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## Queering Secondary Education: An Inquiry to the Necessity of Queer Studies for All Students

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**Queering Secondary Education:  
An Inquiry to the Necessity of Queer Studies for All Students**

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May 2020

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### **Abstract**

In the current state of secondary education, queer studies are appallingly underexposed. The subject matter is often completely disregarded due to a perceived discomfort around themes and content regarding LGBTQ+ sexualities. This process of elimination is a disservice to all students as they continue their education and move on to the adult world. Queer studies must be included for all students to ensure a society of empathy and understanding. Including the queer identity in the secondary education, classroom gives LGBTQ+ students the usable past that is essential to their wellbeing and mental health, and it provides exposure and understanding for students who fall outside the queer umbrella. This process is not one of addition or elimination, but rather, it is striving to acknowledge the information already present in most curriculums. An educator must create a culturally inclusive classroom that reflects the world in which their students live.

Diversity is not simply a matter of race or religion. It is acknowledging and engaging in all aspects of intersectionality within a text, community, and the world.

*Keywords:* secondary education, queer studies, intersectionality, diversity, LGBTQ+, lesson plans, pedagogy, queer literature, English education

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## **Queering Secondary Education: An Inquiry to the Necessity of Queer Studies for All Students**

Growing up in Mississippi<sup>1</sup>, the concept of tradition becomes quickly ingrained into one's mind. It is much more important to understand the ways "things are done" rather than branching out and finding one's own thoughts and voices. I became acutely aware of this when I came to terms with the othering aspect of myself: I was queer. I tried on multiple identities throughout the years before coming to terms with my own gender identity and sexual identity. However, maneuvering through information proved to be difficult in the Bible Belt. Without queer exposure, I was lost.

### **Younger Years**

I was terrified of myself the way that most children are afraid of the dark or the monster in the closet. It was a fear of the unknown. Being gay in any aspect was not something that people in my hometown talked about. It was a hidden secret that had a very clear warning around it: avoid at all cost. I watched as my peers used the term as a derogatory and negative connotation. Everyone would defend themselves so adamantly that they did not fall under this forbidden category.

Before the age of ten years old, I learned that being gay would mean losing my family. My cousin and I were playing in my eldest brother's bedroom. We sang silly songs that played on the radio, one of which was about kissing girls. As we giggled through the lines about the

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<sup>1</sup> Names and locations have been purposely left ambiguous in order to preserve the privacy and safety of those mentioned within the anecdotes.

recipient's cherry chapstick, my eldest brother burst into the room in a rage. He promptly told us that we needed to stop listening to such music. "*If either of you ever bring home a girl, you have no business speaking to me again,*" he told us angrily. I can remember my cousin, who was three years older than I was, slinking back slightly. She began using the same defenses that my peers would use. She was able to laugh it off. I joined in because at nine years old, I was too young to even understand what that meant. I just knew that I loved my brother, and if I had to make sure that I never managed to 'bring home a girl' to keep my brother loving me, I could definitely figure that out. How hard could it be to not be gay?

### **Secondary Education**

As I grew up more, the antigay pact that I had made with myself to ensure my place in the family became much more difficult to adhere to. Like any other child, I started developing feelings for certain individuals that I grew up with. At first there were only boys that I developed crushes on. I would sit around with my friends and giggle about which guy we were hoping took us to what dance. I remember spending a lot of time with one girl in particular. We would have slumber parties and stay up for hours chatting about cute boys and watching silly romantic comedies where the quirky boy wooed the popular girl. Somewhere along the way, this close friend ended up being my first crush.

Realizing that I had a crush on a girl was absolutely devastating. I could still hear my older brother's words ringing in my ears from five years prior. At thirteen, I had a slightly better grasp on what it meant to be gay, but it made it much more scary to understand. I started to avoid the girl as much as I could hoping that with physical distance, I would be able to create

emotional distance. This is where I originally started attempting to do any kind of research on what it meant to be gay and, more importantly, how to get rid of it. I dug into informative videos and articles that never seemed to be able to supply the information I was looking for. The closest I was ever able to find were videos fetishizing the idea of gay men or women, which ultimately made me much more uncomfortable with myself and my sexuality.

I ultimately decided that it would be best to hide my identity. If I pretended to be *normal* then I could disguise myself and live a perfect heterosexual life. I started hanging out with my friends once again and gossiping about what boys I wanted to kiss - despite my reality of being much more interested in them than I ever had been with boys.

While I was in my disguise, I never stopped looking for information. Part of me truly believed I could find some kind of cure to my feelings before anyone ever found out. However, like most thirteen year olds, I was not good at keeping secrets to myself. One night, the same group of girls were all gathered around at a slumber party. I do not remember who suggested that we could all play spin the bottle, but I do remember that once we got the game rolling, I was terrified. All the other girls were slightly mortified by the idea that we were going to kiss each other, but I was excited. I had never kissed a girl until this point, so I believed that this might be the cure I was looking for. Everyone else was squeamish about the concept; I thought that once I actually kissed a girl, I would realize that it was gross and never want to do it again. My plan was foolproof.

After my first kiss with a girl, I had to mourn any hope that I had that I could fake being straight. It was, instead, time to focus attention on finding ways to tell my family. This is when the bulk of my investigation about what it meant to be gay really began. I was too afraid to ask

any teacher for help or direction on where to look due to fear of persecution. I was scared that if I mentioned anything about the feelings and emotions that I was having, my parents would be immediately told. I would be stuck without any explanation to provide for my wrongness.

I never was able to find the materials necessary to create a case for my gayness with my parents. I did not have the in depth research skills required to even find queer content - at the time it seemed too heavily shrouded. I used to have nightmares about the subjects. I would dream that the pretty girls in my grade wanted to kiss me too until my parents found out and did horrible things to me. I grew up hearing stories about how gay kids would get kicked out of their homes after they came out and would live on the streets. Ultimately, at fourteen I reckoned with the fact that my parents were not the first people to come out to.

I came out to my friend that I had been crushing on first. I had wanted to be able to show her that women could love women in a healthy and normal way. I became fixated on the idea of finding a way to make it normal. When I told her, she came out to me as well. Apparently we had both been dealing with the anxiety of queerness quietly, terrified that if we uttered it to anyone we would be thrown to the metaphorical dogs. Our once isolating secret became shared, keeping an understood bond between us. We could talk about this shared otherness together. It made it much less scary. I also gained a partner in crime when it came to researching gay representation. Her hunger for normalness matched mine.

My friend and I became more and more bold as time went on. Instead of leaving the subject for private conversations, we would start to communicate over the phone. Countless texts about cute girls would fill our phones. We started reaching out to internet communities where strangers would validate our feelings. We would have done anything to escape and feel normal



about our questioning sexuality. Looking back, we never called ourselves gay as if giving language to the complex feelings we had would make it become much too real for us to bear. Instead, we focused on things we could explain: the pretty color of one girl's eyes, or the way a girl giggling made our stomachs feel.

