultimately discover the truth behind their father's untimely death.</p> <p>This tale is not predictable and touches upon a variety of classical tropes. Furthermore, readers are able to delight in Bonhomme's vivid artistry that brings such a journey to life.</p> <p>David Chang Chicago, IL</p>	<p><i>Publishers who wish to submit a book for possible review should send a copy of the book to:</i> <i>Melanie Hundley</i> <i>1021 Delmas Ave.</i> <i>Nashville, TN 37216-3630</i> <i>To submit a review for possible publication or to become a reviewer, contact Melanie Hundley at melanie.hundley@Vanderbilt.edu.</i></p>

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Instructions for Authors

ABOUT THE ALAN REVIEW. *The ALAN Review* is a peer-reviewed (refereed) journal published by the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of the National Council of Teachers of English. It is devoted solely to the field of literature for adolescents. It is published three times per academic year (fall, winter, and summer) and is sent to all members, individual and institutional, of ALAN (The Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of NCTE). Members of ALAN need not be members of NCTE.

THE ALAN REVIEW publishes reviews of and articles on literature for adolescents and the teaching of that literature: research studies, papers presented at professional meetings, surveys of the literature, critiques of the literature, articles about authors, comparative studies across genre and/or cultures, articles on ways to teach the literature to adolescents, and interviews of authors.

AUDIENCE. Many of the individual members of ALAN are classroom teachers of English in middle, junior, and senior high schools. Other readers include university faculty members in English and/or Education programs, researchers in the field of adolescent literature, librarians, authors, publishers, reading teachers and teachers of other related content areas. ALAN has members in all 50 states and a number of foreign countries.

PREFERRED STYLE. Manuscripts should usually be no longer than fifteen double-spaced, typed pages. A manuscript submitted for consideration should deal specifically with literature for adolescents and/or the teaching of that literature. It should have a **clearly defined topic** and be scholarly in content, as well as **practical and useful** to people working with and/or studying adolescents and their literature. Research studies and papers should be treated as **articles rather than formal reports**. Stereotyping on the basis of sex, race, age, etc., should be avoided, as should gender-specific terms such as "chairman."

MANUSCRIPT FORMAT. Manuscripts should be **double-spaced** throughout, including quotations and bibliographies. A **title page** with author's name, affiliation, address, and a short professional biographical sketch should be included. The author's name should not appear on the manuscript pages; however, pages should be numbered. Short quotations, as permitted under "fair use" in the copyright law, must be carefully **documented within the manuscript** and in the bibliography. Longer quotations and complete poems or short stories must be accompanied by **written permission** of the copyright owner.

Author interviews should be accompanied by **written permission of the interviewed author** to publish the interview in *The ALAN Review*. Interviewers should indicate to authors that publication is subject to review of an editorial board. The title of *The ALAN Review* should not be used to gain an interview.

Original short **tables and figures** should be **double-spaced** and placed on a **separate sheet** at the end of the manuscript. Notations should appear in the text for proper placement of tables and figures.

The ALAN Review prefers the use of the Publications Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA).

SUBMITTING THE MANUSCRIPT. Authors are to submit manuscripts electronically to alanreview@lsu.edu. In the subject line please write: **ALAN manuscript submission**. All manuscripts should be in a recent version of Microsoft Word and use APA format. Complete submissions include, as separate attachments, the following documents: (1) A manuscript without references to the author(s). (2) A separate title page with author's name, contact information, affiliation, and a 2-3 sentence biographical sketch. In the case of multiple authors, the author submitting the manuscript will serve as the primary contact unless stipulated otherwise. (3) A brief statement that the article is original, has not been published previously in other journals and/or books, and is not a simultaneous submission.

REVIEW PROCESS. Each manuscript will receive a blind review by the editor and at least two members of the editorial review board, unless the length, style, or content makes it inappropriate for publication. Usually, authors should expect to hear the results within eight weeks. Manuscripts are judged for the contribution they make to the field of adolescent literature, clarity and cohesiveness, timeliness, and freshness of approach. Selection also depends on the manuscript's contribution to the overall balance of the journal.

PUBLICATION OF ARTICLES. *The ALAN Review* assumes that accepted manuscripts have not been published previously in any other journals and/or books, nor will they be published subsequently without permission of *The ALAN Review*. Should the author submit the manuscript to more than one publication, he/she should notify *The ALAN Review*. If a submitted or accepted manuscript is accepted by another publication prior to publication in *The ALAN Review*, the author should immediately withdraw the manuscript from publication in *The ALAN Review*.

Manuscripts that are accepted may be edited for clarity, accuracy, readability, and publication style.

Upon publication, the author will receive two copies of *The ALAN Review* in which the article appears. Publication usually occurs within 18 months of acceptance.

DEADLINES. Please observe these deadlines if you wish to have your article considered for a particular issue of *The ALAN Review*.

FALL ISSUE Deadline:	MARCH 1
WINTER ISSUE Deadline:	JULY 1
SUMMER ISSUE Deadline:	NOVEMBER 1

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From the Editors

As editors of *The ALAN Review*, we readily acknowledge that we are not experts on all areas of young adult literature. In fact, as we begin our fifth volume of the journal, we are increasingly aware of what we don't know. We do, however, seem to be getting better at finding people who focus on areas that we see as important—poetry, fantasy, dystopias, science fiction, gender issues, and, in this issue, nonfiction. The specific call for this issue focused on young adult nonfiction literature. For the introduction, we recruited Chris Crowe.

Many readers of *The ALAN Review* know Chris as a past president of the organization. Others know him as the author of *Mississippi Trial, 1955* (2002) and its nonfiction companion piece *Getting Away with Murder: The True Story of the Emmet Till Case* (2003). He claims to have been introduced to YA literature by his students as a high school English teacher in Arizona, but he certainly became immersed in it while studying with Ken Donelson and Alleen Nilsen at Arizona State. While writing a biography of Mildred Taylor (Crowe, 1999), he found that he enjoyed historical research and ever since, he has been hooked on the genre. A few years ago, he was a judge for the nonfiction category of the SCBWI's Golden Kite Award (<http://www.scbwi.org/Pages.aspx/Golden-Kite-Award>) and reviewed nearly 100 nonfiction books published for children and teens. We are pleased that Chris accepted our invitation to serve as the guest editor for this issue with an emphasis on nonfiction.

Before passing the introduction to the nonfiction pieces off to Chris, we want to comment on several

other contributions to this issue. As always, we look for submissions beyond a specific call. Alan Brown and Chris Crowe discuss how they have used YA fiction with a focus on a sport to connect with young readers. They show that it isn't always about the ball, but about the challenges the protagonist might be facing. Their piece is accompanied by Matt de la Peña's author column that discusses his own introduction to literature as a college athlete and his eventual career as a writer who just can't seem to stop using sports in his novels as he writes about something else.

Margaret Willey contributes another Author's Connection column. She discusses her immersion into the social problem of bullying as she prepared her most recent novel, *Four Secrets* (2012). The struggle to prevent bullying in our schools and in our society is an important issue that we will return to with a greater presence in our Winter 2014 issue—stay tuned. Finally, welcome Joe Milner's discussion of formal text complexity in YA literature. Certainly, the conversation about text complexity is at a new height as educators everywhere discuss, debate, and argue for or against issues raised by statements in the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). Milner reminds us that educators who use and promote YA literature have always been interested in quality and rigor. He provides some side-by-side discussions of classic texts and YA literature. So, as we consider the demands of CCSS, perhaps the old is new again.

Now, with that final connection to CCSS, we turn

to Chris's introduction where we just might find that a focus on nonfiction and its relationship to CCSS is more timely than we imagined it would be four years ago when we outlined the foci of our issues.

From Guest Editor Chris Crowe

Writing in the February 1976 issue of *The Horn Book*, Milton Meltzer lamented the fiction bias of the Newbery Medal. He pointed out that in 1922, the very first Newbery Medal was awarded to a work of *nonfiction*, Hendrik Van Loon's *Story of Mankind*, but that only four more nonfiction books had won the medal in the next fifty-some years. In the time since Meltzer published his article, only one book, Russell Freedman's *Lincoln: A Photobiography*, has captured the coveted literary prize, and that was 25 years ago.

In an attempt to remedy its nonfiction neglect, the American Library Association established the Robert F. Sibert Award in 2001 and the YALSA Award for Excellence in Nonfiction for Young Adults in 2010. Prestigious as these two awards are, they do not—and likely never will—reach the level of respect and notoriety of the Newbery Medal. Sadly, that surprises almost no one.

Nonfiction has rarely been considered “literature” by English teachers. The tradition in university English departments—and by trickle-down, the tradition in high school English departments—has been to define literature as fiction, poetry, and drama. Political documents, journals, and essays sometimes leaked into reading lists, but fiction has always been king of the English curriculum, with poetry and drama as crown princes. As many of the articles in this special issue point out, the Common Core State Standards seem designed to dethrone the traditional notion of literature, or at least to revise dramatically the reading content in English and other secondary courses.

This change will be a challenge for many English teachers, not because there's a dearth of worthwhile nonfiction, but because as English majors, these teachers rarely if ever encountered book-length nonfiction texts. And even if they have gone out of their way to read nonfiction books since graduating from college, many of these teachers don't know how to teach nonfiction texts; the teaching approach, logically, should be different from the methods of instruction used for novels, poems, and plays. So, in order to prepare to

meet the demands of CCSS and to be better teachers of literature broadly defined, secondary teachers need to know how to find suitable nonfiction texts, how to evaluate them, and how to teach them.

This issue of *The ALAN Review* will help, and Dawan Coombs's article is a great place to begin thinking about teaching nonfiction. Coombs suggests quite reasonably that fiction and nonfiction can have a symbiotic, complementary relationship in the classroom, and she offers some practical, CCSS-worthy ways to integrate nonfiction into a literature curriculum. Nonfiction texts can provide helpful background knowledge that will enhance students' reading of traditional literature. It can also, she points out, provide opportunities for authentic inquiry and for differentiated instruction.

For teachers looking for ways to talk about and study nonfiction texts, “The Role of Design in Nonfiction Books” by Terrell Young, Nancy Hadaway, and Barbara Ward provides some refreshing and interesting approaches to informational books. Rather than focus merely on the content of such books, they propose that teachers should also help students see nonfiction books as whole texts by considering the visual and design elements and access features of such books. Using winners of the YALSA Award for Excellence in Nonfiction for Young Adults as examples, the authors explain how teachers can help students understand the essential role nonprint aspects play in nonfiction books. Their discussion is enhanced by an interview with a book designer who explains some of the hows and whys of her work.

In the next article, high school English teacher Rachel Billings explains that she teaches nonfiction because she wants her students to develop a better sense of the past and of their abilities to make a difference in the future. For several years, she has used two nonfiction books that deal with civil rights history to engage her students in thinking and writing about America's past and themselves. Lee A. Talley's article, “Operation Pied Piper,” also focuses on history but in a much different way. Rather than relying solely on secondary sources to engage history, Talley shows how she has used primary sources, in this case letters written by English children displaced from their London homes during World War II, to provide insight into that segment of history. When paired with what he calls “evacuation fiction,” these primary sources

provide a much more nuanced understanding of what these children experienced.

Paul Binford's column connecting practices in the social studies classroom to the teaching of informational texts in the era of CCSS makes a long-overdue formal connection between the social studies and young adult literatures. He reminds us that this connection is easily made and promotes timely interdisciplinary discussions about pedagogy. While history and English are curricular cousins, and many of the fiction–nonfiction, cross-curricular connections take place in those classes, Kelly Byrne Bull and Juliann Dupuis discuss a more radical—and more exciting—cross-curricular pairing: English and biology. Citing the CCSS recommendation for a greater presence of nonfiction texts in all classes, these two teacher educators believe that YA nonfiction can be a useful and successful tool for interdisciplinary instruction.

In their article, “From Cave Art to Cryonics,” Lawrence Baines and Jane Fisher recommend some effective assignments that take advantage of the growing number of first-rate YA nonfiction books that deal with science, history, and a range of other topics. One of the assignments they describe, “How Long Will You Live?,” is certainly something that English teachers could use to develop an interdisciplinary assignment with a science or social science class. Brianna Burke takes nonfiction back into the realm of traditional literature by discussing how the novel *The Hunger Games* can be a vehicle for understanding the very real issues of social and environmental justice, issues that traditionally have been limited to social science courses. Issues raised in the novel provide opportunities for reading and discussing nonfiction texts that argue or explain contemporary social and environmental conditions.

TAR's lineup of nonfiction articles concludes with Teri Lesesne's column, “Tell Me a (Real) Story: The Demand for Literary Nonfiction.” As most of the authors in this issue have done, she begins by citing the nonfiction mandate in the CCSS before tackling some of the essential questions this new mandate has raised for teachers and librarians. She reviews, for example, a range of definitions of “nonfiction” to show how the term means different things to different people, and then recommends that educators work together to develop a consistent and coherent definition of the term as it will be used by teachers and librarians. Readers who are still struggling to discover the wide range of YA nonfiction books that are available will appreciate her resources for finding high-quality nonfiction books. Of course, all of us will benefit from her suggestion to read more nonfiction and to find ways to integrate it into our courses.

I'm pleased to see that *TAR* has seen fit to devote an entire issue to YA nonfiction, and I hope the fine articles contained herein will lead to the kinds of discussion and consideration of these books that will help teachers meet the mandates of the CCSS and, more especially, the needs of their students. I also hope that this issue provokes more articles that focus on the dynamic and fascinating field of YA nonfiction.

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Call for Manuscripts

Submitting a Manuscript:

Manuscript submission guidelines are available on p. 2 of this issue and on our website at <http://www.alan-ya.org/the-alan-review/>.

Summer 2014 Theme: How to Teach Young Adult Literature in an Age of Censorship and Common Core

In a time of extreme criticism and scrutiny of texts that are being used in the classroom, what are proponents of young adult literature to do? This issue seeks to address that question with submissions that offer very practical ways of incorporating (or continuing to incorporate) young adult literature in the classroom. What ways are you teaching young adult literature? How are you using young adult literature to meet or exceed what is being required in the common core? What experiences have you had with censorship, and how have you dealt with them? How can beginning teachers approach the inclusion of YAL in their classrooms to take advantage of the power of young adult literature to improve reading skills and foster a lifelong love of reading? **Submission deadline: November 1, 2013.**

Fall 2014: Open Call

The last 40 years have seen an explosion of young adult literature novels. From vampires to zombies, biographies to poetry, video games to movies, YAL is a considerable force in the world of publishing and media. This issue is an open call, so we ask you to consider young adult literature writ large. What is it that we know and can say about this field? Who are the authors and texts that are shaping the current and next generations of readers? What has changed or stayed the same about young adult literature? What are the trends, themes, or topics that capture the attention or imagination of adolescent readers? This theme is meant to be open to interpretation, and we welcome manuscripts addressing pedagogy as well as theoretical concerns. General submissions are also welcome. **Submission deadline: March 1, 2014.**

Stories from the Field

Editors' Note: Stories from the Field invites readers to share a story about young adult literature. This section features brief vignettes (approximately 300 words) from practicing teachers and librarians who would like to share their interactions with students, parents, colleagues, and administrators around young adult literature. Please send your stories to: jbach@lsu.edu.

Fiction and Nonfiction:

A Symbiotic Relationship

sym-bi-o-sis (sim'be-o'sis, -bi) *n. Biol.* A close association between two or more different organisms, esp. when mutually beneficial (Evenson & Patwell, *American Heritage Dictionary*, 1994, p. 821)

Although not exactly different organisms, fiction and nonfiction texts are often classified in relationships that seem anything but mutually beneficial. For example, recent mandates from the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSS], 2010) call for 55–70% of secondary reading to focus on informational texts, resulting in curricular shifts in some English/language arts departments that require teachers to increase their focus on nonfiction (Layton, 2012; Petri, 2012). However, traditionally trained to teach fictional narratives, essays, and the occasional autobiography, a significant number of English teachers feel overwhelmed and ill prepared to offer students opportunities to authentically encounter nonfiction texts outside the realms of their content area. Proponents of the Core attempt to assuage teacher concerns by explaining that these percentages represent schoolwide reading, not just reading done in English/language arts (Jago, 2013). But, despite this assurance, many English teachers resent watching the literature they love replaced with procedural texts they deem of little literary value.

However, young adult nonfiction poses a solution to this dilemma that addresses both the concerns of teachers and the demands of the Common Core Standards. Librarian Ed Sullivan (2001) alluded to

this answer when he explained, “Unrecognized is the potential nonfiction has to stimulate the analytical and critical thinking skills students use in reading fiction” (p. 45). In other words, instead of placing fiction and nonfiction in curricular competition, symbiotic relationships allow the reading of one form to support and compliment the reading of the other. In this way, incorporating high-quality YA nonfiction into the study of young adult and canonical fiction supports comprehension and authentic inquiry for students of all ability levels and interests.

Why Both Are Needed

The NCTE/IRA Standards for the English Language Arts explain that students need to read a range of texts to understand other texts, themselves, and the cultures around them (Greer, Smith, & Erwin, 1996). Similarly, the Common Core requires students to analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics to build knowledge (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). In some ways, these may seem like top-down requirements, but these policies mirror the literacy demands of the rapidly changing societies in which students live (Deshler, Biancarosa, Palincsar, & Nair, 2007).

In addition, research supports integrated approaches to literacy learning. Exposing students at the earliest stages to nonfiction texts through daily read-alouds, explicit reading and comprehension instruction, and books in classroom libraries, offers balanced instruction where both fiction and nonfiction are

valued (Dreher, 2002). Although nonfiction texts present information more directly, fiction offers narrative structures that are easier for students to comprehend, demonstrating the advantages to using both (Camp, 2000). Teachers who purposefully integrate multiple forms of text in classroom inquiries engage student interests and experiences, while simultaneously building background knowledge, providing supplemental information, and supporting understanding of fiction and nonfiction (Duke & Bennett-Armistead, 2003). In multiple instances, elementary and secondary teachers demonstrated how using fiction and nonfiction together facilitate the teaching of concepts and the exploration of essential questions in deeper and more meaningful ways than either could accomplish alone (Epstein, 2000; Tovani, 2004; Vasquez, 2003).

When used symbiotically, the study of fiction and nonfiction texts as paired texts (Camp, 2000) or text sets (Ebbers, 2002; Tovani, 2004; Vasquez, 2003) promote authentic inquiry and meet the demands of the Common Core. However, finding or creating these symbiotic combinations can prove challenging. As a result, this article explores high-quality YA nonfiction that helps middle and high school students build background knowledge to comprehend fictional texts, as well as combinations of fiction and nonfiction that facilitate opportunities for differentiated instruction and invite students to consider multiple perspectives.

Providing Background Knowledge

Using high-quality nonfiction to introduce background knowledge exists as one effective use of nonfiction in the English/language arts classroom. In order to comprehend a text, students need to be able to make connections to and access their own understandings about a topic or idea; however, students often lack knowledge about essential concepts necessary to make sense of the literature they read. As Gallagher (2004) explained, “[Y]our prior knowledge guides you when considering what *not* to read” (p. 31). In other words, if students feel no connection to or interest in a story, the probability of them reading it diminishes. Therefore, teachers must do two things: first, establish a context for literary works, and second, introduce background knowledge in ways that engage students and motivate them to read.

The first element, activating background knowledge, helps students make sense of texts. Bomer

(2011) explained that to read efficiently, students “tap into the pockets of knowledge they think will be relevant to [a] text,” but in the absence of this knowledge, they access whatever understandings seem most related (p. 99). Therefore, it becomes essential to establish a reading context that will “lead readers into texts and support their understandings of texts” (Allen, 2000, p. 129). Picturebooks and other shorter texts often provide students with accessible routes to understanding longer texts, primarily because shorter counterparts offer students ways to make sense of abstract ideas, vocabulary, or concepts (Keene, 2007). In this manner, nonfiction can create essential connections to support comprehension.

Second, background knowledge can motivate students to wrestle with texts. Many students don’t see themselves as readers because the reading they value—nonfiction reading—isn’t represented in the classroom (Kaplan, 2003). Some studies suggest this is particularly true for males, who tend to prefer nonfiction to fiction (Moss, 1998; Young & Brozo, 2001). But for many readers, especially those who struggle, nonfiction texts provide appeal. Nonfiction not only engages reluctant readers, but, in some instances, becomes a catalyst for independent inquiry beyond the classroom (Allen, 2000; Bomer, 2011). Because of this appeal, pairing nonfiction texts with a fictional counterpart provides an entry point to stimulate engagement with texts students may not traditionally enjoy (Camp, 2000).

For example, chapters from Georgia Bragg’s *How They Croaked: The Awful Ends of the Awfully Famous* (2012) can be used to build background knowledge and supplement understanding of a variety of historical and literary subjects. Although marketed at tweens, this text provides accessible accounts of historical figures and incidents that prove engaging, even to advanced readers. Before teaching Shakespeare’s play *Julius Caesar*, a teacher could introduce the figure of Caesar by asking the class to read the chapter from *How They Croaked* called “Julius Caesar: Putting the ‘I’ in ‘Ides.’” This selection not only introduces facts about Caesar’s life and his reign, but presents a concise presentation of the motives of Brutus and his followers. Background information provided also explains the complex political backdrop that led to Caesar’s ultimate death, acquainting students with the context of the time.

The accessibility of this chapter makes topics and concepts that often confuse students easy to understand, while the voice and tone bring life to what might otherwise be considered dry background material. In addition, sidebars and definitions encourage students to make connections between the text and word etymologies, such as words like “caesarean section,” “czar,” and even months and origins of the Roman calendar. For students who are not anxious to read Shakespeare, these connections to modern day language and traditions can bring relevance to the text, even in small ways.

Another example of engaging YA nonfiction that builds background knowledge includes *Bootleg: Murder, Moonshine, and the Lawless Years of Prohibition* by Karen Blumenthal (2011), which presents the historical, social, and political context of Prohibition. Opening with a description of the 1929 St. Valentine’s Day murders, Blumenthal traces the origins of the 18th Amendment and spotlights individuals who held a stake in its consequences. Black-and-white pictures, along with a glossary of terms specific to the temperance movement, support readers as they read about this influential movement in US history.

For classes reading the Newbery Honor Book *Al Capone Does My Shirts: A Tale from Alcatraz* (Choldenko, 2004), the chapter in *Bootleg* entitled “Smoky and Scarface” provides a detailed depiction of the life and crimes of gangster Al Capone to supplement student understanding of this real-life individual. Or, for older readers tackling F. Scott Fitzgerald’s 1925 novel *The Great Gatsby*, *Bootleg* offers useful background information as students conduct research and seek to understand this era. In particular, Chapter 7, called “Milk and Moonshine,” proves particularly worthy of attention as it portrays the effect prohibition had on average Americans, as well as its influence on the styles and youthful abandon of the 1920s. It also offers numerous pop culture connections, such as how prohibition influenced Coke sales and the evolution of NASCAR. In addition, sketches and charts throughout explain how smugglers transported their product, providing visual representations of statistics and ideas presented in the text.

These two engaging YA nonfiction texts offer students valuable help in connecting to the content of literary texts by offering significant background knowledge to support their understanding. Not only

do these nonfiction texts supplement the study of fiction, but they also prove appealing as independent reads that can entice students to read connected (and often required) fictional texts. In this way, the study of fiction and nonfiction enhance each other as students draw on both texts to improve their understanding of content.

Supporting Differentiated Instruction

Teaching a whole-class novel often proves challenging because of the wide range of student ability levels and interests within a single class, but pairing fiction and nonfiction texts (Camp, 2000) as the basis of classroom inquiries meets the needs and interests of all students through differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 2001). Offering more than one nonfiction counterpart to supplement the study of fictional texts supports the principles of differentiated instruction by providing access and flexibility for each student, as well as opportunities for meaningful instruction with authentic texts customized to the needs of individual readers (King-Shaver & Hunter, 2003).

Although differentiation takes place based on a variety of factors, including interests, learning style, and ability level, the following texts offer ideas for differentiation based on reading ability, as determined by Lexile levels. Lexile levels exist as one quantitative measure of text complexity and reader ability level (MetaMetrics, 2013). Although Lexile levels don’t necessarily offer a reliable gauge in terms of appropriate age level content or themes, they do quantify text complexity that can be useful for comparisons. In terms of comprehension (as measured by sentence length and vocabulary in texts), these numerical rankings can help teachers determine which informational texts might be best suited to the variety of readers in their classrooms. The following texts, already filtered in terms of content and appeal to adolescent readers, provide a range of text complexity, allowing teachers to offer students opportunities to engage in whole-class inquiry through well-written nonfiction texts that support the study of their whole-class novel.

Ranked at a Lexile level of 1000L, Christopher Paul Curtis’s novel *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* (1995), is commonly taught as a whole-class novel in middle schools across the country. Winner of the Coretta Scott King Award and New-

bery Honor, this text offers a fictional account of the Watson family who travels from Michigan to Alabama during the summer of 1963, only to experience some of the most volatile moments of the desegregation of Birmingham. Although students enjoy the hilarity of the Watson family dynamics, the narrative turns serious as the characters experience the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church and deal with its aftermath.

In the epilogue that follows the conclusion of the story, Curtis offers a concise overview of many of the real-life events that occurred during the civil rights movement and invites students to consider the real individuals who led this quest for freedom. For teachers who wish to support students in this inquiry, the question, “What does it take to be a hero?” allows students to examine both the fictional characters and events in *The Watsons*, as well as the accounts of actual individuals who took part in this fight.

A number of high-quality nonfiction texts on a variety of reading levels allow students to learn more about these individuals through individual inquiry. For instance, *We've Got a Job: 1963 Birmingham Children's March* (Levinson, 2012), winner of the 2013 IRA Young Adult Nonfiction Award and a 2013 Orbis Pictus Honor Book, follows firsthand accounts of four students involved in the march, simultaneously weaving together the events preceding the bombings. Black-and-white photographs capture the enthusiasm and fear of the marchers as they wrestled with police dogs, endured the sprays of fire hoses, and faced KKK and white demonstrators marching in response to the children's protests. A map of Birmingham allows readers to trace the different routes taken by four of the marchers spotlighted in the book. The written text is supplemented with a timeline of events, and those interested in seeking additional information can discover additional sources in the bibliography. Rated at a 1020L level, this text's complexity ranks as only slightly more challenging for students than its fictional counterpart.

However, for those students reading at a slightly more sophisticated level, *Black & White: The Confrontation between Reverend Fred L. Shuttlesworth and Eugene "Bull" Connor* (2011) by Larry Dane Brimner profiles two of the most controversial figures in the Birmingham struggle. Texts and pictures throughout the first two sections highlight the lives of Reverend Shuttlesworth and Commissioner Connor, respec-

tively, including how each rose to power in their individual spheres and their history with one another. The third section of the book, “Confrontation,” focuses specifically on the events leading up to “Project C,” or the Birmingham Children's March of 1963, and ultimately the desegregation of Birmingham. The use of the black, white, and orange color throughout supports the powerful retelling of these events. Rated at a Lexile level of 1150, this text provides advanced readers with detailed accounts of these two men and their roles in the movement, but the large font and abundance of photographs invites readings by all interested students.

Finally, *Birmingham Sunday* (2010), also by Larry Dane Brimner and a 2011 Orbis Pictus Honor book, tells the story of the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church and of its victims. Drawing on newspaper and eyewitness accounts, as well as FBI files and other documents, Brimner recounts the events for consideration. Registering as the most complex text, at a Lexile level of 1190, it includes pictures, quotes, and textboxes to present the stories and events leading up to the bombing.

Although a fictional text, also worthy of note is *Birmingham, 1963* (2007) by Carole Boston Weatherford. In this text, Weatherford uses free verse poetry, photographs, and notes to tell a fictional account of the actual events surrounding the bombing. Winner of the 2008 Jane Addams Children's Book Award, this book registers at 790L on the Lexile scale, making it very accessible for students who might struggle as readers. However, drawing on the text features, photos, and notes offers them an opportunity to share in this inquiry in a meaningful and significant way.

As the class concludes their reading of *The Watsons* and some or all of these nonfiction texts, a variety of ways exist to facilitate student investigation into the question, “What does it take to be a hero?” For example, the tic-tac-toe activity (see Figure 1) allows students to read and research individual nonfiction texts while focusing on the same central question as a class (King-Shaver & Hunter, 2003). Students select three assignments in a row they wish to complete, each engaging in independent exploration of their nonfiction text. As students work on their individual projects, the teacher spends time further differentiating instruction in small groups or with individuals. Then, as a whole class, students collabo-

rate as they compile information about the individuals they learned about and answer their original inquiry question.

Although these numerical rankings can help teachers determine informational texts best suited to the readers in their classrooms, it's important to note motivation and interest play a role as well. Students may be driven to tackle complex texts based on their interests about a particular facet of this story, so teachers shouldn't confine students to a single text; rather, Lexile levels and other measures should be used as a guide. Ultimately, drawing on a variety of high-quality informational texts on the same subject allows all students to engage in whole-class inquiries, but the range of texts allows all learners to read at levels that meet their needs.

Considering Multiple Perspectives

Appleman (2009) explained the limited understanding available to students when they read a story or consider a text from a single perspective, without taking into account other points of view. In contrast, encouraging students to ask questions such as, "How might considering another point of view change the story?" opens up students' interpretations of narratives and invites them to think about implications on a wider level.

Text sets consist of a variety of texts organized around an inquiry question and invite students to learn from fiction and nonfiction books, articles, websites, poetry, movies, and other sources that represent a diversity of perspectives (Ebbers, 2002; Ivey, 2002; Tovani, 2004). This variety becomes key because "having different access routes can create productive pathways to understanding the classics and the important questions that undergird them" (Wold & Elish-Piper, 2009, p. 88). Often used in elementary classrooms, but increasingly present in secondary classrooms, text sets support conversations that consider multiple perspectives and invite students to engage in sophisticated synthesis of information.

On the most basic level, teachers might use fiction and nonfiction books to compare various perspectives of an event. For example, National Book Award Finalist *Flesh and Blood So Cheap: The Triangle Fire and Its Legacy* (2011) by Albert Marrin highlights the political and social conditions that ultimately contributed to the cause of the 1911 fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory that killed 146 workers. Weaving together eyewitness accounts of the events, and supplemented by maps and photographs from the era, Marrin describes the sociopolitical forces that contributed to the tragedy, as well as the experiences of the victims from both the upper and working class.

Write a journal or diary entry from the perspective of one of the individuals you read about in your nonfiction text. What motivates this individual? What is he or she afraid of?	Compile a list of quotes from individuals in your nonfiction text that reveal what it means to be a hero.	Create a news report of one of the major events leading up to the 16th Street Church bombing. Be sure to include a summary of the events and detailed accounts from witnesses.
Make a chart comparing daily life in Flint to daily life in Birmingham. How was life different for Black people in these places? How was it the same? How do these observations compare to your own life?	Select one of the individuals in your nonfiction book and one of the characters from <i>The Watsons</i> . Use their lives and choices to answer the question, "What does it take to be a hero?"	Choose one individual from your nonfiction text and one character from <i>The Watsons</i> . If these two characters met, what would their exchange be like? Using events and evidence from both texts, write a dialogue between these two characters.
How do heroes respond in the face of adversity? Create a collage of pictures or sketches that demonstrate how the characters and individuals in these texts demonstrated heroic responses to their challenges.	Write a newspaper article reporting the church bombing. Be sure to include a summary of the circumstances surrounding the bombing, the actual events, as well as possible motives. Include real quotes from people you find in your nonfiction book.	Make a Venn diagram comparing one of the individuals in your nonfiction text with one of the characters in <i>The Watsons</i> . What qualities do they share? How are they different?

Figure 1. Tic-tac-toe differentiated instruction

Although an outstanding text itself, students can delve into deeper inquiry about working-class conditions or the forces that led to the tragedy when this text is paired with young adult historical fiction about the same event. Both Esther Friesner's young adult *Threads and Flames* (2010) and Margaret Paterson Haddix's *Uprising* (2007) tell the story of the tragedy through the eyes of young girls working at and associated with the events surrounding the fire. Friesner's text focuses on the experiences of a young Polish immigrant who gets a job working at the factory, while Haddix tells the story through the voices of three girls of different social classes, shared in alternating points of view.

When paired with *Flesh and Blood So Cheap*, these texts allow students to deconstruct the gender and social class issues at the heart of this tragedy. For example, students might note and analyze the accounts in *Flesh and Blood So Cheap* specifically from the perspective of a working-class immigrant, a union protester, or a wealthy sympathizer, all similar positions to those offered through the perspectives of the main characters in *Thread and Flames* and *Uprising*.

