MARIO WORLDS AND HENRY "CODY" MILLER

Miles Morales: Spider-Man and Reimagining the Canon for Racial Justice

Mario Worlds and Cody Miller argue that to disrupt racial hierarchies we must purposefully disrupt the canon of literature.

Racial hierarchies within English courses are perpetuated by the reverence for the literary canon. When left unchallenged, the canon is a weapon of the colonial project, which perpetuates Eurocentrism and violence against people of color (Durand and Jiménez-García). Often, canonical texts that are used to discuss racism, such as *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, are centered on White characters' experiences learning about racism and/or take place in the past: *Invisible Man* and *Black Boy* are examples. While texts associated with the canon certainly have a place in English classrooms, we worry that neglecting contemporary texts that address racism results in students associating racism with the past. Legislation and policy have added to this concern.

For instance, the Common Core State Standards draw from canonical texts and Newbery Award winners that are overwhelmingly historical narratives, which can lead students and teachers to believe racism is a relic of the past (Thein and Beach). Meredith Sinclair criticized the exemplary texts set that accompanies the Common Core as being "colonized by whiteness" for centering White authors as being "worthy of study" while largely omitting or marginalizing authors of color (90). Subsequently, teachers' inability to challenge the status and content of the canon emboldens a hierarchy that places White characters *learning* about racism over characters of color *experiencing* racism. In short, an uncritical acceptance of the canon prevents students from addressing racism in its contemporary contexts.

As educators and researchers—Mario is a Black cisgender straight male, and Cody is a White cisgender gay male—it is our belief that English language arts classrooms must be sites to name, challenge, and ultimately dismantle oppressive systems. Traditional canonical curriculum and pedagogy will only reinforce the systems we seek to disrupt. Young adult literature, when paired with intentional pedagogical choices, is a powerful tool to fulfill our aims. E. Sybil Durand and Marilisa Jiménez-García argue that young adult literature allows students to "engage social issues that the established canon obscures" (16). Jason Reynolds's *Miles Morales: Spider-Man* is a text that opens conversations about contemporary manifestations of racism. Reynolds's novel can be part of a larger effort to reimagine the canon. In an exchange with Trevor Noah, Reynolds vocalizes what that effort entails:

> We have to rethink what the literary canon is and whether or not it should remain fossilized and concrete as it is today. It's stagnant. It's static, right? Why not figure out how to expand the canon? To be diverse. To be young. To be old. To have like, poetry, poetry should be, Shakespeare's sonnets and it should be by Queen Latifah. Teach comparative literature where you take Queen Latifah's "Ladies First" and Maya Angelou's "Phenomenal Woman" and you show young people that nothing is new. This is all a continuum. We are working with tradition. Then they can start to see their place in the things that they're reading.

We agree with Reynolds's call and want to place his young adult novel, *Miles Morales: Spider-Man,* in

the reimagining of the literary canon to discuss the racist policy structure that is conceptualized as the "school-to-prison pipeline."

We work to illustrate how *Miles Morales,* along with a variety of other texts, can constitute a new type of canon that foregrounds addressing contemporary issues of racism. First, we outline the key concepts of "White supremacy" and the "school-to-prison pipeline" before providing a brief overview of the book *Miles Morales: Spider-Man*. We end our article with additional suggestions for classroom teachers.

WHITE SUPREMACY, THE CANON, AND THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE

Like education professor Sabina Vaught, we draw on legal scholar Cheryl Harris's definition of White supremacy as a

> political, economic, and cultural system in which Whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of White superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of White dominant and non-White subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings. (1714)

In *Racism, Public Schooling, and the Entrenchment of White Supremacy: A Critical Race Ethnography,* Vaught outlines how schools are rooted in and sustain White supremacy through a number of methods including policy, procedures, structures, and curriculum. For the purpose of this article, we will examine how curricular considerations such as a devotion to the literary canon and school policies and procedures relating to discipline uphold White supremacy.

> The literary canon perpetuates White supremacy by positioning White authors as essential to cultural knowledge through descriptors such as "classic" and "foundational."

