

The Challenges of Engagement: The Perks of Young Adult Literature in the Secondary English
Classroom

by

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Abstract

Young adult literature is a literary genre whose popularity has risen over the years due to its portrayal of the teenage experience. Since the publication of the first young adult novel, writers have candidly portrayed real life issues pertinent to teenagers across decades. Paired with the marketing prowess of publishers who have contributed to the development of young adult literature, this genre has found its place in the lives of readers worldwide. Therefore, this research aims to argue that although a commercial genre young adult literature should be integrated in English secondary classrooms in Puerto Rico as means for students to not only comply in their academic expectations but also at an intrinsic personal level. Through the creation of lesson plans that incorporate reflective writing based on Louise Rosenblatt's Readers Response Theory and Freire's Critical Pedagogy, students will be able to make meaning of the issues the characters in young adult novels face, which are sometimes deemed inappropriate for discussion in a classroom setting. As such, this study presents a brief history of young adult literature as a genre and an analysis of three young adult novels: *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*, and *Going Bovine*. Additionally, this research presents the findings of an on-site study, which assesses students' experience and stance regarding the inclusion of challenging topics and reflective writing in the classroom in order to assist in the creation of lesson plans.

Resumen

La literatura juvenil es un género literario cuya popularidad ha aumentado a través de los años debido a la representación de la vida de los adolescentes. Esto, junto a las estrategias de las casas publicadoras en mercadear dicho género, ha contribuido al desarrollo de la literatura juvenil por lo que ha llegado a ocupar un lugar importante en la vida de muchos de sus lectores alrededor del mundo. Por lo tanto, esta investigación busca justificar la integración de la literatura juvenil en las clases de inglés a nivel secundario en Puerto Rico para que los estudiantes no solo cumplan con las expectativas académicas del grado, sino que la lectura y el análisis de esta literatura contribuyan al desarrollo personal. Esto se logra mediante la creación de planes de enseñanza apoyados en el modelo transaccional de la lectura y escritura diseñado por Louise Rosenblatt y la pedagogía crítica diseñada por Paulo Freire. Por consiguiente, este estudio presenta brevemente la historia del desarrollo de la literatura juvenil como género literario además de un análisis de tres novelas para jóvenes tituladas, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* y *Going Bovine*. Asimismo, esta investigación evalúa la experiencia y la postura de los estudiantes ante la inclusión de temas desafiantes y el uso de la escritura como modo de reflexión en la sala de clases en una escuela superior pública de Puerto Rico.

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Dedication

To my mother and father.

This is for you.

I love you.

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Chapter 1: Justifying Young Adult Literature and Journal Writing in the English Classroom

Due to the increase in popularity of young adult literature in recent years, teachers should foster students' interest in reading by implementing current young adult books into their classrooms. That is not to say every popular young adult book is open for classroom integration, for some of these books can raise concern from some parents and teachers alike: young adult literature may oftentimes present controversial topics which can be deemed inappropriate for young readers. For example, it is common to find debates on topics such as witchcraft (i.e. *Harry Potter*), antifeminism or sexism (i.e. *The Twilight Saga*), and violence, or morbid topics (i.e. *The Hunger Games*), which are commonly explored in young adult books. However, this is not detrimental for the inclusion of these books in the English classroom. Young adult literature is a medium that, with its close roots on topics affecting the lives of teenagers round the world, can offer students a window to explore personal and academic growth. Additionally, these books can pique the interest of reluctant readers in the classroom and serve as a stepping stone for those who have trouble moving into the canon or adult literature.

In recent years, the genres of Children's and young adult literature have risen in popularity due to their successful commercialization. While the Curricular Maps from the Department of Education of Puerto Rico offer suggestions of readings for teachers to use for each grade, Puerto Rico lacks a canon of Children's and young adult literature of its own. Since the closure of Borders in 2011, a major American bookseller and perhaps the most recent influential bookseller in the island because of its lavish selection from national and international authors in all literary genres, young adults and children are still able to get their hands on books either by online retailers, department stores such as Walmart, COSTCO and Sam's, or in small

sections in pharmacies like Walgreens where popular paperbacks are commonly sold. Additionally, with the rise of digital media, readers can also purchase e-books through services such as Amazon's Kindle and Barnes and Nobles' Nook. Regardless of the means of acquirement, recent book hits in the English language—as well as their Spanish translations—such as the *Harry Potter series* by J.K. Rowling, *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, *The Twilight Saga* by Stephenie Meyer, *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* by Rick Riordan, *the Divergent trilogy* by Veronica Roth and *The Fault in Our Stars* by John Green have made way to young adult readers in Puerto Rico, establishing fandoms within their followers. Moreover, with each passing year, readers rejoice with film adaptations of these books, and fandoms keep growing, for these fandoms grow and get established only to move to the next big hit. Current examples include *Divergent*, *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part I*, and *The Fault in Our Stars*.

Regardless of the popularity of young adult literature, this genre is yet to be successfully incorporated in the English classroom, and although a handful of researches have advocated for its inclusion in the curriculum, research on this issue remains limited, if not barren (Hayn, et al. 177). Several misconceptions contribute to this issue as well. One of the most popular misconceptions of including young adult literature in the English classroom “is that young adult literature is for struggling, reluctant readers only, rather than sophisticated, already-motivated readers” (Scherff and Groenke 1), which is fueled by the idea of using young adult literature as means to foster interest in reluctant readers. Additionally, some teachers go as far as to dismiss this genre because of its staying power (1). However, these reasons are not strong enough to dismiss young adult literature's presence in the classroom. Novels published for young adults possess the same complexity as adult novels, thus containing all elements of fiction without them

being downplayed by writers. Instead, it is chapter books and middle grade novels which limit literary elements, such as character development, and topics, both which are targeted for younger readers between the ages 8-12. Lastly, young adult literature has enjoyed an ongoing presence for more than 50 years, and has constantly evolved in accordance to the teenage experience.

Young adult literature can be brought into the English classrooms in Puerto Rican high schools by means of the Transversal Themes in accordance with the Policy Letter 6-2014-2015 of the Department of Education of Puerto Rico, and, with the use of writing journals as reading companions, students can become active readers thanks to teaching units built around the Curricular Maps. In consequence, teachers can introduce young adult literature by making it relevant to students through personal and cultural context. For this thesis, the novels to be analyzed and introduced to 12th grade students are *Going Bovine* by Libba Bray, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky, and *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* by Benjamin Alire-Sáenz. These novels have been chosen because of their literary merit in the world of young adult literature, and because of their rich complexity in regards of the teenage experience and their portrayal of real life.

In her article “Darkness Too Visible,” Meghan Cox Gurdon explores how dark is contemporary teen fiction. She describes how young readers will probably find bookshelves filled “by images not of joy or beauty but of damage, brutality and losses of the most horrendous kinds,” (Gurdon). Gurdon addresses parents who are worried about what their teens are reading by explaining how reading about a specific topic does not influence young readers to act accordingly, for example, “reading about homicide doesn’t make a man a murderer,” (Gurdon). Furthermore, as she explains how the complexity of these books have changed in comparison to those found in library and bookstores forty years ago, she points out “the argument in favor of

such novels is that they validate the teen experience, giving voice to tortured adolescents who would otherwise be voiceless,” (Gurdon), comforting those who have been in the same predicament as the characters in the novels they read. Gurdon concludes by suggesting perhaps the offerings for young readers are an attempt to “keep books relevant for the young” and “the book business exists to sell books; parents exist to rear children, and oughtn’t be daunted by cries of censorship.”

Donna Jo Napoli, both a scholar in linguistics and a writer of Children’s Literature, has listed topics that provoke books to be challenged or banned during her TEDx Talk “What Children (and Everyone Else) Needs to Read.” In it, Napoli, as an author, calls for the necessity for young readers to read about real life issues, all the while listing the twelve most frequent reasons why Children’s books get banned. These are,

[1] offensive language, [2] explicit sexual descriptions, [3] incidence of violence or brutality, [4] disparagement of family values, [5] treatments of Satanism, the occult, or witchcraft, [6] new age anti religion stories, [7] examples of racism, [8] examples of substance abuse, [9] materials that include depressing or morbid topics, [10] attacks on patriotism or established authority, [11] texts that include antifeminism or sexism, and [12] derogatory images of the handicapped (Napoli).

These topics mentioned by Napoli, while mostly perceived in a negative light by parents and educators, can be turned into a positive light, for although the characters in the chosen novel may face some of these issues, the novels themselves do not necessarily center on them, as it was the case of the “problem novels” published during the late 1960s and 1970s. The topics do, however, add layers of complexity to the novel and its characters akin to those in adult novels, the difference being the novel protagonists are teenagers. For example, Gurdon highlights in her

article how, “foul language is widely regarded among librarians, reviewers, and booksellers as perfectly OK, provided that it emerges organically from the characters and the setting rather than being tackled on for sensation.” This is the case for *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* and, specially, *Going Bovine*, for it portrays an accurate condition of the teen experience, such as foul language used for the purposes of showing conflict between characters, as well as show the reckless personality from certain characters and its repercussions. Examples like the usage of foul language, however, do not under any circumstance encourage readers to resort to foul language in their daily lives.

Both Gurdon’s and Napoli’s arguments are some of the many attempts to define or explore what material is appropriate for young adult readers. I believe in their point of view, for contemporary young adult literature is relevant for young readers because they deal with real and current life issues. Because of their validity of the teenage experience, this genre is always expanding its repertoire due to current real life issues and topics; thus, these books can serve as materials for students in the classroom to engage in dialogue. In the lines of Charlie’s English teacher, Bill, in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, “It’s just that sometimes people use thought not to participate in life,” (Chbosky 24). However, these thoughts, or reader responses for this framework, present the students the opportunity to create connections, thus connecting text to self, text to text, and text to world in a written and oral fashion.

In “Using Young-Adult Literature to Enhance Comprehension in the Content Areas,” Thomas W. Bean presents several comprehension strategies for including young adult literature in the English Classroom. He believes “Young Adult Literature is often not well known by content area teachers,” (Bean 4) and synthesizes his argument as follows: [1] “adolescents enjoy reading engaging, popular young-adult fiction”; [2] the genre features “strong adolescent

characters”; [3] “Young Adult literature can be paired with the classics to serve as a bridge for struggling readers”; and lastly [4] “using multiple texts...help students learn to synthesize concepts across a range of texts” (5). Just as Bean argues, I believe young adult literature is an adequate vehicle for students to learn and analyze content, all the while learning to make connections to other texts thanks to the personal and cultural connections students can create thanks to young adult novels.

For this thesis, including reflective writing as means of reading companions provide students the opportunity to not only keep traditional notes about what they are reading, but also to explore literary elements and create meaning of real life issues through introspection. Reflective writing accounts for classroom activities and serve as a basis for in-class discussion, giving the students the chance to explore and connect to other literary works, such as the classics. Accordingly, the inclusion of young adult literature and journal writing in Puerto Rican English classrooms fit the Curricular Maps for 12th grade because students are given the opportunity to transition towards more complex instruction and analysis of texts by connecting what they read to their personal experiences, thus serving as preparation for their potential college years.

Louise Rosenblatt’s reader response theory is essential for justifying the use of journals in this body of work. According to Rosenblatt, “reading is a transaction, a two-way process, involving a reader and a text under particular circumstances,” in which “the reader, bringing past experience of language and of the world to the task, sets up tentative notions of a subject, of some framework into which to fit the idea as the world unfurl,” (73). The intention for using writing journals is to assist this transaction by allowing students to make real life connections to texts which capture the essence of the contemporary teenage experience. This transaction will ultimately lead students to discern and balance their reading activity between, as Rosenblatt puts

it, an aesthetic stance—a stance where the reader seeks a story or a poem—and an efferent stance—a stance where the reader focuses on the information and observations carried away at the end of a reading (74).

It is equally important to recognize critical pedagogy, and the problem posing-method of education, as a crucial part of the theoretical framework that surrounds this study. Paulo Freire, through the problem-posing method of education, challenges the concept he coined as the “banking concept of education”, a process in which students are passive recipients of knowledge as it is delivered by an individual that is considered to be knowledgeable about the topic at hand, thus education resulting in no more than a one-way process with little to no student input (Freire 72). Unlike the banking concept, problem-posing education constantly challenges students, breaking them away from passivity and leading them towards active engagement in dialogue about problems related their life experiences; a point that is highlighted throughout this study as a crucial motivation towards the integration of young adult literature in the classroom. By presenting students with literature that properly represents them as individuals within their communities, or as Freire aptly puts it when referring to problem-posing education, “the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves”, the inclusion of young adult literature in the classroom offers them the means to critically engage their life experiences in relation to those which they observe within the texts to be discussed. In turn, this leads to a critical dialogue of their experiences as they are represented through literature that mirrors, either directly or indirectly, their experiences as young adults.

The purpose of this thesis is twofold: first to make sense of what young adult literature is and its existence as a genre, and, secondly, its inclusion in Puerto Rican classrooms. As such, the study will answer the following research questions:

- 1) How does the history of young adult literature define the classification as a genre and what effect does this classification have over the content of the literature itself?
- 2) What are some of the advantages of using young adult literature in the classroom and how can it be integrated in order to promote the exploration of students' experiences as they are represented in the literature?
- 3) What effects do the presence of challenging topics in young adult literature have in the development of lessons that integrate the literature in the English classroom?
- 4) How does reflective writing supports the successful integration of young adult literature in the classroom?

Therefore, the thesis will be divided accordingly. Chapter one serves as an introduction to this thesis project. Chapter Two presents the Literature Review by briefly exploring the history of young adult literature, common issues regarding its identity, its inclusion in the English Classroom and reflective writing as a tool for creating meaning and dialogue. Chapter Three will contain the methodology. Chapter Four will encompass a look at the three chosen novels, discussing their complexities as novels and their topics. Lastly, Chapter Five will discuss the pedagogical implications for the integration of young adult literature in English classrooms at Puerto Rico following Louise Rosenblatt's Reader Response theory and the results of the study outlined in Chapter Three. Additionally, the lesson plans included in Chapter Four will be in accordance to the Curricular Maps from the Department of Education of Puerto Rico, and they will provide examples as to how integrate young adult literature and reflective writing in classrooms.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Young adult literature is a relatively new genre which includes a variety of literature aimed at young readers. While still unclear, defining young adult literature and its characteristics remain an ongoing task among scholars. Young adult literature as a genre is, at best, defined by its intended audience, which in turn opens the debate on what constitutes a “young adult” (Kaywell 325). Donellson and Nielsen define young adults as “students in junior high school as well as those who have graduated high school and are still finding their way into adult reading” (qtd. in Kaywell 325), and, in consequence, young adult literature is “anything a young adult will ‘choose to read’” (325). While most researchers share their definition of a young adult with Donellson and Nielsen, their last observation, however, further complicates the matter at hand, for if young adults define the genre by what they choose to read, then why, commercially speaking, does a genre aimed at young adults exist? This issue is perhaps what keeps research in the genre coming back to full circle, which renders theory in young adult literature to be almost nonexistent.

The inclusion of young adult literature in English classrooms has helped give sense of what this genre is. Researchers and educators in favor of including young adult literature in the classroom argue how the genre appeals to young adults because they are relatable to their readers and they validate the teenage experience. This factor is of value to educators because it fosters interest in reading. Furthermore, with today’s expanding technology and social media prowess, teenagers are able to engage in communities centered on their favorite books.

This chapter will first examine the history of young adult literature in order to make sense of its conception and changes up to the present day (for the purposes of this thesis, young adult

literature is recognized as a genre of its own). As of today, young adult literature has reached enough maturity as a genre to be considered as a source of representation of the teenage experience, this not only through its representation of young adult characters but also through its portrayal of real life problems that represent, either directly or indirectly, student life experiences. However, this was not always the case through the genre's conception and its development throughout the years. Exploring the history of young adult literature then becomes an important element towards understanding the genre's constant transformation as it adapts to changing generations of young adult readers. Additionally, this examination will shed light of the issues presented by scholars in the field of literature and education in regards of young adult literature, thus showing the two opposing sides of the argument when it comes to integrating it as a serious literary genre in the English classroom. The entirety of the historical account is based in the United States between 1930 and 2016, the time and place in which young adult literature is developed. Lastly, this chapter will discuss the merits of including young adult literature in the classroom as a vehicle to real life experiences.

From the 1930's to the 1950's: A Brief Glimpse into the Origin of Young Adult Literature and the Young Adult Reader

Scholars continue to open new lines of research that further complicate and create a gap within expert's understanding of what young adult literature is. However, this is not to say young adult literature remains in the dark, for the genre's continuous change and trends over the years can perhaps welcome a deeper understanding. Whether it is written for a certain audience, or it is a category of books whose characteristics find a perfect fit with younger readers, the popularity of young adult literature certainly validates its existence as a literary genre, and the best way to trace the roots of it is by starting with its readers, young adults.

During the 1930's, "the [American Library Association] ALA formed its Young People's Reading Roundtables, whose annual list of best books for 'young readers' (think 'young adults' here) contained a mixture of children's and adult books," (Cart, "From Sue Barton" 8). However, in 1948, when the libraries realized young readers had no interest in children books, the ALA changed "their list to Adult Books for Young People," (9). Attempts to address the lack of contemporary books were also made during the early 1930's; the first of these being the publication of Rose Wilder Lane's *Let the Hurricane Roar* (9). These new books were marketed under the label "Junior Books," a mistake made by their publishers which repelled any chances of becoming bestsellers (9). In 1936, another opportunity arose when the publisher Little, Brown "received a manuscript from the writer Helen Boylston" (9). The manuscript, titled *Sue Barton Student Nurse*, was immediately published and its success spawned six sequels between the years 1936-1952 which "saw young Sue finishing her training, serve in a variety of professional capacities . . . and finally marry the young doctor she had met in book number one," (9) and becoming "the prototype of the career novel, an enormously popular subgenre among the earliest young adult books," (10). Other series for girls ensued, such as *Cherry Ames*, *Student Nurse* and *Vicky Barr Flight Stewardess* by Hellen Wells. Book series for boys focused on sports were also published, such as the *Bronc Burnett* series by Wilfred McCormick. While career novels became popular among young readers, these were but precursors of the first official young adult novel.

