THE ALAN REVIEW

SUMMER 2015

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ASSEMBLY ON LITERATURE FOR ADOLESCENTS

OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

New from NCTE

Connected Reading

Teaching Adolescent Readers in a Digital World

Kristen Hawley Turner and Troy Hicks

Principles in Practice imprint
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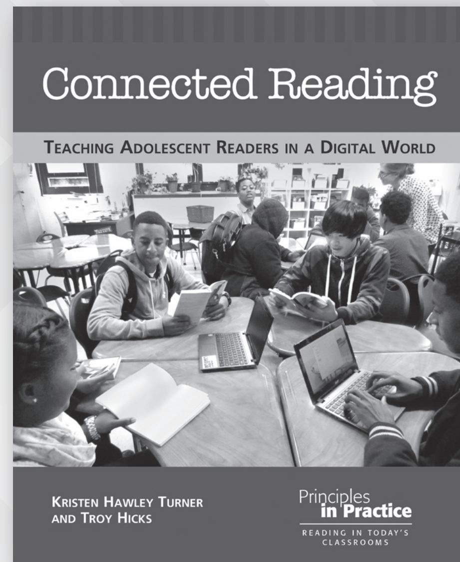

As readers of all ages increasingly turn to the Internet and a variety of electronic devices for both informational and leisure reading, teachers need to reconsider not just *who* and *what* teens read but *where* and *how* they read as well. Having ready access to digital tools and texts doesn't mean that middle and high school students are automatically thoughtful, adept readers. So how can we help adolescents become critical readers in a digital age?

Using NCTE's policy research brief *Reading Instruction for All Students* as both guide and sounding board, experienced teacher-researchers Kristen Hawley Turner and Troy Hicks took their questions about adolescent reading practices to a dozen middle and high school classrooms. In this book, they report on their interviews and survey data from visits with hundreds of teens, which led to the development of their model of Connected Reading: "Digital tools, used mindfully, enable connections. Digital reading is connected reading." They argue that we must teach adolescents how to read digital texts effectively, not simply expect that teens can read them because they know how to use digital tools. Turner and Hicks offer practical tips by highlighting classroom practices that engage students in reading and thinking with both print and digital texts, thus encouraging reading instruction that reaches all students.

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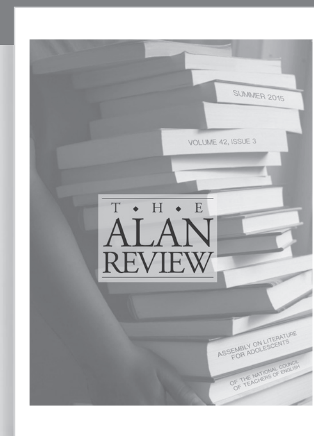

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Call for Manuscripts

Submitting a Manuscript:

Manuscript submission guidelines are available on p. 3 of this issue and on our website at http://www.alan-ya.org/page/alan-review-author-guidelines. All submissions may be sent to thealanreview@gmail.com.

Summer 2016: Mediating Media in a Digital Age
Submissions due on or before November 1, 2015

Today's young adult readers access and generate young adult texts in myriad forms. Through multimedia platforms, television and film adaptations, fan fiction, and social media, they engage with stories in ways that extend beyond the originals. These opportunities for connection are rich in potential and complication. Do media enrich our interactions with others and our world—or is there a falseness in this apparent linkage? Consider the perspective of Rainbow Rowell's narrator: "There are other people on the Internet. It's awesome. You get all the benefits of 'other people' without the body odor and the eye contact" (*Fangirl*, p. 147). We wonder if all readers are inspired by techie texts or if some, in fact, imagine life as "an analog girl, living in a digital world" (Neil Gaiman, *American Gods*, p. 332).

For this issue, we encourage you to ponder and explore the ways in which you use young adult literature to help young people mediate media: How do you foster innovative engagement with media in your professional setting? What are the challenges of teaching and learning in the digital age, and how might they be mediated? How do digital communities invite and/or exclude young people today? What role does/can YA literature play in successfully navigating life in the "digital age"?

Fall 2016: Rethinking "Normal" and Embracing Differences
Submissions due on or before March 1, 2016

"To be careful with people and with words was a rare and beautiful thing" (Benjamin Alire Sáenz, *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*, p. 324). With these words, Sáenz points to the sacredness of language, particularly as we use that language to build up or tear down those we know—and those we don't. We use language to discriminate differences and to make sense of and give meaning to our perceptions, but being discriminate can result in unfair judgment—both subtle and overt—when we fail to consider the unique stories of those to whom we assign our assumptions.

In this issue, we invite you to consider how language, woven through story, can invite exploration of difference centered on (dis)ability, sexual identity or orientation, gender, race, nationality, culture, age, and/or physical appearance. How might young adult literature help readers consider their own and others' uniqueness? How might it challenge deficit perspectives of the other that are too often forwarded by the dominant narrative? What difficulties result from such attempts at engagement in educational settings? How can we help adolescent readers understand that "[A] person is so much more than the name of a diagnosis on a chart" (Sharon M. Draper, *Out of My Mind*, p. 23) and ask themselves, as they grow up in a labels-oriented world, "You're going to spend more time with yourself than with anyone else in your life. You want to spend that whole time fighting who you are?" (Alex Sanchez, *The God Box*, p. 139)?

As always, we also welcome submissions focused on any aspect of young adult literature not directly connected to this theme. Please see the ALAN website (http://www.alan-ya.org/page/alan-review-author-guidelines) for submission guidelines. All submissions may be sent to thealanreview@gmail.com.

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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 young adult literature, librarians, YA authors, publishers, reading teachers, and teachers in related content areas. ALAN has members in all 50 United States and a number of foreign countries.

PREFERRED STYLE. Manuscripts should usually be no longer than twenty double-spaced, typed pages, not including references. A manuscript submitted for consideration should deal specifically with literature for young adults 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 young adults 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. The names of submitting authors should not appear anywhere in the manuscript. 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 from the copyright owner. YA author interviews should be accompanied by written permission for publication in *TAR* from the interviewed author(s). Interviewers should indicate to the author(s) that publication is subject to review of an editorial board. Original short tables and figures should be double-spaced and placed on separate sheets at the end of the manuscript. Notations should appear in the text indicating proper placement of tables and figures.

The ALAN Review uses the bibliographic style detailed in the *Publications Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA). Please adhere to that style when including in-text citations and preparing reference lists.

SUBMITTING THE MANUSCRIPT. Authors should submit manuscripts electronically to thealanreview@gmail.com. In the subject line, please write: ALAN Manuscript Submission. All manuscripts should be written using a recent version of Microsoft Word and use APA bibliographical format. Complete submissions include, as separate attachments, the following documents: 1) An abstract of no more than 150 words; 2) A manuscript without references to the author(s) and with name(s) removed in the Properties section under the File menu to ensure the piece is blinded; 3) A title page with names, affiliations, mailing addresses, and 100- to 150-word professional biographies for each submitting author, as well as 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.

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SUMMER (June) Issue Deadline:	**NOVEMBER 1**

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Wendy **Glenn,** Ricki **Ginsberg,** and Danielle **King**

From the Editors

Remembering and (Re)living: Probing the Collective and Individual Past

Stories are dynamic—told and heard, accepted and revered, rejected and rewritten by readers who draw from their experiences and understandings to garner meaning from the words on the page. In young adult texts—fiction and nonfiction, historical and contemporary and futuristic—this dynamism can encourage the critique of our collective past, helping us question assumptions about what came before and reconsider our responsibilities to the present and future.

These texts can also help us consider the adolescent experience across time and place and explore the similarities and differences that shape reality as young people navigate and draft their own coming of age stories. This universality can foster a connection to others and reinforce our shared existence as members of a human community. And yet, these texts can also give emotional reality to names, dates, and other factual information, letting us imagine the voices of those who lived in other places and times and who have sometimes been silenced in official accounts of history, ideally inspiring us to honor these voices and generate a better future. Through these stories, we might come to reject a single narrative and develop empathy for individuals we never knew—as well as those we did and do and will.

In this issue, we celebrate articles that explore the relationship between young adult literature, history, stories, and readers. "Past, Present, Story: A Conversation with Jennifer Donnelly and Christopher Paul Curtis" features a written exchange between two award-winning YA authors who share their perspectives on history, nostalgia, privilege, and truth as they relate to their work as writers of historical fiction.

In "The (Im)possibility of Objectivity: Narrating the Past in Young Adult Historiographic Metafiction," Amy Cross draws upon two Australian historiographic metafictive texts, *Into White Silence* (Eaton, 2008) and *The Lace Maker's Daughter* (Crew, 2005), to demonstrate how particular narrative strategies destabilize the relationship between history and fiction and the past and the present and can invite readers to consider their own roles as meaning makers—of history and of their individual selves.

In "Troubling Ideologies: Creating Opportunities for Students to Interrogate Cultural Models in YA Literature," Sean P. Connors and Ryan M. Rish explain how young adult novels can expose readers to liberating ideologies and highlight existing power imbalances—but also reinforce the status quo. The authors explore whether or not YA literature is capable of reifying problematic ideologies about adolescents and their relationships to the people and the world around them.

Margaret Robbins, in her piece "Using Graphic Memoirs to Discuss Social Justice Issues in the Secondary Classroom," analyzes how graphic memoirs can be used in high school classrooms to introduce and teach social justice issues through a critical literacy lens. Robbins provides educators with practical questions and learning activities to accompany *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* by Art Spiegelman, *Darkroom: A Memoir in Black and White* by Lila Quintero Weaver, and *A Game for Swallows* by Zeina Abirached.

In “Beauty Is in the Eye of the West: An Analysis of An Na’s *The Fold*,” Joanne Yi draws upon content and thematic analyses to explore how Asian American children seek a Western model of beauty through three types of aesthetic modification: the eyelid fold, male height, and cosmetic use. She further examines how standards of beauty represented in YA fiction can impact the construction of ethnic identity among adolescent readers.

S. d. Collins’s column, “Book in Review: a Teaching Guide—Writing the Past to Right the Future: *The Cure for Dreaming*,” provides extensive resources and strategies for teaching Cat Winters’s *The Cure for Dreaming*, a YA novel that explores historical and contemporary injustices. Collins provides lesson ideas and prompts that encourage deep examination of these injustices as well as hope for the possibility of overcoming them.

In her regular column, “Right to Read: (Re)envisioning and (Re)reading: Examining Problematic Texts,” Teri S. Lesesne invites the participation of two educators who have written widely about problematic texts in light of contemporary culture, Ebony Elizabeth Thomas and Debbie Reese. These teachers and scholars answer questions about how to approach classic titles that could be troublesome given their dated (and sometimes racist) content, offering resources for locating diverse alternative texts.

“Layered Literacies” column editors Susan L. Groenke and Jud Laughter invite teachers and teacher educators to share their favorite tech resources in their piece, “Tech Tools for Reader Response, Communal Engagement, and Effective Writing.” This extensive and varied collection of tools provides opportunities for teachers to help their students engage with texts in authentic and meaningful ways.

We express heartfelt thanks to our outgoing column editors. S.d., Teri, Susan, and Jud, your wisdom, care, and passion have resulted in writings that make a significant contribution to the journal and field. We appreciate you.

As a final reflective piece in this issue, esteemed young adult author Ruta Sepetys informs and inspires us with her contribution, “Historical Fiction: The Silent Soldier.” Amidst criticism that historical fiction doesn’t sell, Sepetys offers evidence—academic and personal—to suggest that historical fiction can (and should) be sold in our global learning community due to its thematic value, offerings of truth, and opportunities for personal connection.

As you read the articles within this issue, we encourage you to consider how they remind us that “every living soul is a book of their own history, which sits on the ever-growing shelf in the library of human memories” (Gantos, 2011, p. 259). Consider, too, how they also reinforce the sentiment that “If you stare at the center of the universe, there is coldness there. A blankness. Ultimately, the universe doesn’t care about us. Time doesn’t care about us. That’s why we have to care about each other” (Levithan, 2012, p. 320). Stories matter in this caring: “I leapt eagerly into books. The characters’ lives were so much more interesting than the lonely heartbeat of my own” (Sepetys, 2013, p. 29).

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Gantos, J. (2011). *Dead end in Norvelt.* New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Levithan, D. (2012). *Every day*. New York, NY: Knopf.

Sepetys, R. (2013). *Out of the Easy*. New York, NY: Philomel.

Jennifer **Donnelly** and Christopher Paul **Curtis**

Past, Present, Story:

A Conversation

From the Editors: In this article, we are honored to feature a written conversation between Jennifer Donnelly and Christopher Paul Curtis, award-winning authors who have given readers some of the most memorable voices in YA historical fiction. We appreciate the generous response of these authors (and their publishers) and their willingness to engage with challenging, important questions of history and fiction.

As to process, we generated and sent a series of questions to both Jennifer and Christopher. We compiled their initial responses into a single document and then sent the compiled version back and forth to solicit questions, elaborations, and revisions until all were satisfied with the end result. We hope our readers benefit from the care and insight reflected in the resulting piece.

How do you define history?

Jennifer: As an unending dialogue between the past and present. I love that definition and wish I'd thought it up myself, but I stole it from *What Is History?*, a book by the British historian E. H. Carr (1961). I think it's brilliant because it presents history as a living, breathing, noisy creature, instead of a dry, dead thing pulled out of a grave. Carr's definition tells us that the case isn't closed. That our understanding of a time, and of its people and its events—whether earthshaking or everyday—isn't fixed, but rather evolves. And it suggests that every one of us is engaged in the dialogue. The forces of history—whether political like a world war or personal like a family legacy of poverty or wealth, addiction, ambition, insanity, or genius—shape us. They make us who we are. They sometimes save us, sometimes doom us.

Christopher: I like Jennifer's definition better than E. H. Carr's! History is both a legacy and a road map; it's something we can choose to ignore or something we can draw strength and knowledge from. Most of all, history is a series of lessons.

There is often a sense of nostalgia associated with how things used to be. Are you critical or celebratory of the past you describe in your works?

Jennifer: Yes, there is a sense of nostalgia about the past, and I'm guilty of putting on the rose-colored glasses, though I hate to admit it. Remember the Ken Burns documentary on the Civil War? Remember the letter from the Union officer Sullivan Ballou to his wife? It was breathtaking. People wrote letters then. They put their hearts into them. When I think of the beauty and emotion in Ballou's writing, I long with all my heart for the days before Twitter.

But then I think about Ballou's death. Part of his right leg was torn off by a cannonball at Bull Run. The rest of it was amputated by a battlefield surgeon. No antibiotics, probably no anesthesia. The Union army retreated, leaving Ballou behind. He died a week later. Pain, infection, fever, delirium—I can't imagine how badly he suffered.

And then I think about Ballou's world. The

war he fought was waged, in large part, to free enslaved African Americans—men, women, and children for whom violence, rape, hunger, and humiliation were a part of everyday life. And the rose-colored glasses crack.

Christopher: To paraphrase an old Gladys Knight song, "Everybody's talking about the good old days, the good old days, the good old days . . . ." But it all depends on whose good old days we're talking about. We have to keep in mind that nostalgia and remembrances of the past are relative and often very personal.

I'm certain that Atlanta, Georgia, in the 1840s was a real humdinger of a time if you happened to be a landed, wealthy, White male. An African American woman would beg to differ. Vociferously. And there's no doubt that if a survey were taken of many of today's dictators, strongmen, and warlords, they could talk your ear off about what a great time this is to be alive. The masses outside the gates would take another view.

The other side of the coin is that parts of the past that are a tragedy to many are a time of celebration for others. On 9/11, there were countless people who fell in love, or experienced great pleasure at the birth of a child, or whose hearts reached unimagined levels of joy upon a letter or phone call or chance meeting of someone thought long lost.

There are no good old days that universally touch everyone's life. Pronouncements of the good old days are just as specious as claiming one generation or the other is the greatest ever.

Jennifer: I think I'm more critical than celebratory of the past I describe in my books. But then, I'm critical of the present, too. In my novel *A Northern Light*, both the fictional main character, Mattie, and Grace Brown, a real person, suffer from the lack of options and opportunity afforded women in America in 1906. Mattie struggles to get an education. Grace—pregnant and unwed—is murdered by the father of her unborn child. I'm extremely glad I live at a time and in a place—and that my daughter does—when girls have access to education and contraception, but feeling lucky and grateful isn't enough. Girls and women in other parts of the world are still afforded fewer educational and professional opportunities than boys and men. Worse still, some endure oppression and live under the threat of constant violence.

And that's why history—not its floozy cousin nostalgia—is so important. Especially in the lives of young people. Yes, it can and does show us the very worst we are capable of, but it also proves to us that we can change. That we can do better. Because it gives us the stories of others who've faced violence, poverty, cruelty, and oppression, and who've triumphed over it. Names like Mahatma Gandhi, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Abraham Lincoln, Rosa Parks, and Cesar Chavez immediately come to mind, but the nameless do, too—the match girls of East London who struck against dangerous working conditions in 1888 and won, inspiring other unskilled and exploited laborers to do the same, or the newsboys of 1899's New York City, who bent Hearst and Pulitzer to their will. More than anything, history shows us the possible.

Christopher: One of the things that I as a writer try to do is always be aware that when I'm writing about a particular time, it is fatal for me to overreach. I can't try to represent an entire era, or a certain year, or even a particular, overarching moment. All I'm capable of doing is offering a snapshot of the lives of a small, select group of people at a very specific moment in time. But in so doing, I also hope I'm offering glimpses of what the larger picture is and what effect great and momentous events have on the lives of those who happen to be around when they occur.

Since I've gone old school once, I might as well keep going. To quote an old Carly Simon song, for some people, "These are the good old days." They're also the times of greatest sorrow and tragedy in other people's lives. The writer in me simply points the camera and shoots.

What are the challenges of researching and sharing the stories of fictional characters living in "real" worlds? Do you seek a certain truth in the telling?

Jennifer: I do seek a certain truth. I wear two hats when I'm writing historical fiction—the historian's and the novelist's. My characters' difficulties arise

largely because of the worlds in which they live. As an historian, I need to recreate a bygone world that's accurate, real, and believable, so that I can then come in as a novelist and start taking some liberties.

Christopher: Truth is as essential in writing fiction as it is in writing nonfiction. Maybe even more so, since there are things that happen in real life that would be disbelievingly snorted off the pages of a novel. Good readers are cursed with noses much like bloodhounds; their nostrils will involuntarily flare in indignation if an author tries to bury an untrue moment under the best cat litter available or 40 feet beneath the surface of a frozen lake. That means the author who seeks to represent something true (and if that's not what you're trying to do, why are you writing?) is faced with the challenge of carefully making certain the atmosphere and ambience of the story ring true to the reader. The only way to do this is to scrupulously research the period about which you're writing.

Jennifer: The challenges are huge. An author can't recreate a bygone world unless she can see it first. To achieve that, I do a lot of research, and I'm rather rigorous about it. For my novel *Revolution*, I spent years reading everything from large historical surveys like Schama's *Citizens* (1991) and Carlyle's *The French Revolution: A History* (1837) to eyewitness accounts of Danton's death, last letters of the condemned, menus, rosters of the guillotined, inscriptions on headstones, lyrics of political songs, speeches, and plays. I haunted archives, museums, and graveyards in Paris. I looked at clothing, dishes, banners, paintings, furniture, palaces, carriages, jewelry, toys, maps. It's very important to me to be accurate, to get all the names, places, and dates right, to present—as much as one can—historical truth.

Christopher: My research most often involves trying to get a feel for the way language was used during a particular era. When my story is set in relatively recent times (let's say the 1920s to the 1960s), I have an advantage. I can go to the library or online and listen to recordings, be they movies, music, or the spoken word in myriad forms, and I can actually hear what I need to do to adjust my ear in order to recreate speech from that time.

Older historical periods are both more problematic and easier to deal with. While none of us can definitively say what George Washington sounded like, we can all speculate. And once I recreate how George's voice sounded, as long as I don't give him any anachronistic vocabulary or usages, I can rest assured that there will be no indignant critic claiming, "That's not the way he sounded at all!" They might say it, but I dare them to prove it.

Jennifer: It's also important to me to convey emotional truth. That requires a bit of unscholarly research. In my research for *Revolution*, I walked Paris looking for the ghosts. I sat in the gardens of the Palais Royal at twilight, squinted my eyes, and saw Desmoulins jump up on a table and urge all of Paris to arms. I talked to butchers and bakers, because the type lives on—ruddy-cheeked and lusty, or covered in flour—from the 18th century to our time. I watched Parisians, noting their gestures, inflections, and stances. I spent time at the Cathedral of St. Denis, gazing at the tiny dried heart of a nine-year-old king. I walked through the catacombs, among the remains of the dead. Robespierre is thought to be down there. As well as Madam Elizabeth, Louis XVI's sister. So I heard some lively conversations. What I'm hoping to do with my unscholarly research is to know the souls of the people I'm writing about and then to get those souls down on paper.

It has been argued that history is politicized, that later generations receive a version of events recorded by those in positions of power and privilege. This version might forward or silence particular voices, asking us to wonder, whose history is our history? Do you grapple with this tension in your writing?

Christopher: The argument that history is not politicized and not self-servingly written by the victors was lost centuries ago. We're back to the concept that writing, nonfiction as well as fiction, is merely a snapshot of a particular time taken by a particular person from a particular perspective.

Jennifer: Robespierre (1792) said "History is fiction," and he was probably being his petulant self when he did, but I see his point. One person's impression of an event is not necessarily another's. And who gets to decide which account becomes the official one? It's important for younger readers to see that there's rarely a single textbook explanation of why something happened. History is the story of human beings, and like its subject, it's messy, complicated, and full of contradictions and conflict.

Christopher: Fiction's role, then, is so important, since it doesn't set out to declare a set of immutable facts. It instead allows readers to come at events from an angle different than the official one. My wish is that my readers will glean the possibilities of other answers, other questions, and other truths.

Jennifer: I grapple with this tension in my work—at least I hope I do—and so do my characters. In *Revolution*, a fictional history teacher, Ms. Hammond, and one of her students, Arden Tode, have this exchange:

> *"Some historians called the massacres a spontaneous outburst of violence, a shameful aberration fueled by fear and hysteria. Others said the butchery was planned, that it was orchestrated by those in power in order to rid Paris of counterrevolutionaries," [Ms. Hammond] said.*
>
> *"Well, which is it?" Arden Tode asked.*
>
> *"One or the other. Both. Neither."*
>
> *"Are you, like, trying to be funny?"*
>
> *"What I'm trying to do, Ms. Tode, is show you that the answer depends on where you stand. Marie Antoinette undoubtedly saw the massacres in a different light than a factory worker who'd watched his child die of hunger and who expected to be killed any second himself by a Prussian soldier. To the former, it was a depraved act of butchery. To the other, perhaps a necessary evil."*
>
> *"Um, can I put that on the final?"*
>
> *Ms. Hammond sighed. "History is a Rorshach test, people," she said. "What you see when you look at it tells you as much about yourself as it does about the past."*

What inspired you to write about the specific time periods/events that serve as the settings for your works?

Christopher: It's always difficult for me to determine where the inspiration to write about a particular event came from. If I'm going to invest a year or two in writing about a specific time, one prerequisite is that I must have some lingering questions about what happened historically. Another, as earlier discussed, is that I want to take a look at the event from a nonstandard perspective.

Jennifer: For *A Northern Light*, it was Grace Brown's letters. Grace was a young farm girl who left her home to work in a factory in a nearby town. She met a young man there named Chester Gillette. He was a nephew of the factory's owner. A romance blossomed between them. One thing led to another, and Grace became pregnant. Chester didn't want to marry her; he felt he could do better. So instead, he murdered her. Before the murder, Grace wrote Chester letters begging him to do the right thing by her. These letters are extremely moving. I defy anyone to read them and remain dry-eyed—especially Grace's last letter, in which she writes how she wishes she could tell her mother what's going on, but she can't because she knows it would break her mother's heart. I heard Grace's voice in her letters, and I was very upset by what had happened to her. Her words stirred up huge emotion, and I had to get that emotion out the only way I knew how—by writing a story.

The inspiration for *Revolution* came from an article in *The New York Times* called "Geneticists' Latest Probe: The Heart of the Dauphin" (Daley, 1999). It showed a beautiful old glass urn. Something tiny and dark was suspended on a wire inside it—a child's heart, ancient and dried. It had been thought to belong to Louis-Charles, son of the French king Louis XVI, who was guillotined by revolutionaries. I was spellbound by the photo. The story explained how, after his father's death, Louis-Charles was taken from his mother and sister to be reeducated by the revolutionaries. He was abused and finally imprisoned, alone, in a cold cell. He was neglected and terrorized. He became ill. Lost his mind. And died. At the age of 10. I had not

known this and again was overwhelmed by strong emotion. I wanted to know how the revolutionaries, who wanted to give the world the very best things—Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity—had denied these things to a defenseless child. Both books were born of a need to go back into the past, to the crimes and mistakes, and have something good come from them. If only on paper.

Christopher: Historical fiction for young readers provides the perfect platform from which to answer questions of history or launch a new look at the past, given the age of the narrator. After much trial and error, I've discovered that my sweet spot for a first-person narration is 10 years old to the earliest teen years. That age span seems to serve as a sort of resting spot in our march toward some modicum of human maturity. It's almost as though we take a breather in going from being a person who is learning to master our own thought and body processes to suffering through the time when the disease of adolescence kicks in and we lose all touch with reality and slip perilously close to being something not quite human. (Think your average eighth graders, people so loathsome and miserable that their parents don't like them, their friends don't like them, their siblings don't like them, and they don't even like themselves. In fact, the only person who sees anything the least bit redemptive in that group is the middle school teacher. Many, thankfully yet inexplicably, have actual affection for them. A third and final old-school song reference: different strokes for different folks.)

In my estimation, the 9–13 age period is the last time a young person is able to be not quite as egocentric and lost in the woods as most full-fledged teenagers are. This allows me to realistically (as much as that is possible) have my narrators focus more on what's going on around them and less on their inner angst.

Jennifer: In the end, we look to authors to put the story in history and deliver something truthful and meaningful to their readers. In my books, I hope to show readers the past and its role in shaping the present, but most of all, I hope to show them themselves and to challenge them to tell their own stories.

Why write about a past that has already transpired? Should readers today care about what came before?

Jennifer: Yes, readers should care. As Faulkner said, "The past is never dead. It's not even past" (*Requiem for a Nun*, 1950, Act I, Scene iii). We are who we are, and do what we do, and live as we live because of the generations and events that came before us. And we need to understand those people, and those events, if we want to understand ourselves.

Christopher: Right. A great philosopher, whose name escapes me at the moment, once said something like, "You may be done with your past, but that doesn't mean your past is done with you." And that is so true. It all boils down to the fact that knowledge is strength, and the more we can learn from history, both personal and grand, the better prepared we are to face the ups and downs of living.

Jennifer Donnelly *loves spending time in the company of old dead people. In fact, she often prefers it to talking with living ones. Her first young adult novel,* A Northern Light, *was awarded Britain's Carnegie Medal, the* Los Angeles Times *Book Prize for Young Adult Fiction, and a Michael L. Printz Honor. Her second,* Revolution, *was longlisted for the Carnegie Medal, awarded an Odyssey Honor by the American Library Association, and named Young Adult Book of the Year by the American Booksellers Association. Jennifer's first novel for middle-grade readers,* Deep Blue, *was a* New York Times *bestseller and is the first of four in the Waterfire Saga. The second and third titles,* Rogue Wave *and* Dark Tide, *will be published in 2015. Also coming in 2015 is* These Shallow Graves, *a YA murder mystery set in Gilded Age Manhattan. Jennifer has also written a picturebook for children,* Humble Pie, *and a series of historical novels for grown-ups, including* The Tea Rose, The Winter Rose, *and* The Wild Rose. *She lives in New York State's Hudson Valley with her family.*

Christopher Paul Curtis *is the bestselling author of* Bud, Not Buddy, *which won the Newbery Medal and the Coretta Scott King Award, among other honors. His first novel,* The Watsons Go to Birmingham–1963, *was also singled out for many awards, among them a Newbery Honor and a Coretta Scott King Honor. Christopher grew up in Flint, Michigan. After high school, he began working*

on the assembly line at the Fisher Body Plant No. 1 while attending the Flint branch of the University of Michigan where he began writing essays and fiction. He is now a full-time writer.

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Amy **Cross**

The (Im)possibility of Objectivity:

Narrating the Past in Young Adult Historiographic Metafiction

In *Child-Sized History*, Sara Schwebel (2011) suggests that "by supporting an approach to reading novels that attends to historical argument and historiographical influence, teachers will help students develop into readers capable of recognizing referential illusion and approaching narratives of all kinds with attention to the [. . .] arguments they support" (p. 161). The genre of historiographic metafiction can provide opportunities for developing such readers. While typical historical fictions are valued for their historical accuracy, historiographic metafictions call into question the very possibility of accurately representing the past. Historiographic metafiction consists of self-conscious fictions concerned with historiography (the writing of history). It questions how we know about the past, which version we know, and who told us and what they told us; then it invites us to consider the possible motivations of particular versions of the past.

Historiographic metafiction also problematizes the relationship between history and fiction as distinct narrative genres. In the classroom, students have access to historical novels that are interpretations of the past, which often invite reader identification with the characters; they might also use textbooks, which are considered authoritative and objective truths (Schwebel, 2011, pp. 4–6). Historiographic metafictions focus attention to both forms of representing history, drawing similarities between the two and demonstrating that history is a construction. The past can only be known via its textual remains, and history is a narrative construction using those textual remains. Historiographic metafiction can be used in the classroom to show the impossibility of objectively and transparently representing the past, while also signifying the importance of history.