My mother read our messages when I was fourteen years old. This shattering of the invisible veil that I had spent countless hours creating left me feeling hollow and anxious. I did not know what she would do or what my father would do. We were in the car one day; she had picked me up from a friend's house. I should have known something was off by how quiet she was. My mother had always been a loud and boisterous presence in my life, but this woman was careful, as if she had considered every word that she spoke to me. Looking back, she probably had.

As we drove down the road part of me knew what was coming. This secret that had been looming over me was finally coming to light. I always knew in the back of my mind she was going to find out through me being careless. I was going to read the wrong thing or forget to erase the history on the family computer. *Something* was going to expose me for the fraud that I had convinced myself to be. This is why I did not flinch when she asked me finally, "*Are you gay?*"

Part of me wanted to lie to my mother. I thought that maybe I could keep up my protective veil of heterosexuality, but it had become exhausting. The anxiety about the what ifs had caused my health to deplete. I was gaining weight due to stress, and my hair had begun to fall out in disgusting tufts. While my queer friend had become a sort of sanctuary, it was not one

that I was able to indulge in quite often. I told my mother the truth that day, and we mutually did not bring it up again for five years. If we did not talk about it, it could not affect us.

### **Collegiate Education**

My sexuality took a back seat throughout the rest of my high school career. I thought it better to play the part of the straight girl in order to succeed and get to college. I had always planned to come out in college. I had it in my mind that college was this safe and productive place that would allow me to be exactly who I was and love who I wanted. I was ready to pilgrimage to the queer spaces and make my mark at the university. I was also convinced that I was going to be able to come out more to my family with my new-found support systems.

The first thing that I did after I started my college career was to desperately seek out classes that I could take that would make me feel at home. I found writing classes that I planned to use as an outlet as well as the women's center on campus. My community advisor had directed me there explaining that all the gay professors would be at the women's center, and they would probably know better to help me find what I needed. With my best friend in tow, who came out to me privately our senior year of high school, I waltz into the department to learn more about what it meant to study gender studies.

This queerly empowered whim became the starting catalyst of my fall down in the rabbit hole. Despite my younger self's efforts, I had never been able to locate much information about the queer identity and how to exist as a queer person. There were few television shows that featured gay characters, and there was no reading material that I was ever able to find. The women's center on campus became a sort of holy mecca for me that promised literature and

representation. I was sold. I knew that this was something that I wanted to integrate into my personal studies.

I continued to take classes throughout my college career ranging from gender identity to sexual identity. I was finally receiving the validation of normalcy that I had been craving so desperately throughout my life. I wanted to go home and tell my family about the exciting opportunities and experiences that were becoming available to me, but I could not. Showing them the good would ultimately lead to admitting to my secret truth that had not been unearthed in years.

At the time, I was convinced that my mother had forgotten the shared secret from five years prior. I was not sure whether jogging her memory would end well, especially because I was still financially dependent on my family. My goal was to start small with someone I knew would not spread information. My grandmother had always been very deliberate about the fact that image was everything. She would encourage me to hide away any parts of me that would be unsavory to public opinion in order to get a leg up in life. There were so many masks I learned how to put on throughout the years from her teachings. As I donned the heterosexual one, I excitedly relayed my activities at college.

At first I told her about the Pride organization that I had joined. I excitedly spilled about the amazing people that I had met, and the classes that I would be able to take. I was thrilled by the chance to surround myself with likeminded people. In my hometown, being queer was scary and something that I wanted to hide, but college gave me this new opportunity to showcase this aspect of my identity. After spilling my jubulations to my grandmother, I waited anxiously for her to return my excitement. Being at college had spoiled me to the point that I automatically

assumed that she would share my excitement of the exposure that I had found. Instead of joining in, however, she grew quiet. The uncomfortable silence stretched over the room until she finally spoke. *“You’re being selfish, you know,”* she finally said pointedly to me. I was shocked and puzzled at first. *“Selfish?” “You aren’t gay, darling. Let those people have their space.”*

I was unable to respond to that. There was no safe way to explain to her that I was one of those people. Their spaces were my spaces. I belonged there. I felt like an imposter; I was so deep in presenting a heterosexual identity that I was unable to defend my queerness, so I stood mute. After this encounter, I dialed back on my excessive excitement and worked hard on creating distance between the version of me that my family would see, and the version of me that I showed the college world.

This distance was ultimately a snowball effect. I began to pull away from my home. I stopped traveling to see my family with the exception of major holidays. I avoided calls and found reasons that I could not make it to family functions. My fear had created an isolating solution: disappear and no one can hate you. However, guilt came with my disappearing act. My grandmother had just been diagnosed with cancer, and I created a narrative in my head that I was somehow failing my family by not heading any form of care for her. I stopped sleeping, my eating habits were corrupted, and I developed a network of unhealthy coping mechanisms.

At the end of my freshman year, I started to get desperate. I had recently started dating women in the hopes of being able to find a sense of identity and my place within the queer spectrum. However, I was terrified of myself and the lack of experience and knowledge I seemed to have. The women I surrounded myself were confident in their identities and seemed to hold no fear for the world and how it may have viewed them. Instead, they embraced it.

I came out to part of my family that year in the hopes that creating a version of me that was open and honest was a step in finding my place in the world I was stuck in. It was uncomfortable at first; my mother seemed to have no idea what to do with the information other than simply supporting me by buying themed t-shirts and sending humorous posts on the internet. My stepfather and I never discussed it, but he did start making comments about whether or not I was a boy. Apparently in his eyes, the only version of a gay daughter he could have was one that fit a hyper masculine narrative that I did not quite fulfill. My grandmother, who had shamed me on this identity, simply informed me that she did not believe I was gay. She stuck to this decision for the next three years.

### **Learning Materials**

My sophomore year of college was the first year I was able to fully dive into the world of gender and sexuality. I had never had the opportunity to formally discuss gender in an academic setting; when I would bring up the topic in high school, I would be dismissed as an angry liberal in a conservative county. I could not have been more excited to learn that there was an academic space to explore aspects of gender identity that I always seemed to question in my own time. I wanted to know the origin of the gender stereotypes and how deep they truly ran. Even more so, I wanted an explanation to why I could never feel confident and comfortable in these predestined roles that society charged me with due to the nature of my birth.

Taking the Honors Introduction to Gender Studies was a mind opening experience. I learned quickly that there were others who had questions similar to my own. I was no longer the over thinker, dedicated to useless knowledge. I had transformed into an academic, hungry for a

specific sect of knowledge that I had felt like I was searching for all my life. As we read different titles and case studies of individuals who diverted from their fixed setting. I felt akin to these people. I started collecting the stories of various times and individuals and tried to apply them to myself. I felt like I was in a thrift store of identities, trying on used concepts and conditions of those who came before me to see if I found anything that was comfortable.

My junior year, I chose to dive deeper. I took a Gay and Lesbian Literature course in order to expand the knowledge of queerness in the world I lived in. I was exposed to a new group of like minded individuals who were not afraid to push the boundaries of what it meant to be normal. Our group investigations into titles of all kinds seemed to ignite my own voice. I wanted to be in that class and treasured every paper that I was tasked with writing on the topic. I started applying these concepts throughout other disciplines I was exposed to: history, literature, education, and sociology. The queer identity was found all around me.