The Outsiders, a novel by S. E. Hinton published in 1967, is widely considered the first novel written for young adults (Cart, "Insider to Outsider" 96), yet others (Cart, "Insider to Outsider" 96; Strickland) have made the case of the first young adult novel all the way back to 1942 when Maureen Daly published *Seventeenth Summer*. The novel's target audience were young girls, and its plot centered on first love. As an early result, "'teenagers' were given their

own distinction as a social demographic” (Strickland) and the novel signaled the beginning of a new field off writing for teenagers (Cart, “From Sue Barton” 11). However, it is not until the 1960s when the term “young adult” is coined by the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA), and it was meant to represent readers between the ages 12-18 (Strickland). With the increasing number of novels for teenagers being published, librarians were forced to come up with a category for these books, for these novels “[focused] on culture and serious themes” (Strickland) and “opened the doors to writers who began exploring issues of relevance to the real lives of teen readers with art and insight” (Cart, “Insider to Outsider” 96). The term stuck and, as a consequence, the category became official.

The 1960’s and Beyond: Young Adult Literature in the Market and its Popularity

The history behind young adult literature is strongly attached to publishing houses due to their desire to fill the void of books aimed at young adult readers. Consequentially, the success of young adult literature has depended on the publishers and their prowess at marketing their books across the decades. With its ups and downs, publishers have monitored their marketing strategies and kept it at its peak. As of now, young adult literature is at its best years, with thousands of books published each year which are widely read by teenagers and adults alike. Popular titles become franchises, which in turn leap out of its pages in the form of sequels, films, apparel, merchandise, and even theme parks. This section will briefly explore this growth and how young adult literature has evolved into what is known today.

As previously mentioned, “the merchandising of and to ‘the juvenile’ had begun late in the 1930s, coincident with the emergence of the new youth culture” (Cart, “From Sue Barton” 11). This emergent youth culture came in the form of magazine publications and as publishers marketing a new type of book aimed at teenagers (10). Because these new books were labeled as

“Junior Books,” many young readers overlooked these titles, which led to failure. Nevertheless, this movement regained interest during the 1940s, for marketers realized teenagers were a potential target market that had yet to be explored (11). While publishers succeeded in this second attempt, “that market wouldn’t fully ripen until post-World War II prosperity put money into the kids’ own pockets” (11). Maureen Daly’s *Seventeenth Summer* success became an early pointer for publishers, for it “spoke with immediacy and relevance for teenagers,” (11).

Another significant contribution to the development of young adult literature came in 1967, when Viking Press published S. E. Hinton’s coming of age novel *The Outsiders*. Contrary to Daly’s focus on girls and first love, Hinton’s novel focused on boys who were part of gangs and their skirmishes in a violent urban setting (Cart, “The Sixties” 25). The success of Hinton’s novel came mostly because of her ability to bridge the gap between real and fictional teenagers, since her characters were inspired in teenagers she knew from her neighborhood. Thus, her treatment of reality became the starting point of a new era (1967-1975) in which authors broke grounds with their boldness and style, the end of this period being the publication of Robert Cormier’s novel *The Chocolate War*. This novel took “young adult readers into the very heart of darkness for the first time,” by telling the story of Jerry Renault’s refusal to sell chocolate in the school’s annual fundraiser, therefore challenging the order of things and its consequences (31). Robert Cormier’s literary seriousness, as well as that of other stellar writers from this golden era, helped shape young adult literature into a respectable genre, for its realistic tone resonated with teenage readers of the time. While *Seventeenth Summer* was still popular in the 1960s (although it was not relevant or relatable anymore to teenagers), this new wave of writers gave depth to the yet developing genre, which prompted the YALSA to finally consider the inclusion of Young

Adult Books on its annual Best Books for Young Adults list of 1973 (33). However, the maturity of the young adult genre did not come without its consequences.

After the publication of *Sue Barton, Student Nurse* by Helen Bolston back in 1936, several imitations ensued, which gave birth to what came to be known as “career novels” (Cart, “From Sue Barton” 10). The story repeated itself when writers would take after the success of their peers from the golden era and give birth to what became known as the problem novel, which in turn would bring the downfall of young adult literature. Canadian critic Sheila Egoff went on to aptly explain the problem with this new kind of novel, for “it was very strongly subject-oriented with the interest primarily residing in the topic rather than the telling. The topics—all adult oriented—[sounded] like chapter titles from a textbook on social pathology: divorce, drugs, disappearing parents, desertion and death,” (196). This new wave of writers continued to write realistic and dark fiction for teenagers without any regards of style or character development, thus resorting to a soon-to-be tired formula. Additionally, these new writers borrowed from Cormier’s take on darkness, for in his novel he explores the possibility of evil ruling the day. As a consequence, teenage readers eventually walked away, “[since] competition for readers’ attention became ever brisker, the problems being addressed had to become ever more sensational” (Cart, “The Sixties” 34), which in turn dismantled the genre’s newfound seriousness and literary merit.

The 1980s saw a number of substantial changes as well, and is perhaps the decade in which the genre’s popularity fell to its lowest. The most important event in this decade was the waning popularity of hardcover books, which was caused by a second wave of romance novels akin to those from the 1940s and 1950s. While trying to escape from the realism portrayed by writers from the late 1960s and the problem novel, teenagers looked for ways to escape realism

(Cart, “The Eighties” 38), which was also fueled by Hollywood’s nostalgic portrayal of teenagers in films (37). These romance novels were published as monthly mass-market paperbacks series and their plots were formulaic, the only difference being that, for the first time, the books were marketed for young adults as their consumers (39). This publishing trend would later take a deathly toll on sales during the early 1990s.

Even though the late 1980s and the early 1990s saw the success of horror titles written by R.L. Stine (*Goosebumps* series) and Christopher Pike, young adult literature sales had steadily declined. Hardcover novels of realism were published and sold at lower numbers (Cart, “The Early Nineties” 59). Writing novels became some sort of a package deal, for “[its] typical function [was] to develop an idea for a series, sell it to a mainstream publisher, and then assemble the talent—including author, editor and illustrator—necessary to produce a finished product for delivery to (and manufacture and distribution by) the publisher” (51). This model of business became quite effective. According to Jack Zipes, two main preoccupations among parents in the 1990s were reading and math skills of their children because of their lack of reading habits (10). Therefore, the marketing systems tried to look for ways to renew reading interest in children, thus devising ways in which books would jump out of their pages: books were not sold just as books, but it became a threshold for merchandise, such as sequels, films, apparel, and games (Zipes 10). One example provided by both Zipes and Cart is the *Goosebumps* series, which not only spawned a substantial number of books, but also its own television series, and merchandise. These marketing efforts were also backed by major chain retailers, such as Barnes and Nobles, (Cart, “The Early Nineties” 53). Book awards were also introduced with the hopes of preserving the genre’s seriousness and “honoring titles that will stand another taxing test of excellence: time” (Cart, “A New Literature” 78), such as the Margaret A. Edwards

Awards, and the more recent Michael L. Printz Award. These scarce yet impactful events would forever shape the young adult literature known today.

In 1998, the publishing world experienced the release of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, the first in a series of seven novels by British writer J. K. Rowling and is the event that brought the revival of young adult literature. While the novel was originally published as a Children's novel, its subsequent sequels witnessed its titular protagonist age alongside its readers, as well as grow darker in tone. Consequentially, the series' last four books were marketed as young adult books. The timing for publication could not have come at a better time, for youth culture was at its renaissance and the media had the full attention from teenagers (Cart, "The Rest Nineties" 69). Television shows such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* were hits among teenagers (70) as well as sitcoms and movies from channels such as the Disney Channel. Television networks such as MTV and VH1 had a large following due to their music and reality TV programs (63). Magazines such as *Vogue Teen*, *Teen People*, *CosmoGirl* and the short-lived *MH-18* launched between 1998 and 2001. Thanks to these mediums, the Harry Potter series popularity grew exponentially, a feat which had not been achieved before.

With each subsequent publication, J.K. Rowling attracted fans by the masses and shattered book sales. In 2001, the first in a series of film adaptations, got released. In wait of a new volume, fans would write and publish their own tales of the wizarding boy and his companions online, which prompted a large internet following. Readers would join online forums and exchange theories of what would come next (this prompted the creation of websites such as MuggleNet and The Leaky Cauldron.net) (Cart, "Romancing" 97). Midnight release parties were planned by retailers upon release and readers from all ages would attend these in dressed in costumes inspired by the films (97). The legacy left by this series even prompted the

creation of a theme park, “The Wizarding World of Harry Potter,” across three Universal Studios parks around the globe. This entire phenomenon was and still is closely followed by the media, a phenomenon which has been dubbed “Pottermania.” In the same fashion, the fans have adopted a name to identify their allegiance to the fandom— “Potterheads”.

The success of both the Harry Potter series and The Twilight Saga became paramount for publishers in the late 2000s, for not only these book series evolved into fully fledged franchises and stretched outside of its pages, but it also captured the attention of both young and adult readers alike, thus reviving the genre into a second Golden Era. As a result, many writers were lured into the possibility of widespread followers and success, which prompted others to replicate the success of their peers by imitating their work. Contrary to the case of the “problem novels” back in the early 1970s, the genre has flourished and has continued to do so in the present days. During the Harry Potter days, series of a magical world parallel to ours were vastly published, such as Cassandra Claire’s *The Immortal Instruments* (which coincidentally began as a Harry Potter fanfiction), and the *Septimus Heap* series by Angie Sage. In the case of Stephenie Meyer’s success, “paranormal romance” became the next big hit (99), which prompted a wave of paranormal romances, such as *Blue Bloods* by Melissa de la Cruz and *Vampire Academy* by Richelle Mead. As of 2016, the trend seems to have turned to contemporary romance and fantasy books.

Young Adult Literature and its Issues

The development of young adult literature began with the necessity to classify books aimed at young adult readers. As the decades passed, young adult literature evolved according to the times, some trends being key in its growth and others hindering its presence. Nowadays, young adult literature is at its pinnacle, and yet it is not without its issues. While these issues do

not necessarily hamper its current status, it does add fuel to the ongoing debate among scholars of the genre. The following issues are the most common debatable issues. It is noteworthy to mention that most of these issues are also discussed in regards of Children's Literature.

Early publications for young adult readers lacked specific features; its only thread of self-rested upon writers who candidly wrote about teenage issues. As it became profitable for writers and publishers with each passing decade, many stories centered on teenagers got published. Thus, young adult literature became a category for books suited for young adult readers and featured young adults as their main characters. As Bushman and Haas aptly round it, "Young Adult Literature has many common characteristics: conflicts are often consistent with the young adult experience, topics are of interest to young people, protagonists and most characters are young adults, and the language parallels that of young people," (2). These "common characteristics," however, still do not define young adult literature as a genre; at best, it is a category that encapsulates books within several genres which are best suited for young adult readers according to authority figures such as publishers, librarians, booksellers and awards. For example, in an interview, Jim McCarthy, Vice President at Dystel & Goderich Literary Management, disclosed,

I don't know that there's a real technical definition of what [young adult literature] is. Essentially, it's just literature for and about teens, there to bridge the gap between children's and adult's books. It can be subdivided into the same genres as adult books—romance, paranormal, mystery, horror, literary fiction.
(qtd. in "What Does Young Adult Mean?")

Examples of young adult books which fit these sub-genres enumerated by McCarthy include *Eleanor and Park* by *Rainbow Rowell* (romance), *The Raven Boys* by Maggie Stiefvater

(paranormal), *We Were Liars* by E. Lockhart (mystery), *Miss Peregrin's Home for Peculiar Children* by Ransom Riggs (horror) and *More Happy Than Not* by Adam Silvera (literary fiction). Other examples of emerging genres not mentioned by McCarthy include *Throne of Glass* by Sarah J. Maas (Fantasy), *The Maze Runner* by James Dashner (Dystopian), *Simon Vs. The Homo Sapiens Agenda* by Becky Albertalli (Contemporary) and *This One Summer* by Mariko Tamaki (Graphic Novel). These examples feature young adults as protagonists, as described by Bushman and Haas, and their respective books, although widely catalogued as young adult literature, can be subdivided into genres which can also be found in adult books. These go to show the complications of young adult literature as a genre and are far from validating it as its own genre and, in a way, help understand its appeal to both young and adult readers alike. Lastly, McCarthy's take on the genre add new insight in the form of young adult literature serving as a bridge between Children's and adult literature.

Young adult literature has widely been described as bridging the gap between Children and Adult Literature, thus serving as the perfect genre for transitioning into adult books. In this same line, it is of interest in this study to highlight how, due to the changing nature of the genre as it evolves according to generational issues, the classification of young adult is often adhered to books that, due to the challenging nature of its topics or the lack thereof, would otherwise be classified within the children or the adult literature classification. While it is assumed young adult literature is, as the name implies, for young adults from 12-18, this characteristic is not echoed by some, especially among educators. For instance, it is worth mentioning the age group 8-12 is sometimes known as Middle Grade, and such distinction is found in bookstores thanks to the efforts to keep up the sales back in the early 1990's. Published novels such as *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio, the *Percy Jackson* series by Rick Riordan, *The Diary of a Wimpy Kid* by Jeff Kinney

and *The War that saved my Life* by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley fall under this category. Conversely, these kind of novels can easily be mistakenly paired together with young adult literature, for the distinction between young adult literature and Middle Graders lies on its conflict devoid of graphic violence or sexual topics, as well as its romantic topics limited to instances such as a first crush or first kiss. Books like the early volumes in the *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling, *The School for Good and Evil* series by Soman Chainani and *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis fall under this gray area, yet they are also known to fall under the Young Adult Literature spectrum as mature topics are introduced in subsequent publications, as is the case with the last four volumes in the *Harry Potter* series. While at best acknowledged as a reading group, Middle Grade adds another category, one that exists between children and young adult literature, thus creating a connection between the two. Recognizing the existence of Middle Grade books helps dismiss the idea that books written for readers other than adults are expected to be lighthearted in content. Rather, young adult literature topics are as serious as those found in adult fiction.

Following the previous line, a new kind of young adult literature has surfaced in recent years. This new movement has been dubbed “New Adult” by readers and the media alike. This classification, which is still in development, was first mentioned by St. Martin Press in a writing competition the publisher hosted in 2009. The call for manuscripts stated,

We are actively looking for great, new, cutting edge fiction with protagonists who are slightly older than YA and can appeal to an adult audience. Since twenty-somethings are devouring YA, St. Martin’s Press is seeking fiction similar to YA that can be published and marketed as adult—a sort of an ‘older YA’ or ‘new adult.’ (“St. Martin’s New Adult Contest”)

Because of this description, it can be inferred that this category is aimed at adults between the ages 18-30. Most of the novels have been self-published, and they more or less explore the same topics found in Young Adult novels with a heavier emphasis on careers and sex. While this classification has yet to be studied by scholars and bears no immediate impact on this thesis, it is noteworthy to acknowledge its existence.

Another topic of discussion when it comes to young adult literature is the author's intent and target audience upon writing their novels. While modern courses for those who intent to write for young adults have recently emerged in Creative Writing programs, the reality for most writers is that their work does not necessarily start with young adults as their intended audience. In fact, many novels published for young adults are marketed so because their lead character is a young adult or because its plot revolves around topics relatable to young adults. For instance, Maureen Daly's *Seventeenth Summer* was originally conceived and published for adults. In 1994, 52 years after the novel's publication, Daly disclosed the following statement, "I would like, at this late date, to explain that 'Seventeenth Summer' in my intention and at the time of publication, was considered a full adult novel, and published and reviewed as such" (as qtd. by Berger, 216). At the same time, given that the novel focuses on the love between two teenagers, and it dealt with topics such as underage drinking and sexual desire (Cart, "From Sue Barton" 12), topics which were unheard of in books concerning young adult characters, it is irrefutable why *Seventeenth Summer* gained notoriety among teenagers at the time.

The novel *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky was never intended to be published as a novel for young adults either. In several interviews, Chbosky has expressed how his novel is semi-autobiographical. He explains,

When I was in my mid-20s I went through a bad break up and I was in a bad place in my life. I think I needed something to give myself some hope in that moment, and Charlie [the novel's protagonist] really came out of that need and out of the question of why good people let themselves get treated so badly. (qtd. in Aquino)

The wide spread readership this novel possesses is due to the novel's teenage perspective of topics such as sex, drugs, friendship and mental health. These topics are not overdramatized or used as plot devices; instead, they are part of Charlie's teenage experience. This issue is important because it contributes to the seriousness of the genre, for writers are employing all elements of fiction writing without downplaying them as they write, thus discarding the idea of Young adult literature as an inane form of entertainment for teenagers.

Why use Young Adult Literature in the English Classroom?

The Members of the Commission of Study and Teaching of Adolescent Literature, a board who brings together the leaders of the field with the purpose of planning, researching and promoting scholarship of adolescent literature, believe a young adult reader is one whose age ranges as early as 10 years old to the early twenties (Kaywell 325). Parting from this description, the board encourages the inclusion of young adult literature in the English classroom. In fact, the age range alone makes the inclusion of young adult literature ideal. However, because of its rather unpredictable trends in the market and its history, it is easy to see why some would evade integrating young adult literature into their curriculum. Nevertheless, young adult literature is a genre that has yet to be successfully explored and weaved into the curriculum, especially in Puerto Rican classrooms.