In addition, text features in *Flesh and Blood So Cheap* bring these perspectives to life in ways written text alone cannot. A map of Lower Manhattan allows students to make inferences about how the migration of wealthy families out of certain neighborhoods influenced the deplorable housing conditions that remained for immigrants. Similarly, a sketched floor plan of dumbbell tenements provides a visual resource to help students understand the cramped conditions where many of the workers lived. Although alluded to in each of the fictional texts, the specific descriptions offered in the nonfiction text provide an alternate means to consider ways status influenced daily life and how the value of individual lives varied by socioeconomic standing.

As they read through these various and unique lenses, students can collaborate and teach one another how the Shirtwaist Factory tragedy influenced all layers of society. Another worthwhile investigation asks students to question how the events preceding this tragedy might have had different results if the majority of workers at the factory were men or of non-immigrant status.

Building on the paired texts about the Birmingham Children's March, the list provided in Figure 2

highlights a text set designed to investigate issues of civil rights in the US. As 2013 marks the 50th anniversary of the civil rights movement, YA fiction and nonfiction can launch student-led inquiries into the question of "Separate, but Equal?" then and now.

Although the study of text sets can begin in a variety of ways, reading one of the fictional picturebooks on the list proves a particularly useful introduction to this inquiry. This reading can be followed by a discussion of philosophical issues from the text, focusing on questions such as, "How do laws of the nation and social practices sometimes conflict?" or "Which of these is most important to follow?" and "Can laws ever be wrong?" (Other examples of philosophical questions to pose with picturebooks can be found at <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/omc/kidsphil/stories.html>.)

After discussing the book, groups of students can begin their own investigations into these ideas through a variety of nonfiction picturebooks. This approach offers opportunities to practice productive discussion strategies in small groups as they prepare for literature circles that will follow. Next, through the use of literature circles organized around both fiction and nonfiction texts, students continue their group and individual inquiries. A variety of high-quality, YA fiction and nonfiction organized around this theme exist for teachers to consider adopting. The list in Figure 2 includes myriad resources to use in this inquiry, but three particularly useful nonfiction texts are highlighted in the paragraphs that follow.

Terry Kanefield's (2014) *The Girl from the Tar Paper School: Barbara Rose Johns and the Advent of the Civil Rights Movement* tells the story of Barbara Rose Johns of Prince Edward County, Virginia. In an effort to oppose the unequal and inhumane conditions maintained at the separate but equal school for Black students, Johns led her peers in a protest that ultimately resulted in one of the five lawsuits that comprised the US Supreme Court case *Brown v. the Board of Education*. This text demonstrates how John's refusal to endure the conditions thrust upon her in a small Virginia town contributed to the integration of public schools across the US.

Also, *Marching for Freedom: Walk Together, Children, and Don't You Grow Weary* (2009) by Elizabeth Partridge highlights another important battle in the war for civil rights. This National Book Award finalist chronicles the role of children in the 1965 march

Separate, but Equal?

In many ways, the ideas and practices of those who lived generations before you significantly affect how you think and live. As we begin our study, this text set is designed to help you understand the issues of race and civil rights faced by the characters in your book, as well as the way these issues influence our society today. The following questions will help guide your inquiry:

- What was daily life like for White people during the Civil Rights era? For Black people?
- What official legislation and social practices prevented integration? How did people bring about change?
- Is our country still fighting for civil rights? Explain your position.

Books

Young Adult Fiction

- Carnes, Jim. (1996). *Us and Them: A History of Intolerance in America*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Crowe, Chris. (2002). *Mississippi Trial, 1955*. New York: Penguin.
- Draper, Sharon M. (2008). *Fire from the Rock*. New York: Penguin.
- Levine, K. (2012). *The Lions of Little Rock*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.
- Williams-Garcia, R. (2010). *One Crazy Summer*. New York: HarperCollins.

Nonfiction

- Bartoletti, Susan Campbell. (2010). *They Called Themselves the KKK: The Birth of an American Terrorist Group*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- Bowers, Rick. (2012). *Superman vs. the Ku Klux Klan: The True Story of How the Iconic Superhero Battled the Men of Hate*. Washington DC: National Geographic.
- Bridges, Ruby. (1999). *Through My Eyes*. New York: Scholastic. Biography.
- Brimmer, Larry. (2010). *Birmingham Sunday*. Honesdale, PN: Calkins Creek.
- Brimmer, Larry. (2011). *White & Black: The Confrontation between Reverend Fred L. Shuttlesworth and Eugene "Bull" Connor*. Honesdale, PN: Calkins Creek.
- Crowe, Chris. (2003). *Getting Away with Murder: The True Story of the Emmett Till Case*. New York: Penguin.
- Kanefield, Terry. (2014). *The Girl from the Tar Paper School: Barbara Rose Johns and the Advent of the Civil Rights Movement*. New York, NY: Abrams Books for Young Readers.
- Levinson, C. (2012). *We've Got a Job: The 1963 Birmingham Children's March*. Atlanta, GA: Peachtree.
- Myers, Walter D. (1994). *Malcolm X: By Any Means Necessary*. New York: Scholastic.
- Partridge, Elizabeth. (2009). *Marching for Freedom: Walk Together, Children, and Don't You Grow Weary*. New York: Penguin.

Picturebooks

- Burleigh, Robert. (2007). *Stealing Home: Jackie Robinson: Against the Odds* (Illus. Mike Wimmer). New York: Simon & Schuster. Nonfiction.
- Crowe, Chris. (2012). *Just as Good: How Larry Doby Changed America's Game* (Illus. Mike Benny). Somersville, MA: Candlewick. Nonfiction.
- Pinkney, Andrea. (2010). *Sit-In: How Four Friends Stood Up by Sitting Down* (Illus. Brian Pickney). New York: Little, Brown. Nonfiction.
- Shange, N. (2009). *Coretta Scott*. New York: Amistad/Katherine Tegen Books. Nonfiction.
- Wiles, Deborah. (2001). *Freedom Summer* (Illus. Jerome Lagarrigue). New York: Aladdin. Historical fiction.
- Woodson, Jacqueline. (2001). *The Other Side*. New York: Penguin. Historical fiction.

Magazine

- Christie, Gregory. (2004, Spring). "50 Years Later: Brown v. Board of Education Special Classroom Section." *Teaching Tolerance*.

Newspaper Articles

- "50 Years of Brown vs. Board of Education" pullout from *The Salt Lake Tribune*, May 3, 2004.
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- *What Was Jim Crow?* Retrieved from <http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/what.htm>.
- Pictures from *Life*, August 9, 1937, pp. 50–52. Retrieved from <http://resources.mhs.vic.edu.au/mockingbird/life.htm>.
- *Race: The Power of an Illusion* by PBS. Retrieved from http://www.pbs.org/race/000_General/000_00-Home.htm.
- "1965 Alabama Literacy Test." Retrieved from www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/teachers/lessonplans/us/.../alabamatest.pdf.

Figure 2. Separate, but equal texts

from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, seeking voting rights for African Americans. From Bloody Sunday to the signing of the Voting Rights Act, this text draws on historical documents and black-and-white photographs as it documents the stories from individuals who marched to change history.

In order to understand the historical context of the prejudice, this next text brings an added dimension to this study. From pre-Civil War to modern day, Susan Campbell Bartoletti's (2010) *They Called Themselves the KKK: The Birth of an American Terrorist Group* explains the origins, motivations, and life of the Klu Klux Klan. Engravings and photographs supplement the discussion drawn together from journal entries, firsthand accounts, and other research. The final chapter and timeline that follows details the story of the Klan in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Each of these texts presents the perspectives of specific individuals and groups regarding the "separate, but equal" question. As students engage in their investigations of these texts, they will see this issue examined through the lens of protesters seeking equal voting rights, victims of violence, hate groups, student protesters, and others. Questions that allow for the examination of each different perspective can be useful to guide students' inquiries. These might include, "What underlying beliefs influenced the actions of this particular group?" "Where do the beliefs of each group differ?" "Where do they overlap?" or "What motivated the actions of each group?"

Throughout their investigations, students should be encouraged to seek out additional information from the other nonfiction books or Internet resources listed on the page. They may also want to collaborate across groups and learn from one another as certain texts support students in becoming specialists on specific aspects of this subject. As students take part in discussions and research to unpack these questions, they benefit from opportunities to compare their stories and their findings with one another.

A variety of ways exist to incorporate these texts and the others in the text set into the classroom; the preceding discussion offers just one possible use for student-led inquiry. However, the multiple perspectives gained when using these fiction and nonfiction texts together allow students to consider the complexity of the issues influencing notions of the "separate but equal?" question in specific instances and in their own lives.

Conclusion

When used together, fiction and nonfiction allow students to read and engage in authentic inquiry into subjects, themes, and ideas in both kinds of texts. As a result, rather than positioning these texts as competitors in the classroom, teachers and librarians should seek out ways to use these texts in complimentary ways, harnessing their symbiotic potential to support student learning.

Although few teachers may have the funds to purchase these texts for their own classroom libraries, many of these nonfiction resources can be accessed from school or community libraries. In addition, a variety of resources are available online, including text previews and online nonfiction supplements. Websites such as pbslearningmedia.org and education.national-geographic.com offer many nonfiction resources that support inquiries similar to those described. Finally, many businesses and community organizations offer grants to teachers seeking to enhance the learning in their classrooms, making them ideal for purchasing nonfiction books such as those listed here.

Rather than viewing the adoption of nonfiction as detrimental to the study of fiction, teachers can increase learning potential by using both types of texts in the classroom. The pairings and combinations discussed offer students alternative ways to view and comprehend content as they explore multiple perspectives and build their content knowledge. But perhaps most important, they allow students to engage in authentic inquiry where both fiction and nonfiction contribute to student understanding in meaningful and lasting ways.

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The Role of Design in Nonfiction Books:

Taking a Closer Look at *Moonbird* and Other Winners of the YALSA Award for Excellence in Nonfiction

“Attractive design is more than cosmetic appeal. The design of a book helps in two ways to capture readers. The first is catching the reader’s attention, and the second is keeping it” (Michael O. Tunnell, James S. Jacobs, Terrell A. Young, & Gregory Bryan, 2012, p. 177).

Multiple-award-winning author and illustrator David Macaulay (1993) considers nonfiction to be “a literary work . . . whose content [is] based on fact and communicated with imagination” (1993, p. 145). Accuracy of the facts is always of the utmost importance in nonfiction, but those facts must be shared in a compelling manner. Communicating with imagination is a shared responsibility between authors and designers. Through their careful word choice, authors breathe life into a topic about which they are passionate. Moreover, they write in such a manner as to engage readers. Additionally, book designers share this responsibility, since their work has a key function in the appeal and comprehensibility of nonfiction trade books for young adults. Thus, design elements such as dust jackets and endpapers help draw readers’ attention to visual elements, as well as important facts and details. Since design and visual elements convey a great deal of meaning, it is important that teachers help their students examine them as closely as they examine the written text (Sipe, 2007).

According to Kress (2003), young adults are increasingly exposed to multimodal texts—those that contain a combination of written text, visual images, and design elements. This is certainly true for many recent nonfiction trade books. Thus, it is important

for readers not only to understand the written text, but also to be able to “read” visual images and design elements in order to truly comprehend a book’s meaning (Kress, 2000). Indeed, there is a synergistic relationship between visual elements and written text so what is constructed between the two systems is much greater than the potential interpretation of either the written text or the visual elements alone (Youngs & Serafini, 2011). Visual images and design elements can often convey things that written text alone cannot (Kress, 2000). Carter notes that visual elements often make “points that either need emphasis or can best be shown through photographs or original art. A picture isn’t always worth a thousand words, but sometimes illustrations help [young adults] *read* those thousand words” (2010, p. 202).

Traditionally, books had a rigidly defined reading path from beginning to end, cover to cover (Kress, 2003). Today’s multimodal nonfiction often empowers young adults to make decisions as they read, since “[m]ultimodal texts include various pathways to follow, parallel displays of information, extensive cross-referencing elements, evocative graphics and images that extend, and often replace, the printed word as the primary carrier of meaning” (Hassett & Curwood, 2009, p. 271). Visual and design elements provide

students with choices as to where to look and how to engage with features of texts. Thus, Wilson suggests that teachers provide students with explicit instruction about “the characteristics of multimodal representations” (2011, p. 441).

In this article, we identify and explain the various elements of book design and illustrate how teachers can call attention to these elements to help students appreciate and comprehend the various aspects of nonfiction texts. We use examples from the YALSA Award for Excellence in Nonfiction finalists to illustrate each design element. Additionally, through an interview with book designer Roberta Pressel, we explore how exemplary design elements contribute richly to both aesthetic and efferent reading experiences in Philip Hoose’s (2012) *Moonbird: A Year on the Wind with the Great Survivor B95*. Not only was *Moonbird* a finalist for the YALSA Award for Excellence in Nonfiction, but the book also received a Sibert Honor and was selected as the Green Earth Book Award Winner for Young Adult Nonfiction. The Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) Award for Excellence in Nonfiction “honors the best nonfiction book published for young adults (ages 12–18) during a November 1–October 31 publishing year” (YALSA, n.d.). For a list of the 2013 honorees, see Table 1.

Elements of Book Design

Often when thinking of design in nonfiction, readers only consider illustrated nonfiction. Yet, designers also must keep in mind the use of white space and how text is presented on the page, since readers benefit when a text is more visual. According to Kristo and Bamford, “In nonfiction, information is not necessarily presented in a linear fashion on the page, nor is visual information always restated in the running text. Readers’ eyes need to move around the page, noting *all* information, textual and visual” (2004, p. 51). For example, font sizes, types, and colors, as well as endpapers and photograph placement, are all design elements that enhance the appearance of a work of nonfiction, carrying a visual message about its subject. Kristo and Bamford (2004, p. 55) note the following as possible elements that can complement and extend the running text:

- dust jackets/covers of the book
- endpapers (sometimes called end pages)

- labels and captions
- illustrations/photographs/archival materials
- diagrams: simple, scale, cross section, cutaways, flow, tree, web
- graphs: line, bar, column, pie
- sidebars
- tables (charts)
- maps: geographical, bird’s eye view, flow
- time lines

The illustrations, photographs, archival materials, diagrams, and maps are all visual elements. The dust jackets, book covers, and endpapers are design elements, while the labels and captions, graphs, sidebars, tables and charts, and time lines are access features or tools for locating, clarifying, defining, or explaining information. Other access features include tables of contents, headings and subheadings, bolded words, indexes, glossaries, references, and additional readings. Access

Often when thinking of design in nonfiction, readers only consider illustrated nonfiction. Yet, designers also must keep in mind the use of white space and how text is presented on the page, since readers benefit when a text is more visual.

Table 1. YALSA Award for Excellence in Nonfiction

Books
2013 Winner
<i>Bomb: The Race to Build—and Steal—the World’s Most Dangerous Weapon</i> , written by Steve Sheinkin and published by Flash Point/Roaring Brook Press.
2013 Finalists
<i>Steve Jobs: The Man Who Thought Different</i> , written by Karen Blumenthal and published by Feiwel & Friends.
<i>Moonbird: A Year on the Wind with the Great Survivor B95</i> , written by Phillip Hoose and published by Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.
<i>Titantic: Voices from the Disaster</i> , written by Deborah Hopkinson, published by Scholastic Press.
<i>We’ve Got a Job: The 1963 Birmingham Children’s March</i> , written by Cynthia Levinson and published by Peachtree Publishers.

features transform into design elements when different fonts, colors, or visual images are employed with them. Thus, Hasset and Curwood note that “words can express meaning through typesetting . . . where the symbols and sizes of the fonts are carefully chosen to represent a sense of feeling and connotation over denotation.” Likewise, “words can express meaning through color changes” (2009, p. 271).

Looking from the Outside In

Readers are often drawn into a book because of its dust jacket. Also referred to as a book jacket, this

wrap-around poster typically contains the title, author’s name, and some visual element(s) representing the topic. The inside flap of the front cover typically provides information about the book while the inside flap of the back cover provides a photo of and information about the author. We discovered that all five YALSA Award for Excellence in Nonfiction for Young Adults finalists

had shorter main titles with longer subheadings that led to placement decisions. For instance, in YALSA Award for Excellence in Nonfiction for Young Adults and Sibert Medal Winner *Bomb: The Race to Build—and Steal—the World’s Most Dangerous Weapon* (Sheinkin, 2012), the title is centered on the dust jacket with large, bold letters falling vertically. A plane is centered on the letter ‘o’ with the remaining two letters underneath suggesting a barrage of bombs. The subheading is placed in the lower right corner, providing information and an invitation into the book.

The dust jacket for *Titanic: Voices from the Disaster* (Hopkinson, 2012), another YALSA Award for Excellence in Nonfiction for Young Adults finalist, is equally dramatic, with the title and name of the ship in huge white letters on a red background running vertically along the far left. Opposite the main title is a night view of the ship that dominates the remainder of the cover. A small lifeboat with survivors is in the foreground, and the subheading below reflects the

reality that theirs will likely be the voices from the disaster. Such jackets attract readers and provide opportunities for discussion.

The book’s casing is exposed when the dust jacket is removed. Sometimes casings exactly mirror the dust jacket. In other instances, the casing contributes to the book’s topic or message through the color of the cloth or paper or even some design or motif. As one example, *Bomb* contains the stamp of the same airplane on its cover but this time against a vivid red background. The book designer chose a simple white casing with no stamp or design for *Steve Jobs: The Man Who Thought Different* (Blumenthal, 2012), possibly to pick up the white background on the book jacket or as a contrast to the colorful letters in the word “DIFFERENT” in the book’s title. *Titanic* (Hopkinson, 2012) also relies on the use of carefully placed colors in its casing, as the spine features red letters spelled out against a silver spine, surrounded by a thick red band, and then an even larger off-white band around that. The colors hint at the anniversary of the famous ship disaster, since the book was published 100 years after it occurred.

Moving Inside

As readers open the book and move inside, more design decisions become apparent. They will next encounter the endpapers. These pages “are glued to the casing to provide a transition between the exterior and the interior of the book and create a structural bond between the casing and the printed pages of the book” (Kerper, 2003, p. 70). The endpapers can provide readers with a link to the book’s content through visual elements, text, or a color that echoes back to the dust jacket to develop continuity. For instance, a photo of young Steve Jobs sitting in front of early Apple computers spans both sides of the front and back endpapers in *Steve Jobs* (Blumenthal, 2012).

Some books have a half-title page that follows the endpapers. Although typically containing only the book’s title, this page sometimes includes other visual elements. The half-title page generally precedes the title page that typically includes the names of the author(s), illustrator, and publisher (Harms & Lettow, 1998). As we examined the YALSA Award for Excellence in Nonfiction for Young Adults finalists, we found some variation regarding how half-title pages

The endpapers can provide readers with a link to the book’s content through visual elements, text, or a color that echoes back to the dust jacket to develop continuity.

and title pages appear in the books. For example, *Moonbird* has two half-title pages—one that precedes the title page and another after the title page, copyright page, dedication, and table of contents. In *Steve Jobs*, there is a simple half-title page with the main title only. The title page is followed by a two-page spread with text on the left facing a photo of Steve Jobs early in his career. Similar to the Jobs biography, *Bomb* has a half-title page with the main title only, followed by a two-page spread with a full title page opposite an archival photo of a bomb. The title page of *Titanic* is preceded by a postcard oilette or reproduction of the ship. The upper left corner of the title page is the logo of the White Star Line, a flag with one star. This logo design is repeated on the upper left of the first page of each chapter in the book.

Frequently, one book page is set aside so that authors and illustrators can show their appreciation to colleagues, experts in a subject matter field, relatives, or friends “by dedicating their works to them” (Harms & Lettow, 1998, p. 22). Dedication pages may include visual and text elements or provide only terse dedication, such as the “For Sandi” found in Hoose’s *Moonbird*. Hopkinson’s dedication in *Titanic* is two-fold. First, she states that the book is for “Michele, who is always there whenever I send a CQD . . .” (p. vii). CQD stands for close quarters defense, one of the first distress signals adopted for radio use. Next, Hopkinson dedicates the book “. . . in memory of those who lost their lives on the *Titanic* so long ago” (p. vii). Thus, even the dedication page may provide additional information or insider references on the topic for alert readers.

Copyright information pages typically provide specific information about the book as well as genre designation. While this page is rarely part of the design, the copyright page of *Titanic* has been designed to reflect the book’s subject matter. Its “iceberg” format, so called because there is a black column or iceberg rising from the dark water, provides a space for information to be displayed.

The pages of a book between the end pages and the text are referred to as the book’s front matter. In *Steve Jobs*, the front matter includes a simple table of contents facing a photo in which Steve Jobs and the Apple logo are placed in the left foreground of a photo of the world. The table of contents in *We’ve Got a Job: The 1963 Birmingham Children’s March* (Levinson,

2012) lists the chapter title followed by a quote. This quote is then repeated with the title at the beginning of each chapter. For instance, Chapter 1, “Audrey Faye Hendricks,” features the quote, “There wasn’t a bombing that I wasn’t at”—sobering words to begin the chapter. The next page after the table of contents uses song lyrics to evoke the civil rights era. The refrain of the song that serves as the main title of the book, “We’ve got a job, We’ve got a job to do. We can’t get freedom ‘til we get through,” is printed on a black background with white print.

Following the title page of *Titanic*, there is a double-page spread with a photocopy of the last message sent from the ship. The haunting handwritten message states, “We are sinking . . . passengers being put into boats” (pp. iv–v). The table of contents for *Titanic* spans two pages with the list of chapters and back matter in a gray box superimposed over an image of the ship. This gray and black motif is repeated throughout the book in tables, charts, and diagrams as a design feature that reflects the archival photos and materials from this era. All of these design elements in *Titanic* set a somber tone befitting this story.

Once the text begins, other design features are evident. In *Steve Jobs*, the first page of each chapter faces a black-and-white photo that mirrors Jobs’s life at that point. Thus, as the book moves through Jobs’s life, the text is supported with visual images for readers to connect to the words. The text of *Titanic* begins with a foreword in white print on a black background opposite a photo of the wreck of the ship at the bottom of the ocean.

Chapter headings, labels, and captions offer readers direct information as well as other more indirect and subtle cues. In the case of *Bomb*, the headings are reminiscent of old-fashioned typewriter print signaling the World War II setting of the book. In other instances, important quotes and facts are highlighted through sidebars or text boxes. *We’ve Got a Job* (Levinson, 2012) makes excellent use of topical sidebars and boxed quotes. The topical sidebars are on a

Chapter headings, labels, and captions offer readers direct information as well as other more indirect and subtle cues.

black background with white print, such as the one detailing Segregation Ordinances (p. 7). Likewise, the boxed quotes are on a black background resembling a brushstroke with white print, and they feature powerful words to consider, such as “No way for me not to be involved” (p. 5). Ending most chapters in the Steve Jobs biography are boxed insets with additional information. The format for the boxes resembles early computer screens.

Archival photos abound in several of the YALSA Award finalists. In *We’ve Got a Job* (Levinson, 2012), large black-and-white photos paint an honest and startling picture of the turbulent times. *Bomb* introduces each of the book’s four sections with a double page collage of photos highlighting individuals mentioned in that section. Each photo has a caption noting the person’s name and role, such as “Eugene Wigner, physicist, helped initiate Manhattan Project” (p. 5). In *Titanic*, double-page spreads of archival photos are common, and copies of primary source documents, such as menus for first-class dinner, telegrams, and tickets for passage, support the facts and give the reader a real sense of the ship and the tragedy.

Timelines are another critical visual element to help readers organize the facts and events in nonfiction books. In *Steve Jobs* (Blumenthal, 2012), not only does the timeline include important dates but also icons depicting various Apple products linked to certain events.

Design Elements in *Moonbird*: An Interview with Roberta Pressel

We chose *Moonbird* as the young adult book exemplar for our article because of its outstanding design features coupled with the engaging writing of author Philip Hoose. Roberta Pressel, a senior designer from Farrar, Straus and Giroux, designed this book. Our interview provides insights into the thinking behind the design and the decisions made to effectively combine visual elements, design features, and engaging text for this book.

TAR: Arguably, many readers judge books by their covers, and in the case of this book, the cover features a photograph of B95 winging his way over the surf. Is that actually B95? What other photographs were considered in selecting this one? Why was this one chosen? There are other design consider-

ations for the book’s cover, for instance, the choice of font—size, type, and placement—and the back cover. Could you describe some of the considerations you made as you designed the cover and back and decided where to place the book’s title?

Roberta Pressel: The book cover is the reader’s first impression of the book. The jacket photo is indeed B95. It was the only photo we considered as it was a great close-up of B95 in flight and clearly shows the orange plastic flag fastened around his upper left leg. This flag has the letter and number combination that gives B95 his name.

The color palette of the entire jacket was inspired by the colors of the photo. We wanted the title to be large, but also needed a subhead to explain to readers just who the “moonbird” is. The subhead is in a darker shade of blue so it stands out a bit, as is the author’s name. We wanted Phillip Hoose’s name to be prominent, as he is an extraordinary writer who has won many awards for his books. The back cover was kept simple in order to highlight the glowing comments from renowned authors. To enhance them even more, I used the larger display type, instead of the text font, to make the copy more interesting and stand out a little more. I loved the image of the knots in flight, and felt that would make a nice background when converted to a one-color image.

On the spine of the book, we also wanted to make the title type large and bold, in case the book is shelved with the spine facing out. The author’s name needed to be bold and readable also. If you lift the jacket, you’ll see what we call a “blind stamp” of B95 on the case cover. It’s always fun to be able to add these little decorative elements to the case cover when possible.

TAR: The book’s chapter headings are printed in a light blue reminiscent of the blue on the cover. Why was that color selected? What other colors were considered and rejected? Does the use of blue contribute to a certain “feel” that the book has or evoke a certain sort of emotion or remind readers of all the time B95 spends in the sky?

RP: The chapter heading color was chosen to tie in with the blue of the cover. At one point, orange

was considered, to match the flag on B95's leg, but the lighter orange that we would have used on the sidebars wasn't as pleasing as the lighter blue. The blue is reminiscent of the sky color throughout and is neutral enough to complement most of the photos. Light yellow was chosen for the Profile pages to help them stand out, but not distract from the overall look of the book.

TAR: How important is a book's overall design? Why? What are some of the elements of book design you consider to be the most important of all? How does someone become a book designer?

RP: A book designer's job is to interpret and translate the text visually for the reader. It's important that the design doesn't overwhelm the book; it should enhance it. The designer has a responsibility to the author, the editor, and the publisher to design books that will look good today and in the future. Aspiring designers should research the marketplace by going to bookstores and libraries to see what book designs they like. They should put together a portfolio that showcases their best work. Computers have revolutionized the book design field, so it's important to be competent in all the appropriate design programs.

TAR: What is the first thing a book designer does? What was the very first step you took in designing this beautiful book? The last step? Do you see the manuscript as you are designing the book or make suggestions for additional elements, such as the short informational text boxes that fill the book? Take, for instance, "Why Do Red Knots Go So Far?" on page 15 and "Molt" on page 20. Why were those bits of information placed separate from the rest of the text?

RP: The first thing a book designer does is read the manuscript. For *Moonbird*, the editors had included color copies of most of the photos interspersed with the text pages, which really helped give me a sense of the framework of the book. The information in the sidebar boxes was specified by the author to be highlighted as separate elements throughout the book. Instead of using plain square boxes, I used

boxes with a light blue tint in them, with indented corners to make them more interesting and eye-catching.

TAR: There are several profiles of scientists and young activists such as Mike Hudson included. Can you talk about the inclusion of those profiles? How do they help make this a more kid-friendly book?

RP: Reading about the young activists is something kids can definitely relate to. You don't have to be an adult to make a difference. In addition to the bios of the scientists, there are projects described that young adults can participate in, which also makes the book more kid-friendly.

TAR: Often, today's students race through texts and ignore elements such as maps, charts, and photographs. Why shouldn't those elements be skipped over?

RP: All of those extra materials, such as maps and photos, help to draw the reader into the story. In addition to reading about B95's travels, the maps can be used to visually follow his route and get a better sense of the incredible distance that he's traveled.

TAR: The book contains several photographs. How many were considered and rejected? Why were these chosen?

RP: The photos were supplied by the author and keyed into the manuscript by him and the editors. When there were multiple images of some of the subject matter, we chose the photos that would reproduce the best, as well as ones that would best fit into the overall design. It was exciting to get the photo on page 105, for example, as it showed the latest sighting of B95 at Rio Grande. The quality of the photo is not great, but we felt it was important to show the most recent photo of this amazing bird.

TAR: Even the Source Notes section contains thumbnail photographs that introduce each chapter. Could you talk about that design decision, as well as how you chose the photos to open each chapter?

RP: Often back matter in books can be uninteresting and skipped over. Adding the photos was a way to relate the source notes to the chapters they correspond to. The author, Phillip Hoose, chose the chapter opening photos that he felt were important to set the tone for each chapter.

TAR: In terms of design, do you have a favorite page? What is it? Why do you like it so much?

RP: I don't have a favorite page, but I do like all of the chapter opening pages, especially the ones with the photos. Having the photos bleed on all sides gives the opening pages more impact and makes a dynamic intro to each section of the book. They also give the readers a heads-up as to the content of each chapter. Using blue for the chapter heads and subheads also makes an attractive lead-in to the chapters.

Focusing Readers on Design Elements

One possible way to help young adult readers consider the design and visual elements in nonfiction trade books is to have them work in pairs to analyze and evaluate a book they have read. Kristo and Bamford (2004) suggest that students respond to the following questions as they analyze the book's visual elements:

- Is the visual/feature clear in describing or explaining the information?
- Does the visual/feature help readers understand the content?
- Is the visual/feature appropriately placed to connect directly with the text?
- Is the visual/feature clear and easy to read?
- If appropriate, is a key provided to explain how to read the visual/feature?
- Is there sufficient information in the running text to understand the visual/feature?

Harms and Lettow (1998) note that as students develop an understanding of design elements, they attend more closely to the design and visual elements in the books they read, enhancing both their enjoyment and comprehension. Teen readers may enjoy filling several Venn diagrams with elements that nonfiction books have in common.

In addition to reading the YALSA Award finalists,

students may want to search for additional books on one of the topics explored in those books and compare and contrast. For instance, Allan Wolf's masterful novel in verse *The Watch That Ends the Night: Voices from the Titanic* (2011, Candlewick) covers some of the same territory as Hopkins's book but in a fictionalized version of the story. Readers may also find it helpful to compare the two versions of this shipwreck disaster as they compare and contrast design elements in fiction versus nonfiction versions. Or after reading *We've Got a Job*, students may be interested in examining the documentary of the same events, *Mighty Times: The Children's March*, available free to teachers at the Teaching Tolerance website at <http://www.tolerance.org/kit/mighty-times-childrens-march>.

Conclusion

Young adults learn that nonfiction books are more than words and facts when they are taught about design elements. Instruction about book design elements provides them with new tools for reading, understanding, and appreciating nonfiction books. With eyes that are more aware, they are likely to enjoy unlocking some of the elements of nonfiction titles.

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2013 Promising Researcher Winner Named

Dr. Amy Stornaiuolo, Assistant Professor, University of Pennsylvania, has won the 2013 Promising Researcher Award for “‘Like Two Different Worlds’: Teachers’ Perspectives on Social Networking and Schooling.” This award, given in commemoration of Bernard O’Donnell, is sponsored by the NCTE Standing Committee on Research. The 2013 Promising Researcher Award will be presented at the NCTE Annual Convention in Boston, Massachusetts, at the Opening Session of the Day of Research, Saturday, November 23, 2013.

Why Teach Young Adult Nonfiction?

When I first started teaching 13 years ago, I had great dreams of teaching literature and transforming children’s lives with books. The kids who hated reading would learn to love reading because of the way I used literature in the classroom. Unfortunately, after my first year of teaching, I realized that some of my students still hated reading. It didn’t matter that we had read *Holes*, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, or *Maniac Magee*—those were just books I had forced them to read. They were part of the game of school. My students were not connecting with the literature; they saw the reading as a hoop through which to jump.

With a move to the Common Core (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010), there is a greater emphasis to help students connect with what they are reading and to comprehend nonfiction and informational texts. There are three standards given for nonfiction or informational texts within the common core. The first states, “Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text” (<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/9-10/3/>). A second standard that appears in the Common Core for nonfiction states, “By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at the high end of the grades 9–10 text complexity band independently and proficiently” (<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/9-10/>).

Students also need to read nonfiction to be prepared for reading outside of school, and I expose them to nonfiction texts to prepare them for real-world read-

ing. Mary Lamb states, “students are constantly faced with nonfiction genres, including their textbooks, editorials, blogs, informational websites, business writing, and instruction manuals” (2010).