In this class, I conducted a social experiment. I wanted to gauge how the world would view me in different forms of the queer identity. At this point in my life, I had been in a long term relationship for the upward of two years with another feminine presenting person. I spent two weeks living very different identities. The first week was dedicated to masculine presentation. I was methodical in choosing a masculine presentation before a feminine presentation because I did not want people to have the hyper feminine version of me in mind when they interacted with the masculine me. I wanted raw treatment from people who were not aware that I was fluid in the way I presented myself. For this week, I wore men's clothing only. I kept my, at the time, long hair tied up and hidden in a hat to give the appearance of short hair to establish the 'dyke' stereotype. I went as far as to flatten my chest daily with compression

garments and ace bandages, much the chagrin of my transgender friends who had advised me on this project.

Part of this project was a desire to feel close to the gay women who came before me and paved the way for a safer life for myself and my loved ones. However, this project was also a way for me to finally explore my own gender identity. At this point, I felt relatively comfortable in my sexuality in that I was capable of loving my partner, and I was comfortable in having no formal definition beyond queer. However, my gender identity was something I was desperate to explore. This project was my opportunity to try on these two extreme identities to see if one was comfortable.

The first week of the project was much harder than I could have anticipated. It was as if my peers used my purposeful detachment to the feminine identity as an excuse to execute aggressions towards me that I was unaware people possessed. In one case in particular, I was walking out of the Honors College when a group of boys grabbed me by the back of my head - I think that they were attempting to rip my hat off - and threw me to the ground. The weight of my backpack, packed heavy from class materials, caused me to hit the concrete ground hard, knocking breath out of me. I looked up, expecting a form of remorse on their faces, but I was only met with echoing laughter as they walked away, a slur on their lips.

I learned the weight of the project more than ever that day. As the week continued I was met with multiple cases of disgusted looks and dismissive attitudes. Nothing matched the experience outside the Honors College. Once the week ended and I changed into the high femme attire, the world seemed to completely change. The people who had spent the week prior dismissing me and actively avoiding eye contact were the same that went out of their way to

engage with me. Something about conforming to the gender expectations that the average cisgendered heteronormative individual deemed acceptable allowed me to be welcomed back into common society with good graces. Gender, I came to learn, was simply a matter of other people's perception. Others dictated when and in what ways I was acceptable based on my gender expression, and their actions towards me followed suit with their ideals. It was not necessarily a situation where these people, most of which did not know me personally and could not distinguish me from one week to the next, valued me to the degree in which I could make them comfortable.

I applied what I learned to the learning materials matched with the project. Relating the experiment to texts such as *Stone Butch Blues*, I concluded from my social experiment that personal bias has not changed regarding those deemed as 'other' within the last one hundred years. This sense of 'othering' an entire group of people has given those who remain ignorant the entitlement to treat others with disrespect and discrimination. There are little to no social consequences for this negative treatment because individuals have been taught no different. Education of human empathy cannot start as an adult.

### **Student Teaching**

Entering my student teaching career, I was eager to experiment with introducing learning materials regarding gender and sexuality to the average secondary classroom. While I valued my time working within the Sarah Isom Center - especially when I was given the opportunity to work as an intern and TA for an Introduction to Gender Studies classroom - my goal was more



centered towards normalizing the teachings rather than exposing those who were already searching out the material.

I worked closely with members of the Sarah Isom Center as well as members of the School of Education to create sample lessons and mini units introducing gender and sexuality studies into the Secondary Education classroom, but they were simply used for theory purposes.<sup>2</sup> Once I felt comfortable both with my presence and teaching style in the classroom and my ability to deliver potential sensitive information in a way that would encourage discussion while discouraging disrespect, I introduced my first gender specific lesson into the classroom.

In the lesson<sup>3</sup>, I used an opener to encourage students to indulge in their gender bias. Their task was to illustrate what they believed a murderer would look like. Out of 66 students, 2 students drew a woman, 2 students were absent during the day of the activity, and 62 students drew a man. After we discussed the characteristics of a killer, I directly asked the students to raise their hands if they drew a man. Once the class was able to see the majority, I asked them to describe to me why they made this choice. While I was not surprised by their answers, some did concern me. One student informed me that the reason that he drew a man was solely on the reason that men were more aggressive than women, so it made sense to him that a man would be a murderer. Another student offered that most media portrayed killers as men, so she created her image to match the societal norm. While I was not pleased with the answers on a moral level, the activity had led my students in the direction that I wanted them to go.

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<sup>2</sup> Example of mini lessons can be found in Lesson Plans

<sup>3</sup> Full Lesson Plan can be found in Appendix II

After the brief discussion, I transition into a whole class reading of “Lamb to the Slaughter”<sup>4</sup> by Roald Dahl. The students were expected to take diligent annotations as I read the story aloud. They were also aware that after the story was over, we would be conducting a student led Socratic Seminar. I gave the students guiding questions in order to lead them on the right path of conversation, but if there was something that they were passionate about discussing regarding the text, they were allowed to branch off. My questions were intended to be nothing more than a guide.

I was surprised at how truly eager my students became when discussing the topic of gender. They expressed to me that at first, they were not expecting the main character (a woman) to have any violent tendencies because she was a housewife. As the events of the short story played out, the students remained highly engaged. The engagement continued through the Socratic Seminar, and they dived deeper into the social construct of gender and why it was not surprising that Mrs. Maloney was able to get away with her crime.

I noticed that as the students contributed to the conversation, they spent the most time and energy on questions that challenged their beliefs on genders and forced them to think outside of their own bias. This was the hope that I needed to take the next step and introduce sexuality into the general classroom.

The next major unit that the students were expected to complete was on *The Great Gatsby*. Because of the rich nature of the book, my clinical instructor showed interest in giving

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<sup>4</sup> “Lamb to the Slaughter” is a short story in which the main character, Mary Maloney, finds out about her husband's affair and plans to leave her. In a moment of rage, Mary Maloney murders her husband by hitting him over the head with a frozen lamb leg. Mrs. Maloney then concocts an alibi, going to the store and interacting with the grocer as if it was a normal day. When detective's come to investigate, Mrs. Maloney serves the officers the lamb leg, effectively getting rid of the murder weapon.

the students short writing assignments based on the individual characters in order for students to understand and evaluate the complex relationships that the characters within *The Great Gatsby*. With my clinical instructor's permission, I gave students the opportunity to dive into Nick's relationship with Gatsby. While I did not give them specific questions about whether or not Nick's obsession with Gatsby was homosexual in nature, I did ask them to consider homosocialism and how homosocialism related to the relationship of Nick and Gatsby. This was intended to open the consideration for all students as well as to showcase the accessibility of gender and sexuality studies within the primary texts often used within the secondary English classroom. It is just as easy to work with the commonly used texts as it is to explore new sources of literature.

