INTEGRATING NON-CANONICAL TEXTS WITH CANONICAL TEXTS IN SECONDARY BRITISH LITERATURE COURSES: RESOURCES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Capstone Project

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Masters of Arts in Education
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Abstract

The purpose of this project was to develop resources for teachers to integrate modern texts, in a variety of forms, with the canon of traditional literature in secondary British literature classes. The researcher examined material in favor of and in opposition to the project topic to gather information on how to best serve educators and students. The researcher interviewed high school educators about the project topic. The manual is the result of the researcher’s findings and serves to answer the major and sub-questions in the hopes of better supporting secondary British literature educators and students.
Dedication

This capstone project undoubtedly is dedicated to my family. Whether in Texas, New York, Georgia, Florida, or hopping along with me while I’m on a run, this project and my degree would not have been possible without your support, encouragement, and love.

Dave – You’re the love of my life. Remember: “Education, education, education.” You’re continuing the tradition. Thanks for pushing me even when I didn’t think I could continue. Don’t ignore the stray dog.
Acknowledgements

Why do we as teachers continue with our education? Do we not already carry a huge burden by educating America’s children about the world and about life? Perhaps the problem is in the attitude of the educator. Why are you doing it? Why are you in the classroom? What role are you trying to play in the lives of your students? If you’re not trying to reach them all and impact who they will become in a positive manner, perhaps you need an education. The first quote is a key reason for continuing my education. Change is necessary, and it must start somewhere. The second quote is a tiny reminder about the students we are educating daily and how we choose to do it. Thanks to the members of my CMU cohort family and my friends/colleagues who remind me that there are good, honest people in the world who will continue to love and educate people. Your laughter and friendship have taught me many life lessons.
Fate brought us together.

_School-days, I believe, are the unhappiest in the whole span of human existence. They are full of dull, unintelligible tasks, new and unpleasant ordinances, brutal violations of common sense and common decency. It doesn’t take a reasonably bright boy long to discover that most of what is rammed into him is nonsense, and that no one really cares very much whether he learns it or not._
_H. L. Mencken (1880–1956), U.S. journalist_

_The desire to know is far more important than achievement and/or performance measures._
_Caine & Caine, Researchers of Education and Learning_

Finally, I’d like to acknowledge the person whose influence will continue to guide me in my educational pursuits. Dr. Haydel is a true educator of life. These quotes do little justice to demonstrate what she really taught me about who I am and who I can become.

_It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge._
_Albert Einstein_

The man who can make hard things easy is the educator.
_Ralph Waldo Emerson_
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Chapter I

Introduction

Student boredom with traditional literature plagues today’s high school English classes. Teachers work tirelessly to make classes exciting for their students; however, they may be looking in the wrong places. Excitement and learning cannot be recaptured by the use of canonical literature alone. Modern, even popular, non-canonical texts in any form, taught in conjunction with traditional literature, can revitalize the high school English class. The purpose of this project is to develop resources for teachers to integrate modern texts, in a variety of forms, with the canon of traditional literature in secondary British Literature classes.

Background

Many British Literature teachers are discovering new methods and texts to use in their English classes. Teachers are making these modifications because of students’ lack of interest in canonical literature. The lack of relevance seems to rest in the environment and the method by which they are being taught; therefore, the integration of modern texts in conjunction with the classics can revive America’s English classrooms. Literature should help students create personal connections to texts, but to teenagers many works in the traditional canon lack validity.

Teachers can pair modern and traditional texts to aid students in the understanding of the themes present in canonical literature. Students desire literature they can relate to personally. Unfortunately, in most cases the traditional canon alone does not offer students the opportunity for personal connection. Teaching-skills and understanding the importance of students making a personal connection are important. Although the themes are not outdated, for most of today’s high school students, classic literature lacks relevance and, therefore, bores them. Teachers have the obligation to make the texts and themes relevant through the inclusion of modern texts alongside canonical literature, which will allow students to make a personal connection with a variety of
contemporary and classic texts. Students who can relate to the literature they read are more likely to enjoy their English class. When teachers recognize a need for integrating modern texts together with the canon as a method of making texts and themes relevant to students, and then employing those texts, they demonstrate a genuine understanding of the needs of high school British Literature students.

Many teachers are reluctant to stray from texts found within the canon. With the inclusion of modern texts in conjunction with traditional literature, classics will not be discarded from required curriculum. Familiarity lies within the canon, but most twenty-first century students desire an understanding of literature that may involve drifting from traditions and including popular literature alongside the classics in literature classes. High school teachers must recognize the needs of their students in this area. The trends for English curricula are headed towards integrating modern texts with classics in order to keep students interested in their English class.

Problem Statement

Teachers need assistance in delivering the beauty and lessons learned from traditional classics. The inclusion of modern texts, together with the canon, enables students to further appreciate and understand literature. The purpose of this project was to develop resources for teachers to integrate modern texts, in a variety of forms, with the canon of traditional literature in secondary English classes, particularly in British Literature courses. The problem statement lends itself to several pertinent questions.

Major Question to Be Answered by Project

How can teachers enhance the learning experience for secondary British Literature students in classes where classic, canonical literature is required?
Sub-questions to Be Answered By Project

1. What alternative resources can be made available for teachers having a desire to include modern, non-canonical texts alongside the classics in their secondary British Literature classrooms?

2. What canonical texts and modern texts are effective for use as pairs in the resource manual as pairs for teachers to integrate contemporary literature in conjunction with the classics?

Professional Significance

Many high school British Literature teachers hesitate to stray from the canon of traditional literature, but many others desire a revitalization of their classes. Current research enumerates a large contingency of high school British Literature teachers already implementing non-canonical texts alongside the traditional canon, but many researchers and teachers are very interested in seeing this idea more widely accepted and used. Brian Ford states: “I believe the canon should change with a changing world, as it has always done” (p.60). The canon Ford speaks of will evolve in a manner that supports including the classics in conjunction with new, modern texts.

Other research illustrates a need to update the canon with the inclusion of modern texts coinciding with traditional British literature, but most of it lacks evidence as to how to actually accomplish that task. Particularly, teachers can find a variety of current novels to teach in conjunction with classic novels, but they lack resources enabling them to integrate non-canonical texts throughout an English course such as British Literature. Teachers realize “students need to read accessible, worthwhile, relevant, controversial, contemporary literature,” but they remain unequipped to change an entire course for their students (Israil, 1997, p.21). Countless researchers agree with the need for an “evolving canon” (Greenbaum, 1997, p.17). Greenbaum and many
other teachers simply want to add texts to the canon as a way to enhance the learning experience for students.

The best example of an English curriculum devised to incorporate modern texts thus far is Pacesetter English, developed by the College Board and Educational Testing Services. Their hope was “to open national standards and assessment to all students” by the use of contemporary literature and “the understanding of various kinds of texts: poetry, fiction, drama, essays, journalism, memoir, autobiography, documentary, feature films, televisions stories, and the like” (Wolf, 1995, p.59). The course, designed for the twelfth grade, integrated numerous contemporary texts with student personal connections in mind, but the course is almost devoid of required canonical texts (Wolf, 1995, p.60). Unfortunately, Pacesetter will not work as a sole curriculum in schools dealing with required standardized testing, and British Literature as a requirement for graduation. Research supports the incorporation of modern texts with the canon, and teachers need resources and directions as to how to implement them with the required British Literature curriculum.

**Overview of Methodology**

The researcher gave questionnaires to teachers to help determine why an updated canon with canonical and non-canonical texts was needed, and then the researcher designed resources for the integration of modern texts with required, canonical texts in actual classrooms. A need within the researcher’s school involved investigating methods for updating and enriching the current canon. Teachers at Smith High School (fictitious name) and curriculum developers from Smith County were asked to comment on the questionnaire about their philosophy of teaching, relevant to the project and their ideas about integrating modern texts alongside the canon in high school British Literature classes. The information from questionnaires was used to help determine the necessity for an updated canon incorporating modern texts in conjunction with the classics.
The researcher's experience of teaching modern texts along with the canon proved useful to the project. Research was compiled and examined to develop resources to implement modern texts together with the canon of traditional British literature. After all research was examined and participants' questionnaire responses were interpreted, the researcher developed resources for implementation by high school British Literature teachers. The resource packet developed for British Literature teachers was the result of interpreting the questionnaires, investigating research available on the project topic, and designing of the actual resources that employ the use of non-canonical texts in conjunction with traditional literature.

**Delimitations**

With any type of research, factors often arise that present boundaries and bias. In this particular study, the most obvious delimitations were the researcher's role as a teacher, creating a clear bias when dealing with educational issues in the classroom. The participants themselves are delimitations. Participants were from Smith High School in Smith County, a vast school district located twenty-five miles from Washington, D.C. serving over 225,000 residents. Considerable areas of the county are rural, while other sections are considered part of metropolitan Washington D.C. The district has eight high schools. The participants varied in gender, age, and experience related to the topic of British literature. Smith County typically has a graduation rate in the high nineties, ranking it high among other Virginia school districts. Smith High School serves students, ages fourteen to eighteen, who are working towards either a college preparatory/standard diploma or vocational seal. The class sizes at Smith High School average twenty-five students. The student population comes from middle class to upper-middle-class families.
Definition of Terms

- AP: advanced placement courses for high school students; college level.
- Canon: texts, typically in poem, short story, play, and novel form considered traditional literature; i.e., selections by Shakespeare, Chaucer, Hawthorne, and Orwell.
- Classics: pieces of literature, regarded in the mainstream as traditional; i.e., Romeo and Juliet, The Scarlet Letter, The Canterbury Tales, and Animal Farm.
- Non-canonical: texts, in a variety of forms, considered contemporary, modern, and even popular in some instances; i.e., selections by John Grisham, Nicholas Sparks, Tupac Shakur, Laurie Halse Anderson, and Dan Brown.
- Virginia SOL tests: required standards of learning tests for graduation.
- YA: young adult literature.

Summary

The purpose of this project was to develop resources for teachers to integrate modern texts, in a variety of forms, with the canon of traditional literature in secondary English classes, particularly in British Literature courses. The background and research efforts clearly outlined a need for supplemental resources for an entire course. The following chapter reviews the literature in favor of and in opposition to the project topic.
Chapter II

Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review highlights existing information available on the project topic. The purpose of this project was to develop resources for teachers to integrate modern texts, in a variety of forms, with the canon of traditional literature in high school British Literature classes. This chapter further discusses literature and research that favor and oppose the project topic of integrating modern texts alongside the canon of traditional literature. Extensive literature existed in favor of the project topic, but there was a substantial dearth of information in opposition to the project.

Necessity of a New Canon Integrating Modern Texts with the Traditional Canon

The canon of traditional literature lacks modern selections, in conjunction with existing classics, for teachers to use in their classrooms. Ford states: “I believe a new canon should change with a changing world, as it has always done” (p.60). Educators, including Ford and others, see the need for an “evolving canon” (Greenbaum, 1997, p.17). This type of canon calls not for the departure of canonical texts completely, but, instead recommends the incorporation of modern texts with traditional literature. Most of these educators are not asking for all teachers to conform to what they teach in their classrooms, but they suggest that teachers looking at the canon of traditional literature need to include texts that allow students to make a personal connection (Greenbaum, 1997, p.17). Helen Poole states: “Informed teachers strive to balance traditional, multicultural, multi-ethnic, and young adult literature” (p.15). Students in today’s classrooms come from different backgrounds; it is imperative that educators recognize this diversity and work to incorporate all types of literature in the classroom. If educators “make choices of reading out of
the thinking, feeling, and experience of being a person” rather than teaching material because they feel they have to, ultimately teachers and students will be happier and more engaged in literature classes (Ford, 1993, p.61). Students deserve interesting characters and thoughtful pieces of literature that stretch beyond most of what is now found within the traditional canon, as it stands alone. The majority of the literature found within the traditional canon is relevant, but teachers’ poor choices and lack of enthusiasm threaten classrooms (Ford, 1993). Jim Cope writes: “Giving students ownership of their reading can help them become lifelong readers while still exposing them to classic literature” (p. 22). He also suggests that pairing modern texts with the classics invites high school students to read texts that they may enjoy and understand, when taught together (Cope, 1997, p. 23). Students deserve exposure to literature that will invigorate their thoughts, even if it is non-traditional. When taught alongside traditional pieces of literature, modern texts may validate students’ lives and classroom experiences (Skretta, 1997).

