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# Reflections on Teaching Through Research Writing, Literature Analysis, Expressive Writing and the Graphic Novel

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# Reflections on Teaching Through Research Writing, Literature Analysis, Expressive Writing and the Graphic Novel.

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## Natalie Johnson

The role of a teacher requires the ability to value learning experiences and through that process value teaching as both the conveying of knowledge and the imparting of an inspiration to learn. Added to this is the reality that each student in the classroom is an individual with his or her own set of skills and interests.  When learning opportunities are presented to students as an experience toward growth through exploration and challenges, I feel that good teaching also effectively incorporates motivation to read further, to write with consequence, and to critically explore and analyze literature and media. Moreover, I believe that quality student writing establishes itself in the collaborative and/or the personal and extends across content areas and within genres. I feel that students who are effectively empowered in the process of analysis and writing can understand and interpret the writing of others and can express themselves well and can compose with purpose and permanence.  The imparting of these aptitudes are reflected in my goals, in my study of teaching and learning, and the work that I do as a teacher.

I decided to add the Master of Arts in English Teaching Secondary to my current teaching credentials in order to better inform my students in the skills of appreciating literature through a critical lens. I also intend to engage them in writing from a variety of perspectives that allows them not only to grow as authors of agency, but to also develop skills in composing well-thought out, inquisitive and inspiring reflections and commentaries in various genres.  The ability to think critically takes on new meaning in this respect, as I now ask my students to

question, explore, and discuss literature and writing much more effectually than previous.

Through this process they are communicators of ideas in meaningful ways that work for them in the classroom, rather than just composing an expected production of materials.

As a student, I learned much in my coursework through discussions and readings combined with my personal professional development as a member of NCTE reading *English Journal* and *College Composition and Communication*. I have significantly increased my interest in providing quality learning experiences to my students.  I am highly interested in applying what I have learned in my Masters' program in English Teaching Secondary with deliberate effectiveness and efficacy.  It is my feeling and my vote of self-confidence that I am well-prepared to provide a substantial and meaningful learning experiences for students in my classrooms.

I thoroughly enjoy working with writing and composition classes in my teaching profession.  I find writing less cumbersome to teach than reading, yet I also highly value how significantly reading and writing correlate in the learning process.  I do not expect student writers to compose as published authors, however learning to analyze published work leads to student recognition of information that is relevant to topic writings and discussions.  Additionally, comprehending discourse and applying rhetoric to research tasks are tools of composition that are both teachable in the classroom and learnable by students.

There are hundreds of published texts on the teaching of writing.  In fact, there are so many that one could spend hours reading them and not have much time left to develop a teaching program.  It follows then that some basics of teaching writing are tried and true, such as offering topics and prompts to students for quick writes, journaling, and brainstorming to warm them up

to the ideas of expressing themselves. This also includes effective researching and evaluation strategies, ongoing inquiry, relevant peer reviews, and substantial skills in editing.

In most instances, teachers will assign students to reflect on their writing experiences in order to get to know the students and to help them to begin to formulate ideas on paper. In addition, the study of discourse communities and forms of writing presentations are often offered to first year college writing classes. Not only do these tasks prepare students to respond to readings, but these writing strategies transfer across content areas through preparing the students to write succinctly and with purpose. Therefore, a natural inclusion to the writing of a research paper is to begin with the study of Informational Literacy, a (usually) library facilitated study of researching techniques, which can be highly in-depth to include reading and analysis of text, word level study, discourse of topics, and rhetorical analysis, as well as basic researching and reading strategies toward effective selection and use of published authors works for writing a research paper. Many first-year college students benefit from this experience as they gain confidence to analyze and inquire before and while they read.

Oftentimes, the library can present Information Literacy strategies to the class, and can work with individuals, collaborate with teachers, and/or offer independent consultation to students, much like a writing center. These offerings may vary by college or university. In my opinion, this is a component of teaching research paper writing that all teachers should incorporate into classroom experiences for students. Information literacy skills provide experiences that the students have not yet received, and successfully reinforce learning that has already occurred in the classroom.

As a requirement in any English course, middle, high school or college level, the facility to critically analyze a work of literature, research or poetry is a topic of teaching and learning. In

college settings, the expectation is that students will be able to grasp the importance of a work's historical and social setting and how this affects contributes to the work itself. In narrative text, an understanding of plot and characterization and literary device utilization contributes to relevant interpretation. In research analysis, the ability to recognize inquiry and to produce further questionings demonstrates a critical perspective. I decided to include an analysis of a period of literature in my work to reflect this type of writing.

My recent English Literature course required that I read several works and authors that I had not previously read, but that connected strongly and importantly to much of my favorite literature. An avid reader since elementary school, I tend to devour books, ignoring all around me until I finish. Reading is one of my passions. All of that reading supported me greatly in gaining a perspective on new works of literature. Developing integrity in making significant observations in the analysis of these works reflects a commitment to literature and composition. In addition, the knowledge of various theories enables appropriate understandings of author's contributions and leads readers to inquiry and legitimate reflection.

In my literary analysis of the "modern" era of Baudelaire, Poe and Dickens, in order to understand Baudelaire's work, and in particular, "Les Fleurs du Mal" and "Painter of a Modern Life," I felt that I needed to connect appropriately to other authors and artists of his time, as well as understand more of his particular circumstances as an author and a critic of modern art. Baudelaire's "modernity" in relation to art reflects the times in which he and other relevant authors and artists existed. I contemplate and suggest a change in the perspectives of societies, particularly in the Western cultures of France, England and the United States, as discussed briefly through works of Baudelaire, Dickens and Poe. These changes encompass values of

social and cultural observations, as well as interpretations and perceptions of the artists of the times, including painters, composers, authors, and journalists.

During this time frame, cities were expanding, commercialism increased, and the connectivity and visibility of human interactions and daily life was observable through journalism and other modalities. This form of modernity is cast in an apparent value of the time in which it is experienced, combined with a new accessibility of works of art, writing and music to the general public that incorporate the interpretive situation of the observer and of the artist as observer. As in the works of Poe, man is seen examining himself, much as journalism and art reflected the pace and activity of modern existence of the time. Baudelaire's "dandy" or "the flaneur" that we see as popular in writings of the time also demonstrates an observation of society and of life. In Dickens' work we see the inspiration for many reform programs later implemented to help those neglected in society; a form of examination or reflection of the then, present-day. These authors wrote to the situations and concerns of the times with an elegance, foresight, and dramatic allure that inspired many to consider this age the age of "modernity." I felt that the revisions that I made added to the clarity of my analysis and supported the viewpoint of the interesting time frame with respect to the cultures of the day, and modes of expression and communication involved.

My third work came about initially as a class assignment. I was to lead a post, providing a literature review from a chapter of our class text on a type of writing teaching. A close examination of types of writing for teaching led me to a literature review on expressive writing as utilized in the classroom. The literature review format itself consists of providing readers knowledge on a topic and to give credit to other researchers on the topic. A well-written literature review may also note inconsistencies in previous researched works on the topic, as well

as reveal questions yet to be asked or answered on the topic.  It is informative and it guides the reader to additional sources of information.

When I first attempted to compose a literature review on expressive writing, I was lacking in effective sources due to time constraints, plus I did not value the scope of this type of writing teaching as it extends into other content areas.  I was directed by my instructor to take another try at the writing, and to access the online writing sources at the Purdue Owl website.  My instructor also offered valuable insight into the use of this type of writing teaching across content areas and into the creative and communicative aspect of composition.

Since writing the literature review, I now realize how profoundly expressive writing could affect issues and present-day topics of relevancy made possible through a compilation of responses and opinions on issues and outcomes.  Additionally, expressive writing allows students in college writing classes the freedom to value their own perspectives and to include their thoughts and experiences in valuable ways that contribute to the classroom and to their learning.

In my teaching writing through Information Literacy paper, I wrote to the research paper composition side of teaching writing that also significantly connects to the teaching and utilization of expressive writing.  This type of research writing assignment often includes students working with researched authors works through finding details and citing information that is useful to their inquiry.  Students also work on the formation of a hypothesis and defining understandings from the rhetoric and discourse toward effective thesis support.  Individual views and opinions can contribute to the research paper as well as to creative writing tasks and assignments.  In addition, the writing of a research paper extends across content areas of academia and is a valuable skill that most first-year college teachers require.

Creative writing in composition courses and in other courses such as the social and psychology sciences gained attention in the teaching of writing in the 1970's. This type of expressive writing has legitimate use in the classroom as students explore writing about their own experiences and viewpoints, seek agency toward change, collaborate with others on social and community issues, and add their perspectives on writing, even in the genre of the research paper. In terms of connecting students to issues and involvement in the course itself, the use of expressive writing through of journaling, autobiographical essays, narrative writing, and persuasive, informative and comparative writing toward issues and social causes has a profound and, I think, highly valuable context. From the viewpoint of opinion surveying, or from an epidemiological stance, I believe that forms of expressive writing could be utilized or harnessed to create highly informative commentary with effective results that are usefulness to issues and to trends in many different types of topics, thus including expressive writing as a tool toward research in multiple topics.

The graphic novels course that I took this past summer was interesting, intense, and highly engaging for me as a student. As I read through the novels and examined the illustrations, that went with the dialogue from panel to panel I was immediately hooked. At first, I considered this form of text more of a comic book than a teaching tool. After reading a few of these and researching about teaching in secondary classes using the graphic novel, I have since changed my mind.

The ability of the author/illustrator to reach and to really "hook" the reader into the novel immediately is remarkable. From panel to panel, the story comes vividly alive with imagery and with meaning conveyed not only through well-placed and well-formulated words, but with pictures that spark inquisitive kinds of imaginings and possibilities. The fact that some graphic

novels should carry "cautions" for certain age groups and types of students is principal to consideration of the use of a graphic novel for teaching in the classroom.

Just as in my research paper on informational literary and teaching of writing, the tendency for students to be casual in their contemplations and questions while researching objectively for essay content and citations also applies to reading a text such as the graphic novel. Because its format is both dramatic and appealing, students are often not as discerning as they need to be as consumers of the text and the message that it conveys. This was ever so apparent to me as I considered some of the novels available for use in teaching.

Many teachers find it innovative and advanced to be as much "in the moment" with current events and with trends in issues such as gender identity, social media, crime, and socio-political issues such as genocide and war. However, many students are sensitive to the specifics of these types of issues. What one student finds acceptable to discuss and write about, another in the same class or grade level may express concern to others, including parents and other teachers. I believe that that is why it is highly suggested that teachers confer with their administration or at the very least, with other teachers before selecting and teaching a text.

To that end, I felt that it might be beneficial to discuss current events and issues in the students' lives within the learning environment and in their community, plus give them a chance to create their own graphic novel around topics of their choice, while also tending to the teaching of the graphic novel text in the classroom. There are a few online sites that support creating panels and frames in a mini-novel format, and some students may choose to draw their own illustrations.

I believe that it is evident that my papers were composed from the viewpoint of a teacher who is also a student, or a learner of the topics of discussion. I realize that this is the method of

the learning experience that leads to effective teaching, combined with the opportunity to utilize what has been learned in the classrooms. I see myself as functioning with integrity and resourcefulness, as well as with creativity and an ability to question and seek answers to those questions. Since I am an avid reader who has bins of books in her home from courses and choice literature, I felt that my experience in the program allowed me the opportunity to employ and expand my instruction into greater understandings and functionalities in the teaching and learning process that I offer to my students.

