

Approaching Young Adult Literature as Prayers With Sacred Reading Practices

CEA Convention 2023

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Approaching YAL as prayers:

- makes room for a broader range of expression to be seen with a Christian lens. It avoids Christian approaches to literature that are negative (i.e., has few incidents of violence, sexuality, or vulgarity) or limiting (i.e., needs to have a redemptive theme or overtly Christian landscape or message).
- allows space to unpack, explore, and reflect upon issues of justice, rightness and wrongness, meaning, calling, and transcendence.
- can provide a broader vocabulary and specific methods for thinking about and discussing moral, ethical, or religious dimensions of stories as well as the ethical or moral dilemmas within them.
- can acknowledge, affirm, and build on the religious literacy practices that our students already have

Using sacred reading practices with students:

- avoids a didactic approach whereby students might be told how to read or think about a book's meaning, character development, or overall themes. Instead casts a wider net for interpretations and understandings that can connect to a Christian world-and-life view.
- recognizes that a good book is interwoven in such a way that each sentence provides a point of entrée to discuss the overall messages the book carries.
- approaches texts as being sacred, as having something relevant and meaningful to say to us. Those specific words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs, in discussion with other readers, can illuminate and clarify moments in readers' own lives.

- makes space for multiple points of view from the characters and the readers themselves.
- can be used to support many state-wide or national English Language Arts secondary standards focused on literature, close reading, and making connections to texts (i.e., text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world strategies).

YAL Books as Prayers

Anger: *Between Shades of Gray* (Ruty Spetys), *Children of Blood and Bone* (Tomi Adeyemi), *March Series* (Andrew Aydin and John Lewis), *The Girl Who Drank the Moon* (Kelly Barnhill), *Long Way Down* (Jason Reynolds)

Yearning: *Strange the Dreamer* (Laini Taylo), *Vincent and Theo* (Deborah Heiligman), *Eleanor and Park* (Rainbow Rowell), *The Graveyard Book* (Neil Gaiman), *Kira Kira* (Cynthia Kadohata), *In Darkness* (Nick Lake), *The Book Thief* (Markus Zusak) *Just Like That* (Gary Schmidt), *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (Jonathan Safran Foer), *Dig* (A. S. King).

Contemplation: *The Serpent King* (Jeff Zetner), *Crossover* (Kwame Alexander), *We Are Okay* (Nina LaCour), *Just Like That* (Gary Schmidt), *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (Jonathan Safran Foer)

Confession: *Scythe* (Neal Shusterman), *Dig* (A. S. King), *Kira Kira* (Cynthia Kadohata), *Belles Series* (Dhonielle Clayton)

Reconciliation: *Crossover* (Kwame Alexander), *Dragon Hoops* (Gene Luen Yang), *Dig* (A. S. King), *Kira Kira* (Cynthia Kadohata), *Just Like That* (Gary Schmidt), *The War I Finally Won* (Kimberly Brubaker Bradley)

Equanimity: *The Graveyard Book* (Neil Gaiman), *Dig* (A.S. King) *The War I Finally Won* (Kimberly Brubaker Bradley)

Thankfulness: *Ordinary Hazards* (Nikki Grimes), *The Girl Who Drank the Moon* (Kelly Barnhill), *The War I Finally Won* (Kimberly Brubaker Bradley), *Just Like That* (Gary Schmidt)

Obedience: *Dragon Hoops* (Gene Luen Yang), *Children of Blood and Bone* (Tomi Adeyemi), *Navigating Early* (Clare Vanderpool)

Pilgrimage: *Children of Blood and Bone* (Tomi Adeyemi), *Ready Player One* (Ernest Cline), *Navigating Early* (Clare Vanderpool), *Ordinary Hazards* (Nikki Grimes), *Firekeepers Daughter* (Angeline Boulley)

Lament: *Between Shades of Gray* (Ruty Spetys), *Scythe* (Neal Shusterman), *Dragon Hoops* (Gene Luen Yang), *Dig* (A. S. King), *March Series* (Andrew Aydin and John Lewis)

Joy: *Between Shades of Gray* (Ruty Spetys), *The Sun is Also A Star* (Nicola Yoon), *The Girl Who Drank the Moon* (Kelly Barnhill)

YAL books read as different kinds of prayers

Internment (Samira Ahmed) - Anger, Yearning

The Hate U Give (Angie Thomas) - Anger, Lament

Long Way Down (Jason Reynolds) - Anger, Lament, Yearning, Contemplation

Speak (Laurie Halse Anderson) - Anger, Lament, Contemplation

Goodbye Days (Jeff Zetner) - Lament, Reconciliation, Thankfulness

Brown Girl Dreaming (Jacqueline Woodson) - Pilgrimage, Joy

The War That Saved My Life (Kimberly Brubaker Bradley) - Yearning, Anger, Lament

The Poet X (Elizabeth Acevedo) - Anger, Yearning, Obedience

Louisiana's Way Home (Kate DiCamillo) - Pilgrimage, Yearning, Joy

Orbiting Jupiter (Gary Schmidt) - Anger, Yearning

Beast Player (Nahoko Uehashi) - Obedience, Contemplation

Where the Mountain Meets the Moon (Grace Lin) - Yearning, Thankfulness

The Fault in our Stars (John Green) - Anger, Yearning, Thankfulness, Pilgrimage

The Inquisitor's Tale (Adam Gidwitz) - Joy, Reconciliation

Sacred Reading Practices

Florilegium comes from Latin and means “a collection of flowers”. Florilegium is collecting phrases from a text that are important or insightful and writing them down, then selecting and reading them in connection with each other to discern themes in the whole work.

Lectio Divina is Latin for “sacred reading” and “it is used to refer to an approach wherein you pick or choose a given sentence, phrase, or word through which God speaks” Steps include considering the literal meaning of the passage, the allegorical meaning of the passage, asking students to connect the passage to their own lives, and asking students what action the passage invites student readers to take.

PaRDeS refers to “coming back to the same passage repeatedly and thinking about it in different ways.” Based on a modern Jewish practice, readers are invited to consider Peshat (surface meaning), Remez (hints of deeper meaning) Derash (what meaning can you seek in other places that connects to this meaning), and Sod (what surprise meaning does the passage perhaps hold for the reader)

Marginalia “encompasses comments, questions, criticism, annotations, or drawings made in books by readers at the time of the reading -- then discussed with others later. ”

Havruta is an ancient Jewish practice of repeated readings that slowly builds interpretive understanding” Like Florilegia, this practice involves putting two passages in conversation with each other.

Ignatian Imagery/Spirituality is a reading discussion technique that relies on using your imaginary five senses to put yourself into a scene from the book, then consider what that perspective and immersion gives you to see.