

Preparing Preservice Teachers to Teach Young Adult Literature in Conservative Contexts

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Requests to censor or ban young adult literature from K-12 classrooms and curricula have increased. Especially in conservative states and contexts, censorship challenges are systematic and unrelenting, with coordinated campaigns from administrators, parents, and other educational stakeholders. Therefore, English Education must prepare and empower preservice teachers to read, teach, and advocate for the inclusion of diverse young adult literature in their school communities. This article details the pedagogical design of a methods course that instructs preservice English teachers to strategically navigate and counter this conservative activism to protect adolescents' access to young adult literature.

Across North America, book banning and calls for censorship have increased in recent years. In K-12 education settings, books are most often censored at the individual school level after a stakeholder, often a parent of a student, files a book challenge, which is a form documenting their concerns. Now, calls for censorship have expanded to include entire school districts and states. These calls for censorship target books that center characters of color and LGBTQIA2+ protagonists, books that explore sexual experiences including factual information about puberty and reproduction as well as fictional scenes, and books that address historical and contemporary social issues such as racism, human rights campaigns, and unjust systems of oppression (Bucher & Hinton, 2014; Friedman & Johnson, 2022). These censored topics correlate to the themes, content, and characters in young adult literature (Friedman & Johnson, 2022), which publishes stories that celebrate the diverse lived realities of its readers.

Banning young adult literature from classrooms is detrimental to students' academic success and agency as it is a critical instructional tool for increasing readers' expertise and passion for reading, literacy, and disciplinary English skills (Bickmore et al., 2023). It is imperative that calls for book

ensorship are countered by educational stakeholders, such as administrators, parents, guardians, librarians, and teachers to protect the reading rights of adolescent learners (National Council of Teachers of English, 2018). Teacher educators, and more specifically English educators, who mentor preservice middle and high school teachers into teaching, have a responsibility to prepare and empower preservice teachers to advocate, read, and teach diverse young adult literature, and to do so transparently and enthusiastically in ways that strengthen their educational communities.

In this article, I share the pedagogical design of my young adult literature course that serves as an English Education methods course for preservice teachers. One goal of this course is to prepare preservice English teachers to teach diverse young adult literature in our local conservative context, where book censorship is a prevalent, coordinated campaign. These calls to censor books are loud at school board meetings, in emails, and in the minds of my preservice English teachers who fear repercussions for teaching or shelving young adult literature in their classrooms. English Education must respond to these realities teachers face by providing instruction and mentorship to counter this conservative activism attempting to restrict access to young adult literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher education is an ideal time to encourage preservice English teachers to read and teach young adult literature in their future classrooms (Strickland & Bickmore, 2023). Young adult literature can be used to engage adolescent students and meet content learning standards in the secondary English classroom (Ginsberg, 2022). A cornerstone of teacher education is to prepare teachers to be “adaptive experts” (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2007, p. 3), and in the current socio-political landscape that scrutinizes teachers’ curriculum and book selection, the adaptative expertise to advocate, read, and teach diverse young adult literature is critical.

Certain states, like Texas and Florida, are witnessing an increased number of requests to censor or ban books at the school, library, and state level, resulting in each state restricting access to more than 500 books (Friedman & Johnson, 2022). Campaigns from groups such as Moms for Liberty coordinate social media movements that provide lists of books they want restricted or removed, mobilizing parents with carbon-copied censorship complaints without ever reading the books or engaging with teachers about their curricular choices. In these states, there are legislative initiatives, bills, and laws that support the censoring of young adult literature. Texas representative Matt Krause requested school districts remove 850+ titles from their schools (Chappell, 2021; Ellis, 2021). It is important to underscore that while these sanctions are catalogued attempts to restrict

book access, a more insidious and nebulous outcome is teachers' desire to self-censor their own curriculum and book selections to avoid escalating conflict in their educational communities. For example, teachers in the Katy ISD Texan school district removed every young adult novel that received censorship requests from their curriculum and classrooms even though the district's review process requires the book to remain shelved while under review (Goodman, 2022).