Information Literacy Study and Teaching Writing of Research Papers

By Natalie Johnson

**Introduction**

The assignment to write a research essay or paper is a standard, first-year college writing assignment in most colleges and universities. This assignment is presented to students, along with the necessary requirements and guidelines defined in the syllabus from their instructor on the first day of class. Many instructors deliver instruction to provide students with the components they need to perform tasks toward completion of their essay such as selecting a topic, finding relevant sources, gathering and displaying results, considerations on avoiding plagiarism, and how to cite and type the reference list. Even with this support and guidance, first-year writing students may have numerous questions. Additionally, if no further questions are asked about the assignment, this could signify that the students are potentially out of their strategy comfort zone or are experiencing constraints and a limited proximity of inquiry skills and understandings around research and writing.

Traditional classroom research paper assignment requirements often include beginning with the submission of a thesis statement and an annotated bibliography. At the mention of a thesis statement, most writers begin to brainstorm possible topics. Topic selection is often somewhat guided by the course, and teachers and instructors will often provide a list of what is not considered appropriate to write about for the task, as some topics may be deemed controversial or sensitive.

Many dynamics are included in the process of preparing to write a good research paper. Knowledge of the topic discourse, word level knowledge as it applies to concepts of the research, and ways to develop the analysis and explicate the theme are all important. Writing students develop the ability to critically analyze what they read overtime and with experience (Losh, Alexander, Canon and Canon, 2017). Studying the writing of others provides novice writers with prototypes of composition strategies and formats. Exploration of discourse communities before beginning writing helps learners to become familiar enough with the topic to formulate questions and to successfully navigate the wealth of resources in order to refine their research topic. Students begin to formulate a thesis, followed by searches for sources to support their arguments. Most instructors offer students a sample essay of the type of writing required for the assignment. It is at this point that the writing instructor may choose to incorporate instruction or tutorials in information literacy.

Information literacy connects with teaching students abilities to locate and identify, analyze, and to apply researched information effectively, including topic inquiry and investigation. This field of study provides support to student insight on the first steps in the process of research writing through information literacy instruction and works with them to access and analyze resources for their projects. Information literacy is considered a study of

skills and is often offered by or through the college or university library. It is also accessible

through sites such as ACRL (Association of Colleges and Research Libraries, 2019). This site

includes online tutorials, research papers useful to teachers of writing, and website information,

all which is useful to teachers.

There are many methods of teaching writing available to instructors in the classroom.

Teachers may want to begin with brainstorming of questions and responses in discussion, while

other may assign writing prompts or short writing tasks. Students also benefit from a peer

review process that allows them to share their responses and receive comments and feedback

from classmates. Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle (2016) express that threshold

concepts of learning in writing studies are not necessarily usable in a "check-list" type of format,

yet teachers often use these concepts to inform instruction (p. 8). Teachers structure student

learning focused around such concepts and teach activities to provide growth and encourage

confidence. Information literacy instruction provides the opportunity for students in college or

university courses to improve ways of thinking about writing and focusing on the study of

composed knowledge.

**Research and inquiry: Determining student focus**

One of the main goals of the research paper itself is the act of inquiry. Inquiry is an

understanding that research is connective and that it depends upon the development of additional

questionings and associated research. Historically, as a college-level course task, the research

paper was originally assigned as a part of first-year writing in colleges in the 1870-80's (Howard

& Jamieson (n.d.). According to Howard and Jamieson, the research paper was assigned to

develop student skills in research and argument and included the teaching of information literacy

skills. Additionally, according to Malenczyk, Miller-Cochran, Wardle and Yancey, (2018)

writing program development is often influenced by the data gathering, composition and production of documents by students who attend colleges and universities. This contributes to the importance of the task of preparing writing students to understand the strategies of good research writing.

Yet, as Howard and Jamieson (n.d.) observe, when students go to select and begin to read their research sources, instead of reading through their choices and engaging with the text, they appear to be searching only through the first few pages of a source that they have chosen, and in that process, are also only looking for usable quotations to include as valuable evidence to support their thesis (p. 240). According to the Blackwell-Starnes & Walker study of student researching techniques and strategies, (2017) it was concluded that there are "…gaps between these (student) perceived research skills and actual research skills used in academic research tasks" (p. 71). This points readers to conclude that many students are not well-prepared to perform this necessary function in producing a research paper.

What is connected to this observation is that the authors (Howard & Jamieson, n.d.) also report that students write in ways that suggest that they are not reading and analyzing their sources purposefully, and do so *without* the idea of imparting meaning, let alone extending to the point of asking complex and new questions (p. 271). This leads to the conclusion that, aside from the classroom lessons on honesty, paraphrasing, plagiarism, format, and how to cite sources, students also need to develop a better understanding of what research inquiry is, including how to select sources, how to read and analyze those sources and essentially, the value of their work.

Student attitudes toward writing can be affected by the experiences that they are provided in the classroom by teachers of writing. Adler-Kassner and Wardle (2016) write to the '*meta*

*concept*,' necessary for a rational deduction of writing as an activity and as a study (p. 15). The questions they pose are considered by faculty and students alike as having value to the writing process. These questions (Adler-Kassner and Wardle, 2016) include the conceptualizations of writing over time, the purposes and implications of writings, attitudes toward writing in specific contexts, approaches to production and motivations toward writing, and the impact of technology on writing (p. 15). This meta concept is presented as a 'threshold concept' through which instructors should attempt to provide insight and guidance for their students (p. 15). Imagine these questions and more flowing through students' minds as doubt-filled, undefined, and supposedly in-expressible ideas, resulting in confusion and constraints to a successful writing process that began with reading the requirements of the assignment on the course syllabus. No one instructor can gauge or guess questions students may have, particularly if the students are not sure of the questions themselves. And, in fact, many instructors create a sense of required expert-level writing, perhaps through their rubric or through the wording of the assignment in the syllabus, making the writing assignment difficult to initiate with confidence for some students.

**Locating and evaluating references**

Many students experience difficulty in the process of finding and evaluating source information with which to begin their writing task. Students generally understand that the references they seek to utilize for their research provide knowledge based upon the proficiency and authority of the reference source. Author knowledge is typically evaluated within its contribution to the context of the writing in which it is referenced. In this way, students begin their search for sources to defend and support their thesis statement. Through the successful evaluation of sources, evidence is constructed and contextualized. Teachers of writing often provide activities and experiences in the classroom that help to guide students in this process.

Juzwik and Cushman (2014) suggest that teachers facilitate a platform of discussion around

discourse topics in their classroom instruction in order to benefit the effectiveness of teaching

research and writing strategy (p. 92). This can support students' skills in interpreting and writing

from the sources they have selected around their research topic.

Jamieson and Howard (2013), indicate that "…writers can familiarize themselves with

rhetoric and a contextual analysis through learning to "talk" about their topic prior to their

constructing an argument" (p. 129). This teaching and learning strategy is accomplished through

and includes discussions and writings within the composition literature classroom. It is a process

that engages students actively and that points to the fact that the quotations they seek from

sources are not an adequate representation of their own thoughts around the topic. While writing

faculty value skills such as paraphrasing and summary, also of value is the need for students to

be familiar with constructing arguments, posing questions, and reflecting their thought processes

through an engagement with research material.

**Fostering student interpretation and inquisition**

Often, students are functioning under an assumption that there are only "correct" answers

without which consistently referring to their sources their writings will be in error. This is one of

the more unfortunate constraints that first-year college students and potentially even graduate

students may face. For example, as students interpret the claims of the sources and begin to

question these claims, sometimes the mere posing of previously unmentioned perspectives is not

favored by the instructors of the course.

Much information about the experiences that students have in conducting their research

can be learned through observations of student research activities. The Blackwell-Starnes and

Walker study (2017) of student research habits includes observations of students performing

actual research and contains video of research subjects and survey results in its conclusions. The range of student levels in the study are from first-year students to masters level participants. The findings of the study (Blackwell & Walker, 2017) indicate that of the ten students utilized in the study, most spent less than 15 minutes total time in locating their resources, and in fact, some stopped their search before the fifteen-minute time frame expired (p. 68). Further, these same students claimed that they had received adequate instruction through previous learning experiences in successfully locating appropriate resources for their writing task and in citing the internet as a valuable tool to use for searches (p. 68). Yet, only two of the ten students whose results were utilized in the study (Blackwell & Walker, 2017) report receiving any instruction in actually "working with" their source, once located (p. 70). In a similar study of 16 U.S. college and university first-year writing courses, Moore Howard, Serviss & Rodrigue (2010), (in Jamieson, 2013) found that "In addition to not summarizing their sources, our data suggest that many of the students whose papers we analyzed may not even have read beyond the first few pages of the source" (p. 114). This is also supported by Jamieson & Moore Howard (2013), who found that most of the quotations used by students were usually from the first or second page of the source.

This establishes the concern that students are not fully comprehending the text used as a resource, as suggested by Jamieson & Moore Howard (2013). Other similar study findings also point to students including citations and quotes without directly understanding what they have read. Hosier (2019) refers to this as problematic, partly because the time needed to teach the contextual nature of research and make connections to cognitively driven constructs related to context is lacking. Additionally, this constraint probably contributes to students' uncertainty in

selection of sources, including how to locate relevant and useful information within the text of their sources, and how to pose thought provoking questions around their topics.

Adler-Kassner & Wardle (2016) describe *threshold concepts* acquisition by students as not simply learning about a concept, but also their ability to define and use a concept or idea. This concerns students' understandings of an idea or concept beyond the ability to recite and recall, or even the ability to simply recognize basic concept applications. Here learning continues beyond basic concepts to consider students' abilities to utilize strategic and extended thinking in relation to the concepts involved. With respect to research writing, this can be related directly to the defining of issues, analyzing of source theories, making connections to investigations, comparing impetus and findings of research, and formulating and expressing conclusions and summaries. This seems a task laden with context and rhetorical analysis that requires experience and some degree of comfort level for writers, and to which information literacy study has a focus.

**Information literacy study toward improved student research writing**

The field of information literacy includes a Framework for Standards (ACRL, 2000, Appendix A). This chart helps teachers and library staff to see where the standards align with information literacy instruction. The major points of teaching and learning in a writing classroom are addressed in these standards (Appendix A). However, Hosier (2019) does mention that these standards do not respond to the value of context to the research process. It may then be likely that context is deemed a composition or literature classroom teaching and learning process, accomplished within the classroom setting by the teaching of a variety of reading and writing strategies.

In examination of the Framework and Standards, it becomes clear that information literacy staff are concerned with more than database searching techniques when working with students. To that end, staff are often asked to come to the composition classroom to conduct sessions on researching techniques. Rachel Scott (2016) speaks to the challenges faced in this type of encounter. Scott mentions firstly how easy research is with so many databases available to students, but she cautions that information search and retrieval also typically focuses on process and source evaluation. Scott (2016) highlights classroom pedagogy specific to problem-based learning and critical literacy as pertinent to learner competencies and uses of strategy in their engagement with sources. Additionally, Scott (2016) discusses a 'metaliteracy' defined as "…the integration of emerging technologies and multiple literacy types…." as providing a solid foundation from which to assist students in "knowledge construction" and "in learning with flexibility and awareness" (p. 134). The task then becomes a matter of guiding the process of research and inquiry along-side and as a component of the process of students' learning to read critically, to analyze and formulate questions, and to become empowered in their writings.

