

## **Rationale: Why is it important to teach Queer texts in English classrooms?**

The high school that I attended was small; my graduating class had just over 100 students and the entire school had less than 500. I was the only out gay kid among my group of friends and often felt alone in my sexuality. I remember looking for representation of people “like me,” and turning to characters on TV shows for validation. I also remember scouring through every book I read in class, studying every same-sex friendships for signs that it was something more. (To this day, I am still certain that Nick Caraway was in love with Jay Gatsby and no one will ever be able to convince me otherwise). I was lucky because I was surrounded by supporting family and friends who helped me to embrace my identity, even if they couldn’t exactly relate to what I was going through. Unfortunately, not everyone has the support system that I have had, and that is where incorporating queer texts into English classrooms is so important.

Deborah Jean Kinder became a teacher in rural Wisconsin in 1971 and in 1998 published the story of one of her students — a young girl named Kari who was really struggling to embrace her lesbian identity<sup>i</sup>. Kari felt like she had no one to talk to and instead confided only in her journal — that is until she began speaking openly to Kinder. Kinder shared with Kari a short story about gay marriage from the *New Yorker*, which started Kari’s mission to find whatever written information she could about queerness. Kinder writes that she “seemed to find strength in her reading and writing” and eventually felt more comfortable coming out to people (67). While Kari was Kinder’s student for the 1992-1993 school year, her story still remains relevant over two decades later. It is true that queer representation is far more prevalent now than in the early

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<sup>i</sup> “Deborah Jean Kinder “To Follow Your Heart” *The English Journal* Vol. 88, No. 2. November 1998.

1990s, but many students are still not being exposed to queer issues, and certainly not in any sort of critical way.

The job of an English teacher is, first and foremost, to help students develop their literacy and critical thinking skills. There is a belief that the best way to do this is through the texts that are already regarded as prime examples of both of these skills, texts like *The Great Gatsby* and *The Catcher in the Rye*. Undoubtedly, there is a reason these novels are so well regarded and so widely taught, but they are not the only texts that have something to offer to students. This is the first reason that queer young adult novels are not taught in classrooms — because educators do not believe that they have something to offer. The lesson plans provided below show that this is far from true. While not all queer young adult are suitable for the classroom, many are incredibly rich texts that can be used in a variety of different ways to teach students a number of different skills. All of the lessons that teachers use *The Catcher in the Rye* for can just as easily be taught with a queer text such as *Dance on My Grave*. A research paper about the 1920s that is taught alongside *The Great Gatsby* can easily be replaced with a research paper about animals, and with far more interesting results. It is understandable why many teachers do not believe that queer young adult novels can be used as teaching tools, but this misconception must be challenged so that classrooms can become more inclusive.

The second reason why queer young adult texts are not taught in classrooms is far less innocent. Teachers, as well as administrators, are fearful of the repercussions of including queer texts in their classrooms. In a 2009 article<sup>ii</sup>, William P. Banks, an advocate for queer inclusion in the classroom, reveals that the question he is most asked by educators “is not ‘What is the *best*,

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<sup>ii</sup> William P Banks. “Sexuality, and the Value(s) of Queer Young Adult Literatures” *The English Journal*. Vol. 98, No. 4. March 2009

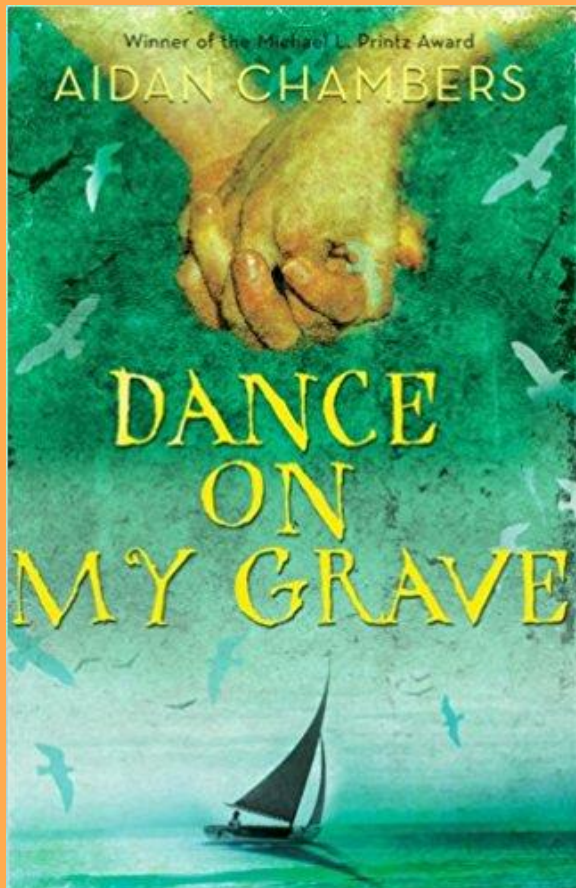
*most powerful* LGBT young adult novel you've read recently?" but "Is there a book you think I could *get away with* without ruffling too many feathers?" (34). This question shows that there is a fear among teachers about the repercussion of including queer texts in their curricula. This fear is understandable, but should not be reason enough to not teach these texts. Teachers have a duty that extends beyond themselves, a duty to look after their students and encourage their growth as individuals.

