

The Importance of Student Choice, and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

by

Fowzia Shaham

A thesis submitted to the Department of Education and Human Development of The College at Brockport, State University of New York, in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science in Education;
December 14, 2020

Table of Contents

Abstract	3
Part One: Introduction.....	4
Part Two: Literature Review	8
Part Three: Contributions to the Profession.....	15
References:	54

Abstract

There are many problems that our education system has. The most complained about is lack of student choice and understanding who your students are on a different level. Educators tend to forget that our role is not just based on teaching kids' information from a text, but we are exemplifying how an adult should interact with others. By getting to know our students, we are teaching them how to express themselves and communicate. And by giving our students choice, we are allowing them to feel as important as they truly are, and we are showing them that we respect and value their preference. These simple rules will allow trust to build between the student and the educator, and will benefit both by ensuring that the student feels comfortable and willing to learn.

Part One: Introduction

I would like to focus on a few different topics that help explain the importance of student choice and getting to know your students. In order to express how important student choice is, there are many factors to consider. I would like to discuss how implementing YAL literature is a huge stepping stone in creating a classroom with engaged kids. I also would like to discuss that not only bringing in texts that are relevant, but creating a classroom that is culturally appropriate for your students. Getting to know them is the first step that needs to be taken, not taking any negative feedback from previous educators and truly getting to know the student for who they are, not how they are perceived or judged by others.

Studies have shown that giving a student choice in the classroom creates a more engaging and welcoming environment. Students want to be heard, and as educators we need to teach them to use their voice; the only way to do that is to make sure they are given ways to express themselves and feel safe doing so. Implementing student choice does not only allow the student to pick a book they would like to read, but it also allows the students to explore their creativity and learn about things that are relevant to them. The only way to successfully create that environment is by getting to know who your students are beyond a classroom setting.

I believe teaching any subject has to have passion to it. The teacher has to show that she/he is interested in teaching the subject; and has to show that they are knowledgeable yet willing to learn at the same time. For ELA in particular, there is so much to learn. I have created a relationship with all of my students that shows them I am learning with them. For example, if there is a word I do not know, I openly tell them and we look it up together. Students need to know that just because we are the teachers, it does not mean that we cannot learn with them. It

builds a different type of relationship in the classroom, the students are less intimidated, and I for one, am too.

There are many ways teaching can be culturally relevant. The first step is the one I believe works in every practice I have ever worked with: getting to know your students. In order to create a lesson that will work with your students, is getting to know them, not just academically. Know what they like to do for fun, what sparks interest for them, what they absolutely do not like- all of these are important factors in creating a successful lesson. However, it must be noted that creating a lesson by incorporating relevant music would be fine, but that is not what Culturally Responsive means, and I think that's what a lot of people confuse the term with. As an educator you have to be aware of your students' race, yes, but you do not have to create lessons that are relevant with their race. Because the majority of the time, the students are a mix of different race/religions/ethnicities. Culturally Responsive teaching means creating lessons that work with the students, not just with the teacher. Creating a lesson that your students can have fun with, changing the fact that teaching has been the same for so many years. Lessons have to change with the students, we meet different students every single year, and they have different likes/dislikes, different lifestyles, different mentalities- we have to adapt to changing our techniques to benefit our students.

“Stretch yourself to expand your own self-definition. To help you see life from a different perspective, consciously read books or watch movies about groups other than your own.” *Culturally Responsive Teaching Matters!* by Elizabeth B. Kozleski

We have to be open to learning about other cultures, before we even meet our students. That way we can connect with the students because we have at least some knowledge about their culture that they assumed we wouldn't have.

Getting to know what the students like, what they will find interesting, will make creating a lesson 100% easier- because then we can take any literature and make it relevant to them by bringing in different works, or just all together creating culturally relevant activities. Incorporating different types of literature is key. Opposed to sticking to one type, the kids can now have a choice on what they want to read. Many books are being pushed to the side because teachers do not want to teach them or they do not know how to. However, why make that decision for the kids instead of having them see for themselves what is out there and if they like the material or not. Judy Blume says in *Right To Read The Books That Will Never Be Read* : “It’s not just the books under fire now that worry me. It is the books that will never be written, the books that will never be read” (Judy Blume, n.d.). Such a powerful set of words. If we do not implement YA literature into our curriculum, this is exactly what will happen. Introducing kids to YA literature is beneficial in many ways. It will capture their attention by having them relate to stories that are relevant to them. Bringing in relevant literature will allow the students to have a desire to participate, especially because they will connect with the texts. In the article *Recognize the Signs: Reading Young Adult Literature to Address Bullying* Sherry explained, “We need to find literature so we can talk about the issues. . . . we have to find books that get through to students.” Lana recognized the power of knowing the literature in order to recommend a particular title to a student. The preservice teachers discussed the “power of books” and a “trusting teacher” to help students through difficult times or to help students understand the consequences of their actions. (Asher, J. (2011). Literature can either create a positive or negative environment for the students.

But what if at the end of the day, the student is not connecting with our assignments? In *Reading Democracy: Exploring Ideas That Matter with Middle Grade and Young Adult*

Literature , Steven Wolk discusses what the majority of teens goes through- they do not like to read classical literature at 13, 14, 17, 18, they want to read stuff that they can connect with- stuff that they can relate to, then they will build their reading skills and eventually begin reading classical literature. “Through these books, the issues are situated in stories that are enjoyable, relevant, and interesting; they open up endless possibilities for students to engage in meaningful dialogue and debate of issues and ideas that truly matter to them and society.” (Wolk). It is very important for teachers to be aware of differences in cultural backgrounds and perspectives as well as social identities because it allows the teacher to acknowledge each student as an individual.

Equity Pedagogy would be one of the examples that illustrate the concepts of culture and identity. Matt Davis defines equity of pedagogy in his article *Preparing for Cultural Diversity: Resources for Teachers* as, “Educators change their instructional practices to reflect the diversity of their students.” (Davis) By acknowledging each student as an individual the teacher can have the opportunity to teach the student in a way that’s best for him or her. Teachers are not supposed to treat each student the same because every student is different and comes from different backgrounds. Another example is Critical Multicultural Social Justice that is defined as valuing students by showing and teaching them ways to push forward through the negative and make it into a positive experience. (Davis) In many cases when an educator is teaching a subject, they may say something that can impact some students negatively; but their intentions are not meant that way. By teaching with a Multicultural perspective, it allows the teachers to secure social justice. Not only does Multicultural Education secure practices through school reforms but it also eliminates inequities and is good for all students. The multicultural education provides an open door to all students regardless of what color their skin is and what their family

does to provide for them. In order to make this education program work, teachers must fully understand the background of their student; not just their cultural practices

Part Two: Literature Review

Throughout the years different materials have been introduced in all subjects for students in schools. In science, for instance, students are taught new things about molecular growth, how the earth rotates, and which planets are no longer considered planets. In math, students are taught simpler ways for problem solving, they are introduced to different techniques on how to use a bar graph. In History, things are constantly changing and the students are taught the effects of what has happened to what is currently happening in our world now. In literature, well, we have stalled; we are still teaching Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, and teaching kids how properly format your "5 paragraph essay", why? There are new literature books that are constantly coming out, books that are relevant to our new generation of students. Teaching literature does come with basics, but it does not need to be the same materials that have been taught for over 20 years. As educators we need to realize that our students will change, and they will be different every single year we see them. So why not create curriculum that is aligned with who they are? Research has shown significant rising in interest from students when implementing things such as student choice and YA literature.

The benefits of implementing YA literature can help students cope with the struggles they are facing during their adolescent years. There are so many texts that kids can connect with, from LGBTQ + rights, bullying, relationships, and to going through unfamiliar changes. These texts will show them that they are not alone in whatever they are going through. In his article *YA Literature Belongs in the Classroom Because...* Mike Roberts (2013) says

Having YA books available in classrooms helps students find books that speak to them, and when they encounter those books, students are much more likely to look for another one. If we want students to become readers, we need to provide access to all sorts of reading material—including, of course, YA books. (2013)

This ties in with student choice, choosing the text that they connect with to help them fall in love with literature.

