Linked Text Sets in the English Classroom

Literature provides students with powerful experiences in which they can reflect on their lives, imagine future scenarios, and consider diverse cultures, time periods, and experiences. These experiences might be even more powerful for readers of young adult literature, which focuses most especially on the various, intense life experiences of adolescents (Caywood, 1995; Greinke, 2007). Educators have found that through reading YA literature, young adults can reflect on life experiences, develop empathy, make independent decisions while avoiding peer pressure, and learn about important social issues and social responsibility (Caywood, 1995; Greinke, 2007; Kist, 2013; Pytash, 2012; Wolk, 2010).

English educators know the potential value of literature, particularly young adult literature, in students' lives, and yet, unintentionally, we often diminish the power of reading in our secondary classrooms by focusing on one text at a time. In one academic year, students might read two or three novels, while the rest of the curriculum contains individual units on short stories, nonfiction, poetry, and dramatic works, such as Shakespearean plays (Applebee, 1992). Often these units are not integrated, but rather taught as separate components of English curricula. We worry that while students might be able to discuss the themes within *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937/1993) or symbolism in *The Scarlet Letter* (1850/1965/1986), they often miss the larger thematic connections between multiple texts and the world around them. Indeed, in many traditional high school English classrooms, young adult literature and other kinds of texts might not have a place at all, as teachers may feel that the literary canon must take precedence.

Reliance on reading one text at a time might serve a specific purpose in curricula; however, it not only limits the amount of reading students do, but it also precludes a rich and diverse reading experience. Many teachers are currently concerned about "close reading" and "text complexity"; however, it should be noted that the emphasis in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) on close reading and text complexity does not by default mean that the teaching of close reading must be accomplished by using one text at a time or just one kind of text at a time (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

Instead of just focusing on the thematic development or interpretation in one text, we should want students to interpret how several authors across several media interpret the same theme or topic (CCSS—RL.9–10–7; CCSS—RL.11–12.7). Students should be able to see how broader themes speak across multiple texts—from information-based, to poetry, to fiction, to film—so they can connect these themes to issues in their worlds. By providing students with teaching units that include a variety of text sources, both canonical and YA literature, including print- and screen-based, students can gain even more powerful reading experiences and insight about multiple perspectives and experiences, and in turn, become critical readers who can analyze as well as make connections across different kinds of texts. Of course, as people are doing more reading from a screen, with all of the multimodal elements therein, another benefit of this

kind of exposure to a broad variety of texts in English classrooms is the enhancement of the increasingly screen-based reading experience—one that is increasingly intertextual in nature (Semali, 2002).

Furthermore, as many teachers are reexamining their English curricula in light of the Common Core State Standards, we hope a dialogue begins that includes certain questions: How do some texts become privileged in schools? How can we incorporate YA literature into the "traditional" English language arts curriculum? How can we provide students with robust reading experiences? How do we create intertextual connections in the English language arts curriculum? How can we challenge students, both individually and collaboratively, to consider multiple perspectives and interpretations of themes across different modes of communication?

Addressing these questions and creating meaningful reading opportunities in middle and high school classrooms are not new. Educators such as Harvey Daniels, Joan Kaywell, Don Gallo, Sarah Herz, and Daria Plumb have been integral voices in establishing the foundation for this work. These authors have long argued for the importance of literature being relevant and meaningful to young adult readers. They have also provided insight into pedagogical practices that support engagement and motivation as students grow as readers. For example, Harvey Daniels's work (2002) surrounding literature has been integral in helping teachers understand how to include multiple texts through instructional approaches, such as literature circles. He has demonstrated how literature circles can foster collaboration, stimulate critical thinking, and help students comprehend literature.

