

# Connections



**A Journal of the  
Georgia Council  
of Teachers of  
English**

Cover art by Travis Wiggins  
Assistant Principal at A.R. Johnson Magnet School



# Executive Board + Directors + Advisors



President  
Jennifer Dail  
Kennesaw State University  
[jdail1@kennesaw.edu](mailto:jdail1@kennesaw.edu)



First Vice President/Conferences  
Alisha Hill  
Gwinnett County Schools  
[alishahillphd@gmail.com](mailto:alishahillphd@gmail.com)



2nd Vice President  
Cassandra Smith  
Chattahoochee Valley CC  
[Cassieteach@hotmail.com](mailto:Cassieteach@hotmail.com)



Secretary  
Kristy Girardeau  
Georgia State University  
[kjmcghee@gmail.com](mailto:kjmcghee@gmail.com)



Treasurer  
Matt Brown  
Albany State University  
[mateusbrown25@gmail.com](mailto:mateusbrown25@gmail.com)



Conferences co-Directors  
Kyle Jones & Nick Thompson  
[kyle.jones777@gmail.com](mailto:kyle.jones777@gmail.com)  
[a.nick.thompson@gmail.com](mailto:a.nick.thompson@gmail.com)



Diversity Director  
Marla Fowler  
[mfowler@albanytech.edu](mailto:mfowler@albanytech.edu)



Publications Director  
Karen Mitchum  
[kmitcham@mgresa.us](mailto:kmitcham@mgresa.us)



Publications Director  
Rebecca G. Harper  
Augusta University  
[harper7@augusta.edu](mailto:harper7@augusta.edu)



Membership Director  
Kenya Taylor  
[ktaylor@bellsouth.net](mailto:ktaylor@bellsouth.net)



Teacher/School Awards  
Director  
Brenda Logan  
[BLogan11@comcast.net](mailto:BLogan11@comcast.net)



Technology Director  
Darren Crovitz  
Kennesaw State University  
[dcrovitz@kennesaw.edu](mailto:dcrovitz@kennesaw.edu)



Director At-Large  
Melissa Bridges  
Union County Middle  
School/High School  
[mebridges@ucschools.org](mailto:mebridges@ucschools.org)



Past President/NCTE Liaison  
Jim Hill  
Albany State University  
[james.hill@asurams.edu](mailto:james.hill@asurams.edu)



GLAS Liaison  
Carolyn Waters  
[carolyn.e.waters@outlook.com](mailto:carolyn.e.waters@outlook.com)



College Relations  
Nancy Remler  
Georgia Southern University  
[nremler@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:nremler@georgiasouthern.edu)



Legislative Advisor  
Amy Fouse  
Houston County Schools  
[amy.fouse@hcbe.net](mailto:amy.fouse@hcbe.net)



GCTE Mini-Grants  
Amanda Montgomery  
[amonty0909@gmail.com](mailto:amonty0909@gmail.com)



Photographer  
Rosetta Coyne  
[rosettacoyne@gmail.com](mailto:rosettacoyne@gmail.com)



Social Media  
Kristin Rabun  
[rabun.kristin@mail.fcboe.org](mailto:rabun.kristin@mail.fcboe.org)

---

# Table of Contents

---

<b>LETTER FROM THE EDITOR</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>ARTICLES</b>	
<b>Cultivating Community: Celebrity Social Media Accounts as Complex Texts</b> <i>Morganne Biddle and Darren Crovitz</i>	<b>6-11</b>
<b>Tomorrow Won't Be Easy: Poetry to Teach the Day After</b> <i>Whittney Conley and Leah Panther</i>	<b>12-18</b>
<b>Tough Topics &amp; Safe Spaces: Using Literature to Explore 9/11</b> <i>Erinn Bentley and Jalin Murphy</i>	<b>19-23</b>
<b>Music in the English Classroom: Playlist Activities to Support High School Reading</b> <i>Charles W. Hyatt and Grace J. Hyatt</i>	<b>24-29</b>
<b>GTCE MEMBERSHIP FLYER</b>	<b>30</b>

# Letter from the Editor

Greetings, Good People~

It is my pleasure to share the reboot of the GCTE journal *Connections*! After a long hiatus, our journal is back with some fantastic articles from educators in the field.

In this issue, you'll hear from inspiring educators who are working diligently to ensure that our students have authentic literacy experiences that are engaging and powerful. Now more than ever, teachers and students need safe spaces and places to read and write this complex world they live in. Read about how authors Biddle and Crovitz offer us suggestions for utilizing social media for analysis and the examination of complex texts with high school students while authors Conley and Panther share ideas for using poetry as a vehicle for discussion and healing in the classroom. This tees up our next article by authors Bentley and Murphy who continue the conversation with more ideas for utilizing literature to address sensitive topics. Lastly, authors Hyatt and Hyatt offer solid ideas for utilizing music and playlists in the classroom that build engaging learning opportunities for our students.

Make sure to save the date for our next GCTE Conference which will be held at the University of Georgia Center of Continuing Education on February 2-4, 2023. Look for a call for proposals in the coming months. Lastly, if you are looking to get reenergized and need a professional space to share ideas, collaborate, and learn, I encourage you to join GCTE. (see the included flyer) and get connected with your local National Writing Project Site.

Until our next issue, I hope that you are happy and well wherever you are.

Sincerely,

Dr. Rebecca G. Harper, Editor for *Connections*

**Call for Manuscripts**  
**GCTE *Connections***  
**Deadline: November 30, 2022**

*Connections* is the peer-reviewed journal of the Georgia Council of Teachers of English. *Connections* publishes original contributions on English-Language Arts learning, teaching, and research, focusing on issues concerning students in elementary, middle-level, high school, and college classrooms. The journal offers educators innovative and practical ideas for classroom use that are rooted in current research as a practical guide to best practices in schools. Please address any questions to *Connections* editor Dr. Rebecca G. Harper (rharper7@augusta.edu).

**This edition of the GCTE *Connections* journal invites educators to share ways in which they are utilizing literature and writing to transform instruction and empower students, both in face-to-face and digital environments.** We ask that manuscripts received for this issue address and consider the following:

How can writing and literature initiate and propel social justice movements?

In what ways are educators utilizing literature to evoke conversations of inequities, justice, and systemic racism?

How can literature used in multiple platforms (digital/hybrid/face-to-face) motivate and empower students through discussion and writing engagements?

In what ways are classroom teachers using literacy engagements for social and civic responsibility?

How can literature and writing create safe spaces for sensitive topics and difficult conversations?

How are educators responding to book bans and curriculum challenges?

### **Submission Guidelines**

Manuscripts should offer specific classroom practices that are grounded in research.

Manuscripts should be 2,000-3,000 words double-spaced with 1-inch margins in 12-point Times New Roman font, prepared according to the citation style specified in the APA Handbook, current edition.

Any images (i.e., photos, visuals, charts, student work, etc.) must be black and white or grayscale in high-resolution (300 dpi) files (tif, jpg, or pdf).

For student work or photographs of students, please include appropriate Student Consent-to-Publish form(s) completed and signed by the student and the student's parent/guardian.

Authors are responsible for any excerpts from previously published sources requiring a reprint fee.

To ensure impartial review, information that identifies the author should not appear in the manuscript. A cover page, submitted as a separate document, should contain

- the title of the submission

- an abstract or overview of the article and word count

- the author's name, email, address, and phone number

- the author's teaching grade level and affiliation

- the author's 2-3 sentence biographical information

**Submissions should be emailed as Word document attachments to rharper7@augusta.edu**

# Cultivating Community: Celebrity Social Media Accounts as Complex Texts

Morganne Biddle  
Meadowcreek High School  
[morganne.biddle@gmail.com](mailto:morganne.biddle@gmail.com)

Darren Crovitz, Ph.D.  
Kennesaw State University  
[dcrovitz@kennesaw.edu](mailto:dcrovitz@kennesaw.edu)

In just a few years, social media platforms and applications have transformed our lives. The massive diversity of digital expression is obvious to anyone spending time online. While the typical activity on apps such as Instagram and Tiktok may seem to have limited application to traditional classrooms, the affordances of these technologies have certainly been embraced by business, entertainment, and corporate interests. Notably, companies and celebrities have recognized the value of social media spaces in curating branded identities and communicating in ways that convey authenticity to customers, fans, and followers.

In this article, we describe a project in which high school English students explored questions of authenticity and community in social media feeds, and we consider the possibilities for digital texts and spaces as complex texts worthy of analysis.

## Digital Literacies: A Short Primer

English teachers are quite familiar with print-based forms of literacy, and many conventional ELA skills (such as reading and writing) are useful in a digital realm. When we compose a tweet or browse information on a website, we're often drawing upon skills that we might use in print-centered contents.

But taking full advantage of the possibilities of digital technologies and spaces calls for new knowledge and skills that extend beyond the boundaries of traditional ELA literacies. For instance, the affordances of hypertext (i.e., linkable "documents," folders, objects, and spaces) along with embeddable forms of multimodal texts mean that "composing" entails new dimensions of visual, graphical, informational, and networked understandings. Similarly, the ability to swiftly navigate through and organize inter-linked and image/video-integrated texts requires a different skill set than those employed in print-based activities.

Jones and Hafner (2021) list several other abilities that simply didn't exist a few years ago:

- Composing complex multimodal documents (such as Instagram "stories") that combine words, graphics, video, and audio.
- Assessing reality in digital spaces to separate the "true" from the "fake" in a complex information ecosystem.
- Curating identity to manage constant surveillance by peers and private companies and to protect one's personal data and "identity" from being misused by others. (p. 1-2)

A fourth new ability leads into the focus of this project: "negotiating online spaces [...] to create and maintain dynamic online profiles and manage large and complex online social networks" (p. 1). The kinds of communities that digital spaces make possible draw upon new forms of literacy, such as the curation and maintenance of a public-facing digital persona.

Preparing literate citizens in a modern era means widening traditional definitions of literacies to include these new dimensions. Of course, for ELA teachers to help their own students build these skills, they must first develop familiarity with and a productive stance toward these literacies through their own meaningful learning experiences.

## Digital Media and Technology in English Language Arts

Dr. Darren Crovitz is a faculty member in Kennesaw State's English Education program, in which he teaches a Digital Media and Technology (DMT) in English Language Arts course. This course provides preservice teachers with a broad introduction to digital texts and the applied uses of technology in middle school language arts and high school English classrooms.

