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## “But She Didn’t Scream”: Teaching About Sexual Assault in Young Adult Literature

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**Abstract:** In this article, three English Language Arts teachers draw on their teaching experiences of addressing sexual violence in assigned young adult literature. The authors use their experiences to guide a series of suggestions for other teachers who wish to teach these texts in their own classes. First, the authors offer suggestions for legitimizing the literature with school leaders and students’ caretakers. Then, the authors offer a list of steps that teachers can follow so that students develop an accurate understanding of sexual assault and rape. Finally, the authors provide curricular suggestions to teach students to critically examine those topics when reading young adult titles. Although the focus of this article is young adult literature, the teaching suggestions can be applied to other texts.

**Keywords:** young adult literature, social justice, English Language Arts



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### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

I walk by and overhear Anita (pseudonym) as she whispers to her peer, "Yeah, but she didn't scream, so it wasn't really rape." I freeze, pivot, and take a seat next to Anita and her friend.

Their book, *Speak*, is tossed open on the floor next to their legs. I think to myself that what I say next is very important; however, I also needed to listen. I need to hear why Anita said what she said.

-Kathleen's tenth grade English class

We have spent several years teaching assigned classroom literary texts that contain sexual assault and/or rape as an important plot point. It has become apparent to us, three current and former English Language Arts (ELA) teachers, that the rigorous work of teaching such topics goes beyond simply being granted the permission and access to do so. Students and the teachers who guide them must understand sexual violence as a concept to fully examine its narrative existence. As Cleveland and Durand (2014) note, teachers should examine the role of sexual assault in literature and explore how sexual assault links to societal misconceptions surrounding sexual violence. The following paper discusses our experiences teaching texts that address one of the most prevalent crimes in our society. We provide suggestions for teaching young adult literature (YAL) that features sexual assault and/or violence. We, the authors, all taught at the same

school: Kathleen taught tenth grade, Cody taught ninth grade, and Jen taught eighth grade.

### Young Adult Literature as a Vehicle for Teaching the Issue of Sexual Assault

We argue that students should understand the issue of sexual violence as a traumatic and real part of the lived human experience, especially because young adults are heavily represented in sexual violence statistics. Startlingly, the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (2012) reports that 42.2% of rape victims first experienced rape before the age of 18. Our concerns are further bolstered by recent Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) data. A survey of college undergraduates from nine institutions found that 34.4% of undergraduates experienced sexual assault in their lifetimes, and 20.5% experienced sexual assault since entering college (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2015). As teachers, we contend that the ignorance or passive acceptance of such statistics is a violation of our students' human rights.

Contemporary ELA courses could do more to educate students about sexual violence. We say this because as we explored our own teaching histories regarding novels that contain sexual violence, we wondered: *How many times had we missed an opportunity to correct a student's misconception in*

<sup>1</sup> We acknowledge that there is a gender spectrum and that myriad pronouns exist that we can use when referring to individuals in our writing. Throughout this

article we will use the pronouns *he* and *she* to reflect the gender identities of those discussed in this work.

*the context of teaching such texts?* As Alexie (2011) points out, many young adult titles banned from public schools contain plot events that adolescent readers might themselves have experienced. Opportunities to address social justice topics exist in every classroom interaction, in every curricular choice, and in “every assigned material” (Shelton, 2017, p. 12); our own classroom contexts were no exception. To illustrate, works in the literary canon chosen for secondary ELA courses frequently feature sexual aggression or violence; for us, this included titles such as *The Kite Runner*, *The Color Purple*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *To Kill a Mockingbird*. We found that YAL in particular serves as an important avenue for understanding complex sociopolitical issues, because it is relatable and accessible to students. Alsop (2003) called YAL novels “critical texts” that allow students to “confront difficult topics” (p. 158). Furthermore, Cleveland and Durand (2014) note that YAL texts should be explored to examine how sexual assaults are portrayed. Therefore, the need for teachers to address the issue of sexual assault through young adult literature cannot be overstated.