While this is true for all teachers, it is most possible in English classes, where students and teachers can use literature as a means of having open discussions about a variety of issues. Caroline T. Clark and Mollie V. Blackburn<sup>iii</sup> state that they "have long argued that teaching cannot and should not be value-free, neutral, or apolitical ... This work is risky, and as long as heterosexism and homophobia are institutionally supported forms of oppression, it will continue to be so. But this risky work has the potential to dismantle such oppression, and this makes it worth doing" (31). I am not advocating teachers risk their jobs to include queer content in their classes; however, I am trying to show that it is important work. Queer students benefit from seeing themselves reflected in the texts that they are reading, but even cisgender heterosexual students have something to gain from reading these texts. Teaching queer young adult literature in classrooms teaches students skills they will need in English, but also information that they will need in life.

The lesson plans collected below are just a few examples of the countless ways that queer texts can be used in the English classroom. It is my hope that teachers will see these lessons and use them as both a justification for the validity of including queer young adult literature in the classroom and the inspiration to do so.

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<sup>iii</sup> Caroline T. Clarke and Mollie V. Blackburn. "Reading LGBT-Themed Literature with Young People: What's Possible" *The English Journal*. Vol 98, No. 4. March 2009.



## ***Dance on My Grave* by Aidan Chambers**

When Hal Robinson capsizes in his classmate's boat that he borrowed he is rescued by Barry Gorman. Barry is a few years older than Hal and had to leave school in order to help his mother run the family store after his father's death. Meanwhile, Hal is deciding whether to continue on with school or enter the workforce himself. After Barry rescues Hal they begin to spend a great deal of their time together. Hal even gets a summer job working with Barry and his mother. Hal is drawn to Barry's unique take on life while he continues to try to figure out his own. Eventually the boy's relationship becomes sexual and Hal finds himself completely enamored by Barry.

From the very first page, however, readers are aware that this love story does not have a happy ending. The book opens with a newspaper article detailing that a 16 year old, who we can conclude is Hal, was arrested for defiling Barry's grave. The rest of the book is Hal's recount of what happened mixed with running reports by a court appointed counselor. As Hal struggles to come to terms with the events of the summer and understand Barry's death, readers are presented with an engaging coming of age story that is far from usual.

Compared to the rest of the texts in this packet, *Dance on My Grave* is the most like a more traditional coming of age novel that you are likely to find in a high school English classroom. Hal's story of teenage angst puts him in the same category as Holden Caulfield. The narrative structure of the story is highly engaging and offers up many opportunities for analysis. Hal references a number of other literary texts, allowing for a study of allusion. The text is full of opportunities to study symbolism, characterization, plot, and many other literary devices. In addition to all of the more traditional English class tasks, this text also allows students and teachers to discuss gay life in the 1980s.

## **Topic: Characterization of Hal**

**When to teach: This lesson can be taught any time after the first running report in part 1**

**Rationale:** Since most of the novel is narrated by Hal, the majority of the information that we are given about him comes from his own perspective of himself. However, the running reports that are interspersed throughout the novel give us an outsider's perspective. In comparing these two versions of Hal, students can get a better sense of who he is while practicing their characterization skills.

**AIM:** How can we compare the way Hal sees himself to the way he is seen by others?

### **Learning Objective**

- Students will understand the various forms of characterization
- Students will be able to use evidence in order to characterize Hal

### **Common Core Standards**

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1**

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3**

Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

### **Activity Plan**

- Place Aim and Do Now on the board
  - Do Now: What are the different approaches that we can use for characterization
- Give students time to copy board and complete do now (5 mins)
- Go over Do Now, calling on students to share answers and creating list on the board (5 mins)
- Mini Lesson: What is the difference between direct and indirect characterization? (10)
  - Direct characterization: something that is said by or about a character

- Indirect characterization: something a character does or says that gives us a hint into the character
- Ask students to come up with definitions of each and examples
- With their desk partners, students will be asked to complete worksheet. Students must use running reports and Hal's writing to characterize Hal. Students should place quotes in one column and characterization in the other (15 minutes)
- Teacher will recreate list on board, calling on students to share answers. Students should copy any information they do not have onto their own charts (8 minutes)
- Exit Pass: At the bottom of their worksheets, students should write in 1-2 complete sentences which representation of Hal (his own or the running reports) is more reliable/accurate and why (2 minutes)

Assessment Plan

Informal Assessment: Teacher will monitor students as they work in their groups and take note of what students are sharing answers as the teacher creates a chart on the board

Formal Assessment: Teacher will collect worksheet and grade worksheet and exit pass as a classwork grade

Worksheet:

<u>Quote (from Hal)</u>	<u>Characterization Analysis</u>

<u>Quote (from Running Report)</u>	<u>Characterization Analysis</u>

## **Topic: Debating Hal's guilt**

### **When to teach: After finishing the entire book**

**Rationale:** Hal is writing this book after Barry's death because he feels a sense of responsibility for what happened to him. It is also the result of an investigation after he is caught dancing on Barry's grave. While Hal is ultimately not charged for any crimes at the end of the novel, this does not mean he feels completely innocent or that he is. This lesson allows students the opportunity to gather evidence about Hal and work on their communication skills. The fact that this is a debate with an incentive of extra credit will make students even more invested in the assignment.