### **Vision**

As a teacher, it is my job to teach students. I am expected to provide a culturally responsive classroom that creates a safe environment for learning for all students. My classroom and its contents should reflect the world that my students live in. This includes all kinds of people. Allowing more LGBTQ+ content within the secondary education classroom benefits all students. Knowledge is valuable inherently. While some may argue whether or not it is appropriate to include queer content when teaching high school students, I cannot stress how distressing that message is to students who fall under the LGBTQ+ umbrella. Educators have a duty to their students to serve all students and dismiss bias. Diversity does not stop at race or religion. It is important to remember that we are teaching intersectional students, and our curriculum should reflect the same intersectionality.

## **Does it matter?**

The inclusion of queer materials into the mainstream education curriculum is a highly debated topic within the sphere of secondary education. While some would argue a level of inappropriateness of the material, queering the pedagogy is an essential need for a truly culturally responsive classroom. Despite the resistance and anxiety surrounding the topic, many studies argue the positive value of queer studies for all students no matter how they identify. There is no completely correct method of integrating queer studies into the standards-based curriculum, but a close examination of queer pedagogical materials, as well as well-rounded resources that meet the standards and provide quality and guidance needed to begin the process queering a curriculum, will not become a black and white system that requires full units to be rewritten. The content is already present in many commonly used or accessible materials. Educators simply need to be willing to dive deeper and not shy away from topics that some may deem uncomfortable. In academia, discomfort is not a negative aspect of learning as long as it is approached appropriately.

Literature is, arguably, the simplest way to introduce natural queering of curriculum. In literature, there should be no completely correct answers when analyzing a text. “We must forgo the wish for a single correct or absolute meaning for each text. If we agree on criteria for validity of interpretation, however, we can decide on the most defensible interpretation or interpretations. Of course, there remains the possibility of equally valid alternative interpretations as well as for alternative criteria of validity of interpretations. Such an approach enables us to present a sophisticated understanding of the openness and the constraints of language to our students without negating the possibility of responsible reading of texts. (The

Reader 183)” (Spurlin, 2000, pp 143-144). Creating an environment where sexuality can be explored academically gives students tools to prepare them for the real world where they will experience people different from themselves. Classroom exposure teaches tolerance. It is vital that all students are exposed. There must be a creation of normalcy around the queer identity, just as there should be for all races, religions, ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds. Lessons and units can include the queer identity and acknowledge the present and usable history naturally without seeming forced for the sake of inclusion.

## Queer Young Adult Literature

Young adult novels are an excellent introduction to exposure of queer studies to the average secondary student. Young adult novels, as a whole, are a vital teaching tool. They allow students to relate and engage in the narrative in a more direct way since the main characters reflect them more closely. When students are able to recognize themselves in a text, they are able to create connections and engage on a deeper level of inquiry. The ideals and concepts developed in young adult novels can be at the same level as more classical texts, but young adult novels portray them in a way that matches the cognitive level of its intended readers. Today, more and more authors are utilizing the queer narrative to dive into multifaceted themes that would prove beneficial in the secondary classroom. These themes could be matched with some classic works and typically used titles to develop a well rounded understanding of the standards. Ultimately, the addition of queer works would result in a gain of knowledge; it would not take any value or merit away academically.

Maintaining continuous reading habits is more vital than exposing students to heavily policed literature that is determined to be a classic. "Classics" in literature only pertain to the amount of reprints a title gains over the course of time. It does not directly attest to the quality of the work overall. "... Bonnie Ericson points out, 'To limit our selections of novels, especially to the 'classic' novels, is to tell our students that all these other texts, perhaps the students' preferred types of reading have less value' (10). Additionally, Ericson asserts that class reading needs to extend beyond classic novels and novels in general to encompass a variety of genres in order not to "limit students' bridges to the joy of reading' (10)" (Gibbons, 2006, p. 3). Policing students and dictating strictly what types of novels are deemed acceptable only harms the

relationship that students work to build with the content and stifles the imperative exposure that a student must procure to grasp the concepts of literature fully and proficiently.

Introducing queer literature is vital when understanding the world as it exists today. Just as classical literature may open connections are imperative information pertaining to a particular movement in history, queer literature introduces notions of the social climate surrounding the queer identity. Introducing such notions in the secondary education classroom challenges students to understand an underexposed identity both academically and empathetically.

This exposure is just as crucial to those who identify as LGBTQ+ as those who do not. With this integration, students who self-identify as LGBTQ+ are granted a usable past through their academic studies. Usable pasts give historical context and validity to identities that exist today. Many LGBTQ+ students feel a sense of isolation, and often anxiety, due to their sexual orientation. Because of the limited exposure, it is often difficult for them to come to terms with their identities and find comfort in their individual existence. This often leads to a higher risk of depression and anxiety among such students. The isolating nature of being a queer student in a strictly heteronormative society and education system can be combatted with the mindful integration of queer titles, both in the fiction genre and the nonfiction. Students who do not identify as LGBTQ+ gain the same academic benefits from the inclusive materials. Furthermore, these students will ultimately develop a level of understanding and empathy for all students as the “otherness” of the LGBTQ+ identity dissipates. “Quality LGBTQ-themed literature can have a positive impact on the entire school community, not just teenagers with same-sex orientation. By collecting tales of friendship, companionship, and romance, school librarians can ‘help to create a more complete portrait of the life of an LGBT [Q] teenager’ (Manfredi 2009, 28). Angie

Manfredi has argued that familiarity with LGBTQ-themed literature can help all [students] understand what it means to have gay friends, family members, classmates, peers, colleagues, and acquaintances.” (Hughes-Hassell et al., 2013, p. 4). The best course of action for all students is to normalize and destroy biased stigma surrounding the queer identity.

Queer young adult literature ties in the essential, beneficial elements of both queer pedagogy and young adult literature. These tools allow teachers to provide an inclusive and intersectional environment where representation and accessibility is available to all students. Queer young adult novels increase engagement for students who identify within the LGBTQ+ umbrella and provide vital exposure to students whose identity falls outside. Exposure to intersectionality within the classroom provides the usable past necessary for the well-rounded success of the minority student who would otherwise lack beneficial representation in the curriculum. This has a direct impact on the increased quality of mental health of students who, with the exclusion, would feel outcast and isolated in their developing identity. “Identity formation is a much more difficult task for most lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth. These young adults often come of age in communities where few gay adults are visible, attend schools that have no openly gay staff, and interact with peers who use “fag” and “dyke” as the favored insult and “that’s so gay” as a common put-down (Kosciw et al. 2012; Sears 1991)” (Hughes-Hassell et al., 2013, p. 2). Integration of queer young adult literature provides a unique opportunity for classrooms to combat harmful assumptions and predispositions that will have lasting effects of students of all identities.



## Choosing Literature

When selecting specific literature to use while incorporating queer works to the average secondary education classroom, there are three levels of analysis that must be conducted.

Integration depends on the analysis of relevance, merit, and relation. Titles are put to the adequacy challenged before they are considered for incorporation to the class. This ensures that the students of all backgrounds will be given material on par, if not those of greater educational and engagement opportunity.