Student preparedness for research inquiry also depends upon levels and experiences that they may bring to the first-year writing class. College level academic research writing is considerably different from the guided teaching practice utilized in most high school settings. Many first-year writers experience constraints in the process that can be understood through the perspective of Vygotsky's constructivist theory of the zone of proximal development. As noted in Green's article on introducing (ACRL) framework concepts to first-year writing researchers, Green (2018), asserts that "Through student engagement and instructional exchanges, information literacy staff inform student learning experiences" (p. 3). It is possible that student challenges and reluctance to pass this threshold of writing experience is the result of the

limitations they experience, represented as a lack of knowing how to begin, or a floundering in finding a strategy for their inquiry and what to accomplish through the research process. One goal of information literacy instruction is to help students to be prepared to identify types of research sources while also valuing the context of the source. Through comprehension of author purpose and engagement with text, these skills are placed well within the understanding of the student.

Alice Horning (2011) in Jamieson (2013) writes that "…students should be taught meta-reading skills in discipline-based courses that are scaffolded to help them learn to read more effectively as they are also learning the vocabulary, concepts, and context of the discipline" (p. 7). This skill of reading is intrinsic to the ability to interpret sources in ways that respond to authority, and to pose arguments and valuable research points to an audience. Initial close work with sources and classroom practice in producing meaningful questions and responses to text prepares students to research and write successfully.

Estrem (2016) also contributes ideas toward an understanding of the need to teach writers to move beyond constraints and into higher order thinking processes in analysis and authoring. She writes that "While a writer identity can be constructed through writing in a variety of contexts, many first experience unfamiliar disciplinary (or professional) discourse in college" (writing courses) (p. 55). Guided discussions around interactions with modes and mediums, and influences and views on a variety of issues central to student exploration of topics and discourses may alleviate some of this type of unfamiliarity. This teaching theory is also supported by Tate et al., (2014), whereby teachers in the writing classroom facilitate functioning within a discourse through instruction that focuses on work with audience, purpose, perspectives and contexts within the content of student sources and their own writing, (p. 235). The ACRL Standards

(2000) also reflect this in the performance indicators and outcomes listed for Standards Two and Three (Appendix A), where vocabulary specific to the discipline of study, along with an understanding of the context and purpose of the resources utilized in research, align with information literacy concepts.

**Information literacy services offered at most colleges and universities**

At the University I attend, Bowling Green State University, Main Campus, the library staff offers guest lectures in an information literacy pre-search session format and a research session format. At my inquiry, Library staff Associate Professor Rob Snyder explains in an emailed response that he prepares materials for the students himself, "… as these are one-shot sessions and not semester-long courses where a textbook might be more appropriate." In his sessions, students can work on research projects with a librarian staff member available to help, or, for the pre-search sessions, students are taught in small groups working on topic selection and narrowing of the topic, keyword generation and database selections. Instructors select which session their students need and schedule this with library staff. Many college and university libraries offer such types of services and more.

Many teachers of first year college writers focus on a process learning of writing. Norgaard (2003) defines this as an "…exploring of writing as a recursive, goal-oriented, and problem-solving activity that involves a complex repertoire of strategies" (p. 127). He also adds a that high level of emphasis on student voice is often taught within a student-centered pedagogy. This can erroneously place the value of information literacy instruction into consideration as a strategy of process-writing. Norgard (2003) refers to information literacy further, as a "…vehicle for inquiry and meaning making" (pg. 127). The engagement is placed upon the skills

that information literacy promotes, rather than reflecting it as a step or a part of the process of writing (Norgard, 2003).

Teachers of writing may approach the research writing assignment somewhat differently within the classroom. Some teachers may create the assignment to write a research paper requesting students to select a limited number of resources in order to help them to better focus on reading and interpreting text. Instructors may provide specific sites from which sources are allowed for a research paper. Others may ask students to turn in their drafts after highlighting any of the writing that is their original thought (Tate et al., 2014). Some may teach through summary writing, or the teaching focus may be on multimedia genres for presentations of research findings, thereby allowing students to choose a mode of expression (or use one that has been assigned) that differs from the usual text format of the research paper assignment (Tate et al., 2014). This broadens opportunity for expression and the conveyance of ideas and questions to be presented alternatively, and perhaps reaches a wider audience in multiple ways. Additionally, students gain confidence and maturity in their writing, and acquire skills in analysis and connecting of concepts or issues relevant to their research.

Other teaching methods that reduce student experienced constraints in research writing assignments typically include the use of quick writes, journals, short responses, and investigative short writings and questionings based upon a variety of text during classroom instruction. Instructors may incorporate a pedagogy of strategies teaching to support successful outcomes. One such methodology is evidenced in the classroom handout "Twenty Questions About Writing Assignments" prepared by E. Shelly Reid (n.d.) (Appendix B). Here, Reid has prepared some twenty questions posed to writing students at the end of his teaching of the writing course and

before they begin writing in a content course classroom.  The questions concern purpose, audience, sources, formatting, style, discourse and voice.

To assist writing students in my courses, I designed a short activity around topic selection (Appendix B), created to initiate students' thinking prior to their searches for resources.  My consideration is that the sources are often thought of as the only needed or necessary tool for writing, which tends to overlook the student's own thought process from the start.  That thought process should ideally begin with the selection of the topic itself, then extend to the search for and reading of materials used for writing. This activity serves as a starting point for discussion and contributions to research process engagement strategies during classroom teaching and learning.

## Conclusion

Effective research strategies involve much more than information seeking from databases and skimming through sources to locate effective quotations.  It is much more than simply paraphrasing what has already been concluded as evidence by a reputable source. A need is seen by many teachers for changes in approaches to teaching research writing in ways that promote reflection and thought provoking questionings that lead to and from discourse rich analysis of the source materials that students who are writing these research papers are using to support their thesis.

Reference sources are the usual means for academic research (Green, 2018), and as such require that students can discern what information is valuable and then interpret that information. Novice learners may need guidance in the types and formats of sources relevant to their work. Once this is a "zone" of comfort to them, (Green, 2018) they are then comfortable in engaging with the text on a higher level, empowering them to produce effective and original writing work

(p. 11).  Information literacy is much more than instruction in a basic skill needed to begin a research paper project (Hosier, 2019). Teachers of writing may choose to incorporate information literacy study strategically into their classroom format along with the teaching of effective reading, discourse, and rhetorical strategy.  Through these teaching approaches, students have an increased opportunity to strengthen writing, experience fewer constraints, and become comfortable in the task of producing meaningful and appropriate writing.

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**Appendix A** ACRL Standards and Performance Indicators and Outcomes from Hosier,

"Research Is an Activity and a Subject of Study: A Proposed Metaconcept and Its Practical

Application." Page 50. ACRL Standards (2000), Performance Indicators and Outcomes for each

standard.

| TABLE 2 | |
|---|---|
| **Explicit References to Research Context and Discipline in the ACRL Standards** | |
| **Standard** | **Performance Indicator and Outcome** |
| Standard 1: The information-literate student determines the nature and extent of the information needed. | 2b: Recognizes that knowledge can be organized into disciplines that influence the way information is accessed<br><br>2e: Differentiates between primary and secondary sources, recognizing how their use and importance vary with each discipline<br><br>3b: Considers the feasibility of acquiring a new language or skill (such as foreign or discipline-based) to gather needed information and to understand its context |
| Standard 2: The information-literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently. | 2c: Selects controlled vocabulary specific to the discipline or information retrieval source<br><br>2f: Implements the search using investigative protocols appropriate to the discipline |
| Standard 3: The information-literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system. | 2d: Recognizes the cultural, physical, or other context within which the information was created and understands the impact of context on interpreting the information<br><br>4d: Tests theories with discipline-appropriate techniques (examples: simulators, experiments) |
| Standard 4: The information-literate student, individually or as a member of a group, uses information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose. | 1d: Manipulates digital text, images, and data, as needed, transferring them from their original locations and formats to a new context |
| Standard 5: The information-literate student understands many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally. | No explicit reference |

**Appendix B** Activities for Increasing Inquiry

"Twenty Questions About Writing Assignments, "By E. Shelley Reid.

And

"Focused Activities Toward Better Writing," by Natalie Johnson

Name _____ Course _____ Date _____

Once you have selected your topic, brainstorm what questions and the potential answers to those questions you will try to locate in your research.

Example One:

Topic: Investigating themes through blog posts.

Questions:
1. Who can write a blog? Who can respond to one?
2. What kinds of information can I find in a blog?
3. What is the blogger expected/expecting to accomplish?

Brainstorm some possible answers to these questions. What might you find in your research? Which area do you think you will find the most information? What will be your focus?

Example Two:

Topic: How much time do online students really spend on classwork each week?

Questions:
1. How (what method) should I use to find out the information that I need? How can I ensure accuracy in my findings?
2. What kinds of answers am I expecting to find?
3. How many people should I ask? Are there recommended sizes of research groupings?
4. What kinds of tasks am I looking to investigate?
5. What about student time spent actually logged onto the online site?

Assignment
Write your topic on a piece of paper (or the back of this paper), then devise at least three questions that you want to ask regarding this topic. Leave space below each question.

Next, you will write your responses to the questions and be prepared to discuss/turn in your answers.

Finally, locate three appropriate sources from the university library database and read through them, noting relevant points and highlighting and/or framing questions.

**Appendix C** Sampling of ACRL articles available to teachers and public

From: *Association of College and Research Libraries.* Framework Sandbox.

Below are listed four information literacy articles accessed data from over a six-month time period in 2019. The literacy articles were accessed by public domain (teachers, librarians, students, others) from the ACRL site. Included is a breakdown of key terms in the abstract of each paper.

List of Articles:

Dolinger, Elizabeth. (2019) Defining and teaching information literacy: Engaging faculty and the Framework. *College and Research Libraries News,* 80, 1. Pp. 10-21.

**Abstract**

For librarians at Keene State College, the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education solidified moving away from one-shot instruction sessions and toward initiatives that would better integrate information literacy into the curriculum. This approach meant moving away from the idea that librarians must be teaching information literacy and instead adapting the idea that faculty within the discipline are best positioned to teach information literacy through their disciplinary context.

Green, Kristin. (2018). Meet them in the proximal zone: Introducing framework concepts to "novice learners" using reference sources. *College and Research Libraries News,* 70,10. Pp.542-545.

**Abstract**

Striving to foster critical thinking and metacognition in relation to information literacy is the penultimate goal of instruction librarians. Yet, all effort to do so is futile if students are not being met in their own proximal zone of development. Within the descriptions, knowledge practices, and dispositions of the frames in the Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education,1 the "novice learner" is often referenced and compared to the "expert learner." So, while first-year college students begin their journey into higher education with varied levels of experiences in academic research and writing, many are these novice learners referred to within the Framework. Recognizing, and more importantly, accepting where these students are within their own levels of information literacy development can help to determine how to best scaffold instruction by using appropriate teaching tools and pedagogy.

Pullman, Ethan. (2018). Applying the Framework as a reflective tool: A teacher learner perspective. *College and Research Libraries News,* 79, 18. Pp. 416-18.