**AIM:** Is Hal guilty of Barry's death?

### **Learning Objective**

- Students will be able to debate ideas and form conclusions based on their readings of a text
- Students will be able to use evidence in order to support a claim
- Students will be able to work collaboratively in order to successfully debate their side

### **Common Core Standards**

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1**

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1**

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

### **Activity Plan**

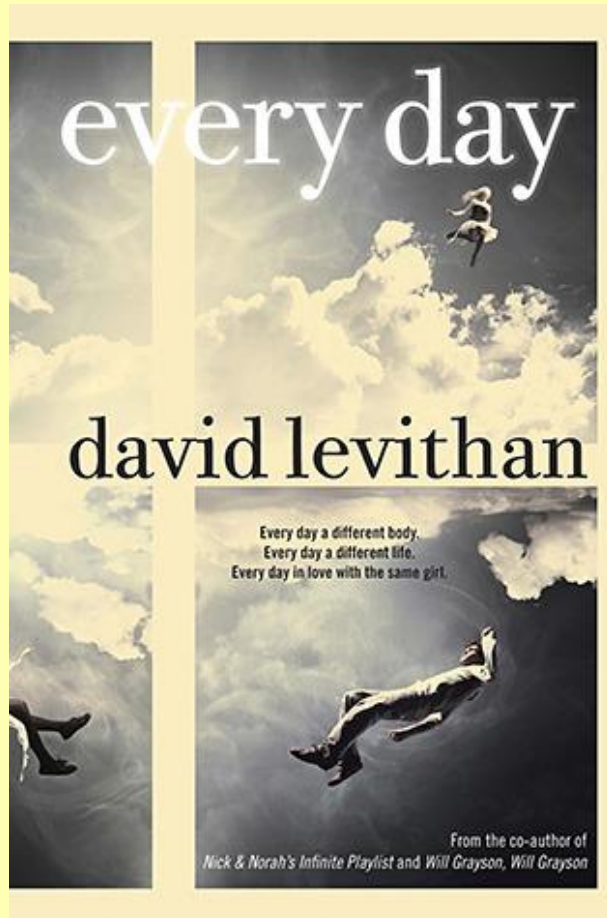
- Place Aim and Do Now on the board
  - Do Now: Sit with your group and take out the evidence that you have collected

- Once in their groups, give students time to discuss how they are going to frame their argument. Tell each group that they should select one student for opening remarks and one student to be the first debater. (5 minutes)
- Students will come together and co-construct rules for debate. Teacher will guide students to include the following criteria (6 minutes)
  - One speaker at a time
  - Refer to text whenever possible
  - Be respectful when responding to peers
- One student from each group will sit in the front of the room. These students will each have 1 minute for opening remarks to state why they believe Hal is innocent or guilty (2 minutes)
- After opening remarks, students will take turns debating. Every five minutes the students at the front of the room will swap out. Students who are not debating should be paying attention to the debate in order to decide what student should speak next and what they should say. This should happen 5 times, (25 minutes)
- Each group will be given 1 minute for closing remarks (2 minutes)
- At the end of the debate, teacher will tally up points to determine what side won. Students will also be given the opportunity to debrief on the activity (5 minutes)

### Assessment Plan

Teacher will play the role of debate moderator while informally assessing students. Teacher will tally points for each team, giving one point for each argument with evidence, half a point for each successful rebuttal, and half a point for a successful point without evidence. Teacher will also dock points for students speaking out of turn and calling out or students who are not on task. All students will be given participation classwork grade, with winning team given extra credit on the classroom assignment.





## *Every Day by David Levithan*

Every day for A's entire life A wakes up in the same body. After 24 hours A is whisked away from one person and into the next. There seems to be no order or pattern to who A borrows except that it is never the same person twice, always around the same age that A is, and never too far from the last one. Over the years, A has developed a series of rules to follow so as to not mess up the life of whoever A is inhabiting: A will not interfere and try to leave as little trace as possible.

This all changes, however, when A borrows the body of Justin and falls for his girlfriend Rhiannon. A sees Justin and Rhiannon's relationship as toxic and decides to give Rhiannon a day of happiness, skipping school with her to go to the beach. A few days later, when A has borrowed the body of the highly religious Nathan, A decides to break the rules

further by driving to a house party that Rhiannon will be attending, something Nathan would never do. When A eventually tells Rhiannon the truth, the two try to find a way to be together, no matter what body A is inhabiting that day. But A has another problem too, Nathan remembers being inhabited and thinks it was by the devil and he has begun to make a fuss.

*Every Day* is an incredibly unique text, and really allows for an in-depth study of identity. Levithan explores issues of gender and sexuality, but the issues of this book go much deeper. Through the various bodies that A borrows, readers can see issues of body image, insecurity, complex relationships, drug abuse, depression, poverty, religion and much more. The story line is one that will be engaging to students, especially since it has been made into a movie (which can also be used as a teaching aide), but through it students can have discussions about many important issues.

**Topic: Creative Writing, Understanding of A**

**When to teach: This lesson can be taught any time**

**Rationale:** A is a very unique character and can be hard to understand. However, A seems to have a code when A inhabits the lives of other people. Through creating a narrative of what it would be like if A was them for a day, students can use their personal investment in the activity to better understand A as a character.

**AIM:** What would it be like if A borrowed your body for the day?

**Learning Objective**

- Students will be able to implement narrative techniques to create a story
- Students will be able to use creative writing as a means of understanding a character

**Common Core Standards**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3b

Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters

Activity Plan

- Place Aim and Do Now on the board
  - Do Now: What are A's rules for spending a day as someone?
- Give students time to copy board and complete do now (5 mins)
- Go over Do Now, calling on students to share answers and creating list on the board (5 mins)
  - Does not interfere, tries to be respectful, only intervenes when necessary, only access memories when needed, check email but clear history.
- Mini Lesson: What goes into writing a narrative? (10)
  - Plot, characters, dialogue, conflict, narration, setting etc.

