A Curriculum Proposal: *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

Sarah Semroc, Elizabeth Shalda, Tyler Soule, Justin Cochran, Sora Choi, Barbara Schmidt, Kirstie Day, Sarah Casman

ENG 308 Spring Semester

*The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson

**Overview:**

Robert Louis Stevenson’s novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* has been a successful text since its publication in 1886. Numerous stage adaptations and over 100 filmic versions of the work have been created over the years, demonstrating its intrigue and power. The interest stems from the main character of the novella, Dr. Henry Jekyll. Dr. Jekyll was a wealthy, seemingly good-natured man who was secretly “committed to a duplicity of life” (78). Although he appeared a moral man, he recognized that there was a darker, more evil side of him. Realizing that life would be more bearable if he could also express his second identity, he concocted a drug that could completely change him into Edward Hyde – his evil counterpart. Mr. Hyde was seen performing such misdeeds as trampling a young girl and beating a man to death. These horrifying occurrences plus the fact that Dr. Jekyll could no longer control the transformation into Mr. Hyde cause Dr. Jekyll to lose hope in maintaining his dual lives. He then recognizes the death of the unhappy Jekyll because he was to live forever as the evil Mr. Hyde.

Two other major characters in the text are Mr. Utterson and Dr. Lanyon – a lawyer and a doctor, respectively. The two are former friends of Dr. Jekyll and are emotionally invested in both his mental stability and the safety of London. The minor characters of Mr. Poole – Dr. Jekyll’s butler – and Richard Enfield – a relation of Mr. Utterson – also play roles in Dr. Jekyll’s strange story.

The duality of identity is a main theme within Stevenson’s novella. This theme is continually emphasized throughout the text in symbols such as doors and mirrors, which represent the two different sides. Also part of the allegory is hatred or harsh criticism of oneself, such as Jekyll feels towards Hyde. The setting of gloomy, rainy 19th Century England adds to the violent, foreboding mood of the text.

**Pedagogical Engagement:**

Some pedagogical goals that we will focus on when teaching *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* will be to understand character analysis, authorial decision making, and advanced language usage. The hope is that within these discussions, the relevance of the themes in the text in the lives of young adults will reveal themselves and thus students will be able to directly connect to Stevenson’s work.

A necessary part of the pedagogy of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is analyses of the characters Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and how they create a dual personality. To do so, it is useful to unpack the last section of the novella entitled “Henry Jekyll’s Full Statement of the Case”. This portion is useful because it is a first-hand account from Dr. Jekyll about his experience living with a double identity. It is also a good section to read because young adults may be able to relate to
Jekyll’s hardships in outwardly relaying the “moral” side of oneself but also feeling as if there is a significant part that must be hidden.

The most emotionally appealing sentiment in this passage is the first long paragraph on pages 78-79. A few phrases are important to highlight in a classroom setting in order to understand Dr. Jekyll’s emotional status. First, he identifies that there is a “truth” concerning man’s natural disposition. He states, “Man is not truly one, but truly two” (78-79). Here, Jekyll is admitting that there is some legitimacy to his struggle because every man encounters the same dualities. Recognition of this statement in a classroom setting could launch into a debate on whether or not students agree with Jekyll’s opinion.

The issue of defining oneself may be appealing to the lives of young adults who also struggle with “finding” themselves. Students are constantly faced with choices about doing their work, their behavior and how they treat themselves and their peers. The culmination of these choices defines their identity. Not only is there an unspoken character created between peers, but also grades and progress reports act as ways of recording this chosen character. Because of these physical acknowledgments of identity, students are especially aware of the person that they choose to be. In this way, they can relate to Dr. Jekyll’s struggles with choosing the most appealing aspect of him to outwardly show.

Another way that students can relate to Dr. Jekyll’s cause and find interest in his story is through the theme of appearances. In the last section that we are analyzing, Dr. Jekyll describes the appearance of Mr. Hyde. He says, “Even as good shone upon the countenance of the one, evil was written broadly and plainly on the face of the other. Evil besides… had left on that body an imprint of deformity and decay” (81). Young adults are familiar with the challenges of appearances and the struggle to appear physically attractive. It will be relevant to their lives to have a discussion on how personality can affect perceptions of attractiveness and why Stevenson chose to describe Mr. Hyde in this specific way.

One of the challenges in reading this particular section of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde will be the advanced language. Words such as ‘imperious’, ‘inveterately’ and ‘vestment’ may prove to be difficult for students of a particular age to understand. In order to establish good close reading skills, it is important to recommend that whenever a student comes across a word they do not know, they immediately look it up. Along with the use of a dictionary, utilizing the margins will prove to be especially beneficial in dense passages. If students summarize long paragraphs, highlight important phrases and recognize important uses of language, it will enhance their understanding and interpretive abilities. Full understanding of the text is vital for good, intelligent discussion.

**Tasks/Activities:**

In designing tasks, exercises, and assessments for The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, we focused on the production of a lasting resource that allows students to refer to the foundation texts while exploring other texts within the curriculum. That in mind, the overall project for the reading of the Stevenson text is a journal. With this type of project, students are given a structured environment in which to produce an artifact. The journal will serve, after the first text, as a reference text for relevant themes in later texts as well as a place for students to record thoughts, inform annotations, and practice writing mechanics. Rather than reading quizzes that only measure participation in the homework assignments, the journal will be focused on literary terms and four specific passages from the Stevenson text in such a manner that measures participation, comprehension, and writing proficiency.
The three content areas that will be primary in the background information for the curriculum are Symbolism, Theme, and the Classic/Canon. Journal tasks on symbolism will define symbolism, explore the uses of symbolism, and lead to a classroom discussion that attempts to formulate a list of common symbols and their associations (e.g. black is associated with evil and white is associated with good). Journal tasks concerned with theme will be the primary focus for background information (as it is a major component for intertextuality). The journal writing portion will explore definitions of theme, formulate and discuss a list of themes, and lead into a larger conversation about themes that are familiar and canonical across and within genres. Consideration for the concept of Classics and Canon will be limited to a definition (What does it mean for something to be a Classic?), a sparse discussion of examples, and a brief overview of the concept of Canon. This topic will be the least detailed during background information because it plays a role in the interpretive aspect of the final curriculum evaluation.

After the background unit (which could take anywhere between one hour and one week, depending on the context), the function of the journal will change to a textually specific exploration of content themes. The content themes will explore Reputation, Appearance, Silence, and Duality as they exist in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

The first topic, Reputation, will be approached in a minor essay assignment that goes into the journal. The prompt will refer to a particular passage (in this case, the Dialogue between Utterson and Enfield about questions and the nature of gossip in “Story of the Door”). Students will be asked to identify key pieces of the passage as well as discuss the importance of appearance in Stevenson’s narrative. Students will then be asked to consider the significance of appearance in their own lives. The key here is detailed analysis of Stevenson’s text along with a personal relation that suggests some form of intertextuality between the students’ personal narrative and that of Stevenson’s fiction. This discussion will include conversation on gossip and the role of gossip in middle or high school relationships. The curricular focus on intertextual notions and relativity in theme is paramount to the overall curriculum.

The second topic, Appearance, will be considered in relation to the description of Mr. Hyde that Utterson provides near the end of “Search for Mr. Hyde.” This passage provides some insight into the role that rhetoric and descriptive devices have in character design. For example, a discussion goal might be answering the question “How does Stevenson’s description of Hyde’s appearance inform Hyde’s character?” The lesson will also be followed by a brief mini lesson on the pseudoscience of physiognomy: this provides a reading break that is content relevant to motivate students with a variety of classroom work.

The third topic, Silence, can serve as either a response to a specific passage (any of the passages in which a character chooses not to or fails to describe or discuss an event with which they are involved) or as a response to the novel as a whole with respect to all of these passages. In this case, the topic serves as a point to which the novel leads after reading. The goals of this topic are to explore the two types of silence that appear in the novel (i.e., voluntary and involuntary). These topics particularly are relatable to filmic versions of the text and can be used to generate on-the-spot dramatic interpretations of scenes in the narrative.

