

2020-21 MS ENGLISH LITERATURE SELECTION ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

8TH-GRADE READING GROUP

AGENDA & NOTES

3/31/21; Virtual: <https://pausd.zoom.us/j/94766097557>; 4:10 – 6:10

DESCRIPTION	NAME	PRESENT
ENGLISH INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER	Deanna Jones (8) Fletcher MS djones@pausd.org	Yes
	Kim Lohse (7) JLS MS klohse@pausd.org	Yes (arrived 5:30)
	Brooke Tassa (6) Greene MS btassa@pausd.org	Yes
MS ENGLISH TEACHER	Ander Lucia (8) Fletcher MS alucia@pausd.org	Yes
	Kari Nygaard (8) JLS MS knygaard@pausd.org	Yes
	Jennifer Valero (8) JLS MS jvalero@pausd.org	Yes
	Kelly Zalatimo (8) Greene MS kzalatimo@pausd.org	Yes
PARENT REPRESENTATIVE	Iva Reid JLS parent izreid@gmail.com	Yes (arrived 4:30)
STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE	Olivia Souter Fletcher student Olivia's parent's email: souter98@sbcglobal.net	Yes
HS ENGLISH TEACHER	Shaina Holdener Gunn HS sholdener@pausd.org	Yes
ENGLISH LANGUAGE REPRESENTATIVE	Jedd Bloom Greene MS jebloom@pausd.org	
TEACHER LIBRARIAN	Kristen Lee Fletcher MS klee@pausd.org	Yes (arrived 4:30)

DIRECTOR, SECONDARY ED	Kathie Laurence District Office klaurence@pausd.org	Yes (arrived 4:56)
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT, SECONDARY	Sharon Ofek District Office sofek@pausd.org	
FACILITATOR, TOSA	Karen Logue District Office klogue@pausd.org	Yes

AGENDA ITEM	NOTES
1. Welcome!	
2. Agenda Overview	
3. Review Norms & Expectations	
4. Fishbowl Setup	<input type="checkbox"/> Quick Reminders
5. Fishbowl Discussions	<input type="checkbox"/> Discuss possible core lit candidates <u>Poet X:</u> <p>Teacher: loved this book; appreciate that it is written in verse; clear climax and resolution. The audiobook was read by author; wonderful to hear – spoken word element really comes through when listening to the author. For some of our students I wonder about their connection to the text and how they might relate to the content. Some are so there; some are young and it might feel like they are being thrust into this exploration they are not ready for. Hesitation in terms of the content and if it’s relatable enough</p> <p>Student: also really love this book. Read it all in one night. speaking to the relatability: I’m not Catholic or Dominican, but I could relate to it. I’m also going through confirmation – could relate to the struggles of faith, processing everything in life through writing; finding sanctuary in written word – hit close to home. Very familiar. Her brother’s struggle too with sexuality was really real. Personally I recommend it for core, but as long as it’s an option and a resource that teachers have, I’d be happy.</p> <p>Teacher: I fully agree with both who have spoken. Really love the book, too; was really moved by it. I did only listen to the audiobook, just want to acknowledge that I did not read it. I want to recommend it for HS core, that’s not our job here. I think it would capture some of our readers but not sure all our readers are ready for it. See older readers getting more out of it. It would be great for this book to be a mirror, but mostly going to be a window in our community. I can see this book being really</p>

transformative.

Teacher: I loved that it was a book in verse. Looking at arc from 6-8, we don't have other books in verse. Same – I don't see myself being mirrored in this story, but the struggle with parents and own identity is really real and raw. Might be nice for kids to see. Novel in verse is short would be an easier fit into curriculum. Could fit into a broader unit.

Teacher: a lot of what's been said I completely agree with. Some parts read like a novel and some read like really good poetry. I liked that it was really a positive portrayal of someone's relationships and acknowledging her growing sexual feelings. I question if all of our kids are there and I question some of the language (f-word). Remembering parents' objections to Sex Ed curriculum, makes me a little hesitant. Very personal book, too, and I would have loved this book as a teen, but I don't know if I would have wanted to discuss it with a whole class. I love it – so in that sense core. There are aspects of it that really fit all criteria.

