Kansas English

2017, Volume 98, Number 1

Kansas Association of Teachers of English

Sun Seeker by Jenni Bader

In this issue ...

Articles by Drew Clifton Colcher, Kynda Faythe, Jason J. Griffith, William C. Sewell, and Nathan G. Whitman

Essays by Jenni Bader and John Franklin

Poetry by Kynda Faythe, Brooke Johnson, and April Pameticky

Kansas English

A peer-reviewed journal of the Kansas Association of Teachers of English

2017, Volume 98, Number 1

Member of the NCTE Information Exchange Agreement

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*Special thanks to those who reviewed two manuscripts for this issue.

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Katherine Mason Cramer, Wichita State University

Cover Art
Sun Seeker by Jenni Bader, Winfield High School

Kansas English is published once a year by the Kansas Association of Teachers of English (KATE), a state affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English. Annual memberships for KATE are $30 ($10 for students/retirees) and can be purchased at www.kansasenglish.org. Communication regarding *Kansas English* can be directed to the editor at Katie.Cramer@wichita.edu.

Kansas English Author Guide

Kansas English is the peer-reviewed journal of the Kansas Association of Teachers of English (KATE). It publishes articles and materials on subjects of interest to English teachers, including scholarly articles, reflective/practitioner essays, opinion pieces, interviews, book reviews, and creative works (including photos and artwork). *Kansas English* publishes about 80 percent of the manuscripts it receives each year. Specifically, consider submitting the following types of manuscripts:

1. **Practitioner Pieces** describing how you teach a particular text, skill, or concept in your English language arts classroom.
2. **Scholarly Articles**, including research studies and academic arguments supported by research in English education.
3. **Reflective Essays** about teaching English language arts.
4. **Creative Works** (e.g., poetry, vignettes, photography) related to teaching English.
5. **Interviews** with authors (YA and adult) and experts in the field of English language arts.
6. **Book Reviews** of recently published young adult literature and English pedagogy texts.
7. **Conversation Pieces** in response to previously published work in *Kansas English*.
8. **Kansas-Specific Articles** that would be of interest to Kansas English teachers.

Deadline for submissions for the 2018 issue of *Kansas English*: January 15, 2018

MANUSCRIPT FORMAT

Manuscripts should typically not exeed 15 pages, excluding references or works cited. Submissions should be in 12 pt. Times New Roman font, double-spaced throughout (including quotations and bibliographies), and adhere to the latest edition of APA or MLA documentation style. The names of submitting authors should not appear anywhere in the manuscript. All scholarly articles and practitioner pieces should include an abstract (no more than 200 words) and a list of keywords.

SUBMITTING THE MANUSCRIPT

Manuscripts should be submitted electronically as attachments to Katie.Cramer@wichita.edu. In the subject line, please write Kansas English Manuscript Submission. All manuscripts should be written using a recent version of Microsoft Word. Please also indicate the type of submission (e.g., practitioner piece, scholarly article, reflective essay) based on the categories above, as this will inform the peer review process.

Complete submissions include, as separate attachments:

1. A manuscript without references to the author(s) to ensure the piece is blinded.
2. A title page with names, affiliations, mailing addresses, and 100-150 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 receives a blind review by at least two members of the review board, unless the content or length makes it inappropriate for the journal. The review board typically makes a final decision regarding publication within three months of the posted submission deadline. Submitted manuscripts may be edited for clarity, accuracy, readability, and publication style.

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From the Editor

Welcome to the first issue of *Kansas English* published fully and exclusively online! I hope you enjoy this new format and the increased accessibility of the journal.

As the incoming editor, I would like to offer my sincere gratitude to a number of colleagues who helped get the 2017 issue off the ground.

Thanks first to the Kansas Association of Teachers of English (KATE) Executive Board and KATE President Steve Maack for allowing me the opportunity to step in as editor of *Kansas English* in March 2017—and for supporting the transition to a fully online journal.

Thank you also to my incredible editorial review board. Each person listed on page i of this issue enthusiastically agreed to serve on the board earlier this year, and then provided detailed, constructive, and *generous* feedback to the authors featured in this issue—and they did so in a relatively short timeframe. Members of the editorial review board made the peer review process an educative one for authors who submitted to *Kansas English*. Each author received thoughtful and encouraging feedback from two peer reviewers in order to revise and improve their work for *Kansas English* readers, and I am grateful for reviewers' expertise and collegiality in this process. If you have an interest in serving on the editorial review board, please contact me by e-mail.

Thank you to John Franklin of Pittsburg State University. John is a former editor of *Kansas English*, and he took time on a July morning to meet with me to discuss the journal, share his expertise, and talk about young adult literature. John, I took your advice on the cover—great idea!

Thanks also to Nathan Whitman, co-editor of KATE's *Voices of Kansas*, for his expert tutorials in layout and design. Nathan consistently responded to my e-mailed requests for technology help within hours and provided patient, detailed, encouraging advice for any challenge I faced.

Thanks to Susan Matveyeva at WSU Libraries for her expertise in publishing the journal fully online through WSU's Open Journal Systems. With Susan's help, *Kansas English* is now accessible to anyone. My hope is that this will broaden our readership, increase submissions, and create opportunities for our authors' voices and ideas to be heard/read widely. Publishing digitally also happens to be more cost-effective for KATE.

Thank you to Jenni Bader, 2017 graduate of Wichita State University and first-year teacher at Winfield High School, for generously sharing her photography featured on the cover of this issue.

Finally, thank you to all of the authors who contributed to my first issue of *Kansas English*! Each author graciously accepted constructive feedback from reviewers and worked under tight deadlines to make their manuscripts ready for publication.

I'm thrilled about the range and quality of articles, essays, and poetry featured in this issue, and I hope you'll take some time to peruse them. Thanks for reading!

~Katherine Mason Cramer, Wichita State University

Implementing Vocabutoons in the English Language Arts Classroom: Drawing Their Way to Success

William C. Sewell

Abstract
Although vocabulary acquisition remains a critical to literacy development, teachers infrequently devote classroom time to vocabulary exercises. In this article, the author demonstrates the use of "vocabutoons" as an instructional activity which draws upon students' multiple literacies—in particular, visual literacy—in order to foster vocabulary development. Tooning is based upon the belief that "[p]roficient readers visualize what they read as they construct meaning from a text" (Onofrey & Leikam 682). Representative artwork created by English Education majors enrolled in a young adult literature course at a university in the Midwest will be featured to highlight the tooning process.

Keywords
vocabulary, middle and high school English language arts, art

Vocabulary comprehension and retention are critical components of academic achievement (Allen 3-4) since students acquire somewhere from 40,000 to 80,000 words by the time they graduate from high school (Graves 3). Studies consistently assert that vocabulary instruction increases decoding, fluency, and ultimately reading comprehension (Berne and Blachowicz). Nevertheless, vocabulary study itself consumes significant amounts of classroom time (Graves 5), and vocabulary activities bore students "to tears" (Otten 76). Perhaps for both reasons, this is why instruction has been neglected (Manzo et al. 812). Consequently, an alarming trend has emerged. Even though more and more students declare an interest in attending college and, thus, need to communicate at a college-level, their vocabulary range and depth has plummeted 50% since the 1940s. Students today know about 30% of words on standardized reading tests; statistically, this is like "random guessing" (Manzo et al. 811).

As a former Kansas English teacher, I often share Otten's frustrations, thinking: "[t]here's got to be a better way" (76) to motivate my students. Instead of taking the time to enrich their diction through careful study, students hastily "cram" mere minutes prior to the weekly vocabulary test. Fortunately, there are more effective instructional methods available. Chiefly, we can appropriate our students' out-of-school literacies (Sheridan-Thomas 121). These include a variety of literacy skills such as writing on social media applications; listening and discussing music; and reading graphic novels, web sites, and popular young adult books. Both quantitative, as well as qualitative scholarly studies, affirm that when students draw upon their personal literacies, they are much more engaged learners since they bring skills and knowledge to the English language arts classroom (Wilhelm 467; Hinchman, Alvermann, Boyd, Brozo, & Vacca 305).

The key verb in the previous paragraph is "draw." For students, art is a significant and powerful out-of-school literacy. Nathan observes that employing artistic activities inspires students and instills confidence in them because they feel ownership over the material. Artwork creates an "emotional connection" which provides a "transfer to their academic learning" (para. 15). Art, in sum, can play an important role in English language arts classrooms.

Over the years, I have found that integrating students' artistic gifts into classroom instruction can rectify problems experienced during vocabulary instruction. An especially helpful strategy is the drawing assignment, "vocabutoons," or simply "toons." It is based on the belief that skilled readers visualize information as they decode the text (Onofrey and Leikam 682). In this

essay, I will demonstrate the "tooning" process using representative artwork (with one notable exception) created by my English Education majors. These students were enrolled in a young adult literature course at a university in the Midwest and allowed me to use their toons. I will also discuss implementation issues encountered in my secondary classes. To preserve their anonymity, secondary students have been given pseudonyms. Ultimately, "tooning" has proved an effective strategy in my classroom because it allows students to visually construct knowledge and employ their talents; tooning helps them draw their way to success.

Visualizing Vocabulary: What Studies Say

Several studies demonstrate a strong connection between nonlinguistical representations of information and word acquisition. Sheridan-Thomas points out that this practice dates back "from hieroglyphs scribed on pyramid walls to words printed on paper, to computer-based images and text" (123). Marzano popularized the strategy of creating nonlinguistic representations in the classroom. He contends that this process is "crucial" because the students are much more successful when they follow the strategy (34). The reason for increased achievement, according to Wilhelm, is that this process activates and creates schema, or mental structures that help us mentally organize new information with old. This strategy also gives students a "sense of agency, ownership, and authority" (470).

Carter et al.'s study of vocabulary acquisition and retention of 121 high school students in eight Latin I classes underscores the importance of schema-building. Group One memorized 21 words "chunked" in seven randomly assigned columns and then took an immediate and then a delayed posttest. Group Two received the same 21 words; however, vocabulary was chunked into seven columns based on their definitional similarity. Group Three was given the chunked list and a five-minute "imagery treatment" prior to the posttest. Control Group X was given no special intervention, just the list of 21 words (226). Chunking vocabulary as conducted in Group One and Two yielded much higher test scores on their immediate and delayed posttests than the control group. More importantaly, the combination of chunking and imagery in Group Three yielded significantly higher scores than all other participants on both posttests (227).

Wilhelm contends that while "the use of mental imagery has powerful positive effects for readers," teachers and materials infrequently employ imagery as a strategy for "experiencing the text" (470). Having established strong scholarly support for non-linguistic representations and vocabulary development, the next section models the tooning process.

Vocabutoons in the Classroom

Marzano asserts that a key to long-term concept retention is student interactivity (84); this is the driving element of tooning. A vocabutoon (see fig. 1), is a graphical-textual representation of a vocabulary term and it addresses a number of Common Core State Standards. For example, as a vocabulary exercise, tooning meets the following standards: 9-10.RL.4 (determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text) and 9-10.L.4 (determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple meaning words and phrases).

Each week, I generate 10 vocabulary words based upon course readings and literary concepts used during that period. To give them a sense of power over the assignment, students choose the word for their toons. On a blank sheet of paper, they write the concept and provide a short definition. With markers, crayons, or colored pencils, students create a drawing which symbolizes, depicts, or highlights an aspect of the term. Finally, they use the word in a complete sentence. Once finished, students present their toons to the class.

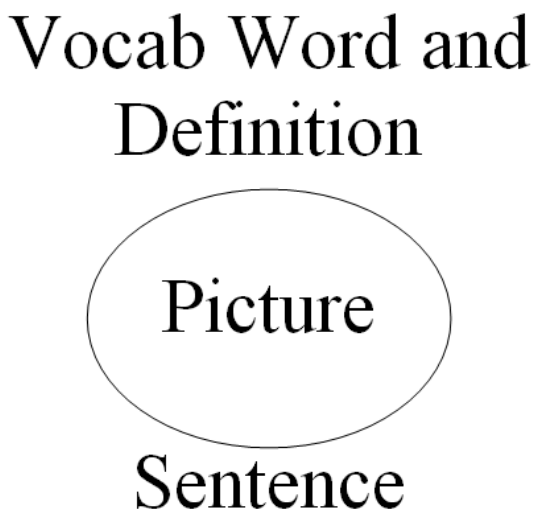

Fig. 1. The basic components of a "Toon."

Student exhibitions mark an important component of tooning as it provides an opportunity to pronounce and hear vocabulary, integrate their conceptualizations with peer drawings, and gain immediate feedback from teacher and peers about the accuracy and quality of their work.

A former eleventh-grade student, Jack (a pseudonym), exemplified the kind of success one may achieve when tooning. Jack was one of my many struggling learners in a "Class within a Class" (CWC) high school English course. These courses blend special education with regular education students. Jack, whose life goal was to become a tattoo artist, constantly doodled in class. He struggled as a reader because of learning disabilities, but he amazed students with his wonderful artwork. By melding reading instruction with his artistic gifts, he took more pride in his work and (perhaps for the first time) felt successful in an English class. Furthermore, he gained a following amongst his peers as they eagerly awaited his next vocabutoon.

I created toons to be a low-stakes formative assessment that prepared students for summative assessments such as weekly vocabulary tests and state reading assessments. The assignment is worth 20 points: 10 points for defining the term and using it correctly in a sentence; 10 points for presenting it to class. The only way for students to fail the activity is if they chose to not do it. If they have any errors such as incorrectly using the words, students are allowed to revise the toon.

As a formative assessment tooning can provide helpful data regarding student learning. Researchers have identified three components of effective formative assessments: informing practice, affecting instructional decisions, and giving students instructional support for improvement (Clark 341). Voni's drawing exemplifies how toons showcase student learning. Her drawing, "Climax" (fig. 2), demonstrates an understanding of the assigned literary concept and renders a visual and text summary of a scene from *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton.

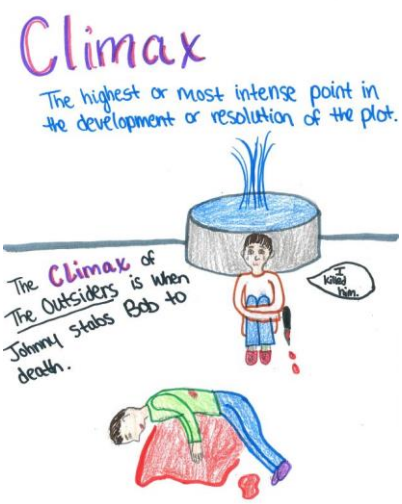

Fig. 2. Climax

Since Voni is literally illustrating her knowledge, any problems understanding the material would be immediately evident. Therefore, I could quickly give her assistance while she drew her toons.

Tooning also helps me support the entire class. If many of them had incorrectly defined "climax," it would indicate that I would need to do a whole class lesson. For instance, the first time I taught Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado," the words "catacombs" and "niche" confused students because they had insufficient background knowledge with the terms. Shanahan et al. find that background knowledge is key to helping students grasp "the explicit and inferential qualities of a text" (61). Instead of orally explaining the concepts to build background knowledge, I showed pictures of Italian catacombs and noted the indentations in the walls used. This helped students create mental pictures and strengthen their schema so they could better comprehend key the story.

Numerous studies demonstrate that the more students activate and build background knowledge, organize, restate, visualize, and clarify concepts, the more successful they are at comprehending difficult texts (Swanson et al. 4). Voni applied a literary concept to a significant scene from *The Outsiders*, paying special attention to character development, mood, setting, and plot. Tooning, thus, extends beyond vocabulary instruction and addresses reading comprehension standards such as 9-10.RL.3 (analyze how complex characters develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

It should be noted that tooning can be intimidating to some students. One of the single greatest obstacles of this assignment is that some students believe that they cannot draw; hence, they are reluctant to try and even more reluctant to share. Consequently, when evaluating their toons, I emphasize the vocabulary aspects of the assignment—defining the term correctly and using it properly in a sentence—which all students can meet regardless of their artistic skill level. As demonstrated in Keagen's "Paradox" (fig. 3), students may draw simple images or even stick figures as long as they make the attempt to tell a story or communicate concept knowledge.

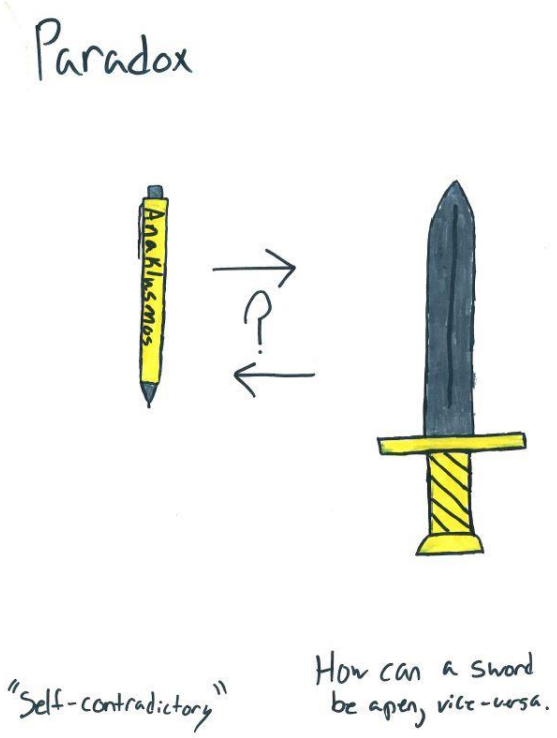

Fig. 3. Paradox

Kali's toon (fig. 4) demonstrates how simple shapes may strikingly tell a story.

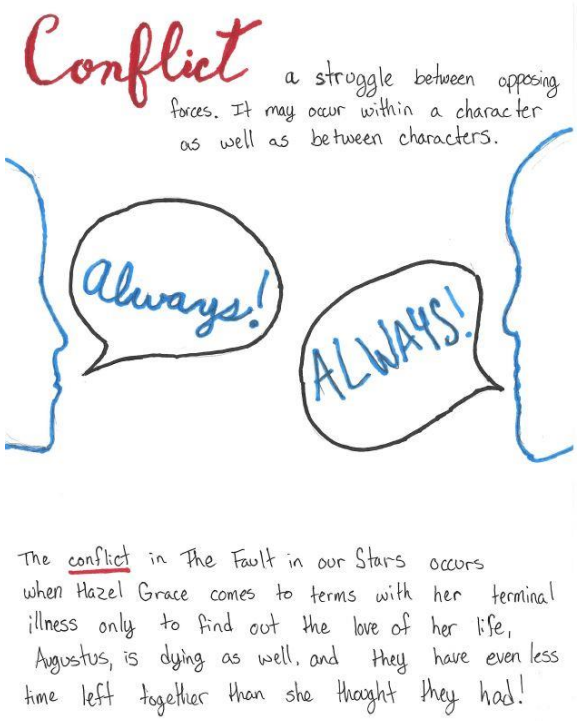

Fig. 4. Conflict

The use of color and cursive in the design of "conflict" attracts our attention, but did not necessarily take a "Michelangelo-level" artistic ability. Kali's drawing also affords an opportunity to integrate grammar instruction: she forgot to underline the book title. After praising her work, teaches can simply note the grammar rule and move on to the next vocabutoon. Through tooning, thus, we can address language standards such as 9-10.L.1 (demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking).

Ultimately, the key to encouraging reluctant artists is coaching and praising their efforts so they feel more comfortable about their efforts. The late Bob Ross serves as a perfect role model for motivating my artists. He always believed in having fun in our artwork. He argued that it was important to "show people that anybody can paint a picture that they're proud of." Ross added that, "It may never hang in the Smithsonian, but it will certainly be something that they'll hang in their home and be proud of. And that's what it's all about" (qtd. in Shrieves para. 6). When tooning, hence, I emphasize enjoying the activity regardless of skill.