The fourth topic, Duality, can also be considered with respect to the novel as a whole, or particularly from the perspective provided in the final chapter, Jekyll’s Statement. The goals of this topic are to explore the dualistic nature of humanity as it is portrayed by Stevenson. In this sense, the topic of Duality provides an interesting possibility for the generation of argumentative activities in which students agree or disagree with Stevenson’s position.
Once these topics have been discussed and reviewed within the context of the journal, the journal will serve as an artifact in which to read and record activities related to these themes in the context of the other textual works in the curriculum. In that way, our foundation text, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, becomes a companion text for the remainder of the readings covered in the class. With the themes, texts, and the journal being thoroughly discussed throughout the class, the final becomes an assessment of the ability that students have to understand intertextuality and the relationship between the classic and the contemporary texts. The final, in an essay format, will necessitate that students explore the ways in which these specific content themes compare and contrast the novels (Stevenson and at least one other work) as well as defining intertextuality and providing examples of the universal nature of literature.

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde Film Adaptation

Overview:

These three clips each provide a door through with the students can explore the physical representation of the character created in the novel. The Paramount Pictures adaptation from 1931 starring Frederic March is black and white, which lends itself to the obvious examination of moral black and white, or grey areas. The transformation scene is almost more gruesome in its black and white form, and with the limited effects of the early twentieth century cinematographers, the camera often pans from his face to his hands which sprout hair as they become less fleshy and more skeletal. The audience is left at the reveal of a man more primal than refined, with the teeth of a gorilla and a prominent brow bone, with facial hair everywhere but the mustache area, rejecting any kind of social refinement. The 1953 adaptation takes on the tone of a horror-comedy, with Boris Korloff as the doctor-turned-murderer. This transformation exaggerates the primal tones of the 1931 version even further, as the hair grows longer, the face becomes more similar to a primate than a man, and his hands thicken to more greatly resemble the digits of a gorilla. Still in black and white, we see as the doctor behind the desk, so sophisticated with a mustache and silvery-combed hair becomes a monstrous man with dark locks and the mustache gives way to primal jaw and lip configuration. The 1971 adaptation takes on a completely different tone, the only clip in color, we see a Doctor Jekyll become a woman in his transformation, one not ugly, but objectively very pretty, a change that doesn’t change his hair color, skin tone, or relative body features – just a female version of the male doctor. The three of these works together to present a companion to the text that gives physical representation to their imagined ideas of what the characters and the transformations might be. They each suggest different things about the themes of appearance and portrayal, such as our primitive nature, animosity, and the lines between the genders, the stereotypes that form them and the subtext of the film.

Pedagogical Engagement:

While the first two adaptations portray Jekyll’s transformation into Hyde as being very primal, leaving him more greatly resembling a primate than a man, the 1971 film pulls questions of gender to the forefront as Jekyll transforms into a woman. The juxtaposition of feminine grace against primal inhibition gives the students a forum in which to discuss representations not just of man, but also of mankind. When looking deeper into the 1971 adaptation, we can draw on themes of not just portrayal, but gender portrayal through appearance. In choosing to make Hyde female, there’s a certain connotation given that Hyde is – in literary history – a negative,
murderous, hideous figure, mapping that onto the woman figure, whether meant to break the mold or perhaps in a misogynistic tone reinforce it, the conversation is open to question the intentions and underlying tones of the adaptation. Due to the 1970’s being the continuation of the progression of social values from the 1960’s, exploring its representation in the Hammer Films production would be valuable for both historic and literary genres and analyses.

Both the 1931 and 1953 versions are in black and white, which is interesting to analyze given the concept of “moral shades of grey”, and the questions of good and evil raised by the text. Their transformations, however, raise the question of innate animosity and the primal nature of man when left unbound, un-groomed, and uninhibited by society or its demands. Hyde’s blatant resemblance to a gorilla challenges the viewer to think about human weakness and primal nature as cast onto an animal, rather than a disfigured or simply unattractive male form. The production teams could have easily created a man whose appearance is simply displeasing, being that the text describes him as follows, nowhere mentioning any animalistic appearance or clear deformity:

“He is not easy to describe. There is something wrong with his appearance; something displeasing, something downright detestable. I never saw a man I so disliked, and yet I scarce know why. He must be deformed somewhere; he gives a strong feeling of deformity, although I couldn’t specify the point. He’s an extraordinary-looking man, and yet I really can name nothing out of the way. No, sir; I can make no hand of it; I can’t describe him. And it’s not want of memory; for I declare I can see him this moment.” (Stevenson, 15).

Using this excerpt from the text, Mr. Enfield’s first reaction to the appearance of Mr. Hyde and the novel’s portrayal of him to the reader is a key moment for our exploration of these themes. Since the students will have already laid a foundation for their engagement with Stevenson’s text in the first weeks of the curriculum, exploring the themes on a surface level and gaining a sense of familiarity with the text, this close reading leading into their first activity will allow them to examine what they deem to be key points of the author’s portrayal of his Hyde. This will serve as a solid starting point from which they can build their understanding of the themes and analyze their presence in the clips to be shown, as well as the implications of their use on the overall message of the story.

**Tasks/Activities:**

It is important when providing a filmic representation of a novel to give the students a format for comparison and contrast that can serve them in their analysis but also be a way for the teacher to evaluate their comprehension and personal investment in the film and novel. First, after reading the texts the students would write down five words to describe the way that they envision both Mr. Hyde and the transformation, his characteristics, appearance based on the way in which he is portrayed in the text. Following an open discussion of their expectations, the students would secondly have a reactionary activity – simply writing five words to describe each clip as they are shown, nouns or adjectives as they watch, in a sheet formatted like the first image. This will facilitate their engagement with the filmic representations as well as enable them to begin their deep-thinking process. Following their five words, they’ll be asked to share out with the class a few of their words, we’ll list them on the board under the heading of each film, then compare them on this basic level.

As we move forward in this engagement and their understanding of the theme of **appearance** and **portrayal**, they’ll create a comparative Venn diagram of the three transformation clips and their expectations based on the reading, as shown in the second image
below. While both of these exercises will facilitate engagement with the adaptations and their own reading, questioning their interpretations of the text and the portrayal of both Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde in the text and in the film, since they are handouts, they can also be handed in to the teacher for assessment of engagement, investment, and growth in understanding. The next step, as the students build their engagement with the film clips and are challenged in their comprehension and deep thinking, will evaluate the themes present in each clip. Starting with the major themes of appearance and portrayal, they will examine the presence of an underlying theme in one of the clips. In a short group breakout session, the groups (presumably gender, primal nature, good v. evil, etc.) will discuss and delve into the themes, preparing a one-paragraph analysis of what they see and how it could have come from the text either in concept or literal interpretation, to be shared with the class in a sharing-out. This slightly larger-group utilization of Think, Pair, Share will allow the students to engage more deeply with the text through the contributions and conversations of their peers, highlighting that our own learning can be enhanced through others. Since the curriculum won’t include the entire film of any of the three adaptations, it allows the class to go in depth into the three key transformation scenes. Since the transformation is the axis on which the Jekyll and Hyde story revolves, delving into it through those three activities will challenge the students to test and better their skills of comprehension and analysis.

For a final activity and assessment, the students will write a brief praxis, arguing for or against one of the adaptations in comparison to the text and using at least one of the other adaptations as a counterexample. This praxis will not only greaten their argumentative writing skills and ability to argue a thesis in a quick and concise manner, but allow me to see how well they’ve come to understand the text, their effort to engage with it in an analytical manner, and evaluate the three clips as tools for engagement with the Jekyll & Hyde text. The students will be expected to acknowledge the era from which each adaptation came and it’s historical influences on the portrayal of the text (the 1970’s and the continued progression of social values, the 1930’s and the Great Depression, the 1950’s recovery from the World Wars and movement into the Cold War, etc.) bridging the literary significance with filmic representation, evaluated under a historical lens.
**Overview:**

The notion of duality within a single person is presented throughout *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Because of this, our group has chosen Chuck Palahniuk’s *Fight Club* as it presents similar ideas. *Fight Club* is centered on the anonymous narrator living in New York City, whose name is never learned, who tells the story from his own perspective. He suffers from insomnia and his doctor suggests going to support groups for cancer patients to see “what real suffering looks like.” He meets another faker at one of these meetings named Marla Singer, who ignites further struggle with insomnia for the narrator. Later, the narrator meets Tyler Durden on a nude beach and he becomes a good friend, who is continually described to be everything that the narrator is not, as if he fills certain voids within the narrator. Tyler and the narrator end up living together after an explosion in the narrator’s condo, this is where they begin fighting and eventually form Fight Club: A bare-fisted brawling club with a set of straightforward rules. Eventually, Marla begins a love affair with Tyler and confuses the narrator because he never sees Tyler and Marla simultaneously; leaving him wondering if the two are actually the same person.