**Abstract**

If you teach information literacy (IL) according to the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education,[1]then you have been introduced to terms like knowledge *practices, dispositions,* and *troublesome* knowledge*.* You may have also read several articles debating the Framework (for a quick overview, read Lane Wilkinson's "The Problem with Threshold Concepts").[2] Regardless of where teaching librarians stand on the Framework, the discourse surrounding it doesn't adequately address its potential as a reflective tool (as opposed to addressing student learning alone). This is ironic when considering that, at its core, the

Framework's foundation is based in "critical self-reflection, as crucial to becoming more self-directed in [a] rapidly changing ecosystem."[3]

Van Hove, Allan. (2018). Who's left out of the conversation: The problem of marginalizing students in the scholarly conversation. *College and Research Libraries News,* 79, 6. Pp. 318-336.

**Abstract**
The description of the frame "Scholarship as Conversation" in the ACRL "Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education" states "[w]hile novice learners and experts at all levels can take part in the conversation, established power and authority structures may influence their ability to participate and can privilege certain voices and information." When I think about scholarship as conversation I wonder, who does this discussion exclude? Librarians often consider the role race, gender, and sexuality have in excluding people from the conversation, and these are extremely important issues to explore and work to equalize. However, there is another group whose voice is often marginalized in academia: students.

Frequency of requests by article
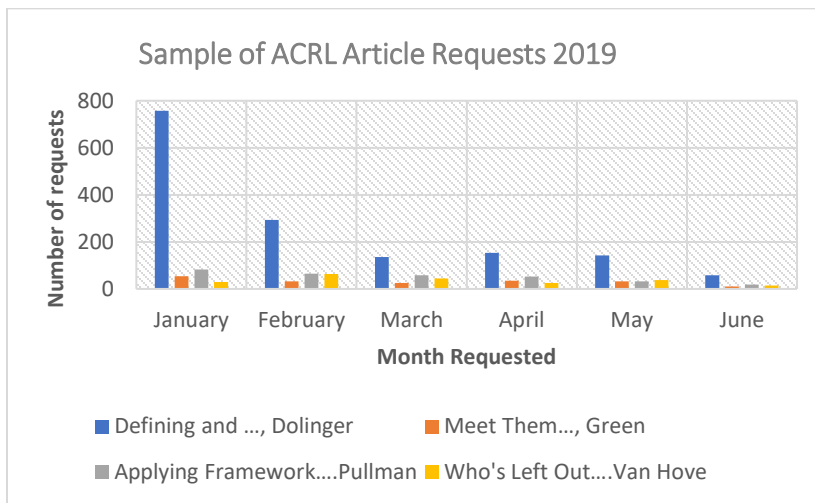


Frequently used terms by article abstract

| Abstract Key Terms by ACRL Article Requests 2019 | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Teaching or Instruction | Information Literacy | Research and Writing | Reflection | Marginalized | Knowledge |
| Defining and …, Dolinger | yes | yes | no | no | no | no |
| Meet Them…, Green | yes | yes | yes | no | no | no |
| Applying Framework….Pullman | yes | yes | no | no | no | Yes |
| Who's Left Out….Van Hove | no | Yes | no | no | yes | no |

Notes on Baudelaire, Modernity and *The Painter of Modern Life*

By Natalie Johnson

Baudelaire was a French author and poet who lived from 1821 to 1867. He is considered by many to be one of the first "modernist" vs. "romantic" writers. He is reputed by some to be the "father of modern art criticism." Baudelaire's works reflect his views on the prospects of humanity during the era and comment on his choice depictions in art and literature. During his lifetime, he was himself an observer of artistic works of writers, painters, and composers of music, all with notice of public perceptions and acceptances, the uses of the imaginative to perceive these works, and the status that artists' work found in society.

Although he scorned the idea of positivism, he did believe that a moral infinite summoned the universe (l'harmonie éternelle par la lute éternelle)" (Touya de Marrenne, 398). His writings are at times poignant, submerging the reader in the moment and in the human experience of the art of his poetry. Others of his works were found offensive in nature, demonstrating his breadth of insight into the potential elucidation of the human spirit, and sometimes revealing a "horror" of, or an aversion to situations and emotions, contrived or real. His commentary and observations brought to the artistic world the idea of modernism and situated its place in art and culture.

**On Modernism**

According to Habermas in "Modernity-An Incomplete Project" as cited in Norton's *Anthology of English Literature* (1577) modernism initially sought its meaning from an emotional current of intellectual existence qualified in the transition from antiquity to the present.  However, after the French Enlightenment, circa 1715-1789, which includes the French Revolution of 1789, reference to the ancients was not as significant.  Thus, the term "modernity"

took meaning from concepts of progress in knowledge, from stimulus derived in contemporary science, and in improved social and moral advancement. Avant Garde art emerges in opposition to the historical standards and concepts of what constitutes art and literature, exposing a "raw nerve" of vitality and humanity. Art is no longer a mirror of the artist, nor is literature the musings and confidences of the author. Art then becomes an aesthetic involvement for those who experience it.

To understand the theories and work of Baudelaire concerning his deliberations on aesthetics, it is important to understand the period's transformed attitudes from the perspective of existence and commentary on the present, to a focus to move forward as expressed through "metaphors of the vanguard, and the avant-garde" (Habermas 1582). Habermas (1581) describes the avant-garde as, "... (avant-garde) understands itself as invading unknown territory, exposing itself to the dangers of sudden and shocking encounters, (while) conquering a yet unoccupied future." Interpretations and observations of the reader and the artistic viewer were of more value than those of the author or the artist. The public could now place its' responses into the work of art or literature or choose to observe.

Modernism in art and literature is more of a reconciliation of humanity and social life than was previously created art and literature. It seems, however, a cautious leaving from romanticism and from what is historically considered "art" and "literature." For example, Baudelaire demonstrates his fascination with "modern life" in his admiration of the work of Constantine Guys and the relationship if Guy's work to Baudelaire's ideal of modern life as an artist who could meet the requirement of representing the (present) age to itself, complete with imaginative and heroic representations of what he saw as a "setting of moral and spiritual desolation" (Baudelaire xiv) **.** In examining the relationship between Baudelaire's theories and

his appreciation of Guys' paintings, we see a meaningful and definite connection to modern day society portrayed in the work of Monsieur Guys. (See Appendix A). Here, human beings are depicted in settings of activity and of purpose. This replaces older forms of art such as portraits, still life, and scenes of nature with vibrant and interactive typical scenes from trendy walks of life and newsworthy events.

A trend toward "art for art's sake" (Habermas as cited in Norton 1582) begins around the mid-19$^{th}$ century. Prior to that time, the concepts of beauty remained as refined during the Renaissance period. Now, art is shaped by the subjective experience of the artist. However, Habermas asserts that by the time of Baudelaire's work, this art distances into "art as a critical mirror, showing the irreconcilable nature of the aesthetic and the social worlds" of society" (Habermas 1583), that is intent on demonstrating differences between aesthetics and the current social world. No longer does "art imitate life" on a complimentary scale. Instead, art now has the capacity to cast questions and to critique. Habermas suggests, (1584) that a "false negation" of culture, in which theorists' attraction to partake for the sake of 'modernity' (innovation or newness) is lessened by the ability to interact with the existence of aesthetics through moral and practical perceptions. Thus, the saying "To each his own" does not necessarily preclude sameness, nor a lack of it.

**Reflections on the Self and Others**

In Foucalt's "What is Enlightenment," he considers Baudelaire's "The Painter of Modern Life," and describes the work as exhibiting a "philosophical ethos of beliefs and ideology defined by an interpretation of oneself." (McCall 140). Thus, this "modernity" (avant-gardism) becomes an "ethical task of self-articulation," to which self-cultivation tempts those who wish to become "modern" in their philosophies, theories, and work (McCall 140-141). In his writing,

Foucault notes that the concept of modernity means, to Baudelaire, taking a stance on the modern, and seizing a break with tradition.

In Baudelaire's era, the city of Paris is a modern city, constantly in motion. The artists of the time referred to Paris as "la ville qui remue," or the "city of constant movement." New buildings are erected, people move about busily and anonymously, and there are streets and side streets, theaters, shops, and squares of activity. Although certainly not a representative scene of "nature," as previously epitomized in art, this life has a quality of its own. To the city dweller, one's natural self is found traveling in crowded streets of people, teeming with urbanity and modern-ness; anonymity and society, existing connected yet crammed with crowds of unknowns. "La rue assourdissante autour de moi." "The street around me is deafening," as Baudelaire describes modern city life in his poetry (Newmark 17).

Baudelaire's work included translation of the works of his American contemporary, Edgar Allan Poe, into the French language. Poe, famous for his macabre and mystery, touches on the concept of observation and aloneness, connecting to modernity in art through imagination and personal aesthetic sense. For example, in his work "The Telltale Heart" the narrator is both the teller of the story and the individual about whom it is written. And, conversely, around the same time England's Charles Dickens wrote an often-bleak portrait of Victorian under-class in animated and unambiguous words and settings.

Both Baudelaire and Charles Dickens wrote of the city life, and of the view of it as seen by the *flâneur,* whose purpose, it may seem, is to separate the author from "ownership" of the voyeurism or "observing," but yet to share the "view" (of humanity or sometimes the absence thereof). Of the *flâneur,* "He maintains a degree of distance with the urban spectacle and turns into a detached observer who experiences society in his own way," (Cabanes 114).  Humanity is

presented in varying and often odd circumstances in some of the works of Dickens and of Poe.

Behind the concept of the *flâneur* lies the idea that "the whole may not be the sum of its parts,"

as any number of interpretations and situations are described, yet much is also left out. What is

more, Dickens compares London to Paris, and finds Paris inferior, suggesting that one may be

more socially or culturally advanced than the other.

**Art and Beauty**

Baudelaire (1) with reference to art, "The past is interesting not only by reason of the

beauty which could be distilled from it by those artists for whom it was the present (time), but

also precisely because it is the past, for its historical value." He writes of the beauty of time and

place and of the persona of the human figure as accessible and temporal in the art of the past. It

is from the relationship of art with history that he develops his theory of beauty in art, and thus

connects this with the present, including the duality of the eternal, and the elements of the day.

Baudelaire suggests each era or time, while considering itself modern and progressive,

eventually becomes history. He refers to painters as artists and poets, and as observers and

philosophers of the passing moment and of eternity.

According to Mayne (12) Baudelaire believed that each nation and each age held its own

beauty, analyzed into two separate elements: the eternal beauty that is common to all, and the

transitory beauty that changes with the feelings of each age. He (Baudelaire) also posits that

without the co-existence of both elements, beauty would not exist at all (Mayne 12). According

to Baudelaire, the modern artist's task is to afford strength to the incidental element of fashion,

including morality and emotions.  In McCall (151) we read that, with reference to the two

elements of beauty, "…this dualism conformed to the natural dualism of the human being

understood as the conjunction of body and soul."  McCall (142) goes on to state that

"Baudelaire's philosophical prelude already shows the reader that it will be impossible to discuss art without discussing the individual who makes the art, understood as that individual who defines him-or herself in terms of this creation." This includes the artist or the author as a part of humanity, which is fortunate for the sake of advancement of the arts and sciences as a human experience, and as for humanity of the age in which it exists.