To model and support students' artistic efforts, I share my own (not so great) artwork. For instance, "Foreshadow" (fig. 5), is based upon my reading of *Squashed* by Joan Bauer.

Fig. 5. Foreshadow

The drawing of Cyril Pool's pumpkin, "Big Daddy," contains a tiny clue as to what will happen to this antagonist's gourd. I created this toon on my Galaxy Note S3 using Sketchbook for Galaxy software to show preservice students how they might toon with school-issued notebooks, tablets, or

even phones. By showing our own work, we encourage our students to have fun while applying their knowledge in a deeper setting.

Modifications for Students with Special Needs

There are times when I had to adapt student presentations to meet the needs of some of my shy students. Carrie (a pseudonym), a very nice, but highly-introverted student in special education, represented an extreme example of students who would resort to being absent to avoid giving oral presentations. To assist her with this phobia, I stood beside her and presented the toon. Fortunately, her peers were sensitive to this problem. Casually, the class and I would chat with her about her artwork. They overlooked her phobia and offered her genuine praise. While we never got Carrie to fully overcome her fear, she incrementally gained confidence. By the end of the school year, we could get her to say one or two things about her toons.

Actively coaching students to perform at higher levels and publicly praising their efforts are critical components of vocabutooning. Consequently, I maintain a policy of displaying exemplary efforts of all my students on a designated bulletin board. One of my sophomores, Julie (pseudonym), comically demonstrated the value of displaying at least one toon from each student. During the first quarter of the year, my bulletin board was full. I told her class that toons were now being posted on the classroom door so people could view student artwork as they walked by the classroom. Evidently, she was not paying close attention. She angrily asked why I had not posted any of her toons yet. I asked her to check the new postings on the door. When realized that her most recent toon was there, she gave me a sheepish grin that melted into distinct pride. Later in the day, she brought her friends by to see her toon.

Classroom Management Issues

Generally, my students have been very well-behaved when tooning. I can only point to two instances of inappropriate behavior. The first case involved a student who constantly incorporated the Confederate battle flag in his artwork. This incident led to a class discussion about symbols and how they can be hurtful to classmates; he grumblingly stopped drawing flags. The other incident involved a student who drew a series of toons depicting another student getting "splattered" on the football field. In this case, I did not have to say much as the whole class asked him why he kept doing it. Evidently, he bore no malice to the student; he just thought it was funny. This incident led to a discussion about decorum.

Variations on the Toon: Other Applications for the Assignment

For the most part, students draw toons based upon our weekly vocabulary words; tooning, however, might be applied in other areas. One popular application is the book cover revision activity. At the end of a reading, we examine the themes, conflicts, and important characters of the text. We then look at the novel's book cover to determine how well the artwork represented these aspects. The revision activity has students combine some of the elements we have discussed and create a new cover. Finally, students talk about their artistic choices and contrast their pictures with the original cover.

There are a range of possibilities for using artwork as a literacy tool. For during-reading activities, students create a drawing that predicts how the story might end. Additionally, they could select and draw a character or characters using text-based details. Seglem and Witte touted a similar tooning variation, creating character tattoos based upon students' reading of *Romeo and Juliet*. Finally, another option is to have students create "dialogic toons" where students team up and create drawings that connect to one another. For example, two students picked the terms "protagonist"

and "antogonist." One student drew a picture of Dorothy from *The Wizard of Oz*; the other countered with the antagonist and drew a picture of the Wicked Witch of the West.

Concluding Thoughts

Not all toons are created equal: some students, such as Voni, draw spectacular renderings which amazed the class; other students such as Keagen and Kali draw simple images to brilliantly convey their ideas. Some of us (like me) just draw pumpkins. As we do in writing, it is important to help students see the value of the process in addition to the product. Instead of cramming before the vocabulary test, they are thinking, speaking, and seeing new vocabulary words. When students seem disconsolate about their artistic capabilities, I remind them of Bob Ross' exhortation: create "happy little trees." Then, students can draw their way to success.

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Author Biography

Dr. William Sewell is assistant professor of English Education and Composition at Dakota State University in Madison, South Dakota. Dr. Sewell taught secondary English, forensics, debate, and theatre in Kansas schools for 12 years. His research interests include multimodal intertextuality, content area literacy, active learning strategies, young adult literature, and middle and secondary English education. He can be reached at william.sewell@dsu.edu.

Supporting Students and Their Emerging Sense of Self

Jenni Bader

(with poetry by Phan)

As a newly minted teacher, I have begun to look back with fresh appreciation for my year of student teaching and the many people who helped shape and inform my ideas about education. Among those who left their impression on me is one student, Phan, who expanded my vision for the English classroom as a safe place to express and reflect. From this student I learned that a teacher can support by listening without judgment even when she or he does not fully understand.

During my first weeks in the classroom, Phan asked me if I could use plural pronouns or their last name only to address them. This request shocked me but I agreed to it. Confused about the request to be identified by pronouns meant for more than one person and worried what that might signal about the student's mental health, I consulted my university supervisor for advice. Dr. Cramer gave me several possibilities about what Phan's request could signify. She also reassured me that it most likely did not mean that Phan suffered from dissociative identity disorder. (I realize now how humorous that assumption may seem, but it was the only possibility in my mind at the time.) Dr. Cramer suggested that I continue to listen to and support Phan and allow them to reveal their reasons for this request in time and as they felt comfortable doing so.

The more I worked with the class and spoke with Phan, the more their singular personality and creativity shone through to me. When it came time for me to teach my unit on poetry, Phan responded with beautifully unique poetry and artwork that allowed me a greater window of understanding to that initial request that so shocked me. One poem in particular stood out to me. After seeing their rough draft, I told Phan that this was a new perspective for me and that I appreciated them sharing it. I asked—and they granted—permission to publish the poem to help others understand as well. Below is Phan's poem, revised and edited. All language and grammatical choices belong to the poet.

"Boy or Girl"
They told me to choose only two
Then came another world I never thought
There's more than pink and blue
It's a colorful spectrum
That twinkles of different stars
I learn of myself,
I learn who I am
But when I speak
No one understands
They hate, they push away.
Disappointment and fear in their eyes
It makes me want to cry
"It's not a thing" they say.
"It doesn't exist" they added
And call me what they want to hear
Not what I needed
My sibling laughs and mocks me
My parents don't support me

I only can rely on others from another
Place who are like me
They understand my pain
I can fly so high there
Yet in reality
I listen and read to people like me
Been kicked out of their home
Yelled and abused even killed
No wonder why there are some who are closeted
Because no one wants to feel the pain
Of being treated as an it
What irony in for the land of equality
That lowers groups like us down
So they tell me "Boy or Girl"
I say, "Neither."

In my written feedback to the rough draft of this poem, I told Phan that, although I identify as female, I do not always feel that the societal norms and expectations for women fit me. There are many more ways to be male or female than what society tries to dictate. I believe narrow, arbitrary definitions only force a feeling of otherness on those who do not fall neatly into that mold. Phan later presented this poem at our class coffee house, a great personal risk at any age but particularly for a teenager, and I applauded their courage.

Interestingly, two other students had written a two-voice poem on a similar issue. These two students do not identify as LGBTQIA (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual) and I would point out that Phan has not specifically expressed such a designation either. The lesson for me is not in learning how to qualify or label students' gender identities or sexual orientations but in learning *not* to label or make assumptions. Rather, each of our students should be able to expect non-judgmental, unconditional care and support as students and as individuals. This should easily fit with any teacher's core beliefs.

Author Biography

Jenni Bader is a recent Wichita State University College of Education graduate and a first-year English teacher at Winfield High School. She has felt the call to serve through teaching ever since first grade when she read about Anne Sullivan in a chapter book detailing the life of Helen Keller. Although her path to professional teaching has been long and winding, Jenni has found many opportunities to share her care for people and her joy in learning along the way. She looks forward to the possibility of each new day and helping each student realize his or her full potential. She can be reached at nachalah@sbcglobal.net.

Un-Banning the Huckleberry

Nathan G. Whitman

Abstract
Over the course of history, various groups have challenged, banned, and burned texts out of fear and the desire to control the thoughts and beliefs of a populace. Dictatorial regimes such as Hitler's Nazi-controlled Germany used "bonfires [to] 'cleanse' the German spirit of the 'un-German' influence of communist, pacifist, and, above all, Jewish thought" (Merveldt 524). Modern religious fundamentalism seeks to control a populace either through fear and indoctrination like the ultra-conservative, nearly-literal witch hunt of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series when religious leaders of various Protestant denominations feared that the hit young adult book series would teach impressionable minds actual witchcraft. One of the most famous and still frequently taught banned books is Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. In this paper the argument is made for the teaching of banned books by a case-analysis of Twain's text that considers the historical context, positive and negative aspects of the text, the harm of censorship, the value of free speech, and how frequently-challenged texts promote critical thinking for students.

Keywords
Huck, Twain, Huckleberry, race, language, critical thinking, high school, African Americans, freedom, speech, common core state standards, censorship, banned books, challenged books, slavery, book burning

Fernando Báez argues in *A Universal History of the Destruction of Books* that "the root of book destruction is the intent to induce historical amnesia that facilitates control of an individual or a society," and that the "[f]undamentalist biblioclast [the group that burns or destroys books] does not hate books as objects, but fears them for their content and does not want others to read them" (12-15). This is the case throughout history: dictatorial regimes such as Hitler's Nazi-controlled Germany used "bonfires [to] 'cleanse' the German spirit of the 'un-German' influence of communist, pacifist, and, above all, Jewish thought" (Merveldt 524). Modern religious fundamentalism seeks to control a populace through fear and indoctrination like the ultra-conservative, nearly-literal witch hunt of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series when religious leaders of various Protestant denominations feared that the hit young adult book series would teach impressionable minds actual witchcraft. However, the battle over book banning is not only a political or religious one: it is also educational.

Teachers are held accountable in most states by the Common Core State Standards. In particular, the 11th-12th grade standard for Speaking and Listening (SL11-12.1) states that students will do the following:

> Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions . . . . Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives. . . . Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

These outcomes are reasonable for preparing students for college or career, where any number of diverse, critical situations may occur and need analytical thinkers and team leaders; however, when local and federal spheres are at odds, there is — for lack of better expression — a catch-22.

When students are forced to confront their social norms, they enter the state of true critical thinking, thus challenging their parents' American ideal of (limited) free speech with the possibility of undermining the system. In her article published by the National Council of Teachers of English, Jennifer Rossuck outlines how she created a senior English elective course for her all-girls school on banned books and civic discourse as a response to a piece of legislation passed after a sex-education book stirred controversy. In her course of study, her students are required to uncover the following details about the text of concern: context, positive versus negative aspects, censorship as a form of denial, freedom of speech for the author, and respect towards students' common sense and critical thinking abilities (69).

This occurrence in 1994 sounds similar to a recent legislative battle in Kansas: the passage of Senate Bill 56 (2015) *Removing affirmative defense to promotion to minors of material harmful to minors for public, private or parochial schools* by the Committee on Judiciary states that teachers can be imprisoned for any material "harmful to minors" meaning anything that "the average adult person applying contemporary community standards would find that the material . . . Depicts or describes nudity, sexual conduct, sexual excitement or sadomasochistic abuse in a manner that is patently offensive" (2). As a result of this bill, the present-day biblioclast (book burner) is both politician and community member who has little to no experience in the educational sector. Furthermore, if the vague description of this person as the "average adult" is understood, this theoretical individual's perspective of that which is "obscene" will vary across communities depending on whether or not they are more inclined to conservative or liberal ideologies. Classical works of art may be considered vulgar and pornographic in some communities and high art in others, and this legislation affects every classroom. To provide an example of what might happen if a teacher were disciplined for teaching *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, up until recently, Kansas teachers did not have tenure: one student with a complaint about one text could force even the Kansas State Teacher of the Year out of his or her job.

While this legislation died in the House Committee, it is without doubt that other challenges to the classroom will arise because a certain fundamentalism exists in challenges towards books taught in the classroom; parents and administrative ideologues fear the content of books but express a desire for students to become critical thinkers — a pedagogical and paradoxical decree, for if teachers exceed the community's acceptable definition of critical thought (challenging one's thoughts about the world), then the text stands heretical.

Therefore, it is imperative that discourse be made available that is understandable by this "average person" yet holds true to rigorous academic standards: If this unit study works for Jennifer Rossuck's students, it is sufficient to prove contested works such as Twain's novel as both appropriate and critical for students in high school to read.

The Context of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

One of the first aspects that must be considered in the exploration of Twain's text as a challenged book is its historical context. Controversial from its initial publication, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* challenged social mores when public libraries deemed its language offensive in 1885, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) considered it racist in 1957 (Savo 4). It is these two affronts that provide the background for the immediate past and present challenges to the text: language and race.

Contest about language past and present centers upon vulgarities and the use of lower-class dialect. Later attention drew to the use of the racial slur "nigger," which is used in the book 213 times (Rush 583). The earliest critics focused on language as a means of circumventing the contentious topic of race, and the Concord Public Library called the book "rough, coarse and inelegant" and that it was "more suited to so the slums than to intelligent, respectable people" (qtd.

in Fulton 54). However, Twain as his true self (Samuel Clemens) was both elegant and respectable in his day — even though he sought to shock and offend through satire to promote social change. On a variety of occasions, Clemens traveled with George Washington Cable who encouraged Clemens to censor himself (his use of the word "nigger" and "darky jokes"), and the two of them read a variety of passages from their anti-racial writings before public audiences (Pettit 131). For these reasons — Twain's prowess of the English language, his ability to juxtapose the sentimental with the real, and the ability to incorporate regionalism that the book is considered canonical and quintessential American literature; however, as the country neared desegregation, the focus upon the book centered on its racist content.

The NAACP's 1957 challenge to the novel's racism continues to carry concern for today's parents and students who confront the text as a tool for the disenfranchisement of African Americans. One of the most-recent challenges to *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* comes from Renton, Washington in 2004 when an African American student "complained to the school officials that the novel degraded her culture," even though it sat on a list of "supplemental" (optional) reading materials; however, she still felt the need to file a complaint (Sova 6). Hers and others' arguments reflect those of John Wallace's assertions that called the book "the most grotesque example of racist trash ever written" (qtd. in Fulton 56). Despite the heated condemnation brought upon the text by critics for its prevalent use of the word "nigger," Gregg Camfield points out that "some of the most spirited and interesting defenses of the book's characterization of Jim [the slave] have come from black authors" (4). Some argue that Jim acts as a father figure or a brother to Huck, or they suggest that Jim manipulates Huck with his own mask of the stereotyped slave as a means of securing his own freedom. Nonetheless, others point out that "Huck's emotional attachment to Jim can be characterized as cruel and indifferent" because towards the end of the novel Huck acts with complete "indifference to Jim's welfare as he sits in the rat- and snake-infested pen" (Rush 590). Considering that not even African Americans or scholars can agree upon whether or not *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is, in fact, racist points to a need for further discourse, one that perhaps students should help carry.

Whereas both sides are debatable, Samuel Clemens himself supported African Americans and abolitionist causes; he advocated on behalf of Frederick Douglass and contributed to scholarships for black students at Lincoln University in 1882 (Pettit 125). Twain put his money where is mouth was; however, that mouth straddled both sides of the race debate, for while he contributed to scholarships and advocated for the rights of African Americans, he also told racist jokes before white audiences. Yet, "[f]rom the 1880s onward Mark Twain began to replace his old darky jokes with carefully selected readings about blacks, delivered before both black and white audiences" (Pettit 127), and this shows his awareness about race and care toward the topic; it appears that his sentimental intents conflicted with his reality: as a Southerner he had to maintain a facade. Therefore, it makes sense that his text supports such a duality and creates a comparative and combative discourse.

The oldest and newest challenges are the same: both elaborate upon the issues of social degradation — how the text either lowers the reader in social class (intellect) or depicts people of color within the text (racism). Such a text as this — for the sake of dialogue alone — lends itself to use by teachers, for there is room for debate by both white students and students of color about the book's true message and societal value, allowing all students to reflect on their own perceptions of race and the depictions of the experiences of slaves while Huck and Jim travel down the Mississippi River. Overall, the historical context of both language and race as a means to censor this text fall short; though, these topics introduce some of the dialogue of positive versus negative aspects of the text.

Positive Versus Negative Aspects of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

To provide a perspective on the need to ban or to teach *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Susan E. Rush posits that Twain's text should be considered "anti-canonical," meaning that this quintessential American English literary study should be taught as an example "for understanding why society's values have changed" (580). From the perspective of both a parent and an educator she argues that some of the negative elements of Twain's novel, including its racist content, may harm more African American students and lead to the perpetuation of racist ideology through the entertainment of the white student than promote discourse and understanding. Her primary cause for this concern lies in the grade-level appropriateness of the text, as her own adopted (black) daughter read the text in middle school and felt disenfranchised, and she argues for a reading at the upper levels of high school or during a post-secondary course because she finds the text still valuable.

One positive aspect that Rush expounds upon is that Twain reflects regionalism via dialect and realism well within his writing. Moreover, while realism, regionalism, and dialect are important, "focusing on the issues of slavery or race is as important to white society — [if not] more important — than teaching it for style" (581). Furthermore, while the text is filled with satirical commentary, she expresses concern that "the novel is beyond the maturing intellectual abilities of most middle- and high-school students (Rush 581). Lastly, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* depicts the conflicting ideas of white supremacy and racial equality because of its anti-canonical value: "White society should no longer accept the normative value of the novel's message," which is "a message that is far more complex and racist than whites understand" (Rush 582).

These conflicting ideas of white supremacy and racial equality, which Rush highlights as a strength of the novel, are also the reasons Rush also feels that students are not mature enough to understand the anti-racist sentiment. Huck is not the hero he is made out to be, and most white teachers are not competent enough to recognize the prevalent racism in the book or Twain's own racist tendencies because "on some level, it is 'fun' for (white) students to read" about Huck's journey down the river; meanwhile, "multicultural education is intended to give students an appreciation of people different from them but not in the ways that *romanticize* the oppression of one group of people by another" (Rush 584-585). Ultimately, Rush argues that books like *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* should be read to show how terrible whites treated blacks and as a lesson from which we should never return; it should cause anger and frustration that Jim is the only well-developed black character, and "black students [cannot] identify with Jim because he 'is a character to laugh *at* and little more'" (588).

As a high school English teacher, I agree with Rush's concerns and praises, but I believe that the concerns justify the teaching of the text to upper-level high school students (eleventh and twelfth graders). Twain's text does require a readership of higher developmental ability. Not only is the regionalist dialect difficult to decode, but also middle school students are far too close to the age of Huck and prone to immaturity; it is far better that students be able to see his perspective in hindsight after they have had the opportunity to make their own mistakes and develop some wisdom that will also allow them to also see into Jim's views — however much or little that may be.