Tyler soon forms an anti-consumerist organization called “Project Mayhem,” whose goal is to end modern civilization. As the project’s missions become increasingly more dangerous and destructive, one of the narrator’s friends, Bob, who he met at the testicular cancer support group, dies in one of the operations. The narrator then decides it’s time to stop Tyler and Project Mayhem, but then he realizes Tyler is actually a personality within himself. Marla reveals to the narrator that he and Tyler are the same, that she had an affair with him, he blew up his own condo, and created fight club all on his own. The novel ends with the narrator held at gunpoint by Tyler on top of the roof of a building that Tyler intends to blow up. However, Marla shows up and Tyler vanishes. The bomb does not go off as Tyler mixed paraffin into it, and since the bomb doesn’t explode, the narrator decides to hold the gun in his mouth and shoot himself. He awakens some time later in a mental hospital, thinking that is in Heaven. Hospital employees tell the narrator that they are members of Project Mayhem and intend to carry out the plans while waiting for Tyler to come back.

One of the overarching themes in the novel is masculinity and the feminization of masculinity. It is possible that Tyler is a product of the narrator’s struggle with his own masculinity. This text can be very confusing because the reliability of the narrator is often questioned because of his mental illness, which could be an issue for some students. Also, references to old pop culture such as the “I am Joe’s (insert body organ here)” blurbs from antiquated versions of *Reader’s Digest*, could go right over the students’ heads. It would also be helpful to have a discussion on existentialism, since many would argue that the story is existentialist. However, with proper guidance, *Fight Club* could prove to be a very rich teaching and learning experience for both teacher and students.

**Pedagogical Engagement:**

*Fight Club* has the potential to be a very confusing novel for some student since it is written somewhat unconventionally, but can be a useful tool in helping students to develop analytical and critical thinking skills. The goals in teaching this book would include exploring the duality that can occur within one person, masculinity and the negative impact societal views on gender can have on males specifically, the notion of existentialism within the novel, as well as
consumerism/capitalism. In order to discuss and explore these ideas, the main focus would be on the narrator and his other personality, Tyler Durden.

Duality
This is probably one of those most interesting concepts within Fight Club, since it is not explicitly revealed to the reader that the narrator and Tyler are, in fact, the same person. There are cues throughout the novel that might suggest this, however. Below are small passages that are related to the notion of duality within a single person.

Who guys are in fight club is not who they are in the real world. Even if you told the kid in the copy center that he had a good fight, you wouldn't be talking to the same man (46).

Although this quote does not focus directly on the narrator and Tyler, it is an interesting that the narrator says this. It makes Fight Club seem like another world.

I love everything about Tyler Durden, his courage and his smarts. His nerve. Tyler is funny and charming and forceful and independent, and men look up to him and expect him to change their world. Tyler is capable and free, I am not. I'm not Tyler Durden.

“But you are, Tyler,” Marla says.

Tyler and I share the same body, and until now, I didn’t know it. Whenever Tyler was having sex with Marla, I was asleep. Tyler was walking and talking while I thought I was asleep.

Everyone in fight club and Project Mayhem knew me as Tyler Durden (174).

This passage is important to the novel because it marks the narrator’s realization of his split personality. The reader gets to see how this realization affects the narrator, yet questions how the narrator never knew before then.

Masculinity & Emasculation
The testicular support group is called Remaining Men Together. What does that suggest about the correlation between a person’s physical body and their gender identity? Asking students this question can begin a conversation about gender, specifically what it means to be a man, since this an issue that the narrator tackles throughout the book. To him, Tyler Durden is the perfect representation of masculinity; he is good-looking, strong, violent, and knows how to get his way.

This discussion can also begin very early in the novel as the testicular support group is mentioned within the first few chapters and continue as the students read. These ideas can also be tied to the struggles the narrator clearly has about not growing up with a father as this could be one of the reasons why he seems to have several issues with his own masculinity.

“Bob cries because six months ago, his testicles were removed. Then hormone support therapy. Bob has tits because his testosterone ration is too high” (17).

This quote, early in the book as well, is interesting to point out to students as well since the character of Bob is described by the narrator as an emasculated male since he no longer has parts of his male genitalia. Again, this brings in the question about gender identity and what it means
to be a male. It would be interesting to have the students talk about what society tells us a real male is and how it affects a person whose physical body does not correspond with societal standards pertaining to gender.

**Existentialism**

It's easy to cry when you realize that everyone you love will reject you or die. On a long enough time line, the survival rate for everyone will drop to zero (17). You are not a beautiful and unique snowflake. You are the same decaying organic matter as everyone else, and we are all part of the same compost pile (133).

These quotes give insight into the narrator and Tyler’s life philosophy. We learn his nihilistic views on life and living and can give students the opportunity to ask themselves and their peers what the meaning of life is, one of the central questions to existentialism. Why are we here? What might the narrator or Tyler say to answer these questions?

**Consumerism/Capitalism**

"Then you're trapped in your lovely nest, and the things you used to own, now they own you" (43).

This quote is a great way to open up a discussion about consumerism and the capitalist obsession with material goods. Students can talk about how this idea is present in the novel, but also in the real world, particularly in our own country. You can ask questions such as: Does money really buy happiness? What descriptions in the book might suggest an answer to this question, whether negative or positive?

*Tasks/Activities:*

Overview 1: This assignment requires students to write an argumentative essay that asks students to make a claim about the novel regarding a particular topic--aggression (abuse), duality, personal destruction/decay, consumerism/capitalism, personal growth, masculinity/emasculation etc.--and describe the significance of the topic to the novel. The essay must answer these questions: Why did Palahniuk add this trait to the novel and what would the novel be like without it? It must be 3-4 pages in length. (12 pt. Times New Roman) With argumentative essays, students are taking topics and discussing the significance of these issues. In the real world, students will be faced with many challenges that force them to make a stand and/or an argument on a crucial subject.

Overview 2: This activity involves students acting out different scenes from the text that allow them to get into character and experience the novel in a different form. Along with this activity, students would have to write a 2-3 page paper arguing why they dressed the way they did as well as what the character brings to the novel--his or her significance and importance. With this assignment, students would come into class dressed as a chosen character and get into their assigned groups--practicing their sections of the novel--eventually leading up to a day
dedicated to these presentations. This would be a good end-of-unit assignment that allows students to better understand the characters of the novel while also having fun with it. As students come in presentation day, after working in class on this for over a week, they are able to reenact particular, important sections of the novel “dressed” in their characters persona, while also having the opportunity to express their own unique, individual creativity. It is important for teachers to remember that the best lessons are those that students can engage themselves in while also creating rememberable experiences in the classroom.

Overview 3: This lesson would involve showing clips from the film that relate back to the text, asking students to compare and contrast characteristics of each mode (novel and film), directly stating what similarities and differences they see in both modes. They must include specific examples they noticed such as tone, character traits, etc. Comparing and contrasting the traits of a novel and a film forces students to question why one author/director did one thing with that mode while the other author/director did another. They would need to answer questions pertaining to why a director chose to take a different/same approach as the author of a novel. What are the differences? What are the similarities? What mode is most effective to its viewer/reader? These questions get students to look into the deeper meaning and goal of the mode while also getting students to choose which one they prefer. This assignment could also lead to an in class debate that forces students to argue why their assigned mode is better than the other--using textual evidence to support their claim.

Overview 4: An assignment that requires students to research articles that discuss incidents that resulted from the success of the novel and movie such as real fight clubs that were formed as a result of the movie and/or film with a two page analysis. With this assignment, students are able to get a better understanding of how novels and films can influence certain individuals. With the technology today, resulting with students constantly on Facebook and Twitter, the media has a larger opportunity to seep into the minds of the public. This assignment can lead the students towards a class discussion that dissect the way at which our media has the power to influence mass quantities of people while weighing the pros and cons of what this power does for society. This discussion would pose the questions: How has the media influenced you or swayed you in one direction or another? Why did it influence you? Students would need to give specific examples of their own personal encounters with this situation.

See handouts for Overviews 1 & 2 below.
Overview 1 handout: Argumentative Essay: Fight Club

For this assignment, you must write an argumentative essay on a main theme that you feel helps shape the novel into the must read it has come to be today. With this essay, you must make a claim regarding one of the following themes:

- Aggression (abuse)
- Duality
- Personal Destruction/Decay
- Personal Growth
- Masculinity/Emasculation
- Consumerism/Capitalism

It is an argumentative essay; thus, you must argue what your chosen theme does for the novel’s success. With your theme in mind, you must consider how it affects the characters of the novel. Along with any substantial argument, you must use textual evidence to back your claim. These quotes must include an in-text citation as well as a works cited page for Fight Club. You may use outside sources--just be sure to include them in your works cited page.