According to John H. Bushman and Kay Park Haas, in their book *Using Young Adult Literature in the English Classroom*, many teachers need to choose books appropriate for their

students so that they become “emotionally and cognitively involved” (3). In many cases, “if students are asked to read literature that is not consistent with their developmental tasks, they will not be able to interact with that literature. As a result, students who do not interact with the literature are left with learning only about literature,” (3). As a result, teachers need to look at literature as a vehicle towards negotiating meaning of real life experiences especially within this age group that is centered within a moment of transition of many aspects of students’ lives.

One of the main reasons young adult literature is of use in the English classroom is how characters resonate with its readers, for it explores a stage in life which everyone experiences, being a teenager. This reason alone is why adults and young adults alike enjoy reading these books, for it explores topics and questions we all might have at some point in our lives; questions that we may not have yet answered ourselves even in adulthood. Teenage characters in young adult novels explore subjects that mirror our everyday life well into adulthood, such as family ties, sexuality, personal growth, friendships, love, loss, career interests, and others. This sole reason is attractive in the English classroom because it allows student to connect to the literature in a personal and emotional level. It allows for personal exploration and growth, inviting young readers to interact to what they are reading in the classroom. As Bushman and Haas argue, “[i]f schools and teachers want students to understand what they read, to interact with the literature so that they can make connections to their own lives, to make critical judgements that will enhance their intellectual, emotional and moral development, and, perhaps, most important, to become lifelong readers, schools and teachers must evaluate the literature curriculum and make the necessary changes so that students can indeed achieve success in these areas.” (4) One of the most the most distinctive areas of the Department of Education of Puerto Rico’s mission statement towards the English class, as presented in Policy Letter 8-2013-2014: English

Program, is to “offer enriching, integrative and challenging educative experiences that, beyond students’ knowledge and capacities, also take into consideration students’ personal sociocultural and economic background” (my translation) (2). This reiterates young adult literature as a logical and effective option to promote these type of interactions between students’ and the literature in the classroom. In this transitional stage of their lives, students rely in real world experiences as part of their development. Although the English teacher cannot recreate these real life experiences as a source of development, young adult literature, and the topics it usually encompasses, provide tools necessary to discuss and reflect upon real life situations within the class and even drive exploration of the students’ own lives through the use of reflective writing.

Reflective Writing within the English Classroom

Reflective writing is a common yet instrumental tool in classrooms across all subject levels, and it is beneficial for both teachers and students alike. Reflective writing is described as a “written [document] that students create as they think about various concepts, events, or interactions over a period of time for the purposes of gaining insights into self-awareness and learning” (Thorpe 328). In their literature review about reflective writing, Timothy S. O’Connell and Janet E. Dymont outline how students benefit from using reflective journals in the classroom. The first benefit of using reflecting journals in the classroom is “a starting point for learning.” Journals allow for students to make note of observations and occurrences that can later be used for further exploration or scaffolding (48). This starting point leads to “centering students in the learning process,” which promotes experiential learning (49). Thanks to experiential learning, students are able to incorporate their life experiences in order to understand a topic by taking an active role in their learning process. It encourages “personal growth, development and maturation,” (49) thus focusing in the pace and means a student learns rather

than the final product. The third benefit from using journal writing in the classroom is “critical reflection,” for it allows students to take a critical look at how their learning experience takes place. As O’Connell and Dymont aptly summarize it, “In a sense, journals give students an ‘instant replay’ of their experience and of themselves which they can then critically review” (50). The last benefit for students engaged in journal writing is creativity, for it allows for self-expression and incorporation of their personal flair (51).

Within the discussion of young adult literature, reflective writing takes the role of mediating students’ understanding of the literature; through the process of writing about the literature students establish connections to the reading both in an objective and a personal manner. In many cases, due to the themes and topics this type of literature deals with, students are able to identify with the characters they meet through the literature and even engage the texts in a conversation anchored within their personal experience. Louise Rosenblatt’s refers to reading as a transaction, “a two-way process involving the reader and a text at a particular time under particular circumstances” (73). This process is informed through a mediation of an individual’s background, language, and experiences which they bring into the reading of the text and which inform the stance the individual takes in regards what they read. When referring to students at a secondary level, many of their experiences suffer a lack of representation in the traditional literature which justifies the inclusion of young adult literature as an option.

Donna Jo Napoli, Louise Rosenblatt and Paulo Freire: Young Adult Literature as a Vehicle for a Critical Examination of Real Life Experiences

According to the TEDx Talk by Donna Jo Napoli, acclaimed author of children and young adult literature, children books are often faced with criticism due to the addressed topics which are challenged by those who deem them inappropriate for children. It is this reason why

growing quantities of books belonging to children and young adult literature face bans from school, parents, and even official associations such as ALA (American Library Association). One classic example of this is Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, a novel which constantly is listed in the annual Top 10 Banned Books according the American Library Association ("Top Ten"). The topics listed by Napoli are,

[1] offensive language, [2] explicit sexual descriptions, [3] incidence of violence or brutality, [4] disparagement of family values, [5] treatments of Satanism, the occult, or witchcraft, [6] new age anti religion stories, [7] examples of racism, [8] examples of substance abuse, [9] materials that include depressing or morbid topics, [10] attacks on patriotism or established authority, [11] texts that include antifeminism or sexism, and [12] derogatory images of the handicapped (Napoli).

These topics, while certainly a point of concern, are, to a degree, talking points that are necessary in the development of a students' critical consciousness. Rather than ignoring these topics, the English classroom becomes a perfect environment in which to address and promote the critical discussion of these topics as students challenge the knowledge they have constructed in regards to these issues and build new understandings through a negotiation of meaning between the student experiences and background, the teacher, and the text they are working with. One of the main purposes of this action is to drive students to think critically about, not only the text they are addressing, but also their pre-conceived notions in regards to topics related to these same challenged themes.

The English classroom is benefitted by its unique characteristic. Beyond the teaching of the language, students are prompted to explore real life events and experience as mediated by literature they can identify with. Therefore, through the exploration of these texts, students use

their background experiences as a way to negotiate meaning build connections between themselves and the text, a process often illustrated through the students' reflective writing if prompted by the teacher. Likewise, students engage with the teacher in critical conversations which in many ways introduce new perspectives to the students' understanding of their reading and ultimately prompt students to once again challenge the meaning they have adhered to the themes and topics the reading has introduced. In the end, this reading transaction creates a reflective cycle in which students address pre-conceived notions about the topics, notions often built by background experience, hearsay or family influence. For example, a novel that deals with gender identity might prompt students to reconsider their pre-conceived notions about the topic.

These ideas strongly reference Paulo Freire's dialogic cycle which places dialogue as a center of learning about the world. As he puts it, "[d]ialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world", thus becoming an act of humanization of the life experiences of the individual (93). When addressing challenging topics in the classroom, students must be given the chance to engage these topics as they address their understanding of them and how that understanding changes according to their own life experiences. The teacher thus surrenders a position of power and serves as a mediator of new learning that is anchored upon students lived experiences and "the organized, systematized, and developed 're-presentation' to individual of the things about which they want to know more" (Freire 93). As such, Freire defines authentic education in this context as, "not carried by 'A' for 'B' or by 'A' about 'B,' but rather by 'A' with 'B,' mediated by the world—a world which impresses and challenges both parties, giving rise o views or opinions about it" (93). Education the goes beyond presenting students with an information bank; the examination of literature, in turn, moving from

an examination of the literary value of a work to the exploration of the work as it represents and challenges students' perceptions and understandings of their own life experiences and the world that surrounds them.

Freire defines people as "beings in a situation," and through a constant reflection of their situationality they can begin to understand their position within the world. As such, reflection about our own situationality, or the very condition of our existence as posed by Freire, becomes a critical component our understanding of the world and how we can change it. Young adult literature, in its candid representation of the life experiences of young adult learners, offers just that; an examination of challenging topics as they mirror the lives of teenagers. Teachers can help students establish meaningful dialogue in which they explore their understanding of such topics and consciously reflect upon ways in which their life experiences shape their understanding about a specific topic as represented in the literature. This in turn guides the way in which students approach readings in the classroom.

Louise Rosenblatt identifies two different reading stances: efferent and aesthetic reading. On the one hand, through efferent reading, the reader will "narrow his attention to building up the meaning, the idea, the directions to be retained; attention focuses on accumulating what is to be carried away at the end of the reading," (Rosenblatt 73). On the other hand, "if the reader seeks a story, a poem, a play, his attention will shift inwards, will center on what is being created during the actual reading," (73) then he/she is carrying out aesthetic reading, in which "a much broader range of elements will be allowed to rise into consciousness, not simply the abstract concepts that the world point to but also what those objects or references strip up of personal feelings, ideas, and attitudes," (73). Rosenblatt clarifies how readers do not adopt only one of

these stances of reader, but rather a combination of the two. However, there can be the dominant stance taking place if the reader chooses to (73).

The two readings stances identified by Rosenblatt

The last point this research study intends to do with the inclusion of Young adult literature is bring a balance into the classroom. While students can study the English language, and the elements of fictions as part of an efferent stance, students can equally bring their reading experience to an aesthetic stance, thus experiencing literature both on a personal yet academic level, rather than just learning about literature.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to investigate how popular young adult novels can be integrated into the English classroom in Puerto Rican high schools. In addition, since many of these novels present topics that can be deemed controversial for young adult readers, it is this study's interest to introduce writing journals with written assignments, which can serve as reading companions, thus allowing teachers to discuss texts with students based on students' responses as readers. As such, the purpose of the in-school research section of the thesis project is to validate the need to introduce students to literature they feel more effectively illustrates their real life experiences while also targeting their knowledge and experience dealing with different forms of reflective writing and young adult literature itself.

Although the on-site research is a significant component of the project, another area of the study encompasses an evaluation and categorization of three young adult novels (*The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*, and *Going Bovine*) according to the challenging topics and themes they present. This analysis will be based upon Donna Jo Napoli's topics as illustrated in Chapter 2 of this thesis and Louise Rosenblatt's Reader's Response Theory. The purpose of this in-depth analysis and categorization is to provide teachers with a sampling of how young adult literature can be integrated in the English classroom in accordance to the requirements of Department of Education of Puerto Rico's for the English classroom. For this reason, the text analysis will be heavily aligned with English Curriculum maps for the 12th grade English classroom and the use of transversal themes in the curriculum as posed by Policy Letter 06-2014-2015: Planning. The researcher's goal is to provide teachers with a starting point in the development of teaching units anchored upon the use

of young adult literature in the classroom. The remainder of this chapter will focus on an examination of the methodology of the on-site research results which will be examined in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

Research Site

The site for this research was chosen through a process of purposeful selection. In purposeful sampling, as explained by Joseph A. Maxwell, “particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately to provide information that is particularly relevant to your questions and goals, and that can’t be gotten as well from other choices” (Maxwell 97). The school in which the research took place is in a rural area in the western part of the island. The teacher in charge of the group of participants had expressed interest in the incorporation of young adult literature and welcomed me as a researcher in the classroom with the proper permits as approved by the Department of Education of Puerto Rico, the school’s administrator, and the internal review board (IRB) of the University of Puerto Rico at Mayaguez.

Research Participants

The research participants for this projects were part of a 12th grade AP English group. The number of participants in the research was 13 students of which 7 were females and 6 were males; all between the ages of 17 and 18 years old. This group was chosen due to their familiarity with journal writing. Additionally, as part of the AP English track, students are more likely to spend time engaging different genres of literature in the classroom. These students are in a transitional phase in their personal life and academic career. As such, looking into the possibilities young adult literature opens up in the classroom at this level is a logical endeavor, especially in the context of this research.

The research participants provide a non-probability sample. As such, generalizability is not one of the goals of this project. However, I offer that this group of students can, in many ways, illustrate how students, in an equivalent level, observe challenging topics in the classroom and how reflective writing helps or hinders their learning as they approach the examination of literature in the English class.

Instrumentation

For the on-site research, the only medium of data collection was a student questionnaire, available both in English and Spanish in order to allow students to consult the Spanish translation in case of doubts in regards to the language. Each Spanish translation was placed directly below the English section in order to facilitate understanding. The questionnaire consisted of multiple choice questions, open-ended questions, and a survey using a Likert scale. The first section of the questionnaire offered questions related to students' experience in writing and reading in the classroom. Between the areas covered are the types of writing students have practiced as part of their daily instruction and the types of literature and literary genres they have read in their English course. The second section of the questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions which prompted students to think about the topics they have written about or encountered in the literature part of their English course and the topics they would consider challenging or difficult to discuss in class. The last section consisted of several survey questions which use the Likert scale. This section addresses students' perceptions regarding journal writing in the classroom and its effectiveness as a learning tool.

Procedure

The procedure through which the data was collected underwent a formal review of all parts involved in the research as well as the respective agencies. The research was approved by

the Department of Education of Puerto Rico's district office (Appendix A) and by the school's administration (Appendix B). The research plan was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (Appendix C) and was determined that, under the clause 45CFR46.101(b)(1), this study was to be exempt of all requirements of the 45CFR46 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Code of Federal Regulations, 45CFR46-2009). As part of the review of the research design and instrument, it was determined that the research study posed minimal risk for the students and how the probability and magnitude of harm and discomfort is no more than what is usually expected from the students' normal day to day activities.

Once the research was approved, I was introduced to the students and given the opportunity to explain to them what the research consisted of. At the time, students were informed how participation in the research was voluntary and depended upon their consent as individuals and that of their parents (Appendix D). Upon consent for students to participate in the research, each participant was given a questionnaire (Appendix E) to fill out during their class time. My role as a researcher in the classroom did not go beyond explaining the project, administering the questionnaire and answering questions related to the questionnaire. Both parents and students were notified they could choose to withdraw from the research at any moment and how no compensation or reward nor penalty would be given as result of their participation in the research. Additionally, both students and parents were offered the researcher's contact information in case more information about the research was needed.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, percentages were drawn upon the multiple choice and survey answers. Using the open-ended questions, patterns were identified in students' responses in regards to their previous exposure to writing and reading about challenging topics. These

patterns, along with the results of the rest of the questionnaire, were used to validate the researcher's argument towards the implementation of young adult literature in the English classroom.

Ethical Considerations

As previously addressed, this research posed a minimal amount of risk to the research participants. All participants attended an orientation session before taking part in the research and parents were notified by means of a letter requesting their consent for their sons and daughters to participate. Along this same line, students were explained how their participation was voluntary and they could choose not to participate even if their parents had provided consent.

In order to protect the identity of all of the research participants, all data collected through questionnaires was anonymous beyond specific demographic data sets. All data collected was examined only by me as the researcher, and was kept apart from any identifiable data that might in one way or another result in the identification of the participants. All data was kept in a secure location under lock and key and will be destroyed one year after the completion and submission of the research study. In addition, all representation of data in research reports and publications will only offer the minimal demographic data necessary in order to protect the identity of the research participants.

Validation

Through the process of the development of this project, I had the opportunity to present part of this research in professional organizations and conferences. These opportunities allowed me to obtain feedback from both professionals in the area of English education and current teachers of English. This feedback helped me polish certain areas of the research design. It is

noteworthy to mention how none of the information regarding the school, students, and the instrument was shared during these opportunities.

Selecting the Novels for this Research

As previously mentioned, this thesis has another area which revolves around the analysis and evaluation of three novels. These novels are *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky, *Going Bovine* by Libba Bray, and *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* by Benjamin Alire-Saenz. These novels were chosen due to their depth and rich character development, thus offering a sample of what young adult literature encompasses and its opportunities for discussing real life issues in the English classroom. While young adult literature offers a wide range of novels and series for selection, this study was limited to standalone novels for it best portrays the maturation of its protagonist. Additionally, these novels have been celebrated for their literary achievements, and their writing style.

When choosing the novels for this body of research, there were three criteria upon which the decision for inclusion was made. The first of these factors was the narrator. Since the narrative voice in each novel offers a clear look into the mind of its characters as young adults and their teenage experience, this characteristic proved useful, for it is in accordance with this thesis' standpoint in regards of young adult literature mirroring, either directly or indirectly, the validity of the real teenage experience. For example, in the novel *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, Charlie' sexual awakening closely mirrors that of a real life teenager through his first sex dream, which in turn makes him feel ashamed of himself. Through his conversations with Patrick, one of his best friends, Charlie realizes this is normal among his peers. Similarly, in the novel *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*, Dante worries about whether his relationship with his parents and their bond as a family will be affected because of his

homosexuality. Finally, the novel *Going Bovine* shows the maturity in its protagonist, Cameron, as he learns the importance of friendship. At the beginning of the novel, Cameron avoids cementing friendship with his peers, for he deems others as a hassle. However, as the novel progresses, Cameron learns to appreciate those who care about him and to keep his promises. The second factor that aided in the selection of these novels is the topics presented. Just as with the narrator, it is important to recapitulate that many of the challenging topics mentioned within this thesis which reflect the teenage experience and the diversity of thought and life experiences of our young adult student population. The final criteria comes in the form of literary awards. Although the presence, or absence of literary awards does not guarantee an accurate representation of the quality or the pedagogical value of the novels chosen, they can offer much needed assistance for teachers in the choosing of novels that are considered to offer content that is deemed to be relevant and significant at the novels' publication. For example, *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* received the Stonewall Book Award for the Children and Young Adult category in 2013 due to its "exceptional merit relating to the gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender experience," ("Stonewall Book Award"). The novel's protagonists, Aristotle and Dante, come into terms with their homosexuality and how this can affect their relationship with their parents. Moreover, the novel presents the topic of hate crime and how this affects their lives as members of their community. Because of these topics, the novel also received the Children's/Young Adult Lambda Literary Award in 2013. Overall, these awards hint at the reception the books received at their publication which helps those interested to find a way of navigating the extremely prolific genre of literature.