Baudelaire's critique of art, according to Mayne (18) supports his belief in the integrity of art in and of itself as separate from politics, philosophy or archaeology, and representative of principles of life found nowhere but "in the soul of the artist." He rejected ideas of realism and positivism, considering these as antitheses of the imagination.  Baudelaire writes. "(Art) It is the creation of an evocative magic containing at once the object and the subject, the world external to the artists and the artist himself." (Mayne 16).  This theory certainly lends itself well to the idea that Romantic beauty is illustrative of wit and humanity, and consequently suggests the reason that Baudelaire is referred to as "The father of modern art criticism." (Mayne 18).

**Writings**

In discussing Baudelaire's poems, Walter Benjamin, as well as many others, describe Baudelaire's "modernity" as a "shock experience." Baudelaire was not delicate in his treatment of perspective and symbolism. "To encounter the other in Baudelaire is to undergo a loss of self." (Benjamin as cited in Newmark 17). A part of his seeming negativism and his "shocking" references may have been due to his physical condition, which led to his early death.

Baudelaire's elements of "shock" and "surprise" (Mayne 10) is also noted in a somewhat different and less intense assessment, as he himself writes of the initial "shock" or "wonder" onlookers experience in first viewing a work of art, followed by an examination and analysis of the work's *why* and *how*, which subsequently results in the acquisition of knowledge around the

artwork and its meaning.  It is important to note that Baudelaire lived at a time when past artistic

norms were no longer viable and history was in the process of being replaced with "wit,

anecdote, and erudition." (Mayne 11).  Moreover, Baudelaire describes this Romanticism as

"modern" art that is "…intimacy, spirituality, color, aspiration towards the infinite, (and is)

expressed by every means available to the arts." (Baudelaire as cited in Mayne 11).

Baudelaire invented the phrase "the painter of modern life" in description of his favorite

artist Constantin Guys, an illustrator for British and French newspapers and a watercolor artist.

Here Baudelaire seems to find an epitome of his idea of the two elements of art: "eternal, and

circumstantial or contemporaneous" (Thirwell 46). Baudelaire refers to Guys' paintings as "(of)

the fleeting moment and of all that it suggests of the eternal."  Baudelaire seems to appreciate the

modernity of human representation in Guys' work, along with the representation of ceaseless

qualities of human existence. Further, as Baudelaire has claimed he wants nothing really to do

with art that is representative of nature (but not of human nature, perhaps), then certainly Guys'

painting and drawings suit his definition of modern art of the time.  Guy is observant of people's

existence in a variety of forms, as his position for newspapers would require him to be just that –

an observer (painter) of modern life.

**"The Painter of a Modern Life" by Baudelaire**

Baudelaire in *The Painter of a Modern Life* writes of Monsieur G., who is Monsieur

Guys, the newspaper illustrator and watercolor painter, as a "flâneur" or observer, but whom he

at first did not consider an "artist." To Baudelaire, Monsieur G. is one who has passion for

sensitivity and who abhors the blasé; who is an energetic spectator of life enjoying his position as

an incognito while rejoicing in life as he sees it.  He declares when Monsieur G. misses an early

morning because he is sleeping, he will rise and regret the lost hours of gorgeous morning light

and activity that he could have witnessed that day. Further, Monsieur G. is said to give "historical personality" to his drawings, adding, "The moral reflections and considerations provoked by an artist's drawing are in many cases the best translation of them that criticism can make…." (29).

**Baudelaire on Poe**

In Baudelaire's "Essay on Edgar Allan Poe" he writes of Poe as an incredible poet and author, yet these words themselves are missing from his description of Poe, even though it is obvious to the reader that he thinks highly of him. He describes Poe as Bohemian, jinxed, misunderstood, and unappreciated. In fact, Baudelaire concedes in any number of lively and descriptive words that Poe did not enjoy living in the United States, and that he was greatly unappreciated, to say the least. He writes that Poe despises materialism and the concept of "progress," while Baudelaire himself derides positivism (73).

Baudelaire translated many of Poe's tales into French and introduced Poe to others. In fact, because of these introductions, an admirer of Baudelaire, a young French poet Mallarmé, learned English to read Poe's works. Baudelaire and Mallarmé considered Poe's theory of poetry one that "…privileged the aesthetic over the moral, the beautiful over the true and the artistic effect over authorial intention."

Although a drinker, Poe is described as socially assured and polite. Baudelaire writes of him as "marked by Nature with a special vigor of temperament upon those of whom she expects great things…." (83). He speaks of Poe's style of writing as "eccentric, urbane and precise, (90) urging the reader to the end, unfolding in a "thrilling and terrible manner…all that is exceptional in a moral order." He also writes, "This child of a nation (the United States) more self-infatuated than any other, has clearly seen and dispassionately asserted "the wickedness of man." (91).

Here, we see the artist as the observer, yet as hidden from the work and from himself, while expressing varying and expressive forms of human interpretations within his writings.

Poe and Baudelaire share a commonality of a focus on the solitary person and his or her thoughts, mainly with respect to others and to objects and impressions evoked by elements of the immediate surroundings, as in the case of Baudelaire. In the case of Poe, man's conscious and actions, or lack thereof, conflict with his thoughts. Baudelaire utilized a theory of the grotesque in his work, referring to it as the "absolute comic." Thus, rather than a commentary of art and moralism, it is simply just unqualified *grotesque*, and, by virtue of a paradox to an awareness of understanding or of assimilation, it becomes just as it is; that is, grotesque.

In "A Une Passant," a poem from the collection *Les Fleurs du Mal* (Baudelaire 1857), a man observes a woman passerby and thinks to himself how they could have been lovers, had they met. Poe's *The Raven* (1845), concerns a young man who laments the loss of his love, slowly driving himself mad with the repetitive thought of the loss of her. Thus, the *who* and the *what* of these poets is made obvious, at least situationally. These "connections" do not appear to be dissociative disorders, but rather an intellectual and poetic form of irony (Philippov 5). Referring to some of both Poe and Baudelaire's tales and poetry, Harter (33) strongly expresses this irony of the subject of the work as "…a form of himself that is 'mad,' but that does not know its own madness," or, as a "…reflection on madness from the inside of madness itself." One might guess that each is distraught over love and loss of love, both in family and marriage, or in relationships; with one dying from alcoholism complications (Poe) and the other from a serious illness (Baudelaire). Hence, the irony found in their writings that so profoundly speaks of man's own loneliness and/or his irrational and disturbed thoughts or actions, appears, in part, possibly

prompted by a not at all benevolent surrender to troubles and circumstances caused or affected by others.

Farrant and Urakova (159) write of Poe and Baudelaire, in comparing *The Raven* and *Le Cyne* (The Swan), as authors who utilize, "…. dialects of presence and absence, plenitude and abjection, relativity and transcendence." They describe both author's works as "uncanny" and as the epithet of the known yet unknown, as "ambivalent, anxious, neurotic responses to experience." They suggest that Poe and Baudelaire "mirror" each other, yet never met. This opposition or dichotomy is exhibited in Baudelaire's didactic writings, while Poe's are completely the opposite, and are concerned not at all with covetousness or morality.

**Structuralism and Post-Structuralism relative to Baudelaire's work**

At the time of Baudelaire's life, literature, art and interpretations of beauty were not yet subject to ideas of structuralism, and eventually, post-structuralism. In Barthes (Norton 1317), structuralism as an examination of text and meaning was not a part of Baudelaire's time. However, criticism of his work from a structuralist viewpoint indicates that in seeking an explanation of the work (Norton 1322) we find the author is a failure at representing himself within it. That is, he does not write about himself to the reader. In this way, Baudelaire perhaps fits the structuralist theory in that he allows the language to speak in his writing in form and function. Historically, this move may be considered a part of the modernism of the changing times in art and poetry where, before Baudelaire's writings, the author held a more prominent voice in his or her writings, perhaps as "confidant."

Baudelaire was reputed to enjoy form found in music. His work "Les Fleurs du mal" is said to be a "…moral and allegorical representation of the world, a quasi-musical harmony of forms, rhythms and sounds…" (Touya De Marenne 398). In his 1971 "From Work to Text"

Barthes (as cited in Norton, 1330) writes in his propositions, "The (T)text requires that one try to abolish…the distance between writing and reading, in no way by intensifying the projection of the reader into the work, but by joining them in a single signifying practice." Barthes dispelled the structuralist views in his analysis of theory of text and was a part of post-structuralist theory.

Baudelaire's works are extensive modernism, defending existence and the attitudes of human nature, yet true to the common and conceivable conditions of "l'homme" (mankind) throughout. Much of his work theory is respected. His oeuvre in the idea of modernism provide an interesting and sometimes attentive perspective.

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Attachment A - Works by Monsieur Guy from "The Painter of Modern Life." Here the artist paints public scenes in real-life depictions.
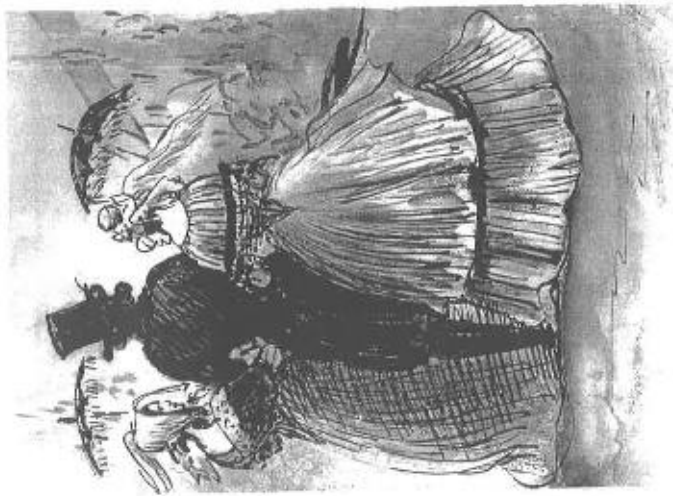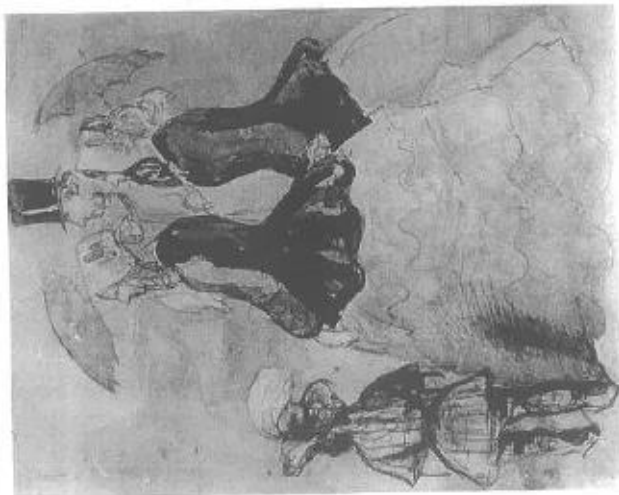
Expressivist Theory: A Literature Review

By Natalie Johnson

**Abstract**

Expressivist theory can be defined as a counterapproach to traditional methods of composition learning and doing.  The expressivist classroom consists of learning and engagement involved in a practice that fosters self-expression and contemplation through the act of writing.  The writer is valued and is imaginative with growth and development occurring in conscious and socially relevant ways.  Traits of the pedagogy of expressivist theory include freewriting, journals, reflective writing, peer review, revision, and group dialogue, all with the purpose of promoting the writer's development through somewhat innovative methods.