My main reason for teaching nonfiction is to help my students understand that we are all a part of the past, and we can make a difference. Russel Baker states, “We all come from the past and children ought to know what went into their making, to know that life is a braided cord” (1984, p. 16). Like Baker, I want my students to know that what happened in the past affects their lives today, and they can make an impact on the future. For this reason, I try to find nonfiction that talks about the past and how people can make a difference.

I have had great success with using two nonfiction texts in my classroom. The first is *Getting Away with Murder: The True Story of the Emmett Till Case* (2003) by Chris Crowe. My students love this book because they connect with the story of a teenage boy who was judged unfairly; after all, they are often judged unfairly because of their age. In class, we discuss how they are treated when they go into a store as a large group, and I get the following responses, “People watch us like we are going to steal something. I don’t like it. Just because some teenagers steal doesn’t mean all of us steal,” or, “Just because we are loud doesn’t mean we are going to get in trouble.” After reading the story of Emmett Till, my students feel a need to speak out and get involved when people are judged unfairly. They see that what happened in the past does not have to continue to happen in the future.

To follow the reading of *Getting Away with Mur-*

der, we read the abridged version of *Warriors Don't Cry* by Melba Patillo Beals. I discuss the chapters with the students, and they complete study guides so I can make sure they comprehend what they are reading. My students also write a Poem for Two Voices to demonstrate their comprehension about the events of the book from two different points of view. Below is an example of a student poem for two voices:

Character #1: Thelma	Character #2: Woman Screaming
Hate!	Hate!
I don't want to go.	How dare you come to our school!
	I don't want you here.
I have to go, but I don't want to.	Hate!
Hate!	My kids are better than you.
Why do they hate me?	You don't deserve this.
It's not my fault my skin is black.	Hate!
Hate!	Go back to where you came from.
Maybe I should leave.	Let us scare you away.
No, I won't back down.	I will let HATE win.
I won't let HATE win.	

Upon completion of the novel, my students complete an Act of Intolerance multigenre paper. The students research an act of intolerance from the past or present and then write about the act using different genres, such as journal entries, PowerPoint presentations, newspaper articles, songs, and poems, or any other genre they feel would work for the assignment. Students then share one genre with the class, and as they share, they explain how they can make a difference to help prevent similar acts of intolerance from happening in the future. The students are invested in this assignment because it is not another research paper. It is a way for them to connect with the nonfiction texts through their own writing.

After teaching the two nonfiction books and completing the paper with my students, I have asked some of them to share what they liked about the nonfiction and the assignments. One student stated, "I loved it! The fact that the book wasn't fiction made the history

very real. We have heard stories of prejudice and segregation since we started going to school. *Warriors Don't Cry* came from the kids who actually experienced the stories we hear, and that made it even more real."

I also asked another student what she gained from studying the nonfiction texts and completing the paper. She told me, "I learned that sometimes people are not nice to others who are different. I've learned to wait to get to know people who are different before I make those judgments."

Through teaching nonfiction texts such as *Getting Away with Murder* and *Warriors Don't Cry*, I have seen the impact literary nonfiction can have. My students come away from the reading with the ability to read and comprehend informational texts, tools for reading nonfiction in the real world, and the knowledge that they are a part of the past and can make a difference in the future. As a result, I will continue to seek more literary nonfiction to use in my classroom, and continue to encourage my students to read and study it outside of school.

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My students come away from the reading with the ability to read and comprehend informational texts, tools for reading nonfiction in the real world, and the knowledge that they are a part of the past and can make a difference in the future.

Operation Pied Piper:

Historical Texts and the CCSS

The Common Core State Standards' College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading and Writing (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010) stress key critical thinking skills from close reading and logical inference to argumentative writing using sound reasoning and well-explicated textual evidence. Finding interdisciplinary materials that can help Language Arts and Social Studies students master these skills while cultivating a wide range of student engagement with informational texts could pose challenging, however.

My academic research on "Operation Pied Piper," the British World War II evacuation of children, and my experience teaching some of these materials at the college level may prove useful to middle and high school teachers seeking texts that help fulfill the Standards in numerous classes. The plan's code name signals the cultural importance of poetry in its reference to Robert Browning's *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* (1885), which could easily be incorporated into a study of the evacuation, given its focus on a town's coming to terms with the loss of its children. What is more, the history is gripping, directly involving millions of children and teenagers, and these events produced an astonishing range of accessible written materials (both fiction and nonfiction) that could be utilized in a number of classes.

Over the course of the Second World War, the British government evacuated over 3.5 million children to the countryside or British dominions and commonwealth nations in order to protect them from

German aerial bombing (Gardiner, 2004; Smith, 2007; Welshman, 2010; Wicks, 1988). Although some children were only evacuated for a short time—returning home after a few months because of the "phoney war" and then being evacuated again once the German bombing began—many did not return to their families until 1944 or even 1946. Most of the children sent overseas were separated from their families for four to six years, and sustained their relationships entirely through writing. The evacuation thus provided the space for children and young adults of all classes to write, describing the war in diaries, stories, poems, and essays as well as letters home. This unique historical moment thus left an entire generation with a means of creating a written record of their experiences as young people (as opposed to adults reflecting on their youth).

Important materials for scholars, these types of documents could be profitably incorporated into assignments addressing the Common Core Standards ranging from reading for key ideas and details or craft and structure to integration of knowledge and ideas (College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 9), as well as Standards for writing and research (College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, and 10). Furthermore, these materials would likely be particularly interesting to middle and high school students, since they can see how children and teenagers were actively involved in major historical moments in ways they may not have previously contemplated. (See Mayall & Morrow [2011] for the range of ways

the young were actively involved in the war effort.)

Together with adult-authored materials, child narratives provide unique views of children's experiences of WWII. Familial letters available on the Internet and fictional letters found in children's and young adult evacuation literature can be productively juxtaposed to help students contemplate the nature and limits of historical and/or literary evidence as well as to hone their close reading skills. Further, focus on fictional children's letters can help students think about the possibilities afforded in epistolary self-representation in addition to apprehending what might be omitted from letters. In short, fictional letters can help illuminate the limits and possibilities of historical evidence.

Although this experience was understandably traumatic for many children, relocating millions of children to homes across divisions of city, country, and class (and at a time when gender roles were more relaxed because of the war effort) created a space of possibility and growth for many. Because of this historical event, "real life" now presented options for children that had previously only been part of the world of fiction. Children who had never left their neighborhoods, for example, now traveled to distant parts of the country or to America, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa. The actor Michael Caine describes himself initially as "a six-year-old cockney more familiar with the smells and sounds of Billingsgate fish market than with manure and bird-song" (Wicks, 1988, p. vii). Although he had some "rough treatment from the family who first took [him] in, . . . [he] went on to enjoy some halcyon days over the next six years growing up on a 200-acre farm in Norfolk, which changed [him] . . . into the country-lover [he is] to this day" (Wicks, p. vii). For Ben Wicks, the author of *No Time to Wave Goodbye: The True Story of Britain's Wartime Evacuees* (1988), "evacuation from the squalor of soot-covered slums provided a view of the outside world," literally and figuratively, showing him "greener pastures" (Wicks, p. xi).

These more positive experiences are recounted in novels such as Michelle Magorian's *Good Night, Mr. Tom* (1981), whereas more vexed experiences of evacuation are articulated in Nina Bawden's *Carrie's War* (1973). A marvelous trilogy, *The Guests of War* (1989–1993) by Kit Pearson, imagines both types of experiences through a brother and sister evacuated

to Canada and is particularly well suited for contemplating the limits and possibilities of children's and teenagers' letter writing. The second and third novels, in addition to examining both child and adolescent perspectives on evacuation, also explore the ramifications of returning home after several years.

Materials available online provide a sturdy foundation for contextualizing evacuation as well as for highlighting the types and range of letters that document this unique experience. *George—an Evacuee's Story* contains a small collection of letters to, from, and about George Shephard Johns as well as a series of official documents pertaining to the evacuation. These materials enable students to see primary source documents urging evacuation and to understand why parents were willing to part with their children. The West Bromwich Education Committee, for example, tells parents that the "noise and fright" of an air raid "will be so great that the child will remember it all its life, even if it lives through the raid" (West Bromwich Education Committee, "To the Parents of Children," September 4, 1939). In addition to the harbingers of their child's possible death or lifelong psychological scarring, they also let parents know that in the event of an air raid, "so many people will be hurt that Hospital and Ambulance Services will be so engaged that it will be impossible to give everybody the attention which they should receive and every child that remains in West Bromwich makes this difficulty greater" (West Bromwich Education Committee, "To the Parents of Children," September 4, 1939). Other materials on the website orient readers to the practicalities of evacuation, such as how it was paid for and the items children were allowed to bring with them.

The small collection of letters about George Shephard Johns quickly familiarizes students with the correspondents (adults writing to or about an evacuee and the child evacuee writing to adults—either his parents or other caretakers) and provides more infor-

Materials available online provide a sturdy foundation for contextualizing evacuation as well as for highlighting the types and range of letters that document this unique experience.

mation about the ways families adapted to wartime conditions. The letters provide useful evidence for understanding inference especially. In the first one, Florence Field writes to George's mother, telling her, "we shall take great care of him so try not to worry about him," and that if she is allowed to visit, "we

While the evacuation was an obvious result of adults' desire to provide children with safety, the letter makes clear how children could not be protected from the material reality of war.

shall be pleased to see you any time" (Field, September 6, 1939). She also lets her know how close they are to the school, that her son is "pleased to have him," and that there is another evacuee staying there, assuring George's mother that she has "no doubt they will be great chums" (Field, September 6, 1939). Students can quickly discern the facts of George's billet (where it is and who is in the household), but they can

also infer Florence Field's desire to reassure George's mother that she will be taking good care of her son and that he has arrived at a good home.

George's letter to his parents reflects the practical side of being an evacuee: he asks his parents about buying books he needs, requests that they send him his bathing suit, and tells them about going to the movies and writing his grandparents (Johns, September 15, 1939). His letter does not mention how he feels about being evacuated—an omission about which students can speculate, but given the lack of evidence cannot infer anything. His postcard, however, reveals that "Brian pushed [him] out of bed," suggesting that perhaps these "chums" did not always get along (Johns, December 1, 1939).

In the final letter in the collection, written by Nurse Field to George after he has returned home, readers learn his mother has died. Although the cause of her death is not discussed, Field's articulation of an earlier wish—that George and his parents could have visited over the upcoming summer—followed by "this awful war has altered everything" suggests that her death was connected to the war (Field, November 1, 1940). While the evacuation was an obvious result of adults' desire to provide children with safety, the

letter makes clear how children could not be protected from the material reality of war.

A significantly longer set of letters about another evacuee, John Swallow (2003), gives contemporary readers more information about activities children found interesting and engaging—plane spotting, learning Morse code, going to the movies, studying French—as well as providing a more sustained look at how children and parents managed to stay connected despite their separation. It also makes clear the real costs of war as bombing raids and the death of John's older cousin are recounted. Swallow's letters are especially significant for the ways they elucidate how much this boy and his parents missed each other and how the war shaped almost every aspect of their lives. Swallow writes repeatedly about his gas mask, planes he has seen, and battles that were fought in Britain and elsewhere. In addition to signing his letters as their "ever loving" son, John Swallow's eventual return home (along with his mother who joined him in evacuation at some point) illuminates how difficult it was for families to be separated. His letter telling his father that he and his mother are coming home reflects the unique blend of logic and emotion many evacuees used to try and convince adults to let them return. Out of ten points he uses to make his case, numbers five and six reflect the boy's understanding of the war as well as his strong desire to be with his parents. Point five asserts that "the [air]raids will probably almost cease in winter, as the airfields in Northern France, Holland and Belgium [. . .] have become waterlogged: the Jerries will have to build concrete runways which will be bombed by us" (Swallow, November 11, 1940). In point six, Swallow reasons, "If we have to go, we might as well all go together—you have got to die sometime and it might as well be painlessly by the bomb as by a long illness or something" (Swallow, November 11, 1940).

Many children did not want to be evacuated or yearned to return home once they were. Like John Swallow's letter, there are others available that eloquently articulate evacuees' feelings and advance sophisticated arguments designed to persuade adults. One 11-year old boy wrote the following letter to his parents that he sent to *The Times of London*, where it was published:

I am writing to beg you not to let me go to Canada. (I suppose you know we probably are going?) First, because I do

not want to leave England in time of war. Prejudice apart, if it had been peacetime I should have opened my mind to it. Second, because I should be very homesick. Third, because it would be kinder to let me be killed with you if such a thing happened (which is quite unlikely) than to be left adrift in a strange world and finish my happy childhood in the contrary fashion. Fourth, I would not see you for an indefinite time, perhaps never again. Letters simply redouble my homesickness. These are my reasons and I hope you will take them into consideration. I cannot do anything myself but I implore you to be reasonable. I am not asking to live in London. I am merely asking not to leave the country. P.S. I would rather be bombed to fragments than to leave England. (qtd. in Post, 1940).

In addition to calling attention to his homesickness, this boy—like John—makes clear that dying with one’s parents is preferable to being sent away. He tempers his request by saying that he does not wish to live in London, he is “merely asking not to leave the country.” He ends his letter with the astonishingly moving statement that he’d rather be “bombed to fragments than to leave England.” Contemporary students can thus read a compelling historical document from which they can infer the young boy’s feelings as well as trace his logic. The boy presciently mentions how letters from home will “simply redouble my homesickness,” a theme found in many memoirs and fictional accounts of evacuation but rarely articulated in evacuees’ letters.

While online materials such as these profitably provide students with primary source materials and informational text, literature can productively expand and complicate these offerings. Evacuation fiction can be helpfully juxtaposed with these types of historical documents to help students contemplate the range of evacuation experiences as well as comprehend how child authors were fashioning themselves in their letters home: giving voice to or silencing emotions and/or analyses of the war. Kit Pearson’s *Guests of War* trilogy provides readers with 21 accounts of letter reading, writing, or receiving that make clear the importance of letters to sustaining familial ties. It also provides students with compelling examples of how children censored themselves. Although fiction, it valuably extends the real letters available online by reminding readers of the limits within an epistolary relationship. The *Guests of War* books follow the lives of two evacuees, Norah and Gavin, siblings aged 10 and 5 at the beginning of the war, who are 15 and 10

at its end. Over the long arc of the trilogy, Pearson is able to examine the issues surrounding leaving home and adjusting to Canadian life as well as tackling the complicated issues of returning to Britain. Norah is yearning to go, while Gavin struggles with imagining a life with people he barely remembers, as well as fearing life in a country so deeply affected by war.

Although both Norah and Gavin eventually adjust well, the first book in the series, *The Sky Is Falling* (Pearson, 1989), illustrates how, like many children, they were traumatized by evacuation. Both wet the bed at different times; Gavin becomes hysterical when adults in Canada try to take off his balaclava, which he’s worn since the second day on board the ship; Norah struggles with nightmares; and friends of theirs have developed rashes and nervous habits despite their creation of “a society called the ‘Thumbs Up Club’” (Pearson, 1989, p. 50).

Pearson’s novel accurately describes the experience of evacuation, from the travel involved to selection by foster parents, but more important, it beautifully attends to the rich welter of emotions accompanying epistolary contact with loved ones now far away and provides some very plausible reasons for the silences and elisions in children’s letters.

Norah longed to pour out the truth, to relieve her misery with a litany of complaints. [. . .] Just to be able to tell them all this would be a huge relief.

But she couldn’t. It would only worry them, when they had the war to worry about. And she knew how disappointed Dad would be if she complained. Grandad would understand, but if she wrote to him separately her parents would wonder why.

Finally Norah thought of a way to fill up the page. She dipped her pen in the crystal bottle of ink and began.

Dear Mum, Dad and Grandad,

Here is what is different about Canada. The cars drive on the wrong side of the street. The robins are huge. There is no rationing of food or petrol. There’s no black-out. Canadians

In addition to calling attention to his homesickness, this boy—like John—makes clear that dying with one’s parents is preferable to being sent away.

have different money and they speak a different language. Here is a list of the words I know so far.

[. . .]

By the end of the letter she was limp with homesickness. (Pearson, 1989, pp. 114–115)

The heart-wrenching description of Norah's homesickness conveys how deeply she, like thousands of real children, yearned for home. Pearson illustrates well the ways Norah censors her letter, and by providing readers with the whole letter, they're also able to see how a "newsy" letter could, in fact, not contain any news. Indeed, Norah's father replies, "Norah we are delighted to know you're learning so much about Canada. . . . We'd like to hear more about *you*. Are you happy at the Ogilvies? Is school all right? Please tell us everything" (Pearson,

Although exchanging letters was sometimes fraught for children like Norah, who yearned for home, and for those like Gavin for whom home was his foster family, the letters illuminate quite a bit for the reader.

1989, p. 150). Only toward the end of the novel does Norah feel she can "write long uncensored letters home and say honestly she was all right" (Pearson, 1989, p. 222). These earlier potent omissions from her letters reflect many written during the war. In archival materials I have read, more than one set of parents had to ask repeatedly about questions they had asked their children or information they had shared that was met with silence—and this was silence on important issues. Even in the small collection of letters about George Johns, readers wonder about the incident when Brian pushed him out of the bed: was it a small, ordinary argument or was it used synecdotally to describe the relationship?

Pearson's trilogy, like other contemporary works of children's and adolescent literature (e.g., Little, 2010, or Stone, 2011)), also examines the emotional difficulty of receiving letters from home. When Norah receives cards from her old friends, she finds the experience "so unsettling" that she only reads them quickly once. The temporal and spatial distance has made them "see[m] like people in another life" (Pearson, 1989, p. 235).

For younger children, like Norah's brother Gavin, letters or gifts from home presented other problems. In the trilogy's third volume, which focuses primarily on Gavin's experience, he struggles to write his parents. He can't remember them; "their faces were blank" (Pearson, 1993, p. 42). He finds thanking parents for gifts sent to a much younger child not only frustrating, but it makes him "wigg[e] with guilt. He knew Dad had carved the truck and Mum had knit the hat" (Pearson, 1993, p. 42). Like many younger evacuees, Gavin recognizes his parents because "he'd had their faces pointed out in [. . .] photograph[s] as 'Mum and Dad.' But he recognized them the same way he did a picture of a famous actor or hockey star: someone familiar but not intimate" (Pearson, 1993, p. 68). Letters for other evacuees reminded them of their great distance from their biological families since foster parents and their new lives had become home. Fictional Gavin's experience thus extends the online letters of children domestically evacuated for a short time and enables students to apprehend the emotional consequences of being separated for several years.

Although exchanging letters was sometimes fraught for children like Norah, who yearned for home, and for those like Gavin for whom home was his foster family, the letters illuminate quite a bit for the reader. When Gavin reads all the ones he and his sister received over the course of the war, he learns that "the letters portrayed two people bravely struggling from day to day in war-torn England. [. . .] Every letter said how much they missed Norah and Gavin and looked forward to having them back" (Pearson, 1993, p. 69). Gavin not only understands more about his parents, but in their responses to his letters, when they "commented on something Norah and Gavin had told [them . . .], Gavin remembered the thrill of learning to swim and ski, the exciting train journey west," etc. (Pearson, 1993, p. 70). While the letters are not powerful enough to restore Gavin's lost memory of his parents, readers can quickly discern how they functioned to maintain family ties. One can then return to details from John Swallow's online collection to discern more about his relationships with other family members. For example, his excitement over his Aunt Phyllis's impending visit—"???Guess? guess? guess? guess??? Auntie Phyllis is coming down tomorrow!!!!" (June 19, 1940)—reveals how much this young boy loved his aunt and delighted in anticipating her visit.

Significantly, Pearson ends the trilogy with

Gavin's letter to his Canadian "Aunt" Florence, her daughter Mary, and their cook Hanny after he has returned "home," giving him the last word. Ending the book with a letter stresses the importance of letter writing for evacuees, and it also provides another extraordinary piece of evidence about the limits and possibility of letter writing. Pearson movingly expands readers' thinking about how children write about themselves in difficult situations.

Dear Aunt Florence, Aunt Mary and Hanny,

Thank you for your last letters. I'm glad [the dog] is still okay. Uncle Reg sent me a picture of him. He looks fat! I hope Uncle Reg isn't feeding him too much.

[. . .]

School isn't too bad. There's only six other kids who are ten and only thirty-three in the whole school. . . . Some of the kids tease me about my accent and call me "Yank." I told them they should call me "Canuck" instead. Joey said I was a coward because I left England during the war. But another boy called James stuck up for me. Yesterday James came for tea. He likes all my models. You can't buy models in England any more.

[. . .]

(Pearson, 1993, pp. 194–195)

Pearson recreates the whole letter—like Norah's early in the trilogy—granting readers access to what feels like Gavin's unmediated voice, and offers them documentary evidence of his experience. While it is clear that Gavin is being teased upon his return, being called Yank, it is also clear he is fighting back—correcting them. His long letter continues to recount his British news, updating his Canadian "family" on his new life. On the third page of his letter, however, Pearson's narrator returns to elaborate his experience of writing:

Gavin put down his pen and read over what he'd written. There was so much he'd left out. How the puppy he'd picked seemed afraid of him. How small and drab England was. How crowded they all were in Muriel and Barry's tiny house. The meager food. The bitter coldness inside, now that fall—*autumn*—he corrected himself—was here. Most of all, his constant, burning homesickness.

[. . .]

Gavin picked up his pen again.

I miss you very much and I miss Canada.

I am being brave.

(Pearson, 1993, p. 196)

Here, the narrator describes how very difficult returning home was for many and demonstrates the process of acculturation when Gavin corrects himself using the British "autumn" rather than the North American "fall." He also thinks about—but does not write of—the material realities of returning to a country more directly involved in the war than Canada, and one in which food and fuel are still rationed. Beyond physical privations, though, he considers emotions that could not be articulated—either for parent or child. Gavin *yearns* for Canada, and while he does mention that he misses it and them, he does not write about his "constant, burning homesickness," and temperately articulates his love for the women who cared for him so well. Gavin consciously elides the pain of returning to a home that is unfamiliar. In this silence, readers witness this ten-year-old's resilience, realism, and his connectedness to others.

While there is no way of knowing what material was unsaid in the letter collections available online, the fictional letters in Pearson's trilogy provide students with concrete evidence about what might not be said, and can be used to contemplate the ways children created narrative versions of themselves for their readers. This particular insight—and one could use just the first and final letters in the trilogy to set up the exercise—could help inform more work on inference or other writing exercises. In Britain, younger students write letters from the perspective of evacuees (see Kennedy, for example). Older students could write letters as well, but like the ones described in Pearson's fiction, they could also separately describe the information they are *not* sharing with their parents. Contemplating what could and could not be shared along with evidence-based inference could produce more careful readers of historical evidence as well as more self-conscious writers attentive to varied potential purposes of a letter.

Contemplating what could and could not be shared along with evidence-based inference could produce more careful readers of historical evidence as well as more self-conscious writers attentive to varied potential purposes of a letter.

Letters helped maintain family ties during the Second World War—especially for evacuees. Good fiction about the evacuation reveals both the excitement and adventure of exploring a new home and locale, making new friends, and the thrill of being on one's own, but it also explores the emotional difficulty of these events. Evacuation fiction elucidates the particular vulnerabilities of the young as well as ways they are capable, and how those skills and potential are often disregarded in times of peace. The evacuation of British children was a watershed event in the history of childhood, an important part of the past that children and adolescents should know about. Such knowledge will quite likely make them interested in exploring history in ways that other historical events may not. My college-aged students are fascinated by the evacuation; I imagine younger students, closer in age to the evacuees, could be even more so.

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The Role of Young Adult Nonfiction in an Interdisciplinary Approach to Teaching Genetics

Sometimes the students labeled “reluctant readers” are only reluctant to read the steady diet of fiction offered to them in English class. Increasingly, English teachers are looking to expand the kinds of texts they teach in order to better meet students’ diverse interests and abilities. To meet students’ interests, English teachers can include quality titles of young adult (YA) nonfiction that engage those readers who thrive by learning more about a multitude of subjects. In fact, *Reading Next* (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006) identifies elements of effective adolescent literacy programs, calling for “language arts teachers using content area texts and content area teachers providing instruction and practice in reading and writing skills specific to their subject area” (p. 4). Such calls speak directly to English teachers, encouraging them to participate in interdisciplinary teams to benefit student learning.

Adolescent Literacy: A Position Statement (IRA, 2012) also encourages content area teachers to collaborate, stating that adolescents deserve “content area teachers who provide instruction in the multiple literacy strategies” and “deserve access to and instruction with multimodal, multiple texts” (p. 2). The use of literacy strategies, namely the focus of English teachers on providing materials concentrated on a particular area of study, can only help to create meaningful content area learning from text that has been a continuous “barrier to both science learning and reading comprehension” (Romance & Vitale, 2011, p. 1).

With these position statements in mind and acknowledging how the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010) call for an increased use of nonfiction in English classrooms, we look to an interdisciplinary teaming of English and biology to answer these literacy calls and build student learning. We—an English educator and a science educator—believe that YA nonfiction is a powerful tool in an interdisciplinary approach for teaching content in both English and biology classrooms.

Sheehy and Clemmons (2012) assert that “the future of YAL must include its integration into all content areas through engaging projects that challenge students to integrate literacy, critical thinking, content, and technology” (p. 226). Supporting this stance, Au (2013) acknowledges that “by high school, many students of diverse backgrounds are reading and writing far below grade-level expectations. These students need the boost provided when all teachers emphasize the importance of literacy and teach accordingly” (p. 537). In addition, Romance and Vitale (2011) supported previously reported findings with conclusions from a multi-year study that content area learning in science was effective as a means for improving student reading and comprehension. The authors provide implications that suggest that a curricular approach to integrating literacy within in-depth science instruction has the potential to increase student academic

achievement both directly and through transfer. This article aims to illustrate how English and biology teachers can utilize YA nonfiction texts to provide an interdisciplinary approach to teach genetics via the theory of evolution.

In high schools across the country, students often take courses in English and biology at the same time, providing an opportunity for these content area

teachers to collaborate. In such collaborations, “sharing books with our colleagues can initiate rich discussions about the role young adult literature can play in fostering adolescents’ literacy and content knowledge” (Bull, Dulaney, North-Coleman, Kaplan, & Stover, 2013, p. 121). Both English and biology teachers benefit when their students employ literacy skills, are involved in meaning making with complex texts, and increase their comprehension.

The purpose of this article is to illustrate how YA nonfiction texts (in both print and digital format) can be utilized in an interdisciplinary approach, teaming English and biology teachers, to strengthen students’ understandings of genetics. This kind of collaboration can improve student comprehension of science content while meeting the English language arts standards identified in the CCSS: a win-win situation for both teachers and their students.

A Rationale for Interdisciplinary Instruction

This article, while intended for the use of all teachers, may be most helpful to those teachers who are new to the idea of interdisciplinary teaching. The ideas are meant to help scaffold the process of teaching across the curriculum and can be adjusted for the use in all content area classrooms. It is our hope that the reader is able to find ideas that will spark an interest or will inspire collaboration between colleagues.

We understand that oftentimes educators find themselves struggling with the amount of information they must cover within their content areas, leaving

little time or space in their curriculum to collaborate with others. This lack of collaboration is not only due to the immense pressure felt by teachers to prepare students for state testing, but also the deficit in the amount of time there is to meet with other teachers, especially those teaching other subject areas, due to the different teaching schedules.

While these barriers can seem overwhelming and discouraging, they are not absolute and can be overcome by encouraging leadership to incorporate some common planning times into the schedule throughout the week or during professional development days. The collaborative planning will only work to enhance the connections students will make between subject areas and their relation to real-life encounters. With the implementation of the Common Core Standards, teachers of all content areas are responsible for teaching core disciplinary ideas and concepts. The integration of these concepts in all subject areas is of benefit to both teachers and students: students are better able to see and make tangible connections between subjects; teachers are able to build on one another’s ideas, making them more focused, engaging, and confident. This integration provides the perfect opportunity for teachers to work on curriculum mapping, encouraging those who teach the same subjects to collaborate and discuss where and how they teach certain topics. Those teachers who teach different subjects can also discuss their timelines and where certain subjects may fit together well, thus promoting the idea of teaming across content areas.

High school teachers typically teach the same content and books across grade levels and ability levels. With this continuity, it would be possible to integrate another text focusing on a specific area of study about another subject—in this case, genetics. Whether or not the students have the same biology teacher is irrelevant, because at some point during the year, students taking biology will encounter genetics in their curriculum. The overlap in the English classroom can only help to bolster an understanding of these concepts.

Teachers of both subjects will need to find a common planning time to discuss any questions or concerns either of them may have. A good time to do this is during inservice days. Often, there is some time set aside in the day for individuals to work on planning and/or collaboration. If this is not the case, then asking for some time from administrators is reason-

Both English and biology teachers benefit when their students employ literacy skills, are involved in meaning making with complex texts, and increase their comprehension.

able. While the content in each course overlaps, there is still freedom for each teacher to make the content their own and teach using preferred methodologies.

A Rationale for the English–Biology Collaboration

The interdisciplinary study we offer in this article employs YA nonfiction in meaningful ways that can benefit all stakeholders: English teachers, biology teachers, and the adolescents they teach. English teachers can benefit from this interdisciplinary approach in three ways. First, the new NCTE/NCATE Standards for Initial Preparation of Teachers of Secondary English Language Arts, Grades 7–12 was approved in October 2012 and has important implications for both preservice and practicing teachers.

Specifically, element six of Standard Three calls for teachers to “plan instruction which, when appropriate, reflects curriculum integration and incorporates interdisciplinary teaching methods and materials” (NCATE, 2012). Knowing that adolescents often struggle with and are rarely encouraged to see how subjects have cross-curricular connections, English teachers can look for ways to make such connections more transparent and relevant. Second, the Common Core English Language Arts Standards (2010) call for increased emphasis on informational text and its range, quality, and complexity. YA nonfiction texts that center on genetics content hit these marks. Third, a key text that we offer in this article is a work of graphic nonfiction, a relatively new genre that appeals to YA readers who are interested in learning content (nonfiction) through a highly visual format (graphic novel). What English teacher *isn't* interested in test-driving this graphic-nonfiction vehicle that is sure to engage reluctant readers?

Biology teachers can benefit from this approach, too. Incorporating YA nonfiction texts that will supplement and enrich units of study is a goal of this approach. These YA nonfiction texts are not meant to replace biology textbooks, but to be used as supplemental texts that offer accurate information on specific topics in great depth and detail. Our approach offers literacy-building activities that align with both the CCSS (2010) and the newly published *Next Generation Science Standards* (Achieve, 2013). It is our hope that these instructional activities that align with national

standards will encourage biology teachers to incorporate these YA nonfiction selections into their units of study.

Science and Literacy

The marrying of the two concepts, science and literacy, into one cohesive package is integral to growing our students into responsible and informed citizens who are able to make educated decisions and engage with policymakers regarding important scientific issues (Dougherty, 2009). The ability to integrate ideas and subject matter should not be a foreign concept, but rather one that is commonplace; it is our job as educators to make this explicit connection for our students. Reading is seemingly a neglected part of the science curriculum, as textbooks are used most often to provide homework (Wellington & Osborne, 2001). The missing connection between reading and science is unfortunate, given that most scientists today spend much time reading and acquiring knowledge (Wellington & Osborne, 2001). It is the job of the science teacher, therefore, to make this connection for students and teach them how to read “actively, critically, and efficiently” (Wellington & Osborne, 2001, p. 41).

Young adult nonfiction (aka trade books) for the science classroom offers teachers current, accurate texts that are rich in the depth and detail on focused topics that textbooks cannot match. NSTA asserts that “reading science trade books is the perfect way for students to build literacy skills while learning science content” (National Science Teachers Association, 2013). Recent studies support the view that students learn effectively when scientific concepts are studied through the use of trade books. Authors of these studies have noted that students who read trade books in the science classroom have increased knowledge and vocabulary acquisition (Fang & Wei, 2010), improved motivation and engagement (Jensen & Moore, 2008),

Young adult nonfiction (aka trade books) for the science classroom offers teachers current, accurate texts that are rich in the depth and detail on focused topics that textbooks cannot match.

and improved standardized test scores (Greenleaf et al., 2011). Such findings are difficult to overlook when teachers consider how to improve engagement and achievement in their own classrooms.

Although these studies document student gains in the science classroom, they do not address how an interdisciplinary study of YA nonfiction might improve student learning. Additionally, “recent pedagogical scholarship is aimed at making students active readers of fiction, but there is less discussion of teaching nonfiction genres” (Lamb, 2010, p. 43). Our article seeks to address both of these concerns. Because the study of science is vast and our space is limited, we chose to focus on one particular unit of study commonly found in a biology class—genetics.

