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Tracey Budworth Master's Portfolio

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Final Master's Portfolio

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A Final Portfolio

Submitted to the English Department of Bowling Green
State University in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in the field of English
Specialization in Teaching

23 July 2021

Dr. Erin Labbie, First Reader
Dr. Lee Nickoson, Second Reader

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Analytical Narrative

The journey toward my Master's Degree began with an email from a community college in my area. The State of Wisconsin's Department of Workforce Development was offering community colleges across the state funds under a grant that would allow high school teachers the opportunity to obtain their Master's with tuition assistance. I must admit that it took me longer to take advantage of the opportunity than it should have. I was a 50-year-old wife, mother of five, and grandmother of two. I struggled with the concept of having to study and write papers again while also teaching full time, grading essays, and attending all of the sporting events my teenaged children were participating in. Ultimately, my husband and I decided that it was an opportunity that we could not overlook. First, obtaining my Master's in English meant I could teach 3-credit, college level classes that were offered through CVTC, the local community college. Second – and most intriguing – I could eventually consider pursuing a teaching position through one of the two larger community colleges within a short commute of my home. So, I took my first class during the summer session of 2019 and never looked back.

Choosing my specialization was the easiest part of my journey. Teaching, despite the low pay, long hours, and constant hoop-jumping, is more rewarding than I ever dreamed it would be. I was a stay-at-home mom before I returned to school to obtain a post-baccalaureate degree in teaching (my bachelor's degree was a BS-Liberal Arts with English as my major). As the number of children at home with me decreased, I decided I wanted to do something; that something became substitute teaching in my local district schools. I found that I really enjoyed filling in for special education teachers, but I knew that my love was English. Because of my experience in the special education classrooms, especially those that housed students who struggled with disorders associated with behavior, when I was offered a full time English teaching position, my

class rosters contained students with a variety of academic barriers, including specific learning disorders, behavioral disorders (namely, ODD and EBD), and other health impairments like ADD and ADHD. Eventually, a co-taught English class was formed, and I and a special education colleague created curriculum and lessons that would best suit students with a variety of abilities and disabilities. This experience honed my skills in differentiation and modification, but I felt that I still had room to improve. I believe that the courses that I chose to take to fulfill requirements for my Master's Degree in English with a specialization in teaching have provided me with the tools to enhance my teaching practices.

As a result of my extensive work with students with special needs in a standard classroom environment, I became more conscious of the subaltern. Oxford's definition of the subaltern is "any class of people subject to the hegemony of another more powerful class." In my classroom and in my philosophy, this definition encompasses not only students of different races and social classes, but also students who struggle academically. Because this is an area with which I have become familiar, I found that I gravitated toward courses that provided opportunity to learn methods and practices that would enhance my teaching in that regard.

The courses that most resonated with me throughout my Master's journey were classes that focused on those that I define as subalterns in my school and classroom. As a result of my experience in "Contemporary British Women Authors", I found ways to incorporate more activities, discussions, and writing that focused on changing societal views of women. This focus pays special attention to the varying levels of power women can and do exhibit and how that power – whether silent or voluble – can change the landscape of society. As a result of my experience in "Theories and Methods of Literary Criticism" and "Antiracist Pedagogy", I found ways to incorporate activities, discussions, and writing that focused on the concepts of

colonialism, post-colonialism, and gender and race studies into my curriculum. My writing prompts for *To Kill a Mockingbird*, for instance, changed from a focus on finding evidence of two or more themes in the novel to analyzing the levels of racism that exist within the novel. Students now are asked to describe and analyze examples of individual, institutional, and systemic racism that can be found in the novel. I have learned a great deal about how to address the issues of modern society through the use of contemporary novels in addition to the use of texts from the literary canon.

The first project in my portfolio is the pedagogical unit I completed for Chad Duffy's section of "Teaching Grammar in the Context of Writing". I chose to create a multimodal writing unit for *To Kill a Mockingbird*, one of the anchor texts taught at the sophomore level at Prescott High School. Duffy provided me with a fair amount of constructive feedback, including suggestions regarding how I could make particular lessons and assignments better. Because this was a pedagogical unit, aside from making minor changes to the lesson plans, I made few revisions.

The second project in my portfolio is the final paper written for Khani Begum's "Theories and Methods of Literary Criticism". The literary text studied in this section of the course was *Days of Destruction Days of Revolt*, an anthology authored by Chris Hedges and illustrated by Joe Sacco. The vignettes in this collection focused on the subalterns of our society, and the two subjects of my paper were the Native Americans of the Pine Ridge Reservation and the lower-class residents of Camden, New Jersey. Unfortunately, I did not receive any constructive feedback on this final project, so I struggled with a starting point for revisions. I read closely through the paper and, as a result of readings and discussion in the "Graduate Writing" class, I made revisions based on transitions and repetition. I also determined that it was

necessary to add information regarding American Indian boarding schools to further enhance my colonialism criticism of the vignette titled “Days of Theft.”

The third project in my portfolio was the most difficult to revise despite it being the paper that I most enjoyed researching for and writing. As an English instructor, it should come as no surprise that I love reading, and since the focus of this course was on the reading of several novels, “Contemporary British Women Authors” was one of my favorite classes during this journey. I specifically enjoyed reading Pat Barker’s *The Silence of the Girls* because I have always been intrigued by the retelling of stories – both fiction and nonfiction - from a different perspective. I enjoyed researching articles that focused on Barker’s novel and themes and concepts addressed in the text, and I enjoyed comparing Briseis’ account of Achilles to that of Homer’s. Unfortunately, I received the only ‘B’ of my Master’s career in this class. The feedback I received related to the grade was that while I had done an excellent job conveying my thoughts and providing a thorough analysis of the work, I had not met the minimum page requirement (I was one-half of a page short of 12 pages). I did not receive any constructive feedback related to what I could have added or changed in order to achieve an ‘A’ in the course. My first round of revisions focused a good deal on enhancing my writing through the use of stronger transitions and making minor edits grammatically. As I continued with a second round of revisions, I did expand on some thoughts and incorporate a few new ideas into the piece.

Finally, the last piece for my portfolio is from another elective course. Khani Begum’s course titled “Graphic Novels: Art or Agenda” focused on using graphic texts in the classroom. This class was highly beneficial for me in my practice because of my student population. Working with students who have a low self-perception when it comes to reading performance means it is often a struggle to instill a love of literature. Through the use of graphic novels, my

students – while they may not grow to love it – are able to find a new appreciation for literature.

I enjoyed examining the impact of graphic novels on their readers. Again, however, I did not receive constructive feedback on this paper so found it difficult to find areas for revision.

Another possible reason for my difficulty in revising this piece was that I had my most experienced teaching colleague review the paper before submission. She provided me with a great deal of impactful feedback, so my final product had already been closely analyzed and reviewed before I turned it in for final grading. I chose to focus on enhancing my thoughts with this paper. This included a look at the piece from a gender and identity standpoint and incorporating ideas from an additional source. I also tried to include more in-depth analyses of my ideas.

I found that a good deal of the revisions that I made to my work came about as a result of readings from the required “Graduate Writing” course as well as review of notes from the online discussions that were part of each of my courses. The “Graduate Writing” course readings focused a good deal on paragraph formation and transitions. I tried to incorporate some of Eric Hayot’s ideas from *The Elements of Academic Style* into my revisions, especially focusing on chapters 8 and 11, which address “the Uneven U” paragraph, repetition of the main idea, and stronger, more frequent use of transitions in my writing. When available, I referred back to the appropriate discussion forums for the courses from which my papers were generated. I found it helpful to read through what my classmates had to say to refresh my memory of the stories and topics discussed and further enhance my thinking. Ultimately, what was most beneficial in my preparation of my Master’s portfolio and my writing overall was referring back to the methods of literary criticism that I have studied over the course of my journey. While I unknowingly incorporated the ideas and concepts outlined in gender and race theory, colonialism, new

historicism, and new criticism into my writing before I learned of them through the classes I took for my Master's, I did not incorporate those ideas to the extent I am able to do so now.

As I've stated previously, the work that makes up my final Master's portfolio greatly focuses on the subaltern: those who suffer in one way or another as a result of not being members of the majority group. Those who are considered outliers. This can be seen in my choice to create a multimodal writing unit for *To Kill a Mockingbird* for Chad Duffy's "Grammar in the Context of Writing" course and my overall focus on making instruction and academic success available to students at all levels of academic ability. It can be seen in my choice to include the paper for Khani Begum's "Theories and Methods in Literary Criticism" course, in which the primary literary text addresses the inequalities that exist in our society relative to those who are not white, middle-class males. It can be seen in the research and analysis I completed in association with the paper I wrote for Piya Lapinski's "Contemporary British Women Authors" course that focused on the strength of women. And finally, it can be seen in my final paper for Khani Begum's "Graphic Novels: Art or Agenda" course where I focused on the idea of the "other" as seen through the memoir of a Vietnamese refugee, the stories of African Americans who have fought for equality, and the story of the individuals who are left to recover from a publicly scrutinized tragedy.

The lessons I have learned about the subaltern, the "other", and the "outlier" will and already have played a major role in changes that I make to my teaching practices, lessons, and assessments. I have already begun to apply a great many of them to my units and everyday policies and procedures. I look forward to continuing to incorporate what I've learned into my teaching.

Tracey Budworth

Dr. Chad Duffy

Teaching of Writing

1 July 2020

Multimodal Writing Project: *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Rationale

As the world advances technologically, “One of the biggest communication changes happening today is the shift from the printed word on a page to multiple modes of image, sound, movement, and text on a screen” (Dalton 334). Multimodal writing projects require that students work across a range of media. Students combine the skills of writing with visual and audio texts. According to the Georgetown University Writing Center, “there has been a dramatic expansion of [multimodal] texts in professional and extra-academic settings, as well as [an] expanding array of tools available to facilitate their production. As such, in order to ensure that our students are college and career ready, we must incorporate multimodal texts into our curriculum”.

In addition to the increased access and use of multimodal texts in general, this writing project will greatly benefit a growing cohort of students at Prescott High School: those with emotional and behavioral disorders. Since “the integration of technology into the writing process provides a universal intervention for all students” (Butler and Monda-Amaya 14), it is imperative that we give greater access to the skills associated with analysis, argument, and writing to all learners. There is significant evidence that “students with disabilities often struggle with writing at all stages. They have been found to demonstrate low levels of motivation or persistence, have poor use of self-regulatory skills, and lack general knowledge of genres, conventions, and devices for writing” (Butler and Monda-Amaya 14). Technology plays a great role both in and

outside of the classroom, and “with the CCSS emphasis on creating savvy digital composers and the growing availability of composing tools and media, the time is ripe to make some important headway in this arena (Dalton 334). Prescott School District’s use of Google Education tools is a vital step in ensuring success for our students with special needs. With the use of VoiceIn®, students who struggle with expressing their ideas in writing can easily translate their speech to text. With the use of Mercury Reader®, students who struggle with attention are able to remove distracting information when utilizing online resources. And finally, with the use of Auto Highlight®, students who struggle with reading can highlight the important information in a text for later use. Therefore, it is only logical that we would incorporate technology into our writing curriculum.

