

Chapter 7: Selecting Literature

(Maxwell, Meiser, McKnight, 2011)

It was interesting to read this chapter and reflect on my reading experience while reading this chapter. Looking back I realized that much of my literature experience in secondary school was centered around books that are a part of the canon. And even if they were not considered part of the canon, they were still considered classics. The two times I remember being able to choose a book that would not be considered as a classic or part of the canon was during our middle school individual reading hours and our final reading project my senior year. While I was excited to read a majority of the books assigned during that time, I have since realized I only wanted to read them because I thought they were important. Maxwell et al. touch on this idea omission at the beginning of the chapter. This idea of omission is discussed more today in all disciplines and it needs to be a part of our thinking as we plan our units.

Another perspective we should consider while selecting our literature is including young adult (YA) literature. Maxwell et al. even go as far as to say “young adult literature enhances students’ understanding and appreciation of more difficult works” (2011, p. 184). While I am happy they have included young adult literature as a form of literature that should be used in the classroom, I find the use it as a way to improve students reading skills to later read more complex texts. This feels a little condescending to me. As a high school student, I used to laugh and avoid YA literature thinking it was below me because it was omitted from the literature we read in class. However, as I have gotten older and read more YA literature, I have realized that it can be complex. The character development and writing style have greatly improved in the last few years and the authors are more diverse and come

from all around the globe. To top it all off, the subject matter is more poignant to what is happening in our students' lives.

I am not arguing to get replace all of our traditional, canonical texts for our classroom, I think we can pair these texts with other more traditional ones. I am arguing that we no longer omit YA literature from our lesson plans and give them the credit they deserve. This literature is easier to digest, reflects students' lives, and is often more enjoyable to read. They touch on the same themes and often have similar plots to canonical literature. For example, if you are teaching the hero's journey from the *Odyssey* you can use a number of newer stories that have the same structure and hit the main points you are teaching your students. I cannot say for certain that I would have understood better or been more engaged in the literature I read in high school if it was YA, but I do not think it would have hurt my learning. After all, we have to remember, we are teaching young adults.