- Students will be given the majority of the class period writing a scene that could appear in *Every Day*. Students should imagine that A woke up in their body and decide what A would do. Is it a weekday or a weekend? Does A go to school? How does A interact with friends and family? What would A think of you? (20 minutes)
- Prior to the end of class provide students with the option of sharing out part of their narrative. (5 mins)
- Collect student work. Students have the option of completing their scene for homework, due the following class period

### Assessment Plan

Informal Assessment: Teacher will monitor students as they work on their narratives. Teacher will take note of student participation in whole class discussions and which students want to share their work

Formal Assessment: Teacher will collect the narratives at the end of class or the following class period. Students can be given a classwork grade, homework grade, or both.

**Topic: Characterization of A**

**When to teach: Any time, the later in the book the more students will have to work with.**

**Rationale:** Because A wakes up in a new body every day, it can be difficult for students to separate A from the bodies A inhabits. This activity helps students with their ability to collect evidence, their ability to characterize, and their understanding of who A truly is apart from all the people A borrows.

**AIM:** Who is A?

**Learning Objective**

- Students will be able to find evidence related to the character of A
- Students will be able to separate A from the bodies A inhabits
- Students will be able to use the evidence that they collect to develop a characterization of

A

**Common Core Standards**

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1**

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3**

Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

**Activity Plan**

- Place Aim and Do Now on the board
  - Do Now: Which of the bodies A borrows is most helpful in understanding who A is?

- Students will come in, copy board, and complete do now (5 minutes)
- Turn and talk: Students will share and compare answers with one student sitting next to them (5 mins)
- Whole class discussion in which class will select 4 days that seem to really show who A is (5 mins)
  - Possible days: Justin, Rhiannon, Vic, Alexander, Nathan, Kelesa
- Students will count off by four and break into groups. In groups of same number assign students 1 of the days and ask them to fill out one part of the worksheet, showing A's personality on that day (15 mins)
- Students will transition into groups of one student from each number and share what they have found, filling in the other sections on the front of the worksheet and seeing the character of A on different days (15 mins)
- For Homework: Students will complete the back side of the worksheet, filling in the silhouette with the four most important moments they think define A's character as well as a description of how they view A.

### Assessment Plan

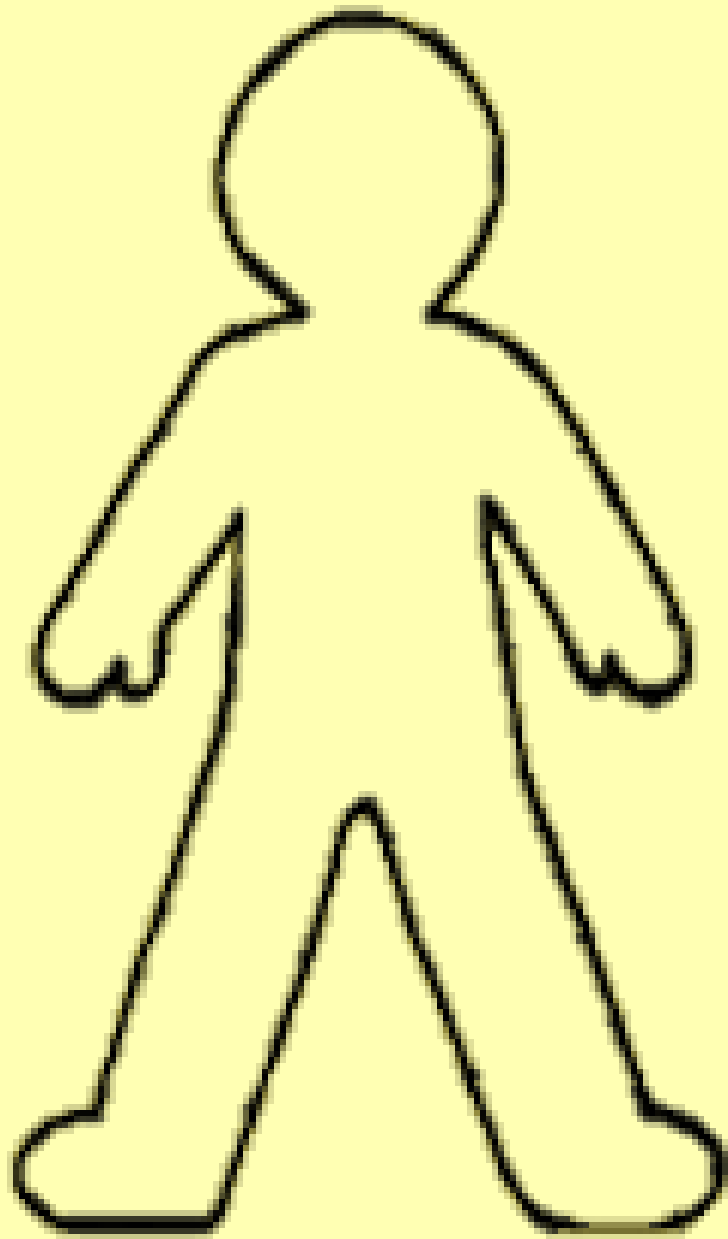
Informal Assessment: Teacher will walk around the room monitoring student involvement in groups

Formal Assessment: Teacher will collect worksheet the following day. Worksheet will be graded as both a classwork (front) and homework (back) grade