Many of the projects and activities in the DMT course are purposefully experimental and divergent in nature. Rather than mastery of a particular classroom technology or tool, course assignments are designed to support a curious, proactive perspective from students toward the possibilities of new technologies. That is, the course is intended to help preservice teachers establish a *principled stance* toward digital phenomena in order to consider the affordances and constraints of any emerging technology for its uses with future students. The course emphasizes both a critical and creative approach to tools and texts, with preservice teachers experimenting with the kinds of meaningful projects

that they might in turn design (or redesign) for their own students.

In 2020, Morganne Biddle took Dr. Crovitz's DMT course as an English Education major. Based on her experiences in the course, Morganne subsequently designed a student project during her year-long clinical experience at a local high school during a period of remote learning. While anchored on concepts from the DMT course, her assignment was a new foray into a specific digital phenomenon, analyzing celebrity social media feeds as complex texts. In the next section, Morganne describes the basis for this work and the specific steps she took with students.

### **Morganne's Social Media Profile Analysis Project**

In January 2021, I was a student teacher at a local private high school beginning my second semester with my AP Language & Composition students. We were reading *The Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis, a satirical novel written as a series of letters written from a devil (Screwtape) to his nephew (Wormwood) giving advice about manipulating humans into practicing self-destructive behaviors. As we discussed the themes of the book in class, one theme that really interested my students was this idea of *fabricated authenticity*. They were fascinated by how easily people could be manipulated into feeling a certain way based on something that seemed very real but was actually intentionally fabricated to generate a specific reaction. Naturally, the topic of social media kept coming up. My students brought up how social media would sometimes make them feel jealous, insecure, or left out, and how they felt like some people were very different on social media than they were in real life. At the same time, I was looking for modern texts I could pair with this novel to help my students see the relevance of the rhetorical analysis skills they'd been practicing: how could they apply these analytical tools with real texts beyond the classroom? This initial thinking became the basis for a Social Media Profile Analysis Project, in which students examined the social media accounts of celebrities for how they attempt to convey authenticity to a certain audience.

### **Rhetorical Inquiry**

In analyzing any conventional text, my students were used to starting with some basic questions:

- Who is the author?
- Who is the audience?
- What is the message or purpose?

These questions would usually be followed by others that get more specific elements of the text.

- What is the tone?
- How does this specific scene or passage relate to the author's overall message or purpose?
- What strategies is the author using to appeal to the audience?

These and similar questions are also useful tools for considering non-traditional texts. Many social media feeds, especially those of celebrities and entertainers, are clearly complex operations designed to cultivate a fan base. Businesses know that making sure that a brand comes across as authentic is an essential strategy for success. In *LikeWar: The Weaponization of Social Media*, Singer and Booker (2019) discuss the power of authenticity on social media, and how people of power can present themselves as relatable and authentic (even if they aren't). In this sense, "authenticity" becomes a quality or tactic that can be purposefully manufactured to reach and maintain audiences.

We want the people we admire to be relatable. We crave authenticity, but what does that quality look like? How can distant celebrities portray themselves as authentic people to their followers? Why does this even matter? These are the essential questions that motivated us as we began this work.

### **Part 1: Journal Prompt and Discussion**

My students began this project with the following journal prompt.

*I'm going to ask you all to just go with me for a second on this one. Go to Taylor Swift's Instagram or Twitter account. Think about what we read last class and answer the following question: What is something about her account that makes her seem relatable or authentic? (Even if you personally do not find her relatable or authentic, consider her audience and write about how she may appeal to them.)*

After some time to think and write, we talked about what we noticed on Swift's social media



accounts. Many of my students mentioned the photos and videos of her cats with casual and funny captions such as “a smol baby seal on land” or “majestic even when she had a cat cold.” A few students also mentioned a specific post where she posted a picture of herself on a Zoom call, something that they could relate to since they were having class on Zoom.

I pointed out how Swift speaks directly to her fans, not only to thank them for their support but to explain her music and process to them. For instance, when she released her album *Evermore* only five months after releasing *Folklore*, she crafted a post explaining why she’d decided to make these two connected albums in such a short time period and what headspace she was in while writing these songs. Consistently sharing these behind-the-scenes thoughts can be seen as a strategy: it strengthens Swift’s relationship with them by making her fans feel like they know her on a more personal level. None of the choices were necessarily fake or inauthentic—those photos really could be impromptu pictures of her cats, and that really could have been a real Zoom call she was on. But importantly, they were all *intentional* posts about the parts of her life that not coincidentally serve to make her more relatable to her fans.

## Part 2: Small Group Analysis

After our discussion about the social media strategies that Taylor Swift uses, I asked my students to form small groups and decide on a famous person with a large following on social media: this could be an actor, an athlete, a YouTuber, or some other personality, as long as it was someone with a large following with whom they were familiar. Next, I asked them to analyze their chosen person’s social media accounts and create a presentation that made a case about

1. the image that the person is trying to portray to their audience, and
2. how this person attempts to come across as authentic or relatable to followers

Each group had the following list of questions to consider as they analyzed their chosen person’s profiles:

- Who or what is the subject of their photos/posts?
- Are there any specific posts that stand out to you? Why?
- Are the posts mostly about their personal lives, their careers, or something else?
- Do they interact with other people? If so, who and how?
- Are their photos super-filtered, or more natural looking? Are they candid or posed?
- What are their captions like? Does it sound like they’re directly speaking to their audience, or not so much?
- What does their profile picture say about them?
- How do they describe themselves in their bio?
- Do they use a lot of hashtags, and if so, what is notable about their choices?
- Do they post advertisements? If so, how are these products connected to the image they’ve curated?

As my students worked, I popped in and out of their breakout rooms to listen to their conversations, and what I heard was fascinating. My students were actively engaged in conversations about language, purpose, audience, tone, and rhetorical strategies—all the same things that I would be asking them to think about with a traditional text. The groups chose several very different people, and each turned out to have their own specific social media strategies.

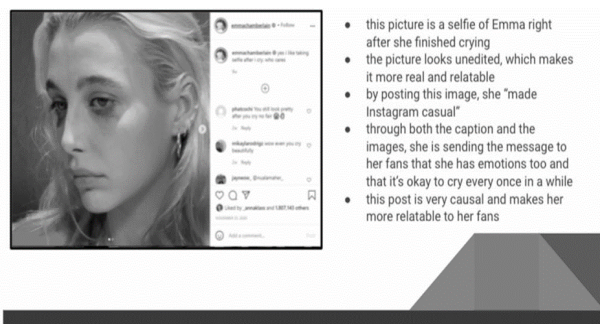
## Part 3: Presentation and Discussion

A couple of groups chose Emma Chamberlain, a famous teenage vlogger. Chamberlain achieved fame as a YouTuber (with over 10 million subscribers); she also has 13 million followers on Instagram. Vlogging has seen a shift in recent years from over-edited, hyper-polished content to a style that is more casual and authentic, and Chamberlain is one of the influencers who really popularized this style of content.

My students found that the posts that made Chamberlain seem most authentic were the unposed, unfiltered, unphotoshopped selfies with funny and relatable captions. Groups focused on pictures she’d posted of herself crying, wearing sweatpants and no makeup, and lying in bed with a towel on her head (see Figure 1). These are the kinds of photos that a lot of average people might take of themselves, but (at the time) not the kind of pictures that most people would post for the public to see, especially high-profile celebrities who typically strive to maintain a particular image. Except that is exactly what Emma Chamberlain does, and that’s what



has made her so popular.



*Figure 1. A slide from a group's presentation about Emma Chamberlain's Instagram, with students providing an example of a typical post along with analysis of what the image is intended to convey to her followers.*

Another group chose to focus on John Cena, a professional-wrestler-turned-actor with more than 15 million followers on Instagram and over 13 million followers on Twitter. First, my students analyzed Cena's Instagram, which at first glance looks like a bad meme account. His Instagram bio reads "Welcome to my Instagram. These images will be posted without explanation, for your interpretation. Enjoy." My students were confused and had no idea how to interpret his posts (and neither did I), but then they decided that absurdity and confusion were the point of the posts. The mystery of the account is the reason so many people follow it.

My students also examined Cena's Twitter account, which again was not at all what they were expecting. Instead of chaotic memes posted with no explanation, they mostly found inspirational tweets (see Figure 2). They noticed that he was speaking directly to his followers in these uplifting messages and concluded that this was his way of forming a deeper connection with his audience as well as an attempt to be seen as more than just a wrestler. The duality of John Cena's social media accounts is a very drastic example of how someone can present themselves in completely different ways on social media depending on their purposes.

*Figure 2. A slide from a group's presentation about John Cena's Twitter. In this slide, students provide examples of typical posts along with analysis of what the tweets are intended to convey to his followers.*



Other groups did similar analytical work. Students examined how Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, another professional-wrestler-turned-actor, uses his fit and healthy image to promote his different drink brands (such as his energy drink ZOA) to the 256 million people who follow his personal Instagram. Another group chose Jojo Siwa, a singer and actress, and noticed that her social media accounts were filled with bright colors, lots of emojis, and messages promoting positivity, which they attributed to her younger fanbase. Finally, the students who chose rapper Playboi Carti noticed that his strategy was different from most of the other influencers. This group argued that Carti's social media strategy was to present himself as he truly was: strange but captivating. From his unique spelling and mechanics (replacing o's with 0's and using random capitalization), to saturating many of his images with a red tint, his brand is unique and very recognizable to his fans.

In this assignment, each group investigated a person they were interested in and investigated digital spaces with which they had some experience. My students were able to use their own background knowledge and experience to inform their analysis of these complex texts. I watched students who usually never spoke up in class engaging in lively discussions about language, purpose, audience, tone, and rhetorical strategies. Several groups even did additional research on their chosen person in order to provide a more in-depth analysis and strengthen their argument. This is the type of engagement we all want from our students, and it all started with meeting my students where they were (in digital spaces) and providing them with the opportunity to choose their topics.