The essay should answer the questions: Why did Palahniuk add this trait to the novel and what would the novel be like without it? Why?

Your essay must be at least 3-4 pages in length. (12 pt. Times New Roman)
Overview 2 handout (including rubric):
SWBAT get into character using voice, clothing, and props that are used and supported from the textual evidence within a chosen novel.

Getting Into Character!

Chuck Palahniuk used a significant amount of time creating and shaping the characters of his novel. In order for us to better understand both the plot and the characters of Fight Club, each of you will be assigned one character at which you will impersonate to the rest of the class. By getting into character, you are given the opportunity to see your character and his/her significance to the novel in a different light. When personally getting into the mind of the character, you are forced to consider what it feels like to be this person, allowing you to form an understanding and awareness of what your life would be like if you were him/her. You should dress how you envision them, including accessories you think fits your character such as watches or dressy earrings. Not only will you dress like your character, but you will also speak the way you interpret your character would speak if you were to see him or her in real life. Your attire and persona should be relatable enough to your character so that your classmates will know who you are without being directly informed. Each of you will pick a name out of a hat at random.

Along with reenacting your character, you must bring in a 2-3 page written argue (typed), of what you wore as well as an explanation as to WHY you chose this outfit, voice, and accessories/props. You must argue in this paper the significance the character brings to the novel using details and quotes from the text that support your observations. With this argument, you are able to draw on textual evidence and consider HOW exactly your selected character holds importance to the plot. Ask yourselves, “What would this novel be like if he/she were not included?” You want to convince your reader that your attire and persona fits accordingly with your character. This description should include specific quotes from the text, backing your reasoning for the attire/voice. (must be in 12pt font, Times New Roman)

Note: If your character is not described with any specific accessories or props, you may add in something to your outfit and attributes that you feel would fit with the characters persona.
EXTRA CREDIT: student uses memorized quotes from the novel said by his or her character

Possible characters to choose from:
- Narrator (unnamed)
- Tyler Durden
- Marla Singer
- Robert "Bob" Paulson
- Angel Face

M.A.P.S. (Mode, Audience, Purpose, Situation):
M- clothing, props, voice
A- teacher, peers a.k.a. “fellow friends” (other characters from novel)
P- to convince others of who your character is without directly stating the name
S- students must get into character, allowing them to see things from another point of view

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attire</td>
<td>Attire reflects on how the novel describes the chosen character extremely well.</td>
<td>Attire reflects on how the novel describes the chosen character well, yet could have been more specific to the novels description.</td>
<td>Attire reflects on how the novel describes the chosen character slightly if not very little.</td>
<td>Attire does not reflect on how the novel describes the chosen character at all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessories/Props</td>
<td>Accessories/props are used appropriately from the textual evidence. (if made up, are realistic and go well with the character)</td>
<td>Accessories/props are used well for the most part from the textual evidence. (if made up, may not necessarily go with the character)</td>
<td>Accessories/props are used appropriately from the textual evidence minimally. (if made up, do not flow very well with the character)</td>
<td>Accessories/props are not used appropriately from the textual evidence whatsoever. (if made up, are not realistic and do not go well with the character)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imitation/Voice</td>
<td>Voice is creative and comparable. (can be supported from the book as to why the imitation and voice are done in that way completely)</td>
<td>Voice is slightly creative and comparable. (can be supported from the book as to why the imitation and voice are done in that way for the most part, but not completely)</td>
<td>Voice is not very creative nor comparable. (can not really be supported from the book as to why the imitation and voice are done in that way)</td>
<td>Voice is not creative and not comparable. (can not be supported from the book as to why the imitation and voice are done in that way)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument Essay (x2)</td>
<td>Description fully gives reason for the entire attire of the character, including full reasoning for chosen accessories/props (why they are important to the characters persona) and is 2-3 pages in length. The argument is made very clear and the essay clearly states why that character is important to the novel with supported details and quotes from the text. (12pt font, Times New Roman)</td>
<td>Description gives reason for the entire attire of the character for the most part, slightly includes reasoning for chosen accessories/props and is 2-3 pages in length. The essay makes an argument about the character supported with some detail and quotes from the text. (12pt font, Times New Roman)</td>
<td>Description barely gives reason for the attire of the character, nor includes full reasoning for chosen accessories/props and is not quite 2-3 pages in length. The essay does not make a clear argument about the character and does not use very much supported detail from text. (12pt font, Times New Roman)</td>
<td>Description does not give reason for the entire attire of the character at all, with minimal reasoning for chosen accessories/props and is not 2-3 pages in length. The essay does not make an argument about the character. (12pt font, Times New Roman)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Speak by Laurie Halse Anderson**

*Overview:*

*Speak* is the story of high school freshman Melinda Sordino’s rape and her journey to find her voice after an incident that occurs during a party in the summer. Melinda is ostracized by her classmates due to her inability to talk about what happened, and she finds herself becoming lonelier and more depressed as the school year goes on. However, she slowly finds the will to express herself through an art class at her school. With the help of her friend David Petrakis and her art teacher Mr. Freeman, Melinda is able to finally acknowledge what happened to her and fight against the boy who hurt her. The novel ends with Melinda slowly but surely making her way towards recovery.

We chose this book because it relates to the theme of silence that is also present in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. In *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, most of the characters face moments where they are unable to articulate their true thoughts. Jekyll, for example, is unable to tell anyone about the truth of his darker side and lets it fester inside of him until his death; the only time he breaks his silence is at the end of the novel with his confessional letter. The silence that characters impose on themselves is an important theme that relates to Melinda’s own silence in *Speak*.

We also chose this book because it deals with issues of identity that are relevant to middle school and high school students. Melinda’s story is centered in a high school that most young adults can relate to. There are cliques, there is peer pressure, and there is an atmosphere that can sometimes make it hard for students to speak up about important issues. Melinda’s voice at the beginning of the novel starts off harsh, cynical, and lonely because of what has happened to her; however, she gradually shapes her identity as a strong girl who can acknowledge the wrongs committed against her.

*Pedagogical Engagement:*

One of the biggest goals for an English teacher is to build a student’s close reading skills. By using *Speak*, teachers can use the themes of silence and identity to help students analyze the prose of the novel. These skills also allow for a student to understand the mindset of a character, which in the case of *Speak*, is Melinda while she goes from a silent victim to a hero who is unafraid to speak up.

A basic foundation for close reading starts with students being able to understand the connotations of words used by the narrator. It is not just enough for a student to understand the denotation; by picking out words and analyzing why they were chosen, students can better comprehend the underlying mindset of a story’s characters. The following passage from *Speak*, for example, reveals how Melinda feels about her school:

“Older students are allowed to roam until the bell, but ninth-graders are herded into the auditorium. We fall into clans: Jocks, Country Clubbers, Idiot Savants, Cheerleaders, Human Waste, Eurotrash, Future Fascists of America, Big Hair Chix, the Marthas, Suffering Artists, Thespians, Goths, Shredders. I am clanless. I wasted the last weeks of August watching bad cartoons. I didn’t go to the mall, the lake, or the pool, or answer the phone. I have entered high school with the wrong hair, the wrong clothes, the wrong attitude. And I don’t have anyone to sit with.
I am Outcast.

There is no point looking for my ex-friends. Our clan, the Plain Janes, has splintered and the pieces are being absorbed by rival factions. Nicole lounges with the Jocks, comparing scars from summer league sports. Ivy floats between the Suffering Artists on one side of the aisle and the Thespians on the other. She has enough personality to travel with two packs. Jessica has moved to Nevada. No real loss. She was mostly Ivy’s friend, anyway.” *Speak*, pg. 4

This passage is loaded with rhetorical devices, such as metaphors, that teachers should teach their students how to pick up on. Ideally, a student should be able examine this passage and discuss how each word and device is used to contribute to Melinda’s voice. An example of a close-reading students should be able to come up with could go like this:

Melinda clearly feels like that high school kids lack real power to do anything. She compares the students to cattle that are “herded into the auditorium”; this implies that students are not treated equally to adults, and that they are just beasts meant to be controlled. Melinda’s reference to “clans” shows how she feels that the cliques in school are clearly divided up and finalized. The groups are exclusive and at odds with each other, but as an “Outcast”, Melinda is posed as the most vulnerable student. She is not just lonely; she also has no comrades to help her in the battlefield that is school. The repetition of “wrong…wrong…wrong” helps to emphasize how out of place Melinda feels at the beginning of the novel. She blames herself for not fitting in, which may indicate the low level of her self-esteem following her attack at the party.