The canon of traditional literature needs to change to incorporate new, modern texts with classics. “Canons...are evolutionary; even though, they may seem concrete and stable...,”and educators who recognize this growth of the canon will have success as they modify it (Doherty, 1998, p.403). The canon need not be completely rewritten; instead, it should be adapted to meet the needs of current students through an alternate canon that integrates modern, even popular, texts. The current canon is defined by texts that appear to withstand time because of their time-honored themes. Unfortunately, the existing canon, standing alone and without the aid of proper teaching skills, serves almost no point to high school British Literature students (Doherty, 1998).

Educators who fail to recognize the need to add contemporary literature are doing a great disservice to their students. Elfie Israel, a veteran teacher of thirty years, writes: “Students need to read accessible, worthwhile, relevant, controversial, and contemporary literature” (1997, p.21).
She further comments that "classics are an indispensable component of our heritage" (1997, p.21). Even teachers who have been teaching from the canon for several decades recognize the need to include modern literature with traditional literature. According to Frank Madden, "More than fifty years of research indicates that our personal reaction to literature is the most basic part of literary experience..." (2001, p.1). Literature should aid students in creating personal connections. Most of the traditional canon lacks validity with students because they cannot relate to certain aspects of the literature, and teaching styles may be outdated.

Pairing modern texts with traditional texts will allow special connections to take place. Teachers need to be aware of the necessity for aiding students in understanding the worlds found within literature and the connection to their lives (Madden, 2001). Furthermore, "the best way to have students think critically about the concept of literature is to have them analyze, comparatively, both canonical and non-canonical texts..." (Hesse, 1989, p.16). The definition of a classic is one that moves the reader emotionally, and for the most part, canonical literature alone does not have the capability of achieving that without the aid of modern literature (Jurgella, 1998). Mitch Cox states: "The literature we select for our students should serve their interests as they perceive them" (1988, p.32). Teachers are not serving their students well by giving them classics without a modern, popular example to read. Educators have a responsibility to make the curriculum reflect "the diversity of this pluralist society" (Cox, 1998, p.33). If educators teach the canon of traditional literature alone, they are excluding an integral part of the world's diverse culture that students can benefit from being exposed to in the classroom.

Educators fearful of switching to incorporating modern literature alongside the canon need not be fearful. Many resources are available for teachers, and many teachers who have already tried this are having great success. Patrick Sullivan writes: "Perhaps the greatest benefit with this approach is that it allows students to see for themselves in a concrete way how a literary text
created by a writer like James Baldwin, for example, is different (and superior in almost every way) than one created by somebody like John Grisham” (1995, p.268). If educators use traditional and modern texts, they are exposing their students to even more literature, diversity, ideas, and perspectives. Sullivan further comments: “Comparing popular literature and classic literary texts in class allows students to seek answers to questions for themselves” (1995, p.270). By exposing students to popular literature, teachers are making the contents of English class accessible and enjoyable. Many educators do not realize they “[spend] too much time on works that students don’t like and [lack] a real tradition of conversation into which students can enter” (Applebee, 1997, p.27). Applebee suggests that in order for teachers to further develop new and relevant curriculum, they must find a balance between traditions and current reality, which allows students to define their identity through a synthesis of the past and the present (1997). Furthermore, allowing students to read traditional texts in conjunction with modern literature “permits them to change their own realities, based on traditions” (Applebee, 1997, p.29). Students find literature applicable to life when they can relate to the themes presented to them in English class (Applebee, 1997).

The state of Virginia’s SOL tests require the teaching of many traditional pieces of literature, but the British Literature curriculum allows numerous areas where modern texts can be taught, with works and concepts that the state deems essential. Many school systems realize a need to change the face of British Literature curriculum by including modern literature pieces (Poole, 1994). Bruce Robbins writes: “Almost by definition, classics are challenging to read because of their sophistication and artistic uses of language and their immersions into unfamiliar worlds” (1998, p.14). The purpose of this project was to take those unfamiliar worlds and make them familiar through the use of modern literature incorporated with the classics. Ted Hipple writes: “I’d be elated if students adored Hamlet, shared my belief that Jane Austen has benefited
humankind in significant ways, returned to Twain and Dickens just for the sheer pleasure of doing so, but that seems not to be the case” (p.15). If students are not interested in the literature, the reality is they will not read. Educators need not be worried about removing classics from their syllabi; instead, teachers can teach both modern texts and traditional texts with the hope that students will connect personally and thoughtfully to literature. Harold Foster writes: “We face serious problems if our classrooms only teach the eternal hit parade of classical American and British literature. The challenge is to expand [the] body of literature, to make it more inclusive, more representative of our times and of the students we teach” (p.56). When educators teach only the classics, they are hurting their students and preventing them from reading at all, much less becoming life-long readers (Bushman, 1997, p.38).

Modern, Non-Canonical Texts and Canonical Texts to be Read Together in English Classrooms

There is a movement among many high school English teachers to include literature, in a variety of forms, including modern, even popular, texts to engage students in vibrant discussions and writing. This literature includes films, young adult literature, songs, magazine and newspaper articles, cartoons, and television (Hobbs, 1998). Renee Hobbs states: “It’s a transforming experience for a young person to discover that the same skills used to discuss The Tempest can be applied to an episode of The Wonder Years (p.49). Hobbs places value on the use of modern texts in conjunction with traditional texts. The author gives further examples of teaching the The Simpsons and Mark Twain together to help build literacy skills. The background knowledge students bring to modern texts will aid them as they analyze more challenging, traditional literature with similar themes. Many English students feel at ease with popular texts. Hipple writes: “There are lots of good reasons to use adolescent literature in schools...students will read it. Part of the problem of students’ dislike of classic literature may lie in outmoded and uninspiring
methods of teaching that literature...” (p.17). When comparing modern literature to traditional literature, students can decipher important information out of the classics while either working with modern texts or directly after studying the non-canonical literature. Randall Withers comments: “The fact that a novel has been taught for decades does not guarantee that students will appreciate its value” (p.63). Modern texts invigorate most students, and teaching texts that high school students like with classics allows them to develop personal connections with the literature (Hobbs, 1998). Educators who choose to ignore the need of their students, in this case, may find boredom and apathy running rampant in their classroom.

When students have the ability or opportunity to compare, contrast, and understand contemporary literature and canonical texts, their experience in literature classes is truly enhanced. *The Shipping News*, a new, modern text by E. Annie Proulx parallels some aspects of *The Color Purple*. Many educators see a strong need for the inclusion of modern texts, like *The Shipping News*, within the canon of literature. Allowing personal connection and, more importantly, a chance for analysis and interpretation by students, is the most essential part of literature classes. Finding a balance between the traditions of the past and new ideas of the present in literature is essential to the success of English students (Greenbaum, 1997). Hipple recommends the following young adult selections by popular young adult novelist like Chris Crutcher and Lois Lowry for teachers to try alongside the canon: *The Giver*, *The Toll Bridge*, *The Drowning of Stephan Jones*, and *Ironman* (1997). He believes that if a teacher can “get a kid thirty pages into a Paterson or a Crutcher, a Bridgers or a Brooks, [the kid] will finish it” (1997, p.15). Ultimately, teachers need to know what is available, so they can provide their students with modern texts to use with the canon of traditional literature.

Many English teachers are making strong recommendations for the use of comic books and realistic novels as modern texts in literature classes. When teaching units on westward expansion
in American Literature, teachers can use "vital graphic novels - particularly Comanche Moon, Lost Cause, and Indian Lover: Sam Houston and the Cherokees-that retell the conquests from a Native American perspective and provide a voice often missing from more traditional historical texts," while still including the classics (Versaci, 2001, p.63). Comic books, such as Maus, can revitalize students' experiences and make them want to read more and even challenge themselves beyond the familiar popular texts. They may even explore similar themes in traditional literature (Versaci, 2001). Educators have paired Dracula with Stephen King novels and Dickens with J.R.R. Tolkien's Fellowship of the Ring (Cox, 1988, p.31). Film versions are also being used alongside traditional literature to engage students. Ernelle Fife stresses the importance of pairing such texts as Don Quixote, "Rappaccini's Daughter," Gulliver's Travels, The Epic of Gilgamesh, and Beowulf with science fiction texts, in film and television form, such as Star Wars, Star Trek, and Galaxy Quest (1999). Students can relate to these modern, popular science fiction pieces, making challenging, canonical texts more manageable, understandable, and relevant.

The science fiction texts, particularly in film and television form, in conjunction with the classics, allow students to grasp difficult themes and ideas. These texts need to be paired together because students can identify with the modern film and television versions and utilize that knowledge and understanding into the more difficult texts (Fife, 1999). Fife comments: "...explaining Don Quixote as a parody of chivalric romances is easy, but having the students watch Galaxy Quest, the 1999 parody of the Star Trek television series and of the culture of sci-fi conventions, greatly helps them not only understand parody, and that a good parody is a well-developed story in its own right..."(p.3). Students will respond to this new innovative way of teaching in a positive way.
The best example of an English curriculum devised to incorporate modern texts, thus far, is *Pacesetter English*, developed by the College Board and Educational Testing Services. Their hope was “to open national standards and assessment to all students” by the use of contemporary literature and “the understanding of various kinds of texts: poetry, fiction, drama, essays, journalism, memoir, autobiography, documentary, feature films, television stories, and the like’(Wolf, 1995, p.59). The course, designed for twelfth grade, integrated numerous contemporary texts with student personal connections in mind, but the course is almost devoid of required, canonical texts (Wolf, 1995, p.60).

*Othello*, often suggested for British Literature classes, is the focal point of one unit of *Pacesetter English*. In the unit, students are reading from the play, working in groups to reproduce scenes, and analyzing modern film versions of the play, particularly *O*, a 2000 version involving teenagers in a modern high school. This method may not sound especially innovative, but the students select their own scenes to reproduce, incorporating blocking and other drama techniques in performance. They must place a modern twist on the scene, and the scene comes from a portion of the play that they have not yet viewed in class. Students are forced to envision the scene on screen through the words of Shakespeare; then, they must produce a modern variation, demonstrating their understanding of the meaning of the scene (Wolf, 1995). *Pacesetter* is a specific course and may not work in all school settings, but there is a variety of modern literature that works in the classroom. Teachers need only to look in the bookstores when seeking contemporary literature to use alongside traditional literature. Guy Bland suggests that teachers need to “[promote] authors whose works have appeared on bestsellers lists-Stephen King, John Grisham, Dean Koontz, Sidney Sheldon, Patricia Cornwell, Tom Clancy…it’s time we legitimized the whole of literature for our students and rejected without qualms the presumption that certain
books are more fit to be read than others” (2001, p. 21). A plethora of modern texts, in a variety of forms, is available for teachers to incorporate with the canon of traditional literature. Teachers need to evaluate the required curriculum for their school district and make modifications and additions where possible in order to ensure that students will become more engaged in their English classes.