### Other Potential Applications: Social Media Advocacy

Kirby and Crovitz (2013) highlight the importance of giving students opportunities to write authentically. The authors define authentic writing as "writing for real audiences (not just the teacher) about a topic important to you (not whatever topic

was assigned) for a reason important to you (not just the makers of high-stakes tests) to communicate a real message” (p. 124). Social media texts offer such opportunities for students through applied, real-world composing about issues they care about. Gallagher and Kittle (2018) ask students to create digital public service announcements as a part of their argument unit. Students first craft their argument in the form of a letter written to a presidential candidate about an issue that they care about and then determine the best way to present that information in a digital PSA. They must make rhetorical decisions (e.g., how to organize information to keep an audience interested, and what images or media might complement the argument). Using different modes helps students to think about their audience, purpose, and writing in a much more authentic way than they would have with a traditional essay.

Similarly, asking students to create an argument in the form of a series of Instagram posts (for instance) can call upon complex skills and understandings. Such work would force students to set aside formulaic writing and make specific decisions about argument, presentation, and audience. What kind of image should they use to grab attention and make someone stop scrolling? What hashtags could spread their argument to a wider audience? How can they present an argument concisely without compromising the message? Crafting a series of social media posts advocating for a specific cause—and reflecting on their choices in doing so—involves many of the skills typical for traditional assignments while calling on the new literacies necessary in a digital realm.

### Moving Forward

When we bring social media into the classroom, students can apply ELA concepts to the spaces and situations that they’re interacting within every day. This project called on students to discuss the relationship between a composer, audience, and purpose; analyze and explain punctuation, word choice, and grammar in context; and identify different rhetorical strategies and determine their impact and effectiveness on others. Maybe the best part: students were much more engaged and excited to practice these skills on texts with which they had a genuine interest.

In *A Place to Write*, Montgomery & Montgomery (2021) argue for a writing curriculum grounded in

locations beyond the classroom as a key means of engaging students. As the authors note, a sense of “place” can extend to digital realms: “the virtual world itself is a place with distinct identifying features that can be leveraged for authentic writing” (p. 152). Young people who follow celebrities, entertainers, and influencers on social media do so in part because these spaces invite contribution, conversation, and community. They are affinity spaces (Gee, 2004) in which participants enact specific literacies anchored on a shared sense of identity and interest. Opening the classroom to these places as ongoing sites of textual creation and reception offers a means for students to do critical work in familiar contexts. Now when they’re scrolling through their social media feeds, they’ll be more likely to see these posts in a new light—as multilayered texts designed to have a particular impact on an audience—while they practice being critical producers and consumers of information themselves.

### References

- Gallagher, K., & Kittle, P. (2018). *180 Days: Two Teachers and the Quest to Engage and Empower Adolescents*. Heinemann.
- Gee, J. (2004). *Situated Language and Learning: A Critique of Traditional Schooling*. Routledge.
- Jones, R.H., & C. A. Hafner. (2021). *Understanding Digital Literacies: A Practical Introduction*. (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Kirby, D.L., & Crovitz, D. (2013). *Inside Out: Strategies for Teaching Writing* (4th ed.). Heinemann.
- Montgomery, R., & Montgomery, A. (2021). *A Place to Write: Getting Your Students out of the Classroom and Into the World*. NCTE.
- Singer, P.W., & Brooking, E.T. (2019). *LikeWar: The Weaponization of Social Media* (Reprint ed.). Mariner Books.

### About the Authors

Morganne Biddle is a Language Arts teacher at Meadowcreek High School. She can be reached at [morganne.biddle@gmail.com](mailto:morganne.biddle@gmail.com) and @ms.biddle.



Darren Crovitz is a professor of English and English Education at Kennesaw State University, where he also directs the English Education program. His research interests include applied grammar application and digital media literacy. He can be reached at [dcrovitz@kennesaw.edu](mailto:dcrovitz@kennesaw.edu) and @dcrovitz.



**GEORGIA COUNCIL OF  
TEACHERS OF ENGLISH**

Since 1923, the **Georgia Council of Teachers of English** has been Georgia's professional home for English Language Arts teachers from pre-K to university levels. GTCE is the Georgia Affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). Membership is open to teachers, administrators, college faculty, education majors, and other interested in the teaching of English Language Arts.

GTCE has won the **NCTE Affiliate Excellence Award** every year since 2001.

For more information on how to become a member, please see page 30.

# Tomorrow Won't Be Easy: Poetry to Teach the Day After

Whittney Conley  
Mercer University  
[whittney.conley@live.mercer.edu](mailto:whittney.conley@live.mercer.edu)

Leah Panther, PhD  
Mercer University  
[panther\\_lm@mercer.edu](mailto:panther_lm@mercer.edu)

As educators teaching during socially and politically tumultuous times, we have faced many “day afters”: the day after the death of Rashard Brooks, when election day became an election night with no clear winner, the day after the Capital insurrection, the day after mass shootings at Atlanta spas, and the day after not guilty verdicts. Each day after, fraught decisions needed to be made regarding *what* and *how* to teach following tragic and traumatizing events. This article shines light on poetry lessons we have collectively practiced and imagined for the days after traumatizing events have affected our students’ lives and created social unrest. Understanding that poetry has a long history within literary traditions and English instruction, we turn to youth protest poems, hip hop pedagogies, and methods of counternarrative composition to center youth experiences and voice as they make personalized meaning following traumatic events in their local, cultural, and global communities.

## Tomorrow Won't Be Easy: Poetry to Teach the Day After

On Friday, March 13, 2020 two events happened that changed the ways we—Whittney Conley, a current classroom teacher, and Leah Panther, a university teacher educator—thought about the power, the privilege, and the necessity of English language arts. First, a young woman named Breonna Taylor was fatally shot by police officers who did not announce themselves before entering her home. Second, our respective schools shifted to emergency virtual learning as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Breonna Taylor, a healthcare worker at the frontlines of the pandemic, became the face and name of two threats to ourselves, our communities, and our students: COVID-19 and racism.

As educators, we both had questions as we prepared for Monday, March 15<sup>th</sup>.

- How do you start class the next day?
- What conversations do you have? Do you avoid? Do you invite, but not demand?

- What do these conversations look like in a course committed to writing and literature?
- What do these conversations look like in a discipline committed to capturing and exploring voices and stories?
- How do we invite students to express their emotions and pain while having their voices heard?

We have not asked these questions just for Monday, March 15<sup>th</sup>, but for the many “day afters” since: the death of Rashard Brooks, when election day became an election night with no clear winner, the Capital insurrection, and the mass shootings at Atlanta spas. Each of these days after led to fraught decisions on how and what to teach. For educators facing these same questions, we offer our response: protest poetry.

Protest poetry is a genre of poetic verse that explicitly names and speaks against injustice. Atkins (2017) explains, “verse has a long history of resisting oppression and rallying opposition in the face of overwhelming odds” (para. 2). Often, this can take the form of sampling, or drawing inspiration from other poets, lyricists, and the media to create relevant statements and inquiry into the topic (Davis, 2019). Within this article, we offer a brief history of protest poetry and how we came to use it within our pedagogy before offering three examples of how English educators can use protest poetry for healing: (a) discussing protest poetry, (b) crafting lyrical responses, and (c) counterstorytelling.

## Historicizing Poetry for Voice and Protest

Southern trees bear a strange fruit  
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root  
Black bodies swingin’ in the Southern breeze  
Strange fruit hangin’ from the poplar trees  
Pastoral scene of the gallant South  
The bulging’ eyes and the twisted mouth  
Scent of magnolias sweet and fresh  
Then the sudden smell of burnin’ flesh  
Here is a fruit for the crows to pluck  
For the rain to gather  
For the wind to suck  
For the sun to rot  
For the tree to drop  
Here is a strange fruit and bitter crop  
—“Stranger Fruit” by Billie Holiday

One of things I, Whittney, love most in this word is Jazz music: the pure heart feeling when I hear the singer’s story, the music flowing so smoothly I get lost in my thoughts, the moment when my surroun-



dings become invisible. In 1939, jazz singer Billie Holiday recorded the song “Strange Fruit” to express her outrage at the lynching of Black Americans. Her poetic lyrics strummed a poison visual she sang to life, the sorrow and pain in her heart pouring out in rivers of lyrics. She invites you to feel racism through her voice, her words. The lyrics are an example of protest poetry: telling true stories of pain and healing, suffering and longed for restoration through many voices, modalities, and times.

Selecting historic examples of protest poetry to teach on the day after invites students into a multigenerational conversation with poets and their families. Whittney’s mother was born in 1957, and Leah’s in 1959, both during the Civil Rights Era. They lived through protests, boycotts, forced integration, the March on Washington, and the assassination of Civil Rights leaders. Similarly, our students’ biological and literary ancestors lived through times of fear and sorrow that can shape multigenerational conversations about tragedy. After the assassination of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK), poet Maya Angelou wrote the book *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* about her childhood. The poem “Caged Bird” contrasts the caged bird and the free bird, describing “. . . a bird that stalks/ down his narrow cage/ can seldom see through/ his bars of rage/ his wings are clipped and/ his feet are tied/ so he opens his throat to sing” and ends with the line “for the caged bird/ sings of freedom”. The poem invites the reader to consider who is caged versus free, what systems have clipped the bird’s wings, and what historic events have tied the feet. Ultimately, to wonder what song of freedom the bird might sing, and how the song would help the listener mourn: whether after the news of MLK’s assassination—or the death of Breonna Taylor 53 years later.

More broadly, poetry is associated with writing for thinking (Bomer & Fowler-Amato, 2014) as a distinct genre of literature (Bomer, 2011; Burke, 2016). English classrooms have historically been spaces to study and compose literature that evokes emotional highs and lows of human experience. Poetry has been a way to spark conversations and evoke emotion about the areas in life that are traumatic (Arnold, 2000). These conversations give

way to composing and sharing in ways that grow empathy and strengthen classroom communities (Gillespie, 2016).

Taken together, poetry has historically been a genre where individual voices are used to challenge societal norms, injustices, and misrepresentations within emotionally tumultuous moments; making poetry a fertile space to plant ourselves and our students the day after. To this end, integrating protest poetry for reading and writing instruction connects the past to the present, offering insights for today.

### **Instructional Approaches to Protest Poetry**

We now offer several ways English educators may use protest poetry for healing: (a) discussing protest poetry, (b) crafting lyrical responses, and (c) counterstorytelling.

