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OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

Table of **Contents**

Volume 45

Number 1

Fall 2017

Advocacy, Activism, and Agency in Young Adult Literature

Wendy Glenn
Ricki Ginsberg
Danielle King-Watkins
From the Editors 3

Call for Manuscripts 5

Sara Farizan
Alex Gino
Bill Konigsberg
Ami Polonsky
Advocacy, Sexual Orientation, and Gender Expression: 7
A Collaborative Conversation

Sean P. Connors
An Invitation to Look Deeper into the World: 12
Using Young Adult Fiction to Encourage Youth Civic Engagement

William Lewis
Jill Ewing Flynn
Below the Surface Level of Social Justice: 22
Using Quad Text Sets to Plan Equity-Oriented Instruction

Ryan Schey
Toward Intersectional Literacy Practices: 32
Interrogating Homonormativity through Reading Sáenz's *Aristotle and Dante*

Jody N. Polleck
Carla España
Revolutions and Resistance: 44
Creating Space for Adolescent Agency and Advocacy through a Critical Reading of Sonia Manzano's *The Revolution of Evelyn Serrano*

Jennifer Goulston Zwillenberg
Danielle Gioia
Racism, Privilege, and Voice in *All American Boys*: 57
A Counter-narrative of Resistance and Hope

Mike P. Cook
Beatrice Bailey
Lienne Medford
***March* and the Struggle for Historical Perspective Recognition** 72

Bryan Gillis
Book in Review: A Teaching Guide:
A Vocabulary of Intimacy: 84
Building and Nurturing Healthy Adolescent Relationship Skills

Victor Malo-Juvera
Lisa Scherff
Right to Read:
Standardized Censorship 91

Shelbie Witte
Katie Rybakova
Layered Literacies:
Digging for Deeper Connections: 98
Building Multimodal Text Scaffolds

Brendan Kiely
Kristin Levine
Isabel Quintero
Fighting for What Is Right: 107
Characters Who Take Risks and Challenge Assumptions

T ◆ H ◆ E
ALAN
REVIEW

Instructions for **Authors**

ABOUT *THE ALAN REVIEW.* *The ALAN Review (TAR;* ISSN 0882-2840 [Print], ISSN 1547-741X [Online]) publishes articles that explore, examine, critique, and advocate for literature for young adults and the teaching of that literature. Published pieces include, but are not limited to, research studies, papers presented at professional meetings, surveys of the literature, critiques of the literature, articles about authors, comparative studies across genres and/or cultures, articles on ways to teach the literature to adolescents, and interviews with YA authors.

AUDIENCE. Many of the individual members of ALAN are classroom teachers of English in middle, junior, and senior high schools. Other readers include university faculty members in English and/or Education programs, researchers in the field of 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.

REVIEW PROCESS. Each manuscript will receive a blind review by the editors and at least three members of the Editorial Review Board, unless the length, style, or content makes it inappropriate for publication. Usually, authors should expect to hear the results within eight weeks. Manuscripts are judged for the contribution made to the field of young adult literature and mission of *The ALAN Review*, scholarly rigor, and clarity of writing. Selection also depends on the manuscript's contribution to the overall balance of the journal.

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

Manuscripts that are accepted may be edited for clarity, accuracy, readability, and publication style. Upon publication, the author will receive two copies of *The ALAN Review* in which the article appears. Publication usually occurs within 18 months of acceptance.

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

FALL (October) Issue Deadline:	**MARCH 1**
WINTER (March) Issue Deadline:	**JULY 1**
SUMMER (June) Issue Deadline:	**NOVEMBER 1**

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

From the Editors

Advocacy, Activism, and Agency in Young Adult Literature

Given their age and perceived lack of power in an adult-run world, adolescents can experience helplessness, cynicism, and frustration resulting from not being able to address issues that anger or exasperate them or to evoke change in the face of obstacles over which they have little or no control. As teachers, however, we recall moments of insight and passion and optimism displayed by our students in response to literature. We believe that stories can empower readers, and we wonder just how far-reaching such empowerment can extend, especially in classrooms and libraries that invite young people to question, to argue, to imagine what is possible—and what they can do to achieve it.

For this issue, contributors share examples of how they promote advocacy, activism, and agency among students (and/or their teachers, families, etc.) using young adult literature. They examine key questions: How are these efforts depicted and advanced by YA authors? How do readers witness and respond to such efforts? How might YAL be used to inspire action in the classroom and larger community? Can story serve to better our world and the lives of those who live here?

As you read and ponder the pieces in this issue, we invite you to listen to the voice of Emil Sher's teen protagonist when he chooses to take responsibility for a challenging dilemma before it becomes too late for action: "I wanted to clean up the mess. . . . The mess would keep spreading like those huge oil spills that turn blue water black and leave birds so covered with oil they never fly again" (*Young Man with Camera*, p. 108).

We begin this issue with four authors we respect greatly—Sara Farizan, Alex Gino, Bill Konigsberg, and Ami Polonsky—in a written discussion titled, "Advocacy, Sexual Orientation, and Gender Expression: A Collaborative Conversation." These authors talk about sexual and gender identities and expression and how they work to fight discrimination in their books and in their lives.

Sean P. Connors's "An Invitation to Look Deeper into the World: Using Young Adult Fiction to Encourage Youth Civic Engagement" invites readers to tap into their students' passion for young adult literature to encourage civic engagement. Connors shares a class project that intersects issues of social justice and dystopia and culminates in a digital video essay with real-world purposes.

In their article, "Below the Surface Level of Social Justice: Using Quad Text Sets to Plan Equity-Oriented Instruction," William Lewis and Jill Ewing Flynn push teachers to provide students with opportunities to think deeply about social justice themes through young adult literature paired with three additional texts in a Quad Text Set framework. They argue that such an approach facilitates strategic, deliberate literacy instruction and places texts in conversation with each other to invite students to consider social justice while fostering advocacy, activism, and agency.

In "Toward Intersectional Literacy Practices: Interrogating Homonormativity through Reading Sáenz's *Aristotle and Dante*," Ryan Schey draws on queer of color scholarship to theorize intersectional and activist reading practices for interpreting LGBT-themed

literature. He uses Sáenz's (2012) *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* as an example and outlines two cultural models for understanding the intersections of ethnicity and non-heteronormative sexualities in the novel. Schey writes that these models have the potential to interrogate and disrupt heteronormativity and homonormativity in classrooms.

Jody N. Polleck and Carla España, in their article "Revolutions and Resistance: Creating Space for Adolescent Agency and Advocacy through a Critical Reading of Sonia Manzano's *The Revolution of Evelyn Serrano*," explore how educators might use texts, such as *The Revolution of Evelyn Serrano* (Manzano, 2012), to support secondary students' development of political consciousness. The authors argue that linking novels with contemporary resistance movements can invite readers to interrogate oppressive practices in and outside the US and explore historical legacies of activism, including the role of youth as change agents within their communities.

In their piece titled "Racism, Privilege, and Voice in *All American Boys:* A Counter-narrative of Resistance and Hope," Jennifer Goulston Zwillenberg and Danielle Gioia examine critically the scholarship on race talk, racial stereotypes, and privilege to analyze Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely's *All American Boys* (2015). They describe how educators can use this novel to engage students in race-oriented conversations, specifically concerning the topic of police brutality.

Mike P. Cook, Beatrice Bailey, and Lienne Medford, in "*March* and the Struggle for Historical Perspective Recognition," share the experience of three teacher educators as they introduced social studies teacher candidates to John Lewis's graphic memoir *March* (Lewis, Aydin, & Powell, 2016). The authors describe how the text fostered the development of perspective recognition and helped students consider pedagogical possibilities for their own future classrooms, as well as reflect upon (non)empathetic responses to Lewis's life and role in the civil rights movement.

In his Book in Review: A Teaching Guide column, "A Vocabulary of Intimacy: Building and Nurturing Healthy Adolescent Relationship Skills," Bryan Gillis explores the complexities inherent in adolescent relationships. Using two texts, *Honestly Ben* (Konigsberg, 2017) and *Manicpixiedreamgirl* (Leveen, 2013), Gillis examines the adolescent relationships represented in each and provides innovative teaching strategies for educators using these texts with their students.

In this issue's Right to Read column, "Standardized Censorship," Victor Malo-Juvera and Lisa Scherff explore the influence of "curricula, policies, standards, norms, and goals that prioritize standardized testing, remove academic freedom from teachers, and support the continued Othering of marginalized peoples based on constructs such as color, race, gender/gender identity, sexual orientation, immigration status, age, or religion" on classroom instruction. They offer a view of the realities of teaching in a time when external influences hold significant sway.

Shelbie Witte partners with Katie Rybakova in the Layered Literacies column, "Digging for Deeper Connections: Building Multimodal Text Scaffolds." These authors challenge readers to consider how they might incorporate authentic texts into reading ladders (Lesesne, 2010) to embrace the multimodality of the 21st century lives of their students. The column features three reading ladders along with a guide for practitioners seeking to create their own ladders.

Our final piece is a collaborative conversation between three YA authors, Brendan Kiely, Kristin Levine, and Isabel Quintero. In their conversation, titled "Fighting for What Is Right: Characters Who Take Risks and Challenge Assumptions," they discuss how they address explicitly issues of agency and activism in their writing and craft characters who challenge assumptions and become change agents. These authors share candidly the responsibilities, risks, and consequences that come with the encouragement of activism in their work.

As evidenced by the articles included in this issue, we recognize the challenges inherent in advocating, acting, and assuming agency, but we find hope in Kekla Magoon's reminder: "The river moves, but it follows a path. When it tires of one journey, it rubs through some rock to forge a new way. Hard work, but that's its nature" (*The Rock and the River*, p. 283). We hope this issue encourages you to enact ways of teaching young adult literature that achieve positive social change.

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Call for Manuscripts

Submitting a Manuscript:

Manuscript submission guidelines are available on p. 2 of this issue and on our website at http://www.alan-ya.org/page/alan-review-author-guidelines. All submissions may be sent to thealanreview@gmail.com.

Fall 2018: The Psychology of YA Literature: Traversing the Intersection of Mind, Body, and Soul
Submissions due on or before March 1, 2018

Mental illness, the effects of violence, trauma, and other psychological issues permeate the lives of the young people with whom we work and the families and friends who exist around them. Young adult authors have taken up these topics in their writings, providing space and opportunity for readers to find solace and support and to develop understandings that complicate their existing assumptions and beliefs.

In this issue, we invite you to consider how YA authors explore, for example, what it means to feel lost, to be in that "moment when I know that I should scream. But screaming would be hard. And blackness would be easy. Black picks me" (E. K. Johnston, *Exit, Pursued by a Bear*, p. 47). Or to feel worn out, to have "no emotions left: I was a candle that'd burned all the way down" (Rahul Kanakia, *Enter Title Here*, p. 181). Or to want something you can't have due to forces out of your control: "I want to grab your hand, allow you to pull me through, to take us wherever you want to go, fill my calendar with your smile and laugh the way we used to" (Eric Gansworth, *If I Ever Get Out of Here*, p. 12).

As educators, we invite you to describe your efforts in using YA literature in the classroom. Perhaps your work might help students build richer understandings of the mind, body, and soul and learn to challenge, as noted by David Levithan, how "some people think mental illness is a matter of mood, a matter of personality. They think depression is simply a form of being sad, that OCD is a form of being uptight. They think the soul is sick, not the body. It is, they believe, something that you have some choice over. I know how wrong this is" (*Every Day*, p. 119). We wonder how your work can offer hope. Yes, it is a "hard cycle to conquer. The body is working against you. And because of this, you feel even more despair. Which only amplifies the imbalance. It takes uncommon strength to live with these things. But I have seen that strength over and over again" (*Every Day*, pp. 119–120).

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Winter 2019: How We Play the Game: YA Literature and Sport
Submissions due on or before July 1, 2018

Sport, culture, identity, and power are intimately related. Sport can both reaffirm and challenge societal beliefs, strengthening and calling into question existing ideologies related to gender, race, and class. While it might be true that "it's a long race and you can always outwork talent in the end" (Matthew Quick, *Boy 21*, p. 8), the relationship between sport and socioeconomics, for example, is real: sport is an industry driven by profit, and young people pay to play. Working hard sometimes isn't enough to gain access, leading us to wonder who gets to participate and if and how such issues are addressed in YA literature.

Sport can also unite and divide people—with real consequences. It's true that the team element of sport can connect people in memorable ways, as "it's amazing how two thin pieces of clothing can hold such deep memories. Laughter, pain, victory, defeat, friendship, fatigue, elation . . . they're all there, but only to the person who's worn the uniform" (Wendelin Van Draanen, *The Running Dream*, p. 187). But it's also true that sport can perpetuate inequities across people and across time, as evidenced by this scene from Sherman Alexie's *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven:* "Last night I missed two free throws which would have won the game against the best team in the state. The farm town high school I play for is nicknamed the 'Indians,' and I'm probably the only actual Indian ever to play for a team with such a mascot. This morning I pick up the sports page and read the headline: INDIANS LOSE AGAIN. Go ahead and tell me none of this is supposed to hurt me very much" (p. 179). For this issue, we invite you to consider the presentation of sport in YA titles and how YA sports literature might be used to foster a more nuanced understanding of the game and its players, its history and institutional norms, and its impact on life on and off the court.

As always, we also welcome submissions focused on any aspect of young adult literature not directly connected to these themes.

Sara **Farizan**, Alex **Gino**, Bill **Konigsberg**, and Ami **Polonsky**

Advocacy, Sexual Orientation, and Gender Expression:

A Collaborative Conversation

***From the Editors*:** In this article, we are honored to feature a written conversation among four authors who work to fight discrimination in their books and in their lives, particularly surrounding issues of sexual and gender identity and expression. We greatly appreciate these authors (and their publishers) and their willingness to participate so honestly and thoughtfully in this important conversation.

As to process, we generated and sent a series of questions to each author. We compiled the responses into a single document and then sent the compiled version back and forth to authors to solicit questions, elaborations, and revisions until all were satisfied with the resulting piece. We hope you appreciate and learn from the wisdom they share.

What challenges come with writing about gender identity?

Bill: For me, writing about gender identity as it is understood today makes me feel old. My understanding of what the battles were regarding gender identity is dated. Back when I was being a radical, artistic teenager, my understanding was that we were trying to expand the definitions of what it meant to be male or female. I grew up with *Free to Be . . . You and Me* (Thomas, 1974), which was all about the fact that boys can play with dolls, and girls can do whatever they please. A boy loving another boy back when I was a teenager in the 1980s was far outside the accepted range of male gender identity, to the point that my biology teacher was openly saying things like "Gay is subnormal" and not getting in trouble at all. So really what's happened is the battle lines have shifted. Now being cisgender and gay is more or less accepted as a variance of male gender identity, but gender fluidity and being transgender are the areas where we need to fight. So my biggest challenge is to not only understand what the battle currently is, but to internalize this new understanding so I can authentically write characters who are struggling in a modern way with gender identity.

Ami: Gender identity is a complex concept, and it differs from person to person, so I think it's important to point out that I didn't write about gender identity; I wrote about one person—Grayson—who struggles to express herself as the female that she is. One challenge is to help readers understand that the concept of gender identity is broad and complex, and no author, in creating one character, can address the broad scope of gender identity. In the publishing world, we often hear that if you're going to write about a marginalized group, especially if you're not a member of that group, you have to "get it right." This is absolutely true. But just as there are many ways in which to "get it wrong," there are many ways in which to "get it right."

Sara: One of the greatest challenges for me was writing about gender identity from a different cultural context. My debut, *If You Could Be Mine* (2013),

was not set in a western culture, and it *was* set in a country where there are highly specific rules and laws about the subject matter. When that novel came out, I was very anxious about whether I was writing something problematic, not only because I was not born and raised in Iran, but also because I am cisgender and had trans characters in my story. I worried a great deal that I did not have the authority to write characters that may misrepresent a community. When I am asked about books to recommend on this subject and others, I respond with books by authors who are writing from a point of view they identify with. *If I Was Your Girl* by Meredith Russo (2016), for example, is a wonderful book and reads as authentic and true.

Alex: I don't think all gender identities are hard to write about. Authors with cisgender, heteronormative characters have a culture's worth of references and external cues to rely on. It's when the character is outside the norm that the author needs to subtly educate readers while connecting with them. With transgender and other marginalized identities, it becomes a balance between respecting the characters and making sure the reader is with you—all that without being pedantic and with language that is rapidly morphing and developing. And since there are so few models out there, there's a heightened need to get it right while also acknowledging that there's no one way to be trans or gender nonconforming. Oh, and write a good and engaging story while you're at it.

Is there an overlap between your own life and the lives you create on the page?

Ami: Definitely. While I'm cisgender and Grayson is transgender, she's very much like I was as a sixth grader—shy, introverted, and naturally inclined to deflect attention. I wish I had come out of my shell when I was Grayson's age. Grayson's experience as someone who feels "other" because of her gender identity overlaps with the experiences of some people I'm close to, but I would never publicize their stories.

Sara: While my books are fiction and the characters have very different experiences than I do, the voices of the main characters sound very much like mine. I am also writing about things that I struggled with in my own adolescence. I am Persian and gay, and my first two books delve into both of those identities. In my future work, I will continue to write about facets of my identity, I will continue to write about things that I find unfair, and even when I have a main character who is physically different from me, the character will still have a lot of my voice.

Alex: I would agree and say of course there is an overlap between my life and the lives of my characters. I think this is true for all writers, though maybe not in the ways some people would expect. For example, what I have most in common with Melissa, the transgender main character of my middle grade novel *George* (2015) is that we both love *Charlotte's Web* (White, 1952). The character I connect with more in how she sees the world is the cisgender, heterosexual main character of my work-in-progress. But my life surely impacts the lives I write about, and just like my characters, I'm trying to figure out how to connect with people and what it means both to be yourself and to be there for others.

Bill: I suppose there's always an overlap between my own world and the one I create on the page, hard as I might try sometimes to erase it. I've written a lot of "my" stories already, and that means I'm now branching out into stories that aren't exactly mine. When Toby comes out as gender fluid in *Honestly Ben* (2017), I have to translate a lot, because I didn't as a young person consider myself gender fluid; my coming out was about sexual orientation. So as I write more, the overlap becomes less.

Do you consider yourself an advocate for the right to gender expression? Are there certain responsibilities and/or risks that come with such advocacy efforts?

Alex: I do, both in my writing and in the way I live my life as a femme genderqueer person. I think that comes with a responsibility to be honest—not sugar coating, not demonizing, but being compassionately honest. It's also important to be aware of

intersectionality and how realities like race, class, gender, and disability all affect our stories. There are probably risks involved, but what I see is the risk I take when I don't speak up—the risk that kids who need an advocate don't have one.

Sara: I do, as well, but I don't think I do enough or am vocal enough on social media or as an activist. When I give talks, make appearances, do school visits, or am asked to do an interview, I always make sure that I am welcome and that the audience is familiar with the subjects I write about. This is done selfishly on my part, as I do want to be in a safe environment, but I also believe that as we go forward, all people must do what they can to advocate for what they believe is right. There is no longer any room to stay quiet in hopes of being liked or made to feel comfortable. I hope that the stories I write help others in some way, but without the efforts of teachers, librarians, students, and other activists to foster discussion, awareness, and advocacy work, those stories are just stories.

Bill: I consider myself an advocate for all people who are searching for their own authenticity. And that is absolutely the case for people who are trying to figure out their own gender expression. Especially the case for those people. I think the responsibility that is most important to me is to get it right, as Ami mentioned earlier. Especially if and when I am telling a "not-me" story, I need to inhabit that character truthfully and authentically, and that's a big responsibility.

Ami: When I wrote *Gracefully Grayson* (2014), I didn't see myself as an advocate; I simply felt that I was telling a story that needed to be told. In retrospect, I think this was overly simplistic of me. Anyone who writes a story about someone who could potentially experience discrimination because of that person's identity becomes an advocate. So yes, now I'm comfortable saying I'm an advocate. Because I'm cisgender and unwilling to reveal the real-life inspiration for Grayson's character (since publicizing someone else's personal story is not my right), I walk a fine line. It's important for me to advocate, but I tend to do so through allying myself with those who are comfortable and open sharing their own personal stories with the world.

In my "other life," I'm a sixth-grade English teacher and a mom. I feel very comfortable advocating for the right to gender expression through these roles. Many of my conversations with my students and my own children center around putting ourselves in others' shoes and seeking, first and foremost, to understand where others are coming from. There are huge responsibilities that come with this role; I feel that I'm no longer allowed to keep quiet when I notice injustice, and speaking up always carries with it an inherent risk. People will disagree, people will get angry, but people will also agree, be grateful, and evolve.

How would you respond to people who say your books are inappropriate for the classroom setting?

Sara: Very calmly—but I would ask about what books they find appropriate for the classroom and why. If you make young people feel that issues of sexuality or gender identity are shameful, you are fostering a sense of shame not only with students who identify with or support the LGBTQ community, but also with some students who are straight and cis who will take that shame as validation of their continuing prejudice. I understand that teachers are not always supported in ways they should be and that many communities will grapple with reading materials for their young people, but we have to ask ourselves, do we want to live in a world that is inclusive and educated or a world that is exclusive and misinformed?

Alex: It is never inappropriate to be compassionate. My book, with a trans main character, will not make anyone trans. However, it can make people trans-aware. Cisgender children who grow up seeing the humanity in others will become adults who respect the people they meet. Transgender representation in children's and YA literature can also provide needed support for kids who were already themselves long before they touched my book. What is damaging is hiding information. Hiding leads to shame and ignorance. The path of ignorance is close-minded and hostile, and the road back from shame is long and hard.

Ami: I would speak to the perceived risks and clear benefits of promoting books about children who aren't cisgender. What risk is involved, for example, when a child reads *Gracefully Grayson*? Through my many conversations with teachers, administrators, school social workers, child psychologists, and children about this very issue, what often comes up is that adults are afraid that a child who reads about others' journeys to express their gender identity will suddenly believe that they, too, are not exploring and/or expressing their true gender identity. This is nonsensical. No individual who is cisgender is going to suddenly become transgender, just like nobody who is transgender will become cisgender. If a book gives children the courage to show the world who they are, have always been, and always will be, that is a beautiful thing. The benefits to reading about people who are transgender are vast, both for transgender and cisgender children and young people. Transgender kids see characters with struggles and triumphs that might be similar to their own, and cisgender kids learn to sympathize with others' difficulties, celebrate others' joys, and learn to look for commonalities between themselves and other people who might, on the surface, appear different from them. This is the case when we read any novel. It's a win-win.

Bill: I just don't understand what "inappropriate" means in this context, I guess. I mean, we wouldn't want to share pornography or gratuitous violence in the classroom, but when we are talking about writing that offers a mirror or window into another character's life, who gets to choose which character's mirrors/windows are appropriate?

For whom do you write?

Bill: I'm not sure how to answer this. I write for anyone who feels a little left-of-center, a little square peg-ish. I definitely don't want to focus on my audience while I'm writing, as it hurts the process, but if we're talking about who I expect/intend to reach, it's people who are searching for where and how they fit into this crazy world of ours.

Ami: As I was writing *Gracefully Grayson*, I would have answered that I write for my own personal growth and enjoyment and for middle grade readers. Since *Gracefully Grayson* was published and I learned more about the publishing world, I've become less idealistic. Every day, though, I remind myself to think about and write for the kids who will one day be reading my words—the kids who feel different, the kids who can't yet empathize, and the kids looking for a good story. In the end, they're the readers that matter most.

Sara: I began writing to make myself feel better. What has been incredibly rewarding in my books (which I thought would never be published) is that while I felt very alone when writing them, since publication, I have met so many different people of all ages, races, sexual orientations, nationalities, and gender identities who have read my work and have connected to it in some way. I write for young people of all backgrounds, but I am mostly writing stories I wish I had had when I was younger to better equip me for a world that might not always accept me as I am.

Alex: I write for kids. It's as simple as that. My first book was a book with both a trans main character and a trans theme, but it was never meant to be just for trans kids. The stories I write are about being different in a world of difference. They are about friendship and connection. They are about finding our places in the world.

Sara Farizan *is the author of* If You Could Be Mine *and* Tell Me Again How a Crush Should Feel. *She resides in Massachusetts.*

Alex Gino *loves glitter, ice cream, gardening, awe-ful puns, and stories that reflect the diversity and complexity of being alive. They would take a quiet coffee date with a friend over a loud and crowded party any day. Born and raised on Staten Island, NY, Alex has lived in Philadelphia, PA; Brooklyn, NY; Astoria (Queens), NY; Northampton, MA; and Oakland, CA. In April 2016, they put their books and furniture in storage and moved into an RV and are currently driving around the country, happily watching the landscape change.* George *is Alex's debut novel. When they started writing it in 2003, they had no idea how long a journey it would be, but the hole in children's literature was clear. After countless revisions, breaks of frustration, and days spent staring at drafts willing them*

to be better, Alex is delighted and proud to share Melissa's story with the world.

Bill Konigsberg *is the award-winning young adult author of four novels.* The Porcupine of Truth *won the PEN Center USA Literary Award and the Stonewall Book Award in 2016.* Openly Straight *won the Sid Fleischman Award for Humor and was a finalist for the Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award and Lambda Literary Award in 2014. His debut novel,* Out of the Pocket*, won the Lambda Literary Award in 2009. His most recent novel,* Honestly Ben*, received three starred reviews from* Publisher's Weekly*,* Booklist*, and* School Library Journal*. Bill is an Assistant Professor of Practice at The Piper Center for Creative Writing at Arizona State University, where he coordinates and teaches in the Your Novel Year online certificate program. He lives in Chandler, Arizona, with his husband, Chuck, and their Australian Labradoodles, Mabel and Buford.*

Ami Polonsky*, author of* Gracefully Grayson *(an ALA Rainbow List Top Ten Selection, 2016, and a Goodreads Top 100 Children's Books title) and* Threads *(a Winter Indie Next Pick) is also a 6th-grade English teacher at Lake Forest Country Day School in Illinois. She is grateful for all the goofy children in her life and the writing ideas they give her. She works hard (usually unsuccessfully) to juggle teaching, her family, and her writing career. She is devoted to equity, openness, love, chocolate, and dogs. Learn more at www.amipolonsky.com.*

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Sean P. **Connors**

An Invitation to Look Deeper into the World:

Using Young Adult Fiction to Encourage Youth Civic Engagement

Foregrounding a relationship between popular culture texts—specifically, J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter books (1997–2007)—and social activism in a presentation that he gave at the 2011 TEDxTransmedia conference, Andrew Slack, cofounder of the Harry Potter Alliance (HPA), confronted a long-held assumption that devalues the genre of fantasy fiction by dismissing it as escapist literature. In doing so, Slack (2011b) described how, by mapping the content world of stories onto the real world, the HPA, a grassroots activist organization, aims to harness the passion that millions of fans have for the Harry Potter novels and redirect that energy toward addressing social problems, such as poverty, class inequality, genocide, and child slavery. Slack (2011b) consequently challenged his audience to reflect on the following question: "What if we used fantasy not as an escape from our world, but an invitation to look deeper into it?"

Reflecting the theme of this issue, I begin this article with a slightly altered form of Slack's question: *What if, as educators, we were to view young adult fiction not as offering readers an escape from our world, but an invitation to look deeper into it?* In asking this question, I am not interested in young adult fiction's ability to sustain complex thematic readings, nor do I mean to call attention to its ideological dimensions, since readers of this journal are already aware that both of these topics have been well documented. Rather, in raising the above question, my objective is to better understand how, as educators, we can harness the passion that works of popular young adult fiction inspire in many young readers and redirect it toward addressing injustices that students are aware of in their local communities. In this sense, I am interested in the pedagogical possibilities that are associated with using young adult fiction to support youth civic engagement, especially as this involves their experimenting with literacy practices and dispositions that are deemed necessary in our democratic society. At a minimum, this includes an ability to read critically, to gather relevant information about a problem or issue, to engage in perspective sharing, and to use the information that one collects to take a stance on a problem or issue and advocate for a reasoned course of action.

In the remainder of this article, I examine the role that young adult fiction can play in supporting youth civic engagement. After introducing the concept of cultural acupuncture (Slack 2011a, 2011b), I describe a class assignment, the "Become a Mockingjay Project," that asked undergraduates in a young adult literature course to read a young adult dystopian novel of their choice and identify a social justice issue it addressed. Having done so, the students researched the issue to better understand it, after which they produced digital video essays in which they mapped elements of the novel's content world—defined by Jenkins and his colleagues (2016) as "the network of characters, settings, situations, and values that forms the basis for the generation of a range of stories" (p. 131)—onto the "real" world for the purpose of calling attention to how people experience the issue. Following this, I offer a close reading of one student's

video essay to demonstrate how she used the content world of *The 5th Wave* (Yancey, 2013) to examine a humanitarian crisis that was unfolding at the time she took my class. To conclude, I consider the implications of using young adult fiction as a vehicle to support youth civic engagement. In doing so, I argue that projects such as the one I describe in this article play a crucial role in supporting students' developing literacy practices and dispositions that are integral to public activism.

What Is Cultural Acupuncture?

One need not look far to find examples of how young adult fiction is being used to foster civic engagement. The Harry Potter Alliance (HPA), a nonprofit organization run primarily by fans of J. K. Rowling's novels, offers a particularly rich example of the promise this work holds (see http://www.thehpalliance.org/). As explained, the HPA aspires to tap into the enthusiasm that millions of readers have for the Harry Potter books and use it to unite fans in addressing activist causes. To this end, the organization describes itself as aspiring to "chang[e] the world by making activism accessible through the power of story" (Harry Potter Alliance), and to date, it has proven remarkably effective in doing so. Among its many accomplishments, the HPA has partnered with other activist organizations (including brothers John and Hank Green's Nerdfighters) to send $123,000 in rescue supplies to the people of Haiti in the wake of a devastating earthquake; to donate approximately 315,000 books to communities in need as part of its Accio Book Campaign; and to collect over 400,000 signatures for a petition that resulted in a commitment by Warner Bros. corporation to ensure that its Harry Potter licensed chocolate products are Fair Trade certified.

The HPA's method of using stories to encourage fan activism is guided by the overarching concept of cultural acupuncture. As defined by Slack (2011a), cultural acupuncture involves "finding where the psychological energy is in the culture, and moving that energy toward creating a healthier world" (para. 4). In this metaphor, "stories are our needles. Stories are what resonate. Stories are what can renew our soul as individuals and as a planet" (Slack, 2011b). One method of practicing cultural acupuncture that the HPA has cultivated involves the organization's mapping elements of a story's content world onto the real world to call attention to systems that produce and sustain inequality. For example, prior to the release of the film *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2* (Yates, 2011), the HPA initiated a campaign that challenged fans to "destroy" real-world horcruxes, just as the characters in Rowling's novel must destroy a series of horcruxes before they are able to vanquish Voldemort. Among the horcruxes the HPA identified were human rights issues such as low wages, child slavery, and climate change. Just as Harry and his friends formed Dumbledore's Army to resist oppressive measures that headmaster Dolores Umbridge implemented at Hogwarts, so too does the HPA invite fans to come together as a real-life Dumbledore's Army to address social and political problems.

Slack's (2011a, 2011b) cultural acupuncture metaphor is ripe with possibility, especially for English teachers and librarians, both of whom traffic in the currency of stories and occupy a position that allows them to stay abreast of books, television shows, graphic novels, video games, and films that are popular with young people. Moreover, I argue that, from a pedagogical standpoint, the cultural acupuncture metaphor offers a user-friendly, portable conceptual model that educators can use to think about how they can deploy popular culture texts in ways that foster youth civic engagement; in other words, teachers are in an ideal position to create opportunities for young people to engage in literacy practices that are at the core of public activism. As explained, this includes the abilities to read critically, to become informed about an issue, to entertain alternative perspectives, and to use what one has learned to adopt a stance and advocate for a cause or position.

By tapping into the enthusiasm that many students have for popular young adult fiction and by creating opportunities for them to put not only this energy but also their literacies toward addressing problems in their local communities, teachers have the potential to ignite students' civic imaginations, thus encouraging them "to imagine alternatives to current social, political, or economic institutions or problems" (Jenkins et al., 2016, p. 29). In the next section, I describe a class project that was organized according to the logic of cultural acupuncture and which asked undergraduates in a young adult literature course I taught to use young adult dystopic fiction as a platform to engage in public activism.

The "Become a Mockingjay" Project

In fall 2015, I taught an undergraduate elective called "The Hunger Games Trilogy and Young Adult Dystopian Fiction." As the title suggests, the class focused specifically on the genre of young adult dystopian fiction, beginning with The Hunger Games trilogy (Collins, 2008, 2009, 2010) and moving on to examine other popular young adult dystopias, including (but not limited to) *Feed* (Anderson, 2002), *Little Brother* (Doctorow, 2010), *Divergent* (Roth, 2011), and *Legend* (Lu, 2013). Throughout the semester, students who took the course were invited to participate in ongoing conversations that literary critics and scholars have initiated about dystopic fiction. They were also asked to read the assigned young adult novels through the lens of critical theory. Given that dystopia, as a genre, is overtly interested in social and political issues, a considerable amount of class time was spent interrogating ideologies that the students identified in the young adult novels they read. Building on this work, several course assignments challenged the students to investigate identity politics in young adult dystopic fiction. (For an example of this work, see Connors, 2016).