It is the goal of the teacher to have students generate ideas such as these that contribute to their understanding of the story. *Speak* is initially about alienation and loneliness, so having students analyze a passage like this could really impact how they understand Melinda’s hostility towards school. Another idea would be to have students compare this passage to another one later on in the novel, when Melinda has finally been set free with her confession. The difference in wording and style is drastic enough that students, having built up their close-reading skills, could engage in the text to comment on Melinda’s progression from beginning to end.

**Tasks/Activities:**

The novel *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson handles a difficult subject matter by personalizing it through different narrative forms. While the novel is told through the first person, the narration often breaks from the real world and enters into the main character Melinda’s mind, where she either reevaluates the world around her in a sarcastic tone, juxtaposing the way she sees things compared to how others do. The novel also contains sections that mimic typical diary entries, and at some points the action is written as if it were a play. The novel does this as a way so that Melinda’s voice is authentic, and it isn’t as if Anderson is speaking through the character. The narrative style works to handle the novels main theme of silence as well. Using writing exercises that mimic the way in which the novel is written will help students make connections between not only their lives and *Speak*, but other texts as well. With these assignments, the intention was to create some core ones that would focus on *Speak* alone, helping students unpack what was within the text, once this was accomplished, the final assignment bringing the novel together with *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in order to compare/contrast canonical texts with YAL.
Assignment 1: Using different narrative structures from the novel Speak (script, monologue, prose, etc.) the student would use one that best suits them to bring their personal experiences to the paper. The students would use this activity as a way to take the structure of the novel and apply it to their own lives. In doing so, they’re not being tested necessarily on the books subject matter (as that is reserved for a different assignment) but instead part of the texts purpose is being revealed. Students also will receive practice writing in different formats other than essay or strictly short stories, they can even combine multiple formats to form their narrative.

Assignment 2: Assignment 2 is similar to the first in that it involves writing, but the format changes. The object of this assignment would be to write a narrative in which the world is told strictly through the students interpretations. For example, if there are two characters speaking, one would represent the narrator, but the second characters intentions would be told from the narrators assumptions. Students would use this format to tease out ideas of silence similar to those in Speak. Much in the way Melinda uses a sarcastic attitude to parody those around her while developing her ideas, students would use this format to write in a way in which their voice exists only within their own head.

Assignment 3: Compare the ways in which Speak and a novel like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde explore the theme of silence. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde uses names and titles to emphasize the theme in ways, words like Hyde, Utterson, all bring to mind feelings of secrecy. Students would be asked to compare and contrast this with Speak and the way that it handles the same issues. How is Melinda silenced? Do others silence her, or does she silence herself? By asking these questions, students aren’t being quizzed in the mundane sense of “What happened in part A of the book,” but instead they have to pick pieces out they’ve read and create connections between the two works.

Assignment 4: Students could be asked to assess gender roles within the novel Speak. In this way they don’t have to deal with the highly personalized material, but can take the core themes and create something from it. Students would write a scene in which they apply gender roles from Speak to other scenarios. In this way, the character of Melinda, her story, and how it happens/how she’s silenced can begin to take form.

Assignment 5: For a larger assignment, students could be asked to write an essay comparing thematic elements of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde with Speak. It is safe to assume that without the actions that occur to Melinda within the novel, she would be a significantly different person. In this sense, there are two Melindas (although one is more embedded within context), just as there are two Jekylls. Using this assumption, students would be asked to use facets of both novels to explore changes in identity, and how these changes affect the works as a whole. Is it fair to say there are two Melindas? If so, can one Melinda be held accountable for the other Melindas actions—as in, the sarcasm, bitterness, what adults see as snide, cocky behavior? The same way Utterson doesn’t speak of Hyde’s secrets in a way to protect Jekyll, is that the same way in which Melinda protects herself? Students will have multiple options to take the essay in either way they choose as long as the themes of identity and silence are focused on.
"The Tyger"

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night;
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies.
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand, dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain,
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp,
Dare its deadly terrors clasp!

When the stars threw down their spears
And water’d heaven with their tears:
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger Tyger burning bright,
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?
As for integrating a piece of short fiction, a novella, or a poem, we have selected to study William Blake’s poem “The Tyger” from his collection *Songs of Experience* alongside his poem “The Lamb” from *Songs of Innocence*. “The Lamb” was published in *Songs of Innocence* in 1789 and five years later in 1794, “The Tyger” was published in *Songs of Experience*. When first introducing the reader to these poems, a basic understanding of poetic form as well as historical context for the texts would be helpful. Students should be given a basic cameo of Blake as a writer and theologian. By understanding Blake’s commitment to writing about Christianity and contrasting good and evil, students will be better equipped to analyze “The Tyger” and “The Lamb”. Although these poems were published in the eighteenth century, the less modern English language Blake has used can be understood through close readings and translations of the text into “modern English” more commonly used by high school students today.

As “The Tyger” and “The Lamb” stand side by side, these sister poems will illuminate the theme of duality that is illustrated in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Each of these poems features an animal and proceeds to question the creature’s origin and innate characteristics (the lamb as pure and innocent, the tyger as ferocious and powerful). The poems not only address the characteristics of the animals, but also the qualities and intentions of the creator of such animals. The swaying of the speaker between reasoning the tyger, lamb, and creator as “good” or “evil” represents the duality that is also employed in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* between the characterizations of the good-doing Dr. Jekyll and his crude counterpart: Mr. Hyde.

---

**“The Lamb”**

*Little Lamb who made thee*
*Dost thou know who made thee*
Gave thee life & bid thee feed.
By the stream & o’er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing woolly bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice!
*Little Lamb who made thee*
*Dost thou know who made thee*

*Little Lamb I’ll tell thee,*
*Little Lamb I’ll tell thee!*
He is called by thy name.
For he calls himself a Lamb:
He is meek & he is mild,
He became a little child:
I a child & thou a lamb,
*We are called by his name.*
*Little Lamb God bless thee.*
*Little Lamb God bless thee.*
Pedagogical Engagement:

As posted above, both William Blake’s “The Lamb” and “The Tyger” from the collections *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*. Through the teaching of these selected poems, the pedagogical goals would be as follows: to analyze the texts in terms of poetic meter, to comprehend the meaning of the texts in a historical context as well as in context with *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and to find symbolic meaning in the poetic meter and devices in the poems. Ultimately, the students will have a competence in reading Blake’s eighteenth century poetry and place a relevance in its meaning to modern day. By understanding the struggle in the battle between “good” and “evil” in this poetic text, students will be better equipped to draw upon this duality in other class texts (such as *Speak*, *Fight Club*, and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*).

When teaching “The Lamb” and “The Tyger” in a high school classroom, one should begin with a basic overview of the poet, William Blake. Through a short biography of Blake, the students will know to pick up on biblical or Christian references in the text, which will add an additional layer of meaning to the text which many students may be able to draw meaning from with possible prior knowledge they may have. At surface level, students will be able to read through “The Lamb” and “The Tyger” and easily state the differences between the two poems. For example, “The Lamb” uses words like “delight”, “wooly”, “tender”, “meek”, and “mild” all so describe the lamb, while in “The Tyger” more aggressive words like “fearful”, “dread”, “furnace”, and “deadly terrors” in association with the tyger and its creator. With a historical background in texts like *The Inferno of Dante Alighieri* or even *Paradise Lost* (which may only be read by Honors or Advanced Placement high school students), an association with terms like “furnace” can be attributed to that of Christianity’s perception of hell. In addition to this metonymic reference of a “furnace” to hell, the qualities of the lamb can be compared to the Christian biblical character Jesus who is routinely referred to in biblical texts as a “Lamb of God”. In viewing the poems through a biblical lens, the duality of good and evil between “The Lamb” and “The Tyger” will become quite apparent.

Not only is teaching these poems through a figurative context key for exploring the duality of good and evil, but a close reading of these poems according to poetic devices is also key. Blake’s “The Tyger” the poem is composed of six quatrains and contains rhyming couplets throughout each quatrain. “The Tyger” employs pretty straightforward rhyme, as well as some slant rhyme (like “eye” and “symmetry”). Overall, “The Tyger” has a concrete form throughout. “The Lamb” is written in the form of two ten-line stanzas that follow the pattern AABB CCDD (etc.) throughout. In both the first two and last two lines of each stanza is couplet that repeats itself. These couplets serve as a kind of chorus for the sing-song AABB rhyme of “The Lamb”. Traditionally, church hymns follow the simple and song-like rhyme scheme of AABB. This form is typically helpful when memorizing lyrics and rhymes, and is also quite similar to the form of most nursery rhymes. The use of a repeated couplet as a kind of chorus throughout “The Lamb” echoes this biblical theme and repetition of good (in comparison to that of “The Tyger”).

