

Bridge over Xenophobia: Using Literary Choices to Encourage Tolerance

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Prior to the 2016 Presidential Election, I had given cursory consideration to the role that I, a college English professor, played in diversity education. I had always made it a point to include as many diverse voices and perspectives as possible in my course reading lists, but my approach to diversity would be forever changed following the seemingly never-ending election cycle where the political and social fragmentation produced a level of rhetorical incivility unseen in recent years. The attack language, often hurled at minority groups, coupled with several disturbing events that happened near my hometown, lead to a pedagogical epiphany for me: I must revise the traditional literary canon by meaningfully incorporating diverse selections in my literature courses that serve as springboard for discussing contemporary issues, thereby making cultural diversity a central tenant of my courses.

Trouble on the Homefront

Print, broadcast, and web-based news outlets are filled with examples of racial injustice on a daily basis, yet somehow, these acts are often overlooked when news coverage does not focus on injustice that is happening in one's own backyard. In December 2015, local media covered the story of Yasmin Saunders, a military wife who happens to be Muslim, and a fellow

shopper at a local grocery store in northwest Florida (Humphrey). While shopping with her parents and two-year old baby brother, a stranger approached and tossed a package of bacon into her shopping cart, narrowly missing her brother. “Merry Christmas, buddy,” the man said. Saunders turned and asked the stranger why he threw the bacon in her cart. “Because I can!” he exclaims.

The very next month, January 2016, former Office of Special investigations agent Dave Gaubatz published a blog portraying a twenty-year old mosque in a neighboring panhandle town, as being an incubator of terrorist activity. Gaubatz visited the Islamic Da’wah Center the day before speaking about “Islamic terrorist events” at a gathering entitled “Understanding Refugee Resettlement” (qtd. in McLaughlin). Following his visit, Gaubatz wrote “My friends in Fort Walton and the surrounding area are surrounded by ISIS members/supporters who are living, working, and spreading the same ideology as ISIS advocates in Syria and around the world. Mosque leaders released a statement reading in part “We consider ISIS to be a terrorist organization which is determined to destroy the world; Muslims and non-Muslims alike, and Isis should be eliminated.”

These two examples of Islamophobia are not unique to the Florida panhandle, my home for the last fifteen years, but the amount of coverage the incidents received did serve as wake-up call to me that racist and xenophobic ideologies must be confronted. The area is predominantly conservative, white, and Christian, and the events described above happened against a backdrop of fear, distrust, and even hatred propagated in part by candidates for political office. During the 2016 presidential primaries, two candidates for the Republican presidential nomination declared

war on Muslim immigrants; businessman Donald Trump's campaign tweeted "Donald J. Trump is calling for a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country's representatives can figure out what is going on." Texas Senator Ted Cruz proposed a religious test for immigrants where Muslim immigrants would be turned away while Christian immigrants would be allowed to enter the country. After his election to the presidency, Trump enacted controversial travel bans that some say unfairly targeted Muslim-majority nations—bans that were ultimately upheld in a 5-4 decision by the Supreme Court in 2018. While these examples highlight a fear and disapproval of Islam, it could be argued that on a macrocosmic level, all three incidents are actually a fear of the unknown and an intolerance of minority groups.

Such fear and intolerance is certainly not limited to matters of religion. In 2017, then-Mayor Ashton Heyward's public support for the removal of a Confederate monument in a downtown Pensacola park sparked a weekend protest, complete with Nazi symbols, KKK references, and hate-fueled rhetoric. A demonstration supporting transgendered military members was met with counter-protestors bemoaning the godlessness that has overtaken society. It seems that our society becomes more politically polarized with each passing day.

The constant media attention on the topic caused me to reflect on my own students' attitudes towards diversity—meaning diverse people, beliefs, and opinions. I began reflecting on incidents that had occurred in recent years in my literature courses—the bulk of my teaching load. Specifically, I focused my attention on student attitudes in American Literature from 1870, by far the most popular literature course offered by my employer, Pensacola State College,

