

Reframing equity under Common Core: A commentary on the text exemplar list for Grades 9-12

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ABSTRACT: This article provides a commentary on the text exemplar list for Grade bands 9-12 included in the Common Core documents in the United States. It is argued that a critical literacy perspective supports ELA teachers to assert a professional voice when making complex text selections based on diverse students' needs and interests. Implications for how this perspective reframes goals for equity, working both within and beyond the text exemplar list, are addressed.

KEYWORDS: Critical literacy, English education, Common Core Standards, text complexity.

INTRODUCTION

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in the United States represent an historic shift in education policy. Based on the premise that U.S. public schools fail to graduate young people who are academically ready for the demands of college and the workforce, the CCSS (adopted by 44 states at the present time) demonstrate an unprecedented nation-wide standardisation process (Bomer & Maloch, 2011). Letters of support for CCSS (www.corestandards.org) make clear that the new standards address 21st century demands:

With American students fully prepared for the future, our communities will be best positioned to compete successfully in the global economy...The standards are designed to ensure that students graduating from high school are prepared to enter credit bearing entry courses in two or four year college programs or enter the workforce. (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, n.p.)

On the surface, these goals may seem unproblematic. Stakeholders who support the CCSS further acknowledge, however, that equitable access to the opportunities for college and career readiness has historically been determined by the conditions within which one lives. These sentiments are repeatedly echoed in letters of support on the CCSS website:

- This initiative helps provide all students with an equal opportunity for an education, regardless of where they live. (CCSSO)
- These common standards can ensure that every student receives a high-quality education, regardless of his or her place of residence. (Business Roundtable)
- Zip codes might be great for sorting mail, but they should not determine the quality of a child's education or success in the future workforce. (Bob Wise, Alliance for Education)

Thus, supporters of the Common Core acknowledge that access to college and career readiness has fundamentally been an issue of “zip code”—a euphemism for deeply ingrained race and class segregation, or what Tate (2008) refers to as the geography of opportunity in the U.S. While the creators of the CCSS are commendable for considering the inequalities that drive educational opportunities, implementations have fallen short of what is needed for the material social, political and economic changes they advocate.

For English Language Arts (ELA) teachers, the CCSS determine that two major instructional shifts are needed to equalise access to college and career readiness: increased teaching of non-fiction and engaging in study of complex texts throughout the K-12 lifespan. How do teachers and school leaders determine what makes a text complex? Common Core authors, with support from the reading research and professional community, created a triad of tools to offer guidance in this area. These measures include: quantitative features (e.g., lexile levels and other readability formulas); qualitative considerations such as knowledge demands; and reader and task considerations including motivation and purpose for reading (Neuman & Gambrell, 2013). The second and third part of the triad makes it clear that a teacher’s professional judgment about individual readers’ social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds and prior knowledge are a necessary and important consideration. In tandem, each of these tools aid in text selection that achieve the Common Core goals for selecting appropriately complex text. Hiebert (2012) cautions:

The question of text complexity is especially important at the present time because of the expectations established in the Common Core State Standards. At least in the near future, the view of text complexity is going to be powerful in terms of the assessments that students are given, and it is going to determine how we view students’ accomplishments and also the kinds of texts that are given to them. (p. 112)

Included in the CCSS document is a text exemplar list, also referred to as *Appendix B*. The appendix presents a compiled list of texts deemed sufficiently complex to be taught at each grade level. (See *Appendix B* in the CCSS documents, or the Appendix in this document, for an abbreviated list of suggested exemplary texts referred to in this article.) In this article, I join an ongoing conversation in ELA that critiques *Appendix B* for losing sight of what is most important to the CCSS conversation: equity for our young readers. I argue that now more than ever we need a critical lens to question the taken for granted assumptions about the “kinds of texts” suggested for young readers in *Appendix B*. This lens is crucial to support ELA teachers to move forward with implementing the CCSS in more equitable ways. In the remainder of this article, I extend current critiques of *Appendix B*. Then, I discuss how a critical literacy lens helps teachers work within and beyond the text exemplar list to meet the dual goals of challenging and achieving justice for youth.

