

Reflective Critical Thinking through the Study of Adolescent Literature in the English Classroom

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Thinking critically

- Why do we educate?
- What should adolescents study/learn as students?
- What is the role of the teacher?
- Why do we study/teach literature?

Critical literacy

“The ability to read texts in an active, reflective manner in order to better understand power, inequality, and injustice in human relationships...The development of critical literacy skills enables people to interpret messages in the modern world through a critical lens and challenge the power relations within those messages.”

Coffey, Learn NC: Critical literacy

Reflective practice

- A deliberate way of considering and questioning that supports changes in understanding and action

Dewey, 1960; Schön, 1983

- An intellectual means by which to explore the relational aspects of teaching and learning and provide...entry into the affective aspects that play a potentially positive role in shaping quality teachers

Shoffner, 2009

Reflective practice

Formal

- journal writing
- audio-journaling
- book club
- professional discussion
- workshops/seminars

Informal

- pedagogical notes
- weblog
- online discussion group
- teacher listserv
- café talk

Reflective thinking

“Reflective thinking begins with a state of doubt, hesitation, or perplexity and moves through the act of searching to find material that will resolve, clarify, or otherwise address the doubt’ (Spalding & Wilson, 2002, p. 1394). In this presentation, reflection, whether grounded in practice or thought, calls for sustained consideration, as prior knowledge is incorporated or transformed into new understandings that support internal or external change (Francis, 1995; Hatton & Smith, 1995; LaBoskey, 1993; van Halen-Faber, 1997). “

Shoffner, 2008, p. 124

Critical reflection

The “examination of personal and professional belief systems, as well as the deliberate consideration of the ethical implications and impact of practices”

Larrivee, 2000, p. 294

Critical reflective thinking

Intentional, active consideration and interrogation of personal actions, emotions and beliefs in order to more fully understand and respond to complex, contextual implications and outcomes