### **Suggestions for Instruction**

The next sections provide suggestions for teachers who teach texts featuring sexual assault. These suggestions are informed by our own teaching experiences. First, we discuss how we worked with our school to include selected texts in our curricula. Next, we consider how teachers can: (1) define rape and sexual assault for themselves and their students, (2) work to dispel rape myths and victim blaming, and (3) expand learned concepts about sexual violence through literary analysis.

### **Suggestions for Legitimizing Novels with Parents and Administration**

The complexity surrounding teaching novels that contain sexual assault remains a roadblock for some teachers who wish to teach such texts. Teachers may need to “legitimize” novels that feature sexual violence with their departments and administrators as well as with parents (Jackett, 2007). We address legitimization first because this is often a teacher’s first step in the curricular planning process. The authors were lucky to work with a supportive curriculum coordinator and administration. As a department, we issued a general statement to parents and guardians about the texts we selected in our classes and why they were important to the course. Additionally, parents and guardians were provided with lists of class novels, so they could understand and preview class texts.

We called upon external expert voices to further support our text choices. For example, NPR called young adult literature a “parent’s best friend” when discussing the issue of sexual consent with their children (Ulaby, 2016). Such respected sources as NPR and the American Library Association can be cited when communicating with parents and administrators. However, we recognize that some teachers might still meet with resistance when attempting to include such texts in their reading lists. Therefore, we offer three primary suggestions for legitimizing texts containing sexual assault as part of a well-rounded and responsive curricula: 1) ensure the texts are recognized as rigorous and of literary merit by at least one other reputable entity, 2) link the texts to canonical texts, and 3) offer the texts as book club *options* rather than mandatory whole-class texts.

School leaders may be reluctant to approve texts dealing with sexual assault and/or rape because of the potential for parent objection, misplaced fears of

poor correspondence to standards, or simply due to a lack of precedent. As Connors and Shepard (2013) note, to legitimize YAL, “We need to engage those who would marginalize it on their own terms, arguing for its sophistication, craftsmanship, and yes, even its complexity” (p. 7), which is what we did at our school. Teachers can work to minimize such concerns by independently verifying the literary merit of titles in the eyes of parents and administrators. Successful methods include citing endorsements (such as awards from literary organizations or other school district curricula) and sharing clear and careful plans for instruction. For example, when introducing the realistic fiction novel about sex trafficking, *Sold*, to 9th and 10th grade parents, we explained in a letter to parents that the novel had received multiple literary accolades.

Additionally, teachers can further support their argument with parents and administrators by building and demonstrating connections already considered “acceptable” and YAL literature. We encourage considering Malo-Juvera’s (2014a) approach to teaching such texts, which suggests drawing comparisons between the young adult title *Speak* and canonical texts. Connors and Shepard (2013) also argue that YAL can be legitimized by drawing comparisons between widely-taught texts and YAL (see Figure 1 for a list of suggestions).

Our final consideration includes incorporating YAL literature that features sexual assault as a book club option. We offer this suggestion because some students might find sexual violence triggering or upsetting. By making texts optional, administrators might be more supportive and can better work with teachers should parental push-back become an issue. As Alsup (2003) notes, just because a novel deals with sexual violence does not mean that it should not be taught in school; however, offering it as a choice might be the right option for some teachers. Nevertheless, teachers should ensure that

there is a plan for students who might find such texts a trigger.

### **Defining Rape and Sexual Assault**

As a first step in discussing novels that present rape and sexual assault as plot events, we suggest teachers begin by guiding students to develop a clear definition of these concepts. Teachers themselves must develop a list of related terms and definitions *before* they begin teaching assigned novels so that students have access to accurate, fact-based definitions they can use during textual analysis. Providing a strong foundation for students to understand sexual assault by providing statistics and definitions supports students’ reading of YAL with such topics (Jackett, 2007; Malo-Juvera, 2014b). In our approach, we also suggest students define terms.

