

Talking Points for Jennifer Buehler's *Teaching Reading with YA Literature: Complex Texts, Complex Lives*

Critiques about YA	Research-Based Responses
<p>“They can read this stuff at home.”</p>	<p>While students certainly can read these books at home, there is additional value in reading them in a school setting. Students who read YA lit in school experience the social dimensions of reading and benefit from our expertise as teachers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading YA lit in classrooms capitalizes on students’ desire to talk with one another about important issues and motivates them to keep reading.</li> <li>• Students will make better choices as YA readers if they have a knowledgeable adult to guide them.</li> </ul>
<p>“The books are too dark.”</p>	<p>Look at the issues we can explore with young people when we invite them to read YA lit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teens want to be told the truth, and YA lit gives them honest stories.</li> <li>• YA lit can be used to spark teens’ critical consciousness because it challenges them to step outside the limits of their individual experience to see their lives in a larger context.</li> <li>• Reading about other people’s lives often leads us to reflect on our own, so discussions of YA lit can guide teens in their everyday living.</li> </ul>
<p>“The books are not complex.”</p>	<p>When we expand our notion of what complexity means (beyond Lexile scores, for example), we find many forms of complexity in YA lit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many YA texts exhibit complexity in both style and substance, using literary devices and immersing readers in complicated discussions of timely and significant topics.</li> <li>• The best way to discover the complexity in YA lit is to start reading it ourselves.</li> </ul>
<p>“These are books nobody’s heard of.”</p>	<p>Outside of school, many people (teens and adults) are reading YA lit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the real world, many people are reading YA lit, a fact reflected in industry sales and popular culture tie-ins.</li> <li>• But beyond the bestsellers, there are many more YA titles worth knowing about.</li> </ul>
<p>“Reading YA lit in school sets kids up to have a bad attitude about the classics.”</p>	<p>Reading YA lit in school sets kids up to have a good attitude about reading. It sets us up to talk with kids about what reading is for, and it gives us the chance to point out how often YA authors invoke the classics in their novels.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teens will have good attitudes toward reading when we give them books they are capable of reading and willing to read.</li> <li>• YA pedagogy invites conversations about purposes for reading: that is, what texts have to offer, what we seek in texts, and how our stance toward a text shapes the complexity we make from it.</li> <li>• Since many YA titles make intertextual references to the classics, rather than turn kids off to those books, reading YA lit may lead students to them.</li> </ul>