This writing project will incorporate analysis, writing, technology, editing and revision, and reflection activities. Writing as a process will be embedded into the lessons. For instance, each of the activities in the final project has a pre-writing activity associated with it.

Activity 1

The opening chapter of *To Kill a Mockingbird* provides an impeccable glimpse into Harper Lee’s writing style. This chapter will be read aloud to the students, and the students will use Post-It® notes to identify examples of figurative language paying particular attention to examples of simile, metaphor, imagery, allusion, irony, and hyperbole. After reading the chapter, students will participate in a pair and share activity. Finally, we will come back together as a whole group and discuss student examples and writer’s style. Some questions that will be addressed are: 1) Why does the author use so much figurative language in her writing? 2) How does her writing style impact the reader’s experience? Students will then be shown a model of a photo journal and given the handout for the first activity of the writing project: A Photo Journal

of Prescott (see appendix). The model slide for this activity includes an image from my childhood home, the east side of St. Paul. I have included a note that contains two guiding questions for students in order to enhance understanding of the requirements of the assignment. During off-campus learning as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, I asked sophomore students to create a photo journal of their quarantine experience, and the results of the activity were impressive. Allowing students to express themselves in ways that go beyond extensive writing increases student creativity, and it also increases student production. Beyond these functions, a Photo Journal gives students of different cultures and backgrounds the chance to express themselves in a way that is possibly more fitting to said cultures/backgrounds.

Students will be given one week to find or take a minimum of five photos of areas of interest in Prescott, write descriptions that mirror - to the best of their ability - Lee's writing style, and create a Google slideshow photo journal. An assignment of this nature can easily be modified for students with learning disabilities. Because CCSS RL9-10.4 is not a priority standard at Prescott High School, struggling students will simply provide a description of what is in the images they have chosen for their photo journal. By using the Alt Text method, students can provide an image description that focuses on basic sentence structure and descriptive writing in lieu of figurative language. They will then be assigned as peer reviewers for their classmates and will use the Describe-Assess-Suggest method to provide feedback. Instructors will also complete a review, but in addition to the Describe-Assess-Suggest method, they will also provide feedback on English grammar and usage.

Activity 2

The use of digital media in writing instruction, as discussed in the rationale, is highly beneficial to students, especially those with behavior disorders. Digital media also “provides an

important scaffold to foster student independence in writing while at the same time allowing students the chance to engage collaboratively with peers” (Butler and Monda-Amaya 15). As such, the second activity for the multimodal writing project will be one of two collaborative activities: a partner podcast that will be created after the verdict for the Tom Robinson trial has been announced (chapter 21). Podcasts are a unique and engaging way for students to construct and represent their knowledge of a topic, and collaboration is a key component in the Common Core State Standards for English. This activity will be an analysis of the testimonies and evidence given in the trial. Students will focus their comments on the credibility of the witnesses and as well the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence. Students will also use prior knowledge for this activity, so in order to ensure that they are prepared, a brief review of rhetoric devices will be completed. They will also provide an opinion on the verdict. Because a large number of students in my classroom have needs that require an IEP or a 504, it will be most beneficial for the instructors to pair the students to give everyone the best chance at success. Student pairs will be required to create an original script, have the script approved by an instructor, then record a podcast using the Voice Recorder extension in Google Chrome®.

Students will be assisted in this activity by the Witness Testimony Graphic Organizer that they filled out as we read the trial chapters as well as whole group discussions of each witness testimony and Atticus Finch’s closing argument. Students will be well-prepared for their analysis of the closing argument as a result of the close reading activity that corresponds with chapter 20. The materials for these activities are located in the appendix. In addition to the assistance directly related to the fictional text, students will also be provided with a tutorial video on creating podcasts. That video will be uploaded to the Google Classroom site and can be found [here](#).

Students will be given one week to create their podcast script. Scripts will be submitted to Google Classroom then assigned for review to classmates. Again, the Describe-Assess-Suggest method of review will be used, and instructors will include a review of English grammar and usage in addition to the Describe-Assess-Suggest feedback.

Activity 3

The third activity for the multimodal writing project will be assigned after students have read chapter 29 of *To Kill a Mockingbird* and will focus specifically on the events depicted in chapters 27-29. For this activity, small groups of three students will create a newspaper page using Newsletter Creator for Google Apps® or a similar extension. Students are familiar with this type of activity at this juncture of the school year because they have already used an instructor-created template of a newspaper front page for a writing assessment for Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery", so there is less need for instruction and lecture relative to this activity, and there is a certain comfort level because they have experienced an activity like this in the past. Students will be required to create three newspaper articles including images that tie to their stories. One article will be an editorial on the events described in the chapters. This article will be an opinion piece. Another article will be a news story that includes the facts of the events and quotes from the characters involved. Finally, the third article will be a feature article. Students will choose an issue that is evident in the focused chapters and write an article that addresses that issue. For instance, students may choose to address the prevalence of alcoholism in the unemployed, or they could address the dangers of allowing children to be out after dark by themselves.

The groups will be given two class periods to complete the articles for their newspaper page. The pages will be submitted so they can be given peer and instructor feedback. In order to

build peer review skills and form strong habits, students will again use the Describe-Assess-Suggest method to provide feedback to their peers.

Activity 4

The final activity for this project will be an infographic that focuses on summary, characters, and themes. I have chosen this as the last activity for the project because it will be a culmination of everything that students have been discussing and considering throughout the course of the unit. They will be able to refer back to elements of the previous activities in order to incorporate that information into this final activity. Students will be asked to use Canva® to create their infographic, but if they are more comfortable with Piktochart® or easel.ly®, they can use those sites as well. Much like the photo journal, the infographic is a compelling way to allow students to combine images with text to show their understanding of the concepts and skills studied over the course of the unit. The infographic is an excellent medium because it forces students to be focused and mindful of the content of both the anchor text and their final product and its audience. In essence,

The promise of digital composing to help students become more conscious of their writing behaviors and to begin a process of mindful monitoring is great, in part because of the ways digital writing asks students to create new composing scripts and to communicate with real audiences for genuine purposes (Wenger 235).

To prepare students for this activity, I will use my projector to display examples of infographics for different subjects and areas of interest. Finally, I will project an example of an infographic for *To Kill a Mockingbird*. This example includes the required elements of this activity and will provide students with an idea regarding how they might design their final product.

Students will be given three class periods to complete this activity, and they will be required to submit a draft for review in the same manner as the previous activities.

Final Reflection

When students have completed all four activities and have submitted final drafts of each, they will be asked to write a one-page reflection on the activities in this project. They will be asked to answer the following questions in their reflection: 1) Which activity did you enjoy the most for this project, and why? 2) Which did you enjoy the least, and why? 3) When did you feel the most successful during this project, and why? 4) When did you feel the least successful, and why? 5) How has your writing style changed? 6) What have you learned about your writing style from these activities?

Students will not be required to share this reflection with anyone other than the instructors. Despite the fact that the steps involved in creating this writing project will have been instrumental in creating a community of student writers, I do not want to risk students losing any headway they have made in their writing confidence by asking them to share their weaknesses and fears with other students at this point.

Assessment of the Products

According to both the Georgetown University Writing Center and Bridget Dalton, assessment of multimodal writing activities can be concerning and troublesome. One reason for this is because when instructors are more comfortable with using multimodal texts in their own instruction, they are more comfortable with assessing this type of work from their students. When I approach assessment of this project, I will focus mainly on the written portions of the activities, but I will also use much the same method of assessment that I use for argumentative writing assignments. Does the evidence support the claim? If an image is being used, does what

the student writes about that image provide adequate support of its use? Because my English standards do not require me to assess a student's use of color but rather their use of information, I will keep evaluation focused on the primary and priority skills being assessed: using evidence, analyzing themes and character development, and summarizing text. In some cases, the overall assessment of the activities in this unit may be done through the use of an artist's statement.

Another issue that exists when assessing multimodal writing relates to accountability for both instructor and student. According to Bridget Dalton, one pitfall for instructors is the use of scaffolding. She believes that "scaffolding can limit growth and actually cause students to disengage if it is too constraining or if there is no progression toward increasing independence" (337). In order to avoid this issue, she recommends that there is a healthy balance between highly scaffolded activities and those that require more independent thought from students. Thus, I have worked to include that recommended balance. The two activities that students have familiarity with have very little scaffolding involved while the two activities that are new to the students have higher levels of scaffolding.

Student accountability revolves around work completion. While students may be more motivated to complete multimedia projects, a study conducted by Nair, Tay, and Koh (2013) indicated that "there were lower submission rates as compared to paper-based methods" (Darrington 32). As I have implemented peer review and incentives to complete and submit work, I hope that I will alleviate this accountability issue to some extent. Another way I hope to be more successful in this regard is by giving students a voice in creating the assessment tool for the final product. I have used this practice in the past, and it has proven to be effective. As students work with me to develop an assessment rubric, I will refer them to the "I CAN" statements for each of the activities. Students will determine which of the standards should be

summatively assessed, then we will work together to determine what looks like a proficient example of the skill being assessed.

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APPENDIX

English II - Mrs. Budworth
Multimodal Writing: *To Kill a Mockingbird*
“A Photo Journal of Prescott”

Standards Addressed:

RL 9-10.5: Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

W 9-10.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

W 9-10.8: Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

This is the first of four activities you will do for the writing project for this unit. The first draft of this activity will be due on **DATE TBD based on unit timing**. This is a hard deadline. If you do not have your draft turned in, you will not be eligible for the peer/instructor review and will not receive vital feedback necessary to improve your final product.

Instructions: Over the course of the next week, you will complete the following steps to meet the requirements of this activity:

- Obtain photos of a minimum of five areas of interest in Prescott. You can either take these pictures yourself, or you can download them from the internet. The photos you choose can be recent or they can be historical (if you do an online search for “old photos of Prescott, Wisconsin, you can find some pretty cool images!).
- Gather relevant historical information for each of the images you have chosen to include in your photo journal. This information should come from online and book sources, but you can also include anecdotal information from family or community members.
- Create a slideshow for your photo journal. The first slide should be a cover slide, and slides two through six should be the image/text layout.
- The descriptive text for each slide should be modeled after Lee’s writing style. Refer back to our close reading activity and discussion of chapter 1 of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. You should include examples of figurative language in your writing.

Peer/Instructor Review Process: Each student who submits a first draft of their photo journal will receive feedback from two classmates and an instructor (me or Mrs. Clauson). This means that you will be required to provide feedback to at least two of your classmates.

- Peer review will be done using the Describe-Assess-Suggest model as described by Dr. Chad Iwertz-Duffy of Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio. I have

provided his informational video for this review method on our Classroom site. You can also access it [here](#).