Currently, I am an English teacher educator living in Utah, which is one of these conservative states restricting access to books. During the 2022 - 2023 academic year, house bill 374: Sensitive Materials in Schools was passed into law, requiring all school reading materials to be officially reviewed. Empowered by this law, a local school district has banned 52 books, including young adult titles such as the graphic novel *Flamer* by Mike Curato, *What Girls Are Made Of* by Elana K. Arnold, *All Boys Aren't Blue* by George M. Johnson, and *Out of Darkness* by Ashley Hope Pérez (PEN America). There is a local special interest group called Utah Parents United who mobilize parents to request the removal of young adult literature from K-12 classrooms, curriculum, and school libraries through district-wide bans under their slogan "protecting our right to parent." This special interest group weaponizes parental autonomy to strategically restrict access to young adult literature through school board elections, legislative bills, and inundating schools with numerous censorship complaints that intend to overwhelm and intimidate teachers.

In conservative educational contexts, calls to censor books systematically undermine the expertise of English teachers who mentor adolescent students through generative and meaningful reading experiences using young adult literature. It is imperative that teachers and teacher educators advocate, read, and teach diverse young adult literature, as a critical focus in English teacher education. While teacher education programs often announce a commitment to social justice and culturally responsive teaching, they do not enact these commitments in actionable ways (Sleeter, 2017), and so in this article, I detail my commitment to doing so. First, I describe the pedagogical and course frameworks that inform my course design, and then, I share three essential components: anticipating book challenges, articulating curriculum rationale, and connecting with the young adult advocacy community.

PEDAGOGICAL FRAMING

To build preservice English teachers' expertise in responding to prevalent requests to censor their curriculum, as well as other nebulous impacts like self-censorship, I employ design-based research (DBR) to address the practical, specific, educational problem (Crippen & Brown, 2018; McKenney & Reeves, 2012) of increased calls for censoring and banning diverse young adult literature in educational contexts. Design-based researchers develop a solution, coined the intervention, to test in real world, pragmatic application, and in this case, my pedagogical course design is the proposed solution to preparing preservice English teachers to read, teach, and advocate for inclusive young adult literature in their future classrooms, curricula, and educational communities.

The course, titled *Young Adult Literature*, is a required methods course for preservice English majors. Based on school demographic data and getting to know my students, the majority of preservice teachers enrolled in this course are white and are members of a religion that upholds conservative values aligned with the ideologies that undergird book banning campaigns. While it is important to the preservice teachers enrolled in the course to teach equitably, enacting this pedagogical commitment is at odds with their religious ideologies that can interfere with their pedagogical decisions (Hadley, 2022).

As a white, heterosexual, cisgender teacher educator, I share many of my students' privileged identities. I use this outward affinity to subvert my students' expectations that I will center their whiteness and their comfort (Chang-Bacon, 2022; Kohli & Pizarro, 2022), and instead, I enact antiracist and antibias pedagogies. One example of this is through the young adult literature I teach in the course that celebrates and centers all identities and personhoods, speaks to trauma and historical truth, is joyful to read, and disrupts white supremacy through diverse perspectives, which are often the titles named in censorship requests.

The course framework is grounded in the metaphor that books can be mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors (Bishop, 1990). We discuss how books can act as affirming mirrors, empathy-building windows, and sliding glass doors that help readers recognize how the human experience is both universal and intimate. We consider this through the lens of teaching adolescents, articulating how teaching diverse books ensures every student reads mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. Then, we examine the Cooperative Children's Book Center (2020) statistics on diversity in young adult literature and the accompanying graphic (Huyck & Dahlen, 2019) to understand that curating an inclusive curriculum requires intentionality and that the literary canon cannot achieve that goal

(Borsheim-Black & Sarigianides, 2019; Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013). Ultimately, the course framework helps preservice teachers recognize the value and validity of young adult literature and its capacity to enact equitable and successful learning experiences for all students in the English Language Arts Classroom. In the examples that follow, the preservice teacher participants have consented to their work being published.