The Perks of Being a Wallflower is a popular Young Adult novel published in 1999, yet it has resonated with readers and writers around the globe due to its "honest literary portrayals of

teenage life within the last decade,” (Matos 86). One of its most compelling features is the writing, for it is written in an epistolary fashion which directly addresses the reader as Charlie tells his story and candidly shares his innermost thoughts. Therefore, this novel makes for an effective starting point for reflective writing in the classroom. As a last note, this novel has been immensely influential for shaping the contemporary young adult novel and relies on the description of music as a means of nostalgia.

Going Bovine by Libba Bray is a surreal dark comedy and recipient of the 2010 Michael L. Printz award for exemplifying literary excellence in Young adult literature. While the novel is equally candid as *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* and follows the stream of consciousness of its protagonist; instead of having a confessional tone, it can reach absurd levels of comedy. This, however, does not diminish its seriousness on real life issues, but rather presents comedy and drama being sides of the same coin and exploring the expression of feelings. The novel heavily draws inspiration from *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote de la Mancha* by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra and it incorporates it into the main plot.

The last novel chosen for this study is *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* by Benjamin Alire-Sáenz. This coming of age novel has received critical success and won several literary awards, including the Lambda Literary Award and Stonewall Book Award for its explorations of LGBT topics, an Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award and Michael L. Printz Award honor for literary fiction, and the Pura Belpré Narrative Medal for Latino Fiction. This novel was chosen for this study due to its exploration of diversity; it explores LGBT themes and second generation Latino identities. Moreover, it deeply explores opposing sides of family relationships (while Dante is close to his parents, Aristotle yearns to be close to his father and brother), male gender roles and expectations, and hate crime. It is a novel which presents the

friendship of two boys with opposing personalities that, through the course of time, has an impact on their maturation.

Chapter Overview

This chapter served as an overall introduction to the research design and methodology to the study. As previously observed, this research study has two goals, to validate the need for the incorporation of young adult literature in the classroom and to provide teachers with a starting point for the incorporation of the literature and the development of teaching units utilizing recognized works in young adult literature. Chapter 4 will consist of a formal analysis of the aforementioned novels and Chapter 5 consists of an in-depth discussion of the results of the on-site research and a discussion of the pedagogical implication the project has in Puerto Rican English Classrooms.

Chapter 4: Sampling the World of Young Adult Literature

Introduction

The first part of this thesis project is the analysis of three young adult novels and how they can be integrated in the English classroom through reflective writing. The novels chosen are *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky, *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* and *Going Bovine* by Libba Bray. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the books were selected according to three factors: their narrator, their topics and, literary awards. Moreover, this literary analysis serves as means towards an examination of the challenged topics presented by Do Napoli's in order to exemplify their pedagogical value in the classroom. Considering that these challenging topics are oftentimes addressed as reasons for this literary genre not to be included in the classroom, it is of interest for this study to provide with the means towards turning these challenging topics into meaningful sources of dialogic content in the English secondary classroom.

The examination is divided into three areas. First, an overview of the novel will be presented, which will provide the novels' background, and a summary of the story and its characters. Secondly, there will be an analysis of its writing style, which will highlight the narrative as it is represented through the main characters' experiences; experiences which often mirror the young adult experience. Lastly, the topics presented in these novels will be discussed by focusing on their impact in their character development and therefore the ways in which these provide a strong representation of a wide variety of experiences for students' to discuss. In turn, the manner in which these topics will be addressed is an attempt to destigmatize these topics which are at times attached to negative connotations, especially when integrated into the school curriculum.

The latter part of this chapter focuses on their integration in the English classroom and how teachers can work with the challenging topics posed by these novels by engaging students through the use of reflective writing as means of discussion. The closing of this chapter will contain examples of lesson plans, thus illustrating how teachers can incorporate young adult literature in the classroom. These lesson plans incorporate and are supported by elements of Louise Rosenblatt's Reader's Response Theory and Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogy. While these are just a starting point towards the development of broader units of discussion of the novels in the classroom, teachers can use them as a way to propel forward further dialogue of these challenging topics in the classroom. These lesson plans were prepared following the curricular maps provided by the Department of Education of Puerto Rico and follow the guidelines provided in Policy Letter 8-2013-2014: English Program regarding English instruction in Puerto Rican schools.

Novel Discussion

A. The Perks of Being a Wallflower

The first novel discussed in this chapter is *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky. This novel was published in 1999, yet it has helped shaped the landscape for young adult literature today due to its treatment of the teenage experience. Its protagonist, an introverted teenager named Charlie, describes his experiences and thoughts in a series of anonymous letters. These letters do not specify who they are directed to, but it alludes to them being addressed to the reader itself. The novel is set during the 1990s, specifically during Charlie's freshman year in a suburban area in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania.

The novel begins as Charlie tells the reader he has chosen to send letters because he heard someone said how the reader is nice and will not judge him by what he has to share. He also

explains how two events had a huge impact in his life: the suicide of his best friend from middle school, Michael, and the death of his aunt Helen during his early childhood years, with whom he was close to. Prior to starting high school, Charlie underwent therapy with a guidance counselor, who helped him work out his guilt over his best friend's death, even though he had no direct involvement in the event.

Through the course of the novel, Charlie presents to the reader instances of his new life as a high school student. Noticing how much of a deep thinker Charlie is through his written class assignments, his English teacher, Mr. Anderson, encourages Charlie to become an active participant in life, and assigns him extracurricular readings and written assignments, thus becoming Charlie's mentor. Charlie also becomes friends with Patrick and Sam, both being Charlie's senior. Sam is Patrick's stepsister, and Patrick is dating Brad, a closeted football player. Charlie is instantly smitten by Sam's charm, and eventually confesses his feelings to her. During the early parts of the novel, Patrick and Sam invite Charlie to a party. It is there where Patrick makes the observation that Charlie is a "wallflower," and offers an explanation, "You see things. You keep quiet about them. And you understand," (37).

Eventually Charlie succumbs to anxiousness and panic attacks, for when the school year ends he will lose his friends, who will graduate and go away for college. Moreover, Charlie is still in love with Sam, even though she has a boyfriend who is in college. During their final days in the semester, Sam finds out her boyfriend is cheating on her. As Charlie helps Sam pack for college, they talk about Charlie's feelings; Sam expresses her anger, for Charlie never acted on them. This discussion leads to them engage sexually. However, Charlie runs away in a panicked state and is found catatonic by his sister and his parents.

In the epilogue, Charlie is admitted to a mental hospital, where he discovers the truth behind his flashbacks and de-realization episodes: his aunt Helen abused him sexually when he was a child, and he repressed those feelings due to his love for her and empathy due to her troubled adolescence. As he comes to terms with this realization, Charlie is released from the hospital two months later and is visited by Sam and Charlie. In the final scene, the three friends take a drive through the tunnel they used to visit while they listened to music in the previous months. Charlie exclaims how he feels infinite, and ceases to write letters in order to participate in life.

Style

As previously mentioned, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* is an epistolary novel in which the protagonist, Charlie, directly tells the reader about his first year of high school, his friendship with Patrick and Sam, and his maturation as a teenager and writer. Charlie chooses to write letters to an undisclosed recipient because he was told he would not be judged. This gives way to a very personal relationship between Charlie and the reader, even though Charlie is writing under a pseudonym and has also changed the names of the people he mentions across his letters. Charlie is candid in his writing, exploring typical teenage topics such as drugs, masturbation, romantic relationships, and family. However, Charlie writes about these topics as more of an observant and reflects upon them. As such, writing also becomes essential to the story, thus acting as a motif and assisting in Charlie's character development, thus prompting *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* to stand out from the rest, for it serves as an opening point for students to use both literature and writing as vehicles of exploration and meaning.

One important aspect highlighted at the beginning of the novel is how Charlie excels at writing, which in turn becomes a motif. After turning in his first essay for English class, Mr.

Andersen takes interest in Charlie's writing and his passion for it, highlighting how Charlie "has great skill at reading and understanding language," (Chbosky 10). In order to help him explore and develop his writing skills, Mr. Andersen assigns Charlie additional readings, such as *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger, *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, and *Peter Pan* by J.M. Barrie. Whenever Charlie is done with one of these books, he writes a report, his impressions of the book and ties it up to his life. On one occasion, Charlie explains how Mr. Anderson is helping him with his writing skills, "[Mr. Andersen] gave me a C on my *To Kill a Mockingbird* essay because he said that I run in my sentences together. I am trying now to practice not to do that. He also said that I should use the vocabulary words I learn in class," (14). Another example, which extends beyond the classroom, is when Charlie includes in his essay an episode in which he witnessed his sister being physically abused by her boyfriend. Mr. Anderson brings up this particular experience and discusses it with Charlie, which leads to the famous quote ensued by this discussion "We accept the love we think we deserve," (24).

While still his teacher, Mr. Anderson becomes a mentor to Charlie, for not only he helps Charlie with his writing, but also encourages him to become better at life. Therefore, this impacts Charlie's growth and helps him break away from his inertia and become a participant in his social circles, such as family, friends and community; in essence, he helps Charlie to participate in life.

Coming back to this thesis project, this kind of relationship serves as a basis for praxis in the English Classroom, for it mirrors the relationship students can achieve with literature as a vehicle for real life issues and writing, as well as that of the teacher as a facilitator. Mr. Andersen provides Charlie with reading material that help Charlie explore aspects of his life. In essence,

literature becomes the vehicle for the exploration of real life issues, which is what this project proposes.

It is important to mention how this idea serves more of a model. Out of the three novels in this study, the topics presented by *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* can be the most difficult to discuss in real life for both students and teachers alike. Therefore, teachers need to be careful when discussing these topics and take into consideration how some of these topics can trigger students who have experienced situations that mirror those illustrated by the novel. Nevertheless, teachers can, for example, help students write and engage how these topics affect Charlie and help him mature and overcome his inertia and stance as an observer in life. As Matos aptly puts it, “rather than simply narrating the account of a teenager trying to deal with these intense issues. . . Charlie’s brutally honest letter manage to convey the story of an adolescent trying to evolve from a passive observer of life to an active participant,” (87) and, in a way, teachers have to keep the discussion of these real life issues tied to the novel. Overall, these topics, although challenging, are consistent with the teenage experience and allow readers, who are also teenagers, connect to characters and make meaning of what they are reading.

Topics

Friendship

This is one of the earliest topics introduced in the novel. In its opening letter, Charlie explains the impact the suicide of his middle school best friend had in his life. Charlie, who is now starting high school, is shy and still coming to terms with it. However, a senior in his shop class catches his attention because of his name and humor. Charlie explains the boy’s name is “Nothing” and how he heard the rumors telling he is new in town. Afterwards, during a football game, Charlie remembers how he and Michael would always attend football games when he

notices Nothing is at the football game as well. Nothing recognizes Charlie from class and introduces himself as Patrick. During the same game, Charlie meets Sam, Patrick's stepsister. It is thanks to Patrick's and Sam's friendship that Charlie is able to make new friends and integrate himself into a social circle.

Friendship is a very important component in the life of an adolescent, which is consistent with their developmental tasks as previously described by Bushman and Haas (3). Like Charlie, teenagers meet new people as they switch schools or take classes. Additionally, as teenagers grow, many friendships fall apart and new ones are forged, an aspect of life still prevalent in the life of an adult. Through his new friendship with Patrick and Sam, Charlie is able to look forward and overcome his grief for the loss of his best friend, all the while honoring their time together. Patrick and Sam take Charlie under their wing and introduce him to their circle of friends. Patrick, Sam and Charlie also share their favorite music among themselves. This close bond makes him feel at home, a bond he does not share with his parents or sister and one he tightly grasps on to.

Family

Charlie does not have a close relationship with either of his parents or his siblings, which is reflected by the absence of their names in Charlie's letters. Rather, he mentions the only person in his family he was ever close to was his aunt Helena, who died when he was young in a car accident. Although his parents are attentive and make sure of Charlie's wellbeing, their relationship does not go beyond that capability. Charlie also has two older siblings, a brother who is in college, and a sister who goes to the same high school. While he terribly misses his brother, Charlie does not see eye to eye with his sister and mentions this constantly.

Coming of Age and Male Role Models

Overall, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* is a coming of age novel, focusing on Charlie's struggle to fit in and become his own person. This topic takes place in conjunction with another topic, male gender roles. One detail Charlie observes is how different he is from his father, older brother, and his teacher, Mr. Anderson. Thus, Charlie is constantly wondering what constitutes to be a man. Charlie's confusion reaches a high point when he witnesses his sister being hit by her boyfriend. Instead of breaking up their relationship immediately, his sister argues her boyfriend has issues to solve and turns softer and submissive towards him. This leaves Charlie wondering whether self-control or self-assertion is necessary to become a man, for Charlie himself harbors dark feelings of aggression tied to a repressed memory from his childhood.

Rape

Towards the end of the novel, Charlie remembers how his aunt Helen used to rape him, a memory he repressed. This memory begins to surface when he accidentally witnesses part of a rape in one of the parties he attended, and haunts him throughout the rest of the novel through de-realization episodes. This particular topic is attached to the aforementioned topics, Male Role Models. As Charlie witnesses yet another episode of aggressiveness, he also has to come to terms with his situation, which sees a reversal of gender roles. While this does not, in any way, pose that men cannot be raped by women, it does create conflict in Charlie, for it makes him question how different and restrained he is from the other males he knows. Sam also admits to being raped by a friend of her dad's long before the start of the novel.

Sexual Awakening

Charlie, as part of the teenage experience, becomes aware of sex and he gets fascinated by it. In the early parts of the novel, Charlie admits his discovery of masturbation, which was explained to him by Patrick. Also, Charlie begins to dream with Sam where they engage sexually. Feeling guilty, Charlie eventually confesses his dreams to Sam, to which she calls him cute and how very “Charlie-esque,” due to his sincerity. Because Charlie admires and loves Sam, he does not think about her when he masturbates or thinks about sex.

Misfits and Drug Use

Charlie considers himself different from others. However, when he gets together with Patrick, Sam, and their social circle, Charlie is able to talk candidly and feels comfortable in this environment. However, this group of friends are misfits. Charlie, a misfit himself, is unable to act accordingly due to his self-reflecting and passive nature. When in company of other misfits, Charlie does act out and feels comfortable under his skin. When in isolation, Charlie gets consumed by anxiousness and his letters turn erratic. It is in this group where Charlie first tries drugs. Although he does experiment with them at first accidentally, he does not make a habit of it. The group mainly consumes marihuana.

Secrets

One of the major topics in this novel are secrets. Charlie is a “wallflower,” therefore he knows a lot of secrets about other people. One example of this is Patrick’s relationship with Brad. Although Patrick is openly gay, Brad is still closeted and breaks his relationship with Patrick when his father learns about it. Another secret is how Charlie saw his father cry when the last episode of *M*A*S*H* aired, which, in turn, is the only time Charlie has seen his father cry. These secrets prompt Charlie to reflect about others. However, whenever he reveals some of the

secrets, chaos ensues. For example, when Charlie writes about his sister's abusive boyfriend in his essay, Mr. Anderson calls home and reports Charlie's parents about it. This shatters the relationship between Charlie and his sister, who is then prohibited from continuing her relationship with her boyfriend. Charlie apologizes to his sister, yet is shocked when his sister, in anger, replies by telling Charlie she hates him.

The biggest secret in the novel is Charlie's repressed memory about his aunt raping him. When he finally confides to his family what happened, they are left in shock, for they never once suspected what was going on. For Charlie, this secret shatters him from the inside out, and life falls apart exponentially. He is admitted to a mental hospital where he is treated by a psychiatrist. In essence, just as secrets give structure to Charlie's life and writing, it also tears it down.

Participation

Participation in life is the novel's main topics, for it drives the development of Charlie as a character and a writer. Throughout the novel, Charlie is perceptive of everything and everyone around him. This trait is what drives Charlie to constantly reflect and write his letters, seeking to understand everything around him, especially himself. However, this has a negative impact for him, for his deep thought renders him unable to participate in life to the point of inertia. With the help of Mr. Anderson, Patrick and Sam, Charlie is able to become more comfortable with himself, thus adding validity to Patrick's view on Charlie being a "wallflower."

B. Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe

The second novel chosen for this thesis is *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secret of the Universe* by Benjamin Alire-Sáenz. A multiple award winning novel, it tells the story of Aristotle Mendoza (Ari) a 15-year-old Mexican boy who is bored and has no plans for the

summer of 1987. He lives with his mother and father in Texas; his mother is a teacher and his father was in the military who served in the Vietnam War. However, Aristotle is miserable. His dad became distant after the war and refuses to share his experiences there. His brother is in jail, yet everyone in his family behaves as if he was dead. His two older sisters are married and moved away. Because of his solitude, Aristotle feels as if he is suffocating.

One day, Ari decides to go swimming, even though he does not know how. There, a boy engages him in conversation. His name is Dante Quintana, and he offers Ari swimming lessons. Ari and Dante instantly become friends. They make fun of their names and how they bestow expectations upon them. Ari becomes fascinated with Dante's quirkiness, for he hates wearing shoes, is sincere and struggles with his Mexican identity. Moreover, Dante is very affectionate with his parents and share their love for music and literature, which surprises Ari, who is, in turn, distant with his own parents. As the boys' friendship blossoms, Ari cannot help but notice how different yet similar they both are.