Rachel Wadham and Jonathan Ostenson (2012) are advocates for Young Adult Literature. They both say:

Young adult literature can provide the familiar, less alienating literature that Rosenblatt (1955) called for while also meeting the standards of quality that are often ascribed to the classics. Consequently, secondary school students are understandably more motivated to read YA literature than other texts assigned them in schools, especially titles from the canon of classics. Likewise, the use of familiar teenage characters and settings, especially in realistic fiction for young adults, often mirrors what students know from their own experience, making the texts less demanding in terms of what prior knowledge students need to bring to the reading. (2012)

They believe that both canonical texts as well as YA literature both bring great benefits to students. However, at the end of the day, YA literature and building connections with the kids makes all the difference.

In one article found on the NCTE *The Top Five Reasons We Love Giving Students Choice in Reading*- students are given choice on what to read and their passion for reading grew tremendously. The article explains how choice empowers students, how it makes them feel

important and that they matter. And that is what students should always feel. DiCamillo (2016) says:

When we assign reading, rarely do we have meaningful conversations about these texts with all students. Now that we offer choice, our conversations are about books students enjoy reading, and the discussions are exciting and passionate. (2016)

How to Thrive in the Middle by Nancie Atwell (2016) discusses that giving the students the ability to teach other students has been a success as well.

They recommend books to one another, unpack poems together, quiz peers in spelling, establish criteria for genre studies in writing workshop, make plans, discuss, debate, research and create in collaboration, and teach one another across the curriculum.” (Atwell, 2016)

Providing the students with choice helps teach them accountability.

Another great book is *The year they burned the books* by Garden, N. (2017). This book is about a controversy that broke out after Jamie Crawford wrote an article in the school’s newspaper that condoms should be available to high school students.

Staff in the school is trying to get rid of sex ed classes, and the students do not agree with this choice. Jamie is struggling with coming out herself, and she has friends that are gay who are dealing with parents that are “anti-homosexual”. (2017)

Throughout all of the problems these kids face, they are still trying to fight for something they feel is important to them. This book helps students understand the importance of using their voice, and fighting for what they believe in.

Michael Sadowski discusses important practices that can make schools more inclusive with LGBTQ curriculum by ensuring that LGBTQ students are supported and welcomed in their

schools. Sadowski writes about how we, as adults, can become role models, create outreach programs, and ensuring that families are involved as well. Schools must go beyond just creating a GSA clubs and press on the fact that although safety matters, LGBTQ students must feel that their respected and that they have a place in their school in order to succeed academically. This book explains how to do that for students in many different ways. *Safe is not enough: Better schools for LGBTQ students* Sadowski, M. (2016) is about how all educators can support the growing population of the LGBTQ communities.

Just Like Sadowski, Donn Short believes that bullying stems from the simple fact that people are not educated enough on something, they feel the need to undermine others. In his book *Am I Safe Here*, Donn Short treats students as the experts, asking them to shine a light on the marginalization and bullying faced by LGBTQ youth. *Am I Safe Here?* Is another book that helps educators create more inclusive settings not only in their classrooms, but school wide. It explains the importance that teachers need to do more than just include one LGBTQ book or article in their lessons, a whole culture change is needed in order for LGBTQ to feel welcomed and not have to question their safety. Short explains how LGBTQ students need more than just hallway security cameras to make them feel comfortable, that they are not going to be bullied, because in reality, those do not do much. LGBTQ students go through enough trying to find their own identity, they should not have to feel constant fear of becoming bullied at a place that is supposed to be a safe haven for kids.

So how can we tie LGBTQ+ with YA literature and truly emphasize the importance of introducing them? Colleen M. Graff and Derry L. Stufft (2011) explain just that in their article *Increasing Visibility for LGBTQ Students: What Schools can do to Create Inclusive Classroom Communities*.

The number of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning students is increasing in schools. School districts, administrators and teachers need to increase awareness of these students and work to make them feel included and welcomed in a safe school environment, one free from offensive languages and practices. This article discusses some of the problems that these students and teachers face and some strategies that educators can use to help them be a valuable part of a learning community. (Graff & Stufft, 2011).

There are so many benefits of incorporating multicultural literature into the classroom.

According to a study made by DeLeon (2002), McCowan (2011) states:

The main goals of multicultural literature are to increase sense of self-worth in students, achievement of educational equity, cultural pluralism, a sense of empowerment, the ability to work in harmony with other students, and teaching from a multicultural perspective. In using this particular type of literature in the classroom there are many benefits that can be taken from it. (2011)

This ties into bringing in literature that is meaningful and relevant to the students, rather than just teaching something that has been taught for years. The study made by Brooks and Young (2010) explains that student choice is more than just giving the students a voice. It impacts the students as they get older and eventually have to speak up about what they want outside of school life. Brooks (2010) explains that without student choice and the opportunity to give students a voice in the classroom, we are not teaching them self-determination. In the actual study, students were given a choice (college level) as to which assignments they wanted to complete, and some students were not given the choice at all- Ultimately, the students that did have a choice, did much better on their assignments and chose assignments that were meaningful and beneficial to

them. They were not as stressed as the students that were not given a choice, because they were able to pick the assignments that they felt were useful.

So, this is how students at a college level felt, but what about students in an elementary school? Do younger kids need a choice as to what they want to read or work on? Does their opinion matter? Of course, it does- by starting at a younger age, it allows the students to be more comfortable when they are in a situation where they are asked to voice their opinion. According to Johnson & Blair (2003)

Students must not only be allowed to choose their own books and have the time to read them, but they must also be accountable for the decisions they have made. With guidance from the teacher, students will know that they want to read a book that captures and holds their attention; one they hope will go on forever. (2003)

We simply cannot just assume that children, especially at the elementary level, will be able to narrow down choices from 20 books down to 1. We have to be realistic and give them a reasonable selection to choose from. Teacher discretion will always be necessary.

If we incorporate other pieces of information for a student that make the text relevant, it does not matter in the end if it was written by a “dead white man” or not. I believe that we need to incorporate more works of different races and implement them both in IB/AP and general ed classes! Like Julia E Torres says, “In the end, what are we doing in Language Arts class if we are not encouraging students to examine and ‘taste’ life?” Why can’t we have our students still read Shakespeare with a modern twist and act out Romeo & Juliet with hip-hop/ rap music? I do not think that teaching old literature is the problem, I think that some teachers are afraid to get out of their comfort zone and create new lessons that students will interact with and relate to. “The AP English test may never have lyrics from Cardi B. on it for FRQ 1, an essay about Chance the

Rapper from [They Can't Kill Us Until They Kill Us](#) (not technically YA, but full of pop-culture references still the same) as FRQ 2, or list [Electric Arches](#) as one of the options for FRQ 3. But, in teaching these works, I know that my kids are getting a taste of what real writers do: write for an audience that can relate to their work.” (Torres, 2018).

If one book sums it all up, it is *English Teachers Are from Mars, Students Are from Venus (But YA Books Can Help Interplanetary Understanding)* by Chris Crowe. Crowe (1999) ties everything in together so well. He explains how different generations have this belief that there is a gap between them in their learning and interest style. However, he realized that it was not a generational gap that was an issue, it stemmed from elementary school when kids were programmed to believe that teachers came from another planet! So how does a teacher prove to a student that they can think like them, learn like them, and enjoy similar things? It all starts with the teacher and building that trust with the students. Crowe says:

By encouraging our students to read YA literature, we can help reluctant readers overcome their reluctance, and we can allow avid readers to discover a whole field of books they may have overlooked. YA publishers and authors work very hard to produce books that will appeal to the unique characteristics of the Venusians who inhabit our classrooms; as English teachers, we can't afford to miss the opportunity these books give us to bring our students from Venus a little closer to Mars. (1999)

Stepping out of our comfort zone, helps the students reach their full potential in the classroom.

We must be willing to change in order for our students to open up and change as well.