A title must first be deemed relevant. Relevance is the most crucial requirement for a selected title to be considered for the classroom. Relevance, in this instance, is the direct correlation the text has or can have to the standards. In the state of Mississippi, teachers are expected to follow a set of standards called the Mississippi College and Career Readiness standards. These standards give an exact expectation of student ability all they progress through their primary and secondary education experience. This ensures that all students are offered the best opportunity for success, no matter where in the state they reside. It is an educator's responsibility to ensure that every lesson they provide their students is linked to these sets of standards.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, if an educator wished to pick a title for their curriculum, they would have a guide to what would be academically appropriate.

One of the most productive ways to compose a unit for student success is to consider the standards first. Once an educator has decided on which set of standards they plan to teach, they will be able to select a title that will accomplish the job. This introspection will act as a shield to

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<sup>5</sup> The Mississippi College and Career Readiness standards can be publicly accessed on the Mississippi Department of Education webpage.

ensure that there is no teaching with an agenda. With standards to back up the education, the students will be learning grade appropriate material through a potentially unconventional means.

The ease that the standards provide should mean that adding queer education to the curriculum is relatively simple and logical. However, due to the stigma surrounding queer education, many educators are unwilling to put in the work to diversify their curriculum. “Further, as preservice teachers’ resistance to conversations and texts regarding gay and lesbian issues are reified by the laws of the land that deny equal rights to members of the gay and lesbian community, it is easier to leave these few texts in the closet, even to the detriment of future...students.” (Hermann-Wilmarth, 2007, p. 347) It is deleterious, damaging, and complacent for educators to simply brush away the essential need for queer studies. And in doing so, educators are grossly failing their students on their opportunity to learn vital social awareness that will aid them through the rest of their lives.

One title to consider when completing a standards based analysis of a text would be *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe* by Fannie Flagg. This story is a period tale that follows the lives of two women who grew up in a small town in Alabama. This murder mystery engages itself with themes of race, southern culture, and friends to compose a rich literary work. Consider an eleventh grade English classroom, the RI.11.4<sup>6</sup> standard would easily be met through the rich symbolism and use of figurative language in the book. The educator could easily construct an environment where the students would identify and recreate such figurative language, using one of the central themes.

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<sup>6</sup>RI.11.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text

After a title is deemed relevant to student learning, a teacher must analyze whether or not the title offers significant literary merit. Merit in literature can be found through different aspects of the craft and content of a novel. While an educator should never police or exclude literature that the students' themselves were to indulge in, that does not mean that educators cannot encourage a culture of rich learning as well. The exposure to various levels and variety of literature encourages readers to dive deeper into seemingly less dense narratives to expose underlying meaning. Educators train students to investigate at high aptitude levels which ultimately becomes an approach to reading all together. The key to literary merit, ultimately, is whether or not it provides enough stimulus to call for engagement in a classroom setting. Plainly, is there enough within the text to investigate?

Virginia Woolf offers a sophisticated collection of high caliber writings that would easily flow and enrich the average secondary classroom. As an academically appreciated author, such titles as *To the Lighthouse* can be found woven into the curriculum as the teacher guides students through rhetoric and how the decisions Woolf makes in her own writing ultimately affect and add to her pieces. However, many of her more explicitly queer titles have been swept under the metaphorical rug despite the fact they offer the same rich stimulation as her more hetero-appropriate ones do. *Orlando: A Biography* would be an appropriate replacement. Woolf wrote this story about a traveling entertainer that due to circumstance, is forced to live a life in a woman's body. Through Orlando's adventures, the reader can gain deep analysis of the inner workings of relationship within the Elizabethian era as well as the role of gender and how it affects characters and reader's interpretation. This novel also opens an exciting opportunity to

discuss the transgender identity in a literary sense and offer a hero that ultimately lives a fulfilling and successful life.

The final criteria used to determine whether a new piece of text is appropriate to promote learning is relation. Relation occurs to the specific relationship that a student will have to a text. This is visible in many different forms. The student could relate to the characters due to their age and background, or the title could discuss culturally relevant information. Due to the fact most schools will be full of students whose peers come from diverse and unique walks of life, it is an educator's responsibility to the wellness of their student population to offer wildly diverse levels of relation for all students. Many books deemed classics follow a specific narrative of one or two centralized people. This means that a teacher must become willing and able to push the boundaries and limitations of exposure to foster a relationship with all students to their specific topic. All texts that students are exposed to will form a positive or negative relationship between student and content. Educators, however, are in a position to work with the students' interests and schema to develop functional relationships. To make such determinations, however, there must be a critical analysis of the detail-oriented aspects of a novel. These aspects are included but not limited to: setting, character background, stereotypes, social climate, socioeconomic backgrounds, sexuality, etc. What small piece that forms the human existence will students be able to latch onto, relate to, and understand? An educator must also consider what assumptions a student may have about the content of the novel (themes or details) and determine how they are going to be addressed in an appropriate and academically minded way.

When assessing the potential relation that students may have or build with marginalized identities, it is crucial that the presentation of the identity is carefully analyzed as well. The last

thing an educator needs to do as they are trying to enforce relationships between student and content is to accidentally reinforce negative stereotypes and honorifics of the identity. Within the queer identity, there is often a sense of inescapable tragedy that looms over the representing characters. They are attached to narrative tropes that often are the source of negative stigma being reinforced. When these negative stigmas are never properly addressed, a message is sent to the students that there is no happy ending for people within the queer identity - which alone can have substantial effects on psyche and mentality.

*Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky is a coming of age story that discusses multiple aspects of identity through the protagonist, Charlie's, eyes. As Charlie is faced with the complicated nature of becoming an adult, he meets many upperclassmen friends who seem to each be at a different point in their lives. This narrative's variety of characters with complex, intersectional identities creates a strong recipe for building relationships between students and texts. Because of the three dimensional way the characters are written, students can latch onto the aspects of characters that they see in themselves. Because the students will care about the characters and the hardships that they endure, students will become much more open to engaging with the narrative in critical analysis. This narrative also provides a sense of hope for the identities it emulates. Instead of a clear set future of dread, the characters seem to have a level of agency in shaping the world around them with the choices they make. There is a lack of inevitability that most want to see reflected in their own lives.

All around, literature is a resourceful tool in giving students pertinent historical, social, or thematic insights on the world they live in. Optimal development, both socially and academically, can be found in the variety and diversity of the information that is presented to

them. With exposure, they have the opportunity to possess a more socially responsible understanding of the inner workings of their day to day life. The critical thinking skills a student will learn will ultimately be used in one way or another through the rest of the student's life. So, it is imperative that what teachers choose to teach creates the greatest impact for all students, even if boundaries must be pushed. Actively pursuing to queer the curriculum combats the erasure of identity and combats the heteronormative matrix. Making a choice to include queer literature into the classroom allows students to feel safe to explore themselves with a new lens and creates a cooperative and hegemonic space to reflect the world. This engagement, truly, is the key to a higher caliber of education and existence for all provided.