Days later, after burying a sparrow some kids killed using a BB gun, Ari wakes up with a serious case of the flu. As Ari recovers and is buried in feverish dreams about his estranged brother, Bernardo, Dante visits him and draws sketches of him. However, Dante does not allow Ari to see his sketchbook. Eventually, when Ari recovers, they take a walk and Dante explains how he is moving to Chicago for a year because his dad was offered a new job as a literature professor. After breaking the news, Ari and Dante find a dead bird in the middle of the road. While Dante goes on to check on the bird, a car speeds by from around the corner. Ari throws himself into the street, and pushes Dante out of the way. While Dante only suffers minor injuries, Ari gets hit by the car.

Sometime later, Ari wakes up in the hospital with casts in both of his arms and legs. Dante is consumed by guilt, yet Ari makes him promise to never talk about the accident. Both the Mendozas and the Quintanas become closer due to the events. During one of his visits, Dante gives Ari his sketchbook, a gesture that disgusts Ari; he thinks Dante only lets him see the sketchbook as if he owed him something. Even though Dante keeps visiting Ari every day, Ari ceases to talk to Dante for a while. However, before Dante moves to Chicago, he confesses to Ari how he loves him and swimming. Ari brushes away this confession and says how Dante should not say those things even if they are true. Dante moves away, and the summer ends.

Ari goes back to school and Dante sends letters to let Ari know how of his new life in Chicago. Even though Ari misses him terribly, he decides not to answer to his letters. This does not stop Dante and he keeps sending letters explaining how he has tried marihuana and alcohol at parties, kissed girls, and his visits to the art museum. It is in one of these letters when Dante confesses how he would rather kiss boys and how his parents would be disappointed if they found out. In the meantime, Ari continues his life by getting a job, adopting a dog and dating girls. He also tries to bring up conversations regarding his brother to his parents, but to no avail.

The school year comes to a close and summer arrives again. Dante is back in town and visits Ari. During one of his visits, Dante proposes they kiss in order to make sure he indeed likes boys. Ari reluctantly accepts, and confesses he did not feel anything. Dante, on the other hand, admits to feeling something. Several days later Ari discovers his aunt Ophelia has died. Ari and his family attend the funeral, and he notices how none of his extended family is there. His parents explain to Ari how their family disapproved of Ophelia's lifestyle; years before, she had a girlfriend and used to live with her. This caused her immediate family to estrange her, which

angered Ari's mother. After the funeral, Ari's mother finally accepts to talk about Bernardo, Ari's brother.

Ari's brother, Bernardo, once hired a prostitute. However, the prostitute was a male-to-female transgender. This infuriated Bernardo, which drove him to kill her with his bare fists. A second incident of the same nature occurred once Bernardo started serving his sentence. As a consequence, his sentence was extended for life. As Ari returns home, he learns how Dante is in the hospital because he was jumped. When the Quintanas ask Ari if he has any idea why Dante might have been jumped, he confesses it is because Dante is gay. Both of Dante's parents show support for their son and admit they already had suspicions because of the way he looked at Ari. They also observe how Dante still loves Ari, and any present love interest is just a stand in.

When Dante is released, Ari sees Daniel, a boy whom Dante was beginning to date, visit Dante. Ari asks Daniel for information and he confesses how they both were jumped because they were kissing in an alleyway. However, while Dante stood his ground, Daniel ran away. Infuriated, Ari asks for the name of the aggressor. Afterwards, Ari locates him and proceeds to beat him up.

Once Mrs. Mendoza hears about Ari beating up Dante's jumper, she calls for a family intervention. It is here when Ari's dad opens up and tells him about the incident where his best friend sacrificed himself during the war at Vietnam, an incident Ari's dad still feels guilty of. Additionally, he points out to Ari how Dante is in love with him, and the fact that Ari went and stood up for Dante by beating his jumper further confirms what Ari has been denying to himself: he loves Dante back. Ari tries to argue but his father tells him he accepts them and he would rather see his son be happy rather than wallow in darkness like he has after the war. Accepting he

does love Dante, Ari visits him and confesses his feelings. When Dante asks him why Ari said he did not feel anything when they kissed a few months back, Ari smiles and accepts he lied.

Style

Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe is a contemporary young adult novel written in the first person point of view of Aristotle Mendoza. The novel is divided into six segments, each narrating the happenings between the summers of 1987-1988. Unbeknownst to him, Ari imitates his father's brooding personality. He is oftentimes quiet, taking in what is happening in front of him in short lapses, which is evidenced by the simple and concise writing style. As a result, instead of presenting a full scale map of Ari's thoughts, the novel only shows his immediate reactions and what happens around him. However, when in the company of Dante, Ari's mind is stimulated by Dante's extroverted nature, and it is then when Ari becomes talkative and tries to make sense of his life. Ari's state of mind is fueled by constant anger due to the secrets held by his family and his inability to connect to his father. This is further reinforced when Ari is without Dante's company. Lastly, most of Ari's stream of consciousness is vague and devoid of feelings other than anger. Nevertheless, the reader is able to understand Ari throughout his actions, which do the speaking for him.

Topics

Coming of age and Friendship

Aristotle Mendoza begins his summer without any friends, and it is through his new friendship with Dante Quintana when he begins to become his own person. Although their friendship evolves into romantic love, the impact their relationship has on one another allows for maturation, for both boys are of opposite personalities. Both boys desire to uncover the secrets of the world, understand them, but above all, understand themselves as their own individual. Thus,

Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe centers around both friendship and coming of age.

Family

In the same vein as the topic of friendship, the novel explores the value of family. In the case of Ari, he shares a close bond with his mother, to the point of being able to read between the lines during their conversations. However, Ari is unable to connect with his father. A man of few words, Ari's father spends most of his time in his room. Ari yearns to reach out for a father and son relationship, yet he finds there is nothing for them to talk about when they are both in the same room. As of consequence, this barren relationship harbors a sense of pessimism in Ari's viewpoint towards life.

In Dante's case, his relationship with his parents is entirely different in comparison to Ari's. When Ari first visits Dante, he is shocked to see how Dante kisses both his mother and father in the cheek. Additionally, Dante seems to have a close relationship with his father and is shown by their shared love for literature. Although Dante does not want to disappoint his parents because of his sexuality, his parents are able to notice his feelings toward Ari. When Ari saves Dante from being run over by the car, Dante's parents constantly shower Ari with affection, a gesture that, although warm, makes Ari feel uncomfortable, yet he is able to appreciate Dante's optimistic viewpoint towards life.

Secrets and Male Role Models

The biggest topic in the novel is secrets. Because of the many secrets in Ari's family, a heavy atmosphere pervades in the Mendoza household and Ari is sensible enough to pick up on it. As a consequence, Ari is constantly in anger and has an estranged relationship with his father.

Unlike Ari, Dante has a secret of his own too, yet it does not weight him down. In this novel, the topic of secrets is directly connected to another topic, which is male role models.

The first secret we are introduced to is Ari's father experience at war. As aforementioned, Ari's father wallows in guilt because of the sacrifice of his best friend during the war. Therefore, this creates a barrier between Ari and his father. Ari's mother knows about the pain her husband is in, how the wound inside him belongs to him. Therefore, she gives him the necessary space for him to recover. As she puts it, "Because it's his. It's just his, Ari," (Alire-Sáenz 90). Ari, however, desperately seeks attention from his father, which is perfectly illustrated when he lies in bed with the flu. One night, as Ari is haunted by feverish dreams, he wakes up and finds his father in his room. Ari asks why his father is there, watching him, to which Ari's father explains how he heard Ari talking in his sleep. "You were looking for me," (63) says Ari's dad, surprised. Ari confirms this when he says "I'm always looking for you," (63). The next day, Ari's dad checks on his son, and asks him about his dreams. Ari dismisses the questions. But then, his father unexpectedly confides in him "I have bad dreams too, Ari," (66). This confession brings a new level of understanding between them and Ari begins to understand what his mother previously told him.

There is another secret in the Mendoza household. Ari desires to know about his brother and why everyone acts as if he is dead. He remembers how kind his brother was towards him when he was a child, yet he wonders why he stopped seeing him at home. Ari later learns how his brother is in jail and the crime he committed. Also, Ari learns how his brother is the one who detached himself from the family because of the shame he feels from his actions. Although Ari has the chance to find out the truth about his brother earlier in the novel when he finds an envelope in his mother's bedroom with pictures and letters of his brother, he chooses to allow his

parents to tell him the truth when they feel the time is right, thus showing Ari's maturation and coming to an understanding of how this particular secret not only affects him, but his entire family as well.

Ari and Dante both also have a secret of their own; they are both gay. However, it is not the same case for each of them. On the one hand, Ari suspects of his sexual orientation, yet he denies it and buries it. Dante, on the other hand, accepts his sexuality, yet keeps it hidden out of fear of disappointing his parents and confides his secret to Ari. While Ari tells Dante he accepts him for who he is, he also avoids the topic as much as possible, thus behaving like his father. This is also reflected when Ari asks Dante to never talk about the accident ever again.

Mexican-American Identity

Mexican-American identity issues are part of the conversations between Ari and Dante early in the novel. While both Ari's and Dante's family come from Mexico, none of the two boys identify as Mexican. Both boys were born and raised in the United States, and yet they feel they do not belong in the United States either. This issue is of importance mostly to Dante, whom seems bothered every time he and Ari talk about the issue. This issue is first introduced when Dante talks about his disdain for shoes. Ari notices how Dante always leaves his shoes in the front porch whenever he visits. When asked about it, Dante explains it is a Japanese custom, to which Ari replies "Yes . . . but we're not Japanese. We're Mexicans," (Alire-Sáenz 44). Dante points out how they are not really Mexicans because they do not live in Mexico, and how they do not know anything about the country (45). Ari argues how they at least know Spanish, yet Dante admits they are not good at it either. Ari, worked up, snaps back and says "Speak for yourself Dante, You're such a pocho," (45). When Dante asks what a "pocho" means, Ari explains it is a "half-assed Mexican," (45). Further into the story, this issue resurfaces when Dante explains how

he dislikes visiting his family, for his cousins like to point out how different he is. Although Ari usually presses Dante during their conversations, he realizes how this issue affects Dante and decides not to pursue it any further.

Although this novel makes mention of Ari's and Dante's cultural heritage, the topic only scratches the surface, for it is the first time Ari sees Dante get upset. Most of the time, Dante irradiates light, his extroverted personality sparks heated yet profound conversations between them. This kind of energy is new to Ari, since the only other male in his life, his father, wallows in the memories from his times during the war. Yet seeing as the topic irritates Dante, Ari drops it, for he realizes even Dante carries a bit of darkness inside of him.

Hate Crime

There are two instances in which the topic of hate crime is raised in the novel: through the episode in which Dante is jumped for kissing Daniel, and when Ari learns how his brother got convicted because he murdered a transgender prostitute. Ari, who carries a lot of anger within him, never acts upon it. But when he learns who jumped Dante, he takes matters at hand and lashes out. This act raises a flag and Ari's parents decide an intervention is in order, for they realize how his father's guilt, the secrecy of his brother and his conflict with his own sexuality are pushing him to be like his brother. Rather than allowing him to fall into this vicious cycle, Ari's father points out how different Ari is from his brother and how he should not carry that sort of darkness. It is important to clarify how the novel touches upon hate crime and Mexican-American identity issues in a manner where these two never intersect. In the novel, hate crime is tied to sexuality issues.

C. Going Bovine

Going Bovine by Libba Bray is a young adult novel which won the Printz Award in 2009. The novel centers on Cameron Smith, a 16-year-old teenager who gets diagnosed with transmissible spongiform encephalopathy, commonly known as mad cow disease. During one such occasion, his hallucinations turn public during English class, which gets him sent to multiple drug counselors. However, Cameron's diagnosis turns out to be Creutzfeldt-Jakob variant BSE (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy), which doctors believe he contracted at his school cafeteria or at his job at a fast food joint.

During his stay at the hospital, he is visited by Dulcie, an angel "with short pink hair, torn fishnets, black lace-up punker boots, and a tarnished breastplate," (Bray 90) who tasks him with a quest in which he must defeat the mysterious Wizard of Reckoning, and the only way to do so, is to find Dr. X, a time traveling physicist. As Cameron makes sense out of his situation, he is attacked by the Wizard of Reckoning and fire giants; this episode prompts him to accept Dulcie's request. Dulcie then gives Cameron a wristband from Disney World, which will delay the BSE from advancing to his brain for a set period of time. Cameron sneaks away from the hospital, accompanied by Gonzo, his hospital roommate and high school classmate. His only lead is to follow "random signs," a point brought up by Dulcie throughout various instances in the novel in order for him to meet his goal.

Throughout Cameron's journey, he meets new people who help him find his way to the Wizard of Reckoning. One of these character is the Norse god Balder, who has been cursed and imprisoned in the body of a garden gnome. However, as Cameron relapses throughout the novel due to his illness, the reality of Cameron's journey is questioned, for it seems his journey to defeat the Wizard of Reckoning is all occurring in his head as he lays dying at a hospital. Sudden

glances back to reality reveal how his parents' marriage has been crumbling; Cameron believes his father is having an affair with his young research assistant based on a conversation he accidentally eavesdropped on when he visited his Dad's office one afternoon. Other glances include how estranged Cameron's relationship with his sister is, and another shows his parents consulting with a doctor about turning off Cameron's life support machinery. This is reinforced by the appearance of fire giants, for it hints he is actually suffering from a fever in real life and it is when most of these glances occur.

Cameron ultimately encounters the Wizard of Reckoning at Disney World, specifically in the Small World ride. It is then revealed how the Wizard of Reckoning looks exactly like Cameron. As Cameron chases after the Wizard of Reckoning, he runs through a series of doors which lead to scenes of the time he almost drowned at the Small World ride back when he was five years old. Coincidentally, this memory has already been shared with the reader at the opening stages of the novel as Cameron's earliest memory and the best day of his life. After defeating the Wizard of Reckoning, Cameron wakes up at the hospital, where he sees a nurse turning off his life support machinery and his parents and sister crying in the background. This last glimpse implies how Cameron's journey is indeed a hallucination induced by the mad cow disease.

In the epilogue, Cameron finds himself surrounded by darkness. He discovers he is actually back at the Small World ride and sees Dulcie waiting for him at the Inuit Village segment of the ride. Cameron jumps off the boat, and joins her. During their conversation, Cameron asks Dulcie if his journey to defeat the Wizard of Reckoning was real or a disease-induced hallucination, to which Dulcie admits "Who's to say what's real or not?", leaving the

reader to determine the veracity of the events. In the final moment of the story, Dulcie takes Cameron under her wings as the sky explodes.

Style

Going Bovine is a surreal dark comedy. As such, the novel's comedy prevents the plot from being taken too seriously. The novel is told in the first person point of view of Cameron. His attitude and sarcasm makes him an unlikable character during most of the novel, although this character development later impacts his narrative and he becomes likable and relatable. Cameron is straightforward and is not afraid to speak what is on his mind, thus providing the reader a clear idea of what Cameron thinks of the people around him. In essence, the reader has complete access to Cameron's thoughts. Additionally, he is hotheaded and bitter because of his fate, yet through his conversations with Dulcie throughout the novel, Cameron is able to stand back and reflect on the problems he is currently facing and the meaning of his journey.

This last characteristic sets Cameron apart from the protagonists from *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* and *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*. Contrary to Charlie's and Ari's constant reflection, Cameron always acts first and then reflects on the meaning of his actions, which prompts him to come across as selfish and not able to feel empathy towards others as easily. This lack of empathy and selfishness makes him come across as a jokester, which is reinforced by his care-free nature and his use of drugs at the beginning of the novel. Therefore, the novel's comedic tone is borderline absurd, for Cameron's sarcasm clashes with the already questionable situation he is in, leaving the reader to make sense of the absurdity of it all.

Topics

Friendship

Cameron's character development is based on the friendships he cultivates through his journey. Since the beginning of the novel, Cameron's detached personality renders him unable to create meaningful connections with others. While not a loner, Cameron's closest circle of friends is perhaps the group of "stoners" whom Cameron occasionally smokes marihuana with.

Additionally, Cameron does point out he is not exactly the most popular person in school, unlike his older sister, Jenna. Therefore, Cameron faces difficulty in believing Dulcie about his quest at the beginning, as well as hesitating in inviting Gonzo as an ally, a detail Dulcie insists will benefit Cameron. Because Cameron at first rejects this idea, he dismisses both Gonzo, and Dulcie as hassles for him.

Through the course of the novel, Cameron begins to warm up to Gonzo, and eventually Balder, the Norse god in the shape of a garden gnome. For example, there is an episode in which Cameron, Balder and Gonzo have acquired a car and are on their way to Disney World to confront the Wizard of Reckoning. However, Cameron offers a hitch ride to three college students who are on their way to Daytona Beach for the YA! Party House, a musical event which is also being televised. Unfortunately, the three college students steal Balder with the idea of selling him in one of the event's game stations. Instead of continuing his journey, Cameron proposes to rescue him. This leads Cameron and Gonzo into participating in a game show where they win enough money to buy Balder off from the three college students, thus illustrating how Cameron is able to establish a meaningful connection with others.

Being Alive Vs. Living

The biggest concept presented by *Going Bovine* is the idea of how being alive does not necessarily mean living. At the beginning of the novel, Cameron makes no effort on anything in his life. He barely has any friends, has no friends, and deems everyone and everything a hassle. However, everything changes when Cameron is diagnosed with mad cow disease. As Cameron begins to cement friendships, Cameron starts to live, for he saves the lives close to him towards the end of the novel, even though he is unable to save himself. Additionally, Cameron opts not to stay in the Church of Everlasting Satisfaction and Snack-‘N’-Bowl (CESSNAB), a group who is devoted to always experiencing happiness and washing their negative feelings away by bowling and drinking milkshakes. Although Cameron could easily have chosen to stay and forget about his illness, he sees no purpose leading a life of suppressed emotions and decides to escape the church’s facility, thus welcoming life and its many challenges. At the end of the novel, before Cameron dies, he engages in a conversation with Dulcie. Although she offers no insight on whether his journey was hallucination, Cameron does realize his journey was not in vain, for it granted him a chance to live, and mature.