Teacher: general comment because of a pattern I've noticed. I noticed that with this book and with *The Hate U Give*, that there was a concern about the book being too old for some students and not being too old for other students. I want us to think about how we put books into some kids' hands and not into other kids' hands. I worry that sometimes we assume that some kids are more sheltered or innocent than others

Teacher: some of my comments about age are based on my experiences teaching *The House on Mango Street* to 7th graders. I felt that the text went over some heads. It wasn't a problem; no one complained. Just a feeling that this beautiful text was lost on some of my students. You're right that it's hard to predict where students are coming from.

Student: think about age. I'm on the younger side of 8th graders. Personally, I don't think this book was too mature. I do know that there are some students who might not appreciate how well the *Poet X* is written and that's where projects and group conversations could happen. With books that handle a lot of hard topics, it is good to talk them through because there will be kids who notice some things that others miss. Talking leads to deeper understanding

Teacher: where I'm coming from - *Twelve Angry Men* has some mild swearing and some kids won't say the words. We have students with a wide range of comfort

Teacher: maybe a question then for the committee to consider is how much comfort are we willing to sacrifice for the greater goal? I wonder too how much is code-switching – I'm in a

classroom setting – I don't want to get in trouble; I don't want to cuss here. More acceptable to cuss outside the classroom. In the classroom they would never say that. I don't discount that some people might be uncomfortable saying the swear words. Bigger question is how much discomfort are we willing to take for greater good? I heard all the positive things you all said [about this book]

Teacher: thanks for that question. I'm even thinking about it now. as I was reading the text, I was uncomfortable and I had to interrupt that – realize that I grew up in a Puritan country. When there's a poem about masturbation, I think oh, I can't go there with students. But having a positive portrayal of sexuality could also be really powerful

Student: I think on a language standpoint, I didn't read any new words in the book between television and older siblings. At some point, we have to think about who we are protecting and why? Are we protecting our students or are we protecting ourselves because we are uncomfortable teaching it? I have a friend who is uncomfortable around swearing, but at the same time, it's part of being a teenager. Tom Sawyer – I know there were slurs and language in there. It's been done before; question is what context it's done in. Tom Sawyer features a white lead and Poet X a Dominican-American lead

Teacher/Librarian: I have faith in the teachers being able to handle the swear words. I totally have faith in you. If it feels awkward or difficult, we have resources.

Dragon Hoops:

Teacher/Lib: This book covers 3 things students requested – sports, graphic novels, and diverse. Loved that it's nonfiction – this is something we could consider. It's about speaking up. Not a sports person at all and I loved this one.

Student: not a sports person either and I know a lot of kids who are and I think there would be a lot of names and games and sports stuff that they would recognize and that would be important to them. I really liked this book; didn't feel like non-fiction. Handled a lot of topics like religion, racism, prejudice against people of different religions and skin colors

Teacher: I agree with what's been said. Love diversity, graphic novel. Read very quickly. Teachable. The one thing I was concerned about from the student perspective – the breaks where Yang reflects on his writing – sometimes it drags. I wondered about 8th graders reading that part.

Teacher: would love to teach a graphic novel. Love that it's local. Would be happy teaching this book. Happy with core. I'm in connections, I do a lot of nonfiction already so I'm over here in the corner rooting for fiction

Teacher: I agree. Loved the graphic novel. But it's another male lead. Which is pretty much what we have in 7th and with *Twelve Angry Men*, so that's my question mark that goes up

Teacher: see where [teacher] is coming from. [There is a] Female aspect – women getting involved in basketball. Sister/little brother relationship aspect. Aspect of whether or not to include the coach – did it happen? Didn't it? How much power do we give something by writing about it? Kind of a similar thing to what *Pet* was touching on. How much do we face something? Might fall under what teacher was saying about kids not being so into that. Yang might have some cred for Avatar

Parent: I would just ask if this is more of an underdog story? Comments in other meetings about a lot of books covering a heavy topic? Underdog might be nice.