A CRITICAL LITERACY PERSPECTIVE

My critique of *Appendix B* is informed both by my own critical approach to literature instruction and by my role as an English educator committed to teaching that fosters empathy, democratic dialogue and academic rigour. Critical literacy is a frame readers bring to a text to surface messages that normalise ideas about race, class, gender,

ability and sexual orientation (among additional identity markers). Freire’s work with adult learners in Brazil in the 1960’s (Larson & Marsh, 2005) served as a catalyst for the theoretical underpinnings of critical literacy. Freire moved beyond a skills-based view of literacy, and instead sought to politicise the act of making meaning with the “word and the world” (p. 41). Focusing on the primacy of dialogue, Freire worked with his students to uncover how institutional norms marginalise and privilege groups of people in different social contexts. Engagement with literacy as a social and political practice, then, works to empower individuals to “understand what the text is doing to them and whose interests are served by the positions that are on offer” (Janks, 2010, p. 22). Thus, to engage in conversations about equity with texts, such a lens is needed. Freebody and Luke (1990) note that a reader who adopts this stance reads as a *text critic*. Adopting such a stance requires readers to infer how language and other sign systems shape and are shaped by power. This stance involves close reading of a text with attention to how an author or the messages invoked positions particular identities or “ways of being in the world” (Gee, 2005) for readers. Thus, reading from a critical perspective offers readers a highly complex, interpretive experience and is aligned with CCSS goals.

The kinds of texts ELA teachers select for classroom study greatly influence the ways young readers understand and perform their multiple and intersecting identities in the world. The CCSS make clear that “college and career ready” readers take up identities that include the literacy practices of close reading of complex texts that may marginalise students’ social and cultural worlds (Beach, Thein & Parks, 2007). Critical literacy helps us understand that how a text positions readers influences students’ willingness to engage and perform a readerly identity. Hall (2009) states,

If identity takes precedence in how students approach reading tasks, their decisions may focus on what they need to do in order to hide, maintain, or promote a specific identity amongst their peers, teachers or family members. Therefore, the quality or amount of reading tasks and instruction they receive may have little influence on their actions unless it’s responsive to issues of identity. (p. 287)

For example, Tatum (2009) considers how African American males who live in poverty are positioned by texts that have traditionally been taught in the ELA classroom. Tatum notes that African American males all too often “lack sufficient exposure to texts they find meaningful and that will help them critique, understand, and move beyond some of the turmoil-related experiences they encounter outside school” (p. xii). Tatum’s argument challenges simplistic claims about text complexity as the answer to equitable access to college and career readiness, regardless of how such texts engage readers in critical and meaningful study of their own identity positions in the world.

CRITIQUING THE TEXT EXEMPLAR LIST FOR GRADES 9-12

To critically examine *Appendix B*, I developed a series of questions that ELA teachers also can use to conduct their own analyses of the text exemplar list (and materials created from this list). These questions included:

- What voices, knowledge and genres “count” on the exemplar list?

- Who decides what “counts” on the exemplar list and why does it matter?

To fully address these questions, I also read widely across the CCSS policy documents, the research literature and other publically available comments including blogs and social media. For the purposes of this article, I focus on the suggested stories, poems and informational texts for Grade bands 9-12. The suggested list for the early and middle grades, while equally if not more problematic, can be countered with the same points. It is beyond the scope of this article to include these texts with the depth of analysis they deserve. Even though the list is promoted as “suggested”, if we consider semantics, the list is not titled Suggested Complex Texts or Sample Texts but is indeed referred to as Exemplar Texts to be used as “guideposts” and “models” for complexity, range and quality. Regardless of efforts to promote this list as suggested, the outcome has resulted in publishers, states and school leaders uncritically adopting these texts for use (Short, n.d.). In the sections that follow I delve into two key questions that illustrate the problematic nature of the widespread implementation of this list, focusing on how such implementation threatens ELA teachers’ professional judgment and disregards the needs and interests of 21st-century students.

