Doing Differently with Novel Study
Hello!

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What is the canon and who decides?

Selecting the texts that your students need to be better readers, thinkers, and empathizers.

Nuts and Bolts - Ways and permission to do differently
#DisruptTexts
1. Confession Time

Share a traditionally canonical text -- or many -- that you’ve never read (or fake read) and the negative or positive impact of that decision.
1. The “Canon” is a Construction

What is the canon? Who constructed it?
What/Who does it center? Who benefits?
THE CANNON OF LITERATURE

WHO CONTROLS THE CANNON?

ACADEMICS IN IVORY TOWERS?

WELL-MEANING ENGLISH TEACHERS?

IT'S CANNON.

DECONSTRUCT THE CANNON.

THE SECRET SOCIETY FOR THE PROMOTION OF DEAD, BEARDED WHITE MEN?

OR HAS THE CANNON SUNK INTO IRRELEVANCE?

NO! WE CONTROL THE CANNON.

EXPLORING ALTERNATIVE DESIGNS.

THE EASTERN CANNON

THE RAYGUN OF GENRE

THE SLINGSHOT OF UNSUNG VOICES

OPRAH'S BOOK CLUB

REBUILD THE CANNON WITH MORE RANGE AND CALIBER.

AND LOAD THE CANNON ONE BOOK AT A TIME

IN HOPES IT MAY STRIKE

AT THE ESSENTIAL MOMENT.
1.

The “Canon” Can Be Torn Down and Rebuilt

It is our professional responsibility — a moral obligation — to actively shape a curriculum that meets the needs of all students in an increasingly diverse world.
Diversity in Children’s Books 2015

Percentages of books depicting characters from diverse backgrounds. Based on the 2015 publishing statistics compiled by the Cooperative Children’s Book Center, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison. ccbc.education.wisc.edu/books/pcstats.asp

0.9% American Indians/First Nations
2.4% Latinx
3.3% Asian Pacifics/Asian Pacific Americans
7.6% African/African Americans
12.5%* Animals, Trucks, etc.
73.3%** White

* About a quarter of the total children’s books published in 2015 were picture books, and about half of those depict non-human characters, like animals & trucks.
** The remainder depict white characters.
31% of books published in 2017 contain diverse characters.
“The century has changed, but many of the texts taught in English classrooms have not” (Styslinger 3).

**Applebee (1993)**
- Romeo and Juliet
- The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
- To Kill a Mockingbird
- Julius Caesar
- The Pearl
- The Scarlet Letter

**Beers and Probst (2013)**
- Romeo and Juliet
- The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
- To Kill a Mockingbird
- The Scarlet Letter
2. Text selection is paramount.

Choose intentionally for audience needs.
- interests, building empathy, relevance, connection
“... If we want students to read more often and subsequently improve their reading performance, we need to provide high-interest and more accessible text. We need to better incorporate what students are more likely to read out of school into the school” (Styslinger 3).
"Books aren't written to be taught. They are written to be loved." - @KyleneBeers

On the Notice and Note for Educators FB page, a teacher asked how she should "teach" a particular book. It was a smart comment as she had not shared that particular book with her students in previous years. And, it reminded me that as we begin this new school year, it's a good time to remember that books weren't written to be "taught." They are written to be loved. If we can start there, the teaching we all must do will come easier.

Let kids discuss what surprised them. Perhaps use the BHH framework discussed in Disrupting Thinking to help guide discussions - if that's needed. Let them discuss what has changed their mind about something. Let them tell you about any of the signposts they noticed. Let them tell you what made them laugh or cry or worry or nod their heads in agreement. Let them tell you why they felt some sort of kinship with a character. In other words, let them begin the conversation by telling you what mattered to them.

As students discuss what is meaningful, you'll hear places to insert, "Oh, you've really noticed how the character is changing. We call that character development." Or, "You are mentioning what bothered the character. That's called internal conflict." As you discuss a particular chapter and notice that not one child used a word the author used and you think it's important that children learn that word, turn to that sentence and tell students why you LOVE that word the author has used and discuss its meaning. As you listen to discussions, you'll hear places to insert the academic language and academic skills that students need to learn. You can attach that to the academic standards you need to teach.