Part Three: Contributions to the Profession

ELA is the foundation of learning. As mentioned in the readings, ELA is a subject that will help students in any class they take. To me, ELA is broken down in four categories: reading, speaking, listening, and writing. It is an essential subject for students to learn to excel in anything they do, even outside of school. I always had a struggle with finding a way to explain to everyone, not just my students, how important learning the basics of English is. After the readings and videos, I am able to articulate myself and back up my knowledge with studies that prove just that. For instance, I had a student during my student teaching that was adamant about how irrelevant English class was for him- I was struck with the question- “when am I ever going to use this material if I don’t plan on attending college?” I simply could not answer it aside from saying it is an important subject to learn. Fast forward to this year, just two days ago after I read this material I was welcomed with hugs by this student and I sat down with him. I brought up that question and he laughed, I told him I could not find a way to answer it at the time because I simply did not know how to put it into words- but now I can. I began explaining to him that although he did not want to attend college after graduation, he still needed to know how to articulate himself to do anything in this world. He eventually needed to get a job, and he needed to know how to present himself, I proceeded with explaining the details I’ve learned and he truly took my advice to heart. That alone made me feel like I accomplished something, I got through to that one student, and although it was something so simple- it was enough to help him hopefully want to learn this year.

My first year teaching, I had over 200 freshmen. I provided them with a survey at the beginning of the school year and asked them questions such as: What is one thing you do not like

about English class, and what is something you love about English class? Their answers did not shock me, over 80% of them said that they hated learning about “old literature”. Upon receiving their information, I followed up with them and asked them what exactly is “old literature”? They said they did not like the fact that they had to read things like Romeo and Juliet- they wanted to learn something new. I agreed with them, as much as I love Shakespeare, I did not get to enjoy it until after I fell in love with literature. And the process for me to love literature was not easy. I had to wait until I was in college to experience learning material that was relevant to my time, material that I found interesting enough to want to read at home and do further research. So gaining the information that I collected from my surveys will help me create lessons that will hook my students into literature.

“It’s not just the books under fire now that worry me. It is the books that will never be written, the books that will never be read” (Judy Blume, n.d.). Such a powerful set of words. If we do not implement YA literature into our curriculum, this is exactly what will happen. My students already show little to no interest in reading at all, and if we keep bringing in books that have no relevance to them, then we will lose them completely. That is exactly why I fought to bring the book *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers for my students. This book exposes real life situations that my students could possibly face. My students are a mix of different races varying from: African American, White, Hispanic, Middle Eastern, and Asian; the majority of them are Hispanic, African American, and Middle Eastern. Unfortunately, in the world we live in now, they are targeted the most by society and stereotyped.

This will be the second unit of the school year. This unit will help students write research papers, build confidence in reading and acting with their classmates, and expand their

vocabulary. *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers, is about a 16-year-old African American boy Steve Harmon who is on trial for murder. Steve Harmon was a film student prior to his arrest. In the novel, Steve decides to make a movie about his experiences in prison and in the courtroom. *Monster* is his record of the events that occur during his murder trial, written as a movie script. Because the novel is a look inside a courtroom trial, the reader gets the real feel on what goes in during this intense case. The students will be able to act out scenes and really get a feel of how this young man felt. Not only connecting to the students because it is based out of New York, but this book will open the student's eyes to the corrupt justice system we have. My school thought it may be too "hard" on the students to bring in this book, not really looking at the population there. They were not concerned with the fact that it may be difficult to comprehend (which it is not), but they argued that it would be too much of an emotional read. "Taking landmark books away from kids, books that help them to make sense of their place in the world, hardly seems a means "to make this country a better place." In fact, it would seem to confirm that these "injustices" are systemic and ongoing." (Blasingame and Durand, 2015). If we cannot expose our students to the reality of what can happen if you are falsely accused or in the wrong place at the wrong time, then what are we preparing the students for? This book will help students see how unfair our justice system can be, and how crime against minorities is and always has been a big issue in today's society.

In Jason Griffith's *Constantly Curating: Building Text Sets and Pairings in Novel Study*, he discusses the importance of pairing readings with other forms of texts. When discussing my rationale for my book, I discussed how I was going to incorporate other texts that would expand the students literature knowledge. I will be using the poem *The Road Not Taken* by Robert Frost to connect with Steve Harmon's journey. The students will understand how to read poetry, how

to write poetry, and how to analyze poetry. It is very important that the students understand how to connect two different types of texts together. The non-fiction piece I will be using will be an article based on Kalief Browder. Kalief was a 22 year old man that was wrongfully convicted and spent time in Rikers Prison. His tragic death happened after he was found innocent and released. I will also be incorporating some videos, pictures and activities to check my students understanding. The overall unit is to help students understand and be aware that their actions will always have consequences.

My choice of articles, videos, and music, were all chosen because they will help connect with the students everyday life. By incorporating modern information, it will help the student better understand the context given. My unit plan will help the students write with more detail, understand how to read and analyze poetry, and how to present cases without making a bias judgment. Griffith argues a valid point, “Curating a multimodal set of contemporary, complementary texts focused on fostering connection and building upon theme can help to offset the limitations of a canonical novel.” (Griffith, 2018) Students will also be able to successfully learn different forms of communication; they will learn to present their ideas and work to an audience and they will be able to use new vocabulary learned from these works. Last but not least, students will be able to view perspectives given by different people/characters within the works.

Introducing kids to YA literature is beneficial in many ways. It will capture their attention by having them relate to stories that are relevant to them. Bringing in relevant literature will allow the students to have a desire to participate, especially because they will connect with the texts. In the article *Recognize the Signs: Reading Young Adult Literature to Address Bullying* Sherry explained, “We need to find literature so we can talk about the issues. . . . we have to find

books that get through to students.” Lana recognized the power of knowing the literature in order to recommend a particular title to a student. The preservice teachers discussed the “power of books” and a “trusting teacher” to help students through difficult times or to help students understand the consequences of their actions. (Asher, J. (2011). Although this article is about bullying, it addresses important facts about how literature can either create a positive or negative environment for the students.

Unit Plan Monster:

Topic/Text: *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers

Grade Level: 11th Grade (High School Juniors)

Time: Twenty 45- minute classes

Big Ideas:

- Justice
- Hope
- Racism
- Consequences

Context:

This will be the first unit of the school year. This unit will help students write research papers, build confidence in reading and acting with their classmates, and expand their vocabulary. In this unit students will be reading a primary text *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers. In this novel, a 16-year-old African American boy Steve Harmon is on trial for murder. Steve Harmon was a film student prior to his arrest. In the novel, Steve decides to make a movie about his experiences in prison and in the courtroom. *Monster* is his record of the events that occur

during his murder trial, written as a movie script. Because the novel unfolds like a courtroom drama; the reader feels like a spectator at a trial. The students will be able to act out scenes and really get a feel of how this young man felt. Not only connecting to the students because it is based out of New York, but this book will open the student's eyes to the justice system we have.

I will be using the poem *The Road Not Taken* by Robert Frost to connect with Steve Harmon's journey. The students will understand how to read poetry, how to write poetry, and how to analyze poetry. It is very important that the students understand how to connect two different types of texts together. The non-fiction piece I will be using will be an article based on Kalief Browder. Kalief was a 22 year old man that was wrongfully convicted and spent time in Rikers Prison. His tragic death happened after he was found innocent and released. I will also be incorporating some videos, pictures and activities to check my students understanding. The overall unit is to help students understand and be aware that their actions will always have consequences.

Rationale:

My choice of articles, videos, and music, were all chosen because they will help connect with the students every day life. By incorporating modern information, it will help the student better understand the context given. My unit plan will help the students write with more detail, understand how to read and analyze poetry, and how to present cases without making a bias judgment. Students will also be able to successfully learn different forms of communication, they will learn to present their ideas and work to an audience and they will be able to use new vocabulary learned from these works. Last but not least, students will be able to openly view perspectives given by different people/characters within the works.

Essential Questions:

- How do the decisions we make affect our community?
- How can we determine which path is the correct path?
- Does society influence our decisions?
- How do the people you hang out with influence how society views you?

