

## It Is Inexcusable to Deny *Inexcusable* a Place in the Classroom

*"This book is messed up!" Janet exclaimed as she walked into my classroom.*

*I followed her as she proceeded to take her place in the back of the class.*

*"Wait a minute," I said, "what does messed up mean?"*

*"You know that kid, Keir, is in a bad situation and doesn't get it."*

*"Have you finished it yet?"*

*"I just have a couple of chapters left."*

Janet's (all names are pseudonyms) first response while reading *Inexcusable* by Chris Lynch was blunt, but was the kind of direct response I hoped for when I gave her the book. I was immediately taken with *Inexcusable* when I first encountered it at the 2005 ALAN Workshop in Indianapolis. I hoped to include this dynamic book, along with other titles, as a possible choice for literature circles and self-selected readings. In my experience, students are more likely to finish and enjoy books of their own selection over books that are chosen for them. "Books that make a lasting impression on readers are those that connect with their lives and personal experiences in significant ways" (Brown and Stephens 66). *Inexcusable* is such a book; it has modern issues and problems related to our students' concerns. Educators should place *Inexcusable*, and books like it, into our students' hands.

I asked my two student aides, Janet and Zac, to read *Inexcusable* to gauge student reaction to the book. Both Janet and Zac had been in my regular junior English classes the previous year. They were

typical of my students; they were bright but not overly engaged in the study of English or, for that matter, any other classes. In my class, they managed to earn a variety of grades at various times depending on their interest or their inclination. I may have seen more promise in these students' academic ability than they did themselves. I readily recruited them as aides when they were seniors. While Janet and Zac worked as my aides, I quickly learned to value their insight into books they read the year before, books I was now teaching again to a new crop of juniors. As they helped me, it became apparent that they had a good handle on my current students' reactions to class activities. They turned out to be perfect aides; they were valuable living commentaries on activities I had attempted the year before and were sounding boards for current projects.

When Janet and Zac finished reading *Inexcusable*, we held an informal discussion about what they liked and didn't like about the book. We also discussed how best to fit the book into class activities according to Daniels' contention that:

teachers who really want to meet this need for genuine choice and self-direction must provide two kinds of independent reading: time for individuals . . . and time for independent reading in *groups*, when kids select, read, and discuss books together, as in literature circles. (19)

In the past I had too often relied on books and methods that I liked or had selected without consulting students. By recruiting the advice of Janet and Zac, I hoped to gain insight into the kinds of books my students would self-select. I wanted to get closer to

“genuine choice” in the selection process. In hindsight, I should have used students, like Janet and Zac, as book scouts to provide lists of books for my classroom. They provided many reasons to include *Inexcusable* in a classroom. It was a novel they both enjoyed and found thought provoking.

Did *Inexcusable* have a place in my classroom? Why should I bother with a novel that might be problematic? As a teacher, I found reasons to include *Inexcusable* as I strived to include novels in my classroom with interesting ideology and fine literary craftsmanship. Many English teachers feel that young adult (YA) literature simply isn't rich enough to compete with the entrenched works of the canon as quality literature. But I (and I believe many other teachers) keep finding students who resist the classics or disdain how literature is seemingly forced on them. Probst suggests that students:

may despise literature, the literature classroom, and the literature teacher. They may even express great pride in their inability to make sense out of the written word. But, unless they are very unusual, they have the one characteristic that is essential for the reader of literature: an interest in themselves. (30)

In this battle to teach literature and the skills to interpret and enjoy it, teachers too often encounter students who resist and shut down. If Probst and others are right and young adults are motivated in their reading by their interest in themselves, then YA literature should give us an edge, a hook, to draw students to reading.

Students are selecting and reading YA literature outside of class or for independent reading, but those choices are not often explored or validated by teachers. Soter explains, “[M]any students who had become disenfranchised members of English classrooms loved those [YA] books, read them voraciously, and *became* readers. But we never used them to teach students *about* literature” (1). I agree with Soter's further suggestion: “Although many young adult novels do not have the qualities that bear the kind of scrutiny that literary study involves, some do lend themselves well to interpretive study as literary works” (2). From my first exposure, I felt that *Inexcusable* could withstand close literary evaluation. It is a well-written work that addresses a deeply rooted social ill, one that lurks on the fringes of daily life for many young people.

As I have argued elsewhere, English teachers carry the responsibility to introduce young readers to books that are finely crafted. Books with strong ideological themes allow our students to vicariously place themselves in perplexing situations. Vicarious experiences “transport readers to unknown places and help them understand what others experience. Literature provides a powerful means by which we can ‘walk in another's shoes’ and begin to understand what another experiences” (Brown and Stephens 5). Students can then think productively about the serious problems they face in their lives through the power of literature. Based on the advice of Janet and Zac, I suggest that our students can be trusted to internalize the lessons we teach. Despite the facades they present from day to day, students are listening to their teachers and are retaining more of the tools to read and understand literature than we think they are during the daily grind of a school year.

## **A Place of Discovery: Finding *Inexcusable***

Like all participants in an ALAN Workshop, in 2005 I received an English teacher's (and a reader's) dream gift of two overstuffed bags of books. I found a place to sit and began exploring the collection. I found *Inexcusable* and noticed in the program that the author, Chris Lynch, was speaking the following day. I started reading the book and finished it later that evening. The force of the narrative and the “touchy” subject of date rape were powerful. Like young people around the world, many of my students had difficult life experiences, life experiences that went unaddressed at school; as a result, I believed I had students, both boys and girls, who would be drawn to this story even though they were not attracted to more traditional texts.