What follows here are selections of YA nonfiction that can be used to teach genetics through the theory of evolution and to build literacy skills. These texts can be incorporated into English and biology classrooms to deepen students’ content knowledge and improve students’ integration of knowledge and ideas. To assist educators with incorporating these nonfiction texts into their classrooms, we offer reading strategies and multimodal activities designed to improve student comprehension.

YA Nonfiction Genetics Texts & Teaching Strategies

In the English Classroom: Graphic Nonfiction

Graphic nonfiction is a relatively new genre that has not received much scholarly attention. This is unfortunate because graphic nonfiction affords both teachers and students valuable literacy opportunities, particularly with the majority of states adopting the Common Core State Standards. Graphic novels “by their very nature, draw the reader into the story because the reader has to construct the story by actively integrating visual and verbal components. This is both a highly creative and interactive process, which makes learning more meaningful” (Jaffe, 2012). Teaching *The*

Stuff of Life: A Graphic Guide to Genetics and DNA (Schultz, Cannon, & Cannon, 2009) can draw readers into the story, meet numerous Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts, and strengthen and deepen content knowledge in biology class.

The Stuff of Life: A Graphic Guide to Genetics and DNA (Schultz et al., 2009) is an award-winning selection of graphic nonfiction written for young adults. Recommended by *School Library Journal* and *Booklist*, *The Stuff of Life* is also a Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) 2009 Great Graphic Novel and a 2010 Quick Pick for Reluctant YA Readers. Using an entertaining format, *The Stuff of Life* explains genetics in a multimodal way, illustrating complex concepts and processes with artwork and highly accessible text. Students are sure to enjoy the “back story” of this book: Bloort, an alien from another planet, has traveled to earth to study human genetics and is reporting back to his leader. Bloort’s information helps his leader determine that evolutionary processes that lead to genetic diversity are a strength for species survival and that his species could benefit greatly from such diversity.

Literacy activities designed to engage learners with meaning making throughout their reading of *The Stuff of Life* are included in Table 1. These activities are designed to engage readers with understanding key ideas and details, analyzing craft and structure, and integrating knowledge and ideas as called for in the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). Because *The Stuff of Life* works well across content areas, reading it in English class can assist students in analyzing multimodal text. As graphic nonfiction that is “housed” within a narrative framework, this text provides ample opportunity for readers to develop higher-level thinking. To further analyze *The Stuff of Life*, we believe that interdisciplinary study can take place in the biology classroom, enabling students to develop deeper understanding of genetics.

Table 1 illustrates how this interdisciplinary study can take place and aligns the learning activities with both the Common Core State Standards and the Next Generation of Science Standards. Before-reading activities are designed to build background knowledge

To assist educators with incorporating these nonfiction texts into their classrooms, we offer reading strategies and multimodal activities designed to improve student comprehension.

Table 1. How interdisciplinary units satisfy mandates of the CCSS and NGSS

<i>The Stuff of Life: Interdisciplinary Teaching</i>	
In the English Classroom	Follow-Up Discussion in the Biology Classroom
Introduction	
<p>Activities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. View the book trailer: http://us.macmillan.com/the-stuffoflife-1/MarkSchultz (CCSL-2: Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats). 2. Preview the text by listening to NPR’s story on <i>The Stuff of Life</i>: http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=100056967 3. Create a panel-type comic USING CHOGGER (http://chogger.com/creator) to explain a process familiar to you (CCW-6: Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others). <p>Questions: How does Bloort explain DNA? What is it? What can it do? What metaphors does he use for DNA? (CCRL-4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone.)</p> <p>At the end of the introduction, readers learn that Bloort has shared enough intriguing info with his leader to be allowed to continue his presentation. Why does the leader want to learn more? How will this info possibly affect Bloort’s planet? (CCRI-3: Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Life on earth did begin with asexual reproduction, Bloort tells his leader. However, species evolved through sexual reproduction. What advantages are there to sexual reproduction in terms of genetics? LS2.D: Social Interactions and Group Behavior 2. Who were some of the “founding fathers” of human genetics? What were their discoveries? LS3: Heredity: Inheritance and Variation of Traits
Ch 1 How the System Works: The Molecular Story	
<p>Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bloort explains that “the language of genetic science is very specific and specialized—it needs to convey concepts that are sometimes hard to visualize. It takes some study to make sense of it” (p. 27). Explain the analogy that Bloort uses to explain how DNA works. 2. How is RNA a “much less cautious, much more promiscuous cousin” to DNA? (p. 35) (CCRL-4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone.) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There are a few sidebars that chronicle DNA from a Human Perspective in this chapter. Explain the contributions of the people highlighted here. 2. View Anatomy of a Cell (http://www.biology4kids.com/files/cell_main.html) LS1.A: Structure and Function LS1.B: Growth and Development of Organisms LS1.C: Organization for Matter and Energy Flow in Organisms LS1.D: Information Processing

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Ch 2 How the System Works: Sex and the Cellular Life	
<p>Activity:</p> <p>With a partner, explain how the dialog format allows for in-depth detail of information to be conveyed. What is the purpose of having the ruler ask Bloort questions? (CCRI-6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text;</p> <p>AND</p> <p>CCR Anchor Standard 2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide a few examples of how chromosome complexities create varieties within a particular species of organism. 2. Construct an “Alike but Different” graphic organizer for mitosis and meiosis. (Briefly describe the cell cycle process known as mitosis. Briefly describe the cell cycle process known as meiosis.) 3. View Mitosis (http://micro.magnet.fsu.edu/micro/gallery/mitosis/mitosis.html)
Ch 3: How the System Works: Everyone Gets an Inheritance	
<p>Activity:</p> <p>Transform pictures into text that explains a process. Explain in writing how X [choose a process] occurs. Students must use pictures and text from the story to make sense of and explain the process in their own words. (CCW2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How did Mendel come to understand laws of genetics? 2. Illustrate the probability of an offspring’s having a particular genotype by using Punnet Squares. 3. The leader surmises that phenotype expression is more ‘unruly’ than genotype. Explain why. 4. View Learn Genetics (http://learn.genetics.utah.edu/)
Ch 4: Applying All That Stuff: For the Greater Good	
<p>Choose 5 terms that you feel should have been included in the glossary because they are important. For each, write a definition and create an illustration. Write a sentence for each word, incorporating context clues to assist readers with determining meaning.</p> <p>Teachers should collect this work, and use these words, definitions, and illustrations to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • construct a bulletin board for word study; • create a review game where students must match the word/definition with the correct picture; • direct students to find these words used in context (articles on the Web; in this graphic novel; in the biology textbook). <p>The leader is very interested in gene therapy because he wonders if it might be a solution to the genetic problems his species faces. Use the following words in a paragraph to explain how gene therapy works: identify, manipulate, splice, microbes, insert. (CCS Reading Anchor 2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain the significance of the Human Genome Project. 2. View Control of the Cell http://www.nobelprize.org/educational/medicine/2001/ <p>LS2.D: Social Interactions and Group Behavior</p>

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Ch 5: Applying All That Stuff: Into the Future through the Past

<p>Explain the two theories concerning Neanderthals presented in this chapter. (CCRI-8: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.)</p> <p>From Bloor’s lessons on genetics, what does the ruler decide is best for his planet? What changes will this mean for life on Glargal? (CCSS Reading Anchor 3: Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.)</p> <p>Construct a Glogster: graphic blog. This is a creative, interactive tech tool that utilizes both print and nonprint media. Mix Web, Images, Text, Music, and Video to express your understanding of X (choose a process). (CCSL-5: Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.)</p>	<p>1. Variations in the human species are significant. They reflect the fact that humans migrated from a single point of origin to establish genetically differentiated populations around the globe” (p. 123). How do we know this? Interpret the family tree on p 125.</p> <p>Core Idea LS4: Biological Evolution: Unity and Diversity</p> <p>LS4.A: Evidence of Common Ancestry and Diversity</p> <p>2. View Evolution http://evolution.berkeley.edu/evolibrary/article/evo_01</p> <p>LS4.B: Natural Selection</p> <p>LS4.C: Adaptation</p> <p>LS4.D: Biodiversity and Humans</p> <p>Create a panel-type comic USING CHOGGER (http://chogger.com/creator) to explain Y process in science. (CCSW 6: Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.)</p>
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and familiarize students with the genre of graphic nonfiction. They include multimodal resources to assist students with understanding content by viewing, listening, and creating. During-reading activities are designed to clarify concepts for students. They include examining the narrative framework of this story, completing chapter-specific reading guide questions, and creating illustrations to convey a scientific process. After-reading activities are designed to review and synthesis content presented in the book. They include focusing on key vocabulary, illustrating scientific concepts, and using multimedia resources to provide evidence of their understanding. Because biology is traditionally taught in ninth or tenth grade, we have aligned activities with the Grades 9–10 Complexity Band of the CCSS.

In all, the narrative structure of *The Stuff of Life* lends itself to a traditional literary analysis. The graphic aspect of the story illustrates clearly complex scientific concepts and processes. Together, the structure and illustration offer both English and biology teachers a wealth of teachable lessons to develop students’ critical thinking, writing, and analysis while meeting curricular objectives and aligning with the CCSS.

In the Biology Classroom: Two Websites

Adolescents are “engaging more and more in reading and writing mediated by technology” (Conradi, Jang, Bryant, Craft, & McKenna, 2013, p. 567). Incorporating such multimedia into our instruction can engage and motivate learners as they deepen their content knowledge. Here are a few such websites.

The American Museum of Natural History—Darwin website: Found at <http://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/past-exhibitions/darwin>, this website has a vast amount of information about Darwin’s life history, spanning from his childhood through all of his contributions to the understandings of evolution. One of our most well-known scientists, Charles Darwin is responsible for the theory of evolution. With his detailed notes and observations of finches from the Galapagos Islands, he became the authority on the adaptation of traits—the process whereby living species evolve in response to their environment.

The American Museum of Natural History website is broken into many different focus areas from which teachers can choose. An example that focuses on one particular portion of Darwin’s history, entitled *The Idea Takes Shape*, is particularly helpful. Table 2 con-

Table 2. Reading guide for American Museum of Natural History website on Darwin

Sequence of Reading Activities	Activities	Alignment with Disciplinary Core Ideas and Common Core State Standards
Before	<p>Post the following quote on the board “. . . barriers of every kind seem to separate regions in a greater degree than proportionally to the difference of climates on each side. Thus, great chains of mountains, spaces of sea between islands and continents, even great rivers and deserts.”</p> <p>Ask students to think about and discuss what Charles Darwin meant by this.</p> <p>(He is emphasizing the importance of physical barriers—“spaces of sea between islands” like the Galpagos—in the origin of new species.)</p> <p>Ask students to define natural selection and how it relates to the quote.</p>	<p>LS3: Heredity: Inheritance and Variation of Traits across Generations—focuses on the flow of genetic information between generations. This idea explains the mechanisms of genetic inheritance and describes the environmental and genetic causes of gene mutation and the alteration of gene expression.</p> <p>LS3B: Variation of Traits</p> <p>CCSS Speaking and Listening Anchor 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.</p>
During	<p>Complete an analysis of directed activities relating to text (DARTs; see Figure 1). Students create tables using information from the information provided in the webpage. The headings are constructed by the student based on themes that may emerge. When tables are complete, ask students to make connections between their ideas either in graphic (concept map) form or written.</p>	<p>LS4: Biological Evolution: Unity and Diversity—explores “changes in the traits of populations of organisms over time” and the factors that account for species’ unity and diversity alike.</p> <p>LS4.A: Evidence of Common Ancestry and Diversity</p> <p>CCSS Reading Anchor 7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively as well as in words.</p>
After	<p>Small-group and class discussion. Ask students how Darwin arrived at his final conclusion that natural selection was the cause of variation in organisms. Ask students to make connections to the scientific method.</p> <p>(Darwin gathered data from the islands, read other pieces of literature, formed a hypothesis about the origin of different species, continued to make comparisons between organisms (studying his specimens and others more local), arrived at current conclusion that “More animals were born than could survive. They constantly struggled against one another for food or room to grow, he thought. That meant any plant or animal with a competitive edge--drought tolerance, a thicker-than-average coat—could live longer and leave more offspring than its fellows. The presence of such adaptations controlled, in effect, which individuals would represent the species in the next generation.”)</p>	<p>LS3: Heredity: Inheritance and Variation of Traits across Generations—focuses on the flow of genetic information between generations. This idea explains the mechanisms of genetic inheritance and describes the environmental and genetic causes of gene mutation and the alteration of gene expression.</p> <p>LS3.A: Inheritance of Traits</p> <p>LS3.B: Variation of Traits</p> <p>LS4: Biological Evolution: Unity and Diversity—explores “changes in the traits of populations of organisms over time” and the factors that account for species’ unity and diversity alike.</p> <p>LS4.B: Natural Selection</p> <p>LS4.C: Adaptation</p> <p>CCSS Reading Anchor 2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.</p>

Types of organism	Location	Other species known to exist elsewhere
Finches	Galapagos (different versions found on all the islands)	
Mockingbird	Galapagos (2 of the 3 from different islands)	
Lesser Rhea	South America	Larger Rhea (common to an adjacent region)
Toxodon fossil	Uruguay (and 200 miles away)	

Figure 1. Example of analysis DART

tains a reading guide for this website, offering before-, during-, and after-reading activities that are aligned with Disciplinary Core Ideas. This reading guide is tailored to assist students in deepening their content knowledge through literacy activities (including “Directed Activities Relating to Text” or DART; see Figure 1). The goal of using this particular website would be to explore the essential question: *How does variation between individuals of the same species allow for survival?* Learning objectives for students would include: 1) explaining how barriers lead to changes in organisms, and 2) making connections between information in a text with scientific concepts.

Understanding Evolution, University of California, Berkeley, found at <http://evolution.berkeley.edu/>, has an immense amount of information focusing on Darwin, but also on the concept of evolution in general. The section used as an example is titled *Misconceptions about Natural Selection and Adaptation*. While there are many concepts to focus on regarding evolution, it is important that students’ common misconceptions be addressed. In this section, incorrect information is dispelled, and students are provided with correct information regarding concepts commonly misunderstood.

Table 3 is a reading guide for this website offering before-, during-, and after-reading activities that are aligned with Disciplinary Core Ideas and the CCSS. It is tailored to assist students in deepening their content knowledge through literacy activities. A main focus or essential guiding question for this lesson would be: *How does genetics play a role in the evolution of species?* Learning objectives for students would include: 1) explaining the role that heritable traits have on natural selection, and 2) generalizing that organisms

change due to the shift in environmental factors focusing on the need for survival.

The split-sentence DART in Figure 2 can be used with students in two ways:

1. Hand out the two lists in different envelopes and have students arrange the first list so all phrases can be seen, then take a phrase out of the second envelope and try and match it to one of the phrases already displayed.
2. Provide students with both lists of phrases, either on a piece of paper or on the board. Have students match a phrase on the left with a word/phrase on the right (Wellington & Osborne, 2001).

Given the push for the incorporation of digital text and media sources by the CCSS, the two websites we have highlighted will prove helpful and beneficial to students who are studying the topic of genetics. When websites such as these are used in conjunction with the textbook, students are provided with multiple modes and layers of learning. This learning is greatly beneficial to the diversity of learners we so often have in our classrooms who could benefit from expanding their book knowledge and engaging in other methods of instruction. Although we have offered a few suggested uses for the websites, there is a vast array of activities that could be constructed using the information provided there. We encourage teachers to adjust their activities according to students’ needs and interests and to seek out other websites to supplement their book work.

Conclusion

Using YA nonfiction and websites as resources for teaching genetics and other science concepts provides

Table 3. Reading guide for UC Berkeley site on evolution

Sequence of Reading Activities	Activities	Alignment with Disciplinary Core Ideas and Common Core State Standards
Before	Use a split sentence DART to determine student levels of understanding before reading information on evolution. (See Figure 2.)	<p>LS4: Biological Evolution: Unity and Diversity—explores “changes in the traits of populations of organisms over time” and the factors that account for species’ unity and diversity alike.</p> <p>LS4.B: Natural Selection</p> <p>LS4.C: Adaptation</p> <p>CCSS Reading Anchor 5: Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text relate to each other and the whole.</p>
During	Students construct a Frayer Model (Frayer, Frederick, & Klausmeier, 1969) using the concept of Natural Selection as the central focus and building upon it throughout the reading. (See Figure 3.)	<p>LS3: Heredity: Inheritance, and Variation of Traits across Generations—focuses on the flow of genetic information between generations. This idea explains the mechanisms of genetic inheritance and describes the environmental and genetic causes of gene mutation and the alteration of gene expression.</p> <p>LS3.A: Inheritance of Traits</p> <p>LS3.B: Variation of Traits</p> <p>LS4: Biological Evolution: Unity and Diversity—explores “changes in the traits of populations of organisms over time” and the factors that account for species’ unity and diversity alike.</p> <p>LS4.B: Natural Selection</p> <p>CCSS Reading Anchor 7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.</p>
After	After students read the webpage, ask them to reevaluate the phrase pairings from the <i>before</i> activity (Fig. 2). Ask students to identify which phrases are misconceptions, then discuss what the correct phrases should be and why. (Incorrect phrases: Natural selection is a process that perfects organisms; all adaptations can be used to explain natural selection; the only mechanism of evolution is natural selection.)	<p>LS4: Biological Evolution: Unity and Diversity—explores “changes in the traits of populations of organisms over time” and the factors that account for species’ unity and diversity alike.</p> <p>LS4.B: Natural Selection</p> <p>LS4.C: Adaptation</p> <p>CCSS Reading Anchor 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.</p>

students with supplemental texts that are rich in detail and description. Reading such texts enriches their understanding, especially when teachers utilize content area literacy strategies such as those mentioned in the article. In particular, we find graphic nonfiction to be an especially powerful tool for communicating complex ideas in an accessible multimodal way for

students. *The Stuff of Life* is an important text that lends itself well to interdisciplinary study, prompting students to think critically about both the form and content of the text. Our before-, during-, and after-reading activities prompted students to interact with texts by working collaboratively and utilizing technology to construct their understandings of genetics. Such

Phrase List A	Phrase List B
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection is dependent on • Natural Selection is a process • All adaptations • Feathers are • The only mechanism of evolution is • Mutation, migration, and genetic drift are • An exaptation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • natural selection • heritable traits • mechanisms of evolution • performs a function not produced by natural selection for its current use • can be used to explain natural selection • that perfects organisms • availability of genetic variation

Figure 2. A split-sentence DART

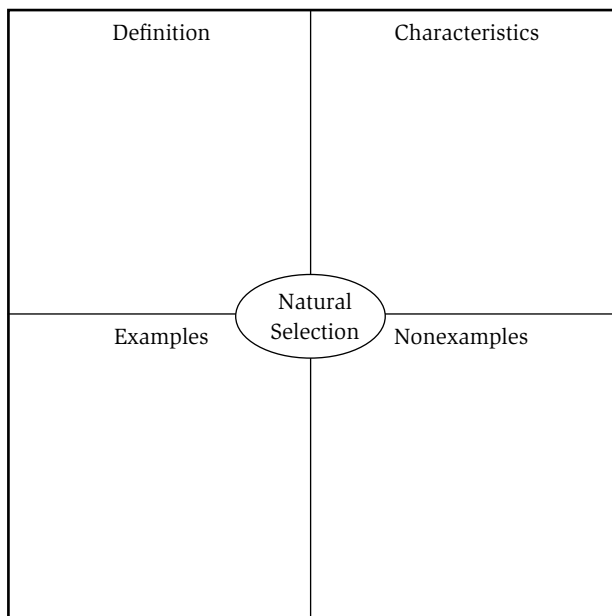


Figure 3. Frayer model for vocabulary development

instruction integrates the new Science Framework with the Common Core State Standards, ensuring our students work toward mastering twenty-first-century learning goals—goals that will prove to be beneficial beyond the walls of high school and support them in pursuing careers where they will be expected to work with information in multiple formats and interact with others in a respectful and productive environment.

We hope that this article intrigues readers enough to consider using these concrete strategies for interdisciplinary collaborations between English and biology teachers. Twenty-first-century learning, we believe, calls for methods and materials to engage learners in critical thinking and active learning across disciplines. For additional YA nonfiction texts that may work well

for other English–biology collaborations, consider those in Tables 4 and 5.

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Table 4. Additional genetics & evolution texts to consider

<p>Trade Books</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>*Charles Darwin’s On the Origin of Species: A Graphic Adaptation</i> (graphic novel) • <i>*Darwin: A Graphic Biography</i> (graphic novel) • <i>*Evolution: The Story of Life on Earth</i> (graphic novel) • <i>EVO Teachers’ Guide: Ten Questions Everyone Should Ask about Evolution</i> • <i>The Usborne Introduction to Genes & DNA</i> • <i>Garden Genetics: Teaching with Edible Plants</i> • <i>Kingfisher Knowledge: Genes and DNA</i> <p>Websites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn Genetics: http://learn.genetics.utah.edu/ • Control the Cell Cycle Game: http://www.nobelprize.org/educational/medicine/2001/index.html • About Darwin: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/evolution/index.html • Evolution Lessons: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/evolution/educators/lessons/index.html • Resources from the National Academies: http://www.nas.edu/evolution/ • Evolution on the Front Line: http://www.aaas.org/news/press_room/evolution/ • PBS Video Series: Evolution—A Journey into Where We’re from and Where We’re Going: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/evolution/ • NSTA Recommends 36 books on evolution: http://www.nsta.org/publications/evolution.aspx
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Table 5. YA nonfiction texts for additional English–Biology collaborations

Mary Roach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Gulp: Adventures on the Alimentary Canal</i> • <i>Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers</i> • <i>Bonk: The Curious Coupling of Sex and Science</i> • <i>Packing for Mars: The Curious Science of Life in the Void</i> • <i>Spook: Science Tackles the Afterlife</i>
Sy Montgomery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Temple Grandin: How the Girl Who Loved Cows Embraced Autism and Changed the World</i> • <i>The Good Good Pig: The Extraordinary Life of Christopher Hogwood</i> • <i>Numerous award-winning titles from the Scientists in the Field series</i>
Phillip Hoose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Moonbird: A Year on the Wind with the Great Survivor B95</i> • <i>The Race to Save the Lord God Bird</i>
Jay Hosler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Evolution: The Story of Life on Earth</i> • <i>Clan Apis</i> • <i>The Sandwalk Adventures: An Adventure in Evolution Told in Five Chapters</i>
Christopher Willis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Darwinian Tourist: Viewing the World through Evolutionary Eyes</i> • <i>The Spark of Life: Darwin and the Primeval Soup</i> • <i>Children of Prometheus: The Accelerating Pace of Human Evolution</i>

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NCTE Literacy Education Advocacy Day 2014: February 27

Join NCTE members from across the nation for NCTE's Literacy Education Advocacy Day on Thursday, February 27, 2014. NCTE members attending Advocacy Day will learn the latest about literacy education issues at the federal level and have a chance to interact with people highly involved with those issues. See <http://www.ncte.org/action/advocacyday> for details.

From Cave Art to Cryonics

A quick scan of the books that students carry around in school reveals a plethora of young adult (YA) fantasy and science fiction titles. *Insurgent* (Roth, 2012), *The Scorch Trials* (Dashner, 2011), and *The Rise of Nine* (Lore, 2012) seem to be current favorites. However, some students just do not enjoy science fiction, despite the popularity of books such as *Matched* (Condie, 2011) and *Hunger Games* (Collins, 2010), and the seemingly endless sagas of vampires and wizards. Some students simply prefer to read nonfiction, especially the kind of “true stories” that make them gasp and ask, “Is that really true?”

The good news is that the number of quality, nonfiction books for students is burgeoning. No matter the topic, from cave art to cryonics, a universe of new titles has the potential to invigorate the classroom with fresh perspectives. As with literary fiction, a primary criterion for the selection of nonfiction texts is the quality of the writing. In our classrooms, we like to integrate YA nonfiction with contemporary trade books, selected online articles, videos, news stories, websites, and as much relevant art, music, and sensory stimuli as we can find. Routinely using sensory stimuli (usually from the Internet) in conjunction with print nonfiction encourages students to move from reading to understanding, and at the teacher’s discretion, to research and creative projects.

Pondering the Future

Several recent YA dystopian novels postulate about the ways that innovations in microbiology could go awry. For example, in *Wither* (DeStefano, 2011), scientists who are trying to eradicate disease accidentally

program a shorter lifespan into the DNA of humans so that women die at age 20 and men die at age 25. In *Pretties* (Westerfeld, 2010), characters pop pills to remain perpetually beautiful and “bubbly.” It is a dose of tracker jacker venom that convinces Peeta that assassinating Katniss is the right thing to do in *Mockingjay* (Collins, 2011). While such speculations about trends in microbiology may seem bizarre, they are no more incredible than actual developments, which include tiny brain implants that dramatically increase intelligence and nanoparticles that, once injected into the bloodstream, detect and cure human disease at the cellular level before it starts.

These developments, along with hundreds of others (including spacecraft crafted to the size of a sewing needle) are featured in *Physics of the Future* (Kaku, 2011a). Recently, when I brought a two-page excerpt from Kaku’s book, entitled “Life in 2100” (Kaku, 2011b), that proclaimed that “the Internet will be in your contact lens,” “cars will be driverless,” and “the robot industry will dwarf the size of the current automobile industry” (pp. 45–46) to an eighth-grade English class, students actually attempted to pry the article out of my hands so that they could read it. The article also generated enthusiasm among students in a twelfth-grade Advanced Placement class. In the AP class, one student commented that he hoped a driverless car would improve the road habits of elderly drivers; another student predicted that school administrators would likely prohibit Internet-ready contact lenses, as they had already banned cellphones.

While it can be useful to pair YA literature with YA and adult nonfiction with similar themes (Walther & Fuhler, 2008), the oeuvre of nonfiction is sufficient-

ly compelling to constitute a worthwhile area of study all its own. Researchers interested in student engagement have long established that students are more likely to read when topics are related to their own lives (Gambrell, 2011; Guthrie, Wigfield, Metsala, & Cox, 1999; Wang & Holcombe, 2010). Perhaps nothing is more relevant to the lives of adolescents than the future and their prospective place in it, so we built a unit around an exploration of the future.

Futurist and inventor Kurzweil has written several books (2005, 2012) and created a website as a forum for discussing the future. The KurzweilAI website (www.kurzweilai.net) brims with free articles, books, and videos. The Web address of the site combines inventor Kurzweil's last name with AI or "artificial intelligence," though the site says that AI stands for "accelerating intelligence." Recent offerings include stories about a robot programmed to clean and tidy up, a forthcoming manned flight to Mars in 2033, the benefits and liabilities of a swarm of artillery-enhanced drones, and three-dimensional avatars (one is Princess Leia from *Star Wars*) who are soon going to greet tourists in New York City airports.

Kurzweil is famous for making outlandish predictions about the future, so an initial reaction to his website might be a roll of the eyes. However, for those who bother to track his predictions, Kurzweil's record is quite impressive (Kurzweil, 2013). In fact, in a 148-page update on the accuracy of his predictions, he writes,

I made 147 predictions for 2009 in ASM [the book *Age of Spiritual Machines*], which I wrote in the 1990s. Of these, 115 (78 percent) are entirely correct as of the end of 2009, and another 12 (8 percent) are "essentially correct" — a total of 127 predictions (86 percent) are correct or essentially correct. Another 17 (12 percent) are partially correct, and 3 (2 percent) are wrong.

Kurzweil is also famous for saying that the individual who will live to be 150 years old is alive today. He confesses that he is trying to stay alive as long as possible because he believes that, relatively soon, new breakthroughs in science will permit humans to live a high-quality life for hundreds of years without the hindrances commonly associated with old age. Indeed, the title of one of his books is *Fantastic Voyage: Live Long Enough to Live Forever* (Kurzweil & Grossman, 2005). According to Kurzweil, if consciousness, personality, and brains could be downloaded, then they

could become operable in robots. At the point where humans and machines merge, immortality becomes plausible.

In the book *Ending Aging* (2005), De Grey notes that aging is often the result of mutations of cells. As cells mutate or die, the body begins to shut down. De Grey asserts that by inhibiting cell mutation, a human could live much longer, perhaps to the age of 1000 years old. De Grey has an interesting talk on TED (De Grey, 2012) and articles and videos of his speeches and presentations abound on the Internet.

An organization called the Methuselah Foundation, founded by De Grey, has as its mission "to significantly extend the healthy lifespan of humanity." The organization's website (methuselahfoundation.org) describes several initiatives, including information about a prize established for the first company that regenerates a complete human organ (Methuselah Foundation, 2012). Also, there is the SENS (Strategies for Engineered Negligible Senescence) Foundation, a clearinghouse on breakthroughs on aging, which lists De Grey as one of its chief scientists (SENS, 2012).

Among the most radical of organizations related to aging is Alcor, a corporation that will freeze you through a process called cryonics, with the promise that you may be revived at some point in the future, preferably after the cure for aging has been discovered. While cryonics might seem outlandish or improbable, as of May 31, 2012, Alcor had 968 members and 111 patients (Alcor, 2013). A patient is an individual who has paid the \$200,000+ membership fee for full body cryopreservation or \$80,000+ for neurocryopreservation (just the brain). A member has paid an initiation fee and a number of additional fees in the hope of finding enough cash to pay for the preservation process at some point before Judgment Day. Alcor also features a free, slick magazine that is well worth reading.

The premise of cryonics has emerged in recent YA fiction, such as *Across the Universe* (Revis, 2011). Delving into real, science-based speculations about the future can be enlivening for students who might not

Perhaps nothing is more relevant to the lives of adolescents than the future and their prospective place in it.

be big literature-lovers. Learning about transformative technologies that could dramatically impact the future is a way of giving students a sense of time and place in the midst of tumultuous change.

How Long Will You Live?

An interesting way to begin the *How Long Will You Live?* project is to show how a person's physical features change with time. A photographer from Argentina has a nice website that shows photos of his family over several years (Goldberg, 2012).

Ask students to write down three facts from each of these websites:

- A governmental report on changes in life expectancies (United States Special Commission on Aging, 2013)
- Information on lifespans from countries around the world from the World Health Organization's database (World Health Organization, 2012)
- Facts about causes of death from National Vital Statistics Reports (Murphy, Xu, & Kochanek, 2012).

The *How Long Will You Live?* project requires students to combine readings of Kurzweil and De Grey with knowledge of the claims of Alcor and current data about longevity. The activity in Figure 1 requires students to answer three questions that require critical thinking, close reading, and considerable creativity. For the first question, students turn a table into a graph and make a prediction about trends in aging. The second question requires students to try to understand differences in the average lifespans in various countries. Possible reasons for a longer life include diet, lack of wars, and availability and quality of medical care. The third question asks students to write a story as if they were much older—30, 50, 80, or 100 years old. The idea is for students to work in details about daily life in the future based upon their previous readings. If students need inspiration for what their daily life might be like, the free Corning video available online might help (Corning, 2013).

Of course, there are many literary works that invoke the idea of immortality. In fact, one of the earliest stories on record, *Gilgamesh*, which was written on clay tablets, is about a king who strives to live forever. A superb, free graphic novel that describes the process of creating a new translation of *Gilgamesh* is available online (McAlpin, 2013).

Immortality is a theme in many Norse and Greek ancient myths, an obsession with the Romantic poets, and it shows up frequently in novels such as *The Picture of Dorian Grey* (Wilde, 2013), *Tuck Everlasting* (Babbitt, 1975), and current dystopian YA literature, such as *Incarceron* (Fisher, 2011), *The Postmortal* (Magary, 2011), and *The Declaration* (Malley, 2008). These fictional works should prove especially engaging to students after perusing the landscape of the factual future-in-progress.

Every Bone Tells a Story

Before Ancient Greece, and perhaps even before the development of language itself, there was art. Mithen (2005), in his provocative book *The Singing Neanderthals*, posits that singing, dancing (of a sort), and art actually preceded language. Anyone who has seen primitive "cave art," or at least Herzog's documentary film *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* (Nelson & Ciuffo, 2010), knows the power of the image to communicate across thousands of years. A discussion of cave art appears in the pages of the entertaining and sometimes irreverent *Every Bone Tells a Story* (Rubalcaba and Robertshaw, 2010), a finalist for the YALSA nonfiction award in 2011. *Every Bone* is the account of four ancient hominins—Turkana Boy, Kennewick Man, Otzi the Iceman, and Lapedo Child—who, by the power of the mysterious trail of history, left behind their fossilized remains. Containing encyclopedic-grade information, this text is written for students in a way that is both accessible and intriguing. In essence, students walk in the shoes of a scientist, archaeologist, adventurer, and artist, examining artifacts from characters who died millions of years ago.

Archaeologists debate whether or not Turkana Boy had the ability to speak and use language while he was alive. While it was finally deduced that no, he did not use language, the subject of art as symbolic expression and a form of language arose among anthropologists. Students who are drawn into discussions of "What ifs" will be deeply interested in how characters like Turkana Boy used art to communicate.