In this paper, we employ the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network’s (RAINN’s) definitions of sexual assault and rape. We selected RAINN as a vocabulary resource because terms and concepts are defined in an accessible fashion. For example, some words are defined through question and answer format. RAINN defines rape as “sexual penetration without consent,” and sexual assault as, “sexual contact or behavior that occurs without explicit consent of the victim” (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, n.d.). As the Network notes, it is important for people to understand that “not all sexual assault is rape” (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, n.d.).

We make this suggestion in hindsight, because when Kathleen and Cody taught *Sold*, some relevant terms and definitions were introduced only verbally. However, upon further reflection, we believe that our method would have benefitted from the inclusion of formal vocabulary strategies. It is important that students have a clear and concrete

understanding of these terms. Thus, the following section details our proposed activities for future teaching. We then suggest teachers expand students' understandings by exploring the definitions listed on The Bureau of Justice and Statistics (BJS) website, which provides the public with clear definitions of rape and sexual assault (bjs.gov). These activities can be conducted through a whole-class lesson in which the teacher provides definitions from these published sources and shows them on the board for discussion, or perhaps in small groups where students are given words to define and links to helpful websites. Teachers can also create vocabulary reference sheets so that definitions are clear and universally used by students in their class discussions and writings, and when expanding their understanding through literary analysis.

We also suggest that students reading YAL with sexual violence as plot events also read news stories about sexual assault and look at examples of sexual assault from the media. Jackett (2007) finds in his study that students did understand rape as a concept once he asked them to read articles to help them address rape and sexual assault in contexts *outside* of the literature. Cleveland and Durand (2014) state that by connecting YAL that contains sexual assault to the media, educators can help students address broader national and cultural concerns about sexual assault. For example, when Kathleen and Cody taught *Sold* as a combined 9th and 10th grade text, they printed and distributed recent local news stories that discussed human trafficking (see Figure 2 for some examples). By doing so, students realized that human trafficking was happening in their home state, just as it happened to the protagonist, Lakshmi.

When Kathleen and Cody co-taught *Sold*, the 9th and 10th grade students gathered in Kathleen's English classroom. Concepts were frontloaded for students and both grades reviewed key ideas about

human trafficking, such as statistics and how individuals become trafficked. Students were given a list of approved articles to review (in teams) and annotate. Students annotated the articles and marked key information about human trafficking in the U.S. Using the news stories as examples, students posed clarifying questions about the definitions. For our own future practice, we plan to include the guidance department in this activity to support students who may be emotionally triggered by the subject matter.

### **Dispelling the Rape Myth and Victim Blaming**

To understand the selected authors' intended themes (and to enrich their own lives), students would benefit from an understanding of the issues of rape myths and victim blaming. Of course, it is essential that teachers understand these terms and concepts before teaching them. Parrot and Cummings (2006) note that the United States has many "common" rape myths; Burt (1980) notes that rape myths are ideas that exist in society to legitimize sexual violence. Malo-Juvera (2014b) argues that it is important to reduce rape myth acceptance. Together with our students, we must address and analyze the societal structures and systems that allow these myths and sayings to permeate society. In Figure 2, we offer suggested nonfiction readings for teachers that explain victim blaming and rape myths. Students can also read these articles and engage in class discussions with the guidance of the teacher.

Helping students develop a clear understanding of rape myths might help mitigate dangerous assumptions (Malo-Juvera, 2014b). One such assumption is that the "rape survivor has to justify why it was preferable to be raped and live rather than to fight back and die" (Alsup, 2003, p. 163). Such assumptions might muddy students' understanding of rape-based literature or worse:

impact their own personal lives. Park (2012) found that her middle school female student participants often blamed the victim and noted that a student believed, “Sexual violence is the result of individual girls making poor decisions, such as flirting or drinking at a party” (p. 202). Malo-Juvera (2014b) found that teaching the young adult novel *Speak* was effective when combating pernicious rape myths. Additionally, Cleveland and Durand (2014) argue that addressing how characters are treated within YAL texts that contain sexual assault provides educators with curricular opportunities to explore victim blaming. Jackett (2007) explored the term slut and associated readings with students.