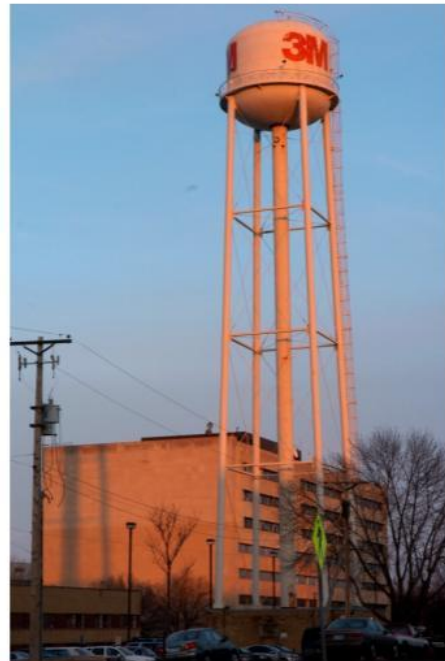
- Describe: Be specific about what it is you are responding to. Is it an idea? Specific words? A transition?
- Assess: Provide clear language that indicates your assessment of what you are responding to. Remember to be gracious and kind. Someone is reviewing your work as well.
- Suggest: Provide specific suggestions for how the descriptions can be expanded, refined, revised, or otherwise changed. Do not just offer assessment; offer valuable feedback that will improve your classmates' writing.
- Instructor review will consist of feedback on English grammar and usage in addition to the Describe-Assess-Suggest feedback.

A Look at the East Side

Mrs. Budworth

The 3M Water Tower

It stood like a sentinel over 7th Street. Legend has it that the fence surrounding it, at a paltry six feet, had to be replaced with a massive 12-foot eyesore because SPPD got tired of being called to get wayward teens down from the ladder and, on more than one occasion, the peak of the tower. The 3M tower gave East-Siders the chance to practice their inner Jack Dawson.



English II - Mrs. Budworth
Multimodal Writing Project: *To Kill a Mockingbird*
“Trial of the Century Podcast”

Standards Addressed:

W 9-10.6: Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.

RI 9-10.8: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.

This is the second activity for the writing project for this unit. You and your partner will create an original podcast from scratch, including a transcript for the recording. Your draft transcript will be due **DATE TBD based on unit timing**. Your final recorded podcast will be submitted on the final due date for the project.

Instructions: You will need to complete the following steps for this activity:

- Create a transcript that analyses the testimonies and evidence during the Tom Robinson trial. I have included an example podcast transcript for your reference.
 - Discuss each witness individually. What information did their testimony give the jury and the audience? What evidence was provided? Evaluate the evidence. What was harmful to Tom’s case? What was beneficial to Tom’s case?
 - Evaluate the closing argument of Atticus Finch. Was his argument effective? Why or why not? What types of rhetoric did he use? Which devices were most and least effective? Keep in mind that the devices can include both speech and body language.
 - Discuss the verdict. Do you agree with the verdict? Do you understand the verdict? Why or why not? Could the attorneys in the case have done anything differently to have a different outcome?
- Submit your draft transcript for review by peers/instructors, then make necessary changes before recording.
- Complete your podcast using the Voice Recorder extension in Google Chrome.
- Submit your final podcast and your final transcript by the due date for the final drafts of all activities for the multimodal writing project.

EXAMPLE TRANSCRIPT

it, I really liked it, 'cause it was organized. I have done Hire Tual before, I have used that as well. One thing I actually recently discovered, it's not necessarily sourcing but more networking, going back to the dating thing because I think recruiting is dating, essentially it's kind of like dating. [00:25:00] Bumble, have you heard of Bumble?

Chris Russell: Bumble yes, the dating app.

Erin Stevens: The dating app.

Chris Russell: But they also have a business version now, right?

Erin Stevens: Yes, and I just learned about it the other night. I was taking my sister out for her bachelorette party and her friend, my sister's about six years younger than me and her friend's younger than that. And she was like, "Oh you know you can do Bumble for networking?" And I was like, "You can?" So I felt a little weird setting up my own Bumble account, but you swipe left and right, and [00:25:30] like you can see people's job titles, and I'm gonna use it. I'm traveling over the next couple of weeks so I'm gonna use it and see if I can find anybody in those areas and connect with them as far as networking opportunities. It's really cool.

Chris Russell: There's another app like that called Shapr, which is S H A P R, that I tried earlier, I think last year. Very similar. You can see job titles, you could, it also lets you kind of push out quotes, business quotes to your social media and stuff, [00:26:00] so check that out, see if you might like that. Well speaking of-

Erin Stevens: Well my thing, I was just gonna say though, that you need to use something that people know. Like I've never heard of Shapr but I've sure as heck heard of Bumble, so.

Chris Russell: Nice, well speaking of Hire Tual, they're our second sponsor on today's show.

Erin Stevens: Oh what a great lead in.

Chris Russell: Yeah and their AI engine is your personal sourcing assistant, so if you submit your sourcing task with them, it'll do the sourcing for you while you're sleeping Erin, so enjoy your cup of coffee and let [00:26:30] Hire Tual source for you. You can build Boolean strings on the fly, the space contact info for the candidates you find on there. Let me just read one of the reviews on Facebook that I just pulled up here.

<https://castos.com/podcast-script/>

English II - Mrs. Budworth
Multimodal Writing Project: *To Kill a Mockingbird*
“The Maycomb Times”

Standards addressed:

RL 9-10.1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RL 9-10.2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

RL 9-10.3: Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

W 9-10.1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

W 9-10.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

W 9-10.7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

This is the third activity in the multimodal writing project for this unit. You will be creating a newspaper page using a newsletter extension in Google Chrome. Your news page will have three separate articles as well as images that connect to at least two of the articles being published. You will have two class periods to complete a draft of your news page. This is a hard deadline. If you do not meet the deadline, you will not receive valuable feedback from classmates and instructors for your final draft.

Instructions:

- News Story: This article will be strictly informative. You will use only the facts of the events in chapters 27-29. You can include quotes from interviews with the characters in the story if you would like, but it will not be required. The news story should really be a summary, and it should be approximately two paragraphs long.
- Editorial/Opinion Piece: This article is opinion based. Your voice should be heard loud and clear in this piece. Use personality! Your editorial can focus on all of the events in these chapters, or you can hone in on certain things that did or didn't happen or things that were or were not said.

- **Feature Article:** This article will be very focused on some issue that has been brought up as a result of the events of chapters 27-29. For instance, maybe your feature article is about the prevalence of alcoholism in the unemployed or the dangers of allowing young children to be out after dark without an adult. You will need to do some research and digging in order to complete this article, and it should be the longest of the three on your news page (3-4 paragraphs)

Peer/Instructor Review Process: Each student who submits a first draft of their photo journal will receive feedback from two classmates and an instructor (me or Mrs. Clauson). This means that you will be required to provide feedback to at least two of your classmates.

- Peer review will be done using the Describe-Assess-Suggest model as described by Dr. Chad Iwertz-Duffy of Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio. I have provided his informational video for this review method on our Classroom site. You can also access it [here](#).
 - **Describe:** Be specific about what it is you are responding to. Is it an idea? Specific words? A transition?
 - **Assess:** Provide clear language that indicates your assessment of what you are responding to. Remember to be gracious and kind. Someone is reviewing your work as well.
 - **Suggest:** Provide specific suggestions for how the descriptions can be expanded, refined, revised, or otherwise changed. Do not just offer assessment; offer valuable feedback that will improve your classmates' writing.
- Instructor review will consist of feedback on English grammar and usage in addition to the Describe-Assess-Suggest feedback.

English II - Mrs. Budworth
Multimodal Writing Project: *To Kill a Mockingbird*
“*Mockingbird* in a Nutshell”

Standards addressed:

RL 9-10.1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RL 9-10.2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

RL 9-10.3: Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

W 9-10.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

This is the final activity in the multimodal writing project for the unit. For this activity, you will work independently to create an infographic that highlights your understanding of the literary value of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. To complete the infographic, you will need to create a free, online account in Canva®, Piktochart®, or easel.ly®. Your final product must contain a concise summary of the plot of the novel, detailed analysis of two of the themes discussed over the course of the novel study, and detailed analysis of the development of at least two characters from the story.

Instructions:

- Set up an account in any of the above listed online infographic generators.
- Choose a layout for your infographic.
- Write your summary. This should be no more than four or five sentences long.
- Analyze two themes. Your analysis should include examples of how key characters develop the theme over the course of the story.
- Analyze the development of at least two characters. Your analysis should include what those characters learn as a result of the events in the novel.
- Choose images that are relevant to your overall analysis of the novel.

Peer/Instructor Review Process: Each student who submits a first draft of their photo journal will receive feedback from two classmates and an instructor (me or Mrs. Clauson). This means that you will be required to provide feedback to at least two of your classmates.

- Peer review will be done using the Describe-Assess-Suggest model as described by Dr. Chad Iwertz-Duffy of Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio. I have provided his informational video for this review method on our Classroom site. You can also access it [here](#).

- Describe: Be specific about what it is you are responding to. Is it an idea? Specific words? A transition?
- Assess: Provide clear language that indicates your assessment of what you are responding to. Remember to be gracious and kind. Someone is reviewing your work as well.
- Suggest: Provide specific suggestions for how the descriptions can be expanded, refined, revised, or otherwise changed. Do not just offer assessment; offer valuable feedback that will improve your classmates' writing.
- Instructor review will consist of feedback on English grammar and usage in addition to the Describe-Assess-Suggest feedback.

English II - Mrs. Budworth
Multimodal Writing Project: *To Kill a Mockingbird*
Final Reflection

Standard addressed:

W 9-10.10: Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

As part of your final grade for this project, you will submit a reflection of your experience. This reflection should be approximately one page, double-spaced, 12-point font and should address the following:

- Which activity did you enjoy the most for this project, and why?
- Which did you enjoy the least, and why?
- When did you feel the most successful during this project, and why?
- When did you feel the least successful, and why?
- Was the peer review process beneficial? Why or why not?
- How has your writing style changed?
- How has your view of writing changed?

English II - Mrs. Budworth
Multimodal Writing Project: *To Kill a Mockingbird*
Final Reflection

Standard addressed:

W 9-10.10: Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

As part of your final grade for this project, you will submit a reflection of your experience. This reflection should be approximately one page, double-spaced, 12-point font and should address the following:

- Which activity did you enjoy the most for this project, and why?
- Which did you enjoy the least, and why?
- When did you feel the most successful during this project, and why?
- When did you feel the least successful, and why?
- Was the peer review process beneficial? Why or why not?
- How has your writing style changed?
- How has your view of writing changed?

Tracey Budworth

Khani Begum

Theory and Methods of Literary Criticism

14 August 2020

Sacrifice Zones and Literary Criticism

As human beings, we are flawed, so we are surrounded by exploitation. We see it in the treatment of women, minorities, and children, and we see it in the use and treatment of our natural resources. With exploitation so prevalently evident in society, it is easy to locate and present examples of it to readers. Chris Hedges and Joe Sacco's *New York Times* bestselling *Days of Destruction Days of Revolt* is a scathing exposé of the lasting impact of colonization, capitalism, and the race for technological advancement on certain sectors of American society. The vignettes of the book address the effects of trauma on the individual and group, the ability of the Other – or subaltern – to find a voice, the lasting impacts of colonization on the colonized, and the negative influence of social class.