Through the understanding of the biblical allusions and use of poetic device to emphasize the good and evil throughout “The Lamb” and “The Tyger”, students will be able to clearly highlight the conflict and duality existing between the texts. By critical analysis of each poem and exploring the texts in terms of themes of symmetry, good and evil, and duality, students will successfully be able to attribute qualities of “The Lamb” and “The Tyger” onto plot lines and characters from *Fight Club* and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. 
Tasks/Activities:

When introducing a high school aged classroom to the writings of William Blake, it is integral to address the potential confusion that may surround language of the eighteenth century poems. Including an activity that confronts this topic of language is integral in the students’ understanding of the poems. While including tasks to master the language and literal meaning of the poems, tasks intended to address figurative language and thematic topics throughout the poems in relation to the base text: *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* are quite important as well.

In an introductory activity, students should read through both “The Lamb” and “The Tyger” multiple times (both alone and in a group/partnership). The students should then be instructed to translate line for line the literal meaning of the poems. For example, lines 3-4 “What immortal hand or eye, Could frame thy fearful symmetry?” of “The Tyger” would translate into: “What non-human created this powerful creature?”. By translating the text of the poem into a more modern form of English, students will be forced to ponder the meaning of terms like “symmetry” and delve deeper into the poem to draw out further meaning from such a term. After students have essentially rewritten “The Lamb” or “The Tyger”, students should read their translations aloud to the class. Giving students a chance to share their work and listen to the work of their peers may introduce a new meaning or interpretation of “The Lamb” or “The Tyger”. The verbal presentation of each poem will likely also create a competition between groups to defend their translation or derived meaning from the text. As a teacher, facilitating this friendly defense/ offense of students’ work will be greatly important to maintaining a healthy classroom environment. Students should be able to express their confusion or correct a translation that they feel is problematic. Through the discussion of translations of “The Lamb” and “The Tyger” students will end the activity with a greater understanding of Blake’s writing.

In another activity with “The Lamb” and “The Tyger” students will compare the language of the two opposing poems in an effort to highlight the duality between good and evil. This task may be as simple or involved as the teacher wishes. For example, for a simpler activity, teachers could hand out two colors of highlighters to the class and designate one color as “good” and one as “evil/bad”. Students will highlight all adjectives, adverbs, verbs, and nouns that possess either a “good” or “evil/bad” inflection or intonation in a color coded manner. Through this activity, students will be able to visually see the repetition in imagery and figurative language that is incorporated in the poems in order to create a specific mood or tone. In poems students will likely highlight “good” terms such as: “little”, “stream”, “delight”, “Lamb”, “tender”, “bright”, etc. Whilst searching for “evil/bad” thematic terms students will likely highlight “furnace”, “fire”, “meek”, etc. After students’ quick scan and highlighting of the terms found in the poems, the instructor can then facilitate a conversation that unpacks the etymology such terms in accordance with being “good” or “evil/bad”. This conversation will force students to confront the stereotypes and word associations they place upon terms such as “furnace”. During this conversation, for example, the word “furnace” could be associated with topics like hell, sin, fire, evil, or the devil. Through this conversation of pathos that Blake’s word choice evokes, students will begin to see the duality between “The Tyger” and “The Lamb”.

In a final task with Blake’s “The Tyger” and “The Lamb”, students will work to compare the Lamb and Tyger with Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Again, this activity could be as involved or simple as class time allows. In this activity students will be placed into groups and given art supplies (markers/crayons/pencils) and instructed to create a visual representation of either the Lamb, Tyger, Dr. Jekyll, or Mr. Hyde. The visual representation may be an abstract swirl of
colors, a detailed portrait, or a metaphorical drawing of some other object. The students’ work will be graded in accordance with textual support for their visual depiction. Each group will be asked to turn in a brief list of textual support for which they based their drawn interpretations. These works of art are meant to give students the option to express their interpretations of the textual characters/themes. Through this fun activity, students can be creative as well as delve into the texts of Blake’s poetry as well as into *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

Ultimately, the activities surrounding the writings of William Blake are meant to scaffold the understanding of themes of duality found within the text of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Through the translation of both “The Tyger” and “The Lamb” students will learn to withdraw meaning and better interpret eighteenth century writings. The use of highlighters to indicate the duality of good and evil within the poems will teach students to learn the etymology and associated meaning with words that depict a specific tone. With the final activity, the visual representations of the Tyger, Lamb, Dr. Jekyll, or Mr. Hyde, students will scour the texts for evidence for how to design their character/image. Once the images are completed and displayed in the classroom, students will easily be able to see the duality between the Tyger and Lamb with Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. The theme of duality is one of repetition between the texts of William Blake as well as in the tale of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and this theme will be communicated and emphasized through the use of these classroom activities and tasks.

**Critical Analyses**


The purpose of this article by Denise Johnson is to articulate the ways that students can interact with an author’s blog while reading a text. Johnson says that students can enhance their understanding of a text by creating and managing their own blogs and posts by which to interact with authors. Students can interact with each other as well as with the author, if he/she is willing, online. As today students are constantly surrounded with and submerged in a technological literacy, it only makes sense to extend this literature with scholarly work. As students read articles, posts, and background about the author that composed a text they are currently reading in class, students will gain a stronger understanding of the author’s perspective while writing the text. Students may have the opportunity to reply to blog posts and comment on things that the author or other readers of the author’s texts have posted. This technologically oriented literacy possessed by so many young adults today must not go to waste in the classroom, but be engaged with in order to advance and enhance students’ educations.

This article by Johnson addresses the many ways that interacting with an author’s blog or website can be helpful when teaching in a young adult classroom. In order to further engage students with a text, allowing students to interact with online resources such as blogs found on WordPress or Tumblr, or author’s personal Twitter accounts will likely engross the students into a particular text or genre. In a realistic classroom application, the use of an author’s personal blog or website will likely be most useful only if the author is actively using the account and is not deceased. That being said, if an author is unavailable via blog, students could take this chance to create blogs of their own in response to the text they are studying. By providing classroom time for students to create a Tumblr or Wordpress blog to use alongside their English
class, students will be able to respond to texts in a variety of mediums via blog post (music, vlogging: video blogging, photographs, poems, narratives, or journal entries). Not only can students interact with each other’s blogs online, but students may also have the opportunity to respond to or Skype with the author of a text they are reading. By conducting dialogue with the author or fan base of a text, students will learn meaningful ways to activate their technological literacy and engage this new literacy with their scholarly work in the English classroom.


The purpose of this article by Lori Wilfong is to illustrate the purpose of utilizing literature circles in a middle school classroom. Wilfong presents a highly structured format for these literature circles in the classroom and shares her own personal testimony from when she used literature circles in her own classroom. As defined by Harvey Daniels, a literature circle is as follows:

“Literature circles are small, temporary discussion groups who have chosen to read the same story, poem, article, or book. While reading each group determined portion of the text (either inside or outside of class), each member prepares to take specific responsibilities in the upcoming discussion, and everyone comes to the group with the notes needed to perform that job. The circles have regular meetings, with discussion roles rotating each session. When they finish a book, the circle members plan a way to share highlights of their reading with the wider community; then they trade members with other finishing groups, select more reading, and move into a new cycle. Once readers can successfully conduct their own wide-ranging, self-sustaining discussions, formal discussion roles may be dropped.” (Harvey, 1994).

This detailed explanation of a literature circle serves to explain the standard literature circle that is ultimately the goal of a teacher trying to implement such literature circles in a classroom. Throughout the article, Wilfong stresses that by allowing students to work in groups and assume roles for which they have personal responsibilities for, students will become more motivated to participate in conversation.

Ultimately, literature circles are a way to engage students in conversations about texts being read in the classroom without teacher facilitated dialogue. Through the roles students assume in literature circles (discussion director, literary luminary, illustrator, and connector) students will possess a greater sense of ownership over the texts they discuss and the work they complete in a group. Literature circles assign roles to students and involved every student in the discussion of a text in their own specialized way. Another benefit of literature circles in the classroom is that they allow for diversity in reading for students. As an entire class set of a single book may not be possible to hand out, reading a multiple books in groups of 4-6 will be much easier to acquire books for. Not only will finding copies of books within libraries be much easier, but students will also have the opportunity to possibly choose which book they would like to read and select their group based upon book choice. By allowing students to have more independence to select which book(s) they read, students will possess more ownership over the text they read and the work they complete alongside the texts. Overall, literature circles are a way to successfully engage students in classroom discussion, give them opportunities to select the texts they read, and motivate students to read in order to be prepared for discussion and fulfill their roles in the literature circle.