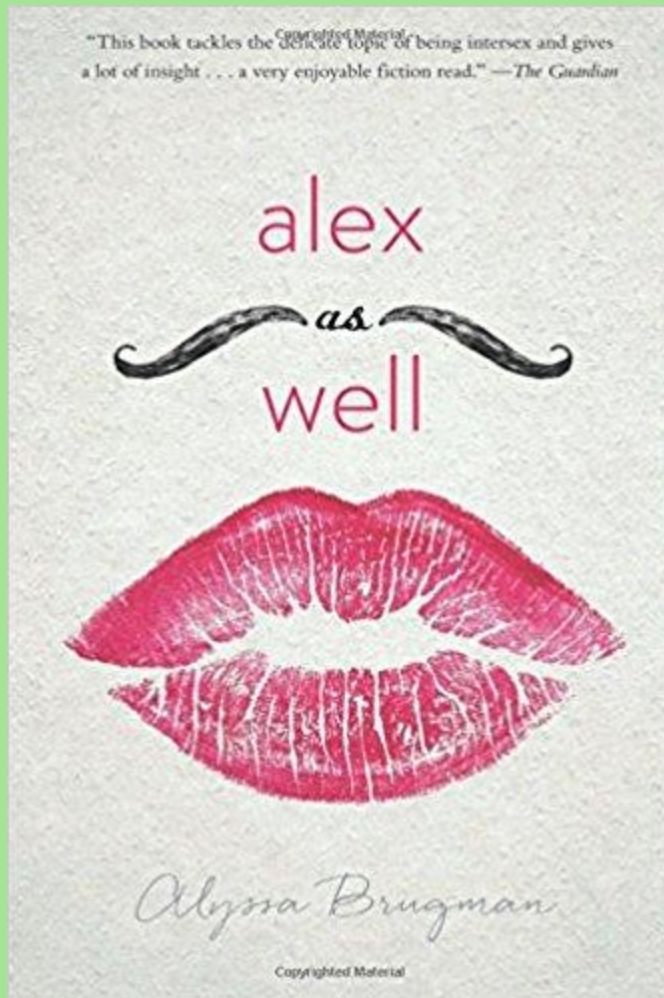


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**FOR HOMEWORK: In each of the 4 limbs, select and explain one quote that shows A's charcter (these do not have to be from days we analuzed in class) In the head and chest write a description (4-5 sentences) of who you would imagine A to be if A had their own body.**







## ***Alex as Well by Alyssa Brugman***

After an incident that occurs in his high school and the decision to stop taking the pills his parents say that he needs, Alex makes a decision that changes his life forever. Alex decides to transfer schools and live her life as a girl. While Alex initially believes herself to be transgender, the truth is that she is intersex. In fact, her initial birth certificate listed her as female until a team of doctors decided that she would be more content being raised as a boy. Alex's parents hid this information from her, believing that it would take away from her normal life. Yet, somehow Alex always felt as if there were two Alexes — the boy Alex and the girl Alex, Alex as well and now it is Alex as well's time to come to the front-lines.

Alex as Well follows Alex as she transfers to her new school and tries to live her life as the girl she knows herself to be. Alex

shares with the readers her struggle to get a new birth certificate, her desire to fit in with the other girls, and her experience of modeling in the school fashion show fundraiser. Yet, as much as this novel is about Alex, it is also about her parents. Interspersed with the chapters narrated by Alex, the reader is given a selection of posts made by Alex's mother on a website for mothers as well as the advice that she receives in the comments — most of which is far from helpful. Alex's parents struggle to decide what is the best way to help their child and make sense of what is going on.

Because of its unique look at intersex identity, this text is a highly educational one for students. Moreover, it provides students with a way to critically study gender roles. Students can look at the way Alex's gender has been constructed both prior to and after Alex's revelation that she is a girl and not a boy. The book's unique writing style of having Alex talk to the boy Alex provides an opportunity for multiple class discussions and assignments.

## **Topic: Gender Roles, Creative Writing**

### **When to teach: This lesson can be taught any time**

**Rationale:** In *Alex as Well*, Alex often imagines conversations with her boy self. While it is never really explained why Alex has these moments, they are certainly interesting parts of the narrative and help us to understand Alex's character. In this lesson, students are asked to be like Alex and imagine a conversation they might have with their different gendered selves. This task helps the students to work creatively, practice their writing skills, develop a better understanding of Alex, and maybe even a better understanding of themselves.

**AIM:** What would your different-gendered self tell you?

### **Learning Objective**

- Students will be able to create an imagined dialogue between two versions of themselves
- Students will be able to use their dialogues to better understand the author's choice of creating two Alex characters

### **Common Core Standards**

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3**

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3b**

Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters

### **Activity Plan**

- Place Aim and Do Now on the board
  - Do Now: What would you be like if you were a different gender?
- Give students time to copy board and complete do now (5 mins)
- Ask if there are students, who would like to share their do now answers. Call on 3-4 students (5 mins)
- Mini Lesson: What makes a successful dialogue? Ask students to co-construct success criteria for a successful dialogue. List should mirror most of the following: (10 mins)

- Both characters should have distinct personalities, they should be discussing some sort of conflict, there should be at least a temporary conclusion, should include description as well as dialogue.
- Students have time to write their dialogues on a separate piece of paper to be collected. Dialogue should be at least 8 lines and include description of the setting (15 minutes)
- Call on students to share their dialogues (5 mins)
- Wrap Up: have a discussion with the students about what they got out of the activity. Ask students why they think Brugman made the decision to include scenes with Alex speaking to an imagined other Alex (5 mins)

### Assessment Plan

Informal Assessment: Teacher will monitor students as they work on their dialogues and pay attention to what students are volunteering

Formal Assessment: Teacher will collect the dialogues at the end of class. Teacher will assess whether or not student met success criteria and assign a classwork grade

**Topic: Using Evidence to Make an Argument**

**When to teach: At the end of the novel**

**Rationale:** At the end of *Alex as Well*, Alex moves out of her parent’s home and in with Mr. Crockett’s daughter. This is a significant moment in Alex’s life and may come as a surprise to some of the readers. After all, Alex’s parents seem to have been making some progress accepting her. It is likely that the class will be dividing as to whether moving out was the right decision for Alex, especially since they will be around the same age and may or may not have imagined living on their own. This assignment gives the students an opportunity to reflect on the ending of the novel and practice using evidence to make an argument.