The literary canon perpetuates White supremacy by positioning White authors as essential to cultural knowledge through descriptors such as "classic" and "foundational." Defenders of the literary canon position the themes of canonical texts as "objective knowledge" and "universal in nature" despite the reality that the construction of the canon reflects "values, ideologies, political positions, and human interests" of Western imperialism (Banks 5–8). The canon submerges knowledge in an unnamed Whiteness that masquerades under labels such as "universal" and "timeless." Vaught reminds us that labels act as "ideological and structural gateways to the effective maintenance of racial hegemony" (148). When left unquestioned, the construction and continual credence of the literary canon acts as a "structural message" that teaches "consistent racial grammar" within English classrooms and schools (155). This structural message affects both students and teachers. Scholars H. Richard Milner and Jane Murray Agee have demonstrated how a department's or school's strict reverence of teaching canonical literature marginalizes teachers of color. The canon is not merely a collection of texts. Rather, the canon represents a cultural construction of knowledge centered in Whiteness that institutions deem superior and essential.

Similarly, schools can uphold White supremacy through policies and discipline procedures by implicitly demanding compliance to White, middle-class norms of dress, speech, and classroom engagement (Hatt-Echeverria and Jo). Black and Latinx students are disproportionately punished within schools when they fail to succumb to those norms by teachers who have not critically examined their own cultural biases. Punishments, as a result of "zero tolerance" policies, often include suspension and expulsion. These punitive punishments frequently occur at schools with heavy police presence, which statistically are schools that are underfunded and serve predominantly Black and Latinx students. The multiple and interconnected factors of underfunded schools, police presence, centering of White norms, and harsh punishment result in Black and Latinx students being forced out of schools and into prison systems, whether directly or indirectly. This reality has been conceptualized as the "school-to-prison pipeline" to make the implicit threads between White supremacist school policies and the prison system explicit (Kim et al.).

The literary canon and the school-to-prison pipeline are different in form but manifest from the same White supremacist ideology. The canon positions White authors' experiences and language as aspirational and superior while the school-to-prison pipeline codes White cultural norms as essential for academic success. Both the canon and the school-to-prison pipeline are upheld, perpetuated, and even strengthened through the institution of school. Fortunately, schools, especially English classrooms, can be spaces to challenge these manifestations of White supremacy. Teaching Reynolds's *Miles Morales: Spider-Man* disrupts canonical wisdom about what "counts" as a valuable text.

MILES MORALES: SPIDER-MAN

The titular character in Reynolds's text is described as "Baby Einstein" and "Smarty Arty" (Reynolds 43). Miles is the son of Rio Morales, a Puerto Rican woman, and Jefferson Davis, an African American man. Miles prefers to use his mother's last name to avoid jokes about the musician Miles Davis and, more seriously, to avoid the "dirt" his father's last name carries in the neighborhood (20–21). Ganke, Miles's best friend, is Korean American. *Miles Morales: Spider-Man* features a multicultural cast that is significantly different from the nearly racially homogenous cast of the original series. Most notable is the fact that Spider-Man is no longer Peter Parker, the White hero audiences have known for decades.

In recasting Spider-Man as Miles Morales, an Afro-Latino male, Marvel comics engaged in a process known as "racebending." Bryan Cooper Owens defines racebending as the "practice in comic books (and other media) of taking an established character and rebooting them as another ethnicity." Racebending is far more than casting choices and fan art. Ebony Elizabeth Thomas and Amy Stornaiuolo argue that racebending is a form of restorying, a "process by which people reshape narratives to represent a diversity of perspectives and experiences that are often missing or silenced in mainstream texts, media, and popular discourse" (313).

The racebending of Spider-Man, a story with a traditionally White male hero, is especially difficult
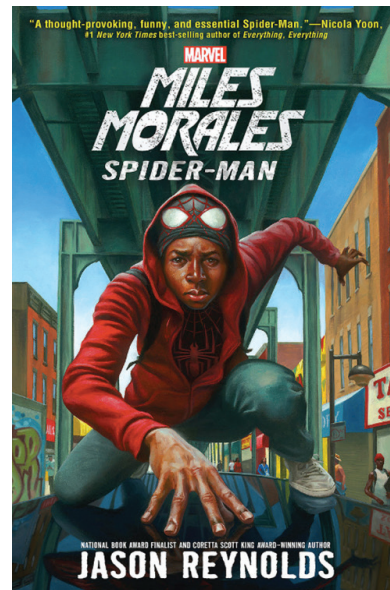

FIGURE 1.
Miles Morales: Spider-Man chronicles the titular character's experiences balancing the dual identities of student and superhero.

for some to fathom because it challenges existing notions about who can and should be a hero. By reimagining Spider-Man as an Afro-Latino boy from an urban environment, Reynolds problematizes the belief that heroes must be White males. Visions of who villains are and what they look like, largely perpetuated by racist stereotyping and media representation, are challenged when the hero looks like someone society has historically villainized. The presence of Black superheroes destroys illusions of who commits crime (Black males) and the heroes who save society from them (White police officers).