making it the course students turn to in order to satisfy their literature requirement for graduation. I also selected this course because studying American literature encompasses understanding American society by way of analyzing the writings of Americans past and present. I design my literature classes to be highly interactive, discussion-based courses; consequently, controversial opinions often arise. While most students are polite to classmates whose views might best be described as unconventional for the area (meaning different from their own), some students stand out as intolerant—even hostile—towards those with different views. For example, a recent male student bemoaned the “pussification of America” in a workshopped paper that explored the current state of the American Dream. He blamed political correctness, feminism, fake news, the Black Lives Matter movement, and the higher education system controlled by the liberal elite as having ruined our once-great nation. When pressed for credible research to support his claims, he was unable to provide it. Although many of his fellow classmates disagreed with his views, only two were willing to challenge them publically. Then I thought of another student who shared his atheistic views in an informed, polite manner after reading “Fire and Ice” by Robert Frost. Most of his classmates were dismayed that anyone could identify as a non-believer in the United States. No one spoke in support of his views. These moments, along others like them, showed me that the majority of the students at PSC dare not exempt from the political polarization sweeping the country, especially given the lack of diversity at PSC.

Since attitudes are often born of ignorance, education is the ideal way to dissuade students from hopping on the bandwagon of fear. The Association of American Colleges and Universities defines liberal education as “an approach to learning that empowers individuals and

prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity, and change. It provides students with broad knowledge of the wider world (e.g. science, culture, and society) as well as in-depth study in a specific area of interest. A liberal education helps students develop a sense of social responsibility, as well as strong and transferable intellectual and practical skills such as communication, analytical and problem-solving skills, and a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings.” As an English professor, I had always felt that it would be presumptuous of me to lecture my students on social responsibility, diversity, and change; however, after researching cultural literacy, my opinion changed. In *Language, Culture, and Teaching*, Sonia Nieto identifies multicultural education as basic education (35). Nieto further states that “multicultural literacy is just as indispensable for living in today’s world as reading, writing, arithmetic, and computer literacy. When multicultural education is peripheral to the core curriculum, it is perceived as irrelevant to basic education.” With this newfound mission to incorporate multicultural literacy into my classes, I set about redesigning my literature courses with literary works that address social and cultural injustice. While these topics have organically arisen in previous classes, I never intentionally incorporated the ideas of diversity and social justice into my curriculum. Furthermore, while I had taken every step possible to create a safe space where students felt free to share diverse ideas, I never shared my own viewpoints, and I wondered if I had been supportive enough of students whose viewpoints were not those of the majority. I have always enjoyed a reputation as a fair, approachable, friendly professor, and I did not want to be pegged as an out-of-control liberal professor with an agenda. I had seen a colleague deal with the fallout of such a label. Nonetheless, I realized that my

behavior would have to change if I wanted my students' behavior to change. This epiphany led me to formulate a research question on how to be a better teacher in this age of partisanship: How can I meaningfully incorporate diverse selections into my American Literature from 1870 course in order to encourage reflective and critical conversations about modern-day issues of social justice? By changing what and how I teach, and by exposing students to new and different ideas, I aim to extinguish some of the fear and xenophobic behavior that is all too common today. This paper explores what I learned in my quest to create a college literature course that has cultural literacy as a focal point.

Reimagining the American Literary Canon: Literature Review

While there is an abundance of existing scholarship on literary canons, little has been written about the connection between diversity, social justice, and college reading lists. Nieto examines the role of the canon in education in general and finds that it “assumes that the knowledge that is most worthwhile is already in place” (35). This sets a potentially dangerous precedent, as Nieto points out, since much of the knowledge taught is “inevitably European, male, and upper class in origin and conception.” For years my reading list, and the table of contents of my required anthology, fit Nieto’s description.

The need to diversify is clear, but how does one create an intentionally diverse, meaningful reading list for the course while also meeting the requirements of a general education, literature survey course? The justifications of teaching diverse literature is not new. Defining the term “diverse” is, in itself, a challenge, and not a new one at that. In his 1949

article “A Course in World Literature,” Boyd Guest mourns “the atomic bombing of Hiroshima” while offering literature as a “cure [for] the world” (399). This view is famously challenged by Mary Louise Pratt’s 1991 essay “Arts of the Contact Zone” in which Pratt argues for “a new conception of the classroom as a place of cultural dissonance, translating the rhetoric of culture wars—the tropes of heritage, identity, and otherness—into a model for pedagogical practice in which conflict stimulates learning” (Smith 595). Pratt further argues for “exposing the historical interplay of power that comprises complex and asymmetrical intercultural relationships in which no single group tends to remain indefinitely in the role of victim or victimizer” (596). Rather than focusing on texts, Pratt proposes focusing on “arts,” and her essay paves the way for a paradigm shift in literary pedagogy—one that views literature not as a “bounded whole, but as a dynamic process powered by cross-cultural, cross-lingual, and cross-temporal reading.” (Smith 598). Following Pratt’s rationale, I must be willing to embrace conflict in my classroom as an instrument for intellectual growth—and an instrument of professional growth for me, as I had always avoided conflict in the classroom.