Hedges and Sacco begin their collection of experiences with the portrayal of the lives of Native Americans of the Pine Ridge Reservation of South Dakota. "Days of Theft" introduces the reader to several Native American residents of Pine Ridge, including Verlyn Long Wolf, a recovering alcoholic who suffered physical and sexual abuse from direct family members in addition to the travesties put upon her by the American government. Long Wolf describes two separate instances of being raped - the earliest being at age eight - then goes on to explain that sexual abuse was prevalent where she grew up (Hedges and Sacco 6). She continues to describe her adult relationships, all of which involved some type of abuse. In her journal article titled "Trends in Literary Trauma Theory," Michelle Balaev implies that this is an example of

representation of previous trauma by referring to Cathy Caruth's position that "trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way its very unassimilated nature - the way it was precisely not known in the first instance - returns to haunt the survivor later on" (151). Long Wolf's earlier trauma most likely perpetuated her gravitation toward abusive relationships in her adult life as well as her heavy use of alcohol.

As mentioned previously, Long Wolf is not alone in her experiences with rape; rather, it was a common occurrence among the people of the Pine Ridge Reservation. According to Hedges and Sacco, "rape and indiscriminate violence are legacies of the white conquest" (8). Throughout history, in fact, dating as far back as the Greek and Roman conquests, women have been war prizes. That practice held firm when the white man's armies entered Indian territory to seize control of the land and resources. The trauma suffered by the squaws of the conquered tribes reverberates today because "traumatic experience is repetitious, timeless, and unspeakable, yet, it is also...contagious" (Balaev 151). Simply stated, we perform acts in our adult lives that we've seen practiced in our childhood and youth. Rape is prevalent at Pine Ridge because the residents are stuck in a vicious cycle that began with the colonization of their lands.

In addition to the physical trauma suffered by a large number of the female Native American population at Pine Ridge, Hedges and Sacco provide examples of the long-lasting impact of the psychological trauma suffered by Native Americans throughout history. Psychotherapist Laura S. Brown refers to what she calls "'insidious trauma', by which she means 'the traumatogenic effects of oppression that are not necessarily overt or threatening to bodily well-being at the given moment but that do violence to the soul and spirit'" (Henrichsen 650). This term can easily be applied to the Native Americans of the Pine Ridge Reservation in the high rate of alcoholism and suicide amongst the residents. When referring to the four liquor

stores located in nearby Whiteclay, Nebraska, Hedges and Sacco state that “the poison pouring out of these little shrines of death and profit, erected by tidy white capitalists, greases old, familiar cogs” (Hedges and Sacco 4). Those “tidy white capitalists” began with the early settlers who introduced alcohol to the Native Americans as a means of trade. And the “cogs” they are referring to date as far back as the mid-1800s and include the virtual decimation of a number of Native American tribes and the stripping away of the cultures and ideals of said tribes, leaving the Native Americans left standing with no sense of identity and being pushed to learn and accept ways of life that defied all that they had known. Those cogs continued to turn when, beginning in the late 1800’s and continuing into the mid-twentieth century, Native American youths, generally teens, were removed from their homes and sent to a “tool the U.S. Government used to address what mainstream America called the ‘Indian problem’”: Indian Assimilation Schools (Elliott). Verlyn Long Wolf was among the thousands of young girls who were taken from their homes and “educated” at boarding schools that were meant to assimilate Natives into white culture and society. According to Elliott, “These schools forced [Natives] to abandon their customs and traditions, with the goal of having them adopt mainstream America’s beliefs and value systems.” This practice of systemic racism devalued the cultures and beliefs of Native Americans and created a loss of cultural identity in the children who were forced to change their clothing and hairstyle, their language, and their religion. This practice, alongside the perpetuation of alcohol as a tool of manipulation, created generations of untethered individuals with no sense of who they truly were. What followed is generations of extreme poverty and unemployment, alcoholism that was not only self-destructive but has also destroyed any number of families, and a community in which “one in five Indian girls and one in eight boys attempt suicide by the end of high school” (Hedges and Sacco 4). The actions of those in power – the whites – as a result of

their belief that they were better and therefore were better, have played a significantly negative role in the lives of sundry Native Americans beyond that of Verlyn Long Wolf.

In “Days of Theft,” the reader is also introduced to Ivis Long Visitor, Jr., Will Andrews, and Michael Red Cloud. All three are examples of the “insidious trauma” inflicted upon Native Americans as a result of the actions of the early colonizers. Ivis Long Visitor, Jr. epitomizes the unemployment and alcoholism that is prevalent at Pine Ridge. While he represents a less threatening piece of the remnants of the blanket of pain that the white man sewed so long ago, his story is all too familiar. He lives in a sod hut, is unemployed and “survives on food stamps and welfare”, is down to 10 cows from “a lot”, and “outside his shack are piles of old beer cans” (Hedges and Sacco 20-21). Will Andrews is a more threatening piece of that blanket. Will is a gang leader who has recently been released from prison. He is in hiding on “the rez” after a parole violation (Hedges and Sacco 38). Will’s involvement in a gang is not uncommon amongst males in an area of poverty, drug and alcohol use, and crime. As has been well-documented, gangs represent a sense of family that many young men like Will seek. This involvement in gang life can be construed as another impact of trauma carried out on past generations. Hedges and Sacco describe another phenomenon with gangs. Often, gangs like the one that Will is involved in target other individuals of “the same race” (Hedges and Sacco 38). Considering “a traumatic experience disrupts attachments between self and others by challenging fundamental assumptions about moral laws and social relationships that are themselves connected to specific environments” (Balaev 160), the fact that Will and many other young Native Americans involve themselves in gangs that perpetuate violence upon other Native Americans only exacerbates the lasting impacts of the earlier traumas inflicted upon Indians of the Western territories. Despite all

of this, there is hope that trauma can be overcome. That hope exists in people like Michael Red Cloud, among others.

Antonio Gramsci sees the subaltern as more than “a synonym for the proletariat”. Rather, “Gramsci’s articulation of the subaltern encompass[es] racial minorities and women, and thus recognize[s] that subalternity [is] defined not merely by class relations but rather by an intersection of class, ‘race’, culture, and religion that function[s] in different modalities in specific historical contexts” (Bracke 845). Michael Red Cloud fits this definition of the subaltern, and he chooses to use his voice. Red Cloud’s childhood is a common one amongst residents of Pine Ridge: raised by someone other than his biological mother; no knowledge of his biological father; gang activity; and drug use. But where Will Andrews seems stuck in the cycle, Red Cloud made other choices. Despite being a member of the oppressed, Red Cloud chose to break from the cycle. While in prison on drug charges, Red Cloud began to participate in sweat lodges and, as a result, re-established a relationship with his culture; one that had been lost due to the colonization of his ancestors. He sums up his spiritual awakening by stating, “They can take away your freedom. They can take away everything in your life. But they can’t take away this relationship from your heart to your mind. And that’s where spirituality exists” (Hedges and Sacco 37). This is an example of “a critical consciousness and revolutionary struggle” that pays “careful attention to the realm of culture – and notably folklore, tradition, or language – instead of flatly dismissing it” (Bracke 844). By returning to his culture and one of the ritual practices of his people, Red Cloud was able to find his self-identity; something that was stolen from his people generations ago. And Red Cloud is not alone as a subaltern of colonization of the Indian territories.

Another example of the subaltern voice exists in some of the children of the last 1800s to the mid-1900s who were shipped off to the aforementioned Christian boarding schools in an effort to assimilate them to the ways of the white man and separate them from their culture. Many of the children sent to these schools were not allowed to return home until graduation (Hedges and Sacco 12), but others were. When those others returned, they returned with ammunition: an education. This small pocket of Indian youth “were acutely aware of the suffering of their people as well as the duplicity and mendacity of the colonist” and “understood power and oppression” (Hedges and Sacco 40). This allowed them the knowledge and fortitude to rebel against their oppressors.

Finally, “‘Giving voice’... relies on a logocentric assumption of cultural solidarity among a heterogeneous people, as well as suggests a dependence upon Western intellectuals to ‘speak for’ the subaltern condition rather than allowing them to speak for themselves” (Bracke 848). This concept can apply to people like Charlie Abourezk, who “was involved in the struggle for civil and human rights of traditional tribal members on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and worked with them, sometimes alongside members of the American Indian Movement (AIM)” (Hedges and Sacco 16), a group that can be considered another example of the voice of the subaltern. In addition to Abourezk, Hedges and Sacco relate the participation of Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman in the Crazy Horse Ride, an annual celebration of one of the Native Americans’ greatest resistance figures (Hedges and Sacco 41). While a less glaring example of a Western intellectual speaking for the oppressed, Heineman’s support of the Native Americans can serve to alleviate some of the wrongs done by the colonists. Still, the repercussions of colonization are strongly felt today throughout the Native American population.

The negative results of the colonization of the Western plains that occurred in the 1800s is still evident in the lives of Native Americans today. We see it in the high level of alcoholism throughout the residents of Pine Ridge. We see it in the continuation of violence of women that began with Custer's army. We see it in the loss of tradition and ritual of the tribes. White men, like their European predecessors, entered Indian territory with the belief that they were better; they were members of a higher, more civilized class. This level of imperialism has been in existence for millenia, and it still exists today at a domestic level in places like Camden, New Jersey.

According to Karl Marx, "literature is in the first instance a social phenomenon, and as such, it cannot be studied independently of the social relations, the economic forms, and the political realities of the time in which it was written" (Rivkin and Ryan 711). Hedges and Sacco address this argument in "Days of Siege", a vignette that describes the dissolution of Camden, New Jersey, a once thriving metropolis that has fallen to ruin as a result of the imperialist practices of the rich and powerful. In this case, while some literature "reflects...the values and ideals of the class of dominance" (Rivkin and Ryan 711), Hedges and Sacco's literature reflects the results of the values and ideals of the dominant class on the submissive class. Those results cannot be more evident than they are in the statement that "in Camden the world is divided between the prey and the predators. And the weaker you are, the less money and legal status you have, the more the predators hover like vultures" (Hedges and Sacco 77). The predators the authors speak of are the criminals who run rampant throughout the devastated city as a result of the misuse and misappropriation of government funds that were meant to rebuild the communities throughout the city. One case of this fund misuse is in the development of Mount Laurel, a suburb of Camden. The resulting impact of this development is truly tantamount to the

state-sponsored system of segregation that occurred across our nation in the early to mid-twentieth century. “The development of Mount Laurel was a part of a classic two-pronged attack against the working class and poor African Americans” that ultimately drove blacks from the area and into Camden (Hedges and Sacco 76), where there were few jobs as a result of the desire of corporations to find cheap labor overseas. In Camden, this desire was backed by one of the wealthiest and most corrupt men in the country, George Norcross. Norcross appropriated and then divvied out government funds to those who would support his causes and pad his pockets. These actions ultimately contributed to the virtual destruction of a city. Graham Harrison describes imperialism as a Marxist notion (despite Marx never having used the term); an “analysis of a global system that is indisputably and extremely uneven in the distribution of wealth, property and power” (82), and Hedges and Sacco provide a portrayal of this uneven distribution in “Days of Siege”.