**AIM:** Should Alex have moved out?

**Learning Objective**

- Students will be able to develop an argument as to whether or not Alex should have moved out
- Students will be able to find evidence to support their argument

**Common Core Standards**

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1**

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1**

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

**Activity Plan**

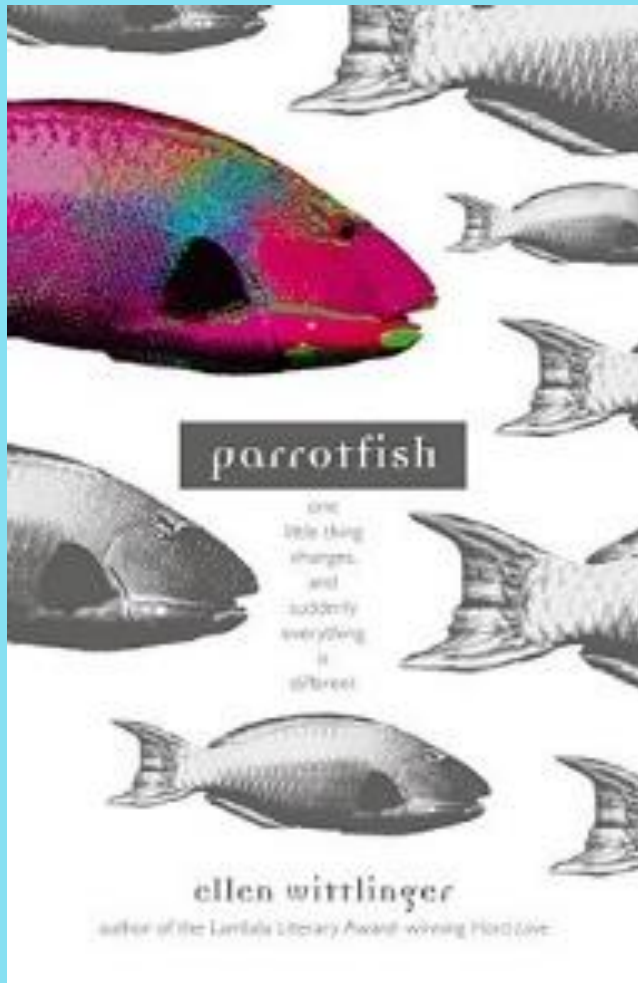
- Place Aim and Do Now on the board
  - Do Now: Answer the Aim Question
- Ask students to copy the board and ask the question (5 mins)

- Pair Share: Have students turn to someone next to them and share their answers as well as their reasons why (5 mins)
- Mini-Lesson: Opinion vs argument. Remind students that they must use evidence to support an argument, not just their own opinions. Review with students how to select evidence and how to incorporate quotes into their argument (10 mins)
- Give students time to create a list of evidence to support their argument. This can be done individually or in groups (10 mins)
- Students will have the remainder of the class time to write an extended paragraph arguing whether or not Alex should have left out. They should include at least 3 pieces of evidence, 2 in support of their argument and 1 for the counter argument, which they will disprove. Students may finish paragraph for homework (15 mins)

#### Assessment Plan

Informal Assessment: Teacher will walk around the room monitoring students as they work on the various parts of the lesson

Formal Assessment: Teacher will collect the paragraph at the end of the period or the beginning of class the next day and grade it as a class/homework assignment.



## ***Parrotfish* by Ellen Wittlinger**

When Angela Katz-McNair came out as a lesbian, her parents and friends barely batted an eye. However when Angela comes out as transgender and asks to be called Grady from now on, everyone seems to have more trouble. Grady's mother cannot make sense of it, his best friend and sister are embarrassed, and only his father and brother seem to be somewhat more understanding. The only exception is Sebastian, a guy who takes TV Production with Grady is immediately accepting. Grady and Sebastian quickly become friends and Sebastian teaches Grady about different animals in nature that are known to switch genders (most notably the parrot-fish) and making him see that there is a biological precedent for being transgender.

Since Grady was home-schooled for most of his life, he is not exactly popular, but after coming out he becomes the subject of some

unwanted attention. Thankfully, throughout the book Grady is able to build a team of allies. Meanwhile, at home things seem to be getting better but his mother still struggles to understand. One thing is for certain, however, by the time everyone comes together for Christmas Eve dinner at the end of the book, everyone's perspectives will have shifted at least a little.

*Parrotfish* is one of the first novels with a transgender protagonist targeted at a young adult audience. Grady is a likeable character that students can relate to, even if they haven't had any experiences similar to his. In addition to studying standard English skills such as creating inferences, using evidence, and analyzing literary devices, teachers can use Grady's story to look deeper at issues of gender roles and identity. The text offers many students for teachers to engage students in lessons and activities that will help them to build their academic skills, but also help them to build a better understanding of the world and of themselves.

**Topic: Creative Writing, Rewriting scenes**

**When to teach: This lesson can be taught any time**

**Rationale:** This lesson is an exploration of external versus internal self. Everyone has had the experience of having a conversation with someone where they had to watch what they say or felt like the other person was not saying what they actually thought. In this sense, what a character says can be quite deceiving. Throughout the book, Grady attempts to get at what he believes to be the truth of the situation. This lesson asks students to do the same. In doing so, students are able to develop a better sense of Grady's character as well as that of the other characters in the novel, and do so in a fun and creative way.