Toward the end of the course, students were tasked with completing the "Become a Mockingjay" project, the title of which refers to the symbolic identity that Katniss Everdeen, the 16-year-old protagonist in The Hunger Games trilogy, performs. By asking students to "become Mockingjays," the final course project encouraged them to look deeper into their world with an eye toward identifying injustices they wished to bear witness to, much as Katniss does in the trilogy.

For organizational purposes, the "Become a Mockingjay" project consisted of three phases. In the first phase, students were asked to self-select an additional young adult dystopian novel; they could choose either a novel they wanted to read or one they had read previously, rereading it with an eye toward identifying social justice issues it addressed. After choosing a focus issue, the students began the second phase—conducting research to better understand how people experience that issue in the world beyond the text. In the third phase of the project, the students designed and produced a digital video essay in which they used audio, music, still images, video footage, and print to call attention to the issue. In doing so, they practiced cultural acupuncture (Slack, 2011a, 2011b), mapping aspects of the novel's content world onto the real world to demonstrate how the social justice issue impacts people. To conclude their video essays, the students invited members of their audience to become real-life Mockingjays by highlighting specific, concrete actions they could take to combat whatever issue they addressed. This required them to exercise their civic imaginations (Jenkins et al., 2016) insofar as it challenged them to imagine other possible social arrangements and relationships.

Each video essay's closing shot depicted an image of a hand with three fingers raised, a gesture that, in the context of The Hunger Games trilogy, is understood to signify resistance to oppression. Beneath the image, which graduate student Logan Hilliard designed and painted, was an appeal encouraging readers to "Become a Mockingjay" (see Fig. 1). This image was accompanied by the now familiar refrain of the Mockingjay whistle made famous by The Hunger Games film franchise.

The video essays that students ultimately produced examined an array of social justice issues, including gender-based discrimination, income disparity, body shaming, homelessness, discrimination based on one's sexual orientation, and unequal

Figure 1. "Become a Mockingjay" graphic

access to education. In the next section, I offer a close reading of one student's video essay for the purpose of demonstrating how she mapped elements of author Rick Yancey's young adult novel *The 5th Wave* (2013) onto the real world to call attention to what was at the time a developing humanitarian crisis: namely, the mass migration of thousands of Syrian refugees caught in the throes of a violent civil war. I conclude the article by examining the implications of the "Become a Mockingjay" Project for educators, paying special attention to how, through its conceptual design, the project supported students' participation in literacy practices that are associated with public activism and with democratic citizenship.

Calling Attention to the Syrian Refugee Crisis with *The 5th Wave*

Defining the Context and Analysis

A first-generation college student, Rebecca, was a senior majoring in English literature when she took my dystopian fiction course. Presented with the "Become a Mockingjay" project, she chose to read *The 5th Wave* (Yancey, 2013), the first novel in a trilogy of the same name. Rebecca's decision to read this particular book was motivated in part by the fact that a film adaptation was scheduled for release not long after the course ended. In the weeks that led up to the project, a brutal civil war in Syria had displaced thousands of refugees, causing them to flee their war-torn country in search of sanctuary in Europe. This wave of mass migration was accompanied by a spike in Islamophobic and nationalist sentiments, both in European nations and in the United States, as evidenced by the inflammatory discourse that then presidential candidate Donald Trump used during the course of his campaign in the Republican Party's primaries, including his promise to ban Muslims from entering the country. In November 2015, tensions escalated still further after a series of terrorist attacks on Paris were wrongly blamed on Syrian refugees. It was in this context that Rebecca read *The 5th Wave* (Yancey, 2013), a work of apocalyptic fiction that imagines an alien invasion of Earth.

I chose to examine Rebecca's video essay, which readers can view online at https://youtu.be/eYRWhxaa1qY, in part because of the powerful response it has elicited from audiences who have seen it, beginning from the time she screened it in class. At just over three minutes long, Rebecca's video essay interweaves music and spoken narration with a visual narrative track that splices together television news footage and still images to call attention to the Syrian refugee crisis. To examine her video in a way that would allow me to attend to the different semiotic resources that Rebecca used to make meaning, I created a table that consisted of two columns (see Fig. 2). In the right-hand column, I inserted 37 screenshots, each of which represented a single image that Rebecca incorporated in her video essay's visual narrative track. In the left-hand column, I described any music, spoken narration, or animated effects that accompanied these images, the result of which allowed me to attend to the text's multimodal design. Having prepared my data in this way, I next analyzed them to understand how Rebecca used *The 5th Wave* (Yancey, 2013) to practice cultural acupuncture (Slack, 2011a) and to call attention to the plight of Syrian refugees. With this in mind, I offer a close reading of her video essay in the next section.

The video essays that students ultimately produced examined an array of social justice issues, including gender-based discrimination, income disparity, body shaming, homelessness, discrimination based on one's sexual orientation, and unequal access to education.

Mapping the Content World of *The 5th Wave* onto a Geopolitical Crisis

From the beginning of her video essay to the end, Rebecca's spoken narration is accompanied by a somber (and somewhat repetitive) musical score that is performed on a keyboard and that serves to establish the tempo of her film. At times, the musical selection also functions to produce feelings of tension in the viewer, an effect that is exacerbated by Rebecca's use of seven jump cuts in the first 15 seconds of her video essay. When the video first begins playing, white letters drop against a black background, ultimately communicating the following excerpt from *The 5th Wave*: "The minute

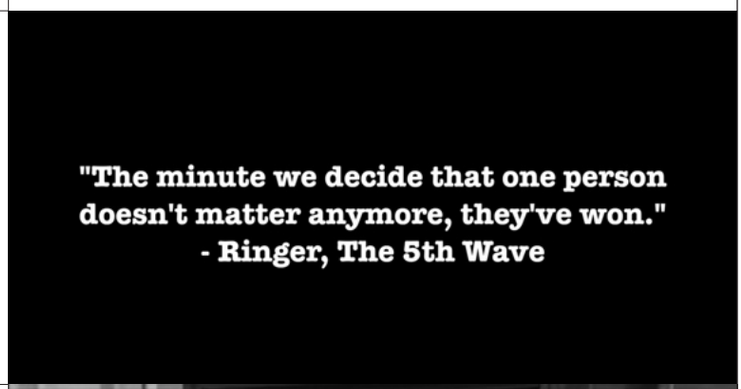
Verbal Track	Visual Track
00:00 – 00:04 *(keyboard music)*	
00:04 – 00:06 *"…immigration crisis in Europe…"*	
00:06 – 00:07 *"…three children drowned…"* *(the words "Desperate Journeys" are projected onto an image of rescue vessels in the background)*	

Figure 2. Excerpt from the breakdown of Rebecca's "Become a Mockingjay" video essay

we decide that one person doesn't matter anymore, they've won" (Yancey, 2013, p. 455).

In the montage that follows, Rebecca marks her first attempt to practice cultural acupuncture (Slack, 2011a) by mapping the latter theme from the novel's content world onto the world beyond the text. To do so, she intersperses dramatic television footage of Syrian refugees fleeing violence with images of a rescue worker retrieving the lifeless body of a drowned child. These images appear and disappear on the screen and are accompanied by bursts of static, the result of which creates the impression of television channels being changed in rapid succession. This effect is further enhanced by Rebecca's decision to overlay fragmented voices of news journalists on top of these images, the result of which creates a cacophony of sound—"*immigration crisis in Europe*"; "*Syrian refugees*"; "*three children drowned*"; "*Syrian refugees*";

"*It's become a symbol of the desperation*"; "*a surge of refugees*"; "*among the dead, several children, including a baby*"—and calls the viewer's attention to the humanitarian crisis the author intends to address. When Rebecca's voice is finally heard for the first time, she prompts her audience: "*Now* are you paying attention?"

At this juncture in the video, images of refugees fleeing violence give way to a quieter, calmer picture of Earth as it is seen from space. Rebecca takes advantage of this lull in the text's previously frenetic pace to refocus her audience's attention on *The 5th Wave* (Yancey, 2013), explaining that in the novel, "Earth is under attack and in danger of being completely taken over by aliens. In the final wave of the invasion, humans are trained to kill each other based on lies and misconceptions told to them by people of power." Having offered this brief plot summary, Rebecca asks, "So who are these aliens?" Answering her own question, she again practices cultural acupuncture, this time mapping the content world of Yancey's (2013) novel onto our world by speculating that the aliens may serve as a metaphor for the Other—that is, anyone who is perceived as different from members of the dominant culture.

In raising this possibility, Rebecca extends her own critical reading of *The 5th Wave* (Yancey, 2013) by building on arguments that contemporary literary critics and scholars have made about the functions that apocalyptic fiction serves. In examining zombie films, for example, Orpana (2014) uses the term "zombie imaginary" to refer to a process wherein "problems that are properly structural, political, and economic are personalized and projected onto the devalued, often racialized, and gendered bodies of people" (p. 298). In this context, the "aliens" in novels and films that feature apocalyptic invasions by alien hordes could be interpreted as signifying dominant culture's fear of the Other, or what Trimble (2010) calls the "'thirdworldification' of the 'First World'" (p. 295). Building on this argument, Rebecca attempts to make a similar interpretive move when, in her video essay, she proposes that in *The 5th Wave* (Yancey, 2013), aliens may serve as a proxy for "migrants and refugees coming into the U.S. from Syria."

Mapping a third element of *The 5th Wave*'s (Yancey, 2013) content world onto the Syrian refugee crisis, Rebecca speculates that in the novel, the final wave of the alien invasion may serve as a cautionary "metaphor for society's overtrust of people of power." In a moment that is fraught with political implications, she cuts to footage of Donald Trump, who at the time was seeking to become the Republican Party's nominee for President. Standing at a podium set against the backdrop of a large American flag, Trump emphatically asserts, "I don't want the people from Syria coming in because we don't know who they are." To clarify "who these people are," Rebecca juxtaposes Trump's words with video footage of Syrian men, women, and children wandering against the backdrop of a city ravaged by war. In doing so, she draws on the research she conducted and informs her audience that despite the United States' long history of accepting immigrants, the country had, since 2011, accepted only 1,500 Syrian refugees "compared to the almost 1.9 million [Syrian refugees] in Turkey."

In the final portion of her video essay, Rebecca engages in public activism, positioning both herself and her audience as agentive people capable of advocating for those in need of help.

Citing an article from *The Guardian* that described the Obama administration's plan to admit 10,000 refugees in 2016, Rebecca notes that, in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on Paris, which were falsely attributed to Syrian refugees, the governors of nearly 30 states announced their refusal to accept refugees, a decision that she attributes to discrimination based on "nationality and religion." Foregrounding this parallel between the content world of *The 5th Wave* (Yancey, 2013) and the social and political realities of our own world, Rebecca explains, "Just as in the novel, these people of power seem to have quite a knack for influence." She then seizes on an opportunity to speak to the racism and xenophobia that underscored (and continues to underscore) political debates about refugees and immigrants, explaining that to date, those charged with committing the terrorist attacks on Paris have all been European Nationals. This consequently leads her to wonder: "So what's holding us back? Why are we refusing to help people who are in desperate need of it?" Why, indeed?

In the final portion of her video essay, Rebecca engages in public activism, positioning both herself and her audience as agentive people capable of advocating for those in need of help. In doing so, she argues that, like Cassie, the protagonist in *The 5th Wave* (Yancey, 2013), "we can all take a stand and place our trust in the unknown." Her use of the word "we" here is important, as it signifies assumed solidarity between author and audience. Rebecca exploits this rhetorical move still further a few moments later when she positions the viewer as wondering, "How can I possibly help?" Answering this question, she proposes a specific course of action, identifying a series of concrete steps that viewers could conceivably take to support Syrian refugees, beginning with their volunteering time at organizations that exist to help these people. Recognizing that this option might not be available to all viewers, Rebecca recommends that her audience also consider donating money and resources to organizations such as InterAction and Twitter, both of which had set up accounts for this very purpose. Additional pathways to advocacy that Rebecca identifies include using the website Instacart "to donate groceries to people that have been displaced by the conflicts in Syria" and sponsoring clothes and canned food drives in one's local community.

Noting that "every little bit helps," Rebecca brings her video essay to a close by asking a question that is meant to provoke introspection as well as action: "Are we willing to let innocent people that are looking to us for safe haven die because we believe the misconceptions that we've been told about them?" Rejecting this possibility, she once again signifies her solidarity with her audience, reaching out to them with the following invitation: "Let's help these refugees together." In doing so, Rebecca once again positions her audience as like-minded people willing to combat social injustice. Through both her emotional investment in the plight of Syrian refugees and her willingness to advocate for them, it is possible to understand Rebecca's video essay as a form of social activism.

Implications and Conclusion

Anecdotal evidence that students shared when we screened their video essays in class suggested that participating in the "Become a Mockingjay" project led them to experience a number of positive outcomes. For example, several students indicated that their experience designing a video essay had in some ways proved more challenging than writing a traditional essay, and they described having lost themselves in the composing process. They also shared their excitement about the fact that their work had the potential to be viewed online; for the majority of these students, the project marked their first experience in school writing for an audience beyond a teacher. Indeed, several students recommended that in future iterations of the project, I consider adding a comment box on our class website that would allow viewers to respond to different authors' work. Although these outcomes are valuable to me, they do not reflect my primary purpose for the "Become a Mockingjay" project, which was to encourage student civic engagement.

With this in mind, I wish to examine two questions that readers may ask. First, is young adult fiction, which is associated with the domain of popular culture, and hence with entertainment, an appropriate site for encouraging students' participation in democratic politics, a domain that is traditionally treated with seriousness and reverence? Second, is it possible to understand the act of producing a digital video—a medium that uses a work of young adult fiction as a foundation to address social and political problems—to be a legitimate form of civic engagement? As will be seen, I argue that the answer to both of these questions is an emphatic, "Yes!"

Conceptualizing YAL as a Site for Democratic Politics

In *Entertaining the Citizen: When Politics and Popular Culture Converge* (2005), van Zoonen critiques arguments that conceptualize politics and popular culture as wholly distinct categories of human life. Problematizing this view, she argues, "Politics has to be connected to the everyday culture of its citizens; otherwise it becomes an alien sphere, occupied by strangers no one cares and bothers about" (p. 3). For many contemporary young people, young adult fiction does exist comfortably as part of their everyday lives and culture. Popular series such as The Hunger Games (Collins, 2008, 2009, 2010), The Lunar Chronicles (Meyer, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015), and The Mortal Instruments (Clare, 2007–2014) constitute sites where adolescents are able to participate in debates about beloved characters and storylines, produce fan fiction

and fan art, and design websites and blogs that allow them to represent their knowledge to other fans who share their affinities.

Beyond this, there is reason to believe that teenagers and college students are already interacting with young adult fiction in ways that reflect Jenkins et al.'s (2016) assertion that "popular culture, rather than leading to a disengagement from public life, is being used as a resource around which young people are making connections to civic and political worlds" (p. 107). Consider, for example, Garcia and Haddix's (2014) fascinating discussion of the racially infused debates that erupted among fans of The Hunger Games books and movies as they argued over which character—Katniss or Rue—inspired the rebellion against the Capitol and thus deserved the title of Mockingjay. Similar arguments took place over Stephenie Meyer's Twilight series (2005, 2006, 2007, 2008), as both fans and critics engaged in heated debates about whether the series' protagonist, Bella Swan, could be interpreted as a strong female character. In some cases, these discussions led to arguments about the meaning of feminism. Alternatively, one could consider the success that the HPA has experienced uniting fans in pursuing activist causes in the name of a fictional boy wizard. As these and a host of other examples suggest, politics and young adult fiction *already* exist comfortably alongside each other. Moreover, they indicate that "[t]he quality of civic participation is not inherently compromised by a critical engagement with commercial pop culture" (Brough & Shresthova, 2012, p. 9), thus clearing the way for educators to use these texts to support youth civic engagement.

Cultivating Literacy Practices and Dispositions Associated with Civic Engagement

Critics of my argument might understandably ask, "But can the act of producing a video essay that uses a work of young adult fiction to address complex social and political problems realistically be understood as a legitimate form of civic engagement?" The answer to this question is complicated. As Hentges (2015/2016) argues, projects like the one that I have examined in this article, or which Simmons (2012) recounts having undertaken with high school students whose passion for The Hunger Games trilogy inspired them to pursue activist causes in their local community, may raise students' awareness of problems such as poverty, gender inequality, racism, and religious intolerance, but they do not address the underlying social, political, and economic systems that are responsible for producing and sustaining these problems (p. 50). This is a valid criticism, and it warrants careful consideration. It should not, however, deter educators from designing instruction that positions students to use their literacy to call attention to injustices they recognize in their local communities. Indeed, as Simmons (2012) argues, English and language arts teachers in particular have a responsibility "to provide a venue in which students can use their language skills to promote change and contend with social responsibility and justice" (p. 31). Class projects like the "Become a Mockingjay" project, as well as those Simmons describes, may not change systems that perpetuate inequality, but they can and do support students' coming to understand themselves as agentive people capable of critiquing unjust systems—that is, as potential Mockingjays.

Class projects like the "Become a Mockingjay" project may not change systems that perpetuate inequality, but they can and do support students' coming to understand themselves as agentive people capable of critiquing unjust systems—that is, as potential Mockingjays.

It is also worth considering the different literacy practices that students had to participate in as they worked to complete the "Become a Mockingjay" project. To begin, Rebecca and her classmates had to read a young adult novel from a critical perspective, attending to whether it promulgated progressive or conservative ideologies and determining how it did so. Having identified a social justice issue in the book, they next had to conduct research on that issue to become more informed about it and to understand how people experience it in the world beyond the text. This necessitated their searching for relevant articles in online databases, reading with an eye toward critiquing the validity and reliability of their sources, taking notes, and so on. Throughout the course of the

project, the students regularly shared what they were learning with their classmates, which inspired discussion, and hence, a sharing of perspectives. Beyond this, the project asked the students to adopt a stance on a social justice issue, advocate for it, and propose a reasoned course of action their audience could realistically take to address it. This necessitated their participating in literacy practices that are associated with "old" literacy, such as writing a script or taking notes, as well as practices that are associated with "new" literacies—for example, composing with sound, video, images, and music. Finally, the students circulated their work by publishing it online and sharing it with members of their social networks via platforms such as Twitter and Facebook (a whole other set of literacy practices).

From beginning to end, then, participating successfully in the "Become a Mockingjay" project necessitated the students' engaging in practices that van Zoonen (2004) argues are at the core of democratic politics: gathering information; discussing that information with others; and using the information to advocate for a cause or position (p. 46). Significantly, while these practices were not explicitly taught in class, it is reasonable to believe that students would "acquire" them—in Gee's (2012) sense of the term, this is a process wherein one comes to know something "subconsciously by exposure to models and by trial and error" (p. 259)—provided they were given regular opportunities to participate in these practices over an extended period of time.

In addition to the aforementioned literacy practices, the students also had to experiment with a range of dispositions that are associated with democratic politics. To begin, they had to perceive themselves as people with both a vested interest in social and political issues and a responsibility to become more knowledgeable about them. They had to demonstrate a willingness to entertain other perspectives in order to understand how different people understood and experienced these issues, and in sharing their own perspectives in class, the students had to engage in reasoned discourse with people who didn't always share their beliefs and opinions. Most important, the students had to perceive themselves, if only momentarily, as people with not only a right, but also a responsibility to engage with and argue for social and political issues.

Finally, it is worth noting that in asking students to conceive of social arrangements and relationships beyond those that structure our contemporary society, the "Become a Mockingjay" project created space for them to exercise their civic imaginations (Jenkins et al., 2016). The importance of this point cannot be overstated, especially at a time when political discourse in the United States is infected by unabashed nationalism, xenophobia, racism, and intolerance. As Jenkins and his colleagues (2016) argue, "[O]ne cannot change the world unless one can imagine what a better world might look like" (p. 29). Their assertion echoes another made by author J. K. Rowling who, in delivering a 2011 commencement address at Harvard University, instructed her audience, "We do not need magic to change the world, we carry all the power we need inside ourselves already: we have the power to imagine better" (para. 9).

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Below the Surface Level of Social Justice:

Using Quad Text Sets to Plan Equity-Oriented Instruction

Have you seen the social justice warrior memes? If you do a Google search, you may find some like these: "Minorities are strong, independent people, which is why they need me to speak for them." "There must be some way this victimizes me." "I support equality for all. But f**k those white people." The list goes on.

While we believe the work of education is closely tied to issues of equity and justice, we understand that, as these memes show, "social justice" can be perceived to be the latest buzzword or the most recent version of political correctness. These memes present the concept as merely lip service—a trend with little meaning. But we know that true engagement in social justice requires a more profound level of commitment; teachers and students must push below the surface. As teachers and teacher educators, we believe that we need to grapple with the sometimes complicated issues of social justice and learn to become activists and agents. Literature can provide us with a vehicle for these efforts.

Our major motivations include commitments to educational equity and a more just society, and we are not alone. In this age of accountability, social justice is now evaluated by the National Council of Teachers of English when reviewing applications for accreditation of teacher education programs. Standard 7 reads, "Candidates demonstrate knowledge of how theories and research about social justice, diversity, equity, student identities, and schools as institutions can enhance students' opportunities to learn in English," and Element 1 asks teacher candidates to "plan and implement English language arts and literacy instruction that promotes social justice and critical engagement with complex issues related to maintaining a diverse, inclusive, equitable society" (NCTE, 2012). As a result, we have considered how young adult literature can help meet the goal of promoting social justice.

Many teachers have come to understand the value of YA texts as tools to engage their adolescent students. However, these texts have the power to do even more than connect with readers: YA titles have the potential to address vital issues of social justice. In this article, we will show how one of our course assignments, the Quad Text Set, can be designed with the intention of pushing teacher candidates to look past the surface level of equity and justice issues in ELA instruction. While this assignment has been discussed previously in scholarship (Lewis, Walpole, & McKenna, 2014), this particular article aims to highlight how teachers might use the Quad Text Set as a planning framework to build their students' knowledge of social justice.

Social justice pedagogy is defined by Carlisle, Jackson, and George (2006) as "the conscious and reflective blend of content and process intended to enhance equity across multiple social identity groups, . . . foster critical perspectives, and promote social action" (p. 57). As Keehn (2015) reveals, some of its chief aims include:

> Providing students with the tools to think critically about their own social identities and social locations, developing an understanding of various manifestations of privilege and oppression, building an understanding of the historical

> roots of structural inequality, and developing individuals' and groups' capacities to take action against injustice. (pp. 374–375)

We believe that planning ELA instruction that uses sets of strategically connected texts (that include high-quality YA titles) has great promise. Such instruction can be used to provide students with exposure to multiple perspectives and the background knowledge required for critical engagement with issues of equity and social justice, potentially inspiring them to become agents of change.

Text Sets in English Language Arts

Using sets of connected texts in English language arts is not a new idea. As Applebee (1974) points out, text pairings and text sets have been part of curricular reform efforts since the early 20th century. More recently, they have been used to encourage robust discussions (see Hartman & Alison, 1996), to foster connections with canonical literature (see Herz & Gallo, 2005; Kaywell, 1997), and to leverage quality young adult literature and multimedia texts to build mature understandings of thematic issues (see Pytash, Batchelor, Kist, & Srsen, 2014). It is this last goal that animates our engagement with this planning framework in our preservice teacher education program. More specifically, with a focus on social justice, we use the Quad Text Set to measure NCTE Standard 7 (NCTE, 2012) for accreditation.

As researchers have argued, teaching for social justice is an important and complex pursuit (Lee, 2011). If teachers are to engage their students in robust conversations around issues of equity and social justice using challenging and complex ideas and texts—while avoiding surface-level conversations that "celebrate diversity" but do little to encourage students to be active change agents—students must have well-developed background knowledge. Recent research demonstrates that students are provided with significantly limited reading opportunities in many secondary ELA classrooms (Swanson et al., 2016). However, studies also show that the reading and comprehension of individual texts can provide students with both the language and background knowledge needed to be successful with subsequent texts (Shanahan, Fisher, & Frey, 2012). We believe, therefore, that these connected text sets offer teacher candidates a framework for the reading volume their students need in order to practice sophisticated reading skills *as well as* the critical background knowledge required to engage in important conversations around justice and equity. We argue that without relevant background knowledge, our candidates' future students will be unprepared to engage "with complex issues related to maintaining a diverse, inclusive, equitable society" (NCTE, 2012).

The Quad Text Set Assignment

For this assignment, we have adapted the Quad Text Set approach of Lewis, Walpole, and McKenna (2014). This framework is composed of four separate texts that work together to build the critical background knowledge needed to engage with a complex target text, as well as address issues of equity and social justice. We ask our teacher candidates to build these instructional units using four categories of text: 1) a video clip, piece of artwork, or musical selection to introduce the topic and develop general background knowledge about the text or theme; 2) an informational text that builds more specific contextual or thematic knowledge and highlights issues of justice and equity; 3) a complex canonical or contemporary young adult target text; and 4) a canonical or contemporary young adult text to extend student understanding of equity and social justice issues (Lewis & Walpole, 2016). (For a complete assignment description and rubric, see Appendix A.)

Such instruction can be used to provide students with exposure to multiple perspectives and the background knowledge required for critical engagement with issues of equity and social justice, potentially inspiring them to become agents of change.

Before the Quad Text Set is assigned, teacher candidates read nine YA novels and apply critical lenses (Appleman, 2014) to these texts in face-to-face discussions, online discussion posts, and two formal papers. The lenses lay the groundwork for social justice

exploration, as they help uncover missing voices and highlight power relations in texts. In the next sections, we discuss in depth how two students successfully designed their Quad Text Sets.

Quad Text Set Example: Racial Inequality

To understand how these text sets are constructed, we first provide a sample set that one of our teacher candidates, Rachel, designed. Rachel centered her set on the criminalization of people of color in the United States, focusing specifically on police brutality against African Americans. She chose as her target text the award-winning young adult book *All American Boys* by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely (2015). This dual-narrative novel presents two accounts of an incident of police violence against an African American high school student. One perspective is from Rashad, the victim himself, who is unjustly accused and assaulted in a neighborhood store by a white officer; Rashad's sections are written by Jason Reynolds, an African American author. The other perspective is from a white classmate, Quinn, who witnessed the police brutality but feels conflicted about providing an eyewitness account because of his close relationship with the police officer and the officer's family. Quinn's sections are written by Brendan Kiely, a white author. One of the most intriguing and realistic aspects of this novel is the nuanced way in which the authors treat all characters: they all have both positive and negative characteristics, making them realistically human rather than stereotypical.

Once students have been exposed to the inequality inherent in historic and modern instantiations of segregation through the video and informational texts, they might be better prepared to take action against this injustice due to their more keenly developed critical perspectives.

To prepare students to engage with this text, Rachel began by choosing two short video clips from the movie *The Help* (Barnathan, 2011). Although this film is set in the Jim Crow South during the 1960s, the clips clearly demonstrate the physical proximity of blacks and whites, while also reinforcing the essential separateness of the groups and the inequality that exists between them. This separateness is a key motif in *All American Boys* (Reynolds & Kiely, 2015), which is reinforced by the dual narrative—one chapter written from Rashad's perspective followed by a chapter written from Quinn's perspective. In the movie, black characters work and sometimes live in the same homes as their white employers, yet are not allowed to be a part of that society with its legal, financial, and social privileges. Similarly, Rashad and Quinn go to the same high school and have friends in common, yet still lead lives that are almost entirely segregated by race—a problem that emerges as the town's demographics transition from primarily white to more racially diverse. While the implicit bias of the police officer likely caused his violent assault of Rashad, segregation exacerbates misunderstanding and mistrust and contributes to the unjust act. Unlike *All American Boys*, *The Help*—both the movie and the book (Stockett, 2009) it was adapted from—has been justly criticized for its shortcomings in the authenticity of its voice, in its depiction of the horrors of Jim Crow and the struggles of the civil rights movement, and in echoing the harmful trope of the "white savior" (Dargis, 2011; Solomon, 2011). However, the short video clips Rachel incorporated into her Quad Text Set served her instructional purpose by allowing her to target both the historical roots of segregation as well as the current inequalities that are the thematic focus of *All American Boys*.

To build more specific background knowledge on racial profiling and the injustices still suffered by young African Americans today (for those students who may not know this information directly), Rachel chose the article, "Why is the NYPD after Me?" (Peart, 2011), which details the experiences of a five-time victim of New York's "stop and frisk" program. This text documents a very real manifestation of privilege, power, and oppression and clearly addresses the effects of implicit bias and "structural inequality" (Keehn, 2015) that prove to be essential to understanding Rashad's victimization in the novel. Furthermore, once students have been exposed to the inequality inherent in historic and modern instantiations of segregation through the video and informational texts, they might be better prepared to take action against this injustice due to their more keenly developed critical perspectives

(Carlisle, Jackson, & George, 2006; Keehn, 2015). This is the lesson that Quinn learns in *All American Boys* (Reynolds & Kiely, 2015) as he comes to recognize the privilege that comes with his skin color and the need to stand up and march—for Rashad and for racial justice—in a Black Lives Matter type of protest. His is a first step in healing the separations that he has been a part of, and it provides a model of action for students.

As an extension text, Rachel chose specific chapters of *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 2006) in order to delve into the historical nature of these injustices and to help students draw comparisons between Tom Robinson and Rashad Butler. Here Rachel encouraged students to explore the nature of the characters' experiences, recognize how institutional racism played a role in the injustices they suffered, and understand the responsibilities that we share to become change agents against that injustice. It is important to note that *To Kill a Mockingbird* could have been used as the target text for this Quad Text Set; it is one of the few texts that is both pervasive in high school English classrooms and also directly addresses racism. Unfortunately, Lee's novel is often the *only* text used to discuss race, which is problematic because it is written by a white author, told from a perspective of a white narrator, and not contemporary; these characteristics can give the illusion that racism is a historical rather than current problem. Instead, Rachel chose to focus this set on *All American Boys* (Reynolds & Kiely, 2015) because of its relevance to a current racial equality issue and its provision of diverse perspectives of both black and white main characters (and authors). Additionally, unlike *To Kill a Mockingbird*—which ends in Scout's deeper understanding but no activism—*All American Boys* ends with a call to action for both the main characters and the novel's readers.

Quad Text Set Example: Gender Inequality

Racism is not the only social justice issue that students might consider in the Quad Text Set assignment. Kelly decided to construct a text about gender inequality and chose the young adult novel *The Disreputable History of Frankie Landau-Banks* (Lockhart, 2009) as her target text. This book details the struggles of an adolescent young woman as she negotiates her way through her rarefied, male-dominated boarding school, aptly named Alabaster Prep. During the course of the novel, Frankie grapples with both the attractions of a powerful romantic relationship and her exclusion from the activities of the school's influential, male-only secret society: The Loyal Order of Basset Hounds. Although Lockhart's book humorously details how Frankie manipulates the all-male club to do her bidding, it also clearly addresses the dangers that women face in a society that often does not allow them to find or express their voices beyond those ways that are socially sanctioned.

Kelly decided to construct a text about gender inequality and chose the young adult novel *The Disreputable History of Frankie Landau-Banks* (Lockhart, 2009) as her target text.

In order to prepare students to understand how women can be repressed, silenced, or stereotyped, Kelly chose two short video texts that introduce students to the harmful impact of gendered expectations for women and girls: the Always #LikeAGirl (2014) and Always #LikeAGirl–Unstoppable (2015) videos. These provocative commercials ask grown men and women to demonstrate, on camera, what it means to run, fight, and throw "like a girl." In the opening of the videos, the adult interviewees invariably pantomime weak, ineffective, or pathetic imitations of those actions—physical demonstrations of the perceived weakness and ineffectiveness of girls. The interviewers then ask the same questions of preadolescent females. Unlike the ineffectual representations of feminine power offered by the older interviewees, the girls take these requests seriously and put a great deal of effort and power into the actions they are requested to perform. The message is clear: as children grow into adolescents and adults, they fall prey to the gendered expectations and stereotypes of a male-dominated society and lose their ability to control their own identity and story. These are stereotypes that Frankie fights against mightily in *The Disreputable History of Frankie Landau-Banks* (Lockhart, 2009), though there are no easy answers; at the end of the novel, it is unclear whether she has succeeded in her crusade to gain power and voice.

To build on this background knowledge and understanding of basic issues of gender and power, Kelly chose a *Time* article (Cheng, 2016) from our recent

presidential election cycle that provides a historical perspective of Hillary Clinton's robust public speaking style. This article not only offers a critique of those who criticize Clinton's "raised voice" speeches, but also addresses the key problem that Frankie faces in this novel: how she can have her "voice" recognized and respected in an environment that is male-dominated. As Cheng concludes:

> An entrenched irony of public expression in American democracy is how individuals who endure systemic oppression (women, the LGBT community, people of color)—who might have the most reason to shout—tend to be the same individuals who are urged to keep their voices down, to stay calm, and to laugh a little (or "smile," as Joe Scarborough and others have advised Clinton). (Cheng, n.p.)

This text helps students understand the tension faced by oppressed groups, in this case, women; simply "speaking up" is not an adequate answer. Women are burdened with the obligation of expressing themselves in only limited ways in order to be heard and taken seriously. Armed with the knowledge of gendered expectations in the videos and the specific manifestation of those expectations in the *Time* article, students are better prepared to engage in the key thematic issues of *The Disreputable History of Frankie Landau Banks* (Lockhart, 2009).

This assignment facilitates strategic, deliberate literacy instruction that builds background knowledge about privilege and oppression.