When Huck narrates, "I would do the right thing and the clean thing, and go and write to that nigger's owner and tell where he was; but deep down in me I knowed it was a lie — and He knowed it. You can't pray a lie — I found that out" (Twain 343), it is a passage that highlights the complex regional dialect, as well as the debatable development of Huck's character. Teachers think that this section teaches a moral lesson, but really, it is a lesson of ethics. Students must decode that Huck is experiencing an inner-conflict about slavery and whether or not to report to Jim's owner of his whereabouts; furthermore, he has a spiritual conflict about praying for Jim's freedom — a social taboo if one were a southerner because slaves were property, and Jim is stolen property that should

be returned to his rightful master. However, since Huck states that he does not believe much in God or religion, his prayer about Jim's freedom holds little weight in whether or not he's a reformed Southerner, for he does not believe in either the system of slavery or the system of religion he uses to convey his thoughts to the reader thus satirizing the whole dilemma and critiquing society as a whole. That is a lot for a high-performing student to keep straight, let a lone a middle-school student, and this is one small quote from a lengthy text. Does it display Twain's racist tendencies? Yes, but he is depicting a reality with which he and his audience are familiar. Does it show the conflict between whites and racial equality? Yes, and Huck is trying to figure out his own identity and thoughts. Does it give a definitive answer? No, because as the analysis of the text notes, Huck is a flawed child with paradoxical views instilled upon him by others and assimilated by choice: He prays out of habit because Miss Watson and the Widow attempt to "sivilize" him; he recognizes the injustice of the treatment of slaves, but his society shows him slavery is "normal." Therefore, Huck is as conflicted as the text itself.

Despite the label it is given (canonical versus anti-canonical), *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is a seminal text in the United States — for better more than worse, and as such it mandates analyses and remembrance of a time of oppression in history. There is no better sense of regionalism today than the racial gulf of interpretations of this novel. The book is valuable for teaching style and tone, and once those concepts are mastered, students should focus on the postcolonial lens and racism that perpetuates the text, practice close readings, determine if Twain is for or against slavery through his depictions of Jim and his interactions with Huck, and explore what the book says about the human condition and societal progress. And, if teachers fear that Twain's white perspective will land them in hot water, pair the text with African American writers like Richard Wright (*Black Boy, Native Son*) or Solomon Northup (*Twelve Years a Slave*) who give voices to people of color and slaves where Twain falls short.

Censoring *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* Denies the Reality of the Past

When one looks to the past and present biblioclasty — the past biblioclast being that of the North afraid of language and African Americans offended by racism of a satirized (and sentimental) version of the antebellum South; the present biblioclast being politicians and the "average" citizen — it is evident that both groups past and present miss the point of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*: they fear the reality of a history of oppression and wish to romanticize the past in order to ignore the problems of the present.

Fulton mentions that critics of the text betrayed their own prejudices: like Huck, they too are "playing double." For example, while the editors of the *Republican* "condemn *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* . . . they betray their own fear of mingling with the lower orders, even aesthetically" because of the regionalist dialect (Fulton 56). He goes on to show how Twain intended for the racist language to disturb his readership — African Americans included — with the example of when "Sally Phelps asks Huck if anyone was hurt in the steamboat explosion and he answers, 'No'm. Killed a nigger'" (Fulton 56). Acknowledging that this way of life existed, that whites treated slaves like cattle and placed such little value upon the lives of blacks – this strikes fear into those who seek to avoid future persecution or reminders of past mistakes. The white reader wants to believe that he is for racial equality and in no way (past or present) perpetuates racism; the black reader wants to forget the past and improve the present: these are also examples of "playing double." Even Twain plays double; his pen name of Twain to that of Samuel Clemens, and America had two identities: the North and South. As such, today there are now two identities in this discourse: the past and the present. All these identities act as a means of survival and avoidance of the real issue of race and the still-present need for societal change.

By erasing *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* from the canon due to its racial prejudices, the current biblioclast of politicians and average citizenry hopes to further liberate themselves from the racial terms found within the text. In an unprecedented move in 2011, the Alabama publishing house NewSouth books sought to expunge all occurrences of racist language — "nigger" and "injun" — and replace the terms with more politically correct language such as "slave" (Page). The rationale behind this censorship was to circumvent problems before they arose with the text, a means of making it less controversial and more readable. However, this censorship perpetuates the problem of which Twain is accused: Critics claim that he romanticizes the past in the South and that the use of the word "nigger" desensitizes and promotes racial prejudices, but omitting the word and all its enormity further adds to the sentimentality through omission. In other words, deleting "nigger" from the text is a means of saying that America had no such problem and that it is not even appropriate to discuss how it is used in the novel. Furthermore, this deletion would deny the terrible state from which the United States developed, and even the replacement word "slave" lessens the weight of the problem of racism in America. This is not like the reclaiming of a word; it is a murder of identity, one that the South and white society must recognize it placed upon blacks, and an identity that it must also help heal.

This shows the need for freedom of speech and for critical thinkers: If society forgets the past degradation of a people seen as Other (racially), then there is no groundwork to prevent future discrimination toward those who are Other (sexually, mentally, physically, etc.). The deletion of an epithet ("nigger") is not a solution so long as words like "chink," "fag," "retard," and "gimp" continue to define Others in society and limit their agency, and Twain's prevalent use of shocking satire as a means of drawing attention to issues shows the need for freedom of speech today. Teens today are all-too aware of prejudices in an era where tensions and bullying rates are higher than ever: Latinx students are told to move back to Mexico beyond a proposed border wall – even if they are legal citizens; Muslim students' extended families face travel bans; LGBT+ students see rollbacks on protections from the Department of Education. Racist language, charged language, and oppression are not going away, and students need to be instructed on how to analyze a situation and the language at hand.

Twain's Freedom of Speech

During his life, Twain advocated for equality and the fair treatment of not only African Americans at home, but also those of color abroad. Not only did he aid Frederick Douglas and provide scholarships for black students, he also critiqued the treatment of people of color around the world. Regarding his tours and lectures on race, Twain remarked:

> In more than one country . . . we have hunted the savage . . . with dogs and guns through woods and swamps for an afternoon's sport, and filled the region with happy laughter over their sprawling and stumbling flight, and their wild supplications for mercy . . . . In many countries we have . . . made him our slave, and lashed him every day, and broken his pride, and made death his only friend, and overworked him till he dropped in his tracks. (Pettit 133)

While Twain used his humor and satire to mock slave owners and the South as well as to encourage reforms, when it came time to be serious Twain became blunt with his message.

It is true that Twain waxes sentimental in his depiction of the South in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*; however, the voice he gives Huck is enough to lead to tarring and feathering if said to the wrong group of Southerners. Over the course of the novel Twain expresses his freedom of speech through Huck.

The first notable instance of this free speech is when Huck and Jim become separated in a fog, and Huck plays a trick on Jim for which he is later sorry. Huck says, "It was fifteen minutes before I could work myself up to go and humble myself to a nigger — but I done it, and I warn't

ever sorry for it afterwards, neither" (Twain 150). With no outside influence to promote his self-censorship (like Tom Sawyer), Huck equalizes himself with Jim.

A second instance of this free speech is when Huck states, "I knowed [Jim] was white inside" (Twain 287), thus, showing a critical reader that while raised in the racist antebellum south, Huck is capable of change, and that is why the Southern biblioclast fears him, and it is why Huck fears the Southern biblioclast. Huck is aware that this is a face he can only wear toward Jim, for whenever Huck is around Southerners, his regard for Jim's wellbeing vanishes. As mentioned earlier, Twain also self-censored depending upon his audience; therefore, it makes sense that Huck does too.

By deleting Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* from the canon (or anti-canon) of literature, society says that his voice and views do not matter; that racism was and is not still a problem; that America is not conflicted about how citizens treat one another; that Twain did not help start this dialogue. Twain's advocating for reform is seen in the text, but as he, like his characters must put on multiple faces, the text at times turns sentimental; however, this is permissible, for Twain enjoyed speaking his mind and creating arguments, and it is with this text that he begins a dialogue among readers and scholars that continues to this day. It is a dialogue that students must use critical thinking to help continue to solve.

How *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* Promotes Critical Thinking

Huck's dilemma is a universal one that models all recurrent instances of oppression and societal nonchalance and apathy towards change. Current instances of oppression are seen in a variety of societal contexts in America alone: the Black Lives Matter movement shows how police corruption continues to perpetuate the problem of race; the failure of congress to pass housing and work protections for persons who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT), such as the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) hearkens back to the rhetoric of separate-but-equal and white flight; the targeting of Muslims out of xenophobic fear of Islamist extremism are but a few examples of how Huck's conflicted mind on race reflects the conflicts faced by current generations. During class discussions, my own students bring up these topics because they hear about them in the news or halls, and in some cases, disagree with their own parents' sentiments, and the safe space of the class guidance through this text allows for them to work through these issues and their own cognitive dissonances regarding race and other forms of discrimination. By the end of the book, the majority of students find it valuable, and even those who disagree with its inclusion in high school tend to reflect more of an anti-canonical approach and advocate for its value in post-secondary education.

When Huck experiences a cognitive dissonance between his society's expectations for his behavior and how he feels he should treat Jim, his thoughts and reflections upon the world provide a framework for current students. When he does not preach, he shows the errors of others' ways, and it is this critical discourse that needs to happen for change to be successful: the reader must be able to stop and declare the injustice, think about why the situation makes one sick. If Huck can make the connection that Southerners act in a manner that is "enough to make a body ashamed of the human race" (Twain 280), an extension can be made from Twain's work to the world. Huck and Twain may revert to sentimental ways, but students today do not have to: they can be the voice of change.

Conclusion

The text of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* helps to justify the reading of banned books and highlights their importance to the instruction of critical thinking in public education. Censorship on behalf of language and race eliminates a discourse that is still relevant to the classroom; it is neither anti-intellectual to read a text with dialect, swearing or racial slurs if discussed

both within context of the novel's historical setting, author's background, and current relevancy, for it provides a safe place for students to express concerns about and problem solve social issues — a mandate of current curriculum instruction within the Common Core State Standards. It is for these same reasons that the negative aspects of the book lend to positive use for instruction: *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* reflects the conflicting world view of Twain (sentimental and rational) and today's conflicting views toward race and Other groups in society. It shows how people and institutions make mistakes in how they treat Others and invites the reader into a discourse of how to make society a better place now and for future generations. Regardless of its offenses, one must understand that censoring the past omits the shames and obstacles that current society overcame and still confronts. Refusal to talk of language and of race denies the reality of the past and denies freedom of speech. Freedom of speech mattered to Twain — a freedom he expressed, regardless of whom it vexed — and it is this same freedom which promotes and fosters critical thinking within today's students who need not be protected but be guided to making their own decisions about the issues of language and race, for far too long scholars and teachers carried the discourse, and it cannot be clearer than it is in the Common Core State Standards (SL11-12.1) that students need to have "civil, democratic discussions," over "a full range of positions on a topic," that offers "diverse perspectives" that requires them to "resolve contradictions."

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is an example of such a text that offers students the opportunity to commit to these higher standards, confront their own perspectives, and challenge those of their parents and their community. They too are part of the ongoing fight in a biblioclastic system that claims to espouse the necessity of free speech as a means of ideological control. High school students should be allowed to analyze banned and challenged texts, and the institutions must support the teachers who engage students in critical thinking and civil discourse, even if it frightens political or citizen biblioclasts. For free speech to exist, critical thinking must first be allowed.

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Author Biography

Nathan Whitman is a fifth-year teacher at Burrton High School who has a Bachelor of Arts in Secondary Education with an emphasis in English 6-12, and a Bachelor of Arts in Creative Writing, as well as an endorsement in English to Speakers of Other Languages from Wichita State University. In addition to heading the school's Kansas Association for Youth club, he is a senior class sponsor, and a graduate student at Wichita State University seeking a Master of Arts of English. He is also Co-Editor of the *Voices of Kansas* journal published by the Kansas Association of Teachers of English. He can be reached at whitmann@usd369.org.

Paper

April Pameticky

or the day we made paper pinwheels
instead of shooting each other

We folded carefully along
perforated lines, to bend paper

into submission
only to be blown about
by Wichita Wind.

Prescribed in chaotic rolls,
it's so easy in our pale protection

and privilege and innocence
to play at peace
with paper gestures

while Syrian refugees
cross the Mediterranean to be

cast out on the coast,
tiny babies wrapped
in their fathers' turbans, blue

from cold and starving.

Author Biography

April Pameticky received her MFA in Fiction and her teaching certificate from Wichita State University. After transitioning from nearly a decade's service in the middle school classroom, she teaches Reading Interventions and AP Language & Composition for Wichita East High School. A strong advocate for empowering the student writer, she involves her students in activities that develop academic voice and critical thinking. This means her students must become comfortable as contributors to the classroom discourse community. She has participated as a Site Team member for two secondary AVID programs and finds those strategies effective with students at all levels of development. In addition to her professional affiliations, she serves as Managing Editor of *River City Poetry,* on online e-zine focused on regional and national poetry. She also assists the organization of the Wichita Broadside Project and Poetry Rendezvous 2017. She can be reached at aprilpameticky@hotmail.com.

Rebellious Lass:
From Robin Hood to Juliet—Katniss Everdeen at Play in *The Hunger Games*

John Franklin

Abstract
By tracing Katniss Everdeen's character development from gender-bending ersatz Robin Hood to revisionist historian to star-crossed lover playing the role of Juliet, we can see how she reveals conflict and history as essential elements of this saga of adolescent rebellion.

Keywords
The Hunger Games, Katniss Everdeen, Robin Hood, Juliet

In this essay, I will connect Katniss Everdeen—protagonist of *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins—to two familiar literary characters who help us see how she develops from an angry impulsive adolescent to a more mature person entering young adulthood. First, I connect her to Robin Hood through the bow and arrow each uses. Beyond this object, I will present examples of each archer's prowess to further demonstrate how alike they are. Then, in keeping with an essential characteristic of these literary creations, I will show how Katniss's actions embody a rebellious spirit—which I believe is kin to Robin Hood's—that prompts sympathetic reactions from her audience.

Second, in the case of Juliet, I will connect the two adolescent women with the use of a phrase: "star cross'd lovers." Because Juliet is a difficult character for Katniss to emulate, I will also explicate the directorial role played by her mentor Haymitch Abernathy, an action that I believe helps Katniss to mature. Finally, I will conclude with a scene from the novel where Katniss plays both roles so effectively that she is able to revise the rules and rewrite the history of the Hunger Games. This revision, I believe, demonstrates her development from a rebellious adolescent to a young adult capable of confronting forces of inequity. All along the way I will rely on the author's words to refresh our memories—and our enjoyment—of the novel.

We meet Katniss Everdeen on Reaping Day, as she awakes and then prepares to retreat to the woods. We see her depart the hearth of her home, inhabited by a beloved younger sister, an ugly ungrateful cat and a dysfunctional widowed mother, escaping these responsibilities for the freedom of the woods. These woods allow us to begin associating Katniss with Robin Hood, that legendary English outlaw of the 12th century who haunted Sherwood Forest, creating a community based on courage as he defied elements of a corrupted society. An object with which we may associate him is the bow with its arrows.

In *The Hunger Games*, this object is quickly attached to our heroine. Soon after awakening and departing her home she enters the woods where, Katniss informs us, "As soon as I'm in the trees, I retrieve a bow and sheath of arrows from a hollow log" (5). Katniss' association with a bow and arrows is reinforced by her hunting companion Gale, who later in the day has a strong word of advice before she departs for the Hunger Games: "get your hands on a bow" (39), he urges her. Indeed, she is able to do so in the Arena when one of the Careers [adolescents trained from childhood to be Games players] who snatched the weapon from the cornucopia of supplies dies a horrible death, presenting Katniss the opportunity to secure her preferred weapon.

Let us attach Katniss to the object by referring to this grim and gruesome scene.

> The bows. The arrows. I must get them. I reach Glimmer just as the cannon fires [signaling the death of a contestant and the imminent arrival of a hovercraft to retrieve the body.] The tracker jackers [genetically altered wasps] have vanished. This girl, so

> breathtakingly beautiful in her golden dress the night of the interviews, is unrecognizable. Her features eradicated, her limbs three times their normal size. The stinger lumps have begun to explode, spewing putrid green liquid around her. I have to break several of what used to be her fingers with a stone to free the bow. The sheath of arrows is pinned under her back. I try to roll over her body by pulling on one arm but the flesh disintegrates in my hands and I fall back on the ground. (192)

Eventually, Katniss secures the weapon, returning her—bow in hand—to a familiar role as one at home in the woods.

While the bow and arrows help us to associate the novel's protagonist with Robin Hood, it is more than objects that cement the association: two of Katniss' actions solidify the comparison between this pair of criminal perpetrators. The first occurs at the culmination of the training sessions for the Hunger Games when tributes meet the Gamemakers privately; the second occurs during the Games themselves.

However, before relating the examples from the Hunger Games, let me review some 12th century literature, for each of Katniss' feats of archery echoes an oft-told tale of Robin Hood. Let's quickly revisit it.

To synopsize Francis James Child, who included the tale among *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, the Sheriff of Nottingham is having all sorts of trouble capturing the bold outlaw Robin Hood. Though the administrator travelled to London to consult with King Richard, he is met with no sympathy from his majesty. The king admonishes him to do his job, even if it means resorting to trickery. And so he does, laying a trap with an especially desirable prize: "an arrow with a golden head/And shaft of silver white" (v. 7). Tempted, Robin Hood is determined to "try my skill/At yon brave archery" (v. 11). Little John advises the band of bowmen to disguise themselves before marching to the fair where Robin is clad in red rather than green—"the prize he got/For he was both sure and dead" (v. 22), a direct result of his shooting skill.

This aptitude is exemplified by Katniss when we look to the training sessions where tributes from each of the twelve Panemian districts go to hone or to learn skills that will serve them in the arena of the Hunger Games. The purpose of the tribute-wide demonstrations is to assess each contestant so that a betting line can be established for wagerers; and, so sponsors may be attracted to potential winning tributes. The gifts given by sponsors during the game—a kind of *res ex machina*—can be crucial to survival. Directed by her advisor Haymitch Abernathy to veil the talent heretofore witnessed only by her friend Gale, Katniss avoids the archery station until she is called before the Gamemakers in a private demonstration of prowess.

Like Robin Hood, Katniss has resorted to disguise, though in her case it is her skill with a bow that she hides. So, blind to her talent, bored because she is the last of two dozen tributes to present themselves, rendered soporific by drink, the Gamemakers all but ignore Katniss as she demonstrates her archeristic aptitude. Initially unaware that she is being overlooked, Katniss compliments herself: "It's excellent shooting" (101) and looks to her judges. She sees that "a few are nodding approval, but the majority of them are fixated on a roast pig that has just arrived at their banquet table" (101).

The Gamemakers' inattention enrages Katniss, sparking her inner rebel. Though she knows that these people personify power, still "suddenly I am furious, that with my life on the line, they don't even have the decency to pay attention to me. That I'm being upstaged by a pig. My heart starts to pound, I can feel my face burning" (101-2). Katniss leaves the realm of reason and surrenders to her emotion: "Without thinking, I pull an arrow from my quiver and send it straight at the Gamemakers' table. I hear shouts of alarm as people stumble back. The arrow skewers the apple in the pig's mouth and pins it to the wall behind it. Everyone stares at me in disbelief" (102).

Not content with being half a rebel, Katniss goes whole hog. "Thank you for your consideration, I say [here, I imagine irony dripping like pork fat from her lips]. Then I give a slight bow and walk straight toward the exit without being dismissed" (102). This angry impulsive action is exactly the sort of behavior that we expect from an adolescent.

Another example of the association between Katniss Everdeen and Robin Hood occurs in the Arena during the Games themselves when Katniss aims to thwart the gang of Careers by destroying their cache of supplies.

Katniss approaches the cache cautiously, reconnoitering the area, using her hunting skills to help her plot a strategy to achieve the goal of robbing the rich Careers of their sustenance, creating a more egalitarian situation, providing her a greater chance of winning by surviving the Hunger Games. As she surveys the net-enclosed pile of loot she learns from the actions of Foxface, the vixenous tribute from District 5, that the supply dump is booby trapped. She racks her brain for a solution to destroying the goods upon which the Careers depend, thinking rocks, flame, stealth in turn before returning to the image that dominates her boldly rebellious act before the Gamemakers. She hits upon the idea of shooting at apples. I quote the novel by way of explicating both her thought process and her performance.