Defining terms such as multicultural, multiethnic, and diversity proved even more challenging. Werner Sollars, in his celebrated 1986 work *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Literature and Culture*, refers to the “polyethnic character of America” and defines ethnic as both those groups whose members migrated, immigrated, or fled to this country as well as those groups whose members were forcibly brought here as a servant or slave. Sollars contends that literature in English about members of these groups should be viewed as “American ethnic literature,” not multicultural literature (Stotsky 28). While there is

disagreement over what qualifies as multicultural literature, especially where modern and contemporary literatures are concerned, most scholars agree that a major purpose for including multiethnic, multicultural literature is to “develop our students’ knowledge of and respect for the extraordinary religious, racial, and ethnic diversity of American citizens, and to enhance their familiarity with and appreciation of the literary traditions of other peoples in countries around the world” (28). The end goal is a primary mission of cultural literacy: the elimination of stereotypes of people based on racial, religious, gender, and ethnic groups.

The need for groups to stereotype other groups is explained in the theory of Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) by Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, and Malle. According to the theory of SDO, societies minimize group conflict by reaching consensus on ideologies that promote the superiority of one group over other groups (Sidanius, Pratto, Martin, & Stallworth, 1991). These ideologies promote and maintain inequality among groups, thereby *legitimizing* discrimination. Institutionalized discrimination—formed from a collective body of individuals sharing similar views—is doubly hard to challenge, as financial resources and power available to larger organizations make change difficult. According to Postcolonial theorist John McLeod, these ideas trace back to colonial days, where empires, motivated by economics, “perpetuated in part by justifying to those in the colonizing nation the idea that it is right and proper to rule over other peoples, and by getting colonized people to accept their lower ranking in the colonial order of things,” a process McLeod calls “colonizing the mind” (20).

In addition to McLeod, other postcolonial theorists pose questions related to social justice that can and should be examined in a modern American literature survey course. Spivak, for

example, explores the relationship among “culture wars,” gender, and class. Said’s concept of Orientalism and the “subtle and persistent Eurocentric prejudice against Arab-Islamic peoples and their culture” should also be explored. Following their research, and the theories espoused by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin in the landmark *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature*, literary works that challenge marginality, discrimination, and Eurocentric notions of language and literature must be read and discussed, thereby allowing students to respond not only to works shaped by colonial ideals but also works that challenge those ideals. While it is not my job to indoctrinate students with a world view, it is my job to point out injustice, to have them think critically, to view literature from critical perspectives that may contradict their own beliefs, and to consider well-constructed arguments.

Educational research has shown that when teachers fail to address issues of social justice, marginalized groups are victimized (Ball and Tyson). Silence is often viewed as approval, making faculty engagement in critical conversations regarding social justice imperative (Ladson-Billings). While many scholars encourage the establishment of safe spaces within classrooms to protect marginalized and minority students, others caution that the creation of such space leads to overly sensitive students who find course assignments and dissenting viewpoints traumatizing, leading to a classroom experience devoid of rigorous intellectual inquiry that college should be all about (Brown and Mangan). Experts point out that there is a difference between a “safe place” that is a physical place and an intellectual safe place where challenging issues can be openly discussed in a way that underrepresented groups feel comfortable participating in discussions. Creating such a place largely depends on the instructor’s ability to create a strong

sense of community in the classroom through student engagement and interaction. Students are less likely to intentionally offend individuals with whom they have a relationship. Teresa Martin of Northwestern University refers to the spaces as “brave spaces” where difficult discussions take place in an atmosphere of mutual respect. The end goal is for students to engage with topics in thoughtful, objective, and respectful ways.

Conversations with Colleagues

In addition to reviewing literature, I turned to my colleagues for a series of informal conversations about diversity and the American literary canon. The chief questions that I asked my colleagues were how they compile their reading lists for the course, how they structure their course (e.g. chronologically, thematically, a blend), if they address issues of social justice in their classes, and if so, how. I also asked how they handle intolerant student attitudes – if such attitudes are encountered.

