

# Linked Text Sets for Disciplinary Literacies

Evan Ortlieb, St. John's University

Wolfram Verlaan, University of Alabama in Huntsville

# Need for Multiple Perspectives

- Whether history, politics, or religion, there is a clear need for learning from multiple angles and humanizing others' thinking.
- Despite economic hardships and reduced opportunities for learning in the field, students can garner rich perspectives through carefully selected text sets.

# Linked Text Sets

- These can include a range of print and media, from music lyrics and movie clips to poetry, short stories, picture books, informational texts, adolescent literature, and canonical texts.

# Disrupting the Single Story

- Through provocative questions teachers can challenge students to think critically about connections between their lives and texts, while also constructing deep, nuanced ideas about the human condition (Elish-Piper et al., 2014).

# Learning with Disciplinary Literacies

- Now students are taught to think like scientists, explore like archaeologists, and reason like mathematicians using unique skills in those respective disciplines (Juel, Hebard, Haubner, & Moran, 2010; Ortlieb & Anderson, in press).
- This augmentation is based on the premise that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to literacy across the disciplines. We seek learners who are sophisticated readers who engage in analysis, argumentation, and investigative inquiries using language and literacy as a means to explore.

# Practical Examples

- What follows are samples of how linked text sets could be used in various disciplines to develop diverse literacy skills while engaging in teaching for social issues.

# History Class

- Using the Autobiographies of Malcolm X and Eleanor Roosevelt to address the civil rights movement.

# Malcolm X

- He provides his opinions on the civil rights movement and the oppression and racism imposed on blacks by the white race.
- He explains why nonviolence is not the correct tactic against segregation and racism--he feels that nonviolence makes men defenseless. He goes on to say that the entire U.S. economic and political system is inadequate and incapable of producing justice and equality.
- He provides his opinions of prominent black politicians, but says he feels that the approach of passing laws to end segregation is not working. In his opinion, it would take a police state to enforce the civil rights legislation.



# Eleanor Roosevelt

- A champion of the downtrodden, Eleanor drew on her experience and used her role as First Lady to help those in need. Intimately involved in her husband's political life, from the governorship of New York to the White House, Eleanor would eventually become a powerful force of her own, heading women's organizations and youth movements, and battling for consumer rights, civil rights, and improved housing.
- In the years after FDR's death, this inspiring, controversial, and outspoken leader would become a U.N. Delegate, chairman of the Commission on Human Rights, a newspaper columnist, Democratic party activist, world-traveler, and diplomat devoted to the ideas of liberty and human rights.

# Math Class

- How Missile Tracking Cameras are Remaking the NBA
  - <http://www.fastcodesign.com/1670059/moneyball-20-how-missile-tracking-cameras-are-remaking-the-nba>
- Charles Barkley doesn't back down on analytics stance
  - <http://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/nba/allstar/2015/02/14/charles-barkley-mark-cuban-analytics/23417305/>

# Math in Practice

## *How Missile Tracking Cameras are Remaking*

- The technology was originally developed to track missiles. Now, SportVU systems hang from the catwalks of 10 NBA arenas, tiny webcams that silently track each player as they shoot, pass, and run across the court, recording each and every move 25 times a second.
- SportVU can tell you not just Kevin Durant's shooting average, but his shooting average after dribbling one vs. two times, or his shooting average with a defender three feet away vs. five feet away.
- SportVU can actually consider both factors at once, plus take into account who passed him the ball, how many minutes he'd been on the court, and how many miles he'd run that game already.

# Math in Practice

## ***Charles Barkley doesn't back down on analytics stance***

- "I'm not anti-analytical, but I think that basketball is about talent and coaching and things like that," Barkley said. "I didn't have (a) problem with anything today. And I never have a problem with somebody disagreeing with me. I still believe the game is about talent. Are stats important? Yeah, they're a small part of it, but the game still comes down to talent."

# Science Class (brief example)

- Good ozone and bad ozone
  - <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/caer/ce/ee/earth/air/badozone.htm>
- National Geographic article on thinning ozone layer
  - <http://environment.nationalgeographic.com/environment/global-warming/ozone-depletion-overview/>
- More available here:  
[http://readingandwritingproject.com/public/themes/rwproject/resources/booklists/science\\_text\\_sets.pdf](http://readingandwritingproject.com/public/themes/rwproject/resources/booklists/science_text_sets.pdf)

# English Language Arts Class

- Consider supplementing or even replacing “the canon” with linked text-sets especially if the reading level is overly ambitious – e.g. from *To Kill a Mockingbird*:

“Being Southerners, it was a source of shame to some members of the family that we had no recorded ancestors on either side of the Battle of Hastings. All we had was Simon Finch, a fur-trapping apothecary from Cornwall whose piety was exceeded only by his stinginess. In England, Simon was irritated by the persecution of those who called themselves Methodists at the hands of their more liberal brethren, and as Simon called himself a Methodist, he worked his way across the Atlantic to Philadelphia, thence to Jamaica, thence to Mobile, and up the Saint Stephens. Mindful of John Wesley’s strictures on the use of many words in buying and selling, Simon made a pile practicing medicine, but in this pursuit he was unhappy lest he be tempted into doing what he knew was not for the glory of God, as the putting on of gold and costly apparel. So Simon, having forgotten his teacher’s dictum on the possession of human chattels, bought three slaves and with their aid established a homestead on the banks of the Alabama River some forty miles above Saint Stephens.”

# English Language Arts Class

- Use films (e.g. *Whale Rider*) and multicultural literature (e.g., Maya Angelou, Sandra Cisneros, Christopher Paul Curtis, Amy Tan, Gary Soto, etc.) to support a middle school unit addressing how themes of identity development, commonality with those of other cultures/backgrounds, and “coming of age” are relevant to the students’ lives

# Film/Multicultural literature

- Excerpts from Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, such as Chapter 16 ("My name is Margaret!") can help students relate to the establishment of identity as teens interact more and more with adults.
- Chapters from Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street* and the Gary Soto poem "Oranges", can help demonstrate the universal experiences of seeing ourselves transition from children to young adults



## Film/Multicultural literature (cont.)

- Christopher Paul Curtis's *The Watson's Go to Birmingham – 1963* helps exemplify how our views of ourselves and our relations to others develop as we become more mature
- Amy Tan's essay "Fish Cheeks" demonstrates the importance of being proud of one's cultural heritage and back ground
- The film *Whale Rider* demonstrates the importance of being true to and believing in oneself and the questioning of cultural norms that may no longer be valid