There is some argument around whether expressive writing is allowable and/or useful in writing curricula that *relies* heavily on research writing. In his review of Hawk's 2007 "A Counter-History of Composition: Toward Methodologies of Complexity" cited in Miller in *Rhetoric Review* (2010), Miller writes to Hawk's statement that composition writing courses typically "had a concentration of rhetoric and composition pedagogy" (p. 210).  Miller notes composition studies as becoming increasingly difficult to sustain a connection to rhetoric's "historical continuities" (p. 211).  Miller also describes Hawk's theories as offering expressivist writing pedagogy as challenging of a traditional rhetoric through a "collective knowing," and included expressive writing described as "attending to the interconnectedness of (writer) experience" (p. 210). Further, since the recognition of expressivist theory composition pedagogy, there have been many published contributions toward the relevance of this writing theory. Teachers of writing and composition theory find expressivist writing useful in engaging students, as well as increasingly valuable in recognizing current issues and authorities, while also highly

relevant in the scope of social experiences.  This writing theory appears to have not lost its impact on teaching of writing and composition but has rather seemingly carved itself a valuable function in the modes of first year writing courses and other types of writing to communicate.

## Introduction

Expressivist theory is not a new theory of writing teaching.  Having its start sometime in the 1970's or slightly prior, some of the teaching methodologies of expressivist theory have found their way into many writing classrooms as an accepted part of the current curriculum. Rather than a traditional reliance upon grammar and stylistic rules and a use of researched sources as authorities on topics, the expressivist writer is encouraged to utilize a rhetoric formulated by the writer's own language, knowledge and experiences.  The writer becomes the center of this theory, with the writer's voice active, even in research writing (Burnham & Powell, 2014).  In expressivist theory composition, the writer is encouraged to participate in the process of writing both as an author and as an audience or a spectator, free to explore for shaping of ideas and use of language. As writers consider the dichotomy among paradigms of their professional and their personal experiences, they can write maturely and can become able to attach an academic discourse that resonates with the value of the content.

### Expressivist Pedagogy

Expressivist writing theory encompasses multiple perspectives and approaches to an individual locus of writing and its potential positionality.  Leake (2015) proposes "…an understanding of critical expressivist theory that builds upon critical empathy to examine personal understanding and identity within a network of social and affective connections" and mentions that there are extremes to the concept of expressivist writing from one end of the spectrum consisting of "uninhibited, free writing" to the opposite with the inclusion of

transactional writing theory (pg. 149).  It is also mentioned in many other writings about this theory that it has evolved somewhat, influenced by contrasts to creative writing, process writing, and to uses in social constructs, author self-exploration, discourse and inclusion of research and rhetoric.  This evolution may be, in part, a response to changes in social constructs, along with changes in ways and modes of communication and resolution of issues.

Writing from a subjectively informed perspective is frequently considered as contrary to traditional theories of analytical composition.  In "Don't Call it Expressivism: Legacies of a Tacit Tradition" (2017), Goldblatt cites social theorists such as Berlin and Bartholomae, whom he states saw expressivist theory as focusing too much on the individual, while seemingly missing the required focus on a topic of analysis (p. 440)..  Further, Rysdam (2015) writes to the concept that many students now attend college to have a better chance at becoming employed when they graduate.  She refers to teaching some students who are unprepared for college at a somewhat developed level of experience as "low-stakes" writers, for whom the concept of expressivist writing may be beneficial (p. 281). For most classroom teaching purposes, it is certainly an option to consider the levels of students in the class as affecting the types of writing demands that will be made of them.  In addition, Rysdam (2015) writes to a concept that expressivist writing engages students because it connects and appeals to their own experiences, while also engaging them in mindful self-exploration and discovery as writers.

"What we do is encourage students to bring words to bear on their experiences, to ground their writing in their lives, to be responsible for their words, and to be responsible to the community in which they are reading, writing, and responding" O'Donnell as quoted by Goldblatt in "Don't call it Expressivism: Legacies of a Tacit Tradition" (2017).  This, Goldblatt adds, could be the standard answer of teachers of any writing pedagogy (p. 439).  However, he

connects this statement to expressivist theory and social constructivism writing directly in the features required to compose. Goldblatt (2017) writes to four "legacies" of expressivist writing theory: individual voice, social character and linguistic resource, active position toward social/political groups, and professional and teaching stakeholders (p. 443). Goldblatt (2017) adds this valuable and succinct concept, "Recognizing that expressivism is not gone but woven into our present, ways of understanding writers and writing will add to our core strength as a discipline faced with daunting social, administrative, and intellectual challenges in the American and global literacy scene" (p. 440).

*Expressivist theory and creative writing*

Individualized and creative writing tasks can be supportive of fostering student agency and may promote community engagement on issues and concerns. Sumpter (2016, web) compares the teaching of creative writing with the teaching of expressivist writing. He writes of the teaching of creative writing as a rather detrimental process that "…results in a gradual accrual of uninformed praxis." His concern is over the techniques and tools that are used in teaching composition that are lost in the creative writing process. The concept here is that while an expressivist theory is concerned with social constructivism and can overlap or mesh with creative writing in that respect, they are not the same.

Sias (2014) writes to the recent trends in the uses of expressivist writing. As he states (2014) "So as the term shall be used here, 'ethical non-cognitivism' names any view that combines semantic non-factualism and psychological non-cognitivism, with respect to ethical claims" as he is referring to the writings of authors who are expressing such views around issues and social constructs as basically factual or opinionated, based upon experience or conjecture (web). Sias also writes (2014) to a "hybrid-expressivism," which essentially states "…that is

that we might be able to secure all of the advantages of both expressivism *and* cognitivism by allowing that ethical claims express both non-cognitive *and* cognitive mental states" (web). While these conclusions might be considered a natural result of writing in this theory, this does raise a question to the basis for interpretation of writer's work, whether simply as self-expression, or as based upon or existing as fact.

*The act of reflecting on writing in expressivist theory*

Expressivist theory is often considered a writing theory in which authors use their own individual voice to create and to expand as writers. Composition and making meaning intertwine in the process of expressivist writing; while understanding leads to action. Writers "see the subject" through the writing as it evolves and is rehearsed and revised (Burnham and Powell, 2014). Shared action that occurs through reflection on the writing is beneficial in discussions on current and socially relevant concepts and ideas. Many teachers of high school and middle school classes are likely to incorporate some of these practices in the teaching of writing, in part to engage students and to encourage exploration of thought processes and critical thinking skills, and to foster growth in writers through reflection.

One such example is cited in Goldblatt (1980) as teacher and pedagogist Sondra Perl (1980), author of "Understanding Composing" in *College Composition and Communication* whom Goldblatt associates more with the "original" movement in process writing than with expressivist theory, travels with her writers to Austria to write about Nazi Germany. The students tour the area and are to write about the experience. As the students prepare to write, they converge their thoughts of anger, doubt, and fear as reflective writing in action. Here, Goldblatt terms the language as expressivist, as the "focus is not on the individual." This is the social-constructivist platform from which current expressivist theories emerge.

*Expressivist theory and epistemic rhetoric*

Thus far, it likely appears to many of us that expressivist writing and epistemic rhetoric are not co-existing theories. Epistemic rhetoric is often defined as knowledge from researched authors that determines rhetoric used in writing. However, in his thesis, John Schell (2015) suggests that the theories of expressivist and epistemic writing can and do successfully blend to allow "student voice, critical awareness and social/cultural implications of their work" (p. 1). He suggests that each utilized individually does not offer the best theory of writing for students. He writes of the value of student perspectives on the analysis of rhetoric in reading and writing as contributing to composition coursework.

Expressivist writing can prove to be an effective assessment of issues, their social impact, and topic relevancy to current research. Bryant as cited in "Critical Expressivism: Theory and Practice in the Composition Classroom," (2015) writes: "In our scholarship one cannot "be both or and" because the significant scholars in our field have said that a social epistemic view of writing precludes an expressive and cognitive view of writing (p. 3).. However, as I work with the myriad of writers in my classes from first-year writing to graduate thesis writing, I experience writers thinking and composing in various paradigms." In her teaching, Bryant (2015) advocates helping students incorporate theory through an understanding of writing as a social and expressive experience, and by posing author/reader questionings such as "Do your readers need this information to understand your research?" when students ask if they should include a quote or segment of research data (p. 3).

*Blending of theories – Expressivist and feminist*

Multiple perspectives in composition can be explored through a variety of teaching and learning strategies. Bessette (2002) talks of writing from memory and the role this has in

expressivist writing. She points us to a value of experience writing for students that also impacts

from a social and feminist perspective as cited in Hesford "Framing Identities: Autobiography

and the Politics of Pedagogy" (1999), where: "Instead, she advocates autobiographical acts that

attend to the "social signifying practices shaped and enacted within … ideologically encoded"

social and historical forces" (p. 79). Student voice helps to shape perceptions and analysis in

feminist and other theories. Feminist pedagogy is positioned within the domain of social justice

exploration and analysis in the classroom. Students are encouraged in expressivist theory to

value, write about, explore and learn from their experiences in autobiographical writing and in

writing/analysis. This connects expressivist writing with feminist theories through teaching and

learning according to Micciche, as cited in *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies* (Tate et al.,

2014) (p.143)..

*Expressivist writing across the content areas*

One such area of content writing that benefits greatly from expressivist theory is in the

field of psychology. Just as the writing group who visited Austria felt compelled to share out

and discuss thoughts prior to composing their writings, each had their own interpretation and

need to connect with others to validate their experience. According to Goldblatt (2017 "In other

words, the individuals are contending with expectations and constrictions that include the well-

intentioned aims of the advocacy group, but they need most of all to choose their own mode and

content of expression if they are to exert agency in an otherwise oppressive situation" (p. 456).

Journaling about conflicting ideas, challenges, sorrows and grief and other types of

stressors is a beneficial well-being strategy for writers. For example, when tragedy strikes a

community, teachers often assist students in expressing their concerns around the event through

discussions and writings. Additionally, in a recent study on the psychological benefits of

writing, Troop, Chilcot, Hutchings and Varnaite (2013) find that expressive writing lessens

negative outcomes, reduces self-doubt and provides positive outlooks on life goals.   This type of

writing allows the author to focus on his or herself and requires the formulation of a perspective

of a situation which the author then attributes to potentials and realizations.  The study asked

participants to write about their goals in life, not necessarily on a professional level, but more of

a personal level.  The authors of the study were able to pinpoint the use of emotional wordings as

either positive or negative showing an improved outlook for those utilizing positive words, as

well as those using cognitively based words such as "because" or "cause" and "think" and "to

consider" (p. 376).  This exercise is introspection allowed the authors to reflect on their own self-

appraisal and to share thoughts and conceptualization of their reality.