A feminist lens would suggest that teachers should explore rape myths with students, focusing on gendered patterns of behavior (Appleman, 2015). Jackett (2007) also suggests asking students to address readings using Appleman’s (2015) suggestions for teaching using literary theory. For example, as Cleveland and Durand (2014) explain, *Speak* explores what happens when a victim is silenced after an assault, by paying particular attention to gendered responses and addressing what happens when Melinda shares what happened to her. Men have an overall higher rate of rape myth acceptance; hence, there is a higher rate of violent behaviors by men towards women (Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). Literature featuring sexual assault and rape helps students navigate messaging about these issues that they may receive from the media (Cleveland & Durand, 2014). Too often, students are not always aware of the underlying political messages they receive from entities whose pedagogy is “invisible and unconscious” (Kellner & Share, 2005, p. 372). For example, a study of college-aged males found that over a quarter of participants could not accurately identify what constitutes “rape” (Edwards, Bradshaw, & Hinsz, 2014).

We felt our students’ nebulous understanding of sexual assault complicated their understandings of plot events in assigned novels. For example, when reading *The Taming of the Shrew* (often paired with the YAL novel, *Sold*), Kathleen and her class discussed catcalling. Students considered ways women in contemporary society are still treated like the protagonist, Katherine. One male student shared that he had previously engaged in catcalling. When Kathleen asked him why, he said he thought that “girls like it.” In class discussion, his peers (predominantly female) explained that they had felt frightened in their everyday lives when men made uninvited calls after them. It was through this moment of class discussion that the teacher was able to deconstruct why catcalling and other related behaviors were aggressive and demeaning. Unprompted, several students helped dispel a common myth held even by a classmate by sharing why they did not like it. Furthermore, this example shows how class discussion can help dispel the societal misunderstanding that women “like” or “enjoy” verbal assaults and view catcalling as a form of flattery.

### **Connecting Concepts Through Young Adult Literature**

In this section, we describe how we taught four titles across our various grade levels, and we note areas of improvement for our future teaching. The four young adult titles we suggest all take place in settings that span history and geography; yet, sexual assault and rape occur in each of the settings. Additionally, these are the texts we used in our own courses. However, we do recognize that there are other published texts that would also work well. For example, Cleveland and Durand’s (2014) review of texts that feature rape and sexual assault offer teachers additional titles they may want use to explore these issues in their classrooms.

To teach these texts, students should be asked questions that require them to grapple with the institutional and socio-political elements that perpetuate sexual violence and assault within an environment. It is our hope to make this type of questioning more explicit in our future teaching and we offer these guidelines to other teachers who wish to strengthen their students' analysis of such texts. It is common in English class to have students address literary concepts in texts; however, students can also analyze texts for concepts pertaining to sexual violence. Teachers can prompt students to think about power dynamics within a literary environment by posing questions for students to discuss (see Figure 3 for some examples of questions). Students should begin to apply their new understandings of sexual assault, rape, the rape myth, and victim blaming to assigned literary works.

The novel *Sold* is about a young girl from Nepal who is trafficked to India for sexual exploitation. The prevalence of sexual violence in the storyline is intertwined with poetry that serves to illustrate the horror experienced by human trafficking victims. McCormick doesn't shy away from rape in the novel; however, instead of graphically detailing the protagonist's multiple assaults, she writes in increasingly fractured poetry to convey the emotional breakdown of the main character. Kathleen and Cody asked students to complete an annotated timeline in which they traced how Lakshmi, the protagonist, changed over the course of the narrative. Specifically, students were asked to make connections to events, settings, and other characters to understand how social norms and dynamics shaped how Lakshmi was either supported or marginalized.