Opposition to Integrating Modern, Non-canonical Texts with the Canon

Although integrating traditional texts with modern literature in the classroom is a popular trend in America’s high schools, there are teachers who still advocate keeping the classics at the forefront. Carol Jago sees the issue with students not liking the classics as a teacher created problem. She feels teachers have become “too passive,” as they attempted to get away using only classic literature; therefore, students are not taught critical thinking skills. That is why teachers and students do not have success with the classics (p. 21). Jago believes that teachers should “teach students how stories work” by using the classics (p. 22). The solutions are not a matter of the students not being able to read classic literature; instead, teachers have placed too much of an emphasis on new, modern texts. As a result, students find aspects of the classics too challenging and the stories within them boring.

Educators are creating a society of students who cannot read the classics because they are offered popular fiction in its place. For some classic literature enthusiasts, secondary English curriculum is about exposing students to the classics (Shelley, 1998). They argue that students will react negatively to the classics when presented with modern substitutions. Teachers need to make “difficult literature more approachable for high school students,” and they do not have to do this by using popular literature (Shelley, 1998, p. 386). Students can read the classics and complete enrichment activities that will aid in their understanding of the more difficult classic literature; for
example, they can write news articles, keep a journal, design and model costumes, make collages, and/or build models that are representative of aspects of the novel (Shelley, 1998). Educators advocating the classics as the primary source for the curriculum in the classroom feel the methods used to teach classics or popular literature are the real reason for their failure. If students are given traditional literature “with the right activities, [they] will learn to read and respond to a classic novel without relying on study guides or watered-down versions” (Janeczko & Mathews, 1990, p.44). Opponents of a new canon incorporating non-traditional literature with classics believe that students are not being challenged if they are not reading traditional literature.

Summary

This literature review highlights existing information available on the project topic. The purpose of this project is to develop resources for teachers to integrate modern, relevant texts, in a variety of forms, with the canon of traditional literature in high school British Literature classes. Through the review of literature, the need for resources to be used in a British Literature class remains obvious. Many teachers clearly support the use of modern texts with the canonical texts, but they lack direction for British Literature curricula. Teachers in Smith County, forced to deal with the Virginia SOL tests, will need assistance for integration of modern texts with required canonical texts. Resources developed by the researcher will give these teachers a foundation for implementing non-canonical texts with canonical texts required curriculum. The following chapter describes the methods of research used for the project.
Chapter III
Methodology

Introduction

This chapter describes the methods of research used for this qualitative study and project that created resources for the integration of modern texts with the canon for high school English classes. A lack of resources in the form of manuals and/or teaching guides on this particular subject, British Literature, established a need for the development of materials for educators. Teachers at Smith High School and curriculum developers from Smith County and the College Board were asked to complete a questionnaire about their philosophy of teaching relevant to the project and their ideas about the integration of modern texts, alongside the canon in high school British Literature classes. The information from the questionnaires helped to determine why an updated canon, incorporating modern texts in conjunction with the classics, is necessary and to identify what modern texts the interviewees recommend for the project. The traditional canon of literature was reexamined, and an investigation was conducted concerning new, modern, even popular texts for inclusion in a high school British Literature class. The project meets the needs of the SOL requirements of the state of Virginia, follows the Smith County public Schools’ required curriculum, and implements non-canonical texts into that curriculum.

The following major question was answered by the attainment of resources and project outcome: How can teachers enhance the learning experience for secondary British Literature students in classes where canonical literature is typically the only literature taught? Two sub-questions were established and examined as a result of the major question:

1. What alternative resources can be made available for teachers having a desire to include modern, non-canonical texts alongside the classics in their secondary British Literature classrooms?
2. What canonical texts and modern texts are effective for use in the resource manual as pairs for teachers to integrate contemporary literature in conjunction with the classics? Gathering research and distribution of questionnaires began in October 2004. The researcher sought the following information:

1. Modern texts to integrate alongside the canon.

2. Modern texts that coincide with Virginia SOL tests and Smith County’s required British literature curriculum.

3. Canonical texts effective for use in the project to correspond with modern texts.

4. Opinions of teachers and curricula developers on integrating modern texts with the canon in questionnaire and article form.

The following research was compiled and examined to develop resources for implementation by high school British Literature teachers. The resource packet developed for execution by high school British Literature teachers is the result of what the researcher learned from the questionnaires.

*Setting and Demographics*

Smith High School in Smith County, a school district, is the main setting for this project. Considerable areas of the county are rural, while other sections are considered part of metropolitan Washington D.C. The district has eight high schools. Smith County typically has a graduation rate in the high nineties, ranking it very high among other Virginia school districts.

Smith High School, a suburban high school, serves students fourteen to eighteen who are working towards either a college preparatory diploma or vocational seal. The English requirements for Smith High School are as follows: ninth grade genre-based approach, tenth grade British Literature, eleventh grade American Literature, and twelfth grade Advanced Composition
and World Literature. AP and honors level classes are available as well. The focus of this project was the tenth grade British Literature curriculum.

The average size of an English class at Smith High School is approximately twenty-five students. Students have access to four computers in every classroom and four computer labs in the school. The majority of the student population comes from middle class to upper middle class families.

Participants

The participants of this project were the English teachers, administrators, and developers of English curriculum from Smith High School. These participants varied in gender, age, and years of experience in the field of education as a teacher, administrator and/or curriculum specialist. The researcher distributed questionnaires to six female teachers, one female curriculum specialist, four male teachers, and two male administrators. The oldest participant was fifty-five years old, the youngest twenty-seven. The average age of the participants was thirty-seven. The participant with the most experience in the field of education has been a teacher for twenty-eight years, and the one with the least experience has been teaching for four years. The interviewees' years of experience combined together equal 133 years of experience in the field of education. The average of their years of experience is ten.

Resource Acquisition

Most of the resources for this project can be found online through the ERIC database, The Language of Literature, 5th Course textbook, and the English Journal online, published by NCTE. All other information comes from questionnaire responses of participants, which are clearly cited in the project and reference pages. Any research acquired from participants was made anonymous through fictitious names, where needed.
The resources for this project were collected in the following manner:

1. Distributed questionnaires to English educators from primary setting.

2. Obtained information from various libraries, British literature textbooks, and educational databases.

3. Investigated existing British Literature curriculum, required Smith County curriculum, and Virginia SOL test requirements.

4. Evaluated the implementation of modern texts alongside traditional literature in current English curriculum with educators and developers of English curriculum through interviews.

Analysis of Resources

Resources found during the acquisition phase were condensed into information pertinent to the project topic. The research was then written in narrative form, explaining how it applies to the project. Resources for teachers were created for teachers of British Literature. The researcher analyzed all research in the following manner:

1. Questionnaire responses were studied, and the texts that were suitable for the project were included in the resource manual.

2. Educational websites were studied for information regarding canonical and non-canonical texts to be included in the resource packet created for implementation by British Literature educators. The suggested texts and pairings are found in the resource manual.

3. Current English curriculum, particularly British Literature, was examined to determine the need for inclusion of modern non-canonical texts. The curriculum did not offer many modern choices, so non-canonical texts were placed in the resource manual.
4. Communication, via email, with curriculum developers was used to select texts for the project.

Participants were given a copy of the questionnaire via email and were asked to complete them within a ten day time period. The researcher collected the questionnaires from each participant, and the responses were kept in a locked filing cabinet at the researcher’s residence.

Project Questions

Major Question to Be Answered by Project

How can teachers enhance the learning experience for secondary British Literature students in classes where classic, canonical literature is required?

Sub-questions to Be Answered By Project

1. What alternative resources can be made available for teachers having a desire to include modern, non-canonical texts alongside the classics in their secondary British Literature classrooms? The researcher searched educational websites and textbooks for resources incorporating canonical texts alongside contemporary literature in British Literature classes. Although extensive resources exist for American Literature classes, the researcher did not find any materials for implementing modern texts alongside the canon in British Literature classes; therefore, English teachers, school administrators, and a curriculum specialist were asked to complete a questionnaire in regard to what resources could be made available to secondary English teachers.

2. What canonical texts and modern texts are effective for use in the resource manual as pairs for teachers to integrate contemporary literature in conjunction with the classics? English teachers, school administrators, and a curriculum specialist completed a questionnaire about what texts they thought would be appropriate for use in a resource manual pairing modern, non-canonical texts along with traditional literature. The
researcher also communicated with the curriculum specialist for the school district as to what modern texts coincide with required curriculum.

Summary

This methodology chapter addresses the important aspects of setting and information about the participants, pertinent to the project topic. Furthermore, resource collection and the analysis of the resources are presented. These vital pieces of information allow the reader to understand the research process for this project. The following chapter presents the results obtained using the methods described in this chapter.
Chapter IV

Product Development

Objectives of the Product

As stated in Chapter I, the purpose of this project was to develop resources for teachers to integrate modern texts in a variety of forms with the canon of traditional literature in secondary British Literature classes. The researcher examined available research on the project topic and interviewed various subjects in the field. This chapter presents interview responses as they relate to the major question and sub-questions of the project and includes the actual manual for use by secondary British Literature teachers. The manual contains suggested lesson plans and resources for use in secondary British Literature classes and is to be used as supplementary materials along with the required curriculum within a school district. The manual, itself, is an answer to the following major question: How can teachers enhance the learning experience for secondary British Literature students in classes where classic, canonical literature is required? The following sub-questions are also answered by the project:

- What alternative resources can be made available for teachers having a desire to include modern, non-canonical texts alongside the classics in their secondary British Literature classrooms?

- What canonical texts and modern texts are effective for use in the resource manual as pairs for teachers to integrate contemporary literature in conjunction with the classics?

Collected Data & Analysis

Questionnaire Response Summary & Analysis

The data from questionnaires helps answer Sub-question # 1)

Describe what you know about the current British Literature curriculum at your school site, and what involvement you have in creating/maintaining it.
Responses to this question varied as a result of the experience the participants have within the school district. The newer educators are eager to work on summer curriculum committees, and most of the experienced participants will continue to work on the committees. Many of them emphasized the importance of the yearly summer committees as a way to update the required curriculum as the needs of their students change.

**What are your thoughts on the current British Literature curriculum?**

Many of the participants are frustrated with British Literature at the tenth grade level, arguing that students are not mature enough for the subject matter, and that students complain about the texts they are reading. Students claim the literature is boring or too hard. Many participants remarked that students are not easily engaged in this course. Two respondents feel the current curriculum is a wonderful way to expose students to different types of literature, and, even though it is broad, the curriculum seems appropriate for the grade level.

**How important is it to you that your students make personal connections with the text? Explain.**

All the participants think personal connections for students are important in their classroom. They vary in the degree to which it is important in their classroom. For many of the respondents, student personal connections with texts are an essential aspect of their teaching philosophy. These educators do not feel that students can effectively learn or think deeply without making personal connections with texts. Other respondents feel it is important, but they also feel students can learn even if they do not connect personally with a piece of literature.
If allowing for students to make personal connections with texts is important, how can we achieve that?

The respondents suggested a variety of ways to aid students in making personal connections with texts. These included; giving students a choice in the texts they read, introducing students to YA literature, including writing assignments where students respond to the literature on a personal level, and finding relevant pieces for students. A few of the respondents emphasized the importance of weaving writing assignments throughout the study of a text in order for students to make personal connections.

