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Critical Literacy Elementary Book Clubs

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Text Choice

- **Intentional** text choices when engaging with critical literacy
- Engagement and motivation linked with text choices leading to cognitive engagement and learning (Lapp & Fisher, 2009)
- Pre-service teachers and pre-service librarians can be hesitant to introduce "controversial" texts with students. Kimmel & Hartsfield (2019) present four practical tenets of how to utilize critical literacy texts
 1. Integrate texts based on literary quality and curricula connections to prepare PST and PSL for potential challenges
 2. Developing relationships with students can highlight the disservice being done by not exposing them to varied texts
 3. Advising students how to respond to text and content presented in such books
 4. Engaging with a supportive professional community
- Book clubs can be considered as figured worlds students can enter, with books functioning as the pivot into a learning space (Holland et. al, 1998). The classification of books as pivots layers an additional importance for student learning in using texts as vehicles for figured world learning.

Resources for Text Choice Support

- Online Resources
 - <http://socialjusticebooks.org/sources/>
 - <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/publications/reading-diversity>

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- <http://cbbc.education.wisc.edu/books/pcstats.asp>
- <https://www.diversefutures.net/resources.html>
- <https://www.amightygirl.com/books>
- **Project LIT Program**
 - *"Project LIT Community — a grassroots network of book groups that aims to get students excited about reading by highlighting diverse, high-interest, culturally relevant books"*
 - <https://www.vocabulary.com/articles/tips-and-tricks/project-lit-communitys-2019-2020-book-selections/>

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Student Agency vs. Facilitation

When engaging in critical literacy book clubs be cognizant of the need for facilitation in group discussions, but the need for students to have agency in thinking:

- Three categories of *critical literacy practices* (Gatto, 2013) to consider when addressing the *tension of student agency and adult facilitation* in book club discussions
 1. Attentive: "students become aware of voice in consuming and producing texts"
 2. Connective: "texts become a vehicle for agency"
 3. Disruptive: "bringing voice and agency together to use text for transformation of their world"
- Creating the space for student questions (see discussion framework example under [Sustainability](#))
 - Four elements for student thinking and engaging with critical content (Luke & Woods, 2009)
 1. *Questioning the commonplace in text*
 2. *Considering the role of the author*
 3. *Seeking alternative perspectives*
 4. *Reading critically*
- Developing agency through voice and the power of language, acknowledging the importance of texts in propelling social realities and
- Developing agency through voice and the power of language, acknowledging the importance of texts in propelling social realities and understanding for individuals (Luke & Woods, 2009).

Contextualization of Social Issues within Texts

- Students need to understand the basic plot of a text before engaging in critical literacy (Barone, 2011)
 - Students need to be presented with information to become well-versed in the basic plot of the text prior to expanding conversations into more critical thinking

<https://www.tolerance.org/>

<https://www.theconsciouskid.org/>

Context of Book Club

What is a book club?

- A group of students who meet to discuss a text read prior to the gathering
- The text is discussed in a group or small-group setting, typically with guiding questions produced by students and facilitators

Critical literacy in *your classroom/book club*

- Understanding not only the school context for students, but the community context when talking about socio-economic status inequities, racial disparities, inequalities in gender or numerous additional prevalent social issues




Mission Statements

"Originally the goal was to expose to books that they might not read on their own with topics of conversation to have with an adult-all about the books." -Elementary Librarian

Community partnerships

- What do you see as areas of improvement?
 - o *"Reaching out to community partnerships for support, one way can be through having individuals from community organizations picking a book and engaging with the book club throughout the 4-weeks." -Elementary Librarian*

Waverly-Belmont Elementary Demographics

	500 STUDENTS		57 FACULTY & STAFF		3 COMMUNITY PARTNERS
Asian 3.6% Black 44% Hispanic 4.8% White 47% Native American 0.2%		SERVES GRADES K-4 IN THE HILLSBORO CLUSTER <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Open Enrollment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Offers Bus Transportation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Offers Before or After Care			

Sustainability

- Educators utilizing critical literacy need to be equipped with tools to engage with students in a productive manner, while additionally being prepared to face challenges from caregivers Kimmel & Hartsfield, 2019). See [Text Choice](#).
- Students are more likely to engage with literature that reflects their own experiences (Hughes-Hassell, Barkley, & Koehler, 2010). In relation to sustainability of book club learning educators need to be aware of student sustained engagement through the lifetime of a book club.
- Being cognizant of text choices and book club culture over the course of the academic year, educators must respond to the climate and dynamics of student-student relations, student-content relations and student-educator relations. Kong & Fitch (2003), posit student needs for valuing personal and peer experiences in a shared space.

Utilizing discussions frameworks (see example below, for a 4 week, before school, elementary book club)

Discussion Framework Example:

Title of chosen text, Week 3 of 4

February 26, 2020

To read for this week: Ch. 25-38 (pg. 146-217)

Goals for this week:

- Set norms for book club
- Discuss social issues topics from text (choose one or two)

Materials:

- Name tents
- Bookmarks for next week
- Information about social issue

*Add content to be discussed with students if historically contextualizing the social issue addressed

1. As students arrive: (7:30-7:40)

1. Have students set their backpack along the ramp by the library door & bring book to table.
2. Have them make a name tent with their name on both sides.
3. Have students write down their own discussion question for the group.
4. At 7:40, focus the group and give any reminders needed.

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2. Small-group discussion: (7:40-8:05)

Leaders, briefly talk about the types of questions and encourage students to identify the types as they are asked. Begin by asking if students have questions about the reading. Supplement with questions below (in no particular order) to keep discussion going.

We'll be focusing on three kinds of questions:

- **Detail ?s** – *When we get a detail question, we try to remember the answer from the book or look back in our book to find the answer. We won't always be able to remember the details off the top of our head, and that's okay, but we're looking back at them because they might be important details.*
- **Inference ?s** – *When we get an inference question, we always start by thinking hard. Because an inference question asks us to think for ourselves, not just remember details from the book, but also remember what we read to come up with a good response to the question. Different people might have different answers to the question that are all good, but they should have a reason based in the book to support their answer.*
- **Exploration ?s** – *Exploration questions help us think about what this book has to do with us and our world and about how we connect with the characters in the story. We should still think hard, but we don't have to think as much about what the books says and instead can focus on what we think.*

Questions: (**Depending on length of book club meeting, vary amount of questions crafted, utilize student produced questions as well*)

1. Where is someplace you have imagined going to? (pg. 146) Why that place?

Wrap-Up/Dismissal (8:05-8:10)

1. Clean up, remind students which chapters to read for next week, distribute bookmarks.

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