This article calls into question not whether independent reading is beneficial or not, but rather how best to implement it so that it is as beneficial to the students as possible; arguing that it is in fact extremely beneficial when executed correctly and that the new tendency to eliminate it completely is a result of misinterpretation of data. After introducing its case, the article explores the data found by research in recent years, highlighting the trends in at-grade-level reading difficulty for students from the fourth to twelfth grades, especially those entering high school. Using the need for vocabulary in society and the common motivation for most educators of English to value vocabulary as a pillar of English, it emphasizes that vocabulary growth occurs in the context of reading, thus reading independently is critical to vocabulary development. However, vocabulary can also be a road block to independent reading since many students fail to understand that reading is not merely looking at every word and flipping the page, either completely ignoring the vocabulary to be added or stumbling, unguided, through unfamiliar words that inhibit them from comprehending the text. The article argues that when teachers believe that independent reading can be done solely in the home, three assumptions are being made: “that students are independent readers, that they have access to books they can and want to read, and that they each have a purpose for reading” (39). It goes on to present the Sustained Silent Reading system and criticize its flaws on the basis that both students and teachers can be obstacles in SSR, and it lacks real engagement between teacher, student and the importance of reading. They then explain their research project, an expanded and adapted version of a reading workshop based on connecting, predicting, summarizing, questioning and visualizing. This led them to their development of R5, a model based on reading, relaxing, followed by responding, reflecting and “rapping” their experiences to a friend and the class. This five-pronged approach meets the student at every level of engagement with the text by attending to the atmosphere, the extrinsic motivation, building proficiency and metacognitive awareness. The ultimate importance and effectiveness of this model, they argue, is the investment of the teacher – if the students know and value that their teacher is a reader and supports their growth by reading alongside them, modeling the behavior of a reader, the students will take him/her as an example, respecting them and the importance of independent reading.

This article is extremely valuable in the classroom setting, given that it provides examples of handouts, worksheets and conversations between students and teachers showing the readers how to facilitate the methods for which it argues. The fact that it addresses not only the importance of independent reading but also the false interpretations of research that argue in favor of abandoning it as a classroom practice renders it highly pertinent to the debates on curriculum, classroom time, and goals to be achieved in the classroom. It displays an astounding understand of the need for student ownership and development of metacognitive skills, while building the bridge between student and teacher, so that each instructor participates actively in the independent reading adventures of each student both by example, motivation and conversation through the R5 method. The article presents a pertinent thesis, argues against a common misunderstanding, addresses the problems in current forms and provides a solution through a new model displayed through concrete examples, cited conversations between teacher and student, and overall commanding the presence of the teacher in each step. It’s a story of personal investment, the mantra of the educators, that offers a happy ending to each teacher with a model that’s open to adaptation but a good foundation on which to rebuild independent reading as a key component of the English classroom.

In "Reading for a Better World: Teaching for Social Responsibility With Young Adult Literature", Steven Wolk argues that without a clear focus on what Language Arts classes satisfy within middle/high-school curriculums, students will fail to grasp the concept of what they should be learning. By not having a clear cut idea of what is being taught, students will begin to resent writing and reading as they see both as mundane chores. Wolk expands from this, going on to argue that establishing purpose in reading beyond “getting an assignment done,” is the key objective when teaching students. The purposes Wolk cite include basic social integration, as far as civil responsibilities and awareness go. He uses examples such as Persepolis and Spite Fences, as well as YAL novels such as the Hunger Games to explain how books can be used to influence students and help them become aware of the world around them.

Wolk’s essay provides critical thinking questions that instead of simply testing students on if they read the book or not, it asks them to make connections between the book and themselves. By doing this, the connection of what it means to write a book and what it is to read it begins to reveal itself. If a student can connect with a book, in a way it becomes their own story. Purpose is therefore revealed to the student, and reading loses its mundane attributes. The essay is also useful in articulating ways students may use books to become more engaged with their own lives as well as the lives of others on a global and cultural scale.


Janet Alsup’s “Politicizing young adult literature: Reading Anderson’s Speak as a critical text” discusses the way in which texts can be an intellectually engaging process, but at the same time ethically engaging as well. While many young adult literature texts are produced for middle school students mainly due to the larger market available to authors within that age range, certain books exist that deal with the issues many 14-18 year olds may see themselves facing. By using Speak, Alsup maps ways in which the book can be specifically used to “‘speak’ to teen readers and help them cope with problems such as dating violence, divisive peer groups and cliques, and feelings of isolation and alienation from school” (162). Alsup argues that a critical text can engage students, especially if they form a connection with the book. Novels like Speak allow these connections to form, by creating a forum for discussion on serious issues.

The essay is useful in a classroom setting as it presents ways in which Speak can be seen as a critical text. “Students need to read, write, and talk about issues that are relevant and real to them and that have immediate meaning for them in their lives” (165), the theme of silence and identity in Speak can be used to engage students, and then carry over in a less personal way to the classics. Texts like *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* can be taught with, or after speak, and since students have already connected to those themes, a seemingly irrelevant text suddenly finds modernity among students.

This article is interested because it discusses the usefulness of bibliotherapy, a word I had not previously heard and how future teachers can utilize this strategy in their classroom. The author defines bibliotherapy as using literature to help students cope with their differences, whether they are social, racial, cultural, or even related to an illness or disability, in an effort to create a more inclusive classroom. This article focuses on various types of disabilities, including social impairments, learning disabilities, and visual impairments. There is also a helpful list of resources at the end of the article to help anyone who would like to learn more about the usefulness of this method as well as how to implement it and a few suggested books that could be used. The beginning of the article gives descriptions of how teacher education students and librarians are taught to use and analyze young adult literature which has characters with special needs and is then followed by steps to utilize these types of books in the classroom.

As a future teacher, I find this article to be extremely useful. Although it is brief, there is a lot of information to be taken away. The chances of any teacher having students in their class who have a disability is quite high, and making those students feel comfortable in that class through lessons is a great idea and will also help students without disabilities to better understand and empathize with people who do have them. The bibliography at the end of the article is a great way to start generating ideas on how you would use young adult literature in your classroom, especially since the chart of books provides suggestions for both children in an elementary class and young adults in middle and high school. It is amazing to learn how literature can be used in a therapeutic manner right in the classroom.


This article seems at first to be primarily directed toward teachers of English, but the author, an English teacher himself, discusses how young adult literature can also be important to the other disciplines. He describes how he was able to convince his colleagues, specifically a science teacher, to leave the standard textbook behind and use YAL to help the students relate to the content being taught in her class. He mentions how the National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE) helped to form the National Center for Literacy Education (NCLE) recently and how the group encourages every subject area to improve the literacy levels in their classroom. This is followed by suggested instructions on how to approach your colleagues about using YAL in their classroom. Of course, he then provides a short list of potential books including in which subjects they could be used, a brief summary of each book, as well as how the novel could actually be implemented in the class.

Again, this is a brief article, but also one that provides future and current English teachers with great ideas on how to talk to your colleagues and the importance of reading outside of the English class. One of the most important parts of this article is that is actually written by an English teacher who has tried these ideas with his own colleagues. It shows how important and useful he thinks YAL can be. This article does not directly discuss the use of YAL in an English classroom, but provides any teacher with suggestions for professional development and how to have discussions with colleagues about how each discipline can actually have something in common; even Math and English can overlap. Though his book list offers a few suggestions for science, he does not make any for math courses, which is something I would have been interested to see.

In *Raising "Hot Topics" through Young Adult Literature*, the authors raise the topic on the importance of discussing those often uncomfortable taboo issues that many young adult novels target in the classroom. The article speaks to this issue when stating, “...when teachers avoid "taboo topics" such as sexual abuse, racism, and homophobia in the classroom, we contribute to their stigmatization in society; that, in turn, makes it harder for adolescents to break their silence as victims and/or to disrupt dominant discourses and the status quo.” Similarly to this idea, the article argues that by hiding our students from the unfortunate truths of the many demons in this is doing nothing but further hindering them from understanding and being prepared for the real world. By giving our students to the opportunity to read these novels in a safe, comfortable setting, teachers can target many of the unjust issues that their students are so often tainted from while giving them the chance to voice their opinions on the issues as well.