This article uses two Australian historiographic metafictive texts for adolescent readers, *Into White Silence* (Eaton, 2008) and *The Lace Maker's Daughter* (Crew, 2005), to demonstrate how particular narrative strategies destabilize the relationship between history and fiction and the past and the present.

Background

History and Narrative

History has traditionally been distinguished from fiction by its content rather than its form, as it is seen as true and factual, while fiction is perceived as the opposite. Hayden White (1984), however, draws similarities between historiography and narrative processes to argue that both history and fiction occupy the sphere of narrativity. He states that while "history is generally taken as truthful, it is more a 'mimesis' of the story lived in some region of historical reality, and insofar as it is an accurate imitation it is to be considered a truthful account" (p. 3) In other words, history comprises not only what happened but the narration of what happened (pp. 4–5). Similarly, Perry Nodelman (1990) proposes:

> Like writers of fiction, historians find meaning in events. But just as the meanings writers find in events (and for that matter, that readers find in fiction) depend on the knowledge

> and values they bring to it, the meanings historians find in history depend on their own values, their own societal and cultural assumptions. (p. 71)

The similarities between history and fiction, and the notion of history as a form of narrative, are foregrounded in what Linda Hutcheon (1988) called "historiographic metafiction"; *historiographic* calls our attention to the writing of history, while *metafiction* emphasizes the constructedness of narrative. Metafictive novels are generally described as self-conscious and self-reflexive because they draw attention to the constructedness and textuality of fiction and incorporate the "construction of a fictional illusion and the laying bare of that illusion" (Waugh, 1984, p. 6). Some examples of YA metafiction include *A Pack of Lies* (McCaughrean, 1988), *Fade* (Cormier, 1988), and *Inkheart* (Funke, 2003).

Metafictive texts include strategies such as unreliable or obtrusive narrators, spatio-temporal disruptions, intertextuality, typographic experimentation, genre mixing, and multiple narrators, all of which can draw attention to narrative processes. Such strategies in historiographic metafictions position readers to be aware of the way that reality is filtered through storytelling, or how the past is constructed through narrative. In adolescent fictions, metafictive strategies allow readers to question the notion of a stable identity and construct positions from which they can critique a text while reading it (Head, 1996, pp. 29–31).

Historical Fiction and Historiographic Metafiction

Wilson (2011) notes, "discussions about historical fiction and what distinguishes history from fiction are not new" (p. 2); however, it is the *engagement* with the distinctions (or lack thereof) between history and fiction that is prominent in historiographic metafiction. Historical fiction generally strives to offer readers a coherent and consistent narrative set in a time preceding the readers' lived experience. According to Stephens (1992), traditional "historical novels generally employ realistic modes, and avoid any self-conscious reflections on their own narrative strategies" (p. 236). However, historiographic metafictions, by definition, self-consciously reflect upon their own narrative strategies. Typically, "metafiction is fiction about fiction, stories that reflect on the nature of storymaking itself and that, in doing so, draw attention to their fictionality" (Head, 1996, p. 29).

Historical fictions often suggest that humanist ideals, or individual experiences, are representative and disclose universal truths, lessons, and values. These ideals are reflected in themes of authority, certainty, and authenticity and are also implicated through narrative closure and teleological purpose—"the impulse to present events in terms of structures of cause and effect" (Stephens, 1992, p. 205). Humanist approaches within narratives are "apt to represent historical processes as developmental and teleological and to generate 'closed' versions of history" (McCallum, 1999, pp. 168–169). Such narratives often seek to authentically represent time and place, source material, and research processes; they inevitably impose narrative structure on the past in order to relay past events, either in history or fiction. Historical fictions also typically engage with teleological purpose in conjunction with coming-of-age tropes, suggesting correlations between the past and the present.

Narrative structures in traditional adolescent historical fictions usually result in two possibilities: a representation of the past as a step in understanding the present, or an assumption that events are embedded with meaning that can be traced in a linear fashion, that is, through recorded history. Such narratives suggest that humans have always been essentially the same, perhaps offering comfort to young readers who believe their own trials or tribulations to be unique or exceptional. Alternatively, such narratives present a sense of history as coming of age for humanity at large, emphasizing linear growth and advancement that offers a template for the individual's coming of age.

In young adult historiographic metafiction, characters often mature as they begin to recognize that "history" and other seemingly stable subjects in their lives, such as authoritative figures, are constructions, not actualities. Through investigations into the past, characters (and readers) come to understand that the past does not contain answers, but the processes of investigating the past and creating a history are analogous to constructing a sense of self. As a postmodern[1]

1. Postmodernism has many definitions. Generally speaking, postmodern novels play with the (im)possibility of inherent meaning. Hutcheon describes postmodernism as a "contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges" (1988, p. 3).

genre, historiographic metafictions challenge the notion that an individual's experience is universally representative, and they interrogate themes of authenticity, authority, and truth. One example of this is found in the novel *Here Lies Arthur* (2008), by Philip Reeve. The narrator Gwyna, along with Myrddin, is tasked with constructing tales about King Arthur that are distinctly different from how they actually happened. Many of her fabrications are those that readers may recognize from typical heroic representations of King Arthur in popular literature and films, such as *The Sword in the Stone* and *The Once and Future King.* Various narrative strategies allow the reader to follow events as they occurred in comparison to how they are later exaggerated, interpreted, and given meaning by witnesses. This historiographic metafictive novel examines eyewitness accounts, reliability of sources, and the role of "truth" in history.

The two focus texts of this article examine other aspects of historiography. *Into White Silence* (Eaton, 2008) embodies concerns about historiography through narrative structure and techniques, including the problems associated with selecting sources, authenticity and authentic representation of those sources, issues of partiality and unreliability, and the similarities between history and fiction. *The Lace Maker's Daughter* (Crew, 2005) overtly discusses issues of objectivity and the reliability of sources, as well as the meaning and purpose of history; it also explicitly asks questions about the possibility of knowing the whole truth about the past.

Analysis

A key element of historiographic metafictions is that narrators are often aware of their role in constructing a history: they engage with historical research and evidence gathering, as well as the selection of source material and the positioning of that material to produce their desired version of history. Through narrators revealing and reflecting on their research practices and self-consciously (and subconsciously) interpreting what they find, readers are made aware of the complexities of constructing a narrative about the past.

The analysis in this article focuses on these narrators, their role in the production of history, and the research materials they use. In particular, I examine metafictive strategies, the kinds of history the narrators are attempting to compose, and the authenticity and authority of their research materials. This article also looks at how the narrators undermine their own analyses and trustworthiness and how historiographic metafictions undermine attempts to add closure and meaning to narratives about the past. Such novels invite young readers to consider their own roles as meaning makers—both of history and of their individual selves.

Public and Private (Hi)stories

Into White Silence (Eaton, 2008) is a novel about explorations both external (of the Antarctic) and internal (of the self) as readers travel toward the South Pole with a present-day narrator and an historical subject. *Into White Silence* is narrated in the present day by Anthony Eaton who discovers a journal previously owned by Lieutenant William Downes, who describes his recruitment to undertake an expedition to map the east coast of Antarctica aboard a ship named *Raven* in 1921. Eaton is driven by a need to both uncover the past and tell the stories he unearths. He steals this historical journal from a library at Casey Station, on Antarctica, in the present day. Although he initially considers appropriating the stories within the journal as his own, Eaton becomes haunted by this thievery and decides to tell the truth about the author of the journal: "I have come to realise that the only way I can free myself [. . .] is to allow this story—his story—to be told" (p. iv).

Both Eaton (the narrator) and Edward Rourke (the Antarctica expedition leader) convey history as a means of validating action and securing enduring recognition or attention. In discussing Rourke's choice of exploration, Eaton notes that Rourke chooses a venture that does not follow in others' footsteps but is something new that will result in a comparison to others' explorations in history. In the initial stages of setting up the exploration, Rourke chooses a "site from which he would launch his own bid to become a part of Antarctic history" (p. 93). Later, Rourke instructs his crew, stating, "If we intend, gentlemen, to write our names into the history books alongside [Shackleton and Amundsen], then we too must have the fortitude to set our course forward, ever forward, without looking back" (p. 168). This assertion of pub-

lic, teleological history as an objective for, and validation of, the expedition aligns with traditional views of history as linear and purposeful.

However, this view of history as the pinnacle of success and as something to depend upon is delivered by two *unreliable* sources—Eaton and Rourke. Rourke is characterized as unreasonable, unfeeling, murderous, and insane, while Eaton, after several chapters of meticulously describing his research processes and the resources used, undermines his own authority by suggesting that readers should regard him with suspicion (p. 66). The doubt surrounding Eaton and Rourke calls into question the validity of their values in the texts. Readers may question the authenticity and authority of history, for example, if such unstable subjects value it so highly.

Tabby, the narrator of *The Lace Maker's Daughter* (Crew, 2005), by comparison, is interested in her family's private history. She is specifically interested in her grandmother, with whom she shares a name. She pesters her parents with questions, claiming she wants to write a history of *Camelot*, the name of the mansion her family lives in. However, her true purpose is to discover the truth behind rumours about her grandmother's confinement to a tower in *Camelot*, as well as the suspicious deaths of family members; Tabby herself has been confined to home and is no longer allowed to go to school after being accused of poisoning classroom pets and indirectly poisoning a child. Tabby states: "So began my obsession with my ancestor (my alter ego, my would-be self), Adelaide Bartlett" (p. 24), affirming that her interest in the past is very personally driven; she hopes to understand more about herself via the past. The intertwining of character and narrative (and intertextual[2]) voices demonstrates the construction of characters (and potentially, readers) in particular ways of seeing the world, foregrounding the extent to which characters interpret and are interpreted as the past is interpreted and given meaning in the present.

Curating the Past

Source Material and the Authoritative Researcher

The traditional historical novel most often reflects history as a "group of facts, which exists extratextually and which can be represented as it 'really was'" (Nünning, 2004, p. 362), whereas a historiographic metafictive novel foregrounds the construction of those seeming facts and the presentation and selection of resources chosen for the process of investigating and representing the past. Use of extraliterary devices is a key strategy for representing the process of doing research and choosing historical sources in fiction and can include historical documents and informational texts, diaries and letters, and paratextual strategies such as footnotes, epigraphs, citations, and typographical experimentation (McCallum, 1999, p. 105). In traditional historical texts, these devices usually serve to indicate a reliable source; they assert an evidence-based historical authority and draw attention to the role of historians and researchers. Within historiographic metafiction, however, such elements are often destabilized or undermined by means of self-conscious, contradictory, or unreliable narration.

A historiographic metafictive novel foregrounds the construction of . . . seeming facts and the presentation and selection of resources chosen for the process of investigating and representing the past.

Referring to source material illustrates the piecing together of the past and the process of constructing a narrative or history of that past. It is this process that occupies the narrator in *Into White Silence*. As noted above, the novel is narrated in the first person by Anthony Eaton. Downes's perspective, as presented within the journal, is framed by Eaton's commentary and his further research into the histories of people discussed by Downes. Eaton's presentation of the journal is further supplemented by conventional historical

2. Both novels discussed here draw attention to literary history with intertextual references, such as to the character Ophelia of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Tennyson's poem "The Lady of Shalott," and Keats's poem "La Belle Dame sans Merci" in *The Lace Maker's Daughter,* and allusions to Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in *Into White Silence.* Both texts are rich with complex intertextual references, and while intertextuality in historiographic metafictions can work to close the gap between the past and the present, it is not within the purview of this article to interrogate this.

materials that include a list of crewmembers aboard the *Raven*, diagrams of the ship and its compartments, and family trees for two main characters, Downes and O'Rourke. Eaton's text is typographically distinguished by a larger-sized font. The journal and its contents are represented as an authentic and authoritative source of information. The journal is then discussed by the narrator and framed as a narrative.

Eaton shows himself to be an authoritative and objective researcher by making various statements that serve to validate his research, despite a lack of evidence. He uses phrases such as "it would appear" and "it is worth noting" to indicate he is drawing conclusions based on his research, rather than simply filling in the gaps. This lends credibility to the narrator as pseudo-historian and validates a position of authority. Furthermore, the language suggests an objective stance to the journal rather than an attempt to impose meaning on it.

The apparent purpose of the novel is to present items from the past, but the intrusive nature of the narrator redirects attention from the historical sources and instead privileges the narrator over the historical source.

Eaton also directly presents the voices of Downes's family and friends via letters to validate the story within the journal, as well as newspaper clippings hailing Downes as a war hero, which positions readers to idealize Downes. These strategies work to demonstrate the narrator's research and evidence-based approach to establishing a history of the exploration to Antarctica aboard the *Raven*. They appear to present Eaton as objective and humble in choosing to represent rather than appropriate Downes's story, as he openly admits to considering:

> My intention was to use it to form a work around the basis of Downes' experience that I could claim as my own fiction. It seemed too good an opportunity to pass up; [. . .] [However,] each time I began to write 'My Antarctic book'—as I came to refer to it—I'd find myself a mere thousand or so words into the first chapter and unable to continue, haunted by the feeling I was doing Downes and those who perished with him a disservice that flew in the face of the Almighty. (p. iii)

By including this description of his intentions, the narrator seems to represent the tale as it happened and to authenticate it with his research and incorporation of materials found during that research. However, while there appears to be a multiplicity of voices in the texts, this multiplicity is governed by an overt narrative voice. That is, Eaton *imposes* his authority on the journal by intruding and disrupting its progression.

The apparent purpose of the novel is to present items from the past, but the intrusive nature of the narrator redirects attention from the historical sources and instead privileges the narrator over the historical source. *Into White Silence*'s challenge to textual, authorial, and historical authority resonates with wider concerns about authority and power in young adult literature as a whole, which tends to "interrogate social constructions, foregrounding the relationship between the society and the individual" (Trites, 2000, p. 20). Young adult historiographic metafictions such as *Into White Silence* expand on this by also interrogating history as a construction and examining elements of novels that blur the boundaries between history and fiction, past and present.

Narrating Eyewitness Accounts: Authenticity and Inconsistency

In *The Lace Maker's Daughter* (Crew, 2005), Tabby aims to access and witness the past through the eyes of those who experienced it in order to discover the history surrounding her great grandparents' and grandmother's mysterious deaths decades ago. Eyewitness accounts are represented through the point of view of nine characters present at the time of the deaths and are framed by Tabby's first-person narration. She is able to access the past through psychometry; finding paraphernalia belonging to her grandmother, Adelaide Bartlett, Tabby touches these objects to psychically access the past. This way, Tabby claims, she may witness events herself and therefore witness, without interference, the past as it was perceived by those who previously handled the objects in question. Describing psychometry, Tabby states:

> What I am saying is this: give me an object (a pair of scissors, say, or a knife) that has been used by someone previously unknown to me and I can tell you the age, gender, etc, of its principal owner/user. [. . .] [M]y head positively reels with the stories that object releases. I swear that I can hear the voice of the owner. Enter into his thoughts. Speak and write in his voice. (p. 6)

The focus in the text is not on the historical authenticity of the objects but rather Tabby's capacity to access history through these objects, in particular whether it is possible to access and understand the past objectively without interpreting the events and their significance.

Tabby uses historical artefacts as authoritative sources of information (though the information is gained supernaturally). The first set of artefacts that Tabby examines are an embroidery needle and three handkerchiefs that have names embroidered on them: "the names of the owners were Whittaker, a doctor; Missingham, a solicitor; and Buckley, a pastor. Like Adelaide, they had lived [. . .] long, long ago" (p. 24). The chapter following Tabby's discovery is from Missingham's point of view, so determined by the opening sentence: "We met, we three—Buckley, a pastor; Whittaker, a doctor; and myself, a man of the law" (p. 27).

There are a number of issues here that cast doubt on the authenticity of Tabby's information, including the unlikelihood that each person's occupation was embroidered along with his/her name. The language implies that Missingham is deliberately conveying information to Tabby rather than Tabby simply witnessing events; for example, Missingham clarifies for an implied audience who the "we" are. It also suggests Tabby had prior knowledge of these people. The proceeding chapter is from Whittaker's point of view, continuing the conversation about Adelaide Bartlett, and the chapter after that, from Buckley's point of view one week later. Conveniently for Tabby, then, the stories accessed through the objects are revealed sequentially about particular events that interest her. Readers may be left wondering how Tabby is able to source such convenient information—from the precise period of time that she is investigating—if she aims to write history objectively and without personal influence.

The eyewitness accounts related by Tabby are narrated accounts of individual experiences. That is, while the different versions of events are apparently directly related eyewitness accounts, each tale contains character self-descriptions and introductions, as though these witnesses are aware of an audience. At the beginning of another account later in the text, a character named Rufus states, "Although my companions, Bruce and Charlie, made me welcome at *Camelot*—and the young mistress, too, in her peculiar way—I must say that I never felt at home there. And I am not referring to the fact that I slept in a barn" (p. 129). Although Tabby aims to view the event through the eyes of the witness via her gift of psychometry, the past tense narration and self-assessment suggest a constructed narrative rather than a firsthand experiencing of events. The effect of this is twofold: first, it draws attention to Tabby's initial dilemma about the relationship between truth and stories, illustrating the historiographic metafictive concern with the interpretive nature of history and source material; second, it suggests that Rufus is relaying his experiences in hindsight, as opposed to Tabby experiencing them firsthand.

These examples highlight problems faced by historians, in particular how, in interpreting and making sense of artefacts, the historian may ascribe them with meaning.

These examples highlight problems faced by historians, in particular how, in interpreting and making sense of artefacts, the historian may ascribe them with meaning. Tabby imposes significance on the witness accounts and unintentionally blurs the past with the present when she realizes that her own experiences in the present seem to be influencing witness accounts in the past. For example, in Part III, Tabby narrates an encounter with her mother over breakfast: unhappy with her breakfast, she says, "braised kidneys and French toast—aaarrrrggghhhh!" (p. 177). Five pages later in "Elisa's" account (derived from an object psychometrically by Tabby), Elisa says to another character: "Do forgive me, Mr Tyle, [. . .] it can only be the braised kidneys that I had for breakfast" (p. 182). This suggests that Tabby's motives and experiences are embedded within the accounts that she is aiming to replicate objectively, which blurs the past with the present. These occurrences signal unreliability in these eyewitness accounts and Tabby as an authoritative source on the past—and her own story.

Tabby, however, is open about her unreliability as narrator. She is aware that her search for the history of her ancestor and the piecing together of her research is personally driven and interpreted. And after

introducing herself and her family history and outlining the circumstances by which she became interested in her ancestor, she states:

> And so began [. . .] my commitment to both discovering and telling her story. Whether in its entirety or otherwise remained to be seen. The truth behind any story is always hard to find. But I had to try. Even if that meant embellishing the truth. I mean, I wouldn't exactly lie. At least, no more so than is expected of a writer. Which comes naturally. To me, anyway. (pp. 24–25)

Tabby immediately blurs fiction and history by aiming to tell stories as well as the truth, yet concedes that together the two objectives provide for an ambivalent, if not untrustworthy, narrative.

[H]istoriographic metafiction works to unsettle notions of closed, meaningful, and objective accounts of the past, subsequently undermining values of authenticity, truth, and authority.

Tabby has an interest in discovering the truth behind historical rumours about murder and poison and the particular history of her grandmother. It is her hope that this investigation into the past will lend itself to her own search for self because she has been accused of using poison. She searches for eyewitness accounts to validate her own theories and to reveal the truths of the past, further instilling significance in the value of individual experiences both as historical account and important access point to the past. She comments on the processes of writing her family history, posing three questions:

> Question Number 1: IS IT POSSIBLE TO THINK ABOUT A *SUBJECTIVE* EXPERIENCE LIKE PSYCHOMETRY *OBJECTIVELY*? (And are *italics* subjective or objective, being leading in their intent?) . . . Question Number 2: CAN SUBJECTIVITY BE TRUSTED? (Might I be at cross-purposes with my art? Or misinterpreting it—deliberately, or otherwise—to suit my own ends? Or might my art be bullshitting me?) . . . Question Number 3: IS WHAT I RECORD (THEREFORE) FACT OR FICTION? (And does it matter?) (pp. 240–241)

This self-reflection suggests that her accounts are untrue and distinctly blurs boundaries between history and fiction. Tabby's questionable influence on the accounts results in a complex narrative that is indicative not only of the ambiguous skill of psychometry, which Tabby openly discusses, but also the contradictions and contentions of history made visible through the narrative devices of historiographic metafiction. As the unstable nature of history as truth or fiction is foregrounded, readers are encouraged to think about the possibility (or impossibility) of a complete and stable sense of the past.

Closure and Meaning in Historiographic Metafiction

Meaning in and of historical events and persons is not inherent in the past. It is imposed by historians, researchers, and chroniclers through strategies—such as ordering events and identifying cause and effect—that attempt to explain and interpret the past for those who did not experience it. As Perry Nodelman (1990) suggests, history is "an art of constructing plots, the meanings emerging from the causal connections that the plots create between events" (p. 71). Meaning and significance are embedded through teleological processes, generating closure and implying closed accounts of the past. However, historiographic metafiction works to unsettle notions of closed, meaningful, and objective accounts of the past, subsequently undermining values of authenticity, truth, and authority. The past is not "closed," and truth and meaning are not "discovered." The possibility of resistance to teleology and closure in young adult texts works against many assumptions and themes prominent in adolescent genres, particularly the teleological function behind maturation themes.

Such metafictive characteristics, according to Koss (2009), "require readers to think critically in order to achieve comprehension" (p. 77). In both texts discussed here, the metafictive strategy of disruptive narrators provides opportunities to reflect on the story- or history-telling process. This method can push readers out of a text, making them aware of the atypical structure of the story. Authors and narrators not only intrude within the text to reflect on narrative processes but also comment on the meaning and purpose of the text. Such commentary on story and historical significance in *The Lace Maker's Daughter* and *Into White Silence* disrupts closure at the end of the text;

the narrators themselves are dissatisfied with the lack of information available to them and reveal "what really happened" in a nonlinear fashion.

In *The Lace Maker's Daughter,* for instance, Tabby directly comments on the level of closure in the text. The final chapter begins with Tabby's frustration at having not recovered all the information necessary for a complete account of her grandmother's death. She states:

I could think of plenty of things that were more important than that. Eg:

1. (a) What happened to Adelaide's baby?
   (b) Why didn't anybody even think to ask?
2. What did she call it?
3. Who was the father?
4. (a) What did Adelaide die of?
   (b) Was she murdered?
5. (a) Did Adelaide murder her parents?
   (b) If so, why?

And so on and so on. (p. 239)

Tabby's questions effectively refuse any closure. This suggests to readers that history is not closed and that it can only be known as far as the past is available via textual remains and interpretations. It also proposes that the past is only significant and meaningful insofar as it is valued by its reader or chronicler.

At the closing of *The Lace Maker's Daughter*, Tabby addresses the reader and suggests that trying to create a history of her family's past was pointless, stating that her ancestor's story "was none of our business" (p. 248). Debra, the housekeeper, asks Tabby, "And are yer goin' to write her story?" Tabby replies, "No, I'm not. There's nothing to tell" (p. 249). This comment is contradictory because much of her ancestor's history is indeed revealed in the text, simply not the particular accounts of the past that Tabby hoped to discover. By stating that there is "nothing to tell," Tabby suggests that the information she revealed to readers was uninteresting and meaningless because it provided no closure to *her* as an individual.

In her "Summation of Conclusions," Tabby surmises that altering the truth to improve expression and language in her stories "lead[s] to *faction* (a combination of *fact* and *fiction*)." Tabby's constructed history of her grandmother leaves her to conclude that whether history or story, fact or fiction, it is without purpose. She recognizes and is frustrated that the past is not comprised of complete stories but that narratives are constructed from the available information. Instead, Tabby chooses to retell this history as a story of herself, the truth of her own circumstances rather than a family history. Readers have seen how investigations into the past have shaped Tabby's sense of self, even if (or perhaps *because*) they did not result in absolute truths.

Likewise, the narrator of *Into White Silence* sees a lack of information about the past as problematic. He claims there were "holes in [Downes's] narrative which needed to be filled" (Eaton, 2008, p. iv). Eaton's statement suggests that the journal has, or should have, a full story, complete with purpose, beginning, middle, and end. The journal dictates the tale of the trip to Antarctica, the mysterious disappearances of the crew, and the appearance of an Ice Man when the *Raven* is lodged in the ice, but the entries do not reveal whether the missing men chose to leave, whether they were taken and rescued or murdered by said Ice Man. In the last entry Eaton makes available to readers, Downes states:

> I have put together what supplies I can carry. With some luck, I will find the others at the coast and we might muddle through until summer, and then who knows what? Either way, my journey aboard this ship is finished. Outside on the ice a perfect morning is upon us, and so I too shall step out, into white silence. (Eaton, 2008, p. 385)

Although the entry suggests an ending to Downes's journey aboard the *Raven*, the linear structure of his story is interrupted throughout the text by the narrator, which in turns disrupts a complete sense of closure.

Eaton reveals to readers that Downes's family never discovered how or when he died, which highlights the incompleteness of his history before the reader discovers it in a linear, progressive fashion. In the "Author's Introduction," Eaton refers to Downes and "those that perished with him" and "his ill-fated crewmates," discouraging any hopes for a happy ending. Eaton's commentary on the journal disrupts anticipation of closure, as the open-endedness of Downes's journal is revealed before the closing entry is made available in the text.

The lack of closure in both novels is typical in the genre of historiographic metafiction, which aims to disrupt fixed, single, and centralized meaning in narratives about the past. The lack of resolution prompts

a number of questions: Is this really what happened? What happens next? What does it mean? As meaning and closure are disrupted in the novels, significance remains indeterminate.

Implications for Practice

Narrative Constructions of the Past

Schwebel (2011) suggests that "a central strength of historical fiction as curriculum is that it allows adolescents to scrutinize historical narrative as a construction" (p. 138). Historiographic metafictions are particularly useful for this purpose, as a central aim of the genre is to draw attention to the narrative construction of history. A common concern about historical fictions in the classroom is that they may contain incorrect information, outdated information, or biases of the author. The combining of self-reflexive strategies with a critique of history in young adult literature can provide readers positions from which to question the authority of history, historians, and historical sources, as well as other power relations experienced by adolescents. The significance, then, of young adult historiographic metafiction is that it can afford readers the place and space to view and potentially critique those social and political relationships that influence their own construction of identity during adolescence.

Traditional historical fictions are imaginative stories that incorporate facts of the past—facts that are subject to interpretation. The subjects of the novels described in this article, however, are aware that they are creating a history and discuss the difficulties in constructing a narrative about the past. As such, historiographic metafictions[3] can be useful examples in the classroom for examining:

- the authority and trustworthiness of historians or narrators as historians;
- the evidence used to construct a history: how it is positioned, interpreted, and amended to achieve a certain outcome;
- any agendas the historians set out to achieve;
- how the narrator's analysis and self-reflection impact readers' understandings of the text and/or affect their view of this history;
- what language is used by narrators to make their historical argument 'authoritative';
- how narrators claim to remain objective and transparent when every investigation into the past begins with a purpose.

By drawing attention to the narrative elements of history, readers can be made aware of the narrative processes of plot, point of view, the power of the narrator, and the effects of closure, as well as how these elements of fiction are used within the discipline of history. In turn, young adult readers might be encouraged to take a critical stance toward history, as well as historical narratives. These strategies invite readers to deconstruct the processes used to create histories and narratives about the past by tracing the historical research process while contradictorily setting up the narrators as reliable and untrustworthy.

A Medley of Meanings

The novels paradoxically suggest that stories need to be told, and truths and knowledge need to be discovered, while also illustrating that the past is not closed. Further, an account of the past does not mean that it is complete and that all information is available or accurate—there are multiple interpretations, perspectives, and values that may be derived from some aspects of the past from which to create a multitude of histories. As characters (and readers) are shown to question or function within this complex space, they engage with meaning construction.

While the narrators in both novels discussed here reflect on their own intentions to write a story, through an understanding of the past and the history of specific individuals, they also experience the processes of constructing a past and concerns with constructing a sense of self in relation to the past. In turn, each of the texts offers positions from which to derive other or multiple meanings, thus engaging readers in the production of meaning and valuing *acts* of narration and interpretation as highly as their products.

Conclusion

Allan (2012) notes that historiographic metafictions "self-consciously remind readers that, while events

3. Other texts that may be examined in this way include *Backtrack* (1986) and *A Step off the Path* (1985) by Peter Hunt, *Strange Objects* (Crew, 1990), *The Complete Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (Spiegelman, 2003/1996), *Here Lies Arthur* (Reeve, 2008/2007), *Monster* (Myers, 1999), and *Winger* (Smith, 2013).

did occur in the [. . .] past, these events are named and constituted as historical facts through processes of selection [. . .] and thus need to be subjected to scrutiny" (p. 97). Historiographic metafiction introduces readers to the selective nature of historiography and highlights the level of control exerted by historians, narrators, and chronicles over the textual remains of the past. In the classroom, they can be used to develop readers' understanding of the complexities of history as a discipline and the struggles of historians to present an objective and accurate account of the past.

The novels discussed in this article highlight the narrative construction of the past, as well as the effect of narration and the narrator or chronicler in historical accounts. They also imply value in accessing and interrogating the past, despite the impossibility of being able to fully know or objectively view and understand the past. For the young adult reader, these contradictions may reflect his or her own existence between childhood and adulthood. By problematizing the authoritative subject of history, the young adult reader is positioned to be aware that other concepts, such as adulthood for example, are similarly neither stable nor absolute. History in *The Lace Maker's Daughter* and *Into White Silence* is both valorised and interrogated. Witnessing the production of history and its narrative processes in historiographic metafictions invites readers to be a part of the process. Engaging with such novels can provide opportunities for young adult readers to critically examine their own experiences and understandings of the past.