How important is it to you to teach classic/canonical pieces of literature? Explain.

All of the respondents think it is important to teach the classics, but their responses varied as to what extent they think the classics should be a focal point of the literature class. Many participants want to their students reading, and they are willing to integrate modern texts along with classics in their classroom to make it happen. Other respondents said the classics are extremely important for students to read and analyze.

How important is it to you to teach non-canonical/modern pieces of literature? Explain.

Only two of the participants did not see including non-canonical texts as important. The other respondents emphasized its importance because they want their students exposed to all kinds of literature. Many of them also stressed the importance of pairing modern texts with traditional literature. They believe their students can relate to contemporary literature; therefore, they are more likely to be engaged in the reading and learning process.
How do you feel about integrating modern texts alongside the canon of traditional literature in high school British Literature classes?

All the educators thought integrating modern texts in conjunction with the canon was a great idea, but a few were not sure how to accomplish it or were fearful that classical literature would be altogether discarded from the classroom once students began reading new, modern texts. The majority of the respondents welcomed the idea, but they stressed they would need guidelines as to how to implement it.

What do you think can be gained/or lost by using modern texts in conjunction with the canon?

All but one of the respondents agreed that the integration of modern texts along with the canon is a gain as long as the classics were not deleted from the curriculum. Any concerns about loses were overshadowed by excitement about giving students contemporary choices. One educator stated that he was unclear about this idea because he has no experience with using contemporary literature.

Is there room for additional texts alongside the canon as you prepare your students for SOL tests and implement Smith County required curriculum? Explain.

One educator believes that there is no room for new texts with the current required curriculum. All others are enthusiastic about implementing new, modern texts along with the canon. They said they would make it work in their classrooms because they think it addresses the needs of the students. If their needs include bringing more contemporary literature into the classroom in order for them to be engaged, all the other respondents want to include new literature for their students.

The data from the questionnaires also addressed Sub-question #2:

What success/problems have you faced when teaching classic/canonical literature?
The consensus among the educators is students are not interested in classic texts if they cannot relate to them. On the other hand, if the teachers show enthusiasm and passion for the text, students will usually be more likely to read and enjoy the literature. For example, Beowulf, Lord of the Flies, any Shakespeare text, and Animal Farm are canonical texts these teachers have taught with success. Some teachers had trouble with Jane Eyre, Pride and Prejudice, and The Scarlet Letter.

What success/problems have you faced when teaching non-canonical/modern pieces of literature?

The teachers who have not tried to integrate modern texts along with canonical literature did not have many comments for this question because they typically only teach from the canon. Other respondents suggested The DaVinci Code, Speak, and YA novels. They also stressed the importance of finding a balance between modern and classic texts. Students need to be exposed to both kids of literature, but using modern texts can help bridge the gap teachers often find when using canonical literature alone.

What suggestions do you have for actual modern texts to be included alongside the canon in a secondary British Literature course?

Target Population

Ultimately, tenth grade British Literature teachers and students in Smith County will use this product as teacher work to enhance the learning experience in their classroom. School districts would use this resource as a teaching tool for their educators.

Product Design

Time Constraints and Limitations

Certain required curriculum and standardized testing may infringe upon the use of the entire manual in classroom, but teachers can implement lessons and resources as they see fit. The manual is not intended to take the place of required curriculum; instead, it can be used to complement the mandatory curriculum for tenth grade British Literature teachers and students in Smith County.

Equipment needed to successfully implement product

Standard classroom materials will be helpful for product implementation. Teachers will need access to TV/VCR, CD player, overhead, and copy machine.

Location in which product will be used

The manual will be used in secondary tenth grade British Literature courses alongside required curriculum in Smith County.

Time-frame of implementation

The manual can be used within a school year during a British Literature course, as supplementary materials along with required curriculum. Teachers can implement different aspects of the resources daily, weekly, and/or monthly, as needed.

Required Resources

Teachers will carefully read through the manual before implementing in their classrooms and will find that they can implement all lessons or a few as appropriate.
Product Costs

Teachers wanting to use the manual may find their school does not provide copies of the suggested modern materials. Videotapes, CD’s, and DVD’s may need to be purchased to implement some aspects of suggested lessons. These materials can range in price from $5.00 to $100 or more, depending on where the teachers purchase the items. Renting videotapes from video stores and borrowing copies from local libraries would be cost effective. Teachers should contact their department chairs and/or administrators to see if they can incur some of these costs; also, the teachers can look for used copies of materials online. Online used materials can range in price from as little as $.01 up to $40.00.

Monitoring and Evaluating Plan

The researcher’s assessment of the success of the product will involve talking with teachers as they implement aspects of the manual in their classrooms. Teachers who use the manual will be asked to complete an evaluation of the materials that is available in the back of the manual.

Summary

This chapter contains a summary of the collected data from questionnaires and analysis of the data as it relates to the project sub-questions: What alternative resources can be made available for teachers having a desire to include modern, non-canonical texts alongside the classics in their secondary British Literature classrooms? What canonical texts and modern texts are effective for use in the resource manual as pairs for teachers to integrate contemporary literature in conjunction with the classics? The following chapter presents the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of the project.
Chapter V

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

Boredom with traditional literature plagues today’s high school English classes. Teachers work tirelessly to make classes exciting for their students; however, they may be looking in the wrong places. Excitement and learning cannot be recaptured by the use of canonical literature alone. Modern, even popular, non-canonical texts in any form, taught in conjunction with traditional literature, can revitalize the high school English class. The purpose of this project was to develop resources for teachers to integrate modern texts, in a variety of forms, with the canon of traditional literature in secondary British Literature classes.

Major Question to Be Answered by Project

How can teachers enhance the learning experience for secondary British Literature students in classes where classic, canonical literature is required?

Sub-questions to Be Answered By Project

- What alternative resources can be made available for teachers having a desire to include modern, non-canonical texts alongside the classics in their secondary British Literature classrooms?

- What canonical texts and modern texts are effective for use in the resource manual as pairs for teachers to integrate contemporary literature in conjunction with the classics?

Overview of Methodology

The researcher gave questionnaires to teachers to help determine why an updated canon with canonical and non-canonical texts was needed and designed resources for the integration of modern texts with required, canonical texts in actual classrooms. Teachers at Smith High School and curriculum developers from Smith County were asked to comment on the questionnaire about
their philosophy of teaching as relevant to the project and their ideas about integrating modern texts alongside the canon in high school British Literature classes. The information from questionnaires was used to help determine the necessity for an updated canon that incorporates modern texts in conjunction with the classics and the modern texts that they recommend for the project.

The researcher’s experience of teaching modern texts along with the canon proved useful to the project. Research was compiled and examined to develop resources to implement modern texts together with the canon of traditional British Literature. After research was examined and participants’ questionnaire responses were interpreted, the researcher developed resources for implementation by high school British Literature teachers. After all research was examined and participants were interviewed, the researcher developed resources for implementation by high school British Literature teachers.

Findings

Based on the questionnaire responses and literature review, the researcher found a lack of resources for British Literature courses in regards to integrating modern texts along with canonical texts in secondary British Literature courses. The need and desire are present to update the canon to reflect the needs and desires of secondary students and teachers. Brian Ford states: “I believe a new canon should change with a changing world, as it has always done” (p.60). Educators, including Ford and others, see the need for an “evolving canon” (Greenbaum, 1997, p.17). This type of canon calls not for the departure of canonical texts completely, but, instead, for the incorporation of modern texts with traditional literature. The canon of classic literature needs to be changed to include contemporary literature; “canons...are evolutionary; even though, they may seem concrete and stable...,” and educators who recognize this growth of the canon will have success as they modify it (Doherty, 1998, p.403). Materials for incorporating modern texts
alongside traditional literature exist for American Literature courses but not for British Literature classes.

The most successful example of an English curriculum that incorporates modern texts, thus far, is *Pacesetter English* from the College Board. The twelfth grade course integrates contemporary texts with student personal connections in mind, but the course includes only a few titles of required, canonical literature (Wolf, 1995, p.60). Specifically, teachers of British Literature classes need resources to guide them as the attempt to incorporate non-canonical literature along with the canon of traditional literature. The need for a manual for British Literature teachers and students remains obvious. Teachers want to see modern texts integrated along with the canon, but they lack direction on how to accomplish that task. The resource manual, developed as a result of this project, gives teachers a basis for implementing contemporary literature with canonical texts within the constraints of the required curriculum.

*Conclusions*

It is the researcher’s hope that this project can serve as a foundation for further study and research for additional English educational policy. This project is a building block for future educational guidelines in English. The research demonstrates a need and desire by educators to enhance the learning experience for their students. The manual is a first step towards integrating modern, non-canonical texts in the required curriculum of secondary English classes. The manual and findings described in Chapter IV give clear reasoning as to why this manual is needed, and the manual presents a model of implementing new strategies that allow old texts to complement new ones in the classroom.

*Recommendations*

School districts could use this manual as a guideline for updating their required curriculum and/or as supplementary materials to coincide with their established curriculum. Students need to
be captivated by what they are learning in their English courses. This manual, and ones like it, can encourage students to make personal connections with texts in order to enhance their learning experience. By incorporating the resources found in the manual, educators can enrich the learning experience for their students. School districts might want to develop a similar manual for World Literature and American Literature courses.
References


Appendix A
Questionnaire

1. Describe what you know about the current British literature curriculum at your school site, and what involvement you have in creating/maintaining it.

2. What are your thoughts on the current British literature curriculum?

3. How important is it to you that your students make personal connections with the text? Explain.

4. If allowing for students to make personal connections with texts is important, how can we achieve that?

5. How important is it to you to teach classic/canonical pieces of literature? Explain.

6. What success/problems have you faced when teaching classic/canonical literature?

7. How important is it to you to teach non-canonical/modern pieces of literature? Explain.

8. What success/problems have you faced when teaching non-canonical/modern pieces of literature?

9. How do you feel about integrating modern texts alongside the canon of traditional literature in high school British literature classes?

10. What do you think can be gained/or lost by using modern texts in conjunction with the canon?

11. Is there room for additional texts alongside the canon as you prepare your students for SOL tests and implement Smith County required curriculum? Explain.

12. What suggestions do you have for actual modern texts to be included alongside the canon in a secondary British literature course?
Appendix B
Questionnaire Questions and Responses

Describe what you know about the current British Literature curriculum at your school site, and what involvement you have in creating/maintaining it.