What voices, knowledge and genres “count” on the exemplar list?

To date, the text exemplar list has been challenged by ELA teachers and researchers for several factors. These reasons include an overemphasis on “classic” or canonical literature, lack of contemporary texts that engage a youth audience and overreliance on print in a digital age (Botzakis, Burns & Hall, 2014; Moss, 2013; Thein & Beach, 2013). I next briefly address and extend each of these critiques.

English educators are familiar with the canonical debate, which has been the subject of much justification and critique throughout our disciplinary history. I draw on Moss’s definition of canonical literature as works that “have stood the test of time, represent high quality, and contain universal truths” (p. 49). Examples of canonical literature that have maintained a stronghold in the English classroom include *The Great Gatsby*, several of Shakespeare’s plays, and *The Scarlet Letter* (each of which are present on *Appendix B*). Many of the texts that connote canonical or “classic” literature have been heavily influenced by governing bodies including the Harvard English department’s list of required reading from 1874-1883 (Applebee, 1996) and the College Board AP English examination (Miller & Slifkin, 2010). For several decades, the canon has been criticised for underrepresenting female authors and/or authors of color, and disengaging contemporary youth. Examining *Appendix B*, we see much of the familiar—overrepresentation of European male authors, and themes or characters that present a dominant, heterosexual and able-bodied perspective.

Even though the text exemplar list does include works by women and authors of colour (e.g., Toni Morrison, Countee Cullen, Amy Tan and Cristina Garcia), the 9-10 Grade band list still includes 85% of works written by white authors and 80% male authors. The Grades 11-12 list is consistent, with 78% white authors and 73% male. These percentages do not represent much of a significant shift from Applebee’s 1996 study of text lists that dominated high school English classes, where “98% of the authors were white and 81% male” (p. 28). While there has certainly been an attempt to create a more culturally inclusive list with *Appendix B*, the list continues a majority

Eurocentric worldview with a “sprinkling of works from other groups” (Perry & Stallworth, 2013, p.16) that continues to position authors of colour and women as “Other”.

Grades 9-10	
Category	Percentage
Male Authors	37/46 = 80%
Female Authors	9/46 = 19%
Authors of Color	7/46 = 15%
LGBT authors/themes	0/46 = 0%
Young Adult Literature	3/46 = .06%
Contemporary (1990-)	3/46 = .06%
Grades 11-12	
Category	Percentage
Male Authors	39/54 = 72%
Female Authors	15/54 = 27%
Authors of Color	12/54 = 22%
LGBT authors/themes	0/54 = 0%
Young adult literature	1/54 = .01%
Contemporary (1990-)	7/54 = 13%

Figure 1. Percent of authors/categories

The list also does not represent any LGBT authors, characters or themes. Across grades 9-12, less than 1% of the texts can be categorised as young adult literature (which I define as written from the viewpoint of an adolescent protagonist) and none present information in any mode other than alphabetic print. Gangi and Reilly (2013) note, “the text exemplars privilege class [and] less than 7% of the exemplars represent working class people and the poor” (p. 13). Therefore, what knowledge “counts” on the text exemplar list still strongly represents European male and middle to upper class cultural perspectives in 19th and 20th-century contexts. Thus, the canonical tradition continues to occupy a privileged position under *Appendix B*. A diverse, young readership will find little within the text exemplar list that speaks to contemporary youth concerns and identities, including race and class segregation.

Who decides what “counts” on the exemplar list and why does it matter?

How was the CCSS Exemplar List created? One might think a rigorous process involving peer-review and involving multiple stakeholders’ voices occurred in the compilation of a list that was published with national guidelines. The CCSS document states that a working group solicited recommendations of titles that met the criteria successfully with students at each grade level from teachers, school leaders and researchers. Several issues plagued the working group and their recommendations, however. Steve DelVecchio, a former school librarian who was responsible for crafting the list, has explained that a group of teachers tried out these books in their classrooms, but could not access all the titles they wanted for reasons that in all likelihood included insufficient resources (Aronson, 2012). According to Short (n.d.):

One of the issues that the group encountered was getting permission to publish excerpts without paying large permission fees. An administrator from CCSSO told me that many of the texts they originally chose had to be eliminated because they

could not get these permissions. That's one reason why the lists contain so many older books and out-of-print books. (n.p.)