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Sean P. **Connors** and Ryan M. **Rish**

Troubling Ideologies:

Creating Opportunities for Students to Interrogate Cultural Models in YA Literature

> The first priority is to understand how the ideology of any given book can be located. Above all, such an understanding is important for teachers, especially primary school teachers and English specialists. Their task is to teach children *how* to read . . . [so that the] child will not be at the mercy of *what* she reads. (Hollindale, 1988, p. 19, emphasis added)

Arguments for teaching Young Adult (YA) literature celebrate its ability to foster self-understanding and empathy for others (e.g., Connors, 2014; O'Donnell, 2011). Because YA literature depicts adolescent characters grappling with issues that are presumably important to teenagers, it is also thought to engage readers in ways that literature written for adults might not, leading to further reading. Given that many works of YA fiction depict adolescents struggling to reconcile their relationship with institutions such as school, religion, family, and so on, the genre can appear to present teenagers as agentive beings. As Trites (2000) argues, however, YA literature also constitutes an institution in that it socializes teenagers to accept adult ideologies and values. In most cases, an adult author stands behind a YA text. Likewise, adult characters often voice the ideologies that adolescent readers are expected to embrace (Trites, 2000). These ideologies can position adolescents as agentive, or they can reinforce the status quo and perpetuate problematic power imbalances. Either way, as Trites (2000) argues, in the case of YA literature, "power is everywhere" (p. x).

Arguments about what kinds of books adults believe adolescents ought to read are also implicated in ideology and power. Writing for the *Wall Street Journal,* Gurdon (2011) asked how continued exposure to what she characterized as the dark, lurid subject matter of contemporary YA fiction might impact adolescent readers. "If you think it matters what is inside a young person's mind," Gurden wrote, "surely it is of consequence what he reads" (para. 7). Advocates of YA literature responded by arguing that adolescents benefit when they read about characters like themselves facing complex issues and problems. For some, Gurdon's article constituted a moral panic that threatened the value of YA fiction in the lives of adolescents. In the weeks that followed, a number of teachers and librarians took to Twitter to defend YA fiction and express their belief in the cathartic power of stories of adolescence using the hashtag #yasaves.

We do not intend to take sides in this debate here, and we suspect that both parties ascribe too much power to literary texts while underestimating the transactional nature of reading. At the same time, we wonder, does YA literature have the potential both to stimulate readers who are otherwise put off by much school-sanctioned literature and to reify problematic ideologies about adolescents and their relationships to the people and the world around them?

In asking this question, we have something considerably more complex in mind than simplistic arguments that conceptualize readers as empty vessels who act out events they read about. Books do not imprint themselves on readers. Rather, as Rosenblatt (1938/1995, 1978) and other reader response theorists argue, readers actively construct meaning in their transactions with literary texts. Nevertheless,

Rosenblatt's insistence that a person's experiences reading literature constitute a form of *real* (as opposed to virtual) experience has led scholars such as Bogdan (1992) to argue that "things *happen* to people when they read, some of them negative" (p. 132, emphasis in original). Bogdan writes, "Whether it is feminist, nationalist, pluralist, or consumerist, the bias inscribed in every literature curriculum makes it problematic to speak of the educational value of literature as self-evident, intrinsic, ideologically neutral, or morally inviolate in unqualified terms" (p. 151).

In this article, we build on Bogdan's (1992) observation, arguing that YA literature is not ideologically neutral. It is always already implicated in ideologies, and individual works of YA fiction, like canonical literature, interpolate readers in particular ways. Put another way, literary texts position readers as certain types of subjects with certain worldviews, beliefs, values, and ethics. As a result, whereas individual YA novels can expose readers to liberating ideologies, they can also reinforce the status quo and reify existing power imbalances, thus further marginalizing some readers. For example, a work of YA fiction might portray characters that disrupt traditional gender roles at the same time that it reinforces other stereotypes about sexuality.

Reading is exceedingly complex, and savvy readers can always exercise their agency to resist the subject positions that literary texts invite them to occupy. To do so, however, they must recognize how a text positions them, which entails asking the question, "Who does this text assume I am?" Acknowledging that YA literature has the potential to marginalize some readers may entail a paradigm shift for educators accustomed to celebrating its ability to engage readers and promote reading. Like Schwarz (2014), we argue that what is currently lacking in discussions about YA literature in the field of literacy education "are questions of quality, purpose, ethical value, and worldview" (p. 20). To counter this, Schwarz recommends approaching YA literature more critically. In addition to making oppressive ideologies visible, she argues that reading critically can "reveal to readers more about their own beliefs, ideas, and approaches to reading—what Schraw and Bruning (1996) call readers' 'implicit models of reading'" (pp. 20–21). This critical approach to teaching and reading YA literature is guided by a two-fold concern: in addition to interrogating the ethics and ideologies of texts, it invites readers to examine the ethics and ideologies they bring to texts.

Our purpose here is to describe an instructional activity that builds on the concept of cultural models (Gee, 2012; Holland & Quinn, 1987; Shore, 1996) and invites students, whether in teacher education programs or secondary English classes, to interrogate YA fiction with the intention of understanding how individual texts reinforce and/or complicate single stories (Adichie, 2009) about issues including, but not limited to, class, race, gender, and sexual orientation. To begin, we introduce the concept of cultural models and examine its relevance to literary reading. Next, we introduce an activity that we use to challenge preservice teachers with whom we work to interrogate how individual works of YA literature reinforce or complicate dominant cultural models. We then illustrate how the activity can be taken up to promote critical conversations in classrooms by applying it to two novels that are widely regarded as tackling social justice issues: S. E. Hinton's (1967/2006) *The Outsiders* and Matt de la Peña's (2009) *We Were Here*.

Cultural Models

Holland and Quinn (1987) define cultural models as "taken-for-granted models of the world that are widely shared (although not necessarily to the exclusion of other, alternative models) by the members of a society and that play an enormous role in their understanding of that world and their behavior in it" (p. 4). Cultural models are comparable to what developmental psychologists call schemas—organized systems of thought that make it possible for people to act in (and on) the world. Humans have access to a potentially limitless array of cultural models that allow them to make meaning out of their experiences. Indeed, without them, we would struggle to make sense of the world.

Shore (1996) distinguishes between two kinds of mental models: those that are personal, and those that we inherit as a result of our standing in social or cultural groups. For Shore, *personal mental models* are idiosyncratic. For example, he explains that the mental maps we construct to navigate our neighborhoods may foreground landmarks that are salient to us as individuals or reflect the unique modes of transportation we use to move around our communi-

ties (e.g., commuting to work by car as opposed to traveling on foot). In contrast, *cultural models* are conventional. Unlike personal models, they reflect the shared cognitive resources a community makes available to its members. For example, Shore (1996) argues that sports fans in a stadium draw on a cultural model when they stand and remove their caps when "The Star-Spangled Banner" is played prior to the start of a baseball game. Likewise, we draw on cultural models to know how to conduct ourselves in upscale restaurants as opposed to fast-food joints and how to dress for a friend's barbecue as opposed to a job interview. In each instance, the cultural models on which we draw structure and guide our behavior.

As explained, cultural models allow us to act in (and on) the world, but they can also produce conflicts and misunderstandings.

As explained, cultural models allow us to act in (and on) the world, but they can also produce conflicts and misunderstandings. Like Gee (2012), Shore (1996) argues that cultural models are schematized. "Details are reduced in complexity and at times eliminated altogether, while salient features . . . are selected and sometimes exaggerated or otherwise transformed by a process of formalization and simplification" (p. 47). Applied to people, cultural models can promote essentialism, with the result that whole groups of people are reduced to a few recognizable qualities or features. We saw this recently when a conservative media pundit, responding to a decision by some professional athletes to wear t-shirts with the phrase "I can't breathe" to protest the killing of Eric Garner, drew on a particularly insidious cultural model to argue that members of the African American community should instead wear t-shirts adorned with the phrase "Don't abandon your children" (Rothkopf, 2014). This is how stereotypes are born. As Adichie (2009) argues, "The problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete" (n. p.). Blind adherence to cultural models can impede our ability to consider this.

As teacher educators preparing future teachers to work with diverse student populations, we are interested in the tensions that arise when different cultural models come in contact with one another. For example, in our local schools, competing cultural models exist and attempt to explain why some students perform better than others in the classroom (they are "better" students versus their dominant literacy practices map onto those sanctioned by schools), as well as whether evolution ought to occupy a place in the curriculum (evolution is a scientific fact versus evolution denies the role of a higher power).

On a broader scale, competing cultural models produce disagreements about how marriage is defined, how masculinity and femininity ought to be performed, and which immigrants are welcome in the United States. When this is the case, dominant cultural models that are informed by systemic inequities privilege some groups of people at the expense of others. In doing so, they give rise to what Adichie (2009) calls "single stories" about people based on race, class, ethnicity, gender, education, family, and so on. According to Gee (2013), humans have historically used such stories for purposes of "control, telling and enforcing [those] that validate their power and sustain it" (p. 35). To accomplish this, they use "the enforcement apparatus of the group or state to keep people from challenging their stories about why the world is as it is and why they and not others should have power and influence in it" (p. 35). It is important to note that Trites (2000) regards YA literature as such an apparatus because it communicates ideologies to adolescent readers and positions them in particular ways. To demonstrate how this might be true, we next examine the relationship between cultural models and literary reading.

Encouraging Students to Ask How Texts Position Them as Readers

Influenced by Chatman's (1978) model of communication, rhetorical criticism conceptualizes narrative transmission as an exchange between various actors (Brewster, 2014). This includes (in part) an actual author, an actual reader, an implied author, and an implied reader. Chatman (1978) acknowledges the existence of a narrator and a narratee as well, but these constructs are not pertinent to our discussion. The "actual author" is the flesh and blood person who writes a text, while the actual reader is the individual who reads it. The implied author and the implied

reader, on the other hand, are social constructs.

The *implied author* refers to the sense we have of an actual author as a result of reading a literary text. Put another way, as we read, we develop a feel for what kind of person the actual author is, what she values, what she knows, and what she regards as just. In this way, the implied author is distinct from the actual author. For example, the actual author of the Hunger Games series is Suzanne Collins. Most readers have never met her, yet they construct a sense of what they imagine she might be like. Having read her novels, readers might conclude that Collins is empathetic to people living in poverty, distrustful of governments, and suspicious of media that she regards as working in concert with the state to distract people from important social justice issues. This sense of Collins that readers construct is the implied author.

Given that they are unlikely to meet the vast majority of people who read their books, authors must also construct a sense of the audience for whom they are writing. Iser (1978) argues that to do so, they draw on a repertoire of literary conventions, genre conventions, historical events, and factual information about the world beyond a text, which they assume their ideal reader will share. For Iser, a text's repertoire consists of "all the familiar territory within the text," including "references to earlier works, or to social and historical norms, or to the whole culture from which the text has emerged" (p. 69). It also includes "elements and, indeed, whole traditions of past literature that are mixed together with these norms" (p. 79). Because authors do not necessarily know who will read their work, they must imagine themselves writing to an "ideal" reader—that is, a reader who "embodies all those predispositions necessary for a literary work to exercise its effect—predispositions laid down, not by an empirical reality, but by the book itself" (p. 34). Iser (1978) refers to this reader as the *implied reader*. Of course, no such reader actually exists. The implied reader is instead a role that literary texts invite actual readers to perform.

Dissatisfied with the concept of the implied reader, Rabinowitz (1987/1998) distinguishes between three audiences readers can potentially join. The first, the *actual audience*, consists of flesh and blood readers. The *authorial audience*, on the other hand, consists of readers whose background knowledge, prejudices, ideologies, values, assumptions, etc. approximate those of the implied author. Put another way, the authorial audience represents the "ideal" audience for whom a given author envisions herself writing. Finally, Rabinowitz argues that readers join the *narrative audience* when they suspend disbelief and accept a work of fiction as "real." As Brewster (2014) explains, "If we did not immerse ourselves in J. K. Rowling's story world, why would we be sad, or maybe even shed real tears, when Dumbledore dies? Yet we also logically understand that our immersion does not make Hogwarts real" (p. 171).

The implied author refers to the sense we have of an actual author . . . what kind of person [she] is, what she values, what she knows, and what she regards as just.

To join the authorial audience, readers must accept, even if temporarily, the author's implied cultural models. In some cases, the actual reader's cultural models may align with those of the implied author. Alternatively, readers might need to set aside their cultural models to join a text's authorial audience. The ethical implications of this are significant: *Joining a text's authorial audience may mean embracing cultural models that marginalize some readers*. Because the high school literature canon has traditionally consisted of works written by predominantly White, male authors (Applebee, 1993), this is presumably an accommodation that females and readers from minoritized backgrounds have historically made. Consider, for example, what the experience of joining the authorial audience for Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* might be like for African American students who experience genuine pain as a result of its use of racist language, even though it is framed as satire. Of course, readers also have the option to resist joining an authorial audience, but their ability to do so is mitigated in school, where grades are often tied to joining authorial audiences.

What are the benefits of encouraging students to acknowledge that adopting the role of the implied reader is to embrace, temporarily or otherwise, a set of cultural models prescribed for us by an implied author? First, doing so invites us to ask, "Who does this text assume that I am?" In turn, we might ask

what cultural models the text invites us to adopt and whether, taken collectively, those cultural models reify or complicate oppressive ideologies represented by the status quo. Additionally, we might ask whether the cultural models are those that we, as members of the actual audience, embrace (or wish to embrace) and what the implications of our doing so might be. This in turn leads us to investigate our own cultural models more closely and to question the extent to which they align with (or contradict) those of the implied author (and hence the authorial audience). In this way, the actual reader is very much at the center of our work.

Often students are reluctant to name racist and sexist cultural models lest they be considered racist and sexist themselves.

In the following section, we describe an activity that challenges students to interrogate the cultural models they encounter in YA texts.

Introducing the Cultural Models Activity to Preservice Teachers

To work toward the goal of preservice teachers considering and interrogating the cultural models implicated within the authorial audience of YA fiction, we first facilitate an activity in which they learn to recognize and name cultural models at work in dominant culture. To facilitate this activity, we use pictures of teens from Bey's (2003) photography exhibit, *The Chicago Project*. Bey photographed portraits of 12 high school students and asked them the questions: "Is it possible for a photographic portrait to reveal anything 'real' about you or someone else? What aspects of yourself are you willing to share with the world, and how do others respond to these self-presentations?" In addition to being photographed, the students were also audio-recorded during an interview. For the exhibit (available online), the teens selected one of Bey's portraits of them, along with an excerpt from the audio interview and transcript that they thought best represented them. We have found these self-selected portraits and interview excerpts to be helpful in considering what cultural models we bring to bear on the portraits and how the audio interviews and transcript excerpts work against the essentialism inherent in those cultural models.

To begin this activity, we explain to preservice teachers that cultural models are at work even when we do not take them up personally. For example, though we may not individually subscribe to cultural models of hyper-masculinity when interacting with young boys, that is not to say that those cultural models do not exist and do not work on boys in problematic ways (Newkirk, 2002). We also have found it helpful at the onset of this activity to allow preservice teachers to distance themselves from the cultural models that are named during the activity. Often students are reluctant to name racist and sexist cultural models lest they be considered racist and sexist themselves. Therefore, we allow our preservice teachers to first attribute the cultural models that are named to dominant culture before we ask them later in the activity to consider their own complicity in perpetuating the cultural models. To signal this attribution to dominant culture, we ask preservice teachers to use the pronoun "they" instead of "I" when naming cultural models that may be brought to bear on the portraits from Bey's (2003) exhibit. Here, "they" voices the dominant culture; preservice teachers use the phrase, "They would say…," to name cultural models that essentialize the students in the portraits.

This first part of the activity involves showing only the portrait of the students depicted in Bey's (2003) exhibit to the preservice teachers and facilitating a discussion of what "they would say" about each of the students. This discussion results in the naming of cultural models that circulate around the students represented in the portraits. For example, preservice teachers name overtly racist, sexist, and homophobic cultural models, and they also name cultural models that are more subtly problematic (e.g., thug, bad student, poor person). Each of these cultural models comes with its own set of assumptions, or "as-ifs," about the way the world works and about how people navigate it. Teasing out the assumptions that accompany cultural models is important for preservice teachers, as it requires them to consider the implications of how these cultural models work on all of us. For example, examining the cultural model of a "poor person" helps us to consider the assumptions made about people "as if" poverty is framed as a result of bad choices as compared to "as if" poverty is a condi-

tion produced by an economic system that people experience. Comparing the cultural model of a "poor person" with the cultural model of a "person experiencing poverty" helps us understand the implications of working from (and with) a given cultural model.

The second part of the activity involves considering the audio recording and transcripts from the excerpted interviews with the students in the portraits. Once the cultural models that dominant culture would bring to bear on the students are named, the interviews can be used to complicate those cultural models. Here, the goal is not to disprove the cultural model by only looking for disconfirming information. Rather, the goal is to seek out information that provides a fuller understanding of the student in ways that the cultural model did not allow. While the cultural model applied to the portraits might essentialize the students, the interview provides information that can broaden our understanding of the students and counter their reduction to a few characteristics offered by the cultural model. Here, Adichie's (2009) reminder is significant; like stereotypes, the cultural models are not necessarily untrue, but they are incomplete. For example, a student who is considered a "thug" may very well be a troublemaker at school, but that does not mean the student's entire existence is defined and explained by that label, especially in the ways it is used by dominant culture. Further, there may be another cultural model that allows for more of that student's humanity to be considered (e.g., adolescent resisting an institution that has historically marginalized him and people like him). This second part of the activity allows preservice teachers to consider the problematic incompleteness of cultural models and the problematic implications of essentializing students "as if" they are and always will be understood only with a narrow set of criteria and assumptions.

Having allowed our students to practice applying the concept of cultural models to Bey's (2003) photographs, we next introduce them to the concept of the implied author. To do so, we explain that an implied author is distinct from a text's actual author. As a social construct, it represents one's overall sense of an author as a result of reading a work of literature. That is, the implied author is a manifestation of the qualities that we, as readers, attribute to the actual author without necessarily having met him or her. As explained, most readers of the Hunger Games series presumably will never meet Suzanne Collins, but as a result of reading her books, they develop a sense of what she might be like as a person and what cultural models she might embrace. Once we have established this concept with preservice teachers, we next spend time working with them to identify cultural models they associate with the implied authors of YA texts they have read for class.

Assured that our preservice teachers grasp the concepts of cultural models and the implied author, we next place them in small groups, each of which receives a sheet of poster board partitioned into four quadrants (see Fig. 1). We ask the preservice teachers to imagine that the protagonist of whatever novel we are reading at the time walks into a room occupied by members of dominant culture. Group members are then asked to answer the question, "What cultural models might the people in that room impose on the protagonist to make sense of him or her?" As the preservice teachers work to answer that question, they record their responses in the upper-left quadrant of the poster board using the sentence stem, "They would say…," with the understanding that "they" refers to readers from the dominant culture. In the lower-left quadrant, students identify the "as-ifs" (or underlying assumptions) on which these cultural models rest. For example, if students argue that dominant culture would construct Katniss Everdeen, the protagonist of Collins's (2008) *The Hunger Games,* as a "tomboy,"

Figure 1. Cultural models activity poster board

they might identify the "as-if" underlying this cultural model as follows: Girls do not typically hunt, fight, or participate in other masculine activities.

Next, the preservice teachers transition to the right side of the poster board where they repeat the same steps, this time identifying cultural models they associate with the implied author and foregrounding the "as-ifs" on which those cultural models are founded. If, for example, preservice teachers argue that the implied author of Collins's (2008) *The Hunger Games* embraces a cultural model that constructs men and women as exhibiting masculine as well as feminine traits, they might express the underlying "as-if" as follows: Gender is not rigidly defined, and healthy individuals exhibit a balance of masculine and feminine qualities. As they complete the cultural models activity, we ask the preservice teachers to work toward answering the questions, "What cultural models do I bring to the text as an actual reader, and is the authorial audience the text constructs one that I wish to join?" To illustrate the kind of critical conversations that are possible when teachers take up this activity in the classroom, we next apply it to two YA novels that are commonly regarded as tackling social justice issues, but which we argue position readers in vastly different ways: S. E. Hinton's (1967/2006) *The Outsiders* and Matt de la Peña's (2009) *We Were Here*.

What cultural models do I bring to the text as an actual reader, and is the authorial audience the text constructs one that I wish to join?

Complicating the Myth of Rugged Individualism in *The Outsiders*

In *The Outsiders* (Hinton, 1967/2006), the narrator, Ponyboy Curtis, and his older brothers, Darry and Sodapop, self-identify as "Greasers," a term that, in the story world Hinton constructs, refers to teenagers from lower socioeconomic backgrounds that mainstream society constructs as "delinquents." Socials (or Socs), on the other hand, come from middle- to upper-class backgrounds. Unlike Greasers, Socs are popular in school, have access to material comforts, and generally escape punishment for drinking and fighting as a result of their social status and privilege. Throughout Hinton's novel, Greasers and Socs repeatedly come into conflict with each other. By forging friendships, however, characters such as Ponyboy, Cherry Valance, and Randy gradually come to appreciate their shared humanity. Indeed, a recurring ideological statement that Ponyboy and Cherry articulate in the novel encourages readers to acknowledge that "things are rough all over" (p. 35), regardless of one's social class.

Our preservice teachers identify a range of cultural models they believe readers from dominant culture might impose on the Curtis brothers and their Greaser friends. For example, they assume that "they" would say:

- The Curtis brothers are more responsible than most of their friends. They work or attend school, and they want to improve their situation in life. In contrast, Greasers are generally lazy and irresponsible.
- Ponyboy will probably earn a college scholarship because he's smart, responsible, and takes school seriously. Most Greasers, on the other hand, put little effort into school and will either drop out or go to prison.
- Ponyboy and his brothers will one day move into a "better" neighborhood. Ponyboy earns good grades in school, and Darry is a hard worker who wants to better himself. Most Greasers do not see the value of hard work and don't show respect for authority. As a result, they will likely continue the cycle of poverty.

The above dominant cultural model is founded on middle-class ideologies and values. As we interrogate it with preservice teachers, we discover that it is premised on the following "as-if": so long as people work hard and take advantage of the opportunities given them, they can improve their situation in life. It is not difficult to recognize the ideological parallels between this "as if" and the American Dream. Both perpetuate a myth of rugged individualism—that is, they assume that, in the United States, hard work and discipline are necessary and sufficient for upward mobility.

We read *The Outsiders* as perpetuating this dominant cultural model, which (alarmingly) holds people in poverty accountable for their situation. From the outset of the novel, Ponyboy, in the role of narrator,

distinguishes himself and his brothers as "different" from other Greasers. He earns "good grades and [has] a high IQ" (p. 4), whereas friends such as Two-Bit "never learned anything" in school and "just went for kicks" (p. 10). Ponyboy also marks the Curtis brothers as exceptional as a result of their embracing a set of ethics that stands in opposition to most Greasers': "Greasers are almost like hoods; we steal things and drive old souped-up cars and hold up gas stations and have a gang fight once in a while. I don't mean I do things like that. Darry would kill me if I got into trouble with the police" (p. 3). Perhaps this is why Ponyboy holds his friends accountable for much of the trouble they face, as is evident when he tells readers that Dallas "deserves everything he gets" while Two-Bit "doesn't really want or need half the things he swipes from stores" (p. 16). In this way, the novel's implied author subtly shifts responsibility for the hardships characters experience away from social institutions, placing it instead on individuals.

Throughout *The Outsiders*, the implied author depicts the class system in the United States as something that neither Socs nor Greasers can change. Instead, it is a natural inevitability. Prior to a climactic rumble between the two groups, Randy, a Soc, instructs Ponyboy, "You can't win, even if you whip us. You'll still be where you were before—at the bottom. And we'll still be the lucky ones with all the breaks . . . . Greasers will still be greasers and Socs will still be Socs" (p. 117). Politically minded readers are unlikely to encounter solutions for dealing with class-related issues in Hinton's novel other than to learn that, economic disparities notwithstanding, people share a common sameness ("things are rough all over").

When one examines the text's surface ideology (Hollindale, 1988), the implied author of *The Outsiders* appears to critique an entrenched class system that oppresses some people at the expense of others. As one interrogates the cultural models at work in the text, however, it becomes increasingly apparent that the implied author seems to regard the path to economic prosperity as requiring passage through that same oppressive class system. For example, we read the novel as suggesting that upward mobility is possible for those who are willing to "play ball" and work within the system. Describing his older brother Darry, for example, Ponyboy states:

> He wasn't going to be any hood when he got old. He was going to get somewhere. Living the way we do would only make him more determined to get somewhere. *That's why he's better than the rest of us*, I thought. He's going somewhere. And I was going to be like him. I wasn't going to live in a lousy neighborhood all my life. (p. 138, emphasis added)

At the end of the novel, Ponyboy, having conceded that the class system poses "too vast a problem to be just a personal thing," takes it upon himself to tell his friends' stories in hopes that "maybe people would understand then and wouldn't be so quick to judge a boy by the amount of hair oil he wore" (p. 179). Not coincidentally, he seizes on an essay assignment for his English class as an opportunity to do so, suggesting that he regards education as offering him an escape from poverty. Other characters reinforce the latter cultural model, including Ponyboy's brothers, who continually remind him, "[W]ith your brains and grades you could get a scholarship, and we could put you through college" (p. 173). In contrast, the most marginalized characters in the novel—Johnny and Dallas—are killed. Likewise, Ponyboy tells the reader that "Tim Shepard and Curly Shepard and the Brumly boys and the other guys [he] knew would die [violently as well] someday" (p. 154). Things might be "rough all over," but the implied author of *The Outsiders* embraces (and invites her implied audience to embrace) a cultural model that regards economic prosperity as possible for those willing to embrace middle-class values and ideologies.

[I]t becomes increasingly apparent that the implied author seems to regard the path to economic prosperity as requiring passage through that same oppressive class system.

With this in mind, we confront the following questions: "What cultural models do I bring to the text as an actual reader, and is the authorial audience the text constructs one that I wish to join?" The cultural model that we have attributed to dominant culture and the implied author of *The Outsiders* strikes us as particularly insidious because it shifts responsibility for class inequities away from social systems and institutions, placing it instead on individuals. If

the "as if" underlying this particular cultural model regards poverty as a result of laziness and squandered opportunities, then the consequences are that we, as readers, have less empathy for people experiencing poverty. Characters such as Dallas and Johnny are considered disposable because we care less for them. In contrast, we have a bit more empathy for the Curtis brothers because they are trying to overcome their situation. Finally, we celebrate Ponyboy because he "picks himself up by the bootstraps," serving as an example for other poor people. In this way, *The Outsiders* strikes us as perpetuating a single story (Adichie, 2009) about poverty in the United States, thereby reifying the very class system that Hinton ostensibly sought to critique.

As we interrogate this cultural model, we discover that it is premised on the following "as-if": To be American is to be White, speak English, and adhere to laws.

Complicating Cultural Models about Race in *We Were Here*

Published 42 years after *The Outsiders*, *We Were Here* (de la Peña, 2009) also focuses on socially marginalized characters. Yet unlike Hinton's (1967/2006) novel, which features all White characters, de la Peña's novel captures the racial and ethnic diversity of contemporary American society. When Miguel Castañeda, the novel's Mexican American narrator, is sentenced to a group home for an act he is unwilling to talk about, he embarks on a physical and existential journey that leads him to question the meaning of life. After arriving at the group home, Miguel is introduced to Mong, a Chinese American teenager facing an existential dilemma of his own, and Rondell, an African American teenager who spent the majority of his life as a ward of the state. The boys decide to escape the home together and set course for Mexico where they hope to put their respective pasts behind them.

The cultural model that our preservice teachers typically suggest dominant culture would impose on the characters in de la Peña's novel is one that emphasizes their status as minoritized youth. Students argue, for example, that "they" would say:

- Miguel probably doesn't speak English, at least not well.
- Mong, Rondell, and Miguel are "thugs" who probably deserve to be in jail.
- Miguel is probably in the United States illegally.
- Miguel and Rondell probably come from single-parent families.
- Miguel isn't American.

As we interrogate this cultural model, we discover that it is premised on the following "as-if": To be American is to be White, speak English, and adhere to laws.

As students revisit de la Peña's novel, they discover that it complicates the aforementioned cultural model in several ways. For example, although Miguel self-identifies as Mexican American, he is, in fact, biracial. His father, the son of a Mexican immigrant, was born in the United States (and died serving in the military), as was his mother, who is White. Indeed, a central tension in the novel arises as a result of Miguel's inability to reconcile himself with his Mexican heritage. Unlike his mother, whose "skin was so much whiter than [his] and [whose] eyes were big and blue" (p. 2), Miguel's skin is brown, and his appearance distinguishes him as Mexican. In the presence of other Mexicans, however, Miguel feels like an outsider. He does not speak Spanish; as a result, he is unable to communicate with his grandfather, who operates a landscaping business in California. Worse, Miguel suspects that his grandfather does not regard him or his older brother, Diego, as "real" Mexicans. Recounting an occasion when he and Diego visited their grandparents and worked alongside their grandfather and other Mexican laborers harvesting produce, a job that Miguel found physically taxing, he states:

> And all Gramps did was laugh the whole time. He told us in Spanish that we were tired 'cause we weren't real Mexicans like everyone else who was out there picking in his group. We were Americans. Told us we might be dark on the outside, but inside we were white like a couple blond boys from Hollywood. (p. 10)

Still later, Miguel wonders whether his grandfather will ever be capable of seeing him as anything other than a "blond boy from Beverly Hills with no heart" (p. 327).