- I’ve never taught it and have never requested it either.
- I haven’t taught that course before, but I would like to try it in a few years.
- American Literature is the best class because the kids seem to enjoy it the most. We’re required to teach British literature to our tenth graders.
- County-wide we’re still working to feel successful in our adaptation of Brit Lit to the 10th grade level. I worked on the honors committees that tried to “infuse” the grade 10 honors courses with Brit lit. Then I taught that for a year. Then I served on the committee that switched the Brit lit survey to ALL grade 10 classes and continued teaching the course (honors only) the next year. As supervisor, I’m ultimately responsible for the quality of the course.
- We have a lot of work to do to get the kids where they need to be. I have worked on the committees for the last few years. I think it’s essential that teachers be a part of this process.
- I know the county moved Brit Lit to 10th grade, a questionable decision that freed senior students and teacher from having to teach an area of literature that is difficult and incomprehensible to many students. Quite frankly, with the exception of Beowulf, Canterbury Tales, and Shakespeare, a chore to teach. To move the most difficult year of literature to 10th grade was a burden for 10th grade teachers. Seniors have difficulty merely understanding the content of most Brit Lit work. 10th graders seem to have nowhere near the sophistication necessary to read and comprehend about Milton, Swift, Pope, Browning, and the rest. I teach one section of 12th Brit lit, and I teach it as a writing for college course. I touch on some Brit lit but end up translating for my students.
- I have worked on the curriculum committees for the last 20 years. I know all there is to know about it, and it’s time for a change.
- It goes from the Anglo-Saxon period to the Post Modern period. It is a survey to skim over major authors, genres, and literary movements of all literature originating from the UK. Such a description encompasses a great deal of literature, as one becomes quickly aware of while previewing the mammoth book. I have worked on the committees, but the VA Board of Ed sets our standards.
- The Brit Lit curriculum is pretty standard. Use the textbook; start with Beowulf, then Chaucer, and Shakespeare. You’re lucky if you get to the Romantics.
- I’ve taught for many years, and I’ve seen it all.
- I had no involvement in creating the curriculum. In regards to what I know about it, I know what I need to teach.
- I haven’t worked on the summer committees because I usually teach summer school.
- I don’t know a lot about the curriculum since I am new to teaching here. My knowledge comes from the county/state guidelines and discussions with other teachers. I have no role in developing it.
What are your thoughts on the current British Literature curriculum?

- Because British literature is taught in the tenth grade the kids don’t do well. They’re too young. The concepts and vocabulary are too hard for them to grasp.
- The kids are qualified to take British literature, but I’m not sure they are interested in it at all.
- It seems like it is just hard to get kids interested in the class. I hear horror stories about teaching this because the choices are so limited.
- I would prefer teachers try to work thematically rather than chronologically. Also, I’m concerned about lack of clarity in the curriculum regarding what literature should be taught. We’re going to work on that this summer. I do believe that 10th graders are capable of “getting” Brit Lit. I think that somewhere along the line we lowered our expectations and need to lift them again.
- Aside from Shakespeare because he works in so many ways, cuts cultural boundaries, etc, the canon fails to address a truly global perspective. When was the last time a Brit., within the last 15 years, has been included in the canon of great literature. The “it ain’t broke, don’t touch it” thinking is stale, male and not inclusive enough of the emerging role of women and people from diverse backgrounds being presented in the arena.
- The question is this- what Brit Lit that has more appeal is compelling and has provocative content, and appropriate subject matter has been written in the last 100 years? That is the quest of the teacher devoted to the instruction and survival of Brit Lit in the high school classroom. It should be integrated into other courses.
- A survey of Brit Lit certainly has lost its importance and relevance in the last ten years. 10th graders do not have the maturity to fully grasp the subtleties of Chaucer or Shakespeare. My 10th graders are struggling with Chaucer’s language and meaning.
- I am in a unique situation as a teacher and lover of Brit Lit. Each literary period has so much to offer students, readers, and thinkers alike, but there is too much to cover. Although the interest and need for more modern works and authors increase among faculty and staff yearly, it is vital students are schooled in the fundamentals of literature. My great hope it to have a split in the curriculum allowing it to be taught over the course of two years. It would be an excellent candidate for an elective choice.
- I think we’re stuck in the 13th century. Sure it’s great to know the stories, but English is about writing and skills. There are more accessible works in Brit Lit.
- Narrow in a sense. Covers classics and historical to a point. Easy to tie together thematically due to simple historical contexts.
- As an adult, I enjoy the current choices, but do find it difficult to engage students at times.
- The British Lit. curriculum provides a unique access to stages of social development not available through American Lit.
- The current curriculum is very broad. It really is no more than an outline of topics to cover, and so the teach has a wide latitude on how to approach it. I think this is good. The range of topics to be covered seems appropriate and is aimed at providing the student with a general working knowledge of the area of study.

How important is it to you that your students make personal connections with the text?
Explain.

- It’s the most important thing to me in the classroom. That’s how my students learn about themselves.
Personal connection is extremely important for these courses. It opens them to new worlds.

Of course, it’s important. Otherwise, the class is meaningless. That’s why I teach.

Critical. Without a personal connection, one is not really reading. It’s not that readers have to agree with everything they read; still, they must find some empathy with the text or it’s only words on a page.

If kids don’t connect to the content of the texts (even if to reject it), what is the point? If they can’t recognize themselves in texts, what is the merit? Simply teaching a text, regardless of canon, for the sake it appears on some standardized test is sterile. Besides some of the most powerful connection students and teachers make is when we connect and share direct experience relevant to the text we’re studying.

For most readers in high school, making a personal connection to character, content, and theme ranks as the most important in the reading of the texts. Without connection on a personal level, students will not read and think deeply about the ideas an author is trying to convey. Students must have a way to access meaning in text.

When students make personal connections to the text, they usually read the entire piece and understand it. They tend to remember the text longer and can relate other texts to it. I don’t feel that they need to make a personal connection to each text, but I do feel that the more they can, the longer they retain it.

It’s important but not absolutely necessary for the college bound student.

Without personal connections, there can be no meaningful writing.

Very. The egocentric high school student must see the relationship of a text to self.

In order to make our students lifelong readers, I think it is imperative for my students to make connections with the text.

Extremely. For this reason, I engage students in winning activities that mirror the texts.

Important but not crucial. The key goal for the teacher is to get the student to think logically and thoroughly. Most students at the high school level seem to have a difficult time with abstract thought. So anything that can make the literature real for them will aid their ability to think about it. Making personal connections with the literature helps make it more concrete and therefore more real for them. It engages their attention more effectively.

If allowing for students to make personal connections with texts is important, how can we achieve that?

Not sure. That’s an interesting thing to think about. Obviously they need to like what they’re reading.

Kids need to feel like they have a choice in what they read and write about. I try to take that into consideration with everything I choose to teach. Sometimes it works, and sometimes it doesn’t work.

My students always like it when we read books and other selections about teenagers. Young adult literature certainly helps to achieve some of this.

There are lots of ways to get there. First, I think, is using writing and talking to learn. We need to move away from the read and discuss model – where discussion is really the teacher asking low-level questions and the kids answering what they recall- into a true dialogue. Use writing to learn and talking to learn to help kids connect. Secondly, less breadth and more depth would help. Getting to know 4 books really well is probably more important than reading 7 books and only touching the surface.

We’ve got to expose them to a plethora of literature. It’s plain and simple.
Ask students to write their feelings about character’s behavior, decisions, actions, motivations, thoughts, and beliefs. Then move to textual analysis.

Give them new, exciting pieces to read. It seems like a no-brainer.

No comment.

We have to choose contemporary texts, or we have to find ways to take ancient texts and relate them to today’s society.

Make texts accessible to students that they will enjoy. If it doesn’t work, try again.

We must find pieces that they can relate to.

The writing assignments are key to getting this done for kids.

By selecting appropriate texts to which they can respond.

How important is it to you to teach classic/canonical pieces of literature?

There should be an equal balance with modern literature to hook the student, but they need to read the classics.

It’s essential for them to have that scope and exposure to the classical literature, but we must also allow them to write about other things and read other non-classic literature.

Based on the kids’ interests, if the teacher is passionate about it the kids will like it too. It’s important to get them to read anything though, so that takes precedence over reading traditional literature in my mind.

Only somewhat. I’m moving toward a mental model that distinguishes between teaching reading and teaching literature. For instance, we should use popular literature and Young Adult (YA) books to help kids learn how to read and learn to love reading; however, we should use some classics to teach literary analysis and the historical implications of literature. It’s also important to use the classics because they tend to be more demanding of the reader than popular fiction. We would be doing our kids a grave disservice if we never exposed them to tougher pieces or gave them the tools to deal with these types.

Teachers should show their students that classic literature can be fun, inspiring, and enlightening by teaching canonical texts that they enjoy reading. Cardinal rule #1: Only teach literature that I like. My job is to inspire students to leave my class with a desire to read books. If I choose to teach a novel that has literary merit but that I despise, such as Jane Eyre, Pride and Prejudice, or The Scarlet Letter, I will send to students the message that they should read because I said so.

I love teaching the classics simply because I love the ideas and characters. When I teach these pieces, students see my passion and try to realize the importance of the piece, and I try to show them that having a background in classics makes us better rounded. Sometimes, we just need to know the old stuff too.

The teaching of classics is of great importance to all students, but it is especially important to the college bound. Students need a foundation and learning base to fully understand any subject. The teaching of classics does not need to be tedious or painful. There are ways of making clear connections for students by stressing timeless themes and ideas.

It’s important to me that they know the basics of the canon, but if they can’t connect to the text, they can’t really understand the profound meaning behind it. There is a problem though. We have to be very careful not to just choose popular books. The books have to connect to students’ lives, but they also have to be challenged.

Very important. It provides insight/historical perspectives as well as enduring themes.

I do think it’s important as long as we don’t lose sight of our kids and their needs.
Extremely. The diction in much of the canon of Brit Lit expands our awareness of the capacities of language.

I think students should have a general knowledge of classical pieces of literature, but I don’t think this is critical to their learning.

It is important that they learn how to think and develop a general working knowledge of the forms and devices of literature so that they can use those forms and devices to inform their own thinking and communication skills. That knowledge can be gained just as well by using non-classical texts as classical texts.

What success/problems have you faced when teaching classic/canonical literature?

I have many successes and not many problems at all. Cyrano is an excellent choice for the kids. It’s funny, and the kids love humor. They relate easily to it, and I pair it with the movie Roxanne with Steve Martin. They love to make the connection between the two selections.

Animal Farm has always been a great one for my kids and me. You can talk about the metaphor and convey hard stuff in an easy way. It’s a matter of helping them through the tough novels.

Preconceived notions about texts by kids can really hurt the experience with a novel. They assume older literature is boring and hard to read. They sometimes give up without even reading a page. To Kill a Mockingbird always works. They are intrigued by the story. The same goes for Romeo & Juliet, Lord of the Flies, and The Outsiders.

It tends to be a bit more difficult to help students make empathetic connections with older texts. Shakespeare’s usually very accessible, but I found Crime & Punishment to have some cultural and time-related disconnects that took some efforts to overcome. I will say that a lot of the really old stuff in Brit. Lit. (Beowulf and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight) were very successful with my 10th graders. The universal themes help. Some Austen and Bronte pieces didn’t connect quite as easily.

From my AP students to my dangerous minds, the experience of teaching say a Prayer for Owen Meaney or Slam by Walter Dean Myers is far richer because the text is relevant to our lives; though it’s an interesting activity to have kids get their mind around the notion of life for the 19th century female. It has little relevance to the students’ direct experience. I return to Hardy’s Tess again and again. Tess works because Hardy railed against the hypocritical values of his day. I would argue that Pride and Prejudice does not work because it lacks the fortitude to bluntly take on the issues of its day.

Huckleberry Finn always gets a moan from my students, but by the end, we’re rolling, and they’ve learned a lot.

Students do not see the connection to their lives or the necessity to study the “old stuff” as they call it.

If I show enthusiasm for a piece, the kids will like it too.

The main focus of my classroom is the student-directed learning/discussion. With canonical texts, students don’t understand the text or cannot connect themselves to the text. This leads to me leading them through the text. What do they learn with that? What original things can they say?

A big problem is always student connections to the literature.

The problem I have faced teaching classics is that they students often feel removed from the subject matter. I do not find it difficult with Shakespeare, but I do find it difficult with Chaucer, Beowulf, and sonnets.
Success came when I can communicate my excitement and passion for the text. Difficulty arises when students reject archaic English.