**AIM:** What were the characters in *Parrotfish* actually thinking?

**Learning Objective**

- Students will be able to reimagine a conversation that occurs in the novel to show what characters are actually thinking
- Students will be able to use their dialogues to understand the characterization and motivation of characters in the novel

**Common Core Standards**

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3**

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3b**

Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.

**Activity Plan**

- Place Aim and Do Now on the board
  - Do Now: Write about a time when you were talking to someone and what either you or the other person was thinking was different than what was said.
- Give students time to copy board and complete do now (5 mins)



- Ask if there are students, who would like to share their do now answers. Call on 3-4 students (5 mins)
- Transition: When Grady is imagining conversations between the people around him and himself, he is tapping into what he thinks people are actually thinking. The conversations he imagines are what he thinks people would say if they did not filter themselves. However, there are other times that Grady gives us an actual dialogue and not an imagined one. Today, we are going to play the role of Grady and reimagine one of the conversations that Grady leaves in place. (2 mins)
- Ask students to think of scenes that would be good to reimagine. Place list on board. (8 mins)
  - Possible scenes: Grady goes to the principal, Grady with any teacher, Ms. Unger and the prank, When Grady tells Sebastian
- Working in pairs, students can select one of the conversations on the board or select another one and reimagine it. (15 mins)
- Groups will pair with another group and present their dialogues (5 mins)
- Exit Pass: At the bottom of the dialogue, explain in 2-3 sentences why you think the changes you made reflect what the characters would have actually been thinking.

### Assessment Plan

Informal Assessment: Teacher will monitor students as they work on their dialogues and pay attention to what students are volunteering to participate in whole class discussions

Formal Assessment: Teacher will collect one dialogue and exit pass from each group at the end of class. Students will be given a classwork grade based on their imagined dialogues as well as their reasoning.



**Topic:** Project Outline: Research Project

**When to teach:** Should be assigned alongside of the book, ideally introduced after Sebastian gives Grady information on the parrotfish. Due date should be somewhere between the middle to the end of the book, with some class periods devoted to the project.

**Rationale:** The title of *Parrotfish* is a direct reflection of the animal that Grady learns to relate to in the novel. This presents teachers with an interesting opportunity for a research project. Writing research papers combines a number of skills that students need to learn in order to help them prepare for college. Having them research animals that they relate to gives students the opportunity to become personally invested in the research they are doing, apply a bit of creativity and personality into the project, and understand why the fish is so important to Grady,

**As part of this project, lessons should be given on the following:**

- An introduction to the project, where students have the opportunity to co-construct success criteria (that can later be incorporated into the rubric)
- A lesson on how to conduct proper research
- If possible, one lesson with laptops where students can conduct research
- One or more lessons on MLA format, including in text citation and how to create a works cited period
- Lessons on essay structure, including transitions, thesis statements, how to quote, body paragraphs etc
- At least one draft with teacher comments and one opportunity for peer review

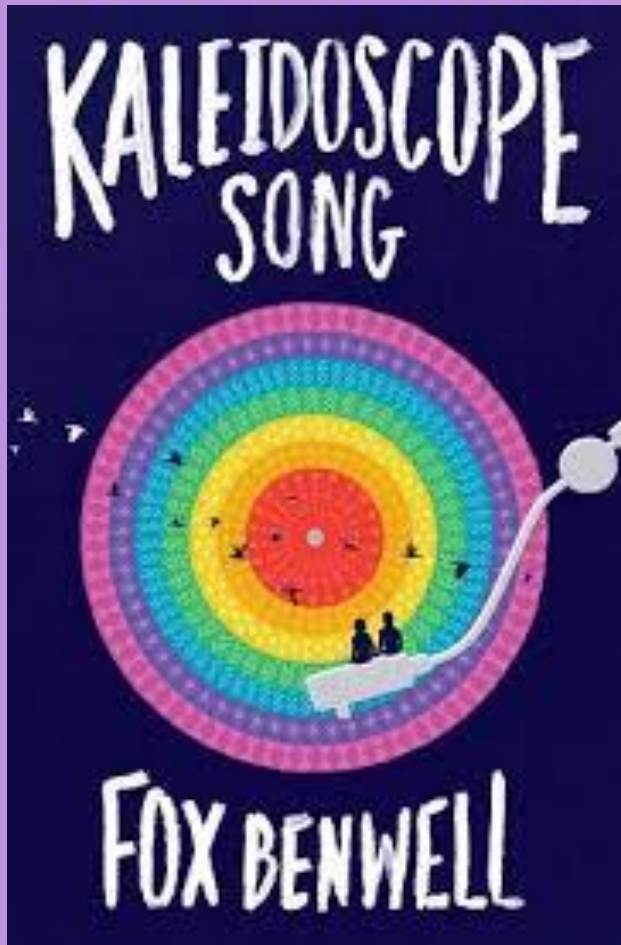
**Throughout the book, Grady realizes that he shares some similarities with parrotfish, most notably that both change genders. Sebastian has to write a paper about these incredibly interesting animals, and through reading Sebastian's research, Grady becomes more accepting of himself.**

**For this project you will play the role of both Grady and Sebastian. You will research an animal that you relate to and write about it. Your final project will consist of a 4-5 page paper written in standard MLA format. The final assignment that you submit will consist of the following four parts:**

- A printout of the sources you use for your paper (does not go towards page count)
- A research component: where you use your sources (properly cited) to show what you have learned about the animal you have selected
- A narrative component: where you explain how the animal you have selected reflects you and why you selected it
- A reference page: where you cite your sources in proper MLA format (does not go towards page count)

