

JLynn Miller

19 November 2015

Toppling Tradition: Integrating Young Adult Literature into the High School Classroom

A current debate in secondary education is the worth of Young Adult Literature (YAL), with many teachers claiming the literature is not appropriate for a high school classroom. According to a 2006 survey of, most of the English teachers they interviewed felt “that YAL does not have the qualities of canonical texts” such as complex plots and symbolism. Teachers feel that “YAL’s role in the curriculum is, at best, peripheral, serving as independent reading outside of class and for motivating struggling readers” (Gibbons 55). However, it is reasonable that many students who cannot connect with the traditional literature provided to them in school, the site where reading is most encouraged, become adults who do not read. According to Chris Hedges in *Empire of Illusion*, as of 2007, there are “7 million illiterate Americans...and 30 million can’t read a simple sentence. There are some 50 million who read at a fourth- or fifth-grade level” (44). The consequences of illiteracy include a reduced ability to comprehend information, to issues of self-esteem, to lower-quality jobs. With YAL, students can relate to the characters in the text in age and experience. This is true, not just for average students, but also for the at-risk students as well. John Bushman states, “If we want at-risk students to continue reading in the middle and high schools, we must provide them with materials they will read” (Bushman 22). If teachers want students to be able to understand and read literature, and to become lifelong learners, it is important to make sure students will be able to connect with the texts. YAL should be used in the classroom not only to promote literacy, especially in dormant and reluctant readers, but also to help better prepare students to contend with canonical texts required in the Common Core State Standards.

Works Cited

- Bushman, John H., and Kay Parks. Haas. *Using Young Adult Literature in the English Classroom*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Prentice Hall, 2001. Print.
- Gibbons, Louel C., and Jennifer S. Dail, and B. Joyce Stallworth. "Young Adult Literature in the English Curriculum Today: Classroom Teachers Speak Out." *The ALAN Review* (Summer 2006): 53-61. Web. 11 Aug. 11.
- Hedges, Chris. *Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of the Spectacle*. New York: Nation Books, 2009. Print.