Because Lakshmi was forced to live in the brothel, many students frequently asked, "Why does Lakshmi stay in the brothel?" Kathleen often asked in response, "What barriers prevent Lakshmi from

leaving?" Students noted that the characters could not return home because they felt shame or worried that families might reject them (as was noted in the text). Kathleen then asked students to make a list of reasons why it might have been difficult for the young characters to leave the brothel. Additionally, students pointed out that Lakshmi was trafficked from another country and was unfamiliar with the city, characters did not have access to resources to leave, and the brothel used violence to keep the girls trapped. When Cody worked in small groups with students, one student at a discussion table added that Lakshmi's "social standing made other people not believe her." Another student added that there were implications for their own lives: "Girls get reputations for dating that boys don't. A girl who dates a lot of guys won't be believed if they say they were assaulted because people will just say she's 'a slut.'"

After students understand terms like victim blaming and rape myth acceptance, they can analyze how these concepts manifest in the selected work. For example, *Gabi, a Girl in Pieces* addresses the issue of date rape. In the novel, Gabi is confronted with her mother's beliefs about female sexuality and her own. She spends much of the novel navigating how to stay true to her own belief system and not that of society and her mother. At one point in the plot, Cindy (Gabi's friend who has a significant role in the text) shares that she had been raped earlier. Gabi tries to be a supportive friend while also dealing with her own anger at the situation. The exchange and resulting anger that Gabi feels allows for students to question, why might someone not want to report sexual violence? As soon as Kathleen assigned the novel as a book club option, one of her students became very interested in how gender roles influence character actions and thinking. In class discussions, the student highlighted the societal double standard of what she called "promiscuity" in society. The students' comments caused other book

club members to consider why male characters did not have to wrestle with "being a good girl" the way that Gabi and Cindy did.

One novel in which symbolism plays a major role is the novel, *Speak*. *Speak* has also been explored by multiple scholars in their studies of students reading and exploring YAL (e.g. Alsup, 2003; Jackett, 2007; Park, 2012, Malo-Juvera, 2014b). *Speak* follows the story of Melinda, who has just entered high school. The first section of the novel details Melinda's loss of social standing with her peers and establishes her growing silence. *Speak* specifically addresses the issue of date rape; furthermore, it explores the trauma of a rape survivor. In the work, Melinda is often described as having bloodied lips, and she perpetually chews on them. When Kathleen first taught the text in her 10th grade class, students often drew images of Melinda's bloodied lips and labeled them with words like "silence" or "she doesn't speak." The symbol of Melinda's mouth and the title highlight her silence and trauma. Once the rape is revealed at the close of the novel, students were asked to readdress the symbol.

The first time Kathleen taught this novel, she asked students to get into a line and they were asked "agree" or "disagree questions." The anticipation activity served as a discussion starter for students to consider Melinda's high school experiences. Many of her questions were generated by students and compiled the class period before. The activity permitted students to pose discussion questions about topics they wanted to address as they read the novel. Popular questions included, "Why didn't Melinda's parents do anything?" or "Why did Melinda's friends ignore her?" These questions helped Kathleen develop class discussion questions. A question Kathleen posed was "Why did Melinda think she could not speak?" In Kathleen's high school class, students noted that Melinda was often bullied and picked on. It is not revealed that

Melinda was raped until the close of the novel. In final class discussions after the rape is revealed, students concluded that Melinda was completely isolated after her rape, and her family and peers did little to explore her drastic changes in behavior and dress.

Also imperative to teaching YAL that features sexual violence is ensuring that the classroom holds meaningful discussions about the topic of sexual assault before, during, and after readings. Undoubtedly, discussing topics like sexual violence is an uneasy task for some teachers (Alsup, 2003; Jackett, 2007), but uneasiness can "be used to generate, rather than shut down, conversations in the English classroom" (Niccolini, 2015, p. 27). As NCTE Vice President Chadwick (2016) notes, as classroom teachers, "We provide safe and trusted spaces for them where difficult conversations can and do take place" (p. 91). One way that teachers can prepare the classroom for such discussions is to create a "discussion agreement" as a class community. As Park (2012) noted in her study, student discussions on these topics, particularly if in book clubs, need to be closely monitored to ensure students engage in meaningful discussion.