> There is a solution to this, I know there is, if I can only focus hard enough. I stare at the pyramid, the bins, the crates, too heavy to topple over with an arrow. Maybe one contains cooking oil and the burning arrow [idea] is reviving when I realize I could end up losing all twelve of my arrows and not get a direct hit on an oil bin, since I'd just be guessing. I'm genuinely thinking of trying to re-create Foxface's trip up the pyramid in hopes of finding a new means of destruction when my eyes light on the burlap bag of apples. I could sever the rope in one shot, didn't I do as much in the Training Center? It's a big bag, but it still might only be good for one explosion. If only I could free the apples themselves. . .
>
> I know what to do. I move into range and give myself three arrows to get the job done. I place my feet carefully, block out the rest of the world as I take meticulous aim. The first arrow tears through the side of the bag near the top, leaving a split in the burlap. The second widens it to a gaping hole. I can see the first apple teetering when I let the third arrow go, catching the torn flap of burlap and ripping it from the bag. (220-1)

"For a moment, everything seems frozen in time" (221) to Katniss. This moment yields to one that could be captioned "Eureka!" or "Hallelujah!" or "Oorah!" as "the apples spill to the ground and I'm blown backward in the air" (221). Her skill as an archer has literally catapulted Katniss into success. Like the legendary outlaw Robin Hood, she has taken from the rich, using her talent with a bow and arrow combined with her wily woodsman senses to provide a more equal environment for the remainder of the Hunger Games.

Now that we have provided textual examples to establish the association between Robin Hood and Katniss Everdeen, we can go beyond objects and actions to see how Katniss shares a spirit of rebellion with the ersatz English revolutionary, a spirit that indicates her development from adolescent to adult. I believe that Katniss' spirit of rebellion is sparked of necessity, for it is against starvation that Katniss initially acts to save her family. No submissive lass she, the female woodsman violates Panem's law in a way that would do Robin Hood proud, for "even though trespassing in the woods is illegal and poaching carries the severest of penalties" (5), Katniss quietly follows in the footsteps of Sherwood Forest's most famous citizen, breaking the law in the name of humanity, of decency, of common sense, of survival.

I believe that this basic willingness to trespass and poach is at the heart of Katniss Everdeen's rebellious spirit and I believe that this heartfelt spirit motivates her actions while also attracting rebels who support her revision of the history of Panem and the rules of the Hunger Games.

In order to see more clearly what it is that she rewrites, perhaps it is best to review the history of Panem. Let us look at an early scene from the novel where Katniss stands anxiously in the town square alongside her adolescent peers, awaiting the Reaping, Panem's version of a lottery. All the citizens of District 12 listen "as the town clock strikes two, [and] the mayor steps up to the podium and begins to read" (18).

The ritual is a longstanding one as Katniss tells us.

> It's the same story every year. He tells of the history of Panem, the country that rose up out of the ashes of a place that was once called North America. He lists the disasters, the droughts, the storms, the fires, the encroaching seas that swallowed up so much of the land, the brutal war for what little sustenance remained. The result was Panem, a shining Capitol ringed by thirteen districts, which brought peace and prosperity to its citizens. Then came the Dark Days, the uprising of the districts against the Capitol. Twelve were defeated, the thirteenth obliterated. The treaty of treason gave us the new laws to guarantee peace and, as our yearly reminder that the Dark Days must never be repeated, it gave us the Hunger Games.
>
> The rules of the Hunger Games are simple. In punishment for the uprising, each of the twelve districts must provide one girl and one boy, called tributes, to participate. [the term "tribute" is appropriate, as a tribute is a sacrifice as well as a payment made in acknowledgement of submission]. The twenty-four tributes will be imprisoned in a vast outdoor arena that could hold anything from a burning desert to a frozen wasteland. Over a period of several weeks, the competitors must fight to the death. The last tribute standing wins. (18)

To retain the conflict among districts so that they will not unite in rebellion, "the Capitol will show the winning district gifts of grain and oil and even delicacies like sugar while the rest of us battle starvation" (19).

Now, let us examine two examples of Katniss' rebellious spirit and of how this spirit attracts approval, agreement, acquiescence and even support from members of Panem's society.

Her first overt act of rebellion occurs during that adolescent rite of passage called the Reaping. Fueled by family feelings, Katniss volunteers to replace her sister Prim, whose name was drawn to serve as female tribute from this Appalachian region. Although volunteers are not unknown in other parts of Panem—indeed, in some places young adults called Careers train as professional tributes—in District 12 "volunteers are all but extinct" (22). In fact, Katniss' act catches officials by surprise so that, for example, Effie Trinket—the capitol's liaison to this perennially losing district—isn't sure of the protocol for volunteering.

But the mayor himself supports Katniss, asking with common sense "What does it matter?" (22), a stance that permits Katniss' revisionist action. Nothing formal here—the rules are ignored, as they are each time Katniss enters the woods. The mayor repeats the practical phrase combined with a command: "'What does it matter?' he repeats gruffly. 'Let her come forward'" (23). And she does, met by the Capitol's representative with the sort of false enthusiasm that plays best on reality TV as Effie Trinket trills: "'Come on, everybody! Let's give a big round of applause to our newest tribute!'" (23).

In response, the people of District 12, the adolescent peers of Katniss Everdeen, their parents, their siblings and their extended families join this woodsman who volunteers to replace her beloved younger sister, understanding that little Prim stands no chance in games controlled by the Capitol. As she looks at them from the stage, Katniss recognizes the solidarity and the rebellion of her family, her friends, her fellow citizens:

> To the everlasting credit of the people of District 12, not one person claps [in response to Effie's exhortation]. Not even the ones holding betting slips, the ones who are

> usually beyond caring. Possibly because they know me from the Hob, or knew my father, or have encountered Prim, who no one can help loving. So instead of acknowledging applause, I stand there unmoving while they take part in the boldest form of dissent they can manage. Silence. Which says we do not agree. We do not condone. All of this is wrong. (24)

It seems to me that the citizens of District 12 have themselves awaited an author bold enough to revise the history they despise by defying the ritual imposed upon them. They have found this person in Katniss Everdeen, recognizing the personification—the embodiment—of a rebellious adolescent spirit that they acknowledge. Katniss perceives this recognition. She sees that …

> Something unexpected happens. At least, I don't expect it because I don't think of District 12 as a place that cares about me. But a shift has occurred since I stepped up to take Prim's place, and now it seems I have become someone precious. At first one, then another, then almost every member of the crowd touches the three middle fingers of their left hand to their lips and hold it out to me. It is an old and rarely used gesture of our district, occasionally seen at funerals. It means thanks, it means admiration. . . . (24)

And, I would add, it means that we are rooting for you, against the Capitol.

A second example of a rebellious spirit is presented after Katniss destroys the Careers' cache of supplies, after she makes her wounded way back to her ally Rue, who reminds her mightily of sister Prim. She finds her friend just in time to see her receive a death blow—a spear to the gut that sympathetically strikes Katniss's spirit. Katniss kills Rue's murderer, comforts her little friend as she dies and then allows her emotion to guide her.

> I want to do something, right here, right now, to shame them, to make them accountable, to show the Capitol that whatever they do or force us to do there is a part of every tribute they don't own. That Rue was more than a piece in their Games. And so am I.
>
> A few steps into the woods grows a bank of wildflowers. Perhaps they are really weeds of some sort, but they have blossoms in beautiful shades of violet and yellow and white. I gather up an armful and come back to Rue's side. Slowly, one stem at a time, I decorate her body in the flowers. Covering the ugly wound. Wreathing her face. Weaving her hair with bright colors.
>
> They'll have to show it [on TV to the Panemian citizens watching the Hunger Games]. Or, even if they choose to turn the cameras elsewhere at this moment, they'll have to bring them back when they collect the bodies and everyone will see her then and know, I did it. (237)

Katniss completes her act of rebellion with the repetition of a gesture with which we are familiar. After whispering, "'Bye Rue. . . I press the three middle fingers of my left hand against my lips and hold them out in her direction" (237). This gesture, in addition to meaning thanks, to meaning admiration, also "means good-bye to someone you love" (24). With this public display of affection Katniss dares defy the powers that be, as she runs contrary to the Hunger Games as a setting filled with temporary alliances and violent hostility. Her heartfelt actions attract the attention of Rue's supportive neighbors, field hands and orchard workers, her well-wishers from District 11.

We know this because as Katniss awaits some sort of disciplinary measure in response to her snub at the Gamemakers and Capitol politicians, "a silver parachute. . . a gift from a sponsor. . . floats down" (238). Let's follow the rebellious adolescent's narration as she realizes that she has attracted yet another group of Panemians who acknowledge her spirit.

> I open the parachute and find a small loaf of bread. . . . this bread came from District 11. . . . What must it have cost the people of District 11 who can't even feed themselves? How many would've had to do without to scrape up a coin to put in the collection for this one loaf? It had been meant for Rue, surely. But instead of pulling the gift, they'd authorized

> Haymitch to give it to me. As a thank you? Or because, like me, they don't like to let debts go unpaid? For whatever reason, this is a first. A district gift to a tribute who's not your own. (239)

Katniss's awareness of the conspiratorially silent act of rebellion from District 11 is further highlighted in the next paragraph, where she speaks directly to her fellow rebels, fully conscious of the fact that everyone—including Capitol oppressors—will hear what Rue's supporters dare not voice. As the day's last rays of sunlight shine upon her face, spotlighting her presence for the TV cameras, Katniss addresses her silent associates: "'My thanks to the people of District Eleven'. . . I want them to know I know where it came from. That the full value of their gift has been recognized" (239). "Full value," of course, includes not only the loaf's value as sustenance, but also the certain punitive consequence this action will attract as a result of their willful association with Katniss Everdeen. If quiet can be echoed, then in District 11's gift we hear the echo of the silent tribute given Katniss by her family, friends and neighbors of District 12 on Reaping Day. And, if growing development from adolescent to young adult can be noted, then we note that this action is much more mature than our heroine's thoughtless shot at the Gamemakers in an earlier scene.

Now that we have seen the relationship between Katniss Everdeen and Robin Hood, a relationship suggested by first a bow, then examples of archeristic prowess and finally reinforced by gestures of acknowledged rebellion, I want to compare her to another literary character: Juliet Capulet, the adolescent heroine of William Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*. However, where our observation that Katniss is linked to Robin is based upon a bow with its arrows, we can see that Katniss and Juliet are joined not by objects but by language. Let us look quickly at the The Prologue to the play to place the phrase. Shakespeare writes: "From forth the fatal loins of these two foes [the Capulets and the Montagues]/ A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life" (lines 5—6). It is the description "star-cross'd lovers" that bonds Katniss and Juliet. Bonded though they may be, however, Katniss plays the role with difficulty as it forces her to assume characteristics unnatural to her as she develops from adolescent to adult, from an angry impulsive teenager to a young adult capable of manipulating personal and social rebellion in order to revise Panemian history.

Where she plays the part of Robin Hood as though she were born to do so, she needs direction to act like Juliet. Luckily, Haymitch Abernathy is her lifeline, assigned—as a winning tribute from District 12—to mentor her. As a sympathetic adult he schemes on her behalf, guiding Katniss toward a performance resulting in a spectacular climax, a calculated action that rewrites the history of the Hunger Games in such a way as to provide a dangerous denoument to this potentially tragic—yet ultimately romantic—play.

We can determine an inciting point for Haymitch's involvement in Katniss' character development early in the Training Sessions for Katniss and Peeta, the male tribute for District 12 reaped from among his fellow adolescents. Worn weary by years of losing children to Career tributes, Haymitch seems cynically uninterested in assisting this couple. However, he changes his mind and agrees to coach them, so long as they will follow his directions. He clearly has a plan for he commands them, "In public, I want you by each other's side every minute. . . . You will be together, you will appear amiable to each other" (92). Although Katniss complains that "It's wearing us both out" (98), Haymitch continues to play the role of director as the Training Session ends and interviews begin. "'Remember [he growls at them at one point] 'you're still a happy pair. So act like it'" (123).

The pair moves from happy to loving when—during his interview with Caesar Flickerman—Peeta declares his love for Katniss. The confession elicits a positive response from the live audience as it is noted that there are "Sounds of sympathy from the crowd. Unrequited love they can relate to" (130). The allusion to and connections with Romeo and Juliet are cemented with Katniss's reaction to Peeta's confession: "Poor tragic us" (134) as well as Director Haymitch's approval

voiced thusly in this explication for Katniss' sake: "He made you look desirable! And let's face it, you can use all the help you can get in that department. You were about as romantic as dirt until he said he wanted you. Now they all do. You're all they're talking about" (135). It is then that Haymitch utters the epithet eternally applied to the adolescents from Shakespeare's Verona: [You two are] "The star-crossed lovers" though he craftily changes the setting from Renaissance Italy to post-apocalyptic Panem by concluding the statement "from District Twelve!" (135). Thus, we cement the bond between Katniss and Juliet.

Though Haymitch and we see the bond, the adolescent Katniss protests "But we're not star-crossed lovers!" (135), forcing her mentor to reveal his strategy for surviving the Hunger Games:

> "Who cares? It's all a big show. It's all how you're perceived. The most I could say about you after your interview was that you were nice enough, although that in itself was a small miracle. Now I can say you're a heartbreaker. Oh, oh, oh, how the boys back home fall longingly at your feet. Which do you think will get you more sponsors?" (135)

Initially indignant, unwilling to shed her persona as a female woodsman from Sherwood Forest in favor of a passive object of Veronian adoration, Katniss nevertheless capitulates: "Star-crossed lovers. Haymitch is right, they eat that stuff up in the Capitol" (136).

Let's focus on one particular example of how Haymitch's strategy pays off before presenting the finale of Katniss' overt rebellion, an action that I believe demonstrates her development from adolescent to young adult.

As Katniss and Peeta hunker down, hidden in a cave, a deluge that would do Noah proud forces the female woodsman to confront her dilemma. She and Peeta are starving, the weather prevents her from using her bow and arrow to good effect and she confesses to herself that "Haymitch is our only hope, but nothing is forthcoming, either from lack of money—everything will cost an exorbitant amount—or because he's dissatisfied with our performance. Probably the latter" (299). Katniss feels her way into the part she's playing. She understands: "My instincts tell me Haymitch isn't just looking for physical affection, he wants something more personal" (300).

I believe that Katniss understands what Haymitch wants all of Panem to realize: that it would be a tragedy if Katniss and Peeta die, that a better ending to these Games would have this pair of tributes live happily ever after. As mentor to the "star-cross'd" pair, Haymitch's intention is to redirect the play, changing the ending from tragic to romantic. Katniss plays along.

Realizing her limitations at playing in love, Katniss draws her bow and aims an amorous arrow from Cupid directly at Peeta's heart, coaxing him into playing lead. As we have come to expect, she strikes her target cleanly, powerfully and perfectly, eliciting from her smitten Romeo the poignant story of him as a second-generation lovestruck baker, of how his father fell in love with Katniss' mother when she was a lass; of how this woman herself rebelled against social status and cultural custom by marrying Katniss' father, a man beneath her family's merchant class; of how Katniss sang on their first day at school, entrancing songbirds into silence, as had her dad. Peeta ends the tale "And right when your song ended, I knew—just like [my dad and] your mother—I was a goner" (301). Playing her part perfectly, it is as if Katniss hears Haymitch's stage-whispered directions, encouraging her to murmur reciprocal phrases to her ersatz Romeo, to initiate a kiss, to win the audience over.

The playacting succeeds: "Our lips have just barely touched when the clunk outside makes us jump" (302). A silver parachute has delivered a basket filled with "a feast—fresh rolls, goat cheese, apples, and best of all, a tureen of that incredible lamb stew on wild rice" (302). The delivered basket announces the success of Katniss's performance, her excellent acting, as she plays the part to the hilt. But an even greater measure of success plays in the girl's imagination as she continues to heed her director's words: "in my head I can hear Haymitch's smug, if slightly exasperated, words, 'Yes, *that's* what I'm looking for sweetheart'" (302). Praise like this—coming as

it does from a Hunger Games winner—is the equal of an Oscar. Further, Katniss's action can be noted as a milestone on her accelerated pathway from adolescence to young adulthood, marking—as it does—a mature understanding of a complex situation.

Because she has so skillfully manipulated her talents as both an archer and an actress, and because she has played the Hunger Games so successfully as both a skilled woodsman and a star-crossed lover, Katniss is able to place herself in a position where she can play both roles simultaneously, a place from which she can rewrite the history and the rules of the Hunger Games.

The culminating act—the climax of the 74th edition of the Hunger Games—in some ways parallels that of *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*. But, whereas in Shakespeare's play a double suicide results from confusion, in the version from an alternate universe with Romeo and Juliet played by adolescents reaped from a poverty-stricken Appalachianesque district, it's not so much a matter of honest mistakes as it is malicious Panemian manipulation verbalized as outright lies by the Capitol.

Earlier in the games, playing the star-crossed lovers provoked enough positive audience reaction that the Capitol changed the rules, allowing for two victors so long as they hailed from the same district—an obvious concession to the success of Haymitch's strategy. However, at the Games' end, after Katniss and Peeta have outfoxed Foxface, killed Cato and escaped the canine mutations, after the two tributes have successfully played the Games, the Gamemakers command the "voice of the Games Claudius Templesmith to announce: 'Greetings to the final contestants of the Seventy-fourth Hunger Games. The earlier revision has been revoked'" (342).

Angered but undaunted, the female counterpart to the rebellious Robin Hood, the innocent adolescent who learned to play one of the most love-struck roles ever written for the stage, has a trick up her sleeve: another act of rebellion akin to poaching, to volunteering to replace Prim, to recognizing Rue and District 11. There is a difference in the next action, though, for I believe that it is more calculated, more mature, more adult as it exemplifies the kind of deliberate manipulation that would win the approval of her mentor Haymitch Abernathy.

As is the case with Romeo and Juliet, poison plays a part. Katniss thinks: "If Peeta and I were both to die, or they thought we were. . . ." (344) then there would be no victor, thus defeating a purpose of the Hunger Games. She and Peeta speak without words, silently understanding the meaning of a handful of the "nightlock" (320) berries that killed Foxface, silently communicating that meaning to the Panemian audience watching them on television.

> I spread out my fingers, and the dark berries glisten in the sun. I give Peeta's hand one last squeeze as a signal, as a good-bye, and we begin counting. "One." Maybe I'm wrong. "Two." Maybe they don't care if we both die. "Three!" It's too late to change my mind. I lift my hand to my mouth, taking one last look at the world. The berries have just passed my lips when the trumpets begin to blare.
>
> The frantic voice of Claudius Templesmith shouts above them. "Stop! Stop! Ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to present the victors of the Seventy-fourth Hunger Games, Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark! I give you—the tributes of District Twelve!" (345)

And, I give you the observation that history has been rewritten by a rebellious lass who—in this triumphant act—transcends adolescence, entering young adulthood.

From Robin Hood to Juliet we see Katniss Everdeen develop in the Hunger Games. Whether it be in the verdantly Edenic Appalachian woods of District 12 or the booby-trapped stages within the arena of the Hunger Games, this female protagonist personifies an adolescent who incites defiant action while inspiring sympathetic reactions, enabling her to confront a corrupt Capitol and rewrite the history and the rules of the Hunger Games. Initially aligned with Robin Hood with whom she shares a bow, a skill and a rebellious attitude, eventually Katniss Everdeen embraces then moves beyond her inner Juliet as she develops into young adulthood.