Other educators have authored professional books to promote student engagement with canonical literature using young adult literature as a bridge, and they have provided pedagogical practices that support these connections (Beach, Appleman, Hynds, & Wilhelm, 2011; Bucher & Hinton, 2010; Bushman & Haas, 2006; Herz & Gallo, 2005; Kaywell, 1997; Nilsen & Donelson, 2009). Sarah Herz and Don Gallo's (2005) book, *From Hinton to Hamlet*, provides a theoretical overview and specific instructional practices for thematically connecting young adult literature and canonical literature. And, of course, there are also many recent works demonstrating the motivating power of allowing students to read and write using a variety of new media (see Calo, Woolard-Ferguson, & Koitz, 2013; Castek & Beach, 2013; Day, 2010; Kist, 2005 for just a few examples).

Despite this work, many high school English language arts classrooms still rely on teaching one paper-based text at a time. With the current emphasis on text complexity, close reading, and rigor, we are concerned that many teachers feel pressured to focus solely on the instruction of a few canonical texts throughout the school year. And yet, we encourage educators not only to continue to implement sound pedagogical practices but also to find room within the Standards to support the instructional practices they know will continue to develop young adults as readers. We remind educators that while implementing the Common Core State Standards, there is also a need for middle and high school students to make connections across texts. Preparing students to be career- and college-ready means teaching them how to be critical readers of many kinds of texts.

How can we challenge students, both individually and collaboratively, to consider multiple perspectives and interpretations of themes across different modes of communication?

As teacher educators, we believe one way to negate the overuse of the traditional canonical literature unit is to prepare our preservice teachers with experiences and knowledge about pedagogical practices that include multiple texts and reading opportunities for students. In our methods courses, we introduce Linked Text Sets to provide preservice teachers with firsthand knowledge about how to create instructional units encompassing a range of both print and nonprint texts for use in their future classrooms (Elish-Piper, Wold, & Schwingendorf, 2014). Although our work is focused on preservice teachers, we believe that there are implications for inservice teachers who would like to incorporate Linked Text Sets in the high school English language arts classroom. With the ever-increasing requirements, such as Standard Growth Measures (SGMs) and CCSS requirements, Linked Text Sets provide K–12 language arts instructors with opportunities to link literature analysis and writing samples from a wide range of media into one

assignment. Through the use of Linked Text Sets, we can assess several of our SGMs in an efficient manner that is also extremely relevant to the variety of ways people read and write today.

Linked Text Sets

A text set is a collection of texts (usually 5–15 texts) that connect in some way (Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996). Traditionally, text sets have been print-based; however, Linked Text Sets expand the notion of "text" by encouraging both print (written) and nonprint (e.g., music, movie clips) (Wold & Elish-Piper, 2009). This extension allows readers to experience a multimodal range of texts (CCSS—R1.11–12.7), such as websites, video, music, art, graphic novels, young adult novels, nonfiction, plays, poetry, and picturebooks (Mathis, 2002; Wold & Elish-Piper, 2009). In addition, the students can receive ongoing feedback about their writing and interpretations (CCSS—W11–12.6) from the teacher using multiple forms of representation.

The goal is for each text to address the particular theme or question, thus providing students with multiple kinds of texts that invite them to explore universal issues.

Linked Text Sets address themes and essential questions and can relate to a single theme (e.g., the American Dream), a topic (e.g., identity), or seek to answer a particular question (e.g., What defines a hero?). In addition to focusing on thematic elements, the teacher and students can also look at the ways in which each medium provides different opportunities to address the theme or question.

In order to create Linked Text Sets, teachers must first consider the purposes for students' reading. This becomes the organizational framework for units, allowing the teacher to design the Linked Text Sets. First, teachers select an anchor text, which all students read. This text can be fiction or nonfiction, canonical or young adult literature. Second, students should have the opportunity to select a book that provides insight into the essential question or theme (CCSS—RI. 9–10.2; CCSS—RL 11–12.2). Similar to the anchor text, these can be canonical or young adult titles. It is important for students to select books they want to read. Depending on the essential question or theme, teachers might have lists of suggested readings. The goal is for students to have books based on interests and reading levels and related to the theme. Third, teachers find relevant screen-based texts, including movies, television, YouTube clips, and social networking sites (CCSS—RL. 9–10.7; 11–12.7; CCSS—SL. 9–10.5; 11–12.2). Fourth, teachers should select supplemental informational or nonfiction texts that are of high interest, short, and accessible (CCSS—RI. 9–10.7; 11–12.7). These might include news articles, commentaries, speeches, opinion editorials, and excerpts from biographies, as the inclusion of nonfiction texts is, of course, a major thrust of the Common Core. Finally, additional sources might include theatrical pieces, visual art, political cartoons, and charts or graphs.