## Afterword

At the beginning of my work for this project, a high percentage of my motivation for my work was a personal yearning to dig into the information that I felt was policed for me. It became a project of pleasure as I tore through materials on pedagogy and the queer identity to learn for the sake of learning. However, I soon came to understand that I was not alone in my thirst for such particular knowledge. Queering the curriculum became much more than simply giving myself what I always wanted in high school. Instead, I learned how important the long term impacts of such a change could have for the safety and mental health of my future students.

Through my work with students during my practicum and further, I have learned just how insightful they can be when given the chance. I quickly noticed that my students wanted to talk about gender and sexuality because it became a topic that they not only could understand but relate to and grow from. I worked to foster an environment where their questions and thoughts on discussion topics were valued as I pushed them to ask themselves, why?

The secondary education system must take necessary measures to move towards a more diverse and identity accepting state. For too long has it been an easy caveat to turn away information that causes discomfort and stay in a bubble that never seems to grow with the world around it. Many of the same topics, ideas, and conclusions are being drawn from the exact same texts that I once worked with as a student. This is not growth. This is a complacent stagnance that enforces outdated ideals that not only are all students the same, but they will learn the same. It is imperative for the curriculum to continue to change to meet the needs of the masses as society quickly evolves. The students of today are much different than those who were my peers, and educators must reflect this with content.

Ultimately, it is not a priority to create a new set of criteria in which to make decisions of education materials off of, but rather a challenge to action for teachers who want to best suit our students. In schools today, there are students whose identity falls under the LGBTQ+ spectrum. Educators must acknowledge, value, and validate the existence of people with this identity. It is no longer a choice of preference or personal morality. Education is failing minority students every moment in which it continues to fail to teach and expose an existing and common narrative.



## **Lesson Plans**

The following give a set of potential lesson plans that could ultimately be used as a central unit of poetry. Within these lesson plans, there is a continuous sapphic theme. This theme could have ultimately been replaced with any other, along with the poems that the students are exposed to, and used as a standard unit within the Secondary Education classroom without raising an eyebrow. The purpose of including such examples is to showcase the simplicity of plugging in the queer identity naturally in a way that never takes away from the lesson. The students are still expected to meet the same amount of standards and understandings as could otherwise be found.

**Day 1: Types of Poetry****Objectives:**

TSW investigates a collection of styles and genres of poetry.

**Materials:**

Sappho poem

Pen/pencil

Highlighter

Powerpoint

Projector

Paper

Computer

Speaker

Poetry Assignment

**Opening (Set):**

TSW listen to a contemporary love song. They will be asked to analyze a verse from it and identify what they can from it (Figurative language, word choice, rhyme, schema, etc.) Students will then be asked to compose their own verse using the identified elements. As a class, everyone will come together to share what they have discovered and utilized. The students will then be given the poetry assignment that they will be completing throughout the unit. The teacher will go over the assignment and open the floor with any questions.

**Learning Tasks (Procedures):**

The teacher will pull up a powerpoint and project it for all students to see. The teacher will instruct students to write explicit notes as they go over the powerpoint. The teacher will proceed to introduce each type of poem, describe the aspects of the poem, show a brief example of the poem, and ask/answer questions to check for readiness. After each poem is addressed, the students will begin a “speed round” in which they quickly attempt to create their own example of

the poem style. The teacher will ask for volunteers for the students to share their creation. The class as a whole will discern if the volunteered poems meet the criteria and why.

- a. Haiku
  - i. Three line stanza with 5-7-5 syllable count
- b. Free Verse
  - i. Deliberately irregular with no formula
- c. Acrostic Poems
  - i. Spell out names or words with the first letter in each line. While the author is doing this, they're describing someone or something they deem important.
- d. Sonnets
  - i. 14-line poem written in iambic pentameter

**Closure:**

TTW Give students a Haiku prompt that they will be expected to complete within the remaining time within the class. The students will use their information about Haiku's to create the Haiku and upload it onto Discussion Form on Google Classroom. Homework will be given that by the next class time they will be expected to upload their own haiku and respond to two student's poems. Within their responses they must give both positive and constructive feedback. This will be taken for a participation grade.

**Differentiated Instruction:**

**Enrichment:** Students with higher achieving abilities will have the opportunity to be challenged through the construction of their individual poem. Because the poems are personal, they will be able to be personalized to the abilities of the individual student.

**Intervention:** Students with remedial achieving abilities will be able to take the poetry at their own pace, allowing for adjustments. They will also have sample poems to base their haiku off of.

**Accommodation:** Students with disabilities will have access to whatever needs they need met including but not limited to enhanced print, audios of the lesson, etc.

## **Day 2: Historical Significance**

### **Objectives:**

TSW: investigate and assess types of poetry and how they connect to their point in history.

### **Materials:**

Personal Poem

Projector

Powerpoint on history

Pen/pencil

Paper

Computer

Speaker

Poetry Assignment

### **Opening (Set):**

The students will have the opportunity to share the poem that they completed the previous night. Students will exercise a positive classroom community by maintaining the rules and expectations set out for sharing personal work. The students will offer their peers complete attention and positive, constructive criticism. Zero tolerance will be held for any amount of disrespect during this process.

### **Learning Tasks (Procedures):**

The teacher will ask students specific questions regarding the craft and style of the three types of poems: Haiku, Free Verse, Acrostic, and Sonnet. As the questions are asked, students will raise their hand in order to be called on. The teacher will discuss the historical moment in which each poem became popular as well as if the style of poem was a part of any specific movement. The students will have informal checks to ensure they are following. Afterwards, the teacher would split the class into 8 separate roles. (Adjusting as necessary to the class size). Each student's role would be a type of poem or a historical fact of the poem. The students must find their match through a series of speed dating. During the round, if they are not a match, they must tell their partner as much as they can about their match. This information may come from today or

yesterday's lesson. The partner will listen closely and use their knowledge of other partners to suggest their next date. This activity will cause students to actively listen and critically think about the four styles of poetry.

**Closure:**

TTW give students a free verse prompt that they will be expected to complete within the remaining time within the class. The students will use their information about free verse to create the free verse poem and upload it onto Discussion Form on Google Classroom. Homework will be given that by the next class time they will be expected to upload their own free verse and respond to two student's poems. Within their responses they must give both positive and constructive feedback. This will be taken for a participation grade.

**Differentiated Instruction:****Enrichment:**

**Enrichment:** Students with higher achieving abilities will have the opportunity to be challenged through the construction of their individual poem. Because the poems are personal, they will be able to be personalized to the abilities of the individual student.

**Intervention:** Students with remedial achieving abilities will be able to take the poetry at their own pace, allowing for adjustments. They will also have sample poems to base their poem off of.

**Accommodation:** Students with disabilities will have access to whatever needs they need met including but not limited to enhanced print, audios of the lesson, etc.

### **Day 3: Figurative Language**

#### **Objectives:**

Students apply concepts of figurative language to enhance their writing of poems.

#### **Materials:**

Personal poem

.Projector

Hand out on figurative language

Pen/pencil

Paper

Computer

Speaker

Poem list

Poetry Assignment

#### **Opening (Set):**

The students will have the opportunity to share the poem that they completed the previous night. Students will exercise a positive classroom community by maintaining the rules and expectations set out for sharing personal work. The students will offer their peers complete attention and positive, constructive criticism. Zero tolerance will be held for any amount of disrespect during this process.