Describing their experience reading *We Were Here*, the preservice teachers with whom we work

often express surprise at de la Peña's decision early in the novel to reinforce dominant cultural models about race. Upon arriving at the group home, Miguel observes that the director's "[b]lond floppy hair, blue eyes and perfect white teeth" cause him to "[look] pretty damn out of place, considering all the Black and Mexican ex-Juvi kids he was supposed to be watching" (p. 15). Likewise, Miguel measures Mong against the "Asian kids in my school back in Stockton" who "barely even talked" and who "just sat there at the front of the class and took notes and got As on all the math tests" (p. 22). At one point, Miguel even perpetuates a racist stereotype by describing Rondell as a "retarded ape" (p. 7). As they complete the cultural models activity, however, the preservice teachers come to appreciate that the implied author introduces these dominant cultural models only to complicate them.

Throughout *We Were Here*, Miguel is acutely aware of the labels others impose on him, and he bridles at the inability of those labels to capture his complexity as a subject. When Rondell nicknames him Mexico, Miguel angrily exclaims, "First of all, man, I'm only *half* Mexican. My mom's white. Second of all, I was born in Stockton, California. *America*. Not Mexico. And third, I don't even speak Spanish" (p. 55, emphasis in original). He also rejects the reductive labels that authorities in the judicial and social welfare systems impose on him. He angrily tells the director of the group home, "You open up their stupid-ass files and act like it has all the answers about 'em . . . . But you don't know me, man. You don't know the first thing about who I am or where I come from" (p. 46). Later, after he shreds his file and symbolically buries Mong's and Rondell's in the sand alongside the Pacific Ocean, Miguel reflects:

> But even so, I decided something sitting there: me, Mong and Rondell might be temporary, but while we were here we were more than just what some file could say. We were real people too, just the same as anybody else who was alive. If somebody wanted to know about us they should meet us face to face instead of just relying on typed words. (p. 138)

Following his epiphany, Miguel sets about writing in his journal, an act that illustrates his desire to regain control over his story and define himself on his terms.

The idea that cultural models are socially constructed is perhaps most clearly highlighted in a scene that takes place after Miguel and Rondell arrive at the border that divides the United States and Mexico. References to borders abound in the scene. As they wait to cross into Mexico, Miguel is taken by the image of White tourists returning "back to America. Back to where it was clean and safe and their houses waited for them on quiet streets with locked doors" (p. 217). Watching them, he states, "Sometimes they'd roll down their window, pull in something colorful, place crisp American bills into brown hands and then roll their window back up" (p. 217). In contrast, the world on the opposite side of the border is made up of "brown people living brown lives in a brown place who made bright colors to sell to America" (p. 217).

[T]he preservice teachers . . . often express surprise at de la Peña's decision early in the novel to reinforce dominant cultural models about race.

As Miguel contemplates this scene, he captures the gaze of a Mexican boy on the opposite side of the fence, a teenager like himself, selling decorative ceramic suns to White tourists returning to America. In that moment, Miguel recognizes a part of himself in his Mexican counterpart, leading him to gain greater clarity:

> For the first time. I was Mexican. Like him. Like my pop and my gramps and all the people me and Diego picked berries with that day in the fields of Fresno. Me. Miguel Castañeda. I was the same as this kid selling suns. We were both tall and young and skinny. We both had short brown hair and bony elbows and the ability to stare without blinking. (p. 218)

Recognition of their commonness leads Miguel to experience a moment of cognitive dissonance, and he wonders:

> How'd it happen like this? If our country's really so much better than Mexico, like everybody says—'cause we got more money and better schools and better hospitals and less people get sick just by drinking the water—then why should I be here and not him? Why was I on the better side of this big-ass fence? Just 'cause my moms is white? 'cause of the story my pop always told me, how gramps snuck through a sewage drain, crawled in everybody's piss and shit, just to make it to America? But that's nothing to do with me.
>
> What did *I* do?
>
> And what did this kid selling clay suns *not* do? (p. 218, emphasis in original)

Miguel subsequently accepts that any perceived differences between Mexicans and Americans are attributable to "what side of a fence you were born on. And the fact that I was on the better side made me feel sick to my stomach" (p. 218). In this way, de la Peña, like Hinton (1967/2006), acknowledges that "things are rough all over." Yet whereas the implied author of *The Outsiders* holds individuals accountable for their situation in life, the implied author of *We Were Here* acknowledges the damage that institutions inflict on people as a result of socially constructed distinctions made about race and class.

Categories such as race, class, and nationality are socially constructed, but the violence they inflict on people is real.

Again, we are led to investigate the "as-ifs" underlying this cultural model with the intention of answering the following questions: "What cultural models do I bring to the text as an actual reader, and is the authorial audience the text constructs one that I wish to join?" For us, the cultural model we attribute to the implied author of *We Were Here* is founded on an "as-if" that can be expressed as follows: Categories such as race, class, and nationality are socially constructed, but the violence they inflict on people is real. Unlike *The Outsiders*, which holds individuals responsible for their poverty, de la Peña's (2009) novel calls readers' attention to the role that systems and institutions play in perpetuating racism and economic disparities. As readers, we empathize with Miguel, Mong, and Rondell not simply because we recognize them as complex characters, but because we respect their struggle to define themselves in the face of labels that powerful institutions such as the judicial system, education system, and social welfare system impose on them. Likewise, when the characters etch their names in a boulder alongside the ocean, we interpret their doing so as an attempt to assert their identities over a world that renders them invisible. In this way, we read *We Were Here* as challenging single stories about people based on race, class, and nationalism and as advancing an ethos of empathy and compassion that we hope our preservice teachers will embrace.

Coda: Asking Troubling Questions of Literary Texts

When we ask preservice teachers to interrogate the cultural models they encounter in YA literature, we also invite them to reflect on the role that cultural models play in their lives. We were reminded of this recently when, a few weeks after introducing the cultural models activity in class, one of us (Sean) asked undergraduate English majors in a course he teaches on YA literature and literary theory how many of them would self-identify as feminists. Two students, both female, indicated that they would, which prompted Sean to ask why the remainder did not. The answer? The vast majority of the students regarded feminists as angry militants who belittle men and take the fight for gender equality to unnecessary extremes. Asked where they acquired this perception, the students were unable to point to a single source, though several of them credited the media with perpetuating this cultural model. Serendipitously, Ryan's students were having similar conversations in protest of a Men's Rights group that was founded on this cultural model of feminism and that hosted a conference on their campus to denounce feminism and advocate in opposition for men's rights.

As Sean and his students explored the issue more fully, some students observed that men often control major media outlets, which led them to wonder how perpetuating this stereotype, even if inadvertently, might further their interests. Building on this insight, other students asked whether women oppress themselves when they accept a single story about feminism that is perpetuated by men and that results in their rejecting a social movement that is intended to safeguard their own interests. As one student stated, "It's pretty powerful to think that the media could persuade women to embrace a cultural model that actually oppresses them." Powerful, indeed.

Sean may not have won any new recruits to the feminist cause, but he left class satisfied that his students had begun to ask how the cultural models they embrace shape their perceptions of other people and the world. In subsequent classes, students initiated discussions in which they considered how competing cultural models account for disagreements about what is "appropriate" for adolescents to read, as well

as how they are implicated in single stories about adolescence as a time of crisis and uncertainty (Lesko, 2012).

Hollindale (1988) distinguishes between a text's surface ideology, where authors communicate their beliefs and values directly to readers through explicit ideological statements (pp. 10–11), and passive ideology, which he attributes to an author's unexamined assumptions (p. 12). For Hollindale, "A large part of any book is written not by its author but by the world its author lives in" (p. 15). The same can be said of reading. Encouraging students, whether in teacher education programs or secondary English classes, to focus only on the surface ideologies they encounter in texts is not sufficient. Rather, if our goal is to produce active readers who are capable of critiquing oppressive cultural models, we must also ask students to consider how the texts they read position them and how the world they live in influences the meanings they construct in their transactions with literature.

In conclusion, we offer a list of guiding questions that we posed throughout the article and that we suggest instructors of preservice teachers or secondary students use to frame the activities we described. These include:

Interrogating the cultural models at work in texts

- What cultural models does the implied author present in the text?
- How and to what extent does the implied author reify and/or critique the cultural models in the text?
- How and to what extent does the implied author invite the reader to take up and/or critique the cultural models in the text?

Interrogating the cultural models readers bring to texts

- Who does this text assume I am?
- What cultural models do I bring to the text?
- How and to what extent do the cultural models I bring to the text align and/or conflict with the cultural models presented and/or critiqued by the implied author?
- What are the social and political implications of the reification and/or critique of the cultural models at work in the text?

Ultimately, our main concern is the extent to which readers are unintentionally marginalized from the institution of school and the pleasure of reading because they are not taking up and/or actively resisting the requisite cultural models validated by school-sanctioned readings of literary texts. Additionally, we are concerned about the extent to which literary texts are uncritically used as vehicles for exacerbating problematic cultural models that maintain the status quo.

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Margaret **Robbins**

Using Graphic Memoirs to Discuss Social Justice Issues in the Secondary Classroom

Traditionally, comics and graphic novels have been perceived as "kids' stuff" appropriate only for pleasure reading. However, I believe this perception is outdated. Over time, graphic narratives that pertain to war and other historically significant issues have made their way into classroom settings. With their combination of words and pictures, graphic narratives with social justice stories are conducive to teaching critical literacy skills. In particular, *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale* by Art Spiegelman (1986), *Darkroom: A Memoir in Black and White* by Lila Quintero Weaver (2012), and *A Game for Swallows* by Zeina Abirached (2007) are graphic memoirs that depict messages of social justice and identity pertinent to young adults.

Pictures, especially those in stories with social justice themes, can aid readers because visuals can bring candor to situations that might otherwise be too difficult to tell and too harsh for a less experienced adolescent mind to comprehend. For instance, images depicting violence proclaim themselves as representations rather than reality by their very nature, thus providing the necessary critical distance to make the subject matter more bearable. These images capitalize on the techniques of drawing and art to call upon readers' own visual memories of actual experiences. Hunt (2008) supports this stance by pointing out that the picturebook form, including the graphic medium, "lends itself well to memoir, dystopia, and wordless narrative" because the writer can use both words and pictures to tell his or her life story (p. 425). By advocating for these specific texts, I hope to raise awareness of the comics/graphica medium as an effective teaching tool, particularly for social justice and critical literacy.

To reveal more saliently the unique benefits of the graphic form in the teaching of social justice, this study utilizes the critical literacy theories of Janks (2000), Behrman (2006), and Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys (2002), foundational scholars of critical literacy. Critical literacy practices can reinforce literary analysis and encourage students to turn new understandings into positive actions. In this article, I discuss critical literacy in the context of the three novels above and explain how they can be used in the classroom to explore issues of identity and social justice, both of which are important to adolescents. Within these novel discussions, I offer examination of key themes and suggestions for use of these graphic novels for critical literacy discussions, interdisciplinary teaching, and writing. Further, in the Appendices to this article, I provide a list of additional graphic novels and academic resources, as well as charts explaining critical literacy's relationship to the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010) as resources for teachers and teacher educators.

Justification for Multicultural Graphic Memoirs

To better understand the graphic novel form, it is important to define the comic medium and differentiate between graphic novels and comic books. Will Eisner, the famous comic artist and one of the founding writ-

ers of graphic novels, defines comics as "sequential art" (McCloud, 1993, p. 5). Cary (2004) extends this definition by citing the framing offered by *The World Encyclopedia of Comics,* which defines comics as "a narrative form containing texts and pictures arranged in sequential order" (p. 11). *Comic* is an umbrella term, and comic books and graphic novels have slightly different definitions under this umbrella. Their text and picture style are the same, but their serialization is different. Thompson (2008) reminds us that comic books "tend to carry the story line from one month to the next—often monthly" (p. 9). Graphic novels "follow a format similar to that of comic books but differ in that they tend to have full-length story lines, meaning that the story starts and ends within the same book" (p. 9). It is important to acknowledge that comics and graphic novels are a form rather than a genre, as they both have stories that can, on different occasions, affiliate with many possible genres, including superhero, mystery, fantasy, and nonfiction, among others (Carter, 2008). Both comics and graphic novels can vary in subject matter. In his article for *The English Journal,* Letcher (2008) defines the graphic novel very specifically as "any book-length narrative comprised of sequential art, or more simply, an entire book written and illustrated in the style of a comic book" (p. 93). The stories of graphic novels are meant to stand alone, unless of course they have sequels. Comics, in contrast, tend to be serialized.

Adolescents in the United States, who are sometimes sheltered from the direct effects of war, can learn about war and other trauma from these graphic narratives.

The comics/graphica medium is conducive to telling stories of marginalization and oppression. Since comics faced a certain amount of criticism early on for being too simplistic, they have sometimes been thought of as a marginalized, or lower status, medium (Schwartz, 2010). However, this status has given many artistic comic writers room to experiment with the medium and use the combination of visual images and words to tell true stories of the characters' oppression. Some underground comics tackled such serious issues as oppression and minority rights in the 1960s, while Will Eisner's 1978 publication of the graphic novel, *A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories,* brought this social justice theme more to the forefront (Schwartz, 2010). Because comics have a history of telling stories of oppressed minorities, that history itself could be part of classroom instruction, including asking students to create a timeline of major graphic narratives focused on major historical issues.

In her important humanities work related to comics, Hillary Chute (2010) has noted that the graphic narrative style works well with such graphic autobiographies as *The Complete Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi (2007) because the comic form gives the reader access to both the reflective narrator's voice and the child's experiences. Additionally, Chute argues that the simplicity of comic drawings can make the traumatic scenes more palpable to the reader. That simplicity makes the characters in graphic narratives relatable by making it easier for the reader to insert himself or herself into the story. Adolescents in the United States, who are sometimes sheltered from the direct effects of war, can learn about war and other trauma from these graphic narratives.

Today, if we are teaching undergraduates or middle or high school students, we are teaching members of the millennial generation and younger, many of whom grew up with the Internet and are heavily engaged with social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. As Whitlock and Poletti (2008) suggest in their article, "Self-Regarding Art," some of the same interest that students of the new generation have in social media could transfer to graphic novels, particularly "autographics" that tell specific life stories. Graphic memoirs are similar to Facebook and Twitter because they "present narrative strategies reminiscent of adolescent behaviors and subcultures, such as experimentation with self-image, a heightened awareness of the potential for images to produce shock in the viewer, and a fascination with the power of social and visual performance in the construction of identity" (p. xviii). Adolescents might be more likely to connect to books that are closely aligned with their media-based, fast-paced world and that deal with issues pertaining to self-identity. Particularly when dealing with such sensitive issues as social justice, it is important for us as teachers to choose texts that are engaging to our readers. Graphica forms provide this benefit.

To highlight potentially productive teaching strategies that capitalize on the power of the graphic narrative, I provide a close look at three specific texts for young adult readers. *Darkroom* (Weaver, 2012) offers a unique perspective; it is a memoir of an Argentinian American girl who grew up in Alabama in the 1960s and experienced the racism of the Jim Crow south. The narrator's family had interactions with both White and Black people in the town, and the reader experiences the family's somewhat emotionally distant view of segregation, given that this was not something they encountered in their home country.

A Game for Swallows (Abirached, 2007) portrays a religion-based war and an adolescent girl who holds on to her own identity in the midst of political strife. It is an international text by a Lebanese woman and translated from French into English. Its implementation in the classroom would add rich and unique diversity to the curriculum.

Maus I (Spiegelman, 1986) has gained attention from educators and scholars because it deals thoughtfully with sensitive historical issues related to Holocaust survivors. Revisiting the Holocaust through a survivor's account as reinscribed by his cartoonist son, Art, *Maus I* explores the long-term impact of the concentration camps on those who eventually escaped them and the challenges that the descendants of survivors face when trying to provide comfort and understanding.

All three books depict social justice issues and advocate for equal rights for people of all races and creeds. Additionally, they depict minority characters and experiences in a respectful manner. They are based on historical events that involved oppression linked to race and/or religion and explore how the protagonists persevered despite the odds against them.

Critical Literacy and Critical Reading Lens

To help students better understand graphic memoirs that tell stories of oppression, educators should invoke reading approaches and activities based on critical literacy. According to Barbara Comber (2001), critical literacies "involve people using language to exercise power, to enhance everyday life in schools and communities, and to question practices of privilege and injustice" (p. 1). Critical *reading*, a practice common in high school English classes, encourages students to question and investigate sources, identify an author's purpose, make inferences and judgments, separate fact from opinion, identify literary elements, and make predictions (Cervetti, Pardales, & Damico, 2001). Critical *literacy* adds an additional step: praxis, or action, to improve the surrounding community.

[C]ritical literacy asks that students go further to examine power relationships and social values as depicted in the text and determine how they can use the book's lessons to promote change.

Critical reading is a necessary step in the critical literacy process, but critical literacy asks that students go further to examine power relationships and social values as depicted in the text and determine how they can use the book's lessons to promote change. As an example, a classroom exercise promoting a move from critical reading to critical literacy through Satrapi's *Persepolis* could focus on a scene where the young female protagonist describes the veils that women in Tehran had to wear while she was growing up. Students might find examples in the book that depict women wearing veils and analyze the accompanying dialogue (critical reading). Students might then consider what these scenes say about gender roles and power dynamics in the book (critical literacy). These same interpretative and critical thinking practices transfer to other graphic memoirs and visual texts, allowing students to develop critical literacy skills.

According to Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys (2002), critical literacy has four main components: "disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple viewpoints, focusing on socio-political issues, and taking a stand and promoting social justice" (p. 382). To be fully engaged in the critical literacy process, students need to participate in all four components. When teachers and students are first introduced to the critical literacy process, they may choose to be involved in only some elements of the process, but the long-term goal of critical literacy is for teachers to understand and implement the *entire* process into the classroom and, as a result, support students in their own comprehen-

sion of critical literacy (Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002).

To engage students in the critical literacy process, a teacher might pose thought-provoking questions about how a novel reflects power relationships in society. Questions about interpretation and author's purpose are good initial steps, as they encourage critical reading skills, but critical literacy involves additionally asking how the text portrays relationships of social dominance and power (Cervetti, Pardales, & Damico, 2001). If students can ask and answer thought-provoking questions about not only how the text relates to their own lives, but also how the text questions the status quo and power relationships in society, then they are engaging in critical literacy (Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002). Again, to use *Persepolis* as an example, when exploring scenes in the novel that show how Marji's school is changed by the rise of the Islamic political structure, students engaging in critical literacy could point to specific visual details that connote oppression of secular lifestyles.

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Hilary Janks (2000) identified four areas of critical literacy for potential consideration in the classroom. The *domination* strand questions how language contributes to the current structures of the status quo. As a parallel, the *access* perspective tries to provide more equal accessibility to the dominant language without compromising the nondominant forms. The *diversity* perspective focuses on how language shapes social identities. And the *design* perspective focuses on semiotic signs, as related to language and literacy. Behrman (2006) reminded us that to achieve critical literacy in the classroom, all four of these aspects must be addressed in a balanced manner. He suggested four primary activities for achieving this goal: reading supplementary texts, reading multiple texts, reading from a resistant perspective, and producing counter texts. The critical literacy discussion questions and activity suggestions I suggest throughout the article bear in mind the philosophies of Janks (2000), Behrman (2006), and Lewison, Flint & Van Sluys (2002).

Analysis of Graphic Literature and Critical Literacy Questions

Maus I by Art Spiegelman

I start the discussion with *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale* by Art Spiegelman (1986) because it is one of the better-known graphic novels for adolescents and, therefore, a solid base from which to draw examples. *Maus I* is a compelling autographic about Art, the son of a Holocaust survivor, who describes how his father's World War II experiences affect both father and son. The novel effectively employs symbolism as Vladek narrates his lived experiences of the Holocaust to his son, an artist and a writer. The most obvious scenes involving symbolism and social justice center on the interactions between the mice, or the Jewish people, and the cats, or the Germans. The cat-as-predator and mouse-as-prey dynamic invites discussion of power relationships—an important conversation from a critical literacy lens.

Page 33 of the book shows several vignette scenes where the cats beat the mice and force them out of their towns. Through the spoken words and images of the uniformed cats clubbing the mice, the reader inter-

prets the German cats as the oppressors and the Jewish mice as the oppressed victims. The use of animals to employ symbolism gives the reader a visual of the hierarchy, drawing upon a "cat chasing the mouse" motif. Also, while the shading of the picture is dark, the mice are white, depicting a traditional contrast between light and dark, innocence and evil. The light and dark contrast serves as a key motif throughout the book as Vladek seeks to better understand the Holocaust and how the traumatic experiences have shaped him. Art, his son, seeks to know his father better and how his father's trauma has affected his family and his life. Some of the visual cues in the book, such as Art's and Vladek's body language when they converse with one another, could create an intriguing dialogue about the nature of this father–son relationship through both visuals and words in graphic memoirs.

There are other scenes in *Maus I* where the images are more subtle but still important to notice. An example is the family dinner scene shown on page 74. On a surface level, everything appears to be fine. The family is having dinner and enjoying one another's company. In that context, students could be invited to identify elements of the scene that resonate with their own favorite family meals. They might note such details as the way people dress, where people sit, and what people do when they are not eating, such as the boy who reads his book. The narrator's father Vladek, pictured on the top left, comments that the Germans could not destroy everything at once.

However, at a closer glance, the reader will notice that the window very much resembles prison bars. Therefore, in spite of the closeness and sense of normality conveyed at the family table, the mice are still victims who will soon be imprisoned and oppressed. Additionally, through prompting, students will notice that the scene has a feeling of surveillance. The nicely dressed family enjoys dinner together, yet there is a sense that they are being watched. From a critical literacy stance, students can discuss how both the words and images contribute to the reading of this story and the irony of Vladek's comments in contrast to the jarring image of entrapment. Some students will notice the picture symbolism right away, while others will need questions and prodding. In either case, graphic novels provide a strong avenue toward expanding critical literacy and literary interpretation skills to images and other multimodal texts.

Maus I is a novel that is conducive to cross-curricular studies related to critical literacy. In her description of her *Maus I* project, high school teacher Paige Cole (2013) explains that she chooses to teach *Maus I* in her high school social studies class because "it is just as much about Art as it is about Vladek. Spiegelman does a great job depicting the tension between his father's discourse and his own" (p. 119). Like many great works of young adult literature, *Maus I* is in part about the tension in a parent/child relationship, a dynamic that one can study under a critical literacy lens. Because of the theme of parent/child interaction, adolescents will relate to Art's quest for self-identity through hearing his father's stories about the Holocaust. The book is truly a story within a story.

Art inserts himself as a narrator of the outer story frame so he can share insights and observations of his father. In the inside story frame, Vladek narrates the events of the Holocaust, since he is the one who experienced them and can serve a witnessing role. Students could thus discuss whose story *MausI* truly is and how the parent/child dynamic plays a role in how the story is told. To help them explore this theme as conveyed in the graphic medium, students might be asked to write a comic about their own family from their own voice and then again from a parental

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figure's voice. Works such as *Maus I* lend themselves to a discussion of narrative voice and perspective.

In graphic novel workshops for both teachers and college students, I have shown the image of *Maus I* with the family eating dinner amid the barred windows as a vehicle for discussion and also as a writing prompt. Sometimes, before showing the *Maus I* images, I will have students view a political cartoon and write a response to the cartoon's message. The images from both the political cartoon and the graphic memoir are good springboards for discussion of how comics can make political statements. Through pairing *Maus I* with political cartoons, students can have intriguing discussions in both English and social studies classes about power relations and the effect of war and other major social events on society. Depending on the grade level, teachers can either provide political cartoons or ask the students to find their own political cartoons related to current events, and then pinpoint how both the visuals and the words contribute to the cartoon's statement.

The following can be a guide for discussing *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale* (and possibly *The Complete Maus*, which also includes *Maus II: My Father Bleeds History*) with a critical literacy lens:

- *Disrupting the Commonplace:* Keeping in mind that *Maus I* was first published as a novel in the mid-1980s, how did Spiegelman disrupt the commonplace by using the comics/graphica medium to tell this nonfiction story? Initially, the *Maus* series appeared in serial editions in *RAW* magazine (Wolk, 2007). What made it stand out enough to be published in novel form? How do you think the animal symbolism of the novel relates to the idea of disrupting the commonplace? How do the images in the book convey the theme of overcoming oppression? [*Suggestion:* In a creative writing course that I co-taught recently, the instructor and I had our students create their own social justice comics to share with the group. In addition, in a Graphic Literature Open Institute for the Red Clay Writing Project, our students (educators and preservice teachers) found a lesser-known graphic novel that related to social justice issues and shared a presentation to the class about why it should be taught in schools.]
- *Interrogating Multiple Viewpoints:* How do both Art's and Vladek's narrative voices contribute to the telling of the story? Why is the framing device of Vladek's story of the Holocaust told within Art's modern-day perceptions of his father important? [*Suggestion:* Students could write their own narrative or graphic narrative story that includes a narrative frame, or a story told through more than one character's lens. Additionally, this novel could be compared and contrasted with the graphic memoir, *The Complete Persepolis,* by Marjane Satrapi (2007), which also includes the framing device of an adult narrator's reflections on a child's experiences of the war in Tehran (Chute, 2010)].
- *Focusing on Sociopolitical Issues:* How did the Holocaust affect world history? How does it continue to affect sociopolitical issues in both Europe and the United States? What are some other conflicts that involve religious persecution, both past and present? [*Suggestion:* Before reading the book, **s**tudents could complete a research project about the Holocaust, its beginnings, and its progression over time, so they will understand the context and its relationship to Vladek's story. Additionally, students could discuss and research the Crusades and the parallels between this historical time period and the Holocaust.]
- *Taking a Stand and Promoting Social Justice:* Why is it important to take a stand against religious and racial persecution? How do these issues still exist in modern society, and what can we do about them? [*Suggestion:* Students could write an editorial for a newspaper about an issue related to persecution and what we as a school and/or community can do to further promote fairness and understanding.]

Darkroom: A Memoir in Black and White **by Lila Quintero Weaver**

In *Darkroom: A Memoir in Black and White* (2012), the images and words combine to show that the family, having immigrated to the United States, was not used to the racial divides that existed in Alabama during the 1960s. The novel tells the story of the Quinteros, an Argentinian family who moves to Alabama for the father's ministry job. Because of their roots, the family initially views the segregation of the south from a psychological distance, and they often feel shocked and appalled by what they see. Particularly compelling are the narrator's statements, "The rules that governed race relations were written down nowhere, but you were supposed to know them anyway" (p.

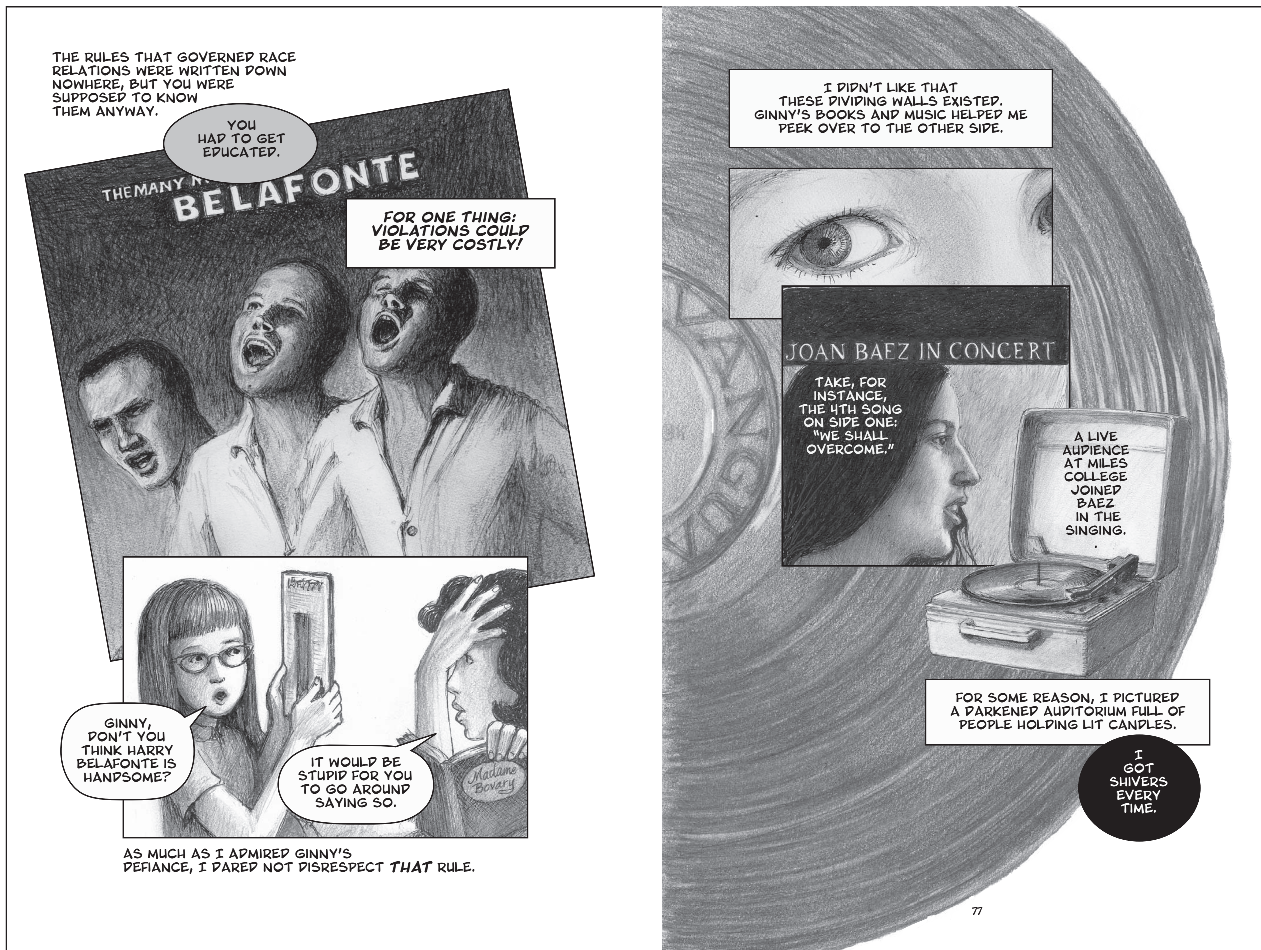

Figure 1. The Quintero sisters gravitated toward artists who reflected a desire for social justice. From *Darkroom: A Memoir in Black and White* by Lila Quintero Weaver, pp. 76–77. Copyright 2012 by the University of Alabama Press.