### **Poetry as an Entry Point**

We the successors of a country and a time  
Where a skinny Black girl  
descended from slaves and raised by a single mother  
can dream of becoming president  
only to find herself reciting for one  
And yes we are far from polished  
far from pristine  
but that doesn't mean we are  
striving to form a union that is perfect  
We are striving to forge a union with purpose  
To compose a country committed to all cultures,  
colors, characters and conditions of man  
And so we lift our gazes not to what stands between us  
but what stands before us  
We close the divide because we know, to put our  
future first, we must first put our differences aside  
We lay down our arms  
so we can reach out our arms  
to one another  
--“The Hill We Climb” by Amanda Gorman

Amanda Gorman, the youth poet laureate, read “The Hill We Climb” at President Biden’s inauguration telling the story of herself, her potential futures, her country. Gorman’s poem was the latest tome to express emotion, share imagery, and cause the listener to look through clear eyes to see the world in a dance of style and tempo.

Our students are facing the social, cultural, historical, and political realities of an unjust society everyday:

protest poetry is a starting point to name those issues plainly and invite conversation on difficult topics. For educators looking for an entry point to discuss tumultuous events, selecting an engaging protest poem (see Table 1), particularly from a teen author, is an entry point.

---

Table 1  
Resources for Selecting Poetry

- The Poetry Learning Lab, Poetry Foundation: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/learn>
  - Poetry Out Loud: <https://www.poetryoutloud.org/teachers-organizers/lesson-plans/>
  - Academy of American Poets: <https://poets.org/>
  - Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/lcpoetry/poetry.html>
  - National Writing Project: <https://archive.nwp.org/cs/public/print/resource/2832>
- 

Once you have selected a protest poem, learners may need historical, political, or sociocultural context to understand the meaning. For example, teen poet Michelle Saltouros used poetry to reckon with the water crisis in Flint, Michigan. As a Michigan teen, she was horrified to learn about high traces of lead in the town's water supply resulted in short- and long-term health complications. Additionally, the crisis severely limited predominantly African American residents' access to clean water (Butler et al., 2016). Michelle Saltouros' words, like Amanda Gorman, are entry point for conversations about the power of a single child's voice against histories of injustice. The poem "To the Brothers and Sisters of Flint, Michigan" begins with the line "I am sorry./ I know that is not enough." then describes the current event, and continues with questions and solutions:

I hear  
they ask you to put up with it.  
I hope you don't.

I hope you throw water balloons at their open windows,  
let them splatter through the screens,  
soak into their legal documents,  
cover their family photos. I hope  
you wield squirt guns,  
and run through the city like children again,  
spraying every suit you can find,  
soaking their ironed out wrinkles,  
they're protective dry cleans.  
Tell them lead is the new gold.

Finally, the poet ends by thinking about her own role, the future, and if there is truly an answer to the crisis, ending with the haunting lines: "I do not know the answer./ I am not sure there is one."

Next, once the poem has been introduced and shared, the work of teen poets the day after becomes an entry point into conversations about the role of a single voice, the connections between histories and present day realities, and to discuss potential reactions and uncertain futures. Here are prompts we have used in our own classrooms after reading poetry from youth voices to invite further conversation:

- What events inspired the poem?
- What was the poet's purpose for writing?
- What emotions did the poet express?
- What questions, concerns, or solutions did the poet offer?
- How did the poet use language or writing to express themselves?
- How does an individual author or poet engage in protest?
- How are you feeling today? What emotions are you experiencing?
- Are you comfortable talking about what happened yesterday?
- What questions, concerns, or solutions do you have to offer?
- How could you use language or writing to express yourself?
- How would you engage in protest?

These questions are designed to spark conversation and begin conversations that will lead to students'

own lyrical composing.

**Lyrical Voice and Hip-Hop Pedagogies**

Yeah, but I got a lot to be mad about  
Got a lot to be a man about, got a lot to pop a xan  
about. . .  
Then I walk up in the bank, pants sagging down  
And I laugh at frowns—what they mad about?  
--*Mad by Solange featuring Lil Wayne*

In the African American community rapping is our poetry. It is how we express our pain, struggle, and movement within our community. The lyrics of rap music can be used to spark relevant discussions using familiar language and discourse that center youth (Camangian, 2008). Lamont-Hill (2009) cautions that using hip hop, rap, and song lyrics can be viewed by students as pandering to get them to “feel better about themselves” if it is presented as a subordinate form of academic literacies, and is worthy of being viewed as sophisticated literature in its own right (p. 118). The emergence of critical hip-hop pedagogies highlights the power of using hip hop to spark conversations, critiques of self and society, and work towards sociopolitical consciousness (Alim, 2007; Stovall, 2006; Hall, 2017).

Further, using hip hop as an entry point to discuss and leverage protest poetry (see Table 2) is a powerful approach because it allows multiple entry points: the print text of the lyrics, the audio recording of the song, and the multimodal music video all provide opportunities for rich analysis and comprehension. Additionally, the wide variety of formats allows educators to select the format that is most appropriate for the cultural, linguistic, and developmental diversity of their students.

Table 2.  
*Protest Poetry in Hip Hop*

<u>Song and Artist</u>	<u>Context</u>
Bigger Than Black and White—Lil Baby	Response to the killing of George Floyd
I Can’t Breathe—H.E.R	Response to the killing of George Floyd

This is America—Childish Gambino	History of racism embedded in the daily life of Black Americans
Fight the Power—Public Enemy	Empowering the Black community to persist
I Am Not My Hair—India.Arie and Akon	Discussion of Black beauty
Reagan—Killer Mike	History of war on drugs and its impact on Black communities and families
Alright—Kendrick Lamar	Empowering the Black community to persist
Americans—Janelle Monáe	A critique of American history and how power is used within society to marginalize groups
To Be Young, Gifted, and Black—Nina Simone (with Weldon Irvine)	Written to “make black children all over the world feel good about themselves forever.”

After using youth protest poetry as an entry point to discuss the events that preceded the day after, using lyrical poetry found within hip hop furthers the conversation with mentor print, audio, and multimodal texts for composing. This prepares students for the composing protest poetry in their own voice as they consider what mode, format, or genre would best communicate their message.

**Counternarratives Through Poetry**

If the abolition of slave-manacles  
began as a vision of hands without manacles,  
then this is the year;  
if the shutdown of extermination camps  
began as imagination of a land  
without barbed wire or the crematorium,  
then this is the year;

if every rebellion begins with the idea  
that conquerors on horseback  
are not many-legged gods, that they too drown  
if plunged in the river,  
then this is the year.  
From “Imagine the Angels of Bread”  
by Martín Espada

Martín Espada puts the past and the present into conversation in his poem “Imagine the Angels of Bread”, critiquing the dominant political narrative of immigration by foregrounding the lived experiences of Latin American immigrants. As teachers, we have daily opportunities to affirm that our students’ lives and language are unique and important: in the literature we read, the history we choose to teach, and the dominant narratives we critique, we are making the claim that our students’ lives are worthy of study (Christensen, 2009; 2017). Counternarratives tell the untold, silenced, or marginalized stories that are excluded from the dominant narrative (Hernandez et al., 2020) and aim to cast doubt on prevailing myths, especially ones held by those in power and for those who benefit from power, privilege, or racism (Johnson et al., 2018). Teaching the day after, we also consider whose narratives are being portrayed in media representations and whose narratives are needed to counter dominate media narratives.

Youth compose counternarratives in a variety of ways ranging from metaphors (Everett, 2018) to co-composing family stories (López-Robertson et al., 2010) to more traditional autobiographical texts that highlight identity, race, and language (Martínez, 2017). Ay-Yong Song (2019) describes the process of poetic authoring of counternarratives in her own classroom as multigenre shifts between fiction and nonfiction that reveal the “fissures and productive slippages” during the process of remembering to “make sense of the human condition” and her students’ places within the world (p. 79). During a day after, such storytelling runs counter to the dominant narrative, creating space for youth to voice their own reactions and places within the event and how these responses are connected to larger histories and societies. We detail this pro-

cess, suggesting how to support students’ meaning making prior to writing their own counternarratives (see Table 3).

Table 3.  
*Our Lesson the Day After*

<u>Prompts</u>	<u>Rationale</u>
Ask students, “What do you already know about the event?” Record information in a shared space (e.g. whiteboard, anchor chart paper, GoogleDoc, Padlet bulletin board). Address misconceptions about the event.	Identify the language youth use to describe the event and mirror their language. Determine what prior knowledge students already have about the event. Address misconceptions, false information, or information that is biased, stereotypical, or perpetuates deficit thinking. This can include providing missing information.
Ask students, “What do you still want to know, wonder, or are struggling to understand about the event?” Record information in a shared space (e.g. whiteboard, anchor chart paper, GoogleDoc, Padlet bulletin board).	Identify students’ concerns, paying attention to social and emotional needs. Identify patterns that connect smaller event to larger concepts (e.g. inequity, globalism, power, Islamophobia).
Ask students, “Where could we go to answer these questions?” or “What information is missing from our understanding that would be helpful to know?” Record resources (e.g. reliable news sources, people with connections to the topic, personal experiences)	Encourage students to identify the missing stories (e.g. whose stories are not being recorded or considered, what experiences students bring with them to understand the event, the potential for grief and sorrow, or joy and healing).

After brainstorming and research, if needed, students are invited to individually and collaboratively engage in composing their own lyrical counternarratives. In Leah’s classroom, this is not a time for a grammar mini-lesson, the peer review process, or modeling conferring. Rather, this is a time for Eng-



## The Day After

This article shines light on lessons we have collectively practiced and imagined for the days after traumatizing events and their resulting social unrest have affected ours and our students' lives. Understanding that protest poetry has a long history within literary traditions and English instruction, we turn to youth protest poems, hip hop pedagogies, and methods of counternarrative composition to center youth experiences and voice as they make personalized meaning following traumatic events in their local, cultural, and global communities.

Alim, H. (2007). Critical hip-hop language peda-

Arnold, M. (2000). *Study of Poetry*. Bibliobytes.

Bomer, R. (2011). *Building Adolescent Literacy in Today's English Classrooms*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann

Bomer, R., & Fowler-Amato, M. (2014). Expanding adolescent writing. In D. Alvermann (Ed.). *Best Practices in Adolescent Literacy Instruction* (pp. 154-168). Guilford.

Burke, J. (2013). *The English Teacher's Companion: A Completely New Guide to Classroom, Curriculum, and the Profession*. Heinemann.