In reference to the cave art found at archaeological sites, Rubalcaba and Robertshaw write, "Cave art has some of the most mysterious examples of symbolic art. There are rows of dots, zigzags, V shapes, and grids. What do they mean?" (2010, p. 35). Students

1. Look at the table below on US Life Expectancy. Draw a graph of the average lifespan of Americans from 1900–2100 using intervals of 20 years (1900, 1920 . . . 2080, 2100). Data is available to 2020, but you will have to predict American life expectancies for 2020–2100. What are the trends? Write a rationale for your prediction.

US Life Expectancy at Birth, by Sex, in Selected Years (in years)

Year	Average age	Males	Females
1900–1902	49.2	47.9	50.7
1909–1911	51.5	49.9	53.2
1919–1921	56.4	55.5	57.4
1929–1931	59.2	57.7	60.9
1939–1941	63.6	61.6	65.9
1949–1951	68.1	65.5	71.0
1959–1961	69.9	66.8	73.2
1969–1971	70.8	67.0	74.6
1979–1981	73.9	70.01	77.6
1989–1991	75.4	71.8	78.8
2003	77.5	74.8	80.1
2015 (predicted)	78.9	76.4	81.4
2020 (predicted)	79.5	77.1	81.9
2050	?	?	?
2100	?	?	?

Data gathered from Shrestha (2006) and US Census Bureau (2012).

2. Compare life expectancies among three different countries. Write a summary of the differences in life expectancies and comment on why you think these differences exist.

Rank (of 221 countries)	Country	Average lifespan (rounded)
1	Monaco	90
3	Japan	84
12	Canada	81
28	Germany	80
30	United Kingdom	80
50	United States	78
95	China	75
144	Iraq	71
199	Congo	55
221	Chad	49

3. Assume that Kurzweil is correct and that people will live to be 150. Watch the video about the future at http://www.corning.com/news_center/videos/ADayMadeofGlass2.aspx (Corning, 2013). Imagine that you are one of these ages: 30 50 80 100. Tell a story about a typical day in your life.

Evaluation:

20 points = Details (Specifics about the future are interesting and seem plausible, based upon your reading, current trends.)

40 points = Quality (Story starts in the midst of you doing something. Tell your story so that the realities of the future are revealed. Include an ending.)

20 points = Smooth transitions and good organization

20 points = Technique, grammar, mechanics, word choice

Figure 1. How long will you live?

can ponder the same question: what is the intention behind ancient cave art?

A free, online article (Thompson, 2013) reveals that thousands of “flutings” were made by children’s fingers in the soft clay walls in French caverns over 13,000 years ago. The finger marks range from straight lines to “hectiforms”—hut-shaped symbols. The discovery gives credence to the theory that children were frequently contributors to the galleries of cave art that continue to be uncovered. Pertinent questions to ask students might include:

1. Were children taught to draw these lines and symbols, or were they a natural instinct?
2. Why aren’t the drawings more detailed?

The Bradshaw Foundation (2013) is a rich source of cave art from all over the world. Although the cave art discussed in the flutings article did not incorporate traditional artistic components, such as the use of color, many cave drawings featured on The Bradshaw Foundation’s website are incredibly colorful.

Of course, symbols are important in cave art just as they are in everyday life. Ask students about contemporary symbols used to designate no smoking, the girl’s bathroom, disabled parking, and other areas. Indeed, an important job of the anthropologist is determining the meaning of found symbols.

Symbolism and Critical Thinking

After viewing a variety of cave art, ask students to imagine themselves as ancient cave painters. What

drawings would they create? What message would the drawings communicate? Choose a compelling image from the Bradshaw Foundation website to discuss as a class and pose the following questions:

- How did these artists express ideas through art?
- What can you deduce about the artists and how they lived?
- Why do people use art to communicate?
- Why was art important to prehistoric peoples? (There were no computers or paper.)
- How is art used to communicate history?
- How can symbols help tell a story without using words?
- What would a symbol look like for a predator, a cold day, or for food?

Have students select a different cave drawing and try to discern possible meanings. Ask them to put themselves in the place of an ancient cave painter—what story or sentiment did they want to tell? Have students think of a story and then use a series of only three symbols to represent it. Encourage students to use simple symbols, but to make the message clear. For example, someone who wants to communicate, “It’s cold outside of our dwelling. We need to build a fire,” might use the three, simple symbols in Figure 2.

A useful reference for how symbols work is *Picture This!*, a book that tells the story of *Little Red Riding Hood* through a series of simple shapes (Bang, 2000). Once students create symbol stories, the series of symbols are presented to the rest of the class. Students attempt to guess the story behind the symbols.

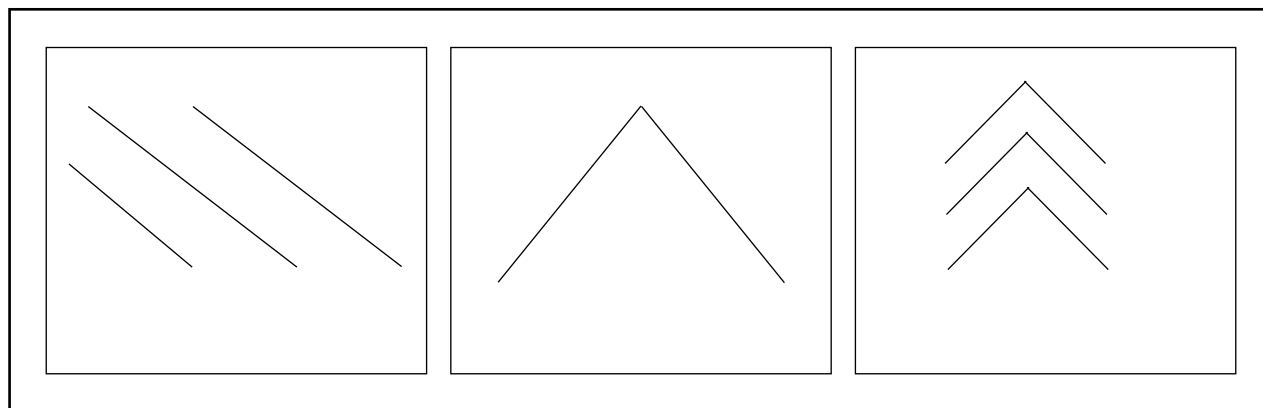


Figure 2. Using simple symbols to tell a story can help students ponder the use of symbols in cave art and other contexts.

The student (or group) that interprets the symbols correctly (matching the story) should be declared the champion story storyteller.

What Is Your Story?

The stories of Turkana Boy, Lapedo Child, Kennewick Man, and Otzi the Iceman are deeply engaging, and students tend to connect to these characters as strongly as they might to a favorite fictional character. It helps that the fossilized remains of these individuals are portrayed in great photographic detail throughout *Every Bone Tells a Story*. The ways that archaeologists can piece together stories from scraps of evidence are remarkable. Rubalcaba and Robertshaw note, “Most people think the dead are silent, but to an archaeologist they’re boisterous storytellers. . . . Of course the dead don’t leap out of their graves and give away their secrets. It takes scientists from every field imaginable to coax the details out of them” (2010, p. 1).

Ask students to consider what kind of story they would tell if they were discovered thousands of years into the future, as marvelous treasures, to scientists who studied their artifacts and bones. Would scientists be able to tell if they were an excellent athlete or an avid reader? Perhaps a soccer player might have sustained a shin injury that left tell-tale marks on his bones. Or maybe a fashionista’s bones would be found along with gems and jewelry.

The last pages of *Every Bone* describe “Iceman” Otzi (pp. 125–162). Found with Otzi was a 5,300-year-old ax, a quiver of arrows, straw-stuffed shoes, clothes, and a backpack (Ives, 2003; Ker, 2011). Ask students to make a list of things that, if they were to be preserved for the rest of time, they would likely have with them. What would the artifacts reveal about their hobbies and interests?

After lists have been made and you notice eyes wandering to neighboring lists, ask students to share artifacts and write lists on the board so that the entire class can see the diverse types of objects archaeologists might find. If someone put “boots” on their list, for example, what are some inferences about that person that an archaeologist might make?

Finally, ask students to pretend that their fossilized remains have been found, surrounded by their ancient possessions, by an archaeologist. In a narrative report, ask students to write about themselves

from the point of view of the archeologist who discovered them. Reports should include:

1. The location of the discovery
2. The situation of the bones (Were the bones scattered or intact? Was the skeleton laying down/jumping?)
3. What artifacts were found with the bones, and what can the archaeologist deduce from the artifacts? (Does a bicycle helmet on the skull say that the student rode a bike or that they had a weird fashion sense?)
4. The tone should be appropriate for the narrator—excited, irritated, elated, or confused—depending on the type of person that the narrator might be. The tone should be communicated in word choice as well as in the oral delivery, as reports are read aloud.

Encourage students to be creative in their “findings.” The anthropological reports in *Every Bone Tells a Story* provide students with professional, real-life models (pp. 53, 108) for their report writing.

Conclusion

Most teachers still associate symbolism, inference, and characterization with fiction. However, these literary elements can be readily applied to nonfiction texts as well. “Good nonfiction books are as rich in possibilities for deep, thoughtful discussion as any good novel” (Sullivan, 2001, p. 45). The edict that teachers should integrate more nonfiction texts into instruction, plan for more multimedia interactions, assign more research projects, and tackle more challenging texts will require a re-thinking of the traditional curriculum, not only in English, but also in social studies, science, and even mathematics (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2013). From cave art to cryonics, nonfiction offers compelling opportunities for students to read new stories, to make new connections, and to build their knowledge in new ways (Common Core Literature, 2013).

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Teaching Environmental Justice through *The Hunger Games*

In 2012, social psychologists Twenge, Campbell, and Freeman released a cross-generational study comparing the civic values of the Millennials against those of Generation X and the Baby Boomers. They found that more than previous generations, the Millennials value money and self-recognition above civic involvement. Empathy for others declined between 1979 and 2009 and, according to the study, the Millennials overwhelmingly believe that we live in a “just society,” or that people create and are responsible for the conditions they live in. These results are disturbing, and although it is not immediately obvious, they work in tandem with the finding that “the decline in wanting to take action to help the environment was particularly steep” (Twenge, Campbell, & Freeman, 2012, p. 1056).

As an educator and scholar, I found this study startling. Routinely, I teach courses on environmental issues, concerning anything from pollution to food to our beliefs about animals, and since my pedagogy is activist, my teaching revolves around the consumptive habits and lifestyles of my students. I get them to question where the materials they take for granted come from; I link their everyday activity to the impact it has on other living beings. They find this challenging, of course, admitting to feelings of guilt and shame, and sometimes even anger, but by the end of the class, the majority see the world anew and feel empowered to limit their impact on the environment and mitigate the suffering of others through changing their choices. This transformation is empowering and hopeful, but *it isn't enough*. As we enter an age of

escalating ecological turmoil, we must teach environmental values earlier, equipping our students to navigate a world that will pit them against others in the ferocious fight over diminishing natural resources. To prepare them for the future, we need to make the mechanisms by which the world works—as one country exploits another and the wealthy live off the poor—*visible*, so they can make informed choices. In this article, I am going to show how I teach the young adult novel *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) to do just that.

The Hunger Games is perfect for teaching environmental and social justice: it has a gripping plot, it thinly veils the global food system in fiction, making it nonthreatening and visible, and it argues that practicing compassion is the only way to survive a system based on competition. To begin, I will define Environmental Justice and give some examples of how to illustrate this concept. Then, I will give a brief overview of the global food system as well as ways to frame it. Last, I will show how I lead my students to see, through the politics of Panem, how the global food system operates, and discuss how the novel instantiates compassion as an alternative to the politics of greed. Some of these methods and concepts may not be wholly suitable for every grade level, but any teacher can adapt them.

Environmental Justice

Environmental Justice (EJ) is concerned with the unequal distribution of environmental benefits or bur-

dens based on race, class, or gender. Particularly in formerly colonized countries, it is easy to see Environmental Injustice at work as the European Union and

Wealthy countries increasingly import food from countries containing malnourished or starving populations, exactly as the Capitol does in *The Hunger Games*.

the US continue to extract resources under the auspices of trade agreements and through Transnational Corporations (TNCs). But EJ can also be local and, depending on where you live, obvious. For instance, heavy industry is often located in poor neighborhoods or where people of color live; wealthy neighborhoods usually have more and/or nicer parks than poorer ones.

For a long time, food was not an EJ concern, but if EJ is about unequal distribution, then healthy, nutritious, organic food is an environmental “benefit” the poor frequently cannot afford. The highly industrialized, chemically produced food they can afford, then, is an environmental “burden”—the pollution of their bodies through what they are able to consume, if they can afford food at all. An easy way to illustrate this is to ask students how much food five dollars buys at McDonalds versus how much five dollars can buy in fruits or vegetables at the grocery store. They will see there is quite a disparity and that if given the choice, a poor person will of course choose McDonalds over, say, a *package* of carrots, because one gets more

calories for the money, even if they are comprised of unhealthy fats and chemicals.

The Global Food System—A Crash Course

Because it is complicated, Environmental Injustice in the global food system is hard to see, so I spend time elucidating it for students. Globally, our food system is dominated by a small number of TNCs. (Five family corporations own most of the world grain supply, for example; see Barnet [1980], particularly pp. 154–156, and Morgan [2000].) Worldwide, these companies encourage farmers in the Global South¹ to grow cash crops, offering farmers a reduced rate on seed in exchange for a certain yield. Meanwhile, these same farmers must pay for fertilizers and specialized pesticides designed to work in conjunction with genetically modified seeds that produce only one crop—what EJ activist and philosopher Vandanna Shiva (2007) calls “seeds of suicide.” Finally, based on “market value,” these companies offer a devastatingly low price for the yield, simultaneously ensuring future dependence on the company for cheap seeds *and* the cycle of poverty that guarantees the families have no other options.

In *The Hunger Games*, this phenomenon is most visible in District 11, Rue’s district. The Capitol uses it to grow food and keeps its citizens at the threshold of starvation, mirroring the economic relationships of our world. In 1995, the World Trade Organization (WTO) in conjunction with loans from the World Bank gave the Global North unprecedented power—one might say *economic* policing power—over the Global South. As Raj Patel (2007) explains in *Stuffed or Starved* (a great resource for an overview of the global food system), including agriculture under the purview of the WTO was “the sorest point of contention” in its charter and allowed the European Union and the United States “to keep their strategic reserves of food, while forcing countries in the Global South to cede sovereignty over their agricultural supplies” (p. 97). As a result, wealthy countries increasingly import food from countries containing malnourished or starving populations, exactly as the Capitol does in *The Hunger Games*; further, these countries are denied food democracy and become dependent on a created system, also like the Districts.

Well-known sociologist Friedman (2009) argues

Modern-day Share-cropping

Ensuring that farmers must buy seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides each year replaces local, on-the-ground control of food production with complete corporate dependence. In some places, companies extend credit, and when the farmer gets into debt, the company takes the land as payment, then either leases it back to the original farmer or divides it up among many farmers—a new version of the share-cropping practice familiar in the American South post-slavery.

that “food politics are an aspect of class politics” and, I would add, globally entrenched, politically sanctioned racism, which together make unequal access to food an environmental justice issue (p. 1). In other words, hunger is not solely the result of the *inability* to purchase or grow food, it is also caused by preventing the poor from being able to do so through agricultural and economic policy stemming from global imperialism that is driven by outdated ideas of racial superiority. This fact is important; it shows how colonialism—in the form of physical domination—becomes neo-colonialism by way of economic domination, a concept clearly exemplified by the political structure of Panem, which treats its Districts like colonies. Panem, we could say, is a microcosm of our global economic system, reduced to the boundaries of the former United States so as to render it discernable.

Food Disparity and Hunger

When teaching *The Hunger Games* as an EJ novel, I start with food, then the political structure of Panem, and then talk about the two together to illuminate how the novel reflects our world. While *The Hunger Games* is obviously about social justice—the country Panem is, after all, a dictatorship—food justice is subtly woven into the plot. Food arises again and again, but as scattered references in dispersed scenes. Because the references to food are diffuse, and because access to food and eating are an invisible part of our lives (purposely made so), it is easy to miss Collins’s indictment of how the global food system exploits the poor. To get students to see the importance of food in the novel, I ask them to keep a record of the pages where food is mentioned, which inevitably includes almost two-thirds of the novel. We list the citations on the board and slowly go through each; all examples revolve around Katniss Everdeen, because it is through her that Collins illustrates the crushing power of the food system.

Collins establishes the connections between food and oppressive power from the very first page. The book begins as Katniss wakes, puts on hunting gear, and heads to the woods. Readers learn Katniss is forced to hunt due to her family’s economic position. Her father was killed in the coal mines, and although her family received “compensation” from the Capitol, which operates (like any large company) on the belief

that a family can be “compensated” for the life of a loved one, it wasn’t enough to support them for long (Collins, 2008, p. 26). Katniss’s mother is a healer, using plants to treat the injured, but the district is so poor—set in the coal-mining mountains of Appalachia, representing the very real poverty and environmental injustice of the region²—that she often treats patients for free. After her father’s death and the resulting emotional collapse of her mother, Katniss does her best to keep her family alive, “but the money ran out,” she tells us, “and we were slowly starving to death” (p. 27).

Katniss’s entire life is about ensuring her family has enough to eat, and the novel uses her family history to show that her socioeconomic status is controlled and maintained by the Capitol of Panem, which must keep its citizens poor or lose its cheap labor supply and virtually free commercial goods. As she leaves home, Katniss approaches the electrified fence that keeps citizens contained under police surveillance, the food that nature provides just out of reach of the average citizen. Beyond the fence, Katniss tells readers, the woods are “teeming with summer life, greens to gather, roots to dig, fish iridescent in the sunlight” (p. 9), but the Capitol has made it illegal to “poach” (p. 5) on their lands—after all, it can’t let its citizens use weapons, even if only to feed themselves.

“District Twelve. Where you can starve to death in safety,” Katniss mumbles as she ducks under the fence that, like much of the Capitol’s propaganda, is more of a panoptical illustration of power than actual barrier (p. 6). Within sight, the food provided by nature is forbidden by law, and after successive generations of containment, citizens no longer know how to hunt or forage; the Capitol has purposefully created a system that prevents citizens from providing for themselves. This is important to point out to students—Panem would prefer that citizens starve rather than break the law. In other words, the political system of Panem controls the entire food supply, and thus *inflicts* hunger.

In addition, Katniss’s hunting skills seem natural, a *fait accompli*, but after looking at the scene with the fence, I ask students to spend a minute reflecting on this question: if I threw you into the deep woods right now, what would you eat? Of course, their first answer is usually animals of some kind, but this is ridiculous: how would they catch these animals? What

do they know about making weapons, setting snares, or animal behavior? How would they know poisonous foods from safe foods? How would they find enough to *survive*?

I return to this scenario later in the book, but these questions help them realize how much Katniss has had to learn by the age of 16 to support herself and her family, and how much they, as students, depend on their parents and the grocery store for survival. As in Panem, our created food system isn't arbitrary, I point out; it is less than 60 years old. But in our modern day, it has become naturalized, and we are entirely dependent on it. Fewer of us grow our own food, which isn't necessarily bad (as it allows us to do other jobs), but it does mean we take our food and those who grow it for granted, and we are increasingly dependent on corporations for our survival. Corporations, I believe, care more about profit than people, and like the Capitol's voracious appetite for capital, this is part of what *The Hunger Games* wants to teach young adults.

In other words, Katniss's life is emblematic of the billions of poor people around the globe who simply cannot afford food. When discussing institutionalized hunger and food insecurity, I break students into groups, giving each a national, global, or local website on hunger. Our students are very Web-savvy, so I use that to encourage them to teach one another about poverty and hunger. Then I tell them, as numerous food-politics writers point out, that globally we produce enough calories per person to feed everyone in

World Mapper

In visualizing data, World Mapper is one of the best websites for almost any discipline and has a powerful effect on students. Using a map of the world, World Mapper expands or shrinks countries based on different indices. For example, on the "human poverty" map, North America shrinks to a sliver and Africa and India balloon to monstrous proportions. World Mapper has maps for wealth, income disparity, imports and exports (including food products), death rates, pollution, and many more. (http://www.worldmapper.org/textindex/text_index.html)

International Websites on Hunger

The websites for the United Nation's World Food Program (<http://www.wfp.org/>), Feeding America (<http://feedingamerica.org/>), The World Hunger Education Service (<http://www.worldhunger.org/index.html>) and Bread.org (<http://www.bread.org>) are good resources when discussing the political implications of Gayle and Katniss's "feast." If your area has local shelters or food kitchens that have websites, these can be particularly powerful.

the world, but hunger is not about insufficient production, it is about disparity. About one million people on this planet are starving, and one million are obese. We have the calories, but their distribution is based more on geography, class, race, and gender than students think. We can see this in the novel when we compare the living conditions and food in District 12, Katniss's home, to that of the Capitol, and then again when we meet Rue, the young fairy-like tribute from District 11, the agricultural region. What becomes startlingly clear in these comparisons is that Capitol residents live in a luxury that is politically *created* and militarily *enforced*.

To illuminate the contrast, it helps to spend time on the first real meal in the novel, which is hard-won and modest. Before hunting, Katniss and Gale share bread traded for caught game, gathered berries, and a goat cheese that Katniss's sister, Prim, has made from her goat's milk. Gale calls this "a real feast," and indeed, where they live, it is (p. 7). Other than this, most of what they eat is comprised of a rough grain, distributed by the Capitol. Both Gale and Katniss take pleasure in this meal because they earned it with their labor; it represents food democracy and sovereignty—their right to control food resources and to exercise food knowledge. This "feast" is the last food Katniss consumes before the Games, where the wasteful opulence of the Capitol becomes a main focus.

In contrast, Katniss's first meal as a tribute consists of multiple courses of rich, delicious food, lavishly laid out in an equally sumptuous setting. The attention to the extravagance that the Capitol showers on the contestants in preparation for the Games

continues throughout the novel, with repetitive and adoring descriptions of meal after meal. Katniss lists for readers: “Mushroom soup, bitter greens with tomatoes the size of peas, rare roast beef sliced as thin as paper, noodles in a green sauce, cheese that melts on our tongue served with sweet blue grapes” (p. 76). I ask students why Collins would describe each meal in detail; after all, most novels avoid mentioning the everyday duties necessary for survival. Collins describes them because for Katniss and hungry children everywhere, these meals are a kind of food pornography and the attention to them refuses complacency.³ At one point in transit to the Games, Katniss wakes and finds the dining car empty of people, but filled with “eggs, sausages, batter cakes covered in thick orange preserves, slices of pale purple melon” (p. 87). Immediately, she compares this with her mother and sister’s “breakfast of mush” (p. 87). The food the Capitol can afford to eat and waste seems as if from another world when compared to Katniss’s first meal of bread, cheese, and berries.

Collins continually compares the meals the Capitol provides with the living conditions in Katniss’s district, which has a high mortality rate. Katniss remarks that “starvation is not an uncommon fate in District 12” (p. 6) and most at risk are the elderly or the injured who can no longer work, or women and children who have lost their primary wage-earner, like the Everdeens, again representing the reality of our world; women and children suffer most from food disparity and chronic hunger⁴, as the students’ group research should have uncovered.

At this point, it is essential to talk about the effects of chronic hunger, because we tend to focus on the end result (death) and not on the effects on the living. George (1985) writes in *How the Other Half Dies* that chronic hunger creates citizens “physically less developed and mentally less alert than people who eat enough” (p. 11). She cites studies that show how chronic hunger creates a society of people “permanently damaged mentally” if they have not received proper nutrition in utero and during childhood; this, in turn, creates a cycle where development, political involvement, and even the desire to improve one’s living conditions require too much energy (p. 12, emphasis original). George writes, “One wonders, in fact, if those who contribute to keeping these masses hungry do not know exactly what they are doing, since fam-

ished, lethargic, diseased people are notoriously bad at overthrowing anybody” (p. 13). And this is exactly what Collins wants to show: the Capitol seizes all material production while “providing” for its citizens by keeping them at the threshold of starvation, and so prevents them from rebelling against oppression and exploitation. The blunt fact of the matter, both in the book and in real life, is that starvation is a cheap way to control the masses.

After analyzing the meals and before moving fully into the Games, I discuss the political structure of Panem.

Political Force in Panem

Panem is both a consumer-driven and thinly veiled version of the United States, now a dictatorship, and a vision of our future if our current national ideologies and policies persist. When the novel begins, the country is comprised of 13 districts, contained and policed by military surveillance. Each provides material goods, food, clothing, and entertainment for the inhabitants of the Capitol, which controls the totality of material production. District 1 produces luxury items, District 7 provides lumber, District 11 grows food, District 12 mines coal, and all of the districts are required to provide *children* for the gruesome and bloody entertainment of the Games. The districts closer to the Capitol have what we might call “favorable trade agreements”: they supply luxury goods and services, so that the wealth disparity between the Capitol and the districts is mirrored between the wealthier districts and the poorer ones.

Just as America hires workers in China to make iPads or laborers in Guatemala to grow bananas, Panem controls the price and distribution of goods—and thus the quality of life—in its districts, and in turn creates a “market value” for the lives of its citizens. In this case, the “market value” is incredibly low, and Panem has become cannibalistic, consuming its own citizens as the cost of maintaining control. Consumption is simply consumption in this novel, regardless of

The blunt fact of the matter, both in the book and in real life, is that starvation is a cheap way to control the masses.

what is consumed; in fact, the children dying in the Games are literally *consuming* entertainment.

Collins shows how, in a system where everything has a price, *nothing* is immune—not the basic necessities for survival, and certainly not the poor. The conflation of consumable commodities and consumable populations is one of the strongest ways *The Hunger*

The conflation of consumable commodities and consumable populations is one of the strongest ways *The Hunger Games* invokes Environmental Justice struggles.

Games invokes Environmental Justice struggles. Thus, the Games, the novel clearly articulates, are one piece of an oppressive state apparatus designed to show the districts just how much control the Capitol has—so much so that it can take their children with impunity and not only *subject* them to horrific acts of violence, but force them to *carry them out*. Titling the book *The Hunger Games* emphasizes

the role of the games as a mechanism of oppression to ensure compliance—a televised demonstration of power, starvation, and brute force.

This novel points out particularly that poor children are disproportionately at risk in a society that continually assesses “value.” A poor family can trade their child’s safety for food, known in the book as “tesserae,” and I spend quite a bit of time on this when teaching the novel. For example, Katniss should only have four entries in the pool for the Hunger Games since she is 16—one for each year since her eligibility began at 12 years old—but she took four tesserae to feed her family at the age of 12, and since the entries are cumulative, when the novel starts, Katniss’s name has been entered 20 times. In other words, Katniss wagered her life to prevent her family from starving, and it is the system that creates the need for tesserae in the first place. Katniss also notes that wealthier people, like Madge, the mayor’s daughter, do not have to sign up for tessera, which creates anger between the classes that distracts the poor from targeting the real perpetrator of this system. Katniss thinks, “[T]he tesserae are just another tool to cause misery in our districts. A way to plant hatred between the starving workers of the Seam and those who can

generally count on supper and thereby ensure we will never trust one another” (Collins, 2008, p. 14).

Because of tesserae, the chance that poor children will die is exponentially higher than in the wealthier districts, as it is globally due to starvation, pollution, war, or disease. In a cross-national study released in 2007, sociologists Jenkins, Scanlon, and Peterson (2007) show that 815 million people worldwide suffer from chronic hunger, with “nearly 20 percent” of these children under the age of five (p. 823). In the United States, we are more privileged, but hardly immune to food insecurity, especially as our class structure continues to stratify into what looks devastatingly similar to *The Hunger Games*, with a small minority holding a disproportionate amount of national wealth. In the United States, 16 million children “lived in food insecure households in 2010,” according to *Feeding America* (2012), which is about 22% of all children in our country (Food Insecurity section, para. 2). Through Katniss, Collins illuminates what students have already discovered via their group work—that within our food system, poor children suffer most.

As I have said, the Games are Collins’s literal translation of this fact, but she also connects *people* to *food* in numerous ways necessary for her young audience. First, Katniss is named after an edible tuber (Collins, 2008, p. 7), but I also point out that calling the day the children are selected for participation in the Games the “reaping” is purposeful—they are nothing more than a crop—and Collins reinforces this again by calling the “reaped” children “tributes,” a Latin term for the grain paid to the Roman empire by peasants or other countries as acknowledgement of submission. Of course, the very nature of the Games mirrors the gladiatorial spectacles of this era as well, with “Panem” deriving from “*panem et circenses*,” or *bread and circuses*—the idea that the masses need only food and entertainment to keep them quiescent.

Collins conflates people with food again as Katniss is prepared for the Games and turned into a commodity, a character for the audience to identify with, love, and ultimately, *consume*. To illustrate how Katniss becomes a “commodity,” I discuss the scenes leading up to the Games before Katniss enters the arena. Her survival depends on her appeal, so first she must be properly prepared by her “stylist” and “prep team” to conform to the desires of the Capitol audience.

While readers expect a before-and-after beauty makeover, the kind we see on TV with miraculous results, Collins gives quite a different picture. Katniss spends three hours in the “remake center” while they remove layers of her skin until she has been buffed smooth, wax hair from her legs, arms, torso, and face, file her nails, and cut and style her hair (p. 61). This isn’t at all luxurious or pampering, but painful and humiliating. During the process, one of the beauticians exclaims in surprise, “Excellent! You almost look like a human being now!” (p. 62). Concretizing the connection between the tributes and food, Collins writes that afterward Katniss feels like a “plucked bird, ready for roasting” (p. 61) and “a piece of meat to be prepared for the platter” (p. 64). Later, when Katniss does her pre-Game interview with Ceasar Flickerman, she comments that:

They do surgery in the Capitol, to make people appear younger and thinner. In District 12, looking old is something of an achievement since so many people die early. You see an elderly person, you want to congratulate them on their longevity, ask the secret of survival. A plump person is envied because they aren’t scraping by like the majority of us. But here it is different. Wrinkles aren’t desirable. A round belly isn’t a sign of success. (pp. 124–125)

This passage could be the thoughts of anyone from a poor country visiting the United States, where obesity is epidemic, yet we starve ourselves to be fashionably thin; where grocery stores hold an obscene amount of food, yet homeless people beg in the streets.

And so Katniss enters the arena not as a human being, but as a piece of meat prepared for consumption by those too self-involved to see her as anything other than entertainment. As she looks around the room prior to being thrown into the arena, she thinks, “In the Capitol, they call it the Launch Room. In the districts, it’s referred to as the Stockyard. The place animals go before slaughter” (p. 144). The fact that Collins appends the last sentence of this passage shows her awareness that some readers may not know what a Stockyard *is*, which speaks directly to our disassociation from our food system, particularly the vast oppression of animals and the corporate manufacturing of animal corpse flesh for consumption. Like cattle, pigs, or chickens, Katniss is “fattened up” before being “processed” into a consumable commodity, and like them, she is expendable.⁵

If the links between food, economic status, and

survival are not clear to readers, they should become obvious when Katniss enters the arena. Sitting in the middle of the arena is the “Cornucopia” stuffed with the food, water, and weapons the tributes need to survive if they have no hunting and survival skills.

By placing these supplies in a “Cornucopia,” Collins again reaches back to Roman myth and implies that we live within a system where food magically appears without source or labor, and indeed, an American grocery store is testament to this—a modern cornucopia of products from all over the world.

Replicating the conditions of Katniss’s life, each tribute must choose in the opening moments of the Games between potentially dying in battle for the food and other resources, or

starvation—no choice at all. Waiting poised on a pedestal for the Games to begin, each tribute “plays” the national game of social and class warfare. The fight over the resources in the Cornucopia kills almost half of the children on the first day, literalizing the horror of a future with diminishing resources if we do not implement social and environmental justice globally.

Precisely because her choices are restricted, Katniss is forced to use the politics of Panem against her fellow tributes—to use hunger as a weapon—in order to win the Games. Even as she tells Rue, “You can feed yourself. Can they?” (p. 206), she realizes that the other tributes “don’t know how to be hungry” (p. 208), and that she must enact the very ideology of the system she despises in order to survive. And indeed, the tributes who live to the end of the Games are those who have food knowledge: Rue and Thresh from the agricultural district, Katniss who can hunt, and Peeta. The only tribute left who does not know how to hunt or forage is Cato, the strongest and most brutal participant, surviving only because he hoards the supplies from the Cornucopia.