The monies that Norcross assisted in procuring for Camden were used to fund colleges and hospitals, but the distribution of that funding created a greater divide between the classes. “Tens of millions in state funds have been devoted to infrastructure projects to make Norcross and his associates wealthy” (Hedges and Sacco 93). Those projects include the hospitals and colleges mentioned above. Little to no funds were devoted to the rebuilding of neighborhoods throughout Camden, “and if you want a job on any of the dozens of state and municipal projects controlled by Norcross, you spend your time on Election Day getting out the vote for Norcross candidates” (Hedges and Sacco 92), or you don’t work.

Rivkin and Ryan say that “historicism today is, in fact, both diachronic and synchronic” (715). Simply stated, our current reality relates to the past. Like the losses suffered by the Native Americans of the Western expansion, the residents of Camden have suffered significant loss as

well. The number of homeless residents outweighs the number of beds in shelters by, officially, over 500 (Hedges and Sacco 68). Hedges and Sacco call Camden the “poster child for postindustrial America” where greed - under the guise of capitalism - has destroyed what was once a beautiful, thriving municipality. Today, Camden smells of sewage and has “noxious clouds” from trash-burning overhead (Hedges and Sacco 77). Like the buffalo of the Great Plains and the natural resources of the Black Hills, Camden no longer provides the country with supplies and materials that benefit. Instead, Camden is barren. Like Pine Ridge, the people of Camden also have a voice.

The voices of Camden are people like Jamaica Banks, who acts as the leader of Transitional Park, a homeless encampment. While crime is prevalent outside of the walls of Transitional Park, within its confines, there is “a list of sixteen rules written on plywood tacked to a tree” (Hedges and Sacco 67). These rules ensure that there is no crime, and the residents of the encampment are safe. Another voice that provides hope and safety is that of Lolly Davis, who has provided a safe and stable home that promotes values to multiple children in her community despite the gradual and imminent decline of the neighborhood. People like Jamaica and Lolly speak of hope and resilience through their actions.

Through the telling of stories of the oppressed throughout America, *Days of Destruction* *Days of Revolt* paints a picture of our failures while giving us a glimmer of hope through the citizens who chose to use their voices in order to secure their sense of identity. The negative impacts of colonialism exist for generations. The past traumas of a people affect future generations. But with the strength of a few, we can fight through the negative and make some positive.

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Tracey Budworth

Dr. Piya Lapinski

Contemporary British Women Writers: Fiction and Film

8 July 2020

Women of *The Iliad*

Well before Superman, Batman, Thor, and Ironman, our heroes were Odysseus and Achilles. We know that Odysseus spent 20 years conquering obstacles alongside his men and alone to get back to Ithaca, and we know that Achilles was considered the greatest of warriors before and during the Trojan War. But what of the women behind the warriors? What do we know about Lois Lane and Vicki Vale? More recently, there has been an elevated ~~a higher~~ level of attention paid to the faithful, strong women in the lives of our heroes. We know more about Pepper Potts and Jane Foster than we once would within films; we know that beyond their relationships to the heroes, they are heroic themselves. Like our contemporary heroes, today's authors are taking into consideration the lives of the women who stood beside the men of Greek mythology. Originally published in 1995, Jane Cahill's *Her Kind: Stories of Women from Greek Mythology* retells famous mythological tales through the eyes of the women on the periphery of the chronicles. Stories like *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* provide valuable information about how an ancient civilization understood the world. However, "when we talk about how the Greeks felt and thought and how they understood the world, we really mean how Greek *men* felt, thought, and understood the world. If Greek women had had a chance to leave their words for posterity, we would now perhaps recognize two separate value systems" (Cahill 10-11). Most recently, Pat Barker has taken on the challenge that Cahill explored in 1995. Her *The Silence of the Girls* tells the tale of Briseis, Queen of Lyrnessus and war prize to Achilles. Similar to recent retellings of

Greek myths like *The Memoirs of Helen of Troy* and *Lavinia*, Barker's narrator is female and provides a feminine perspective of *The Iliad* focusing specifically on the tragedy of war as well as the strength, power, and resilience of the woman in the life of one of Greek mythology's most famous men and other women of the Trojan War.

Through the women in both Barker's retelling and the original Homer epic, we learn the true impact of war. In general, women in classical literature are mere possessions. They belong to their fathers or brothers until they are given to their husbands through an arranged marriage. In the latter case, the women are given time to come to terms with and understand something about their future spouses. They are categorized along with the gold, silver, weapons, and art that become the spoils of war, and they are inspected as if they are livestock. As they await their fate, men "walk along the line of women, pulling down a lip here, a lower eyelid there, prodding bellies, squeezing breasts" to determine a value of each prize (Barker 19). As a possession of their husbands, the women of Greek myth have a better likelihood of experiencing some form of intimacy and love. As a possession of a conqueror, this is not the case in most situations. They are slaves to be used at the disposal of a man who took part in destroying the life they knew. Through the women in Barker's book, we see that wars in the classical age resulted in the loss of much more than lives and material possessions. It meant the loss of freedom, the loss of love and intimacy, the loss of innocence for girls, and the loss of any true independence for the female race.

Farron argues that the women in *The Iliad* "are all extremely tragic figures" because they have no control "in determin[ing] the course of events, including their own lives" (15). This stance is supported, to a great extent, through Andromache. As the battle for Troy rages and the Trojans are losing, Andromache voices her despondency by telling Hector that he is all she has

left, and without him she is lost. She begs him to stay inside the walls of the city because she knows that if he continues to fight, he will die. Despite the advice that Andromache gives Hector, he ultimately chooses to disregard her, and thus disregard her feelings (Farron 22-23). Through this exchange between husband and wife, we learn that “honor is more important than simple survival” (Lefkowitz 508) and as such, men would prefer the risk of their wives, sisters, and mothers being taken as war slaves than retreat or surrender. Andromache has no choice in Hector’s actions or decisions. It is the women of Greece who truly and thoroughly consider the impact of war. They “not only understand what is happening in the male world of war but are, as the ultimate victims of war, perhaps better able to judge its consequences” (Lefkowitz 508). What is tragic and unfortunate is that in most cases, despite that understanding and judgement, women’s warnings and advice go unheeded. This is because the women of *The Iliad*, like those in other classical texts, had little power and, as such, had little control over the events in their lives or the lives of their loved ones. Emily Wilson substantiates this when describing Barker’s depiction of the women of Greece “as thoughtful, diverse, rounded human beings, whose humanity hardly ever dawns on their captors, owners and husbands”. Mary Lefkowitz, in her “Women in Greek Myth”, reaffirms Farron’s assertion that the women of Troy were tragic. In the case of the women of Troy, Lefkowitz’s universal statement that women are the ultimate victims of war is considerably substantiated. Consider Andromache’s losses and what would eventually happen to her as a result of Troy’s downfall. Barker’s Briseis, in all likelihood, is still young - possibly still in her teens - when her husband and brothers are killed and she is given to “great Achilles. Brilliant Achilles, shining Achilles, godlike Achilles...’the butcher’” as a spoil of war (Barker 3). As a war prize, she becomes the property of Achilles, and he can do what he wants with her, including “[raping her] as quickly as he killed” (Barker 28). Her suffering is only

exacerbated when she is taken from Achilles, after building some sort of understanding and relationship with him, by Agamemnon. Certainly, the women depicted in Greek stories hold little power or control over their lives. Certainly, the women depicted in Greek stories are victims to a greater extent than men in general during times of war. However, this does not mean that women hold no power whatsoever. It simply means that the women of Troy found their power in other ways.

Mary Lefkowitz argues that the women of *The Iliad* do hold power: a power that looks different than that of men's version, but a power nonetheless. Along these same lines, Barker's novel, and to some extent Homer's original story, confirm Lefkowitz's assertion. They allow the reader to see that the women of Troy did have power. Several women of *The Iliad* and *The Silence of the Girls* show power through their fortitude and strength. For instance, "it is significant that Andromache, a woman, does not wish to avoid witnessing the death of her husband" (Lefkowitz 512). She chooses to watch from the walls as Hector is overpowered and killed by Achilles, possibly as a show of loyalty to her husband and the father of their child, but also possibly to reinforce the fact that she has the power – the strength – to choose whether she will face her husband's inevitable death or not. In juxtaposition to Andromache, Hector, who has participated in a number of battles and has killed many enemies, does not want to consider the possibility of what will happen to his wife and child if Troy falls, thus reinforcing the adage of honor above all. This action by Hector can be viewed as his choosing his reputation over his family, or it can be viewed as a lack of power on Hector's part: he does not have the strength or fortitude to consider the idea of the death of his loved ones. In *The Silence of the Girls*, Briseis speaks of the sacrifice of Polyxena at the pyre of Achilles. Rather than mourn her life or scream for her survival, Polyxena "was actually trying to console her mother, begging her not to grieve.

‘Better to die on Achilles’ burial mound...than live and be a slave’” (Barker 314). At 15 years old, Polyxena shows a strength akin to any male on the battlefield. Polyxena chose to see her sacrifice as an escape from the future she would have if she were not chosen to die: a life of abuse and servitude.

Helen, that face that launched so many ships and the woman who is accused of single-handedly causing the Trojan War, also found some kind of power in her life despite her situation. Farron points out that “like the other women, [Helen] must watch and wait passively while the men determine the course of events” (22). However, Barker chooses a different approach in which Helen does not “wait passively” in *The Silence of the Girls*. Instead, Helen pours her voice into her intricate weavings. When talking about Helen’s talent as a weaver and the scenes she creates in her tapestries, Briseis says,

...but Helen wasn't there. Nobody had bothered to tell her what was happening. So her fate was decided without her knowledge. I think the tapestries were a way of fighting back from that moment. Oh, I know she wasn't in them, I know she deliberately made herself invisible, but in another way, perhaps the only way that matters, she was present in every stitch. (Barker 131)

Helen’s strength is shown in that she chose to tell the story the way she saw it, and as Cahill states, “Two versions of one story can exist without any damage being done to the earlier one” (5). The essence of the story of the war is still there. It’s simply being told from a different perspective and giving those silent women a voice.

Briseis, being the narrator and main subject of *The Silence of the Girls*, is the female that shows the most power and strength in Barker’s retelling of *The Iliad*. Briseis “is a war captive and so displays in the most radical form the tragic situation of women in *The Iliad*” (Farron 27).

She is nothing more than an object, much like the iron, silver, and weapons taken from the City of Lyrnessus after its fall. However, in light of this and having watched Achilles murder her husband and brothers, Briseis makes the choice to survive. She goes about her survival in a number of ways. First, Briseis learns to be a silent observer during evening meal times when Achilles is entertaining his men. By making herself invisible and becoming a silent observer, Briseis is able to give readers the story of Achilles from a different perspective, and we are able to see his vulnerability. There is courage in exposing a great warrior like Achilles, who is essentially viewed as a demigod, and showing his vulnerabilities. Briseis also learns through her observations the extreme bond that exists between Achilles and Patroclus. One night while walking on the beach, she witnesses an exchange between the two, and “what [she] saw on that beach that night went beyond sex, and perhaps even beyond love...[she] recognized its power” (Barker 74). This recognition of the extent of the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus provides her a level of security that she had not had before. She understands that Patroclus can ensure her safety. He often tells her that he can “make” Achilles marry her. Yet, Briseis never takes advantage of this opportunity. Instead, she lets nature take its course even when that course means being turned over to Agamemnon. She chooses to maintain her identity as a Trojan woman rather than become Achilles’ Trojan wife. Briseis uses her ability to “read the room” where men are concerned as a source of power.