Before discussing what I gleaned from conversations with my colleagues, it is important to emphasize the racial and ideological composition of both the Pensacola metropolitan area and the college’s student body. With a population of 485,684, the Pensacola metropolitan area is 71 percent white, 17 percent black, 6 percent Hispanic, and 3 percent Asian. With an above-average poverty level for the state of Florida and a higher percent of veterans than many Florida counties, the population of Pensacola is overwhelmingly conservative, Christian, and Republican. This make-up is reflected in the student population of PSC, where 73 percent of the 26,000 students enrolled are white, 15 percent are black, 5 percent are Hispanic, and 3 percent

are Asian. The majority of students identify with Christianity as the basis for their religious beliefs, and a large number of the students identify as conservative. This lack of diversity is also found in the faculty. Of the 25 fulltime faculty in the English department, 2 are black, 1 is Asian, and the rest are white. Three faculty members identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Given the general lack of diversity among English faculty, the responses were as quite varied. The respondents' years of teaching experience ranged from one year to thirty years, with the average length of experience being 16.25 years. This information is significant, as those with more years of teaching experience intimated that they had tried various curricular approaches throughout their careers, while those who were newer to teaching commented that they often designed their courses using advice from colleagues and mentors. Of the topics covered during the conversations, only one question received the same response from all interviewees—whether or not instructors draw connections between the literature being studied and political and social issues of today. Every instructor answered affirmatively to this question. But this is largely where the similarities end.

Compiling a Reading List

The results of the conversations affirmed what the literature review revealed: there are numerous factors that come into play when developing a course reading list, just as there are when formulating a canon for a particular branch of literary studies. An instructor's ideological leanings, for example, play an enormous factor in how that instructor creates reading lists. Those

who adhere to a more traditional, Scholar Academic mindset, for example, tend to stick to the tried and true authors and works that have long been assigned in American literature courses.

These responses indicate such a view:

- “I begin with major authors spread over the time period, those who best demonstrate different literary movements. Then, I try to add in less familiar or lesser known works and authors who deserve more attention.”
- “I try to select representative writers of the main literary periods.”
- “Over the years I’ve added to what I learned in grad school. Now I ‘know’ too many works to include in a course.”
- “I treat the course as a true survey, so I begin with the major authors for each time period: Realism/Naturalism, Modernism, and Post-Modernism. Once I have the authors selected, I choose from the works available in the text. On occasions, I will add outside readings for the class.”

Other responses indicate a more Social Reconstructivist/Learner-Centered approach that more closely aligns with the Postcolonial perspective covered in the literature review:

- “I select authors and works based on their potential to spark productive class discussions and interesting assignments, as well as how they represent various movements, trends, and social issues of the time that we are covering.”
- “I choose authors and works that will give students a representative sample of America and its struggles at various points in time.”

As a follow-up question, I asked interviewees whether or not diversity played a role in creating their reading lists; all but one respondent answered affirmatively, but their explanations varied substantially:

- “I am not driven by diversity, but my courses always include writers of color and I am not limited to the ‘canonical’ writings or writers.”
- “I am working on expanding African American and other ethnic minority literatures to give a broader picture of the American experience.”
- “I make a conscious effort to include authors from diverse backgrounds and ethnicities, although the constraints of the class make it impossible to include as many cultural perspectives as I would like.”
- “We as a department should strive to portray more than the all-American white male. Fortunately, there is no shortage of outstanding works by women, African Americans, LGBTQ writers.”
- “I do try to balance the readings with a diverse pool of authors and poets—men, women, African-American writers, as well as Jewish and Mexican-American writers to reflect the make-up of my class. I like to include writers students are familiar with so they feel comfortable with the material because they have an idea who/what the material is about.”

Despite the different rationales, several key words emerged from the answers provided: identity, balance, comfort, perspective, gender, race, sexual orientation. While some responses tended to

view diversity as a black/white matter, most acknowledged that diversity is much more complex than this binary.

