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English 5359

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Annotated Bibliography

Boyle, Maria. "New Literacy Programme Launches in Bid to Return to Whole Book Literacy Teaching and Inspire Children to Develop a Love of Reading." Pearson Education Limited. 9 September 2009. Web. 21 September 2012.
<http://www.pearsonschoolsandfecolleges.co.uk/assetslibrary/sectors/primary/pdfs/le_pressrelease.pdf>

This press release includes the finding from research “commissioned by educational publisher Heinemann,” a division of Pearson Education (a company that publishes educational resources, books, textbooks, etc.) I kept coming across references to the survey and its findings in articles from the UK concerned with students reading “extracts” instead of whole books in the classroom. This “book deal” announcement aimed at publishing and education industry members was the closest I could get to tracking down the actual study itself. There’s obvious bias since the study seems to have been done wholly to support the launch of Literacy Evolve, a product designed by Pearson: “Developed with the former Children's Laureate, Michael Rosen, Literacy Evolve does just this, bringing whole-class literature teaching back to the primary classroom, using real, whole books, films and poetry from the best children's authors and poets. Plus it's perfect for the Curriculum for Excellence and embedding active literacy too.” I’ll have to be particularly careful then when using data from this study to be transparent about where the information came from and what it was used for.

But I still believe the data in the study has merit—it still empirically proves that some children may go throughout their school careers without reading a book and some only read one a year, if even every year. This will be important data for pointing out that school is sometimes the only place students will ever be exposed to books; banning novels in favor of excerpts effectively eliminates even the chance that some students will encounter and read an entire book each year, or ever. If we agree with the NEA study that literary reading links to civic engagement, Gallagher’s argument that reading complex, longer works exercises parts of the brain being neglected, and Fraser’s point that technology’s information nuggets is infantilizing student comprehension, then this study is reporting some disturbing data—whether we want to buy their literacy program or not. Ally—though one that has to be carefully explained so that the good data isn’t overshadowed by the commercial end it was used for.

Elbow, Peter. *What is English?*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1990. Print.

This book is written by Peter Elbow, a well-respected, widely recognized, and widely-published professional in the English fields. He is currently a Professor Emeritus at The University of Massachusetts, Amherst. The book itself, published by MLA—an association that sets standards in the English professions—is Elbow’s take on the issues and arguments on the field of English as discussed at the 1987 English Coalition Conference. By pulling together the main questions brought up at the conference and reflecting on the answers (or lack of answers) the attendants came up with, Elbow disseminates important reflections on what teachers/professors should be teaching/doing in an English classroom to the wider audience of English professionals (elementary through college) unable to attend the conference at the time and to the same audience years later. Though published in 1990, the book is a gathering together of the same issues that have plagued the English profession for years and that still haven’t found definitive or necessarily satisfactory answers.

The book discusses (as the title suggests) what English, as a discipline, actually is, including the age-old arguments of canon, testing, literature versus writing, and theory. The idea of trying to define what exactly English is and what “language arts” classrooms should be doing is right in line with what my paper will be exploring/arguing. I will use the book as background, showing that the struggle to define what should be going on in the ELA classroom at each level is neither a new nor an easily “resolved” problem. Specific chapters, such as “The Question of Literature,” will provide more background and points of view on the specific idea that what we mean by literature continues to vary from teacher to teacher. But that we can agree, whatever we decide on, that literature belongs in the ELA classroom. Hence, this source falling under the ally category. (I’ll argue that the definitions being presented refer to whole-novels, not excerpts).

Fraser, Helen. Girls’ Day Trust Annual Conference. London, England. 20 June 2012. Speech.

I searched for this speech by Helen Fraser because quotes from it kept popping up in articles I came across on the fight over excerpts or “extracts,” as the British call them, versus novels in England’s schools. Fraser is the head of the Girl’s Day Trust, “the leading network of independent girls’ schools in the UK,” making her responsible for a large network of schools throughout the UK and roughly 20,000 pupils—the population of some colleges here in the US. Though she may not be a well-known name here in the US, her speech was widely quoted in UK educational articles over the past summer.