Destiny vs. Choice

After being diagnosed with mad cow disease, Cameron is visited by Dulcie, who bestows upon him a quest to defeat the Wizard of Reckoning. Cameron chooses to undergo with this quest, yet asks Dulcie where he is supposed to be next. In every encounter Cameron has with Dulcie he asks what he is supposed to do, to which Dulcie always responds how the future is not fixed and that he has to follow the random signs. This sense of destiny pervades through Cameron’s mind as he continues his journey, focusing on the end of his quest rather than on the choices he has to make in order to accomplish it. Choice is also tied to the concept of living. As

aforementioned, Cameron is a care-free adolescent and chooses to finally start living by changing his way of being.

Sense of Reality

The entirety of Cameron's journey is filled with occurrences which prompt Cameron to question whether what he is experiencing is real or a hallucination. Throughout appearance of the fire giants, Cameron has glimpses of him being in a hospital, which puts into consideration how Cameron never left the hospital and his journey is caused by the mad cow disease eating through his brain. At the end of his journey Cameron realizes it does not matter whether if everything is real or not, but rather what matter is how he chose to live without regrets and change for the better.

Integrating *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* and *Going Bovine* into the English Classroom

These three novels have had a major impact in young adult literature. All three novels have been widely recognized by critics and readers alike for their honesty in portraying adolescence, even within the absurd narrative of a teenager suffering from mad cow's disease. The lasting impression left by *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* in young adult literature precedes it to the present day. While its candor and overall treatment of the teenage experience closely mirrors that of the contemporary teenager, it is understandable why the topic presented in the novel might pose a challenge when including this novel in the English classroom. Likewise, *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* puts forward a serious and honest representation of two young individuals exploring their identity and the complexity of the concept. *Going Bovine*, within its almost ridiculous narrative, manages to tackle real life issues

and challenge them as its protagonist learns to be mindful of those around him and the importance of thinking before action.

According to Donna Jo Napoli's list of topics why books get banned, all three novels contain topics which would challenge and lead these novels to be banned from classrooms. In the case of *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* there is "offensive language," "explicit sexual descriptions," "examples of substance abuse," and "materials that include depressing or morbid topics" (Napoli). The topics in this book, specially rape and drug use, have deemed this book inappropriate for its age group (American Library Association). Nevertheless, the novel does not revolve around these topics; *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (as well as the other two novels chosen for this thesis) are far from being a typical problem novel. Rather, this novel "offers a vivid and illustrative record of the protagonist mind" (Matos 87) in which his reflections on these topics give meaning to his maturation and writing. In essence, it invites readers to feel empathy towards Charlie by "[assessing] the value and meaning of his words," (87).

In the novel *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*, there are also difficult topics. According to Napoli's list, these are "incidence of violence and brutality," "examples of substance abuse" (to a degree), and "materials that include depressing or morbid topics." While this novel is not as controversial as the others in this thesis, the LGBT issues faced by the protagonists are enough for it to find resistance in educational settings. The novel does deserve merit and inclusion within education because it mirrors many of the challenges adolescents in real life face when it comes to racial and sexual identity, relationships between family members and friends, and the overall transition into adulthood. Because these issues are essential to the character development of Ari and Dante, this novel is the perfect example of how

characters dealing with real life issues reach maturation do not fall into the classic tropes of the problem novel.

The last novel, *Going Bovine*, is the novel with the most challenging topics according to Donna Jo Napoli's list. These are "offensive language," "explicit sexual descriptions," "incidence of violence or brutality," "new age anti religion stories," "examples of racism," "examples of substance abuse," "materials that include depressing or morbid topics," "attacks on patriotism or established authority," and "derogatory images of the handicapped." However, the novel's comedic tones take away some of the seriousness these topics bring, for the novel never dwells on them thanks to the fast pace of Cameron's journey. Therefore, the reader is constantly trying to piece together and make sense of Cameron's journey, and whether or not his journey is real.

Due to the novel's challenging topics, teachers might demonstrate some hesitance in developing discussions which touch upon these issues. It is widely recognized that these represent real life issues students' face in their lives. As such, it is of importance to consider the benefits these discussions can bring into the development of a curriculum that responds to real life experiences and is personally relevant for students. Even though many of these topics clearly have negative connotations, whether it be characters' behaviors or actions, the teacher can undo the stigma attached to young adult literature and its topics through effective engagement. Through the discussion of these novels, it is important for teachers to take into consideration Rosenblatt's reading stances and place emphasis on the transaction between the students and the novels. Because these novels can be relevant to the students and they can identify with the characters found within the pages, students can easily be swayed by the plot to remain in an *aesthetic* stance. However, it is up to the teacher to engage students and help them look at the

novels from an objective point of view, in essence, an *effereant* stance. This is not to say students will simply look at the novels as just literature, but rather teachers help students keep a balance between both reading stances, thus using the novels for both academic and personal growth. This is where reflective writing comes into place and why the challenging topics can be turned around as means of engagement; through reflective writing, students explore and make meaning of the topics and characters pertinent to their lives yet they also use the novels as vehicles to additionally succeed academically.

When addressing critical pedagogy as a medium for the incorporation of young adult literature in the classroom, it is of importance to take into consideration how, in the process of education, as referred to by Nina Wallerstein while discussing Paulo Freire's views, "[p]eople bring with them their cultural expectations, their experiences of social discrimination and life pressures, and their strengths in surviving" (33). As a result, the dialogue that takes place in the classroom when observing young adult literature as a representation of young adult lived experiences will be highly mediated by students' experiences and their understandings of the world that surrounds them as well. Teachers and students alike will then have to collaborate with dialogue that will challenge group perceptions of the young adult experience and reflective practices that suspend prescribed notions in regards to these challenging topics and truly explore them as they are represented in the novels.

Although there are many ways teachers can incorporate these novels in the classroom, this thesis provides just a few of the many different starting points for teachers to develop teaching units that truly embrace young adult literature in the classroom and its challenging topics. For example, the novel which best serves as a starting point is *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. As aforementioned, writing is an important component in Charlie's life, for not only

he wants to become a writer but also writes constantly. Because of the novel's epistolary style, students develop an intimate relationship with Charlie and teachers can use this special connection as a starting point for reflective writing as well as discuss the characteristics of an epistolary novel. In the case of *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*, students can examine how identity plays a role on how Dante perceives himself to be not normal or living up to his Mexican heritage. Lastly, *Going Bovine*, students can explore the concept of happiness and how Cameron explores this issue through his stay at a religious cult based on everlasting happiness. As an afterthought, teachers who wish to go further can follow up the use of these novels by inviting students to read one of the many books read by the characters in the novels discussed in this chapter. For example, through the course of his mentorship with Dr. Anderson, Charlie reads literary works such as *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau. Similarly, Dante introduces Ari to literature by sharing with him his favorite poems by William Carlos Williams. This last example also extends to Ari's father, who reads one of the books Dante leaves for Ari at the hospital, which is Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

Following the discussion of *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* and *Going Bovine*, as well as their topics, this chapter closes with examples of lesson plans teachers can develop for the inclusion of young adult literature and reflective writing. It is important to close this chapter by highlighting how this thesis aims towards the incorporation of young adult literature as a genre which goes beyond the three novels discussed in this thesis.

Sample Lesson Plans for The Perks of Being a Wallflower

Lesson Plan #1

I. Unit Theme: 12.5 See It My Way

Transversal Themes: Communication, Creative Thinking

Desired results (Enduring Understanding): The pen is mightier than the sword.

Summative Evaluation (Performance Task): Students will read the opening of *The Perks a Being a Wallflower* and discuss the opening letter written by Charlie with the purpose of understanding the characteristics of an epistolary novel, as well as establish the personal relationship Charlie will establish with the reader.

II. Learning Plan (Suggested Learning Activity):

Standards and Expectations:

12.L.1a: Demonstrate comprehension of oral presentations and discussions on a variety of social, academic, college, and career topics by asking and answering questions that show thoughtful consideration and extension of the ideas or arguments.

12.S.1b: Synthesize, analyze, and debate information, justifying answers with details from texts and experiences.

12.R.6I: Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness or beauty of the text.

Academic Strategy: Participatory Approach

Objective: At the end of the lesson, students should be able to identify the writing style of the novel (epistolary), its importance and how it cements a trusting relationship between the protagonist and the reader.

Initial Activity: After reading the opening letter in the novel, students will discuss their impressions and what makes the writing style in this novel unique. This will help students understand the complexity this bring to the novel.

Developmental Activity: Once students have discussed their impressions, they will proceed to discuss the contents of the novel's opening letter. Students will construct the kind of relationship Charlie hopes to set with the reader and the level of intimacy.

Closing Activity: After establishing the relationship between Charlie and the reader, students will write a letter to Charlie introducing themselves and reply to the contents of Charlie's initial letter. This can be summed in in the following writing prompt:

Imagine you are replying to Charlie's first letter. How would you introduce yourself and what would you tell him? What pointers or advice would you offer him for his first day of high school? Write your letter.

Formative Assessment-Other Evidence: Reflective writing.

Materials: Board, markers, paper, pencil, a copy of the novel.

Lesson Plan #2

I. Unit Theme: 12.5 See It My Way

Transversal Themes: Relationships, Self-discovery, Reflection

Desired results (Enduring Understanding): Individuals' beliefs and actions are influenced by background, culture, history, family, etc. and play an important role in their communities.

Summative Evaluation (Performance Task): Students will read the poem ion pages 70-73 and relate the topic of innocence to their own lives. Afterwards, the students will discuss the topic of innocence, how Charlie's world is changing through his friendship with Sam and Patrick and

how students' own relationship with people have changed as well as their interest and their views.

II. Learning Plan (Suggested Learning Activity):

Standards and Expectations:

12.S.1b: Synthesize, analyze, and debate information, justifying answers with details from texts and experiences.

12.R.3I: Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

Academic Strategy: Participatory Approach

Objective: At the end of the lesson, students should be able to illustrate how Charlie has begun to change through friendship and overcoming the loss of his best friend.

Initial Activity: After reading the poem on pages 70-73, students will identify the topic of innocence and how it is explored and changes throughout the poem.

Developmental Activity: Once students have discussed the poem, students will connect their own lives to the concept of innocence. After the discussion, students will then proceed to analyze Charlie's character development in accordance to the poem.

Closing Activity: After establishing Charlie's character development, students will proceed to write about their thoughts on the matter through a letter addressed to Charlie.

Imagine you are replying to Charlie's letter about the poem he read to Sam and Patrick. What do you think about this poem? How do you think Charlie has begun to change according to what he writes in his letters?

Formative Assessment-Other Evidence: Reflective writing.

Materials: Board, markers, paper, pencil, a copy of the novel.

Sample Lesson Plans for Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe

Lesson Plan #1

I. Unit Theme: 12.5 See It My Way

Transversal Themes: Identity

Desired results (Enduring Understanding): Individuals' beliefs and actions are influenced by background, culture, history, family, etc. and play an important role in their communities.

Summative Evaluation (Performance Task): Students will revisit the sections where Ari and Dante have a discussion about their Mexican-American identity and discuss how this affects Dante, who has issues with his identity.

II. Learning Plan (Suggested Learning Activity):

Standards and Expectations:

12.L.1a: Demonstrate comprehension of oral presentations and discussions on a variety of social, academic, college, and career topics by asking and answering questions that show thoughtful consideration and extension of the ideas or arguments.

12.S.1b: Synthesize, analyze, and debate information, justifying answers with details from texts and experiences.

12.R.3I: Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

12.W.1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and sufficient evidence.

Academic Strategy: Participatory Approach

Objective: At the end of the lesson, students should be able to illustrate the change in Dante's personality when dealing with his issues with identity and how the main idea of identity itself is presented in the novel.

Initial Activity: Students will revisit the various instances in which Ari and Dante speak about their Mexican-American Identity and discuss the point of view of each character.

Developmental Activity: Once students have discussed their impressions, they will proceed to assess how Dante loses his composure when the topic is brought up, thus exploring the idea of Dante having some darkness in his heart.

Closing Activity: After establishing the issues of identity in the novel, students will proceed to reflect on the issue and how does it impact both Ari and Dante.

During their first meeting, Ari and Dante briefly joke about their identities and declare how Ari is more of a tragic Mexican and Dante is an optimistic American.

Do you agree with their views? What evidence supports this?

Formative Assessment-Other Evidence: Reflective writing.

Materials: Board, markers, paper, pencil, a copy of the novel.

Lesson Plan #2

I. Unit Theme: 12.5 See It My Way

Transversal Themes: Relationships, Self-discovery, Reflection

Desired results (Enduring Understanding): Individuals' beliefs and actions are influenced by background, culture, history, family, etc. and play an important role in their communities.

Summative Evaluation (Performance Task): Through this lesson, students will compare and contrast the differences between the Mendozas and the Quintanas, and why Ari thinks Dante's family is strange.

II. Learning Plan (Suggested Learning Activity):

Standards and Expectations:

12.L.1b Follow turn-taking, asking/answering relevant questions and paraphrasing while affirming others, adding and relating information to prior knowledge, experience, texts, or real-world situations.

12.S.1b: Synthesize, analyze, and debate information, justifying answers with details from texts and experiences.

12.R.3I: Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

Academic Strategy: Participatory Approach

Objective: At the end of the lesson, students should be able to illustrate how different the Mendozas and the Quintanas are as a family and why Ari thinks Dante's family is different, thus understanding the background of Ari and Dante.

Initial Activity: Students will discuss the concept of family and what constitutes one. Students will record their answers by taking turns at the board, thus serving as a brainstorming activity.

Developmental Activity: Once students have shared their views on family, they will take turns to discuss how each has their own definition. Based on this, the students will compare the Mendozas and the Quintanas.

Closing Activity: After establishing the comparisons, students will proceed to write about their findings and why Ari thinks Dante's family is strange.

Formative Assessment-Other Evidence: Reflective writing.

Materials: Board, markers, paper, pencil, a copy of the novel.

Sample Lesson Plans for Going Bovine

Lesson Plan #1

I. Unit Theme: 12.5 See It My Way

Transversal Themes: Self-discovery, Reflection, Culture

Desired results (Enduring Understanding): Persuasion has specific techniques and strategies to change people's minds, influence ideas and inspire change.

Summative Evaluation (Performance Task): Students will discuss the meaning behind the facility CESSNAB and how its concept of everlasting happiness bothers Cameron.

II. Learning Plan (Suggested Learning Activity):

Standards and Expectations:

12.L.1a: Demonstrate comprehension of oral presentations and discussions on a variety of social, academic, college, and career topics by asking and answering questions that show thoughtful consideration and extension of the ideas or arguments.

12.S.1b: Synthesize, analyze, and debate information, justifying answers with details from texts and experiences.

12.R.3I: Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

12.W.1a: Express, clarify, and defend viewpoints and opinions, by justifying arguments with support of the thesis statement and claims.

Academic Strategy: Participatory Approach

Objective: At the end of the lesson, students should be able to illustrate the change in Cameron's way of thinking and how he is maturing as a character and as a friend.

Initial Activity: Students will discuss the concept of happiness in our society and what is happiness for them. This will be carried out by having students write a short writing exercise about their views on happiness.

Developmental Activity: Once students have discussed their concept of happiness, students will assess the principles of the CESSNAB as a cult and how the concept of happiness is not the same to everyone.

Closing Activity: After assessing CESSNAB, students will proceed to discuss the impact this has on Cameron as a character and why he decides to leave, noting the shift of Cameron's attitude towards life by writing a reflective piece. This reflective piece can later be used for an essay.

Formative Assessment-Other Evidence: Reflective writing.

Materials: Board, markers, paper, pencil, a copy of the novel.

Lesson Plan #2

I. Unit Theme: 12.5 See It My Way

Transversal Themes: Self-discovery, Reflection

Desired results (Enduring Understanding): Individuals' beliefs and actions are influenced by background, culture, history, family, etc. and play an important role in their communities

Summative Evaluation (Performance Task): Students will search for clues that point towards Cameron's journey being a hallucination.

II. Learning Plan (Suggested Learning Activity):

Standards and Expectations:

12.S.1b: Synthesize, analyze, and debate information, justifying answers with details from texts and experiences.

12.R.6I: Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging.

12.W.1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and sufficient evidence.

Academic Strategy: Participatory Approach

Objective: At the end of the lesson, students should be able to illustrate the various instances in which the reality of Cameron's journey is questioned.

Initial Activity: After reading the novel, students will go back and identify moments in which Cameron has visions of him at the hospital. The students will walk to the board voluntarily and write down these instances.

Developmental Activity: Once students have identified the key moments, students will cite evidence that support the idea of Cameron's journey is a hallucination and draw conclusions based on clues, like for example, the appearances of fire giants alluring to Cameron having a fever.

Closing Activity: After establishing the facts, students will proceed to rewrite the final conversation between Cameron and Dulcie in accordance to their opinion on whether Cameron's journey was real or not.

Formative Assessment-Other Evidence: Reflective writing.

Materials: Board, markers, paper, pencil, a copy of the novel.

Chapter 5: Pedagogical Implications

Young adult literature, as discussed in the previous chapters, is a rich pedagogical tool which provides teachers with effective educational materials that students not only enjoy but can use towards their development. Unlike what seems to be a popular belief, young adult literature covers a wide range of topics which go beyond superficial and senseless topics and has helped form and further develop the world view of many young individuals who enjoy reading it. As such, it would be unwise to ignore the many ways in which embracing this genre can support teachers in dealing with topics that would otherwise, in many ways, be ignored in the classroom. *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, *Going Bovine*, and *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* are just a small speck in the wide range of literature available within the young adult classification worth examining towards its use in a classroom environment.