It is important to remember that none of these texts should be privileged over others because each text has a specific purpose for its inclusion into the Linked Text Set. The goal is for each text to address the particular theme or question, thus providing students with multiple kinds of texts that invite them to explore universal issues.

Benefits of Linked Text Sets

Linked Text Sets offer numerous benefits and are certainly appropriate with the implementation of the Common Core State Standards.

Reading and Writing Are Now Increasingly Multimodal in Nature

Students need to acquire skills in reading and writing in multiple forms throughout their school careers, both on screen and on paper, and using Linked Text Sets encourages students to go back and forth across various texts, emphasizing intertextuality (McCormick, 2011). Intertextuality refers to the process of making connections between other texts to facilitate the construction of meaning of new texts (Semali, 2002). Situated within a multimodal (multiple sign system) framework, a "text" can mean any mode of communication, such as a play, a song, a piece of art, a poem, or a dance. Working within a multimodal framework encourages intertextuality because students must make connections between multiple texts.

It also helps students construct new meaning through transmediation, which is the translation between and among sign systems (Suhor, 1984). Transmediation helps students think generatively and reflectively because it provides multiple opportunities for students to create connections that might not have been there while learning in a single sign system (Siegel, 2006). Transmediation also assists students in finding continuity in meaning (Smagorinsky & Coppock, 1994), represented holistically in Linked Text Sets.

Student Choice and Voice Need to Be Honored in English Classrooms

Using whole-class texts seems to ignore recent studies that find a link between textual variety and increased student engagement (see above and also Gibson, 2010; Gomes & Carter 2010; Vasudevan, 2010); improved comprehension of complex content (van der Veen, 2012); and even enriched capacity for performing literary analysis (Lewis, 2011). Although all students read the same anchor text in a Linked Text Set, there are many opportunities for students to have choices in reading materials. With choice, students are able to engage in content at a deeper level through their chosen medium of reading.

Ultimately, variety is a key tenet of Linked Text Sets. With access to a variety of texts, students repeatedly encounter universal issues and themes found in these texts. By connecting texts to universal themes, student interest piques, since the reading is not so focused on one text, but rather centers on the bigger picture, thus connecting the texts to students' lives. This connection is what is often missing in classrooms, which is surprising considering evidence that substantiates the value of personal relevance for students (Gallagher, 2009; Wilhelm, 1997). Intertextual relationships can help students notice similarities and hone in on what is not shared between titles, which allows them to recognize different perspectives and limitations of texts centered on a theme or topic (Berg, 2011).

CCSS Require Students to Be Adept at Deep Analysis across a Variety of Media Texts

According to the Common Core State Standards, in order for students to become college- and career-ready, various works of literature should be introduced throughout their education (although it's worth noting that the Core does not prescribe a list or a certain order of texts). As students read YA literature or canonical texts in their classes, they should have access to accompanying texts to help build, center, and showcase common themes between these books and other media. By making connections with these accompanying texts, students can better "analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take" (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). Linked Text Sets also offer opportunities for students and educators to help develop and probe underlying themes that might be complex and unavailable through a single reading of a canonical classic. If students can build schematic background and link their understandings of what is in the canon to their own interests and lives, it might make the classic piece of literature more accessible and provide an overall deeper, more powerful learning experience (Kist, 2013).