76) and "I didn't like that these dividing walls existed" (p. 77). Perhaps because the Quinteros were outsiders looking into the segregated South, they were better able to see the injustices of the situation. Several scenes show that the early adolescent narrator listened to records by artists such as Joan Baez and read such books as *Black Like Me* that belonged to her older sister. Images in Figure 1 illustrate that the Quintero girls clearly favored the '60s artists who advocated for social justice.

Lila was aware of the social norms that govern this small Alabama town, but she did not care to follow them. A closer look at Figure 1 shows that both Lila and her sister empathized with African Americans but initially did not want to claim this feeling for fear of being chastised. As her sister patted on her hair to make herself look more American, Lila asked, "Ginny, don't you think Harry Belafonte is handsome?" Ginny responded, "It would be stupid for you to go around saying so" (p. 76). Also, the reader should notice that Ginny is reading *Madame Bovary*, a British book, perhaps in an attempt to blend in with European American norms or to show that schools tend to give Eurocentric reading assignments.

However, the picture on the next page shows that in the privacy of their own home, the girls listened to such revolutionary songs as Joan Baez's "We Shall Overcome" (p. 77). As is typical of adolescent girls, Lila and Ginny struggle between fitting in and standing up for their beliefs. Their father, on the other hand, was more open with his anti-segregation beliefs. In the classroom, students who have read the text

might be asked to turn through the pages of the book a second time and create a list of examples of the two girls seeking ways to be accepted by their peers. To encourage students' careful analysis of the father in these terms, they might also be invited to identify particular images that show *his* response to segregation, and then to analyze commonalities within and differences across them.

The light and dark imagery also juxtaposes the darkness of segregation's cruelty versus the light of knowledge that comes from social activism.

Lila's father was a preacher, and in several scenes, he showed opposition to segregation by such actions as eating in a restaurant that normally only served African American patrons. In one particularly compelling scene on page 96, Mr. Quintero invited the choir of an African American church to sing at a White church. As well intentioned as the act was, the members of Mr. Quintero's congregation did not receive this action well. Lila noted, "To my father's astonishment, church leaders demanded that the choir leave" (p. 97). The pictures linked to this episode convey an interesting contrast between the welcome extended by the White church members upon first meeting Mr. Quintero to their looks of anger and dismay upon learning that he invited African American choir members to the church. The visuals, combined with the texts, show how hypocritical people can be. Visuals make juxtapositions between words and actions easier to comprehend than text alone.

When teaching this work through a critical literacy lens, it is imperative to notice student reactions to such a scene and provide them with opportunities to discuss these reactions with others. Before teaching this novel in a secondary classroom, it would also be important to prepare the students for some of the harsh and derogatory language used to describe African Americans. For instance, during this same episode, one of the church members made the statement, "Nigras? You invited Nigras?" (p. 97). If the climate of the classroom is one in which a thoughtful discussion could be had, this scene could invite a teachable moment about why the treatment of both the visiting choir members and of Mr. Quintero was unjust.

In addition to being a messenger of social justice through its engagement with "real life" historical events, the graphic memoir *Darkroom* offers an opportunity to discuss social justice issues through symbolism. Many drawings in the novel, as aligned with the title, convey a contrast between light and dark imagery. Lila's father, in addition to being a preacher, was a photographer. The book shows him developing pictures he took of protests and demonstrations that contributed to the civil rights movement. The phrase "darkroom" is symbolic of the divide between the races, specifically the Quinteros's place in between Black and White as Argentinians of mixed Native American and European backgrounds. The light and dark imagery also juxtaposes the darkness of segregation's cruelty versus the light of knowledge that comes from social activism. The title of the book serves as a roadmap to some of its themes, which is helpful, particularly to students who are learning to understand symbolism. In a classroom setting, students could talk about why the title is appropriate for the book on both a literal and metaphorical level.

The following can be a guide for discussing *Darkroom* with a critical literacy lens:

- *Disrupting the Commonplace:* How do Lila and her family disrupt the commonplace when they interact with the African Americans in their community? At what point do they receive backlash, and how do they handle these interactions? How is their role as witnesses to segregation important to Lila's narrative voice? How do the girls' music tastes and choices show their disruption of the status quo, and why do you think they are hesitant to be vocal about it? [*Suggestion:* Students could draw or create a map of their community and discuss with the class or in a written response who feels a part of the community and who might feel like an outsider. Additionally, they could think about how to be more inclusive of others in the community. Another potential activity could be to make a list of pop culture preferences, such as favorite music and TV shows, and discuss how and if and why people tend to cross cultures with these tastes.]
- *Interrogating Multiple Viewpoints:* How is the different perspective of Argentinians important in this story? How does the girls' conversation around pop culture reveal the tension they feel because they are not members of either the privileged or op-

pressed population in this community? [*Suggestion:* Students can find specific images in the book that show the Quinteros bearing witness to the events of the Jim Crow segregation, both when they directly intervene and when Mr. Quintero tells the story of the events with his camera. In particular, the scene at the church described above and the incident in which Mr. Quintero takes pictures of the civil rights demonstration are powerful scenes from which to begin discussions about multiple viewpoints of an incident.]

- *Focusing on Sociopolitical Issues:* What does the reader learn about the Jim Crow South and its injustices from reading this book? Why do you think the title is important when thinking about the issues of racial injustice that the book explores? [*Suggestion:* If students have read other books about this topic, such as Christopher Paul Curtis's *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* (1995), they could do a compare and contrast essay about what the book taught them about the Jim Crow South and how it is different when told through another character's lens.]
- *Taking a Stand and Promoting Social Justice:* What forms of injustice still exist in the United States today, and what can we do about them? How can the study of literature make a difference in the process? What forms of writing can tackle this issue? How might we change our own roles within our communities to encourage more inclusion? [*Suggestion:* Students can read nonfiction articles about such recent events as the Trayvon Martin trial and the Ferguson riots. This current events examination could lead to a discussion and writing prompts about how prejudice still exists and what we can do to prevent such tragic instances. Additionally, students can have a dialogue about how communities reacted to these acts of violence and how they could have been handled differently.]

A Game for Swallows by Zeina Abirached

A Game for Swallows (2007) is an example of an international YA graphic novel with the theme of overcoming oppression. This book describes a war in Lebanon that takes place between two religious groups, Christians and Muslims. Two prime examples of the image aiding the text in theme depiction are the wall painting of Moses and the Hebrews fleeing Egypt (p. 39) and the map of Beirut, Lebanon, that shows West Beirut labeled as Muslim and East Beirut labeled as Christian (p. 8).

Zeina and her family members are Lebanese Christians who are trying to survive the war-torn city. In this book, war is a major oppressor, along with the religious divisions. Similar to what we see in *Maus I* and *Darkroom*, the contrasts of dark and light in this book depict the darkness of war contrasted with the hope that Zeina and her family are able to retain in the situation. In spite of the brutal war on their home soil, Zeina and her family members are able to rely on each other and survive.

Ultimately, the only way the family can fully escape the oppression is to leave the country. Abirached, the author of this autobiographical graphic memoir, eventually moved to France, and the book was translated from English into French. However, the Arabic lettering of her name at the end of the book shows her attempt to hold on to her home language and culture, despite having to physically leave Lebanon.

Students should be encouraged to read through a critical lens focused on how the story has both an internal and an external conflict. The external conflict is revealed when the parents have to go to the other side of the city to help the grandmother, and the children and their neighbors do not know if and when they will return safely. The internal conflict is seen through the people trapped in the building who, during the fighting, still try to maintain a sense of peace, both inner and outer, amid the frightening events that are taking place. However, there might be an even larger internal conflict occurring—the attempt to maintain one's identity even when one's home is being destroyed—a concept of particular relevance to adolescents. Critical reading skills can help students to recognize these themes and conflicts. Taken a step further, critical literacy discussions can encourage students to see connections to their own lives and enact change.

Discussing religion in the classroom can be complicated, but conversations about the political implications of religious wars can be had in a safe classroom space. The following could be an inquiry process for studying this novel in a critical literacy context:

- *Disrupting the Commonplace:* The children's neighbors, in addition to their actual parents, serve in caretaker roles to the children. Can parental figures exist outside of our immediate families?

How should we trouble and question the definition of a traditional "nuclear" family? Additionally, how do you think this book questions the idea that war is a solution to international problems? [*Suggestion:* Students could brainstorm about who else can serve in parental roles in addition to actual parents. A short story or a children's picturebook with similar thematic issues could be read to the class to initiate a dialogue about alternative family structures. For the discussion of war and conflict, students could identify alternative methods of handling conflict, both internal and external.]

- *Interrogating Multiple Viewpoints:* The story is told from Zeina's perspective, so we see her childlike response to events and also her looking back on the situation as an adult. How would the story be different if it were told from another point of view? What if the story were told from a Lebanese Muslim's point of view rather than that of a Lebanese Christian? [*Suggestion:* Students could choose a section of the novel to rewrite, in either narrative or graphic narrative form, from the perspective of a character of a different religious/cultural background.]
- *Focusing on Sociopolitical Issues:* How do the sociocultural and sociopolitical events in Lebanon during the 1980s influence the story? Why is Zeina's position as a young female narrator important in the telling of this story? [*Suggestion:* Students could learn more about the historical background behind Lebanon and the war. Additionally, this novel could be compared and contrasted to other novels about war, particularly those that involve a young narrator.]
- *Taking a Stand and Promoting Social Justice:* Why is it important for us to hear more voices from the Middle East? How and why are women's voices becoming more prevalent in the Middle East and throughout the world? [*Suggestion:* As a parallel, students could study and respond to the Afghan Women's Writing Project website (http://awwproject.org) and discuss how issues in Afghanistan both parallel and differ from those in Lebanon. This website has several poems and nonfiction accounts written by Afghan women that would be interesting to study alongside this novel. Students could write responses to the poems and stories by the Afghan women and, if they choose, post their responses to the website.]

Conclusion

The three graphic memoirs discussed, like other writings about social justice, contain sensitive issues. Before bringing them into the classroom, it may be necessary to have a prereading dialogue about the subject matter of the books and why it is important to read them. As Letcher (2008) reminds us, since some graphic books deal with harsh topics, "teachers . . . should be aware, as with all books, of the age and readiness of their students" (p. 94). The graphic novels discussed in this article tell the truth of oppressed people and sometimes utilize harsh language and strong imagery to do so. However, all three books examine social justice issues that are productive to bring to light. Additionally, graphic novels that interrogate historical topics are conducive to writing activities. Letcher (2008) notes that because of their appeal, "teachers can and should utilize that engagement and allow graphic novels to serve as a bridge to other texts, as a forum for teaching literary terms and techniques, or as a basis for writing projects" (p. 94).

All three of these graphic memoirs engage in a deep and thought-provoking way with history and its impact on real people. *Maus I* (1986) describes a group of people who were oppressed because of their religion and racial heritage. *Darkroom* (2012) recounts a tale of people who both witnessed and experienced oppression due to race and who were silenced when they attempted to advocate for a marginalized group of people. *A Game for Swallows* (2007) depicts a family who faced the ultimate oppressor, war, which resulted from religious conflict. All three books depict a period of historical significance, its social justice issues, and people who were affected by the oppression of the surrounding events . . . and found ways to overcome it. My hope is that these and other graphic memoirs that convey social justice issues will make their way into more secondary classrooms.

As a student who was labeled as both "gifted" and "learning disabled" as an adolescent, I know that people can be oppressed or treated unfairly regardless of the racial, socioeconomic, or gender group in which others envision them, simply because people are afraid of that which is unfamiliar. Since adolescents are grappling with issues of self-identity, it is important to introduce them to these social justice concepts at an early age when they can easily empathize with people who are trying to find themselves and who

want to be accepted for who they are. Learning activities focused through critical literacy and social justice lenses will help them to see how the issues faced by the protagonists apply to their own lives. Graphic memoirs such as *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale*, *Darkroom: A Memoir of Black & White*, and *A Game for Swallows*) are important for consideration in secondary classrooms.

Recommended Resource Books on Teaching Graphic Novels

Abel, J., & Madden, M. (2008). *Drawing words and writing pictures.* New York, NY: First Second.

Carter, J. B. (Ed.). (2007). *Building literary connections with graphic novels: Page by page, panel by panel*, Urbana, IL: NCTE.

Cary, S. (2004). *Going graphic: Comics at work in the multilingual classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Thompson, T. (2008). *Adventures in graphica: Using comics and graphic novels to teach comprehension, 2–6.* Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

Monnin, K. (2013). *Teaching graphic novels: Practical strategies for the secondary ELA classroom.* Gainesville, FL: Maupin House.

Suggested Social Justice Graphic Novels for Students

(with genre and appropriate age level)

Abirached, Z. (2008). *I remember Beirut.* Minneapolis, MN: Graphic Universe. (Memoir/Middle School and High School)

Anderson, H. C. (2005). *King: A comics biography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* Seattle, WA: Fantagraphics Books. (Biography/High School)

Backderf, D. (2012). *My friend Dahmer*. New York, NY: Abrams ComicArts. (Memoir/High School)

Bechdel, A. (2006). *Fun home.* Boston, MA: Mariner Books. (Memoir/College and Graduate Level)

Bechdel, A. (2012). *Are you my mother?* Boston. MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. (Memoir/College and Graduate Level)

Curtis, C. (1995) *The Watsons go to Birmingham*. New York: Random House.

Deutsch, B. (2010). *How Mirka got her sword.* New York, NY: Amulet Books. (Fiction/Middle School and Early High School)

Deutsch, B. (2012). *How Mirka met a meteorite.* New York, NY: Amulet Books. (Fiction/Middle School and Early High School)

Kellas, I. (1983). *Peace for beginners.* London, UK: Writers and Readers. (Nonfiction/Middle School)

McKay, S. E., & LaFrance, D. (2013). *War brothers: The graphic novel.* Toronto, ONT: Annick Press. (Historical and Fact-based Fiction/Late Middle School and High School)

Moore, A., & Gibbons, D. (1986). *The watchmen.* New York, NY: DC Comics. (Fiction/High School)

Rius. (1976). *Marx for beginners.* New York, NY: Pantheon. (Nonfiction/Middle School)

Spiegelman, A. (2004). *In the shadow of no towers.* New York, NY: Pantheon. (Memoir/Advanced Middle School and High School)

Satrapi, M. (2007). *The complete Persepolis.* New York, NY: Pantheon. (Memoir/High School or College)

Telegeimer, R. (2012). *Drama.* New York, NY: Scholastic. *(Fiction/Middle School and Early High School)*

Tamaki, M., & Tamaki, J. (2010). *Skim.* Toronto, ONT: Groundwood Books. (Fiction/High School)

Ware, C. (2003). *Jimmy Corrigan: The smartest kid on earth*. New York, NY: Pantheon. (Fiction/Advanced High School)

Yang, G. L. (2006). *American born Chinese.* New York, NY: Square Fish. (Fiction/High School)

Yang, G. L. (2013). *Boxers.* New York, NY: First Second. (High School)

Yang, G. L. (2013). *Saints.* New York, NY: First Second. (High School)

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Cervetti, G., Pardales, M. J., & Damico, J. S. (2001, April). A tale of differences: Comparing the traditions, perspectives, and educational goals of critical reading and critical literacy. *Reading Online, 4*(9). Retrieved from http://www.readingonline.org/articles/cervetti.

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Cole, P. (2013). Becoming thrice-born: 10th-grade history students inquire into the rights to culture, identity, and freedom of thought. In J. Allen and L. Alexander (Eds.), *A critical inquiry framework for k–12 teachers* (pp. 109–126). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

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Eisner, W. (1978). *A contract with God and other tenement stories.* New York, NY: Baronet Press.
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McCloud, S. (1993). *Understanding comics: The invisible art.* New York, NY: Harper Perennial.
National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers. (2010). Common core state standards for English language arts and literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://www.corestandards.org/ela-literacy.
Satrapi, M. (2007). *The complete Persepolis.* New York, NY: Pantheon Books.
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Appendix 1: Middle School (8th Grade) Common Core State Standards Related to Critical Literacy

[Website Referenced: http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/8/]

Standard Number	Definition	Relationship to Critical Literacy
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1	Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence	Students learn to form an opinion and to address the counterargument; both are steps toward critical literacy and praxis.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1.A	Introduce claim(s), acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.	Students learn to consider the opposing point of view.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1.B	Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.	Students learn to respectfully disagree with people and to form a convincing argument.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1.C	Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.	Students learn to consider the opposing point of view.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1	Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	Students engage in critical reading, a necessary step toward critical literacy.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.2	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.	Students learn critical reading skills and to develop empathy with the characters and other people.

Appendix 2: High School (9th–10th Grade) Standards Related to Critical Literacy

[Website Referenced: http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/9-10/]

Standard Number	Explanation	Relationship to Critical Literacy
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1	Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.	Students learn to form an opinion and to address the counterargument.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.A	Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among claim(s), counter-claims, reasons, and evidence.	Students learn to consider multiple perspectives.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.B	Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level and concerns.	Students gain an understanding of audience, multiple points of view, and how to argue a viewpoint for the purpose of change.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.C	Use words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.	Students understand a counterclaim or a different perspective.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.A	Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.	Students learn to understand an alternative viewpoint.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	Students engage in critical reading, a necessary step toward critical literacy.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail 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.	Students engage in critical reading, a necessary step toward critical literacy.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3	Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.	Students engage in critical reading, a necessary step toward critical literacy.

Joanne **Yi**

Beauty Is in the Eye of the West:

An Analysis of An Na's *The Fold*

In September of 2013, Julie Chen, a Chinese American talk show host and media personality, ignited a fire of controversy when she revealed that at age 25, she had undergone plastic surgery as a response to racism encountered in the workplace (Oldenburg, 2013). While many others in such visible media roles have professed to having undergone cosmetic procedures, Chen's "confession," as it was often labeled in the press (Oldenburg, 2013; Takeda, 2013), sparked considerable attention for several reasons. First, her motivation for the surgery was racially charged; second, the type of plastic surgery in question, blepharoplasty, is a particularly well-known procedure in many Asian communities. It widens the eyes by removing an epicanthic fold, also referred to as an eye fold, thereby creating an eyelid crease that results in the appearance of larger eyes that are less slanted (ASPS, 2014). Many Asian viewers accused Chen of being ashamed of her ethnic look; she revealed that she had received bitter comments such as, "You're denying your heritage," and "You're trying to look less Asian" (Monde, 2013). While Chen has become the face for this procedure in the United States, her decision to alter her appearance is just one of millions made by people every day in pursuit of looks that adhere to highly idealized standards of beauty.

The objectification of women's appearances has persisted throughout history, originating from the assumption that beauty is good and desirable while ugliness deserves shame and mockery (Northup & Liebler, 2010; Wolf, 1991). Baker-Sperry and Grauerholz (2003) define the feminine beauty ideal as "the socially constructed notion that physical attractiveness is one of women's most important assets and something all women should strive to achieve and maintain" (p. 711). Political activist Naomi Wolf (1991) argued that this societal obsession with women's beauty goes beyond a preference for an aesthetic; rather, it is a mechanism for achieving female obedience and maintaining control that supports dominant hegemonies. It is especially clear that the media, intentionally or not, contribute to this perception in popular culture, and the effects of this gender paradigm are still felt by most, if not all, segments of American society. This topic has been extensively explored in areas such as feminist and gender studies, self and identity narratives, and popular media. Additionally, within the past two decades, the scholarship has grown to consider the influence of Western ideals of beauty on women in communities of diverse ethnic and cultural origins.

However, a distinct gap in academic research exists regarding the impact of the beauty ideal on children and teenagers as seen in contemporary literature. This article addresses this void by exploring a cultural perspective on beauty through an examination of young adult fiction. Its purpose is to identify the messages concerning appearance that are relayed to young people of color in an adult world dominated by specific standards of beauty. Specifically, I analyze An Na's young adult (YA) fiction novel, *The Fold* (2008), for cultural examples of how some Korean American teenagers seek the Western model of physical beauty and how such standards influence the construction of ethnic identity. Due to limited academic scholar-

ship on this topic within the field of children's and YA literature, I refer to studies and research from several other domains, including popular media (e.g. blogs and online news articles), Asian American studies, feminist studies, and advertising.

Perceptions of Beauty

Beauty in Children's Media

Representations of beauty abound in all forms of media for children and teenagers, and they reflect increasingly feminized and sexualized conceptions of womanhood. Previously gender-neutral toys and board games have been modified to include more stereotypically gendered characteristics, and popular television and movie characters among girls are tween and teen starlets, whose appearances are carefully crafted with trendy makeup, clothing, and accessories. Common household products are sold via spokesmodels with hyper-feminine attributes, and even clothing for infants and toddlers is created and marketed with sexualized overtones (Giese, 2014). Messages regarding beauty saturate the daily lives of females from a very young age and undoubtedly influence their identity construction.

It is notable that within this highly commercialized and visible domain, challenges to the portrayal of girls and women have been largely aimed at attitudes and roles, not appearances. Baker-Sperry and Grauerholz (2003) observed that "recent Disney films and even contemporary feminist retellings of popular fairy tales often involve women who differ from their earlier counterparts in ingenuity, activity, and independence but not physical attractiveness" (p. 722). Most recently, this has been true of the popular Disney animated films *Brave* (Sarafian, 2012) and *Frozen* (Del Vecho, 2013), in which the female protagonists are promoted as strong dissenters to the stereotypical princess role. They are "anti-princesses," yet they still conform to societal expectations of aesthetic beauty. The prominence of external appearance coupled with the growth of branding and consumerism within children's and teen media have resulted in a product-driven and beauty-obsessed culture in which a child audience is constantly bombarded with messages to become like these characters. The enduring missive is that this is possible by adopting the characters' features through the purchase of products, the consumption of goods, and personal efforts to achieve conformity in appearance (Hade & Edmonson, 2003; Hunter, 2011; Sekeres, 2009).

Children's and young adult literature has not escaped this path to socialization. Research in the last four decades has demonstrated that children's stories maintain dominant power structures and discourses on gender (Baker-Sperry & Grauerholz, 2003). These dominances are expressed both explicitly and implicitly in children's and young adult literature. For example, some commonly used literary tropes include the existence of a beauty elite, as seen in the *Uglies* (2005) and *Gossip Girl* (2002) series, and physical makeovers that positively change perceptions of the female characters, as seen in *The Princess Diaries* (2000) and *The Hunger Games* (2008) (Theriault, 2014).

Messages regarding beauty saturate the daily lives of females from a very young age and undoubtedly influence their identity construction.

Younger (2003) suggested that "Young Adult fictions provide compelling examples of how female bodies continue to be a site of cultural contestation" (p. 54), where the importance of external appearance battles against the self-worth, wants, and even rights of women. This is demonstrated very visibly in the abundance of YA fiction book covers that feature the faces or bodies of female protagonists rather than images that speak to the content of the stories or characters themselves. What is reinforced to children and teen readers, then, is that external beauty matters and that conforming to the aesthetic expectations in media allows girls to achieve higher status in society.

I extend these findings to argue that these messages also communicate that the type of beauty matters; though different cultures have unique standards of beauty, in the United States, the term "mainstream" most often refers to a Western aesthetic. Additionally, a descriptive like "All-American" often refers to a White ideal (Baker-Sperry & Grauerholz, 2003; Englis, Solomon, & Ashmore, 1994; Hunter, 2011; Iijima Hall, 1995; O'Connor, 2014). Such racialized perspectives can be damaging to young people's identities, self-confidence, and assessments of others.

Cultural Standards of Beauty

There have always been different criteria for beauty within various communities. Encompassed by these unique standards are deeper valuations of certain appearances or even cultural obsessions with particular features or body types (Dolnick, 2011; Emanuela, 2009; Kaw, 1993). For instance, in metropolitan areas such as New York City, plastic surgeons reported clear trends in cosmetic enhancements—whether facelifts, eyelid surgeries, or breast enhancements—that were divided along ethnic lines (Dolnick, 2011). In a 1994 study of cultural encoding of beauty types in media, Englis, Solomon, and Ashmore argued that beauty ideals are multidimensional constructs that have evolved in the United States to include diverse and cultural perspectives. However, I believe their conclusion is an optimistic one that fails to recognize how the American conception of beauty influences other cultural standards. An African American or Asian American perception of beauty, for example, is often altogether different from an African or Asian ideal (O'Connor, 2014; Stone, 2013a).

Within the United States, a Western ideal of beauty is the dominant archetype and one to which many other subgroups around the world aspire. This archetype consists of the hyper-feminized aesthetic portrayed in American media: long hair, light skin, big eyes, a slender frame, and large breasts. Though these attributes are considered highly desirable by mainstream society, they are not accepted without controversy. The complex debates and discourses around hair in African American communities, the eye fold within East Asian communities, and clothing in Muslim communities illustrate women's desires to both conform to mainstream beauty standards and reject them in favor of ethnic, or non-dominant, standards of beauty (Evans & McConnell, 2003; O'Connor, 2014).

A Content and Thematic Analysis

The conflict between cultural and dominant standards of beauty is explored in *The Fold*. This young adult title tells the story of Joyce, a Korean American high school student, who is offered the "gift" of cosmetic surgery by her well-meaning *gomo*, or aunt, who assumes Joyce will be thrilled at the opportunity to get an eyelid crease (also called a double eyelid). Rooted in the narrative are significant insights into the construction of ethnic identity, self-esteem, and societal perceptions of beauty. Western ideals influence the characters' self-perceptions in ways that reflect the real-life concerns and trends of young people of East Asian heritage, in addition to other children of color.

I selected this book for analysis because it distinctively addresses the topic of beauty within a young adult's domain and examines it from a cultural perspective in its main plotline and themes. Being Korean American, I also found that I could relate to many of Na's characters; the book's portrayal of a wide range of perspectives regarding beauty and culture reflected many of the stances and arguments that I heard growing up.

To analyze this book, I coded the story according to qualitative methods that call for axial coding and organization of data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The text was delineated into distinct units according to major and minor plot lines, character development, and dialogue. These units were then categorized into larger domains that referenced topics such as beauty, identity, culture, and hegemonic structures. It was possible to identify numerous major and minor themes surrounding beauty, such as family expectations, peer pressure, social mores, and cultural values. Many of these themes were developed in plot lines concerning three major areas of image insecurity: eyes, height, and skin. The characters in *The Fold* consciously explore the insecurities and cultural ideals surrounding these features, as well as the attempts to modify them. I further investigated these three areas using pertinent historical, cultural, and social research relevant to the East Asian context of the novel. I argue that the ways in which characters attempt or desire to alter their physical appearances within these domains are embedded with racial or gendered tensions that need to be identified in order to empower the characters and allow for healthy and strong identity construction.

I would be remiss not to mention that *The Fold* also identifies weight and body image as another insecurity for several characters. It is nearly impossible to discuss mainstream beauty ideals without acknowledging thinness and body image. Weight, in and of itself, is an important topic of study within the children's domain. Much more YA and children's literature, as well as academic research, concerns weight and body image and its influence on teens' social, emotional, and physical health (Glessner, Hoover, &

Hazlett, 2006; Nolfi, 2011; Northup & Liebler, 2010; Younger, 2003). Due to the wider discussion and scholarship already available on issues of weight and body image, I have chosen instead to focus on the three topics above in order to analyze them more deeply.

A Double Eyelid

For the characters in *The Fold*, external appearances are intricately tied to deeper issues of race, ethnicity, and identity. Nearly every character has a different facial or body feature that is highlighted as needing improvement or alteration. The story begins with an aunt, a complex character herself, who wins the lottery and, in a fit of generosity, offers each family member a gift of beautification—gifts "to make your lives better" (p. 70). In emphasizing specific external features, as well as real methods of alteration, Na brings up an interwoven web of issues present for many Asian Americans. Primarily, the story demonstrates how popular standards of beauty are often highly racialized; dominant aesthetic preferences cannot be separated from influences of Whiteness, and for many minority children and teenagers, the closer one gets to a White ideal, the closer one is to achieving a desirable status. For Asian Americans, this is seen in a battle that is waged both within oneself and in public.