Summary of Findings

This closing chapter discusses the results of an on-site research in a rural school in Puerto Rico which examines student previous knowledge in regards to young adult literature and writing practices that in many ways support the development of pedagogical tools within this literature classification. Students, by means of a questionnaire (Appendix E), examined their previous knowledge of young adult literature, genres of literature, and forms of writing. This demonstrated how, although students have in many ways dealt with pedagogical approaches that surround this thesis' rationale towards the incorporation of young adult literature in the classroom, they do not have the experience of working with young adult literature in the classroom.

Part I: Experiences with Reflective Writing

When asked about their experience working with journals in their classes, an 85% of the research participants answered how in some way they had used journals in the classroom, which is the most common means of recording observations and collecting students' written pieces. Therefore, students' previous experience with journal writing show reflective writing is already an ongoing pedagogical tool in the classroom used by teachers. Before discussing the experience of students with journal writing, it is worth making the distinction how this thesis regards reflective writing as the kind of writing students record in a journal concerning their thoughts and interpretations of the literature they read. Although participants relayed their recognition of several forms of writing, there was still a gap shown in regards to areas at times directly attached to forms of journal writing such as epistolary writing and reading responses. As such, it is of benefit to explore methods to expand students' knowledge in regards to this form of writing. While reflective writing, in the form of journal writing, is one of the major emphasis of this project, it is valuable to point out that discussions of young adult literature can and should include many if not all of the writing forms illustrated in table 1.

Table 1

Percentage of Participants that Demonstrated Knowledge of Types of Writing

Reflections	69%
Epistolary Writing	0%
Reviews	62%
Creative Writing	100%
Reading Responses	54%
Argumentative Writing	62%

Compare & Contrast	54%
Journalistic Writing	31%

When asked about the types of writing the research participants had practiced through their classes in their writing journals, it was shown how students had a varied range of knowledge regarding these varied types of writing as observed in table 1. All of the participants admitted to having written creative pieces, while 69% admitted having written reflections. Surprisingly, none of the participants recorded having written epistolary pieces, which is the style *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* is written in. This is also reflected when 92% of the participants admitted to not having knowledge of what epistolary writing is. Thus, this data points to the novel as being useful not only to explore real life issues, but also as a starting point for students to explore reflective writing in the manner of epistolary writing. This is particularly useful for building a teaching unit towards discussing the characteristics of an epistolary novel and epistolary writing in the classroom, while also engaging students using a novel relevant to them.

Table 2 discusses the findings related to the type of literary genre the participants have either read or written about while table 3 discusses the kind of literary devices students have explored from literary works. It is of particular interest to this thesis to explore students' experiences in working with novels. Although a significant number of the participants (77%) expressed they had either read or written about novels, young adult literature appears to be absent within the English classroom curriculum. Additional information within these tables offer participants' background in regards to writing, reading, and the recognition of literary devices; all areas crucial in the English classroom.

Table 2

Percentage of Participants that Demonstrated Having Read or Written about Different Literature Genres in the Classroom

Short Stories	100%
Novels	77%
Fairy Tales	31%
Poetry	77%
Essays	85%
Epistolary Pieces	0%
Journalistic Pieces	54%
Plays/Dramas	31%

Table 3

Percentage of Participants that Demonstrated Having Written or Analyzed Literary Devices in the Classroom

Plot	100%
Characters	100%
Setting	92%
Conflict	100%
Themes	92%
Motif	46%
Point of View	92%

Style	85%
Genre	92%
Poetic Devices	77%

Part II: Open-ended Questions

The second part of the questionnaire featured open-ended questions where the participants expressed difficult topics they have previously explored in the classroom, whether these were appropriate and what other topics they would like to discuss in class (items 6-8). From the answers gathered, 69% disclosed not discussing any particular challenging topic in the classroom, while the remaining 31% reported having discussed topics in the classroom. All of the participants who have had discussed challenging topics in the classroom listed violence, drugs, and bullying, while only one participant reported having discussed censorship. One of the participants who had experience with difficult challenges in the classroom added how she wanted to see other topics included in the classroom, for she was tired of constantly writing about bullying.

Regarding the item on whether challenging topics should be included in the classroom, only 15% answered how they would not like to discuss challenging topics in the classroom, all participants agreed they would like teachers to focus on something else. However, 85% of the participants disclosed how they would like for the inclusion of challenging topics in the classroom, the unanimous reason being how these topics are part of life and they would like to explore them with their peers. Lastly, when asked about the topics students would like teachers to cover within their classes, several students argued towards the inclusion of topics related to real life experiences. As expressed by one of the participants, “sincerely, teachers do not talk

about life experiences”. Other participants expressed an interest in “real life based stories,” in the sense that they would like to explore issues that are relatable to everyday life experiences. As such, it is hard not to look at young adult literature as an ideal tool towards working in the integration of these topics in the classroom.

The last item in the open-ended questions asked participants what books have they read or heard about in the English classroom. The books mentioned included young adult titles such as *The Hunger Games*, the *Harry Potter* series, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, *Before I Fall*, *Fangirl*, *The Fault in Our Stars* and *The False Prince*. Additionally, out of these young adult novels, *Hunger Games*, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* and the *Harry Potter* series were mentioned several times. One special case listed a small number of adult books, such as *Romeo & Juliet*, *The Alchemist*, and *Interview with a Vampire*. This list confirms how teenagers in Puerto Rico have heard or read young adult literature novels, the most mentioned books being best-selling novels, suggesting how there is awareness among teenagers of a literature aimed at them.

Part III: Attitudes towards reflective writing

The last part of the questionnaire featured six statements based on a Likert scale with the purpose of determining the participants’ attitudes toward including a writing journal in the classroom. When referring to the use of journals in the classroom, the majority of the participants showed a positive attitude towards their inclusion in the classroom, with 54% responding to “Strongly Agree, and 31% responding to “Agree”; the remaining 15% showed “nor agreement or disagreement”. A positive attitude was similarly expressed when participants reacted to using a journal to keep notes and keep track of what they read, with 62% responding to “Strongly Agree” and 38% to “Agree.” In the same positive note, a total of 85% “Strongly Agreed” to the

suggestion of how a journal helps them develop material for further writing, while a 15% “Neither Agreed nor Disagreed.”

When presented with the statement of whether they think a journal can help students to share their writing and develop their sense of audience, participants showed a positive attitude; 54% of the participants responded to “Strongly Agree” and a 31% responded to “Agree.” Some participants showed no attitude towards this statement, for 15% of them “nor agreed or disagreed.” The statement on whether students feel a journal writing invites them to write showed the most reactions in comparison, although they are in their majority positive; 46% percent of participants responded “Strongly Agree” while 31% “Agree.” A small number of participant showed a negative response to this statement; 8% of the participants respectively “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed.” The last item, which presented how journals helped students understand and explore difficult topics mostly received positive response, with 38% responding “Strongly Agree” and 31% “Agree.” The remaining 31% responded to “nor agree or disagree.”

With these results, it can be concluded how students see writing as a valuable tool in the classroom and how they welcome the idea of keeping a journal in class. In regards to this thesis, these further support efforts to incorporate journal writing practices within the discussion of literature. Young adult literature becomes an excellent pairing to journal writing for students are able to connect with at a more personal level. Although young adult literature goes beyond narratives that represent real life experiences with the inclusion of fantasy, dystopian, and other genres within the young adult classification, the connection students build with characters in such literature allows for deeper connections which translate into reflective practices often expressed through journal writing. Teachers can prompt such connections by building journal writing in the curriculum as they approach the discussion of such novels.

Implications of the Study

Through this study, the students' experiences with journal writing, their opinions towards the inclusion of difficult topics, their exposure to young adult literature and their stance towards the inclusion of journal writing has been assessed. Participants in the study revealed how they have had previous experiences with journal writing and showed interest in the inclusion of difficult topics because they are relatable to real life experiences. This interest shows how many students, while addressing necessary academic areas and literature genres, often feel that the literature available fails to adequately represent them and their life experiences. As such, young adult literature rises up as an ideal alternative for the developing of teaching units which allow for such problems to be addressed while still touching upon the necessary skills students need to possess according to standards and expectations required by the Department of Education of Puerto Rico.

Limitations of the Study

This research proposes the integration of Young Adult Literature in the secondary classroom. However, the scope of this research is limited to the 12th grade, for students in this grade are close to transitioning into adulthood and benefit from the discussions these novels provide. Nevertheless, through the Department of Education's Curricular Map and English Program Curricular Framework, teachers can also incorporate young adult literature to 10th and 11th grade. These students are also on their way to transitioning into adulthood, and would also benefit from the real life situations these novels can illustrate as means for discussion.

This thesis project also shows the assessment of student's experience on reflective writing, their thoughts on challenging topics, and their stance towards the inclusion of reflective writing in the classroom. All of these are elements that push forward the importance of a critical

mindset necessary towards reflective practices and should be explored in detail. However, due to the nature of the project and the limitation of access to schools, the number of participants was low. As such, results of the on-site research in the school cannot be met with generalizations. That said, the group of participants allowed for an effective sampling in the context the research takes place and can lead to further research with a larger population and different grade levels.

Although the novels chosen are representative of current trends in young adult literature, due to the scope of this thesis, it was impossible to explore other genres within the young adult classification such as paranormal romance novels, dystopian novels, and mystery novels among others. These other genres open doors for new ways to incorporate young adult literature in the classroom and provide new and challenging topics that might as well open up discussions in the classroom. As such, it would be beneficial for teachers to observe current trends in young adult literature in order to choose the literature that best meets the needs of their students.

Further Research Areas

This study explored the discussion of young adult literature and its topics as means to make sense of the identity of young adult literature and provide a venue towards its integration in the classroom. However, research on young adult literature is fairly new. As Judith Hayn, et al., put it, “the void in research is that the study of [young adult literature] is fairly new, and researchers are just getting to know this emerging body of literature” (177). As such, an exploration of the ways in which young adult literature explores the life experiences and the psyche of multiple generations of young adults and the manner in which it defines in what is means to be a young adult would be beneficial as a way to explore ways in which our students understand and offer meaning of their experiences in the world. Therefore, it is important for researchers to start develop theories that look upon young adult literature and its development as

a body of literature. While this research only touched upon a small section of the literature and the way that it can be incorporated into the English classroom, it would be useful to explore how teacher should evaluate young adult novels in order to gauge whether they meet the standards necessary for their use in the classroom.

Closing Remarks

Young adult literature is a genre which evolves according to the teenage experience and by marketing prowess. While it is perhaps in its second Golden Age, it is undeniable it has become important in the life of teenagers, creating new readers and has even established a following of its own. As this research has demonstrated, students recognize there is a need for the inclusion of real life issues in the classroom, and young adult literature is the perfect means to address this need. The Department of Education of Puerto Rico, through its curriculum maps, allows for such novels to become tools in the English classroom. As such, this thesis provides just one of many ways in which these novels can find their way into our classrooms and help with the academic development of our students while keeping them engaged.

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Appendix A

Enid Ramos, Superintendente de Escuela
Distrito de Aguadilla, PR

TRABAJO DE INVESTIGACIÓN DE TESIS

Estimada Sra. Enid Ramos

El propósito de esta carta es para solicitar su permiso como Superintendente de Escuelas del Distrito de Aguadilla, ya que me interesa llevar a cabo mi investigación de Tesis de Maestría con alumnos de décimo grado en la [REDACTED]. Actualmente soy estudiante graduado en el programa de Maestría en el Arte de Educación en Inglés (M.A.E.E.) de la Universidad de Puerto Rico en Mayagüez (UPRM), y ésta investigación forma parte de mi investigación de tesis. La investigación consiste en administrar un instrumento con varias preguntas que me ayudarán a diseñar unidades de enseñanzas basadas en literatura juvenil.

El enfoque de mi proyecto de tesis consiste en definir lo que es el género *Young Adult Literature* y su audiencia. En actualidad, Puerto Rico no tiene un canon de literatura juvenil definido (tanto en inglés como en español), y es por eso mi interés en investigar que puede ser considerado como literatura juvenil y su uso en la sala de clases. Adicionalmente, me enfoco en incluir el uso de diarios (*writing journals*) en el salón de clases para desarrollar e introducir unidades basadas en literatura juvenil; el propósito del diario es utilizar diferentes maneras de escritura como medio para discutir temas que puedan ser un poco difíciles, ya que la literatura juvenil se caracteriza por su gran repertorio de temas y géneros, y los estudiantes pueden relacionarse con ellos.

Me comuniqué con el director de la [REDACTED], el Sr. [REDACTED], quien me ha dado su aprobación verbal y escrita. El Sr. [REDACTED] ha demostrado interés en ayudar en mi proyecto de investigación. También he contactado a la maestra de inglés de 10mo grado, la [REDACTED], quien me ha informado que puedo utilizar su salón de clases y sus estudiantes para ésta investigación.


Las preguntas del cuestionario para los estudiantes se enfocan en conocer su opinión, experiencia y actitud acerca del uso de diarios en los salones de clases y el uso de novelas juveniles. Solo puedo pedir que los estudiantes participen en el estudio con el permiso de sus padres o encargados; por ende, he incluido las cartas de consentimiento informado.

La UPRM requiere que estos documentos sean sometidos al *Institutional Review Board* (IRB) para que sean validados. Sin embargo, su autorización como Director es necesaria para cumplir con los requisitos de investigación a nivel institucional. Para poder proceder con el proceso de recopilar datos mediante el instrumento, es necesaria su aprobación.

Sra. Enid Ramos
18 de diciembre de 2013
página 2

Agradezco su tiempo y dedicación. Puede comunicarse conmigo al [REDACTED] o
escribirme a través de mi correo electrónico rene.rodriguez@upr.edu.

Cordialmente,



René M. Rodríguez Astacio
Estudiante Graduado, UPRM

Vo Bo: Dr. José M. Irizarry
Catedrático del Departamento de Inglés, UPRM
Director de Tesis

Vo Bo: Dra. Rosa I Román Pérez
Catedrática Asociada del Departamento de Inglés
Miembro del Comité de Tesis

V^oB^o Enid Ramos Jerez
Ayudante Especial III
Distrito Escolar de Aguadilla
(787) 891-0400

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DEPARTAMENTO DE EDUCACIÓN

SOLICITUD DE AUTORIZACIÓN PARA LLEVAR A CABO VALIDACIÓN DE
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Nombre del Solicitante: Bene N Rodriguez Astacio
Teléfonos: (residencial); _____ (Oficina); _____ (Otro) _____
Dirección postal permanente: _____

Indique el propósito de la solicitud:

- ☒ Validación del(los) instrumentos(s). Especifique el nombre de la escuela, o dependencia donde realizara la validación

- _____ Llevar a cabo una investigación. Especifique el nombre de las escuelas, o dependencias donde se va a lleva a cabo la investigación.

Esta solicitud responde a una petición de:

- ☒ La escuela o universidad en la que estudia
Indique el nombre de la escuela Universidad de Puerto Rico Mayaguez
- _____ La institución donde trabaja
Indique el nombre de la institución _____
- _____ Otra, especifique _____

Título de la investigación: The Perks of Journal Writing: Challenged young adult Literature in Puerto Rican Classrooms.

Universidad donde estudia y dirección (si aplica): UPRM P.O. Box 9000, Mayaguez, PR 00680

Tiempo estimado que tomara la validación, o la investigación: 1 Semestre (Segundo Semestre

Importación y utilidad de la investigación para el Sistema Educativo de Puerto Rico:

Grado Académico
2013-2014

Bene N Rodriguez Astacio
Firma del Solicitante y Fecha

[Firma]
Firma del maestro, profesor,
consejero, o director de la
institución, o agencia y Fecha

Appendix B



19 de diciembre de 2013


A quien pueda interesar,

El señor René M. Rodríguez Astacio estará trabajando su proyecto de tesis "The Perks of Journal Writing: Challenged Young Adult Literature in Puerto Rican Classrooms." El estudiante graduado, René M. Rodríguez Astacio entregará cuestionarios en el grupo de décimo grado en el salón de inglés de la maestra [REDACTED]. Dicha investigación durará desde enero 2014 hasta mayo 2014.

Cualquier duda, o de requerir alguna información adicional, favor comunicarse al plantel escolar al [REDACTED]. Esta misiva sirve como evidencia de la autorización de René M. Rodríguez Astacio a trabajar dicho proyecto en la [REDACTED], Puerto Rico.

Atentamente,

School Logo


[REDACTED]
Director Escolar

Appendix C



Comité para la Protección de los Seres Humanos en la Investigación
CPSHI/IRB 00002053

Universidad de Puerto Rico – Recinto Universitario de Mayagüez
Decanato de Asuntos Académicos
Call Box 9000
Mayagüez, PR 00681-9000



26 de diciembre de 2013

Sr. René M. Rodríguez Astacio
610 Calle Manuel Ramón
Mayagüez, PR 00682

Estimado Sr. Rodríguez Astacio:

Como presidente del Comité para la Protección de los Seres Humanos en la Investigación (CPSHI) he considerado la Solicitud de Revisión y demás documentación para el proyecto titulado *The Perks of Journal Writing: Challenged Young Adult Literature in Puerto Rican Classrooms*.

Este proyecto se va a llevar a cabo exclusivamente en un contexto educativo establecido y el estudio trata sólo sobre prácticas educativas normales. Por tal razón, bajo la cláusula 45CFR46.101(b)(1) está exento de todos los requisitos del 45CRF46.