ANTICIPATING POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

My preservice teachers often state they are fearful of administrators or parents challenging a book they have selected to teach or shelve in their classroom library. In our conservative context, it is likely that a teacher will receive scrutiny from guardians and school administration questioning their decision to teach diverse young adult novels. Throughout the course, rather than remain fearful, I mentor preservice teachers to anticipate potential reasons books they teach might be challenged and to prepare their rationale for including it in their curriculum or classroom library. By considering book challenges as an inevitability of the teaching profession in our conservative context, preservice teachers feel empowered to teach diverse young adult literature.

CELEBRATING AND CRITIQUING YA LITERATURE

The course centers reading young adult novels and short stories to identify literary merit while discovering favorite authors, characters, and genres. For course texts, preservice teachers take up the question, “*how* would you teach this book” before determining whether they would like to teach the book or not. This is an important reframing as many of the books we read do not shy away from heavy, vulnerable content and historical truths, such as *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson, and sometimes my preservice teachers’ initial response is to select texts they find safer and easier to teach, self-censoring the more complex young adult novels from their curriculum. By first researching and articulating how they would teach each the young adult text we read, envisioning how they would coach their own students through the reading experience, they are much better positioned to teach any book, and they are more inclined to teach books they previously would have omitted.

Further, I mentor preservice teachers through a visual exercise of how “balanced” their curriculum or classroom bookshelves are by considering if there is a dominating perspective creating lopsided representation. Preservice teachers realize their allyship can be demonstrated through an affirming curriculum that includes authors and characters that adolescents identify with, signaling that all students are welcome. During a reader identity assignment where students identify

their five favorite reads, we unpack whether their own reading lives are diverse, recognizing how dominant white, heterosexual, cisgender, Christian, male perspectives are in texts (Horning, 2014; Koss et al., 2018; Larrick, 1965). I coach preservice teachers to understand that if they are only teaching and advocating for books that “mirror” their own lived experiences, then they are not affording that same affirming reading experience to their students, requiring them to teach beyond their personal favorites. With the pedagogical commitment to orchestrate inclusive and affirming classrooms, preservice teachers recognize that high-quality English language arts classrooms must include diverse young adult literature to ensure every student is valued and represented.

REFRAMING THE CLASSICS

In conservative contexts, English teachers are pressured to teach the traditional literary canon as educational stakeholders perceive the classics as necessary scholarly endeavors. Preservice teachers may feel that teaching the canon will protect them from receiving challenges to their curriculum, and I dismantle this by sharing the American Library Association’s banned book lists (American Library Association, 2022) that includes canonical texts like *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck and *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison. Further, I teach that classic texts should not equate to conventional teaching, inspiring preservice teachers to engage with literary tensions in every novel they teach.

English teachers are obligated to help their students make sense of literary classics in the contemporary classroom by productively disrupting nostalgic narratives (Allen, 2020). As a class, we put this idea into practice with *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, prompting conversations about racism, generational trauma, white saviors, the history of white women falsely accusing Black men of sexual assault, and incestuous rape. Together, we examine the secondary narratives in this beloved American classic, such as complicating the character of Mayella Ewell as both a sexual assault survivor and wrongful accuser. This juxtaposition of Mayella as both an empathetic and problematic character presses preservice teachers to articulate how they would teach this text through a trauma-informed lens (Venet, 2021).

Unpacking how to teach classic texts through an antibias lens demonstrates that the canon is not a safe alternative that avoids controversy. I remind preservice teachers that the instruction they received in their own secondary English classes likely favored Scout’s naïve perspective, but that their future students deserve better pedagogy that does not ignore the complexities of the text and our society. And so, preservice teachers recognize that to teach the canon well, they must teach it through

an antibias lens that troubles the narrative and coaches students through the vulnerable content by the expert teacher.