Butler, L. J., Scammell, M. K., & Benson, E. B. (2016). The Flint, Michigan water crisis: A case study in regulatory failure and environmental injustice. *Environmental Justice*, 9(4), 93-97.

Camangian, P. (2008). Untempered tongues: Teaching performance poetry for social justice. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 7 (2), 35-55.

Christensen, L. (2009). *Teaching for Joy and Justice: Re-imagining the Language Arts Classroom. Rethinking Schools.*

Christensen, L. (2017). *Reading, Writing, and Rising Up: Teaching about Social Justice and the Power of the Written Word. Rethinking Schools.*

Ciardiello, A. V. (2010). "Talking walls": Presenting a case for social justice poetry in literacy education. *The Reading Teacher*, 63(6), 464-473.

Davis, C. (2019). Sampling poetry, pedagogy, and protest to build methodology: Critical poetic inquiry as culturally relevant method. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 27(1), 114-124. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800419884978>

Everett, S. (2018). "Untold stories": Cultivating consequential writing with a Black male student through a critical approach to metaphor. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 53(1), 34-

57.

- Gillespie, T. (2016). Rhythm and Resistance: Teaching Poetry for Social Justice. *English Journal*, 105(6), 84-88
- Gorman, A. (2021 January, 20). *The Hill We Climb*.
- Hall, H. B. (2017). Deeper than rap: Expanding conceptions of hip-hop culture and pedagogy in the English language arts classroom. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 51(3), 341.
- Hernandez, M., Torres, F. L., & Glenn, W. J. (2020). Centering immigrant youth voices: Writing as counterstorytelling. *English Journal*, 109(5), 35-42.
- Hill, M. L. (2009). *Beats, rhymes, and classroom life: Hip-hop pedagogy and the politics of identity*. Teachers College Press.
- Johnson, L.L., Chisam, J., Smagorinsky, P., & Wargo, K. (2018). Beyond publication: Social action as the ultimate stage of a writing process, 18,1-21. <https://doi.org/10.17239/L1ESLL-2018.18.03.09>
- López-Robertson, J., Long, S., & Turner-Nash, K. (2010). First steps in constructing counter narratives of young children and their families. *Language Arts*, 88(2), 93-103.
- Martínez, R. A. (2017). 'Are you gonna show this to white people?': Chicana/o and Latina/o students' counter-narratives on race, place, and representation. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 20(1), 101-116.
- McLeod, H., & Ruebsaat, G. (2014). "The receiver no longer holds the sound": Parents, poetry, and the voices we create in the world. *In Education*, 20(2), 29-47.
- Song, A. Y. (2019). Voice and experience: Forming counter-narratives through personal poetry. *English Journal*, 108(3), 74-80.
- Stovall, D. (2006). We can relate: Hip-hop culture, critical pedagogy, and the secondary classroom. *Urban Education*, 41(6), 585-602.

### About the Authors

Ms. Whitney Conley is a second year graduate student in the Tift College of Education at Mercer University at the Atlanta campus. She is a paraprofessional currently at Eddie J. White Middle Academy as her third year in Clayton County Public Schools. Her majors of study include ELA

and Science as she strives to become a general education teacher on the middle school level. She is also a cheerleading coach at Lovejoy High School, also located in Clayton County. She plans to continue working in urban school areas to support student through interactive learning to promote critical thinking.



Dr. Leah Panther is an assistant professor of literacy education in the Tift School of Education at Mercer University at the Atlanta campus. She has taught preschool through higher education across urban, suburban, rural, and international school settings. Her experiences with teaching, teacher leadership, non-profits, and research center on literacy instruction in urban educational contexts to support culturally and linguistically diverse adolescents.



# Tough Topics & Safe Spaces: Using Literature to Explore 9/11

Erinn Bentley, Ph.D.  
Columbus State University  
[bentley\\_erinn@columbusstate.edu](mailto:bentley_erinn@columbusstate.edu)

Jalin Murphy  
Harris County Carver Middle School  
[murphy-jalin@harris.k12.ga.us](mailto:murphy-jalin@harris.k12.ga.us)

With 2021 having marked the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, many educators may wonder how to best address this sensitive topic, especially considering that our adolescent learners were not alive to witness the event. As English educators, we believe literature can create a safe space for exploring such tough topics. As teacher educators, we believe it is important to model for pre-service teachers how to create such safe spaces. This past summer, an introductory methods course for middle/secondary education majors offered the perfect place for us - a teacher educator (Erinn), her graduate assistant (Jalin), and seven pre-service teachers - to explore how to safely and explore topics related to 9/11 through young adult literature.

In planning this course, we quickly realized a challenge. Jalin and I possessed limited experiences related to the attacks. On 9/11, Jalin was only 3 years old, so he learned of the event from history lessons in school. Although I was an adult and remember the attacks, I was teaching overseas. Any knowledge of the event came from news broadcasts or conversations with family and friends. Neither of us had a sense of the collective fear, anger, anguish, and patriotism others have described. We realized that the pre-service teachers in class, who were the same age as Jalin, may feel a similar disconnect with the event. Our goal, then, was to create a safe space in our methods class for the pre-service teachers to learn about 9/11 so they might - in the future - develop strategies and ideas for teaching sensitive topics through the YA novel *Ground Zero* (Gratz, 2021).

## Background

Literature is often studied in the classroom to demonstrate and practice the use of rhetorical devices as well as for the cultivation of comprehension, inferencing, and critical thinking skills. Yet literature can also serve as a conduit for a *safe space* from which tough, triggering, or even controversial topics can be discussed and utilized for learning. That is, students can grow and develop

by exploring and relating to other people's experiences, no matter how tough or triggering, by engaging with meaningful literature as text sets (Newstreet, Sarker, & Shearer, 2019). Whether the tough topic be the terrorism behind September 11, 2001, or the growing Islamophobia in America, selecting the right literature to analyze in the form of text sets provides students with the opportunity to learn in a productive, empathetic manner.

## Literature as Text Sets

Text sets are traditionally used as a selection of varying pieces of literature that work together to build a coherent construction of knowledge for students to fully understand a particular topic. Text sets can be invitations for students to make text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world connections which may allow them to view the tough topic in relation to prior knowledge. This can help foster new understandings about perspectives and experiences outside of their own and should portray a multitude of perspectives on topics to invite student inquiry and prompt personal connections which leads to students understanding and relating to outside perspectives, as well (Keene & Zimmerman, 1997). The first steps in assembling a text set is to be sure that selections are assessed for their "cultural authenticity and literary quality" (Newstreet, Sarker, & Shearer, 2019, p. 561) and "include a range of modalities to enable students to become discerning users and creators of multimodal texts" (International Literacy Association [ILC], 2019, p. 3). Multimodal text sets may include literary works as well historical documents, photographs, charts, maps, and songs for students to "read" and analyze; these sets may also include opportunities for students to respond orally, artistically, and in writing (Newstreet, Sarker, & Shearer, 2019).

According to the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE, 2019), "Many students (in the context of the United States) do not have equitable access and adequate opportunities to learn as a result of systemic injustices that are informed by race, ethnicity, class, gender, gender identity, sexuality, ability, religion, geographical location, etc. (para. 2)." Although this is true, text sets that offer students the chance to see themselves reflected in the literature while simultaneously providing students the opportunity to understand other perspectives makes "equitable access and adequate opportunities to learn" possible for all students.

## Safe Spaces

Text sets can allow students to make connections

between themselves, their lives, the lives around them, and the text, which is meaningful, but useless if students cannot discover and maintain such connections in a *safe space*. Tough topics, in many cases, bring about an abundance of opportunities to perpetuate insensitive or ignorant messages with which text sets work to challenge but without a *safe space* to discuss those tough topics, learning and growth may not take place. According to a study conducted by Fuss and Daniel (2020), participants defined safe space as a place in which students are permitted and encouraged to be their authentic selves, experiment, succeed, fail, and challenge without fear of judgement or others' expectations in an emotional, social, and physical manner. NCTE (2019) affirms this definition by stating, "To learn, students need to be and feel safe and supported. Educators, researchers, school administrators, and politicians must understand that we have to design learning spaces that are safe and secure (para. 2)."

The construction of the learning space along with the technology, instructional materials, and furniture should reflect the needs of all students, inclusive of students' cultural diversity, and protect children from any bodily harm (ILA, 2019). A safe space should also include opportunities for students to contribute to discussions, move around the classroom during learning activities, display their work, and engage with literature in a way that enhances their literacy skills and challenges them to make profound connections to texts (ILA). Lastly, safe spaces are created and maintained emotionally when students are given the room to share their experiences in ways that they deem appropriate without being judged or expected to share.

## 9/11

Tackling a tough, controversial topic in the classroom like the attack on 9/11 can be overwhelming, especially considering the range of experience individuals may have with the tragic event and the fact that instructional materials might be sparse or nonexistent. After scouring through many textbooks and instructional materials provided to school systems, Hess and Stoddard (2007) were surprised to find that although 9/11 is described as a terrorist attack on America and is plentifully mentioned, the origin and details surrounding the events of that day were not referenced at all in the curricula studied. In fact, they discovered that there were several differ-

ing definitions of terrorism provided in the curricula that never acknowledge the subjective and evolving nature of the term nor provide space for their definitions to be challenged or questioned (Hess & Stoddard). Considering these facts and the complexity of the topic, it is feasible to understand why some teachers would choose not to teach about 9/11.

Where, then, do teachers turn to teach such a controversial topic? Multimodal text sets may be one answer. One example is a seven-week course that was created on the media's representation of 9/11, Islam, and globalization, in which students analyzed the media's effect on Americans' new "war on terrorism" initiative (Brady, 2004). The main objective of the course was to "create a community wherein it was safe to ask difficult questions and to interrupt the dominant symbolic order" that ignored nuance and painted reality in broad, inexact strokes (Brady, 2004, p. 97). One faculty member thought that the best way to achieve this goal was to streamline and organize historical facts about America's relationship with Afghanistan, but it was not enough to prompt critical thinking amongst the students. "Teaching about 9/11 was not simply a matter of providing accurate data. It also required us to engage historical contexts so they could reach their own informed perspectives" (Brady, 2004, p. 97). In other words, simply offering facts to students does not do enough to teach tough topics. Instead, students were able to ascertain their own conclusions about America and terrorism through the analysis and close readings of media coverage and cultural representation in the media. The students also watched a range of visual media from news coverage of 9/11 to civilian response after the Gulf War of 1991. This experience promoted critical thinking because the students were provided with an overarching education of the matter through various perspectives, allowing students to "highlight rather than dissolve contradictions" and make connections between American media and government (Brady, 2004, p. 98).