Resources:

Novel: *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers

Non Fiction Article: Kalief Browder’s Tragic Death and the Criminal Injustice of Our Bail System

Poem: *The Road Not Taken* by Robert Frost

Detailed Instructional Plan:

Week 1

Day 1—Monday: (Lesson Plan 1)

Non Fiction Article: Kalief Browder’s Tragic Death and the Criminal Injustice of Our Bail System

Learning Objectives:

- Students will be able to identify what imagery they see in the article presented.
- Students will be able to understand Gonnerman’s view on Kalief Browder in her article.

Detailed Instructional Plan:

Aim:

How does Kalief’s story demonstrate injustice in our system?

Do Now:

Write about a time you were accused of something you did not do. How did that make you feel?

OR Write about a time you witnessed someone take blame for something they did not do. How did that make you feel?

- The teacher will give the students a few moments to write down what is displayed and prior to them sharing their responses, the teacher will give an example “After 9/11 I have seen many people being treated differently because of their religious and cultural beliefs. They did not commit the crime but they were stereotyped because of what others had done, this makes me feel horrible that we live in a society that innocent people take burdens from the guilty”. **The teacher will model this activity first. While the students are writing, the teachers will take attendance. Shortly after, the teacher will ask the students to volunteer their answers. (4 minutes)**

Procedure:

Mini Lesson: The teacher will ask the students to look at the articles on their desks. Immediately upon looking at the article, the teacher will ask the students to point out a word or a few words that jump out at them. The teacher will write one word on the board as an example:

INJUSTICE. She tells the students they should be looking for words that trigger emotions, once they have found one they must go to the board and write it down. After writing the words on the board, the teacher will read the article out loud using the “Thinking aloud” strategy. The teacher will provide the students with pencils and inform them to underline sentences they may have questions about as she reads. **(10 minutes)**

Lesson and Group Activity:

After mini-lesson, the teacher will divide the students into groups. Each group will have to combine the questions they have collected during the reading and answer them together on a

separate piece of paper. This will enable discussion on the article and allow the students to really think about what just happened. The students will be given time to share their questions and responses to the class.

Summary:

The teacher will then give the students a graphic organizer. On the graphic organizer, the teacher is asking the students to write a letter to Kalief Browder about how his story made an impact on them. The letter should be no less than a page and a half.

After the activity is done, the sheet will be collected and graded based on grammar, and connections to the article.

Assessment Plan:

Informal Assessment:

The teacher will assess the students based on how they work together and discuss their concerns on the article. The teacher will look at how well they analyze what really happened, and how much tragedy is in our justice system.

Formal Assessment:

The teacher will collect the summative assessment and see how well the students understood the terminology used in the article. This will be graded based on the rubric given to the students.

Homework:

Students will be given roles they will have to act out in the next class. They are to make cases for the roles selected. We will be doing a Mock Trial based on the article given, so the students must be able to present their cases accurately and efficiently. The teacher will also provide the

students with a list of words that are commonly used in courts, so they can understand them for the following lesson.

Resources and Materials:

Non Fiction Article: Kalief Browder’s Tragic Death and the Criminal Injustice of Our Bail System

Standards Addressed:

11-12R4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings. Analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning, tone, and mood, including words with multiple meanings. Analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of technical or key term(s) over the course of a text. (RI&RL)

Week/day: First Week; Day 2 Tuesday

Title focus of lesson: Mock Trial

Key Concept /Essential Question connection:

- How can we prove that our justice system is corrupt?

Learning objective:

- Students will be able to view different perspectives of a case and make a conclusion based on evidence provided.

Activities

- Teacher takes attendance (1 minute)
- Teacher passes out an image of Kalief Browder with a small excerpt under it that says: “This is Kalief Browder, who spent three years on Rikers Island without being convicted of a crime. He had been arrested in the spring of 2010, at age sixteen, for a robbery he

insisted he had not committed. Then he spent more than one thousand days on Rikers waiting for a trial that never happened.” (1 minute)

- The teacher asks the students to study his image and prepare for the mock trial they worked on the night before. (8 minutes)
- Teacher informs the students that they have to keep the Do Now question in mind while preparing.
- Display Do-Now activity- “Are the loopholes in the law causing injustice?”
- Teacher asks students after they prepare their cases if they understand the meaning behind the question asked. (2 minutes)
- Teacher will introduce the activity- Mock trial: The following mock-trial activity will challenge students to present cases for Kalief Browder and respond on his behalf. (5 minutes)
- Teacher will provide students with some information to work with:
 - Teacher will list the charges against Kalief Browder.
 - Teacher will also identify the possible sentences for Kalief Browder.
 - Students will have these notes so they can form a case.
 - The group acting as judges should prepare questions for both groups.
 - Explain that the judgment group must create questions that elicit both objective *and* subjective answers. (3 minutes)
 - Teacher will walk around and make sure that the students are deliberating properly and remind them of the time remaining before they have to present their cases.
 - Students present their cases with the class. (20 minutes)

Homework/assessment:

Homework: Review case files for the Mock Trial that will be continued for the next day.

Students must have a formal written closing statement that will be presented to the jury.

Informal assessment: Teacher will walk around class observing the students group work.

Standard Addressed:

11-12SL1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on complex topics, texts, and issues; express ideas clearly and persuasively, and build on those of others.

11-12SL4: Present claims, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective; alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed; organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Week/day: First Week; Day 3 Wednesday

Title focus of lesson: Mock Trial Continuation

The students will come in prepared to finalize the Mock Trial. They have to present their closing statements to the judge and the jury will determine if the defendant is guilty or not guilty. The teacher will then ask the same questions that were presented to the class on day 1: Write about a time you were accused of something you did not do. How did that make you feel? OR Write about a time you witnessed someone take blame for something they did not do. How did that make you feel?

The students are told to reflect on the mock trial and incorporate what happened there to their responses. Then the students will be given an opportunity to share their answers.

Exit Slip: How do you feel about what happened to Kalief Browder? What would you say to the world if you were in his shoes? Write 6-8 sentences, this will be collected.

Homework: Write a 2-3 page paper explaining how you felt the Mock Trial went. In detail, explain how this trial made you feel, what you felt could have gone differently and how your feelings have changed (or stayed the same) towards Kalief Browder. You may bring in your draft to review with classmates for workshop tomorrow. The final draft will be due on **Friday**.

Standard Addressed:

11-12SL1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on complex topics, texts, and issues; express ideas clearly and persuasively, and build on those of others.

11-12SL4: Present claims, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective; alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed; organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Week/day: First Week; Day 4 Thursday

Learning Objective:

- Students will be able to identify and connect with Myers character in his novel prior to reading it
- Students will be able to explore vocabulary they are not familiar with

Title focus of lesson: Monster Anticipation Guide

- Teacher takes attendance and displays “Do Now and Aim” on board.
- Do Now Activity: Do you think before you act on something? Why or Why not?
- Aim: Why is it important to think before you act?

- Now that the students are somewhat familiar with the justice system, we will be working on an anticipation guide (**Attached in Appendix**) for *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers. The book is about another African American teenage boy who was arrested and is going through a trial to see if he is innocent or guilty. The anticipation guide provided would give the teacher a better look on what the students think about our justice system.
- Once the anticipation guide is filled out, the students will share out some of their answers. The teacher will also share some of her answers. After that is done, the students will then be instructed to pull out what they have drafted for their paper. The teacher will pair the students up and have them review their papers. The students will be required to follow a guideline **Ladder of feedback on work guide** that will be handed out. This guideline will explain how to leave feedback for their partner; they have to use constructive criticism.
- Once the students have finished the workshop, the teacher will then allow each student to come to her desk for a meeting. She will go over what can be revised and give the student proper feedback.

Homework: No Homework- finish up your paper, due tomorrow.

Standard Addressed:

11-12W4: Create a poem, story, play, art work, or other response to a text, author, theme or personal experience; demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a variety of techniques and genres.

11-12SL1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on complex topics, texts, and issues; express ideas clearly and persuasively, and build on those of others.

Week/day: First Week; Day 5 Friday

Title focus of lesson: Monster Anticipation Guide Review

Today the students will be reviewing everything they have done this week. We will be discussing the opening of the book *Monster*. The students will have group work activities to do some research on current events in the five boroughs of NYC. They will learn about riots, protests, and the teacher will display a mini video on Kalief Browder from Netflix. After the students have completed the video and research, the students will write about how their views have changed. What has caused this change in emotion? The students will write this on a graphic organizer and turn it in for grading.