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Embracing Multiple Texts Impacts Cognitive and Sociocultural Elements of Learning

Not allowing students to read and write in multiple forms has a negative cognitive impact in that it limits human thought (Eisner, 1997; Tishman & Perkins, 1997). There have also been sociopolitical rationales for embracing a broad spectrum of texts in classrooms. From the onset of the "new" literacies, many have argued that a broader palette of literacies is an essential component to creating a student-centered, democratic classroom (Willinsky, 1990). More recently, the provision of a variety of modes of communication has been championed as essential to bridging the divide between out-of-school and in-school literacies (McLean, 2011). Using Linked Text Sets encourages students to foster independent thought and action, "avoid stereotypical thinking, get exposure to non-dominant views, and hear voices often silenced in the

school curriculum" (Moss, 2011, p. 46).

Linked Text Sets in Action

We have seen the power of Linked Text Sets in our work as former middle and high school English teachers and in our current work with preservice teachers. Linked Text Sets are a priority in our teacher education program. During their junior year, our students take two courses—Teaching Literature in Secondary Schools and Multimodal Literacies—in conjunction with a five-week field experience. Our preservice teachers create Linked Text Sets to be used during their field experiences or future student teaching placements. The preservice teachers often select texts that have been taught in classrooms they observed or texts they plan to teach in the future.

To create their Linked Text Sets, the students select a topic, theme, or essential question as a way to frame their reading of the texts and facilitate connections between texts. Then they select young adult literature, multiple digital media sources, nonfiction works, and visual arts that also address the topic, theme, or essential question. Over the past two semesters, we have been impressed with the richness of intertextuality that our preservice teachers are able to achieve. They were able to share and discuss thematic concepts through an array of multiple sign systems, such as music clips, movie segments, YouTube links, and novel excerpts.

The following sections highlight Linked Text Sets created by two of our preservice teachers as potential models for inservice teachers and students. We provide an overview of their frameworks and the variety of texts they selected. We also highlight their learning during the creation of their Linked Text Sets. As teacher educators, our goals are for preservice teachers to experience instructional approaches that they will implement in their teaching. Our objective for the following examples is to provide models for topics, themes, and essential questions and an overview of the variety of texts that can be incorporated into a Linked Text Set.

The Bonds of Friendship

The first Linked Text Set (see Fig. 1) was framed around the idea that unlikely friendships can form strong bonds. James wrote, "It's hard not to think

Canonical Text

Steinbeck, J. (1937). *Of mice and men*. London, England: Penguin Books.

Young Adult Literature

Philbrick, R. (1993). *Freak the mighty*. New York, NY: Scholastic.

Nonfiction

Fowler, A. M. (n.d.). True friendship. *Teen Ink*. Retrieved from http://www.teenink.com/nonfiction/all/article/7835/True-Friendship/.

Destinyz, T. (n.d.). Online friendship—Latest norm of the century. *Teen Ink*. Retrieved from http://www.teenink.com/opinion/all/article/610614/Online-Friendship—Latest-Norm-of-The-Century/.

Moore, A. (n.d.). Teenagers and the importance of friends. *Global Post*. Retrieved from http://everydaylife.globalpost.com/teenagers-importance-friends-6135.html.

Digital Media

Birnbaum, R., & Mark, L. (Producers), & Johnson, M. S. (Director). (1998). *Simon Birch* [Motion picture]. Hollywood, CA: Hollywood Pictures.

Varrato, R. (2013, March 30). *Friendship in the age of Facebook: Rory Varrato at TEDxGrandviewAve* [Video file]. Retrieved from http://tedxtalks.ted.com/video/Friendship-in-the-Age-of-Facebo;search%3Atag%3A%22tedxgrandviewave%22.

Cjhhh93. (2013, July 26). *Video number fifty-one: The importance of friendship*. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nAeagnGnuMI.

King, C. (1971). You've got a friend [Recorded by James Taylor]. On *Mud slide slim* [CD]. Burbank, CA: Warner Bros.

Withers, B. (1971). Lean on me. On *Still Bill* [CD]. Los Angeles, CA: Sussex.

Stewart, C., Nash, T., Harrell, T., & Carter, S. (2007). Umbrella [Recorded by Rihanna]. On *Good girl gone bad* [CD]. New York, NY: Def Jam.