For Kelly's extension text, she chose several excerpts from the memoir *Wild* (Strayed, 2012). In this work, the author shares her treacherous and thrilling experiences as she decides to hike the Pacific Crest Trail on her own after feeling as if her life has fallen apart. Kelly chose specific sections from this story that focused on the interactions that Strayed has with the males she encounters on the trail. These targeted excerpts provided students with real-life examples of how gendered expectations impact interpersonal exchanges. However, they also provided students with opportunities to explore the intertextual connections between Frankie and Strayed and to examine their burdens and choices and the impact that those choices have on their ability to tell their stories. In consideration of the characters of Frankie and Strayed, students were invited to "think critically about their own social identities and social locations," and develop "an understanding of various manifestations of privilege and oppression" (Keehn, 2015, pp. 374–375). Within the moral laboratory of these texts (Zbikowski & Collins, 1994), students can then use their deeper understandings to evaluate the characters' fight against oppression, the relative success of those struggles, and the extent to which this analysis can inform their own social activism.

Discussion

While many educators recognize the importance of equity, and the National Council of Teachers of English's Standard 7 (NCTE, 2012) now measures how well teacher preparation programs prepare teacher candidates in the promotion of social justice, it is all too easy to treat these issues at surface levels. Fortunately, we have found that it is possible for teachers to push below the surface to address social justice themes through young adult literature paired with three additional texts in a Quad Text Set. This assignment facilitates strategic, deliberate literacy instruction that builds background knowledge about privilege and oppression. For some secondary students (and some teacher candidates), such context may be completely new—mirroring the experiences of Quinn, who was unaware of the extent of his own white privilege and racial biases. For others, the knowledge in informational and media texts may validate their own experiences, as might have been the case for Rashad and Frankie, who were themselves marginalized and who struggled for justice. In both situations, placing the texts in conversation with one another and making conscious choices about teaching for social justice can create a more in-depth understanding of the literature as well as provide inspiration to act.

The complexity of the YA texts chosen by Rachel and Kelly illustrates another important lesson: there are no easy answers to social justice issues. Action is needed, as Quinn and Rashad show, and victories can be won, as with Frankie. But these actions do not end the struggle or solve all problems completely. In addition, the complicated choices and situations faced by these characters show that there is more than one "right" way to achieve the goal of social justice. A

Table 1. Sample text sets for issues of social justice and equity

Economic Inequality			
Target Text: *The Great Gatsby* (Fitzgerald, 1995)	**Video Text:** "Wealth Inequality in America" (Politizane, 2012)	**Informational Text:** FDR's acceptance speech at the 1936 Democratic National Convention (Roosevelt, 1936)	**Extension Text:** Selected chapters from *Disreputable History of Frankie Landau-Banks* (Lockhart, 2009)
Target Text: *Ready Player One* (Cline, 2011)	**Video Text:** "Dystopian Literature" (Joshualane06, 2011)	**Informational Text:** "Hunger in America" (Feeding America, 2017)	**Extension Text:** "A Modest Proposal" (Swift, 2004)
Gender Roles and Heteronormativity			
Target Text: *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* (Sáenz, 2014)	**Musical Texts:** Songs from *Mulan* (Coats, 1998): "I'll Make a Man out of You" (Wilder & Zippel, 1998), "A Girl Worth Fighting For" (Wilder, 1998a), "Honor to Us All" (Wilder, 1998b)	**Informational Text:** "This Teen Has No Time for Outdated Gender Roles for Moms and Dads" (Pittman, 2016)	**Extension Text:** Selections from *The Outsiders* (Hinton, 2012)
Mental Trauma and Mental Health			
Target Text: *The Kite Runner* (Hosseini, 2003)	**Video Texts:** Selections from *The Hunting Ground* (Blavin & Blavin, 2015); "PTSD and the War at Home" (Military.com, 2014)	**Informational Texts:** "Remembering Afghanistan's Golden Age" (Bumiller, 2009)	**Extension Text:** *Boy Toy* (Lyga, 2009)
Immigration			
Target Texts: *American Born Chinese* (Yang, 2007) and *The Shadow Hero* (Yang & Liew, 2014)	**Video Text:** "Children of Asian Immigrants Reveal Sacrifices Their Parents Made" (Boldly, 2015)	**Informational Text:** "Chinese Immigration" (Library of Congress, n.d.)	**Extension Text:** *The Joy Luck Club* (Tan, 2006)
Colonialism and Native American Rights			
Target Text: *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (Alexie & Forney, 2007)	**Video Text:** "In Whose Honor?" (Rosenstein, 1997)	**Informational Text:** "On the Reservation and Off, Schools See a Changing Tide" (Johnson, 2008)	**Extension Texts:** Poetry from *Baptism of Desire* (Erdrich, 1990)
Exceptionalities			
Target Text: *Marcelo in the Real World* (Stork, 2011)	**Video Text:** "Couple with Asperger's Syndrome: 'We're even more extraordinary together'" (Wasser & Chiaramonte, 2017).	**Informational Texts:** "Asperger Syndrome" (Autism Speaks, Inc., 2017)	**Extension Text:** "The Problem of Autism in Young Adult Fiction" (Rozema, 2014)

key task in building a Quad Text Set, therefore, is to select a rich target text and purposeful informational, multimodal, and extension texts that help students explore and consider social justice issues in multifaceted ways. For more ideas of topics and texts that could be incorporated into a Quad Text Set, please see Table 1.

Though the assignment is grounded in comprehension research, the effects of the social justice Quad Text Set on secondary students have not yet been researched. Nevertheless, this framework has become an important tool to help our preservice teachers plan ELA instruction that more comprehensively works to address issues of social justice and equity. We shared these two student examples because they illustrate how text sets can be leveraged to build background knowledge and include multiple perspectives when planning instruction around social justice issues. However, we also freely acknowledge that not all projects are this strong. Although our program assessment data demonstrate that many of our teacher candidates are gaining proficiency in using text sets to meaningfully engage with issues of equity in ELA instruction, some of our candidates are not gaining this proficiency. Over the course of the three semesters we have assigned this project, 51% of candidates completed social justice text sets that met our expectations (3 rubric points), and 38% produced sets that exceeded expectations (5 rubric points). However, 11% of candidates did not meet our expectations for this assignment. (We again invite you to refer to Appendix A for the full assignment description and rubric.)

We shared these two student examples because they illustrate how text sets can be leveraged to build background knowledge and include multiple perspectives when planning instruction around social justice issues.

As is the case for the characters in *All American Boys* (Reynolds & Kiely, 2015) and *The Disreputable History of Frankie Landau-Banks* (Lockhart, 2009) who experience the ongoing nature of social justice work, our efforts persist; we must continue to adjust and adapt our instruction so that we are focused on preparing all of our teacher candidates to push below the surface. We feel there is great value in designing future research around directly examining the impact of our teacher candidates' work on their secondary students in order to measure if and how the Quad Text Sets foster social justice agency.

None of us wants to be like the shallow, shrill, self-righteous social justice warrior shown in the popular memes discussed in the introduction. Rather, we seek deeper understandings and a truer commitment to social justice by examining multiple perspectives, understanding the workings of power and privilege on personal and societal levels, and inspiring action for justice. Young adult literature in strategically chosen text sets can provide us with the vehicle to do so.

Authors' Note

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Appendix A: Quad Text Set for Social Justice and Equity

Directions

You are to develop a mini-unit that is composed of three specific parts:

1. A planning template where you identify your learning objectives related to social justice and equity, a target canonical text, the background knowledge needed to engage that text, and a list of texts and digital media that can provide that knowledge.
2. An explanation of how the texts will be used in instruction and the strategies, materials, and assessments that will be utilized with each text and how these are aligned with the CCSS[1] and your social justice focus.
3. An instructional calendar or outline of your unit and activities.

This unit should provide an instructional framework for using multimedia texts to build critical background knowledge, should pair YA texts with canonical texts to build background knowledge and differentiate instruction to meet student needs, and should engage students with issues of equity and social justice. All texts should be closely related to the canonical text, should help build student motivation and the background knowledge needed to engage the canonical text and issues of social justice, and be focused on building the key critical, analytical, and writing skills that the Common Core Standards demand.

Rubric

Criteria	Ratings			Points
	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Does Not Meet Expectations	
Alignment with CCSS and State Standards	The candidate clearly aligns the text set and instructional activities with the CCSS and state standards: 5 points.	The candidate generally aligns the text set and instructional activities with the CCSS and state standards: 3 points.	The candidate fails to align the text set and instructional activities with the demands of the CCSS or state standards: 1 point.	5
Social Justice and Equity	Candidate's plan creatively promotes social justice, critical engagement with complex issues, and an equitable society: 5 points.	Candidate's plan promotes social justice, critical engagement with complex issues, and an equitable society: 3 points.	Candidate's plan does not promote social justice, critical engagement with complex issues, or an equitable society: 1 point.	5
Instructional Strategies for Reading Texts and Resources and Schedule	Candidate plans creative and sophisticated instruction that utilizes a variety of strategies, materials, and assessments to help students engage with complex texts and allows the candidate to assess the effectiveness of instruction. The sequence of instructional events is clear: 5 points.	Candidate plans instruction that utilizes strategies, materials, and assessments to help students engage with complex texts and allows the candidate to assess the effectiveness of instruction. The sequence of instructional events is generally clear: 3 points.	Candidate plans instruction that does not utilize a variety of strategies, materials, and assessments to help students engage with complex texts or allow the candidate to assess the effectiveness of instruction. The sequence of instructional events is unclear: 1 point.	5
Instruction and Assessment for Composing Texts	Candidate plans creative and sophisticated instruction that utilizes a variety of strategies, materials, and assessments to help students compose a variety of texts and allows the candidate to assess the effectiveness of instruction: 5 points.	Candidate plans instruction that utilizes a variety of strategies, materials, and assessments to help students compose a variety of texts and allows the candidate to assess the effectiveness of instruction: 3 points.	Candidate plans instruction that does not utilize a variety of strategies, materials, and assessments to help students compose a variety of texts or allow the candidate to assess the effectiveness of instruction: 1 point.	5
Consideration of Form, Audience, Context, and Purpose	Candidate evidences a sophisticated understanding of form, audience, context, and purpose, and conventions of English language: 5 points.	Candidate evidences an understanding of form, audience, context, and purpose, and conventions of English language: 3 points.	Candidate does not evidence an understanding of form, audience, context, and purpose, or conventions of English language: 1 point.	5

1. 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.

Jody N. **Polleck** and Carla **España**

Revolutions and Resistance:

Creating Space for Adolescent Agency and Advocacy through a Critical Reading of Sonia Manzano's *The Revolution of Evelyn Serrano*

Adolescents growing up in the United States at this critical time are witnessing, and perhaps participating in, protests across the nation. It is only natural then that questions may arise around issues of resistance and advocacy. We call on educators to address these issues in creative and thoughtful ways (Emdin, 2016). One way to help youth process their questions is to join the journey of Evelyn, the protagonist in Sonia Manzano's (2012) *The Revolution of Evelyn Serrano*, who shares with readers her growing political consciousness around inequities and injustice.

For some, like Evelyn and other characters in the text, political activism is a way to merge an awareness of patterns of oppression with a personal vision of a more just world; young people can see themselves as change agents engaging in a "critical hope" for the humanity of all peoples (Duncan-Andrade, 2009). *The Revolution of Evelyn Serrano* tells the story of 14-year-old Evelyn growing up in Spanish Harlem in 1969 during the rise of the Young Lords Party, a Puerto Rican activist group that advocated for the independence of Puerto Rico and equitable treatment, resources, and opportunities for the community. Manzano gives us this history through the eyes of Evelyn, who is not only finding her place within her own skin and family—particularly in shaping her relationships with her mother and Abuela—but also finding her place in the world of resistance and revolution.

The purpose of this article is to illustrate how teachers can use texts, such as *The Revolution of Evelyn Serrano,* to help students develop understandings of oppressive practices within the United States and globally. We focus on the historical legacy of activism, especially the role of youth as change agents in their local communities, national efforts, and global revolutions. We, the authors of this article, have over 30 years of combined experience teaching culturally responsive and transformative fiction and nonfiction at both middle and high school levels. Jody has taught in urban high schools as an English and reading intervention teacher and literacy coach for 18 years, while Carla has taught middle school and served as a K–12 literacy consultant nationally and abroad in Chile, Colombia, and Mexico. Carla has used *The Revolution of Evelyn Serrano* in middle school book clubs and in one high school for a social movements unit. We share here our vision for teaching this novel within our current political climate, using both our expertise in critical pedagogy and our experiences with culturally responsive curriculum.

Youth Activism and Critical Pedagogy

Youth have been key actors in social movements historically and worldwide, from the civil rights and anti-war movements in the 1960s to more recent waves of advocacy in the realms of feminism, environmentalism, and the rights of LGBTQIA people and immigrants (Costanza-Chock, 2012). For example, youth have been some of our most critical leaders within the Standing Rock Resistance, in which young Native Americans ran 500 miles across the country to

fight against the development of the Dakota Access Pipeline. Unfortunately, current policies and ideologies both prevent youth from "full democratic participation" and stereotype them in the media as "passive consumers of civic life" (Ginwright, Cammarota, & Noguera, 2005, p. 25). Despite claims that youth are not involved in civic issues, however, voting and engagement in community service have increased in the last decade (Ames, 2013; Putman, 2001; Wolk, 2009). In fact, much of the youth activism that occurs often goes "unacknowledged"; simultaneously, many of our schools are not teaching students "how to exercise agency" (Forest, Kimmel & Garrison, 2013, p. 138).

To address these concerns, we interrogate what activism is within this novel and our communities, while also working to build teacher capacity for the integration of social justice and critical literacy in the classroom. After engaging in their own critical self-reflection on ideologies around justice and systems of oppression, teachers can support students in playing a critical role in social and community problem solving. We define social justice as a pursuit of equal opportunities, resources, and access to human rights and social services that manifest themselves in the everyday lives of diverse populations (Ingram & Walters, 2007). Social justice is about dismantling the hierarchies, calling out the systems that enable inequities, and engaging in critical questioning of issues of power. This can be done by building a shared vision and toolkit for changing "coercive and debilitating public policy" (Ginwright, Cammarota, & Noguera, 2005, p. 25).

Additionally, the suggestions in this article come from a critical pedagogical approach in which students see themselves as change agents and educators create spaces to foster this awareness (Gainer, 2010; Janks, 2014; Morrell, 2002). Critical pedagogy asks youth to explore the relationships between power and domination—to unpack the "socially constructed meaning embedded in texts as well as the political and economic contexts in which texts are embedded" (Morrell, p. 73). This critical work of making meaning begins first with the process of reflection, wherein students are given time and safe spaces to consider their own backgrounds and experiences and how those have impacted their ideologies and sense of agency. We provide suggestions for how to equip students to pose critical questions and be anti-racist, participatory, and experiential, all while maintaining commitments to academic rigor and cultural and linguistic responsiveness (Au, Bigelow, & Karp, 2007).

Most important, we look at efforts around social justice and critical pedagogy as ways to create *educational sanctuaries*—social spaces where historically marginalized students are provided with instruction and curriculum that integrate their home lives and where students have intellectual and artistic freedom to engage with social equity issues (Espinoza, 2009). The context in which we teach includes students from Spanish Harlem, some of whom have recently arrived from Puerto Rico. We selected this novel because we believed our students could make powerful connections with the characters and their historical experiences. When we expose students to stories that mirror their communities and histories, we are telling them that their stories matter and are a critical part of what is learned (Miller, 2014). In doing so, we are folding into our curriculum their experiences and ideologies, while also asking them to do critical work where they can deconstruct notions of power and learn ways to resist inequity.

Reading texts such as *The Revolution of Evelyn Serrano* is critical for all students, including white students and those who grow up in different contexts compared to those in this novel, as these narratives open up the Western canon and allow for a plurality of voices and perspectives (Nieto & Bode, 2012). Manzano's text provides a way to not only help students understand and appreciate the legacy of the Young Lords, but also to understand how power is unequally distributed within our communities. As Ehst and Hermann-Wilmarth (2014) explain, "Teachers can provide students with opportunities to learn multiple stories, to investigate their own histories and cultural assumptions, and to learn how to ask and answer questions that push ideas into action" (p. 30).

Beginning with What We Know—and Who We Are

Before introducing any text, it is critical that we first ask students to reflect on their own experiences and backgrounds, as who we are impacts what we read, how we read, and how we engage with our communities (Miller & Kirkland, 2010). Some of the major themes that arise in *The Revolution of Evelyn Serrano* center around identity, family, community,

transformation, revolution, advocacy, resistance, and political awareness. We can meet students where they are by asking them what they make of these concepts. Exploration of guiding essential themes and questions (see Fig. 1) allows students to consider critical ideas around social justice and life experiences prior to reading the novel. These themes and questions should also be revisited, as they are present throughout the text. With our own students, we introduced these ideas initially through individual and collaborative writing and then further discussed them in small- and large-group discussions.

[The] critical work of making meaning begins first with the process of reflection, wherein students are given time and safe spaces to consider their own backgrounds and experiences and how those have impacted their ideologies and sense of agency.

We also recommend beginning this work by participating with students—sharing our own journeys with these topics and co-creating norms for conversations, especially when discussions address the dehumanization of certain groups of people. Development of safe spaces is not an easy process, nor one that should be taken lightly. Creating a community that is culturally responsive means building curriculum and instruction around students' lives and allowing for authentic collaborative conversations (Polleck & Shabdin, 2013).

We can build this kind of culturally responsive space on the first day of the unit (if this work has not already been done previously in class) by having students discuss in small groups their responses to the following questions: *Who am I? How do I identify myself or introduce myself to others? What groups do I belong to?* Next, we can ask students to draw a circle, record their name within it, and sketch lines from the circle outwards, labeling each line with some of the identifying markers they discussed. (See Carla's example in Appendix A.) We can then ask students to select which three identity markers are most important currently, providing explanations for each. This is a crucial conversation and experience to launch discussions of the novel, as our lives are personally connected to acts of social justice. This is also a place to scaffold students' future analysis of the main character, Evelyn, tracking how she identifies herself, the groups she belongs to, and the experiences that shape her. These "Circles of Identities" can be revisited throughout the text in transformative moments; students can reexamine scenes, for example, in which Evelyn's perception of herself shifts as a result of her participation in the activism enacted by the Young Lords.

Next, we can ask: *How do I define my community? What are some issues of access or inequity in my community? What would need to change for my community to be a more just community?* Students can bring photographs from their homes and neighborhoods to share with others or to use as inspiration for writing short imagery narratives or poems. Once this work has been introduced around identity and commu-

Revolution	Advocacy and Resistance	Transformation
1. What is a revolution? 2. How do community change agents engage in revolutionary practices? 3. Why do revolutions occur, how are they sustained, and what is their impact on communities and individuals? 4. What is an internal revolution versus an external revolution?	1. What would be something that you might change about your community and/or country? 2. Why does this matter to you? 3. How do you think you could make a change that would make a difference? 4. Think about the current political climate. What acts of advocacy and resistance have you seen within just the last year?	1. What is a transformation? 2. What does it mean when a person has been transformed? 3. Can you remember a time when you felt like you had been transformed or a time when you felt like you "evolved"? 4. What contributed to your own transformation?

Figure 1. Themes and essential questions

nity, we can then discuss notions of "politics." These politics are not bipartisan, but more broadly encompass students' ideologies, which are shaped by their positionalities. For example, because many of our students are immigrants or children of immigrants, their political ideologies are shaped by these positionalities. In these kinds of discussions, teachers can ask the following: *How do our identity and community shape our "politics" or our ideologies and belief systems?* We recommend asking students to bring in their community perspectives, as integration of our students' families and neighborhoods shows them that we not only care about their lives, but that those stories are critical for our own learning, development, and connection. We can either invite community members to visit the classroom to discuss their responses to these questions or have students interview family and other community members to learn ways in which we construct and view our identities and communities and how those perceptions impact how we participate within political systems and civic engagements.

The themes noted in Figure 1 can also be discussed and processed through different kinds of writing and analysis of multigenre or multimodal texts. For example, Carla asks her students to engage in an analysis of Aloe Blacc's "Wake Me Up" music video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v = M_o6axAseak) in order to consider questions around the theme of art and resistance: *What is the role that artists play in resistance movements? How have artists (e.g., singers, songwriters, actors, dancers, painters, spoken word artists, poets) engaged in issues of social justice? Should artists participate in social justice movements? How do music, poetry, and other forms of art help us process moments of tension and injustice?* The video shows the journey of a family that is separated, with the mother and child attempting to cross the border to be with the father. Blacc joins the family at the end in a scene where people are protesting. Students can analyze the techniques that Blacc uses to develop the themes of resistance, as well as the ways the video connects to their lived realities and the role that music has in processing these. To continue the critical work of analyzing texts that demonstrate agency and advocacy, students can bring in their own examples of social justice through art.

Building Background Knowledge through Student Choice

The Revolution of Evelyn Serrano is set in 1969, and therefore it is crucial to discuss key ideas and historical events that are referenced throughout the novel. Learning stations are a differentiated way to offer students choice based on their interests and can be an impactful method for building students' background knowledge through multiple modalities (Ocak, 2010). One suggestion is to have students sign up for learning stations before the unit begins in order to provide time for preparation and co-creation. It is also critical that each learning station has clear directions with specific outcomes to allow for engagement, high expectations, support, and accountability. Figure 2 (as well as our recommended readings listed at the end of the article) offers an overview of the different kinds of learning stations that could be used before reading the text. Students can either spend a concentrated amount of time in one station and present their findings to the class, or they can rotate through the stations to get a more robust overview of the time period.

We recommend asking students to bring in their community perspectives, as integration of our students' families and neighborhoods shows them that we not only care about their lives, but that those stories are critical for our own learning, development, and connection.

In addition to learning stations, we recommend studying various revolutions, past and present, throughout the reading of the text. Teachers can launch the research with a whole-class topic connected to the text (e.g., Grito de Lares, 1868), and students can then engage in individual or group research on their own, culminating in an inquiry-based research project. For historical options, students could research The Haitian Revolution, the Women's Rights Movement, the Algerian Revolution, the Black Panther Party, the Civil Rights Movement and March on Wash-

Station #1—The Sixties:
Students read different websites or short excerpts about major people and events from the sixties, which can include but are not limited to: Martin Luther King Jr., the Vietnam War, Woodstock, "hippies," American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Malcolm X, the Black Panther Party, and Stonewall.

Station #2—Gallery Walk:
To tap into students' artistic and kinesthetic modalities, students go on a gallery walk where they look at photographs from the sixties that are posted on the walls. These can include pictures from various protests to images of Spanish Harlem.

Station #3—The Young Lords:
Students read a variety of historical materials on The Young Lords, including the following:

- Timelines available online from the Latino Education Network Service and the National Young Lords websites
- "Young Lords Party 13 Point Program and Platform" (Latino Education Network Service, n.d.)
- Pedro Pietri's (1973) reading of "Puerto Rican Obituary"
- *The Young Lords: The Reader,* offered for free on the Project Muse website (Enck-Wanzer, Morales, & Oliver-Velez, 2010)
- Manzano's list of historical articles on the Young Lords from 1969–1970 in the back of her book

Station #4—Documentaries:
Film is a powerful way for students to experience the past. Students view The National Young Lords Network documentary and Iris Morales's film, "Pa'Lante Siempre Pa'lante!"

Station #5—Puerto Rican History and Culture:
Students review materials about Puerto Rican history and culture, including those from The Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College, which offers a wealth of digital information from which students can learn more about Puerto Rican culture and the historical context of the Young Lords uprising. Personal narratives can also serve as a powerful genre to help students relive the historical migration of Puerto Ricans. Juan Flores (2005) has collected many of these stories in his text, *Puerto Rican Arrival in New York: Narratives of the Migration, 1920–1950.*

Figure 2. Learning stations: Exploring historical context (References to resources can be found in Recommended Resources at the end of this article.)

ington, and Stonewall. Students could also research more recent resistance movements such as Black Lives Matter, Occupy Wall Street, Standing Rock, and the Women's March on Washington.

Another option is for students to conduct research that has been organized by youth movements or key figures, such as Claudette Colvin, who was 15 years old when she was arrested for not giving her seat up on the bus, nine months before Rosa Parks. Students could also choose to learn more about Diane Nash and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, United We Dream and undocumented youth activists (e.g., Jorge Gutierrez and Nancy Meza), Riot-grrls and feminist zines, Youth Justice Coalition, Fierce LGBTQ, the Global Action Project, and the Free Child Project. (For more possibilities, please see Recommended Resources at the end of this article.) These models provide powerful examples of how youth participate in civic democracy and resistance.

Delving into the Text with Critical Theories

Manzano offers several entry points for critical literacy and engagement with social justice. Critical literacy is a "pedagogical process of teaching and learning, by which students and teachers interrogate the world, unmask ideological and hegemonic discourses, and frame their actions in the interest of the larger struggle for social justice" (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2008, p. 279). Our primary critical lenses for interpreting this text are critical race theories (including critical race feminism and Latinx critical race theory—LatCrit) and transformational resistance (Rubinstein-Avila, 2007; Solorzano & Bernal, 2001), which will be explained in the next section. Critical theories ask students to explore oppression through an intersectional lens. For example, LatCrit theory asks readers to extend critical race theory discussions to understand how class, gender, and sexuality intersect with race; it

also includes other factors within Latinx experiences, including language and immigration. This approach asks students to continually challenge dominant ideologies as they manifest themselves within the text and the world; in doing so, LatCrit theorists ask that we constantly keep a mind, eye, and movement toward social justice issues. This means examining both the word and the world—and then making commitments to resisting oppression (Freire & Macedo, 1987).

What does this look like when reading *The Revolution of Evelyn Serrano* with youth? The work of using critical literacy to explore issues around oppression can begin with those revealed in the first chapter of the text. For instance, teachers can ask the questions: *How do gendered expectations impact the characters? How do these experiences compare to the present day?* As an example, Evelyn's stepfather says to her, "I want you to take out the garbage. If you can't help in the bodega, you can help more in the house! In Puerto Rico, a young girl knows her place. Knows that she should help her mother" (p. 6). Clearly this is a scenario where gender impacts Evelyn's own sense of power. Helping her mother is an expectation that reveals the relegation of women to the home.

Abuela is another powerful character through which to discuss identity politics and issues around the intersectionality of gender with race and class. For example, Abuela is politically active in the Puerto Rican resistance. She fights for equity based on class and race—and supports the Young Lords from the very beginning of their entrance into the novel. She clearly has great pride in being Puerto Rican and has a critical viewpoint of the inequities in power, yet the reader must question her perspective on standards of beauty, as this can be interpreted in several ways. On the one hand, Abuela reprimands Mami for putting too much sugar in her oatmeal, which will make her fat. She also dyes her hair bright red and wears excessive make-up, according to Evelyn's perspective. That being said, perspectives of her choices are different according to the viewer. Migdalia, Evelyn's friend, sees Abuela's make-up as a small act of resistance, explaining, "No wonder [Abuela's] brave enough to sweep up garbage—and wear eye shadow the color of the sky" (p. 93). For Migdalia, Abuela's choice in make-up is a political one; she has created her own beauty standards and refuses to adhere to what others are doing.

A critical reading can also be applied to Evelyn's understanding and embracing of her own culture. Teachers can engage students in an inquiry of linguistic and cultural practices connected to identity markers and change, similar to the opening discussion of the "Circles of Identities." Teachers might ask, *How does Evelyn position herself within the Puerto Rican community? How does Evelyn's sense of self change throughout the text?* In the opening chapter, Evelyn denies her culture, cutting her name from Rosa Maria Evelyn del Carmen Serrano to Evelyn, as "it was the least Puerto Rican-sounding name I could have" (p. 8). Perhaps she does this because she wants to be unique and establish her own sense of self or because she has not yet fully integrated her sense of self within Puerto Rican histories and communities.

A critical reading can also be applied to Evelyn's understanding and embracing of her own culture. Teachers can engage students in an inquiry of linguistic and cultural practices connected to identity markers and change.

In addition to the power of naming and its impact on identity, Manzano addresses the historical significance of beauty standards and hair as these connect to issues of identity and culture. In one scene, Dolores, an African American coworker, and Evelyn meet. Evelyn says, "I looked at her lopsided hair, while she stared at my brushed-out bangs. I tried to push my bangs to the side, but they were still frizzy" (p. 20). Evelyn's reference to the "taming" of her hair and her observations of others' hair run throughout the text. The politics of Latinx and African American hair have been discussed for decades and warrant a lengthy conversation with students. To understand the intersection of gender and race, teachers can supplement this conversation with accessible essays, including "Black Hair, Still Tangled in Politics" (Saint Louis, 2009) or "Wearing My Afro Is Always a Political Act" (Brown, 2015). These texts frame the sociocultural conversation in contemporary times and can ground the historical regime of power and what constitutes "beauty."

Evelyn realizes eventually the importance of wearing her hair naturally. When encountering the female Young Lords later in the novel, she observes, "They acted like they didn't care how they looked, which only made them look more beautiful. All had natural hair, long or short or wavy or kinky, and I felt stupid with my little roll of bangs. I fussed around with them to make them look more natural" (p. 113). While certainly in this situation, she is seeking to fit in with the resistance, later she becomes more critical about why Latina and African American women struggle with these notions of beauty: "Making us hate the way we looked was a trick people in power played on us" (p. 189). This is a tension that is not new to female protagonists of color as beauty standards connected to a legacy of colonization are revealed, revisited, and questioned.

[I]f we want our students to be part of social justice movements, we need to discuss with them the tensions that come with growing political awareness.

A critical reading can also be applied to Manzano's development of how families are impacted by issues of inequity. Teachers can show students how to keep track of key moments, noting the scenes where characters are affected by systems of inequity and how they respond. For example, this kind of inquiry can take on a study of Evelyn's parents, their work in the bodega, and the Mother's elusive dream of home ownership. Students can also study Señor Santiago's character, whose "eyes were as sad as *la esperanza de un pobre*—as sad as the hope of a poor person" (p. 23). Santiago's character represents the reality of poverty within Evelyn's community, where he sells *piraguas*, barely making ends meet to support himself and his son, Angel. In one scene, he hits Angel, knocking him to the ground. Evelyn is furious, but Abuela provides her with an alternate perspective, explaining "the problems of *la vida,* the problems of life" (p. 64). She problematizes issues of family relationships and family progress within an inequitable system of economic success.

Where Do We Stand? Using Resistance Theory to Understand Text and the World

In addition to using critical race and Lat/Crit theories with students, teachers can ask them to consider and interrogate the *concept of resistance*, as "resistance theories demonstrate how individuals negotiate and struggle with structures and create meanings of their own from these interactions" (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001, p. 315). When reading *The Revolution of Evelyn Serrano,* we want students to deconstruct the struggles that Evelyn goes through in understanding and later becoming part of the Young Lords movement. It is neither a linear nor smooth process, and if we want our students to be part of social justice movements, we need to discuss with them the tensions that come with growing political awareness.

Solorzano and Bernal (2001) categorize resistance into four areas: reactionary, self-defeating, conformist, and transformational. These include what Manzano (2012) defines as those small and big acts of resistance—those internal and external revolutions. We can teach students the differences among the four through an analysis of characters' behaviors and roles within resistance movements. For example, *reactionary resistance* occurs when people may not address or be critical of the reasons for reacting as they do, but instead react without social justice motivation. Evelyn demonstrates this approach early in the novel when she speaks about wearing miniskirts. She explains, "Mami thought I was too young to wear miniskirts, and Pops didn't think it was right for any girl to wear them. Who cared what they thought?" (p. 9). This small act of resistance, this reactionary resistance, represents the beginning of Evelyn's roots to activism. However, she does not yet consider the reasons for *why* she is wearing miniskirts and the impact of gender expectations during those times; she only reacts by donning clothes that her parents do not want her to wear.

Self-defeating resistance occurs when people may have some critique of the power inequities within their communities and society but do not work to transform themselves or others. This kind of resistance can be found in the Puerto Rican expression that Evelyn often refers to: "*tapar el cielo con la mano*"

("to cover the sky with their hand") (p. 4). Throughout the novel, Evelyn views her mother as someone who avoids conflict, someone who is "always covering up what she didn't want to see" (p. 5). Evelyn compares her to *tapetes*, which are frail and delicate, as her mother is often unable to stand up for herself. Her self-defeating resistance, which could be a function of her own oppression as a woman of color, is to ignore the issues as opposed to facing them head on. In another pivotal scene, Abuela plays a song by *Pajarito y su Conjunto* about a massacre. Mami asks that she turn it off because she does not like to hear the "bad memories" (p. 47). Again, perhaps due to her sense of powerlessness, Mami would rather block out the historical legacy of violence rather than fight back through activism.

Conformist resistance occurs when people might be motivated by social justice but do not yet have a deep understanding or critique of systems of oppression (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). This is evident when Evelyn begins to take part in the resistance work with the Young Lords. Evelyn listens to the speeches at the church and begins to change her appearance. She wears her hair more naturally and wears jeans, emulating many of the members of the Young Lords. While she has not yet begun to completely interrogate issues of inequity through an intersectional and historical lens, she is beginning to follow and be intrigued by the Young Lords' efforts, a powerful step to the more integrated and conscious transformational resistance.

Resistance that is *transformational* occurs when a person is both critically thinking about oppression—where it comes from and how it impacts particular groups—and working toward social justice. These efforts allow for the greatest potential for social change, as we see frequently with the Young Lords. They speak out to the community and hand out flyers about the resistance; they are clear about where power comes from and how it creates inequities within their communities in Spanish Harlem. They use this knowledge for social justice efforts, such as sweeping the streets, setting fires to the garbage to bring attention to the negligence by the city, establishing history classes, and addressing healthcare issues within the community.