## Context

### Course

The Introduction to Inquiry-Based Learning course was offered as a 5-week summer session, and its learning outcome was to engage pre-service teachers in practicing strategies and developing instructional materials focused on inquiry-based learning. Seven pre-service teachers were enrolled in the course, majoring in science, English, and social studies education as part of our university's Mast-



ers of Teaching (MAT) program.

### Novel Description

The YA novel chosen for this course was *Ground Zero* by Alan Gratz (2021), which offers parallel narratives: One portrays an American boy and his desperate attempt to escape the Twin Towers on 9/11. The second narrative takes place in Afghanistan in 2019 and features a girl, whose family is caught in the crossfire between Taliban and American troops. Gratz' novels are renowned for attracting adolescent readers, and we felt it was important for the pre-service teachers to "get inside" the mindset of their future students by reading a text appealing to adolescents. This novel also focuses on sensitive topics, with 2021 marking the 20th anniversary of 9/11 and the withdrawal of American troops in Afghanistan.

### Creating Safe Spaces: Pre-Reading Strategies

Prior to reading the novel within a multimodal text set, we wanted to create a space where everyone felt safe expressing their thoughts and opinions. We began with a "four corners" activity. Pre-service teachers were presented with statements related to topics from the novel. In the four corners of the room, these signs were posted: Strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. As we read aloud various statements, the pre-service teachers stood in the corner that best represented their viewpoints and discussed their responses, which led to somewhat heated discussions; however, the pre-service teachers felt safe. One explained that the four corners activity "...can create a safe space in the classroom...[when] every student understands that the most important thing while discussing topics [is] that every student is respected, especially if they disagree." Similarly, another noted, "The only way tough topics can be addressed is if everyone is willing to have a civil conversation about them." All pre-service teachers agreed that in order for this activity to succeed, classroom teachers must model for students how to actively listen and civilly discuss sensitive topics.

Following "four corners," the pre-service teachers explored videos and articles from [this module](#) in the World 101 curriculum (Council for Foreign Relations, 2017-2021). Next, we viewed the documentary "[What Happened on 9/11?](#)" (Schatz, 2019). This film features students on a field trip to the Tribute Museum, where they engage in conversations with survivors, and shows the students cre-

ating 9/11-inspired poems and artwork. This film includes footage of the attacks and interviews with teachers, who explained their approaches teaching this sensitive topic. Our goal was for the pre-service teachers to gain additional contextual knowledge and see teachers model strategies for creating safe spaces.

Overall, the pre-service teachers said they appreciated framing the novel with this multimodal text set. One wrote, "I struggle to recall the events that occurred, but the [World 101] website assisted in reminding of the tragic event." Her peer commented,

*Ground Zero* encompassed some very graphic imagery pertaining to the damage caused by 9/11 as far the dilapidation of the Twin Towers and the smoke plumes that emanated throughout the streets. When I read portions of the novel that correlated with such events, I had a visual reference to help me grasp the importance of that imagery because it was showcased in the documentary.

Not only did this text set help the pre-service teachers understand the novel's historical context and sensory imagery, it also provided safe spaces for them to grapple with various perspectives regarding these sensitive events and to start considering how they would teach the novel.

One of the pre-service teachers noticed that the novel "has a frame of reference of looking outwards from the events in real time, whereas the other sources have the frame of the outside looking in, or looking back over time." That is, the novel portrays characters living "in the moments" of 9/11 and the war. The World 101 module (Council for Foreign Relations, 2017-2021) includes articles, videos, and infographics explaining the history of terrorism around the world as well as the evolution of U.S. counterterrorism policies since 1945 that led to the war on terror. After finishing the novel, the pre-service teachers reflected that these varying frames of reference helped them feel more "comfortable" as readers. As one explained,

As readers, we were just aware of the [characters'] emotions and what

happened on 9/11 as well as in Afghanistan years later. It was uncomfortable and confusing trying to understand or relate to the characters...Readers need the outside articles and videos to see the “big picture” and draw deeper connections to the characters and their actions...[I] would not feel comfortable reading this book without that background.

Another pre-service teacher discussed her hesitations in teaching this text, stating, “It makes inferences about war, revenge, patriotism, nationalism, and other topics, and I would worry that students or parents might think I’m trying to push a certain belief about these topics if I taught this book.” Including the World 101 resources in a novel study made her feel more “comfortable and confident” as these are “factual and vetted” materials, allowing her students to “make their own opinions” about the topics and themes in the novel.

### **During Reading Strategies**

While reading *Ground Zero* (Gratz, 2021), the pre-service teachers participated in Literature Circles (Daniels, 2002). They chose various roles (e.g., Discussion Director, Connector, Illustrator, etc.) to perform as they read and discussed the novel. They felt this strategy enriched their discussions. As one noted, “Many people have a hard time expressing themselves vocally. I believe writing, drawing, and being interactive in a group discussing topics makes it easier.” Considering that our course included various content area majors, this pre-service teacher makes an important point. Not all of our middle/secondary students may feel confident with written or oral expression. One benefit of using this strategy is that students are able to choose how they respond, whether by selecting notable quotes, conducting research, or creating artwork. By choosing their own responses, students may feel more comfortable during peer discussions. This sentiment was shared by one of the pre-service teachers, who indicated that literature circle discussions can “create a safe space by seeing a fictional depiction or a real-life account of a difficult topic” and “letting each student respond in their own way.”

As part of their discussions, some of the pre-service teachers created illustrations and noted how impactful this was for them as readers. One ex-

plained that having to visualize the characters’ experience made him more empathetic toward their situations. This experience reminded him of the “What Happened on 9/11” documentary (Schatz, 2019) we viewed earlier. “The video,” he said, “showed the students writing original poetic pieces about 9/11 as well as creating visual representations of their poems in order to evoke empathetic reactions.” As teachers, we know how important it is for our adolescent readers to make text-to-self connections and text-to-world connections. Yet, as one pre-service teacher noted, “I don’t often tap into my creative side and students may not either.” By participating in the literature circles and seeing other educators model how to teach creative expression, our students gained new ideas for their future classrooms.

Lastly, we participated in a video-conference discussion with four speakers who had firsthand experience with events described in *Ground Zero* (Gratz, 2021): Two New Yorkers who were eyewitnesses to the 9/11 attacks, a local teacher who immigrated to the US from the Middle East and is Muslim, and a navy officer who spent a year in Kabul working with local schools. The pre-service teachers appreciated this discussion. “Hearing the point of view from different guest speakers helped me understand peoples’ lives during that day,” wrote one teacher. Her peer concurred, “This [discussion] really opened my eyes to how the wounds of this day still affect certain people.” The guest speakers, then, provided the pre-service teachers with additional contextual information and viewpoints. Additionally, they learned that text sets are not limited to literary/informational documents, videos, or photographs. Colleagues, “experts,” community members, and authors can also be resources for helping students make meaning with texts.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

Based on the pre-service teachers’ reactions, our multimodal text set seemed to provide them a safe space to learn about 9/11. The videos, outside sources, and guest speakers offered historical facts related to the event as well as a wide range of perspectives. The construction of our text set mirrored recommendations put forth by prior scholars, who emphasized allowing students to experience perspectives outside of their own (Keene & Zimmerman, 1997), interact with a range of modalities (ILA, 2019), and draw their own conclusions about events after analyzing factual information (Brady 2004).

The literature circle discussions also promoted a safe space. The pre-service teachers appreciated being able to share in a variety of creative ways, which aligns with scholarship emphasizing that a successful text set should allow students to respond to literature orally, artistically, and in writing (Newstreet, Sarker, & Shearer, 2019). Because these discussions were prompted by the pre-service teachers' questions and personal connections, they could converse freely rather than seek answers to prescribed prompts. Their interactions, then, were supportive, another key component in creating a safe space (Fuss and Daniel, 2020).

By the end of our course, the pre-service teachers admitted feeling more confident and comfortable tackling tough topics, and four planned to incorporate a 9/11 unit in the upcoming school year. They also acknowledged how beneficial it was to experience the various learning strategies, reflect on their feelings about the novel's content, and consider how they might teach such content to their future students. As one mentioned, "Unpacking our own discomforts as teachers prior to creating the same space for students is important." Overall, it was encouraging to see these pre-service teachers use their experiences as readers to form their own ideas for teaching sensitive topics through literature.

### References

- Brady, J. (2004). Cultivating critical eyes: Teaching 9/11 through video and cinema. *Cinema Journal*, 43(2), 96–99. <https://doi.org/10.1353/cj.2004.0002>
- Council on Foreign Relations. (2017-2021). *World101*. <https://world101.cfr.org/>
- Daniels, H. (2002). *Literature circles: Voice and choice in book clubs and reading groups* (2nd ed.). Portland: Stenhouse.
- Fuss, M., & Daniel, G. R. (2020). Safe spaces for enabling the creative process in classrooms. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 45(8), 41–57.
- Gratz, A. (2021). *Ground zero*. New York: Scholastic.
- Hess, D., & Stoddard, J. (2007). 9/11 and terrorism: "The ultimate unteachable moment" in textbooks and supplemental curricula. *Social Education* 71(5), pp 231–236.
- International Literacy Association. (2019). Right to supportive learning environments and high-quality resources [Research brief]. Newark, DE: Author.
- Keene, E. & Zimmerman, S. (1997). *Mosaic of thought: Teaching comprehension in a reader's workshop*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

- National Council of Teachers of English. (2019). Statement on the opportunity to learn. <https://ncte.org/statement/opptolearnstandards/>
- Newstreet, C., Sarker, A., & Shearer, R. (2019). Teaching empathy: Exploring multiple perspectives to address islamophobia through children's literature. *Reading Teacher*, 72(5), 559–568. <https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1764>
- Schatz, A. (Director). (2019). What happened on 9/11? [Film]. HBO.

### About the Authors

Erinn Bentley is a Professor of English education at Columbus State University. A former secondary teacher in Michigan and Japan, she now enjoys mentoring pre-service teachers and conducting research on writing teacher education and supporting novice teachers' professional development.