Shoffner, 2017

Studying adolescence

adolescence as distinct stage

- time of identity formation and development

social construction of adolescence

- understood differently in different cultures/societies

Challenging assumptions of adolescence

Critical Youth Studies

- lens by which to problematize dominant understandings of adolescence

“coming of age”
raging hormones
peer-oriented
represented by age

Lesko, 2012

Studying literature

UTILITY

ENGAGEMENT

ESCAPE

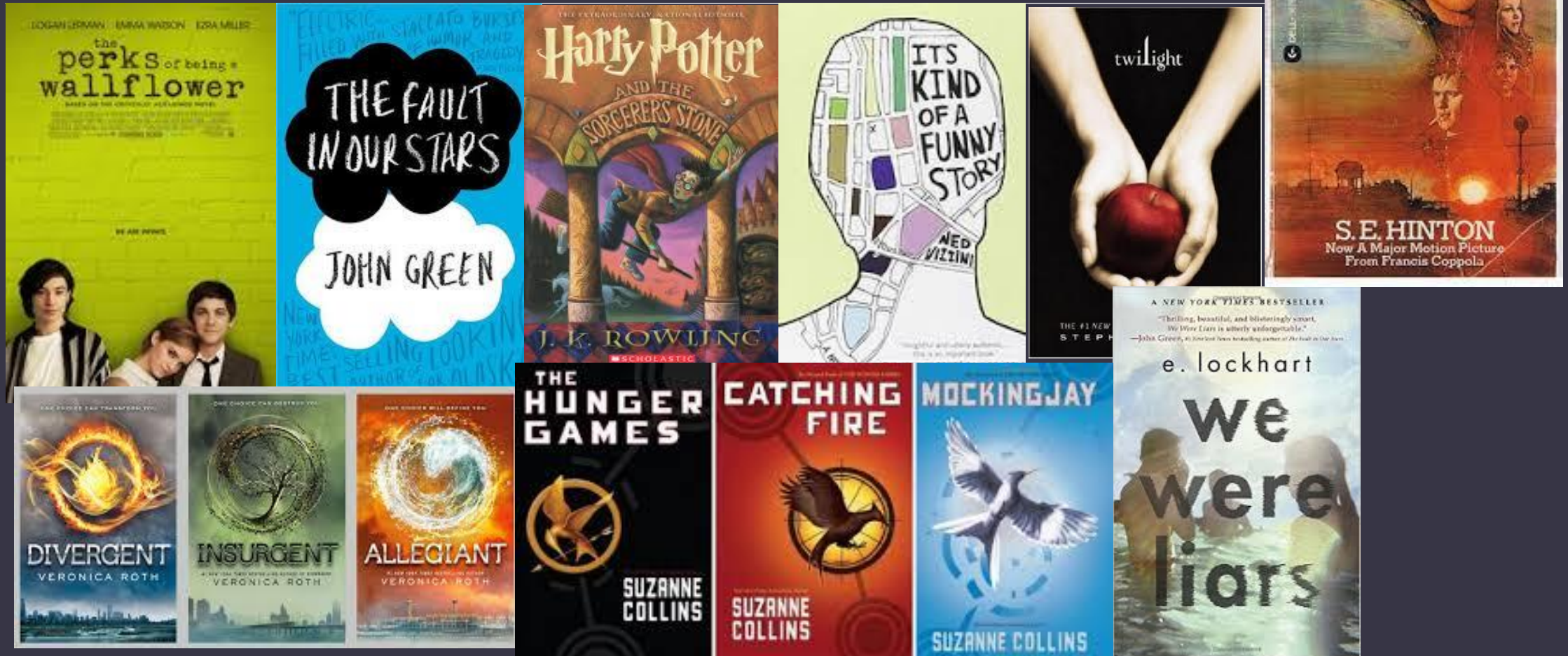
to learn

to understand

to gain perspective

to think critically

Adolescent literature as genre



Discussion questions

- What did you enjoy/dislike about reading this novel?
- Why might adolescents want to read/resist reading this novel?
- What elements of the novel might students or parents question or find objectionable?
- How does the novel address issues/events that are relevant to adolescents and/or adults?
- In what specific ways would you approach teaching this novel?

Discussion leader

Once during the semester, you will serve as the discussion leader for a specific adolescent novel - individually or with others - for half of the class. While you must focus on the assigned novel, what you focus on and how you do so is at your discretion. [You are required to provide one additional reading for the class that supplements and/or extends your intended discussion in some way.] In the week prior to discussion, you will meet with me to briefly discuss the novel and provide an outline of your intended discussion.

Analysis & Review

- This semester, you will write three 3-page analysis papers addressing a specific element of interest in an assigned text. Your papers should (a) briefly identify the element of interest and explain its interest to you, (b) examine the element's contribution to the novel and (c) consider the element's un/intended effect for readers, adolescent and general.
- This semester, you will complete a review for each of the novels read for the class using Goodreads (www.goodreads.com). Each review will consist of response (i.e., personal likes, dislikes, connections) and analysis (i.e., strengths, limitations, understandings) in an informal, useful and brief (3-4 paragraphs) format.

Annotated book trailer

This semester, you will create an annotated book trailer for an assigned adolescent novel. The trailer has two main elements - (1) encouragement to read and (2) reasons to teach - in addition to creation in the multimodal format of your choice.

Through your trailer, you will advocate reading this particular text. Why should adolescents pick up this specific novel? What will interest them? How is this a good read? The same techniques used in film trailers apply here: show/tell enough but not too much; figure out what will interest an audience; use specific techniques to “hook” a reader.

Your trailer will also identify reasons to teach this particular text. Through annotation, you will explain, extend, support, connect and question different educational concepts related to teaching and learning. Why should teachers use this specific novel? What does it offer a student learner? How does the author use specific literary elements or address a difficult topic?

Your trailer should meet the following guidelines: (1) length of 3-5 minutes; (2) multimodal format; (3) thoughtful analysis of the YA novel; (4) accurate application of 2-3 pedagogical concepts; (5) competent use of your chosen technology. The trailer will be evaluated against successful completion of these guidelines.



"Inspiring." —Publishers Weekly

SEEDFOLKS

Paul Fleischman

Newbery Medal-Winning Author



I lived over in Cleveland Heights for eighteen years, then I moved back in to take care of my parents. That border moved too. Most all the whites left. Then the steel mills and factories closed and *everybody* left, like rats. Buildings abandoned. Men with no work drinking from nine to five instead, down there in the lot. Always the sirens, people killing each other. Now I see families from Mexico and Cambodia and countries I don't know, twelve people sometimes in one apartment. New languages in the shops and on the street. These new people leave when they can, like the others. I'm the only one staying. It's so. Staying and staring out this same window.