Abuela acts as the greatest symbol of transformational resistance in the novel. She is the one who sees and speaks to inequities through intersectional and decolonizing lenses. Early in the novel, she notes: "They can go to the moon but they cannot clean up *El Barrio*" (p. 52). She is one of the first from the community to join the Young Lords, explaining that she just wants to do "*mi parte*" (p. 75). Her social justice history, however, did not begin until she witnessed oppression and the resistance against those oppressions, being present during a shooting of peaceful Nationalists who were protesting for Puerto Rico's freedom. This event was pivotal and inspired her to become part of the movement. Abuela's transformational acts of resistance, however, do not come without conflict and contradiction. Through Mami's eyes, Abuela has abandoned her and her family to help the resistance. When she finds Abuela sweeping the streets with the Young Lords, Mami shouts at her, "You always have to help everybody in the world. Why don't you clean your own house first? Sweep our apartment? Or the *bodega*? No, you want to sweep the streets. But you are not helping anybody" (p. 69). Abuela and Mami's tension offers a critical talking point for students to discuss the challenges that arise when doing social justice work and how our identities may cause conflict with others and within ourselves.

Resistance that is transformational occurs when a person is both critically thinking about oppression—where it comes from and how it impacts particular groups—and working toward social justice.

Evelyn's entrance into the world of social justice is also filled with conflict and challenges. In fact, when she first sees the Young Lords with their brooms, she feels a strong desire to cry; she runs away from the scene but begins to notice aspects of her neighborhood with a new lens. She smells the frying grease and walks past the rotten food piled on the sidewalk. She notices the children on their fire escapes "dying to be free" (p. 55). Her reaction? A flirtatious remark to the Young Lords: "Hey, you cute hippie guys—you missed a spot. Come sweep over here" (p. 55). It is critical to ask students about this scene, as it is a pivotal moment in her resistance awakening:

What is so important about this scene? Why is she frustrated? Why does she react the way she does to the Young Lords here?

Like Abuela, Evelyn's rise to resistance comes from being a witness of both inequity and protests. She witnesses the Young Lords, and she listens to stories from her abuela. The combination of both perspectives inspires Evelyn to eventually participate in transformational resistance. She begins to critically view her world, the historical precedent of injustice, and the people around her. For example, she criticizes her mother for her apathy and denial of oppression. As Evelyn begins to see the poverty of El Barrio, she mocks her mother's "pathetic attempts to make everything pretty" (p. 100). She then starts to consider what makes people want to resist, comparing the movement to the beginning of a storm. Evelyn's involvement in that storm begins when the Young Lords use the church as a place for supporting members of the community with various social programs, including free lunches for children, testing for tuberculosis, clothing drives, day care, and educational classes on Puerto Rico. During this time, Evelyn gets involved in the work while also considering multiple perspectives of Abuela, her mother, and the Young Lords. This kind of interrogation is powerful for students in that analyzing the characters—their behaviors and motivations—helps to build their own empathy, which is needed to understand and integrate multiple viewpoints.

This kind of interrogation is powerful for students in that analyzing the characters—their behaviors and motivations—helps to build their own empathy, which is needed to understand and integrate multiple viewpoints.

Eventually Evelyn joins the Young Lords, demonstrating her transformational resistance. She occupies the church with the group and volunteers her time to help her community. Much of what she learns about resistance is through the actions of the Young Lords and her Abuela's stories, but she also learns through attending a poetry reading by activist Pedro Pietri. However, despite Evelyn's growth, her entry into the resistance is not without tension:

> "The whole Barrio isn't feeling well. Angel isn't feeling well. His father isn't feeling well. I'm not feeling well." But then I had to stop because that wasn't true. I *was* feeling well. Actually, I was feeling good. As a matter of fact, I was feeling great. I hadn't felt this good in a long time . . . . *I was feeling so good—but why was I aching too?* (p. 123)

In the center of resistance lies an inherent tension. This tension is present with her mother as well, as Mami harbors feelings of resentment when she concludes that Abuela abandoned her for the fight. While Mami also joins the movement, she does not leave her daughter. For example, when Evelyn is injured during a protest, Abuela stays behind with the protesters, while Mami stays with her daughter, demonstrating that one can be both supportive of family and revolution. It is an important lesson for Evelyn, and she begins to critically reflect on her own past treatment of her mother: "Except for throwing out the garbage, I barely helped Mami around the house. If I didn't want a slave mother, I had to stop treating her like one" (p. 200). Evelyn's transformation has now become seamless, both internal and external. Internally, she recognizes that political acts are personal and can happen within our own homes, and she accepts that they are equally important to the larger revolutions that happen on our streets. Manzano teaches us that both matter.

Figure 3 provides one option for encouraging and documenting students' efforts to think about the different acts of resistance—both small and large—that occur within Evelyn and her community, as well as the author's word choice and character development. Additionally, Appendix A offers a visual for how students can conceptualize Evelyn's tensions and pressures and how she counteracts them with moments of resistance.

Academic Writing for Reflection and Social Justice

The summative writing assessments we have used with our students in the implementation of this unit attempt to reflect the major themes, author's craft, and student choice and voice that we have integrated throughout the novel. Teachers can provide students with several options for written responses that inte-

Chapter Title with Summary	Acts of Resistance (Reactionary, self-defeating, conformist, or transformational)	Literary Techniques and Language	Character Development and Transformation
Chapter 1—My Mother the Slave: We learn about the setting, 1969 in Spanish Harlem, and Evelyn and her family, specifically the tensions.	*"That's why I cut off half my name and chose Evelyn—it was the least Puerto Rican-sounding name I could have" (p. 8). This is reactionary resistance.*	*"taper el cielo con la mano"(p. 4)—use of a proverb in Spanish to reveal how the mother lives in denial (self-defeating resistance)*	*Evelyn recognizes and disparages the powerlessness of her mother.*

Figure 3. Graphic organizer on acts of resistance

grate their knowledge of the text, their understanding of Manzano's literary techniques and language, and their stance on social justice. Students can consider the elements of a genre (e.g., the use of dialogue, setting, action, symbolism, foreshadowing in narrative writing) as well as the language. Manzano's text is an example of translanguaging in literature, or the way bilingual speakers communicate. Rosario (2015) notes that in Latinx literature, "Spanish typically appears in the selected texts as a means of affirming or negotiating cultural identity" (p. ii).

In teaching and analyzing these authorial movements, students can emulate Manzano's style in their own narratives, considering both genre and language in their writing. One option is for students to create narratives inspired by the text. Students can choose to either engage in writing memoirs (relate a moment or two around the topic of revolution or transformation from their own lives), realistic fiction (create a character who goes through an internal and external revolution), historical fiction (create a character set in a specific time and place who undergoes changes and challenges with injustice), or poetry (write a poem inspired by Pedro Pietri's "Puerto Rican Obituary"). This writing can be shared with different audiences inside and outside of the school through author talks, readings, poetry slams, and online communities.

Another option is for students to write literary essays in response to *The Revolution of Evelyn Serrano*. Students can return to the theme of revolution and analyze the efforts of the Young Lords in the novel. *How did the Young Lords sustain their movement and what was their impact on the community?* Students can also consider the theme of transformation and select one character from the text who they thought experienced the most profound transformation, addressing the question: *Using rich and relevant evidence from the text, which character do you think transformed or evolved most significantly in* The Revolution of Evelyn Serrano*?*

A third option is for students to collaboratively write argumentative pieces in the form of social justice proposals. Social action projects require students "to take their learning into the community to benefit the greater good through the use of their learned skills"; they also offer students an opportunity to "express their feelings and desire for change to the wider community" (Simmons, 2012, p. 25). Social action projects also enhance literacy as they promote student voice and agency (Darts, 2006; Epstein, 2010; Goss, 2009; Plemmons, 2006). We ask our students to write these proposals collaboratively, as revolutions are done within a collective, and members must negotiate their group's identity and resistance actions. This kind of work is important for students as they begin to create the necessary engagements for mobilization. We also highly recommend inviting local community activists into the classroom to model these efforts. Figure 4 offers a sample template for social justice proposals that asks students to consider their specific goals, methods, and tools for presentation.

Unfortunately, many of us are living in a nation that feels—and is—very divided.

Finally, for students to see themselves as change agents, they must reflect on themselves, their communities, and their own transformations. Therefore, we ask students to question how their sense of community and agency has developed through readings, discussions, and writing. It is through this reflection that

Social Justice/Resistance Proposal

1. Name your **movement** (e.g., The Young Lords).
2. Create a **slogan** for your issue (e.g., "No More Exploitation of the Poor!" "Puerto Rico is in my heart: Tengo a Puerto Rico en mi corazón.").
3. Create a **symbol** for your issue (e.g., fist in the air, hands holding, peace sign, school building. See the social protest art in *When We Fight We Win* by Greg Jobin-Leeds.).
4. Create a **10-point platform** (e.g., think Young Lords 13-point platform).
   - Describe specific **action steps** you will take. The Young Lords backed up their statement, "Activity is necessary to get city action to meet community needs" (Manzano, 2012, p. 76), with specific efforts (e.g., sweeping streets, free breakfast for children, medical care, educational classes, day care programs, occupying spaces, clothing drives).
   - Describe how you will use the **media** to get the word out (e.g., flyers, Twitter, Facebook).
   - **Impact statement**: What impact do you hope your revolution/movement will have on the community?
5. Design a **presentation** that shares #1–#4 with the classroom community (e.g., Prezi, Canva, podcast, TedTalk, pamphlet/flyer, Snapchat story, documentary clip).

Figure 4. Social justice/resistance proposal

students can begin to develop more integrated selves as critical readers of the word and the world and how that work can be channeled into advocacy (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Like others, we urge teachers to focus on social struggles within our curricula to help our students see themselves as change agents, if they have not already (Forest, Kimmel, & Garrison, 2013; Paris, 2012). Unfortunately, many of us are living in a nation that feels—and is—very divided. These critical times call for us to share such narratives as *The Revolution of Evelyn Serrano* so that we can remember and honor the legacy of resistance and acknowledge our own transformations and the tensions that accompany such political awareness and action. In doing so, we can insert our voices, experiences, and actions in service of a more just and equitable existence for all of our communities.

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Recommended Resources

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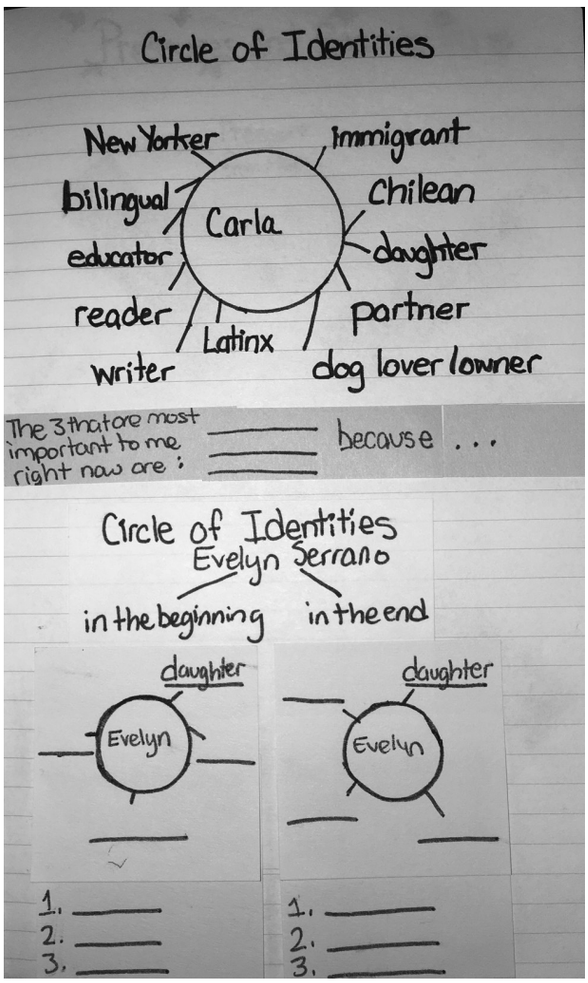
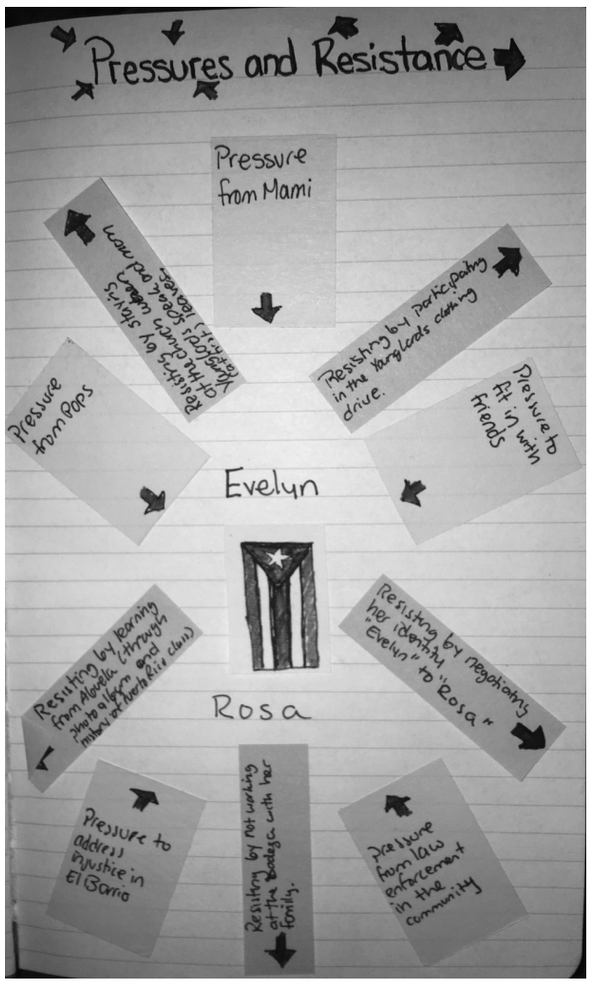
Appendix A: Circle of Identities and Pressures and Resistance





Jennifer Goulston **Zwillenberg** and Danielle **Gioia**

Racism, Privilege, and Voice in *All American Boys:*

A Counter-narrative of Resistance and Hope

Increasingly, students and educators are confronting questions and heightened emotions about the persistence of violence, especially police brutality, against Black men and women in the United States. In response, educators are also finding themselves charged with more urgent responsibilities. More than ever, diverse students' perspectives, experiences, and questions need to be welcomed and addressed. To make these conditions possible for students, many educators want to engage in more critical dialogue about racism in society, including how it is instantiated in the daily lives of students and their families. *All American Boys*, a 2015 novel by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely, potently addresses these issues. By telling the story of two young men—one Black, one white—caught up in an incident of police brutality, this novel demonstrates how profoundly youth are affected by today's culture of racism and violence. Further, by making these two young men the novel's sole narrators, *All American Boys* doubly affirms how youth's efforts to understand and resist the racist status quo are just as necessary, and just as powerful, as that of adults. In these ways, the novel asks both students and educators to join together in critical conversations about race. More specifically, it asks us to consider what it can look and feel like for people of different backgrounds to live in a racist society, confront privilege, and take a stand for social justice.

The young narrators in *All American Boys* speak to educators as well as to students. They ask us to witness the impact of racist violence on individuals and communities. They ask us to understand how they are struggling to reexamine their racial identities and places in society, including dealing with their vulnerability and pain. They also ask us to join them as they take more public stances against racism. We are interested in how their narratives can open opportunities for teachers and students to start conversations about race together in the classroom. In this article, we first provide an overview of the two frameworks that guide our literary analysis of this novel: a) the concepts of counter-storytelling (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) and counter-narrative (Glenn, 2012; Hughes-Hassell, 2013), and b) Bishop's (1990) framing of literature as windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors. We also describe our own positionalities as readers of this text. We then use these frameworks in conversation with critically oriented scholarship on racism, privilege, and antiracist pedagogy to analyze how the two main narrators engage these issues. We conclude by discussing how educators might explore this novel in their own classrooms.

Counter-narratives of Windows, Mirrors, and Sliding Glass Doors

All American Boys challenges young adult literature's deficit representations and exclusions of Black male identities and lived experiences (Bishop, 1990; Delgado, 1989; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Therefore, in order to make the most of the opportunities that

All American Boys provides for talking about race and racism, educators are encouraged to examine dominant social narratives about young men of color, particularly Black men, in school as well as in society (Feagin, 2006; Noguera, 2008; Purpel, 2007; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; Tatum, 2003). With this goal in mind, we situate *All American Boys* in conversation with the construct of counter-storytelling, a multicultural framework rooted in Solórzano and Yosso's (2002) critical race research methodology designed to serve as a "'counter' for deficit story-telling" (Abstract) by centering marginalized stories and people who are too often silenced in society. The ways in which multicultural literature can advance counter-narratives have been discussed in teaching contexts by Glenn (2012) and Hughes-Hassell (2013), with attention to how greater diversity of characters and stories can mutually facilitate and challenge young readers'—and teachers'—understandings of racial identity development, systemic racism, and white privilege.

Through Rashad's counter-narratives, the novel offers readers an opportunity to meditate on their own identities and experiences in relation to how racism operates in society, including how violence against Black people has been normalized.

In addition to the framework of counter-narratives, we draw on Bishop's (1990) pivotal discussion of how multicultural literature offers windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors to young readers, via which they can see themselves and their peers more authentically situated in the complex nexus of our racial and cultural worlds. Through these dual frameworks, it is easier to see some of the opportunities that *All American Boys* affords young readers: a) holding up mirrors to see their own racial identities, pain, and agency affirmed; b) opening up windows into how others may be wrestling with their racial identities and privileges (or lack thereof); and c) sliding open doors to real, tough questions about how youth just like them might experience, understand, take action against, and find their power against racism in their day-to-day lives.

As coauthors of this paper, our positionalities as white educators are also reflected in our selection of this novel and our focus on its affordances for dialogue about race and racism among students and educators. We make an additional narrative choice in this article to employ capitalization for the term "Black" and lowercase format for the term "white." Drawing on McIntyre (2008), we affirm their approach as one that seeks to disrupt the perception that white and Black are terms denoting opposite representations, which falsely suggests equitable positioning. With regard to direct quotes from cited literature, we retain the authors' original capitalization conventions concerning these terms.

Rashad's Counter-narrative: Voicing Resistance and Taking Action against Racist Stereotypes, Bias, and Violence

As a counter-narrative, this novel addresses constructions of racism, privilege, and power. Rashad's character illustrates three key types of counter-narrative engagement with these constructs. First, Rashad's narration as a subject of police brutality situates him within a history of Black men being stereotyped and treated as threatening despite clear evidence to the contrary (Davis, 2001; Harris, 1995). Second, the novel's centering of Rashad's experience gives voice to racial microaggressions and biases that are less often heard yet no less painful for Black youth like him to bear (Sue et al., 2007). Third, Rashad's story is invested with power, as he stands up for his survival, healing, and resistance to racial injustice. Through Rashad's counter-narratives, the novel offers readers an opportunity to meditate on their own identities and experiences in relation to how racism operates in society, including how violence against Black people has been normalized.

Black Youth, Racial Stereotypes, and Violent Consequences

There exists historical and contemporary precedent for young Black men's and boys' identities to be ascribed with stereotypes of threat and violence (Davis, 2001; Harris, 1995; Harris & Harper, 2015). As *All American Boys* emphasizes, these stereotypes are used as justification for the mainstream public's fear of young Black men, including inequitable, often violent

treatment by law enforcement. In tackling these issues from the standpoint of a young Black man, this novel serves as a counter-narrative against these stereotypes (Delgado, 1989; Hughes-Hassell, 2013). It also situates readers as "critical witnesses" (Lopez, 2009) to the physical and emotional ramifications of Rashad being perceived as suspicious simply due to the color of his skin.

All American Boys begins by asking readers to "zoom in" on the individual experiences and development of both protagonists against an unflinching backdrop of racist police violence. The events that unfold at the corner store the night Rashad is attacked are deceptively mundane: A white woman in line in front of him trips over his duffel bag while he looks for his phone. Despite his clear innocence, Rashad cannot escape being under suspicion of shoplifting. In fact, as the clerk starts yelling, Rashad's first thought is to defend the woman: "At first, I thought he was yelling at the lady on some you-broke-it-you-bought-it mess, and I was about to tell him to chill out, but then I realized that he was looking at my open duffel and the bag of chips lying in the aisle" (p. 20).

Officer Paul Galluzzo, the cop on duty, initially "perked up" (p. 20) when the clerk shouts at Rashad, but ignores him as he walks over to the woman. Rashad describes how her testimony is shut down: "'Ma'am, are you okay?' the officer asked, concerned. 'Yes, yes, I'm—'And before she could finish her sentence that would've explained that she had tripped and fell over me, the cop cut her off. 'Did he do something to you?' . . . 'No, no, I—' The lady was now standing, clearly perplexed by the question. 'Yeah, he was trying to steal those chips,' the clerk interrupted, shouting over the cop's shoulder" (pp. 20–21). Ultimately, as both the clerk and the cop escalate one another's accusatory indignation, Rashad offers no resistance to his arrest. Even then, he cannot avoid a violent beating. He is construed as a Black threat, even in his own community, as the clerk's immediate assumption of guilt demonstrates (Noguera, 2008). The narrative of young Black men being falsely accused, assaulted, and even killed by law enforcement is so widely known to Rashad that he only has a single, desperate thought as he is handcuffed and beaten:

> "please
> don't
> kill me" (p. 23).

After his beating, he understands that he has become part of the statistics about Black men accused and assaulted by police officers, yet he is still dazed by disbelief: "I mean, I hadn't done anything. Nothing at all. So why was I hooked up to all these machines, lying in this uncomfortable bed? Why was I arrested? Why was my mother waiting there for me to wake up, dried tears crusted on her face, prayer on her breath?" (p. 45). *All American Boys* places us in these moments alongside Rashad, asking us as readers to bear witness and linger in the hospital with him as he processes and heals (Lopez, 2009).

And for those of us who are white, it holds up a mirror to how we are privileged with the kind of safety and social "benefit of the doubt" that young men like Rashad do not have, no matter how far we tell ourselves America has come.

As Paul's unwarranted attack on Rashad demonstrates, stereotypes about young Black men construct them as "others," often misrepresenting statistics and images in ways that pathologize young Black men's behavior and contribute to deficit ideologies (Harper, 2012). This cultivates fear toward young men like Rashad; although he defies these labels, he cannot avoid them or their lived consequences (Apel, 2004; Baker, 1998; Noguera, 2008). For example, when Paul taunts Rashad as a "thug" who disrespects authority (p. 27), he reinforces the racist intent behind his beating. A later example from the novel illustrates how much Rashad is wounded, inside and out, by Paul's attack: "Nobody wanted to hear the truth, even though everybody already knew what it was. I felt . . . violated. That's the only way I can put it. Straight-up violated" (p. 89).

Throughout the novel, Rashad's characterization—full of detail about how carefully he is being raised and making choices as a young Black man in America—is contrasted with American society's underlying racist assumptions of Blackness-as-indictment. Consequently, *All American Boys*'s nuanced characterization of Rashad also stands as one of the novel's important counter-narrative contributions to young adult literature, as well as one of its most important invitations to young students of color (Bishop,

1990; Hughes-Hassell, 2013). And for those of us who are white, it holds up a mirror to how we are privileged with the kind of safety and social "benefit of the doubt" that young men like Rashad do not have, no matter how far we tell ourselves America has come.

Racial Bias, Microaggressions, and the Lived Experience of Racism

Talking about contemporary racism in school requires more than examining overt acts of racist violence, such as Paul's attack on Rashad. It also requires examination of the effects of racial microaggressions on people of color (Sue et al., 2007). For example, as a prelude to the beating of Rashad by police at the corner store near school, Rashad recalls his exchange with the clerk: "'Wassup man,' I said. He nodded suspiciously. Like he always did" (p. 17). This time, however, the clerk's suspicion results in near-fatal consequences for Rashad.

It is important to note that the novel also addresses how schools are not free from racial microaggressions, biases, and injustices enacted against Black male students. Quinn, Rashad's white classmate and the novel's peer narrator, is depicted as having racist conversations in school without even realizing it. For example, Rashad's friend English calls out Quinn's assumption that Rashad was at fault, including how he invokes a stereotype about Black men, crime, and drug use when, in fact, Quinn is the one who is known to use: "He stood and pointed at me. 'Why does it automatically gotta be Rashad's fault? Why do people think he was on drugs? That dude doesn't do drugs. He's ROTC, man. His dad would kick his ass. You do drugs, asshole'" (p. 175). These examples highlight the relevance of engaging with *All American Boys* to address how Black men are positioned in schools, especially in relation to peers' and educators' unwillingness or inability to recognize racial biases—even among those who consider themselves antiracist (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986; Fenning & Rose, 2007). For example, when Quinn apologizes to English for making assumptions about Rashad, English's response instructively points out that biases can be both pervasive and unconscious: "Man, you have no idea how many times you've sounded like a dick. You think it was just today?" (p. 177).

The novel is also direct about how friends, family members, and school members can be the source of racial microaggressions and bias. For example, Quinn's and English's basketball coach dances euphemistically around the topic of race by encoding it as team unity: "Media shit's gonna hound us every day. You let me handle that. You just ignore that shit. There's all kinds of pressure going on out there, at school, in your lives back home . . . . In this gym we're only Falcons, you hear me?" (p. 138). Despite his desire to go along with his coach, Quinn raises questions about this disingenuous call for unity. Is it possible to have "one goal for one team, none of us thinking about race or racism, all of us color-blind and committed like evangelicals to the word team" (p. 140)? How can it be, when Quinn had just "walked on the court and seen the team like this: seven black guys, five white guys, two Latino guys, and one Vietnamese guy" (p. 139)? What is being asked of each of those students? What are they being asked not to bring, and not to be, on the court? What are the stakes of the coach's request for English, for example, in contrast with the stakes for Quinn?

In a striking classroom-based example, the novel also shows how euphemism and silence about race affects teachers as well as students. When Ms. Webber facilitates a quiet study session in Rashad's absence, "anybody could tell she was nervous and just wanted a silent and nonteaching day of class" (p. 133). When she incorrectly calls out a student for talking, she is taken aback by her own discomfort: "'Every time, EJ,' she said abruptly, so loud that she seemed to surprise even herself" (p. 133). EJ responds, "Guilty until proven innocent, huh? . . . Just like Rashad" (p. 134). Quinn, who is present, notes that this was especially "awkward" because EJ was black, "just like Rashad," and Ms. Webber was white, "just like Paul—like me and Molly, too" (p. 134). The novel demonstrates how Ms. Webber's request to stay quiet in class fails to accomplish the task of eliminating Rashad from everyone's thoughts, especially when that silence only makes the racial tensions more explicit.

Ms. Webber warns EJ that he can't "go conflating things like that" (p. 134). However, she pauses before acknowledging, "I'm sorry. I know there's a student from our school who is in the hospital today, but we don't have the full story" (p. 134). Yet despite the seemingly conciliatory intent of her acknowledgement, the whole exchange illustrates Ms. Webber moving from silence about the topic of Rashad to avoiding,

even erasing, Rashad's name. It demonstrates that she chooses the safety of silence over empathy for her student. This example also shows how she ignores an opening to engage with her other students in class during this painful time. When Molly and EJ say Rashad's name in class, and get thrown out for it, they signal to Ms. Webber that her silence tells more of a story than she thinks. However, Quinn tells us that he and his classmates are also uncomfortable. While Molly and EJ speak up, "the rest of us sat there in shock" (p. 135). Note, too, that even as Quinn is beginning to feel "freaked out" (p. 117) by Officer Galluzzo's denial of any wrongdoing and expectation of loyalty, he also chooses the safety of silence in class. Molly and EJ choose to speak up for Rashad and for their own pain, even if it means taking the risk of standing alone (Leonardo & Porter, 2010).

In these ways, the novel does an important job of addressing the staggeringly heavy day-to-day burdens of Black youth, in conversation with implicit and explicit forms of racism (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986). In particular, the novel shows how Rashad and other Black characters cannot escape the daily stresses of micro- and macroaggressions that engender what Smith, Allen, and Danley (2007) call "racial battle fatigue." For example, Rashad and his family are shocked to find themselves talking about Rashad's appearance in the wake of his attack, despite collectively knowing that it is his Blackness, not sagging pants, that cause Officer Galluzzo to beat him (p. 49). Racial microaggressions, biases, and stresses do not take place in a vacuum, nor can they be disaggregated from the cumulative lived experiences of racism (Sue et al., 2007). These examples also make painfully clear that current sociocultural institutions and conditions will not protect Black men—no matter how well they conform to stereotypes and expectations and no matter how high they clear mainstream bars for performance and responsibility. Only changing our racist systems and cultures will protect young Black men like Rashad.

He Deserves a Face: The Power of Rashad's Counter-narrative

All American Boys emphasizes how Rashad's path from maintaining his silence to taking back his voice is a complex negotiation of personal risk and social benefit. He realizes that he isn't—and can't be—invisible as a young Black man caught up in police brutality no matter how hard he tries (Noguera, 2008). As he decides to join in the novel's concluding protest march, bandage-free, Rashad demonstrates the high stakes of advocating for racial justice: "I wanted people to know that no matter the outcome, no matter if this day ended up as just another protest and Officer Galluzzo got off scot-free, that I would never be the same person. I looked different and would be different, forever" (p. 305).

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Metaphorically, this evolving stance toward visibility and action is strikingly revealed in Rashad's artwork. He feels compelled to draw in the hospital and asks his mom to bring his sketch pad and pencils. In asking for his drawing materials, he begins to claim his right to his own narrative, using his own tools. He tells us, "I wasn't sure what I was drawing. That's not true. I knew *exactly* what I was drawing. The only thing I could. I was going to re-create the scene, what had happened to me, what was playing constantly on the news" (p. 144). He struggles over his drawing, persisting despite the physical and emotional pain it causes: "[W]hen your hand starts aching in the middle of such a personal piece, there's no telling what you might think about" (p. 148). Yet he lets himself feel that ache. Stylistically, he is known for drawing intriguing, faceless figures. However, when drawing about his trauma, he ultimately decides to draw in a face: "The dude with his heart torn out. It's impossible to ignore him. He has a face. He deserves a face" (p. 273). In drawing himself into his own narrative frame, Rashad gives himself permission to be seen. Up to this point, the novel emphasizes how Rashad has tried to avoid seeing images of his face that were publicized in the news after his attack. He also struggles with seeing his brutalized face in the mirror. Yet as he finally comes to claim the "torn out" heart (p. 273) as his own, he also claims the face he sees reflected at him (Bishop, 1990).

This example represents an extraordinary, self-affirming counter-narrative moment in the novel—one that many young readers will be able to experience, especially those who may be suffering broken hearts and bodies like Rashad, yet have not been able to see their pain reflected in books (Bishop, 1990, 2011; Delgado, 1989; Hughes-Hassell, 2013). Rashad comes to recognize, with increasing gravity, that even his devastating personal encounter with police violence is indicative of factors bigger than himself. He comes to believe that he deserves the affirmation of making his pain public—that others need to see him, in all his bruises and strength, as he has come to see himself. He is bearing critical witness to himself, for himself, and for others like him (Lopez, 2009).

As he marches, we are all asked to bear witness to how his body, life, and soul change as the result of unjust police violence. Rashad's evolution toward a self-affirming, publicly antiracist stance represents an indelible lesson for educators and readers. Rather than being forced by outside pressures into a tokenizing role that can be co-opted by those in power, his characterization and trajectory demonstrate powerful ways in which marginalized individuals can find their own power and exercise their own voices as agents against unjust acts, expectations, and systems (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). In the book's final chapter, which is just two pages long and written as a poem that alternates stanzas between each narrator (pp. 309–310), Rashad affirms his place at the march and in the world:

> For all the people who came before
> us, fighting the fight, I was here,
> screaming at the top of my lungs.
> Rashad Butler.
> Present.

Reading Rashad: Opportunities for Talking about Racial Identity, Inequities, and Resistance in the Classroom

Rashad's evolution toward visibility and affirmation offers three central opportunities for educators to use this novel in the classroom to think and talk about race. First, it complicates what the experience might be for a student to occupy a minority position within a classroom setting. This is especially important for educators who represent different cultural, racial, and socioeconomic identities from their students. Too often, students from marginalized groups are tokenized in classrooms and asked to speak as representatives of their group. Yet, they are still often misperceived as "other," even if they do not represent or identify with the labels assumed by peers or teachers from dominant groups (Delpit, 2006; Tatum, 2003). In acknowledgement of these dynamics, Rashad's character is constructed in ways that highlight how students from nondominant cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds challenge these deficit assumptions, holding up a much needed mirror to their experiences (Bishop, 1990). It also shows how such students, even when explicitly subverting expectations, are still pressured to uphold tokenizing roles. By including examples of sometimes tense dialogue among Rashad, his parents, and his brother, the novel also provides a glimpse into how these pressures permeate not only schools, but communities and families, too (Hill, 2003).