Fraser spoke at their annual conference on multiple topics, all of them centered on the idea that with technological advancements and the prediction that her students will be working into their 70’s, life-long learning has become a necessity. One career will probably not be enough for this generation of students. Her point that “learning how to learn, developing physical and mental discipline, being open and engaged with the world, cultivating a true love of learning—these matter as much as knowing facts and formulae” is essential to the novel versus excerpt argument. I’m convinced that the excerpt arguments all go back to the idea that there’s no time, we’ve gotta teach the curriculum and the skills, which goes back to teachers feeling test pressure. But as Fraser reminds us in her speech, if getting ready for the test is “all we do, then we will fail [our students].” Most importantly, I want to mention her metaphor of how the internet and getting information from it are “infantilizing” our appetite for and ability to

understand texts. I'd like to tie her term to Gallagher's phrase—readicide—and then explain her metaphor comparing internet information gathering to nuggets and reading complex texts like novels to “casserole knowledge” with a “richer, deeper flavor.” The metaphor leads into a great point that following an author's train of thought and being in contact with the author's mind, instead of merely digesting the snippets of “dry facts” we get from the internet, requires reading a book from start to finish. Fraser will make, therefore, a good ally.

Gallagher, Kelly. *Readicide: How Schools are Killing Reading and What You Can Do about It*. Portland: Stenhouse Publishers, 2009. Print.

One of my all-time favorite professional development readings and one that heavily informs my teaching philosophy, *Readicide* is a book devoted to the same ideas that my position paper will cover—books and reading are essential yet endangered pieces of the English classroom. Gallagher is a high school English teacher in California (taught for 23 years) and was the co-director of the South Basin Writing Project at California State University. His list of writing and reading publications is long and he speaks on reading and writing education at conferences such as the NCTE national conference. *Readicide* is a fairly recent publication and reinforces/updates familiar arguments for deeper, more careful reading instruction and student support from his earlier books such as *Deeper Reading*, *Reading Reasons* and *Teaching Adolescent Writers*. His audience is most definitely the English teacher—who he continually calls to take action and start the changes we need to see across the nation in his/her own school—and also the administration and underprepared/lazy teacher, groups he believes are committing readicide: “the systematic killing of the love of reading, often exacerbated by the inane, mind-numbing practices found in schools.”

Re-reading this book for this project reminded me that my certainty that full-novel study is necessary wasn't entirely instinct—Gallagher states the case for reading long-complex works, especially novels and books in much more scientific terms than I can. He refers to the idea that in offering only excerpts “we are starving a part of their brains, we are producing kids like the students in my class who can read but who cannot get below the surface of what they read.” He leads up to this claim by applying studies into how the new technologies available to this generation lead to attention disorders and (because information comes in short bursts—a practice reinforced by excerpts and test-practice) certain parts of the brain actually can't develop as they should and can when students must process longer works (this will tie in nicely with the Helen Fraser speech). He also addresses the point that my well-meaning teacher friend had: novels are both under-taught/over-taught (an interesting dichotomy that Gallagher addresses quite well) and aren't interesting to students (possibly doing more harm than good). He agrees that teachers can under/over teach novels, but stresses that “administrators who remove novels from the curriculum do not understand the harm they are inflicting on adolescents. Novels are not part of the problem; the problem lies in how the novels are taught.” Gallagher will be a fabulous ally for my argument to keep novels in the classroom, but he focus heavily on not just teaching novels and keeping them in the classroom, but on teaching them correctly and well. He'll be a good source for the Mapping the Issue Paper because he really is the epitome of the third perspective that I want to cover—the teacher with clear views on student choice in novels, etc. I'll argue in my paper that we can't worry about those issues until we've solved the excerpts or novel debate, but Gallagher will be good support for that point of view.

Krashen, Stephen. "The Case for Narrow Reading." *Language Magazine*. January 2004: 17-19. Web. 22 September 2012.

This magazine article was written by Stephen Krashen (Professor Emeritus at the University of Southern California and cited authority in pretty much every article I come across that has anything remotely to do with what I'm researching) for *Language Magazine*, the self-proclaimed "Language Authority." It is written for educators and advocates within the second language acquisition communities, but I believe the points he makes, especially on the harm that reading broadly and rapidly to get through curriculum, can be transferred to the straight-up (first-language acquisition) English literacy debate. It was published in 2004, not too long ago to be obsolete, and the points do not depend on data that can "expire" or not apply anymore. I believe he just makes good points that will bolster my argument against pandering to the Test and Curriculum's need to hurry through all texts (thus necessitating excerpts) in order to "hit" all the "skills."

Krashen states that "providing only short and varied selections never allows language acquirers to get beyond" the "first page stage" when a new author's style and structure is so new and often frustrating that EFL students will give up on a text. Instead he proposes letting EFL students read "narrowly" early on, or to specialize in a certain author, genre, or topic so that they can become familiar with a certain style, tropes, or even terminology. If not, if we feed them pieces at a time from this book or that author or this anthology, etc, we force "them to move from frustration to frustration." Reading remains all about decoding, and students never become comfortable enough with the textual world they're entering to relax and get more skills/comprehension out of it. He even cites the Leonard Lamme study I also read, pointing out that English speaking students in the "reading craze" years tended (according to the data) to stick with known authors or a series (think Nancy Drew or Sweet Valley High). Putting these two articles together and turning the findings solely onto the English classroom, I can back up my argument that reading just pieces of longer, complex texts isn't worth the time possibly saved or the breadth of authors/texts/skills covered. That instead, opportunities for better language acquisition and vocabulary growth are lost to the frustrations of readers barely getting to dip their brains into a work before being repeatedly yanked out and shoved in the direction of a new, puzzling textual experience. Ally.