Though the body of academic research in this area is surprisingly small, several issues of significance arise in studies examining beauty and body image in various cultural groups. Notably, many Asian Americans not only consider race in their valuation of beauty; they regard the look of White Americans as the height of attractiveness (Evans & McConnell, 2003; Mok, 1998a). The internalization of Western beauty standards contributes to poorer self-perception regarding physical appearance and body image compared to other cultural groups, including African Americans and White Americans (Evans & McConnell, 2003; Mok, 1998), and numerous efforts to modify appearance are made in order to fit an ideal outside their cultural norm.

This struggle is most clearly seen in Joyce's decision regarding the fold. When the topic of her Asian eyes first comes up, Joyce compares her eyes to those featured prominently in makeup advertisements at the local mall: "[H]er eyes had never seemed narrow before, but as she stared at herself surrounded by the faces of countless models, the hurtful term *slant-eyes* popped into her head . . . why hadn't she noticed how thin and small they were?" (p. 84). With this new self-awareness, Joyce considers a permanent solution: Asian blepharoplasty or "double eyelid surgery." This procedure uses incisions to remove skin, tissue, or fat from the upper eyelid, followed by stitches to create a crease above the eye (ASPS, 2014). This is meant to make the eye appear larger and rounder in shape, and the crease can take several forms to create various looks. This crease is natural for most Caucasians and many other ethnic groups. However, only about 50% of Asians are born with it, and for some East Asian populations, such as Koreans and Chinese, the single eyelid, or monolid, is considered normal (American Society of Plastic Surgeons, 2014).

Primarily, the story demonstrates how popular standards of beauty are often highly racialized[.]

Joyce perceives the distinction between single and double eyelids and remarks that Western women take double eyelids for granted. Na writes, "Now that Joyce's attention had been drawn to this detail, she couldn't stop staring at the fold or lack of a fold in all the women she knew and met" (p. 83). The importance of the fold for Joyce is rooted in racialized comparisons of what is a normal or desirable feature, and what is deviant. For Asians, a long history of demeaning statements about their ethnicity comes from this difference in eyes—slurs such as "slant eyes," "slit," "coin slot," and "chink" abound—and the surgery offers a way to address this main point of difference.

The presence of a double eyelid is surprisingly dualistic in perception. For many in the Asian community, the feature is as obvious as the presence of a nose or mouth, while for many outside this community, an eyelid crease is such an assumed attribute that what the term refers to is a point of confusion. Consequently, it remains difficult for many outside the Asian community to distinguish who does or does not have it; in fact, the "it" in question is unclear. This phenomenon hints at a wider issue—an institutionalized view of external appearance embedded in social consciousness to the degree that some characteristics are so deeply accepted as normal, an alternative is truly difficult to comprehend.

In contrast, for those who are familiar with the feature, the difference that it makes in appearance is stark. Na voices this through Joyce, who uses special glue to create a temporary crease in her eyes: "She was stunned by the difference. Stunned at how happy she felt staring at her face. Even her skin looked better with her new eyes" (p. 194). Her new eyelid crease is immediately noticed by others, such as her aunt, sister, and friends, but not discerned by anyone outside the established Korean community. Joyce's crush, a boy who is half Korean and half Caucasian, sees her and comments, "You just look so different" (p. 213); he is unable to figure out what has changed and finally credits it to her hair being pulled back from her face. For Joyce, as well as many others, the eyelid crease becomes a modification that assimilates one into a Westernized view of normalization and beauty.

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This is a particularly relevant issue as these surgical procedures increase in popularity. In their most recent annual report (2013), the American Society of Plastic Surgeons identified blepharoplasty as the third most utilized cosmetic surgical procedure in the United States and noted that it was up 6% from 2012. For South Koreans, this phenomenon has reached a fever pitch as their nation maintains its status as the largest market for cosmetic surgery in the world (Whitelocks, 2012). According to the International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, 20% of women between the ages of 19 and 49 in Seoul have had some form of plastic surgery; most often it is the ubiquitous double eyelid surgery (*Economist*, 2012). It is so common that many high schoolers receive the "gift" of surgery for graduation or birthdays, and it is an expected rite of passage in many families (Stone, 2013b).

With the increasing number of cosmetic procedures, technology has improved, and innovations in laser surgery now allow people to visit the doctor's office during their lunch hour and return with new eyes, all with minimal recovery time. The industry's prevalence is far-reaching and impacts Asia and beyond, including the US. Rates of foreigners visiting countries such as South Korea solely for the purpose of receiving cosmetic surgery are also increasing, and it is becoming more common for Asian American students to travel abroad in order to go under the knife and return with a new feature (Lee, 2013). For those who seek less permanent solutions, the practice of using tape or glue to create a temporary crease (as Joyce did in *The Fold*) is a viable solution and a practice that is largely seen as a "pick-me-up" for the face.

The issue is further complicated because blepharoplasty holds a certain stigma for some who believe that those who get it are denying their ethnic identity (Huet, 2013). In an article about eyelid surgery by the *San Francisco Gate*, an interviewee voiced this perspective, saying,

> If the deeper intention behind wanting bigger eyes has to do with beauty, then it ties back to this Western image of what's considered beautiful. . . . if people see big eyes as beautiful and small eyes as something they want to change, it really perpetuates Asian American stereotypes of not belonging. (Huet, 2013, p. 1)

Another said,

> I've started to come around to the idea that if you have the means to do something that gives you a significant confidence boost and improves your quality of life, then sure. But this still seems really weird to me. It seems a little bit racially self-hating, to be honest, and the fact that people are reluctant to talk about it compounds that. (Huet, 2013, p.1)

Other prominent Asian Americans have spoken out against the practice, including author Maxine Hong Kingston, who referred to "eyes that have been cut and sewn" in her 1989 book *Tripmaster Monkey* (Mok, 1998a, p. 6), and scholar Eugenia Kaw, who considers the surgery a form of mutilation (Kaw, 1993). Na uses the character of Helen, Joyce's older sister, to present this perspective: "'It's ridiculous that you are conforming to these Western standards of beauty. Our eyes are supposed to be like this,' she said and pointed to her creaseless upper lids" (p. 173). The cultural shame, or the threat of it, that accompanies the appearance of the eyelid crease, coupled with the surgery's growing popularity, demonstrates how beauty cannot be separated from identity and culture, even among children.

It is significant that many other Asians, however, do not consider the eyelid crease to hold negative cultural associations. In her research on the popularity

of surgery among Asian Americans, Mok (1998a) observed that a large number of media articles featured quotes from people who insisted that "they [were] not denying or trying to change their ethnicity—merely that they [were] 'enhancing' their 'natural' beauty" (p. 6). Indeed, Julie Chen responded to her critics with a similar response, saying, "Guess what? I don't look less Chinese. . . . I'm not fooling anybody here" (Oldenburg, 2013). For these individuals and others, the surgery is not a response to cultural shame but an attempt to conform to a specific cultural ideal (e.g., a Korean celebrity) instead of an American one. A common refrain is that cosmetic surgery has less to do with trying to look like someone else and more to do with feeling happier and more self-confident; the eyelid surgery, just like any other cosmetic surgery, is a means to feel better about oneself rather than conform.

Several characters in *The Fold* espouse this view, most notably Lisa, who has already gotten the surgery and is considered popular and gorgeous. Lisa confides in Joyce:

> After the surgery, I just felt more confident. My eyes looked fuller and more defined. And for the first time in my life, I could actually wear eye shadow without it looking weird. . . . I finally had the confidence to start flirting with this really cute boy. . . . It was amazing how different I felt after the surgery. . . . Getting the [eyelid crease] changed my life. (Na, 2008, p. 168)

Joyce's best friend Gina also tries to convince her that the crease is a good idea by reminding her of the confidence boost she felt: "Think about how great you felt after the makeover. It'll be like that, only permanent" (p. 156). She further reasons, "We all do things to look better" (p. 157); this could be through makeup, clothes, or even braces. The argument laid out by these characters is nuanced and well thought out. Presented as only an option within a continuum of self-enhancements, surgery can be a means to self-confidence and contentment and thus a move to please the self rather than others. Cosmetic surgery continues to grow in use and acceptance, and the ubiquity of the practice, as well as the decision-making process, indicates that it is an important milestone in identity formation.

For all the complexity of the issue, it is important that any inherent racist rhetoric not be ignored. One of the most popular motivations for getting the surgery is to make the eyes more alert or more accurate in expression ("On creases," 2014). Julie Chen has stated that provocation came from her news director, who said, "Because of your Asian eyes, I've noticed that . . . you look disinterested and bored because your eyes are so heavy, they are so small" (Oldenburg, 2013). However, the question remains why large eyes should appear more alert or expressive, or why small eyes are associated with coldness or aloofness.

It must be acknowledged that the associations made between genetic features and character traits mirror the stereotypes set by the dominant culture.

In a 1993 study by Kaw, an examination of the motivations behind Asian American women's decisions to have cosmetic surgery found that the standards of beauty they were aiming to achieve were influenced by racial ideologies that associated ethnic features with negative traits. All of Kaw's participants stated motivations such as not wanting to look "sleepy" or "dull" while simultaneously claiming that they were "proud to be Asian American" and "did not want to look white" (Kaw, 1993, p. 79). It must be acknowledged that the associations made between genetic features and character traits mirror the stereotypes set by the dominant culture.

Additionally, Kaw's study concluded that the Western medical system promotes and legitimizes these racial stereotypes by "medicalizing" the terminology used in consultations in order to problematize ethnic features. For example, patients were told by doctors that their natural eyes had "excess fat" or looked "puffy" and that blepharoplasty would mitigate these conditions (Kaw, 1993, p. 81). Man (2012) extended the argument for racialized surgery when she highlighted that the eyelid surgery debate centers on the idea of Asians trying to look more White. She observed that the controversy never accuses Asians of trying to look more like people of African or Indian descent, though they commonly share features like large eyes with natural creases. The institutional underpinnings of racism within this issue suggest that Whiteness, along with other beauty ideals in mainstream society, cannot be completely separated from

Asian blepharoplasty, even though current motivations may not cite them explicitly.

Joyce's aunt explains this when talking about her own surgical enhancements:

> I did not do it for [others]. I did it for myself. Here in the United States, everyone wants to look more American. Even the Americans want to look more American. Why do you think there are so many women who diet, change their hair color and make their noses smaller and their chests bigger? (Na, 2008, p. 180)

Interestingly, despite external and unspoken pressures to look a certain way, conforming to the norm (or what looks "American") is seen as an act done for the self rather than another.

Height in Asian Men

Though beauty is largely presented as an issue that affects only females, males, too, are subjected to social conditioning in attractiveness and desirability. Eyelid surgery is growing in popularity among males in South Korea, and cosmetic surgery is becoming a more frequent choice for males who feel pressured to look a certain way in order to succeed or be accepted (Kim, 2013; Stone, 2013a). Na explores another standardized ideal for boys through Andy, Joyce's younger brother. At first glance, Andy seems preoccupied with typical childhood activities such as video games, basketball, and water gun fights. However, he is keenly aware of society's standards for what a boy should look like. He, like one of his friends, eagerly accepts a gift of shark liver pills, intended to miraculously make him taller before he enters middle school the following year. In addition, Joyce's father is gifted shoe lifts to make him taller. Both of their desires to be tall seem innocuous but are intertwined with racial and gendered tensions that question Asian stereotypes and masculinity.

In his *New York Times* bestseller *Blink: The Power of Thinking without Thinking* (2005), Malcolm Gladwell examines height standards and concludes: "There's plenty of evidence to suggest that height—particularly in men—does trigger a certain set of very positive, unconscious associations" (p. 86). He goes on to explain that the majority of Fortune 500 CEOs are tall (just under 6 feet or taller), White men. It has been well established that height is associated with success and authority, but the link between height and race is less explored. Despite the incredible diversity of groups that comprise Asia, there remains a persistent stereotype in the US that Asian men are short. Consequently, these men are seen as less able and powerful in mainstream society. Na uses Joyce's attraction to her crush, John Ford Kang, to demonstrate these racialized underpinnings:

> John Ford Kang stood with his buddies two doors down the hall. . . . he towered over his blond surfer friends, his frame tall and muscular, unlike so many other stringbean Korean guys. But then, he was only half Korean and half something else. Dutch or German or something else, exotic, European. (Na, 2008, p. 8)

Joyce simultaneously rejects Korean males based on what she deems a physical inadequacy and desires the power and exoticism that John's height, in part, affords him. The degree to which John's ethnicity, both European and Korean, factors into Joyce's attraction to him underscores how ethnicity, stereotyped physical qualities, and attractiveness are tied together in mainstream society.

Mok (1998b) discusses this in her analysis of stereotype differentials of Asian American men in media. She illuminates the fact that Asian American men are often characterized in ways that do not fulfill expectations of the masculine American ideal and are contradictory to the traditional ideals of American romanticism. She draws attention to a study by Sung (1985) in which Chinese American students were found to be troubled by threats to their masculinity. The boys felt that their social standing at school was negatively influenced by their cultural upbringing, which valued images and expectations that were often different from those present in mainstream American society. Mok explains, "The U.S. media image of the masculine hero emphasizes sexual attraction but includes few physical or cultural features of Asian Americans" (p. 195). Joyce's assessment of John falls in line with this skewed model. She observes him, thinking, "He always had someone who wanted to talk to him. Even though he was Asian, he looked and acted like everyone else. Like someone who belonged in this school, in this neighborhood, with all these students" (p. 22). Her perception is that an Asian heritage, manifested culturally or physically, is a deterrent to social acceptance and belonging. More than that, the stereotypes that accompany an Asian heritage are discernable institutionally within society's expectations for the behavior and even interests of Asian males.

This is illustrated in the seemingly innocent depiction of Andy's obsession with basketball and his desire to become an NBA player. He ingests the questionable shark liver pills from *gomo*, accepting unfortunate and humiliating side effects in the hopes that he will grow in stature. Writer and NPR journalist Gene Demby (2014a) has noted that basketball is central to many Asian American communities and cultures and has a long history (stemming from before the 20th century) of cultural participation and interest. However, in the 2012–2013 season, only 0.2 percent of all men in NCAA Division I basketball were Asian Americans (Demby, 2014a). Demby questioned this minute cultural representation in a sport clearly identified as central to several Asian communities, and he addressed what he rightly assumed would be the public's first response—that the low representation was directly correlated to Asian males' heights. He countered this with a provocative statistic: Nigerians, ranked 7th from the bottom in average height for 20-year-old men by country (Average height by country, 2009), are still represented by 116 players in Division I basketball (2011). Implicit is that the public would not stereotype Nigerian men as short because of their race; synchronously, there is a widespread assumption that Asian men do not play basketball or are not interested in it professionally.

Joyce's friend Gina voices this perspective when she hears that Andy wants to be a professional basketball player and laughs in response: "What is with your family? . . . Deep denial" (p. 40). Though Andy's ethnicity is not explicitly connected to his aspirations, Na tells an important piece of racialized history when she juxtaposes Andy's passion for basketball with his self-consciousness over height. His storyline also shows how young men are affected by societal standards, expectations, and stereotypes and how they strive to alter themselves in order to conform.

Makeup and Made-up

Another area of image insecurity for characters in *The Fold* revolves around skincare, especially for the face. While Na touches upon several different issues regarding skin beautification, including cosmetics, skin color, and clear skin, thematic prominence is given to cosmetics as a method of alteration to achieve a beauty standard.

Joyce and her friend Gina experiment with makeup, and it plays a big role in boosting their confidence. In spite of these results, the girls still find the daily application and maintenance of their makeup—marketed as a form of "natural" enhancement—to be stressful and expensive. When Joyce receives a makeover at a department store counter, Gina insists that a particular woman do it, saying, "[She does] the best Asian eyes in the business" (p. 89). Joyce's makeover depicts an experience that will likely be familiar to many Asian American teens. While many young people are interested in makeup, Joyce's concerns are specific to her ethnic features. She worries that makeup is not meant for monolidded eyes and that it will require another Asian, someone versed in modifying makeup styles for Asian faces, to properly apply it. This implies that Joyce and others who share her cultural heritage require specific beauty products and application procedures tailored to ethnic features; it also suggests that makeup is used to conform to mainstream ideals of beauty.

The growth of media attention toward skin lightening products and eye-enhancing makeup among Asians indicates that the cosmetics industry and its consumers are linked to racialized ideologies.

Current trends within the global cosmetics market tell a similar story. In the past 20 years, worldwide cosmetic sales have increased; between 1993 and 2011, the average annual growth rate was 4.4% (Ahn, 2013). Meanwhile, in the last decade, the Chinese cosmetics market has shown a 17% growth rate, and premium skin care products, chiefly skin-lightening products, have a majority market share in several Asian countries including China, Taiwan, Korea, and Japan (Ahn, 2013). The growth of cosmetics sales, both globally and specifically within Asian populations, insinuates that increasing efforts are being made by women to conform to mainstream aesthetics. Additionally, the growth of media attention toward skin-lightening products and eye-enhancing makeup among Asians indicates that the cosmetics industry and its consumers are linked to racialized ideologies (Ahn, 2013; Li, Min, Belk, Kimura, & Bahl, 2008; Yi, 2012). It cannot be ignored that children and teens

fall prey to such pressures as much as adults. Various characters in the novel illustrate how self-improvement practices are often linked to consumer activity with, at times, hegemonic undertones.

According to a report by the NPD group, a consumer research company, makeup use has climbed rapidly among tween girls (Quenqua, 2010). Notably, this rise is not in "kid-friendly" makeup such as scented chapsticks and lip glosses, but rather in adult cosmetics. Statistics show that between 2007 and 2009, "the percentage of girls ages 8 to 12 who regularly use mascara and eyeliner nearly doubled—to 19% from 10% for mascara, and to 15% from 9% for eyeliner. The percentage of them using lipstick also rose" (Quenqua, 2010).

These trends indicate that young girls are interested in using makeup more than ever and that the line between children and adults, and what is age-appropriate or not, is quickly becoming blurred.

These trends indicate that young girls are interested in using makeup more than ever and that the line between children and adults, and what is age-appropriate or not, is quickly becoming blurred. Quenqua (2010) argues that "parents have been fighting a losing battle with the beauty industry, which now markets to children and teens so aggressively that it invites a comparison to Big Tobacco's efforts, like Joe Camel" (p. E6). The growth in adult cosmetic use among children combined with the boom in the Asian cosmetics industry indicate that the search for beauty is increasingly important for young Asian females. To say that cultural practices, standards, and expectations ingrained within the cosmetics market are not lost on teens is an understatement.

Na also delves into another modification practice by describing the practice of permanent makeup, in which makeup is tattooed on the face. While this is performed in many cultures, permanent makeup, or cosmetic tattooing, is a common practice in South Korea where it is seen not as extreme but as an act of convenience and natural enhancement (Lee, 2014; Park, 2012). Joyce's Korean American neighbor Sam describes the practice, saying, "It was like a party. [My mom] and my aunts all went together and got their eyebrows and eyeliner done" (p. 108). Joyce responds to Sam's nonchalance with shock and thinks to herself, "How many of these Korean women were walking around with permanent makeup on?" (p. 108). Later, Joyce's mother gets her eyebrows permanently filled in but has an allergic reaction to the tattoo ink, which blows her face up to monstrous proportions. Through Joyce's alarm and her mother's experience, Na intones dismay at society's growing desensitization to aesthetic modification practices and warns of the possibility of unexpected physical and emotional consequences when striving for an idealized standard of beauty.

Discussion

Considering the great pressure to conform to mainstream aesthetics, it is surprising that so little is said about its effects on children, particularly teenagers. That they are bombarded with societal messages about how to look is understood, but the racialized efforts to be prettier or more masculine and the implicit and explicit stereotyping that occurs are areas that deserve more research. *The Fold* bravely draws attention to this phenomenon, which merits more direct discussion, especially among teens. The novel identifies existing power constructions and details how characters work to submit or conform to these societal expectations. In doing so, Na demonstrates how marginalized structures or minorities (e.g., culture, gender, sexual orientation) may be impacted by dominances and how these subgroups can empower themselves by rejecting dominant or "normative" ideals. This is demonstrated in the novel's multifaceted view of cosmetic surgery and balanced portrayal of viewpoints. Helen's advice to Joyce is:

> It's hard to feel all right about yourself when everything around you is saying that you have to look a certain way, act and love a certain way. Or buy this product or take this pill and it will make you better. Make you happy. It's all bull . . . what is beautiful now won't be later. Everything is always changing. You have to know what is true to you. (Na, 2008, p. 230)

Though Joyce ultimately makes the decision to forego the surgery and embrace her natural eyes, Helen's warning is pertinent to teenagers, whose identities are still in the process of developing qualities,

beliefs, and values provided by their ethnic cultures, as well as the mainstream. Without cultural identification and education, individual standards of beauty cannot help but be unduly influenced by dominant perspectives (Hunter, 2011). Harris (1999) observed that:

> While children might manifest prevailing cultural attitudes quite early, they lack the critical thinking skills and experience to understand the factors that institutionalize preferences for one set of physical characteristics rather than a variety. They only know that outsider status is hurtful. (p. 153)

The characters in *The Fold* understand this all too well, as do many of the teenagers in our classrooms, schools, and neighborhoods; while they may not be able to identify how Whiteness pervades their lives and their literature, they feel disempowered from being outside it.

Combatting the ethnocentric messages that young people receive requires a vast movement of knowledge, stereotype resistance, and empowerment. Demby (2014b) observed that stereotypes, rather than being simple reflections of how one sees the world, actually tend to shape what one sees in a self-reinforcing manner, manifesting in a progression that moves from observing patterns to setting rules to making self-reflexive explanations. To counter this, it is necessary to examine and reexamine stereotypes and cultural perspectives. This is especially relevant in schools, where the lunchroom continues to be divided along ethnic lines and where formative school experiences, such as the college application process, homecoming, and extracurricular activities, are influenced by majority or minority status. Educators have a unique opportunity and responsibility to confront these complex and difficult perspectives and histories with their students. But how can this be done when so much evidence points to systemic conflict and social complexity?

Educators will find a partial answer in Na's narrative. The author suggests that one person's willingness to pursue questions of ethnic identity and acculturation is a step in the right direction. Joyce listens carefully to the multitude of opinions given by her trusted friends and family members about whether to have eyelid surgery. Their perspectives reflect a wide spectrum of thought and allow Joyce's decision to ultimately come from informed and reflective contemplation. Admirably, Na does not provide judgment on the issue, and the reader is left to wonder what Joyce's decision will be until the end of the book. In a similar fashion, educators can best serve their students by recognizing their unique identities, validating their cultures, and respecting their decisions regarding beauty and culture. It is critical for educators to learn about different cultural aesthetics and ideals in order to validate individual narratives.

The valuation that teenagers put on appearance and status should be acknowledged and taken seriously. Oftentimes, the insecurities and obsessions that crop up in daily life significantly reflect their evolving conceptions of identity and power, both in personal relationships and societal contexts. It is through the recognition and discussion of this dialectic that educators can provide support and encouragement. Literature acts as one of the best gateways to these potentially challenging discussions. Giving students access to a variety of rich historical and cultural resources is important, as is providing space and opportunity for them to work out conflicts between heritage and mainstream cultures. Pointing out the standards of beauty that are upheld in dominant stories and opening up conversations about them can be a way to explore the culture-gender-image nexus while awaiting more multicultural representations of beauty within young adult literature. Ultimately, looking for literature that focuses less, or not at all, on outward beauty can help educators bring to light qualities of stronger significance to teens: respect and self-worth.

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S. d. **Collins**

Writing the Past to Right the Future:
The Cure for Dreaming

This article is also available in an online format that allows direct access to all links included. We encourage you to access it on the ALAN website at http://www.alan-ya.org/page/the-alan-review-columns.

I promise you, my family is not a rascally bunch of pyromaniacs; however, we do enjoy the bonfires we regularly build in our outdoor fire pit. Sometimes we use a fire to bake potatoes, roast ears of corn, or melt marshmallows for s'mores. Other times we use a fire to warm ourselves when the evening's breezes stir the flames as they dance about the wood.

Our absolutely favorite part of bonfires, though, is to simply stare into the glowing embers as we sit beneath a million acres of stars. For us, that is the moment when fire becomes more than utilitarian—that is the moment when fire becomes magical. From us, the grownups, to our soon-to-be-adult teens to our middle school adolescents, all of us are stripped of our sense of time and obligations, our minds relax, and we enter a realm of speaking and listening that doesn't seem to occur at any other time or place during our regular routines.

It was during one of these recent fire conversations that my high school senior son, Craig, began lamenting how there exists so little honesty in his world. He listens to friends rave about each other's outfit or hair or (insert latest must-have gadget) only to hear them separately ridicule each other.

Craig's conversation then turned to his teachers. He explained how the faculty solicited recommendations from the students on themes for the senior prom. Once several themes were identified, the senior student body voted on the one they preferred. Unfortunately, to many of the students' surprise, not only were they not able to vote on many of the themes they thought would be on the ballot, but the theme that won did not seem to be anyone's favorite. Eventually, Craig overheard a comment from a crass, ready-to-retire history teacher that confirmed what he and his classmates suspected already: the administration and faculty never intended for the students to have a say in their senior prom because they could presumably never be trusted to make a "good" decision. The entire democratic process was a sham put in place to placate the students.

Such reality is harsh, especially when embedded so deeply in false hope. On the other hand, isn't that the case with many situations in our lives?

With this issue of *The ALAN Review* focusing on the theme, "Remembering and (Re)living: Probing the Collective and Individual Past," I sought a book that explores an issue of the past that was once considered a false hope but that was ultimately rectified. I sought a book that deals with injustices such as the one Craig experienced—situations in which people were marginalized and patronized—but I wanted, again, an injustice that was put right.

Our anchor text for this issue is *The Cure for Dreaming* (2014) by Cat Winters. This book is equal parts historical fiction, fantastical, mystical, (dare I say it) educational, and wholly entertaining. The core of Winters's story focuses on inequities women experienced during the early 1800s, specifically their inability to participate in the democratic process and the right to vote. Still, *The Cure for Dreaming* is so much

more, as it is sprinkled with other societal inequities that many people experience in our modern world, tyrannies that convolute reality and hope—tyrannies that history demonstrates can be overcome.

As Shel Silverstein invited his readers in his poem "Invitation" (1974), "come sit by my fire." There, let's discuss how *The Cure for Dreaming* can be used in our classroom communities to help us consider the adolescent experience and reinforce our shared existence as members of the human community.

About the Book

The Characters and Plot Synopsis

Olivia Mead is a strong-willed, independent young woman on the verge of transitioning from a high school student to an adult. She dreams of going to college, becoming a journalist, and participating in the electoral process. Unfortunately, the year is 1900 in Portland, Oregon, where females are expected to be submissive and obedient to the men around them. Olivia's father, who doesn't want her following the whimsical ways of her absent mother, recruits Henri Reverie, a stage hypnotist, to use his mesmerizing powers to purge the rebelliousness from his daughter.

Instead, the mysterious and handsome Henri gives Olivia the horrifying ability to see the world as it truly is and people as they truly are, whether they are vile demonic creatures or innocents surrounded by a soft glow of light. What's more, Henri makes it impossible for Olivia to give voice to her true thoughts, limiting her to the expression "All is well" at the times when she is angry.

Olivia's supernatural condition serves only to make her more determined to become a "responsible woman" and speak her mind. What follows is a mesmerizing tale of Olivia's precarious relationship with the mysterious hypnotist, who seems to be hiding his own secrets, and her surreptitious fight for the rights of women.

The Author

Cat Winters knew early in her life that she was to be a writer. She explains, "I've wanted to be a writer ever since I could first string letters together to make words. I can't remember a time when I wasn't writing or inventing stories in my head" (Lyons, 2014). Still, the road to publication was long. Winters began writing for publication once she graduated from college. It wasn't until after she turned 40 that her first manuscript was accepted (Sarson, 2014).

Perhaps it was growing up in the shadows of Southern California's Disneyland that cultivated Winters's fondness of haunted mansions, fascination with fantasy worlds, and nostalgia for the past. Both her books, *In the Shadows of Blackbirds* (2013) and *The Cure for Dreaming* (2014), are built on a foundation of historical fact then layered with fantastic accounts of ghosts or monsters; however, the fantasy elements of her stories always occur within the realm of subjective human experience, which make them even more eerie.

Cat Winters resides in Portland, Oregon, with her husband, Adam, and their children. Every Thursday morning, Winters gathers with up to four other authors at a local coffee shop to write or research or generally discuss each other's writing projects (Winters, 2014, July 18).

Using the Book in the Classroom

Interdisciplinary Connections

Cat Winters weaves her stories with various and sundry entwined threads of interdisciplinary connections. In *The Cure for Dreaming*, Winters begins with the women's suffrage movement and includes other unexpected, yet fascinating, topics. Explore the resources below to connect some of Winters's topics to various content areas.