Second, the novel offers multiple counter-narrative moments through which students' multiple identities and perspectives are engaged (Delgado, 1989; Hughes-Hassell, 2013). Rashad's understanding of his identities as a young Black man in and out of school, his perceptions of other races and cultures, and his desire to move past these events without being tokenized as another Black victim all suggest rich opportunities to create interpretive classroom communities that reflect greater racial and cultural exchange, learning, and empathy (Fish, 1980; Glenn, 2012; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Third, the story offers readers multiple views of what it can look like to take a stance against racial injustices. It also acknowledges ways in which that work can be unsafe. This is an important conversation to bring to the classroom, especially with regard to Leonardo and Porter's (2010) assertion that people of color do not inhabit safe spaces in race talk. These scholars also emphasize the importance of confronting fears about taking up dialogue about race and social justice toward constructing individual and collaborative goals of advancing understanding rather than comfort. For Rashad and other students in the novel, the work of standing up to racial injustice can indeed be fear provoking and costly. These costs range from infuriating their teachers and losing opportunities for scholarships to alienating friends and family and being viewed in ways that diminish their personal identities. However, these students do still stand up; Rashad chooses to be visible. *All American Boys* makes it pos-

sible for young readers like Rashad and Quinn to see and think through their own fears, relationships, and choices in and out of school (Bishop, 1990).

Quinn's Counter-narrative and the Representation of White Privilege: Discomfort, Accountability, and Social Action

As cross-disciplinary scholarship has established, engagement with white privilege in America must take up the entwined historical and cultural memory of its deep roots—including the ways in which it has been systematically erased from our present-day discourses, policies, and curricula (Harper, 2012; Warnke, 2015). This is a weighty but necessary task. Warnke (2015) reminds us of the need to confront our historical distortions and consequences by taking up a "politics of memory." Even more explicitly, Margolin (2015) contends that an individualistic paradigm has inadvertently reified white dominance in educational policy, culture, and practice, despite pedagogical practices that have developed around white educators acknowledging our privilege.

Quinn's trajectory in *All American Boys* suggests important attention to the domains of the historical and social. The novel not only depicts Quinn's recognition of his white privilege in the wake of Paul's attack on Rashad, but it also emphasizes how he comes to emotionally and intellectually wrestle with how that privilege simultaneously protects and implicates him in relation to that act of police brutality. It thus both sheds light on and challenges some ways in which white privilege and racial inequity have become embedded in American society. Through Quinn's character, *All American Boys* does a critical job of delving into white racial/ethnic identity development and emphasizing the catalyzing, sometimes painful role that confronting white privilege plays in Quinn's development, as it can with other young white men like him (Tatum, 1997). In these ways, it also holds up an important mirror in which white students can see their own doubts, resistance, and questioning reflected, especially in terms of navigating what it can mean to benefit from white privilege, intentionally or not (Bishop, 1990; Margolin, 2015).

Before he becomes a witness to Rashad's attack, Quinn's journey in the novel is seemingly predetermined. However, it also subtly challenges stereotypes. He is a charming white basketball star whose smile and reputation as the son of a fallen soldier gloss over an adolescence as a latchkey kid responsible for taking care of his brother. However, his version of recreation also includes stealing flasks of bourbon from his overworked, widowed mother and drinking with friends. That in itself is a privilege not afforded Rashad, who consciously pursues an "all American" path of academic and ROTC responsibility that doesn't protect him from suspicion and police violence. In contrast, Quinn's characterization exemplifies the novel's subversion of stereotypes commonly associated with Black youth, as well as a broader counter-story about how social norms and opportunities are differently accessed and experienced by white youth like Quinn and Black youth like Rashad (Glenn, 2012; Hughes-Hassell, 2013; Noguera, 2008). The novel also uses this counter-narrative platform to generate questions about how Quinn is afforded social approval due to his father's military service and his whiteness, both of which afford relative invisibility for his illegal behaviors, like underage drinking and theft. In contrast, Rashad cannot escape hypervisibility within inconsequential settings, like standing in line at a corner store (Noguera, 2008).

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Recognizing and Grappling with White Privilege

Throughout the beginning of the novel, Quinn recognizes the advantages that being seen as an "all American boy" affords him. For instance, he acknowledges how his reputation works as he persuades an adult to purchase alcohol for him. He also reflects on how he consciously takes advantage of his community's approval, even when it comes to little things like re-

ceiving free beverages at the local pizza parlor: "I was the kind of guy who just kept taking those free Cokes, no questions asked, like I actually deserved them or something" (p. 78). Part of the privilege afforded by whiteness is the perception that witnessing injustices, and one's complicity in them, can be ignored—and by extension, their harm minimized (Tochluk, 2007).

While learning about the fraught history and legacy of racism in American society is a deep and difficult undertaking, it also affords us distance from the immediacy of how white individuals, families, and peers live with—and avoid—racism every day.

After witnessing the assault on Rashad, Quinn hopes that he and his friends can "all just pretend like we weren't here. Like it didn't happen" (p. 39).

The novel demonstrates, however, that despite Quinn's attempts to ignore Paul's attack on Rashad, he cannot ignore the sick feeling welling up inside him about the injustice it represents. It becomes painfully clear to Quinn that his way of living and being in the world before Rashad's attack no longer exists for him, no matter how much self-protection or what relationships he can preserve by ignoring it. At one point, he thinks, "I didn't want my life to change from the way it was before I'd seen that. . . . The problem was my life didn't have to change. If I wanted to, I could keep my head down" (pp. 178–179). He can only keep up the guise of accepting the academic, athletic, and social favor conferred upon him if he denies who and what he saw. It would also require him to deny how he is changing in his understanding of his own race and privilege.

Quinn ultimately decides to tell the police department what he witnessed. Before he can make that decision, however, we see him coming to an unexpected realization about the title he shares with the novel: "'Regular.' 'All American.' White. Fuck" (p. 180). It is important to note that the novel spends time unraveling the impact that this new understanding has on him. Seeking out conversation with the only member of his social circle who expresses the same discomfort with Paul's actions, Paul's cousin Jill, Quinn articulates feelings of disgust, guilt, and helplessness when he confides, "I feel so gross . . . . I keep telling myself it isn't my problem. But it is. It is my problem. I just don't know what to do" (p. 182). Jill's observation that the problem of racism is everyone's opens Quinn up to another level of talk that he was previously unaware he was avoiding. He asks, "Why is it taking me five minutes to say the word racism?" (p. 181).

Through this dialogue and Jill's rejoinder that "Maybe you're racist?" (p. 181), *All American Boys* resists an easy conversation about coming to terms with racism on social and individual levels. Instead, it asks us to keep looking into the mirror it holds up to the often defensive, always vulnerable work of confronting our white racial subjectivity (Bishop, 1990; Blakeney, 2005; Tatum, 1997). It affirms that one of the reasons talking about racism is hard for white readers like Quinn is because it requires talking about personal complicity as a white person. It also reveals that being able to talk about racism is not the same as excavating our own racism. Moreover, it challenges two pervasive ideas: that white racial identity development is a linear or simple process once we have the language for it, and that awareness alone absolves us from actively fighting racism (Margolin, 2015; Patton & Bondi, 2015; Tatum, 1997).

Through Quinn, the novel reveals that it can actually be easier to affirm racism as a social problem than to confront what it means on an individual level. Once we as white readers accept our acculturation into a racist society, there is no way to escape racism or its complicities. While learning about the fraught history and legacy of racism in American society is a deep and difficult undertaking, it also affords us distance from the immediacy of how white individuals, families, and peers live with—and avoid—racism every day. In these ways, Quinn's struggle reflects the difficulties of private learning and public talking about race (Levine-Rasky, 2000). His deepening conversations with Jill also affirm that asking questions and sharing vulnerably are important parts of the process of confronting our white privilege and moving toward forming a positive antiracist white identity (Levine-Rasky, 2000; Tatum, 1997).

Quinn's experience also may be considered a generative counter-narrative against more simplistic or uninterrupted white male character development in

young adult literature (Harris, 1990). The novel shows Quinn's pain, confusion, vulnerability, and importantly, his wish to go back to a safer, more comfortable period in which he never witnessed Paul unjustly attack Rashad. That alternate history would leave his beliefs about himself, his social circle, and his choices unchallenged. Part of Quinn's counter-narrative is necessarily illustrated by the contrast between his control over his future as a star basketball player (and safety therein) and the lack of Rashad's safety within his own life. For Quinn, relinquishing this control is one of the most painful parts of this process. When he finally confirms to himself and to Jill that he is going to report Paul, it is not yet a cathartic assertion, even by Quinn's own admission. Instead, the novel makes the point that he "finally mustered" the words, as he adds, "[I]f I don't do something . . . if I just stay silent, it's just like saying that's not my problem" (p. 184). By distinguishing Quinn's statement about taking action—however quiet, difficult, and even inarticulate it is—from the complicity of his prior silence, *All American Boys* asserts a counter-narrative about the mutual difficulty and necessity of white people's antiracist action. It also demonstrates how antiracist stances are formulated over time, often through seemingly small steps that signify hard personal work and learning.

Moving from Awareness of Privilege to Taking Antiracist Action

As the novel progresses, it shows how Quinn deepens his commitment to taking Rashad's side. One striking example is his decision to write "I'm Marching/Are You?" on a shirt he wears to school (p. 252). In an echo of how Rashad draws himself into his picture in order to claim his own representation, pain, and path to healing, Quinn writes himself into an embodied public declaration of his solidarity with Rashad and his place in the community protest that concludes the novel. While Quinn is afforded more control over his public narrative than Rashad, there is still a crucial counter-narrative element to his writing on his shirt, specifically his decision to direct his protest participation outward toward his primarily white social circle. This move affirms the responsibility of white antiracist work in white spaces at the same time that it critiques the dominant tendency for white allies to defer the labor and discomforts of fighting racism toward people of color (Levine-Rasky, 2000; Tatum, 1997).

Additionally, by joining his voice with that of the community organizers of the protest, which includes Rashad's brother Spoony, Quinn also makes a conscious decision to disconnect himself from his prior silent complicity with Paul's controlling defensive narrative. In representing Quinn's struggle to negotiate what it means to take social action against racism, the novel raises pointed questions for readers, such as whether Quinn's personal decision to take action would have the same impact on him and his community if he didn't make his stance public. What impact can a single action, like marching in a protest, have against racism? What can we learn from Quinn's evolving antiracist identity as we see him reach out to Jill and make public his decision to march in the protest?

The scholarship around white privilege and becoming a white ally engages with questions like these. However, it often problematically situates itself in relation to individual awareness rather than confronting the tensions between espousing and enacting antiracism. Margolin (2015) suggests that white individuals can actually become more complacent by focusing on affirming their individual experiences rather than challenging them in a more systemic context. As a result, they may become more at home in a persistently unjust world or remain comfortable benefiting from white privilege. Moreover, this standpoint can contribute to the construction of a "white privilege pedagogy," which focuses more on white personal identity than institutional structures: it affirms white personal experience in ways that can minimize the individual and institutional experiences of Black people; it falsely claims that the confession of white privilege leads to social action and equity on behalf of Black people; and it both validates and expands white people's sense of moral rightness (Margolin, 2015). The construction of being a white ally has also been critiqued, with both antiracist scholars and activists calling for a more nuanced, action-focused construction of social justice alliance and white solidarity (Kohn, 2015; Patton & Bondi, 2015).

In contrast, *All American Boys* engages important questions about how to move beyond recognizing white privilege to actually employing one's individual white privilege to work against systemic forms of oppression (Feagin, 2006; Margolin, 2015). It also keeps

a sustained focus on Quinn's awareness that he can no longer ignore the injustices witnessed. In a significant moment of self-critique, he decides to finally watch the video of Rashad's attack that was broadcast on the news, telling himself, "I already *had* walked away. . . . [N]ot watching the damn video was walking away too, and I needed to watch it" (p. 180).

Changing his stance from denial to racial solidarity does have costs for Quinn. The novel emphasizes how knowing the consequences of alienating Paul and his family makes Quinn's wrestling with his growing racial identity awareness even harder. In doing so, it illustrates how both Quinn and Rashad take on fear and risks in doing the work of challenging racism in their lives (Leonardo & Porter, 2010). In Quinn's case, he risks his position on the basketball team and an athletic scholarship by defying the coach's orders. More painfully, in speaking out against Paul's police brutality, he severs his long relationship with Paul's family, including Paul's brother Guzzo, who has been his classmate and constant friend over the years. He reconciles himself to the knowledge that neither his conscience nor his relationships can bear the weight of his complicity in racist violence. In these ways, *All American Boys* positions Quinn as a mirror in which white readers can find affirmation, guidance, and potent challenges to their negotiations of white privilege (Bishop, 1990). It also offers teachers some frank opportunities for engaging classroom conversations about race and privilege.

Reading Quinn: Opportunities for Talking about White Privilege, Racial Solidarity, and Social Action in the Classroom

As white educators, we share in the cultural weight of white privilege that Quinn's character represents. This means we have to interrogate our own privileges and complicities as a starting point in our practice rather than treating our awareness as a fixed anchor from which we work. We have the opportunity to consciously choose more diverse, antiracist teaching materials like *All American Boys* through which our students can see themselves and their questions. This novel offers us a special opportunity to examine how our current biases and positionalities affect how we choose and how we engage with texts like this. It also opens up the opportunity to work through how we formulate positive, antiracist white identities and position ourselves as both teachers and learners in conversation with our students (Utt & Tochluk, 2016). Further, it demonstrates how important it is to reflexively situate our teaching and reading practices in conversation with other critical information for understanding and talking about race in the classroom (Lawrence & Tatum, 2004; Margolin, 2015; Tatum, 1997). Our society's ongoing epidemic of police brutality against Black people lends even greater urgency.

Quinn's trajectory toward an awareness of white privilege as a concept, along with his deepening engagement with the realities of his own white privilege and the action it requires, offer three key opportunities for educators to talk about race and privilege in the classroom. First, it powerfully represents the twinned intellectual and emotional labor involved in coming to terms with one's own white racial identity and privilege (Tatum, 1997). In doing so, it exemplifies a generative approach to race talk as described by Blommaert (2013), specifically with regard to taking account of Quinn's cognitive dissonance, discomfort, and fear as he struggles with what it means to distance himself from white friends who have enacted or silenced racist violence. Second, it offers educators the opportunity to take on classroom conversations about race even further and problematize what it means—and if it's possible—to fully "give up" white privilege (Margolin, 2015).

Third, Quinn's experience demonstrates how the path toward white solidarity is forged not only through personal development but also a sustained commitment to social action. Through Quinn, *All American Boys* advances a persuasive counter-narrative challenge to the passivity of claiming to be a white ally without action or empathy (Glenn, 2012; Hughes-Hassell, 2013; Margolin, 2015). He asks us as much as himself about how the hearts of those who witness racist events in our nation have "become so numb that we needed dead bodies in order to feel the beat of compassion in our chests" (p. 296). Ultimately, however, the novel's narrative is as hopeful as it is challenging. Through Quinn, the novel holds up a mirror in which white teachers and students can see ourselves reflected and find guidance in his complicated, imperfect, lifelong road toward a socially active stance of racial solidarity (Bishop, 1990; Lawrence & Tatum, 2004; Patton & Bondi, 2015).

Implications for Teaching: Pedagogy and Counter-narratives

Using a counter-narrative text such as *All American Boys* to examine modern injustices of race and racism in our current era of documented police brutality represents both an opportunity and a great challenge for our classrooms. Hoffman (1996) calls for a discourse that reflects multicultural awareness in both research and practice, and counter-narrative literature like *All American Boys* can help us approach this work. However, implementing pedagogical practices and specific teaching strategies is difficult. Pedagogy that takes an antiracist stance to create communities for critical discourse and self-reflection requires a fluidity of instructional methods and responsiveness to the individuals within the classroom community. As Gillborn (2000) suggests, "There is not a blueprint for successful anti-racism, no one 'correct' way. What succeeds at one time, or in one context, may not be appropriate at a later date or in another context" (p. 486). The following section outlines work that educators can do in preparation for teaching this text, including specific teaching strategies that might be useful in providing students a space to use the experiences of these characters to examine injustice and racism in the world.

Like many other pedagogical practices, enacting antiracist pedagogy begins with preparation and self-reflection. Educators must consider their own identity and history in relation to the text and their students (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Leonardo, 2004). An educator's point of view stems from his/her own experience; in teaching counter-narratives, that self-history needs to be examined (Willis & Harris, 2003). From what standpoints does an educator witness and understand the fictional lives of Rashad and Quinn?

Teachers need to grapple with the concepts of whiteness, racism, and power as a starting point, and the concept of whiteness needs to be addressed across multiple frames.

Scholars have expanded on what it means to confront white privilege (Blakeney, 2005; Levine-Rasky, 2000) and how to examine racial differences (Willis & Harris, 2003). Blakeney (2005) suggests that antiracist professional development can help educators confront constructs like "white is right, white ignorance, white privilege, and how they interact to perpetuate a white dominant culture that in turn perpetuates aversive racism manifested as institutional racism" (p.129). Leonardo (2004) recommends examining racism and privilege through the lens of how people of color may be denied the resources of their communities and compensation for their labor. Before sharing this powerful counter-narrative novel with students, teachers should examine their own constructions of race, privilege, and power. This reflective act must include questioning white privilege beyond superficial awareness of whiteness on an individual level. It requires sustained engagement with deeper concepts that have historically been left unaddressed, such as how individuals maintain positions of voice and power, enact racial microaggressions, and fundamentally ignore culpability within systems of injustice.

Pedagogy that takes an antiracist stance to create communities for critical discourse and self-reflection requires a fluidity of instructional methods and responsiveness to the individuals within the classroom community.

In addition to considering the context of the classroom itself, as well as adopting a stance of reflection and learning toward examining systemic issues of racism and privilege, there are some pedagogical teaching strategies that may enrich students' experiences with counter-narrative texts like *All American Boys*. One preliminary strategy is pairing the novel with supplementary texts and images that connect students' examination of its themes to real-world examples. Based on research within teacher education, Coleman-King and Groenke (2015) suggest that examining issues of inequality can be enhanced by combining fictional texts such as *All American Boys* with historical nonfiction to understand the ways in which certain cultural groups have been positioned and discriminated against. Similarly, Harris (1993) suggests that a relevant nonfiction source to pair with multicultural fiction can be found in age-group-specific pop cultural texts, such as magazines, which can be beneficial for questioning differences and similarities from different cultural standpoints.

Pairing *All American Boys* with nonfiction texts

represents a rich opportunity to examine issues of racial injustice, both historically and contemporarily. Educators may find it especially valuable to pair the novel with theoretical pieces about racism in the United States, historical perspectives on racism, research and examples regarding media contributions to stereotypes of specific cultural groups, and/or personal accounts of cross-cultural lived experiences and perspectives. Books such as *The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates* (Moore, 2010) and *Between the World and Me* (Coates, 2015) would enhance students' engagement with personal narrative perspectives on race and racism. Hill's (2016) *Nobody: Casualties of America's War on the Vulnerable, from Ferguson to Flint and Beyond* and Lowery's (2016) *"They Can't Kill Us All": Ferguson, Baltimore, and a New Era in America's Racial Justice Movement* lend themselves to examining current acts of grave injustice in the US. Markus and Moya's (2010) *Doing Race: 21 Essays for the 21st Century* has specific chapters on racism in the media, real estate practices, and law enforcement. Each of these titles, whether read individually or as part of a selected assortment, can deepen students' understanding of racial realities, both past and present, and enrich their reading of *All American Boys*. (See "Select Nonfiction Texts to Pair with *All American Boys*" in the references.)

In addition to pairing the novel with nonfiction texts, educators can think about the ways in which they frame discussion of the novel itself. Students could begin their examination of its themes through strategies such as Beers and Probst's (2017) framework of "in the book, in your head, in your heart" that open up ways to access difficult topics. Discussion could be centered on conceptual frameworks that lend themselves to examining cultural difference and injustice, such as examining the literacy aesthetic of a work about a specific cultural group (Glenn, 2014). Classrooms could also explore the coming of age aspect of the novel within the specific cultural spaces that the characters occupy (Harris, 1993). Another possibility is examining the way knowledge is positioned in the novel and which types of knowledge—cultural, mainstream, school, and transformative—are valued. Finally, the concept of moving from analysis to action (Glenn, Ginsburg, Gaffy, Lund, & Meagher, 2012) could also be integrated into classroom discussions and activities. A list of potential discussion questions based on these approaches is included in Appendix A.

To accompany these strategies, there are also opportunities for students to pair their reading of *All American Boys* with writing activities that contribute to their critical analysis of the text and foster analytical connections to the world around them. For example, students can write about this novel from an insider/outsider stance that explores what it's like to identify with certain forms of cultural knowledge while lacking others (Soter, 1999). Romano's (1995, 2000) notion of multigenre writing lends itself well to using different forms to explore voice. Students could also design youth participatory action research (YPAR) projects that address issues of inequality (Glenn et al., 2012). YPAR is grounded in the combined efforts of multiple stakeholders, community members, and outsiders to question injustice within communities, research those injustices, organize for change, and create products to educate others about these injustices (Cammarota & Fine, 2008). In tandem with reading *All American Boys*, students could research racial injustices within their own communities by looking at systemic practices within their school, or elsewhere, in which people are treated differently based on their race, culture, gender, class, or other identity markers. Educators and students alike could draw on resources like the Public Science Project (http://publicscienceproject.org) to examine other youth participatory action research projects and how they have worked to create change.

It is essential to reiterate that this novel can act as social commentary and that it allows readers to explore the concept of self and others, which is crucial if young adult literature is to be used as a way to question social realities and ultimately enact actions that lead to change. Ladson-Billings (1994) argues that culturally relevant teaching is about "questioning (and preparing students to question) the structural inequalities, the racism, and the injustices that exist in society" (p.18). Counter-narratives help students examine, understand, and critique "real-world wrongs borne witness through fiction" (Glenn, 2006, p. 91). Texts like *All American Boys* thus create space for critical witnessing, in which the ramification of reading injustices within the world of a text can lead to action for change within the reader's own world (Lopez, 2009).

Conclusion

During the novel's final chapters, the marchers who protest police brutality have a die-in. Rashad, a survivor, drops to the ground with his fellow protesters amidst a litany of fallen Black men's and women's names. Name after name fills the air. Of profound note: the ten names listed in the text are real people who, innocent and unarmed, lost their lives to police brutality. This novel embeds these people as an enduring counter-story, in which their lives and names will not fade from our public discourse or historical memory (Hughes-Hassell, 2013; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Warnke, 2015).

All American Boys invites us to challenge the privilege of dominant racial groups, examine the positionalities of diverse racial and cultural groups, and offer students an abundance of mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors to see and discuss their own varied identities and experiences. It is also a profound work of insight and empathy that can be brought into the classroom as an act of healing, representation, and empowerment, especially at a time when students are increasingly faced with the daily realities and threats of systemic racial inequity. Reynolds and Kiely (2015) enjoin us in this counter-narrative, asking us to help keep their characters' names in our own memories, to lift up the stories of those, like Rashad, who survive, and to work toward change. Finally, the novel offers a counter-narrative that tells youth we see you, and we know that change is needed.

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Select Nonfiction Texts to Pair with *All American Boys*

Coates, T. N. (2015). *Between the world and me.* New York, NY: Spiegel & Grau.
Hill, M. L. (2016). *Nobody: Casualties of America's war on the vulnerable, from Ferguson to Flint and beyond*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
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Appendix A: Representative Discussion Questions for Classroom Use

1. Rashad is both surprised by the accusation made by the officer and aware that he must quickly remove himself from this situation when he is accused of shoplifting at the corner store. What constructs do you think the authors allude to in both the accusation itself and Rashad's instinct to remove himself as quickly as possible?
2. At the end of chapter one, why does Rashad fear for his life? If you think across identity and race constructions, what different thoughts might individuals from other cultural, racial, ethnic, gender, and sexually-oriented groups think? What would you think if you were in this moment being unfairly accused of shoplifting at your local corner store?
3. On page 49, Rashad's father suggests that Rashad may be at fault for his hospitalization as a result of the way he dresses or his actions. Describe your reaction to his father's words.
4. Why do you think Spoony sends in Rashad's picture in his uniform and tries to be in control of the media narrative?
5. In describing his experience at the pizza shop, Quinn describes himself as "the kind of guy who just kept taking those free Cokes, no questions asked, like I actually deserved them or something" (p. 78). What do you suppose Quinn means by emphasizing this statement?
6. Desmond Tutu's quote, "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor," is in direct contrast with the actions of some of the adults at Rashad's and Quinn's school. Two examples include Coach Carney's desire to have the students "leave all this stuff at the door" (p. 158) and Ms. Webber's omission of Rashad's name in class. In your eyes, how do schools and other institutions maintain systemic issues of injustice? What would you say to Coach Carney, Ms. Webber, and other teachers, like Quinn's English teacher Mrs. Tracey?
7. What do you think English means when he tells Quinn, "You have no idea how many times you've sounded like a dick. You think it was just today" (p. 177)?
8. During the early chapters of the novel, Quinn wants to ignore the assault on Rashad. Why? What does it mean for him to be a witness to this violence?
9. The concept of being "color-blind" comes up throughout the book. What is meant by this term? Why do some want to believe that we live in a color-blind society? What is problematic about the concept of being "color-blind" in our society?
10. What does Quinn mean by stating "[M]y shield was that I was white" (p. 180)?
11. Quinn believes that to work against injustice, he must engage in dialogue about race and his own privilege. How can we work against injustice in our own communities?
12. As you look at Rashad's artwork, what stands out about the passages that refer to the way in which he depicts people, including the Family Circus images, his faceless figures, and his final culminating drawing in the hospital?
13. Why do you think Rashad attends the protest without his bandages on?
14. Why do you think the authors made the choice to list the names of real individuals who lost their lives as a result of police brutality? What are the implications of this decision for you as a reader?

Mike P. **Cook,** Beatrice **Bailey,** and Lienne **Medford**

March and the Struggle for Historical Perspective Recognition

In January 2017, journalists reported that John Lewis, as well as other Democratic Congressional leaders, chose not to attend President Trump's inauguration. As a result of Lewis's decision, his award-winning March trilogy (Lewis, Aydin, & Powell, 2013, 2015, 2016), which recounts his part in the American civil rights movement, received much publicity and was championed by celebrities and public historians alike as a must-read. As teacher educators, we had been drawn to Lewis's work prior to Trump's inauguration and had begun discussions about its pedagogical utility with teacher candidates and their middle school students. Mike and Lienne were already using graphic texts within their teacher preparation courses for a variety of reasons, and all of us had considered the benefits and limitations of using them with young adults as part of our research interests. Our quest became to explore ways to use graphic texts in middle grade social studies classrooms.

Our review of the literature suggested that several social studies educators were already analyzing various issues surrounding the use of graphic texts (see, for example, Christensen, 2006; Clark, 2012; Mathews, 2011; Schwarz, 2002) and found them to be of help in various ways (e.g., studying social and political issues, incorporating graphic memoirs into the social studies curriculum, exploring new perspectives and points of view, providing students accessible views and representations of historical events and participants). Building on these insights, we decided to begin our exploration with middle grade social studies preservice teachers (PSTs)— primarily career changers—within a Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program to see how they might respond to the idea of using graphic texts within their classrooms to help young readers develop empathy or understand a bit more clearly what it was like to be a participant within a historical period.

For our purposes of forging a working operational term, we chose to refrain from using historical "empathy" because of the varied common and academic associations that are attached to it. Instead, we embraced the cultural tool that social studies researchers are labeling as "historical perspective recognition" to capture the kind of thinking we seek to foster. Barton and Levstik (2004) define this type of historical thinking as consisting of five elements: 1) recognizing the existence of other ways of thinking and believing; 2) recognizing that those ways of thinking are valid; 3) recognizing that events and perspectives can be explained in the context of historical beliefs and values; 4) recognizing that at given times in history, people held specific beliefs and values; and 5) recognizing that people's own perspectives are dependent upon historical context. The researchers also suggested that historical perspective recognition is an essential skill for citizens in a pluralist democracy. As leaders within the field of social studies education who have helped shape the National Council for the Social Studies *C3 Framework*, they insist that "students practice moving beyond their own perspectives and [take] seriously those of others, no matter how foreign they seem" (p. 224). Building on Barton and Levstik's work, we asked: *Could teacher candidates begin to think about ways to use graphic texts within their classrooms in ways that help middle school students take seriously the perspectives of others, no matter how different*

those perspectives might be from their own? Is this asking too much of aspiring social studies teachers in a turbulent civic arena?

Shortly after beginning the project, we agreed that *March: Book One* (Lewis, Aydin, & Powell, 2013) would be a good graphic text to use as we invited teacher candidates to consider how graphic texts might enable readers to get a feel for or develop historical perspective recognition for diverse Americans who struggled within the civil rights movement. The March trilogy is a graphic memoir of John Lewis's experiences from his childhood to his involvement in the civil rights movement to his time as a United States Congressman. As such, it offers readers (through the combination of text and images) an accessible view of Lewis's life and role in fighting for civil and human rights. As teacher educators working in the Southeast, a region still rife with racial tensions, we anticipated the challenges that *March: Book One* might pose, but we believe that the text ultimately proves to be a legitimate graphic source for young adolescents. It is a memoir written by a reputable leader who was an active participant within the civil right movement, and its graphic format invites diverse readers to interact with it and appreciate the perspectives of various participants in the movement.

Graphic Texts in Social Studies

Multiple scholars have suggested the use of graphic texts in K–12 schools and within teacher education as a way to reconceptualize literacy instruction and foster critical thinking and questioning in students (Cervetti, Damico, & Pearson, 2006; Hagood, 2000; McVee, Bailey, & Shanahan, 2008; Schieble, 2011; Sheridan-Thomas, 2007). In fact, graphic texts have been used across content areas and curricula, including the study of historical events and participants. Moreover, they have been used to study social and political issues because the format (e.g., images paired with text) can help students better understand and engage with important issues. It is precisely this format that offers readers accessible views of history and culture through diverse points of view (Christensen, 2006; Schwarz, 2002). Chun (2009) has taken the argument one step further and suggested that graphic texts foster critical literacies and allow students to 1) critically analyze the perspectives of historical experiences, 2) connect to texts and concepts through intellectual and emotional engagement, 3) connect the stories they read to their own experiences, and 4) critically reflect. Others (e.g., Mathews, 2011) have pointed to the use of graphic novels in social studies teacher preparation as tools for offering students new perspectives on traditionally taught topics. Even more aligned with our interests, Williams (2008) has suggested that the graphic format could help students develop a sense of empathy (i.e., perspective recognition) and empowerment.

Using a Graphic Memoir to Foster Historical Perspective Recognition

Drawing on the research cited above, we decided to see if we could help a class of 16 mostly career-changing teacher candidates cultivate historical perspective recognition related to the civil rights movement, a historical period addressed within their South Carolina History for Teachers course that Beatrice taught. After our review, we had reason to believe that the middle grade readers these candidates plan to teach might be able to develop deeper perspective recognition within a historical era if they have room enough and time enough to transact with a graphic text; this genre offers not only the written narrative, but also the images that can help them build imaginative worlds in which they can vicariously enter into the life and times of the period. Of course, historical documentaries might be another and perhaps more accessible venue for helping students develop an imaginative landscape for a period, but as the research above has suggested, graphic texts enable readers to have more control over the reading process, since they allow readers the time necessary to at least begin to picture and experience life in a different era. This control over the images and text is what McCloud (1993) has referred to as "visual permanence." With videos, this reflective control is less likely, as the images keep rolling.

Rather than start with the middle grades students themselves, we chose to work with teacher candidates first to see how readily they could enter into the life and times of a civil rights movement leader and his cohort members by transacting with the first book in the March trilogy.

Unlike traditional undergraduate teacher preparation programs, the teacher candidates within this MAT

cohort tended to be career changers who had given up jobs in the corporate or public service sector. Several participants had degrees in History or the social sciences and had tried to find meaningful employment in the world of business. A few were fresh out of college and eager to get professional certification while earning graduate degrees. About a third were from out of state, but most saw themselves as Southerners. Six of the respondents are male, and five are female; two are African American, and nine are white. This cohort of social studies teacher candidates had been together for a full summer, so they had taken several shared classes, worked collaboratively on projects, and built up quite a rapport. Table 1 offers thumbnail sketches of the six PSTs whose responses we reference in our analysis below.

Instructional Approach

We provided all 16 participants a copy of *March: Book One* and had them read the entire graphic text within the context of a three-hour class session. All of them, therefore, had the same reading context and the same amount of time to transact with the text; this allowed for ready comparisons of their responses and helped minimize extraneous factors that might affect those responses. To support their reflective efforts, the 121-page graphic text was divided into roughly five equal passages of about 22–25 pages. Participants read through each passage individually, then paused after 20 minutes to compose written reflections (posted on Google Classroom) on these questions: *How did the graphic text help and/or hinder you in developing perspective recognition for those involved in the civil rights struggle? What methods were used to help you develop perspective on these characters?* As part of their reflections, the teacher candidates were also asked to reference specific pages and panels within the text that they felt best fostered (or hindered) their own perspective recognition and/or to point out the specific authors' and artist's methods they referenced. After

Table 1. Participant pseudonyms and descriptions

Participant Pseudonym	Participant Description
Benton	Benton, one of the two African American students within the class, had just earned his BA degree in History at a state university. His great-grandfather participated in the civil rights movement within the state, helping usher in integration despite massive statewide resistance. Benton was one of the younger teacher candidates and was not married at the time. He had strong aspirations to be an educational leader.
Bill	Bill, a white, male History major had traveled all over the Far and Near East while teaching English as a second language and had chosen as an adult to become a Muslim. Not from the South, he was a newcomer to the state. He liked to discuss controversial historical issues. Like many of the PSTs, he had a fine preparation in History at a major research university.
Canton	Canton, an African American male, was a practicing minister at the time of the study. He held a divinity degree from a prestigious Southern seminary. As a father, he was often eager to speak out about representations of African Americans within the historical narrative of the Standards documents. He came of age within the South as a devout Anglican.
Daniel	Daniel, a white male, came of age in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains and was proud to have recently earned a degree in History from a major research university. He felt comfortable wearing bib overalls to class and chewing tobacco as he considered positions on critical historical issues. He was passionate about state history and his future career as a coach.
Karen	Karen, a white Southern female, was a leader within her small college and was eager to become an educational leader, following in the footsteps of her mentor. She had a strong sense of mission and compassion toward others. She proved to be one of the best instructional designers within the cohort. Just out of college, she was not married.
Leah	Leah developed her own company as a historic preservationist and was paying for her graduate degree through a restoration project she had taken on locally. A single, white mother with several children, she was eager to move forward with her new professional role. Leah was the oldest member of the class, probably in her late 40s.

reading each segment and composing their reflections, participants engaged in 10-minute whole-class discussions where they shared their emerging transactions and considered those of their classmates. This, we hoped, would allow them to get a feel for what their peers were envisioning and would help the instructor steer the focus as needed toward recognizing the perspectives of distant historical others. To further support participants, Lienne served as a visiting instructor who gave a short overview on how to read graphic texts and offered a brief survey on ways graphic texts were being used in various middle school settings.