## Conclusion

Perhaps initially perceived as a relatively new pedagogy, expressivist theory of writing

finds itself as a healthy contribution to social conversations and the generating of ideas through

connected writings and shared opinions.  Certainly, in an environment that must promote

freedom of speech, it makes some sense to incorporate methodologies in writing that allow for

that same freedom, and to guide the course somewhat through processes such as growth and

"experimental" language that help to formulate understandings.  From a research perspective,

given a certain issue, this type of writing could promote examination of group opinions, trends,

movements, or changes in the climate of one issue or another.  This is of value in intent and

purpose as writers participate in an ongoing meaning-making writing process, focusing on issues

and questions, and exploring language and meaning.  The teaching of this type of writing can be

variable in topic, scope and uses, whether in the classroom, or the community.  Much of the

continuity of expressive writing is facilitated through introspection and discussions in the

classroom. Students can become empowered as agents of change, connecting on issues and concerns. They may also be challenged and given voice to face those challenges on events and issues that affect their lives and their communities on many levels.

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Teaching of Social Constructs Through Graphic Novel Study: Challenge Factors

by Natalie Johnson

**Introduction**

Expanding literacies in the middle and high school classroom often include teaching and

learning through reading and analysis of graphic novels. A graphic novel is defined by the

author's utilization of both visual and textual content to convey a narrative of fictional, nonfictional or anthological composition. Graphic novels are usually somewhat lengthy chronicles as compared to comic books, which may extend over several issues. In the graphic novel format, panels and lines or borders that contain the panels called frames provide visual images. These are usually hand or computer generated and are accompanied with text in the form of character or narrator dialogue.

Graphic novels are oftentimes written to engage readers with historical accountings of memorable and/or tragic events as experienced through the eyes of the persons involved. Rather than presenting a comic or cartoonish form of reader entertainment, the topic may be serious in nature, true, realistic, and/or tragic in subject. Graphic novels may be compiled by the author as a venue to share information from a cultural and/or sociological perspective that focuses on the author's experiences in a situation of an extraordinary or exceptional nature. The experiences of young readers in middle and high school literature classrooms often benefit from meaning making of historical or other types of accountings in text and images through graphic novel study. This learning is accompanied with specific and guided teaching toward a critical analysis pedagogy applicable to reader responses. This paper explores classroom uses of the graphic novel through an examination of teaching around issues concerning culture awareness, social justice, and agency of change.

The appeal of the graphic novel

The format of graphic novels makes them appealing reading material for young readers. They resemble comic books in a format that compels readers to interact with the text. Engagement of struggling readers is more easily accessed using graphic novel text through the accompanying visuals, while teachers create activities around the novel to work on symbolism,

characterization, and discussions (Hinds, 2019). The appeal to the student is not difficult to gauge, as the pictorial images convey mood, simulate actions, suggest outcomes and help to move the story forward, while the text validates the readers inferences within the context of the panels.  Through this process, critical reasoning is stimulated as the story develops and circumstances take place.

According to Boerman-Cornell, Jung and Manderino (2017), graphic novels are useful not only in the literature classroom but in any academic area because they offer opportunity to incorporate "…critical thinking, media literacy, multimodal understanding and new interpretive approaches for students"  (p. 25). In support of interpretative qualities, the graphic novel contributes to the formation of images while reading, which is an integral part of the cognitive process of comprehension in construing text.  Students apply visual literacy through learning to interpret and analyze images (Hecke, 2011).  The associated text further expresses and verifies that imagery, sometimes in a profound and descriptive manner.  This aids learners in the comprehension of the topic through a multimodality of presentation.  Students benefit from the opportunity to focus on instruction and discussion concerning visual interpretations.  The potential for symbolism through this combined media is pronounced, yet, in the case of a nonfictional or a historical accounting, the use of symbolism as allegory should not be confused with the realities depicted by the author's choice of frame content.

Graphic novels may be designed to inform and persuade (Schwartz, 2016). Graphic novels can be useful in community-based learning by connecting what is taught in schools with issues in the surrounding community in social and historical contexts. They can be utilized in the classroom to convey social issues, provide historical fictional and nonfictional narratives, explore scientific thinking and practice, and represent understandings in math or science content.

For example, a review of the utilization of a graphic novel entitled *Whose Community is This?*

*Mathematics of Neighborhood Displacement* (Gutstein, 2019) discusses a high school teacher

who provides his students a study of mathematics and justice in combination (Comber, 2015),

thus supporting students with understandings and channels for complex analyses of content and

social issues.  Many other subjects are representable in graphic novels, such as social issues,

schoolwide and community interactions, and sociology.  Diversity and issues of belonging and

differences can be explored through graphic novel material with which students can relate

experiences and values determinations.  From the standpoint of critical literacy and social justice

teaching, the graphic novel can provide a venue to define issues and to explore social legitimacy.

Comber (2015) cultivates a social justice pedagogy that incorporates students as

researchers of language, includes a respect for students' resistance and cultural constructs of

literacy, and considers the problematizing of classroom and public texts (p. 363.  Here, the

problems of using graphic novels that deal with these issues and the problems facing teachers of

social justice issues are defined.  Comber speaks to language as powerful yet as needing

definition for and by students in order to support their understanding of a social literacy.  The

graphic novel seems well-suited to attend to some of these significant concerns.  I suggest that on

some levels, the graphic novel can surpass expectations around these concerns by providing

students with the potential for developing resiliency and an understanding of the power of

ideologies, while focusing on issues and involvement at a practical level of agency toward

change.  Through guided inquiry and examination of topics presented in this format, teachers can

minimize and unclutter student constraints in the construction of meaning while building on

comprehension skills and applications of knowledge.

Graphic novels are often illustrated with purpose and intention by the authors. Choice of scenes and language provide the setting and story line. A balance of text topic and artistic illustration is ideal in the selection of graphic novels for the classroom (Bucher & Manning, 2004). It is important to carefully select text for classroom use, and especially to read through the text before assigning it to students. A recommendation of previewing the text with the students in preparation for a critical analysis would be well-taken, given the sometimes-complex content as it relates to the subjects and/or the narrator's experiences, visual images and potential reactions from readers. Given this consideration, the graphic novel can be exceptional as a choice for young readers toward an appreciation of others' cultures and an understanding of history,

Teaching social issues

The teaching of social issues is not an easy or superficial responsibility assumed by teachers in middle- and high-school classrooms. In a study by Delane Bender-Slack (2010), 22 secondary teachers were interviewed in a study of concerns such as defining social justice, student responses to teaching, safety issues in the classroom, topics choices, text selection, locating deeper meaning in text, and engaging students (p. 183). From this standpoint, Bender-Slack (2012) suggests promoting a "cultural theory of teacher agency" in which teachers are empowered to assist students in examining a less passive view of their heritage of culture, along with a more effective use of the commodities of a community (p. 186). A promoting of the values and perceptions of daily life models this expectation for students and has the potential to become an empowering and external direction of agency and voice. Students can express relevant experiences through the production of scenes and images while building plot, constructing realistic dialogue, and creating meaningful character portrayals.

The way the words and images in a graphic novel interact to make meaning is referred to as "picture/text-hybridity" (Boerman-Cornell, Jung & Manderino, 2012), and is considered both within each individual panel, and from panel-to-panel (p. 74). In this way, the images and text complement each other to extend meaning. Through a reinforcing of reader imagery and text meaning making, the reader enters a "flow state" that allows them to develop an "…intense, situational interest in that relationship (which may remind them of some aspects of their own lives" (p. 78). While teachers may encourage some identification with characters in order to critically analyze plot, setting, dialogue, literary devices and characterizations, there is a caution that some text involves topics around issues of racial tension, crime, or genocide. Because of this, some texts are not appropriate classroom material for certain student age groups, and therefore care should be taken in their selection. Teachers can prepare younger students to examine the text from more of a historical perspective in order to decrease any anxiety around these themes. For example, one study of readers response (Schieble, 2011) found that student readers of the graphic novel *American Born Chinese* constructed characters feelings of racial and cultural inferiority as "a matter of the individual person involved, rather than as a result of institutional patterns of exclusion" (p. 202). From a social studies perspective and from a historical point of instruction and analysis, that type of response would be erroneous and should be cautioned against. Social injustice does not select sole individuals to react, be victimized or to respond to larger issues

Graphic novels provide thought-provoking learning experiences and descriptive media on real events. Since the recounting of historical events does not always consist of equitable, standardized or objective facts, we can understand it better through descriptive retellings of the events that occurred. Graphic novels composed by real-life participants in historical episodes are

an excellent first-hand accounting of experiences and events the author conveys through interviews and storytelling.

Topics and methods of teaching using the graphic novel

It makes sense to inspire and to encourage students in ways that support them as agents of change in their own situation, in their school community and within their outside of school community. According to Comber (2015) literacy education is considered a way of empowering individuals against social injustices and poverty (p. 363). Graphic novels can benefit this process effectively, allowing students to connect with worldwide issues of a social nature using the text as a springboard for understandings, leading questions and for effective action. To that end, this kind of connectivity makes it important that teachers relate to their students that while they may identify with the character's feelings and concerns, they should not feel obligated to self-identify with the novel's events as tragic, racial, violent or otherwise.

Graphic novels can be utilized as alternatives to traditional texts and as a basis for writing assignments (Bucher & Manning, 2004). Preparing students for the type of text and content that they will encounter is part of good teaching around sensitive topics for discussion and writing prompts. If not sufficiently previewed and discussed (Rice, 2012), students may struggle with discrepancy between background knowledge and the novel text. Downey (2009) makes recommendations for the consideration of choice of novels used for teaching and learning in the classroom to include: age of the students, writing and artistic quality, presence of adult language, violence or sexual images, reputation of the author, and the popularity of the title in use in lesson planning and in school media centers (p. 185).

Lessons around responding to text are a central and dynamic aspect of teaching and learning. "Students identify with characters, visualize events and imagery, relate to personal

experiences, and construct the world of the text" (Bender-Slack, 2010).  A cautious and well-thought out focus on the use of graphic novels to teach matters of social justice involving racism, bias, discrimination and toward introducing agency, activism and voice also requires paying attention to that which is upsetting to students. This strongly suggests teaching with a focus that disconnects unsafe topics from student's lives.  To that end, Bender-Slack (2010) promotes a critical pedagogy that encourages student activism through empowering students through action, and includes "democratic principles, inclusion, respect for diversity, and human rights, (and) …. includes the school experience" (p. 195).

Collaboration with other teachers, including content area teachers and administration on text selection is appropriate for teachers who are introducing the graphic novel format to a school or classroom.  Once a novel has met the required criteria for selection, further consideration of topic and relation to content teaching and other academic areas can be incorporated.  Topics that confuse students, or topics that cause them to feel unsafe or angry should be discussed before reading and writing assignments begin as part of the teaching and learning process in the classroom.  Most importantly, these many graphic novels can and do affect middle school and high school students' preconceived notions on life and justice (positively) (Carter, 2007), making them useful tools in teaching constructs of social equity and justice in a social studies, humanities or literature classroom.

There are certainly no recommendations to teachers to lessen the use of traditional novel study and writing forms in exchange for other media forms.  In fact, many graphic novels can be studied in paired text with traditional forms of literature.  New media requires that students are skillful in negotiating meaning through reading and analysis of multiple modalities.  These include print, films, web sites, journals and magazines, formal and informal talks, graphic novels

and other print formats (Schwarz, 2012). Authors and artists who create in multimodal media formats provide teachers and students with multiple ways of connecting with the text, a variety in conveying meanings, explorations of literary and other devices usage, and consideration of author purpose and analysis of readers' expectations.