Not only does this article make teachers think twice about the importance of addressing these taboo topics through literature, it would be a useful non-fictional piece of writing to teach along with a young adult novel that speaks directly to one or more of these issues. When reading this article, teachers are forced to consider what we are doing to our students when we do not discuss these controversial issues--rape, abuse and homophobia--with our students. As a way to use this article as a tool in the classroom, teachers could have their students read it and have a group discussion on the what they think the importance of learning these “hot topics” are, weighing both the pros and cons of the situation. Teachers have the opportunity to break the unknown barriers and introduce their students to real, everyday issues that circulate our countries concerns each and every day. They need to be prepared for the fears their teachers, parents and principals have for them and be able to discuss these fears with their teachers and peers, school being the safest place to do so.


In *Naughty or Not?: Exploring Controversial Content and Core Universal Themes in Contemporary Young Adult Literature*, O’Bannion speaks directly to the issues raised from parents and teachers regarding teaching novels such as Twilight and Gossip girl in the classroom. My research utilized grounded theory and coding to explore controversial content and core universal themes present in the *Gossip Girl* and *Twilight* series in an effort to define any remediating qualities in the literature. She expanded on her search for a justification to allow these novels in the classroom when stating, “My research utilized grounded theory and coding to explore controversial content and core universal themes present in the *Gossip Girl* and *Twilight* series in an effort to define any remediating qualities in the literature...Fansites and literature served as my frame of reference to explore the series for evidence of core universal themes. There was substantial evidence of multiple core universal themes throughout both series.” (3 O’Bannion) These core universal themes throughout both series include the inevitable topics of love, fitting in as well as choice, all three being issues many of students face every day. The article goes further into researching how the effectiveness these novels have the ability to be in the classroom.

By allowing series such as *Twilight* and *Gossip Girl* in the classroom, teachers are able to discuss every day issues students are forced to face while using popular present-time novels that students are interested in reading. Hayn and Kaplan stated a very similar idea to this journal when writing, “Considering that adolescence is a time of constant change, students preferred to read about characters who were wrestling with the same conscious and subconscious identity
issues that they themselves were experiencing” (Hayn & Kaplan 85). What better way to get our students reading about these adolescent issues than with novels students enjoy reading that have characters they can relate to? One of the largest difficulties teachers face is getting students engaged in reading, both in and out of school. Naughty or Not?: Exploring Controversial Content and Core Universal Themes in Contemporary Young Adult Literature discusses the advantages these novels hold for students as it argues the benefits of teaching these issues with novels our students would be more willing to read. When O’Bannion wrote, “This study will hopefully encourage those who question the appropriateness of literature to explore these and other controversial books with deeper contextual understanding,” she hoped to get parents not to jump to conclusions about the quality these novels have with not only our students, but with teachers who are struggling getting students to be more willing to read. This article gets teachers thinking about many popular series recently published and the qualities many of them hold when it comes to educating our students with the best ways possible.


The main point of Jackett’s article is to show how using Speak in the classroom can facilitate meaningful discussions on sensitive issues for young adult students. Jackett first uses concrete examples from his own classroom to demonstrate how Speak can be used; for example, he talks about having students break up into small groupers before coming together for a class discussion. He also discusses outside sources he brought in to the class, such as article or other novels about sexual assault, that helped students to have an intelligent conversation on Speak and Melinda’s rape. He concludes by arguing that Speak, while somewhat controversial because of its sensitive topic, is a book that should be taught because it brings an honest viewpoint about a topic that students will most likely be affected by at some point in their lives.

This article is valuable for future teachers because it gives concrete examples on how to use Speak in the classroom. For example, Jackett gives ideas for projects that can be related to the book, such as creating a skit out of a significant scene in the story. Jackett also lays out specific points on how to address issues of sexual assault in the classroom by putting down word for word what some of his students said to him. He even points out exactly how we responded so that the reader has an image of how to react to students’ questions about rape and sexual assault. By giving the reader a detailed description of his own lessons, Jackett effectively shows us how we can use a book like Speak to bring in sensitive topics into the classroom without being too fearful of parents or administration; as long as the projects and discussions are honest and truthful, Jackett says, then high school students will succeed in handling a difficult topic.


The main point of McGee’s article is how Melinda’s recovery comes from her eventual grasp of the power of language, but at the same time, is undermined by the fact that she can only gain that power by confession what happened to her to an adult figure. This article is critical of Anderson’s voice as an author because it is essentially an adult voice seeking to mimic the confession of a teenage girl. McGee goes on to analyze Melinda’s progression to eventually articulating what happens to her, but the first person she talks to is her adult teacher, Mr. Freeman; McGee then argues that this complicates the story because while Melinda does gain
strength, it is an adult who gives it to her. The article concludes by implying that while Melinda’s strength and power to speak come from both within her own growing up and in her confiding to adult figures at the end of the novel.

This article is valuable for future teachers because it brings in another layer of complexity to the reading of *Speak*. *Speak* can be viewed as a story that simply deals with Melinda finding her voice through her own strength. This article highlights how Melinda is only able to do so with the authority of adult figures in her life. This could be an interesting discussion to bring in the classroom for young adult students. While students will probably focus on Melinda’s self-identity as is shaped by her own actions, they may take the article’s argument into consideration and examine what roles the adult figures had in her life and what factor they placed in her eventual recovery. By introducing different scholarly perspectives, future teachers can ask students questions that may have them considering options that they hadn’t before. From there, students will be able to build upon their analysis skills to examine not just the main characters but also the implications of their relationships to others in addition the story’s main themes.


This article details a research project in the field of Young Adult literature that attempts to describe this particular body of literature as a whole. The study attempts to answer the following questions: “to what degree is current [Young Adult] literature fulfilling the needs of adolescents?” “In what arenas might available [Young Adult] books contribute to adolescent literacy?” “What gaps and needs remain?” To answer these questions, the researchers read, coded, and analyzed a representative sample of 59 young adult books while cataloguing the characteristics of the novel in terms of genre, character representation of real world cultures, textual content, and identifiable trends in narrative, stylistic, and structural features. The study found 85% of the texts to be fiction, with a majority being contemporary realistic fiction. Only 20% of the texts exhibited multicultural consideration in any notable fashion. Religion was found to be nearly absent as a major center for content. Six of the 59 texts revolved around LGBTQ issues in identity. The texts also indicated a shift from social issues and coming of age narratives to teens and typical teen life issues. 85% of the novels focus on teens “finding themselves.”

This study serves educators and future educators by indexing the most available modes of young adult literature: understanding, for example, that the majority of young adult literature is contemporary realistic fiction indicates that an educator will need to work harder to incorporate non-fiction young adult literature in his or her classroom. Similarly, the lack of multicultural identity in young adult literature serves as a challenge to educators attempting to explore diversity through young adult texts. The article also serves as a grounding foundation for other studies in young adult literature: provided with a general knowledge of the texts that are being produced for and read by young adults, researchers and policy-makers can ask informed questions that lead to deeper insights into young adult literacy.


This article serves as an introduction to current research in the field of young adult literature. The author explores the reasons that young adult literature is a current focus of research: increased interest in bullying, technology and adolescent sexuality as well as the popularity of articles and research that consider young adult literature as their primary focus. The
author also mentions the value of the crossover genre in relation to child-parent relationships as well as the expansion of young adult literature as a genre. He goes on to relate information about the essays that follow it in such a way that serves as both a roadmap and a suggestion for perspectives to be considered by the reader. The first essay detailed explores a psychoanalytical perspective that “transcends cultural difference.” The second essay investigates the role of war in the coming of age narrative for child soldiers and demonstrates the ineffectiveness of warfare as a rite of passage. The author goes on to provide brief synopses of the perspectives of several essays, each with an interesting, new perspective on the texts in consideration. He concludes with an anecdote on the value of young adult literature to his students in a college setting.

As a resource, this article serves educators and future educators by providing insight to the ways in which several texts are being used in the greater field of study concerning young adult literature. One could, in practice, utilize the texts and perspectives here presented in a classroom setting to push the boundaries of young adult literature as they are understood by students. The concept of the “real books” depicted in the anecdote that finishes the article is one that must, at some degree, be addressed in a classroom that utilizes young adult literature as a teaching tool. This reference guide to a collection of essay serves as support for the notion that all (or most) young adult texts are “real books” and serve a real purpose in an educational setting.
Bibliography:


"You Can’t Hide in R5: Restructuring Independent Reading to be More Strategic and Engaging” *Voices from the Middle*, Vol. 14 No. 3, March 2007