Briseis also finds strength in her observations and considerations of the other women of *The Iliad*. For instance, Briseis realizes the “misogyny of ancient Greece” when she “described Helen recounting how she’d been raped as a child by a riverbank. ‘Of course I believed her...It was quite a shock to me, later, to discover that nobody else did’” (Gilbert). This realization helps Briseis to strengthen her desire to survive. It brings to her a reality that she was not privy to as a

result of her sheltered, privileged upbringing, which ultimately helped her to survive the treatment she received from Achilles. More importantly, the realization helped her to survive the sexual brutality she endured she received from Agamemnon in Barker's narrative. Another example of Briseis's fortitude – and the fortitude of females of *The Iliad* in general in Barker's account – is what Briseis learns through the camaraderie she has with the other women who have been captured. Through the stories shared among the women in the weaving tent, Briseis receives an education that helps her in her quest for survival. For instance, she knows what to expect when she is taken by Agamemnon because she has learned that “he prefers the back door” (Barker 48). It is also in the weaving tent that Briseis comes to the realization that while the women of Greece and Troy are not in the tapestries that tell the story of the war, they are the creators of those tapestries. They are the tellers of the story. They are not silent. There is strength in this realization. There is also strength in staying the course; in acceptance.

In *The Silence of the Girls*, as Priam is leaving the Greek camp with Hector's body after pleading with Achilles to allow him to give his son a warrior's funeral, Briseis has the opportunity to escape and return to Troy. She sneaks into the cart that carries Hector's body and is nearly free when she abruptly slides out of the cart and walks back to Achilles' compound (Barker 290). When Achilles asks her why she returned (he knew she had been on the cart), her response is, “I don't know”, but upon further introspection, she realizes that she stayed for no other reason than “perhaps no more than a feeling that this was [her] place now, that [she] had to make [her] life work *here*” (Barker 292). Briseis, in her fortitude, has chosen to accept and embrace her life with Achilles and the Greeks. This takes courage because rather than choosing what would have been an easy way out of life, she chooses to stay with the man who killed her husband and brothers and attempt to build a new life alongside him. It can be argued that Briseis

is exhibiting characteristics of Stockholm Syndrome, a condition in which kidnapped individuals form a bond with their captors. However, while this is in direct contradiction to the courage Polyxena showed in accepting her sacrifice on Achilles' burial mound, it is the courageous thing for Briseis to do. Her circumstances are different from those of her fellow captive. Polyxena was able to escape losing her virginity as part of being a spoil of war. Briseis came to Achilles as a wife of another man, and her virginity was no longer at stake. Briseis had lost her virginity in the manner she was supposed to lose it: to her husband. There would have been no shame in her choosing to return to Troy and either die among her people or once again become a spoil of war. She chose to survive, and she chose to survive on her own terms.

Finally, we see Briseis' strength and fortitude when she talks of the laments of the women of Troy. First, it is important to point out that Homer "knew that women are complete human beings and constantly emphasized how deep and intense their feelings are" (Farron 30). As such, he included scenes of their songs and laments. In the original epic, the only time Briseis talks is in Book XIX at Patroclus' funeral. Homer's Briseis follows the traditions of the Trojan women by lamenting the loss of her "once tender friend" who "dried [her] sorrows for a husband slain" and assured her that Achilles would make her his wife (Homer). Barker's Briseis shows evidence of the complete human being that Homer knew her to be; one who feels frustration and resentment. She grows tired of the songs, and expresses that as she listens to the song being sung for the slain Achilles. She says,

The words seemed to have gotten trapped inside my brain, an infestation rather than a song, and I resented it. Yes, the death of young men in battle is a tragedy - I've lost four brothers, I didn't need anybody to tell me that. A tragedy worthy of any number of laments - but theirs is not the worst fate. I looked at Andromache, who'd have to live the

rest of her amputated life as a slave, and I thought: *We need a new song*. (Barker 313-314)

Briseis wants the voices of the women, those who she feels suffer the greatest as a result of war, to be heard. She wants a song that will make people remember those women. There are enough songs and stories of the men. She will see that the songs of the women of Troy are heard.

While there is no information regarding Briseis' life after the death of Achilles and the fall of Troy in *The Iliad*, in *The Silence of the Girls*, Briseis' strength and fortitude serve her well. In rare cases, some form of intimacy was established between the captor and his slave, as is the case in *The Silence of the Girls* with Achilles and Briseis and Ajax and Tecmessa. In the case of the latter two, Tecmessa lives as Ajax's wife, and they have a child together. Ajax brings her to Achilles' compound for meals, and they appear to have a calm, respectful relationship. In Barker's portrayal of Ajax and Tecmessa, we see evidence of deeper feelings at each occurrence in which they appear in the retelling. While this is not the case with the relationship between Briseis and Achilles, Barker does portray a building intimacy between the two. The first evidence of deeper feelings is in Achilles with his reaction to Agamemnon's demand that Briseis be given to him. Briseis tells us that "Achilles cried as [she] was taken away" (110). This scene is reinforced by Homer. He indicates that there is some level of love between Achilles and Briseis as well when, in Book IX, he says, "Don't all decent and sensible men love their own wives and care for them, just as I loved mine with all my heart, my spear-captive though she was?" (Homer 172). This idea is further supported when Agamemnon claims Briseis after returning Chryseis to her father, and "Achilles himself weeps because he is deeply attached to her," he refuses to fight alongside Agamemnon, and "a quarrel over a woman, which involves men's honor and status," results in a turning point in the Trojan war and the deaths of Patroclus,

Hector, and Achilles (Lefkowitz 505). Despite the way in which the relationship between Achilles and Briseis began, it grows in a way that is typical of any other love story until it reaches a climax. In Barker's novel, the turning point in the relationship of Briseis and Achilles seems to have been when Briseis helps Achilles in preparing Hector's body to be returned to Priam. Their bond is further established when Briseis chooses to stay with Achilles rather than sneak to Troy with Priam and the body of Hector, and it is solidified with Briseis' pregnancy. A clear example of Achilles' affection for Briseis occurs immediately prior to the battle that would end Achilles' life. Achilles sees that Briseis is married to Alcimus, a trusted member of his army and a good man, to ensure her safety. Achilles does little to explain his decision, and Briseis is stunned. When Achilles realizes her shock, she states, "he relented a little, taking my chin between his thumb and forefinger and tilting my head. 'He'll be kind to you. And he'll take care of the child'" (Barker 308). Briseis is able to find strength in Achilles' feelings for her and in her knowledge of the man behind the armor. She understands that there is no need to mourn him deeply because he knew he would die in battle and he found honor in that. He wanted to be remembered, and the laments of the women would ensure that he was. She also knows that, as she sits in his room considering whether or not to cover the mirror to block the "threshold between our world and the land of the dead", it is not necessary because "even if he did come back, [she] knew that he would not hurt [her]" (Barker 309). Ultimately, Briseis is able to find strength in herself through the relationship that she formed with Achilles.

Barker's retelling of a famous Greek epic "is the new song Briseis dreams of: a narrative that weighs what war means to women" (Gilbert). When Priam comes to Achilles to ask for his son's body, he takes Achilles' hands and says, "I do what no man before me has ever done, I kiss the hands of the man who killed my son" (Barker 267). While this act is tragic in itself, Briseis'

response, “And I do what countless women before me have been forced to do. I spread my legs for the man who killed my husband and my brothers” (Barker 267), is even more tragic because this travesty continues to exist today in places like Sudan and Rwanda. For far too many women, the loss of war extends beyond brothers, sons, and husbands. Often, they lose their freedom and themselves as spoils of war.

What *The Silence of the Girls* points out is that “the race of heroes cannot exist without women of heroic caliber” (Lefkowitz 214), but this should not be something that surprises anyone because even Homer understood this. We see his understanding of this notion in the laments of the women in *The Iliad*. Through their stories, Homer, Sophocles, and others, “Athenian men...were compelled to reflect on how their customs and actions affected (or afflicted) women’s lives” (Lefkowitz 216). Through the songs, women “are often the last commentators on the war or murders described in an epic or a drama,” and the men who told and wrote the songs in the epics and dramas chose the women to sing them for a reason. Briseis is right in stating “we need a new song” relative to the costs of war, and she is right in understanding that “We’re going to survive - *our* songs, *our* stories. They’ll never be able to forget us. Decades after the last man who fought at Troy is dead, their sons will remember the songs their Trojan mothers sang to them” (Barker 296). Silence does *not* become a woman. She has entirely too much to share with the world. She’s spent entirely too much time at man’s side, quietly observing. She deserves to have her version of the story heard, and we deserve to hear it.

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Eng 6800 Graphic Novels: Art or Agenda

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Creating Student Awareness Through Comics

High school libraries across the nation are seeing a rising interest in comics that go beyond the traditional superhero story. Today's comic writers tell stories of the plight of the LGBTQ community, the refugee, the immigrant, the Holocaust survivor, and those left behind after tragedy strikes. Artists cover subjects like homelessness, feminism, fake news, broken homes, and pivotal moments in history. While critics consider comics as less intellectually demanding, school librarians are educating the educators about how to use them in the classroom. And for good reason. What was once considered a tool for struggling readers is now being seen as a thought-provoking medium that forces students to use "both sides of the brain" ("The Art and Style...", 44:10-44:12) and to think beyond the words and images on the page, thus making them advantageous for students at any reading level. Beyond that, as we prepare students to venture onto the fractured highway that is today's reality, we can provide them with the tools necessary to fill the potholes that we have created. But first, we must give them signage to make them aware of those potholes. A comic becomes both art and agenda when the artist uses their craft to promote civic action. By providing readers with the human perspective, comics make us pay attention, and they are an effective medium that provides us with the awareness that must precede any action; they are redefining the role of art in addressing today's social and geopolitical issues, namely in the areas of immigration, access to information, and race.

The Plight of "The Outsider"

As immigration grows to be one of the most highly debated items on the political agenda of America's leaders, media outlets provide the American public with more and more generalized stories surrounding the immigrants' plight, making us only marginally aware of an issue that is central to our nation's current identity. Through graphic narratives, artists like Thi Bui and Gene Yang "engage readers with specific names and faces" (Gomez 163). We no longer get a general look. We see the human and very personal experiences surrounding the difficult decision to leave a home behind and begin again in an unfamiliar country and the struggle to establish an identity as an American while holding on to some semblance of your heritage.