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Author Biography

John Franklin (BA Rice; MA Miami of Ohio; PhD Florida; Texas Teacher's Certificate) began his career at Jones High School in Houston. During that time, he combined his love for literature with a love of travel, spending twelve-week summers in Britain with a backpack or a bicycle visiting the settings of the fiction, drama and poetry he taught: London for Dickens; Scotland for *Macbeth*; Canterbury for Chaucer; and, the Lake District for Wordsworth. One Fourth of July he ventured further abroad, discovering himself atop the Acropolis in Athens, thinking, "Here I am at the birthplace of democracy on the birthday of the greatest democracy that ever existed." He has spent his life since then appreciating and sharing his good fortune. John Franklin is an Associate Professor of English, a Supervising Professor of English Education and the Director of the English Education Internship Program at Pittsburg State University in Southeast Kansas where he teaches Literature for Middle and Secondary Schools. He can be reached at jfranklin@pittstate.edu.

Creative Triage

Kynda Faythe

Sirens clear a path to this trauma center
Warning others that help is on the way
Armed with only knowledge and good intentions
This educator plays the role of the surgeon
I am a life specialist, who bustles around in stark "school appropriate" clothing
Determining the acuity rating of one's emotional truth, justifying that this requires more attention than another's
Dispersing pencils and a thesaurus to aid the willing
Sorting injured intellects into groups based on their need for immediate treatment
Allocating the scarce commodity of knowledge, motivation, and unconditional love
Sharing the news that someone's ideas need the plug pulled
No false perception of quality work is given in a fake, cheery voice
I ensure that my voice is not intertwined with theirs
Placing sutures on broken phrases
Charting swollen egos
Enticing those who aren't so willing with an attempt to jolt them out of their detachment
I begin to sterilize their educational wounds and promise that the lessons learned will matter

This is not the run of the mill in and out experience
These patients are admitted on their own accord
Willingly they dive into the chaos
Hearts pounding, thumping with the question
"How do you *move* someone?"
Searching for the tubes to free up their breathing
Begging for the elixir to help their voices be heard
I continue the sorting
The ink slinging treatments
The testing of spirits
Prescribing an alchemy of feedback

Hoping and anticipating my intensive care might make a positive difference in better papers, better thinking, and better health of these patients
The bells continue to ring in another group fighting academic convalescence
Prioritizing the urgent, the emergent, and erudite bodies demanding resuscitation
I continue to apply the right diligence, the right time, the right care

Author Biography
A Bohemian-esque tomboy with a passion for stories and words, Kynda Faythe is a free-spirited advocate, teacher, author, and self-proclaimed concoction of Scout Finch, Professor Keating, with a touch of Julie Andrews. Kynda became a fourth generation educator by taking the road less traveled. After experiencing the world of Shakespearean productions and coffeehouse music, she

earned her B.S. in rhetoric from Kansas State University. A detour took her to the Pacific Northwest where she became involved with education in a different manner with Oregon Department of Transportation. After earning her M.A.T. at Western Oregon University, she wrote of her experiences with autistic children. Eventually she returned to Kansas, welcoming a homecoming of sorts into the family "business." She has thrived in her role of teacher, coach, and educational leader at Altoona-Midway School District. Kynda is currently completing her Ph.D. in literacy leadership. This journey has made all the difference. She can be reached at Kynda.Faythe@gmail.com.

Mark Twain, the Dialogic Imagination, and the American Classroom

Drew Clifton Colcher

Abstract
Mark Twain is often read as a provincial realist or naturalist whose works are disseminated in simplified versions as children's stories or seen as humorous social criticism of the southern United States and its dialects. This article focuses on two of Twain's novels—*A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889) and *No. 44, the Mysterious Stranger* (published posthumously with various titles)—in order to focus on the more modern, less provincial, *novelistic* aspects of Twain's writing. The theories of Mikhail Bakhtin provide the background for a characterization of the *novelistic* nature of these works in an effort to re-focus Twain criticism away from realist or naturalist analysis and toward semiotic and structural considerations. This essay functions as an introductory-level presentation of Bakhtinian analysis and Twain criticism, as well as a reimagining of the role of Twain's writings in the classroom, especially in light of recent controversies surrounding the language used in works like *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Of paramount importance to this argument are the temporal, spatial, formal and thematic coordinates of the two books, and the assertion that they conform to Bakhtin's conception of the novel and how it radically differs from other forms.

Keywords
Mark Twain, Mikhail Bakhtin, semiotics, novelism, American literature, literary theory, pedagogy, literary criticism, modernism, realism, structuralism

Novels like *A Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court* and *No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger* raise problematic questions for Twain scholars because they directly approach more philosophical human concerns while, at times, casting off the sarcastically humorous facade that characterizes Twain's work in general. This is not to say they lack humor; in fact, the humor of these books forms part of their engagement with philosophy which constitutes the focus of this essay. It merely suggests that the manner in which Twain approaches themes like the construction of the "self," the subjectivity of reality and time, class issues, religion, is more specifically *novelistic* in these two books than in some of Twain's more provincially humorous work (*The Prince and the Pauper, The American Claimant, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, etc.). The concept of *novelism* finds provenance in the writings of Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, the Russian semiotician. Employing his dialogic perspective when analyzing these two works helps one grasp why they don't fit the canonical image of Mark Twain, and why many scholars and readers consider them salient examples of the uncertain nature of Twain's prose. It also opens the door to a re-imagination of Twain's place in the American canon as an author of more serious weight; this in turn helps lay the foundation for a discussion of why we teach Twain in public schools and how we can contextualize and understand the complicated nature of the heroes of more famous works like *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, a staple of public education and the subject of much recent controversy in that realm (Davis).

Mikhail Bakhtin and his theory of the novel sets forth a new group of theoretical guidelines by which to analyze modern literature in contrast with formerly dominant styles, namely epic and romance literature. In his essay *Epic and Novel*, Bakhtin tackles the problem of defining the novel generically. He essentially argues that as a genre it represents a dramatic break from older traditions in form and content: where works in the epic tradition had as heroes closed, finished products that represented a static cultural tradition and origin, novelistic heroes may no longer be heroic in this sense. The epic hero—typified by characters like El Cid, Odysseus, Roland or Beowulf—

transformed with the advent of the novel into the modern, novelistic hero: Hemmingway's Robert Jordan, Faulkner's Thomas Sutpen or—the perfect antihero—Dostoevsky's unnamed protagonist and narrator of *Notes from Underground*. Such a hero must combine the entire spectrum of human characteristics, positive and negative; they should be dynamic, and thus representative of our experience of an ever-changing reality. Stylistically, a novel is three-dimensional, meaning it engages and is in perpetual dialogue (hence the term "dialogic") with other texts, directly and indirectly through thematic connections or overt reference. Its characters represent variegated, nonlinear narratives that participate in constant conversation with one another on a philosophical plane, as opposed to the characters of Greek epics: types of the same cast adhering to a single set of cultural values. Bakhtin calls this multi-languaged consciousness *polyglossia* (12), and it forms a principal aspect of his definition of the novel as a dialogue.

Temporally, as well, the novel serves a completely different function than epic and romance poems, or the classical dramatic works. Bakhtin makes much of this point, devoting a decent portion of the essay to it. He writes that works from "the world of high literature in the classical era" dealt with an immutable, closed past based on tradition and mythology (19). Writers used this past as a vehicle for exploring non-malleable moral issues that constituted—for that culture in which a given work appeared—a transcription of the heroic beginnings of a nation. Virgil's *Aeneid* would be a prime example of this type of work. All images, metaphors, characters and plots in the epic tradition were based on this set of closed ideas, making of the genre, as a whole, a *closed system* that references only itself, as opposed to the open, polyglossic system of the novel that is in constant dialogue with other narratives. Put simply, the ethics of classical literature are unquestionable; they leave no room for dialogue, protest, or subversion.

The novel, conversely, employs as its temporal coordinate the present—by definition transitory and ever-changing. It engages with the quotidian, with the Everyman and his concerns, considered "reality of a lower order" in works of high literature, and the subject of ambivalent laughter (19). Out of the ashes of this ancient, epic laughter rose the novel, a genre not of royalty but of the people, one that openly embraces that "low reality" and laughs along with the reader at the absurdity of existence. Indeed, a concern with these subjects in literature has its roots, Bakhtin insists, in the common, every day laughter of folkloric parables and songs, forms rejected entirely by ancient wordsmiths. Thus humor becomes an integral part of what defines a novel as such. The images and themes of the novel are constructed in this zone of contact with an ever-changing present; therefore, the novel itself is in a constant state of fluctuation, echoing the vicissitudes of life in the modern world. As Bakhtin states it, "The novel, after all, has no canon of its own. It is, by its very nature, not canonic. It is plasticity itself" (39).

This leaves the reader with a very particular picture of 'the novel': as plastic or fluid, giving way and thus lending form to cultural occurrences, values, humor, etc.; as polyglot, or able to communicate across barriers, between and within temporal and spatial moments; and, more importantly, as seditious, or as a field of play on which mores and ethics—and by extension, cultural reality—become relative and humorous. The reader enters Bakhtin's world of carnival, where everything is reversed and turned on its head. Within the novel one can suggest heretical notions to wide audiences because that is its nature; this is its defining characteristic. It uses laughter, common concerns, fluid metaphors and relativity to subvert cultural hegemony, whatever form it may take. What Bakhtin means when he describes the novel as "a genre that is ever questing, ever examining itself and subjecting its established forms to review" (39) is that it serves the same function for society, regardless of culture, regardless of time, and is thus a subversive, or potentially subversive, form of literature. The real beauty of Bakhtin's theory is its sort of circular inclusiveness: temporal blurring and polyglossia are elements of the fluidity and subversiveness of novels, and vice versa. These aspects are more complementary than mutually exclusive or determinative.

In his novels, Twain uses the literary subversion of cultural norms as a source for most of his humor. More precisely, one could say that—just as Bakhtin noticed in Gogol's *Dead Souls*—Twain uses his at times ribald humor in order to subvert institutionalized belief (Bakhtin 28). All institutions and beliefs are fair game: organized religion, racial prejudices, public ignorance or lack of intellectual robustness. Shelly Fisher Fishkin, a notable Twain scholar, writes in her book *Lighting Out for the Territory* that Twain taught her "how powerful irony and satire could be in the service of truth" (6). Through humor, Twain exposes one perspective on the truth to his readers, calls society out for its faults. This is something that nearly all of his books impart upon us; but in particular, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* and *No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger* can be shown to reflect the Bakhtinian conception of the novel more directly than Twain's other works.

Elements of the overall structure of *A Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court* are very obviously functioning in precisely the way Bakhtin insisted novels should. The story is one of direct contact between the 6th and 19th centuries, personifying in a very real way the sort of dialectic between those era's literatures outlined in *Epic and Novel.* Much of the book's humor is derived from the juxtaposition of the two—for example, the scenes in which Hank Morgan's page-boy tries out 19th century jargon, or the exasperation of Hank with the medieval (and thus, in his view, inferior and nonsensical) narratives of Sandy (47, 136). This is a sort of reprise of the goals of Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, considered by many the first novel and a constant source of reference for Bakhtin. Both novels satirize the characteristics of old literature or stories in anachronistic settings to point out the inherent fallacies of the chivalric ethos, but also to look reflexively at the ethos of their own age (Howe 118). Another great example from *Connecticut Yankee* is the "rescue" plotted by Sandy as Hank's first bout of knight-errantry—a rescue supposedly of a score of princesses from a horrible ogre, but in reality of a herd of pigs from a farmhouse (177). While each instance elicits laughter at the sheer inanity of Hank's situation, these moments help set up an argument of serious weight. They touch on the anthropology of technology, ideas of superiority based on cultural evolution and the gravity of transforming from classical to post-industrialist society, which is really an argument—one quite characteristic of Twain—about American imperialism, of which he was a vehement opponent (Zwick 242).

The two previously cited examples also illustrate another Bakhtinian element of *A Connecticut Yankee*: interaction between different languages, or types of discourse. I qualify "languages" with that latter phrase because Bakhtin meant more by *polyglossia* than simply the presence of multiple categorical languages. He implied interaction between narratives, personal and literary; discourse between social and ethnic groups with varying life experiences; and intellectual conflict between ethoses, as in the previous examples. In this sense, literature achieves polyglossia when kings mix with commoners, or when suppressed narratives—those of slaves, females, or any oppressed group—are brought to the surface. It is also achieved when two dialectal variations of the same language share conversation in literature, something that occurs with dizzying frequency in Twain's literature.

Connecticut Yankee exhibits this type of multi-vocal interaction in all of the aforementioned ways. In the most literal sense, Hank's dialect is so foreign to the villagers and royals of King Arthur's court as to be nearly unintelligible. However, interaction between languages in the other senses implied by Bakhtin occurs as well. The chapter where Hank and the king travel incognito as peasants to explore the societal differences between the aristocratic and serf classes provides a perfect example. From the proximity of and interaction between these two world views and socioeconomic statuses—or languages, essentially—Twain derives humor, sympathy, and the type of moral lesson one infers from the work as a whole. Contact with poverty and distress causes the king to challenge all of his previously held justifications for the status quo: "It is the spirit that stoopeth the shoulders, I ween, and not the weight; for armour is heavy, yet it is a proud burden…" (263).

Twain surely meant more by the irony of this utterance's particular context than merely that cultural contact produces empathy, but it is an important element of the dialogue nevertheless.

In this novel Twain employs temporal subjectivity (e.g., Hank's time travel, the abutment of two eras) and polyglossia (e.g., interaction between the eras, between classes in one era, between sexes, dialects) to subvert cultural institutions held in his day and still present in ours. The fact that Twain's work affects us even in the essentially different world we inhabit today speaks, on a completely different level, to the polyglossia that one text is capable of achieving: speaking to two different eras by itself, crossing linguistic and historical borders to impart upon enthusiasts the intellectual messages it contains. In both ages, we are made to question institutions taken for granted: the positivist doctrine that modern science holds the best answers and will inherently yield more, and that old ways are obsolete; the infallibility of the industrial revolution and the class systems it set in place; the existence of an omnipotent, benevolent god that created and controls the entire universe.

Turning to the second novel comprising this essay's focus, one notes that the novelistic fluidity of which Bakhtin spoke—its engagement with the present, which is transient by definition, making of a novel's meaning many subjective variations—manifests itself in *No. 44, the Mysterious Stranger* more saliently than in others of Twain's works. This novel, while being set in 1490, approaches the reality of the text from the point of view of a very non-heroic hero. His concerns are those of a worker, or commoner; the illustration of his present (temporally) is not highly stylized and heroic, an attempt to glorify cultural values, uphold and recount tradition. We see him bringing these exact values into question after the appearance of No. 44 (or Satan, depending on the version one reads) (Ensor 100). Already we see the formation of a novelistic hero; a non-heroic hero.

At the outset of the novel, Twain represents the small village of Eseldorf as one of unquestioning faith in God, or more specifically, in the Virgin (445). This institution is the unquestionable authority of Eseldorf, and the mythology surrounding her justifies it. The narrator sets out in the first two chapters to outline what the reader may consider as the "epic" creation myth and history of the town, full of lore and tradition: its theological orientation and the reasons for it, famous encounters with the supernatural, etc. His ironic description adds to the criticism inherent in Twain's portrayal of the town and its problems. The narrator himself lives in a sort of enclave outside the village, where he is employed in what he describes as the semi-blasphemous, not entirely legal profession of printing—a *new* profession, one with which the lay public is unfamiliar (451). It is this externally situated, somewhat isolated and not clearly defined setting that allows, after the appearance of the boy simply known as 44, for the type of dynamic character development and questioning of tradition and belief which Bakhtin insists is an inherent characteristic of the novel.

One way the characters begin to question the status quo involves the in-house magician hired by the head printer's second wife. All of the inhabitants and printers had been mostly scared and in mild awe of the magician before the appearance of 44; his job was to hunt for some long-lost treasure hidden deep within the castle, and he seems to have gone mostly unnoticed and unmolested (452). He is a metaphor for the search for meaning using ancient and obsolete superstition as a guiding force, part of a religious critique interwoven throughout the novel. Then 44's indescribable feats of strength cause the castle's inhabitants to lay blame on the magician as the only likely source for such magical occurrences (462). Suddenly he becomes a central character, the scapegoat of everybody's kneejerk reactions to the unknown, to the introduction of change. His ancient powers have turned on him and revealed the imminent change facing the castle. All of their deeply inculcated religious superstitions rise to the surface in both violent and reverent ways: they threaten to repeatedly imprison or kill the magician by turning him over to the church or burning him alive; at the same time, they become dreadfully afraid of him, stupefied and awe-struck by his professed

abilities, and Frau Stein renews her private cult surrounding him. 44 acts as a catalyst, rapidly shifting attitudes about religion and magic among the workers.

Another illustration of dynamism and novelistic fluidity in *The Mysterious Stranger* involves the hierarchy of the print shop before and after 44's appearance, to which we can consider the magician's misfortunes tangential. Before his arrival there existed clearly defined boundaries between all of the castle's lodgers: Stein had complete seniority, but his wife held considerable sway over him, and the workers had developed an age-based hierarchy among themselves. All feared, but did not revere, the magician. Doangivadam factored in only peripherally, a vagrant oddity that didn't necessarily hold sway, but respect nonetheless. After all of the upsets caused by 44's arrival and everything surrounding it—his seemingly supernatural ability with printmaking, his extra-human strength, his indifference and quietude and the raging, jealous reactions they bring out in everybody—the hierarchy becomes irrevocably altered. Doangivadam becomes a sort-of ad-hoc rebel leader, protecting 44 from harm and ensuring that justice (his brand at least) is served within the castle. The workers gain a certain degree of power over Stein through their striking and their perfidious behavior involving the shipment of a large order or prints. The castle becomes divided into camps, with the narrator caught in the middle.

This could be taken as a model for any type of radical cultural change introduced into a partially stable, or perhaps stagnant, society. The types of stresses produced by 44's arrival are those that can only occur in a realistic, fluid present—not an immutable, closed-off, mythological past. This is the crux of what Bakhtin argues is the difference between epic and novel: that only when writers begin to look at their own, true surroundings and depict concerns of the everyday do we have what can truly be considered a novel. Eventually, this mechanism of changing reality causes the narrator of *No. 44* to question his entire perception of reality and morality, to question the pertinence of the gods. "Life itself is only a vision, a dream," insists no. 44. "Nothing exists; all is a dream. God—man—the world…nothing exists save empty space—and you!" (620). These types of philosophical explorations can only be had in novelistic writings; that is its defining characteristic as a genre, and that allows it to subvert authority, to exist on a peculiar cultural plain never before inhabited by literature.

The effect this all has is of reflection on the similarities between Twain's scene and the world surrounding us. It is a reaction that has little regard for temporal moments or spatial separations, and is integral to defining a novel. Furthermore, it is essential to explaining why the novel has superseded older literary forms almost entirely, and why it occupies such an irrepressible part of modern literature. The novel is the essence of free thought, of attempting direct engagement with the semiotic structures that govern our perception of existence, of subversion of cultural norms, expansion of cognitive capacities and an outcry for humanity. This, Bakhtin argues, is how we define the novel, and its canon is comprised not of specific works, but of the dialogue that is formed by all novels, each adding its unique voice to the symphony of philosophy that is tackled anew with each manuscript. It is primarily in its ability to provoke human action over idol worship, not its literary characteristics or qualities (whatever those may be), that the novel finds its definition. *A Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court* and *No. 44, the Mysterious Stranger* stand out among Twain's work as particularly characteristic of this definition.