Standard Addressed:

11-12L3: Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

Week 2

Day 6—Monday: (Lesson Plan 2)

Week/day: Second Week; Day 7 Tuesday

Title focus of lesson: *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers (Pages 1-15)

Key Concept /Essential Question connection:

How do the people you hang out with influence how society views you?

Learning objective:

Students will be able to connect real life situations with the text

Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how society influences views people

Activities

- Teacher takes attendance and collects homework.
- Teacher displays “Do Now: What characteristics define you as a person?” “Aim: What message is the cover of the book giving you as a reader?”
- After giving the students a few moments to answer, the teacher will pass out the book and have the students strictly look at the front of the book. The teacher will give them a few moments to write down some words that come to mind. By doing this activity, it will enable the students to think about what type of book they will be reading.
- The teacher will write the students answers on the board as they share out.
- After completing that task, the teacher will begin the reading with the class.
- For each day for the book, the teacher will display 5 names of students on the board. They will be responsible for reading out loud 3 pages each. By randomly selecting the students to read, this will give the teacher an opportunity to really check their knowledge of homework readings.
- The teacher will inform the students that every day we will recap what happened in the 20-pages they will be assigned to read for homework, and there will be no writing homework until the end of the week to assess their understanding of what we read this week.
- The teacher will present a Ted video called “Why your worst deeds don’t define you.” After watching this video, the teacher will ask the students to find similar themes between the book and the video. This video is about how the speaker turned his life

around and found himself again. In the video he motivates people to change for the better. He talks about how beneficial it would be to change our justice system and jails. So rather than the inmates leaving prison with hatred and anger, they would leave taking jail as a life changing learning experience for the better; a rehab. This connects with *Monster* because Harmon is still struggling to find himself again therefore, the video is a good example to begin discussions on what Steve can do now and what the government can do to help others like Steve.

- Their answers will be collected and graded based on how well they connect both works.

Homework/assessment:

At home, Read pages 15-35. Write down a minimum of two questions or statements to review in class.

Standard Addressed:

11-12R4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings. Analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning, tone, and mood, including words with multiple meanings. Analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of technical or key term(s) over the course of a text. (RI&RL)

Week/day: Second Week; Day 8 Wednesday

Title focus of lesson:

Read in class 35-50.

Today the teacher will be presenting the students with articles on why Walter Dean Myers wrote his novel *Monster*. First we will conduct questions with the students asking why they think this book was written. The teacher will then give an article that interviews Walter Dean Myers directly. The title of the article states “Walter Dean Myers writes books troubled teens can relate

to”. The students and the teacher will analyze the title by getting opinions on if they agree or disagree. After a brief discussion, the teacher will ask the students to analyze and annotate the article. The purpose of this article is to build connections with the author and understanding the logic behind his writing. We will also learn more about Pathos, Logos, and Ethos and which one they feel is connected most.

Homework/assessment:

Read pages 50-70 for homework. Write down a minimum of two questions or statements to review in class.

Standard Addressed:

11-12L3: Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

Week/day: Second Week; Day 9 Thursday

Title focus of lesson: Today’s Music and its Influence in Society

Teacher will begin the class off by playing “Guilty Until Proven Innocent- Jay-Z” in the background and the students will have the “Do Now: How do these lyrics connect with what you have read so far”. The teacher will give the students some time to really comprehend the words in the song. After the song is finished, the teacher will give the students a few moments to complete their sentences.

Then she will display one excerpt from the song on the board:

Guilty Until Proven Innocent-Jay-Z

***“I thought this was America people!
Yeah, GUILTY until proven INNOCENT huh?
That's how we're working huh?”***

Upset my mama, arrested, put in the lineup, trying to put dents in my armor, but I'm a survivor.

*You can't touch me. No you can't touch me.: Jigga, Kelly, not guilty.
Try to charge me, but I'm not guilty”*

Once they have finished, they will do a share aloud. By having the students connect the song to what they have read will give the teacher a better look at who has read and who has not.

Once we have finished discussing the song and its relevance, we will read pages 70-95 together.

Standard Addressed:

11-12R4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings. Analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning, tone, and mood, including words with multiple meanings. Analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of technical or key term(s) over the course of a text. (RI&RL)

Homework/assessment:

Read pages 95-115 for homework. Write down a minimum of two questions or statements to review in class.

Week/day: Second Week; Day 10 Friday

Title focus of lesson: Vocabulary check

In today's class, we will be doing a mid-book vocabulary check. After reviewing last night's homework, the teacher will present the

Do Now: What has Monster taught us this far?

Aim: Vocabulary Checkpoint

After the students are finished with their Do Now and share out, the teacher will give the students a paper with a list of words. Throughout the novel we will come across many of the following vocabulary words. As we study *Monster*, you will be required to know these words and their definitions. I would like you to fill out what you already know and then we will discuss them together. Once everyone has filled out the definitions, the teacher will go over them all and brainstorm what they think the rest mean. Before the end of the class, the students will have all the definitions filled in.

****This is what it will look like when the students have finished answering****

Vocabulary List—Part 1

1. Objection: expression of opposition or disapproval
2. Proposition: statement or assertion
3. Felony: serious, often violent, crime
4. Testimony: witness's statement under oath
5. Suspect: subject to or deserving of suspicion
6. Shackle: restraint or impediment
7. Monster: inhumanely cruel or wicked person
8. Allege: declare, esp. without proof
9. Prosecutor: institute legal proceedings against
10. Merchandise: goods for sale
11. Evidence: available facts determining truth or validity
12. Character: collective qualities that distinguish a person or thing
13. Fringe: outer edge or margin
14. Implicated: show to be involved in
15. Indulging: yield freely

Vocabulary List—Part 2

1. Acquaintance: slight knowledge
2. Taint: spot or trace
3. Incident: an event
4. Perpetrator: person who commits a crime
5. Menace: a threat
6. Implicate: to show involvement in Conviction--a decision or judgment.
7. Technician: person skilled in a specific trade
8. Verdict: a decision in a court of law
9. Accusation: a statement charging a person
10. Transverse: cross-wise
11. Consign: to assign; commit

Once the vocabulary lesson is done, we will continue reading together as a class 115-130. The teacher will assign the students to do an in class writing based on what they felt reading page 125. This is when Steve gets arrested, How did this scene make you feel? What type of image did you see while reading this page? This will be collected as their exit slip and graded.

Homework/assessment:

Continue reading, we're almost done! Over the weekend Read pages 130-180. Write a one page paper explaining the events that occurred in the book, use atleast 2 direct quotes.

Week 3

Day 11—Monday: (Lesson Plan 3)

Title focus of lesson: *The Road Not Taken* by Robert Frost

Key Concept /Essential Question connection:

How can we determine which path is the correct path?

Learning objective:

Students will be able to write their own poem by using a mentor piece.

Students will be able to identify and understand challenging vocabulary.

Activities

- Teacher takes attendance and collects homework from previous week.
- Teacher informs the students to immediately begin working on the “**Do Now:** Think about and write down responses to these following statements- What decisions have you made this week? Did you choose to stay up late one night to watch a movie? Did you go to bed earlier than usual? Did you get homework done or did you put it off? Did you pack your lunch or buy it?”

- As the students work on that, the aim will also be displayed “Aim: What are consequences and is there really a consequence for every action?”
- As the students write down their responses, the teacher also hands out the poem by Robert Frost.
- The teacher calls a couple of students to ask them what their responses are. After sharing their responses, the teacher advises the students to look at the poem and read it to themselves quietly and underline words they do not fully understand. She will give them about 5 minutes to do so.
- The teacher already prepared a list of words from the poem and wanted to check and see which ones the students knew and which ones they did not.
- The teacher checks their understanding by walking around the class as they are reading and writing down what words she sees them underline/highlight.
- The teacher writes the following words on the board:

Diverged: branched off; moved in a different direction

Undergrowth: small trees and plants growing beneath larger trees

Fair: promising; favorable

Claim: demand or right

Trodden: walked on

Hence: from this time

Then she models the reading and activates schema by incorporating the Think Aloud technique.
- The students are then given a sheet to guide them in writing their own mini descriptive poem. “Write a poem of your own, make sure to use descriptive language to help paint a

mental image for your readers. NOTE: try not to tell your reader everything, leave some room for imagination and their own interpretation.”