Yet, while Katniss enacts the tactics of the system to survive, it is her knowledge of nature and food that

The fight over the resources in the Cornucopia kills almost half of the children on the first day, literalizing the horror of a future with diminishing resources if we do not implement social and environmental justice globally.

saves both her and Peeta, and I examine this passage closely with students. Although the Gamemakers announce that, for the first time, if two tributes from one district survive, they will be declared winners together, they revoke this rule at the end of the Games. Facing Peeta, Katniss realizes she cannot kill him, and suddenly she sees that not having a victor would spoil the entire TV extravaganza and prevent the Capitol from “winning” the game *it* has been playing. She suggests she and Peeta threaten to eat poisonous Nightlock berries, literally utilizing her food knowledge to undermine the political system. Collins shows in this moment that knowledge leads to self-determination and empowerment. This is a powerful message for young readers who, in maturing, may be starting to grasp that they live in an exploitative system they

may not fully endorse, even as they benefit from it.

Not all of the citizens of the Capitol agree with the price of their privilege, either. I ask students to consider Effie, Cinna, and Katniss’s prep team—how are they portrayed? As evil agents of the system? Do we feel sympathetic toward them, and if so, why would Collins do that? Collins recognizes that when it comes to dominating the global food supply or state control, the methods of manipulation are much more sneaky, much more nuanced than most young readers will recognize. She shows throughout that the feelings of privilege and entitlement—to foodstuffs as well as to material wealth—is inculcated into the population in order to reinforce and maintain the power of the people at the very top.

This is an opportunity to raise complicity, because we are all complicit in the global marketplace, and this is why students often express feelings of guilt and shame. I stress to students that we are all born into a system, and how that system conducts business is often invisible to us. We may not agree with its methods or how it exploits less fortunate people (precisely why it is hidden), but *we do benefit from it*, especially here in the United States. In this way, the system co-opts our consent; it makes us complicit in suffering and oppression. But if we can see this system at work, the way Katniss does, and understand where our commodities come from, how they were obtained, and the real cost of their production, we can think of ways to work around—or even outside of—the system.

I think Collins is to be commended for not dismissing the messiness of political manipulation. After all, how can we, or the citizens of the Capitol, know the price of our privilege if that information is withheld from us? Katniss comes to see this as well. After she is forced to kill in the arena, she thinks, “to hate the boy from District 1, who also appears so vulnerable in death, seems inadequate. It’s the Capitol I hate, for doing this to all of us” (p. 236). Returning to the earlier moment with Madge, the Mayor’s daughter, Katniss finally realizes that the system maintains itself through class warfare, and in order to truly undermine the political system—which keeps “us divided among ourselves”—we must have more sympathy for others, even if that means we give up some of our own privilege and comfort (p. 14). Making this system visible—a system whereby wealthy nations exploit the poor for food, animals become mere products in

You Decide

“Food Democracy” is the right of citizens to have a say in how our food system works. It means being able to hold companies accountable for how the chemicals and antibiotics used might affect our health, for unsustainable or destructive practices, or for the use of particular ingredients. Food democracy is an area we have severely neglected in the US. In a recent interview, Mittal, Founder and Executive Director of the Oakland Institute, stated that the US was currently “the biggest example” of the loss of “food democracy, food sovereignty” (Danaher, Biggs, & Mark, 2012, para. 9). She discussed the recent push to label GMOs (genetically modified organisms) and how food conglomerates fought it, pointing out that “there was no democratic process whereby people of this country could determine for themselves what kind of food they would eat, how it is grown, and who grows it” (para. 4).

To delve deeper into these issues, the recent 2012 fight in California over Proposition 37, which would have made it mandatory to label foods that contain GMOs, is a good example. The proposition was defeated by the obscene amounts of money spent in opposition to the bill; the list of donors includes virtually all of the modern food conglomerates and can be easily found online.

the marketplace, and poor people often become the same—makes *The Hunger Games* Environmental Justice fiction with a very clear moral message.

Compassion and Social Justice

Recently, in an online interview posted on YouTube, Collins answered fan questions, and one asked what she hoped her readers would take away from the novel. Her reply—that they should ask themselves “was there anything in the book that disturbed you . . . and if there was, *what can you do about it?*”—shows she hoped the book would provoke readers to consider personal accountability and activism. If our desire within the environmental movement or within the critical environmental humanities is to spread recognition of harmful ideologies, novels like *The Hunger Games* provide a unique opportunity to meet precisely the group we want to reach at the age we want to reach them with literature that meets them on their own ground and speaks to them in their own terms. Because of this, I think Collins deserves praise for working important issues of environmental and social justice into novels for a group of readers who, we often think, are too jaded or self-involved to care. In truth, her nightmare fictional world is a condensation of the environmental justice issues that this very generation will face.

Too often, as I’m sure many teachers also encounter, I find students feel powerless to change the system. It is too encompassing, too large. But I point out to students that Gale and Katniss feel this way in *The Hunger Games*, too. Katniss thinks that anger about the system “doesn’t change anything. It doesn’t make things fair. It doesn’t fill our stomachs” (Collins, 2008, p.14). In this, she is right. But anger can spur us to act, and Collins gives Katniss and readers hope by arguing that one revolutionary act of courage and sympathy can create social change. She proposes a simple but radical solution: to practice compassion when faced with need, each time we see it, in whatever way we are able, even if that action seems too small.

To show how she weaves this message into the book, I have students list acts of kindness found within the story; they occur so consistently that we forget until the entire board is covered with page numbers. These acts of compassion are like ripples in a pond

and begin from the very start of the book when Prim is “reaped” and Katniss volunteers to take her place. Rather than clap as instructed, her fellow citizens are moved by her self-sacrifice and “take part in the boldest form of dissent they can manage. Silence. Which says, we do not agree. We do not condone. All of this is wrong” (p. 24). They follow this silence with a three-fingered salute that symbolizes respect and admiration—in short, an act of *civil disobedience*. The media manipulators in the Capitol ensure this protest is not televised, but that doesn’t stop Katniss, and her act of compassion after Rue’s death is broadcast to the entire country.

As Rue dies, Katniss sings her to “sleep” in one of the most touching scenes of the book. In a rush of fury and defiance, she realizes she can replicate her district’s protest “to shame” the Capitol, “to make them accountable, to show . . . that whatever they do or force us to do there is a part of every tribute they can’t own” (p. 236-237). She declares that the tributes are people, individuals, worthy of living their own lives, not commodities; she demonstrates that the most radical anti-capitalist force is compassion, the ability to forsake oneself and show genuine concern for others. She knows they will broadcast the retrieval of Rue’s body from the arena, so she decorates it with flowers, a visual assertion “that Rue was more than a piece in their Games. And so am I” (p. 237).

Rue’s district is so moved by Katniss’s display of kindness and grief that they reciprocate and send her a sponsor gift, a loaf of bread, the first “district gift to a tribute who’s not your own” (p. 239). Katniss recognizes the full value of this gift, and so should readers after hearing about the lives of the starving cash-crop farmers in District 11. What District 11 engages in here is nothing less than the “dangerous unselfishness” that Martin Luther King Jr. urged his listeners to practice in his famous 1968 speech “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop.” Collins argues through these two moments—when District 12 practices civil disobedience and when District 11 sends Katniss bread—not only that the strong have a duty to protect the vulnerable,

Collins gives Katniss and readers hope by arguing that one revolutionary act of courage and sympathy can create social change.

but also that *compassion is contagious*. We cannot witness it without feeling compelled to replicate it ourselves, and with this one act, the seeds of the revolution that follow in book two, *Catching Fire*, and book three, *Mockingjay*, have been planted via live television.

The message that compassion is contagious and the key to undermining an exploitative system is the most radical statement of the novel. This might not seem true to students, so I teach an excerpt of the Dalai Lama's tribute to Ghandi, to show how radical and

sacred the idea of universal compassion really is. In his tribute, the Dalai Lama declares that "some people seem to think that compassion is just a passive emotional response instead of rational stimulus to action. To experience genuine compassion is to develop a feeling of closeness to others *combined with a sense of responsibility for their welfare*" (para. 5, empha-

sis added). Katniss—and others, including Katniss's mother and sister, Peeta, Haymitch, Cinna, Rue, and Gale—embody these ideas in *The Hunger Games*. Their acts of kindness push others to act, leading to truly revolutionary social change where the citizens of Panem begin to feel "a dangerous unselfishness," a "sense of responsibility" for their fellow human beings. That Collins presents these ideas to a group of "undiscerning" readers, bombarded with materialism, increasing narcissism, and a rapidly degrading environment is profound.

While it may be true that Collins provides a solution to the projected dystopian future of the United States through Katniss, she does not give readers the satisfaction of seeing the system topple so that they are relieved of the duty to act. This is typical of young adult dystopias, which "tend to replace the unequivocal unhappy ending of the adult antecedents with more ambiguous, open structures, in which the story appears to be incomplete as it stands," writes Sambell (Sambell, 2003, p. 172). This is because Collins wants readers to recognize that the political realities of her text are not just fiction, but present now; we can't

simply dismiss them. Returning to these politics after the Games, Katniss thinks, "The most dangerous part of the Hunger Games is about to begin" (Collins, 2008, p. 359). If young adult readers don't understand that the Games are merely a heightened version of what these characters face in daily life—hunger, thirst, competition for survival—she tells them directly. Katniss and Peeta may have won the Hunger Games, but the political "games" of their world *and ours*—globally entrenched, state-sanctioned class warfare, racism, and environmental exploitation—continue.

Combined with Collins's elucidation of the global food system, her argument for compassion results in a message that is anything but typical. Taken together, these themes in *The Hunger Games* espouse a vision very similar to Vandanna Shiva's *Earth Democracy*, "a future based on inclusion, not exclusion; on nonviolence, not violence; on reclaiming the commons, not their closure; on freely sharing the earth's resources, not monopolizing and privatizing them" (Shiva, 2005, p. 4). Given where we are headed as a society, both nationally and globally, and what Twenge et al. discovered about the lack of civic altruism in younger generations, Collins's novel offers solutions both simple and radical that the Millennial generation desperately needs to hear. That these messages are wrapped in a juicy love triangle, a gripping plot, and laden with teenage angst merely makes them more delicious to the target audience.

At the end of the novel, I return to a frequent exercise where I ask students to reflect, in writing, on their views of humanity. Are we essentially good, or bad? Are we an inherently greedy, violent species, or can and have we evolved to a more peaceful and moral existence? Overwhelmingly, most of the class responds that humanity is bad—look at the world around us, the war and conflict, the ecological devastation, they say. Yes, I respond, maybe you are right, but in my experience, *that is not true*. When we give people all of the information they need and empower them to act, it is my experience that the vast majority *want* to do the right thing. Just look at yourselves, I point out—isn't that true? They agree, and I find that an enduring moment of hope.

Notes

1. I agree with Raj Patel's reasons for using this term in his book *Stuffed and Starved: The Hidden Battle for the World*

The message that compassion is contagious and the key to undermining an exploitative system is the most radical statement of the novel.

Food System (2007). The term “Third World” is derogatory, “underdeveloped nation” eclipses the political forces that prevent a nation from developing while assuming “development” is good, and the term “developing nations” is often an outright lie. The term “Global South” is geographical and more accurate.

2. For the particularly ambitious teacher, this novel also refers to Mountain Top Removal, the injustice in Appalachia of literally blowing the top off of a mountain to get to the coal most easily. The “waste” is pushed into the valleys or into water ponds above communities who live in constant fear of flood and disaster. (More information can be found at <http://ilovemountains.org/>.) Before I teach *The Hunger Games*, I usually teach a couple of chapters from Ann Pancake’s *Strange as This Weather Has Been*—a beautiful multigenerational novel about Mountain Top Removal—and the eco-documentary *The Last Mountain*.
3. In the second book of the series, *Catching Fire* (Collins, 2009), the Capitol’s disregard for and waste of food is reprised at the annual Games gala. Platters of food cover every surface and surround the party goers, and as they dance and gorge themselves, taking only one bite of each item, Katniss and Peeta discover that small glasses of emetic circulate so that the revelers can eat their fill, purge, and return to consume more (pp. 77–79).
4. The World Food Program estimates that “women make up a little over half of the world’s population, but they account for over 60 percent of the world’s hungry” (<http://www.wfp.org/hunger/stats>). Children account for roughly 20% of the world’s hungry, according to Jenkins, Scanlon, & Peterson (2007), leaving 20% for men, comparatively.
5. The abuses of the meat-processing industry of both animals and its labor force have been well documented. See *Fast Food Nation* (2012) by Eric Schlosser or *Eating Animals* (2010) by Jonathan Safran Foer.

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Tell Me a (Real) Story:

The Demand for Literary Nonfiction

One can hardly pick up a professional journal these days without reading about nonfiction, particularly as it relates to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The demand for the integration of nonfiction into classrooms is made abundantly clear:

[T]he Standards demand that a significant amount of reading of informational texts take place in and outside the ELA classroom. Fulfilling the Standards for 6–12 ELA requires much greater attention to a specific category of informational text—literary nonfiction—than has been traditional (Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Reading, p. 5).

This call for “literary nonfiction” has led to much confusion and debate. What is literary nonfiction and how does it differ from nonfiction in general? How does literary nonfiction support the goal of CCSS? What is the value of literary nonfiction? What resources are present to assist educators in locating and using quality literary nonfiction with students? These key questions need answers from those who know and understand nonfiction and its applications in the ELA classroom. Much profes-

sional development is being offered that ignores these key questions. The purpose of this article is to attempt to provide answers. Before teachers move forward with model frameworks and other curricular decisions, it is essential that a clear understanding of literary nonfiction is paramount.

Toward a Cohesive Definition

The term *nonfiction* is, basically, a definition of a genre by contradiction or negation. A search using the term *literary nonfiction* yields the following definitions:

- Nonfiction that reads like fiction and includes elements of fiction (plot, characters, conflict, etc.).
- A branch of writing that employs literary techniques usually associated with poetry to report on actual facts.
- Literary nonfiction is also called narrative nonfiction and creative nonfiction. It includes travel writing, essays, autobiography, memoir, biography, sports writing, science writing, and nature writing.

- Literary nonfiction is when an author uses facts and research to create a story with no “made-up parts.”
- Literary nonfiction is dramatic true stories that can explore a variety of subjects.
- Nonfiction is biography, autobiography, memoir, and informational texts.

However, a search of the standard textbooks in the field of literature for children and young adults yields different results. *Through the Eyes of a Child* (Norton, 2010), *Children’s Literature Briefly* (Tunnell, Jacobs, Young, & Bryan, 2011) and the classic *Literature for Today’s Young Adults* (Nilsen, Blasingame, Nilsen, & Donelson, 2012) offer definitions of nonfiction more along the lines of the following:

- Informational books (nonfiction) present knowledge that is accurate and verifiable.
- Nonfiction includes biography, autobiography, and informational texts.
- Nonfiction is based on fact and not imagination.
- Facts and information about

nonfiction are uppermost with storytelling used as an expressive technique.

To add to the confusion is the fact that the CCSS documents (National Governors Association & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010) also offer conflicting views of nonfiction. CCSS make a distinction between nonfiction and what they term *informational texts*, including literary nonfiction, and offer the types of these texts within the K–5 and the 6–12 Reading Standards’ discussion (pp. 5, 10, 35, 31, 37). It is quite difficult to determine the distinctions among these terms since they are used in a rather haphazard and inconsistent fashion. However, the CCSS does delineate some specific kinds of nonfiction for use in the classroom. Included for K–5 are these types of informational texts:

- biography
- autobiography
- books about history, science, and the arts
- technical texts
 - directions
 - forms
 - graphs
 - charts
 - maps
 - digital sources (p. 31)

The informational text types for grades 6–12 include:

- personal essays
- speeches
- opinion pieces
- essays
- biographies
- memoirs
- journalism
- historic/scientific/technical/economic texts

- digital sources (p. 57)

Autobiographies, then, are appropriate for K–5, but the Standards list memoirs for grades 6–12.

Technical texts are delineated for younger readers but not for young adults. Vague descriptions (journalism, historic texts) are listed with little or no elaboration. Given that forms, formats, and genres are shifting and evolving constantly, perhaps this is not as surprising as it appears on the surface. Lines are blurring between and among genres; definitions of what is a *text* are also changing with the advent of more electronic forms and formats. Even the design of nonfiction demonstrates the evolution of the genre.

What is needed is a consensus among educational stakeholders (teachers, librarians, administrators, parents, curriculum writers, etc.) about the term *literary nonfiction* and what will qualify as such as new curricula demand its use in larger percentages. (As much as 70% of reading across high school grade levels should be literary nonfiction, according to CCSS.) Moreover, the idea that there might exist a “non-literary” or “non-creative” nonfiction is disturbing. The term that seems to make most sense here is *narrative* nonfiction—nonfiction that tells a story. This term combines the emphasis on fact and information as well as on story. It includes those types of books already being mentioned in much of the CCSS literature: autobiography, biography, informational texts, and memoir (though a discussion about the artificial distinction between *autobiography* and *memoir* needs some closer examination as well). It also includes the element of *story*

Lines are blurring between and among genres; definitions of what is a *text* are also changing with the advent of more electronic forms and formats.

rather than the more amorphous concept of being literary or creative. Narrative nonfiction is informational and it is literary. Perhaps educators would be well served to establish a terminology that is consistent.

The Value of Nonfiction

There has been a great deal of consternation expressed about the demands for more nonfiction within the CCSS. I understand this concern because I know that the background I brought to my ELA classes in the late 1970s is not very different from the background educators are bringing with them in the 21st century. As an English major, I had countless courses that included the reading and discussion of the classics. Most of those classics were fiction, however. Few, if any, of my college courses included nonfiction. There was an occasional essay, of course, but the focus was squarely on fiction. So, as I was developing my classroom library, booktalking to students, and reading to stay abreast of YA books, I seldom turned to nonfiction. Today, however, I am quite likely to turn

to nonfiction for pleasure reading, to include nonfiction among the required reading for my YA class, and to include nonfiction as I present staff development. What changed over the years?

The first change occurred early in my teaching career as I watched kids gravitate toward certain books when we visited the school library. See if this scenario sounds familiar: at one table is a group of students chatting and laughing and pointing as they turn the pages of *The Guinness Book of World Records*. At another table, kids have taken out paper and pencils and are trying to replicate drawings in one of Lee J. Ames's *Draw 50* books. A couple of girls are checking out the latest biography of a pop idol (in my time, it was New Kids on the Block and Vanilla Ice), while a handful are scanning the shelf of sports biographies looking for one they might have missed. I usually headed right to the fiction stacks, but not all of my students did the same. Obviously, there was interest in books other than fiction.

The real jolt happened when I asked one of my students why he self-defined as a nonreader on a survey I had conducted with the class. I saw him reading during silent reading time. He carried books with him. He checked books out of the library. Surely these were the behaviors of a reader, right? Basically, his response was that the reading he did was not the same type of reading he saw in most of his ELA classes. Reading biographies of basketball stars or reading drawing books or browsing the *Guinness Book of World Records* (Glenday, 2009) was not deemed reading by his previous teachers,

Reading nonfiction fits easily into the different stages in the development of lifelong readers.

so he began to define himself as a nonreader. I wondered then (and still do) how many students we lose because our working definition of reading is too narrow or limited?

Reading nonfiction fits easily into the different stages in the development of lifelong readers. For unconscious delight, the reading of serial nonfiction allows readers to become “lost in a book,” enjoying that time when the real world slips away as we are reading. For some, this means specializing in a particular series of informational books, such as *Greatest Stars of the NBA* (Finkel, 2004). This series combines the narrative techniques of biography with the format of graphic novels and manga. Here is informational text that blurs genre boundaries, that combines forms and formats. Serial reading could also mean reading the works of some of the leading authors of biographies and autobiographies, such as Russell Freedman, or reading the narrative nonfiction of Susan Campbell Bartoletti, Steve Sheinkin, or Sue Macy. It might take the form of students seeking out books about historical periods of interest to them, perhaps moving from *Freedom's Children* (Levine, 1993) to *Claudette Colvin: Twice toward Justice* (Hoose, 2009) to Dionne Graham's audio narration of Martin Luther King Jr.'s *Letters from Birmingham Jail* (2013).

If students prefer to read for vicarious experiences, another stage in the development of lifelong readers, there are many subjects and topics to peruse. Instead of simply reading *The Diary of Anne Frank* (Frank, Frank, Pressler, & Massotty, 1995), we might offer the graphic novel biography authorized by the Anne Frank House (Jacobson and Colon, 2010), which might lead to the rendition of the 911 report by these same graphic novelists. Then one might move on to other works set during the Holocaust, including *Hitler Youth* (Bartoletti, 2005), *Surviving the Angel of Death* (Kor & Buccieri, 2009), and *I Have Lived a Thousand Years* (Jackson, 1997).

Reading autobiographically might lead a student to read books about topics that touch on their own lives. Books about health and beauty—like *Lauren Conrad Beauty* (Conrad & Loehnen, 2012), *Seventeen 500 Health & Fitness Tips: Eat Right, Work Out Smart, and Look Great!* (Foye, 2011)—or books about college and career like *Seventeen's Guide to Getting into College: Know Yourself, Know Your Schools, & Find Your Perfect Fit!* (Fender-son, 2008) or books about careers, culture, compromise, and a myriad of other topics.

Certainly there is nonfiction that also causes readers to grapple with more philosophical issues, another important stage of reader development. Books about racism and prejudice, about war, poverty, population growth, climate change, the environment, pollution, and other topics can assist readers in not only finding the facts and figures for a report, but also informing them about choices they must make as consumers and human beings.

I already had evidence that my own students were reading for aesthetic experiences, the final stage in the development of lifelong readers. There was obviously value in reading nonfiction. The question for me was, *how do I fill in my own reading gaps and develop my collection to include more nonfiction?* Though this was a question I considered decades ago, it is still a viable and essential question for teachers entering classrooms today under the CCSS demand for increasing exposure to nonfiction.

Resources for Locating Narrative Nonfiction for Students

Of course, given the emphasis on CCSS means educators are scrambling to locate exemplary narrative nonfiction so that they can develop model frameworks, write curriculum to address the Anchor Standards, and supplement their own reading to include more narrative nonfiction. CCSS provides what they call Exemplar Texts—suggestions for texts to be used in building new lessons. They do point out, however disingenuously, that these are not the only texts that could be used. That is a relief since they list only *five* (!) texts for middle school grades. Churchill, Frederick Douglas, John Adams, and John Steinbeck get nods at this level, along with Ann Petry’s bio of Harriet Tubman (2007). For high school, the list includes Washington, Lincoln, Paine, FDR, Patrick Henry, and Ronald Reagan, along with a very few authors who are not white: Angelou, Anaya, and Tan. Given this paucity of resources, where can teachers turn for more

narrative nonfiction?

My first answer is this: turn to your school librarians. They have much to offer. Their books are free of charge, too. Talk to the school librarian about books for topics and subjects you plan to use within your curriculum. Certified school librarians know the collection and can assist teachers in all subject matters by locating resources, books, and other materials. Here are some other resources that should prove valuable:

1. Excellence in Nonfiction Award from the Young Adult Library Services of the American Library Association (YALSA). Presented in 2010 for the first time, this award recognizes distinction in nonfiction for YA readers. Winners may be located here: <http://www.ala.org/yalsa/booklistsawards/bookawards/nonfiction/previous>.
2. The Sibert Award for Nonfiction from the Association of Library Services to Children (ALSC). First presented in 2001, this award is for distinction in nonfiction for children. However, since the age range for these books extends to age 14, there are plenty of good YA nonfiction titles from which to select. The list of winners, past and present, may be found here: <http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/sibertmedal/sibertpast/sibertmedalpast>.
3. One of the oldest awards for nonfiction, the Orbis Pictus Award from the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) has been awarded since 1990. The award includes one winning title, a handful of honor books, and a list of recommend-

ed titles as well. Current winners and links to winning titles from the past are located here:

<http://www.ncte.org/awards/orbispectus>.

4. Children’s Book Council (CBC). Since 1972, the CBC and content area professional organizations have produced two lists: Notable Books in the Social Studies and Notable Outstanding Science Trade Books. You can link to past lists here for social studies: <http://www.socialstudies.org/notable>. Links for science are here: <http://www.cbcbbooks.org/readinglists.php?page=outstandingscience>.
5. Reviewing journals such as *VOYA*, *SLJ*, *Booklist*, and *The Horn Book* review nonfiction regularly. Lists of those books receiving starred reviews are generally a good place to begin.

Become a nonfiction detective. If you are not already part of a PLN, begin to build one using Twitter, Tumblr, and blogs. See what books are getting the “buzz.” Right now, my favorite new piece of nonfiction is called *Bad for You* (Pyle, 2013), a book that seamlessly blends nonfiction in the graphic novel format. Chapters discuss things that others believe are bad for teens, including play, comics, and video games. Members of my PLN are suggesting titles such as the *Scientists in the Field* series and the *Discover More* series. Individual titles include *Temple Grandin* (Montgomery, 2012), *Invincible Microbe* (Murphy & Blank, 2012), and *Impossible Rescue* (Sandler, 2012). Look inside your classroom as well.

Lurk and watch. See what narrative nonfiction appeals to readers in your classroom. Are they reading

memoirs? Why? Or why not? Do certain topics and subjects appeal across age and gender and other factors? What are they? If CCSS remain as the dictate for many states, we need to assess where our readers are in terms of reading nonfiction and plan how we will introduce them to other types of narrative nonfiction in a way that motivates them to read for more than just a test.

Finally, a Challenge for Us All

The emphasis on nonfiction or reading of informational texts should be one I welcome. But I do have some concerns. David Coleman, one of the key “architects” for the new Standards, points to the need for nonfiction so that students will be more prepared for college and career; thus the push for nonfiction within CCSS. He insists that readers gain “world knowledge” through nonfiction, a knowledge that is absent from fiction. The CCSS call for increasing emphasis on informational texts, about a 70–30 ratio in high school. This de-valuing and de-emphasis on fiction might also result in the loss of readers.

If we are not to be restricted to the rather confining nature of the CCSS Exemplar Texts, we need to challenge ourselves to read more and to read more widely. I generally begin with the award winners, if they are books I have not already read. Here are five of the most recent award recipients for you to browse (and even better, read). *Bomb: The Race to Build—and Steal—the World’s Most Dangerous Weapon* by Steve Sheinkin (2012),

the winner of the Excellence in Nonfiction Award from YALSA, the Sibert Award from ALSC, and a Newbery Honor winner, is a powerful story that has, at its heart, spies and intrigue and political maneuverings. Given all the accolades, this might just be the perfect place to begin reading and discovering the wonderful world of narrative nonfiction available for today’s educators and students. *We’ve Got a Job: The 1963 Birmingham Children’s March* (2012) by Cynthia Levinson was also recognized with multiple awards. *No Crystal Stair: A Documentary Novel of the Life and Work of Lewis Michaux, Harlem Bookseller* (2012) by Vaunda Micheaux Nelson combines fact and story in a documentary novel format. *Titanic: Voices from the Disaster* (2012), written by Deborah Hopkinson, and *Moonbird: A Year on the Wind with the Great Survivor B95* (2012), written by Phillip Hoose, received both the Sibert and the Excellence in Nonfiction Award this year. Challenge yourself and your colleagues to “mind the gap” and read more narrative nonfiction to share with your classes.

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2014 Call for CEL Award for Exemplary Leadership

Please nominate an exceptional leader who has had an impact on the profession through one or more of the following: 1) work that has focused on exceptional teaching and/or leadership practices (e.g., building an effective department, grade level, or building team; developing curricula or processes for practicing English language arts educators; or mentoring); 2) contributions to the profession through involvement at both the local and national levels; 3) publications that have had a major impact. This award is given annually to an NCTE member who is an outstanding English language arts educator and leader. Your award nominee submission must include a nomination letter, the nominee's curriculum vita, and no more than three additional letters of support from various colleagues. Send by **February 1, 2014**, to: Rebecca Sipe, 8140 Huron River Drive, Dexter, MI 48130. Or email submission to Rebecca.sipe@emich.edu (Subject: CEL Exemplary Leader).



To Run the Course

On Memorial Day weekend, my family renews an annual tradition. In Indiana, it is an event that brings the spring (and the school year) to a close while ushering in the freedom, the possibilities, and the warmth of summer. For the last 20 years, we have attended the “Greatest Spectacle in Racing”—the Indianapolis 500.

As we make the hour-long drive to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, a two-and-a-half mile oval affectionately known as “The Brickyard,” other traditions are also reclaimed. We follow the same route to the speedway, park on the same block, sit just past the start-finish line better known as the “yard of bricks,” and enjoy the same packed lunch at this all-day affair.

The race itself is also filled with time-honored and cherished ceremonies. Taps is played and a moment of silence honors those servicemen and women who died in defense of this nation. There is the singing of the national anthem and “Back Home Again in Indiana” followed by the release of thousands of balloons. Next, the command to “Start Your Engines!” is given and, shortly thereafter,

the flying start with 33 cars plunging down the front straightaway approaching speeds of 200 mph, bringing a crowd of 250,000 people to its feet!

Two years ago, we witnessed an Indianapolis 500 like no other. While each race usually produces its own share of drama, close finishes are a rarity. The 100th anniversary of the first 500—held in 1911—was holding true to form. As the penultimate lap was completed, an unheralded rookie, J. R. Hildebrand, led the field by nearly four seconds—an insurmountable margin barring catastrophic engine failure or an accident. As Hildebrand approached the final turn, with the race seemingly well in hand, he came upon a backmarker—a racecar traveling some 80 mph slower than the lead cars. Rather than slowing down, Hildebrand attempted the pass, drifting high in the turn and off the racing line. His car got caught up in the marbles (those pieces of shredded tire rubber that are analogous to a passenger car driving on ice or, yes, marbles). In an instant, he lost control of his car, which slammed into the outside wall, spreading debris across the racetrack. The

forward momentum of his racecar carried him down the length of the front straightaway, but, alas, Hildebrand’s shattered chassis was passed by another car a mere 100 yards from the finish line.

The academic year often seems like just such an endurance race. There are long-standing classroom traditions in the form of treasured anecdotes, books, courses, lessons, and units. There is the excitement of the unknown. Will the implementation of new concepts, materials, and pedagogies bring about increases in student learning? There is the frenetic start with all the aspirations, energy, hope, and hoopla that is part of a new beginning for both students and teachers. However, by mid-year, the days, not unlike the laps of a race, unfold at a steady if not mesmerizing pace, occasionally interrupted by the unexpected student mishap or comment of surpassing insight.

Back to School: Continuing Tradition under Common Core

The 2013–2014 school year is far from typical; something unique is happening in schools across

the country as many states and thousands of districts implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS or Standards). Arguably, these Standards, once fully implemented, will provide students, regardless of location, with a “common” and, therefore, equally rigorous education that prepares them for the next phase of life. This is, undoubtedly, why the CCSS has thus far experienced widespread public support. Of course, the suppositions imbedded in this movement—the efficacy of the Standards, themselves, the implicit criticism of all schools that justifies such a sweeping reform, and the wisdom of applying a single set of standards to a diverse, complex, and continental nation—are just now being broadly debated.

Regardless of this debate’s outcome, the Standards offer teachers in the humanities with at least one positive turn. Hopefully, the Standards’ emphasis on informational texts in the “English Language Arts Standards” and “Literacy in History/Social Studies” will serve as a catalyst for a dialogue between English language arts (ELA) and social studies teachers. As a former middle and high school social studies teacher with 17 years of experience, I recall a lengthy struggle to get up to speed in the teaching of historical writing to secondary students. This is not uncommon among social studies teachers who often have little methodological training in the teaching of writing. Surely, some early career conversations with ELA teachers would have given me a jump start in accomplishing this important and complicated task, thus benefitting the students and teachers in both content areas.

Nevertheless, literacy is not the sole charge of any one content area or teacher, as the CCSS makes clear.

Correspondingly, I suspect my fellow educators in ELA feel a similar foreboding when steering their class from literature toward complementary informational texts, such as historical documents. This is further complicated by the burden ELA teachers often shoulder in schools—the full weight of teaching literacy skills. Nevertheless, literacy is not the sole charge of any one content area or teacher, as the CCSS makes clear:

The Standards set requirements not only for English language arts (ELA) but also for literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. Just as students must learn to read, write, speak, listen, and use language effectively in a variety of content areas, so too must the Standards specify the literacy skills and understandings required for college and career readiness in multiple disciplines.

In the spirit of dialogue and mutual responsibility for developing literate students, let me offer some suggestions for implementing historical informational texts that are appropriate for adolescents and fit into your curriculum, along with information about where they can be found.

Over the last quarter century or so, social studies teachers in particular have been encouraged to use primary sources in their classroom instruction (Barton & Levstik, 2003). Primary sources, defined as

“firsthand testimony about a[n] . . . event,” are the building blocks of history (Handlin et al., 1954). They include documentary sources such as autobiographies, diaries, government documents, interviews, journals, letters, memorandums, official records, speeches, and telegrams. However, they may also include non-documentary sources, such as photographs, moving pictures, paintings, poems, and songs.