Recognising concerns about representation and understanding the flawed process for creating the list provides ELA teachers with essential information for speaking back to pressures to teach texts or textbook materials created from this list. The purpose of this article is not to create a new list of texts to replace *Appendix B*, however. Although additional lists can be helpful in guiding ELA teachers to new perspectives, the goal of this critique is to encourage ELA teachers to critically consider complex text selection with the needs and interests of their own classroom of readers in mind.

If an overarching goal for the CCSS is to address race and class inequities in US schools (or, the “zip code” problem) that have resulted in unequal access to college and career preparedness, to what extent do texts on the exemplar list help or hinder this cause? To what extent are students, who currently experience the daily realities of living in the wrong “zip code”, offered spaces for using literacy to analyse and critique their positioning and become agents of change within the exemplar texts? To what extent do the exemplar texts address the privileges of living in the right “zip code?” In what ways do these texts help young readers become informed citizens who can make voting and policy decisions that attend to the underlying structures of race and poverty that pervade unequal access? An exemplar list that primarily increases students' access to high status cultural knowledge is limited in its ability to address these questions of systemic inequality. Instead, teachers need to be able to choose texts and design curriculum based on the complexities of students and teachers' lives, including economic and social conditions and the variation of state, national and international politics. In the next section, I discuss how teachers can leverage critical literacy, when working both within and beyond the text exemplar list for grades 9-12 to better achieve these goals.

CRITICALLY WORKING WITHIN AND BEYOND THE TEXT EXEMPLAR LIST

What teachers can do to critically read and teach *all* texts

Teachers can engage students in a critical reading of any text, including those present in *Appendix B*. To return to the CCSS overarching goals, facilitating students to take on a critical reading stance is paramount to understanding, analysing and reconstructing race and class systems of privilege and disadvantage. Thein and Beach (2013) present strategies to engage this stance with canonical and contemporary works of literature. For example, they suggest that teachers might work with adolescents to examine stereotypical constructions of adolescents in “crisis” or assumptions about race, class, gender and sexual orientation. The authors also suggest that teachers can pair earlier works with more contemporary titles (e.g., pairing *The Great Gatsby* with *Bodega Dreams*) to examine discrimination due to race and social class from multiple time periods and geographic locations. Further, *The Great Gatsby* also might be supplemented with current non-fiction or media articles that address social issues such as rising income inequality. Blackburn and Smith (2010) discuss how teachers can engage students in critical readings of texts (early works and contemporary) for how they position heterosexuality as normal and natural within

intersections of race and class. For example, students can engage in a study of how desire, masculinity and gender are presented in literature across decades to note changes in attitudes and current limitations. A limitation for only using early canonical works, even with a critical lens, is that texts written by women and authors of colour are highly underrepresented.

Understanding and resisting challenges to multicultural and political texts

A few texts that overtly challenge race and class privilege are included in *Appendix B*; critically approaching the exemplar texts means paying particular attention to these texts and what they can accomplish. For example, Toni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye* is listed as an exemplary text for Grade band 11-12. Morrison's novel addresses how constructions of Whiteness and class in the United States permeate the psyche of African Americans through the story of young Pecola and her symbolic desire for blue eyes. Since the publication of the CCSS documents, the inclusion of this book on the list has been subject to public criticism, even though it is a text that very acutely complicates the race and class inequities that CCSS purports to address. Although this book is often contested on the grounds of sexual content, many educators, including myself, might put forth that this book is contested for challenging race and class privilege—an example of dysconscious racism (King, 1991), defined partly as a limited understanding about inequity and cultural diversity.