- Prior to beginning this activity the teacher will display a mini lesson on descriptive language. The teacher will display on the board “Sight, Sound, Smell, Taste, Touch. Under each category, the teacher will ask the students to give a work that would be

Homework/Assessment

Write your own poem or song! Be creative, write it about an obstacle you have faced and overcame, or write it about a time where you dreamt of something and how you achieved your dreams. Think about everything that we have read so far this term, and incorporate the new vocabulary you have learned. You may select a topic of your own and present it to me before the end of the day for approval. (Due Wednesday)

Let’s keep reading- Read 180-200 of *Monster*

Standards Addressed

11-12R4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings. Analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning, tone, and mood, including words with multiple meanings. Analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of technical or key term(s) over the course of a text. (RI&RL)

Week/day: Third Week; Day 12 Tuesday

Title focus of lesson: Group Work

Activities

- Teacher takes attendance
- Teacher will pair the students into groups of five.
- They will be assigned each two pages from the book that they have to deeper analyze.

- The students will work together to explain what the section they are assigned is about. They will try to identify where Harmon went wrong, one person in the group will write the group responses and share with the rest of the class.

This will help students read closely and think about the overall picture they get in the story.

This will enable them to rely on each other to put pieces together and discover things they had not when they initially read the novel.

Standard Addressed:

11-12SL1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on complex topics, texts, and issues; express ideas clearly and persuasively, and build on those of others.

11-12SL4: Present claims, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective; alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed; organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Homework:

Finish your creative assignment, due tomorrow.

Let's keep reading- Read 200-220 of *Monster*

Week/day: Third Week; Day 13 Wednesday

Title focus of lesson: Constructive feedback

Activities: Today the teacher will collect the creative assignment the students have been working on. After collecting, we will do group discussions on what difficulties they had while doing the assignment. We will address any issues they had and the teacher will have fellow students also provide feedback to each other.

Standard Addressed:

11-12SL1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on complex topics, texts, and issues; express ideas clearly and persuasively, and build on those of others.

Week/day: Third Week; Day 14 Thursday

(Lesson Plan 4)

Title focus of lesson: *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers (Pages 220-240)

Learning Objectives:

- Students will be able to identify the central theme in the book
- Students will be able to identify symbolism
- Students will be able to closely examine how a character has changed through the novel

Detailed Instructional Plan:

Aim:

In-depth analysis

Do Now:

Why is the novel titled *Monster*? What does the monster symbolize?

Procedure:

- Teacher will take attendance
- Teacher will display both “Do Now” and “Aim” on board, while the students write down the answers, the teacher will inform the students that they will be analyzing the book in depth. We will be covering Main ideas, Conflict, Characterization, Setting, and Symbolism.
- The teacher has the students share their responses from the do now and then begins the PowerPoint.

- The teacher will display on the PowerPoint:

Setting: How does the setting impact the story?

Main Idea and Theme: What is the main idea of the prosecutor's closing statement? The defense attorney's closing statement?

If you had been on the jury...how would you have voted?

Discuss the role of race in the text. For example, does it matter what the race of the judge, attorneys, and defendants is? What about Mr. Nesbitt's race?

What about issues of class? Would the story be different if Steve's parents were wealthy?

Conflict:

What does this coming to knowledge cost Steve?

Explain the conflict between Steve and his father.

- The students will be given time to answer the questions in a group setting. Then the teacher will be able to go over their answers as well as give constructive criticism on the responses.

Mini Lesson: Lesson and Group Activity:

Mini Lesson: What is a Haiku?

The teacher will read aloud a few Haiku examples and ask the students if they are familiar with how to write a Haiku. The teacher will give an example that is relevant to the book:

“Monster is human too

Mistakes do not define us

Am I a Monster?”

After giving that example, the teacher asks the students to write their own Haiku. This will be collected and graded as their exit slip.

Assessment Plan:

Informal Assessment:

The teacher will assess the students based on their responses with the group work.

Formal Assessment:

The exit slip will be the formal assessment.

Homework:

Complete *Monster!* Pages 240-270.

There will be a test tomorrow about the overall book, be prepared to answer questions and multiple choice. If you haven't read- now is the time!!!

Standards Addressed:

11-12SL1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on complex topics, texts, and issues; express ideas clearly and persuasively, and build on those of others.

Week/day: Third Week; Day 15 Friday

Title focus of lesson: Check your knowledge- Test day.

Activities

Students will be given 45 minutes to complete test. This test will consist of multiple choice and short answer responses.

Week 4

Week/day: Fourth Week; Day 16 Monday

Title focus of lesson: Final Assessment Project

Activities

For this assignment, you are to create, draft, and write one act from your own life in screenplay format.

The Requirements - Your screenplay must:

- Be about a significant time in your life thus mimicking Steve Harmon's personal account in the book *Monster*.
- Be at least three full pages (typed, Times New Roman 12 point font, double spaced, 1 inch margins).
- Contain all necessary components of a screenplay
- Be creative
- Contain no spelling or grammar errors.

The Focus - The hardest part of this assignment will be narrowing down the events of your life to choose one that is the most screenplay-worthy. We will work on this in class using pre-writing thought questions that should help you to choose the most appropriate, powerful, telling time in your young life.

Every student must have a final draft to be turned in, and the teacher will break up the class in groups so you can present part of your scene to the class.

Below is what you will be graded on.

The Grading Rubric

Screenplay Knowledge

15

Honest Narrative Ability	15
Use of Written Detail	10
Detail from book included	10
<u>Creativity/Effort</u>	<u>10</u>

Homework/Assessment

Continue working on your drafts to bring in for workshop tomorrow.

Standards Addressed

11-12W4: Create a poem, story, play, art work, or other response to a text, author, theme or personal experience; demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a variety of techniques and genres

Week/day: Fourth Week; Day 17 Tuesday

Title focus of lesson: Final Assessment Project

Learning Objective

Students will learn organization skills.

Students will be able to clearly identify the Big Ideas in the book.

Activities

Today the students will work collectively to narrow down the most important parts of the book.

Which sections had the climax and which sections did they connect with the most. The students will then work with the teacher on what Big Ideas they see throughout the book. The teacher will also show a mini clip of the movie *Monster* to give the students a better idea of how scenes are acted out.

Following the mini clip, the teacher will do an Imagery activity.

Guided Imagery

The students will be asked to sit quietly and may close attention to what the teacher will be reading. Imagine you are Steve Harmon, you are a Black 16 year old teenage boy living in New York. One night you happened to hang out with the wrong crowd at the wrong time. You don't think anything of it, but then you wake up and all of a sudden you feel as if you're trapped in a nightmare. You are arrested, and on trial for murder. People are calling you a monster. Listen closely to this passage that was written by Steve:

Passage:

The best time to cry is at night, when the lights are out and someone is being beaten up and screaming for help. That way even if you sniffle a little they won't hear you. If anybody knows that you are crying, they'll start talking about it and soon it'll be your turn to get beat up when the lights go out.

There is a mirror over the steel sink in your cell. It's six inches high, and scratched with the names of some guys who were here before you.

When you look into the small rectangle, you see a face looking back at you but you don't recognize it. It doesn't look like you.

They say that you get used to being in jail but you don't see how. Every morning you wake up and are surprised to be there. If your life outside was real, then everything in there is just the opposite. We sleep with strangers, wake up with strangers, and go to the bathroom in front of strangers. They're strangers but they still find reasons to hurt each other.

Sometimes you feel like you have walked into the middle of a movie. It is a strange movie with no plot and no beginning. The movie is Black and white, and grainy. You have seen movies of prisons but never one like this. This is not a movie about bars and locked doors. It is about being alone when you are not really alone and about being scared all the time.