It is important to note here that one issue classroom teachers struggle with in similar pursuits is getting their hands on classroom sets of texts for their students. If attaining texts such as *March: Book One* proves to be an issue, there are a few options available. First, there are a multitude of teacher funding sites available online (e.g., Go Fund Me for Education) where teachers can receive financial support from anonymous donors for the purchase of classroom materials. Second, school systems can obtain permission to use digitally reproduced texts. While this might be a more viable option for teacher educators, it is worth exploring at the K–12 level as well. Additionally, school librarians often have funds set aside for purchasing class sets to put on reserve. Two other options available to teachers are to purchase half a class set and have students read the text in pairs or require that students purchase the texts as they begin to build their personal libraries. Students who have difficulty purchasing the texts could get support from various civic groups, parent-teacher organizations, or class fund-raising projects. Finally, teachers can use excerpts from texts to introduce their students to important moments and themes from selected texts.

Analyzing the Data

When the class was over at the end of the semester, we each individually read the written reflections to identify exemplar responses that demonstrated historical perspective recognition. Together, we compiled a list of the responses we all agreed were exemplars. We then developed simple codes for these responses according to their content. These codes were then refined within larger umbrella codes so that we could further analyze the portions of the text that seemed to evoke perspective recognition. We then addressed the themes and issues that we did not anticipate. We also reviewed the videotape of the class discussion to see if the conversations helped and/or hindered students' perspective recognition efforts.

What We Discovered

To a certain degree, most of the participants evidenced some historical perspective recognition as a result of transacting with the graphic text in an initial reflective way. Granted, we could have used a more traditional approach: ask participants to offer a detailed analysis of the text within a polished and rigorous essay, possibly as part of a larger project that could have been completed outside of class. In this case, however, our hope was to see how they would respond to the idea of using graphic texts in middle grade social studies classes to encourage perspective recognition and to get a feel for whether they would bother with graphic texts in a discipline less prone to using them. Thirteen of the participants provided evidence of perspective recognition. They grew to understand to a certain extent what it was like for young John Lewis to participate in the early stages of a civil rights struggle. The remaining three participants summarized the text or posted bullet points that they found interesting. They may have been involved in some perspective recognition, but they offered little evidence of it. Perhaps the directions for the reflections could have been clearer.

As teacher educators working in the Southeast, a region still rife with racial tensions, we anticipated the challenges that *March: Book One* might pose, but we believe that the text ultimately proves to be a legitimate graphic source for young adolescents.

Some passages within the graphic text evoked more perspective recognition than others. The most evocative portion related to John Lewis's early childhood experiences growing up on a small family farm in rural Georgia. Altogether, 32 pages were devoted to his coming-of-age experiences, including 16 pages related to a detailed reverie about his love and care for

his family's chickens; this section bore resemblance to a Protestant children's sermon on Sunday morning as he described his love for the chickens while indirectly sharing his emerging altruistic sense of justice for diverse others. Lewis's other main coming-of-age reflection related to his trip up North, as he learned from his uncle how to protect himself and seek out restaurants and hotels for blacks only. The passage that received the second highest attention was related to Lewis's training and action within the Fellowship of Reconciliation (F.O.R.). The enduring F.O.R. is a group committed to the philosophy and discipline of nonviolence. *March: Book One* is filled with multiple pages of often shockingly violent, graphic scenes that reveal how the young civil rights activists were determined to move forward with their peaceful protests. The third major area of interest among participants centered on the generational conflicts that evolved among black leaders—something that seemed surprising for the respondents, as they tended to think that the civil rights activists were more unified.

March: Book One enabled [participants] to enter into a key component of the movement and gain historical perspective recognition about generational differences within an earlier period.

What follows is an analysis of some of the perspective recognition responses that were most evocative in terms of participants' efforts to grapple with the complexities that Lewis and his civil rights colleagues faced.

Generational Differences

Benton (see participant descriptions in Table 1) pointed out the generational tensions among the black community as expressed within *March: Book One* and highlighted the graphic page on which Lewis describes his conflicting feelings in response to the mayor of Nashville's proposed system of "partial integration."

As a result of Benton's engagement with the text, he wrote:

> The political nature of the movement is quite amazing. This is from one person's perspective, but it shows many ways to progression, and it seems within the different generations that there were different ways of moving forward.

Benton connected to the young activists' sentiments at the time in terms of a generational tension, as if he, too, had felt such angst in his own coming-of-age story. As a result of successful sit-ins and boycotts, the mayor of Nashville was willing to propose a system of "partial integration." Young 20-something Lewis was alarmed that two black presidents of two historically black colleges and universities supported the decision. For Lewis, this felt like **BETRAYAL** in all caps and bold font. It revealed to him the differences between the generations.

Young Lewis even questioned the wisdom of Thurgood Marshall, who had ushered in Brown vs. Board of Education a few years earlier when he spoke to the young activists at Fisk. The author and illustrator portray Marshall pointing his finger from a bully pulpit, strongly suggesting to the F.O.R. that members should take a get out of jail free card when they can: "Look, once you've been arrested, you've made your point. If someone offers to get you out, man—GET OUT!" (pp. 110–111). Lewis realized what a fine man Marshall was, but he became more convinced than ever that the revolt they were waging was as much against the traditional black leadership structure as it was against segregation and discrimination.

As readers flip the page, they discover that five days after Marshall spoke, the sit-ins continued. F.O.R. was not about to accept a partial integration. Benton's interaction with and analysis of the text suggest that he recognized the existence of multiple ways of thinking and believing about the same historical event, even for someone experiencing it firsthand. From his own contemporary perspective, he seemed to acknowledge that a variety of perspectives is valid, and he saw these events and perspectives in the context of multiple beliefs and values.

Another participant, Leah, also commented on this generational tension, stating, "The disconnect between the older and younger generations can be seen [on pages] 110–111, which is something we can relate to. Everyone has had a time when adults and parents were not progressive enough for us." She recognized Lewis's concern about generational differences, even though she is neither black nor of that generation. She expressed the tension that comes with both respecting mentors from an earlier generation and wanting to go further than they toward a meaningful vision. *March:*

Book One enabled both Benton and Leah to enter into a key component of the movement and gain historical perspective recognition about generational differences within an earlier period.

Support from Outside Mentors

Another response from Benton helped us better appreciate the significance of outside mentors in a time of deep need. In response to the panel on page 106 showing the voluntary involvement of Dr. Stephen J. Wright, the first black college president in the country to stand by the F.O.R, he wrote, "I can feel Lewis's pride as he said 'We were euphoric.' Such powerful words." As this *March* excerpt suggests, the F.O.R. activists were "euphoric" as they shook hands with the mentors from afar who had come to their aid. On a Sunday morning, Fisk President Dr. Wright addressed the students crammed within the large university chapel and declared that "I Stand with You." Within the same page, Lewis recalled that on the next day, three black lawyers came to their defense in court without charging a dime. One was Attorney Looby from the West Indies, who had recently worked with Thurgood Marshall.

Did it take an African American, such as Benton, to feel this pride? How important are ethnicity or race and gender in readers' abilities to cultivate perspective recognition? No other participant noted this same heartfelt joy.

Values of the Author

Bill evidenced that he was following the authorial intent of John Lewis when he shared the following after reviewing the first few pages of *March*: *Book One*:

> John Lewis's journey began with a historical event that spanned generations . . . civil rights. It set up where he'd been and the magnitude of the day that is coming. A student may not understand the gravity of walking into a US Congressman's office . . . even in the early hours of the day. Work ethic and accessibility are being displayed for students to emulate. A sense of no one is better than another is being set up, too . . . not even the chickens. Hard work all around gets results. Everyday actions can get results, too. Black and white of the text sets a tone in itself.

From the get-go, Bill got inside the head of the master storyteller, and he began to realize what a story Lewis is about to share. The graphic panel on page 19 is just one of several that begins to create the significance of the day as Lewis, a life-long civil rights activist, prepares to attend the Presidential Inauguration of Barack Obama in 2008.

When Lewis arrived in his Congressional office on that chilly morning, young Jacob and Esau from his home state of Georgia, as well as their mother, greeted him. They had stopped by because the mother wanted her boys to see their history: "She wanted them to know" (p. 19). Congressman Lewis invited them into his office and began to share a little of the history that was connected to the framed photographs on his wall. He pointed out, for example, his meeting with President Kennedy when he was 23 years old. He also directed attention to his picture related to the march on Washington when he heard Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. give his "I Have a Dream Speech." In his excerpt above, Bill shared his belief that, through this passage, Lewis indirectly modeled work ethic and accessibility. After all, it was early when Congressman Lewis arrived. He had a big day before him, but he took the time to welcome the young boys and their mother from his home state, and the images he showcases reflect a lifetime of planning, commitment, and plain hard work. As his reverie unfolds, we realize that Lewis must have spent quite a bit of time with the young Georgians that morning. He spoke to them as if they were his kin. Bill, through his response, pointed out Lewis's belief that there is little sense in one chicken thinking it is better than another. Here, he connected with the chicken story to build moral insight into the character of John Lewis.

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Personal Connections

Karen made a personal connection to *March* that suggested she had developed some perspective recognition as well. Surprising us, she shared her personal connection with the graphic text as she reflected upon the passages related to F.O.R. training and activities, specifically the lunch counter sit-ins.

Karen opened up as she shared her feelings, writing, "For me personally, these pictures connect on a very personal level, as my husband's grandmother was involved in sit-ins in South Carolina." Her use of

the words "connect on a very personal level" suggests perspective recognition. She knows her husband very well and probably his family as well, so she is able to perhaps imagine more readily just how tough it was back then to stand up for something you really believed in, despite the cost. White activists were included in the images throughout the text, so she could have been drawn to them more readily than other white readers because of this bond she had, though distant, to someone like her who was white and who had fought for freedom's sake.

Another participant, Canton, offered personal insight that also included perspective recognition in terms of his thoughts about Lewis's history:

> Here I was reading about Justice, when there were brave people out there making it happen. (Doing things with a theological foundation), John Lewis was interested in doing more than just understanding. Likely from his parents and their lack of action.

It could be argued that Canton imposed his own perspective onto Lewis's, but it would be hard to refute that Lewis was interested in doing more than just studying. He did not remain within a theological seminary, although he aspired at one point to be a preacher. Canton may have projected an erroneous motivation on Lewis, but he proffered as a possibility that Lewis was rectifying his parents' decisions to not take action. Lewis certainly hinted within the text that he was disappointed in his family's choices, but that he certainly understood them.

Resistance to Historical Perspective Recognition

We were concerned to find open resistance toward perspective recognition via *March: Book One* with one participant. Daniel described how the text marginalized him and his family in negative ways because they were white. While trying to honor the value of the accessibility of the graphics, he wrote,

> This graphic novel presents the civil rights movement in a very accessible way through pictures. The graphic novel begins with a scene where police are prohibiting a group of black people from Marching (pp. 6–9). While it is very likely this event occurred, it also begins down a slippery slope of marginalizing white people in the South during the civil rights movement. While there were some, probably most, prejudiced police officers, this graphic novel appears to be taking the stance that all white police officers were racist. I am very interested to see if this trend continues throughout the book. I feel that by beginning the text with such a heavy-handed message, that I, as a white person, will need to adopt the persona of the "bad guy," since I share the same skin color as those portrayed, unanimously, as the "bad guys."

Daniel expressed frustration about what he read as a gross generalization about the lack of restaurants for black people in the South and his belief that Southern whites were overly stereotyped in demeaning ways in the text. He built a lengthy but important defense for his position:

> This section of the book depicts the protagonist riding to New York from Alabama to visit family. While I understand that this would have been a tumultuous time for blacks to travel through the South, I again feel that the text is marginalizing white Southerners. The text says, "There would be no restaurants for us to stop at until we were well out of the South" (p. 38). Again, I'm sure that in some, if not most, cases, that would be true. However, my daddy is 60 years old and can remember restaurants in our hometown that allowed blacks as customers. Yes, they were directed to sit apart from whites, but they were admitted, and there was no rioting in _____. The text continues this marginalization by inferring that there would be next to no bathrooms or filling stations that would allow them to use the restroom or fill up with gas. On page 44, the text changes its outlook on white people as a whole, and transitions it to just Southern whites. The man behind the candy counter gives the protagonist a bag of Neapolitan candy. The man behind the counter is white, and he is smiling. The text offers no evidence that the man treated the young boy unjustly or refused to serve him because of his skin color. This is supported by the author saying, "[I]t wasn't until we got to Ohio . . . I relaxed . . ." (p. 41). I will offer no argument that there was a serious and horrible racism problem in America during the civil rights era. I will not argue that much of that took place in the Southern United States. However, this book is seeming to continue the stereotype that all white Southerners were racist, are racist, and will remain racist. I feel like this does more damage than good because it paints whites as a unison group who all mask themselves in racism, when in fact, that is not true. My grandparents would have been in their 30s/40s during this time and would have, and did, accept black people in to their home, workplace, church, or anywhere else. They were not, are not, and will never be prejudice people. This text appears to make a different assumption.

For Daniel and perhaps for other Southern whites, *March* may not be the best graphic text in terms of encouraging historical perspective recognition, since it may come across to these readers as denying their sense of integrity or identity.

Yet the graphic text includes multiple examples of whites and Southern whites coming to the aid of civil rights activists during the time. The most notable example is perhaps the Southern Baptist minister Will Campbell, who earned almost a full page of graphic text. He spoke to the F.O.R. on the morning of February 27th, 1960, just as the group had received word that members would be arrested if they continued to protest. Campbell, who had been run out of Oxford, Mississippi, for playing ping-pong with a black man, shared what he had heard from his contacts in the white community. He warned them that the business community, local officials, and authorities would pull back and let the rough element of the white community come in and beat them.

Paul Laprad was also cited by name and included in the protest graphics, as were other unnamed but pictured white males and females. White broadcasters and newsmen brought public awareness to the protests. Even Mayor West of Nashville was given considerable graphic coverage as he eventually developed the moral courage to suggest that lunch counters should be desegregated, although he offered a disclaimer that it would be up to store managers to decide. Yet by May 10, 1960, white store owners in Nashville let paying black citizens eat at their counters. Daniel was unable, within the context we offered, to appreciate Lewis's notice of these white Southerners' efforts, though few in number.

It is important to note that by the time Daniel had composed his fourth reflection, he had begun to moderate his perspective. He again complimented the text, this time for not overly sensationalizing some of the horrific events, and he offered a way that he could engage in more perspective recognition within a text such as this:

> I feel that this section furthers the racial divisions between whites and blacks today. I am aware that this event happened and that it was very painful—mentally and physically—for all involved. I do appreciate that the author stayed with facts instead of sensationalizing the event for entertainment. I believe the events depicted are very difficult to look at, and could use more inclusion in their depictions, but overall this would help one become more empathetic.

At this point in the course, Daniel had listened actively to several of his peers whom he deeply respected. He seemed to be engaging in a process of revising or moderating his tone and was perhaps conceding that some of the text might even help a Southerner like him develop historical perspective recognition.

These gains were tempered, however, as evidenced by Daniel's continued critique of the text. He concluded his reflections by suggesting that the theme of *March* was divisive and that it should have ended with the results of the successful civil rights movement. (Note that the book opens with Lewis preparing to attend the inauguration of the first black president in American history.) Perhaps one of the strongest arguments to help mitigate Daniel's position is to point out that Lewis's coauthor and the text's illustrator are white. The photograph at the end of the full commercial text shows the three men in a clearly collegial pose and light.

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In Daniel's defense, his resistance began very early in his transaction with the text. By the end of the text and after actively listening to the conversations among his respected peers, Daniel had shifted his stance, if ever so slightly, toward appreciating more fully the plight of distant others rather than letting his fears of being forced to be the bad Southerner erase all potential of a move toward historical perspective recognition. Daniel did not share his perspective during the class conversations that centered around comments about the text's power to aid in his peers' historical perspective recognition. However, the text and method for introducing it did seem to lead to a small degree of historical perspective recognition within the project's most resistant participant.

As teacher educators and teachers, we need to continue to reflect on such reactions when a controversial graphic text is considered. This one response makes our discussion of potential uses of graphic texts for historical perspective recognition more complicated. Now in the wake of the Presidential election, will offering *March* to middle school readers be a suggestion of a preferred political persuasion rather than a fine memoir and source for the exploration of a historical period? The resistance described above represents a real reaction many white students may have

when responding to texts (not just graphic texts) and events in more conservative portions of the country. Likewise, it echoes many of the conversations taking place today and represents a reality for teachers. For example, students may argue that Lewis is insensitive in his graphic memoir by labeling all police and all whites as racist.

One way to help teacher candidates and inservice teachers think through how to handle these student reactions is by utilizing an introductory list of readings and proactive approaches to help students think about their own perspectives and privileges in relation to others. A few texts we believe to be powerful include:

- *Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* (McIntosh, 1989) offers the author's discussion of her white privilege and the ways it manifests itself and can remain unattended.
- *Complicating White Privilege: Poverty, Class, and the Nature of the Knapsack* (Gorski, 2012) includes Gorski's argument that the concept of white privilege has been often oversimplified and should be explored more fully by those in education, specifically those who are white in education.
- *Bringing Students into the Matrix: A Framework for Teaching Race and Overcoming Student Resistance* (Ferber, 2011) presents a discussion of the challenges associated with teaching about race and the author's suggestions for reframing, acknowledging, and addressing the race-related baggage students bring into the classroom.
- *White Power and Privilege: Barriers to Culturally Responsive Teaching* (Glimps & Ford, 2010) suggests the need to prepare future (transformative) teachers for understanding and teaching within the ongoing historic context of white privilege.
- *Race Talk and the Conspiracy of Silence: Understanding and Facilitating Difficult Dialogues on Race* (Sue, 2016) addresses existing resistance to racial dialogue and argues for the need for these difficult conversations about race to take place in ways that challenge assumptions, stereotypes, and myths.

Additionally, the academic journal *Understanding and Dismantling Privilege*—a forum for examining issues of privilege, inequity, and activism—and the documentary *Mirrors of Privilege: Making Whiteness Visible* (Butler, 2006)—a discussion of recognizing and addressing one's own privilege and racism—can be useful, as they too contain a wealth of information on recognizing and addressing whiteness and white privilege. Excerpts from each of these texts can also be used to guide middle and high school students through the process of questioning their own notions of whiteness and white privilege.

Suggestions for Using Nonfiction Graphic Texts to Encourage Historical Perspective Recognition

One important consideration when using texts such as the March trilogy to engage students in developing perspective recognition relates to our discussion above—the issue of controversial responses. Our classrooms are diverse places, and our students bring with them diverse backgrounds, stereotypes, and truths. As such, educators can and should expect wide-ranging responses and reactions to the perspectives of others. Teachers must take the necessary time to teach students how to engage with diverse perspectives and how to turn a critical eye to our own lived experiences and assumptions. This, we admit, can be a complicated process, but one well worth the time when it helps students develop and hone these critical thinking skills. It is equally important to fully evaluate any text before incorporating it into the classroom. This includes being proactive and anticipating and planning for potential issues (e.g., resistance and censorship from those in and outside the classroom).

While *March*: *Book One* served as a particularly useful text for our participating teacher candidates, there are many other graphic texts available that could lead to similar historical perspective recognition development. Other biographical texts that can introduce students to the civil rights movement include Anderson's (2005) *King: A Comics Biography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, Helfer and DuBurke's (2006) *Malcolm X: A Graphic Biography*, and Gunderson and Hayden's (2011) *X: A Biography of Malcolm X*. Gene Yang's (2006) *American Born Chinese* can help students better understand the perspective of someone struggling to find one's place within two competing cultural worlds. Two other books by Yang, *Boxers* (2013a) and *Saints* (2013b), provide readers competing perspectives into the Boxer Rebellion. Satrapi's (2003) *Persepolis* and Spiegelman's (1991) *Maus* are

also frequently taught texts, and both can be used to foster perspective recognition—*Persepolis* of a girl during the Iranian Revolution and *Maus* of Jews and Nazis during World War II. There are also multiple examples of nonfiction or informational graphic texts that might prove worthwhile, such as Jacobson and Colon's (2006) *The 9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation*, which makes accessible the heavily discussed 9/11 Commission report.

This is certainly not meant to serve as a comprehensive list of options, or even a list of those we heavily recommend. Ultimately, teachers are best suited to select the texts for their students, so we encourage teachers to read widely and to research the myriad texts available for these purposes. Here, it is also important to note that within social studies classes, one major criterion for text selection is the feasibility of the text to serve as a legitimate historical source, whether primary or secondary. Although historical fiction might encourage historical perspective recognition more readily than many other nonfiction texts, teachers must consider factors such as the text's legitimacy and the author's reputation as a historian or informant within a period. The March trilogy works quite well because it offers readers an accessible eyewitness historical account from a reliable source and his seasoned collaborators.

Finally, it is vital to take the time to teach students how to interact with graphic texts. Many students are unfamiliar with the graphic format and may struggle with how to read and talk about these texts, which can lead to difficulties in making meaningful connections and developing perspective recognition. There are many good resources available for teachers on this topic. McCloud's (1993) *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, Saraceni's (2003) *The Language of Comics*, and Rudiger's (2006) "Reading Lessons: Graphic Novels 101" are user-friendly resources for introducing students to the form, helping them understand how to read graphic texts, and fostering development of the language necessary to talk about graphic texts. Additionally, there are excellent resources for teachers, many that offer classroom applications, handouts, glossaries, and so forth. Three examples that we have used with our own students include Monnin's (2013) *Teaching Graphic Novels: Practical Suggestions for the Secondary ELA Classroom*, Bakis's (2012) *The Graphic Novel Classroom*, and Carter's (2007) *Building Literacy Connections with Graphic Novels*. Much of the content of these resources can easily be tweaked to fit the social studies classroom and to engage students in the development of historical perspective recognition.

Our ultimate goal in this project was to utilize a graphic memoir to help middle grade social studies teacher candidates develop historical perspective recognition as they interacted with distant historical others via texts. Likewise, we wanted to provide participants meaningful opportunities to consider textual and pedagogical possibilities for their own future social studies classrooms. Most of our participants demonstrated historical perspective recognition through their reflections, specifically with regard to early childhood experiences, training and action for F.O.R., and generational conflicts. Additionally, we shared the struggle one student experienced when reading and attempting to connect with the text and the experiences Lewis described. Taken together, this group of aspiring teachers largely found *March: Book One* to be a useful tool for considering the perspectives of historical others. As instructors, we believe the text holds merit; it is a well-written, well-respected, and relevant account of an important contemporary figure and his role in the civil rights movement, and it provided our teacher candidates with opportunities to connect to and to think deeply about these experiences.

Although historical fiction might encourage historical perspective recognition more readily than many other nonfiction texts, teachers must consider factors such as the text's legitimacy and the author's reputation as a historian or informant within a period.

Texts such as the March trilogy are not only timely, but they are powerful sites for and sponsors of historical perspective recognition. Thus, there is much promise for graphic texts in social studies and ELA classrooms. Based on this initial investigation, however, we realize the need for more research on how and why graphic texts help and/or hinder historical perspective recognition. It is equally vital that, as

teachers, we explore new instructional methods for fostering these experiences with teacher candidates, teachers within our middle schools, and middle school students themselves.

Note: The authors attempted but were unable to secure cost-free permission from Top Shelf Productions to include images of the graphic panels referenced in this article.

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Book in Review: A Teaching Guide

Bryan **Gillis**

A Vocabulary of Intimacy:

Building and Nurturing Healthy Adolescent Relationship Skills

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/publications/the-alan-review/the-alan-review-columns/.

"Today we are faced with the preeminent fact that, if civilization is to survive, we must cultivate the science of human relationships . . . the ability of all peoples, of all kinds, to live together, in the same world, at peace."
—Franklin D. Roosevelt, 32nd President of the United States (1933–1945)

If a science of human relationships does exist, as Roosevelt suggests, I suspect that it is as much an art as a science, and it has certainly not yet been perfected. As adults, we engage in interpersonal relationships on a daily basis, with family, friends, significant others, and people at our workplace. Ideally, most of these associations, which range from brief to enduring, will be healthy and positive in nature. We learn how to develop and maintain these relationships early in life, at home with family and friends, and at school with classmates and teachers. As early as kindergarten, schools attempt to introduce and reinforce relationship skills through programs that teach everything from positive character traits like respect and fairness to anti-bullying. But as students enter junior high and high school, a major storm looms on the horizon that none of these programs are equipped to face. The storm is called adolescence, and it carries with it some monumental relationship challenges for students and their teachers.

Adolescence is an extremely complex and confusing period of life, both socially and emotionally. A teenager's central focus shifts from home and parents to school, friends, and peers. A marked increase in social interactions occurs, both inside and outside of school, as teens learn to manage—with less assistance from parents and significant adults—the social circumstances that arise in their lives (Cross & Frazier, 2010). They also become more willing and able to make moral and ethical decisions that will guide their actions. However, a teenager's ability to comprehend connections between behaviors and their resulting consequences has yet to fully develop. Combine this with what may be the defining characteristic of adolescence—the onset of sexual and romantic desire—and suddenly "the ability of all peoples, of all kinds, to live together, in the same world, at peace" becomes a tremendous challenge, particularly when that world is your classroom and your school.

An adolescent's increase in sexual and romantic desire, especially when paired with an inability to fully comprehend connections between behaviors and consequences, begs the question: Are these students' socio-emotional needs being met at home and/or in the classroom? The most significant adults in a teen's life should be the most credible sources when it comes to responding to these needs, but in many cases, neither parents nor teachers are comfortable having the necessary conversations. As a result, many teens acquire their romantic relationship *knowledge* from peers (Gillis & Simpson, 2015). If teachers want their classrooms to be safe spaces where students feel comfortable as they attempt to navigate the complexities

of adolescent relationships, then it is time we create a curriculum that will do just that.

To date, the only US school curricula that have had the potential to foster discussions about dating and relationships were sex education classes. Unfortunately, since their inception in the United States in the early 1900s, these programs have been devoid of any content that addresses relationships or adolescent socio-emotional development. Instead, sex education programs provide isolated, disconnected information on biological functions, pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and in many cases, the portrayal of sex outside of marriage as inappropriate. The messages are typically delivered through lectures and often employ fear tactics to make key points (Allen, 2006; Gillis & Simpson, 2015).

Not surprisingly, over the past 100 years, sex education has failed to make any positive measurable impact toward its three major goals—the reduction of pregnancies, STIs, or sex outside of marriage (Moran, 2000; Guttmacher Institute, 2005). This can be attributed to several factors: the miniscule percentage of time spent teaching sex education as compared to the rest of the academic curricula, the lack of student accountability for learning the content that *is* taught, and perhaps most significant, the failure to connect sexual information with real-life adolescent situations and emotions (Moran, 2000). The omission of any socio-emotional development context demonstrates a disregard for the crucial relationship between an adolescent's ability to process the facts presented about basic sexual functions and the likelihood that he or she will apply those facts to real-life scenarios, scenarios in which a variety of intense and often conflicting emotions are occurring. For example, just because a teacher lectures on the functions of a condom does not mean that a teenager will make the most informed choice when an emotionally charged situation arises that requires the use of one (Moran, 2000).

Research strongly supports the idea that the building and nurturing of positive romantic relationships is a critical element in the development of a healthy adolescent identity and can help teens achieve developmental milestones, including identity and intimacy development (Furman & Shaffer, 2003; Zimmer-Gembeck, Siebbenbruner, & Collins, 2001). These relationships can also promote self-worth, social status, and resolution skills (Kuttler & La Greca, 2004; Madsen & Collins, 2011). Furthermore, studies have found that healthy romantic experiences in adolescence can improve the quality of romantic relationships in early adulthood (Bouchey & Furman, 2003; Madsen & Collins, 2011).

Reading young adult literature (YAL) with characters that are navigating the slings and arrows of teenage romance is a powerful way to develop and reinforce positive relationship skills with our students. When readers vicariously experience the actions and accompanying emotions of the characters in the YAL they read, verisimilitude occurs. This phenomenon enables students to make personal connections with fictional characters in a safe place. It also provides teachers with opportunities to facilitate discussions and learning tasks that emphasize connections between character and student experiences. As Amy Pattee notes in "The Secret Source: Sexually Explicit Young Adult Literature as an Information Source" (2006), "novels that contain physically and emotionally descriptive scenes allow teen readers to contextualize the physical descriptions of sex." This provides them "with a vocabulary of intimacy they can use to make sense of their own sexual and romantic feelings" (p. 34).

To explore these ideas, I chose two of my favorite authors, Bill Konigsberg and Tom Leveen, and two novels that represent vastly different relationship experiences. Neither are traditional romance novels, but there is much to be gleaned from both in terms of real-life decision making.

Manicpixiedreamgirl by Tom Leveen (2013)

Synopsis

Tyler Darcy has been obsessed with Becky Webb since his freshman year in high school. Two years later, he still hasn't found the courage to talk to her. Tyler has a steady girlfriend, Sydney, and although he truly cares about her, he can't stop imagining what it would be like to be in a relationship with Becky. Sydney tolerates her boyfriend's undying infatuation with Becky, including Tyler's constant questioning as he attempts to learn more about her.

In Tyler's junior year, he joins the drama club so that he can be closer to Becky. The two eventually begin speaking, and as a friendship slowly develops,

Tyler becomes disheartened as he observes Becky engaging in behaviors that don't mesh with the perfect image of the girl he has created in his mind. He suspects that Becky has been hurt in some way and decides that he must try to save her. Tyler is afraid to take the relationship to the next level, though, so instead, he writes a fictional story about the relationship he desires but has been afraid to initiate. He enters the story in a writing contest, and when it is published in a literary magazine, Tyler worries that Becky will read it and immediately recognize herself as the protagonist. The Becky character he has created is based on the girl he imagines her to be, not the girl he is afraid she might actually be.

Reading and writing strategies that provide opportunities for meaningful interaction with YAL are critical, because in order for students to make lasting connections, we must teach concepts through the book.

As Tyler eventually comes to that realization, our hearts break with him. He continues to try to become more intimate with Becky, and readers feel how much he really cares for her. Conversely, Becky's responses to Tyler's attempts at intimacy reveal that the secrets she hides may affect her ability to ever be intimate with anyone.

Manicpixiedreamgirl (http://tomleveen.com/books/manicpixiedreamgirl/) is a realistic look at first love—through the eyes of an extremely likeable and relatable teenage male protagonist—and the measures a teenager is willing to take in order to keep the vision of his dream girl alive. Leveen's use of believable teen dialogue and actions that develop rich characterizations enables readers to experience—along with Tyler—the emotions that accompany romance, lust, and love.

In the Classroom

Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, and Gamoran (2003) conducted extensive research—974 students in 64 middle and high school classrooms in 5 states—that examined the connection between student performance and classroom instruction. They found that high student performance was most closely related to *how* the literature was used. Reading and writing strategies that provide opportunities for meaningful interaction with YAL are critical, because in order for students to make lasting connections, *we must teach concepts* through the book. I have found the most effective way to do this is through the use of text connections. Keene and Zimmerman (1997) describe three types of text connections students can make with literature: 1) *Text-to-self:* connections between the text and prior knowledge and experience; 2) *Text-to-text:* connections between the text being studied and another text; and 3) *Text-to-world:* connections between the text and people, places, and things in the world. Activities that lead students to make these types of connections enable them to value the resources, understandings, and knowledge that they bring from their home lives, communities, and cultures as assets to enrich learning opportunities.

Activity 1: What's in a Name?

This activity involves exploring the significance and relevance of a book title to the story. Nathan Rabin coined the term *manic pixie dream girl* in 2007 in his review for the movie *Elizabethtown* (Rabin, 2007; http://www.avclub.com/article/the-bataan-death-march-of-whimsy-case-file-1-emeli-15577). He explains that the manic pixie dream girl is a fantasy character who "exists solely in the fevered imaginations of sensitive writer-directors to teach broodingly soulful young men to embrace life and its infinite mysteries and adventures." In an article seven years later, titled "I'm Sorry for Coining the Phrase Manic Pixie Dream Girl" (http://www.salon.com/2014/07/15/im_sorry_for_coining_the_phrase_manic_pixie_dream_girl/), Rabin (2014) discusses how much he regrets introducing the term and laments the fact that some even view it as a misogynistic trope. This latter article mentions several female movie characters, including Kirsten Dunst in *Elizabethtown* (2005), Natalie Portman in *Garden State* (2004), and Diane Keaton in *Annie Hall* (1977), who, since the publication of the first article, have been described as manic pixie dream girls.