ARTICULATING CURRICULUM RATIONALE

Because of our conservative contexts, my preservice teachers rarely witness any local teachers teaching young adult literature in their practicum or student teaching, and so it is essential that they observe others advocating, reading, and teaching diverse young adult literature. To showcase English teachers' expertise in articulating rationale for their text selection and pedagogical decisions empowers preservice teachers to reframe calls for censorship as opportunities to advocate for young adult literature by explaining its merits. Using censorship challenges as an invitation to educate our educational communities is an important to protecting adolescents access to books.

FALLING IN LOVE WITH BANNED BOOKS

Many of my preservice teachers are members of the conservative communities that support restricting access to books, and so they often resist reading and engaging with books that have been banned, wrongly believing they are pornographic or gratuitously violent (Price, 2023). Therefore, I designed my curriculum to center banned books to build preservice teacher's capacity for evaluating the quality of these texts. This equips preservice teachers to argue against surface-level challenges from educational stakeholders who have not read the books, a phenomenon that is occurring more regularly as coordinated campaigns target hundreds of books.

To equip preservice English teachers to do this, we read *New Kid* by Jerry Craft, and then interrogate the censorship case against the Newberry-winning graphic novel when Craft was uninvited from a Texan school because of a parent complaint asserting "it is inappropriate instruction material. The books don't come out and say we want white children to feel like oppressors, but that is absolutely what they will do" (Silva, 2021). Preservice teachers experience dissonance when reconciling their love of *New Kid* with this complaint, which they find inaccurate. This dissonance demonstrates that censorship attempts may be incorrect, and that this falsity might be echoed in other calls for book censorship. Helping preservice teachers recognize that banned books are valid and valuable, and that they have the expertise to evaluate, select, and teach these texts in English language arts, encourages them to assuage book challenges from educational stakeholders who do not know books, readers, and pedagogy as well as they do.

AUTHENTIC ARTIFACTS

FIGURE 1

Parent letter naming concerns about Kelly Yang's Front Desk

It has come to our attention that the fifth grade class is reading a book aloud in school entitled "Front Desk". My husband and I are extremely upset that this racially divisive book is even part of the curriculum in our school community and is being read aloud in class.

Effective immediately, we do NOT give permission for our son, [REDACTED] to be present when this book is being read or discussed. It has no place in the classroom, but if it is not removed, he should be excused from any assignments regarding this book - or any book like it - without penalty. This author's books are extremely divisive and controversial, and we are shocked and disappointed that this "CRT" book is part of Plainedge's teachings. Our children, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] are not to be audiences to any books that portray cops as racist, foster the notion of white supremacy or white privilege, teach that America is a racist country where all people are not equal, etc. since these positions go directly against everything we believe in. Books like this basically teach our children to see color and cause great division. This book, which is a recommended CRT novel and which Scholastic even connects to the BLM movement, has absolutely no place in ANY school... much less Plainedge schools.

Going forward, we now feel the need to be informed of any books that will be part of the curriculum since this book has ruined our trust level in the books being read and what is being taught in our schools. After researching and seeing how much Scholastic is behind the BLM movement, we do not want our kids reading or being read any Scholastic books - or any other that teaches subjects of race, gender, religion or any other controversial topic. Scholastic even went so far as to not include "police officers" in their children's book series of "Community Heroes". Librarian, Teacher, Nurse, Doctor, Fire Fighter and MAIL CARRIER are the chosen local heroes

We are interested to know who approved this book to be included in the teachings since when this was discussed at the BOE meeting last night, Dr. Salina said the books are chosen by the teacher and principal.