Teacher: touches on a lot of heavy topics but doesn't linger like some do. Wouldn't necessarily call it light-hearted, though

Teacher: question – still percolating around the concerns of language when we were talking about *Poet X*. There's language [in *Dragon Hoops*] – but it's different.

Teacher: swear words land differently in this book than in others?

Teacher: yeah, maybe. It's lighter. It's **'ed out in the text.

Teacher: it's kind of interesting because if you know the word, it doesn't matter whether it's the symbols or not. If there are some kids who made it to 8th without swear words, I guess they're protected

Port Chicago 50:

Teacher/librarian: Set in our backyard. And yet I didn't know about it. No idea of this history although a former history major. Loved the primary documents. Amazing pairing with *Twelve Angry Men* – this is the trial. In *TAM*, you hear about the trial. Thurgood Marshall shows up in this one. Whether it's about AAPI history or African-American history, it's time for us to include this type of literature for our students. Whether core or supplemental, strongly feel this should be on our offerings

Student: yeah, same. Something this big, must have been in all the papers. Why haven't we heard of this? Said there were movies (in end papers) – I hadn't heard about this at all. Also made me think about how it could tie into curriculum. Either English or History teachers could have students find about an obscure moment in history and have students research them. Needs to be somewhere – don't know where [core or supplemental]. There's a lot of information in the book and a lot to process.

Teacher: I agree that it was a powerful book and that it does pair well with *TAM*. For that reason, I support it more as supplemental because we do our justice books and they are powerful, too. Share from our PLC meeting – [teacher] shared that he really wanted Small's authentic voice and he wondered how it would have been handled by a different writer. Sheinkin is white. Sheinkin takes a smaller event and makes it into a MS drama – made this teacher question his authenticity. Will say that it does focus on male voices once again

Teacher: I do like this for supplemental. I think it's a powerful story. I read it and I had to take breaks. Because so much of it resonated – haven't had that experience [the one described in the book] – but I have had the 'you're overreacting' experience – really heavy. I wonder if it should be more of a choice book? Less of a flow as far as writing. It pairs with what we already have and we may want to find something a little different

Teacher: I haven't read it. Just did a little research. Can someone explain the structure to me? What kind of a narrative is it?

Student: for me, it felt like a textbook trying to be a narrative nonfiction. Borderline textbook

Teacher: any comparison to *Stamped*?

Teacher/Librarian: Reynolds covers the whole scope; this is just one event.

This Land Is Our Land:

Teacher: I vetted it for core but with a qualification that this could be an anchor book paired with other narrative works. This is a little dry. But with the conversations we need to have about immigration, this is very timely. As an anchor book to look at trends and patterns over time, I think this would work. There's not the narrative heart for kids to connect to it

Teacher/Librarian: completely agree. A little slow for me at times – as a history major. But timely – if PAUSD wants to put action to its words, this is timely. History we haven't heard before. So

important that we include books like this in our supplemental list.
Not appropriate for core

Admin: I would agree – my reading of it is this is a supplemental book. It is not core that all kids will jump on. But there are definitely kids who will pick it up and jump on the idea of waves [of immigration]. An appropriate book for supplemental but not core

Parent: repetitive and didn't always go in sequential order. Lots I didn't know. But I grew up in Canada. It was interesting, but I did fall asleep reading it.

Teacher: also struggled to get through it, also found it repetitive at times. Could see it as a core jigsaw with other elements. The thing I really loved about it was that it included multiple immigrant groups. But man, it was dry. Am curious to think about what it would be like as a jigsaw and as part of a larger text set. If shunted to supplemental, I think we might not get to it.

Student: what groups does it feature?

Teacher: It's Ellis Island, Angel Island. Follows different groups – very comprehensive. A little 'here we go again.'

Student: does it also have refugees?

Teacher: yes

Pet:

Parent: had high expectations for the book. I think it started really strong and then I don't know if I feel like there was enough about the characters. Maybe it was even simple in a way? The story construction? I didn't love it as much as I was hoping I would.

Teacher: I think it was really interesting going into it after hearing the review from this committee. Was expecting it to be the best book ever. I did like it and I did see some of the things the committee had already discussed. I was expecting it to be more fantastic and it felt very real. The audiobook was incredible. I do like a lot of things we already talked about it – short, complex linguistically, a lot to unpack for sure.