Permítame sugerirle que por favor no use su Solicitud de Revisión para modelo para ayudar a otros estudiantes a llenarla, debido a que contiene muchos errores. Sugíerale a sus compañeros que pasen a consultarme en la oficina del CPSHI. Aprovecho también para aconsejarle que haga revisar la redacción al español de su cuestionario, ya que hay muchos errores gramaticales.

Cualquier cambio al protocolo deberá ser revisado ya aprobado por el CPSHI antes de su implantación. Agradecemos su compromiso con los más altos estándares de protección de los seres humanos en la investigación y le deseamos éxito en su proyecto. Queda de usted,

Atentamente,

Rosa F. Martínez Cruzado

Rosa F. Martínez Cruzado, Ph.D.
Presidente
CPSHI/IRB
UPR - RUM

Teléfono: (787) 832 - 4040 x 6277, 3807, 3808 – Fax: (787) 831-2085 – Página Web: www.uprm.edu/cpschi
Email: cpshi@uprm.edu



Comité para la Protección de los Seres Humanos en la Investigación
CPSHI/IRB 00002053
Universidad de Puerto Rico – Recinto Universitario de Mayagüez
Decanato de Asuntos Académicos
Call Box 9000
Mayagüez, PR 00681-9000



27 de marzo de 2014

Sr. René M. Rodríguez Astacio
610 Calle Manuel Ramón
Mayagüez, PR 00682

Estimado Señor Rodríguez Astacio:

El Comité para la Protección de los Seres Humanos en la Investigación (CPSHI) ha tomado debida nota de la modificación menor de su proyecto titulado *The Perks of Journal Writing: Challenged Young Adult Literature in Puerto Rican Classrooms*.

Agradecemos el que nos haya notificado y puede continuar con su proyecto sin problema alguno.

Cualquier otro cambio al protocolo deberá ser revisado y aprobado por el CPSHI antes de su implantación. Agradecemos su compromiso con los más altos estándares de protección de los seres humanos en la investigación y le deseamos éxito en su proyecto. Quedo de usted,

Atentamente,

Rosa Fernanda Martínez Cruzado, Ph.D.
Presidente
CPSHI/IRB
UPR - RUM

Appendix D

Universidad de Puerto Rico
Recinto Universitario de Mayagüez
Colegio de Artes y Ciencias
Departamento de Inglés

SOLICITUD DE ASENTIMIENTO

Mi nombre es René M. Rodríguez Astacio y soy estudiante graduado del Recinto Universitario de Mayagüez de la Universidad de Puerto Rico. Soy candidato a la Maestría de Artes en Educación del Inglés (M.A.E.E.) y, como parte de mi proyecto de tesis, estoy interesado en investigar la integración de literatura juvenil en los salones de clases de las escuelas en Puerto Rico utilizando diarios (*writing journals*) como acompañantes de lecturas.

Para lograr mi propósito, necesito hacerte (15) quince preguntas por medio de este cuestionario escrito. El proceso durará aproximadamente unos 20 minutos durante tu clase de inglés y tu maestro estará presente. Tu participación es completamente voluntaria, lo cual significa que no estás obligado/a participar.

El participar en ésta investigación no implica un riesgo más allá de lo normal; si aceptas participar, las probabilidades de que te ocurra cualquier daño serán prácticamente insignificantes. Esta investigación durará hasta el final del segundo semestre del año académico 2013-2014.

Al contestar el cuestionario, no es necesario que escribas tu nombre. Mientras tanto, puedes utilizar otro nombre (pseudónimo). Ajuntaré toda la información que obtenga de ti y tus compañeros de manera que nadie pueda identificarte. Los datos recogidos serán guardados bajo llave en un archivo.

Tus padres, o encargados, han dicho que puedes participar en mi estudio, y ahora es tu turno decidir si te gustaría participar o no. Además, si decides participar y luego cambias de opinión, eres libre de retirarte del estudio sin ningún problema o penalidad.

Mi número de teléfono es el 939-255-1812 y mi correo electrónico es rene.rodriguez@upr.edu. Me puedes llamar o escribir con respecto a alguna pregunta que tengas, o si quieres saber los resultados del estudio. Tendrás una copia de éste formulario para tus archivos.

Gracias,

René M. Rodríguez Astacio

René M Rodríguez Astacio ha contestado todas mis preguntas.

☐ Estoy de acuerdo en participar en este estudio por mi propia voluntad.

☐ No estoy de acuerdo en participar en este estudio por mi propia voluntad.

Firma del participante: _____ Fecha: _____

Firma del investigador: _____ Fecha: _____

Universidad de Puerto Rico
Recinto Universitario de Mayagüez
Colegio de Artes y Ciencias
Departamento de Inglés

SOLICITUD DE CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO

Estimado padre, madre, o tutor:

Mi nombre es René M. Rodríguez Astacio y soy estudiante graduado del Recinto Universitario de Mayagüez de la Universidad de Puerto Rico. Soy candidato a la Maestría de Artes en Educación del Inglés (M.A.E.E.) y, como parte de mi proyecto de tesis, estoy interesado en investigar la integración de literatura juvenil a los salones de clases de las escuelas en Puerto Rico utilizando diarios (*writing journals*) como acompañante de lecturas.

Para lograr mi propósito, necesito hacerles (15) quince preguntas por medio de un cuestionario escrito a estudiantes de 12mo grado. El proceso durará aproximadamente unos 20 minutos durante la clase de inglés de su hijo/a y su maestro estará presente. Humildemente solicito permiso para que su hijo/a forme parte de mi estudio, el cual durará hasta el final del este segundo semestre del año académico 2013-2014. La participación de su hijo/a en este estudio **no** significa ningún riesgo más allá del que enfrenta a diario.

Los datos recogidos se mantendrán bajo llave, lo cual implica que la identidad y la privacidad de su hijo no serán reveladas. Además, cada estudiante llevará un pseudónimo que protegerá su identidad. La información que se revele será de manera grupal, sin identificar a ningún estudiante. Tan pronto entregue y defienda mi tesis, la información recopilada será destruida.

No habrá ningún tipo de remuneración a cambio de la participación de su hijo/a.

La participación de su hijo/a es completamente voluntaria y él o ella puede negarse a completar el cuestionario. También, su hijo/a puede cambiar de opinión y retirarse del estudio luego de haber decidido participar sin ningún problema o penalidad.

Si usted me otorga la autorización para que su hijo/a participe en mi estudio, por favor firme este formulario. Mi número de teléfono es el 939-255-1812 y mi correo electrónico es rene.rodriguez@upr.edu. Puede llamarme o escribirme en caso de alguna pregunta acerca del estudio o si quiere saber los resultados.

Gracias,

René M. Rodríguez Astacio

Por la presente autorizo a René M Rodríguez Astacio del Recinto Universitario de Mayagüez de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, a invitar a mi hijo o hija a una investigación con fines educativos. Puede usar a su discreción información global de la escuela o de los resultados de mi niño o niña en actividades académicas relacionadas con la presentación de su tesis de maestría.

Firma del padre, madre, o encargado: _____ Fecha: _____

Firma del investigador: _____ Fecha: _____

University of Puerto Rico
Mayagüez Campus
College of Arts and Sciences
Department of English

REQUEST FOR CONSENT

My name is René M. Rodríguez Astacio and I am a graduate student from the University of Puerto Rico Mayagüez Campus. I am a candidate for the Masters of Arts in English Education (M.A.E.E.) Graduate Program and, as part of my thesis, I am interested in studying the inclusion of young adult literature in Puerto Rican English Classrooms by using writing journals as a reading companion.

I am inviting you to become part of the study: for the purposes of designing lesson units, I need you to answer a questionnaire with a total of (15) fifteen questions. This will take about (20) twenty minutes of your English class and your English teacher will be present during the period that you fill out this questionnaire. Your participation is completely voluntary; this means that you don't have to participate if you don't want to.

The purposes of this research do not imply a risk beyond what is normal. The probability of being harmed is unlikely if you do choose to participate. This study is set to last until the end of this school semester (May 2014).

When filling out the questionnaire, you do not need to fill out your name. For instance, you can use another name of your choice (a pseudonym). I will gather all the information in your questionnaire, as well as everyone else's. This is to make sure no one will be able to identify your questionnaire. The information to be collected will be kept under lock and key in a file.

Your parents, or guardians, have confirmed that you can participate in my study, and now it's your turn to decide whether you want to participate or not; it's up to you. Additionally, in the event that you decide to participate and you suddenly change your mind, you are free to leave the study at any time without any problem.

You can contact me at 939-255-1812 or write to me to rene.rodriguez@upr.edu in case you have any questions about this study, or if you'd like to know the results. A copy of this form will be given to you for your files.

Thank you,

René M. Rodríguez Astacio

René M. Rodríguez Astacio has answered all my questions.

☐ Yes, I agree to participate by my own will.

☐ I do not agree to participate by my own will.

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

University of Puerto Rico
Mayagüez Campus
College of Arts and Sciences
Department of English

Dear parent, or guardian:

My name is René M. Rodríguez Astacio and I am a graduate student from the University of Puerto Rico Mayagüez Campus. I am a candidate for the Masters of Arts in English Education (M.A.E.E.) Graduate Program and, as part of my thesis, I am interested in studying the inclusion of young adult literature in Puerto Rican English Classrooms by using writing journals as a reading companion.

For this purpose, I need students to answer a questionnaire of (15) fifteen questions, which will take approximately twenty (20) minutes of your teen's English class. Additionally, the English teacher will be present when the students are filling out the questionnaire. I humbly ask for your permission for your son or daughter to be part of my thesis study, which will last until the end of the semester (May 2014). His or her participation in this study does not mean a risk beyond what the students face daily.

The information to be collected will be kept in a file under lock and key; thus, the identity and privacy of your son or daughter will not be revealed. Also, the students will make use of pseudonyms in order to protect their identity. The information revealed will be grouped without

any marker that can identify any student. As soon as I defend my thesis, the collected information will be destroyed.

There will **not** be compensation in exchange for the participation of your son or daughter.

Participation from your son or daughter is completely voluntary, and he or she can refuse to complete the questionnaire. Also, they can change their opinion without any penalty even after agreeing to participate.

If you grant me authorization for your son or daughter to participate in my study, please sign this form. My phone number is 939-255-1812 and my email is rene.rodriguez@upr.edu. Do not hesitate to contact me for any questions about this study or if you want to know the results about this study.

Thank you,

René M. Rodríguez Astacio

I hereby authorize René M. Rodríguez Astacio from the University of Puerto Rico Mayagüez Campus to invite my son or daughter to a research for educational purposes. He can use general information on the school or my child's results in academic activities related to the presentation of his Master's thesis at his discretion.

Signature of the father, mother, or guardian: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix E

12th Grade Bilingual Questionnaire / Cuestionario Bilingüe de 12^{mo} Grado

The Perks of Journal Writing: Challenged Young Adult Literature in Puerto Rican Classrooms

Thank you for participating in the research “The Perks of Journal Writing: Challenged Young Adult Literature in Puerto Rico.” For each section, please follow the instructions provided. As previously stated in the Request of Consent Form, your participation is completely voluntary and you do not have to participate if you don’t want to. Thank you for the time taken to complete this questionnaire. Remember, you can always change your mind and refuse to participate, even if you have already started filling out this questionnaire.

Gracias por participar en la investigación “The Perks of Journal Writing: Challenged Young Adult Literature in Puerto Rican Classrooms.” Por favor siga las instrucciones provistas para cada sección. Recuerde que su participación es completamente voluntaria y no tiene que participar si así no lo desea. Gracias por tomar de su tiempo en contestar éste cuestionario.

I. Basic Information / Información Básica

Age: _____

Gender: _____

Edad

Género

Date: _____

Fecha

- II. Multiple Choice: For the following questions, mark the option that best applies to you. These questions are not intended to measure your experience in your current English class, but rather throughout your whole academic experience.**

Selección Múltiple: Marca la opción que mejor aplique a tu caso. Estas preguntas no tienen como intención medir tu experiencia en tu salón de clases actual, si no tu experiencia a través de tu carrera académica.

- 1. Have you kept a writing journal in any of your classes? ____ Yes ____ No**

¿Alguna vez has utilizado un diario en alguna de tus clases? Sí No

- 2. What kind of writing have you done in your classes overall? (You may choose more than one answer.)**

¿Qué tipo de escritura has completado en tus salones de clases? (Puedes marcar más de una respuesta)

_____ **reflections** / reflexiones

_____ **epistolary writing** / escritura epistolar (epistolografía)

_____ **writing reviews** / *reseñas*

_____ **creative writing (narratives, poems, short story, etc.)** / *escritura creativa*

(narrativas, poemas, cuentos, etc.)

_____ **reading responses** / *respuestas a lecturas*

_____ **argumentative writing** / *escritura argumentativa*

_____ **compare and contrast** / *compara y contrasta*

_____ **a journalistic piece** / *redacción periodística*

3. **Do you know what epistolary writing is?** _____ **Yes** _____ **No**

¿Sabes qué es escritura epistolar (epistolografía)? *Sí* *No*

4. **What genres of literature have you read and written about in class? (You may**

choose more than one answer.) *¿Sobre qué géneros literarios haz escrito o has leído?*

(Puedes marcar más de una respuesta)

_____ **short stories** / *cuentos*

_____ **novels** / *novelas*

_____ **fairy tales** / *cuentos de hadas*

_____ **poetry** / *poesía*

_____ **essays** / *ensayos*

_____ **epistolary pieces** / *literatura epistolar*

_____ **journalistic pieces (articles, newspapers, editorials, etc.)** / *escritura periodística*

(artículos, periódicos, editoriales periodísticos)

_____ **plays/ dramas** (*obras de teatro*)

5. **What literary devices have you analyzed or written about? (You may choose more than one answer.)** *¿Sobre cuáles elementos literarios haz escrito o analizado? (Puedes marcar más de una respuesta)*

_____ **Plot** / *Trama*

_____ **Characters** / *Personajes*

_____ **Setting** / *Escenario*

_____ **Conflict** / *Conflicto*

_____ **Themes** / *Temas*

_____ **Motif** / *Tópico literario*

_____ **Point of View** / *Punto de vista*

_____ **Style** / *Estilo*

_____ **Genre** / *Género literario*

_____ **Poetic Devices (alliteration, metaphors, similes, etc.)** / *Figuras Literarias*
(aliteración, metáforas, símiles, etc.)

- III. **Open-ended Questions: Provide the best answer of your personal experience regarding the following questions.** / *Preguntas abiertas: Conteste las siguientes preguntas basándose en tus experiencias personales.*

6. What themes or conflicts have you read or written about that were challenging or difficult for you in any of your classes? Keep your answers general, like for example, drugs, violence, bullying, etc. *¿Sobre qué temas o conflictos haz escrito o leído que hayan sido retantes para ti? Mantén tu contestación de forma general, como por ejemplo, drogas, violencia, acoso escolar, etc.*

7. From your experience, do you think these topics are appropriate for classroom discussion? Why? / *Según tu experiencia, ¿crees que estos temas son apropiados para un salón de clases? ¿Por qué?*

8. **What topics would you like to read about and see in a classroom environment? /**

¿Sobre qué tipo de temas te gustaría leer o ver en el salón de clases?

9. **What books have you read or have heard of outside of the classroom that you would like to see or suggest for classroom use? If none comes to mind, leave it blank. /**

¿Sobre qué libros has escuchado o leído fuera del salón de clases y te gustaría ver en la sala de clases? Si ningún título te viene a la mente, puedes dejar esta pregunta en blanco.

IV. Opinion / Opinión

In this section, you will read several statements. Please choose the number that best represents your opinion in regards of the statement. The scale works as follows:

5 = Strongly Agree 4= Agree 3= Neither agree nor disagree 2= Disagree 1= Strongly Disagree

A continuación leerá varias premisas. Escoja el número que mejor represente su opinión acerca de ella. La escala funciona de la siguiente manera:

5 = Totalmente de acuerdo 4= De acuerdo 3= Ni de acuerdo, o desacuerdo 2 = En desacuerdo

1= Totalmente en desacuerdo

Strongly agree	Agree	Nor agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
---------------------------	--------------	----------------------------------	-----------------	------------------------------

<i>Totalmente De Acuerdo</i>	<i>De Acuerdo</i>	<i>Ni de Acuerdo o Desacuerdo</i>	<i>En Desacuerdo</i>	<i>Totalmente en Desacuerdo</i>
--------------------------------------	-----------------------	---	--------------------------	---

10. I think writing journals are useful and should be used in class.	5	4	3	2	1
---	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------

*Pienso que los diarios en los salones de
clases son útiles.*

11. I think keeping a journal is an

effective tool for keeping notes and **5** **4** **3** **2** **1**

writing about what I am reading.

Pienso que un diario es una herramienta

efectiva para mantener datos y escribir

acerca de lo que leo.

12. I think keeping a journal would

help me to develop material for **5** **4** **3** **2** **1**

writing.

Pienso que usar un diario me permite

desarrollar material que más tarde puedo

utilizar para escribir.

13. I think keeping a journal can

help me share my writing with **5** **4** **3** **2** **1**

others by developing my sense of

audience.

Pienso que el utilizar un diario me

ayuda a desarrollar mi sentido de

audiencia de lectores con

los que puedo compartir mis escritos.

14. I think keeping a journal sounds 5 4 3 2 1
inviting; it feels like being a writer.

*Pienso que el usar un diario me atrae
a escribir ya que me incita la sensación de ser un escritor.*

15. Writing in a journal helps me
understand and explore readings 5 4 3 2 1
with topics that seem difficult.

*Escribir en un diario me puede ayudar a
entender y explorar lecturas con temas que
pueden ser un poco difíciles.*