But lead with what mattered most to children in the reading of the book. Hopefully, that will help kids fall in love with that book and then encourage...
“There are books students are more likely to read in English class, and there are books they are more likely to read out of class” (Styslinger 2).
2.

Text selection is paramount.

Teaching Tolerance
Diversity in YA Blog
Cooperative Children’s Book Center
American Indians in Children’s Literature Blog
Ink and Pen Blog
Coretta Scott King Awards
Rainbow Project Awards
Stonewall Awards
We Read Too
2. Text selection is paramount.

Choose texts that will enhance skill work.
- There’s a big difference between teaching *Gatsby* and teaching skills via *Gatsby*. 
2.

Text selection is paramount.

What intentional/unintentional messages does your text selection send to students?

○ biases, stereotypes, “The Danger of a Single Story”
○ Which voices matter? What voices are missing?

“I share my story because I believe our past experiences in school shape the teachers we become -- in profound and insidious ways.”
- Tricia Ebarvia
Window, Mirrors, and Sliding Glass Doors
3. Doing Differently.

- spend 2-3 weeks on a novel instead of 6-9
- use strategic excerpts or chapters for whole-class read/discussion
- students practice skills work before, during, and after reading
You CAN have both ways:
Reading Literature Deeply AND Fostering
Joyful, Independent Reading

PLAN

What skills do your *current* students need? Top three?

What book do ALL of your *current* students need?

Teach w/ Whole Class Novel (2-3 weeks!!!)

Teach w/ Book Clubs (about 2 weeks)

Unit culmination (about a week)
A Novel Approach

*Whole-Class Novels, Student-Centered Teaching, and Choice*

Classroom Videos, Organized by Teaching Structure

- The Read-Aloud
- The Minilesson
- The Student Reading Conference
- The Small Group

Classroom Videos, Organized by Chapter

- Chapter 5
- Chapter 6

6.1 Giving Students a "Side Mission" in Reading (Small Group)

6.2 Demonstrating and Thinking Aloud in a Small Group

6.3 Guided Practice and Coaching in a Small Group (Middle School)

6.4 Guided Practice and Coaching in a Small Group (High School)

6.5 The Structure of a Reading Conference
3.

Doing Differently.

thematic literature circles/book clubs
Whole-Class Reading = a “Hero’s Journey” short story/myth each week
Independent Reading = Book Club Selection
Skills Practice via min-lessons applied to both texts students are reading

Heroes
and
The Hero’s Journey

- The Outsiders
- Catherine, Called Birdy
- The Giver
- The Graveyard Book
- The Lightning Thief
- A Wrinkle in Time

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3.

Doing Differently.

instructional + independent text pairings
“When we workshop the canon, rather than planning around a single text, we select a unit focus that allows for multiple texts, voices, ideas, and perspectives to be explored within an array of reading and writing workshop structures” (Styslinger 10).
“Workshopping structures and strategies enable teachers to interweave other genres as a means of providing students with more accessible text and diverse cultural representations, bridging the gap between out-of-school and in-school reading. We partner those texts students are expected to read with those they are more willing and ready to read, and everybody wins” (Styslinger 3).
Ryan Burns @RyanBurnsRI · 16h
The million dollar question for all English teachers to wrestle with: "Who deserves our advocacy more, young readers or antique texts?" #DisruptTexts #edchat #engchat #NCTEplace #edcational @ncte @RIDeptEd

Rachel Lance @ByLanceR
Replying to @donalynbooks @halseanderson
Amen.
Who knows, building literacy skills via books of their own choosing might actually lead to choosing texts that would otherwise be assigned.
Regardless, who deserves our advocacy more, young readers or antique...


"Reading is a changemaker. It's not a skill we learn to improve a test score. It's a way to improve a life."

-Kylene Beers #KidsDeserveIt

Thanks!

Any questions?

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