In the case of Bui, her graphic memoir, *The Best We Could Do*, engages us in more than just her journey as a three-year-old child from Vietnam to the United States in 1978. It is more than just a story of a family ravaged by war. It is a story that both details the impact of clashing politics and brings awareness to the refugee experience. We follow alongside the author as she learns how her homeland's history molded her parents into the people they eventually became, and in turn finds a new understanding for those who desire to leave what they have always known in order to obtain basic freedom and opportunities that have been denied for sometimes generations. We witness firsthand as a first-generation family of immigrants works through that history to navigate in a country that is vastly different from the one they have left. As Bui entered her own adulthood and began considering the rites of marriage and family, she felt a compelling need to learn more about her parents. She had a fear of motherhood that stemmed from what can be considered borderline traumatizing memories of her own childhood. Bui's sudden urge to learn of her parents' pasts in order to avoid creating those same traumatizing memories for her own child(ren) resulted in understanding and reconciliation.

Bui's narrative style in *The Best We Could Do* consists of flashes between past and present as the author interviews her parents about their upbringing in Vietnam. The flashbacks lend themselves to Bui's use of introspection in determining certain nuances relative to facial expression in the panels that depict her parents' histories. Without the use of photographs or personal experience, it would behoove the artist to consider what her own reactions would be in similar circumstances; thus, Bui, along with the reader, is able to establish empathy and compassion for her characters because Bui, for those brief moments, becomes her mother or father, and the reader is able to interpret "the exhaustion in the lines of the eye, the shape of a sad or angry or smirking mouth, the sarcasm that can only be conveyed through the set of a person's eyebrows" (Gomez 163) and identify with Bui's father, whom she calls "Ba," as he hides, terrified, in a thicket of bamboo while his village is destroyed by Viet Minh soldiers and with Ma as she mourns the loss of her firstborn and navigates through a world that continues to exist but is a little emptier and contains a little less color. In learning of the trauma suffered by Ba as a result of both the constant fighting in his country and the constant abuse and neglect he suffered and witnessed relative to his father, Bui forgives Ba's use of terrifying stories to get his children to comply with his wishes. In learning of the trauma suffered by Ma, Bui is able to find compassion and understanding for the distance her mother maintained from her remaining children.

The colors that Bui uses in her graphic memoir precipitate thought and ultimately add to the reader's awareness, understanding and compassion for the family. Bui focuses on the color of the dust that comes from bricks. This allusion to bricks and dust ties back to Bui's building of a better understanding of her parents; thus bringing about a better understanding of herself and a new and greater respect for her cultural identity. In a society/world that expects appropriation of

the dominating culture's values, belief, and practices, it is imperative to maintain some aspects of one's own cultural identity because

...the rediscovery of this identity is often the object of what Frantz Fanon once called a passionate research...directed by the secret hope of discovering beyond the misery of today, beyond self-contempt, resignation and abjuration, some very beautiful and splendid era whose existence rehabilitates us both in regard to ourselves and in regard to others. (Hall 1192)

Through the retelling of her family's past, Bui is able to finally build her own identity. One could also argue the brick dust color signifies the tearing down or destroying of the walls that Bui's parents built to block out the pain of their losses. Bui's choice to refer to bricks at all could relate to "the idea of them being the instrument of creation and a remnant of destruction [that] replicates how immigrants have [to], to some extent, destroy/forget their history of trauma in order to create a future of possibilities" (Begum Wk 2). Still others see the color of the dust that comes from bricks as "the different hues of the red indicative of lifeblood" (Rousseau Wk 2). This image resonates with readers because the varying shades in the panels are associated with the differing emotions felt by the characters. For instance, the panels that depict Ma's description of her upper middle-class childhood are white to light pink, while the panels that depict the family's harrowing boat trip to freedom consist of "shadows of deep mahogany" (Gomez 163).

Ultimately, *The Best We Could Do* does more than give readers the opportunity to learn about "human experiences rather than human events" (Davis Wk 5). It is a heartfelt memoir that follows the author on her journey to understanding herself by understanding her parents and teaches us that sometimes we must work through the events of our childhood in order to avoid projecting resentment or other negative emotions onto our own children.

While Thi Bui's memoir tells the story of first-generation immigrants to America, Yang's *American Born Chinese* introduces the reader to second generation immigrants who must determine their identities in a world in which not every citizen says, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free" (Lazarus). Yang's world is one in which appearance rather than birthplace establishes immigrant status.

The structure of *American Born Chinese* is unique in that it contains three stories that work parallel with each other to form one cohesive graphic novel. Yang takes the reader back and forth between the stories of The Monkey King, the subject of an ancient Chinese parable; Jin Wang, a second-generation Chinese American who moves frequently and is teased by classmates and misunderstood by teachers; and Danny, a blond haired, blue eyed American boy and his visiting Chinese cousin, Chin-Kee, who epitomizes to the extreme every possible stereotype surrounding the Asian community. In the first story, the Monkey King transforms himself and his people in order to fit in, becomes an angry tyrant, pays an awful price but ultimately learns a valuable lesson that he then instills upon his son. This section of Yang's novel begins a lesson in the consequences in turning your back on your cultural identity. Hall asserts that "this inner expropriation of cultural identity cripples and deforms" and ultimately creates "individuals without an anchor, without horizon, colourless, stateless, rootless" (1193). Ostensibly, the lesson to be learned from the Monkey King is denial of our origins leaves us incomplete as individuals. This lesson is reinforced in another of Yang's characters. The second story in Yang's graphic novel occurs in present day and introduces Jin Wang, a second generation Chinese American who moves frequently and is teased by his classmates even more often. This is made clear when, while eating lunch on his first day at his new school, one of Jin's classmates tells him to "stay away from [his] dog" (Yang 32). The misunderstanding regarding Jin's heritage and citizenship

is only pronounced by his teachers, who reinforce the stereotypes by their obvious misperceptions. He would like to one day become a “Transformer,” and is told by a Chinese adult that “it’s easy to become anything you wish...so long as you’re willing to forfeit your soul” (Yang 29). Jin does indeed transform, and he does indeed forfeit a part of his soul. He slowly becomes that caucasian American he wants to become, belittles his friend Wei-Chen, a Taiwanese immigrant, for not being more American, and eventually realizes that changing himself in order to fit in is not everything it is cracked up to be. The final story introduces Chin-Kee, Danny’s visiting cousin from China. While Wei-Chen embarrassed Jin with his “fresh off the boat” behaviors, Chin-Kee “is less embarrassing than monstrous” (Vizzini). Yang’s depiction of Chin-Kee exaggerates every possible Asian stereotype, from Chin-Kee’s inability to say his r’s and l’s (the first page of this section contains a picture of Chin-Kee with the text, “Everyone Ruvs Chin-Kee” [Yang 43]) to his constant hand-raising and correct responses when he visits Danny’s school.

While Yang’s depictions of and dialogues between the characters in *American Born Chinese* bring awareness and instill compassion toward immigrants, his artistic style and choices serve to reinforce the concept that stories of human experiences are more compelling and provoking than stories of human events. This concept is especially evident in Chin-Kee’s portion of the story. This part of the novel is “presented as an American sitcom, complete with an intrusive laugh track”, and every aspect of Chin-Kee’s character, from his buck teeth to his slit eyes, is exaggerated to extend stereotypes to their extreme (Sunami). Chin-Kee embarrasses his American cousin, but the reader receives a cold, hard look at society’s perception of immigrants in general and the Chinese in particular. Yang draws his characters using vivid colors and clear

lines, and every figure has striking and well-defined features. This technique adds clarity for the reader; we know who is an outsider and who is not.

The Best We Could Do and *American Born Chinese* are books written not only for “Americans,” but for immigrants as well. They build awareness that goes beyond the textbook at a time when that awareness is essential. If the reader is the white teenager that Jin Wang wants to be, you see life from the immigrant’s perspective, and if the reader is the immigrant, you see that you are not alone in your journey. Through graphic novels such as these, we see that to achieve the “love, brotherhood, and true peace” that Congressman John Lewis believes we should all strive for, we must be made to feel safe in being ourselves and feel safe in accepting others who are different from us.

Impact of the 24-hour News Cycle

With today’s easy access to the information superhighway, adults and adolescents can become caught up in words and images that may not necessarily depict a truth. We are often exposed to completely false information from people who purport themselves to be in the know. Students can learn a great deal from the works of comic artists like Nick Drnaso regarding the impact of fake news and the theories that result from false reporting. Students are made aware of the repercussions of fake news through, once again, human experience rather than human events.

Drnaso’s *Sabrina* is a dark graphic narrative that describes how “that second wave of traumatic experience, how we’ve come to treat each other in the wake of these tragedies, might just be as traumatic, or even more so, than the initial loss” (“The Best Novel...,” 1:38-1:49). Despite the fact that the story is told in comic form, *Sabrina* contains every element of a traditional realist novel: it is a story of “imaginary people experiencing the conflicts and successes of ordinary life” (Hunter). The novel describes the aftermath of the title character’s

disappearance and murder in what has sadly become a familiar way: it plays out eerily similar to recent real-life events like the Sandy Hook and Parkland massacres. The main characters of the story become increasingly paranoid and/or depressed as a result of the false information being relayed through talk shows and online sources, and readers are there to witness how damaging the mentality that “what [you] see on the web and tv is just a reality show, and so if it’s a reality show, then everything is staged and everyone is an actor” can be to those left behind to grieve (“The Best Novel...,” 0:38-0:47).

The title character of *Sabrina* is seen only in the first section, consisting of 14 pages. On these pages, we witness an ordinary exchange between Sabrina and her sister, Sandra, that consists of discussions regarding relationships, books, and jobs. The section ends with the sisters heading off in different directions and into their ordinary lives. The true exposition of the story does not begin until Teddy, Sabrina’s confused and dazed boyfriend of two years, arrives in Colorado to stay with his old high school friend, Calvin, who is in the Air Force, to put some distance between himself and the psychological trauma of not knowing where his girlfriend, who has been missing for a month, is or what has happened to her. It is during Teddy’s stay with Calvin that he learns the devastating news surrounding Sabrina’s brutal murder: it was filmed, and the killer subsequently sent the recording to various news agencies. What results from the release of this video is a number of conspiracy theories that are started and exacerbated by an Alex Jones-esque talk radio show host who believes that, in addition to the government plotting to “reduce the global population by eighty percent” (Drnas 138), Sabrina’s death was staged and Teddy, Calvin, and Sandra are simply actors playing their parts in the scheme. These conspiracy theories surrounding Sabrina’s murder culminate in a barrage of emails and letters sent to Sandra demanding that she tell the truth about where her sister is - because Sabrina is

certainly not dead! - which exacerbates and extends the grief process for her. The harassment and threats extend beyond Sandra and eventually create a constant state of paranoia for Calvin, who, despite never even meeting Sabrina, receives menacing emails demanding that he come clean about the government's involvement and containing implied threats to the safety of Calvin's estranged wife and child. This paranoia eventually causes Calvin to suspect his coworker of being complicit in the threats and to wake in a cold sweat from a nightmare in which the masked murderer is after him.