Passage from Walter Dean Myer's *Monster*. Passage from pages 1-4

Following reading:

Once the reading is done, these questions will be read to the students, the students must still try to believe they are in Steve's shoes.

What are you feeling?

Do you miss anyone?

What are you thinking about?

Do you wonder what will happen?

What do you miss the most?

The students will be given 10-15 minutes to write their feelings and thoughts as if they are Steve Harmon. The teacher will walk around the classroom observing what the students are writing.

Once they are done, the teacher will request willing students share their passages.

Homework/Assessment

Homework: students have to bring in ideas that will help complete their presentations. The presentations will be graded based on creativity as well as basic literature skills.

Assessment: Informal assessment was based on how well the students were able to work together gathering information for their presentation

Standards Addressed

11-12SL1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on complex topics, texts, and issues; express ideas clearly and persuasively, and build on those of others.

Week/day: Fourth Week; Day 18 Wednesday

Title focus of lesson: Final Assessment Project

Activities

- The teacher will take attendance and have the groups sit together and walk around to check out what they have put together.
- Students will have the majority of their group work assignment prepared when they come into class today.

The teacher will then split her time with each group to discuss any questions or concerns they have.

- The teacher will also provide the students with any additional readings or information from the works in the unit.
- The students will complete their projects in class, they will also have the opportunity to finish the work at home and communicate with each other.
- The teacher will assign each group a number in an order in which they will be presenting.

Homework/Assessment

Gather your final thoughts for tomorrow and Thursday!

Standards Addressed

11-12SL1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on complex topics, texts, and issues; express ideas clearly and persuasively, and build on those of others.

Week/day: Fourth Week; Day 19 Thursday

Title focus of lesson: Final Project Presentations

- Teacher will take attendance and ask the students to sit with their assigned groups.
- The groups will be numbered one through ten.
- Each group will have seven minutes to give their presentation.

- After all five groups presented within the 35-minute timeframe, the students will then have ten minutes to reflect on what they did and the students that have not presented will have the opportunity to ask the presenters for some pointers and feedback.

Homework/assessment:

Teacher will assess the students based on their ability to follow the rubric guidelines during the presentation. Final grade will be given at the end of all presentations on the final hard copy. No homework assigned.

Week/day: Fourth Week; Day 20 Friday

Title focus of lesson: Final Project Presentations

- Teacher will take attendance and ask the students to sit with their assigned groups.
- The groups will be numbered one through ten.
- Each group will have seven minutes to give their presentation.
- After all five groups presented within the 35-minute timeframe, the students will then have ten minutes to reflect on what they did and the students that have not presented will have the opportunity to ask the presenters for some pointers and feedback.

Commentary:

This unit plan was challenging for many reasons. It was difficult for me to visualize how the lesson would really work in a classroom setting. Writing a Composition unit plan is completely different than writing the Conceptual unit plan. This unit had me focusing on how to continuously keep the student's minds working by incorporating activities that they can relate to. Because my unit is about the American justice system, I anticipate there will be a lot of controversy with individual beliefs. That is why I have to create activities that would help the students work together, and allow them to express their opinions freely and respectfully. I chose

Monster by Walter Dean Myers because of how relevant it is to today's news events. It is relatable to the students because of Steve Harmon's age and where he resides; the novel is based out of New York. I chose to add Kalief Browder's story to the unit because of how well it works with the book. The vocabulary usage is very similar, therefore, this non-fiction article not only posed as a great side to the novel, but an anticipation guide as well. I focused on having the students analyze and interpret meaning from all the works chosen. Prior to even addressing the book though, I had the students do a Mock Trial so they can truly connect their emotions to what happened to Kalief. I also wanted to include a poem, and rather than choosing something from Langston Hughes or Audre Lorde, I chose "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost. This poem has the students reflect on all of my big ideas without actually saying what they are. The students here are analyzing the poem, and then writing their own. This poem exemplifies consequences to decisions we make, these decisions do not have to be life changing, they can be very small decisions but it shows how much of an impact they have. I also had the students write a letter to the people we have read about, I incorporated RAFTS into our lessons.

The anticipation guide I created is something I had a fun time making, but I kept second guessing if my order of sequence in the Unit really prepared the students for *Monster*. I was worried that I did too many activities, or did I do too little? Again, these are just a few questions I had to continue asking myself throughout and they cannot be answered unless I put my theory to practice. During the group activities, I wanted the students to really focus on working together to figure out what the author is portraying in his novel. Finding the central idea is a difficult task with this particular novel because it is written as a screenplay, so in order for the students to be able to get it, they have to truly analyze the full text. I felt like it was a good idea to have the students read for homework because the book is an extremely easy read. The pages are so short

and because it is written so simple, I felt that the students are more than capable of reading at home. Besides having the students write something about what they read everyday, I decided to have them write questions they had about the specific pages they read, that way it will help the students engage in class discussions and it will give me an opportunity to get different views on

CATEGORY	Excellent - 4	Good - 3	Satisfactory - 2	Needs Improvement - 1
STRUCTURE	Writing response shows exemplary structure and organization.	The writing response has a good structure and is organized well.	The writing response shows some structure and organization, but is lacking.	The poem shows no structure or organization.
TITLE	The writing response has a title that is engaging, creative, and relates to the assignment.	The writing response has a title that captures the essence of the writing well.	The writing response has a title, but it lacks substance.	The writing response has no title.
CONVENTIONS (SPELLING, PUNCTUATION, GRAMMAR)	The writing response is proofread and has no language convention errors such as spelling, punctuation, and grammar.	The writing response is proofread but has 1-2 small errors.	The writing response shows little editing, with many language convention mistakes.	The writing response is not proof read at all.
VOCABULARY/ WORD USAGE	The writing response contains an outstanding use of vivid and descriptive vocabulary.	The writing response contains many examples of descriptive vocabulary.	The writing response includes some descriptive vocabulary.	The writing response lacks descriptive vocabulary, making the writing lack substance and meaning.

their understanding.

For my assessments, it varied from having the students do exit slips, creative writing, tests, and my final assessment contained both writing and acting. I felt like we went through the novel so much that having the students write their own screenplay would be an easy activity as well as fun for them. The final assessment would bring together all the works we covered for the unit. All in all, as difficult as it was making this unit plan, I enjoyed it very much because I absolutely love the works that are being presented. I feel like this unit would work wonderfully with 9-12. Of course, if it was written for seniors the activities would be adjusted to what level they are on. And that goes for freshmen and sophomores as well.

RUBRIC FOR WRITING RESPONSES TO READING

Name:

Date:

Period:

TOTAL SCORE: _____

Name: _____

Anticipation Guide

Directions: Before we begin reading, *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers, fill out this anticipation guide. These questions are to help you start thinking about some of the ideas expressed in the novel. Read the following statements and write whether it is true or false on the line. Briefly describe your reasoning in the space provided below the question. Think about each question carefully before answering. You will be graded based on completion and thought, rather than correctness.

1. In a court room, a person is always guilty until proven innocent _____
2. Racism and prejudice is not a problem today

3. There are consequences to every decision we make

4. When someone is labeled a Monster, that means they are monsters _____
5. Only naïve people can be peer pressured _____

6. Discrimination is only based on race _____

Name _____

Date _____

Test for *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers

Directions: Answer the questions below in complete sentences. Minimum of 150 words each response. Make sure to include 2-3 pieces of textual evidence to support your answer.

1. Which character in the book is the most moral? Which character is the least moral? Why?
2. Select a theme the book addresses (**Justice, Hope, Racism, and Consequences**), explain how the book develops the theme.
3. Although the ending of the book is ambiguous about Steve Harmon's guilt or innocence, how does Walter Dean Myers show Steve to be more human than monster?