After students read the two articles, ask them to view these movies. Then discuss: 1) traits that define the term, 2) whether they believe the term to be misogynistic, 3) whether the characters portrayed fit the

term's original description, and 4) if/how these movie characters compare to Becky. Rabin specifically addresses Leveen's book and John Green's *Paper Towns* (2008) in his article, so there are plenty of opportunities for text-to-text and text-to-world connections.

After the class discussion, offer writing and discussion prompts for *Manicpixiedreamgirl.* Here are a few examples:

1. In what ways does Rabin's original definition of manic pixie dream girl help readers understand the character of Becky?
2. Do you think Tyler would ever identify Becky as a manic pixie dream girl? Why or why not?
3. Critics have stated that the term *manic pixie dream girl* is disrespectful. Explain why you agree or disagree with this statement.
4. Have you or any of your friends ever known a manic pixie dream girl (or boy)? No names please.
5. How does identifying the manic pixie dream girl trope provide readers with a clearer understanding of the relationships in the story? Explain.

The purpose of these prompts is to encourage discussion. I avoid creating too many personal relationship prompts for my students, but have found that they willingly share personal experiences once they begin making text-to-self connections.

Activity 2: Oprah Show

Louise Rosenblatt (1982) uses the term *efference* to refer to readers' tendencies to read solely for the purpose of arriving at what they perceive to be the desired result. In the context of the classroom, efference can occur when students believe that the purpose behind reading an assigned piece of literature is the demonstration of their reading skills, such as a multiple-choice test. Teachers' verbal questioning techniques, both prior to and during reading, and the learning tasks created during and upon completion of the text reveal testing agendas and can result in reading being reduced to the act of searching for information that students believe is required. Whereas traditional approaches to reading literature encourage these efferent responses through the acquisition of specific predetermined information, an *aesthetic* approach requires students to make meaningful connections that promote better comprehension and higher-level thinking. Traditional school literature experiences do not encourage this aesthetic engagement and, as Rosenblatt argues, lead to limited views of reading.

The Oprah Show activity allows teachers to assess students' engagement with the text while simultaneously creating opportunities for relationship discussions. This game show simulation works well with stories that contain multiple well-developed characters. *Bronx Masquerade* (synopsis at http://nikkigrimes.com/books/bkbronx.html) (2002), by Nikki Grimes, with its abundance of first-person narratives, and *No More Dead Dogs* (synopsis at http://gordonkorman.com/thebooks/novels/no-more-dead-dogs) (2000), by Gordon Korman, which features one storyline told from multiple viewpoints, are both stellar examples.

It is when [students] begin reacting to other characters' comments on stage that verisimilitude is amplified. Students are playing characters, but it can feel very real.

First, place students in groups of four. Each group member selects one of four characters to research and, from that research, creates and responds in writing to 10 questions that the researcher anticipates being asked by the "audience." For *Manicpixiedreamgirl*, for instance, Tyler, Becky, Sydney, and one of Tyler's friends are optimal choices. One at a time, groups take the stage as a unit and the four characters introduce themselves. A student host (Oprah) that I have selected (a different student for each group presentation) then invites the audience to ask questions. If one or more characters is not being addressed by the audience, the student host can direct a question to a specific character or ask the audience to do so. Since everyone in the audience has researched a character, each has questions prepared to ask someone who is on stage at that moment.

I encourage the characters on stage to do more than simply respond to questions from the audience. It is when they begin reacting to other characters' comments on stage that verisimilitude is amplified. Students are playing characters, but it can feel very real. Once each group has performed, it is time to process. How did it feel to be in character? How did you (as

the audience) perceive the individual character performances? I have found that when assessing students' understanding of the text, documenting each student's participation—both in character and as part of the audience—works best. I also require students to write reflections, using text connections, that detail what they learned about the characters and themselves.

Brandi Morningstar, a teacher candidate, prepared the following sample audience questions for *Manic-pixiedreamgirl*:

For Sydney: You knew of Tyler's unwavering feelings for Becky from the beginning. Why would you continue to endure the relationship knowing that he didn't love you?

For Becky: If Tyler had approached you on day one and introduced himself, perhaps even asked you out, how would that have changed your high school experience?

For Tyler: What was it about Becky that captivated you and made you push Sydney to the side, even though she stuck with you for all that time?

Honestly Ben by Bill Konigsberg (2017)

Synopsis

Honestly Ben is the sequel to *Openly Straight* (2015), Konigsberg's (https://billkonigsberg.com) award-winning novel about Rafe, an openly gay student-athlete who decides not to tell anyone when he moves from Colorado to his new private high school in the east. When Rafe meets Ben Carver, sparks fly, but Ben is straight, or at least he thinks he is. Ben's physical and emotional connection with Rafe is amplified, at least in part, because he believes that Rafe is also experiencing these feelings for the first time. When Ben learns that Rafe came out as gay in Colorado, their relationship begins to fall apart.

In *Honestly Ben*, told from Ben's point of view, the boys return to school after break, and both are dealing with the events of the past semester in their own way. Ben is named captain of the baseball team and is awarded a prestigious scholarship. He begins dating Hannah, a beautiful girl from the neighboring girls' school, and Rafe is dating a new guy. As the two attempt to rekindle their friendship, Ben becomes conflicted as his feelings for both Hannah and Rafe intensify. Is it possible that Ben could be mostly straight but gay for Rafe? Konigsberg has created extremely likeable and believable teen characters in Ben and Rafe. Readers will laugh with and hurt for both as they navigate the slings and arrows of teenage romance.

In the Classroom

The interactions between reader, text, and context help to define the effectiveness of the learning activities I design. My goal in the development of these relationship activities is to elicit student responses that make relevant text connections while employing literary elements like theme, character development, plot, and setting. The following are sample prompts to guide this process.

Does the activity give students the opportunity to:

- demonstrate an understanding of character relationships?
- reflect on story elements such as plot, setting, and themes and consider how each contributes to the development of character relationships?
- make choices and personal connections by utilizing prior knowledge and experience?

Jim Burke's *103 Things to Do Before/During/After Reading* is a great resource for activities that can easily be adapted for YAL and relationship discussions (http://www.readingrockets.org/article/103-things-do-beforeduringafter-reading).

Activity 1: Anticipation Guides

The purpose of an anticipation guide is to help students connect to the themes and main ideas of the text. Statements should encourage disagreement and challenge students' beliefs about specific subjects. Each statement should include decision indicators such as true/false or agree/disagree so that students are encouraged to make a commitment. Anticipation guides 1) elicit students' prior knowledge of topics and themes that will be encountered in the text, 2) establish purposes for reading (efference) that extend far beyond a basic factual comprehension of the text, and 3) assess students' understanding after the text has been read.

The first two aims are met prior to reading (the anticipation), and students' responses are based on

personal experience. After reading the story, students reread the prompts and consider their initial responses to the statements. They then gather textual evidence that either confirms their initial beliefs or causes them to rethink those beliefs. The post-reading responses should be more detailed and include text-to-self as well as text-to-text and text-to world connections. Recognizing the effects of one's own point of view in formulating interpretations of texts is central to reader response. These post-reading responses can then be shared in small and/or large discussion groups.

What follows are several anticipation guide sample statements for *Honestly Ben*:

1. If someone is really attracted to a person who is already in a committed relationship, it is okay to still pursue that person.
2. If someone breaks up with me, there is no chance that I will ever date that person again.
3. If someone is attracted to another person of the same gender, they should both keep it to themselves.
4. It is acceptable to lie to someone you love if it means not hurting that person's feelings.
5. If I were in a romantic relationship with someone I knew my parents wouldn't approve of, I would keep the relationship from them.

Activity 2: Musical Response to Literature

In this activity, students create a soundtrack that represents one of the characters in the story. The soundtrack—as determined by the titles, lyrics, and mood of each song—should represent the substance of that character's relationships. Playlists should consist of 12–15 songs and include titles, artists, and text (lyrics) connections that explain how the song relates to the character and his/her relationships in the story and to the student's own life. Students can then include links to each of the tracks or create an actual CD. Songfacts (http://www.songfacts.com/) is a great site for searching songs because of the extensive number of search categories it offers (e.g., "written by," "performed by," "inspired by"). A sample song for *Honestly Ben* might be "Bizarre Love Triangle" (1986) by New Order. The song describes a character that is in love but conflicted, just like Ben in the story. The chorus, "Every time I see you falling/I get down on my knees and pray/I'm waiting for that final moment/ You say the words that I can't say," speaks to how Ben feels throughout much of the story. He loves Rafe but is afraid to express it openly.

Conclusion

YAL provides teachers and students with incredible opportunities to safely explore the socio-emotional landscape of adolescent relationships. It is this participation with story that helps to create verisimilitude, thus motivating and engaging our students in meaningful learning experiences. Perhaps Robert Probst (1987) said it best:

> Literature's value lies not in information it imparts but in experience it enables us to have. It does not provide knowledge of data, codified and transmitted, chunks of information to be stored away. Literature enables each of us to shape knowledge out of our encounter with it. It is personal knowledge, knowledge of how we relate to the world, how we feel and think and see. . . . It invites, even demands our participation. . . . It requires us to participate in the shaping of the experience. (p. 27)

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Victor **Malo-Juvera**
and
Lisa **Scherff**

Standardized Censorship

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/publications/the-alan-review/the-alan-review-columns/.

Context for the Reality of Standardized Censorship

Victor Malo-Juvera

During my first year of teaching, I had no classroom of my own because I taught in an overcrowded school; instead, I would teach in other teachers' rooms while they had a planning period. After one class in my department head's room, she asked me why I was teaching grammar even though it was not on the state exam that students took each year. The test she referred to was the FCAT (Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test), and that was what our school grade was based on. Florida was one of the first states to give schools A through F grades, and those grades determined various rewards and punishments for both teachers and administrators. Although the pressure on teachers to eschew in-depth discussions of verb-subject agreement rarely makes news, it is an example of the power of test-taking curricula to dominate classroom time and marginalize or even eliminate other forms of instruction, including the reading and teaching of young adult literature.

Censorship is most often thought of as a direct conflict, usually one in which parents or community members petition to have a text removed from classroom instruction or school libraries. There are similar instances of administrators ordering teachers not to use certain texts or to remove them from classroom libraries. Beyond official challenges to texts, there are also many forms of silent censorship (Nye & Barco, 2012), where teachers or librarians decide not to incorporate some texts because of fear of reprisal for their choices. Although most of the attention in issues of censorship focuses around the aforementioned types, there is another type that is as insidious as silent censorship and perhaps even more ubiquitous than direct censorship. Some teachers embrace this type of censorship, while others have no other choice. I refer to this pandemic as *standardized censorship.*

As it functions in public schools, standardized censorship refers to the curricula, policies, standards, norms, and goals that prioritize standardized testing, remove academic freedom from teachers, and support the continued Othering of marginalized peoples based on constructs such as color, race, gender/gender identity, sexual orientation, immigration status, age, or religion. Standardized censorship is similar to institutionalized racism as it is embedded in the many institutions associated with public schooling and is often invisible to casual examination; furthermore, it often perpetuates institutionalized racism via the valorization of standardized testing, which has long been considered a form of institutional racism (e.g., Kohn, 2000).

Consider that in many public school systems, the official curriculum is geared toward narrowing the achievement gap, which is measured by standardized tests—a troubling paradox in and of itself. This type of censorship, then, is often more prevalent in schools that serve lower socioeconomic populations where students typically score poorly on standardized tests.

In these schools, budgets are often already meager due to lower property taxes and charter schools taking valuable student dollars; the dwindling funds that are left are often used to purchase commercial curricula and computer programs that promise to deliver better test scores. The result is not just an aging book room with worn out and dated novels, but a dearth of time for teachers to address anything other than the mandated curriculum.

Note that within the context of this discussion, standardized censorship is different from issues of teacher choice. Consider that English teachers at many schools work together to create an integrated vertical curriculum that often includes reading choices for grade levels, and teachers of Advanced Placement language and literature courses often use texts that regularly appear on the AP exam. Although censorship can certainly play a role in these types of discussions, I do not consider these to be forms of standardized censorship because classroom teachers are deeply involved in these instructional decisions.

Beyond reducing students' access to texts by dominating time and money, standardized censorship also results in the creation of a roadblock to implementing social justice education.

Beyond reducing students' access to texts by dominating time and money, standardized censorship also results in the creation of a roadblock to implementing social justice education. This is not because administrators or parents attempt to censor teachers from introducing students to potentially controversial texts or topics, but because teachers are expected to be using other texts and/or excerpts that have been chosen by those outside the classroom in order to achieve standards that are created with little or no input from classroom teachers. Thus, while a teacher or librarian who is facing a challenge to a specific text can seek help from NCTE, ALA, authors, and scholars, there is little recourse for teachers who are not able to teach a young adult novel because they are busy "teaching to the test."

The ramifications of this are serious, as without the ability to dedicate instructional time to teaching whole novels, efforts toward social justice are often negated or relegated to an "add on" status. Contemporary social justice issues are usually best represented in young adult literature, as canonical texts typically do not address current topics such as police brutality or immigration laws, and many perpetuate and codify the very problematic social attitudes that teachers are trying to address.

Some may argue that this type of censorship does not prevent students from accessing texts as part of school or classroom libraries; however, scholars such as Groenke (2012) have warned against relegating noncanonical titles and genres to the margins of curricula. I would argue that it is critical to understand the level of privilege afforded to a text that is read, studied, and instructed on a whole-class level versus a title that sits on a shelf, available to students but not allotted instructional time. The canon derives its power from its enforcement as mandatory for whole-class readings, and despite the fact that numerous scholars (e.g., Haertling Thein & Beach, 2013; Kumashiro, 2002) have pointed out that the canon is predominantly white, male, and heteronormative, there are still many educators and scholars who believe that young adult literature should be voluntary reading or choice reading. I am not arguing against adolescents having choice in the titles they read, nor am I railing against reading just for pleasure, but it is hard to imagine being able to foment the large-scale changes that social justice educators advocate for through the independent reading practices of adolescents, while texts that codify the very things that oppress students often occupy the center of the curriculum.

The results of standardized censorship are evident, as some students who are entering college now have been educated entirely under a system dominated by standardized testing. Just as troubling, there are many teachers now with years of experience who have never taught anything but "to the test" and others who have only followed scripted curricula. In some states, teachers are pitted against each other by evaluation systems that demand winners and losers, and the level of surveillance discussed by MacGillivray, Ardell, Curwen, and Palma (2004) in their analysis of teachers' experiences under a scripted reading program has only become more intense in public schools. All of this points to a future genera-

tion of teachers who may think that "good teaching" is faithfully following a provided curriculum without critically questioning that curriculum—ironic in a time when "critical thinking" is being touted as a necessary skill for students.

All is not bleak, though. There are teachers around the country who are struggling to give their students access to topics and texts in the face of standardized censorship. One of those is this issue's guest columnist, Lisa Scherff, who shares her experiences with various forms of standardized censorship. Lisa was a high school English teacher for six years and a teacher educator for 11 years at the university level before returning to the high school classroom in 2013. Her experiences provide us with a first-hand view of how teachers navigate standardized censorship in an environment where they are shackled by a panoply of curricular constraints.

Experiences from High School

Lisa Scherff

As I started writing this piece, I realized just how much YA literature has influenced my thinking and teaching. Because of YA literature, I am a more informed and understanding person, and that leads me to make certain curricular choices. This has profound and weighty implications for the students I teach. Sadly, however, some of these choices are limited by what is considered "important" in literacy instruction in the current high-stakes educational climate: pacing guides, close reading (i.e., a fixation on excerpts), and higher test scores.

The teaching of literature and English/language arts classes now looks much different for me than it did when I started teaching high school in 1996. Back then, graduation exams did not exist, nor did No Child Left Behind, the Common Core State Standards, mandatory online modules, or incessant teacher bashing. Each year, I consistently taught two novels and a full-length play in my on-level and advanced classes. We studied films; we created games for learning; we wrote in many genres; we did research projects; we made classroom newspapers; we kept writing portfolios.

When I returned to the classroom in 2013—after 11 years as a teacher educator—I was shocked to see that novels were not included in the pacing guide. For those unfamiliar with pacing guides, they are mandated plans, week by week and quarter by quarter, of what teachers must teach in their classes. Usually created at the district level, the goal of a pacing guide is to have everyone, literally, on the same page, so if a student transfers from School A to School B, no "instruction" will be lost. On a more sinister level, it also means that administrators can use them to control their teachers. At any time, a principal can make a surprise visit to a classroom, and if the teacher is not on the designated page, then that teacher could be in trouble. What that trouble is depends on the administration—a bad evaluation, even more monitoring, or worse. What these guides fail to consider—and this is just one of many areas in which they fail—is that schools are different, classrooms are different, teachers are different, and most important, students are different.

The teaching of literature and English/language arts classes now looks much different for me than it did when I started teaching high school in 1996.

These differences are most often ignored, as evidenced by the required adherence of teachers to mandated texts on the pacing guides, and these texts are often excerpts rather than full-length novels. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) drove teaching in a particular direction, distilling it down to multiple-choice work. Now we have the latest initiative—CCSS—driving the teaching of excerpts. As a result, we have pacing guides and no novels. This idea of focusing on short excerpts is intended to "help" students perform better on standardized tests, which are comprised of short texts (poems, stories) or excerpts. However, McConn's (2016) study in an eleventh-grade classroom showed that students in two groups—intensive reading ("reading the minimum number of texts required by the syllabus with a focus on the details," p. 164) and extensive reading ("reading more, with less focus on details and more focus on amount of reading," p. 166)—performed equally well on assessment measures. Although not comparing excerpts to novels, McConn's study shows that the *old way* (my italics) works in terms of literacy instruction.

How could I be an English teacher and *not* teach

a whole-class novel? There are thousands of novels sitting in our book room, and for what? There are so many reasons why students should be reading novels (including YA)—the joy of the story, the timeless themes, the legendary characters, the chance to become lifelong readers—and they all go back to Louise Rosenblatt and the need for affective reading, not just efferent reading. As Roen and Karolides (2005) wrote of Rosenblatt's ideas:

> It [transactional theory] acknowledges the teacher not as an authority representing the meaning and background of the literary work but as a catalyst of discussion, encouraging a democracy of voices expressing preliminary responses to the text and building group and individual understandings. The teacher's voice is at once that of the shepherd and of a partner participant. Student readers are empowered. (p. 60)

Beyond the fixation on using excerpts, the push to incorporate nonfiction has also limited teachers' choice of fictive texts, due to the oft-cited CCSS mandate being misinterpreted.

To meet the teaching requirements for tenth-grade English, I was to spend the first two to three weeks of school having students read two short stories, break down argumentative prompts, and learn note-taking strategies. There were some supplementary ideas listed in the guide (idioms, colloquial language), but they were not mandatory. Luckily, the stories were interesting, and the practice of unpacking writing prompts and learning how to take notes were valuable. However, what if, as a teacher, I didn't want to start the year with those two short stories? What if my student population suggested a different beginning plan? What if, as a professional, I wanted to use the textbook as a tool, not *the* tool? I couldn't.

Beyond the fixation on using excerpts, the push to incorporate nonfiction has also limited teachers' choice of fictive texts, due to the oft-cited CCSS mandate being misinterpreted. As a literacy educator, I have noticed that many administrators became frightened when the Common Core required 70% of students' reading to be nonfiction by twelfth grade, so they overreacted and misinterpreted that to mean that there is no time for literature when students need to read so much nonfiction. But as Carol Jago notes (2013), that percentage is based on the NAEP Reading Framework—and the NAEP "does not measure performance in English class. It measures performance in reading, reading across the disciplines and throughout the school day." Thus, here is another instance of a text noting one thing and people (and for-profit companies) interpreting it as something else, resulting in a very detrimental misinterpretation. Never was it written that teachers must teach 70% nonfiction in English classes. Period. Here is another instance of a single mandate (that a portion of the population interprets and demands) driving policy and practice.

Sadly, even though pacing guides have gone by the wayside, in some areas I still hear stories from teachers whose administration bans them from teaching a whole novel or a whole play. Yes, you read that correctly. In high school English classes, teachers are not allowed to teach a whole novel or a whole play that is in the textbook! (On another note, last year I had a colleague ask me if she "had" to teach a novel. I had to stop myself for a few seconds before responding to her because I sadly wondered what, in her classroom experience, would lead her to even pose this question.) Whether it is because school leaders feel there is not enough time or whether it is because there are excerpts on "the test" for which students need to be prepared, the result is the same: a fragmented, short-sighted curriculum that deprives readers of the literature experiences they are entitled to.

Another example of how excerpts on high-stakes tests are driving instruction is online modules. Many of us have seen how technology drives instruction rather than being used appropriately to enhance instruction. Mandatory online modules serve as the latest example. Based on a quarterly score on an online "reading" assessment that all students must take, students are put into a pathway in a different computerized teaching program (the assessment and the online program are not from the same company). Students must complete 15 minutes each week in this online platform during each of several classes (e.g., English, reading, math, PE, driver's ed). This means that some students are being asked to sit in front of a computer for more than 60 minutes each week to get "taught" literacy practices. Why? Because it is suggested that time spent on this program will increase

test scores. Each week, reports are generated that show how many minutes each school is spending on this program. And yes, to answer your question, "they" can see which teachers are doing it and which ones are not.

Why do teachers go along with mandates like this? I think they do because of the pressure of value-added models (VAM). In many districts like mine, there is no more tenure. We are all on annual contracts, and in some cases, student performance on one high-stakes test can be worth 30–50% of one's VAM score. Because there is no more step pay (guaranteed annual salary increases), the only way teachers can earn more money from year to year is through their students' test scores. The consequences for being rated unsatisfactory can be termination. In Florida, for instance, "annual contract teachers" who do not "perform well" on the evaluation system, "would probably not be awarded another contract" (Florida Education Association, https://feaweb.org/senate-bill-736-how-will-it-affect-me).

I was one of those teachers. At the end of my first year back in the classroom, I received an unsatisfactory VAM score. You read that correctly.

Higher test scores are the name of the game today. That is the reality of teaching. I have a great administrative team, but I see the pressure the team is under from its administration. Schools are given public grades, and because our district is entirely school choice (schools compete for students), that final grade is what the public sees. And no matter how I feel about our required graduation exam (I hate it and think it is stupid), the fact of the matter is that I want all of my students to pass it. If they don't, then all they receive after four years is a certificate of completion, not an actual high school diploma. Because I want my students to have as many post-secondary opportunities as possible, I must look beyond my outrage at the unfairness of it all and find ways to work within the current system.

I do teach full-length works in my classroom. Last year we read *Animal Farm* (Orwell, 1945/2004), *The Scarlet Letter* (Hawthorne, 1850/2009), and *Macbeth* (Shakespeare, 1606/2003)—and I did find ways to connect all of them to current events. This year, we are reading *Animal Farm* and *Macbeth*. While there is no third full-length work, I am incorporating independent research. Each student has picked a burning question of his or her choice to investigate and then write about and present to the class. I wanted to incorporate this because, along with reading novels, the annual research paper/project has also disappeared. In this time of fake news, research literacy is not only a "college-ready" skill, but a lifelong literacy need.

The teenagers I teach see so much injustice around them. Aside from the typical teenage dissatisfaction, much of this injustice stems from systems in which they live and go to school: poverty, absentee and/or overwhelmed parents, neighborhoods with suspicious police, etc. I want my class to be a vehicle for students to think more deeply about issues and perhaps then do some further digging on their own. This is why literature, both canonical and YA, is so important. And this is why schools need to provide a range of titles for teachers to choose from. Unfortunately, however, that is not always the case. At my school, for example, we have several canonical titles in our book room, but I would argue that many of them are not worthy of whole-class study (see Carol Jago's [2004] *Classics in the Classroom* for a discussion of how to select canonical novels and Groenke & Scherff's [2010] *Teaching YA Lit through Differentiated Instruction* for how to choose YA whole-class novels). I recently spent 30 minutes going through the titles we have, and fewer than 10 are what I would classify as YA. There are only enough copies of one title, *Farewell to Manzanar* (Houston & Houston, 2002), to use with a class, let alone with multiple sections. I really like *Farewell to Manzanar*; I just do not want to use it with my tenth-grade honors students, many of whom I need to prepare to take AP Language and AP Literature. I want a more challenging YA novel, such as *The Chocolate War* (Cormier, 1974), *Feed* (Anderson, 2002), or *The Book Thief* (Zusak, 2006).

Because I want my students to have as many post-secondary opportunities as possible, I must look beyond my outrage at the unfairness of it all and find ways to work within the current system.

Because we do not have young adult novels as choices for our whole-class teaching, I bring in shorter

texts that address issues and themes tackled in popular novels (and in society). I have used articles on the Black Lives Movement, immigration, and censorship. I showed a trailer for the documentary *A Place at the Table* (2015), which shows the hunger problem in America. I used a 16-minute excerpt from the documentary *Laps*, about a marathon for inmates at San Quentin (Lozada, 2016), to study and discuss "tested" literacy skills, such as main idea, tone, mood, and author's purpose and craft (https://www.theatlantic.com/video/index/503717/running-marathons-in-prison/). Yes, I covered the "standards," but my primary purpose was to expose my students to texts that might help them see outside themselves and challenge stereotypes, again because I do not have copies of current YA titles to offer the whole class. The class discussions that took place regarding Lozada's text, in particular, were some of the best that happened all year. Admittedly, these efforts are not enough. But it is what I face.

One thing I do to get around the lack of YA novels for whole-class teaching is to incorporate in-class independent reading, and my classroom library contains well over 1,000 YA novels. However, I realize that very few teachers can stock their rooms like this and that even sustained silent reading has been pushed aside in many schools in lieu of more test prep.

So, What Are We to Do?

I am lucky that I teach at a school where I have the freedom to step outside the textbook, where my administration trusts me as a professional in this regard, but not all teachers are in my position. We must fight to reclaim our classrooms and texts, if not for our professional selves than for our students' lives. There are no easy answers for how to do this, and I understand it is easier for some than for others.

I can see some of my former teacher education colleagues raising their fists in protest. I can hear them crying out against the system and stating that they would never compromise. But would they? As someone in the trenches, I can now attest to the fact that it is easy for them to say that. But we know that public school teaching is a yearly contract gig. There is no more tenure in many places (like my district). The average teacher cannot risk losing his or her job. I certainly can't risk it with (still) more than $20,000 in student loans to pay off.

Therefore, I call on my former teacher education colleagues. There are some things you can do to help us. One, stop protesting from afar with easy cries of "don't do it." Not doing "it" is not feasible in many places unless one wants to risk losing one's job. Instead, provide classroom teachers with ways to work around some mandates that will not put their jobs at risk. Two, provide us with class sets of YA novels and ways to teach them and provide administrators with rationales for their teaching. Most of the English teachers I work with did not come from teacher education programs. They do not know what NCTE (or ALAN) is and are unfamiliar with YA literature and how it can be used. Finally, take a year (or two) and go back and teach full time in the classroom. Going back and teaching as a teacher, not as a researcher, has taught me so much. When you are living the life of a teacher without the push to plan, teach, and assess for the next article or book you want to write, you really immerse yourself in the life that your colleagues are living. This experience will change you and perhaps offer more rationales for teaching YA literature than you imagined.

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Shelbie **Witte**
Katie **Rybakova**

Digging for Deeper Connections:
Building Multimodal Text Scaffolds

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/publications/the-alan-review/the-alan-review-columns/.

> *"Comrades!" he cried. "You do not imagine, I hope, that we pigs are doing this in a spirit of selfishness and privilege? Many of us actually dislike milk and apples. I dislike them myself. Our sole object in taking these things is to preserve our health. Milk and apples (this has been proved by Science, comrades) contain substances absolutely necessary to the well-being of a pig. We pigs are brainworkers. The whole management and organization of this farm depend on us. Day and night we are watching over your welfare. It is for your sake that we drink the milk and eat those apples."* (Orwell, 1946/2009, p. 60)

As we consider what advocacy, activism, and agency mean within our own lives and especially within our work with young adults, it is impossible to ignore the current state of affairs in our country, due in part to our complicated political landscape. No matter where our individual political leanings and belief systems guide us, we can all agree that the world feels very unsettled. While the day-to-day lives of a small few of our students and colleagues seem mostly unaffected by the recent world events, countless others are reeling from the challenges, policies, and potential threats to their security and ways of life.

As educators who are often confident in our positionalities and approaches to teaching controversial topics and discussing polarizing world events, many of us have been discombobulated by the current rhetoric used in our daily popular culture media and social media feeds. Terms such as fake news, alternative truths, alternative facts, and post truths have entered the vocabulary of the mainstream media and the vocabulary of our students. Such doublespeak harkens back to a time when controversial discussions centered around the world as it once was, instead of as it currently is. The texts we used to highlight hard lessons society once learned can now be framed in light of mistakes we don't want society to make again.

The reality of teaching a canonical text, whether by choice, by district or school requirement, or by curriculum, is a challenge for many of us who strive to engage our students in a text-as-mirrors-and-windows experience. Canonical texts such as *Animal Farm* (Orwell, 1946/2009), *1984* (Orwell, 1949/1989), and *Brave New World* (Huxley, 1932/2006) offer a renewed sense of purpose given the post-truth world in which we find ourselves. And yet, these canonical texts have the same teaching challenges that have always existed. Teachers have struggled for decades to help students find relevancy in or motivation to engage with canonical texts. But with clear contemporary ties to popular culture, and the scaffolding of traditional and nontraditional texts, including young adult literature, we can embrace the challenge of opportunities to engage with these polarizing issues with our students. The current political climate allows us the perfect opportunity to do so.

Through young adult literature, students have the opportunity to engage with the same themes that emerge from the canon in a way that is more relevant to their lives. By making text-to-self connections with young adult literature, students identify ways in which

the themes of the canonical works relate to them, motivating them to continue to engage in such topics in more complex ways. Whether students need motivation to read the canon or not, young adult literature provides a window offering them a holistic view of the theme as well as an opportunity to engage in several rich, diverse reading experiences. These reading experiences, in turn, allow for complex skill building of not only text-to-self connections but also text-to-text and text-to-world connections.

Layering Literacies with Reading Ladders

In our work as teachers and teacher educators, we plan our instruction through the creation of reading ladders, or scaffolds of print and nonprint texts, both canonical and contemporary, on various thematic issues. Ideally, a teacher wouldn't jump directly into a difficult or complex text such as *Brave New World* (Huxley, 1932/2006) without an opportunity to engage and motivate students with conversations within and about the themes that exist, scaffolding the information and learning opportunities to prepare readers for the experience. Lesesne (2010) introduced the concept of reading ladders, which allow for gradual development of layered reading opportunities with multiple genres of text. With a reading ladder, we can guarantee that the curriculum incorporates texts and technologies that are not authored by "dead white guys" (Wolk, 2010) and instead speak to today's students, to real life (Lesesne, 2010). We show the flexibility of reading ladders as we consider them in multimodal ways.

We challenge our teacher candidates to create reading ladders that balance the reading experience of a required or canonical text with contemporary young adult literature and other texts. It's important to note that while a ladder suggests a hierarchy of importance or value, in this case, we use the ladder as more of a sequential tool to help our teacher candidates better understand the layers of scaffolding necessary to prepare readers for more challenging reading opportunities and experiences. As Lattimer (2010) suggests, a text that motivates students is first and foremost an authentic experience that connects to the real lives of students. Authentic texts include everything from scientific research articles to consumer ads to websites to poems to media to song lyrics; they embrace the multimodality of the 21st century lives of our students.

The Reading Ladder Design Process

When we design reading ladders, we use a five-prong approach that we term "text excavation":

- Determine the required and elective texts.
- Identify the thematic strand.
- Highlight multimodality.
- Situate the texts to self, world, and other texts.
- Scaffold beyond (in spite of) designated reading levels.

Determine the Required and Elective Texts

The first step to text excavation is to consider what it is we are digging for in order to build our ladders. As teachers, we are often given curricula with required readings aligned by grade level or dependent on book resources; as a result, we are assigned a particular set of novels related to the courses we teach. Some of the canonical texts used frequently in middle schools and high schools offer a rich understanding of ourselves and our world (Jago, 2001). But often, the canonical texts we introduce to our students are used only because we've been told to incorporate them into our plans or because we must use the resources provided to us by the district. Our approach to reading ladder design allows teachers to supplement required, canonical texts with an enriching reading experience of elective texts. These particular texts are chosen specifically for what they can add to students' understanding of a thematic strand that we have designed. We work purposefully to find texts that students might choose themselves in tandem with texts that they might never consider choosing if given the opportunity, especially in consideration of genre and mode (see the "Highlight Multimodality" section below).

Young adult literature serves a multitude of purposes in this ladder. The texts act as motivation because they 1) are contemporary; 2) allow students to identify the same themes as those in the canonical text, showcasing the merits of young adult literature; and 3) are approachable and support students in making text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections both within and beyond the texts themselves. As we discover other thought-provoking and powerful texts in our daily readings, we are continually excavating for future reading ladders; we organize our texts in Evernote, one of many online tools and bookmarking apps that work well for this purpose.

Identify the Thematic Strand

The next step to text excavation in reading ladder design is a consideration of the thematic strands that tie the texts together. Much of our preservice teacher work builds on Smagorinsky's (2008) *Teaching English by Design*, so we intuitively find ourselves working toward thematic planning structures. We first identify themes that emerge from the multiple texts we initially choose. We then continue to search for elective texts, considering gaps in our ladder and other topics, genres, and forms we might have overlooked.