Women's Suffrage Movement

"Reforming Their World: Women in the Progressive Era" (The National Women's History Museum): https://www.nwhm.org/online-exhibits/progressive era/suffrage.html

"The Fight for Women's Suffrage" (The History Channel):
http://www.history.com/topics/womens-history/the-fight-for-womens-suffrage

"Battle for Suffrage" (PBS: The American Experience):
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/general-article/eleanor-suffrage/

Hypnosis
"From Magic Power to Everyday Trance" (History of Hypnosis):
http://www.historyofhypnosis.org/

"What Is Stage Hypnosis?" (Learn Stage Hypnosis):
http://www.learnstagehypnosis.com/

Dentistry
"Dentistry" (Encyclopedia Britannica):
http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/158069/dentistry

"History of Dentistry" (IncisorsandMolars.com):
http://www.incisorsandmolars.com/history-of-dentistry.html

"A Pictorial History of Dentistry" (DentalAssistant.Net):
http://www.dentalassistant.net/pictorial-history/

America in the 1900s
"Progressive Era to New Era, 1900–1929" (The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History):
http://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/progressive-era-new-era-1900-1929

"America at the Turn of the Century: A look at the Historical Context" (Library of Congress):
http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/papr/sfamcen.html

"Inventions: 1900 to 1990" (History Learning Site):
http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/inventions_1900_to_1990.htm

Prereading Activities

Teachers generally use prereading activities to provide their learners with specific information about a text they are going to read. Prereading activities are a way to "front-load" factual information. For *The Cure for Dreaming*, I would like to repurpose the prereading activities to focus more on Cat Winters's writing craft—and inspire students to engage with writing as authors themselves. Winters uses her writing to entertain as well as take on weighty cultural issues. Flannery O'Connor (1952) wrote, "If you don't hunt it down and kill it, it'll hunt you down and kill you" (p. 85). In other words, writing is a way of reflecting as well as a way of exploring—a way to take on the world before the world has the chance to swallow us.

Listed below are two writing strategies designed to help teachers and students reflect and explore as they begin their own stories.

Remembering and Reliving Our Lives: Constructing Memory Maps

As I mentioned in a previous column, a writer's home area can have a tremendous impact on his or her writing (Collins, 2014). In a television interview with *Oregon Art Beat,* Cat Winters explains, "I really do like writing about the area where I live. The longer I live here, the more history I see and the more fascinated I am with what's around me" (Sarson, 2014).

Place was such an important aspect of poet William Stafford's writing that he developed a strategy he called "memory mapping" to help him develop a bevy of writing topics tied to specific locations of his everyday life (Stafford, Merchant, & Wixon, 2003). To prepare students for discussions regarding the importance of setting and place as they read *The Cure for Dreaming,* invite them to think about their own experiences and memories related to specific locations in their lives.

Begin by asking students to think of places that are incredibly special to them for whatever reason. These places may center on their houses when they were young, a clearing beside a creek, a park, their neighborhoods, their bedrooms. Invite students to close their eyes and see as clearly as they can the places that come to their minds.

Next, have students begin sketching a map of one special location. Critical to this process is that everyone understands that the map is not intended to be a beautiful piece of art. Although the pictures should contain enough detail to begin pulling out memories, using rudimentary symbols or rough shapes is enough to get the memories churning. Coax students to pay attention to the memories that begin surfacing while sketching their rooms or houses or farms or neighborhoods. Begin with only a word or two, but label these memories on their maps.

As I work with students on this strategy, I model the process by sketching and "thinking aloud" about my own memories that are meaningful to me. I try to make each memory as personal, specific, interesting, and natural as possible. This is no time for posturing

or insincerity—students must see that what I write comes from the core of who I am. I narrate the story behind each topic in as much detail as possible while attempting to be concise.

Once the students have placed a few memories on their maps, invite them to share with the person beside them. Each writer/listener should pay attention to the details that surface during the sharing. These details are the nuggets that will develop into full-fledged topics to get them going later as writers. Lucy Calkins (1994) writes of how Malcolm Cowley refers to such details as "precious particles" from which the students will be able to grow meaning and pieces of writing.

Once everyone has had an opportunity to share, go back to thinking and writing as individuals. Everyone should take the event/experience about which they just shared and write down as many key words and details noted from the conversation as they can. Capturing these words now allows students to more easily begin a longer, sustained piece of writing later. For our purposes here, the focus is on the power that specific places have on our memories, our imaginations, and our writing.

Facing the Music: Freewriting Your Way into a Story

In an interview with the bloggers of *The Corsets, Cutlasses, & Candlesticks*, Cat Winters describes the genesis of what would become her second book, *The Cure for Dreaming*. Winters explains, "At the time, I was listening to Kristen Lawrence's eerie and dreamlike Halloween music (see HalloweenCarols.com), which put me in the mood to write something theatrical and Victorian, with a dash of horror" (Long, 2014).

Next, Winters simply began freewriting—an exercise that writers use to warm-up their minds and to get ideas and language flowing (Elbow, 1998). Although many writers use freewriting as a strategy to overcome being stuck, freewriting is the perfect tool to generate topics and ideas for extended pieces of writing. The ultimate goal of freewriting is to help writers grow in the long run rather than produce good writing in the short run. When combining freewriting with a variety of media (specifically, pictures and music), teachers expand writers' possibilities by appealing to several different learning styles and preferences of the individual or the class.

Begin this exercise by collecting samples of music you wish to present to your learners. Three to five diverse tunes will be adequate. Explain to students that they will listen to various styles of music and write down whatever comes to their minds without worrying about what shows up on the page. An example of a five-song compilation created by a local National Writing Project site (the Upper Cumberland Writing Project in Tennessee) using iMovie and Garage Band can be accessed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=luVlGkBKSnE.

Play the first segment of music. Ideally, allow the writers 20–30 seconds to listen and soak in the feel of the music before asking them to write. Then, with the music continuing to play in the background, have everyone write continuously and quickly (without rushing) for the next minute and a half. Repeat this process of listening and freewriting with three to five different pieces of music for a maximum of 10 minutes.

It's worth mentioning that the goal is for students to constantly be writing whatever comes to mind until the next song is presented. Elbow explains, "Never stop to look back, to cross something out, to wonder how to spell something, to wonder what word or thought to use, or to think about what you are doing" (1998, p. 94). Should the writer run into a dead end or draw a blank, she/he should simply keep writing the same word or phrase over and over again until something else comes to mind.

Once the writers have had a chance to write in response to each segment of music, ask everyone to read through what they have written independently. (Allow approximately five minutes.) As they read, encourage writers to pay attention to their words. Although there is not a specific set of questions they should ask themselves, they might ponder the following:

Which of my words are surprising to me?

Is there a "voice" that comes out in any of the writing that interests me?

Are there any potential characters or stories or poems hiding in the words?

Does any of the writing remind me of another author or book?

Is there an idea that emerges more than once despite the changes in pictures/music?

As the writers read through and think about their writing, encourage them to circle or underline the words/ideas that interest them, as well as jot down in the margin any further thoughts they have that might be useful for future writing projects.

Finally, direct each writer to partner with another writer to share the specific words/ideas/thoughts that are emerging. (Again, allow around five minutes for this process.) By the end of the session, the writers should have at least one idea that they can take to a longer, more focused piece . . . just as Cat Winters did with *The Cure for Dreaming*.

Group Discussion Questions

Try some of the following discussion-starters with your students.

- Cat Winters opens *The Cure for Dreaming* with the following paragraph:

  Portland, Oregon—October 31, 1900

  The Metropolitan Theater simmered with the heat of more than a thousand bodies packed together in red velvet chairs. My nose itched from the lingering scent of cigarette smoke wafting off the gentlemen's coats—a burning odor that added to the sensation that we were all seated inside a beautiful oven, waiting to be broiled. Even the cloud of warring perfumes hanging over the audience smelled overcooked, like toast gone crisp and black. (p. 1)

How many details about the setting is the reader able to discern? What mood is author Cat Winters establishing? Judging from the opening scene, what projections might the reader have regarding the type of story the author has created?

- During a performance by the mysterious mesmerist, Monsieur Henri Reverie, 17-year-old Olivia Mead agrees to volunteer to allow Reverie to hypnotize her. Henri asks the audience, "Is this raven-haired beauty known for her brute strength? . . . Would you like to see this delicate young feather of a girl become as strong and rigid as a wooden plank?" (p. 11)

What do the juxtapositions of "beauty"/"brute" and "delicate young feather"/"strong and rigid as a wooden plank" suggest about the complexity of Olivia's personality? As students read further, what additional details reinforce the paradoxical nature of Olivia's character?

- In a letter to the *Oregonian* newspaper, the father of Olivia's initial love interest writes what was, at the time, a well-reasoned argument as to why women should be silenced (pp. 85–86). What are at least two of the rhetorical devices Judge Acklen employs to coerce his readers?

- In response to Judge Acklen's letter, Olivia anonymously pens an incendiary rebuttal in which she not only repudiates each of the Judge's points as to why women should not be in politics, she goes even further and makes the case as to why a woman "would probably make a far better president than the pampered male you gentlemen vote into office this Tuesday" (p. 88).

  After thoughtfully considering several signatures that would simultaneously conceal her identity and emphatically conclude her letter, Olivia chooses the inscription, "—A Responsible Woman" (p. 89). What is another word that might replace "responsible" in Olivia's signature without changing her intended meaning (connotation and tone)?

- Once Henri Reverie hypnotizes Olivia and allows her to "see the world the way it truly is" (p. 64), Olivia has monstrous visions of her father. The first time Olivia sees her father she describes, "The brute's red eyes gleamed . . . and his skin went deathly pale and thin enough to reveal the jutting curves of the facial skeleton beneath his flesh" (p. 66). Later, when explaining her father's head, Olivia remarks, "His ears turned as pale and pointed as the Count's in Dracula . . . horrifying flaps sticking out from the sides of his pasty-gray head with its fierce and bulging red eyes" (p. 92).

  Once Olivia confronts her father and stands up for her rights as both a woman and a human, her father becomes silent and Olivia sees him as never before: "All I saw was an eight-year-old boy in a long evening coat and an oversized silk hat. He backed toward the hospital's front entrance in shoes too big for his feet, his lips sputtering to find something more to say" (p. 321).

  What is the significance of the change in Olivia's visions of her father? What insight into Olivia's father's character does the author provide for her readers?

- Read Charlotte Perkins Gilman's poem "Locked Inside" (1911):

  She beats upon her bolted door,
  With faint weak hands;

Drearily walks the narrow floor;
Sullenly sits, blank walls before;
Despairing stands.
Life calls her, Duty, Pleasure, Gain–
Her dreams respond;
But the blank daylights wax and wane,
Dull peace, sharp agony, slow pain–
No hope beyond.
Till she comes a thought! She lifts her head,
The world grows wide!
A voice–as if clear words were said–
"Your door, O long imprisonéd,
Is locked inside!" (1911, pp. 3–4)

How does the theme of Gilman's "Locked Inside" correspond to at least one of the themes in *The Cure for Dreaming*? What are the nuanced differences between the female's life experience in Gilman's poem and Olivia Mead's life experience?

Post-Reading Activities

The purpose of post-reading activities is to help readers solidify their comprehension of a text, as well as extend their understanding by applying their comprehension to other thinking and communicative tasks. Consider the strategies below to help students go deeper with *The Cure for Dreaming*.

A Novel by Any Other Name

Cat Winters started off calling her book *The Mesmerist*, but as she explained in an interview, "The [final title] came to me in the middle of one of my title-creating brainstorming sessions. I realized the main issue in the book is that a man is trying to cure his daughter of her 'unladylike' dreams of voting and receiving a higher education, and it hit me: why not call the novel *The Cure for Dreaming*?" (Long, 2014).

Create a list of possible alternate titles for the novel. Do the titles capture any of the book's themes? Are the titles intriguing and able to catch a prospective reader's attention? Are there any cultural allusions that could be used as one of the titles?

In My Humble Opinion . . .

School systems across the nation are listing the ability to write argument/opinion pieces as one of their central standards. One of the major junctures in *The Cure for Dreaming*, a point where the plot's conflict is ratcheted up, is when Olivia writes her "A Responsible Woman" opinion piece that was printed in the *Oregonian* (pp. 87–88).

Take another look at Olivia's opinion piece and notice the steps she takes as a writer, namely how she:

- clearly states her opinion in the beginning,
- sufficiently supports her position throughout the piece,
- strategically considers her opponents' counterarguments,
- assertively restates her position to neutralize the counterarguments,
- ends with a summative and thought-provoking signature.

Using the same general framework that Olivia used to draft her opinion piece, find a topic about which you are passionate and write an opinion piece. In order to make your writing authentic and purposeful, write the piece with the intention of submitting it to your local newspaper as a "Letter to the Editor."

Whoa-oh-Whoa, Listen to the Music

As mentioned earlier in the column, *The Cure for Dreaming* was inspired by Cat Winters listening to "eerie and dreamlike music," music that put her in the "mood to write something theatrical and Victorian, with a dash of horror" (Long, 2014). Silas House, whose writing credits include two novels for adolescents, *Eli the Good* (2009) and *Same Sun Here* (with Vaswani, 2013), sometimes creates a play list that he listens to throughout his process of writing a book. House explains, "Music is a big part of my life. I can't imagine not using it in some way in my fiction. Music inspires me, and it informs my writing. I feel so much when I'm listening to music, and I just want to convey some of those same emotions in my writing" (McMahan, 2003, p. 103).

Below are pieces of music that Cat Winters works into *The Cure for Dreaming*'s story:

Camille Saint-Saëns's "Danse Macabre" (pp. 5, 184)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YyknBTm_YyM

Stephen Foster's "Beautiful Dreamer" (pp. 8, 238, 262)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=onaSQp_35qs

Engelbert Humperdinck's "Evening Prayer" from the opera "Hansel and Gretel" (pp. 17, 98, 205) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4_Pj1ixJBWM

Arthur J. Lamb and Harry Von Tilzer's "Bird in a Gilded Cage" (p. 226) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gEUmc5Uuwy8

Various Romantic Piano Music from 1900 (p. 267) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KpOtuoHL45Y&list=PL0CC24A1A592B4ADC

Reread sections of *The Cure for Dreaming* while playing the accompanying songs in the background. How does the reading experience change? How is your experience of the story world affected?

Find other passages in *The Cure for Dreaming* and create playlists that match the tone or mood or action of the scene.

Who Has the Power?

At the heart of *The Cure for Dreaming* is the question of who is in control of whom. The most obvious struggle is between women and the men who seek to keep them docile and silent. There are also several examples of women seeking to exert their influence on the behavior of other women, a hypnotist who controls Olivia's behavior through memorization, and a disease controlling the life of a young person.

In their book, *Uncommon Core* (2014), authors Michael Smith, Deborah Appleman, and Jeff Wilhelm provide a plethora of strategies, lesson ideas, and activities to help teachers meet the real intent of the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010) without succumbing to the dangerous misunderstandings being developed around so-called "standards-aligned" instruction. An especially powerful activity, "Who Has the Power," comes from their unit for teaching "Letter from a Birmingham Jail."

Access Smith, Appleman, and Wilhelm's worksheet on "Who Has the Power" by visiting this URL: http://www.corwin.com/uncommoncore/materials/Figure_7.2.pdf. Next, determine which group or individual in each pairing you believe possesses the greater capability to bring about authentic change. With what evidence are you able to justify your decisions?

Words, HUH, yeah/What are they good for?

One of my all-time favorite books, *Writers on Writing* (Winokur, 1990), is a collection of quotations about the art of writing. In his introduction, Winokur explains, "[Quotations] confirm the astuteness of my perceptions, they open the way to ideas, and they console me with the knowledge that I'm not alone" (p. 1).

Laced throughout Cat Winters's book are quotations connected to the struggles women encountered simply to gain the right to vote in political elections. Some of the quotations elevate women, while others demean their status. All of the quotations, however, expose us to the prevalent ideas of the 1900s.

Choose a quotation that stands out to you, regardless of whether the words are consoling or agitating. Take notice of the emotions and/or thoughts the quotation conjures inside of you. Are there any agreeable words (AMEN!) or disparaging slurs (F*#% YOU!) that come to mind? If so, harness the energy and begin to freewrite a response to the quotation. The freewrite can serve as the jumping off point to a longer, more refined piece later, but it's essential to capture the energy of the piece early on in the writing process. Using a writer's notebook (or other artifact), begin assembling your own list of quotations that serve as powerful talismans.

Additional Resources

There are infinite ways to invite students to imagine, explore, and create stories or academic essays based on insights gained from books such as *The Cure for Dreaming*. Below are a few more resources to help deepen your own and students' knowledge of author Cat Winters and the world of which she often writes.

Official Cat Winters Website
http://www.catwinters.com/

Cat Winters on Twitter
@catwinters

Cat Winters on Facebook
http://facebook.com/catwintersbooks

The Oregon Historical Society
http://www.ohs.org/

Social Justice Organizations (Extensive List)
http://www.startguide.org/orgs/orgs06.html

S. d. Collins *serves as an associate professor of Graduate Education Programs at Lincoln Memorial University. He returns to higher education after a two-year sabbatical during which he returned to a middle school classroom to teach English and talk books with adolescents, colleagues, and parents. S.d.'s writings have appeared in* English Journal, Language Arts, The ALAN Review, *and the* Handbook of Research on Teaching Literacy. *You are welcome to contact him at sd_cllns@charter.net.*

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Right to Read

Ebony Elizabeth **Thomas** and

Debbie **Reese,** with Teri S. **Lesesne**

(Re)envisioning and (Re)reading:

Examining Problematic Texts

This article is also available in an online format that allows direct access to all links included. We encourage you to access it on the ALAN website at http://www.alan-ya.org/page/the-alan-review-columns.

When I entered the classroom in the late 1970s, the only text I was prepared to teach was *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain (1885/2014). I was teaching in a largely African American community. I felt ill at ease sharing this text with my students. I know I was not alone in this. Often teachers wrestle with texts, especially canonical texts, that contain problematic content. So for this issue about Remembering and (Re)living, I turned to two educators who have written widely about problematic texts in light of contemporary culture.

Ebony Elizabeth Thomas (@ebonyteach) and Debbie Reese (@dbreese) graciously agreed to answer the questions I posed about how to approach classic texts and to offer resources for locating alternative texts and/or texts with more diversity. How I would love to have them both in the same room for an extended conversation! I encourage you to follow them on Twitter so that you can continue this conversation about a critical issue.

What do you feel is the best way for teachers to approach classic texts that include problematic language or use cultural references that are racist?

Ebony: One of the most commonly used texts in the high school curriculum, Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960/2010), is rightfully praised for its enduring critique of racial segregation in the United States. However, if we are to retain the novel's significance for future generations, it is essential that we connect our students' contemporary experiences in today's world to the long-ago world of young Scout Finch and Maycomb, Alabama. Before we pass out copies of *Mockingbird* (or any other novel about race), I propose that every teacher ask himself or herself three key questions:

1. *What kind of students do I have?* Students' positioning and location within their schools, communities, and the larger society must be taken into account when exploring themes within novels that are complex and controversial. What are students' individual and group interests and aspirations? What is the demographic makeup of the group? Does the classroom dynamic emphasize competition, community, or both?

I've taught this novel in two very different high school settings. The first was in a magnet high school in one of the nation's largest cities. More than 90% of the seniors at this school matriculated at a four-year college or university upon graduation. Students were highly motivated, expected to do well, and for the most part encouraged each other to achieve. The students were also racially, culturally, and religiously homogeneous, with more than 95% hailing from working and middle class African American homes. The rest of the students were of Mexican, Palestinian, Hmong, and Ban-

gladeshi descent. This was a school where most students were bidialectal and/or bilingual, and teachers and students for the most part engaged in a classroom dialectical dance that was replete with Standard English, AAVE, local catch phrases and references, African American rhetoric, and more. I taught ninth graders in this district for five years. I was a graduate of another magnet high school that was much like the one where I taught. That cultural familiarity helped me figure out how to position the text for student engagement and understanding.

The second school where I taught *To Kill a Mockingbird* was very different. It was a neighborhood high school in a university town with a very heterogeneous population and no racial or ethnic group as the majority of the student body. Students' socioeconomic backgrounds ranged from upper middle class to the working poor, and reading and writing abilities were present across the range.

It is important to perform this type of analysis of context before attempting to teach any classic literature, let alone literature about race. The ninth-grade students who were reading this novel at my second school were born in the 1990s. Today's ninth graders were born *after* 9/11. Even in my majority African American classroom over a decade ago, in a city where students had a compelling interest in the themes treated within the novel, there was a need to aid them in imagining the relevance of this timeless text for their contemporary world.

2. *How can I contextualize/historicize* To Kill a Mockingbird *for my students?* The best way to do this is to scaffold the novel with multimedia resources about race relations. Since the novel is written from the point of view of a character who is privileged by race and class (though admittedly not by gender or age), I would typically begin the *Mockingbird* unit by screening the PBS *American Experience* documentary on the 1938 Scottsboro trial (Goodman & Anker, 2001), "Scottsboro: An American Tragedy" (http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/scottsboro/), or asking students to view it on their own. Students in both school settings were completely engaged with the story of the Scottsboro trial and were outraged by the outcome. The students at the more culturally diverse high school were even more appalled at the miscarriage of justice and could not believe that the two White women who gave false testimony about the Scottsboro boys were never punished. They did find a hero in Samuel Leibowitz, the attorney for the Scottsboro boys, which prepared them for meeting Atticus Finch. After the movie, students created response journals to Countee Cullen's moving poem, "Scottsboro, Too, Deserves Its Song" (1947, p. 160).

In the middle of the book, it was time for students to move forward in their study of racial segregation in the United States. At that point, we paused for a single class period to watch segments from the first episode of the award-winning PBS documentary *Eyes on the Prize* (Hampton et al., 2006). Again, student interest was high. We used deep viewing techniques that involve repeated viewing and analysis of multimodal texts (Pailliotet, A. W., Semali, L., Rodenberg, R. K., Giles, J. K., & Macaul, S. L., 2000), and students did an excellent job of relating the real-life events of the mid-1950s (including the Emmett Till trial) to Tom Robinson's fictional trial.

After we finished reading the book, I tried to bring in one of my favorite *California Newsreel* documentaries, the late Marlon Riggs's *Ethnic Notions,* but my comfort level as a first-year teacher in a district with very few teachers of color made me abandon deep viewing of the video after a single class period. However, as a culminating project, I asked students to conduct Internet research on a topic related to the novel that they wanted to know more about. Today, with the proliferation of social media networking sites and multimedia software, I would invite students to create a multimodal project for the unit. I would also have students read Ta-Nehisi Coates's 2014 feature in *The Atlantic,* "The Case for Reparations," which brings the history of racial segregation from the South to the North, which is important for understanding the scope of historical and contemporary discrimination. This bridges to a final question.

3. *How can I illustrate the contemporary relevance of To* Kill a Mockingbird *for my students?* W.E.B. DuBois (1903/2007) famously stated that the problem of the twentieth century would be the problem of the color line. In the middle of the second decade of the twenty-first century, racial/ethnic relations continue to be at the forefront of

local, national, and world news. These events should absolutely be brought into the classroom! For instance, while teaching *To Kill a Mockingbird* in the autumn of 2005, the following major events occurred:

- The devastation left in the wake of Hurricane Katrina opened up yet another round of discourse about race and poverty in America. Adolescents were acutely aware of these conversations, which extended into popular culture (hip-hop icon Kanye West's charge that former President Bush didn't like Black people, etc.).
- An initiative that ended racial affirmative action within the state [Michigan] was approved by voters that November.
- Rosa Parks, the "mother of the Civil Rights Movement" and trigger for the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955, passed away. Her funeral was televised all day on our metropolitan stations [Michigan]. Students talked about it at school the next day.

Debbie: One evening when my daughter Liz was in third grade, she said, "Mom, I don't get it." I looked at her, sitting on the bed, reading. I noted that she had *Caddie Woodlawn* (Brink, 1935) in her hand. Realizing she was reading a problematic text, I asked, "What don't you get?" She started telling me about the scalping and fear of Indian massacres. Calmly, I asked to see the book and told her we'd talk to her teacher about it. Later that night, I asked Janice, a friend knowledgeable in children's literature, for help. I'd been calm with Liz, but inside I was seething and needed help putting my upset into words that would be productive. Janice was dismayed that Liz's teacher had assigned such an old book. She suggested that old books like that be used in a specific way. One group reads one chapter, another group reads another, and so on. In each chapter, children should read critically, noting biased portrayals of Native peoples. I like Janice's suggestion. Part of what she said is that reading a book cover-to-cover invites readers to identify with the characters, location, etc. Once you've embraced the story or characters, it is difficult to be critical from within that embrace.

Many people have written to me, saying that when they're reading *Little House on the Prairie* (Wilder, 1953) to their child (this is usually a parent), they pause to tell their child what is wrong with the depictions or the attitudes of characters in the book. That might work in that setting, but what to do in a classroom of children when you have one or two who are Native? I invite people to walk through this in their own minds. Here's what I see. The teacher is reading aloud from *Little House on the Prairie* and comes to that part where she'll read, "The only good Indian is a dead Indian." What will the teacher do? Walk over to the child and say, "She's not talking about you, dear?" Intellectually, we might think we've done well, but what about the emotional costs to this child? What is going on in that student's head and heart? Might there be some dissonance? Someone he/she likely trusts and respects has just read out loud a horrible sentence. It'll happen three more times. When read-aloud time is over, everyone will set the book aside and do other work, perhaps a spelling test. But consider, how might a Native child perform on that spelling test, having just heard that "the only good Indian is a dead Indian?"

Studies show that Native students drop out at alarming rates (Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2014; Fryberg, Markus, Oyserman, & Stone, 2008). Scholars posit that the dropout rates are due, in part, to Native students' lack of engagement because the curriculum does not reflect their cultures with accuracy or integrity. Thoughtful analysis of our history of racism and bias must be taught in schools, but unless careful thought goes into how literature is used to accomplish that, I think more harm is done to those very demographics that struggle in our schools.

Can you suggest resources for teachers who seek alternative texts or additional texts?

Ebony: We need more than just books about historical and contemporary racism. Many of the images of Black children and teens in youth literature show them in trouble or suffering. I expressed concerns about the positioning of Black child characters and other characters of color in a recent American

Library Association publication aimed at diversifying librarians' and classroom teachers' criteria for text selection:

> Stories of oppression and inequality are important ones that must be told and retold. Nevertheless, those of us tasked with presenting these texts to young people would do well to consider the impressions of African American children and youth they might be left with if the majority of the Black American characters they encounter are enslaved, suffering under Jim Crow, living under duress during the Civil Rights Movement, and/or struggling to survive the nation's postmodern inner cities. If there are few (or zero) young African American detectives, doctors, crime fighters, superheroes, brave soldiers and knights, or princesses in our stories, what ideas about the humanity, the diversity within, and the inherent worth might young people from other cultures take away from their readings? What might Black kids and teens themselves come to believe about their inherent worth? How does this affect the development of young readers' imaginations, dreams, and aspirations? (Excerpted from Thomas, 2013).

In order to begin bridging this imagination gap, I launched my blog, "The Dark Fantastic," this summer (http://thedarkfantastic.blogspot.com/). This blog is intended to provide criticism and resources of race in the imaginative genres, primarily yet not exclusively focusing on literature, media, and digital cultures of youth and young adults. I also recommend *The Brown Bookshelf* (http://thebrownbookshelf.com), librarian Edi Campbell's *Crazy Quilts* (http://campbele.wordpress.com/), and author Zetta Elliott's *Fledgling* (http://www.zettaelliott.com/) for more resources.

Debbie: Last summer, the We Need Diverse Books campaign published a series in which they paired a well-known book like *Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909* (Markel, 2013) with a book that was similar in theme but that focused on a non-majority culture. It went like this: "If you liked *Brave Girl*, read *Fatty Legs* by Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton [2010] next because both are about young girls who stand up to grown-ups and refuse to cave to injustices." That summer reading series is a good place to expand our knowledge of titles that could be used in a Reader's Advisory session. Here's the link: http://weneeddiversebooks.tumblr.com/tagged/SummerReadingSeries.

My work is specific to Native peoples of the Americas. At my site, *American Indians in Children's Literature*, teachers will find my lists of recommended books, backed up with in-depth discussions of books I like and those I find problematic. Many people write to say that such critiques are especially useful at helping them see bias and error that usually go unnoticed or unremarked upon by reviewers in mainstream journals. My list of best books can be found here: http://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/p/best-books.html.

How can we, as educators, become more knowledgeable about teaching literature that accurately portrays other cultures?

Ebony: The best teachers, librarians, and youth mentors are constantly learning! Join the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents (ALAN) and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA), attend the conferences, and engage in social media. There are a ton of resources that can help, but we could always use more. We need more bloggers who review African American children's and young adult literature, as well as kids' and teen media.

Debbie: In 1965, Nancy Larrick called attention to the all-White world of children's books. That world included stereotypes and biased portrayals of Native people and people of color, but those portrayals are all around us today. Generally speaking, we were all socialized with the same television shows and movies, the same toys and games, and even the same products in the grocery store. Immersed in a world that so pervasively stereotypes "other," it can be difficult for anyone to see the stereotypes at all. That pervasiveness also makes it hard to step outside that space and look critically at what we believe we know about other cultures.

When multiculturalism took off a few decades ago, there was a rush to bring out stories about different cultures. The frameworks, however, were limited to material culture such as foods, clothing, and traditional stories. In that particular

framework, there is no space for Native peoples as sovereign nations. Our status as sovereign nations that engage in diplomatic negotiations with leaders of other nations is the single most important thing to know about us. Most people know there is a federal government in the United States, and that states have their own governments, as do cities and towns. Native government structures are not generally taught—but ought to be. I imagine people are taken aback when they are pulled over for speeding by tribal police on a reservation and have to pay a fine to a tribal court! Teachers can read more about sovereignty on my site at http://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/p/we-are-not-people-of-color.html.

The Internet gives teachers a way to become knowledgeable more readily than in the past. Teachers can visit websites of tribal nations and learn history from their perspectives. Lisa Mitten, former president of the American Indian Library Association, maintains a website of links that teachers can use: http://www.nativeculturelinks.com/nations.html. The Internet provides depth and breadth when researching other groups, as well. Of course, teachers must remember to approach their Internet research with a critical eye!