“The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost Vocabulary List:

Diverged: branched off; moved in a different direction

Undergrowth: small trees and plants growing beneath larger trees

Fair: promising; favorable

Claim: demand or right

Trodden: walked on

Hence: from this time

English Department

Creating Lessons and Choosing Books that Matter to OUR Students

“It’s not just the books under fire now that worry me. It is the books that will never be written, the books that will never be read” (Judy Blume, n.d.). Such a powerful set of words. If we do not implement YA literature into our curriculum, this is exactly what will happen. Our students are interested in more- so how can we teach them and get them engaged in lessons that is interesting to them? We must know our students! The best way to do this is by implementing various ways of getting to know them, and then bring in texts that they will **want** to read.

How to make lessons more interesting:

- Choose a text that is relevant to your students; get to know who your students are, implement surveys or just simply have a mini discussion on a daily basis to know them better.
- Incorporate music to your lessons; every child loves music! It just depends on what music they listen to- find out! Music can open up many doors. Check out Jason Griffith’s *Constantly Curating: Building Text Sets and Pairings in Novel Study*.
- Know the author’s background and purpose before teaching; do not just pick a book because it has a Black or Hispanic author- get to know who the author is, why they wrote the book, and then relay this message to the students prior to reading.
- Make sure your text can be connected to their everyday lives: this is key to the students thinking outside of the classroom. Once you bring in connections from outside, the student will be able to reflect and connect with the text anywhere they go.

- Teach the vocabulary and literary elements- these are important for the student to be able to understand and comprehend the text. Do not assume your students know every word- we are all learning together- so teach them new words, and even old ones- expanding their vocabulary and knowledge will always be a benefit to them...and you!

Why teach YA Literature:

- Students already show little to no interest in reading at all, and if we keep bringing in books that have no relevance to them, then we will lose them completely.
- It will capture their attention by having them relate to stories that are relevant to them. In *Recognize the Signs: Reading Young Adult Literature to Address Bullying* Sherry explained, “We need to find literature so we can talk about the issues. . . . we have to find books that get through to students.”
- The preservice teachers discussed the “power of books” and a “trusting teacher” to help students through difficult times or to help students understand the consequences of their actions. (Asher, J. (2011).
- YA Literature brings in much more than just a relevant text, it gives our students opportunities to explore their imagination and go into a whole new world.
- Last but not least, we will get our students passionate about reading- and once that is done, we can have them read anything!

Book Suggestions:

- What to Say Next by Julie Buxbaum
- Dear Martin by Nic Stone
- The Sun is also a Star by Nicola Yoon

- How to make Friends in the Dark by Kathleen Glasgow
- Red Queen by Victoria Aveyard
- The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas
- On the Come Up by Angie Thomas

References:

Atwell, N. (1987) *In the middle: Writing, reading, and learning with adolescents* (1st ed). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann

Batsche, G. M. (2002). *Bullying*. In G. G. Bear, K.

M. Minke, & A. Thomas (Eds.), *Children's needs: Development, problems, and alternatives* (pp.171–180). Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

Blasingame, J., & Durand, E. S. (2015). Right To Read “The Books That Will Never Be Read.” *The ALAN Review*, 43(1), 94–100. doi: 10.21061/alan.v43i1.a.10

GRIFFITH, J. (2018).

Brooks, C. (2010, November 30). Are Choice-Making Opportunities Needed in the Classroom? Using Self-Determination Theory to Consider Student Motivation and Learner Empowerment.

Retrieved October 28, 2020, from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ938578>

Constantly Curating: Building Text Sets and Pairings in Novel Study. *Voices from the Middle*, 26(2), 39–41. Retrieved from

<http://search.ebscohost.com.brockport.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eue&AN=133712986&site=ehost-live>

Batsche, G. M. (2002). *Bullying*. In G. G. Bear, K.M. Minke, & A.

Crowe, C. (1999). Young Adult Literature: English Teachers Are from Mars, Students Are from Venus (But YA Books Can Help Interplanetary Understanding). *The English Journal*, 88(4), 120-122. doi:10.2307/822443

Culturally Responsive Teaching: 4 Misconceptions. (2020, February 9). Retrieved from <https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/culturally-responsive-misconceptions/>

Davis, M. (2016, September 08). Preparing for Cultural Diversity: Resources for Teachers. Retrieved December 14, 2020, from <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/preparing-cultural-diversity-resources-teachers>

DeLeon, L. (2002). Multicultural Literature: Reading to Develop Self-Worth. *Multicultural Education*, 10(2), 49-51.

Frost, R. (n.d.). The Road Not Taken by Robert Frost. Retrieved December 08, 2020, from <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44272/the-road-not-taken>

Garden, N. (2017). *The year they burned the books*. New York: Open Road Media Teen & Tween.

Graff, C. & Stufft, D. (2011). Increasing visibility for LGBTQ students: What schools can do to create inclusive classroom communities, *Current Issues in Education*, 14(1). Retrieved from <http://cie.asu.edu/ojs/index.php/cieatasu/article/view/636>

Gonnerman, Jennifer. "Kalief Browder, 1993–2015." *The New Yorker*, The New Yorker, 3 Oct. 2017, www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/kalief-browder-1993-2015.

GRIFFITH, J. (2018). Constantly Curating: Building Text Sets and Pairings in Novel Study. *Voices from the Middle*, 26(2), 39–41. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com.brockport.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eue&AN=133712986&site=ehost-live>

JAY-Z (Ft. R. Kelly) – Guilty Until Proven Innocent. (2001, March 13). Retrieved December 08, 2020, from <https://genius.com/Jay-z-guilty-until-proven-innocent-lyrics>

Johnson, D., & Blair, A. (2003). The Importance and Use of Student Self-Selected Literature to Reading Engagement in an Elementary Reading Curriculum. *Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts*, 43 (3). Retrieved from https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons/vol43/iss3/3

McIlhagga, K. (2016). Teaching Young Adult Literature: Integrating, Implementing, and Re-Imagining the Common Core ed. by Judith A. Hayn et al. (review). *The Lion and the Unicorn (Brooklyn)*, 40(2), 232–233. <https://doi.org/10.1353/uni.2016.0014>

McCowan, Chelsey. "Benefits of Multicultural Literature." Multicultural Literature in The Language Arts Classroom, chelseymccowan.weebly.com/benefits-of-multiculturalliterature.html.

MONSTER - Trailer - YouTube. (n.d.). Retrieved December 8, 2020, from

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jlqFm5R3QgM>

Myers, W. D., & Myers, C. (2008). *Monster*. New York: HarperCollins.

National Council of Teachers of English. (n.d.). Retrieved October 17, 2020, from

<https://library.ncte.org/journals/ELQ/issues/v38-3/28004>

Ncte. (2019, January 17). Engaging Student Interests by Using New and Diverse Texts. Retrieved

from <https://www2.ncte.org/blog/2019/01/engaging-student-interests-by-using-new-and-diverse-texts/>.

Ostenson, J., & Wadham, R. (2012). Young Adult Literature and the Common Core: A Surprisingly

Good Fit. *American Secondary Education*, 41(1), 4-13. Retrieved October 29, 2020, from

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/43694146>

Roberts, M. (2013). Teaching Young Adult Literature: YA Literature Belongs in the Classroom

Because.... *The English Journal*, 102(5), 89-90. Retrieved October 17, 2020, from

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/24484103>

Sadowski, M. (2016). *Safe is not enough: Better schools for LGBTQ students*. Cambridge, MA:

Harvard Education Press.

Senghor, S. (n.d.). Why your worst deeds don't define you. Retrieved December 08, 2020, from https://www.ted.com/talks/shaka_senghor_why_your_worst_deeds_don_t_define_you

Short, D. (2017). *Am I safe here?: LGBTQ teens and bullying in schools*. Vancouver: On Point Press, a UBC Press imprint.

Torres, C. (2019, April 16). The Power of Words: On "Classics" and "Canon". Retrieved from https://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/intersection-culture-and-race-in-education/2019/04/the_power_of_words_on_classics_and_canon.html.

Thomas (Eds.), *Children's needs: Development, problems, and alternatives* (pp. 171–180). Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists

“Walter Dean Myers Writes Books Troubled Teens Can Relate To.” *The Christian Science Monitor*, The Christian Science Monitor, 29 June 2012, www.csmonitor.com/World/Making-a-difference/2012/0629/Walter-Dean-Myers-writes-books-troubled-teens-can-relate-to.