Leonard Lamme, Linda. "Are Reading Habits and Abilities Related?". *The Reading Teacher*. October 1976: 21-27. JSTOR. Web. 26 September 2012.

This article presents a study done by Leonard Lamme, a professor in the College of Education at the University of Florida, in the 70's. Unfortunately, that's a bit far back to really rely on without using it in conjunction with more contemporary studies or as more than backing for more contemporary articles. The audience was, specifically, the readers of *The Reading Teacher*, a professional journal that publishes scholarly work in the field of reading, literacy, and education. It was meant to help teachers discover whether or not reading habits outside the classroom correlated with performance on standardized tests or if "avid" reader could necessarily translate as "critical" reader and vice versa. Leonard Lamme claims that there isn't solid proof for the later correlation. And that her data is not enough, just as relying on standardized tests alone to assess children's reading development is not enough. Instead, she calls on more teachers to have their students keep reading logs like she did to help gather more data to help the "campaign to increase love of reading."

I believe I will definitely bring up one conclusion she came to when proving there isn't necessarily a link between avid and critical: "apparently practice in reading alone does not develop critical readers." In conjunction with Shin's anecdote about encouraging students to read and my opponents' possible point that we can still encourage students to read outside of class, this assertion by Leonard Lamme will help me make the point that we also have to be working with the students, alongside them, when they tackle the longer, more complex works Gallagher claims they need in order to develop necessary critical thinking/reading skills. There has to be some work done in the classroom with novels as well as encouraging them to read books outside of the classroom. Ally.

National Endowment for the Arts. *Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America, Research Division Report #46*. Washington, DC: NEA, 2004. Web. 21 September 2012.

This is an in-depth report of literary reading in our country by the National Endowment for the Arts. The U.S. Bureau of Census polled a sample group of more than 17,000 adults (including all major demographic groups and considering age, gender, education, income, region, race, and ethnicity) over a 20 year time period. The resulting report includes data on the decline of reading in the nation, but goes a step beyond that to empirically link that decline to declines in other areas such as the arts and civic engagement. For the most part, the NEA lets the data speak for itself and it was gathered in the near enough past to still be relevant. If anything, electronic entertainment, which the report claims is replacing literary reading while creating a more passive society, has only proliferated since the report and I can make the case that we're more than likely worse off than when the report was published. The NEA is a national organization invested in supporting the arts and culture and will, therefore, be inclined to favor a cultural activity like reading over video gaming, etc. But I don't think this bias hurts them, especially when they link reading and the arts to civic engagement.

The preface and executive summary reflect on the report's data as evidence that "the decline in reading, therefore, parallels a larger retreat from participation in civic and cultural life," which appeals to a much larger audience—the concerned American citizen. They make cases for "who cares" and what an overall decline in literature consumption does and will mean to our country as a whole. I will most definitely use these thoughts and the extensive data that

backs them up to show that this is a problem for everyone, not just English teachers, and that excerpt reading only reinforces the short attention span and instant gratification trend that electronic entertainment is instilling in our youth. According to this report, such trends hurt civic engagement and all the arts, not just literature: “the decline in literary reading foreshadows an erosion in cultural and civic participation.” The report’s data and NEA Chair Dana Gioia’s reflections will be excellent allies.

Shin, Fay, and Stephen Krashen. "Should We Just Tell Them To Read? The Role Of Direct Encouragement In Promoting Recreational Reading." *Knowledge Quest* 32.3 (2004): 47-48. Academic Search Complete. Web. 26 Sept. 2012

This short article is part of *Knowledge Quest*’s “Home Run Series” which gives new research in small, “digestible” articles. Fay Shin—a teacher in the College of Education at California State, Long Beach—relates a case study of a student directly encouraged by a teacher during summer school to read books over the weekend. The student ended up checking out books almost every day as she went through the *Goosebumps* series and eventually moved on to other books the teacher recommended. The story is meant for teachers and librarians, those educators with a hand in helping students access books. The article was published in 2004, but it’s not data and, instead, is an anecdote that many teachers can relate to—I know I see stories like this at least once a year with my own students who I encourage to read outside of school. It addresses one of the “realities” I believe my opponents will use: students can still read outside of school if we ban the novel in the classroom.