> Both the canon and the school-to-prison pipeline are upheld, perpetuated, and even strengthened through the institution of school. Fortunately, schools, especially English classrooms, can be spaces to challenge these manifestations of White supremacy.

Racebending is also important because (re)casting characters using alternative race and ethnicities creates possibilities for popular comics and other "classics" to be told from underrepresented perspectives

rarely seen in literature. In an interview about his novel, *Shadowshaper*, Daniel José Older explains that diversity is needed in literature because "there are other ways of thinking about time, there are other ways of thinking about place and community, what it means to win, be a hero, or save the world" (qtd. in Gonzalez).

Miles attends Brooklyn Visions Academy, which he describes as a "bougie boarding school" with "a lot of rich kids acting like rich kids" (Reynolds 92). He relies on a scholarship for tuition and works a job at the campus store to waive room and board fees. Most teachers are described as wearing blazers, "overstarched button up" shirts, khakis, and "sensible shoes" (52–53). Miles is aware that his race and economic status mark him as an outsider within Brooklyn Visions Academy, noting that he is from the "part of Brooklyn that Brooklyn Visions Academy didn't have much vision for at all" (259). Like its real-life counterparts in many urban areas, Brooklyn Visions Academy relies on a dress code that makes White, upper-middle-class culture, attitude, and beliefs aspirational (Hatt-Echeverria and Jo).

Miles Morales: Spider-Man follows the eponymous character throughout one year in high school. The plot revolves primarily around the fact that Miles's powers are acting strangely while he is antagonized by his history teacher, Mr. Chamberlain. The racebending in *Miles Morales: Spider-Man* not only recasts the superhero but also recasts the villain, Mr. Chamberlain, a White male. Through Mr. Chamberlain's actions, the audience is able to see a reconceptualization of teachers and the negative impact their teaching can have on students when their instruction reflects racist beliefs. By offering alternative representations of both the hero and the villain, Reynolds's text actively works to dismantle racial hierarchies.

THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE AND *MILES MORALES*

The school-to-prison pipeline is a concept used to illustrate how schools employ "discipline policies that push students out of the classroom and into the criminal justice system at alarming rates," especially Black and Latinx students (Elias). English

classrooms have been seen as sites to resist the school-to-prison pipeline (Rubin). Indeed, the racial categorizing that determines which piece of literature is deserving to be part of the canon is the same system of White supremacy that dictates who will be part of the school-to-prison pipeline. The school-to-prison pipeline acts as the central antagonist in *Miles Morales: Spider-Man*. Thus, Reynolds's book offers an opportunity to examine the school-to-prison pipeline and deepen students' understanding of slavery in America's history.

TEACHER AS VILLAIN

Miles's history teacher, Mr. Chamberlain, is the primary antagonist for Miles throughout the book. Mr. Chamberlain talks about the Civil War "like this beautiful, romantic thing" and defends slavery as "kind of good for the country" (Reynolds 40). Miles notes that Mr. Chamberlain's defense of slavery is dead wrong, but he keeps his thoughts to himself initially; Miles even wonders if Mr. Chamberlain is trying to anger students so they'll engage in the curriculum (61). As a history teacher, Mr. Chamberlain uses his classroom as a site to replicate White supremacist myths about the purpose and morality of the Civil War. He compares enslaved people to dogs, suggests enslaved people should be "grateful" to their masters, and informs students he will bring in images of enslaved people to confirm that "many slaves were comfortable with being enslaved. Happy even" (115). Mr. Chamberlain even dresses as a Confederate soldier for a Halloween school party.

Miles has an emotional reaction when he eventually challenges Mr. Chamberlain's assertion that enslaved people should be "grateful" to their masters, which causes Mr. Chamberlain to tell Miles to "put a muzzle on . . . this anger of yours" (117). Mr. Chamberlain's response reflects dangerous and unexamined views White teachers hold about Black youth that lead to higher rates of disciplinary action taken against Black students (Morris).

Sip, one of Miles's father's friends, argues that educators can cause even greater harm to already marginalized youth: "school is like a tree we get to hide in. And at the bottom of it is a bunch of dogs.