Not only does considering these works in light of Bakhtinian theory help augment the already long list of novels whose interpretations are aided by such a consideration, but it helps channel the critical discourse surrounding the writings of Mark Twain away from the type of controversy that led to the (in)famous 2011 "edited for schools" version of *Huckelberry Finn* and towards a possible exploration of why this man and his words have come to be so closely associated with what it is to be an American writer, or an American in general (setting aside the imprecision of that term and its connotations). For many, Twain's entire catalogue is stained by its seemingly

outdated racial perspective and provinciality. His works are taught less and less in public schools and his words are changed in order to fit a more modern narrative. The prevalence of an especially horrifying racial epithet in *Huckleberry Finn*, for example, is indeed an often difficult reality to stomach when it comes to digesting his work or teaching it in the classroom. Some scholars and public educators have embraced edited versions of *Huck Finn*, arguing that despite the absence of the word in question on the pages of the book, the reality of its former presence and intentional omission nonetheless help guide classroom discussions towards matters of race, appropriation, language and culture, and help stimulate interest on behalf of teachers by removing the stigma surrounding teaching Twain in the classroom (Davis). Others argue, however, that by redacting the dehumanizing term and replacing it with the often contextually incorrect term *slave*, one does effectively remove the soul of Twain's social critique and offer readers an "out" in those uncomfortable moments where they are forced to examine the facts of their country's history and the unimaginable horrors that have been committed in the name of progress and capital (Smith).

If readers and educators consider what it is that makes Twain an important novelist and what it is that makes the novel important in the mind of Bakhtin and in modern society, it becomes obvious that the complicatedness of his heroes—be it Huck Finn, Jim, Hank Morgan, or No. 44—is merely the novelistic mechanism through which Twain forces his readers to question their own beliefs and the stated beliefs of those in power at any given time. This questioning of hegemony is perhaps the most important aspect of Twain's works and a huge part of why they are taught in schools and universities. Critically considering *No. 44* and *Connecticut Yankee* in a Bakhtinian light provides examples of how the novel functions, why it does so, why the heroes it produces are sometimes so hard to accept, and why we must nevertheless continue to dissect them and the implicit themes they personify.

These complications have, however, led to a fairly understandable critical ambiguity toward these two Mark Twain novels specifically, and indeed the works of Twain in general (Howe 96). There exist, of course, the problematic endings, but this has always been characteristic of Twain's writings; many would insist that he simply had difficulty wrapping up all of his thoughts on a particular work. The existence of multiple versions of *No. 44*, and the emergence of what is considered the authoritative version many years after scholarship had already had its way with others, further complicates the message of that novel. Both are also less funny, in the slapstick, folksy manner that most have come to associate with Twain (wrongly, one could argue). However, one could also argue that in these works he had merely begun delving into literary themes and novelistic concerns more seriously and more decisively than before. Twain was no longer content to let the river sweep him and his characters into its current, giving fate the reigns and asking the more provincial questions. He had turned his eye and pen on the universal, and on the overtly subversive and problematic. He had become, in the Bakhtinian sense, a novelist, a man with a dialogic imagination. This is why we teach Twain in schools, and why educators and critics alike must continue to explore complicated American literature, regardless of how uncomfortable the language and ideas contained therein may be.

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Author Biography

Drew Colcher holds a BA in English with a minor in anthropology (2011) and a BA in Spanish (2017), both from Wichita State University. His expected graduation date for an MA in English literature is May of 2019, also from WSU. During the 2017-18 school year he has been contracted as a graduate teaching assistant in the English Department. Recently, Drew has presented twice at WSU's 2017 Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity Forum: once on discrimination against the Spanish language in Kansas (as part of a broader sociolinguistic project conducted by WSU professor Rachel Showstack) and once on an essay regarding Mark Twain from a Bakhtinian critical perspective. He can be reached at dccolcher@gmail.com.

Butts in Bleachers

Brooke Johnson

Note: This spoken word poem was written and presented by Brooke Johnson at the October 2015 KATE Storytelling Conference.

I traveled week after week following my mom's butt to the bleachers.
My five-year-old bright eyes held her rear at eye level.
I kept it in sight so as not to get lost.
Where she sat, we stayed, for bubby.
Win or lose, we stayed.
Physically, she taught me how to show up, sit down, and support.
Secretly, she taught me the extraordinary ability to value a person,
Someone outside myself.
When our butts landed in the bleachers it carried a quiet presence, loudly speaking.

My mom had 4 kids: boy-girl-boy-girl.
Four kids, four times the activities.
Her butt sat in every bleacher, pew, auditorium and sideline seat you could imagine.
She was there for it all.
Week after week, year after year, kid after kid.
She would sit and wait, sit and wait, sit and wait,
Then jump to her feet exclaiming, "That's my boy - *or girl, or boy, or girl*!"
Every activity ended with a smile of pride
A pat on the back followed with, "You did good out there!"
I thought nothing of it, expected it actually.
It's just what moms do, right?

The level of extraordinary breezed past the top of my highly hair sprayed head and
Cartwheeled over my starched glittery dance team bow.
The sacrificial gift of her butt in the bleachers week after week was all too often lost on me.

Then, I started teaching.
My first year out, no kids of my own,
I did the only thing I knew how.
I became my mom, my backside planted in the bleachers.
I would sit and wait, sit and wait, sit and wait,
Exploding to my feet with exclamations of, "That's my boy - *or girl, or boy, or girl*!"

Don't let my butt in the bleachers fool you.
I was no saint.
My sacrificial gift was riddled with judgment, hardly a gift at all.
Game after game the bleachers overflowing with the opposing team's parents
Left me annoyed and confused.
Where are the parents? Our parents?
What could they possibly have to do?
Who will greet our kids smiling with pride in their eyes, pat them on their backs and tell them,

"You did good out there!"
Well, if they won't come then I WILL!

Little did I know, they would if they could.
They would gladly put their butts in the bleachers to whoop and holler.
They would travel from school to school, game to game– if they could.
You see, it has taken years of surgical precision to extract judgment from my screwed-up vision.

I met these families face to face.
I spoke broken Spanglish sprinkled with laughter.
I saw their eyes smile with pride at baby's first baptism.
I sang Happy Birthday at their grandchild's first party.
I accepted impromptu tamale luncheons seated at their dining room tables.

I packed makeshift mini vending machines for their hospital stays.
I prayed over parents delirious with exhaustion, while a steady heart beat echoed in critical care.
I wept, tightly hugging a son crumpled in the pew, at a funeral where death stole life too soon.
I held my breath in the courtroom with one anxious family, waiting for one judge's decision.
I lifted mere ounces of the weight they carried.
I stood in awe at the joy rooted behind their smiles.

Gone is the question, where are these parents?
They have their reasons, they have their stories, they have their butts in the bleachers from afar.
I still go – like my mom – sliding my backside into every bleacher, pew, auditorium and sideline seat.
I am not a parent replacement.
With slightly clearer vision, I see my butt in that bleacher for what it really is:
A family representative, an extension of what is and could be.

To all the teachers whose butts land in bleachers, you serve as a rare gift
affirming these families as extraordinary, valued beyond measure.
So, we go, we sit, and we wait for the moments that shout both near and far,
"There goes our boy - *or girl, or boy, or girl*!"
We all did good out there.

Author Biography

Brooke Johnson was born and raised in Wichita, KS. She loves the wide-open spaces but continually feels the need to travel abroad. After graduating from Wichita State University in 2008, she taught English Language Arts at Wichita North High School for nine years. Six of those years she worked with the AVID system, encouraging students to seize every opportunity they could for their future. Currently, Brooke teaches ESOL English Language Arts at Wichita East High School. Recently she received her MLA degree from Baker University with an emphasis in literature. Brooke is also a National Staff Developer for AVID, where she trains other content teachers in AVID reading strategies that can help increase rigor and comprehension in the classroom for all students. Brooke was the 2015 Summer Teacher Speaker at the Dallas AVID Summer institute. She enjoys sharing her stories and lessons learned in the classroom. She can be reached at brooke.bn@gmail.com.

Mirroring Atticus: A Text-Complexity Circle Highlights Unconventional Heroes

Jason J. Griffith

Abstract
This article outlines the arrangement of a text circle in an eighth-grade English language arts class around the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The author first provides rationale for examining Atticus Finch as a non-traditional hero for his going against the status quo despite consequence to do what's right. The author then establishes that mirror neurons allow student readers to experience literature and emotionally put themselves into situations they might not otherwise experience; and therefore, Atticus is worthy of direct character study. Ancillary texts to support Atticus' heroic example are shared, including the films *Gandhi, High Noon*, and *12 Angry Men* as well as the song "I Won't Back Down." Finally, excerpts from student responses comparing and contrasting characters in the various texts demonstrate a deeper understanding of the fulcrum text (*To Kill a Mockingbird*) as well as personal thematic connection by students.

Keywords
To Kill a Mockingbird, Atticus Finch, text-complexity circle, text set, unconventional heroes, literature, unit plan, empathy

Introduction

> We're the safest folks in the world… We're so rarely called upon to be Christians, but when we are, we've got men like Atticus to go for us… I thought, Atticus Finch won't win, he can't win, but he's the only man in these parts who can keep a jury out so long in a case like that. And I thought to myself, well, we're making a step—it's just a baby step, but it's a step. (Lee, 1960, p. 246)

Addressing Jem's disappointment at Tom Robinson's conviction in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Miss Maudie explains the significance of Atticus Finch being appointed to defend Tom. While many of us would claim to follow a moral code, when the same is put to the test, only a select few like Atticus are willing to practice it. Atticus Finch is a beloved character in literature because of his dogged obligation to doing what's right, even though it is not easy. Atticus challenges readers to step up to the moral high ground, despite its exposure to critics in the status quo. In this way, Atticus is a veritable role model for young readers.

Because of his unfailing sense of personal ethics, his willingness to stand up for Tom against the wishes of his community, and his non-violent penchant for turning the other cheek, critics have written about Atticus being too idealistic a character. For example, within his critique, Barra (2010) called Atticus, "the only saint in a courtroom of the weak" (para. 6) and "a repository of cracker-barrel epigrams" (para. 8). However, such analyses miss Atticus' clear flaws. At times, he doubts his abilities as a father. He's often reclusive, ignoring the social functions of the town. It could even be argued that he doesn't fight hard enough. Malcolm Gladwell (2009) writes, "Finch will stand up to racists. He'll use his moral authority to shame them into silence...What he will not do is look at the problem of racism outside the immediate context of... the island community of Maycomb, Alabama" (para. 16).

Gladwell argues that Atticus should have been outraged at Tom's verdict; that he makes excuses for his racist neighbors despite their inexcusable behavior; that he prefers to view humanity as basically good with a tainted perspective rather than acknowledging some aspects of human nature, like violence spawned from racism, as just plain evil.

Gladwell makes an interesting point, but it's possible that he's mischaracterizing and even overstating Atticus's kind of heroism, which is subtle, even reluctant. In fact, Atticus's defining heroic quality may simply be his avoidance of what Zimbardo calls the "evil of inaction" (qtd. in Brockman, 2005). Representing Tom Robinson isn't a grand heroic gesture on Atticus's part (since it's Tom's life that's on the line), but it's what he can reasonably do in his capacity as a lawyer. Though he can't single-handedly save Tom from a corrupt system, he doesn't turn a blind eye and stand by as the injustice unfolds, as do most of his neighbors. Atticus's limitations humanize him, make him more plausible, and make his willingness to do the right thing even more remarkable because he sets an achievable example of how not to fall into the trap of a passive bystander.

This practical heroism makes Atticus a perfect character for adolescent readers to study in detail. Ciardiello (2010) writes about the importance of learning democratic practices including "acts of social justice and empathy. Children need training in these democratic acts... Literacy can play a role as a resource for cultivating civic responsibility and social justice" (p. 464). While *To Kill a Mockingbird* is certainly a fantastic text for plot study and other academic uses, it also provides a model and an experience for readers to develop empathy and social responsibility, thanks in no small part to Atticus. In this way, Atticus and *To Kill a Mockingbird* help to "serve a broader purpose, the nurturing of men and women capable of building a fully democratic society" (Rosenblatt, 2005, p.19).

One engaging format for this kind of character study, which I have used with my 8th grade classes, is what Sarah Brown Wessling calls a reading complexity circle.

Reading Complexity Circles

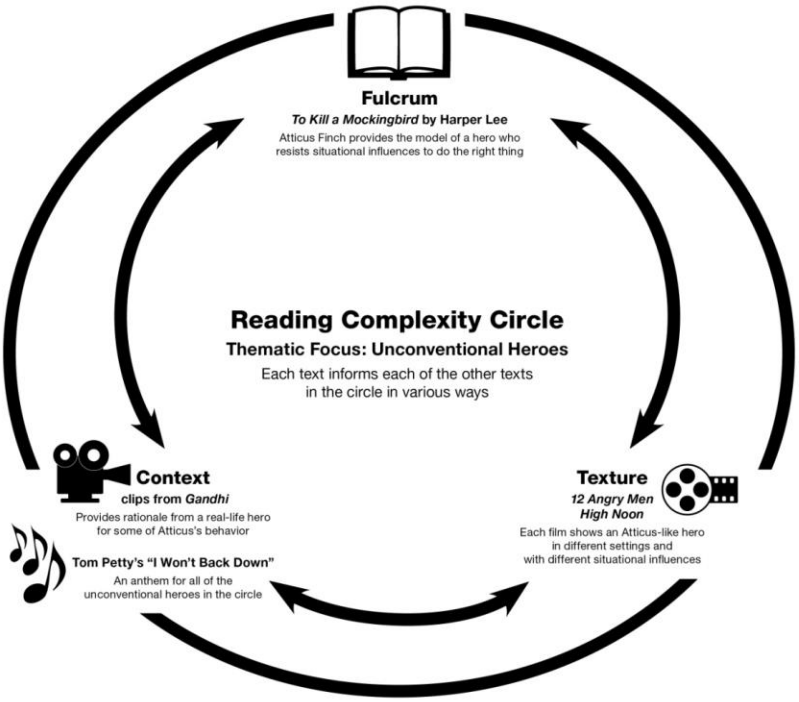
Wessling (2011) writes:

> Reading, especially complex reading, doesn't occur in isolation. In imagining a reading experience that is scaffolded by design, that resists reading in isolation, and welcomes a situation in which texts 'talk' to each other [Wessling uses] a concept to design instruction that deliberately layers the reading of texts by way of conceptual reading circles. (p. 24)

In this type of circle, *To Kill a Mockingbird* would become the fulcrum text which is the "centerpiece of any unit of study" and "offers distinct layers of meaning and complexity for the reader" (Wessling, 2011, p. 24) with other texts offering texture and context. Unlike literature circles, which are often focused on small groups of students reading and meaningfully discussing a singular, self-selected text, a reading complexity circle is more about grouping a variety of meaningfully related texts. The circle, in the latter case, is more about the thematic connections between various content, but some goals of both approaches overlap. Regarding literature circles, Daniels (1994) writes, "Any work of literature is always a confrontation, a collaboration, between a reader's prior experience and the worlds of an author" (p. 34). By using full-length films, film clips, and songs to support a fulcrum text in a reading complexity circle, students have multiple avenues of connection between their experience and the worlds of several authors, and an opportunity to deepen meaning beyond a single text.

Figure 1 shows a visual representation of a text complexity circle built around the theme of unconventional heroes and using *To Kill a Mockingbird* as a fulcrum text.

Figure 1: Reading Complexity Circle: Unconventional Heroes



Before further exploring the significance of and relationship between these specific texts used to support *To Kill a Mockingbird*, it's important to consider in more detail what Atticus has to offer to young readers through this thematic text set**.**

Adolescents, Situational Influence, and the Importance of Heroes

Adolescents of every generation have it tough. It's no easy task to carve out one's identity while developing physically and emotionally. Social pressures add even more of a challenge, not to mention the hyper-expansion of the digital realm. Today's teenagers have more opportunities than ever to connect positively through social media and smart phones, but they are also more exposed to peer pressure, cyber-bullying, and the judgments of those around them. Those pressures are the same as they've always been, but developing digital mediums have given 24-hour access to their influence. Because of these continuing challenges, it's important to remind young people of the power and responsibility of the individual.

Daniel Goleman (1995) writes in *Emotional Intelligence* that:

> By late childhood the most advanced level of empathy emerges... At this point [children] can feel for the plight of an entire group, such as the poor, the oppressed, the outcast. That understanding, in adolescence, can buttress moral convictions centered on wanting to alleviate misfortune and injustice. (p. 105)

Goleman suggests that students are more than capable of empathizing with others and even feeling a responsibility to address social problems. This is evident in many schools where students organize charitable clubs and drives to benefit the less fortunate. However, other students choose to do nothing, content to fade into the crowd, perhaps not being willing to risk the exposure which comes with distinguishing themselves against their peers.

Psychologist Phillip Zimbardo labels this kind of bystander passivity as "the evil of inaction" (qtd. In Brockman, 2005). Zimbardo is best known as the architect of the notorious Stanford

Prison Experiment during the 1970's when he divided college students into the roles of guards and prisoners in a mock penitentiary. Zimbardo was forced to end the experiment early because of hostility between the groups, and his subsequent findings have centered on how situational influences can drive people to do things they normally wouldn't. He has also addressed the role of bystanders.

In an interview, Zimbardo states:

> If you watch [an unethical event] happening and you don't say, "This is wrong! Stop it! This is awful!" you give tacit approval. You are the silent majority who makes something acceptable. If I get in a cab in New York and the cab driver starts telling me a racist or sexist joke and I don't stop him, that means he will now tell that joke over and over again, thinking that his passengers like it. He takes my silence as approval of his racism. There is not only the evil of inaction among all those people in that prison, but also the people in society in general who observe evil and allow it to continue by not opposing it. (Brockman, 2005, para. 37)

Zimbardo places a sizable burden of responsibility on society by suggesting that it's not only the perpetrators of evil who are guilty but also, to an extent, the bystanders. Consider this for students in situations like bullying; according to Zimbardo, those who would watch a bully and a victim without interfering are partially complicit by not voicing their discontent. Such a theory places Atticus as the ideal; one who stands up for another regardless of the social consequences.

According to Zimbardo, Atticus is heroic: "The hero is somebody who somehow has the inner qualities, inner resources, character, strength, or virtue… to resist those situational pressures" (Brockman, 2005). In these terms, a hero is not the stereotype from an action film with bulging muscles and a cunning sense of wit. Nor is a hero a charismatic orator or one who demonstrates feats of strength or physical bravery. Zimbardo's hero is simply one, like Atticus, who's willing to stand out from the crowd to do what's right in situations where it's necessary.

There's evidence in *To Kill a Mockingbird* as to the source of Atticus' inner resources: being a good role model for his children. After being taunted by her classmates because Atticus is defending Tom, Scout asks,

> "[I]f you shouldn't be defendin' him, then why are you doin' it?"
>
> "For a number of reasons," says Atticus. "The main one is, if I didn't, I couldn't hold my head up in town, I couldn't represent this county in the legislature, I couldn't even tell you or Jem not to do something again."
>
> "You mean if you didn't defend that man, Jem and me wouldn't have to mind you anymore?"
>
> "That's about right." (Lee, 1960, p. 86)

Thanks to the enduring significance of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, not only does Atticus provide a positive role model for his children and neighbors but also for the generations of young readers who continue to discover this novel. As a fulcrum text, *To Kill a Mockingbird* is less about Atticus than it is about his brand of heroism. Atticus provides a model of an unconventional hero which students can also explore in other texts. Highlighting these types of heroes is one way to use literature to help students develop the kind of empathy and responsibility that Rosenblatt and Ciardiello mention.