Jalin Murphy is an English Language Arts teacher at Harris County Carver Middle and a student in the final semester of Columbus State University's Secondary Education: English program. Although he enjoys reading the scholarship surrounding education and writing creatively, he takes the utmost pride in being able to cultivate the future's youth.



# Music in the English Classroom: Playlist Activities to Support High School Reading

Charles W. Hyatt  
Mammoth Education  
[cwhyatt007@gmail.com](mailto:cwhyatt007@gmail.com)

Grace J. Hyatt  
Mammoth Education

The variety of materials and subject matter found in high school English/Language Arts (ELA) classrooms lends itself to enrichment through popular music. Themes, ideas, history, identity, and vocabulary study can all be enhanced by making connections with music which can also support state and national standards as well as widely read texts. Although some research exists supporting language arts instruction with songs and soundtracks and is reviewed below, few specific recommendations for playlists were found before beginning this project. Since its completion, an entire edition of *English Teacher* was recently devoted to “Sounds of Music in the English Classroom,” in which editor R. Joseph Rodriguez explains that in the context of ELA “...music and songs today inform and change lives,” that students “...can build musical identities, meaning, and memories,” and that music in the classroom “...can merge across domains... toward appreciation, performance, and protest, too.” In an effort to explore and expand the relationships between literature and music, as well as to enliven the school environment and increase engagement with students, six thematically related playlists were developed by the authors with student input (See Figures One and Two), and students were asked to create their own playlists to support characters, themes, and events in their readings. The playlists received widespread positive responses and engagement among students and faculty.

## Literature Review

Curriculum playlists have become a popular technique to provide differentiation and individualized learning to students who may be ahead or behind their peers or just seeking customized readings and activities (Evans “Playlists”; Herold [edweek.org](http://edweek.org)). These “playlists” individualize instruction by giving students lists of assignments, readings, questions, or other activities to complete based upon their levels of performance and assignment completion (Gonzales [cultofperdagogy.com](http://cultofperdagogy.com)).

Many students respond positively to the independence and flexibility such playlists provide ([ted.com](http://ted.com)); and, Instagram, Apple’s iTunes, and Youtube.com are rife with user suggested playlists by theme (#Education). One of the most widely referenced works on using music in the classroom is Chris Boyd Brewer’s Playlists for Learning, which describes techniques of engagement, rhythm, and focused learning to have impacts on differentiation, English as a Second Language, and kinesthetic activations in education. His set-the-scene, set-the-theme, and sound breaks principles set the tone for this study by providing precedents in connecting, energizing, and differentiating instruction through incorporating music in the ELA classroom, as well as its use to calm, focus, and instruct students. Englishclub.com reports that using music in the ESL classroom can improve memory, concentration, a sense of community, and fun connections to vocabulary study while reducing stress. And, [Eflclassroom.com](http://Eflclassroom.com) lists 50 different ways that music can be used to support language instruction, including the writing of lyrics, teaching grammar, retelling stories, sparking discussion, and increasing engagement with and enjoyment of vocabulary and language. This teacher explored similar activities in the creation and use of the playlists described below.

## Activities Teacher

Figure One shows a CD library of six playlist collections of about 80 minutes on each disc (\*with bonus tracks) that served as companions to the traditional themes and selections for reading and writing in grades 9-12. Figure Two contains the actual songs along with links to songs collected on the author’s YouTube channel. A wide variety of activities could be connected to each song, such as analyzing lyrics for style, meter, and figurative language; having students create their own playlist for characters, themes, and/or authors; or, showing how the musicians and genres connected to and changed over the time periods in which in-class readings were written. Playing music while students entered and exited the room was the most popular application, increasing energy and engagement in the room while generating discussion warm-ups and icebreakers. Playing softer tempo music during writing or reading time was also well-received, as were specific lessons analyzing the poetical styles and elements of imagery, diction, and rhyme scheme of singer songwriters as expressed in their lyrics. Each of the songs had a connection to a text, but all of the songs supported.



Connecting the songs played to Unit themes of instruction was the key to incorporating all of these, including the following thematic and skills highlights:

Grade	Theme/Topic	Playlist Songs	Focus Skills
9th	Mythology History Drama	"We Don't Need Another Hero" Turner "We Didn't Start the Fire" Joel "Romeo and Juliet" Knopfler	Hero's Journey Allusions Inspirations
10th	World Cultures	"Zorba the Greek" Gehardt "Sukiyaki" Sakamoto "Alma en Pena" Gardel	Diversity Interconnectivity New Forms
11th	American Traditions	"Promised Land" Berry/Presley "Witchy Woman" Eagles "The Raven" Parsons	Geography Superstitions Allusions
12 <sup>th</sup>	British Literature	"Hail Britannia" Arne/LSO "Barbara Allen" (unknown) "The Highwayman" Noyes/McKennitt	History Folk Forms

- American Literature also benefited from the use of Native American flute music during quiet reading time; the music of Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, John Phillip Sousa, and Scott Joplin to augment studies of the early twentieth century, Jazz Age, and Harlem Renaissance selections; and, protest music from the 1960s to connect to history and build energy in the Spring.
- British Literature also benefited from the study of a range of popular music from the Beatles and Rolling Stones, as well as some of the more traditional allusions to history found in orchestral arrangements by the London Symphony Orchestra of the traditional "Greensleeves" and Elgar's "Pomp and Circumstances."
- Teacher Tunes was mainly used for mood setting and enter/exit music, but mini-lessons on Cat Stevens, Michael Jackson, and Simon and Garfunkle's interpretation of E.A. Robinson's

"Richard Cory" (among others) increased younger generations' connections to education and those artists' lasting contributions.

- Graduation Songs also connected musical legacies to student futures, inspiring juniors and seniors that their goals were nearly accomplished and their futures were waiting. (This playlist was also a popular graduation present.)

### *Students*

Students were also asked to create and share their own playlists reflecting interests in various reading selections, which can be a valuable creative application of state and national standards, especially the Georgia Standards of Excellence (ELAGSE) on Key Details, Craft and Structure, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, and Writing Across Different Text Types and Purposes. Production and Distribution of Writing, Research to Build and Present Knowledge, and the Speaking and Listening Standards on Comprehension and Collaboration can also be connected to these activities (Georgia Department of Education). Clever and appropriate student responses for character playlists included: Montag from Fahrenheit 451 (Bruce Springsteen's "Fire," The Doors' "Light My Fire," and Johnny Cash's "Ring of Fire,"), Brutus from Julius Caesar (Taylor Swift's "Should Have Said No," Bob Dylan's "Idiot Wind," and Coldplay's "La Vida"), John Proctor from The Crucible (Hank Williams's "Your Cheating Heart" and Loretta Lynn's "Stand by Your Man), or Jay Gatsby from The Great Gatsby (Carly Simon's "You're So Vain," Miley Cyrus's "Wrecking Ball," and Fred Astaire's "Puttin' on the Ritz"). Students individualized their own experiences when connecting to the readings.

Certainly many other longer pieces of music could support subsections of the units featured in traditional ELA courses, such as a collection of folk songs and spirituals like "Swing Low Sweet Chariot" and "Follow the Drinking Gourd" for American Literature (and Slave Narratives) from the early to mid 1800's. Gym Class Heroes' "Stereo Hearts" provides numerous, modern uses of apostrophe which make a perfect support of Edward Taylor's Puritan "Huswifery." ("Make me thy spinning wheel, O Lord" thus becomes "Make me your radio.") Teachers may also mix and match music from the Big Band era (Glen Miller, Benny Goodman) when reading from the 1930s-40s; Elvis Presley and Jerry Lee Lewis from the 1950s; Vietnam War songs like "Give Peace a Chance," War, "Fortunate Son," and "For What's it's Worth,"

in support of *The Things They Carried* or other fiction from the 1960s (and Sgt. Barry Sadler's "Green Berets" for one of the few pro-war songs of that era); and the history of MTV and music videos may be incorporated into lessons from Postmodernist literature from the 1980s and beyond. The extensive lyrical outputs of Bob Dylan in "The Times They Are A-Changing," "Blowin' in the Wind," and many others were recognized with the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2016 and can provide additional study on their own.

### Benefits

In addition to the above teacher-facilitated uses of music in the classroom, having students create their own playlists as representative of themes and characters within classic works of literature is an informative method of gauging student perceptions of character qualities and has turned into a proven technique of high interest connection to any number of literary works in this teacher's classes through increased engagement, discussion, and contribution. Questions about the meaning of songs, special lyrics or techniques, and fun facts about the artists and contexts of the songs used in these collections frequently spurred lively discussion among students eager to share their own favorites or knowledge about similar themes, artists, or lyrics. Teachers' sharing of their favorite music can also build connections across generations and between students and educators as well as give insights into history and development of popular ideas.

### Conclusions

Students of English have responded attentively and enthusiastically to music playlist assignments by creating their own lists for works studied in class, and they have become interested in and intrigued by teacher created playlists supporting traditional subject matters in grades 9-12 Literature classes. Student comments included things like, "These songs fit the stories," "Thanks for sharing these song lyrics, I enjoy learning about that time period," and, "I like being able to bring my music into the classroom and share it with others." Adding the ability to listen to their own music while sharing with classmates and connect to readings can be engaging enrichment for many classroom settings.

A variety of flexible techniques described above were engaging, included warm-ups and send-offs, lyrics discussions, teacher and student song sharing of personal playlists, and character-based playlists development. Lessons, inputs, and student/teacher experiences and interactions can be fluid and adjustable once the door to music in the classroom is opened.