#### **Learning Tasks (Procedures):**

The teacher will hand out a Figurative Language cheat sheet to the student's and go over each of the most common uses of figurative language within a poem. Students will be encouraged to come to the board and demonstrate each type of figurative language. After they have successfully completed their figurative language, they will return to their place and nominate a peer to return. After every student has successfully demonstrated figurative language, the teacher will prompt students to shout out figurative language that they do not understand. The teacher will model these specifically and encourage students to model their own. Once understanding

seems to be met, the teacher will offer examples of acrostic poems and the whole class will discuss the use of figurative language within it.

**Closure:**

TTW give students acrostic prompt that they will be expected to complete within the remaining time within the class. The students will use their information about acrostic poems to create the acrostic poem and upload it onto Discussion Form on Google Classroom. Homework will be given that by the next class time they will be expected to upload their own acrostic and respond to two student's poems. Within their responses they must give both positive and constructive feedback. This will be taken for a participation grade.

**Differentiated Instruction:**

**Enrichment:** Students with higher achieving abilities will have the opportunity to be challenged through the construction of their individual poem. Because the poems are personal, they will be able to be personalized to the abilities of the individual student.

**Intervention:** Students with remedial achieving abilities will be able to take the poetry at their own pace, allowing for adjustments. They will also have sample poems to base their poem off of.

**Accommodation:** Students with disabilities will have access to whatever needs they need met including but not limited to enhanced print, audios of the lesson, etc

**Day 4: Workshopping****Objectives:**

Students will apply concepts utilized in prior days of the unit to compose their own poem using the tone of the sapphic poem.

**Materials:**

Personal poem

.Projector

Hand out on figurative language

Pen/pencil

Paper

Computer

Speaker

History Notes

Poem construction notes

Poetry Assignment

**Opening (Set):**

Students will choose one of the four types of poems to construct using whatever tools they desire. They will have access to figurative language guides, history notes, and construction guides to a specific type of poetry.

**Learning Tasks (Procedures):**

The teacher will facilitate as students workshop each other's poems in class. During this workshop, the students will pair together and discuss their poems as a team. Using a colored pen of their choice, they will be expected to annotate their peer's poem. Students may highlight anything from technical errors, to word choice that they love. They will be expected to give at least two instances of positive feedback and two constructive criticisms for each work that they



workshop. They will be expected to have workshopped at least three poems, one of which from a student that they have not workshopped this week.

**Closure:**

The teacher will have students give each other shout outs on their work that they have conducted throughout the week. This will establish and refurbish the positive and safe learning community that has been worked on throughout the week. This safety will increase comfort for final day's activities.

**Differentiated Instruction:**

**Enrichment:** Students with higher achieving abilities will have the opportunity to be challenged through the construction of their individual poem. Because the poems are personal, they will be able to be personalized to the abilities of the individual student.

**Intervention:** Students with remedial achieving abilities will be able to take the poetry at their own pace, allowing for adjustments. They will also have sample poems to base their poem off of.

**Accommodation:** Students with disabilities will have access to whatever needs they need met including but not limited to enhanced print, audios of the lesson, etc

**Day 5: Presentation****Objectives:**

The students will showcase their finalized poem and defend influences.

**Materials:**

Personal poem

Voting sheet

**Opening (Set):**

Students will draw a number from a hat which will indicate who will go first and further in the presentation.

**Learning Tasks (Procedures):**

The teacher will have the student's count off numbers equalling up to the total number of individuals in the class. This number will be their assigned number. The teacher will pull out a cup with folded pieces of paper. Each piece of paper has a number equalling up to all the numbers in the room. The teacher will ask for a volunteer. Once a student has volunteered, the number on the paper will indicate who will be presenting their final poem. The student will come to the front of the classroom, project their poem, read their poem to the class, and discuss the aspects of their poem. Within their discussion they will be expected to reference the information that they have learned throughout the week about craft and style. Once the student has finished their presentation, they will have the opportunity to pull the next number and return to their seat. This system will continue until all students have presented.

**Closure:**

As a class, students will vote for the best poem of the group followed by a second place and third place. These poems will be showcased within the room.

**Differentiated Instruction:**

**Enrichment:** Students with higher achieving abilities will have the opportunity to be challenged through the construction of their individual poem. Because the poems are personal, they will be able to be personalized to the abilities of the individual student.

**Intervention:** Students with remedial achieving abilities will be able to take the poetry at their own pace, allowing for adjustments. They will also have sample poems to base their poem off of.

**Accommodation:** Students with disabilities will have access to whatever needs they need met including but not limited to enhanced print, audios of the lesson, etc.

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## Appendix I

### Type of poems Powerpoint

- Haiku
  - Three line stanza with 5-7-5 syllable count
  - Example

*Sing, my sacred tortoise shell lyre;*

*come, let my words*

*accompany your voice*

- Free Verse
  - Deliberately irregular with no formula
  - Example

I'm nobody! Who are you?

Are you nobody, too?

Then there's a pair of us — don't tell!

They'd banish us, you know.

How dreary to be somebody!

How public, like a frog

To tell your name the livelong day

To an admiring bog!

- Acrostic Poems
  - Spell out names or words with the first letter in each line. While the author is doing this, they're describing someone or something they deem important.
  - Example

Serene, a calming quality

Organized, you always have it together

Picturesque, strikingly beautiful

Honest, so genuine

Imaginative, a creative mind

Alluring, so attractive

- Sonnets

- 14-line poem written in iambic pentameter
- Example

My love is as a fever, longing still  
 For that which longer nurseth the disease,  
 Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,  
 Th' uncertain sickly appetite to please.  
 My reason, the physician to my love,  
 Angry that his prescriptions are not kept,  
 Hath left me, and I desperate now approve  
 Desire is death, which physic did except.  
 Past cure I am, now reason is past care,  
 And frantic-mad with evermore unrest;  
 My thoughts and my discourse as madmen's are,  
 At random from the truth vainly expressed:  
     For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee bright,  
     Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.