Discussions can also result in follow-up activities in which students consider social action based on what they discussed. As Simmons (2012) notes, child prostitution is "not a fictional horror" (p.30). In her proposed framework for connecting *The Hunger Games* to social justice topics, Simmons (2012) posits that students might also need to be aware of terms and statistics to understand trafficking. Simmons suggests that students can create posters with facts and statistics to hang around the room. Similarly, Kathleen asked students to create "human rights" posters using the International Declaration of Human Rights to determine which rights Lakshmi's traffickers had violated and displayed them in the



class. Students often focused on how sexual violence is a violation of human rights.

Addressing sexual assault and rape within young adult literature can also support students in developing a more realistic understanding of historical events. *Copper Sun* addresses the rape of enslaved women. Some textbooks at both the secondary and college-level often erase or omit the real historical horrors of slavery (Loewen, 2017). Jen asked her students to compare how their U.S. History textbooks addressed slavery with how Draper writes about slavery in *Copper Sun*. Students were quick to point out that their textbooks did not mention the raping and assaulting of enslaved people. Students then discussed why textbooks would leave out this part of history. In her future teaching, Jen wants students to compare assault and rape, real and alleged, in *Copper Sun* with *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Students will explore why white men in *Copper Sun* raped enslaved women with no consequences while Tom Robinson, a black male, was unjustly accused of raping a white woman despite evidence of his innocence in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Teachers can guide students to explore how history, race, and society influence issues of justice in these texts. Through these explorations, students should confront the representation of historical facts and figures, including that some figures often revered in national narratives and history books, perpetuated these injustices.

A final consideration includes our acknowledgement that the texts discussed in this article focus on sexual violence against cisgender women by cisgender men, which provides only a limited view of the full reality of sexual violence in our society. Pattee (2004) notes that texts that can challenge our understandings of gender and victimization are unfortunately rare and unequivocally necessary. Research shows that sexual violence committed against LGBTQ students is underreported due to

social barriers such as fear of being “outed” and isolation (Potter, Fountain, & Stapleton, 2012). Individuals who do not adhere to a strict gender binary face violence at underreported levels due to systematic misunderstanding of gender identifications that resist binary demarcations (Harrison, Grant, & Herman, 2012). Furthermore, K-12 public school sex education is rooted in an outdated hetero- and cisnormative framework that leaves LGBTQ students without proper information and support (Pettway, 2016). Teachers might include texts that address sexual violence against LGBTQ individuals, such as Cheryl Rainfield’s *Scars* and Rachel Gold’s *Just Girls*.

### Concluding Thoughts

As noted in the opening vignette, Anita, one of Kathleen’s students, did not necessarily understand the instance of sexual violence in the novel, *Speak*. After the interaction, Kathleen and the student moved back through the text and addressed the plot events that resulted in the student’s misconception. With her reading partner, the student looked at flashbacks and reviewed key quotes that indicated that Melinda was struggling with her trauma. This vignette highlights opportunities to address misconceptions about sexual violence in texts, misconceptions that have implications for students’ daily lives. We believe classrooms need more of these opportunities.