Thank you,

To prepare preservice English teachers to articulate their rationale for adopting inclusive young adult literature in their curriculum, I designed opportunities to analyze authentic artifacts from book censorship cases. These authentic artifacts act as mentor texts showcasing how previous teachers have successfully argued against censorship challenges. While I recognize these authentic examples are not perfect, their authenticity underscores their credibility and affords a space for preservice teachers to imagine themselves in the scenario, developing expertise that serves them in their future classrooms.

The first authentic artifact is a letter that author Kelly Yang shared on social media to rally support for her book *Front Desk* (Figure 1). When I saw the artifact, which is a letter from a parent to a teacher addressing their concerns with the

novel, I envisioned it as a pedagogical tool to help preservice English teachers engage with one of their main professional concerns: a parent email that disagreed with their text selection. After we read *Front Desk*, we analyze the letter as a class, determining what parts of the letter we are professionally obligated to respond to. After tracing these specific parts of the letter, I share a

fabricated response I crafted that models how to de-escalate concerns, initiate dialogue with administrative and parental partners, and protect access to young adult literature in the classroom. In collaboration, preservice teachers annotate my imagined response letter to emulate in their careers.

The second authentic artifact (Figure 2, next page) is a permission slip a teacher crafted to obtain parental consent to read *Looking for Alaska* by John Green, a popular young adult novel to teach in English classrooms (Strickland, 2021). I acquired this authentic artifact in a public records request in this censorship case against the teacher and school in response to a parent arguing that their child had read this book without their express permission. In conservative contexts, schools often require parental permission for whole-class novels, and so this transparency and communication is often expected of my preservice teachers through both their course syllabi and individual permission slips for each book. This particular authentic artifact protected the teacher in the censorship case because it required signatures for both affirmative and refusal responses, serving as a record of communication for all the students in the class.

After discussing the legal scenario above, we analyze the intentional language, pedagogical rationale, and the teacher's trust in her students. I underscore how the teacher anticipates potential challenges to the content in *Looking for Alaska*, and so she was able to preemptively address those concerns in the permission slip. We critique the teacher's approach and make suggestions on how to communicate both why the book has been challenged and why it is a great classroom text. This authentic artifact models a transparent approach to engaging educational stakeholders like administrators and parents in English teachers' pedagogical and literary decisions in sophisticated ways preservice teachers can reproduce and improve for their own curricular needs.

FIGURE 2

Permission slip for the YAL novel Looking for Alaska by John Green

March 10, 2016

Dear Parents:

My next selected text in your child's Language Arts class is titled *Looking for Alaska* by John Green. Due to some controversial topics in the book (sexually explicit situations, language, and drinking/smoking cigarettes), I wanted to send home a permission slip stating that you give permission for your child to read this book with me. I truly feel that this is a book students will really enjoy and it has also won many awards (see below), and therefore I am willing to take this risk in tackling a more mature book with my students. Students were warned at the beginning of the year that their maturity will be needed in the reading of this text. Students who cannot handle this text at a maturity level suitable for a 12th grade class, may be assigned a different text to read by the teacher. Also, if you as the parent feel uncomfortable with your child reading this text, a supplemental text can also be given. Please complete the bottom slip of this letter and send it back to me with your child by **Monday, March 14th**. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me. Thank you! ☺

Ms. Emily Marie Veatch

Looking for Alaska Awards:

- Winner, 2006 Michael L. Printz Award
- Finalist, 2005 Los Angeles Times Book Prize
- 2006 Top 10 Best Book for Young Adults
- 2006 Teens' Top 10 Award
- 2006 Quick Pick for Reluctant Young Adult Readers
- A New York Public Library Book for the Teen Age
- A Booklist Editor's Choice Pick
- Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers Selection
- Borders Original Voices Selection

--Author, John Michael Green is a #1 Best Selling author on the New York Times Bestseller list!
--During the week of July 29, 2012, *Looking for Alaska* broke into the **New York Times best seller list** at number 10 in Children's Paperback!
--*Looking for Alaska* as been published in more than fifteen languages!