Drnaso's artistic choices convey themes of isolation, vulnerability, and despair, all of which establish a feeling of empathy for the characters. His use of limited text forces the reader to closely examine each of his panels and "makes you do the work of understanding the story" (Hunter) as well as understanding the impact of the false narrative on people on the periphery of the tragedy: the family and friends of the victim. The lack of dialogue gives a sense of isolation that is depicted throughout the novel, and that constant isolation creates a foreboding. Teddy listens constantly to the spewing of the talk radio show host, Douglas, and rarely leaves his room. He becomes further and further isolated and depressed to the point of contemplating suicide. The reader sees just how much conspiracies like this magnify and extend the trauma on page 108 of *Sabrina*, when in three of the panels, Drnaso has chosen to draw Teddy with his hands over his ears and in the fetal position; an obvious effort to drown out the noise and the pain that the noise is causing.

More empathy is established through interpretation of the facial expressions, or lack thereof, of the characters in the novel. The main characters, Teddy, Sandra, and Calvin, are often drawn with little to no expression. Eyes are tiny black dots and mouths are thin slashes, as if to represent the void that each character is in as a result of the tragedy that has beset them. This

minimalist choice has a substantial impact on the reader. As Greg Hunter states, “[Drnaso] draws his characters in a way that initially suggests minimal emotion: their eyes are dots, their mouths small semi circles. But this aesthetic makes it all the more wrenching when the reader detects a flicker of anguish on one of the placid faces.” During one exchange between Calvin and Teddy, Drnaso draws the latter with wider, more defined eyes, but the slash of Teddy’s mouth has become a pronounced frown. This grief and anguish is only more pronounced when we watch Calvin, in an attempt to get Teddy to eat something, feed his friend a hamburger (Drnaso 54-55). This scene is immediately followed by an interaction between Sandra and her partner in which Sandra’s face is drawn similarly (Drnaso 57).

Drnaso also establishes for the reader the level of vulnerability that survivors of a tragedy experience as a result of not only their loss, but of the false narratives that can occur as a result of that loss. As Teddy’s depression and isolation spirals, he is more often drawn wearing nothing more than his underpants. He becomes “so detached from life that he [can’t] even follow through with the basic steps necessary to reintegrate with society” (Orcutt Wk 4); he has become “so stunted in his attempt to live that he can not even put on a shirt as part of facing the day” (Lozier Wk 4). Finally, Drnaso’s color choice, in part, enhances the reader’s empathy toward the characters. The color in the panels is dull and muted; washed out. This color choice echoes the lives of the survivors. It is difficult for them to find brightness, and they feel hopeless and without a voice. It also echoes the lines between fiction and reality that have become so blurred in light of the 24-hour news cycle and the ease in which people can create a false narrative. And, worse case scenario, the dull color subtly expresses contemporary society; a society that has become desensitized because we are “inundated with tragedy and crazy-newscaster-screaming” (Coad Wk 4).

Sabrina provides a stark reality through the use of a fictional account. Despite Drnaso's minimalist approach in his drawings, the reader is given a very clear picture of the collateral damage that is caused by irresponsible reporting of a tragedy. *Sabrina* "capture[s], in a subtle, effective way, the allure of [the conspiracy] mindset to a vulnerable person" (Hunter). The novel teaches a lesson - don't believe everything you hear, see, or read - by creating empathy for the characters in a quiet and subtle way and by painting a picture of what human beings impacted by the tragic events of this nature experience.

The Fight for Equality

In recent years, graphic nonfiction has become a powerful medium for storytelling. Graphic nonfiction texts like Craig Thompson's *Blanket* and Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home* tell the artists' personal stories. Other graphic nonfiction, like the *Strange Fruit* series and the *March* trilogy, address the weightiness of history and its impact on the human experience through the appeal of comic books. Works like *Strange Fruit* and *March Book One* portray the triumph of the human spirit in the fight for equality and freedom from constraints, and they inspire readers to, as John Lewis says, "make good trouble".

The fight for fair treatment and equality has existed throughout human history, and one of the most prominent times in American history began in 1861, with the war between free and slave states. Joel Christian Gill's series, *Strange Fruit: Uncelebrated Narratives from Black History*, highlights some of the unsung heroes in the African American fight for true freedom and equality. Much of what Gill writes about "focuses on African Americans' resistance to racism and their achievements despite the racial oppression" (Wang). *Strange Fruit* serves as a reminder of what we are capable of: we can all overcome racism if we are willing to resist it. Volume I of the series consists of nine short stories, including that of Henry Brown who, in order

to escape slavery, travels in a wooden crate for over 24 hours, and the story of Bass Reeves, an African American lawman who is credited with the capture of thousands of outlaws over the course of his career (Wang).

Beyond the text in Gill's anthology, the images convey important messages to both African American and caucasian readers. The artistic rendering of Henry Brown's day-long trip in the crate, depicted on pages 11-13 of *Strange Fruit*, reminds African Americans of the lengths their ancestors went to in order to gain freedom, and adjacent panels of Reeves and the Lone Ranger remind any reader that heroes come in all shapes, sizes, and colors (Wang).

While the *Strange Fruit* series consists of stories that honor the successes of African Americans in their fight against adversity, *March Book One* places more of the spotlight on strategic thinking in order to obtain success for a movement rather than on an individual (Lucas). It is the first book in a three-part memoir, yes; but the memoir focuses on one person's experience and involvement in what is the true subject of the text: the Civil Rights Movement.

March Book One actually opens with the subject of the final book in the trilogy: the famous march, led by a young John Lewis, across the Edmund Pettus Bridge leading into Selma, Alabama. From there, the narrative bounces back and forth between the moments before former President Barack Obama's first inauguration in January 2008 and pivotal moments in the first 20 years of John Lewis's life; the moments that led him to become part of the Civil Rights Movement. The present day portion of the story takes place in Congressman John Lewis's office immediately prior to his attendance at the historic inauguration of America's first black president. A bulk of Lewis's interactions in these scenes are with two young boys as their mother stands as witness to the conversation. What occurs over the course of the next one hundred or so pages is a simple interaction, but we know that "sometimes the 'simplest' works can be the ones

that tell us the most about ourselves and the world around us” (Johnson Wk 6). This chance meeting between an octogenarian and a few adolescent boys turns into a lesson in the power of people’s voices and the power of “social gospel.”

The choice to include the current generation in the narrative is effective for many reasons. First, the authors recognize that the young adult audience, which will gravitate toward graphic nonfiction over nonfiction text, was born of parents who were either too young to “recall Jim Crow’s death rattle (Ashley), or, an even better likelihood, were not alive at the time; as a result, many of them will have not heard stories of the 40’s, 50’s, or 60’s from their parents and will have only received textual information from history classes at school. Second, Lewis’s calm narration and gentle conversation alongside Powell’s sensitive portrayal of the violence that occurred in the narration “could go a long way in connecting young Americans to events and issues” that are portrayed throughout the text (Ashley). Young and old alike can sympathize with Lewis when he says, “I started to feel guilty for not doing more. I became restless” (Lewis et.al. 65). Like Lewis, we have all been aware of injustices of one sort or another, even children, and suffered guilt from feeling powerless to help. Finally, telling the younger generation this story “helps [them to] visualize the possibilities of political engagement”. It teaches them that noticing a need for social change is not enough. It “inspire[s] another generation to find a way to get in the way” (Politics and Prose, 12:23-12:26). Young readers will see the successes of Lewis and other members of the Civil Rights Movement and be motivated to create similar successes today.

The inspiration for the *March* trilogy comes from a 1957 comic book titled *Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story*, and much of the style chosen by illustrator Nate Powell for the contemporary novel is modeled after the original comic. By mimicking certain devices, Powell ties the future to the past and continues what was started with the authors’ choice to include the

younger generation in the script. Like the '57 comic, *March* combines both narration and dialogue as text, and there is a clear distinction between the two. Both texts also contain the occasional sound effect panel most notably found in superhero comics. Unlike *Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story*, *March Book One* contains no color. All panels are done in black and white. Several panels have areas of heavy shading, reminiscent of photographs or dream sequences, a reminder that Lewis and the reader are looking back on a moment in our history and Lewis's experience in that moment. Powell adds depth to the emotions instilled by Lewis's narration by adjusting the depth of the black shading, thus indicating a change in tone.

The choices made in narrating and drawing the scenes of violence in *March Book One* are subtle but clear and show the sacrifices one must be willing to make in support of a cause or belief. For instance, as Lewis describes the brutal murder of Emmett Till in Mississippi in 1955, Powell draws the "corpse of [the boy] accurately but "tastefully", responsibly but without cleaning up the sheer horror of what [those] monsters did to a teenage boy" (Ashley). As Lewis describes being jumped while approaching a lunch counter in Woolworths, Powell shows Lewis's reaction "in a 3-panel sequence, forcing himself back to his feet, taking the counter seat as his peers continue to be beaten and pulled from chairs as they attempt to sit" (Ashley).

Despite the fact that the bulk of *March: Book One* takes place nearly sixty years ago, much of its content is still relevant today. Episodes of police brutality against people of color occur too regularly, and there is still a great deal of evidence of discrimination against blacks and other minorities. According to Jaffe, this series "sensitively documents Americans' struggle for equal rights and civil liberties" and "provides a wonderful window into what life was like for black families...under Jim Crow and segregation laws." Adolescents do not just read about Jim Crow in textbooks and worksheets. They see the dark smoke billowing from the "old hand-me-

down” bus that took Lewis and his siblings to and from school, and they see the distinct similarities between work gangs of black prisoners and black sharecroppers working in their fields (Lewis et.al. 48-49). These images are not so far removed from the predominantly black, poor school districts that, even with federal aid, cannot provide the level of education of their richer counterparts. They are not so far removed from today’s prisons, where people of color represent over 65% of the population. *March Book One* shows us how far we have come, but it also brings awareness as to how far we still must go.

Conclusion

Comics can be both art and agenda. Through the use of first-person accounts of experiences like many of those heretofore discussed, students learn to understand and empathize with others. Understanding and empathy are the first steps to action. The aforementioned Alexis Bechdel writes, in part, of her discovery of her sexuality in *Fun Home*. It is her journey to personal awareness, but it can be a journey that is beneficial for others to follow because it can help readers who are struggling with their own sexual identity while helping others to understand the importance of tolerance. Craig Thompson’s *Blankets* tells the story of the author’s personal experience with his spirituality among other things, but again, reading about Thompson’s experience can possibly help others to address their own spirituality with a little less guilt.

Comic Sarah Glidden states that “if we’re going to have opinions about things, we should pay attention to those things first” (“Oct 2016’s...,” 45:38-45:42). Graphic novels can be powerful tools in helping students understand and think critically about the news that is reported. The graphic texts discussed herein focus on developing a more global awareness for the reader, and their use of both art and text make the reader pay attention. These books address issues that impact anyone and everyone, and as such, promote action from anyone and everyone, even when

that action is something as small as telling a friend to ignore the different eye shape of a second-generation Chinese American classmate.

Comics can heal and they can help to inspire positive action. They can help to find answers to the questions that trouble us and they can, through the use of images and colors, help us to better understand the complex aspects of human nature that are associated with emotion. Comics can help us to understand what is wrong in our world by painting a picture of the impact of those wrongs. We've created that fractured highway, and comics and graphic novels give us the means to help this next generation heal those fractures.

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