We are living during an important cultural moment where victims of sexual violence are speaking out. The #MeToo movement highlights how sexual violence has entered the public discourse at-large. Yet, the lack of classroom discussion on this topic can leave many students with incomplete understandings of sexual violence. Fortunately, teaching literature that educates students on sexual violence can fight against this trend. Cleveland and Durand (2014) note that such texts offer students an

opportunity to participate in the national discussion around this topic. In our article, we have detailed how young adult titles can be used to discuss the issue of sexual assault. However, young adult titles are not the only texts capable of promoting discussions. Cody, in teaching *Romeo and Juliet* this school year, used the opening scene of the play to discuss sexual violence and victim blaming. Gregory and Sampson, two servants of the Montague family, brag about women being sexually abused. One student voiced that Gregory and Sampson were “just the type of creeps abusing women today.” A second student pointed out that Gregory and Sampson were engaging in victim blaming, and “We have to stop

blaming victims in our society. We have to be better than these Shakespeare characters.”

Our suggestions in this article can support teachers who seek to use literature instruction to cultivate a citizenry that fights for justice and safety within and outside of classrooms and hallways. Additionally, we hope that the current political urgency around this topic results in more studies and articles that explore how teachers can use YAL texts, such as those noted in this article, to cultivate students’ awareness of these issues. Our classrooms and our students cannot be shut out of that conversation.

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Text	Whole Class/ Book Club	Sexual Assault	Text Pairing	Why pair these texts?
<i>Speak</i>	Whole Class and Book Club Option	Date Rape is a major plot point and central to the conflict.	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	Both texts deal with the treatment of women (family, friends, expectations of behavior, socialization of women). Additionally, both texts address dating and romantic relationships.
<i>Copper Sun</i>	Whole Class	Rape and sexual assault are plot events throughout the text.	<i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>	Both texts address the treatment of African Americans throughout American history. <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i> explores how one character is unjustly accused of rape while <i>Copper Sun</i> explores the exploitation and inhumane treatment of slaves.
<i>Sold</i>	Whole Class	Sex Trafficking is central to the plot and conflict.	<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>	Both texts deal with the unfair treatment of women and abuse (family, friends, expectations of behavior, socialization of women).
<i>Gabi, a Girl in Pieces</i>	Book Club Option	The protagonist's friend reveals that she was assaulted. Important to the central story; however, the assault is a minor plot event.	<i>The Kite Runner</i>	Both texts deal with the coming of age. Both texts also address how the characters "don't always fit in" with family and friends. Both texts explore how friends make choices based on social expectations and how sometimes the results of these choices are at odds with the protagonist's understanding of the world.

Figure 1. Pairing YAL with Classic Literature

### Nonfiction Resources Explaining Rape Myths and Victim Blaming

Students select different topics and readings that they are comfortable with to learn about sexual assault. We suggest using a Jigsaw for this activity so that students can engage in choice and peer teaching.

Amnesty International Educator's Guide: Respect my rights, respect my dignity: Module three - Sexual and reproductive rights are human rights:

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/ACT3000102015ENGLISH.PDF>

Huffington Post Blog: "Fighting Rape Myths with Empathy": [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marina-rosenthal/fighting-rape-myths-with-empathy\\_b\\_10228836.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marina-rosenthal/fighting-rape-myths-with-empathy_b_10228836.html)

*Miss Representation*: <http://therepresentationproject.org/film/miss-representation/>

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN): <https://www.rainn.org/>

Take Back the Night Organization:

<https://takebackthenight.org/><https://takebackthenight.org/><https://takebackthenight.org/>

Why These Disney Films May Help Perpetuate Rape Culture: A lot of the classic tales you know and love have a pretty dark subtext <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/disney-films-rape-culture>

Human Trafficking Hotline <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/states>

Figure 2. Nonfiction Resources Explaining Rape Myths and Victim Blaming

**Critical Text Questions**

Who gets believed in the text? Why?

What barriers exist for characters seeking justice?

How are the perpetrators of assault and violence treated by institutions? Why?

How are the survivors of assault and violence treated by institutions? Why?

How does race impact how survivors of assault and violence are treated?

How does class impact how survivors of assault and violence are treated?

How is power maintained within this environment?

What symbols exist in the text that express these injustices?

What gender roles exist in the text?

How are these gender roles maintained in the text? How are they disrupted?

*Figure 3. Critical Text Questions*