Some regularly incorporated graphic novels for secondary classroom teaching and learning include such texts as *Maus*, (1996) or *Maus I and II* (1986, 1992) by Art Spiegelman, which is an account of the story of a WWII prison camp survivor as told through his son. Also, consider *Persepolis* (2004) by Marjane Satrapi, which tells about a young girl growing up in Iran during the revolution. And, *Yummy: The Last Days of a South Side Shorty*, (2010) by G. Neri and Randy DuBurke, a story of a troubled and violent youth in Chicago. These and other text provide students with interesting artwork depictions of a story line, accompanied with detailed text describing characters, scenes and conflicts. But, because of the sensitive nature of these texts' topics, teacher will want to preface the readings with discussion, or perhaps select less controversial texts.

These are, however, excellent texts to teach from and provide valuable lessons in close reading, interpretation and author purpose. Other text of significance toward the interpretation of visual artwork in a graphic novel is *New York Drawings* 2012) by Adrian Tomine. Yet another text of historical/political note is *A Child in Palestine* (2009) by Naji al-Ali. All of these provide an excellent learning experience for students, while not necessarily imposing on a comfort level of identity. I have included utilizing the text *March* by John Lewis, Andrew Aydin and Nate Powell (2016). The texts are part of a trilogy of graphic novels around the topic of the human rights movement for African-American citizens in the United States. In the profound depictions found in *March: Book Three* teachers can utilize the effective artwork and descriptive wording to

teach the struggles and effective actions taken to identify and end discrimination against blacks in America. This novel is important from a historical and a sociological point of view. It is dramatic and shows how a cause can be confronted and won through intelligent and proactive means. This text won several awards, including the Coretta Scott King Book Award.

In fact, a productive and connected perspective on identity in relation to course work and novel study is an effective classroom strategy. This is done through sharing of histories, writing about current issues and involvements, and discussions of events and topics of concern in students' schoolwide, community and world views. In T. Nichols, C. McGeehan, & S. Reed (2019) we read "Educators must take seriously students' needs both for relevant curricula and for pedagogies that do not reproduce already existing vulnerability" (p. 67). This requires teachers to be sensitive to students' cultural make-up. Teachers should provide lessons that promote the defining of and the expectations of one's identity. Nichols, et al., (2012) suggest structured discussions that offer the modeling of thought processes around differences, while also promoting a selection of texts for students that allows them to concentrate on world issues (p. 72). The graphic novel format is exceptional in this capacity but does require guided and modeled reading and discussion and well-thought out introductions to the themes and content. Effective text selection

Teachers may want to seek the opinions of other educators in selecting text for study in the classroom. Students may at some point be unable to distinguish the non-reality of some graphic novel text with actual events, either in the past or the present. In the May 2019 issue of *English Journal*, Amanda Gardener discusses the graphic novel in "Graphic Possibilities in an Era of Fake News" (p. 54-60). She describes the graphic novel as "…a medium that combines the visual and verbal as do films, TV and even pop-up ads" (p. 55). This is part of the graphic

novel's appeal to readers in K-12, and it is often promoted to engage reluctant readers in learning. She also mentions that "Finally, in an age where image and text are continually manipulated to sell a version of reality, understanding how image and text collaborate is essential to determining the trustworthiness of a multimodal message."

We teach students to empathize with others, and young children are often very eager and able to do so. Their emotions can range from pity and concern to a stance of defending and more. These are the same conditions of experience to consider when selecting text. Gardner suggests that one "weapon" in the arsenal against "fake News," or the mistaking of a graphic novel as an actual event that occurred or that is going to occur at one time or another, is the ability to assess the relationship between text and image (p. 60). Gardner writes "In teaching the graphic novel, we are teaching visual literacy" (p. 60). A caution is made against blindly succumbing to perspectives, as "each item linked in a graphic novel has meaning, as does each item printed in a news story." Additionally, she mentions that these types of links can be made subconsciously or consciously (p. 58).

Introducing graphic novel experiences through production

With all of this in mind, I designed a graphic novel to introduce the graphic novel genre to my students in middle and high school classrooms, both in English literature courses and in English language learner classrooms. I determined that I wanted the readings to be as diversified as possible, and to include popular and current graphic novels used by teachers in K-12 classrooms.

I first wanted to familiarize my students to the format of a graphic novel vs. a comic book, ensuring they could identify and detail the characters dialogue and actions and relate them to the work that we would be doing in our class. To that end, the mini-graphic novel I have

created for teaching depicts a typical class given an assignment to write about themselves through an introduction activity in a unit of study on social justice. Understanding that all students will approach this topic from a different "place of experience" and different perspectives that include outcomes and challenges, I did my best to open the communication as much as possible. The students are assigned a two-part task around writing in the graphic novel format using a software program designed for this purpose online or drawing the pictures themselves. The main concept of the task components is two-fold. First, the students focus on their own interests while learning how to use the software, and incorporate images and text in a short, panel by panel story. Secondly, the students study terms and issues of social justice through their experiences in classroom discussions, after which they compose another short graphic novel around an experience that they have selected. After this preparation, I feel that they would be ready to begin a unit of study on one of the above-mentioned graphic novels. I also chose the activity of writing in the genre of the graphic novel, as many students have a desire to communicate artistically through pictorial images, film, or other visual media, and can communicate through writing that is associated with those images. This gives them the venue in which to do so at any point in which they feel compelled to express their creativity in this way.

I decided to focus heavily on student experience and empowerment at the school and community level, including impacts upon issues of social justice, thereby giving students a sense of agency and identification before they begin reading themes around tragedy of society, worldwide issues, or crime. This releases them from feeling a weighty need to explain rather than interpret the text and reduces any degrees of anxiety over the content during and after the read.

Some students are stressed by reading about sensitive issues or by viewing conflict-filled illustrations, while others may take it too personally.  By pre-defining agency and preparing discussions around such themes as racism, bias, discrimination, violence and crime, genocide, immigration, poverty and other issues, students will be better able to focus on the literary elements of the text and on the essential message that it conveys to the reader about current and recent historical issues and relevant societal concerns that affect them and their school community. .
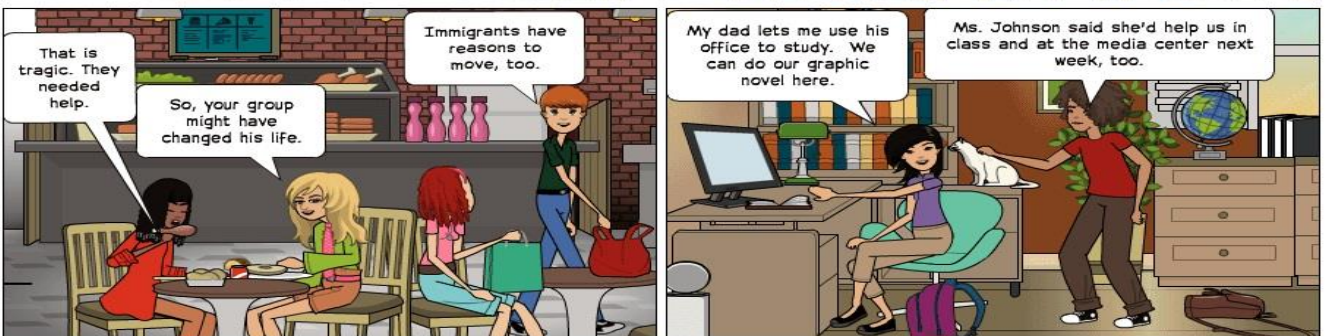

*Below are pages of the Graphic Novels that I created to share with my students at the beginning of a unit on graphic novels and graphic novel composition.

First Day of School — by Nat Johnson
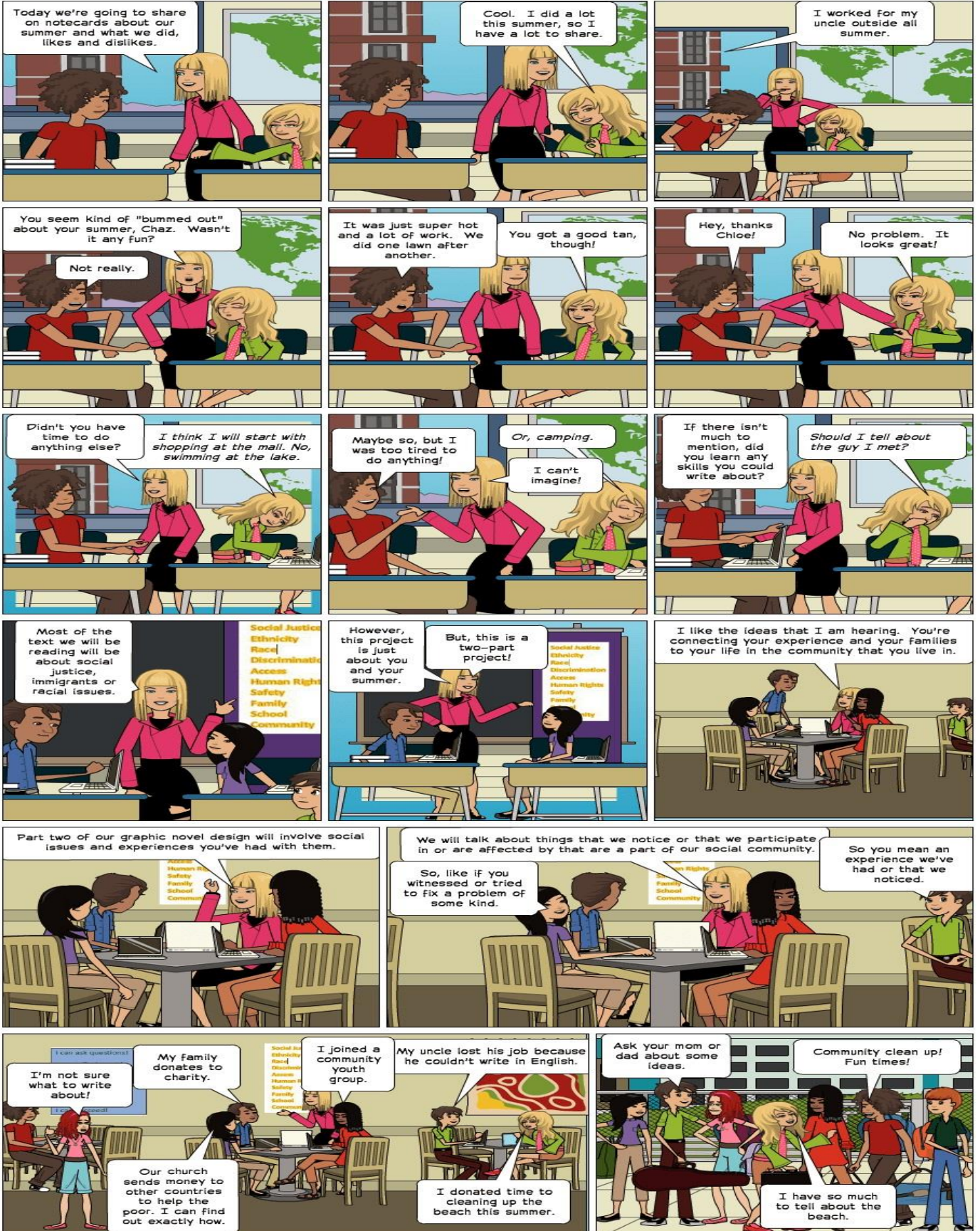
**Discussion**

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