Regardless of the format, primary sources offer the possibility of seeing events and developments from multiple perspectives. They empower individual students to interpret and construct historical meaning. These sources also have another appeal; they are seen as antidotes to the sanitized, staid, and stilted narratives often found in history books. Gradually, primary sources have become standard fare in social studies classrooms.

In spite of their attraction, primary sources require competent and thoughtful handling. Several strategies, often simply known by their acronym, have been developed to provide students a framework for analyzing documents. Among these are RAFTS (Role, Audience, Format, Topic, and Strong Verb; www.vrml.k12.la.us/graphorgan/18strat/strat/raft/raft.htm) and APPARTS (Author, Place and Time, Prior Knowledge, Audience, Reason, The Main Idea, and Significance; <http://teachinghistory.org/teaching-materials/ask-a-master-teacher/24711>). At the apex of the corner connecting English language arts with social studies is a College Board analysis strategy known as SOAPS. In this age of the CCSS, the strategy has a parallel application to both ELA and social studies. In ELA, it is referred to

Table 1. Questions for students as they approach English language arts or social studies texts

	Speaker	Occasion	Audience	Purpose	Subject	Tone
English Language Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whose voice will be heard in this composition? Is this voice a fictional character or that of the writer? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the time and place of the writing? What context prompted the composition? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who is the intended audience for this writing? Why are you addressing them? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do you hope to accomplish with this composition? Is the composition going to be a narrative, persuasive, or analytical? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the subject of this writing? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the attitude of the author? What is the author's tone of voice?
Social Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who is the author of this document? What is the author's point of view? Is this person writing in an official capacity or privately? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When was this document created? What is the historical context that led to the creation of this document? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who is the intended audience? What does the author think about his/her audience? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why was the document written? What purpose(s) does it serve? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the message? What does this document tell us about the era, the people, and/or institutions? 	

as SOAPStone, and it involves a series of questions that students should answer before writing a composition. By contrast, the social studies version is simply known as SOAPS and is used for document analysis as explicated in Table 1. In short, the idea is that the very questions used in the construction of a composition are later fruitful for document analysis.

So, if you are teaching or your students are reading a YA novel with a specific historical setting (e.g., Westward Expansion, World War I, the Great Depression, the Holocaust), it is easy to find primary information texts to supplement your teaching or their reading. The National Archives (www.archives.gov/nae/education/lesson-plans.html) is a wonderful source for additional document analysis worksheets, lesson plan ideas, and primary sources. George Mason University (<http://historymatters.gmu.edu>) sponsors "History Matters," a website that provides links and materials for the teaching of American history. In addition, the National Endow-

ment of the Humanities (<http://edsitement.neh.gov/subject/history-social-studies>) offers nearly 400 lesson plans related to social studies, often incorporating primary sources. This site also allows you to search for lessons by grade level, subtopic (including themes, such as "common core"), people (including African American, Native American, and Women, etc.), place (including Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas, among others), and duration. These are but a few of the many sites offering informational texts that might enrich the study of young adult literature.

I find the origin of the term *curriculum* intriguing. The term is derived from Latin and came into existence in the 1820s. Curriculum literally means "to run the course." It suggests activity, involvement, and a completeness that defies artificial content boundaries. While the yearlong race to "cover" learning targets, objectives, standards, and the like are understandable given the implications of high-stakes testing, all too often a backmarker is overlooked. As teachers in the hu-

manities, we need to take our foot off the throttle, just long enough to complete the final circuit, in order to help our students see the deeper understanding of what young adult literature and history can offer each other.

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Sports as an Entry Point to Literature

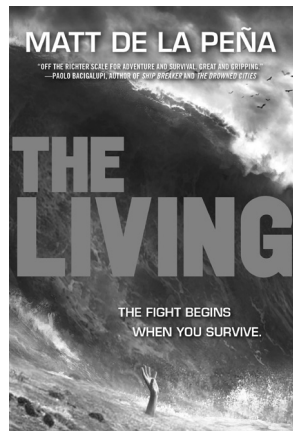
I spent the majority of my teenage years obsessed with one thing: earning an athletic scholarship for basketball. It didn't start out that way. Nobody in my family had ever been to college. Not my parents or my uncles or my aunts or cousins or anyone else in my family tree, as far back as I could trace it. But at the start of my sophomore year of high school, a savvy counselor got a hold of me.

"So, have you given any thought to college?" she asked.

"What do you mean by 'college'?" was my response.

When she saw I wasn't kidding, she shifted into a clever strategy. After high school, she explained, a lot of kids went to college to continue their education. But college was more than just academics. There were also athletic programs and study abroad opportunities and maybe I'd get lucky and meet the girl of my dreams. When she saw how that last part had piqued my interest, she pressed further. "Trust me, Matt. Go to college and you'll meet pretty girls from all over the country. All over the *world* even."

I left that meeting wondering—for the first time in my life—if



college was a legitimate option for a mediocre student like me. But it wasn't long before reality set in. Even if I got accepted, my parents would never be able to afford the tuition. And my grades certainly weren't going to earn me any academic scholarships. The only other thing I could think of was basketball. If I worked hard enough at the game I loved, maybe it could be my ticket to college.

This epiphany marked a new phase in my life. I now had a tangible goal. I started spending all my free time in a gym shooting jumpers and running sprints and lifting weights. I went to the library every morning before school and read basketball magazines cover

to cover. I kept out of trouble so I wouldn't sabotage my future (and that's how I'd started to think of myself—as someone who had a future). I was still a very average student, and I struggled through all the novels we were supposed to read in class, but my skills improved dramatically on the court, and by my senior year, several colleges had offered me a basketball scholarship. My dream of being the first in my family to go to college was coming true. I distinctly remember sitting at midcourt in an empty gym the day before I left home, trying to picture myself up at my new school, playing ball at the highest level and talking to all those pretty girls my counselor had described, girls from faraway places like Idaho and West Virginia and Delaware.

But a funny thing happened once I landed on campus. It was literature that I fell in love with.

Sure, I played ball. And there were certainly girls. But in the first English class I took my freshman year, a professor introduced me to a few "multicultural" authors that hit me right in the gut. I experienced books like *The Color Purple* and *Drown* and *The House on Mango Street* on such a vis-

ceral level—they gave me a secret place to “feel”—but the stories also woke up this intellectual part of my makeup I never even knew existed. Throughout the next four years, I read everything I could get my hands on, including many of the books I had dismissed in high school. I even started writing my own spoken word poetry—about growing up biracial and my working class neighborhood and the grace I sometimes experienced on a basketball court. My teammates thought I was crazy, of course. Why would a hoop player read poetry on the plane ride to Vegas for the Big West Tournament? I told myself I’d feel more at home once I got out of college and surrounded myself with fellow readers and writers.

By the time I got to graduate school, where I studied creative writing, I had morphed into a genuinely committed and successful student. Fiction had become my new obsession. I dreamed of one day writing a publishable novel of my own. However, I definitely didn’t feel at home in my MFA program the way I had imagined. In one of the first fiction classes I took, a girl glanced back at me and quietly asked her friend, “Since when did they start letting jocks into the program?” They both looked at me again with expressions of pure annoyance.

That was the day I decided sports and literary fiction simply didn’t mix. I had to either be a basketball guy or a writer. I couldn’t be both. So throughout the rest of my graduate school years, I distanced myself from my athletic past. I never once wrote about the game, never even mentioned it to

any of my classmates. And when I graduated and moved up to Los Angeles to begin my life as an aspiring writer, I made one rule for myself: I would never, ever, write a novel about basketball. Why? Because the game didn’t define me. I was out to prove to everyone—okay, mostly myself—that I was more than just corner jumpers and that patented spin move in the lane. Why waste time writing about a silly game when I aspired to write about the world?

I made it three weeks before I started my first novel, *Ball Don’t Lie*.

For those who don’t know, *Ball Don’t Lie* follows a foster kid named Sticky who’s an amazing basketball player growing up on the streets of Venice Beach, California. In other words, I slipped up, broke my one rule. I failed. Except actually I didn’t. As the story came pouring out of me, I realized something. The story was set against a basketball backdrop but I was still writing about the world. What fascinated me about Sticky’s story wasn’t what he did on the hardwood, it was how he survived off of it. I spotlighted the crowd that frequented the gym, guys who assumed positions of power in this context. When it was game point, the best player on the court was the CEO, the president, the one percent—but as soon as the game ended, and he stepped back into the bright world that waited outside, all that power was immediately stripped away. Sticky was raised in this setting, among these powerful, powerless men. The novel was originally titled *3 Stones Back*, a reference to Sticky’s low position within LA’s exaggerated

social class structure. When my editor asked me to come up with a title that referenced basketball, I was devastated. It made me feel like I was still that ex-jock trying to fake his way into the literary club.

It took me years to get over myself enough to admit that my editor was right. The title *Ball Don’t Lie* is more inviting to certain high school readers. I recently met a student named Terrence, an all-state basketball player in South Carolina, who had read the book six times. It was his all-time favorite book, he announced excitedly. His teacher had given it to him in a reading class, and as soon as he read the title, he asked if he could check it out overnight. It was about basketball, the game he loved. But as he described in great detail all his favorite parts of the book, I realized not one of them had anything to do with basketball.

In a way, when I write novels that include sports, I’m employing the same strategy my counselor used to get me interested in college. The game motivates readers like Terrence to penetrate my fictional world, and once he’s inside with solid-enough footing, I’m able to take him to the places that any other ambitious work of art aims to take its audience.

As I wrote at the beginning of my review of Matthew Quick’s *Boy 21* in the *New York Times*, there’s more to playin’ ball than just playin’ ball. If you’ve spent any time inside a gym or run fives at the local street-ball spot, you understand this. Most of what I know about the world was gleaned from inside a hoop gym populated by guys twice my age. But to the uninitiated, basketball is nothing more than what

it looks like: a game. And books set against the backdrop of a game are often labeled like cans of soup and stuck on shelves reserved for “reluctant readers.” Novels with sports themes can certainly lure jocks into the library, but the best of them reach toward literature.

***Matt de la Peña** is the author of four critically acclaimed young adult novels—*Ball Don't Lie*, *Mexican White-Boy*, *We Were Here*, and *I Will Save You*—and the award-winning picture-book *A Nation's Hope: The Story of Boxing Legend Joe Louis*. In 2013, his fifth YA novel, *The Living*, will be released, along with his first middle grade novel, *Curse of the Ancients*.*

Matt received his MFA in creative writing from San Diego State University and his BA from the University of the Pacific, where he attended school on a full athletic scholarship for basketball. He currently lives in Brooklyn, New York, teaches creative writing, and visits high schools and colleges throughout the country.

Rick Chambers Is 2013 CEL Exemplary Leader

Rick Chambers is a former secondary school English teacher and department chair who, for more than 26 years, taught in several schools in Dufferin and Waterloo counties in Ontario, Canada, as well as with the Canadian Department of National Defence in Europe. In 1997, he joined the Ontario College of Teachers, the regulatory body for the teaching profession in Ontario, where he managed the Professional Learning Program and served as a program officer in the Accreditation Unit. Since 2004, he has worked for Agriteam Canada on a teacher professional development project in South Africa and for the United Church of Canada on a project to develop standards of practice, ethical standards, and discipline processes for ministry personnel. He has also served as a coordinator with the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto in their Continuing Education Department.

Rick is past chair of the Conference on English Leadership (CEL) of NCTE, and has made presentations and contributed articles on English teaching, assessment, literacy education, and professional development nationally and internationally. Currently, he is part of a team at OISE writing an online teacher education course for teachers of English as a Foreign Language. He also continues to write and conduct courses for Pearson Professional Learning, a division of Pearson Education Canada. He is a coauthor of the Literacy in Action series of English language arts books for grades seven and eight. Rick is the Canadian consultant for the *Stepping Out* resource—professional development courses and materials focused on middle and secondary school cross-curricular writing, reading, and viewing. He has delivered courses on the *Stepping Out* resource in all parts of Canada.

Rick holds degrees from McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, and the University of Calgary in Alberta. He will be presented with this award during the CEL Annual Convention in Boston, Massachusetts, on Sunday, November 24, 2013, at the CEL Sunday Luncheon.



Ball Don't Lie:

Connecting Adolescents, Sports, and Literature

Linking Sports and Literacy (Alan Brown)

A few months ago, a group of middle and high school media specialists invited me to help them consider approaches for engaging reluctant male readers. I thought long and hard about my own experiences, both as a reluctant male reader and as a teacher of reluctant readers. To begin to respond to such a query, I suggested, meant that we must first ponder several equally important questions:

- What are students doing instead of reading?
- In what literary practices are they already engaged outside of school?
- How can educators connect current extracurricular interests with ongoing curricular activities?
- How can books further develop this connection?
- How can reading push students toward new ideas, understandings, and ways of being in the world?

Over the course of our discussion, we began to realize what I sus-

pect many of us, somewhere deep down, already knew: in the 21st century, *reluctant* readers can no longer be expected to stroll purposefully into school and/or classroom libraries of their own free will. There are simply too many other places for them to stroll. In a digital, global world containing countless competitors to the act of reading, we must answer the call to present students with texts that offer innovative twists on the activities of their everyday lives.

For the infinite number of boys and girls who spend an exorbitant amount of time playing and/or watching sports, promoting reading can be a perplexing conundrum. I often hear teenagers acknowledging how they despise sitting still for the time it takes to read a book; or they view reading as a feminine activity for nonathletes; or they have never laid eyes on a male (or female), sports-loving English teacher or media specialist; or they have never seen an athletics coach pick up a real book. Their words are disheartening on many levels, and there are no easy answers for promoting reading with this group of reluctant and/or struggling readers. How-

ever, with the essential questions listed above as a pedagogical framework, educators and media specialists can begin to paint a portrait of sports-loving adolescents before turning to the books needed to engage their innate curiosities. What follows is a brief glimpse of this portrait.

It was the summer of 1991. Two ten-year-old boys—Dustin and Alan—found themselves sequestered in Dustin's basement collaborating on a writing project with an enthusiasm unlike any they had ever known in school. Together, these boys formed an inexperienced, albeit dynamic, duo of novice researchers, writers, editors, artists, and publishers. Their work schedule was grueling, yet the boys found their project nothing short of exhilarating. Spread across the room, the tools of literacy surrounded them: paper, pencils, newspapers, magazines, books, and baseball cards. Yes, baseball cards.

The boys' intention was to produce a magazine centered on the game of baseball (imagine a cross between *Sports Illustrated for Kids* and *Beckett Baseball Card Monthly*). Ideas were bandied about as they

poured over statistics on the back of cards, checked box scores in the local newspaper, borrowed ideas from the articles of their ‘competitors,’ and flipped through the occasional biography of a sports legend (e.g., Babe Ruth, Jackie Robinson) in search of historical relevance. Handwritten editorials and featured news stories—fiction and nonfiction alike—were the primary sources of content, although photographs and advertisements were cut from magazines or drawn by hand to provide aesthetic appeal. The boys’ motivation came from a sense of accomplishment that increased gradually one article at a time and lasted long past the close of the business day—when one of their mothers would call for supper.

Dustin, my next-door neighbor of many years, and I never received fame or fortune from our publication. In fact, our unfinished masterpiece never saw the light of day, and our fascination eventually gave way to some other adolescent curiosity. Nevertheless, sports were instrumental in fostering our interest in reading and writing. Twenty years later, Dustin is a screen writer (motto: have Mac . . . will travel) whose interests lie in fiction and creative writing. I, on the other hand, am a former high school English teacher and basketball coach now working as a teacher educator in the field of English education.

As a kid, Dustin used reading (e.g., comics, sports) as an escape from the daily realities of childhood, while I focused a very limited interest in reading on various forms of sports-related media (e.g., newspaper and magazines articles). Although sports were regularly a topic of conversation among



our classmates in the academic classroom, these discussions were almost always internally motivated and rarely connected to any official academic conversation. Over the years, the relatively few teachers who spoke of sports were generally athletic coaches, many of whom were often more concerned about athletics than the content they were charged with teaching. In other words, my extracurricular interest in sports and the curriculum of my academic courses rarely came together in any meaningful fashion.

I was not introduced to young adult literature (YAL) until my junior year of college. While times have changed and YAL now has a more prominent place in libraries and English classrooms, there remains much to be learned about how to engage reluctant readers in various literacy practices. Looking back, I realize that one of the most influential curiosities of my adolescent life was never considered as a way to increase my interest in reading. While sports are all too often considered an extracurricular, physical activity that pulls students away from more curricular, academic responsibilities, this extracurricular interest is precisely

the connection that many students need to help foster a love of reading.

With this in mind, consider the story of Trey (pseudonym), a student I taught in English 9 and coached on the junior varsity (JV) basketball team many years ago. Trey was a thoughtful and kind young man who was the oldest of many siblings in a single-parent home. His love of basketball was second only to his love of family, and he would do anything to make sure his brothers and sisters had proper care. Trey was by far the smallest player on our team, and he was also one of the few white players. In the classroom, he was a reluctant reader with a lack of self-confidence; on the court, he was a point guard with a below average jump shot. Yet, in both arenas—the English classroom and the basketball court—Trey had a strong work ethic and an unquenchable desire to improve. As a basketball player, he had a remarkable gift for passing and ball-handling. For those of you who know the game, Trey’s court vision was compared by some to former NBA standout Jason Williams. In retrospect, perhaps a more apt comparison would be to Sticky, the protagonist in Matt de la Peña’s (2005) YA novel *Ball Don’t Lie*, an ALA-YALSA Best Book for Young Adults.

Sticky is a high school sophomore who grew up playing ball in the streets of Los Angeles while being shuffled back and forth between foster parents. In his search for a place of belonging, he finds a home on court one of Lincoln Rec amidst hustlers, drug dealers, and the homeless. In a world that tells him he is worthless, Sticky finds

If our goal is to provide books that appeal to students' extra-curricular interests and out-of-school literacies, we must first connect them to books about characters with whom they can relate.

his own self-worth on the basketball court with a ball in his hand. And even though Sticky is a young white male, he discovers family among a group of older and more experienced black males at Lincoln Rec. Over the course of the novel, Sticky battles Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) as well as the pressures of school, basketball, and relationships, and he begins to recognize one universal truth: in the games of life and basketball, you will win some, and you will lose some. And while we may regularly lie to ourselves or others, there is one thing all ball players know for sure: the ball never lies.

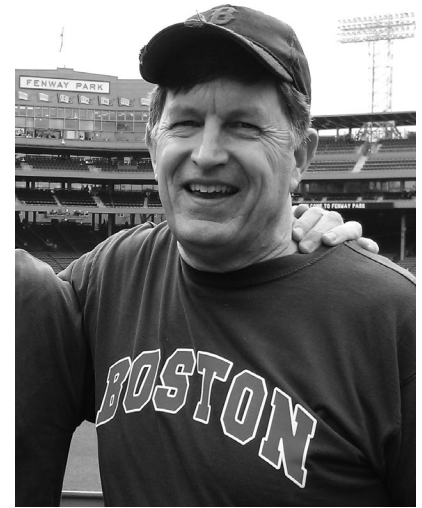
I came across *Ball Don't Lie* two years after teaching Trey, and by then, he had transferred to another school, and we had lost touch. Nevertheless, I believe Trey would have liked Sticky, and I suspect Sticky would have liked Trey as well. As teachers, if our goal is to provide books that appeal to students' extra-curricular interests and out-of-school literacies, we must first connect them to

books about characters with whom they can relate—protagonists who are confronted with situations both familiar and unfamiliar and who act in expected and unexpected ways. Reluctant readers like Trey, and like me, may ultimately depend on sports as an entry point into reading.

I now know that the kid I used to be would have enjoyed getting to know Jerry from Robert Cormier's (1974) *The Chocolate War*, Felton from Geoff Herbach's (2011) *Stupid Fast*, Junior from Sherman Alexie's (2007) *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, T. J. from Chris Crutcher's (2001) *Whale Talk*, Slam from Walter Dean Myers's (1996) *Slam!*, and Nick from Carl Deuker's (2000) *Night Hoops*. Unfortunately, the use of sports as an entry point into literacy is often underutilized and, as Chris Crowe can attest, making connections between students and protagonists in YA sports novels is another underutilized opportunity in many English classrooms and school media centers across the country. We hope teachers and media specialists will keep this in mind when their next sports enthusiast walks in the door without a book in hand.

Sports Literature for Young Adults (Chris Crowe)

Years ago when I interviewed for a job as a high school English teacher and football coach, the principal told me that in order to be considered, I would first need the approval of the English department chair. To get her approval, I would have to convince her that I was an English teacher first and a coach



second. He did not need to explain that coaches (and athletes and sports in general) generally seem out of place in secondary English departments, perhaps owing to the fact that in their intense dedication to literature and language, many English teachers do not have room for extracurricular stuff, especially when that stuff is sports-related.

Sports literature sometimes faces similar barriers when trying to enter the secondary English curriculum. Some teachers dismiss it simply because it is not canonical; others may consider it a poorly written subgenre unworthy of literary study; still others may simply be ignorant of its existence. Finally, a few English teachers, still smarting from unpleasant encounters with PE classes, coaches, rabid fans, or bully athletes may reject sports literature because they loathe sports and anything connected to it.

And there's the shame.

Of course, I know that English classes cannot cover everything and that teachers have to make decisions based on curricular require-

ments, the availability of texts, and other considerations, but given the pervasive presence of sports in modern culture and the growing number of students involved in sports, teachers who dodge sports literature are missing a chance to engage their students in books that offer relevance, interest, and, dare I say it, literary quality.

English teachers and their students should know that while not every sports novel hits it out of the park, there are plenty that do. The key is to remember that fine YA sports novels are about people and the complications that entangle them, not about games. In his novel *The Huge Season*, Wright Morris has two characters discussing this very point:

“What’s your novel about?” I said and glanced at the yellow sheets on the desk. A small pile of typed sheets were in the case for his typewriter. A big photograph of Lawrence, smashing one away, was under the jelly glass full of sharpened pencils. “It wouldn’t be about a tennis player?” I said.

He wiped his face with the towel again. “Old man, a book can have Chicago in it, and not be about Chicago. It can have a tennis player in it without being about a tennis player.”

I didn’t get it. I probably looked it, for he went on,

“Take this book here, old man—” and held up one of the books he had swiped from some library. Along with the numbers I could see Hemingway’s name on the spine. “There’s a prizefighter in it, old man, but it’s not about a prizefighter.” (p. 179)

English teachers need to remember that good sports novels are really just novels, and as such, they provide opportunities for discussion of literary elements as well as discussion of important

social issues such as bullying, peer pressure, drug and alcohol abuse, bigotry, emotional illness, and nearly anything else that is relevant in modern society—and in the lives of our students. Given the opportunity, YA sports novels can accomplish nearly all the same academic purposes that other literary forms do; the thread of sports that runs through the narrative may, for many readers, be a value-added feature that makes the text more relevant, more interesting, and more likely to be read, especially by students who consider themselves reluctant readers.

I am not saying that our traditional literature offerings should be replaced by YA sports literature, but I am suggesting that teachers should consider adding

The key is to remember that fine YA sports novels are about people and the complications that entangle them, not about games.

sports literature into the rotation. To do so, teachers must be selective; there are many sports books to choose from, some more literary than others, some more socially relevant than others, some better written than others. (Perhaps those that are best suited for use in secondary English classes are the types of novels I’ve labeled *sportleroman*—coming-of-age stories of athletes. See my article in *School*

Library Journal (2005) for more on this.) And the sports content varies as well. While there are a handful of excellent books that deal with so-called minor sports like soccer, wrestling, field hockey, and swimming, most of the games at the heart of YA sports novels tend to be the same games that dominate the US sports marketplace: football, basketball, and baseball. And, for reasons I cannot explain, despite the huge increase in girls’ participation in interscholastic sports since the advent of Title IX, most YA sports novels feature male protagonists.

For teachers thinking about adding some YA sports literature to their literary lineups, the good news is that the YAL sports landscape is changing and improving. Veterans like Robert Lipsyte, Chris Crutcher, and Rich Wallace continue to publish excellent books, but they are now joined by a crew of talented younger authors like Matt de la Peña and Matthew Quick, as well as by some equally talented *female* authors like Sharon Flake, Donna Freitas, Lisa Luedeke, and Sarah Skilton. As the audience for these books grows, it will encourage publishers to continue to support authors who choose to tell their stories from an athlete’s perspective. This added encouragement will only help to make YA sports literature more accessible and more relevant to a wider range of teen readers than ever before.

Alan Brown is an assistant professor of English education at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. His research interests include aspects of secondary teacher education, ELA supervision, and

adolescent literacy, as well as various intersections of sport, education, and society. He can be reached at brownma@wfu.edu. For more information on his work with sports literacy, check out his blog at <http://sportsliteracy.wordpress.com/>.

Chris Crowe teaches courses in creative writing and English education in the English department at Brigham Young University. His lifelong interest in sports literature led to the publication of *More Than a Game: Sports*

Literature for Young Adults (*Scarecrow*, 2004). His next historical YA novel, *Death Coming up the Hill*, will be published by Harcourt in 2014. He can be reached at chris_crowe@byu.edu.

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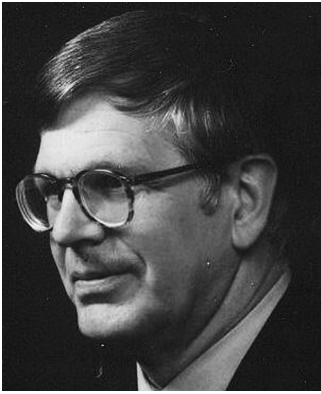
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Call for Manuscripts: Themed Issue of *English Journal*

Guest Editors Alan Brown (Wake Forest University) and Chris Crowe (Brigham Young University) are calling for articles for the theme **A Whole New Ballgame: Sports and Culture in the English Classroom** for the September 2014 issue of *English Journal*. Love sports or hate them, it's hard to deny their prominence in American society and their popularity with twenty-first-century adolescents. Interscholastic athletics in particular can play a significant role in the overall culture of a school and have a substantial impact on students' daily lives. Despite this influence, the topic of sports in society is often absent from the professional conversations of English teachers, an exclusion that could prove to be a missed opportunity. This issue will examine the possibilities for both utilizing and critiquing the culture of sports as a means of increasing student engagement and promoting student learning in the English classroom. Within this context, we seek manuscripts that explore the intersection of literacy, sport, culture, and society, and we encourage column submissions devoted to this same theme.

A number of important questions guide this issue: What connections or disconnections exist between the perceived physical nature of athletics and the mental nature of academics? What real-world associations have you made between sports and the English curriculum? How can sports-related texts (e.g., young adult literature, canonical literature, graphic novels, poetry, nonfiction, magazines, newspapers) be integrated into the academic culture of an English class? How have you promoted the teaching of 21st century skills through the use of sports-related media, film, and technology? What possibilities exist for interdisciplinary (e.g., historical, political, scientific, social) connections to sports across content areas? How have you engaged students in critical dialogue about our societal emphasis on sports? How can we extend the definition of sport to be more inclusive for students of diverse cultures, races, genders, ethnicities, and abilities? How can an examination of sports culture open the door to discussions of other cultures that exist in school and society?

With questions or comments about this themed issue of *English Journal*, please contact guest editors Alan Brown (brownma@wfu.edu) or Chris Crowe (chris_crowe@byu.edu). **Deadline: January 15, 2014.**



Formal Complexity in Adolescent Literature

Common Core State Standards are a major item of discussion at almost every meeting I attend, whether at our North Carolina state administrators' conference, a North Carolina Literacy Project session, or the NCTE Annual Convention. I always sense a mix of doubts and fears, and on the other extreme, hopes and dreams. But one constant at the center of the discussion is the call for rigor and complexity of texts. Certainly my hopes and those of my students who teach have always been invested in a kind of rigor that moves to depth and an attachment to complexity of texts. So I was relieved and excited when NCTE adopted a resolution on Teacher Expertise and Common Core State Standards calling for "Instruction that reflects the importance of students' academic, social, and emotional needs; background knowledge; and cultures"; "materials that respond to students' interests and that broaden and deepen students' understanding"; and "experiences with multiple forms of literacy" (NCTE, 2013, p. 24). NCTE's resolution lets me fully endorse CCSS because it supports exemplary teaching and recognizes literature's unique power—its

strong emotional and aesthetic connection with students. And though "multiple forms" can imply the requirement to teach nonfiction as well as traditional fictive texts, it also suggests a call to consider the relationship between literature's form and its complexity. I believe that standards of rigor and complexity can be well met when students explore some of the bold formal innovations in canonical literature, but that even better results are achievable using adolescent literature.

I offer here a broad stroke picture of some of the most dramatic innovations in canonical literature, realizing that great swaths of time are overlooked and many classic texts go unmentioned. I know that complexity can be measured by a text's lexiles or its sentence structures, but I lean toward using literature's formal departures, because I believe they are a more authentic measure of complexity. These innovators, now canonized, fulfill the requirement of complexity and the need for reading rigor, but here I offer a parallel list of texts drawn from the world of adolescent literature, ones that are more in tune with the lives of students of our

day. I will describe and illustrate eight surprising formal literary innovations, first in a venerated text and then as they appear in a young adult novel.

Literary Juxtaposition

Epistolary Novels: Richardson's *Pamela* and O'Brien's *Z for Zachariah*

The first of these formal dimensions of complexity is found in Richardson's *Pamela* where he uses Pamela's letters to her parents to form an epistolary novel. It may seem simple because it is a very direct statement coming from a young girl of 15 who is trying to explain her compromised life situation to her parents, but the novel's complexity lies in the basic time and place differentiation between the frantic *now* of the narrator and the reader's more leisurely *later*. The reader and parents know that they are stuck in the helpless *later*, unable to assist Pamela in any way.

O'Brien's diary format in *Z for Zachariah* is complex in much the same way. Although O'Brien's book is not a series of letters, Ann's diary entries give readers the same sense of immediacy and helplessness Pa-

Hesse is offering both a novel and an extended poem; its form and style are poetic, but its overall panoramic view is more like that of a novel.

mela's letters yield. We know that in each entry, we are living in the chilling immediacy of the present, but at the same time, we realize that there is more of the total story to tell and we are anxious to know it. O'Brien's readers become aware of the conflict between nature and artifice, scientific know-how and humanistic dispositions, and other binaries, but their most pressing task is to keep up with the complexities of Ann's present and the uncertain future that lies ahead. Like Richardson's reader, we are hearing from a person in dreadful circumstances. With Ann, this is an even more frantic situation because she is molested and ultimately hunted like a dog.

Genre Shift: Melville's *Moby Dick* and Hesse's *Out of the Dust*

Melville was a fine poet and short story writer, but his most innovative artistry is found in the midst of Ishmael's long narrative in *Moby Dick*. He offers some scenes that become pure drama, complete with soliloquies and stage directions. This slight of hand is occasionally employed by today's writers, but it was particularly audacious and inventive in the middle of the nineteenth century. Melville not only

shifts to a full dramatic presentation, but he laces his prose with lengthy cetological passages where the speaker's steady voice is very unlike Ishmael's troubled narrative. They are as unexpected as the shift to dramatic action. Melville is a deep diver, ever willing to try something new to get at what is so very difficult to grasp.

Hesse's *Out of the Dust* presents a similar genre shift to the radical one Melville offers in *Moby Dick*. As we begin to read Billie Jo's poetic portraits, we realize Hesse is offering both a novel and an extended poem; its form and style are poetic, but its overall panoramic view is more like that of a novel. Like a novel, it presents a very clear storyline and a structure that moves through months of time, but like a poem, we partake of it as a series of intense personal explorations, a collection of emotional snapshots. The vignettes are so revelatory that their forward motion is almost undetectable, but readers know it is a full story that is being experienced. They are kept off-balance by this mix, but at the same time brought into a deep state of engagement.

Disingenuous Narrator: Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and Avi's *Crispin*

Huck Finn's voice is central to the complexity of Twain's disingenuous narrator. The notion that a speaker may be telling us things that are unreliable is true for voices in other novels, but in Twain's account of Huck's river journey, we hear Huck speaking in ways that are untrue to his changing core beliefs. We have a clear sense of the difference between his developing beliefs and

those we hear him declaring. We see him try to honor the ideals of his former home while at the same time uttering more natural responses to Jim as their relationship matures on the river.