An example of such a dysconscious racist stance can be found in conservative ELA scholar Sandra Stotsky's worry that Morrison's book is problematically about "white guilt". She encourages ELA teachers to:

Include literary works in which "white" America is portrayed as containing decent, civic-minded people as well as prejudiced or mean-spirited people. An overdose of "white guilt" literature in the curriculum (like *Ceremony*, *Farewell to Manzanar*, and *The Bluest Eye*) may cause students to associate "multicultural" literature with white-guilt literature and to develop a negative reaction either to "white" America or to the authors and the groups featured in them, depending on the social group in which they may see themselves as a member. (1994, p. 30)

Her statement views racial tension as an interpersonal matter between whites and non-whites, suggesting that literature portray both "good whites" and "bigoted whites" to examine racism in the US. What is absent in Stotsky's statement is a broader understanding of racism as woven within the fabric of U.S. institutions. Privileges associated with Whiteness, such as speaking in a "Standard dialect" and living in the right zip code, which affords access to well resourced schools in the United States, are not interrogated if we view racism as merely a matter to be resolved by studying literature featuring both civic-minded and bigoted white people. Zeus Leonardo (2009) contends that: "Defining racism as fundamentally a problem of attitude and prejudice fails to account for the material consequences of institutional racism, behaviours that produce unequal outcomes despite the transformation of racial attitudes" (p. 132-133). Understanding the critical learning opportunities that Morrison's book presents moves students closer to a systematic understanding of why access to education and social mobility is maintained by intersections of race and class privilege. Thus, ELA teachers need to carefully approach and resist challenges to the political and multicultural texts that *are* on the list; these texts offer rich

opportunities for engaging a complex stance toward institutional oppression—a stance that reframes and achieves goals for equity under CCSS.

Noticing absences and filling voids

It is also important for teachers to become critically aware of the kinds of texts and perspectives that are absent from the exemplar list and look for ways to fill those voids. There are many contemporary, young adult and non-print texts that address critical issues related to race, class and additional identity-markers such as sexual orientation and ability, which are notably absent from the text exemplar list. Of particular note is the complete absence of texts that feature characters who are openly gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender; are questioning heterosexual norms; or who have same-sex parents. From a critical perspective, the texts present on the list marginalise LGBT students' identities and continue to normalise a heterosexual culture in schools. Blackburn and Smith (2010) encourage ELA teachers both to select texts that represent LGBT authors and characters *and* to teach all texts with a critical eye toward heteronormative culture. Examples of YA texts for youth that feature LGBT populations include *From the Notebooks of Melanin Sun* by Jacqueline Woodson (a book that presents intersections of race and sexual orientation) and *Keeping You A Secret* by Julie Ann Peters. (See Logan, Lasswell, Hood & Watson {2014} for recommended YA titles that engage queer themes and meet standards for text complexity.)

Many YA titles also can engage youth in highly complex study of social issues, including *La Linea* by Ann Jaramillo, which details the harrowing journey of young Miguel and his sister Elena to cross the U.S. and Mexico border to reunite with their parents; An Na's book, *A Step from Heaven* and *Funny in Farsi* by Firoozeh Duman, show how characters balance dual cultural worlds and language barriers, offering complex study and connection for students whose home language(s) and culture differ from the culture of power in the U.S. (See Glaus {2014} for further suggested YA titles and how they meet goals for text complexity.) While YA literature does have a presence on the 6-8 Grade band, the limited representation of texts with adolescent protagonists on the 9-12 list trivialises issues important to adolescents and further promotes the myth that selecting YA literature results in “dumbing down” the curriculum. Rather, a growing body of research has shown that these works engage reader motivation (Hughes-Hassell & Rodge, 2007)—a key component of the CCSS triad for determining the appropriateness of a text for classroom study.