Furthermore, there's an argument that, through literature, students can access experiences that they don't get to have in their own lives. One of Atticus's most famous lines from the novel is when he advises Scout that, "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view…until you climb in his skin and walk around in it" (Lee, 1960, p. 36). Mirror neurons may explain how readers can figuratively climb into Atticus's skin and walk around in his experiences.

Considering Mirror Neurons and the Influence of Literature

Literature is a powerful vessel for providing students with experiences concerning morality, and neurology may explain why. The PBS science program *NOVA* (2005) claims that empathy is one of humanity's finer traits, and the reason that watching sports, video games, dances, etc., can be evocative is because of the presence of what are referred to as mirror neurons: "Watching someone do something is just like doing it yourself… you can share the experience" (Cort, 2005). The program suggested that observing an action, even one that's recorded on video, causes neurons to fire in the brain of the observer in the same way that they fire in the actor. So, an audience would feel similar emotional sensations as would those engaged in the observed activity. This explains why we get nervous watching others carry heavy packages or cry while watching a character endure heartbreak during movies. Furthermore, mirror neurons may react to others' feelings in direct interaction. We can "read another's mind" by adopting that person's point of view.

The consideration of mirror neurons is powerful in connection with Zimbardo's "evil of inaction" as it establishes that one who would stand by and do nothing while another is victimized would be well-aware of the feelings of the victim. In today's voyeuristic society, it certainly seems that English Language Arts teachers should be engaging students with literary examples, such as Atticus and Tom, to help them develop their sense of moral obligation, but does reading literature create the same neurological response that visual examples do?

Literacy Integration Specialist Alana Morris (2010) states that while visual examples are most powerful, "Mirror neurons simulate the actions described in the novels we read." This seems accurate considering how often literature evokes emotion strong enough to provoke physical reaction such as laughter or an increased heart rate. To enhance the reading experience of Tom's verdict, I have taken my eighth-grade students to our local county courthouse, which was built in the mid-1800's and is fortunately only a half mile walk from our middle school, and we have placed student readers throughout the courtroom. Every year without fail, thanks no doubt to our physical setting, when I read Judge Taylor polling the jury and each "guilty" verdict aloud, I get choked up, and there are audible gasps and protests from the student audience.

Burke (2013) writes, "We read both to grow our minds and heal our hearts... we need books that... take us to places where we can meet people and do things we would never dare to do in real life" (p. 146). If mirror neurons are engaged while reading, it stands to reason that literature can allow readers to experience a multitude of ethical scenarios and moral dilemmas which they might never otherwise encounter. Stepping into his point of view or "mirroring Atticus" allows readers to directly experience his experiences. Considering that Atticus does not stand alone in his heroic qualities, students could be more fully engaged through multiple texts in a reading complexity circle.

For the first layer of context beyond the fulcrum text, I draw from a dramatization of a real-life event featuring a well-known historical figure.

Establishing Plausibility through Non-Fiction: *Gandhi*

It is easy for my eighth-graders, or any skeptical readers, to dismiss the actions of a fictional character like Atticus if they don't consider his or her actions likely in reality. For example, would a lawyer really stand guard, unarmed, to protect a client from an angry lynch mob, as Atticus does for Tom? Following this scene, while explaining his motives to Jem, who questions how a so-called friend like Walter Cunningham could have possibly killed his father, Atticus concedes:

> He might have hurt me a little… but son, you'll understand folks a little better when you're older. A mob's always made up of people, no matter what. Mr. Cunningham was part of a mob last night, but he was still a man… you children last night made Walter Cunningham stand in my shoes for a minute. That was enough. (Lee, 1960, p. 180)

Atticus recognizes that if Walter's gang had attacked an unarmed neighbor, it would clearly display their behavior as wrong. Because Scout, Jem, and Dill showed up, Walter empathized with Atticus's position as a father, and violence was avoided. Many of my students struggle with this scene; they argue that Atticus should have gone with a gun considering his talent as the best shot in Maycomb County. To help establish Atticus's strategy as not only honorable but also plausible, I call on non-fiction.

While Gandhi may be an almost impossible human ideal, he was flesh and blood, and he did gain moral authority by placing himself in harm's way to showcase the brutality of India's British occupiers. Perhaps more impressive than what Gandhi did himself was what he inspired others to do. After Gandhi's famous march to the sea to make salt, he was imprisoned. In protest, his unarmed supporters marched against the guards of the Dharsana Salt Work even after being warned they'd be beaten:

> … The officers ordered [the protestors] to retreat but they continued to step forward. Suddenly… scores of native policemen rushed upon the advancing marchers and rained blows on their heads with their steel-shod lathis (staves). Not one of the marchers even raised an arm to fend off the blows. They went down like ten pins. (Fischer, 1954, p. 101)

To help my students conceptualize Atticus's strategy of nonviolent resistance, I show them the Dharsana Salt Works Scene from Richard Attenborough's Oscar-winning 1982 biopic. As the protestors are beaten in rows and rows, my students cringe, and then Martin Sheen (playing an American journalist) shouts his summation of the event with chill-inducing inflection into a telephone:

> They walked, both Hindu and Muslim alike with heads held high without any hope of escape from injury or death. It went on and on into the night. Women carried the wounded and broken bodies from the road until they dropped from exhaustion. But still, it went on and on. Whatever moral ascendency the West held was lost here today. India is free for she has taken all that steel and cruelty has to give, and she has neither cringed nor retreated. (Attenborough, 1982)

The Dharsana Salt Works scene gives students a historical allusion and adds weight to Atticus's intended strategy. Because the British were so one-sidedly violent, it established the Indians on the moral high ground and left the British less able to defend their occupation of India internationally. This scene also demonstrates real-life heroism in the terms that Zimbardo describes. Fittingly, the American Film Institute ranks Atticus Finch (played by Gregory Peck in the film version) as number one and Mahatma Gandhi (played by Sir Ben Kingsley) as number twenty-one on its list of the greatest film heroes of all time.

In the reading complexity circle, this clip from *Gandhi* adds context to Atticus's heroic fulcrum by making clear his motive. It also engaged my students emotionally. I asked students to write their reactions after watching the clips. One answered, "I felt angry. Gandhi's followers are innocent and they're getting hit for no reason." Another student wrote, "I feel disgusted by the way these people are treated for being peaceful." At least one student put a hopeful spin on the scene by writing, "This film clip clearly depicts inspiration. The men continue to walk knowing they'll be beaten. This is heroic."

I also asked students if they could act as the protesters had for a cause they felt passionate about. One responded hopefully, "I could get beaten for something I believe in. There are plenty of people who have not just been beaten but have also been martyrs for their faith." Others were more pragmatic: "Personally, if I was in that situation, I believe I would not be strong enough. This shows how strong-minded the protestors were." Some recognized that they couldn't be like Gandhi's supporters for other reasons, "I could not stay. I have a very bad temper and would want to kick all of their butts." While there's no way to truly tell how individuals would react until they're

in certain situations, students at least got a chance to consider their reactions, and they were exposed to another heroic example through the film clip.

Besides the context of *Gandhi*, I also included two full-length classic films for texture.

Full-length Features: *High Noon* and *12 Angry Men*

Wessling (2011) writes that, "Texture texts do just that: add texture to reading and thinking through their juxtoposition... These texts may contradict another work, may focus on one aspect of another work, or may illuminate another work in some fashion" (p. 25). The western *High Noon* and the film adaptation of the jury play *12 Angry Men* portray Atticus-like heroes in different settings and with different situational influences.

The idea of using *High Noon* with *To Kill a Mockingbird* came from Raif Esquith's *Teach Like your Hair's on Fire* (2007). Esquith included an appendix of films he shows to his students along with an explanation of each film's value. For *High Noon*, Esquith writes, "The film reinforces the importance of a personal moral code—even in situations where no one else seems to have one" (p. 167), which reminded me of Atticus. As further evidence of connection, AFI (2003) ranks *High Noon* protagonist Marshal Will Kane at number five among its greatest film heroes.

Kane offers an interesting contrast to Atticus's pacifism, considering his role as an Old West sheriff, but their values in regards to doing the right thing are both heroic in Zimbardo's terms. In the film, Kane is about to retire from his duties as marshal and leave town in deference to his new bride's pacifistic (Quaker) faith when he receives a telegram that his nemesis, murderer Frank Miller, has been pardoned and is returning to town on the noon train. Kane's sense of personal ethics compels him to stay and face Miller even as the rest of the town proceeds to turn its back on the situation, and Kane's new bride threatens to leave him. As it gets closer to the high noon showdown, Kane stands alone.

This rising action creates a sense of desperation that readers don't experience with Atticus. While Atticus may lose his reputation, it is Tom's life that's on the line. Kane creates a situation where his sense of personal ethics could spell his own demise. *High Noon* provides potent examples of the evil of inaction as the town is willing to sacrifice Kane to Miller, and despite those situational influences, Kane remains to fight the good fight. After two scenes where Kane implores townspeople for help, the first in a bar and the second in a church, I asked students how they'd feel to be rejected as Kane is. One wrote, "I would be very upset because I always help people when they need it, and if no one helped me, I would be hurt." Another acknowledged the difficulty of such a request with, "I would feel really nervous asking complete strangers for help and if they laughed at me, I'd be angry." Perhaps the student who most closely mirrored Kane's own thoughts wrote, "This is a town of people who don't even care. I would've felt betrayed." Following the pattern of individual responsibility, *12 Angry Men* is another useful film depicting another facet of the unconventional hero.

As the jury takes their initial vote in *12 Angry Men*, Juror #8 (played by Henry Fonda) is identified as the lone "not guilty" vote, and sarcastic Juror #10 shook his head and muttered, "Boy oh boy, there's always one" (Fonda, 1957). The same quote could easily be directed towards Atticus, Gandhi, or Will Kane. Teachers frequently pair Lumet's seminal film with *To Kill a Mockingbird* to showcase how a jury, like Tom's, might work, as well as the dangers of profiling and harboring prejudices against a defendant. In my reading complexity circle, protagonist Juror #8 offers another layer of comparison for Atticus' heroism- just one more example of one who would do right in the face of many who would not.

In an interestingly subtle scene which takes place in the restroom on a break between deliberations, even-tempered Juror #6 said to Juror #8, "Nice bunch of guys, eh?" to which Juror #8 responds, "Oh, they're about the same as anywhere else" establishing the jury as a cross-section

of average society (Fonda, 1957). As the jurors deliberate, I asked my students to consider which of the juror's personalities is most similar to their own and whether or not they think this situation is plausible. I also shared an anecdote from my father who was randomly voted jury foreman of a civil case involving a tractor trailer in a traffic accident. My father shared with me how many of the jurors simply wanted to vote whichever way would get them out of deliberations the quickest, and how one juror wanted to vote in whichever way would cause the most financial pain to truck drivers, since he claimed to hate truck drivers. My father's anecdote generates the plausibility of the jurors voting without direct consideration of the facts and in light of their own biases as is showcased in *12 Angry Men*. My father's story also demonstrates the need for real-life heroes like Juror #8 and Atticus.

Since Juror 8 must face an uncomfortable crowd of opposition as the initial lone not guilty vote, I asked students for their reaction. One responded, "I have felt the same way as Juror 8 before, and it was difficult to stand up for what I really feel. Often times, I go along with what everyone else feels, but if it truly affects me, I'll stand up for my opinion." Another also recognized the difficulty of standing alone: "If I were to vote with this jury, I don't know if could stand up for the kid with everyone staring me down like that. It would be very difficult to be the first to vote innocent."

Each of the texts in this circle demonstrate a hero positively influencing others; with Atticus, it's providing a role-model for his children; with Gandhi, it's inspiring the protestors to demonstrate non-violence on a massive scale; with Will Kane, it's inspiring his wife to save his life during *High Noon's* climax. In one of my favorite scenes from *12 Angry Men*, Juror #8 helps Juror #3 put on his coat as the men leave the jury room. As Juror #3 was the final "guilty" vote to be converted, Juror #8's action shows empathy between the only two jurors who ever stood truly alone during the deliberation. Perhaps Juror #8's kindness would provoke more thoughtful consideration from Juror #3 in the future. More importantly, perhaps Juror #8's example would inspire my students to be those who stand up for due process should they find themselves in a real-life jury situation as did my father.

In order to connect the context, texture, and fulcrum texts back to the overarching theme of unconventional heroes, it's effective to close this text set with a theme song, of sorts, and an examination of notable Common Core standards addressed in this unit.

Tying it all Together with Tom Petty and the Common Core

In *The Comprehension Experience* (2011), one of Hammond and Nessel's essential ideas to inform reading instruction is that comprehension is a dynamic process: "Effective readers… move easily towards the text, dive inside it, interact with it, and are changed by the process. They do so to the extent that they are allowed and encouraged to be active participants and are made to feel comfortable in their attempts at personal discovery" (p. 28). Using film examples with *To Kill a Mockingbird* allows students to experience true heroism, as defined by Zimbardo and demonstrated by Atticus, more fully through multiple levels of texture and context.

Besides helping students to develop a sense of personal responsibility and true heroism, this reading complexity circle also relates to several Common Core State Standards. In general, the Common Core stresses close reading, and the variety of texts (which also vary in modality and complexity) in the circle allows students to approach *To Kill a Mockingbird* from a broader contextual standpoint. More specifically, the two most apparent Common Core connections are in the Anchor Standards in the Integration of Knowledge and Ideas category. These standards ask students to "integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media formats including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words" (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7) and to "analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take" (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.9). The reading complexity circle format

easily allows texts of multiple modalities to be integrated around a common theme for students to analyze with the added benefit of allowing them to comprehensively experience the literature, engage their mirror neurons, and develop empathy and social responsibility in the process.

Tom Petty's "I Won't Back Down" is the final contextual text in this reading complexity circle as it provides an anthem for each of the featured heroes. Another Common Core standard asks students to "draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research" (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.9). After reading the novel and watching the films, I asked students how "I Won't Back Down" relates to Atticus Finch, Juror 8, and Will Kane? After listening to Petty's song and specifically the lines, "Well I know what's right, I got just one life. In a world that keeps on pushin' me around, but I'll stand my ground. And I won't back down," a student responded, "It relates because no matter what people tell them, they stand up for what they believe and they won't back down."

I also asked students: "What theme and characteristics do Atticus Finch, Juror #8, and Marshall Will Kane have in common?" One answered, "They share the theme of perseverance. All three are doing something they believe in when no one is on their side. They are all courageous, stubborn, and they stand up for what they believe." A second student considered similar qualities by writing, "They show perseverance in the face of adversity. None of them were willing to back down even when everyone is against them. They are all unorthodox, clever, and have something to do with the law (sheriff, prosecutor, juror)." Finally, a student recognized the sacrifices made by each character with, "Even though the right thing to do is hard, the three men give everything they have to do it."

A final question I presented to my students engaged their judgment (and was perhaps unfair to Juror #8 considering that he was relatively safe when compared with Atticus and Kane) was, "Which character demonstrates the most courage?" The students were generally split between Atticus and Will Kane. One wrote, "Will Kane is the most courageous because if he hadn't stayed, who knows what would have happened to the town. He could have lost his wife and his life, but he stayed and fought." Another countered with "Atticus faces the whole town and society throughout his court case which caused opinions to become public and a general dislike for Atticus. He also stood up to a lynch mob unarmed."

A third student thoughtfully considered all parties before settling on Kane, "Will Kane was the only one whose life was at stake, and he had to stand up to all of his friends because they wanted him to leave. Atticus Finch's life was never truly at risk, and Juror 8 had nothing to gain or lose from standing up to strangers." And a fourth student simply concluded, "Atticus demonstrates the most courage because he stands up to everyone with no violence." While the character who was most courageous is debatable, my students gained greater comprehension of *To Kill a Mockingbird* through the texture of the films and song as well as a more complete experience of the kind of heroism that Atticus demonstrates.

The reading complexity circle format and their engaged mirror neurons allowed students to mirror Atticus, march in Gandhi's shoes, experience being an outnumbered juror, and walk the lonely, dusty streets of the Old West. No doubt the combination of heroic examples has also offered these students the chance to consider and develop their own moral codes and heroic characters. While connecting to a classic novel like *To Kill a Mockingbird* on a deeper level is a worthy goal in itself (especially while addressing Common Core Standards), perhaps an even higher hope is that this literary experience will allow students an opportunity to avoid the evil of inaction in their own lives by doing what's right even if it's not easy.

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Author Biography

Jason Griffith is a Teaching Associate and Ph.D. Student (English Education) at Arizona State University. A National Board Certified Teacher and Fellow of the National Writing Project, Jason taught middle school and high school English for 12 years in Carlisle, PA. In 2012, Jason received NCTE's Outstanding Middle Level Educator Award, and he currently serves on NCTE's Middle

Level Section Steering Committee. Griffith has presented at national conferences including NCTE, SXSWedu, CEE, and the Educator Collaborative's Gathering, and his work has been published in the *Language Arts Journal of Michigan* along with edited volumes by Rowman and Littlefield and the ISTE. In Fall 2016, Routledge published Griffith's first book *From Me to We: Using Narrative Nonfiction to Broaden Student Perspectives*, which features critical reading and writing strategies for creative nonfiction in secondary English class. He can be reached at Jason.J.Griffith@asu.edu.

Promoting Literacy with Teacher Knowledge in Analyzing and Using Student Data: A Review of Literature

Kynda Faythe

Abstract
The concept of data based decision making has been in the forefront of educational reform for decades. Despite the fact that data could better inform the educational decisions teachers make, some educators lack understanding of data and assessment. This could lead to misinterpretation and poor use of the scores. The purpose of this literature review is to learn more about English language arts (ELA) and literacy teachers' current practices and experiences in using assessment data to shape their literacy instruction and to learn more about their perceptions of how this assessment data should be used to shape classroom instruction. This literature review will describe five themes: (a) school leaders and teachers' level of understanding related to interpreting assessment results, (b) use of data types having different applications for school, (c) data collection methods schools employ, (d) the process of utilizing the data, and (e) creating a data culture within school. Finally, possible ideas about the future areas of research are shared.

Keywords
data, assessment, literacy, data culture, data-driven decision making

Introduction

The notion that decisions will be based on data rather than intuition is known as data-driven decision making. This concept has been in the forefront of educational reform for decades (Datnow, Greene, & Gannon-Slater, 2017). Lai and Schildkamp (2016) have deduced that data use arrives from two, sometimes-counteractive, motivations or agendas. One agenda wishes to hold teachers, administrators, and schools accountable and is associated with top-down, external accountability, and high-stakes testing. The other agenda uses assessment as a vehicle of teacher inquiry, which is associated with bottom-up, internal accountability, and low-stakes testing. As reported by Lai and Schildkamp (2016), teachers often have to balance these two competing agendas simultaneously. Kim et al. (2016) solidify this conclusion by stating that teachers use student assessment data for a wide range of purposes, from planning everyday lessons to making school-level programming decisions found in reading and English language development. The authors suggest that despite the fact that data would better inform the educational decisions teachers make, some educators lacked understanding of certain technical terms (e.g., scale score, confidence band), which could lead to misinterpretation and poor use of the scores.

Significance

As key provisions of previous educational policies such as No Child Left Behind of 2001 and the more recently passed Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 show, closing the achievement gap for all students is a high priority for school districts and educators. Because of the emphasis on data analysis as an indicator of the level of success in teaching and learning, it is important for teachers to be able to interpret data results and make appropriate teaching decisions based on these interpretations. Darling-Hammond (2015) concluded that professional support and development is the most effective method schools have to help improve teachers' knowledge and use of student data.