Brel, J., & McKuen, R. (1961). Seasons in the sun [Recorded by Terry Jacks]. On *5* [CD]. New York, NY: Bell Records.

Figure 1. Linked Text Set for the theme "Friendships"

about this statement while reading *Freak the Mighty* (Philbrick, 1993) or *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937/1993), two stories that follow the friendships between two very different people." James not only saw a thematic connection, but also noted both novels have an "emotional" ending, which is why he also included the film *Simon Birch* (Baldecchi, Birnbaum, & Mark, 1998) in this Linked Text Set. James highlighted that three of the main characters pass away at the end of each text: George shoots Lennie, Freak passes away from a medical condition in which his heart is too big for his body, and Simon dies while saving a student from drowning during a bus accident. James explained, "These texts are centered around what it means to be a friend. You go through their struggles and triumphs. And you accept their flaws." He noted that the tragic ending of these characters' lives might help young adults consider what it means to value the important people in our lives and the daily acts we do to let them know they are valued. He wrote, "These books reinforce the idea that even though someone passes, they are not truly gone from your life."

In addition to these three texts, James selected the songs "You've Got a Friend" by James Taylor (King, 1971), "Lean on Me" by Bill Withers (1971), "Umbrella" by Rhianna (Stewart, Nash, Harrell, & Carter, 2007), and "Seasons in the Sun" by Terry Jacks (Brel & McKuen, 1961). He reasoned that music is an important part of many people's lives and explained, "During my field experience, I would always hear kids singing and rapping in the hallways, so I really think including music would appeal to high-school-aged students." James also discussed creating an 8Tracks (www.8Tracks.com) collaborative playlist so that each of his students could contribute music for a complete class playlist.

In order to incorporate nonfiction, James found pieces from *Teen Ink*, a literary magazine written by and for young adults. He selected two pieces: "True Friendship" by a young adult named Amanda who describes an emotional conversation between two friends, and an opinion piece, "Online Friendship—Latest Norm of the Century," which describes how friendships are forged with social media. He included these pieces because he thought they not only contributed to the Linked Text Set's theme, but he also liked the idea of including pieces written by young adults. Finally, he explored how the Ted Talk "Friendship in the Age of Facebook" could be used to explore the nature of friendships and how we engage with friends both face-to-face and in social media (Varrato, 2013).

Developing and sustaining friendships are critical experiences and are particularly important during adolescence. James's goal was for students to "look deeply inside of themselves" to consider who they are as friends and how they create and maintain friendships. He hoped this would lead to an in-depth discussion surrounding relationships and friendships.

Outcasts

Sara began her Linked Text Set (see Fig. 2) by making an initial connection between the canonical text *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathanial Hawthorne (1850/1965/1986) and the modern-day young adult novel *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson (1999). Sara believed that, at their core, both novels dealt with the central premise: What does it mean to be an outcast?

She chose the theme of being an outcast because it connected well with the texts and is applicable to high school students, many of whom might have experienced being an outcast at some point in their lives. Initially, she began by marking direct connections between the two main characters—Hester Prynne (*Scarlet Letter*) and Melinda Sordino (*Speak*)—and this thematic concept. For example, Sarah noted that Hester's feelings of "misery upon the heap of shame" (Hawthorne, 1986, p. 54) for her "crime of adultery" were very similar to Melinda's feelings of despair when she was hit with "a lump of potatoes and gravy" (Anderson, 1999, p. 8) on the first day of school—a penalty for contacting the police about a class party. Sara acknowledged that the way these characters experience "isolation and embarrassment from society" was something to which most high school students could relate.

To expand the list, Sara found informative, short, nonfiction resources on the PBS website (see PBS, "Gossip and Rumors," 2012), including an article about why people gossip and strategies for handling rumors. She also found a feature article written by a teenaged reporter about his experience with cyberbullying. Sara chose these resources because they were specifically written for young adults. She also reasoned that since the pieces were short, students could read both pieces and engage in a discussion framed around the question: "What should be done about

Canonical Text

Hawthorne, N. (1986). *The scarlet letter* (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Ticknor, Reed, & Fields. (Original publication 1850).

