

I think these past four weeks have been the hardest so far in this class for me. The reason it has been hard is because I do not see books as instruments to dissect and find hidden messages; when I hear the title “classic” that is exactly what I think of—reading a book not for enjoyment but for punishment. I think this is a result of my stubbornness to read what I want and also the consequence of how my past teachers have presented the classics to me. However, probably because of my age and “wisdom” I see why books should be given the label “classic” and why they should still be available to future generations of readers. Classics offer a learning opportunity for students and teachers alike to appreciate different genres of writing and different writing styles.

I feel that classics should still be read and hopefully enjoyed by the readers of today. The classics open the door to help readers understand and appreciate how the world was viewed during the time period the book was written for. For example, To Kill a Mocking Bird offers the reader a deeper understanding and appreciation of what life was like during the Depression Era and what life was like in the Deep South. The message and morals, such as prejudice and racism, that run throughout this story is magnified through the eyes and innocent young girl. It would be a grave mistake if To Kill a Mocking Bird was considered “out of date” since it was written 50 years ago because the lessons and great writing that is in this story offer a modern day reader glimpses into the past.

Another reason classics should still be read is it offers readers a reason and chance to read different writing styles. Every author has a different writing style and way that they present and tell a story. When a wide range of classics are available for the student to read it broadens the students idea of what good writing looks like. The student is not just reading a set of books by the same author and the same generation of authors but they are reading books by different authors and each author lived during different time periods. The readers today, and I am one of them, love Stephanie Meyer and JK Rowling books. Sometimes, when readers love a certain authors style of writing they will search for books similar to that authors style. This could play a limiting role on what the readers will select. However, if classrooms still offer up books that are considered classics it will allow the students to get a taste of what else is out there and maybe help them find more of a variety of books to read.

One of the issues that was discussed during the past four weeks is who exactly makes a book a classic. Is it the publishing company trying to bring in a profit? Then no matter where you search a different list of what is considered a classic becomes available to teachers and readers. Because of this discrepancy and inconsistency I feel the role that classics should play in contemporary readers today should be taken with a grain of salt and open-mindedness. Young readers should approach a classic like they approach any book that they read. They should not think of it

Anna Marie Walters
9.3 Position Statement

as a book that is labeled better than others because some person feels that way. They should think of it in the same way they think of books written by today's generation of authors. I think a book labeled as a classic offers many learning opportunities and creates reasons for discussion among students. These books have been around for many generations and some still have the same issues as books written today. There is a reason why these books have lasted the years they have and because of that the modern day readers should get a chance to enjoy them. A lot of these books have been made into movies and are constantly getting a "make-over" with new cover illustrations to attract modern day readers. Classics today should be used as a way to open the minds of modern day readers and help them gain an understanding of different genres and writing styles.

A classmate commented earlier that a classic to them is a book that they should have read. But why should they read this book? What makes them feel guilt because they have not read a book that others feel they should read? I feel this is a good approach to how classics should be taught. First, the age group determines how much scaffolding the students will need in this project, have the students generate a list of books they feel are classics. Ask the students why they think those books are classics to them and compare the books they have chosen. From there let them agree on a few of the books to read and discuss during the year. This will allow the students to have more of an impact on what they read and they will gain a better understanding of the definition of what a classic is. I think it is always important to give students more of a say on what they read because then they will not enter into a book with dread and foreboding.

Another way classics should be taught is through comparison. Pick a modern day book and then a classic with similar messages and compare the two. Have the students predict whether or not the modern day book will ever reach classic status and ask them why they came up with their answer. This will allow the students to not only read literature from different genres but allow the students to analyze writing styles and techniques.

I feel the most important approach that should be taken when teaching classics is the message that just because someone listed this book as being a "classic" does not make it good or better than any other book. Students should feel comfortable in knowing that just because they did not get a book's message or like it does not make them literary imbeciles. Just the thought of reading The Scarlet Letter or The Crucible makes me nauseous.

I think I now have a greater appreciation of classics after the past four weeks. Classics are books that have universal themes/messages, great writing styles, and have made an impact on readers from the past, present, and even future. They are an important tool to have in the classroom because they open the doors to different genres and writing

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9.3 Position Statement

styles and provide a means to classroom discussion. However, how classics are taught to readers today should be more modern. Students should have more of an understanding of why a book is considered a classic and feel comfortable about sharing their feelings on the book. There is a reason why these books have stood the test of time and because of that they should be available to the contemporary readers of today.

Write a 3-page position statement based on what you have learned from this **module** (all four weeks) about Classics.

- What is (or should be) the role of classics in the life of a contemporary young reader?
- Should classics still be read? Why or why not?
- Should classics be taught in other ways? Why or why not?

Ground your positions in activities/discussions that you've participated in in the Classics module. Refer to specific readings, assignments, experiences, conversations, writings that you've done in the past several weeks to demonstrate what you are learning and thinking about classics.