Those who acknowledged that they promote diverse opinions within their classes were asked whether or not they have encountered problems with students who were disrespectful of opinions with which they did not agree. Twenty-five percent had. When asked how these behaviors were addressed, multiple answers were given, though almost all of them centered on creating and fostering an environment that is open, safe, and respectful. Two respondents gave in-depth responses:

- “I don't want any student to feel shut out or shut down in my class. I try to avoid potential confrontations by making sure that students know I respect their right to their own opinions (even if I strongly disagree with those opinions). Some students are inevitably going to feel defensive if they believe their beliefs are being challenged, but from day one of the class I make it clear that one purpose of literature is to challenge the beliefs of the reader and promote empathy for ‘the Other.’ I that maintaining this theme throughout the semester makes it clear to students what my goals are for the class. If a student becomes upset, I will meet with him/her individually to assure that I am not trying to indoctrinate the class and open the conversation so that the student does not feel disregarded.”
- “Just as an example, if we're talking about the African-American experience, some students who are not African-American might interpret a particular element a certain way. Just the other day, a student made the comment that Langston Hughes’ speaker

sounded angry in a particular poem, but an African-American student disagreed, saying that he sounded determined, not angry. It was a way to address how these two different interpretations of the poem's tone are a sort of microcosm of society in that one group's behavior is often viewed differently by the other.”

Course Redesign

After an overview of the literature supporting the impact of a diverse reading list on students, and learning of colleagues' practice and attitudes, the need to diversify the traditional American literature canon to bridge the gap between our students' often limited cultural perspective and the wider American society is obvious. It is also clear that there is not one correct way to achieve this diversification, for it would go against the spirit of diversity if instructors were forced to approach the issue from the same angle. Like our students, we are complex, complicated beings who must find ways that work best for our strengths as instructors. To that end, I have decided to adopt a Reconstructivist/Postcolonial approach to teaching in my American Literature from 1870 class. I have re-examined the ideas of a founding figure in American Studies, R. W. B. Lewis. Lewis's first major work, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* presents America as a “new man,” an innocent Biblical Adam in a new Eden that is disconnected from the historic past. Lewis then traces the development of the American mind through the great literary characters that come to represent America, though the majority of those characters are both white and male. I have organized my class around the theme “The American Identity,” and have my students, like Lewis, explore the

evolution of what it means to be American—from as many different angles and perspectives as possible. As I introduce the material to my students, I focus on student perceptions and reactions to the literature that is studied in the course. This is largely achieved through reflective journals that students write after reading assignments and through group discussions where a diverse mix of students tackle issues that are relevant not only to the works being studied but also to issues impacting America today ([See Appendix](#)). Additionally, students are tasked with composing works that explore the struggles of literary characters that are being studied—through their own perspectives. As a follow-up assignment, they are required to write a secondary paper from an opposing perspective. For example, I added Stephen Crane’s naturalistic novella *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* to my reading list. While Crane does not belong to an underrepresented class of authors, his work deals with many weighty topics that are still relevant in contemporary society: scientific determinism, society and class, immigration, religion, violence, and gender roles. By researching the conditions in which these characters lived and worked, students better appreciate the struggles they faced daily. Then, by exploring the attitudes of the privileged classes toward these struggling characters, students come to see what social injustice looked like in the late nineteenth century before drawing connections to similar acts of injustice in the twenty-first century.

While I have used this approach for just one semester, I have already seen a difference in the attitudes of my students. Because an emphasis is placed on privileges enjoyed by certain groups and the struggles faced by others, students often come to appreciate that social justice is a worthwhile pursuit. As a result, there has been a decrease in the number of disruptive,

disrespectful comments in class, while participation in discussion has increased. Additionally, the amount of independent research conducted by students has significantly increased. Students come to class excited to share about historical events they have read about outside of class. I encourage such research by bringing in primary sources to share with students as often as possible and by placing a higher importance on works of nonfiction throughout the class. These changes were in place for a single year before the COVID-19 pandemic forced changes in course delivery methods, making some of the newly implemented pedagogical approaches difficult to incorporate in a virtual setting. Additional research and analysis is needed to see if the changes have contributed to increased cultural literacy.

Despite the short time period with this pedagogical approach, the experience has been a gratifying one for me, and it has revolutionized how I view my role as a teacher and how I approach designing curriculum for my classes. No longer do I worry about making students uncomfortable, for it is through discomfort that growth typically happens. I now realize that for far too long members of oppressed, underprivileged groups sat through classes where I taught the traditional white, middle/upper-class, male-dominated works that have for decades dominated the American literary canon. I will spend the rest of my career sharing great literature from a diverse group of writers to my students in the hopes that exposure to cultures, ideas, religions, and philosophies that contrast their own will make them more accepting, open-minded citizens and that the events described early in this paper are not repeated.