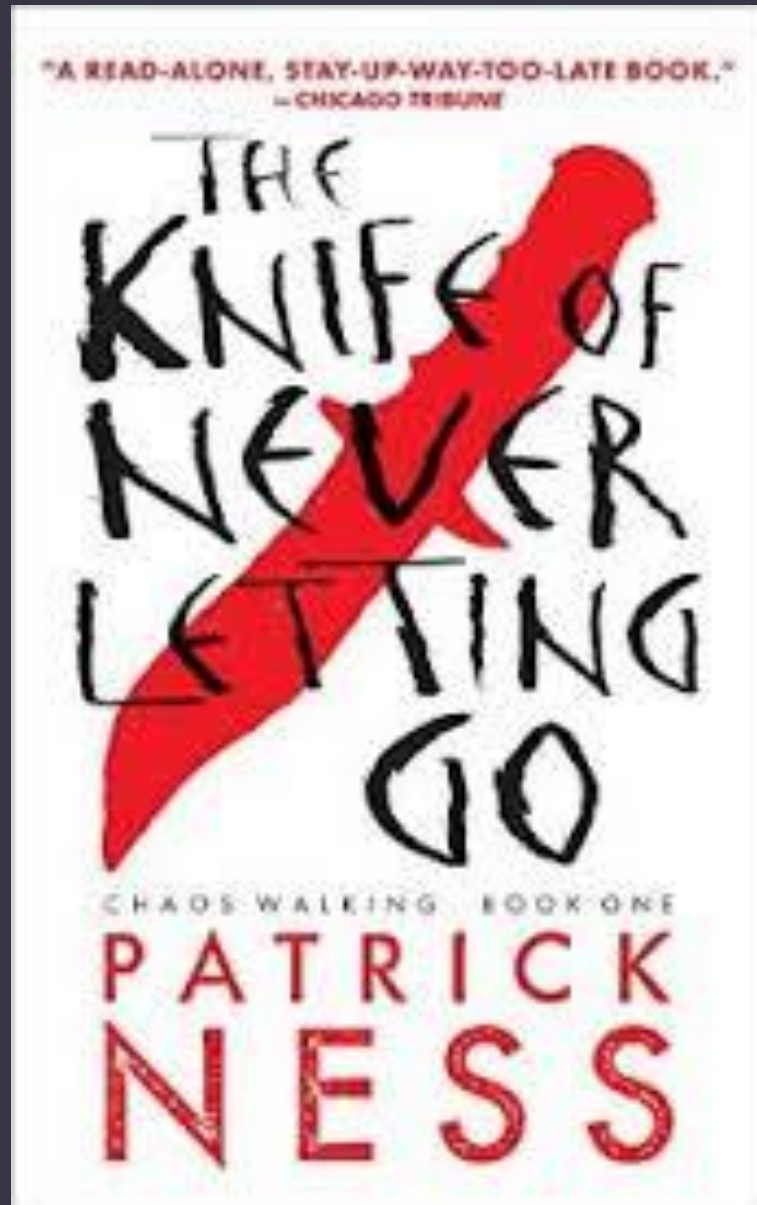
february 12, 1963

I am born on a Tuesday at University Hospital
Columbus, Ohio,
USA—
a country caught

between Black and White.

I am born not long from the time
or far from the place
where
my great-great-grandparents
worked the deep rich land
unfree
dawn till dusk
unpaid
drank cool water from scooped-out gourds
looked up and followed
the sky's mirrored constellation
to freedom.





We don't need apples from the swamp, truth be told. Ben can buy them at Mr. Phelps's store if he really wants them. Also true: going to the swamp to pick a few apples is not a job for a man cuz men are never allowed to be so idle. Now, I won't *officially* become a man for thirty more days. I've lived twelve years of thirteen long months each and another twelve months besides, all of which living means I'm still one month away from the big birthday. The plans are being planned, the preparayshuns prepared, it will be a party, I guess, tho I'm starting to get some strange pictures about it, all dark and too bright at the same time, but nevertheless I will become a man and picking apples in the swamp is not a job for a man or even an almost-man.

But Ben knows he can ask me to go and he knows I'll say yes to going because the swamp is the only place anywhere near Prentisstown where you can have half a break from all the Noise that men spill outta themselves, all their

A WORD FROM YOUR SPONSOR

This book begins with a plane crash. We do not want you to worry about this. According to the U.S. Department of Unnecessary Statistics, your chances of dying in a plane crash are one in half a million. Whereas your chances of losing your bathing suit bottoms to a strong tide are two to one. So, all in all, it's safer to fly than to go to the beach. As we said, this book begins with a plane crash. But there are survivors. You see? Already it's a happy tale. They are all beauty queen contestants. You do not need to know their names here. But you will get to know them. They are all such nice girls. Yes, they are nice, happy, shining, patriotic girls who happen to have interests in baton twirling, sign language, AIDS prevention in the animal population, the ancient preparation of popadam, feminine firearms, interpretive dance, and sequins. Such a happy story. And shiny, too.



Reflective critical thinking

The value of literature is inextricably connected to the value of critical literacy: in teaching our students to *read*, we must teach them to *think*. Adolescent literature offers an accessible means by which our students can consider different the perspectives, examine the different beliefs and explore the different worlds that challenge our understandings of self and society. Through the study of such literature, students – and teachers – can engage in the reflective critical thinking that supports positive change of idea and action.