The texts that appear in *Appendix B* clearly suggest that complexity is only found in print. Many graphic novels and wordless books, however, offer students opportunities for complex discussions about race and identity. One such work is the Printz Award winning graphic novel, *American Born Chinese*, by Gene Yang, who was recently nominated for a Booker Prize for a different work. This graphic novel presents an intensely complex multimodal reading experience about identity, race and media stereotyping and can be easily paired with informational texts (Schieble, 2014). The graphic novel *Persepolis*, by Marjane Satrapi, offers students a perspective on the role of religion, ideology and government. Graphic novels and other forms of visually represented storylines (e.g., *The Red Tree* by Shaun Tan and *Fun Home* by Alison Bechdel) ignite ways of making meaning familiar to today's adolescents that have grown up in a digital era of television, video games and the Internet (Evans, 2005).

Simply put, multimodal texts are an indivisible part of youth culture and affect the processes by which children and adolescents interact and make meaning with their social worlds (Myers & Beach, 2004). Their absence on the text exemplar list means that ELA teachers must work beyond the list and assert their professional judgment to include these texts as complexly significant for classroom study.

CONCLUSION

First, ELA teachers must recognise that the CCSS documents stress professional judgment as a powerful indicator of what makes a complex reading experience for youth. Thus, ELA teachers have a profound opportunity to apply this rhetoric to select and defend texts that engage 21st-century youth and reframe goals for equity under CCSS. English teachers at all levels can apply the questions offered in this commentary to examine the text exemplar list or similar lists at the school, district or national level. Additionally, professional development might be conducted to support ELA teachers to engage with the text exemplar list and to determine how to work within and beyond it based on their local contexts and students' interests and needs. Equally important to conducting analysis of the list itself is to consider the publication materials that are being (and will continue to be) created on account of shifts in ELA instruction and the text exemplar list. While it is beyond the scope of this article to address these materials, the framework presented in this article will bear important questions and concerns about their implications for young readers.

Equally important to defending text selections, ELA teachers should promote their voice at a local and national level to foster what helps us move toward equity under the Common Core. This might include group organising, voicing concerns in media and with parents and taking a bold step to act as an advocate for students, a position that is challenging for novice teachers to take up. A helpful resource for voicing public concerns about CCSS aligned assessments is www.testingtalk.org. As I wrote this article, many principals, teachers, parents and even students have voiced their concerns over the 3-8 CCSS aligned ELA exams in New York State through media and organised protests (Phillips, 2014). These publications and practices may serve as models for other ELA professionals. Consistent with the theme of this issue, an uncritical adoption of the CCSS text exemplar list is an assault on the very youth we serve and only further drives race and class inequalities that result in uneven access to educational opportunities in the United States.

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APPENDIX**9-12 Text Exemplar List****Grades 9-10 Text Exemplars****Stories**

Homer. *The Odyssey*
 Ovid. *Metamorphoses*
 Gogol, Nikolai. "The Nose".
 De Voltaire, F. A. M. *Candide, Or The Optimist*
 Turgenev, Ivan. *Fathers and Sons*
 Henry, O. "The Gift of the Magi"
 Kafka, Franz. *The Metamorphosis*
 Steinbeck, John. *The Grapes of Wrath*
 Bradbury, Ray. *Fahrenheit 451*
 Olsen, Tillie. "I Stand Here Ironing"
 Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*
 Lee, Harper. *To Kill A Mockingbird*
 Shaara, Michael. *The Killer Angels*
 Tan, Amy. *The Joy Luck Club*
 Álvarez, Julia. *In the Time of the Butterflies*
 Zusak, Marcus. *The Book Thief*

Drama

Sophocles. *Oedipus Rex*
 Shakespeare, William. *The Tragedy of Macbeth*
 Ibsen, Henrik. *A Doll's House*
 Williams, Tennessee. *The Glass Menagerie*
 Ionesco, Eugene. *Rhinoceros*
 Fugard, Athol. "Master Harold" ...and the boys