I don’t have a lot experience with this yet, but I would say the problem with classic pieces of literature is that students have a difficult time relating to it because such literature tends to describe a world that is so different from the one they live in. Since they cannot make a quick connection to such literature they will tend to shut it out.

How important is it to you to teach non-canonical pieces of literature?

Very. That’s what kids want, so we need to give it to them to engage them. I think it’s so important.

Again it’s the idea of exposure and interest. Expose them to all kinds of literature to peek their interests.

Keep it fresh. This must be done. It’s not fair to make them continue to read the same old stuff, but sometimes YA books can be too easy. So, it’s a balancing act in the classroom, but if they read the newer books, I am all for it.

Very. We have to remember that we’re still teaching kids how to read. We want to use literature that they will pick up on their own to catch and keep their interest in reading so it turns into a love of reading.

It’s very important to expand the canon I teach. Every year I teach no less than 2 new works a year that I’ve never shared with kids. Keeps me fresh, keeps them learning. It’s win-win for us all. As the globe shrinks, that canon must expand to provide dialogue for understanding of how alike we are regardless of culture or race.

It is vital to show students modern texts that most likely will never show up on reading lists. English teachers are years behind in updating reading lists to include modern texts. Teachers should show students the wide choice of reading options available.

Students must be introduced to a variety of literature especially modern pieces because they enjoy these because they can relate to them. They have an easier time with the reading level.

It depends on the amount of time we have left at the end of the year. State standards ask a lot of teachers.

The more modern, the better. The problem is that modern works are dangerously sexual or violent or too juvenile. It’s a balancing act or risk-taking venture.

Very important as well. You have more chance of student connections here also.

It’s essential to the success of the students in my classroom. I would lose more than half of them if I didn’t offer modern choices.

I haven’t in the past, but I’m looking forward to expanding in that situation.

I think it is fairly important for many of the reasons I indicated before. The students will generally more readily respond to and therefore absorb better non-classical texts.

What success/problems have you faced when teaching non-canonical/modern pieces of literature?

It’s something I’m still working on. I feel like with testing I can’t read all the fun stuff, but when we have, it’s been great. The kids usually really respond to it. I’d like to teach a book like The DaVinci Code.
Again, I must say I’m such an advocate for this kind of thing. *Speak* is on the 10th grade list, and I love it. The kids do too, so that is an amazing process to watch take place. Sometimes the literature that’s modern is too easy, but they’re still reading.

Other than the YA books being too easy, nothing has been a problem. I’d love to teach all post 1970’s novels. It’s amazing what a different reaction you get from the kids when you pull out new books. They almost seem to sit up a little straighter.

Frankly, I think we lost a bit of respect for very good literature if all we read is fluff. The assumption can end up being all literature is easy and forgettable, which is simply not true. Also, there is often the problem of questionable content. While YA novels may reflect the actual lives of student, I do not particularly like to have to justify a novel that contains racy scenes.

Students can see it as fluff and not take it seriously, but we just have to make them see how it works for them.

Students wanting to only read this kind of text. It’s a matter of balance.

It’s the idea that the reading level is too low, and kids think they know it before they even start reading. For the most part, kids do really well with modern texts. Can we blame them?

I typically stick to the canon.

Sometimes, the works lack depth and the discussions end up going nowhere other than a plot summary or a review.

None really. You are enthusiastic about it, and they are too. It’s a matter of attitude sometimes.

It’s always success with the modern texts. Kids like it, and I do too. It’s a matter of compromise sometimes, but I find them reading more and more this way. That’s what I want for my students.

I haven’t done this before.

No comment.

How do you feel about integrating modern texts alongside the canon of traditional literature in high school British Literature classes?

It’s essential to the ultimate success of our students whether we like it or not.

Other distractions like TV and video games are taking over our kids’ brains. Sometimes we have to supplement or pair the new with old to get them hooked. I think it’s great.

It must be done again, keep it fresh. It can’t be overdone and be successful for the students. We’re building lifelong readers, so balance is key.

I’m highly in favor of it. I think students can learn quite a bit from a thoughtful comparison between two pieces.

Fabulous idea. Who’s not doing it is my question?

Again, we have to do it for our times.

I have been integrating modern texts this year, and quite frankly, I am not sure that I have been successful. I taught *Speak* after we finished *Beowulf*. I wanted to use it in connection to Chaucer’s “Prologue.” I thought that the characterization in it would be a nice transition into the tales. It did not work. The kids liked *Speak* but not Chaucer.

If we have time to do it, that would be great.

I think it’s great idea. It allows kids to engage in a text, and hopefully, connect ideas from the easier to understand texts to the more difficult ones.

It’s great if it provides all facets.
I think it would be an excellent idea to integrate modern texts.
If nothing is lost from using new texts, I think it would be great. I just worry that kids will not take class seriously if they’re not challenged by the texts.
I think it is necessary for the reasons I discussed.

What do you think can be gained or lost by using modern texts in conjunction with the canon?

Not much in terms of loses. I see it as the key to kids loving English classes.
That’s not something I have thought about, but I hate to see all the classics go. This is still English class, but if we can pair an old text with a new one and get kids reading and talking, that’s got my vote.
I’m thinking nothing can really be lost while a ton can be gained, like more readers. Isn’t that what we’re here for? I think we have to give kids a choice and a chance to succeed in the classroom. This seems like the way to do it in my eyes.
Gained? Connections, understanding, depth, love for reading. Lost? A comprehensive survey, to be sure. But what good is a survey if kids don’t understand it, appreciate it, or remember it?
Nothing can really be lost if the kids are reading and talking about what they read.
Only gains. We must update our choices and read literature that expresses modern ideas about modern times.
I hate to see classics be pushed aside for only new texts. I want to see them used together.
As long as we keep the canon involved, it’s no loss at all. Students should have a choice in what they read.
Only gains in my eyes.
I feel like it would only be a positive step for our classes. If I taught nothing from the canon, but the kids were reading and analyzing, that would be the best.
I think I somewhat answered that with the last question. I worry about people straying from the canon and students not taking it seriously.
I’m not sure because I’m weak in this area.
I think modern texts should be integrated. I guess perhaps that a student should have a grounding in historical literature in order to be a well-read person who can explore a variety or ideas, but I also think that the task of making students into clearer thinkers may be more easily accomplished by using texts that speak more directly to their situation and experience and therefore to them.

Is there room for additional texts alongside the canon as you prepare your students for SOL tests and to implement Smith County required curriculum?

Sometimes I’m not sure, but I always try to make room for this idea because I think it’s a way to hook kids.
Some years I do a better job with this, but the pressure can be strong to stick to the curriculum guides. I always get at least one or two of the fun novels in.
Yes, because comprehension is key. It’s not what they read. It’s if they can read, the skill should be applied across selections.
Yes, the good thing about the English SOL’s is that they are skills-based. We can help students master these skills with many different types of literature.
I’ll make it work because we all get bored.
There’s always room for more literature.
Absolutely.
That is a good question. I would say no because of the way the course is currently set up.
I say ditch the canon and find room for it.
That’s a touchy one with others, but with me it doesn’t matter what they read to get what they need as long as they get it.
You make it work if you have the kids’ best interests in the right place. This is your job and their future. You just do it.
Depends on the teacher and the school. I would like to see it work.
I think it is necessary for the reasons I already discussed.
Yes.

What suggestions do you have for actual modern texts to be included alongside the canon in a secondary British Literature course?

- The DaVinci Code, Bean Trees, and Where the Heart Is
- Catalyst, Speak, The Lovely Bones, The House on Mango Street
- Poisonwood Bible, Fried Green Tomatoes, Harry Potter, Joy Luck Club, Malcolm X
- Beowulf should be paired with any YA novel or popular fiction that includes a strong hero, perhaps a braggart or graphic novels. Sir Gawain could be paired with a contemporary love story that includes a quest. The King Arthur stories could be paired with any modern versions, film and text. Macbeth could be paired with a YA novel that deals with a kid who makes one bad decision after another.
- I’d have to think and get back to you. Maybe The Girl with the Pearl Earring.
- High Fidelity and About a Boy; science fiction stories, mystery novels by Peter Robinson and Tom Rankin.
- Try including short, high-interest pieces.
- I have no idea.
- Modern British Short Stories, Science fiction.
- Thematic comparisons versus historical/chronological
- Well, I always like Grendel with Beowulf. I’d love some insight into this idea.
- I would need help in this department. It’s too hard to come up with these on your own.
- Again my background is very weak in this area, so I would love suggestions
- No particular suggestions at this time.
Appendix C
September 14, 2004

Kari Yuhas

Dear Kari:

I have reviewed your request to pass out questionnaires to teachers at Potomac Falls High School. I feel that this project will be beneficial to the school and all Loudoun County schools. You have my permission to interview teachers at Potomac Falls.

If you have any questions regarding this letter of approval, please give me a call.

Sincerely,

David Spage
Principal
Appendix D
Central Michigan University

September 30, 2004

Dear Participant:

My name is Kari Yuhas, and I am a graduate student at Central Michigan University. As part of my research, I am distributing questionnaires to teachers about the current British Literature curriculum in Loudoun County. As a teacher in Loudoun, you are invited to be a part of this research through a questionnaire.

The questionnaire will require approximately fifteen minutes or less to complete. There is no compensation for participating nor is there any known risk. Participation is strictly voluntary, and you may refuse to participate at any time. Please be forewarned that the questionnaire asks you to comment on how you feel about the current curriculum in Loudoun County. Consequently, to ensure your responses remain confidential, your responses will appear next to a number instead of your name, and your name will not appear in or on any document. Copies of the project will be provided to my Central Michigan monitor, the Dean of Students, the Student Government Association, and the Faculty Association. If you choose to participate in this questionnaire, please answer questions as honestly as possible. Please feel free to skip any question you are not comfortable answering.

Thank you for taking the time to assist me in my educational endeavors. The information will provide useful insight for future Loudoun County British Literature students. If you require additional information or have questions, please contact me at the number listed below.

Sincerely,

Kari B. Yuhas

[Name redacted]

Dr. Nina J. Haydel
CMU Advisor

[Name redacted]
Appendix E
Integrating Modern Texts Alongside the Canon in Secondary British Literature Courses: A Manual for Teachers

Kari B. Yuhas
December 2004
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Introduction

This manual was created to aid teachers as the try to enhance the learning experience for their students in secondary British Literature classes. When I was assigned this course in the summer of 2003, I was very nervous about teaching it to sophomores. I kept wondering how I was going to get across the difficult concepts and tough literature to tenth graders while engaging them in the learning process. This manual is just a start to answering the questions I had about teaching British literature. It is essential that my students make personal connections with the text, so this manual is built on that idea. I found that by incorporating modern, contemporary texts (in a variety of forms) along with classics, the learning experience for my students was quickly enhanced.

My hope is that classroom teachers will find this manual helpful as they work their way through a secondary British Literature course. The resources are numbered, but the lessons contained within each resource can be taught at any point in a school year. Most school districts are working with required curriculum, and these resources are meant to be supplementary materials. In regard to required state testing, use the manual to supplement required material. As you prepare students for state testing, you should find the resources helpful. Many of the resources include examples of authentic assessment in place of traditional assessment. My teaching philosophy for a survey course is quality versus quantity. Hopefully, you will see that philosophy reflected in this manual. The important thing to do is to use the resources that best suit you and your students.

To my colleagues at PFHS:
Thanks for helping me come up with many of the resources. As a result of the amazing teachers you are, many of you were already implementing the lessons and ideas in your classrooms. Thanks for letting me share them with others.
Continue to love and teach the kids the way you do. What an amazing example you have set for others to follow! It's an honor and a pleasure to come to work with you each and every day.