Ebony Elizabeth Thomas *is an assistant professor in the Division of Reading/Writing/Literacy at the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education. A former Detroit Public Schools teacher, Dr. Thomas's program of research is focused on children's and adolescent literature, the teaching of African American literature, and the role of race in classroom discourse and interaction. Dr. Thomas has published her research and critical scholarship in journals and edited volumes and is the coeditor of* Reading African American Experiences in the Obama Era: Theory, Advocacy, Activism *(Peter Lang, 2012). She is currently a 2014–2015 National Academy of Education/Spencer Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow.*

Debbie Reese *established* American Indians in Children's Literature *in 2006 to share her research with those who don't often have access to professional and academic journals. Dr. Reese is tribally enrolled at Nambe Pueblo, and her articles and book chapters are used in education, English, and library science courses in the US and Canada.*

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Layered Literacies

Susan L. **Groenke**
and Judson **Laughter**

Tech Tools for Reader Response, Communal Engagement, and Effective Writing

This article is also available in an online format that allows direct access to all links included. We encourage you to access it on the ALAN website at http://www.alan-ya.org/page/the-alan-review-columns.

Recently, Susan visited a middle school classroom with a well-stocked library of young adult novels, graphic novels, and other books—the kinds we know young people read when given opportunities to choose (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2012). Students were encouraged and expected to self-select books and read independently for the first 20 minutes of class. We know choice, access to high-interest/multilevel books, and time to read are factors that increase students' reading motivation and achievement (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004; Kittle, 2012), so Susan was happy to see these factors (and motivated readers!) at play.

But Susan grew disappointed at the end of the 20-minute reading time when she saw students heading to computers to take Accelerated Reader (AR) tests. When asked about her thoughts on AR, the teacher responded that the tests "prove the students are reading" and "assess their comprehension." The teacher further commented, "AR is helpful—how else will I know the kids are reading the books?"

We think there are more engaging, authentic, and respectful ways to know whether our students are reading the books, and computers can certainly assist in this process in ways that don't include test taking. In what follows, we introduce you to three guest columnists, all long-time teachers and teacher educators, who spend significant time looking for and testing out digital tools to help students engage deeply with—and write their own—texts. In the current data-driven context, we know accountability is important. The tech tools provided below can help teachers hold students accountable for reading and writing in ways that aren't test-based and don't feel competitive or punitive but rather authentic, personal, and meaningful.

First, English teacher educators Jennifer Shettel and Lesley Colabucci share 21st-century tools for enhancing student responses to reading. Then, Brooke Cunningham, a high school English teacher, describes tools she uses to facilitate communal learning around texts. Finally, Jennifer Kilpatrick, a doctoral candidate in deaf education, lists tools for effective writing instruction. We can't wait to try these tools and hope you'll be inspired to explore them, too!

(Re)Imagining Reader Response with 21st-Century Tools

Jennifer W. Shettel & Lesley Colabucci, Millersville University of Pennsylvania

With 21st-century classrooms come 21st-century challenges, such as increasing competition for students' attention with mobile devices, social media, and texting. As 21st-century teachers, we wonder: How can we harness technology while ensuring students have rich and rewarding reading lives? One solution we use is tech-based book responses. Using technology to facilitate reader response illuminates reading as both a critical and communal practice (Park, 2012).

While nothing can replace the dynamics of a rich book discussion, a variety of digital tools are available to help students capture their experiences as readers in new and innovative ways. In addition, digital tools may enable teachers to incorporate art and music more easily. The tools featured below are truly multimodal, allowing for a great deal of creativity and collaboration in the spirit of 21st-century learning. Here are our top digital tools for tech-based book responses:

Thinglink (https://www.thinglink.com)
This tool offers a way to tell stories using interactive components. Functioning somewhat like a bulletin board, Thinglink allows users to choose images and then "tag" them by uploading links. Viewers click on the images and follow related links. Videos are particularly easy to embed. Thinglink allows students to track interests and reflections as they read. Readers can find videos or articles with answers to enduring questions and then build in links to share their discoveries. This tool is similar to **Glogster** (http://edu.glogster.com/), which is fee-based.

The tools . . . are truly multimodal, allowing for a great deal of creativity and collaboration in the spirit of 21st-century learning.

Easelly (http://www.easel.ly)
Easelly allows those of us without a degree in graphic arts to create eye-catching infographics using thousands of free templates and tools. In order to create infographics related to the content of a book, readers do additional research or delve into their understanding of why and how the story unfolded. As a bonus, students become more skilled in reading, interpreting, and analyzing infographics when they have an opportunity to create their own.

Tagxedo (http://www.tagxedo.com)
Great for fans of **Wordle** (http://www.wordle.net), Tagxedo takes word clouds to a new level of awesome. Students can utilize the provided graphics to create a word picture (or upload their own image), and Tagxedo's word-generating software fills it in with the words the student types. These images are stunning in terms of composition and color effect. This tool lends itself particularly well to character studies with portraiture-style Tagxedos or theme studies with an appropriate symbol used to create the word cloud.

Padlet (http://padlet.com)
Padlet is an excellent tool for group collaboration. A teacher poses a question, and students use virtual sticky notes to respond on a group board. Students can also use Padlet individually to create a virtual "sticky note wall" in response to a book they have read. Images and Web links can be added to the wall, as well. This is a convenient way to track student thinking about a book.

Voki (http://www.voki.com)
With Voki, students create a "talking head" of a character, historical figure, animal, or avatar. Students are limited in the amount of text, so this is an excellent tool for teaching summarization skills. In addition, this tool could be used for booktalks or persuasive arguments in the voice of a character.

Fakebook (http://www.classtools.net/FB/home-page) and **iFakeText** (http://ifaketext.com)
Both of these tools make it possible for students to create "mock" versions of two favorite social media tools: Facebook and texting. Analysis takes on a new dimension when students create Fakebook pages that mirror what a character's Facebook page would look like. Understanding character motivation goes to a deeper level when students create dialogue between characters using texting language.

Google Drive (https://www.google.com/drive/)
The powerhouse of all collaborative Web tools, Google Drive has just about everything you could ask for. Consider using **Google Slides** to create a collaborative presentation or **Google Drawing** to work together on a concept map. Harness the power of Google's translation technology within a **Google Doc** by selecting *Tools* and then *Translate document*. Use **Google StoryBuilder** to have students converse about a book in real time and then capture the exchange.

Smore (https://www.smore.com/)
This tool for online flyers features sophisticated design elements. Geared toward advertising and promoting

an event, Smore flyers are visually appealing with easy access to the embedded components. Students can use Smore as a way of building background knowledge. For instance, while reading historical fiction, students can create flyers with embedded links to relevant information related to the time period. Part of the appeal of this tool is the ease of usability; videos, photos, and links are simply dragged into place with ease and with an end product that looks very professional.

Leveraging the "Know-How" of Tech-Savvy Students to Communally Engage with Texts

Brooke Cunningham, Hardin Valley Academy, Knoxville, Tennessee

Far too often, teachers see the incorporation of technology as, at best, a gimmick and, at worst, a concession to short attention spans. In truth, many of us are trying to compensate for an apparent flaw in the next generation as we grumble about their emoji-infused writing skills and obsession with instant gratification. We use technology in a desperate attempt to capture students' attention for a fleeting moment, hoping to somehow reverse the effects of 24/7 screen exposure. However, we will never be able to maintain student attention with a specific technology because the evolution process happens too quickly; my students no longer use Facebook, and Twitter is quickly being replaced by Instagram. Our objective as educators should instead be to leverage students' technology "know-how" to help them interact with texts in new and profound ways.

By understanding how technology functions on a cultural level, we will be able to sustain student engagement and develop lifelong readers. Perhaps most important to our endeavors as teachers is that millennials are interested in community, and technology can certainly be used to create and foster social, collaborative interactions around a text. This requires a skillful, intentional, and ever-evolving use of technology, but the rewards are well worth it. Below are several tools I use to engage my students in tech-supported communal learning around texts:

LibriVox (https://www.librivox.org)
LibriVox brings people together from around the world to create free audiobook podcasts of books in the public domain. Sometimes a reader volunteers to read an entire work, but more often, people from all over the world volunteer for different sections or chapters. Students are afforded a new way to interact with a text and also experience interacting and working with people from diverse places and backgrounds. Teachers can use this tool to have a class create its own audio version of a work to share with the world and publish in iTunes. It's a great way to connect interpretation, fluency, and an audience for reading.

Goodreads (https://www.goodreads.com)
Similar to LibriVox, an obvious choice to get students to interact in a community devoted to literature is Goodreads, a social media site centered on books. I ask students to use this site to keep track of the books they read independently, to set yearly reading goals, to analyze data on reading patterns, and to share this information with others. Students can post status updates on their progress through a book and even send and receive book recommendations. Goodreads also works a bit like Netflix for books, recommending titles one may like based on ratings and reviews, and users can get together to vote on or create searchable lists of books. Goodreads often hosts author Q & A sessions where students can interact with their favorite writers. This is a great opportunity to use technology to interact with a community around a book.

Our objective as educators should instead be to leverage students' technology "know-how" to help them interact with texts in new and profound ways.

Nerdfightaria (http://nerdfightaria.com)
The gold standard of an authentic learning and reading community is Nerdfightaria, the online community created by John and Hank Green. At this site, we can access the Green brothers' "Crash Course" series—YouTube videos providing introductions and overviews of popular school subjects and topics. I often use their videos on literary texts and US and World History because they provide entertaining, insightful, and informative introductions to historical periods or

literature. Users can ask questions, get answers, and engage in debate in the comments section provided for each video, offering an excellent way to show students the kind of engagement we want with texts and how that engagement can be something relevant far beyond the classroom. The Green brothers have created other places where students can find examples of active, social engagement with texts. Their **Vlogbrothers** channel often features conversations about John Green's own novels, and **Pemberley Digital**, a fictitious company, produces "documentaries" that are actually modern YouTube adaptations of classic works.

YouTube (https://www.youtube.com)
With Nerdfightaria as a model, it is easy to see how YouTube can be used as more than an example of how authentic learning communities interact with text; it can also serve as a tool to foster this same type of community in our own classrooms. Students can use YouTube to retell classic stories from various perspectives, creatively transforming the work into something new. Or students can use this format to tell their own stories, scripting out and planning a vlog or other YouTube format. We can take social engagement and interaction a step further when students interact with each other's videos or see outsiders interact and react to their videos. Their schoolwork is no longer something shared only with the teacher; it is now something they publish and share with the world.

The affordances provided by digital tools can influence both *what* and *why* students write.

Edmodo (https://www.edmodo.com)
What if teachers and students are not comfortable sharing their work with the world? There are different sites with various levels of privacy in which we can have our students interact. There are many blogging sites where students can respond to one another; Edmodo is one that is safe for creating an isolated learning community with whatever content one has in mind (video, text, links, images). The simplest way to describe Edmodo is "Facebook for school." This site allows teachers to create a class page that students can join using a code. Students have individual profiles but cannot interact except within the class page. This creates a safe environment for students to have discussions about a text or even each other's work.

Using Technology to Support Effective Writing Instruction in the ELA Classroom

Jennifer Kilpatrick, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Technology has become an integral part of community and personal literacies (Kist, 2009; Leu & Kinzer, 2000), but the use of technology during writing instruction is still limited and infrequent (Applebee & Langer, 2011; Harris, 2011). Integrating digital tools into the ELA classroom has the potential to support effective writing instruction by bridging the gap between home and school writing practices, influencing the development of ideas, and providing authentic purposes and audiences. The affordances provided by digital tools can influence both *what* and *why* students write. The apps described below could be used at various stages of the writing process during guided, shared, and independent writing with all students:

Evernote (https://www.evernote.com)
Evernote is a collaborative digital workspace where users can compile notes, ideas, images, and tasks. By using several Evernote apps together, students can research, plan, and organize their ideas all in one place. They can use **Clipper** to clip and save resources from the Web, **Skitch** to mark up images and PDFs, and **Penultimate** to draw or write with a stylus. Resources can be organized into notebooks by class and topic, making them easy to locate. I love using Evernote for everything because students can easily access their notes and find the same website they were using yesterday without searching their backpacks, lockers, and desks. It is a huge time (and paper!) saver. This is a free app for the iPhone, iPad, Android, and Web.

iBrainstorm (http://www.ibrainstormapp.com)
This is a digital corkboard where users compile freehand drawings and typed notes. iBrainstorm is a great tool for planning and organizing. Users can type individual sticky notes, change the colors of those notes, and rearrange them to organize and group their ideas. Collaborators in a local setting can share their ideas by "flicking" notes to one another. This app is

an easy way to do the same thing I've been doing with sticky notes on chart paper for years. Students can brainstorm first and organize second. Only now, they can continue to work on their plans and collaborate outside of class, and there is no fear of lost stickies! This is a free app available for the iPhone and iPad.

Popplet (http://www.popplet.com)
Popplet is a platform for ideas where users can compile pictures and typed notes and connect them with lines to create charts or webs. Popplet is a great tool for organizing ideas into planning webs. Students can collaborate in "real time" when working from their own devices in any location. Finished popplets can be exported as PDFs or JPGs. I like using Popplet with my struggling writers because they can search for pictures on the Internet and make a plan before having to think about the language they need to use. This app costs $4.99 and is available for the iPhone, iPad, and Web.

A+ Writing Prompts (http://appcrawlr.com/ios/a-writing-prompts)
This is a writing prompt generator that provides an endless supply of inspiration. This app includes five prompt generators: scenes, sketches, texts, words, and news. Scenes include a place, character, object, and smell to inspire a creative narrative. Text prompts include phrases, quotes, story starters, and more. News includes a headline and news source. There are billions of unique prompt possibilities. Students can no longer say, "I don't know what to write about." Writer's block happens, but after flipping through a few ideas, students find an idea that gets their creativity flowing. I like this app because it gives them ideas while still providing them with choice. This app costs $4.99 and is available for the iPhone, iPad, Android, and Kindle.

Strip Designer (http://www.vividapps.com/Strip_Designer/index.html)
Strip Designer is a comic strip creator that allows users to tell a story with their own photographs. It is a unique and motivating way for students to publish a story. They can include dialogue with text balloons and add captions, drawings, and effect symbols/stickers. Finished strips can be exported as PDFs or JPGs or shared on a variety of social media sites. Students can even create graphic novels by combining strip pages. My favorite thing about this app is that it motivates students who thought they didn't like to write. Suddenly their protests about writing stop, and they are bringing in comic strips about things they did on the weekend. They often don't even realize they are writing until I tell them! This app costs $2.99 and is available for the iPhone and iPad.

Shutterfly Photo Story (http://www.shutterfly.com/photostoryclassroom)
This app is a digital and print book creator that authors can use to tell the story behind photographs. With Photo Story, young authors choose from a variety of layouts, import pictures, add doodles and text, and even record audio messages on each page. The finished product can be shared with the audience via email. After reading the full-screen digital version, audience members have the option to purchase a print book with prices starting at $19.99. Shutterfly even has a database of CCSS aligned lesson plans for creating books of all genres with students in grades K-8. This app is so easy to use to share work with an audience. Students will be proud of the professional appearance of their work. This is a free app available for the iPhone and iPad.

They often don't even realize they are writing until I tell them!

Book Creator (https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/book-creator-for-ipad/id442378070?mt=8)
This app is a book creator that gives authors the option to share their books in a variety of digital and print formats. Like most e-book apps, Book Creator allows the user the opportunity to create personalized books using photographs, free-hand drawing/writing, and words. What makes this app unique is its ability to include not only music and recorded speech but also video clips on every page. When authors are finished with their books, they can publish them to iBooks or export them as movies or PDFs. As a deaf educator, I am always looking for apps that are accessible for students who are deaf and hard of hearing. This app is not only fully accessible, the video feature also makes it perfect for students who use American Sign Language to communicate. This feature affords

my students the unique opportunity to publish their writing in both English and ASL side-by-side. This helps bridge the two languages, expand their audience, and personalize their writing. This is a free app available for the iPad.

HaikuDeck (https://www.haikudeck.com)
HaikuDeck is presentation software that lets authors share their ideas in a simple and creative way. HaikuDeck is a quick and fun way to make a slideshow. Users can search millions of Creative Commons photographs using keywords. If students are stumped, the app provides a word bank for image searches. Taking or importing original photos is also an option. Changing the theme or layout and adding text is easy. This app is a great way for students to publish poetry. Simple. Easy. Fun. And the finished product always looks great. It helps students who tend to be overwhelmed by a blank screen by providing them with options that make the task much less daunting. This is a free app for the iPhone, iPad, and Web.

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Ruta **Sepetys**

Historical Fiction:

The Silent Soldier

"Historical fiction doesn't sell."

This is a direct quotation from several of the early rejection letters I received for my debut novel, *Between Shades of Gray*—the story of a 15-year-old Lithuanian girl deported to Siberia under Stalin's regime. The letters were kind and apologetic, and they stated that, amidst a competitive market, it helped if historical titles contained a twist or device. The rejections explained that "traditional historical," written in previous decades, had saturated the genre and addressed most topics. As I tried to peddle Advanced Reading Copies (ARCs) at my first conference, a librarian sighed and said, "Historical. It's such a tough sell. But I hope you stick with it."

Several years later, I'm still scratching my head. Historical fiction sells worldwide and has one of the broadest audiences, from preteen to elderly readers. It is equal parts entertainment and instrument. It provides a telescope to peer not only into the past but also into the timeless qualities of the human spirit. Reader becomes detective, examining hidden details and charting a path to a better future. History is full of thrilling secrets and dark doorways. We find hope, horror, comedy, tragedy, shocking plots, beautiful heroes, and evil incarnate. But despite all of its merits, historical fiction retains the reputation of being difficult to sell. Is that simply an old label we can't seem to scratch off, or is it a branded fact? Is this stigma an American construct only?

Historical novels open borders, ideas, voices, and possibilities. But what role do national optics play in story interpretation and value assessment? Instead of perpetuating the idea that "Historical fiction doesn't sell," what if we reframe to examine, "How can we best sell historical fiction, and what is its global value?" Do we really need a device to attract readers, or are universal themes, historical truths, and personal history the rivers to the sea?

The Cultural Lens

For several years, I've been traveling worldwide to meet with readers, teachers, librarians, and booksellers. I quickly realized that, although I can describe the time period or historic basis for my novels, it's difficult to distill a theme for readers in different countries because members of each location read through a different lens.

In the United States, the conversations about both *Between Shades of Gray* (2011) and *Out of the Easy* (2013) are often framed through a lens of courage and survival. When I visited France, however, students there told me that *Between Shades of Gray* is a story of identity, posing the question: How much can be taken away from human beings before we lose our sense of self? Further, they felt that *Out of the Easy* is a story of feminism in historical context. The Parisian readers then discussed how themes of identity and women's roles have been drivers in the French culture for generations. In Poland, *Out of the Easy* is titled *Choices* and is presented as a story of decisions and the dynamics that affect choice. During WWII, the fate of Poland was determined by choices—some made by others, not the Poles themselves. In Spain, some readers say my books are about freedom. In Germany, they are about historical responsibility, and in Japan, compassion.

I've learned that each country, each reader, filters and absorbs history based on family narrative as well as national narrative. When the readers in Spain speak of freedom, they connect it to the Spanish Civil War. When German readers speak of historical responsibility, they compare it to their own Holocaust accountability. In Thailand, young girls read *Out of the Easy* and see a disadvantaged girl who escaped a brothel, not feminism in historical context. The text is the same, the history the same, but the themes and learning outcomes are very different. What quickly becomes most relevant is the reader's interpretation, not the author's explanation.

We also noted that, with decades as a buffer, what lingered foremost amidst the history were the stories of love and the incredible power of the human spirit.

To some extent, the scholastic outcomes in each locale are guided by curriculum. The German students spend years studying the Holocaust. A 15-year-old German student told me quite grimly, "I am responsible for what happened. All of us in this class must assume responsibility." When I visited schools in Japan, I realized that although students study the crimes of Hitler and Stalin, some Japanese students were unaware of Japanese acts of brutality during WWII. When I consulted a colleague in Tokyo, he explained that perhaps the goal is to teach empathy in the classroom without the burden of guilt. Naturally, these different study methods result in different learning outcomes, associations, and interpretations.

Just as each country approaches historical novels differently, their resources, reading guides, and academic supplements are also very different. In Japan, a teacher created an exam for *Between Shades of Gray* with over 100 questions. Some of the questions were difficult for *me* to answer, but they very clearly illuminated the focus and goals within the Japanese classroom.

Following a successful all-school read program, teachers from Montgomery Bell Academy and Harpeth Hall School in Nashville traveled to Lithuania. They have since partnered with a Lithuanian school for a joint reading experience and cultural exchange based around the novel. If analyzed in depth, the American lens differs in many ways from the Lithuanian lens, illustrating perceptions of secure democracy versus fragile freedom. But the teachers involved in the cultural exchange assure me that, despite the ethnic differences, the students on both ends have gravitated most to the universal themes of hope, love, and courage. The history became memorable because the readers in both countries could feel and imagine themselves within it.

Each spring, I Skype with English classes at St. Anne's Diocesan College in Hilton, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Students read *Between Shades of Gray*, study the Soviet occupation of the Baltics, and then compare and contrast through a lens of Apartheid. In our last visit, the girls created a video message. They sang a song cherished by freedom fighters during Apartheid that is now part of their national anthem. That day they dedicated the song to Lithuania. They sang with purpose and emotion. I cried. They cried. Through historical fiction, two very different cultures were suddenly joined together in empathy—the powerful acknowledgment, "I feel for you. You are not alone."

United in Story

Global Classroom

By allowing individual readers, classrooms, and countries to interpret historical events and characters through their own lens, both history and historical literature take on deeper meaning and purpose, honoring those who gave their lives in pursuit of truth and freedom. Historical fiction and its universal themes allow us to connect on an emotional level. It is those emotional strands that are the strongest and most memorable.

After a presentation at European Parliament, a discussion of WWII arose amongst several students in the audience. Each student contributed and debated, and the discourse was overwhelmingly positive. One of the Parliament members pointed out that the students speaking were from countries who stood on opposite sides during the war, yet now, through a book discussion, they were joined in critical thinking and positive progress. We also noted that, with decades as a buffer, what lingered foremost amidst the history were the stories of love and the incredible power of the human spirit. It was a moving reminder—history

divided us, but through books, we can be united in story, study, and remembrance.

Through these cultural lenses, I've learned we are a global reading community, but most important, a global human community striving to learn from the past.

It's Always Personal

When discussing history with readers, the conversation inevitably shifts to individual and personal stories. I've discovered that reading historical novels creates a hunger to uncover personal family history. Readers ask: *How would I have endured this history? What is my family story? Is my family history lost, or is it just hidden?* Discussing underrepresented history with students, teachers, and librarians has emphasized the role that personal history plays in forming our identities.

In his article, "The Stories That Bind Us," writer Bruce Feiler (2013) discusses how knowledge of family history and developing a family narrative are essential for both individuality and strong group dynamic. Psychologists reported that children and teens who know a lot about their family history fare better when facing challenges. Further studies revealed that the more children know about their families' story and legacy (the good, the bad, and even the ugly), the more control they feel over their lives and the stronger their self-esteem. Research suggests firmly that connecting with history and family stories creates a stronger intergenerational self.

I've experienced this firsthand at book events. The discussion begins with very specific events, locations, and dates related to my historical novels. As the conversation progresses, it becomes more elastic, with participants relating the specific ideas to their own history or family members.

These migratory discussions of world history into personal history have brought some of my most rewarding experiences. As someone explains how his or her own personal history aligns with an element in the novel, the revelation in the room is palpable. I can practically hear the filaments pop in the mental light bulbs.

"Your mother is originally from Bulgaria? I didn't know that."

"My grandmother refused to speak of her WWII experience and would never go near the water. We could never connect with her because we didn't know what happened."

I let the participants talk and exchange personal history, paying close attention to the elderly readers when they question or contradict aspects of my writing. My older audience has lived through the periods I write about. They are the survivors, the true witnesses, and when they speak, I am captivated. So are the teen readers. They crave honesty. Through multigenerational discussions, readers gain a better understanding of history, each other, their community, and their collective story.

Shared experience is a powerful connector and triggers the realization that we are not alone in the stories that are our lives.

How often do we misjudge others because we aren't familiar with their backgrounds and ancestries? People who know my father understand that fireworks on the Fourth of July trigger difficult memories of the bombings in Europe. Those who don't know his history might think he is unpatriotic. After all, who doesn't love the Fourth of July and fireworks?

As Feiler points out in his article, knowledge of personal history helps individuals, classrooms, companies, and countries function better. I believe that to be true. I also believe that, when a reader identifies with a character in a book, the world is suddenly less lonely. We gravitate toward those who share or relate to our personal narratives. Shared experience is a powerful connector and triggers the realization that we are not alone in the stories that are our lives.

Finding the Truth in Fiction

Historical novels provide a compelling introduction to underrepresented time periods and events. Through characters and story, historical statistics become human, and we know that stories of human experience resonate deeper than numbers. But is there a danger of a fictional account becoming the definitive frame through which a particular historical event is remembered? What determines how a country's history and legacy are preserved and recalled? Does fiction play a role in that? Some teachers and librarians have

expressed concern that students' comprehension of history is through fictional storylines and not facts.

Historical novelists strive for accuracy. Many historical writers spend years researching before writing a single word. We work with historians, consult academics and experts, and lose sleep over the smallest detail. And still, despite all efforts, there will be some small measure of inaccuracy. My greatest hope is always that a curious student will be the one to discover the error. In some cases, that has happened.

After much touring and many book events, I'm led to believe that the stigma associated with historical fiction is not actually attached to the literary genre itself. The stigma might originate with the academic "'H' word."

History.

For many young people, the initial exposure to secrets and stories of the past is through their early history classes. At that point, "the 'H' word" is assigned a label in their minds. Depending on their experiences and performances in history class, the word "history" is either exciting and revelatory or difficult and boring. If someone recommended a book about mathematical fiction, I might hesitate and think, *Uh oh, math is a difficult mountain for me to climb.* I've discovered that readers worldwide associate historical fiction, and evaluate their attraction to it, based on their academic experience with history as a subject in general.

In truth, historical fiction is comprised of all of the genres together. History is mystery, romance, thriller, poetry, biography, and sometimes even fantasy. A good historical novel is a door. Once we've read the book, we've opened a door to step through, to seek and explore. Historical novels are most meaningful when we identify the truths woven within. The historical genre becomes a treasure hunt of fact over fiction, and teenagers, often with the help of teachers and librarians, are discriminating detectives.

Keeper of the Key

Young readers demand the truth. I'm elated when a reader says, "But this is fiction. Exactly how much of this is true? What's the real story?" They not only want the truth, they beg for the sad and gory details. "What was the absolute worst story you heard when researching? Don't sugarcoat it. Tell us everything." They ask to see photographs of the witnesses and survivors. They often tell me that they conducted their own research online and discussed it with their parents. "My dad told me stories about our relatives. It was cool. He said I should read a book by a guy named Solzhenitsyn."

If historical fiction is a door, teachers and librarians hold the key. They are the bridge between "the 'H' word" and the journey to the past. Readers don't bound into the library or classroom begging for a novel about totalitarianism. Young readers don't just "happen" to ask for Solzhenitsyn. These books are recommended by teachers, librarians, reading specialists, and parents who know the students and their personal histories, and they understand the lenses through which those students view the world.

Historical fiction *does* sell. But the truth is, teachers and librarians are the ones who sell it. Worldwide. And they sell it better than anyone. They take time to create new lesson plans around the material, they collaborate with other departments, they spend time and personal resources on classroom sets and supplemental materials. They contact the publishers and authors about ideas, school visits, and Skype visits. They raise their swords and shields to defend historical truth and then pass the blade to each student to slay the ghosts of the past and make way for a more just future.

Historical fiction vends hope, courage, and empathy. It teaches, it endures, and it gives voice to the forgotten, the overlooked, and the underrepresented. It joins readers from all parts of the world together in common purpose to share, learn, and defend humanity. And that makes me think of the librarian's words so many years ago: "Historical. It's such a tough sell. But I hope you stick with it."

We are a global learning community reading through different lenses, comprised of interwoven personal histories, watered and tended by teachers and librarians. I'm on a mission to meet with readers in every nation. I want to listen to their interpretations and look through their lenses. History gives me this opportunity. Historical fiction is the quiet soldier of our community defending truth, selling hope, and building dreams of a better tomorrow.

Yes, I will stick with it.

Ruta Sepetys *is an internationally acclaimed author of historical fiction whose books have been published in over 45 countries and 33 languages. Her novels,* Between Shades of Gray *and* Out of the Easy, *are both* New York Times *bestsellers, international bestsellers, and Carnegie Medal nominees. Her books have won or been shortlisted for over 40 book prizes and 20 state reading lists and have been selected for several all-city read programs. Ruta is the first young adult novelist to be invited to address European Parliament and was recently Knighted in Lithuania for her contributions to education and culture. In addition to her historical novels, Ruta has contributed essays to NPR's* All Things Considered *and* The Huffington Post. *Ruta was born in Michigan and now lives in Tennessee. She serves on the Board of Advisors at Belmont University in Nashville and also on the Advisory Board for the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. Ruta's new historical novel,* Salt to the Sea, *will be published in February 2016.*

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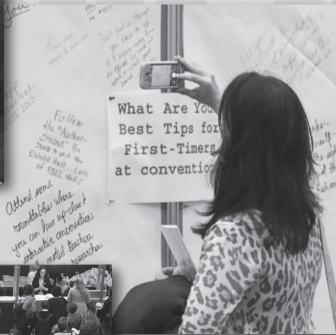

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