Poetry

Shakespeare, William. "Sonnet 73"
 Donne, John. "Song"
 Shelley, Percy Bysshe. "Ozymandias"
 Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Raven"
 Dickinson, Emily. "We Grow Accustomed to the Dark"
 Houseman, A. E. "Loveliest of Trees"
 Johnson, James Weldon. "Lift Every Voice and Sing"
 Cullen, Countee. "Yet Do I Marvel"
 Auden, Wystan Hugh. "Musée des Beaux Arts"
 Walker, Alice. "Women"
 Baca, Jimmy Santiago. "I Am Offering This Poem to You"

Informational texts

Henry, Patrick. "Speech to the Second Virginia Convention"
 Washington, George. "Farewell Address"
 Lincoln, Abraham. "Gettysburg Address"
 Lincoln, Abraham. "Second Inaugural Address"
 Roosevelt, Franklin Delano. "State of the Union Address"

Hand, Learned. "I Am an American Day Address"
 Smith, Margaret Chase. "Remarks to the Senate in Support of a Declaration of
 Conscience"
 King, Jr., Martin Luther. "Letter from Birmingham Jail"
 King, Jr., Martin Luther. "I Have a Dream"
 Angelou, Maya. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*
 Wiesel, Elie. "Hope, Despair and Memory"
 Reagan, Ronald. "Address to Students at Moscow State University"
 Quindlen, Anna. "A Quilt of a Country"

Grades 11–12 Text Exemplars

Stories

Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales*
 de Cervantes, Miguel. *Don Quixote*
 Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*
 Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Cask of Amontillado"
 Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*
 Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The Scarlet Letter*
 Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *Crime and Punishment*
 Jewett, Sarah Orne. "A White Heron"
 Melville, Herman. *Billy Budd, Sailor*
 Chekhov, Anton. "Home"
 Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*
 Faulkner, William. *As I Lay Dying*
 Hemingway, Ernest. *A Farewell to Arms*
 Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*
 Borges, Jorge Luis. "The Garden of Forking Paths"
 Bellow, Saul. *The Adventures of Augie March*
 Morrison, Toni. *The Bluest Eye*
 Garcia, Cristina. *Dreaming in Cuban*
 Lahiri, Jhumpa. *The Namesake*

Drama

Shakespeare, William. *The Tragedy of Hamlet*
 Molière, Jean-Baptiste Poquelin. *Tartuffe*
 Wilde, Oscar. *The Importance of Being Earnest*
 Wilder, Thornton. *Our Town: A Play in Three Acts*
 Miller, Arthur. *Death of a Salesman*
 Hansberry, Lorraine. *A Raisin in the Sun*
 Soyinka, Wole. *Death and the King's Horseman: A Play*

Poetry

Li Po. "A Poem of Changgan"
 Donne, John. "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning"
 Wheatley, Phyllis. "On Being Brought From Africa to America"
 Keats, John. "Ode on a Grecian Urn"
 Whitman, Walt. "Song of Myself"
 Dickinson, Emily. "Because I Could Not Stop for Death"
 Tagore, Rabindranath. "Song VII"
 Eliot, T. S. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"

Pound, Ezra. "The River Merchant's Wife: A Letter"
Frost, Robert. "Mending Wall"
Neruda, Pablo. "Ode to My Suit"
Bishop, Elizabeth. "Sestina."
Ortiz Cofer, Judith. "The Latin Deli: An Ars Poetica"
Dove, Rita. "Demeter's Prayer to Hades"
Collins, Billy. "Man Listening to Disc"

Informational texts

Paine, Thomas. *Common Sense*
Jefferson, Thomas. *The Declaration of Independence*
United States. The Bill of Rights (Amendments One through Ten of the United States Constitution)
Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden*
Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "Society and Solitude"
Porter, Horace. "Lee Surrenders to Grant, April 9th, 1865"
Chesterton, G. K. "The Fallacy of Success"
Mencken, H. L. *The American Language, 4th ed*
Wright, Richard. *Black Boy*
Orwell, George. "Politics and the English Language"
Hofstadter, Richard. "Abraham Lincoln and the Self-Made Myth"
Tan, Amy. "Mother Tongue"
Anaya, Rudolfo. "Take the Tortillas Out of Your Poetry"