Getting Started: You may use the following websites to begin your research and select an animal, but once you have an animal in mind you should research it more specifically:

- <https://www.globalanimal.org>
- <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/>
- <https://www.encyclopedia.com/plants-and-animals/zoology-and-veterinary-medicine/zoology-general/animal>



### *Kaleidoscope Song* by Fox Benwell

Neo has loved music as long as she can remember, but living in the poor South African township of Khayelitsha, her dreams aren't perceived as being practical. Neo's parents would much rather see her finish school and become a wife or get and get a real job. But Neo cannot help but to be moved by the music. When the local radio station does a live show featuring local artists, Neo cannot help but to sneak out and go. It is at this show where she first sees Tale and the Storytellers and falls just as hard for their music as she does for their lead singer.

From that moment on, Neo can think of nothing but Tale and the music. By day she dreams of Tale's voice and by night she sneaks out to try and find her. After befriending Tale and the rest of her group, Neo ends up with an internship at the radio station and begins to build a name for herself. When Neo's

relationship with Tale becomes romantic and Neo begins to introduce queer artists into her radio show, however, it becomes clear to the adult men around her that something must be done.

*Kaleidoscope Song's* more adult subject matter may make it difficult to use with underclassmen, but it is an ideal text for an Advanced Placement Class. The novel offers a glimpse into the life of queer characters in South Africa, but also provides readers with a look at the socio-economic status of the nation. As a result, this text lends well to study using a post-colonial lens and looking at post-colonial studies more generally.

## **Topic: Music and Plot**

**When to teach: This lesson could be taught at any point in the novel using any of the scenes mentioned in the discography, however I recommend doing it after the first scene where Neo watches the show as it makes for an impactful introductory lesson and introduces students to the discography, which they can use with later scenes.**

**Rationale:** This is a novel about music just as much, and at times even more, than it is a novel about queerness in South Africa. For Neo her love for music and her love of Tale are inseparable. Moreover, the book starts and ends with a radio broadcast. The author states that the music listed helped him to imagine the scenes, by listening to the songs that Benwell lists, students can get a better sense of the story that he shapes. The music also allows them the opportunity to practice analytical skills with non-traditional texts.

**AIM:** How does Fox Benwell’s discography help us to understand the novel?

## **Learning Objective**

- Students will be able to apply their critical analysis skills to music
- Students will be able to use their analysis of music to develop a better understanding of the novel

## **Common Core Standards**

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.5**

Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.6**

Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature

## **Activity Plan**

- Place Aim and Do Now on the board
  - Do Now: How does music impact your mood? Give an example.
- Give students time to copy board and complete do now (5 mins)

- Go over Do Now, calling on students to share answers (5 mins)
- Count off students by the number of songs related to the scene
  - If using the opening scene, there are 5 possible songs: Siya Makuzeni Sextet “Moya Oyingwele,” Bombshelter Beast ft Siya Makuzeni “My Boyfriend is a Hustla”, Gasper Nali “A Bale Ndikwuzeni, Brenda Fassie “Vulindlela”, Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrica
- Students will move into groups. At each station there should be a way to listen to the song as well as printouts of the lyrics
- Students will have 5-6 minutes at each station to listen to song and fill out worksheet before moving to the next station. Students should have time at each station before class ends (30 mins)
  - Note: depending on how long students take and how many stations, this may take more than one period
- Teacher collects worksheet at the end of class

Assessment Plan

Informal Assessment: Teacher will monitor students as they work in their groups, ensuring that they are on task

Formal Assessment: Teacher will collect worksheets at the end of class and give students a classwork grade

Worksheet:

Song	Notes on Song	How it helps me understand the scene

**Topic: Postcolonialism**

**When to teach: This lesson should be taught after reading through page 163, when Neo discovers the scratched out record. Ideally, students would already have had a lesson on post-colonialism**

**Rationale:** *Kaleidoscope Song* takes place in South Africa and was written by an English author. While it does not directly reflect post-colonialism, there are certainly elements that can be seen. Looking at the text from a post-colonial lens is a fruitful exercise, especially for an advanced placement class, and allows the class to look at the novel in a variety of different ways.

**AIM:** How can using the post-colonial lens help us to understand *Kaleidoscope Song*?

**Learning Objective**

- Students will be able to use the post-colonial lens to analyze *Kaleidoscope Song*
- Students will be able to find and analyze evidence related to the colonialism and post-colonialism

**Common Core Standards**

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1**

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3**

Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

**Activity Plan**

- Place Aim and Do Now on the board
  - Do Now: What is post-colonialism?
- Students will come in, copy board, and complete do now (5 minutes)
- Whole class review of post-colonialism (10 mins)

- Whole class discussion in which class will select 4 days that seem to really show who A is (5 mins)
  - Possible days: Justin, Rhiannon, Vic, Alexander, Nathan, Kelesa
- Mini Lesson: Apartheid (10)
  - 1948-1994- racial segregation in South Africa
  - <https://www.history.com/topics/apartheid>
- Students will work independently or in small groups to fill in chart showing evidence of post-colonialism in the book. Teacher will collect worksheet at the end of class (15 mins)

Assessment Plan

Informal Assessment: Teacher will walk around the room monitoring student involvement in groups

Formal Assessment: Teacher will collect worksheet at the end of class. Teacher will grade on how much students were able to accomplish, the relevance of the quotes they select, and the level of their analysis

Worksheet:

Quote (with page number)	Analysis of quote through post-colonial lens