Contact Info:
Kari Yuhas
Potomac Falls High School
46400 Algonkian Parkway
Potomac Falls, VA 20165
RESOURCE #1:
Beowulf, Indiana Jones, & Personal Heroes:
Lessons & Compare/Contrast Essay

1. Hero journal #1: What are the character traits of a hero? Who is your personal hero and why? Discuss and create a list of common characteristics.

2. Read excerpts from Beowulf in textbook.

3. Hero journal #2: How does Beowulf fulfill the role of an Anglo-Saxon warrior hero? How is he similar or different from your personal hero? Discuss. Use attached notes for Seven Habits of Highly Effective People (Resource 1.1) and further discuss similarities and differences between Beowulf and their personal hero.

4. Watch the film Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade. Have students complete the attached compare/contrast heroes worksheet (R 1.2) for BW, IJ, and their heroes.

5. Read excerpts from John Gardner’s Grendel.
- Discuss how Beowulf is presented in this novel versus the poem version.
- Discuss compare/contrast technique with this activity and use attached song lyrics for “Eater of the Dead” (R 1.3) to further emphasize this technique.

6. Compare/contrast HERO essay – see attached handout (1.4)
Depending on the level you are teaching, you may want to adjust the difficulty of the compare and contrast essay. This example is a basic introduction to the concept.

Source: Kari Yuhas/Marty Ryman/Kiberly Finnegan/Donna Pomponio-Rosa; Potomac Falls HS; Sterling, VA
7 Habits of Highly Effective People

- Appreciate the importance of crisis management (or fix problems before they occur)
- Leave no task unfinished
- Think outside the "box" when trying to solve difficult or unique problems
- Watch out for backstabbers and people who try and set you up for failure
- Plan for successor (or simply put – if you want a promotion begin acting like the position you plan to be promoted to)
- Establish a heroic legacy – or as kind and humane as possible to others around you

**Compare/Contrast Heroes Worksheet**

Most epics have common characteristics. Fill in the chart with examples from the texts we read or viewed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Indiana Jones</th>
<th>Beowulf</th>
<th>Personal Hero</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Well-known hero</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives important speeches</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(long, ceremonial)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story may include journey to distant places</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeless principles involved</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal themes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hero's personality reflects strong morals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performs brave acts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fate of people essential to Hero</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official speech</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kari Yuhas
Eater of The Dead
Lyrics
Artist(Band): Gehenna

SEE THE BODIES
DRENCHED IN POOLS OF BLOOD
ALL OF THEM DEAD
SOME BY THEIR OWN HAND
SEEKING REFUGE IN SUICIDE
AS TERROR SPREADS THROUGHOUT THE LAND

NO SLEEP
NO PEACE
THE CARNAGE NEVER CEASE

DARKNESS UNFOLDS UPON THE EARTH
EACH DAY ANOTHER LOSS

THE PAIN GROWS STRONGER EVERY DAY
UNTIL DEATH COMES TO TAKE THEM AWAY
THE GROUND IS PAINTED RED BY BLOOD
IN THEIR THOUSANDS THEY LIE DEAD
ABRUPTLY AWAKENED FROM THE SERENITY OF DREAMS
TO REALITY WHERE TERROR REIGNS SUPREME

DARKNESS UNFOLDS UPON THE EARTH
EACH DAY ANOTHER LOSS
HUNTED EACH AND EVERYONE
ALL THE BODIES LEFT TO ROT IN THE SUN

Source: Retrieved from www.lyrics.com; October 2004
Compare & Contrast HERO Essay

Your task is to write an essay comparing & contrasting the heroes we have studied.

Think of it as comparing and contrasting the 21st century hero (your hero, Indiana Jones) to the epic hero (Beowulf).

- It is imperative that you include references to the texts (poem, movie) to support your paper/thesis. You are also to refer to similarities/differences between Beowulf, Indiana Jones, and your hero within your body paragraphs.

Outline for Hero essay

Intro paragraph -
Grabber:

Example of a grabber: Who can be a hero? It can be anyone who physically or emotionally saves a life.

Give general information on the qualities of a hero (not your hero)
(2-3 sentences)

Thesis statement on your hero

Example of a thesis: My personal heroes are my parents because of their amazing love and devotion to me.

Body paragraphs

Make a list of 3 fundamental characteristics of your hero or reasons why this person is your hero.

1-

2-

3-

Next >>>Give a specific example of how your hero displays this quality and go into detail about your example.

Body paragraphs #1- #3

Your reasons are the topics to your 3 body paragraphs, and then you will go into detail about a specific example to support your reason to create your 5-10 sentence paragraphs.

Conclusion

Summarize the important aspects of your paper. Do not repeat information; summarize it. Remember not to bring up any new information in the conclusion. Make sure this paragraph is 5-10 sentences.

Source: Kari Yuhas
Resource #2: The Canterbury Tales: A Project and Stories of Pilgrimage

1. Students will complete the following journal prompt:
   Think back to a time when you told stories with friends about life and becoming a teenager. What brought about the conversation? What did you learn from the exchange of ideas?

2. Read selected excerpts from The Canterbury Tales in textbook. Discuss pilgrimages and journeys with students. Have them complete a journal about their dream pilgrimage or journey.

3. Read excerpts from Jack Kerouac’s On the Road and from The Hobbit. Ask students to compare and contrast the pilgrimage and journey themes present in these texts. Discuss the lessons to be learned that are present in each one and how they differ from The Canterbury Tales. You can also discuss the effectiveness of the different writers. What do the students like/dislike and why?

4. Have students complete the suggested group activity in which they will create their own modern rendition of The Canterbury Tales. (R 2.1)

5. After reading from “The Knight’s Tale”, view A Knight’s Tale film. Action/Adventure, Drama and Romance
   2 hrs. 20 min. Inspired by The Canterbury Tales, this is the story of William, a young squire with a gift for jousting. After his master dies suddenly, the squire hits the road with his cohort Roland. On the journey, they stumble across an unknown writer, Chaucer. William, lacking a proper pedigree, convinces Chaucer to forge genealogy documents that will pass him off as a knight. With his newly-minted history in hand, the young man sets out to prove himself a worthy knight at the country's jousting competition, and finds romance along the way. May 2001, Rated PG-13

   This is a good time to introduce the idea of looking at film as literature. Discuss how short stories, poems, plays, and novels are similar to films because the director of the film makes choices about what to include, just like writers do in literature. Close up shots, long shots, medium shots, lighting, and music are some literary devices for directors.

   Ask students to analyze the similarities and differences between Chaucer’s story and the film. This could be in test form or an in-class timed essay for SAT or state standardized test practice.

Source: Kari Yuhas/Kimberly Finneghan; Potomac Falls HS; Sterling, VA
The Canterbury Tales Project Requirements

Due Date: ______________

Your job, in groups, is to recreate your own version of Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales. As a group, you will decide upon the trip you will be taking, why you are taking it, and how you are going to get there; also, each of you will have to take on a particular persona. The persona is up to you.

In a rhyme scheme, you will write a prologue explaining the reason for your trip. Secondly, you will describe each of your personas. Lastly, each of you will have to tell a tale from the perspective of the persona you created. These will also need to rhyme. All writing will be bound and decorated to make it look like a book/storybook.

Specifics:

1. Prologue
   A. Explanation for trip: at least 20 lines
      (Complete as a group)
   B. Description of each persona: at least 14 lines each
      (Complete individually)

2. Tales: the length will depend on you but it should be at least 50 lines
   The tale can be told about your character or about something else from your character’s point of view. If you want to, make it a lesson-learned story.

3. All parts MUST BE TYPED.

4. Final product must be bound together. Be CREATIVE.

5. Cover must have a title, be decorated, and have all names of group members.

6. You will present your Prologue to the class in costume. Each group member will dress as his/her persona and read the description of their persona from the Prologue. PRIOR to your presentation, pick someone to read the explanation for your trip.

7. Each Tale must have an Illustrated Title Page.

RUBRIC

Group grade:  
Cover: 20 points
Front page: 10 points
Opening prologue: 20 points
Overall Creativity/Neatness: 15 points

Individual grade:  
Description of persona: 15 points
Quality of tale: 30 points
Presentation: 10 points
Title page for your tale: 10 points

Source: Kimberly Finnegan/Kari Yuhas; Potomac Falls HS; Sterling, VA
Resource #3:
King Arthur Legends: New & Old

1. Students will read excerpts from *Le Morte d'Arthur* and *The Once and Future King*. Discuss the way Arthur is presented in these two selections.

2. Discuss elements of romance, an imaginative adventure concerned with noble heroes, gallant love, a chivalric code of honor, and daring deeds/faraway settings, depicts events unlike those of ordinary life, and idealize heroes as well as the eras in which the hero lives.

3. Depending on your school system, view any combination of the following films or clips from the films that present differing versions of King Arthur’s life. Discuss or have students write about how romance is presented in these films as opposed to the excerpts they read.

- *Excalibur* - Science Fiction/Fantasy
  Director John Boorman’s passionate adaptation of Sir Thomas Malory’s LE MORTE D’ARTHUR stars Nigel Terry as the faithful King Arthur. Necromancer Merlin offers the magic sword Excalibur to the warlike Uther Pendragon in exchange for a promise that he’ll make peace with his enemy, the duke of Cornwall. He agrees but breaks his word after catching sight of Cornwall’s wife, Igraine. With the magician’s help, he makes love to the woman in the guise of her husband. She bears a child, Arthur, who is taken by Merlin as payment for his assistance and left in the care of Ector. Years pass, and the boy, now a humble squire, pulls Excalibur from the stone in which Uther had sunk it—a task no other could accomplish. With Merlin’s counsel, he marries the stunning Guinevere, finds a champion in Sir Lancelot, subdues the skirmishing knights, and builds the Round Table to unite them. Yet his half-sister, Morgana, lurks in the shadows, preparing to poison her brother’s reign. Rated: R; Prior to showing in class, be sure to edit for sex content.

- *First Knight* - Drama
  Lancelot (Richard Gere) is a rogue with no ties, no enemies, and no fear—until he meets Lady Guinevere of Leonesse (Julia Ormond). She has promised to marry King Arthur (Sean Connery), not only because his armies can protect her country, but because she truly loves him. But her chance encounter with Lancelot as she prepared to enter Camelot stirs conflicting and powerful emotions within her. Arthur welcomes both into his city with open heart, little foreseeing how his great capacity for love and trust opens the doors for his own betrayal. Rated: PG-13.

  2 hrs. 10 min. As the Roman Empire crumbles (circa 450 A.D.), the British Isles are thrown into a loose anarchy as errant knights are entrenched in years of territorial battle. Then, one king emerges to unite them, Arthur, with his concept of a Round Table of united knights. Rated: PG-13


Source: Jason Walker; Potomac Falls HS; Sterling, VA/ Movie synopsis retrieved from www.movies.yahoo.com; October 2004
Resource #4:  
1984: Here Today, Gone Tomorrow

1. Students will address the following questions as they read the novel and complete other related activities.
   - How does this novel represent power? What interplays of power are represented?
   - How are the powerful portrayed? How are those without power portrayed?
   - Who are silenced and who are heard?
   - How does this novel represent class and class distinction?
   - What insights into the "nature" of politics does this novel offer?
   - What does propaganda mean? How can we separate it from "truth"?