### History PowerPoint

- e. Haiku
  - i. Used originally for nonfiction observations
  - ii. Originated in 17th century Japan
  - iii. Adopted by western culture in 1900s
- f. Free Verse
  - i. Movement originated in 1880 in France
  - ii. Became experimental with modern artists



- g. Acrostic Poems
  - i. Originally used by Greek prophetesses.
  - ii. Adopted later by medieval monks
- h. Sonnets
  - i. originated at the Court of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II in Palermo, Sicily
  - ii. Popularized by Shakespear in the 16th century
  - iii. Yeats utilized it and reshaped it in the 20th century

### **Figurative language list**

- Metaphor: A figure of speech that makes a comparison between two unrelated things by stating that one thing is another thing, even though this isn't literally true. For example, the phrase "her lips are a blooming rose" obviously doesn't literally mean what it says—it's a metaphor that makes a comparison between the red beauty and promise of a blooming rose with that of the lips of the woman being described.
- Simile: A simile, like a metaphor, makes a comparison between two unrelated things. However, instead of stating that one thing *is* another thing (as in metaphor), a simile states that one thing is *like* another thing. An example of a simile would be to say "they fought like cats and dogs."
- Oxymoron: An oxymoron pairs contradictory words in order to express new or complex meanings. In the phrase "parting is such sweet sorrow" from *Romeo and Juliet*, "sweet sorrow" is an oxymoron that captures the complex and simultaneous feelings of pain and pleasure associated with passionate love.
- Hyperbole: Hyperbole is an intentional exaggeration of the truth, used to emphasize the importance of something or to create a comic effect. An example of a hyperbole is to say that a backpack "weighs a ton." No backpack literally weighs a ton, but to say "my backpack weighs ten pounds" doesn't effectively communicate how burdensome a heavy backpack feels.
- Personification: In personification, non-human things are described as having human attributes, as in the sentence, "The rain poured down on the wedding guests, indifferent

to their plans." Describing the rain as "indifferent" is an example of personification, because rain can't be "indifferent," nor can it feel any other human emotion.

- **Idiom:** An idiom is a phrase that, through general usage within a particular group or society, has gained a meaning that is different from the literal meaning of the words. The phrase "it's raining cats and dogs" is known to most Americans to mean that it's raining hard, but an English-speaking foreigner in the United States might find the phrase totally confusing.
- **Onomatopoeia:** Onomatopoeia is a figure of speech in which words evoke the actual sound of the thing they refer to or describe. The "boom" of a firework exploding, the "tick tock" of a clock, and the "ding dong" of a doorbell are all examples of onomatopoeia.
- **Synecdoche:** In synecdoche, a *part* of something is used to refer to its *whole*. For example, "The captain commands one hundred sails" is a synecdoche that uses "sails" to refer to ships—ships being the thing of which a sail is a part.
- **Metonymy:** Metonymy is a figure of speech in which an object or concept is referred to not by its own name, but instead by the name of something closely associated with it. For example, in "Wall Street prefers lower taxes," the New York City street that was the original home of the New York Stock Exchange stands in for (or is a "metonym" for) the entire American financial industry.
- **Alliteration:** In alliteration, the same sound repeats in a group of words, such as the "b" sound in: "Bob brought the box of bricks to the basement." Alliteration uses repetition to create a musical effect that helps phrases to stand out from the language around them.
- **Assonance:** The repetition of vowel sounds repeat in nearby words, such as the "ee" sound: "the squeaky wheel gets the grease." Like alliteration, assonance uses repeated sounds to create a musical effect in which words echo one another.

## Appendix II

### Lamb to the Slaughter (95 minutes)

#### Objectives:

TSW: Draw from their knowledge of women's role from the 1920s and the character of Daisy from *The Great Gatsby* to analyze *Lamb to the Slaughter*.

#### Materials:

Paper

Pencil

Copies of Short Story

Highlighter

Timer

Grading Sheet

#### Opening (Set):

The teacher will set a timer for 5 minutes and instruct the students to draw what they think a killer looks like. The teacher will explicitly tell the students that they are not to draw anything that violates the code of conduct at the school. There will be no gore or weapons tolerated. The teacher will walk around and look at what each student is drawing until the time runs out. Once the photos are drawn, the teacher will have three separate volunteers describe what they drew. After the three are drawn the teacher will show how many students drew a man. Once the appropriate hands are in the air (usually all) the teacher will ask why. The students will be expected to defend their decision.

#### Learning Tasks (Procedures):

Students will read, be read to, or popcorn read *The Lamb to the Slaughter* and asked to annotate. Annotations will be turned in as part of their grade for the day. If there is effort, every student will receive at least a C. The point of this lesson is to make them think to shape the framework of the novel. Students will be allowed to use annotations when we bring the class to full discussion. The teacher will go over the 10 Socratic Steps and model how to interact within the socratic seminar. There will be a zero tolerance policy for any disrespectful or disruptive behavior.

Students will be removed from discussion after a warning which will earn them a zero for their daily grade. Students will be given a copy of the steps so there is no confusion on how to properly and appropriately conduct themselves during the seminar. Students will be guided in an in depth discussion about the short story. They will be given a list of discussion questions in which they may discuss at their own discretion. One student will be nominated as the starter. Students will not need to raise their hand (which will be gone over in the 10 Socratic Steps). The discussion questions will serve as a guide for the students. If students stray from the topics provided in an intelligent and appropriate manner, they will be encouraged to proceed. If students begin to discuss topics that cannot relate to the discussion, TTW guide them back to the appropriate topic. Students will be graded on the amount of “Chime Ins” that they contribute to the overall class discussion. They will be graded as follows:

- 100: 3 chime ins (with the annotations)
- 90: 2 chime ins (with the annotations)
- 80: 1 chime in (with the annotations)
- 70: 0 chime in (with the annotations)

If students fail to turn in the annotated document, the grading scale will be as follows:

- 60: 3 chime ins
- 40: 2 chime ins
- 20: 1 chime in
- 0: 0 chime in

### **Closure:**

The students will have the final piece of class to fill out an exit ticket. The exit ticket is just an informal document that will allow the teacher to see how effective this style of learning and discussion helped students receive the big picture concepts that they will be focusing on throughout the unit. Students who complete the exit ticket showing understanding, effort, and thoughtfulness will receive 5 bonus points to the overall daily grade.

### **Differentiated Instruction:**

**Enrichment:** Students will be expected to promote critical thinking skills and strategies to contribute to the discussion. Some guided questions are formed to promote a deeper inquiry of the text.

**Intervention:** Students will be able to ask and have questions answered in real time as they are engaging. The teacher may interject information as necessary to aid the overall discussion.

**Accommodation:** Students with disabilities will have access to whatever needs they need met including but not limited to enhanced print, audios of the lesson, etc..

**10 Socratic Steps:**

- 1. A Thoughtful Answer Is Never A Wrong Answer**
- 2. Listen While Others Are Speaking**
- 3. Do Not Raise Your Hand To Speak - Do Not Talk Over Others**
- 4. Refer To The Text**
- 5. Speak Loudly And Clearly - Your Voice Matters!!**
- 6. Take Notes!!**
- 7. Ask Questions**
- 8. Be The Devil's Advocate**
- 9. Speak To The Idea, Not The Person.**
- 10. You Are Responsible For The Quality Of Discussion.**

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1. What is significant of the point of view used in *Lamb to the Slaughter* ?**
- 2. What is significant about the title of *Lamb to the Slaughter*?**
- 3. Who is the antagonist of *Lamb to the Slaughter*? Who is the protagonist?**
- 4. How does Mary Maloney compare to Daisy?**
- 5. How do gender roles affect the American Dream for women?**

**Exit Ticket Questions:**

- **Name**
- **Email**
- **Why did Mary Maloney kill her husband?**
- **What is one thing you learned from the discussion?**
- **How is irony used in *Lamb to the Slaughter*?**
- **Will Mary get caught? Why or Why not?**
- **How does the killer we drew as a class compare to Mary Maloney?**