Them dogs are bad decisions. So when people shake us out of that tree for no reason, it becomes a lot easier to get bit" (Reynolds 207). Educators shaking students out of the metaphorical tree include an English teacher who picked on a student who couldn't read well, a principal who had no concern for the well-being of students, and a dean who would "pop into classrooms and pick out students he felt needed to be chastised" (204–06). Each of these figures, all named Chamberlain, are later revealed to be a group being led by a Confederate zombie named the Warden who works in schools to punish young students of color until the students are sent to prison, where they work as indentured servants and are enslaved. The history teacher Mr. Chamberlain foreshadows this plot when he muses that the "South rose up again, by a new, much smarter form of slavery. Prison" (155). The Chamberlains literally represent the school-to-prison pipeline as they use racist discipline policies to funnel students of color into the prison system.

NONFICTION TEXTS AS PAIRINGS

We offer a list of nonfiction texts that can be paired with *Miles Morales: Spider-Man* to further the discussion of the school-to-prison pipeline within secondary English language arts classrooms (see Table 1). These texts, which vary in format and genre, can deepen students' historical understanding

TABLE 1.
Nonfiction Pairings to Teach about the School-to-Prison Pipeline

Author and Title	Description
13th. Directed by Ava DuVernay, Kandoo Films, 2016.	Documentary detailing the historical nature of modern-day slavery, including the school-to-prison pipeline
Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New Press, 2012.	Book detailing the history of mass incarceration through policy analysis
Elias, Marilyn. "The School-to-Prison Pipeline." *Teaching Tolerance,* vol. 14, 2013.	News article detailing the history of the school-to-prison pipeline and contemporary legislative attempts to counter it
Lopez, German. "How Schools Push Black Students to the Criminal Justice System." *Vox*, 30 July 2015, www.vox.com/2015/7/30/907 5065/school-to-prison-pipeline-study.	Explainer article detailing the statistics and research associated with the school-to-prison pipeline
Morris, Monique. *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools*. New Press, 2016.	Book detailing how racist and sexist structures in schools push Black female students out of school and into prison
Teaching Tolerance. *Teaching "The New Jim Crow."* Southern Poverty Law Center, 2014.	Curricular resources for teaching *The New Jim Crow* in secondary classrooms
TED. "The Urgency of Intersectionality: Kimberlé Crenshaw." *YouTube*, 7 Dec. 2016, youtu.be/akOe5-UsQ2o.	TED Talk video detailing why we need to address gender in our analysis of racist policies
Vox. "The School-to-Prison Pipeline, Explained." *YouTube*, 11 Jan. 2016, youtu.be/HoKkasEyDOI.	Explainer video briefly detailing the history of the school-to-prison pipeline

of the school-to-prison pipeline and its connections to American slavery.

Ava DuVernay's documentary, *13th*, offers a historical context of Black and Latinx imprisonment and outlines the progression of incarceration from slavery to prison. The film gives historical background knowledge that can be used as a framework through which the text, *Miles Morales: Spider-Man*, can be read. The film explores the loophole in the Thirteenth Amendment that made modern-day slavery possible. The amendment states that slavery is illegal in the United States, "except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted." The film notes criminal offenses that people of color are routinely convicted of often stem from policies that specifically target Black and Latinx students.

While *Miles Morales: Spider-Man* focuses primarily on male characters such as Miles and makes analysis of the school-to-prison pipeline more easily viewed as a phenomenon affecting mostly young Black and Latinx boys, the text also demonstrates how young girls of color, too, are victims of school systems that usher girls into the school-to-prison pipeline. In her TED Talk, "The Urgency of Intersectionality," Kimberlé Crenshaw challenges audience members to recognize the number of Black women who have been victims of police brutality. In doing so, she encourages the larger society to #SayHerName and brings awareness to forgotten or ignored stories of women of color who suffer, often silently, within systems of oppression.

> **We must reimagine the canon to address how racism embedded in political systems perpetuates racial hierarchies within our societies and schools. Fortunately, we are not alone.**

Being sure to consider the ways in which women of color are marginalized because of the intersection of both their race and gender, Reynolds answers Crenshaw's call to #SayHerName through the character Alicia. In class, Alicia challenges Mr. Chamberlain's interpretation of the Civil War and his racist teaching philosophies and is consequently punished.

Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in School represents a foundational text that can be used to understand Alicia's experiences and make room for discussions about young girls and the school-to-prison pipeline. This text looks at disciplinary practices and school policies that punish Black girls at alarming rates, creating gateways for them to be forced into the pipeline. This text can help students make sense of Alicia's experience from a feminist perspective that offers opportunities to understand how Alicia is uniquely gendered and racialized in ways that characterize her as insubordinate or criminal.

Michelle Alexander's work, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, is an important pairing that explores the historical, sociological, and political contexts that situate the school-to-prison pipeline in a broader scope of White supremacist policies. Miles's school and the school-to-prison pipeline concept inevitably reflect a microcosmic representation of how White supremacy evolves and is enacted in different policies across various US institutions like schools. *The New Jim Crow* allows students ample chances to draw connections from *Miles Morales: Spider-Man* to larger social issues and offer critiques of policies that unfairly target and punish already marginalized students.

OTHER CLASSROOM SUGGESTIONS

This article suggests one way in which the canon can be reimagined to address contemporary sociopolitical issues. Specifically, we examined how *Miles Morales: Spider-Man* can be used to address the school-to-prison pipeline. This is just one text and one racist policy. We must reimagine the canon to address how racism embedded in political systems perpetuates racial hierarchies within our societies and schools. Fortunately, we are not alone.

#DisruptTexts is a "crowdsourced, grass roots effort by teachers for teachers" meant to "challenge the traditional canon in order to create a more inclusive, representative, and equitable language arts curriculum that our students deserve." Developed by English teachers Tricia Ebarvia, Lorena Germán, Kim Parker, and Julia Torres, #DisruptText is

determined to "aid and develop teachers committed to anti-racist/anti-bias teaching pedagogy and practices." The movement works through Twitter participation. A Twitter chat that takes place over a week is dedicated to a canonical text. Teachers are invited to discuss the values of teaching the canonical piece, the problematic nature of the canonical text, how the canonical text can be used to discuss contemporary political issues, and what additional texts can be used to "disrupt" the perspectives and ideologies in the canonical text. #DisruptTexts is an invaluable source for any teachers seeking to speak against the White supremacy inherent in the canon.

Miles Morales: Spider-Man can enter dialogue with other texts, even canonical ones, in thematic units. This approach may be especially valuable for teachers who are institutionally obligated to teach canonical texts. For instance, *Miles Morales* can be taught with *Beowulf* in a unit focusing on hero narratives. Students can be asked to analyze what makes a hero, who has historically been considered a hero, and how unequal power dynamics shape our understanding of heroes and villains. Teachers can pair *Miles Morales* with *The Catcher in the Rye* to critically examine how youth, as a concept, has been socially constructed over time. Students can be asked to tackle the question of how race and class shape experiences youth face, and whose youth gets positioned as universal. Finally, Miles's schooling experiences can be compared with Scout's in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Teachers could ask students to critically compare how Scout and Miles are positioned in their respective schools and how their actions are interpreted and reacted to by teachers. In each of these examples, *Miles Morales: Spider-Man* acts as a counter to canonical texts to provide students with an opportunity to challenge assumptions about heroes, youth, and schooling experiences.

CONCLUSION

Jason Reynolds's novel adaptation of the beloved superhero can be used in classrooms to teach about "forms of racism and colonialism that persist for youth of color today, particularly African American and Native American youth, who continue to be located in the margins of society" (Durand and Jiménez-García 12). Incorporating *Miles Morales: Spider-Man* offers opportunities to address and challenge the school-to-prison pipeline within secondary English language arts classrooms. Including Reynolds's racebending Spider-Man in classrooms and reading lists pushes against literary hierarchies that place whiteness as aspirational.

Not challenging canonical wisdom and avoiding important conversations about race and racism in our contemporary society creates classroom conditions similar to those Miles has to survive in the novel. Just as Miles Morales's actions set in motion the toppling of Mr. Chamberlain's attempt to preserve a racial hierarchy, reimagining the canon with books like *Miles Morales: Spider-Man* can begin to splinter the racial hierarchy that reigns over English curricula. **EJ**

WORKS CITED

13th. Directed by Ava DuVernay, Kandoo Films, 2016.

Agee, Jane Murray. "Negotiating a Teaching Identity: An African American Teacher's Struggle to Teach in Test-Driven Contexts." *Teachers College Record*, vol. 106, no. 4, 2004, pp. 747–74.

Banks, James. "The Canon Debate, Knowledge Construction, and Multicultural Education." *Educational Researcher,* vol. 22, no. 5, 1993, pp. 4–14.