Young Adult Literature

Anderson, L. H. (2003). *Speak.* New York, NY: Scholastic.

Brown, J. (2009). *Hate list*. New York, NY: Little, Brown Books for Young Readers.

Nonfiction

Rinaldo, D. (2011). Bullying takes center stage. *Choices Magazine, 27*(1), 4–7.

Articles about Bullies:

New York Times website— http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/subjects/b/bullies/index.html.

Cloud, J. (2010, Oct. 24). When bullying turns deadly: Can it be stopped? *Time Magazine*. Retrieved from http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2024210,00.html.

Poetry

Dickinson, E. (1976). The loneliness one dare not sound. In T. Johnson (Ed.), *The complete poems of Emily Dickinson* (p. 379). Boston, MA: Little, Brown.

Digital Media

http://pbskids.org/itsmylife/friends/rumors/index.html

Anderson, L. H. (2009). *Speak* poem. New York, NY: Penguin Young Readers. Retrieved from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ic1c_MaAMOI.

Lucy Political Cartoon. (2012, May 14). "Bullying." Retrieved from http://neveryetmelted.com/2012/05/14/bullying/.

Cypress Ranch High School Anti-Bullying Lip Dub. (2012, March 29). Who Do U Think U R? Retrieved from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=waAqJ6727Hk.

The Bully Project. (2010, May 30). Bully. *YouTube*. Retrieved from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBymTVjBYHg&feature=related.

Figure 2. Linked Text Set for the theme "Outcasts"

cyberbullying?"

Also included were video clips, such as the YouTube clip from Cypress Ranch High School that features the entire school participating in a video about anti-bullying. Sara thought the videos would not only be engaging, they might also spark conversations about particular policies that schools should have in place regarding bullying. Knowing the power of music in many young adults' lives, Sara found a website that connects popular music to canonical literature (corndancer.com). She noticed bands like Mudvayne and Tool have songs that reference *The Scarlet Letter* (1850/1965/1986). Finally, poetry was explored as a complement to the Linked Text Set. For example, she connected Laurie Halse Anderson's work with Emily Dickinson's poetry. She thought Anderson's poem "Listen" (2010) would provide a powerful glimpse into how other adolescent readers have connected to the book *Speak*, and then she considered comparing Anderson's "Listen" to Dickinson's poem "The Loneliness One Dare Not Sound" (1976) to emphasize not only feelings of isolation and pain but also hope and resilience. These discussions led to considerations about how certain people find resilience and strength even when considered outcasts in society.

In addition to using Linked Text Sets to make connections from canonical literature to modern-day texts and societal issues, Sara also brainstormed how multimedia links could be used for middle and high school students to demonstrate their understanding. For instance, she shared that Sketchfu is a resource that would "allow students to draw ideas as they come to them and then publish the drawings so that the other students can see the way that the idea grew" (it should be noted this site is no longer active). She also considered how students might create video projects similar to the Cypress Ranch High School video.

In the end, preservice teachers recognized how Linked Text Sets could benefit middle and high school students with different learning styles. In addition, using multimodal instruction gave preservice teachers the ability to hone in on their creativity and ingenuity.

Ways to Implement Linked Text Sets in the English Classroom

To incorporate Linked Text Sets into the curriculum, we suggest teachers first model the process of how

to connect universal theme topics across different media. For each section of the anchor text, the teacher will model how to find the theme topics or universal questions. For example, for the play *A Raisin in the Sun* (Hansberry, 2009), the teacher could begin by teaching students how to find central theme topics or universal questions in the play. As the students read through the play, the teacher could begin each daily lesson with a different text set that highlights a theme topic from each act.