Please return this permission slip to Ms. Veatch by Friday, October 16.

_____ Yes, I give my child _____ permission to read *Looking for Alaska*. I understand that there are controversial topics in this book and that my child's maturity will be needed.

_____ No, I do not give my child _____ permission to read *Looking for Alaska*. I understand that my child will be given a supplemental text to read which may require more independent reading/work.

Parent Signature _____

CONNECTING WITH YOUNG ADULT ADVOCACY COMMUNITY

Preservice teachers graduating from this course will likely teach in our immediate conservative context, and they may feel isolated as the only teacher in their school advocating for diverse young adult literature, or they may acquiesce and not teach inclusive young adult literature at the expense

of their students and their own pedagogical expertise because it is the path of least resistance. To encourage preservice teachers to persevere through these obstacles, I connect them with co-conspirators outside of our conservative context who advocate for adolescents and young adult literature. My intention in establishing this community is that it will sustain their advocacy, reading, and teaching of diverse young adult literature long after our course has ended, transitioning their passion for texts as a pedagogical tool from our college course to their own secondary classrooms.

ACTION-ORIENTED COMMUNITY

Introducing preservice teachers to the action-oriented young adult literature community supports their commitment to teach diverse young adult literature as book challenges continue to increase. The action-oriented community affords preservice teachers a critical lens to articulate their rationale for including diverse young adult literature in their curricular text selection process. We read scholars who prompt pragmatic implementation for preservice teachers to enact in their future classrooms. These texts are the *Guide for Selecting Anti-Bias Children's Books* by Derman-Sparks (2013), *Reading Against the Grain* by Learning for Justice (2023), professional teaching guides curated by expert teachers and scholars like the *1619 Project: Born on the Water* published by Penguin Random House (2021), and the four core principles guiding the #DisruptTexts movement (Ebarvia et al., 2023). By introducing preservice teachers to resources they can return to throughout their profession to remind them of their commitment to teach diverse young adult literature, they can navigate their conservative contexts equipped with these resources.

VIRTUAL COMMUNITY

As preservice teachers transition into classrooms, I want them to connect with a virtual community, as they may not have immediate support in their local conservative contexts. I introduce preservice teachers to educational leaders on social media platforms, blogs, and podcasts so they have access to real-time, multimodal inspiration, even after they graduate from our class. We connect with young adult authors who engage with their readers and share their writing process online via Twitter or Instagram like Samira Ahmed, Aiden Thomas, Xiran Jay Zhao, Alex Gino. We read Tess Sharpe's newsletter that details the publishing process. We learn from scholars like Ebony Elizabeth Thomas and Debbie Reese, expert librarians such as Angie Manfredi, Jillian Heise through #ClassroomBookADay, and John Schu, and also, expert teachers, such as Pernille Ripp and Cornelius Minor. We listen to podcasts that celebrate the power of young adult literature such as

Reading While White, The Book Love Foundation, Schoolutions, Cult of Pedagogy, and Heinemann. Starting with these, we develop a connected web of online voices that bolster preservice teachers' commitment to reading and teaching diverse young adult literature.

COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY

In my young adult literature class, I design opportunities for collaboration in the hope that the cohort will continue to support each other. Even if they acquire jobs at different schools, collaborating across educational settings strengthens the larger effort to counter book challenges across the state. Powerfully, the connections forged in our class carry preservice teachers through their teaching careers. One specific way I foster community is through collaborative annotations. Throughout the semester, I find that preservice teachers love the young adult novels we read but often feel defensive when reading the scholarly articles that accompany the novels because they press on the conservative values my students' and their community holds. This creates a lot of vulnerability in the classroom as the scholarly material conflicts with the diverse ideologies in the class (Graber, 2023). To ensure I am guiding preservice through a generative and supportive process as they unlearn their own biases and work toward establishing antibias pedagogies, I upload our scholarly readings as a shared PDF we annotate together, beginning with my own comments annotating the text that bridge theory with the pragmatic classroom challenges of teaching in conservative communities who do not value diverse and inclusive young adult literature.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

In speaking with graduates from my young adult literature course, they reflect that the pedagogies of anticipating potential challenges, articulating curriculum rationale, and connecting with the young adult literature advocacy community inform and sustain their commitment to teach young adult literature in conservative contexts that unrelentingly challenge, censor, and ban these texts from English classrooms and curricula. The final course assignment demonstrates moments of resistance and commitment in advocating, reading, and teaching of diverse young adult literature.