Appendix: Reflective Journal Topics

American Literature from 1870 is a writing-intensive course that traces the development of American literature following the Civil War. The selections covered in this class will vary, ranging from works by well-known authors such as Twain, Faulkner, and Walker, to more controversial works by the likes of Ginsberg, Whitman, and Chopin. Though the genres we study and the eras in which they were written will vary, we will use two guiding questions as we study these works to unify these seemingly unrelated works: (1) What role does the work play in the evolution of American literature, and (2) How does the work depict what it means to be American? It is the latter question that will be the focus of reflective journals.

You may be asking yourself just what exactly a reflective journal is. Simply stated, a reflective journal is composition in which you explore and reflect about some aspect of an assigned literary work. For the purposes of this class, both the works and the topics of your reflective journals will be assigned to you (see below). Unlike traditional journals, though, these reflective journals are not limited to alphabetic text; that is, you may use multimodal composition to create your reflective journals. This means that you can use software and apps to blend music, images, words, sounds, etc., to capture your response to the literary work and the guiding question at hand. Before any of your reflections are due, we will have a crash course on using these programs in class, so do not panic if you are not familiar with the programs listed below. There will be eight total reflective journals. Some of these journals will be created as in-class writing assignments; others will be completed outside of class. Refer to your syllabus for the due dates of each assignment.

The topics of each journal and a brief description of each assignment is provided below. Unless otherwise noted, each work can be found in ninth edition of *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*.

Journal #	Author and Literary Work(s)	Assignment Prompt/Description
1	de Crevecoeur’s “What Is an American?”	Using images, sound, and alphabetic text, provide a rendering of Crevecoeur’s definition of an American. You may wish to use Atavist, Prezi, or PowerPoint. You may also wish to be even more “out-of-the-box” and create a Pinterest page for Crevecoeur’s American.
2	Twain’s <i>The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i> and Smith’s “Huck, Jim, and American Racial Discourse”	Smith asserts that “Twain recognized that racial discourse depends upon the deployment of a system of stereotypes which constitute the ‘Negro’ as fundamentally different from and inferior to Euro-Americans.” Does Twain’s work succeed at challenging racial stereotypes? How does <i>Huck Finn</i> contribute to the evolution of the American identity? Use the mode of your choosing to respond to this prompt.

3	DuBois' <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i>	How does DuBois depict the African American experience in his work? Has this experience changed any from the experience depicted by Twain? Record your thoughts as a video blog on Canvas.
4	Addams' <i>Twenty Years at Hull House</i>	Jane Addams is considered the “mother of social work,” a pioneer, a social reformer, and a leader in the women’s suffrage movement. What does her writing—particularly “Immigrants and Their Children”—say about the American identity? Use a combination of images and alphabetic text to respond to the prompt. You may wish to consider using Timeline, Atavist, PowerPoint, or Prezi for this journal.
5	Stein’s “from <i>The Making of Americans</i> ”	Explore the significance of the title of Stein’s novel. What does the novel suggest about the American identity? While you may use the mode of your choosing, consider making this response a video blog on Canvas.
6	Hughes’ “I, Too,” Cullen’s “Yet Do I Marvel,” and	How do these three works by three different authors capture the identity of the American minority? Have

	Wright’s “The Man Who Was Almost a Man”	these depictions evolved from earlier minority depictions? Consider the role of setting (or place) in each work. Use Story Map to compare and contrast the identities depicted in each work and to show how setting does or does not impact that depiction.
7	Miller’s <i>Death of a Salesman</i>	Miller’s work is said to be a masterpiece that explores the American Dream—or, depending on your viewpoint, the death of the American Dream. What do Miller’s characters suggest about the American identity? Use alphabetic text as the primary mode of response to this prompt.
8	Proulx, “Brokeback Mountain” (<i>A link to the story is provided in Canvas.</i>)	Proulx’s short story became an instant classic following its 2005 film adaption and it launched a national dialogue about LGBTQ issues. Though set in the 1960s, the work’s depiction of gay romance is nonetheless significant. What do Proulx’s characters suggest about the American identity? Look at numerous characters, not just LGBTQ characters. Use a multimodal approach to this reflection.

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