Teacher sharing from PLC: [teacher talked about] elements of suspense, slow-building. Really powerful ending. At first not sure if it was top-notch literature, but hearing people's responses on the committee gave him a new appreciation

Student: what parts of book felt simplistic or monotone?

Parent: the hunt was the whole focus of the book. Not a lot of other stuff going on at the same time. That was what the whole story was about.

Teacher: I think it is a simple story. There are different levels of reading it – just reading for plot alone is simple. But I think if we go deeper with class discussions and everything being a metaphor, then it's on a deeper level. I like that it's accessible and every reader will get something different out of it.

Teacher/Librarian: as a parent and librarian, I think this is awesome. But hearing from teachers is so helpful. One student may see it as a hunt for a bad guy, but then it's the English teacher's job to draw more out of the story. Very complex characters and what they are dealing with

Parent: how do you teach nonfiction books?

Teacher: we don't have a nonfiction text that we teach – we have a lot of articles that we use. But with a nonfiction text, usually there are some narrative elements that come into play

Teacher: my experience teaching nonfiction is mostly the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution – we look for textual evidence, just like we might with fiction. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* – has some narrative elements in it – motif of religion – how do characters use it as a justification for slavery? Do some character analysis, but tougher than with fiction. We are piloting *Stamped* and we've done lessons on author's craft and looked at what Reynolds does that is different than regular history texts

Teacher: sometimes talk about text features and text type - problem solution, compare contrast. Look at argument - author bias, what biases color the author's argument, pulling evidence

Vote on each candidate: Should this text stay in the running as a core lit contender?

- *Dragon Hoops*: Core (5); Sup'l (6)
- *Pet*: Core (11); Sup'l (0)
- *Poet X*: Core (9); Sup'l (2)
- *Port Chicago 50*: Core (1); Sup'l (9); Off (1)
- *This Land Is Our Land*: Core (3); Sup'l (8)

Wrap up: Which books are still in the running? Who else will read them by 5/19?

- *Pet* and *Poet X* are still in the running as core

<p>6. Small Groups: Identify Titles to Read for 5/19</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Decide which Fishbowl book(s) to read next <input type="checkbox"/> Debrief any new book you/your group read for today <input type="checkbox"/> Look at your group's book lists and at our new MS anthologies list and pick a new book(s) to read and vet <input type="checkbox"/> If you haven't read <i>The Hate U Give</i> yet, please do so for next time. <input type="checkbox"/> Debrief decisions with the whole group <p><i>Kelly/Olivia: They Called Us Enemy</i> <i>Ander: A Thousand Beginnings and Endings (anthology)</i> <i>Kristen: Foreshadow: Stories to Celebrate the Magic of Reading and Writing (anthology)</i> <i>Kelly/Olivia/Ander/Kristen: Reread Hate U Give</i></p> <p><i>Deanna/Iva/Kathie: We Are Not Free by Traci Chee</i></p> <p><i>Kari/Jen: A Thousand Beginnings and Endings (anthology)</i> <i>Shaina: Poet X</i> <i>Kari/Jen/Shaina: Reread Hate U Give</i></p> <p><i>Brooke/Kim: Reread Hate U Give</i> <i>Brooke: Universe of Wishes (anthology)</i></p>
<p>7. Tidy Up the Supplemental Menu</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Starred titles <input type="checkbox"/> Pink titles <input type="checkbox"/> Orange titles: Decide whether to keep or not. <p><i>Did not get to this agenda item</i></p>
<p>8. Thank you and good-bye!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> For Wed., May 19, 4:10-6:10 (Note: this meeting replaces the one originally scheduled for 4/13): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Read any Fishbowl Core Candidates that you signed up for o Read & vet any new book/anthology your group selected o Read <i>The Hate U Give</i> (if necessary) o Be ready to continue working on the supplemental menu o Talk to department/course-alike team about your reading. Solicit their thoughts and tell them yours.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, May 19, 4:10-6:10; Virtual: <https://pausd.zoom.us/j/94766097557>