For instance, the teacher might start an Act I lesson about the theme topic of Dreams with the poems "I Hear America Singing" by Walt Whitman, "I, Too," by Langston Hughes, and "Harlem [Dream Deferred]" by Langston Hughes. For an Act II discussion on the theme topic of Racism, the teacher might show clips from movies like *The Great Debaters* (Washington, 2007), pictures from the Jim Crow era, slave narratives, or newspaper articles. Finally, for Act III, the teacher might start with the TED talk by Angela Lee Duckworth: "The Key to Success? Grit" (Duckworth, 2013). After the students watch the clip, they can compare and contrast how Ms. Duckworth's interpretation of perseverance compares to Lorraine Hansberry's depiction. After the students analyze each text set, they should be able to interpret, analyze, and write about how the linked text and core authors discuss the theme topics in their works and the similarities and differences across types of media.

Once students have experience thinking about how to make thematic connections, they can begin forming their own Linked Texts Sets. It is important to note that although we suggest teachers select the anchor text and theme, topic, or essential question, we encourage teachers to allow students to select the remaining texts included in the Linked Text Set. Once students have read the class- and self-selected novels, they can work in groups to brainstorm and research other media that highlight the central theme topic. See Figure 3 for a scoring guide that assesses the Linked Text Set.

Once these Linked Text Sets are uploaded to a teacher-approved online platform (perhaps a learning management system such as Moodle or Edmodo, or even a teacher-created wiki), the students can spend the final days of the unit writing an analysis of how these texts all connect together around the thematic elements. Students might choose to write their interpretations in blog posts, journal entries, or formal expository writing. Whichever writing style is selected, students should remember to include direct quotations

Name(s):	/100
Class Novel:_____ **Companion Novel:** _____	/10
Theme Topic/ Universal Question: _____ **3 direct quotations connected with theme/question in class novel:** **3 direct quotations connected with theme/question in companion novel:**	/10
3 additional texts: **(10 pts each)** _____ movie clip(s) _____ poem(s), music (lyrics and audio) _____ speech(es) (TED talks, political debates, etc.) _____ art (sculptures, graphic art, historical pictures, etc.) _____ information-based texts, reviews, critiques _____ other (check first!)	/30
Analysis Demonstrating How Texts Fit with Theme/Essential Question: (10 pts each) _____ Strong Support/ Clear Rationale _____ Mechanics, Usage, Grammar, and Style (MUGS) _____ Clear Theme Statement/ Universal Question	/30
Evaluation: **(10 pts each)** Survey/Peer Review of other Groups	/20
Comments:	

Figure 3. Scoring guide of Linked Text Set

from each text set. After the projects are complete, the teacher might provide time for the students to present their findings to the class or allow a class "sharing session," in which all of the students can read or hear about their classmates' connections. As the students read their peers' Linked Text Sets, they could also complete a peer review critique sheet to document the new perspectives they have gained from their classmates.

After completing the project, the students should have deeper understandings about how to make thematic connections across different media. And, it is hoped, they will come to realize that all texts—whether they come from the canon, a classic book, young adult literature, a newspaper, or YouTube—have merit and worth as contributors to the expression of one or more universal themes.

Conclusion

The current reading model found in many high school English classrooms deserves closer attention. Yes, reading a great work of literature connects readers to an author or a particular time period temporarily, but if we continue to teach literature one work at a time, students are likely to miss the relationships texts have with each other as well as how these texts fit into the grander scheme of an essential question or theme. As noted earlier, educators such as Kaywell, Gallo, Herz, and Plumb have argued for the importance of incorporating young adult literature into the high school English classroom and have explored pedagogical practices to support adolescents as readers. Linked Text Sets support their work by recognizing the issues of privileging canonical literature and build upon this work by broadening notions of "text" to include both print and non-print texts.

We know that Linked Text Sets provide intertextual connections that build and mature common understandings of themes and issues; what is even more important is that the variety of formats and genres provide numerous opportunities to reach students in different ways. These multiple perspectives generate richer and deeper instances of understanding. By reading and engaging in texts via Linked Text Sets, there is no privileging of a particular title or author over another. The students can see the value and connections between the world and YA literature at least as well as if they had read a piece from the canon, which encourages all formats and voices to be heard in the classroom. Using Linked Text Sets embraces powerful reading, thinking, and learning experiences for students.

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