Some readers may believe that adolescent narrators are by nature a bit unreliable, but when we look closely at adolescent literature, it is difficult to find a narrator like Huck who is consciously crafted by the author as unfaithful to his most authentic beliefs. Avi's Crispin is like that, but his words are not as unpredictable as Huck's. This medieval lad is in a slow unwinding toward a new self. He is very young and naïve at the beginning of the narrative, but unlike Huck who is culturally divided from the start, Crispin is fully shaped by his former society; over time, however, he jettisons that culture's control. He begins to make decisions that are not in tune with his birth family's mores. He has the prodding of his new mentor Bear to encourage him to think for himself rather than appropriating the shibboleths of his past. Because the religion of his family is being slowly discarded and because his pathway toward a new belief system is so steady, his thoroughgoing disingenuousness is somewhat harder to recognize. I know of no other adolescent literature text that has an inversion of this kind.

Stream of Consciousness: Joyce's *Ulysses* and Zindel's *The Pigman*

Joyce's adroit use of language sets him apart from the writers who came before him, but it is his stream of consciousness that provoked readers most and carved

out his unique place as a writer. You get a taste of that power in the *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, but *Ulysses* is the novel that made his reputation. In *Ulysses*, Joyce not only moves into an unmediated revelation of the mental meanderings of his characters, but he offers other formal kinds of shifts that are extraordinary. He compresses Ulysses's mythic 10-year journey into one day's walk through the vulgar streets of Dublin. These multiple talents and brave departures from the literary norm set Joyce apart and single out his complex texts as the work of a creative genius.

This is for me a most difficult departure to match. I have a hard time coming up with a text in which the narrator's unmediated mental stream seems to be unvarnished rather than consciously framed by the author. John's and Lorraine's strophic statements in *The Pigman* rising out of their troubled minds approximate this stance. Their utterances are more self-consciously crafted than those of Joyce's narrators, but the two voices tend to move from opposing stances of character, emotion, and intellect that eventually elide as they move through the rigors of their confessional. John's voice becomes tempered by reflection and Lorraine's grows less officious. Writers of adolescent fiction are aware of the power and artistry of canonical authors who use this special formal departure to great effect, but most of them shy away from this challenging departure, knowing that this level of difficulty and complexity could dissuade younger readers from following them into such literary thickets.

**Multiple Perspectives:
Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* and
Childress's *A Hero Ain't Nothin'
but a Sandwich***

William Faulkner's novels feature elongated sentences and convoluted syntax that are extremely complex and set him apart from his contemporaries. His creativity may perhaps be best expressed in his novel *As I Lay Dying*, in which he presents a family whose individual, selfish voices color their speech about the death of their mother Addie. Cash, the carpenter son who crafts his mother's coffin, speaks with exactitude about falling from the barn "Twenty-eight foot, four and a half inches, about" (p. 85). Adding the corrective "about" to the exact distance tells us everything about Cash's zone of proximal concern. Other voices convey their own special character: Darl's distance from his family as he rides apart from the cortege, Vardaman's confusion as he says "my mother is a fish" (p. 79), and Dewey Dell's lusty determinism that she ascribes to providence. The town of Jefferson, Mississippi, that they are all driving toward is much more their field of pitiful dreams than their fulfillment

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of a sacred pledge made to their mother.

Hesse's *A Hero Ain't Nothin' but a Sandwich* broke compellingly onto the literary scene in the 1970s. Its appeal arose from multiple voices from very different layers of society speaking about urban drugs and hoping for family solidity. Benji is scrutinized by a host of people whose perspectives range from his loving mother, to his misunderstood stepfather, to his politically coercive teacher, to a drug-pushing street-preacher, and many more. We witness a lost soul being ministered to but also tortured by those who hope to understand the deep perils of his troubled life. Each voice seems authentic and even today speaks to a huge issue of our time.

**Minimalist Fiction: Hemingway's
"A Clean Well-Lighted Place"
& "Hills Like White Elephants"
and Paulsen's *Nightjohn***

Hemingway has fallen out of favor just now because of the number of macho qualities in his life and writing, but his quiet, almost mute narrative voice secures his place as an innovator who formed a literary movement. The minimalists may not fully acknowledge Hemingway's influence in their work, but his celebrated short stories are majestically minimal. "Hills Like White Elephants" and "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" (in Hemingway, 1987) are two remarkable short stories that are so stripped down that readers must constantly struggle to know who is speaking. Characters often speak and then speak again rather than adopting polite turn taking, so we must figure out who is speaking by trying

to link up their dialogue with what they seem to believe. The narrative is extremely flat and simple; complex sentences and varied levels of embeddedness are uncommon. He pares language down to its core by removing most of the adjectives and adverbs. His minimal style is unmistakable and serves as a terrific departure from the more luxurious language of his peers.

Paulsen uses few words to open *Nightjohn*: “I’m Sarny” (p. 14). He offers no embellishments. Sarny tells us from the first that she’s not dumb, “I’m just quiet” (p. 15). Her entire story is built on learning letters and numbers, but she and Mammy are nervously aware that quiet is smart. Mammy even prays her brief 14-word prayer into a kettle to smother those few words. Paulsen, like Hemingway, lets action speak louder than words. He uses less than 80 pages to tell Sarny’s story. *Nightjohn* enters the story stripped naked with a rope around his neck and returns at story’s end in the silence of night with his foot’s imprint in the dust, its middle toe missing, as his signature. The slaves are minimalized, dehumanized by their master; learning words is penalized by harsh punishment. But *Nightjohn* knows words, and he teaches them letter by letter. At the story’s close, Sarny simply pronounces, “[H]e bringing us the way to know” (p. 92). A part of Paulsen’s minimal posture is the fact that all of the brutality and horror are deeply understated in Sarny’s narrative. She sees Alice tortured, Mammy naked and driven like a beast, and *Nightjohn*’s middle toes chopped off, but shows little emotion. It is Paulsen’s minimal narrative about

such horrific events that causes readers to become deeply caught up in his brief tale.

Authorial Fracture: Barth’s *Lost in the Funhouse* & Coover’s *Hat Act*; Crutcher’s *Ironman*

Barth’s (1968) and Coover’s stories (1969) came much later in the century and mark a departure from the work of Joyce, Faulkner, and Hemingway. They create a fragile world very much more like a funhouse than the painful world that we navigate daily. Barth offers a series of short stories that make the reader feel that the author is losing control of the world he created. Coover’s *Hat Act* uses the metaphor of a magician on stage who begins his act with great aplomb only to lose any sense of control.

A complete authorial fracture is, perhaps, too much to expect in the world of adolescent literature. Crutcher’s *Ironman* nevertheless provides the kind of complexity CCSS standards aim for.

We have no sense of where to draw the line between truth and illusion, between audience reality and stage magic. Both authors seem to be telling us that the illusions of the storyteller are no longer predictable, that art is incapable of providing a comforting illusion, imagined as Wallace Stevens’s “necessary

angel.” The hope of transcendence through the imagination is made somewhat doubtful.

A complete authorial fracture is, perhaps, too much to expect in the world of adolescent literature. Crutcher’s *Ironman* nevertheless provides the kind of complexity CCSS standards aim for. On its surface, Bo’s story is a simple tale of a triathlon contender and his circle of supporters and sworn enemies. But we also know Bo through his occasionally emotion-laden letters to television celebrity Larry King. After each letter, the story suddenly shifts to a much more distant narrative stance where Bo’s actions are recorded from a third-person perspective; no inner thoughts are offered. These more distant narratives are longer than Bo’s 22 self-disclosing letters, but the opposing stances give us both an inside and outside view, the emotional journey and the flat events. Both extremes offer a record of Bo’s tortured yet spirited mind. So the narrative surface is not totally whacked out, but is full of extreme ways of harpooning the truth.

Blended Genres: Mailer’s *Armies of the Night* and Avi’s *Nothing but the Truth*

Norman Mailer’s *Armies of the Night* is a part of Coover’s and Barth’s philosophical world, but he takes a more straightforward swipe at life in the 20th century than did they. His writing seems realistic and heavily sociopolitical, yet he takes great liberties with the genre he has chosen. His reader is never sure of the truth quotient of the narrative. The details make the text seem documentary-like, terribly accurate, yet the reader knows that

Mailer is taking great liberties with the truth. This kind of mixed genre is as confusing to readers as the wild creations of Barth and Coover, though Mailer's followers seem quite comfortable with this blurred authorial stance.

Nothing but the Truth is a brassy example of a mixed-genre text. Avi goes beyond Mailer in creating a "novel" that is built not on multiple narratives, but rather is a cacophony of mixed-media snippets that we are all familiar with but do not expect to see as the center of a novel. A letter to the principal, a clip from a radio talk show, a superintendent's memo to his staff, a supportive letter from a teacher's sister, a school announcement, a patriotic letter to the editor from a local school board member, and on and on—we see the story unfolding from each of these perspectives, but we are never able fully to capture the truth of whether Philip is guilty of humming the Star Spangled Banner or Miss Narwin is over-zealous in keeping the school's rules. We side with her, but Avi's title suggests that we are in a virtual courtroom trying like a jury to sort out the truth. So we have something that approximates a novel, but a document that is very close to a multigenre report. Some readers are intrigued by sorting out the facts of the case while others look for a more personal narrative, but Avi settles for a mix that sets his work apart.

Conclusion

Yeats famously spoke of the "fascination of what's difficult" or complex (Drabble, p. 100), but in order for students to reach such reading

maturity, teachers should consider a developmental approach to their learning. Only through such an incremental process can students engage the formal complexity found in the most challenging, sophisticated texts. Helping them move from simple to complex, from concrete to abstract understanding makes great sense. We know that students can actually recognize the formal departures of adolescent literature and understand its complexity more clearly when they are not initially pushed to their intellectual limits reading highly sophisticated canonical texts. If we accept these propositions about literature, we should consider initially moving to the challenge of Common Core State Standards through the pathway of adolescent literature.

Joe Milner is professor of English Education at Wake Forest University and was, for 28 years, the chairperson of the Education department. Presently, he serves as director of the Advanced Placement Summer Institute, director of the Visiting International Fellows graduate program, and director of the North Carolina Literacy Project at Wake Forest University. During 40 years of participation in the work of NCTE, he has served as chair of the Conference on English Education, chair of the International Assembly, chair of the International Assembly, cochair of the Assembly on American Literature, and a member of the NCTE Executive Committee and other committees. He has authored, coauthored, and edited eight books and numerous articles on English education, children's literature, aesthetics, linguistics, and American literature. For these years of service to English education on a national, state, and local level, he received the North

Carolina English Teachers Association Lifetime Achievement award.

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"Something Awful Is Happening to Me"

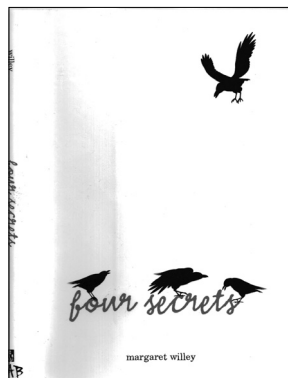
The Seeds for a Novel about Bullying

The writing and the publication of my most recent young adult novel, *Four Secrets*, required an immersion into the social problem of bullying today and also a journey backward to a few notable books about peer cruelty from earlier decades. One rediscovered treasure was a novel in my own library—*The Goats*, by Brock Cole, which happily has been recently reissued, and which has lost none of its punch or its pathos since its original publication in 1987.

Cole is a terrific writer, and his narrative, written long before the current spate of books about bullies and bullying culture, begins with a gripping opening chapter—an incident of extreme cruelty amongst unsupervised youngsters, a subsequent heroic odyssey, and a realistic yet hopeful final chapter. Cole himself says of Howie and Laura at the book's conclusion: "They've decided to rejoin the world." The two survivors are aware, as the reader is aware, that the world they rejoin is a different world, less innocent, and lacking in all guarantees of protection from further persecution. But they have become stronger, and they have each other,

something they did not have before their ordeal began.

The protagonists in *The Goats* endure bullying with a capital B. No mere episode of teasing here, nothing mundane or forgettable. The novel opens at a summer camp, a place of special torment for some unlucky children. Cole's bullies have actually stolen Howie and Laura's clothing and left the children stranded naked on a small island (a scenario that resulted in some unfortunate book banning when *The Goats* was first published). Their nakedness is the perfect metaphor for the state they find themselves in: twin creatures, reborn into the wilderness, vulnerable as babies.



In *Four Secrets*, the trio of young teenagers also have their clothes taken from them, but in a very different context—they exchange them for prison sweats and scuffs—the uniforms of juvenile detention, where their futile efforts to protect Renata from relentless bullying at school have led them. Nathaniel describes himself as "stripped of my ancestry and banished from my village." He calls juvenile detention "The Place of Contrition," and worries constantly about the well-being of his two fellow prisoners, Renata and Kate, who are being kept in a different part of the detention center "in absolute confinement . . . far from everything that is familiar." It is a different kind of exile than being cast naked into the wilderness, but it is equally clarifying. In both cases, the children must spend time in isolation before they can "rejoin the world."

Greta Shield, the persistent social worker and co-narrator of *Four Secrets*, struggles to decipher the detention journals of her three detainees. She recognizes an essential integrity in their refusal to reveal the details of their crime to

her. They are intensely loyal to one another and they do not believe that any social worker can rescue them from what will happen next—a severe sentence and more detention. Likewise, Cole’s victims are convinced that none of the adults in their lives can rescue them, including their well-intentioned parents. This is a common, albeit unfortunate belief of many bullied teenagers—that no adult can improve the situation.¹ It is why Howie and Laura decide never to return to camp, the scene of their shaming. Their journey from the forest and back to civilization gradually transforms them. They work as a team. They forge an ironclad connection that no mere bully, no blind adult, can ever wrest from them. This is the same truth that the social worker uncovers in the pages of the journals of Renata, Kate, and Nathaniel—a fierce connectedness among the injured teenagers. She realizes that the loyalty they share is stronger than their fear of what will become of them. It is bigger than the misery of their incarceration. Reading and taking notes in her office at the JDC, she is moved to tears at the realization.

Rereading *The Goats* moved me to similar tears. Brock Cole celebrates the same qualities I chose to celebrate in *Four Secrets*—adolescent courage and loyalty—as well as the heartfelt belief that bullied teenagers can protect and heal one another. *The Goats* had taken hold of me, found a quiet corner in my brain, and stayed alive there until I had written six picturebooks and another novel, and was finally ready to write *Four Secrets*.

My earliest introduction to bullying scenarios in literature came

from three classic novels that I read in my own adolescence; two were assigned reading in my English classes—*Lord of the Flies* and *A Separate Peace*—and one I came to on my own, *Catcher in the Rye*. These books were all published in the 1960s and all written by men. Each establishes the problem of bullying as a boy-problem, particularly boys in groups, and even more particularly boys in groups without adult supervision. Of the three, *Catcher in the Rye* spoke most deeply to my (already) intense fascination with coming-of-age as a time of lost innocence and emotional confusion, but each book reinforced a belief that the darkest cruelties of school were created by boys and aimed at other boys. Boys, apparently, could more easily lose the trappings of civilization and become the victims of murderous rivalries, savage confrontations, and suicidal acts. I remember reading them with a feeling of relief that I was not a boy, especially a boy in a prep school.

I first learned of the trend among girls to bully and shame each other 10 years ago, when my husband and I co-taught a course on Adolescent Culture at Grand Valley State University. We found in our research a plethora of books about the bullying culture among middle and high school girls. Writers like Rosalind Wiseman, author of *Queen Bees and Wannabees* (2002), and Rachel Simmons, co-founder of the Girls Leadership Institute and author of *Odd Girl Out* (2002), explored the more invisible, yet sometimes even more diabolical, ways that girls hurt each other. A 21st-century girl can find herself vilified and cast out in a matter of

***The Goats* had taken hold of me, found a quiet corner in my brain, and stayed alive there until I had written six picturebooks and another novel.**

hours, thanks to the immediacy and obsequiousness of Facebook and Twitter. Katie briefly describes this special hell in the opening chapter of *Four Secrets*—she calls it “getting stung” and says, “Everybody does their part—and presto. You are gone, Journal. You are just gone.” It’s a kind of death by overexposure, and modern teenagers, especially girls, live in fear of it.

Leora Tanenbaum contributed to the wave of information about peer cruelty with her study of gender bullying, bearing the attention-getting title *Slut! Growing Up Female with a Bad Reputation*. Using oral histories of girls and women who had been labeled “sluts” during their high school days, the book explores the cultural myths and social paranoia that can lead to an indelible “bad reputation” for female adolescents, often merely because they are early developers. The book confronts the word “slut” itself—that most feared of pejoratives hurled at girls in middle school and high school. Tanenbaum asks the reader to remember his or her own history with the word, and in doing so, to reconsider the plight of whichever unfortunate girl carried the label in

our high school memories.

Slut! does much to dispel the myth that girls who are so labeled are promiscuous, or even sexually active. The book also highlights the ways that a girl's size and shape can too easily make her a target for unwanted attention, something Renata has experienced to her great distress when we meet her in *Four Secrets*. Her time of persecution is not because she is overly developed for her age, but because she is small and androgynous. Her tormentors tell her that they know she is a boy. "Is there something wrong with me?" she asks her best friend Katie tearfully, feeling that she must somehow be responsible for what is happening. Self-blame is an unfortunate result of such bullying. Author Tanenbaum describes a similar phase of self-blame after being labeled a slut while a freshman in high school. "I started to suspect that maybe there really was something wrong with me," she writes. "Maybe I really was garbage." Tanenbaum remembered what hearing the label over and over did to her developing identity; years later, it led to a tone of urgency in her groundbreaking study. This book was another seed.

As the culture of bullying became more pervasive, and as the cultural awareness of bullying as a social problem increased, so too did serious and compelling novels about adolescent cruelty. And the special gifts of a novel about bullying go far beyond increasing awareness. Only in a realistic novel can a teenager explore the humanity and the vulnerability of both the bullied child and the bully. Only in such a novel can a reader find a sense of blessed *aftermath*, a time beyond

As the culture of bullying became more pervasive, and as the cultural awareness of bullying as a social problem increased, so too did serious and compelling novels about adolescent cruelty.

the brutal present. And only in novels are the labels and stereotypes of high school deconstructed.²

Last fall, *Publishers Weekly* published an article titled "A Call to Action," which recommended new books about bullying and reiterated a claim often made by librarians and educators—one that I heartily agree with—that nothing is more helpful to a bullied girl or boy than a good novel about enduring and surviving a painful episode. From classic novels like Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War* to exemplary novels of the past decade like Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak*, to R. J. Palacio's recent masterpiece *Wonder*, the gift of an evocative, well-crafted story can reinforce a fragile identity under siege. It can also inspire children who are not victims of bullying to intervene, and thus bring hope to a situation wherein the witnesses feel helpless and afraid to speak out.

Perhaps my most crucial seed and the deepest insight into what bullying does to a child's sense of self came from an episode in my own family, during which my daughter was treated at her high

school in much the same way that my character Renata is treated at her middle school—targeted by older boys and mocked for her size and appearance (my daughter at 16 was very small, dark-haired, and boyish). The bullies were athletes (an unfortunate pattern) and nearly twice her size; they were led by a boy with a reputation for bullying. The torment, and it was torment, lasted for several weeks, the same boys every day, the same place in the school hallway, the same remarks and noises, mocking her appearance. That hallway of her high school became a gauntlet she faced for nearly a month before she told me about it.

The scene in *Four Secrets* where Renata explains to her best friend Katie that "something awful is happening to me" is taken directly from an unforgettable spring afternoon during which my daughter finally broke down and told me what that "something" was, after weeks of trying to manage it on her own. I can still hear her plaintive questions; they are burned into my brain:

"Is there something wrong with me, Mom?"

"Am I just really ugly and you never told me?"

"Why do they keep doing it? Why won't they stop?"

In *Four Secrets*, Katie asks Renata why she did not tell her sooner. I remember asking my daughter the same question and she told me, as Renata tell Katie, that she was hoping the bullying would stop on its own if she didn't respond, didn't defend herself. My daughter endured weeks of bullying mutely, despite being a girl who had always been able to speak

her mind freely and with gusto. The mother in me listened to my daughter describing her experiences through her tears; I listened and ached and watched those tears streak down her cheeks and onto the blouse she was wearing (bright yellow, I can still see it). I saw that my daughter had changed. And so I was also changed. And because I am a writer, a novel about an incident of bullying began to grow in my imagination. Slowly, as do all my novels, but persistently. *Four Secrets* contains many twists and turns that are purely fiction, but I brought the aforementioned dialogue from that terrible afternoon, intact, to an early chapter.

My daughter had many of the qualities that help children to survive bullying with minimal scarring—she was an innately hopeful child, she believed that people cared about her, she trusted many adults in her life. She quickly regained her sense of self after that terrible month. But in my opinion, the most crucial resource, the one that helped her the most, and the one resource that so many bullied children do not have, was the safe haven of strong friendship. Chloe had a circle of loyal peers, girls and boys, who, once they realized what was happening to her, came to her rescue, confronted the boys who were making her life miserable, and took a stand with her in the hallway of her school. These were kids I already knew and loved, and witnessing them closing ranks around my daughter was a beautiful thing to see. A beautiful thing, coming on the heels of a terrible thing. I wanted my novel to depict a brutal bullying incident, but also to celebrate the power of friendship

in the same way that Cole's novel celebrated it, long before I had seen it with my own eyes.

When I talk about *Four Secrets* to students in their schools, there is almost without exception a moment before I leave the school wherein a teenager approaches me in a manner that indicates approaching me is not an easy task. I intuit a young person who is pushing him or herself. I recognize that I am being sought out by a child who is shy. I hear that I am being spoken to by a girl or boy who is not socially comfortable or chatty. I see a student who is making eye contact with me with great effort. And I often suspect that the student has lived through, or is perhaps currently living through, a time of persecution at the school in which we find ourselves together for the morning.

This young person, usually a boy, thanks me for writing the book. Little else is said. And I always thank the student for taking the trouble to come forth in this way. It is a deeply precious moment, and it reinforces a belief I have held for the 30 years that I have been writing YA novels—that books sustain children who have difficult social lives, who must face the hallways and cafeterias of their schools alone, who do not have ready-made protectors, like Renata has, or soul mates as Howie and Laura have in each other.

Being bullied can seem like a living nightmare, but there is opportunity for redemption and growth. Seeds are planted. Awareness is deepened. Compassion grows. Reconnection becomes possible. Books about bullying are another way to “rejoin the world” after dark days.

Notes

1. In both novels, the children come to the realization that there are adults that can be trusted with the truth. It is an important part of each story's resolution.
2. In contrast, Hollywood movies about the adolescent experience have been woefully inadequate at exploring the reality and the very real cost of bullying. If anything, teen comedies made in the USA for teen viewers have increased the perception that labels are normal and amusing, and that high school is a high-risk social game with clear winners and losers. I became more aware of this pattern in Hollywood films about teen life while teaching the course on Adolescent Culture. We watched many foreign films about growing up and discovered that in other countries, the process of leaving childhood is portrayed with great dignity and complexity, including the area of adolescent sexual identity. Films like *Wild Reeds* and *36 Fillete* (France), *Gregory's Girl* (Scotland), and *My Life as a Dog* (Sweden) are good examples.

Margaret Willey is the author of nine novels for young adults, most recently Four Secrets (Carolrhoda Lab, 2012), for which she has received many ALA Awards and Recommendations. She is also the author of the award-winning Clever Beatrice picturebook series and many essays, reviews, and stories. Her next Carolrhoda novel is scheduled for Fall 2014. She lives in Grand Haven, Michigan, and was awarded the Gwen Frostic Award from the Michigan Reading Association, an award for contributing to literacy in her state. Visit her website at www.margaretwilley.com.

Stories from the Field

Editor's Note: *Stories from the Field* invites readers to share a story about young adult literature. This section features brief vignettes (approximately 300 words) from practicing teachers and librarians who would like to share their interactions with students, parents, colleagues, and administrators around young adult literature. Please send your stories to jbach@lsu.edu.

That which Is Real

Lauren Krodel

Bedford Middle School

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Coauthor of *Stretching beyond the Textbook: Reading and Succeeding with Complex Texts in the Content Areas*

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As a social studies teacher, students are always surprised when I use nonfiction (and especially fiction) in my class. I always try to explain that there is a lot of social science in fiction, and we can read more meaningfully when we have context and depth of thought. My hope is to convert students who “only like to read fiction” into well-rounded readers, ones who can transfer ideas among and between genres. For our civil rights unit, we read *Claudette Colvin: Twice toward Justice* by Philip Hoose. In addition, I offered students the opportunity to read *The Girl Who Fell from the Sky* by Heidi W. Durrow as a fiction pairing and then asked them to think about how young people develop their racial, ethnic, and social identities.

One of my students wrote about her own experience that led to not wanting to wear her Star of David necklace at school because a student had been unkind

to her about it, imposing some terrible stereotypes on her. She said that experiencing both books (one about a real person and one about a fictional character) helped her to realize that she had something in common with the women she read about. Her final reflection says it all: “Now, I wear that same shining Star of David necklace once a week, because I have my strength, and the strength of Claudette Colvin and Rachel Morse backing me up. The three of us identified ourselves primarily based upon how others assumed we were, until we realized that the only opinion about us that actually mattered was our own.”

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Everyone Is a Reading Model

Dana L. Bickmore

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As a middle school principal without a literacy background, I knew little about YA literature. I was, however, convinced that for our students to improve their literacy skills, we, as a staff, needed to encourage them to read a lot more. We discussed this point in our staff leadership team meetings, and we decided that every adult at the school could become a reading role model. To this end, each staff member would post outside their classroom or office an 8" x 10" picture of themselves reading a book each quarter. Staff mem-

bers were asked to pick a high-interest young adult novel recommended by the language arts and social studies departments or their own favorite books. Teachers were also encouraged to give a “book talk” during the quarter to their students.

It wasn’t too long after the first pictures were posted that I knew the project was bearing fruit. I was doing my regular hall duty when a student, nose in a book, bumped into me. He said sorry, and I asked him what he was reading. He said, *Night* by Elie Wiesel. I

commented he must like the book if he was reading it in the hall. He said yes, it was great. I then asked what made him choose that book. He said it was the book Ms. Lauren, his music teacher, was reading, and she made it sound so cool he decided to read it. I asked this seventh-grade student how many books he had read the previous year. He said none.

By the way, I was also part of the project and I am no longer YA illiterate.

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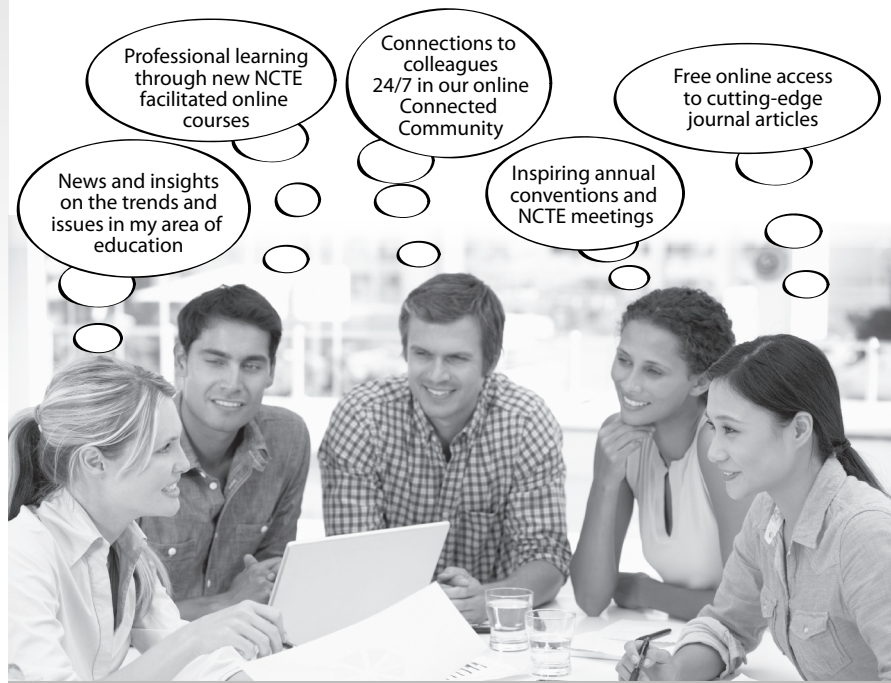
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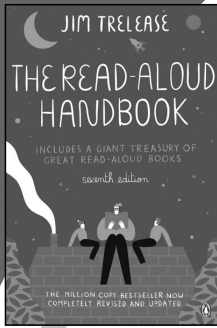


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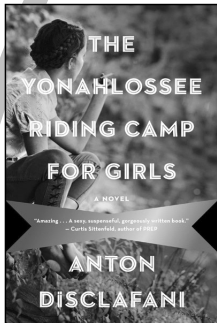
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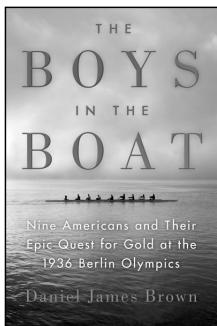
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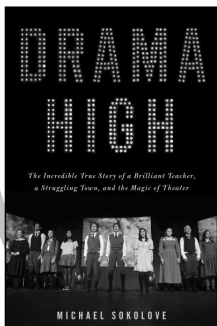
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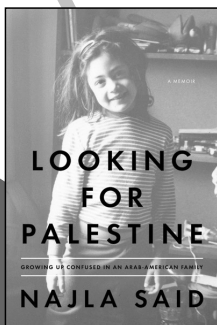
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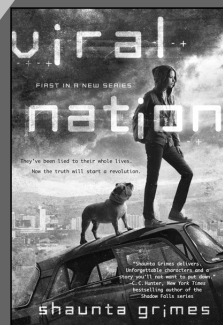
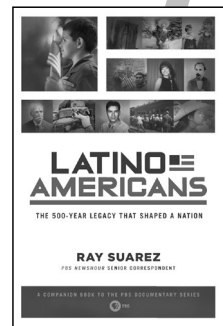
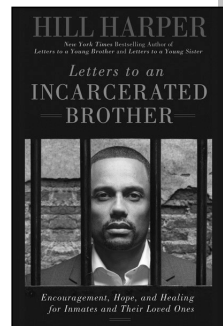
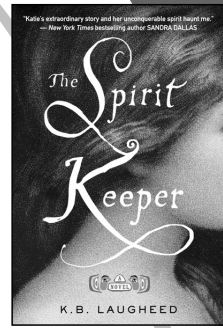
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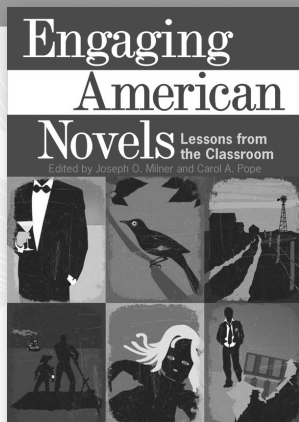
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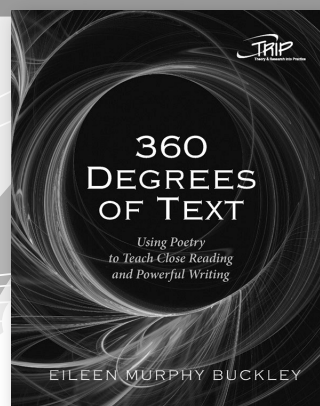


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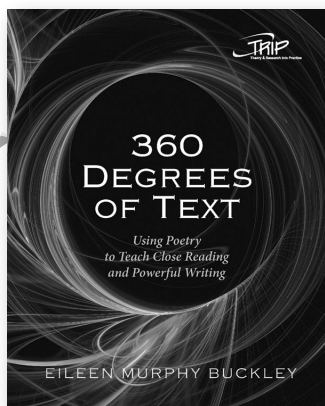


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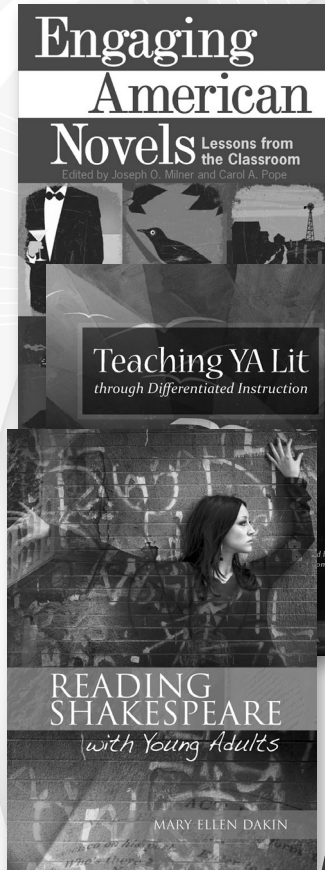
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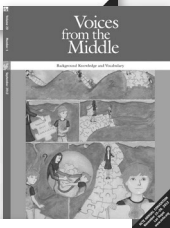
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