2. As pre-reading assignments, ask students to analyze and comment on the songs, "1984" & "For the Love of Big Brother". (R 4.1, R 4.2) Based on these songs, what do they think the novel will be about? Give examples.

3. If there is a media unit required in the curriculum, this would be a great pairing for 1984. If you do not have access to a media unit, ask students to analyze advertisements, in print and TV form, as well as TV shows for bias in terms of race and gender; also, how are stereotypes portrayed in these ads?

4. Another way to teach this novel is to divide the class into two groups, ask one group to read 1984 and the other group will read Margaret Atwood’s The Handmaid’s Tale. Students will then present their book to the class and a Socratic seminar format can be used. Go to http://www.studyguide.org/socratic_seminar.htm for instructions on creating a Socratic seminar in your classroom.

5. The film, Enemy of the State, nicely parallels many of the themes presented in the novel. Students can analyze the similarities and differences presented in this modern interpretation of the Big Brother theory.
   
   (Action/Adventure and Thriller)
   
   Robert Dean (Will Smith) is a labor lawyer who is unknowingly in possession of evidence related to a serious politically motivated crime. Government agents eager to hide their guilt believe that Dean is on to them, and proceed to turn his life upside-down, ruin his reputation, and frame him for various incidents, thanks to the latest in high-tech government surveillance techniques. In an attempt to clear his name and reclaim his life, Dean teams up with the reclusive Brill, a former federal employee who has as much high-tech equipment and expertise as the government itself. Smith scores as a man who is desperate to reclaim his identity and prove his innocence. This intense technological thrill-ride from director Tony Scott questions how much access the government should have to the communications of private citizens, and leaves the viewer with the unsettling feeling that Big Brother is definitely watching.

Sources: Kari Yuhas/www.NCTE.org./Movie synopsis retrieved from www.movies.yahoo.com; October 2004
1984 by David Bowie

A little piece of you
The little peace in me
Will die [This is not a miracle]
For this is not America

Blossom fails to bloom
This season
Promise not to stare
Too long [This is not America]
For this is not the miracle

There was a time
A storm that blew so pure
For this could be the biggest sky
And I could have
The faintest idea

[For this is not America, sha la la la la, sha la la la la, sha la la la la
This is not America, no, this is not, sha la la la la]

Snowman melting
From the inside
Falcon spirals
To the ground [This could be the biggest sky]
So bloody red
Tomorrow's clouds

A little piece of you
The little piece in me
Will die [This could be a miracle]
For this is not America

There was a time
A wind that blew so young
For this could be the biggest sky
And I could have the faintest idea

[For this is not America, sha la la la la, sha la la la la, sha la la la la
This is not america, no, this is not, sha la la la
This is not america, no, this is not
This is not america, no, this is not, sha la la la]
For the Love of Big Brother by The Eurythmics

Like a train passing in the distance
Black bird in flight
I hear you call
And even though there’s no one
Dark shadows move across the wall

I still hear the echo
Of your footsteps on the stairs
Still recall the images that
Seem to live out there

First you see my fingerprints
Like skeletons of leaves on the wall
People changing places
I stand for a moment
And it’s gone

I still hear the echo
Of your footsteps on the stairs
Still recall the images that
Seem to live out there

Like a train passing in the distance
Black bird in flight
I hear you call
And even though there’s no one
Dark shadows move across the wall

I still hear the sound of
Conversations from the hall
Look to see who’s coming
But it’s nothing
And there’s no one there at all
(no one there at all)

Sources: www.NCTE.org/Retrieved from www.lyrics.com; October 2004
Resource #5: 
*Lord of the Flies: Who’s in Charge?!?!

1. As a pre-reading assignment for this novel, show up to class about 1 minute after the bell rings. You may stand directly outside, but do not let the students see you. Do not let them know you’re doing this ahead of time. Upon entering the room, ask students to write down what was going in the room before you arrived, then ask them to narrate a day at your school when the teachers don’t show up, but they must stay there. Ask for volunteers to share as you get the conversation directed at the novel’s most basic themes.

2. In conjunction with required curriculum for the novel, students can view the episode “White Rabbit” from the TV series *LOST* on NBC. The characters and story are similar from the names, right down to the “beast” that resides on the island.

3. Have students compare and contrast the novel’s themes with Yeats’ poem “Second Coming.” (R 5.1)

4. A Socratic seminar is an excellent way to conclude this novel because students are left to discuss the book on their own. It reinforces many of the book’s themes. For more information on Socratic seminars, go to: www.mcps.k12.mcps.us/schools/wjhs/depts/socialst/Skills/Socraticseminar/ Socraticseminarintro, www.studyguides.org/socratic_seminar.htm, or go to www.google.com and type in Socratic seminar.

Sources: Kari Yuhas/Jason Walker; Potomac Falls HS; Sterling, VA
“Second Coming” by Yeats

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

Source: Retrieved from www.poets.org; October 2004
Resource #6:  
Short Stories/Autobiographical Accounts/Narratives: New & Old

1. Ask students to write down 2 significant things that happened to them when they were 5, 10, and 15 years old. For example - broken arm or moving. Once they have created this list, have them pick 2 of their items to elaborate. Take some time to write what was happening around this time. Emphasize the importance of telling not showing.

2. Review sensory imagery with students and ask them to include imagery in their descriptions. They'll reuse these when completing their own short story/personal narrative about a significant event in their life.

3. Read and discuss the following stories with students: “Araby” by James Joyce, “A Family Supper” by Kazuo Ishiguro found in Modern British Short Stories, and excerpts from Angela’s Ashes or Tis by Frank McCourt (go to www.pbs.org for more info on Angela’s Ashes). Discuss elements of short stories and personal narratives with students. How do these stories relate to those ideas? Are they good/bad examples? Why or why not?

4. Students are to take one of the items from their original list and create a personal narrative/short story expressing the elements of imagery and others discussed while reading the example texts. Go to www.webenglishteacher.com for various personal narrative writing assignments.

Sources: Kari Yuhas/Ruth Keiper; Potomac Falls HS; Sterling, VA
Resource #7: Frankenstein/The Munsters: A Creative Project

1. After reading Frankenstein, new & old versions, it might be helpful to show students clips from film adaptations. Students also enjoy viewing episodes of The Munsters and the film Young Frankenstein (a satirical approach to the story) to compare with the book. Have students write a journal about “Science & Technology – The Monsters We’ve Created.” Ask them to list and comment on 4-10 modern monsters humans have created. Share and discuss. You may want to have students further study one of the modern monsters. This might be a great starting point for a research assignment.

2. Students will make a list of the several personalities of Dr. Frankenstein and the Monster. Consider how each of these characters starts out and then changes as the story continues. Think about what they go through, especially how each of them acts around certain other characters. How does circumstance relate to behavior?

2. Select one personality trait for each of the above characters or select one personality trait that they both possess. Show your audience how the personalities are similar, different, or shared at some points. Feel free to use any type of media such as: video, music, artwork, symbols, shapes, diagrams, colors, etc. to present your view.

RUBRIC

Opening introduction: 20 points
Presentation: 30 points
Overall Creativity/Neatness: 50 points

Source: Kari Yuhas/outtarayshead.com
Resource #8:  
Gulliver’s Travels: A Journey Through Satire

1. Brainstorm with students the definition of satire. Define Horatian and Juvenalian Satire for them.

2. Watch several school appropriate scenes from John Stewart’s “The Daily Show.” Try to find the corresponding news story from the newspaper or TV news program. Compare and contrast the differences and similarities. This can also be done with appropriate articles from “The Onion.”

3. Read from Gulliver’s Travels. Discuss satirical elements. View clips from 1996 version with Ted Danson.

4. Have students read Flowers for Algernon by Daniel Keyes and Harrison Bergeron by Kurt Vonnegut. Discuss with students the effect of science on society in these stories as related to Jonathan Swift’s take on that idea.

5. Students can view any example of a satirical film, such as Young Frankenstein or Monty Python and the Holy Grail to further their understanding of satire.

6. Have students create a satirical political cartoon based on something they read or a current event.

Sources: Kari Yuhas, Jason White; Potomac Falls HS; Sterling, VA/www.webenglishteacher.com
Resource #9:
Conrad, Harris, & Dinesen: Darkness in Colonial and Modern Times

1. Students will read excerpts from Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and Wilson Harris’ *Palace of the Peacock*, a colonial fantasy set in British Guyana.

2. Students can explore what the heart of darkness is in each of these novels.

3. Isak Dinesen’s *Out of Africa* is an excellent film version representing several of the common themes found within these novels.

Sources: Kari Yuhas/Heart of Darkness-www.discoveryschool.org
Resource #10: Other Suggested Pairings

1. *Great Expectations/Ruby in the Smoke* by Sally Lockhart

2. *The Tempest/Tar Baby* by Toni Morrison

3. *The Taming of Shrew/Film: Ten Things I Hate About You*

4. William Blake’s “In Depths of Solitude”/*The Rose That Grew from Concrete* by Tupac Shakur (poetry book)

5. Any writings by/about Virginia Woolf with *Bend it Like Beckham*.

6. *Jane Eyre/Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys


8. *Hamlet/ Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead* by Tom Stoppard

Sources: English teachers and students; Potomac Falls HS; Sterling, VA/www.webenglishteacher.com
Recommendations

Teachers:

- Please use this resource manual as a way to guide you through a survey course of British Literature.

- Pick and choose from the different resources. They can and should be changed and adapted to best suit your needs.

- I'd like to work to continue to update the selections and lessons offered in the manual. If you'd like to help, please contact me.

- Enjoy this resource manual, as you work to enhance the learning experience for your secondary British literature students.

- Feedback is always important. Send your questions, comments, and suggestions to [Redacted]
Bibliography

• The College Board. http://www.thecollegeboard.com
  The College Board is known for being the home to the ETS, but it also
  created Pacesetter English, an amazing course for integrating modern
  texts along with traditional literature. This site will only give teachers
  the basics about the course and how to bring it to your school. Go to

• Discovery School. http://www.discoveryschool.com
  This site provides teachers with many innovative lessons incorporating
  multimedia techniques.

  The NCTE is the leading organization for English teachers. The website
  provides copies of archived English Journal, which have a variety of
  lessons incorporating modern texts along with classic literature.
  Teachers can also find information about Pacesetter English, a course
  developed by the College Board.

• Outta Ray’s Head Lesson Plans.
  http://www.home.cogeco.ca/~rayser3
  Ray, a former teacher, has collected an assortment of cutting edge lesson
  plans. Some are better than others; carefully read each lesson on this
  site, but many of the lessons introduce innovative and exciting ways to
  teach the classics.

  This site is one of the best sites for teachers of English. It ranges from
  grammar and writing to poetry and prose. Literature/prose selections are
  listed by author. Upon clicking on the author’s name, you’ll be given
  many examples of lessons to use in your classroom. Some are more
  traditional, but the vast majority includes multimedia resources, modern
  text pairings, and great examples for writing across the curriculum.
Evaluation

-Teachers-
After you use some of the resources, please complete the following evaluation and email/fax it to me at [redacted] or [redacted].
Thanks for your input.

1. How did you hear about this manual?

2. What aspects of this manual were helpful? Explain...

3. What aspects of this manual were confusing? Explain.

4. What aspects of the manual would you use again/not use again? Why or why not?

5. What aspects of the manual/resources did your students like/not like? Explain.

6. In what way(s), were you able to use this manual in conjunction with required curriculum?

7. Would you recommend this manual for use by other teachers? Why or why not?

8. What additional suggestions do you have for the manual? (actual texts, comments, etc...)