While we often differentiate for our students based on text difficulty, our ladder chronology is based on the flow of thematic concepts, the levels of engagement expected through the reading of the text, and the narrative we wish to create through the order we sort and design.

Highlight Multimodality

We believe that it is critical to include a variety of print and nonprint texts, audio recordings, video clips, and Web-based reading and compositing opportunities (such as video games) to engage and differentiate our teaching approaches within the ladder. As our definition of reading and composing expands in the 21st-century world, we consider ways we might weave 21st-century texts together with traditional texts using the same lenses of analysis. We have also learned that the engagement and motivation of the students significantly increases when we can bring the texts they use outside of school into the ladder (Hinchman, Alvermann, Boyd, Brozo, & Vacca, 2003).

Situate the Texts to Self, World, and Other Texts

It is at this point in the text excavation process that we try to determine whether we have provided opportunities for students to make text-to-self, text-to-world, and text-to-text connections while they engage with the texts of the ladder. While YAL serves well for this purpose, oftentimes it's hard to predict where these connections will happen and whether they will happen with every student. What we do make sure of, though, is that if there is a lack of text connection with the students after we launch the reading ladders, we provide other opportunities for them to seek and excavate their own texts to bring to the conversation. We find that our reading ladder experiences only become richer because of their sharing, and we use the pool of texts to populate our Evernote list for future ladders.

Scaffold beyond (in Spite of) Designated Reading Levels

Perhaps one of the most important tasks in text excavation comes at the end of the design process, once the texts have been selected. As we sort, we label each text on a piece of paper and physically move the texts to various places in the chronological ladder, designing the scope and sequence of the ladder based on the students in our classrooms. We make sure that a thought-provoking, multimodal text launches our work and believe that the required texts do not have to culminate or start the reading ladder. For example, in the *Animal Farm* (Orwell, 1946/2009) reading ladder below, we believe the text connections that students make with *The Port Chicago 50* (Sheinken, 2017) and *Outcasts United* (St. John, 2013) are far more powerful than those made with *Animal Farm*. In fact, we believe the students' understanding of *Animal Farm* is strengthened as they tie the reading of the YA texts back to their shared reading experience of *Animal Farm*. When they read *Matched* (Condie, 2011) or *Delirium* (Oliver, 2011), students engage with a main character who is closer to their age, allowing them to connect on a personal level and consider how abstract themes, such as "abuse of power," matter to them as young adults. *The Port Chicago 50* and *Outcasts United* also allow students to engage with texts that are classified as YAL but are written with equal style, structure, and merit of even the most valued canonical work.

Additionally, we do not scaffold our ladder based solely on increasing text difficulty. While we often differentiate for our students based on text difficulty, our ladder chronology is based on the flow of thematic concepts, the levels of engagement expected through the reading of the text, and the narrative we wish to create through the order we sort and design.

***Animal Farm* Reading Ladder**

"All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others" (Orwell, 1946/2009, p. 192). Themes: abuse of power, revolution, class stratification		
This reading ladder scaffolds a variety of texts specifically related to *Animal Farm* and includes a selection of fiction and nonfiction young adult literature, music, and video game connections. Students are given multiple textual examples that show abuses of power and stories that feature the multiple dimensions of revolution, including the aftershocks that impact the lives shattered by each. Young adult literature is the first novel in this reading ladder, exposing students to the themes of abuse of power, revolution, and class stratification with an approachable text that allows students to make text-to-self connections. By incorporating choice reads, students take "the drivers' seats" in their instruction and learn how to identify texts they want to read versus those they do not want to read, which is critical for the development of their reader identities (Miller & Kelley, 2014). Reading the canonical text after exposure to video games as well as the young adult literature allows students to consider similar concepts within different levels of stories. Incorporating further texts in this reading ladder *after* the canonical work allows students to work their way back into how the canonical text might matter in the real world. This offers opportunities for students to gain a well-rounded and holistic view of how literature impacts society and vice versa.		
Texts	**Genre**	**Description**
St. John, W. (2013). *Outcasts united: The story of a refuge soccer team that changed a town.* Chicago, IL: Ember Press.	YA Nonfiction	In the town of Clarkston, Georgia, a refugee resettlement center, Luma Mufleh works with youth refugees to form the Fugees, a youth soccer team that inspires and challenges their community, breaking down barriers of discrimination and preconceived notions of refugees. By using YAL to finish this ladder, not only are students able to get a rich text experience with a variety of different forms, but they also begin to recognize the merit of YAL by identifying the same themes that are present in the canon.
Sheinken, S. (2017). *The Port Chicago 50: Disaster, mutiny, and the fight for civil rights*. New York, NY: Square Fish Publishing.	YA Nonfiction	In 1944, on the segregated Navy base of Port Chicago, CA, an explosion occurred, killing hundreds and injuring many more. Refusing to go back to work until the unsafe conditions were attended to, hundreds of men faced mutiny charges, some with the threat of execution. Much like the connection made with Sutherland's piece, students are exposed to diverse, contemporary literature that engages them in a holistic exploration of the major themes of the reading ladder.
Sutherland, J. (2017, January 27). How George Orwell predicted Donald Trump. *The Daily Beast*. Retrieved from http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2017/01/28/how-george-orwell-predicted-donald-trump.html.	Opinion/ Online Reportage	Sutherland examines the origins of Orwell's approach to his works and the parallel between the political upheavals of the 1940s and today's current political climate that lead to the election of President Trump. Students engage in this contemporary text explicitly related to the state of affairs in the United States; this experience allows students to move "full circle" to see the ways in which the canon and the themes within the canon impact today's society.
Orwell, G. (1946/2009). *Animal farm*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.	Novel	In this allegory, a farm is taken over by its overworked, mistreated animals. The animals set out to create a utopia of progress, only to dissolve into tyranny and totalitarianism. The canonical text allows students to use the terminology and the different texts they have read so far to analyze Orwell's intentions as well as making text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections.
Codcom0. (2013, July 29). Animal farm: Cops n robbers style map *[Digital image]*. Retrieved from http://www.planetminecraft.com/project/animal-farm-cops-n-robbers-style-map.	Video Game	This is a downloadable Minecraft map of *Animal Farm*. Pictured is the stable, the barn, Mr. Jones's house, the pond, the roads leading into the farm, and the very important windmill. This allows the teacher the opportunity to fly around and explore *Animal Farm*, as most computers can run Minecraft, and it could be played on a projector at school. By using the video game, students are engaged in prereading strategies of both prediction and visualization.
Oliver, L. (2011). *Delirium*. New York, NY: HarperCollins. or Condie, A. (2011). *Matched*. New York, NY: Speak. or sample chapters from each	YA Fiction	In *Delirium*, love is a disease that forces all 18-year-olds to have the Cure, which prevents them from falling in love in the future. Lena is ready for the treatment that will save her, until she meets a boy who makes her question everything. In *Matched*, society has everything perfectly planned and the needs of all citizens met. Cassia is matched in life with her best friend, Xander, but wonders if the relationship is meant to be. Cassia begins to recognize Society's façade, and finds her own ways of fighting against the system. YAL, in this case, offers exposure to themes in *Animal Farm* in novel form, as well as a motivating and relevant read to engage students in making text-to-self and text-to-world connections.

Quitney, J. (2012, November 6). Communism 1952 (Cold War political education) [Video file]. Glenview, IL: Coronet Instructional Films. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v = bvcLwcRRl0k.	Video	A succinct and not very subtle explanation of Communism from an American perspective in the height of the Cold War, this video highlights the two conflicting ideas of communism and capitalism, or totalitarianism and libertarianism. It allows students to make cross-disciplinary connections in its provision of an overview of different government styles and approaches. It also prepares students to utilize these terms when they approach analysis with the literature they will read.
Commerford, T. (2000). Testify [MP3]. On *The Battle of Los Angeles* [CD]. New York, NY: Epic Records. (Brendan O'Brien, Producer. Rage Against the Machine.)	Song	The band Rage Against the Machine (RATM) made a name for itself doing exactly what the animals of *Animal Farm* did, but through music. Known for being anti-establishment, anti-wealth, anti-everything-to-do-with-politics, RATM carried a fairly sophisticated philosophy of egalitarianism. Students learn how to read different forms of texts through this song and engage in the different philosophies that tie into the concept of abuse of power.
Seuss, D. (1971). The Lorax. New York, NY: Random House.	Children's Book	Before students can fully grasp Orwell's *Animal Farm*, it seems necessary that they understand how authors use allegory. Seuss's *The Lorax* is an allegory about how humans are destroying nature and themselves in the process.
Guthrie, W. (1944). This land is your land. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v = wxiMrvDbq3s. and Spitzer, N. (2012, February 15). The story of Woody Guthrie's "This land is your land." Retrieved from http://www.npr.org/2000/07/03/1076186/this-land-is-your-land.	Song, Video, and Opinion/ Reportage	Partnering the recording of Woody Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land" with Spitzer's NPR article highlights the political motivations of the song lyrics Guthrie wrote in the 1940s as a social commentary on the current state of affairs. This introduction to the theme allows for students to identify text-to-self connections as well as analyze texts in depth.

1984 Reading Ladder

"Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past" (Orwell, 1948/1989, p. 32)

Themes: propaganda, historical revisionism, surveillance, doublethink

After 9/11, the United States increased its level of surveillance of both suspected terrorists and, according to information leaked by former operative Edward Snowden, ordinary US citizens. Students can be provided with opportunities to debate the balance between national security and individual privacy, as well as the very current 2017 examples of historical revisionism by elected officials and their spokespeople. This reading ladder begins with an introduction (or review) of the idea of Big Brother through video and song. It alternates between media and news related to surveillance in contemporary society as well as the political movements that frame the events in the texts. Young adult literature is used several times in this ladder as a way to engage students in the themes of propaganda and surveillance while offering connections to a 17-year-old protagonist (*Little Brother*) and an alternative universe with social media on steroids (*Feed*).

Texts	Genre	Description
Atwood, M. (1986). *The handmaid's tale*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin.	Adult Fiction	In the Republic of Gilead, Handmaids are chosen to bear children for elite couples. Offred, the handmaid of the Commander, shares through flashbacks how the architects of Gilead devised their scheme to first crumble and then rule society and how she fights to escape to freedom.
Robertson, A. (2016, November 9). In Trump's America, *The Handmaid's Tale* matters more than ever. *The Verge*. Retrieved from http://www.theverge.com/2014/12/20/7424951/does-the-handmaids-tale-hold-up-dystopia-feminism-fiction.	Opinion/ Reportage	Robertson draws parallels between current events in the United States with the gendered harassment and misogyny in the *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Doctorow, C. (2008). *Little brother*. New York, NY: Tor.	YA Fiction	Marcus, a 17-year-old tech genius, and his group of friends are detained by Homeland Security after a terrorist attack in San Francisco. His week-long abusive interrogation leads him to fight against the ever-increasing government surveillance. *Little Brother* parallels Orwell texts and contemporary policies, such as the Patriot Act.	
Orwell, G. (1949/1989). *Nineteen eighty four*. London, UK: Penguin.	Novel	In the superstate of Oceania, citizens are oppressed by government surveillance and manipulation, with independent thought characterized as thoughtcrime. Newspeak is required to control the language and the people. Big Brother is always watching.	
Crouch, I. (2013, June 11). So are we living in 1984? *The New Yorker*. Retrieved from http://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/so-are-we-living-in-1984.	Reportage	Edward Snowden, the intelligence contractor who leaked classified information about the United States, sheds light on the government surveillance issues, drawing Crouch to make comparisons to *1984*.	
Anderson, M. T. (2012). *Feed*. New York, NY: Candlewick.	YA Fiction	Televisions and computers are directly connected to people as babies, where most individuals are without original thoughts or actions. The teenspeak and world revolving around technology speak specifically to young adults.	
Kardaras, N. (2016, August 27). It's digital heroin: How screens turn kids into psychotic junkies. Retrieved from http://nypost.com/2016/08/27/its-digital-heroin-how-screens-turn-kids-into-psychotic-junkies/.	Opinion/ Reportage	A controversial article that equates the time we spend on electronic devices as a society with habit-forming heroin. A fantastic article for debate or Socratic Circle.	
Seeker Daily. (2015, August 15). What is fascism? [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v = aUcYU95kCAI.	YouTube Video	A short video that highlights the definition and origin of fascism, totalitarianism, and nationalism. Showing this video helps students develop vocabulary for describing the ideas they encounter in *1984*.	
Eurythmics. (1984). For the love of Big Brother. On *1984 (for the love of Big Brother)* [CD]. London, UK: Virgin Records. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v = DiYnLh_PXIo. Shapiro, A. (Executive Producer). (2000). *Big brother* [Television series]. Universal City, CA: Dreamworks Television. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/user/bigbrother.	Song,Video	Recorded for the motion picture *1984*, the Eurythmics used Orwell's text to influence their music and drew quotations from the text as lyrics in many of the songs. "For the Love of Big Brother" introduces the concept of Big Brother within the context of the world and beyond the TV show they know. For scaffolding purposes, the link to the *Big Brother* YouTube channel is also included. Caution should be used in selecting any video clips from this site, as many are not edited and contain controversial language and situations.	

***Brave New World* Reading Ladder**

"But I don't want comfort. I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness. I want sin" (Huxley, 1932/2006, p. 66). Themes: consumerism, technological control, delusions, fake news, superficiality, cynicism		
Themes of technological control, cynicism, and fake news layer well with today's newsfeed and *Brave New World*. Layering poetry and art with fiction and film, we shed a brighter light on the nonfiction pieces in the ladder. YAL serves as a culminating experience in the various multimodal readings students engage in; *Unwind* serves as a fast-paced, engaging read to be used in connection with *Feed* and other texts in this ladder. The YA texts allow students to experience a world one step away from the current political system, and the nonfiction media and texts throughout the ladder help students explicitly draw connections between consumerism and technological control.		
Texts	**Genre**	**Description**
Shusterman, N. (2009). *Unwind*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.	YA Fiction	Unwinding exists as a solution to abortion, the cause of a civil war. Teenagers between the ages of 13–17 can be unwound by their parents or guardians, allowing their body parts to be harvested for use in adults. The book follows three teens as they fight being taken to the harvest camps.
Wachowski, A., Wachowski, L., Reeves, K., Fishburne, L., Moss, C.-A., Warner Bros., . . . Silver Pictures. (1999). *The matrix* [Motion picture]. Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video.	Motion Picture	Mr. Anderson (Neo) learns that he has been living in a computer program created by machines, making human birth an artificial process. With the help of Morpheus, he battles the machines in order to save mankind.
Huxley, A. (1932/2006). *Brave new world*. New York, NY: Harper.	Novel	In London in 2540, citizens are genetically bred and controlled through psychological and technological manipulation. The novel follows a couple as they explore a world they didn't know existed and challenge the very technologies and gadgets we have come to depend on today.
Anderson, M. T. (2012). *Feed*. New York, NY: Candlewick.	YA Fiction	Televisions and computers are directly connected to people as babies, where most individuals are without original thoughts or actions. *Feed* is used again in this ladder as a way to support our belief that we can revisit texts we love to highlight particular themes.
Postman, N. (2005). *Amusing ourselves to death: Public discourse in the age of show business.* New York, NY: Penguin.	Critical Media Theory	Postman's critique explores what happens when media and politics become entertainment.
McMenamin, E. (2017, January 4). Did Neil Postman predict the rise of Trump and fake news? *Paste Magazine*. Retrieved from https://www.pastemagazine.com/articles/2017/01/did-neil-postman-predict-the-rise-of-trump-and-fak.html.	Opinion/ Reportage	McMenamin examines Neil Postman's (1985) book *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* and considers whether he predicted our current fake news scenario.
CBS News. (2017, March 26). What is fake news? *60 Minutes*. Retrieved from http://www.cbsnews.com/videos/whats-fake-news-60-minutes-investigates/.	News	The *60 Minutes* news program investigates both Fake News, as termed by politicians who are unhappy with what news sources are reporting, as well as user-created Fake News, false news stories generated purposely to drive Internet clicks and shares (the method of payment for the creators).
Rockwell, N. (1957). Lift thine eyes [Oil painting]. Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Museum of Art.	Art	Rockwell depicts New Yorkers walking past a church without looking up to engage with one another, to notice the beauty of the church, or to consider what the church marquis has to say. Rockwell had a great deal to say about the loss of religion in America as well as the encroachment of cynicism in our daily lives.
Eliot, T. S. (1925/1969). The hollow men. In *The complete poems and plays of T. S. Eliot* (pp. 81–86. London, UK: Faber and Faber.	Poetry	The idea of cynicism rings loudly from Eliot's poem and provides a starting place for discussion on the cynical nature of society, a reflection of one's life, and the likelihood of mankind to blindly follow one another.

Sample Reading Ladders

Below we offer three sample reading ladders. When navigating the ladders, begin from the bottom and work your way up.

Conclusion

Admittedly, there are countless resources we didn't excavate to design these ladders, and there are countless ways we might have approached the instruction of these themes and novels. (Additional reading ladders can be found in the "Theory to Practice Connections" section of the Initiative for 21st Century Literacies Research page: http://www.initiativefor21research.org/theory-to-practice-connections.) Whatever the approach, we believe that YAL should be a part of it; the motivation and engagement factors alone allow students to read approachable texts that invite strong text-to-self experiences. By including YAL (and innovative multimodal texts), students engage in a more textually complex reading experience and are able to connect to the texts on an aesthetic level more than is possible with only a "cold" reading of a canonical text.

As a note, these reading ladders could be viewed as quite dark and dystopian. However, we wholeheartedly believe that young adults need safe places to talk about the real issues that concern them and our society. While teachers may not feel comfortable using every text in the examples provided, we want to encourage our colleagues to use popular culture to connect texts we love to teach and those we are required to teach.

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Brendan **Kiely,** Kristin **Levine,** and Isabel **Quintero**

Fighting for What Is Right:

Characters Who Take Risks and Challenge Assumptions

From the Editors: In this article, we are honored to feature a written conversation among three YA authors who have explicitly addressed issues of agency and activism in their presentations and writings. We appreciate the generous response of these authors (and their publishers) and their willingness to engage so thoughtfully in such an important topic.

As to process, we generated and sent a series of questions to each author. We compiled the responses into a single, shared document for authors to elaborate upon and revise until all were satisfied with the resulting piece. We hope that our readers gain an increased appreciation for these authors and the challenging issues they tackle.

How do your characters fight for what is right in difficult situations?

Brendan: How does a person define "right and wrong," and how does that change over time, or what inspires that change? Paradigms of cultural understanding shape the way we think about ethics and morality (rights and wrongs), and fighting for what's right, to my mind, often requires a paradigm shift.

In *All American Boys* (Reynolds & Kiely, 2015), Quinn battles the complacency his privilege provides him. Like too many white Americans, he wants to believe that by doing nothing (after witnessing racial injustice), he can remain neutral. That's what he tells himself initially—but he's lying to himself. Quinn's first real fight against injustice is to find the courage to be honest and recognize how he might be part of the problem. But no one should fight alone, and in all my books, the value of friendship is the way in which teens push each other and hold each other accountable. For example, the rampant and unchecked misogynistic culture at a boarding school in my upcoming novel *Tradition* (2018) makes girls unsafe. In order for Jimmy Baxter to fight for what's right, he has to listen when his friends (and especially the girls) hold him accountable.

Isabel: I think that's the key to doing what's "right": listening, to others and to yourself. Gabi and her friends in *Gabi, a Girl in Pieces* (2014) have been brought up in similar cultural environments and can therefore relate to each other in some ways, but this by no means signifies homogeneity in their belief systems. For example, Sebastian gets kicked out of his home for being gay. Gabi cannot understand how a parent would do that. She is also surprised by her own mother's reaction, allowing Sebastian to live with them, because she didn't expect that from her. In this case, it is easy for Gabi to do what is right.

In another situation, however, Gabi is confronted with Georgina (a classmate) and her unwanted pregnancy. Here, Gabi struggles more with doing what is "right," not because she isn't pro-choice, but because she has to face the fact that Georgina is a more complex individual than she had originally thought. Going to the clinic is a brave choice for both Georgina (obviously) and for Gabi. They are both in a place their parents would

not approve; however, they both know they are doing what is right. This certainty for Gabi comes from understanding that it is a tougher situation for Georgina than it is for the boy who got her pregnant and who doesn't have to deal with any of the consequences. Ultimately, the characters must do some internal searching each time they face a difficult situation that requires a "right" action. Mostly, they have to ask themselves a version of *Why am I/ am I not doing this?*

Kristin: In *The Best Bad Luck I Ever Had* (2009), Dit, a white boy in the deep South, becomes friends with Emma, a black girl. In *The Lions of Little Rock* (2012), Marlee and Liz help to get the schools reopened when they are closed to prevent integration in Little Rock, Arkansas. In *The Paper Cowboy* (2014), Tommy fights to get his troubled family the help it needs.

Although my stories are set in different times and places, they all start with the realization that the status quo is wrong. I love writing about how adolescents begin to question social conventions and beliefs in which they may have been complicit in the past. It's a scary but exciting time, full of much personal reflection and growth.

However, my characters also fight by realizing they can't go it alone. Learning to ask for help and finding a community to provide it are huge themes in my stories. Change in one person is not enough; activism actually means inspiring change in a community.

Too often, young people are not taken seriously because of their age and lack of experience. How do your characters challenge this assumption?

Kristin: What I love about characters on the cusp of adulthood is that they have a certain naivety about them. They don't realize they are "too young to make a difference," so they give it a try. Often this is simply doing what they know how to do.

Dit can't change his friends' teasing, but he can teach Emma to throw a baseball. Marlee doesn't run the campaign to reopen the schools, but she does open their mail. Tommy can't solve his mother's problems, but he can play the accordion in a fundraiser to help pay his family's bills. It's taking that first, small action that often inspires others around them to take action as well.

My characters also learn to see partial success as still worth the struggle. Dit and Emma become friends, but she still has to leave town. Marlee and Liz get the high schools reopened, but they still have to attend separate, segregated middle schools. Tommy helps with his family's medical bills, but he still has to deal with a less-than-perfect home life. Part of their journey is realizing that change is often gradual, slow, and imperfect. But it is still worth striving for.

Brendan: A paradigm shift requires the humility and strength to change yourself to become someone new, and the greater capacity for reinvention that young people have inspires me. In *All American Boys*, Quinn's greater capacity than most of the adults to interrogate his own white privilege enables him to be a better participant in the fight for racial justice. And in *Tradition*, Jimmy Baxter's willingness to challenge the ways he's been told what it means to be a man enables him to embrace what it means to be a feminist and become a stronger ally to the girls in the school.

Isabel: Well, the challenge really is directed at the belief systems young people were raised with. The choice they make when they decide that the adults in their lives have failed them in a way is still questioned. And that's because adults have a difficult time accepting that teens can make good decisions for themselves. Cindy, one of Gabi's best friends, is looked down upon because she is pregnant and therefore deemed irresponsible, even though readers later find out how she came to be pregnant. However, Gabi's mom is pregnant, and there are no repercussions; it is a given that she is an adult and therefore knew what she was doing, yet it was a bit irresponsible. Gabi is able to see this double standard and questions it, if only in her journal.

Kristin: To me, it's not so much that the adults around my young characters have failed them as it is that my protagonists are realizing for the first time that the adults in their lives are imperfect. Growing up means accepting this and learning to think for themselves.

Isabel: I think both Cindy and Georgina make decisions that challenge assumptions of lack of maturity. Both make choices based on the lives they lead and knowing what they can handle. They put thought into their choices and aren't impulsive about them. Even Gabi's decision to go away to college challenges assumptions of what is expected, yet she does what is best for her. Whether or not the adults in their lives will/would understand this is another issue.

How do you craft characters to help them become change agents?

Brendan: I try to create characters who are learning to become better listeners. Listening—non-defensive listening that is open to criticism—always comes first. I often write about characters with vast amounts of social privilege and power; in order for them to fight for what's right, they must have the humility to recognize when they are part of the problem of injustice.

Characters with privilege become change agents when they address and critique those who share it with them. They can never shed their privilege and power—wishing so is its own kind of danger—but they can think about how to live with it more consciously. Quinn's decision to wear a t-shirt asking others to join him at the protest is an act that asks people like him, who are too comfortable in their complacency, to risk discomfort in doing what's right. Jimmy Baxter's decision to confront the misogyny in the locker room comes from really hearing Jules when she tells him she needs him to be her friend not only when he is by her side but, most specifically, when she isn't in the room—when he's in a room full of boys, and her body is under threat from afar.

Kristin: When I'm crafting characters, I like to think about both the external and internal changes they go through. Being a "change agent" at the most basic level involves changing something about ourselves: what we believe, what we say, how we act.

Also, I think for my characters to become change agents, it has to feel personal. Marlee might have felt it was unjust that people of different races couldn't go to school together, but without her friendship with Liz, I'm not sure she would have taken the time to do anything about it.

Isabel: Because I created the characters, I could give them some wisdom that I have gained over the years (ha ha ha). I, too, am inspired by real young people who are agents of change. Gabi and her friends are simply questioning authorities in their lives, and that is probably the best answer I can give; I have my characters question everything and then question the answers to those questions. I think that is how change begins, right? By questioning expectations, rules, and people who attempt to govern us by being dependent on our conformity, we begin to change and then enact change in the world.

When you encourage activism, are there certain responsibilities you have as an author? Are there certain risks or consequences that land on the shoulders of the young readers who take up your charge?

Kristin: As an author, I do feel like I have a responsibility to make sure not to portray people as the good and the bad, the "us" and the "other." Some of my favorite characters in *The Lions of Little Rock* ended up being more minor characters, like Sally and JT, who do bad things and express offensive viewpoints but, in the end, are not bad people.

Because the fact is that we have to deal with everyone in our society. We can't just avoid those with whom we don't agree, even those whose opinions and beliefs we find abhorrent. True change is standing by those people, too, not giving up, but not forcing our beliefs down their throats, either.

Isabel: There are several ways to be an activist, and I encourage young readers to do what is right for them. Usually, I encourage young readers to write and question; to use their voices to tell their own stories. I think that is a type of activism. Mostly, I think doing things outside of the narrative that has been written for us by others, whether it be attending academic institutions that were never meant for us, writing, saying no to conformity and complacency—these are all forms of activism. Of course, there are responsibilities as an author; we do not live in a vacuum, and we must understand

that what we say or do, or don't say or don't do, has consequences.

Some young women find themselves in the same boat as I did—with a parent who has told them they cannot move away to college because there is no value in it and it promotes promiscuity. To those women I say, "Move out and go away to college if that is what you really want to do." Of course, this goes against what we have been taught and how we have been raised—to obey. It's just another symptom of patriarchy in our communities that limits women (and some young men). When I encourage going away to college, however, I talk about what can potentially happen—good and bad. Ultimately, it is their choice, and they should do what's best for them. That is a form of activism, as well—fighting against centuries of patriarchal expectations of good girl behavior by going off to college.

Kristin: Isabel, I so admire that you had the strength to go away to college when your parent didn't want you to go. I'm not sure I would have been able to do that as a teenager! It's taken me much longer to learn to listen to my own voice about what is right and wrong.

Isabel: I wish! I didn't realize I was strong enough to do it then, but I want to help young women realize that they have options.

Brendan: To Kristin's point about getting away from "good and bad," "us and them," I, too, feel a responsibility to try to find the fuller humanity in all of the characters in a book. I think the story that feels real to young and old readers alike provides the most room for discussion in a classroom and provides the greatest opportunity for young readers to feel inspired and take up the charge of the novel's call for social justice.

From your perspective as an author, how would you like to see your novels used in classroom contexts?

Isabel: I'm not sure. I think this depends on the teachers and professors who have been using it. I know I'd like students to be able to see themselves in the novel, question patriarchy, and challenge biases, and I would encourage them to write their own stories, but beyond that, no se.

Brendan: When I was a high school English teacher, I wanted the books in each course to be in conversation with each other. I write with similar intertextual obsessions. *The Last True Love Story* (2016) is in direct conversation with *The Odyssey* (Homer, trans. 1999), as it asks the same questions about what "home" means, but these texts arrive at different conclusions because I am addressing an odyssey for a different era. *Tradition* is in direct conversation with the biblical book of Genesis, as it asks questions about innocence and experience as they relate to fundamentally corrosive assumptions about sexuality and gender. And while pairing texts is invaluable (many people already pair *To Kill a Mockingbird* [Lee, 1960] with *All American Boys*—which thrills me to no end!), there are many other ways (and many other voices) to add to the conversations as well. What love songs and love poems could be taught alongside *The Last True Love Story*? I dream of classrooms pairing *Tradition* alongside Kirby Dick's (2006) film *The Hunting Ground*.

Also, Isabel, if I were still teaching, I'd love to use *Gabi, a Girl in Pieces* as a novel that introduces a poetry unit. I always used poetry as a way for students to explore and assert personal identity, and your book brilliantly lays that out for folks!

Kristin: I hope my novels are used to raise the topic of race in classrooms. I do a lot of school visits, and many of the schools I visit are still all white or predominantly white. I feel like they have a different understanding of the book than more diverse classrooms.

I specifically hope *The Lions of Little Rock* is used to encourage people to remember the value of school integration. The height of integration in this country was in 1987—thirty years ago! I can't help thinking that some of the fracturedness we've seen in our country lately is a result of us not having diverse enough schools. It's hard to be afraid of people who look different than you if you wait with them at the bus stop every morning.

What is the power of story?

Isabel: Whew, this question. . . . We use stories like we use metaphors and similes—to gain understanding. When we talk about being kind to each other, we talk about the story of the Good Samaritan. When we talk about fascism, someone brings up *1984* (Orwell, 1949). When we try to explain love, often someone (sadly) brings up *Romeo and Juliet* (Shakespeare, 1594/1985). Western Imperialism? *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (Garcia, 1978). Stories are important in our understandings of ourselves and the world around us.

Story becomes more powerful when we can see glimpses of our realities in them. When this happens, it's like our existence becomes validated in some way. I will never tire of telling the story of how Michele Serros's work changed my life—it was the first time I saw myself, my Chicananess, in a piece of writing. Suddenly, being Chicana became important. I had a voice. It is easier to preserve your culture when instead of giving in to assimilation, you see it celebrated; that is what Michele Serros encouraged—not giving in. That is a powerful and important thing.

Brendan: I will never forget studying *Frankenstein* (1818/1982) as a sophomore in high school. I was fascinated with the questions Shelley asks about what it means to be human: who is ultimately more human, Dr. Frankenstein or his creation, or do they both embody extreme elements of our humanity? These were big questions, but what I remember most was the plunging feeling in my gut when I suddenly saw myself as one of the villagers chasing the creation out of town. Who had I called or made feel like a monster in my life? Who had I, in a sense, tried to chase out of my social group? This came at a time when I was beginning to think much more broadly about society and its injustices, and while I read articles and case studies about injustice, nothing was as powerful as reading Shelley's *Frankenstein* and asking myself two questions woven into one: What does it mean to be human, and how is justice a part of it? What's my role in the story—who do I become?

Kristin: Story is powerful because it allows us to see life from another person's point of view. It also allows us to see motivation in a character's actions—something that is often missing from real life. JT, for example, is someone who might be dismissed as an obnoxious jerk if we came across him in real life. By seeing his family and where he comes from, we learn a lot about why he acts the way he does.

Story also tells us about possibility and provides hope that change *is* possible. A good story makes you feel like the struggle is worth it in a way that is sometimes hard to see in real life, especially when you're stuck in the middle of a situation you'd like to change. Ultimately, I think, story can make us feel less alone. It's wonderful to know that others in the world share our concerns, even if those immediately around us do not. At its best, fiction can give us the strength and bravery to face the challenges of our own, real-life story.

***Brendan Kiely** is the* New York Times *bestselling author of* All American Boys *(with Jason Reynolds),* The Last True Love Story*, and* The Gospel of Winter*. His work has been published in 10 languages; has received a Coretta Scott King Author Honor Award, the Walter Dean Myers Award, and the Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award; was twice awarded Best Fiction for Young Adults (2015, 2017) by the American Library Association; and was a* Kirkus Reviews *Best Books of 2014.* Tradition *(forthcoming in spring 2018) is his fourth novel.*

***Kristin Levine** received her Bachelor of Arts in German from Swarthmore College and a Masters of Fine Arts in film from American University. Before becoming a writer, she worked various jobs—from an au pair in Vienna, Austria, to a professor of screenwriting at American University. Currently, she lives in Alexandria, Virginia, with her two daughters. Her first book,* The Best Bad Luck I Ever Had*, was on the American Library Association's 2010 list of Best Books for Young Adults.* The Lions of Little Rock *was selected for numerous state reading lists, was a* New York Times *Sunday Book Review editor's choice, and received the New York Historical Society's Children's History Book Prize.* The Paper Cowboy *is her third novel.*

***Isabel Quintero** is the daughter of Mexican immigrants. She resides and writes in the Inland Empire of Southern California. Her first book,* Gabi, a Girl in Pieces*, is the recipient of several awards—among them the 2015 William*

C. Morris Award for Debut YA Novel and the 2015 Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children's Book Award—and it has been on several best of and recommended reading lists. Her series Ugly Cat & Pablo (Scholastic) is out in spring 2017, and a graphic novel biography on photographer Graciela Iturbide (Getty Publications), which she collaborated on with Zeke Peña (the cover artist for Gabi, a Girl in Pieces*), will be released in September 2017. In addition to writing fiction, she also writes poetry, and her work can be found in various journals online and in print.*

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