In the final project, preservice teachers compile an annotated bibliography of ten texts they want to teach. Then, they analyze their text selection from the antibias and inclusive pedagogical framework we have developed throughout the semester (see figure 3), articulating how they intentionally curated diverse and generative reading experiences that reflects their goals as educators. I analyzed my preservice English teachers' text selections and their rationale using a priori codes to

label whether the text selections were canonical or young adult literature. Out of 413 total number of books, 46% were catalogued as young adult literature, which demonstrates a significant commitment to teaching young adult literature in conservative contexts when the challenges are frequent.

FIGURE 3

Assignment prompting analysis of text selection through inclusive curriculum lens

- 1) Think of your 10 texts holistically, as a unit of study together. Explain how your 10 texts reflect your teaching philosophy, pedagogy, and literary commitments as a teacher. How do your text selection decisions communicate the teacher you want to be? How do these books help you build the classroom community you wish to create? How do these texts celebrate reading and literacy in a way that cultivates and inspires lifelong reading/readers?
- 2) Explain how your Virtual Bookshelf intends to engage a variety of readers (adolescents or your own target audience) with various reading identities and abilities via how “balanced” your bookshelf is considering genre, format, publishing date, representations of violence and trauma, joy, race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, religion, mental health and illness, disability representation, setting and location, how age-conscious the vulnerable content is, and body size. Discuss the implications of how balanced your virtual bookshelf is and explain why this is a high-quality Virtual Bookshelf.
- 3) Select one course assigned reading that helped you develop your Virtual Bookshelf. Describe how that reading informed the way you evaluate and value texts and how this impacted your curation of your Virtual Bookshelf. Discuss how this assigned reading has shifted your pedagogical commitments to teaching young adult literature.

In identifying moments of resistance to using young adult literature in their future classroom, one preservice English teacher wrote that “the canon is the foundation for teaching critical thinking. I prefer to keep newer, contemporary YA out of [the classroom], mostly because the events that they relate to are often too current, too recent, to allow students to take a step back from their own beliefs and ideals to examine the book and events from a more critical standpoint—it’s too personal for them.” This resistance demonstrates the need to refine my current course design and underscores the importance of teacher education continuing this work programmatically to ensure we graduate antibias teachers.

In identifying moments of commitment to using young adult literature, one preservice teacher stated she “is committed to helping students see things from differing perspectives and the benefits of doing so; this will invite a variety of different readers into my classrooms. I hope to create a welcoming and diverse classroom that both reflects and expands my students’ identities.” To do

so, this preservice teacher states she will “need to expand her own personal readership to try to find more diverse authors.” Further, she reflects on how her education only promoted “white, male authors” and expressed how she wants to change what she was exposed to as a student. In considering the pressure to yield to book censorship requests in conservative contexts, this is a promising pedagogical commitment to advocate, read, and teach diverse young adult literature grounded in her developing expertise navigating how to do so with transparency and collaborative partners.

CONCLUSION

It is imperative that preservice English teacher education continues to demonstrate the value of young adult literature in K-12 classrooms as valid and valuable texts, especially as these books are challenged and censored across the nation. Young adult literature is an important pedagogical tool in the secondary English classroom, and preservice teachers should be prepared to protect adolescents’ access to it. This course design offers one approach English education can adopt to ensure young adult literature is accessible in the K-12 classroom and curriculum.

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