The anecdote itself is a good one, a pretty standard story of how teacher encouragement can help a low-performing student (she’s in summer school) improve. I’d like to include it as a concession to my opponents that novels can and should be encouraged outside of the classroom, but then point to the claim in the same article that “research shows that children of poverty have very little access to books at home, at school, and in their communities.” And remind my opponents that then banning full-book study from the classroom eliminates one more place for students to encounter books when yet another article or expert is emphasizing how important it is to give these children, all children, access to books. Concession/ally.

United States. Department of Education. The National Institute of Education. The National Academy of English. *Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading*. Washington, DC: The National Institute of Education, 1985. ERIC. Web. 22 September 2012.

This report was issued by the NAE, a group working within the NIE for the US Department of Education. According to the abstract, it “[fulfills a need for careful and thorough synthesis of an extensive body of findings on reading]” and includes “leading experts’ interpretations of both current knowledge of reading and the state of the art and practice of teaching reading.” By looking at highly effective reading schools and classrooms, the report makes suggestions on what it will take in the ELA classroom and schools in general to produce a nation of readers. Though the report was released over two decades ago (1985), I’d like to use it in conjunction with the NEA report from 2004 as a way to show that the changes it calls for and suggest how to make haven’t taken hold.

I also believe the points and suggestions that the report makes are actually timeless reminders of best practices. The truly interesting point in this report focuses on teacher professional development and leadership. According to this report, teachers do not have enough education in current (to their time) theory on teaching reading and need continual professional development to stay up with current trends and theory. Though I may be able to work these ideas into the paper when addressing the fact that teachers tend to over/under teach the novel, I'm most interested in addressing the report's insistence that having strong leadership (principal, reading specialist, etc.) that creates a campus culture that values literacy and literature is essential. It does no good, according to the report, to have well-informed, well-meaning teachers doing their parts here and there to increase literacy when the leadership doesn't value or expand that literacy "ethos" to the entire school. What's happening at Timberview is a direct violation of that suggestion. Instead of an English Department Head advocating for reading and novels they have someone in a leadership position ordering them to forego an essential piece of literary study (novel) for strategies he believes will bring up his test scores and help them cover the entire curriculum. This report's backing on the importance of educational leadership's role in creating a nation of readers will be important in showing the damage he is doing to his students and reading for the sake of focusing on "teaching skills" as if acquiring those skills is somehow divorced from texts themselves. Ally.

University of Georgia College of Education. "The COE Lecture Series Presents: The Power of Reading by Stephen Krashen." You Tube, 5 April 2012. Web. 25 September 2012.

I found this lecture when an online source led me to look up Stephen Krashen's book *The Power of Reading* but I didn't have time to get it and read it before turning in the annotated bibliography. The hour-long video clip was an excellent source of his main points from the book. A Professor Emeritus at the University of Southern California, Krashen professed in the video that he is an expert (350 published pieces in the language and reading fields would back up his claim) and feels a bit like a country western singer looking to cross over into rock as he brings his expertise from EFL education/research over into the field of reading. He brings in multiple studies, data, and case studies to prove his claim that free-voluntary reading is the, hands down, best way to improve literacy. I also enjoyed and appreciated his point that the media has misrepresented the "literacy crisis" in America to mean that we produce millions of students who can't read or write when in fact the truly illiterate is rarer than we think; the problem is that the level of literacy required now by society and careers is rising faster than educators are able to raise their students' literacy levels. Though his specific audience was a lecture hall of UGA Education students, his larger audience is educators and those who make decisions on how we evaluate and what we teach students. The lecture was given just this past spring and in terms that anyone could understand; in fact, he took great pains to break research down into language anyone outside the field could get.

At first I thought his main claims on free-voluntary reading could support my opponents; free-voluntary reading relies on the idea that if a student doesn't like the book he/she can put it down to try another one and that there should be no accompanying test, book report, etc. However, his focus on SSR as a necessary tool in the ELA classroom (in fact the only tool that truly helps students make large gains in literacy, especially versus skill building activities) is truly in line with what I'm arguing. Again, we have to set aside the argument of what books are read, when and how to agree on the fact that students must have access to books in school,

especially the classroom. I'll use his claim (proven with case studies) that providing access to books (traditionally through a school library) can negate or offset the effect poverty has on standardized test scores to back up the idea that the classroom and school are the only places where some students will ever encounter books. To ban them from the classroom, therefore, (no matter the reasoning behind that ban) is to ban one of the best strategies and tools available for students to actually improve their literacy and, in return, do well on the standardized test. Ally.