Durand, E. Sybil, and Marilisa Jiménez-García. "Unsettling Representations of Identities: A Critical Review of Diverse Youth Literature." *Research on Diversity in Youth Literature*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2018, sophia.stkate.edu/rdyl.

Ebarvia, Tricia, Lorena Germán, Kimberly Parker, and Julia Torres. "What Is #DisruptTexts?" *#DisruptTexts*, disrupttexts.org/lets-get-to-work/.

Elias, Marilyn. "The School-to-Prison Pipeline." *Teaching Tolerance,* vol. 43, 2013, pp. 39–40.

Gonzalez, Barbara. "Daniel José Older Talks Diversity in Young Adult Novels and New Project *Dead Light March*." *Cassius,* 6 July 2017, cassiuslife.com/5873/daniel-jose-older-dead-light-march/.

Harris, Cheryl. "Whiteness as Property." *Harvard Law Review,* vol. 106, no. 8, 1993, pp. 1709–91.

Hatt-Echeverria, Beth, and Ji-Yeon Jo. "Understanding the 'New' Racism through an Urban Charter School." *Educational Foundations,* vol. 19, no. 1–2, 2005, pp. 51–65.

Kim, Catherine, et al. *The School-to-Prison Pipeline: Structuring Legal Reform.* NYU P, 2012.

Milner, H. Richard. "Developing a Multicultural Curriculum in a Predominantly White Teaching Context: Lessons from an African American Teacher in a Suburban English Classroom." *Culture, Curriculum, and Identity in Education*, edited by H. Richard Milner, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp. 37–76.

Morris, Monique. *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in School*. New Press, 2016.

Owens, Bryan Cooper. "Racebending and Representation in Comic Books." *African American Intellectual History Society*, 6 Feb. 2017, www.aaihs.org/racebending-and-representation-in-comic-books/.

Reynolds, Jason. Interview by Trevor Noah. *The Daily Show*. Comedy Central. 23 Jan. 2018, www.cc.com/video-clips/avk8pe/the-daily-show-with-trevor-noah-jason-reynolds-serving-young-readers-with-long-way-down-.

———. *Miles Morales: Spider-Man*. Marvel, 2017.

Rubin, Daniel Ian. "Engaging Latino/a Students in the Secondary English Classroom: A Step Toward Breaking the School-to-Prison Pipeline." *Journal of Latinos and Education*, vol. 13, no. 3, 2014, pp. 222–30.

Sinclair, Meredith. "Decolonizing ELA: Confronting Privilege and Oppression in Textual Spaces." *English Journal,* vol. 107, no. 6, 2018, pp. 89–94.

Teaching Tolerance. *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*. Southern Poverty Law Center, 2018, www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/2018-02/TT-Teaching-Hard-History-American-Slavery-Report-WEB-February2018.pdf.

Thein, Amanda, and Richard Beach. "Critiquing and Constructing Canons in Middle Grade English and Language Arts Classrooms." *Voices from the Middle,* vol. 21, no. 1, 2013, pp. 10–14.

Thomas, Ebony Elizabeth, and Amy Stornaiuolo. "Restorying the Self: Bending Toward Textual Justice." *Harvard Educational Review,* vol. 86, no. 3, 2016, pp. 313–38.

Vaught, Sabina. *Racism, Public Schooling, and the Entrenchment of White Supremacy: A Critical Race Ethnography.* SUNY P, 2011.

MARIO WORLDS is a PhD candidate at the University of Florida, where he studies curriculum and instruction and specializes in language and literacy education. He teaches undergraduate courses in language arts and children's literature. He can be reached at mareaszy@ufl.edu.

HENRY "CODY" MILLER is an assistant university school professor at P.K. Yonge Developmental Research School where he teaches English I. Additionally, he is a PhD candidate in English education at the University of Florida. He can be reached at miller.henryc@gmail.com.

READWRITETHINKCONNECTION Lisa Storm Fink, RWT

Stereotyped images create false ideals that real people can't hope to live up to, foster low self-esteem for those who don't fit in, and restrict people's ideas of what they're capable of. In this lesson, students explore representations of race, class, ethnicity, and gender by analyzing comics over a two-week period and then re-envisioning them with a "comic character makeover." This activity leads to greater awareness of stereotypes in the media and urges students to form more realistic visions of these images as they perform their makeovers. http://bit.ly/1wglDec