The purpose of this literature review is to (1) learn more about English language arts (ELA) and literacy teachers' current practices and experiences in using assessment data to shape their literacy instruction and (2) learn more about their perceptions of how this assessment data should be used to shape classroom instruction. Park and Datnow (2017) report that little is known about how teachers use data for instructional decision-making despite data-driven decision making being an ever-present part of policy and school reform efforts. Teachers do not appear to have much background knowledge in using assessment data. The importance of understanding teachers' perceptions was underscored by Desimone and Garet (2016), who concluded that changing teaching behaviors in a classroom is easier than improving teachers' content knowledge.

Background Literature

When reviewing current literature, it is clear that there is a demand and need for school leadership and teachers to be better informed in order to use student data more effectively. This literature review will describe five themes found: (a) school leaders and teachers' level of understanding related to interpreting assessment results, (b) use of data types having different applications for school, (c) data collection methods schools employ, (d) the process of utilizing the data, and (e) creating a data culture within school. Finally, possible ideas about the future areas of research are given.

Limited knowledge of assessment

Several studies have explored teachers' knowledge of assessment fundamentals such as validity and reliability, and have generally concluded that most teachers have little understanding of these principles (Avargil, Herscovitz, & Dori, 2012; Gotch & French, 2014; Malone, 2013; Mandinach & Gummer, 2013; Newman & Newman, 2013). Mandinach and Gummer (2013) examined building of human capacity around data use and the growing need for data-driven decision-making in programs in teacher preparation programs in schools of education. The researchers concluded that more studies are required to fully understand data literacy preparation for teachers as opposed to administrators and that support from stakeholders and policymakers is required.

Teachers not only face assessment challenges, but also can encounter difficulties when adjusting to the teaching of higher order thinking skills and new curricula. Avargil et al. (2012) conducted a study that focused on identifying teachers' challenges and difficulties when adjusting their perceptions to educational reform's new curricula. This is important to the theme of assessment knowledge because many times if teachers do not fully understand the curriculum, assessments are not effectively utilized, and student assessment data could be skewed as a result. Other challenges teachers faced were related to teaching using real-life examples so that students learn through the actual, practical experience with a subject instead of just theoretical parts, applying understanding levels, developing students' thinking skills, and assessing students' content knowledge and thinking skills. The researchers concluded that a critical success factor in using new curricula was continuous support for teachers. The authors also noted that in order for various components of pedagogical-content knowledge to evolve, teaching must be accompanied with the support of PD. In addition to PD, ongoing relationships between the teachers and the developers of curriculum were also found to be critical in the content, pedagogical, and emotional aspects. Assessment knowledge was the most difficult challenge the teachers had to face. The researchers proposed that assignments designed by teachers be used as an instrument for determining the professional growth stage of the teachers. This outcome highlights the need for increased work on assessment literacy measures in the educational measurement field.

Gotch and French (2014) systematically reviewed teacher assessment literacy measures within the context of current teacher evaluation policies from 1991 to 2012. Assessments such as objective tests, teacher reports of assessment competence, and rubrics evaluating teachers' work were reviewed and then were compared to claims and criteria made on teacher evaluations to judge the relevance of the assessments to the teachers. Across the 36 difference assessment measures within the 50 reviewed, Gotch and French (2014) found that evidence available to support assessment literacy for these claims were weak.

Assessment knowledge

Many schools have implemented intervention frameworks such as Response to Intervention or Multiple Tiered Support Systems to help student growth in reading, mathematics, and behavior. These intervention frameworks strive to have foundational education in place before students fall behind academically, and continually use data to help create student plans for academic improvement. Algozzine et al. (2012) studied the effects of three-tiered interventions in seven urban elementary schools. Continuous professional development (PD) was provided to support the interventions. School-level workshops introduced the overall focus of the framework. District staff and faculty took part in the first year of intervention PD. Individual sessions, small group refresher workshops, and ongoing monitoring were provided for each participating school. The authors concluded that stakeholder buy-in and social validity alone are not sufficient to guarantee successful implementation of a program. Additionally, the researchers found that systematic evaluation and adapting interventions on an ongoing basis is essential to securing adherence to general principles such as expectations of behaviors rather than specific practices. Positive outcomes were maintained longer when teachers and staff made specific efforts to promote fidelity.

As more literacy and ELA teachers are explicit in their teaching and clear in their objectives, one key to making well-informed decisions regarding instruction is to gather as much valid information from assessments as possible. Murphy and Holme (2014) used a rubric for assigning complexity to gauge students' achievement toward learning objectives in general chemistry. The study confirmed that better assessment analysis is paramount to effective instructional design. Though the authors stated that using student assessment data to make informed decisions about what students know is an important factor of instructional design, this study also mentioned that utilizing assessment data can extend into judgments about programs through programmatic assessment. Essentially, a better understanding of students' academic performance goes hand in hand with the improvement of teaching practices.

One method to better decipher students' academic performance is assessing student understanding using rubrics. Atkinson and Lim (2013) created a rubric and automated it through a learning management system (LMS) in order to measure the effectiveness of assessment structure, feedback, and efficiency. The aim was to provide formative assessment feedback for the students. When given clear objectives and the ability to see what gains they have made, the students learned what they needed to do to improve their outcome and satisfaction. Howley, Howley, Henning, Gilla, and Weade (2013) studied teachers' assessment knowledge, the culture surrounding assessments in schools, and teachers' perceptions of the assessment literacy of other key stakeholders. The authors found shared practices of formative assessments to guide instruction and a reliance on collaboration in cultivating school-wide assessment practices. The authors also found among the teachers interviewed, the belief that students, parents, and school administrators are naïve about the importance of summative over formative assessment. This is relevant to literacy and ELA teachers since literacy and language skills span the curriculum and can affect students' academic progress in all areas.

Regardless of the types of assessments used, Hoover and Abrams (2013) found that classroom teachers use summative assessment data in order to shape daily instruction. Most of the teachers in this study stated that they used assessment results to evaluate their instructional practice and make adjustments to support student learning. The results suggested however, that teachers engaged in a cursory analysis of student performance fairly regularly but conduct more in-depth analyses less often. This seems true since anecdotal evidence points to teachers lacking time and resources to delve deeper into data analysis. The researchers noted that the results of the study led to more questions about how teachers can effectively use summative data for instructional purposes.

Since assessments can be conducted and analyzed in a myriad of ways, literacy and ELA teachers do not assess students in the same manner. Braender and Naples (2013) raised questions regarding how teachers effectively use data. They noted that instructors find it difficult to assign grades to individual students engaged in team projects. This study used objective data from student activity logs from a Learning Management System (LMS) and also analyzed peer evaluations using a free, online tool CATME.org. The study investigated categories of measurement, task conflict measures, and satisfaction measures. The activity logs provided early intervention for students who weren't actively engaged in team projects. Because of the switch to objective data, researchers were able to recognize team problems and help students effectively manage teams or reconfigure the teams to create a successful learning environment.

While in the process of creating an evidence-based curriculum, Keister and Grames (2012) collected information from three different needs assessment methods and then analyzed the advantages and disadvantages of each method. The study concluded that one tool was not better than another because each delivers valuable information. The authors noted that educators can select the different method and techniques based on the required information.

Despite the type of curriculum or assessments are used, school systems have access to more data than ever before. Piro and Hutchinson (2014) indicate that the method in which schools use student data may alter and the conclusions from that data may also differ from teacher to teacher. This difference is a result of teacher experience and knowledge of data use. Teachers are expected to be knowledgeable in not only content area, but also be able to comprehend, interpret and use data for instructional interventions. Research suggests that training in data collection, analysis and the use of data closes the achievement gap (Piro & Hutchinson, 2014).

How educators collect and use data

When collecting assessment data, educators must know what data they are collecting and how it will help develop their instruction. Young and Kaffenberger (2013) studied a four-step process and a conceptual model, Making DATA Work (MDW), to help school counselors and district supervisors use data to drive decision-making to address issues such as achievement gaps and program effectiveness. The process aims to answer a question, which drives action research. The first step is to design an action research question. This question either seeks to understand an issue or aims to evaluate a program. The next is to plan the data. This step organizes the type of information that is needed to answer the research question. The third step is to track and analyze the data. Finally, once the data is shared, stakeholders and educators can then become more engaged in the process. Young and Kaffenberger (2013) found that once school counselors and teachers were taught that much of the data needed already exists, the application of the MDW process quickly aided educators and counselors to gain the accountability, data, skills, and confidence required to address assessment questions and instructional issues.

Ellis (2013) acknowledges the usefulness of data analysis for the purposes of understanding and optimizing learning and its contexts, but also claims that too much emphasis on learning analytics is impractical because not all learning environments share the same behaviors and

interactions. Ellis also asserts that when the focus is primarily targeting at-risk students, only a small amount of the students receive attention in the literature on learning analytics. For teachers, using their content expertise is useful and directly applied to learning when analyzing assessments, but a more detailed level of data has been too difficult for teachers to collect and balance. Kan and Bulut (2014) discussed the subjectivity and inconsistency of teachers when collecting data associated with scoring assignments. Their research found that when there are no scoring guides for teachers to use, teachers' scoring of assessments were inconsistent. When rubrics were used reliability increased. The researchers also concluded that the teachers that had more teaching experience were more lenient in their grading. Rosen and Tager (2014) also examined different assessments, but used assessments within computer-based educational environments. The study concluded that students provided more informed recommendations by using supporting evidence and could discuss alternative points of view.

Utilization of data

Data based decisions are correlated with increased student achievement, but most teachers do not use the data or do not know how to use student data to its full potential. Poortman (2015) found that decisions made by teachers were generally based on intuition and on limited observation. This study examined the factors influencing data team procedure. Data teams were comprised of school leaders and teachers who work together to learn how to use data. The conclusion of this study revealed how several data characteristics (e.g. access to data), school organizational characteristics (e.g. shared goal), and individual and team characteristics (e.g. pedagogical content knowledge) influence the use of data in data teams. Although the study did not allow generalization, it does provide insight about the factors that hinder and enable interventions. The more successful data teams had higher access to information, could hypothesize causes to problems, and could design measures of correction. Less successful data teams had limited access to data.

Schildkamp, Poortman, and Handelzalts (2015) also described data use in their case study. The study concluded that implementing data use is not a linear process. Data teams continually go through feedback loops with each inquiry made. This results in reaching higher levels of inquiry. Every team involved in this study would return to previous steps of the procedure. The researchers note that new knowledge can also be built on hypotheses that turn out to be false. This type of knowledge might be even more important than knowledge on hypotheses that turn out to be true. It might prevent schools from investing time and money in interventions that do not solve the problem because cause of the problem is not fully addressed.

Research has demonstrated that teachers and school leaders can incorporate technology in a variety of methods to engage students, assess student understanding, access information to support content, and acquire new skills. Gibson (2013) studied three perspectives on analysis of student performances in SimSchool, a cloud-based simulated environment. SimSchool recreated the complexities of a classroom in order to measure the pedagogical knowledge and teaching skills of aspiring teachers. The program automatically collected data as the novice teachers engaged with the artificial students, and then recommended how the teachers should interact with the artificial students. In the simulation, the various features of teacher assessment such as data collection methods and analysis could be practiced because the program is highly interactive and adaptive in learning. This cloud-based, simulated environment was used to provide learning and training opportunities, and advance assessment practice and knowledge (Gibson, 2013). The author of the study concluded that mobile technologies could aid teachers with the acquisition of assessment knowledge, practice skills, and promote other kinds of interactive educational applications. In another study tied to the perception of educational assessment systems, Hebert (2012) revealed that a critical concern regarding technology and assessment system use is connected to the issues of

change with individuals and within organizations. The researcher concluded that regardless of the technology and assessment systems being used, the impact would only come to fruition if people use it.

Professional development and data culture

Recent studies have indicated that teachers' effective use of student assessment results could improve student outcomes, including graduation rates (DePaoli, Balfanz, & Bridgeland, 2016). Balfanz, Bridgeland, Bruce, and Hornig-Fox (2013) discussed in their executive summary that evidence-based strategies could address dropout rates, and improved data systems could be used in early warning indicators and intervention strategies. The researchers asserted that a more coordinated approach in analyzing data, early warning indicators, intervention systems, and tracking students in real world examples has a positive effect on graduation rates. Perez (2012) also examined the use of professional learning communities, interventions for low performing students, and the use of data-driven instruction within the classroom settings with formative assessments. The researcher found that when professional learning communities used data to track student learning, teacher workload decreased and teachers increased their use of remediation and enrichment opportunities for students. Perez (2012) highlighted the process involved in implementing data-driven instruction through formative assessments, and then how that information can improve teacher collaboration. The results indicated a positive correlation between data-driven instruction and teachers' perception of their effectiveness. The teacher teams using data in the study met weekly to analyze the data and to make decisions about student and teacher learning. The researcher concluded that by using data-driven instruction, the needs of each student are placed at the forefront in instructional planning.

Hubers, Poortman, Schildkamp, Pieters, and Handelzalts (2016) studied data teams and how these groups of teachers and school leaders create knowledge in a case study. In this study, data teams were groups of teachers and school leaders that would collect and chart data, analyze strengths and obstacles, and then establish goals for an educational problem. Hubers et al. conducted a case study for two data teams over the course of two years analyzing the modes, transitions, and knowledge creation using four-stage model of socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization (SECI). The authors reported that the teachers and school leaders indicated that they learned more about curriculum and assessment when they were engaged in activities such as brainstorming on hypotheses, providing background information, brainstorming about possible solutions, and reflecting on data. The data teams met twice a month for two years. During the observation of meetings, the researchers documented and coded the creation process of each meeting. Data teams learned most about content when they engaged in socialization and internalization modes and displayed more personal engagement and gained deeper knowledge with the collection of data. Regarding transitions, the authors concluded that knowledge creation was a cyclical process because data teams seem to follow the steps of data team procedure (as reported by Schildkamp & Poortman, 2015). The researchers also found the team members who engaged more often in the meetings and overall process of knowledge creation gained a greater and deeper level of understanding of the educational problem being addressed. The research provided insight into how educators in the context of PD and how support can be given.

In creating a school culture that routinely uses data to inform instruction, the process of data-driven decision-making must be utilized. Lange, Range, and Welsh (2012) studied five factors associated with effective implementation of a school culture that uses data to inform instruction: school leadership and data, leadership teams, data accessibility, school culture, and data sources. The authors concluded that building administrators must focus on collaboration between school leaders and teachers who have a vested interest in data analysis. Lange, Range, and Welsh (2012) also stated that in order to foster the conditions for a culture driven by data, principals must stress the

importance of shared leadership responsibilities, professional development responsibilities, and school culture responsibilities. In addition to school administration establishing a clear vision, purpose, and goals for their school, the authors argued that principals must focus on the responsibilities of leadership, professional development, and also foster a culture of continuous inquiry.

Almy and Tooley (2012) studied conditions such as the leadership of principals, working alongside colleagues, and work environment that impact the effectiveness of teachers and the job satisfaction of teachers in high poverty schools. The authors of this study found that teacher satisfaction is more influenced by the culture of the school. Especially important to teacher satisfaction and retention is strong leadership and staff cohesion.

In planning effective development sessions, researchers have identified several obstacles to implementing effective training. Galloway and Lesaux (2014) conducted a comprehensive literature review to evaluate how the role of the reading specialist has been altered by the changes in federal policy since 2001. The researchers stated that the job description of the reading specialist now involves such tasks as managing data, serving as a resource to teachers, diagnosing problem areas for students, and instructing struggling students in reading. The researchers concluded that because positions are not standardized and the literature presented that training be diversified to fit various needs, all principals, teachers, and reading specialists need to engage in discussions that clarify the various roles, duties, responsibilities, and working relationships that will help to define and support this role in their school. In addition to identifying the different types of tasks and responsibilities that reading specialists are asked to complete, Galloway and Lesaux also explored literature for themes of conflicting perceptions of the role of the reading specialists by different stakeholders in the school community. The authors recommended policymakers, administrators, and researchers should attempt to understand the value of the non-instructional roles in supporting struggling students

Although data systems are used for student growth, study results have indicated that these systems can also promote professional growth in teachers. In Marzano's (2012) teacher evaluation system, both teacher growth and PD aspects are included. The system is based off the individual evaluation, which drives individual PD striving to improve teacher inquiry. Clarke (2012) studied 37 team leaders who led small groups of teachers through a PD program, Digital Learning Collaborative (DLC), which is designed to improve teacher research-based qualitative inquiry. The results indicate that the PD had an impact on teacher use of technology in the classrooms. Five themes were found to influence teachers: empowerment, teachers as researchers, the use of technology, workload, and engagement. The DLC PD (Clarke, 2012) model empowers teachers, which is essential in successful PD.

In Wang and Hurley's (2012) study, the authors found that assessment programs are more effective if teachers and faculty members are involved in the design, implementation of the program, and analysis of student data. Their study of academic assessment perception included over 200 university faculty and staff. The results indicated that the perceived benefit of assessment was significantly and positively connected to the participant's willingness to engage in assessment practices. The authors reported that the results suggested that the time invested in a program does not ensure the willingness of staff in embracing a program. The study results also indicated that lack of motivation, rather than time constraints hinders teacher engagement in assessment practices. The results of this study also showed that institutional culture did not have an important relationship with faculty willingness to apply assessment practices. The researchers found that the teaching staff in the study was more willing to get involved with an assessment program when they saw benefits to their own teaching and learning efforts.

Limitations and Further Research

This review of literature sought to explore a number of research questions related to teachers' current practices, experiences, and knowledge in using assessment data to shape their instruction and to identify their perceptions of how assessment data should be used to shape classroom instruction. This is a complex topic: even if teachers' assessment literacy is high, this does not always mean teachers' knowledge and skill will translate into improvements in instruction. Given the sheer scope and amount of student data available to classroom teachers today, the effect of professional development meant to promote the use and analysis of that data should be a topic of great interest to the classroom teachers, educational leaders and stakeholders. With all that said, the issue that has application to a wide range of educators who wish to improve their own professional development.

Implications exist, of course, for educators, as well, who might be looking at ways in which undergraduate teacher education programs prepare (or do not prepare) their students for the challenging task ahead of interpreting and analyzing student data. A second important implication of this study derived from the fact that there is no clear-cut method or assessment that meets all of the needs of teachers and the information that they need to improve their practice. There are research-based instructional frameworks, which can apply to various learning environments and will allow school districts to customize the framework to fit their local schools. However, there are no one-size-fits-all answers to assessment questions. Another limitation stems from the fact that educational administrators and policy makers do not share the same knowledge of the importance of assessments. In this sense, this review of literature is especially timely, and further work is necessary to examine the practices of assessment knowledge and how this can affect literacy instruction.

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Author Biography

A Bohemian-esque tomboy with a passion for stories and words, Kynda Faythe is a free-spirited advocate, teacher, author, and self-proclaimed concoction of Scout Finch, Professor Keating, with a touch of Julie Andrews. Kynda became a fourth generation educator by taking the road less traveled. After experiencing the world of Shakespearean productions and coffeehouse music, she earned her B.S. in rhetoric from Kansas State University. A detour took her to the Pacific Northwest where she became involved with education in a different manner with Oregon Department of Transportation. After earning her M.A.T. at Western Oregon University, she wrote of her experiences with autistic children. Eventually she returned to Kansas, welcoming a homecoming of sorts into the family "business." She has thrived in her role of teacher, coach, and educational leader at Altoona-Midway School District. Kynda is currently completing her Ph.D. in literacy leadership. This journey has made all the difference. She can be reached at Kynda.Faythe@gmail.com.