### References

- Berk, Ronald A. "Use of Music and Technology to Improve Learning." [https://images.pearsonassessments.com/images/NES\\_Publications/2008\\_12Berk\\_13012\\_1.pdf](https://images.pearsonassessments.com/images/NES_Publications/2008_12Berk_13012_1.pdf)
- Brewer, Chris. *Soundtracks for Learning*. Bellingham, WA: LifeSounds Educational Services. 2008.
- #Education <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdYxun7eFRRlma4wo0zRNyg>
- EFL Classroom "50 Ways to Use Music and Song in the Classroom." <https://community.eflclassroom.com/profiles/blogs/>
- Evans, Rachel A., et al. "Soundtracks, Songwriting, and Soundscapes: Producing the Podcast of Our Lives." *English Journal*, vol. 100, no. 4, 2021, pp.69-78.
- Georgia Department of Education. "Georgia Standards of Excellence." <https://www.georgiastandards.org/Georgia-Standards/Pages/ELA.aspx>.
- Gonzales, Jennifer. "Using Playlists to Differentiate Instruction." <https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/student-playlists-differentiation/>
- Herold, Benjamin. "Curriculum Playlists: A Take on Personalized Learning." <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2017/03/29/curriculum-playlists-a-take-on-personalized-learning.html>.
- Karnes, Frances A. and Suzanne M. Bean. *Methods and Materials for Teaching the Gifted* (4th Ed.) Waco, TX: Prufrock Press. (2014).
- Listr. *Create Your Own Playlists*. <https://www.listr.academy/?lang=en>
- National Film Board of Canada. "Educational Playlists" <https://www.nfb.ca/education/educational-playlists/>
- Playlists. <https://www.ted.com/playlists/125/tvspe>

ted\_talks\_education.  
 Rodríguez, R. Joseph. "From the Editor," English  
 Journal, vol. 100, no. 4, 2021, pp. 9-11.  
 Using Music in the ESL Classroom. [https://  
 www.englishclub.com/teaching-tips/music-  
 classroom.htm](https://www.englishclub.com/teaching-tips/music-classroom.htm)

Figure One. Playlist CD Covers



Figure Two. Playlists

Ninth Grade (9th) [https://www.youtube.com/  
 playlist?  
 list=PLASpcFpB4X7lCI ng4meUb F61S2oBBes](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLASpcFpB4X7lCI ng4meUb F61S2oBBes)

<b>I'm Sailing Away</b>	<b>Styx</b>
<b>We Didn't Start the Fire</b>	Billy Joel
<b>We Don't Need Another Hero</b>	Tina Turner
<b>Romeo and Juliet</b>	Marc Knopfler
<b>Hall of Fame</b>	The Script
<b>Lean on Me</b>	Bill Withers
<b>Stereo Hearts</b>	Gym Class Heroes
<b>Subdivisions</b>	Rush
<b>Mr. Wendell</b>	Arrested Development
<b>River of Dreams</b>	Billy Joel
<b>I Fought the Law</b>	Bobby Fuller Four (The Clash)
<b>In the Ghetto</b>	Elvis Presley
<b>Don't Worry Baby</b>	The Beach Boys
<b>True Colors</b>	Cindy Lauper
<b>Brand New Day</b>	Tim Myers
<b>Ice Ice Baby</b>	Vanilla Ice
<b>Wonderful World</b>	Louis Armstrong
<b>Across the Universe</b>	The Beatles

**World Lit (10<sup>th</sup>)** <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLASpcFpB4X7n1uck05MuwqNKjpyn08pw>

<b>Zorba the Greek</b>	Charles Gerhardt
<b>Il Pescivendolo</b>	Matteo Salvatore
<b>La Strada Del Bosco</b>	Claudio Villa
<b>Edelweis</b>	Bill Lee (Sound of Music)
<b>99 Luftballons</b>	Nena
<b>Dominque</b>	The Singing Nun
<b>Alma en Pena</b>	Carlos Gardel
<b>Aquarela do Brasil</b>	Daniella Mercury
<b>The Harder They Come</b>	Caribbean Steel Drum Band
<b>Sukiyaki</b>	Kyu Sakamoto
<b>Amarain</b>	Amr Diab
<b>Lelley</b>	Dania
<b>Buya Uz'Ekhaya</b>	Ladysmith Black Mambazo
<b>Raga Bairagi Todi</b>	Ravi Shankar
<b>La Cucaracha</b>	The Wiggles
<b>Ride of the Valkyries</b>	Richard Wagner
<b>Canciero De Aranjuez</b>	Miles Davis
<b>Land of Confusion</b>	Genesis
<b>Waltzing Matilda</b>	Slim Dusty
<b>Oh Canada</b>	Red Bull

**American Lit (11<sup>th</sup>)** <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLASpcFpB4X7nYW1eQeOvaq4qyZ6XHfawh>

<b>Promised Land</b>	Chuck Berry/Elvis Presley
<b>Linin' in the USA</b>	Chuck Berry/Linda Ronstadt
<b>Witchy Woman</b>	The Eagles
<b>The Raven</b>	Alan Parsons

<b>This Land is Your Land</b>	Woody Guthrie/The Weavers
<b>El Paso</b>	Marty Robbins
<b>Ol' Man River</b>	Paul Robeson
<b>Battle Hymn of the Republic</b>	Jim Neighbors
<b>Maple Leaf Rag/The Entertainer</b>	Scott Joplin
<b>When the Saints Go</b>	Louis Armstrong
<b>City of New Orleans</b>	Arlo Guthrie
<b>Night They Drove Old Dixie Down</b>	Joan Baez
<b>Take Me Home Country Roads</b>	John Denver
<b>Puttin' on the Ritz</b>	Fred Astaire
<b>My Old Kentucky Home</b>	Stephen Foster/Bing Crosby
<b>Chicago/New York, New York</b>	Frank Sinatra
<b>Times They Are a Changing</b>	Bob Dylan
<b>US Blues</b>	Grateful Dead
<b>Native Flute</b>	Carlos Nakai
<b>*Born in the USA</b>	Bruce Springsteen
<b>Massachusetts</b>	The Bee Gees
<b>Comin to America</b>	Neil Diamond

**British Lit (12<sup>th</sup>)** [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLASpcFpB4X7mBk4jtbgb\\_QySjAcG6ihe3](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLASpcFpB4X7mBk4jtbgb_QySjAcG6ihe3)

<b>God Save the Queen</b>	Elgar—BBC Orchestra (or Sex Pistols)
<b>Rule Britannia</b>	Thomson & Arne—British Classics
<b>Greensleeves</b>	London Symphony Orchestra
<b>Scarborough Fair</b>	Simon & Garfunkle
<b>Barbara Allen</b>	Joan Baez
<b>Highwayman</b>	Lorena McKennert
<b>Danny Boy</b>	Celtic Woman
<b>Irish Jig &amp; Reel</b>	Traditional Music of Ireland
<b>Amazing Grace</b>	Bagpipes and Drums of Scotland
<b>Scotland the Brave</b>	Bagpipes and Drums of Scotland
<b>James Bond Theme</b>	John Barry
<b>Henry VIII</b>	Hernan's Hermits
<b>Winchester Cathedral</b>	New Vaudeville Band
<b>Ferry 'Cross the Mer-</b>	Gerry and the Pacemakers
<b>Her Majesty</b>	The Beatles
<b>*Let it Be</b>	
<b>She's Leaving Home</b>	
<b>Magical Mystery Tour</b>	



**Teacher Tunes** [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLASpcFpB4X7ll2v5EtINS1Ld9p\\_6YqxEW](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLASpcFpB4X7ll2v5EtINS1Ld9p_6YqxEW)

School Days	Chuck Barry
Linus and Lucy	Vince Guaraldi
ABC	Jackson 5
Black and White	Three Dog Night
Me and Julio	Paul Simon
My Old School	Steely Dan
Poetry Man	Phoebe Snow
At Seventeen	Janis Ian
To Sir With Love	Lulu
Johnny B Good	Men at Work
Every Kind of People	Robert Palmer
Logical Song	Supertramp
Old Schoolyard	Cat Stevens
Another Brick in the Wall	Pink Floyd
Dropped a Bomb	The Gap Band
Everyone Wants to Rule	Tears for Fears
Wonderful World	Art Garfunkle
Teacher	George Michael
Smokin' in the Boys Room	Bachman Turner Overdrive
English Teacher's Wife	Bye Bye Birdy
Schools Out for Summer	Alice Cooper
*Hot for Teacher	Van Halen

**Graduation** <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLASpcFpB4X7kyl0J76GRn4NdDQsIg5GR0>

Time of Your Life	Green Day
Turn! Turn! Turn!	The Byrds
Allstar	Smash Mouth
I Hope You Dance	Lee Ann Womack
Breakaway	Kelly Clarkson
Time For Me To Fly	Reo Speedwagon
Somewhere Over the Rainbow	Israel Kamakawiwo'ole
This Ones for the Girls	Martina McBride
100 Years	Five for Fighting
Free Fallin'	Tom Petty
So Long, Farewell	Sound of Music
Friends Forever	Vitamin C
Born to Run	Bruce Springsteen
Free to Wear Sun-	Baz Luhrman
Pomp and Circumstance	Elgar—40 Most Beautiful British Classics
*Freebird	Lynyrd Skynyrd

**Advanced Placement Literature and Language** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gMfCTBkMgKY&t=114s>

Harvard Fight Song, Oedipus Philosopher's Song, Argument Clinic	Tom Lehrer Monty Python
--------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------

### About the Authors

Charles Hyatt teaches high school and college English in the north Atlanta suburbs where he also studies media, communications, and rhetoric.



Grace Hyatt is a 2021 graduate of the University of Georgia College of Education and an art teacher in Mt. Pleasant, SC.





# JOIN GCTE TODAY!

The **Georgia Council of Teachers of English** is Georgia's professional home for English Language Arts teachers from pre-K to university levels.

**GCTE** is the Georgia affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE).

Membership is open to teachers, administrators, college faculty, education majors, and others interested in the teaching of English Language Arts.



## BENEFITS OF GCTE MEMBERSHIP

- ✓ A professional learning community with colleagues statewide.
- ✓ Recognizes the experience and expertise of Council members by inviting them to give workshops and presentations.
- ✓ Opportunities to submit and publish articles in *Connections*, our peer-reviewed journal, and *Scribbles 'N Bits*, our award-winning newsletter.
- ✓ Free subscriptions to our journal and newsletter.
- ✓ Writing contests for you and your students
- ✓ Teacher awards and grants to recognize and support your hard work



[gcte.wildapricot.org](http://gcte.wildapricot.org)



[facebook.com/gcte.net](https://facebook.com/gcte.net)



@GCTEnglish



@gcte\_english

## BE EMPOWERED

GCTE is the leading partner in giving educators a voice as the educational landscape changes and the needs of teachers from pre-K through college evolve.

## BE IMPACTFUL

GCTE offers opportunities to learn, network, publish, and present. Use your GCTE membership to become a part of the solution, influencing positive changes in English and English education.

## JOIN GCTE

For more information, visit [gcte.wildapricot.org/join-gcte](http://gcte.wildapricot.org/join-gcte)