Quality YA literature should engage the students that pick up and explore these books. Equally important, teachers in the classroom, media specialists, English educators, and the critics of YA literature should promote books that are both ideological engaging and appropriate as well as a finely crafted literary work. Blasingame suggests, “Good young adult literature is powerful. It grabs kid's interest and speaks to them in language they can understand about the very issues they worry about on a daily basis” (7). We should offer these emerging books next to the books traditionally used in the English classroom.

Please don't misunderstand me. I love the classics and have recently read with my students *Huckleberry Finn* (Twain), *Great Expectations* (Dickens), *Heart of Darkness* (Conrad), and *The Old Man and The Sea* (Hemingway). These classics are all books with ideological themes that are complex and relevant in the lives of our students. They are novels that are expertly crafted and can demonstrate how literary devices: setting, character development and narrative structure can open our understanding of a text. In *Young Adult Literature & The New Literary Theories* Soter underscores the canon's importance but points out that one of the purposes of her text is to show that YA literature can be critically examined.

I am not recommending the elimination of adult classics from secondary school curricula. However, I do want to show that among young adult novels are selections that teachers can use to develop students' critical appreciation of literature. Additionally, these novels contain content that is more directly relevant to teenagers and their experiences. A balance of young adult fiction and the classics is what I propose. (2)

Choosing YA literature does not have to mean providing a text of inferior quality, but it does mean that more of us should explain the craftsmanship in these novels. *Inexcusable* is an example of a novel that poses complex ideological questions and is a finely crafted work. The conversation with Janet and Zac is revealing and supports the assumption that *Inexcusable* is a work of literary quality. The approaches they suggested as ways to teach *Inexcusable* provide a groundwork for a discussion of the book's quality and craftsmanship.

### Relying on the Readers

Students need to discover these YA novels. It isn't enough that I like them. I need to find out if the students who walk through my doors each year will read them. Nilsen and Donalson emphasize the role of student participation and choice in finding and defining YA literature; "we define young adult literature as any book freely chosen for reading by someone in this age group" (xvi). The goal of English teachers should be to have our students read and write more. Can we incorporate the books they read rather than insisting on "literature?" Probst reminds us:

The pleasures that first drew us to literature were not those of the literary scholar. When our parents read us nursery

rhymes, we listened for the rhythms of the language and the stories they told without analyzing the rhyme scheme or the metrical pattern, without exploring their political or social significance, without learning about their history or their authorship (29).

Introducing students to the power of literary devices that open up the "political or social significance" of books is important; we should be able to use the books they read in this endeavor. By including their books we empower their choices; we build readers. In addition, we need to find ways to expand their range of choices. We may not create a host of English teachers but we have a chance to create many life-long readers.

In previous years, I returned from the ALAN workshop and displayed my new collection of books around my room. I did book talks and shared new novels by authors that I knew my students had read. Of course, the readers always perked up, but far too many just tolerated my excitement and waited for the opportunity to get back to their iPods. Inviting Janet and Zac to serve as student reviewers employed a new tactic. I was even a little surprised at how quickly they agreed to the idea. I can't say that Janet and Zac were typically eager readers; however, when given the chance to operate as confederates evaluating a book for other students, they both readily agreed. I listened carefully to their experience with the novel and noted their suggestions on how to find a place for this book in my classroom. They quickly highlighted the complex narrator and the narrative structure of the novel. These characteristics of the novel demanded that readers pay close attention. When asked how to incorporate classroom activities around *Inexcusable*, they were quite clear on how the book could be used to illustrate literary devices commonly taught in classroom settings. In addition, Janet said, "You

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should ignore some of the other books and teach this one to everybody.” Zac added that, “Teachers should let us choose all of the books we read.” While I understand the sentiment and realize that we can’t abandon all instruction to the control of students, we should honor their choices. It is important to recognize the excitement that the project generated in both students.

### Troubling the Narrator

I was anxious to follow up on Janet’s first commentary, “*This book is messed up!*” and have her place it in the context of a larger discussion. When I asked her what she meant by “messed up” she said, “It was about a rape, you know. So, this is really what it is about? I kept reading to find out if Keir was crazy or not.” Zac also focused on the narrator during his

initial comments on the book. “Can I trust this guy? Generally, I have an inclination to believe first person narrators and rely on what they say.” Both Janet and Zac focused on a central issue of literary criticism, the role of the narrator. Analyzing the role of the narrator is a task that English teachers hope their students will grapple with at a sophisticated level. In practice, however, the majority of the short stories and novels used in middle school and high school do not feature complicated narrators, especially in regular level classrooms. Unfortunately,

complex novels with narrators that trouble the story line or prove unreliable are often reserved for students in advanced classes. Yet, in this situation both Janet and Zac, students who had participated only in regular English classes, found *Inexcusable* interesting and compelling because of the nature of the narrator.

Chris Lynch’s skill in developing a complex narrator that gets under the reader’s skin is a sign of his craftsmanship, his ability to create a character that moves and controls a narrative. One of the goals when selecting classroom novels is to find texts that illustrate specific elements of literary craftsmanship. Janet and Zac had engaged with a text that expanded their

expectations of fiction. *Inexcusable* had a narrator who pushed beyond the limits of their previous literary experiences. They acknowledged that they were reading something that expanded the boundaries of what they had usually read in school. Janet stated, “It was just unique, it has more to it than most of the things I have read in school.” Even though many English teachers discount the quality and value of YA literature, Janet and Zac readily admit that *Inexcusable* enhanced their understanding of what fiction could do. Isn’t that more closely aligned with the goals that we want for our students when they read?

My own first experience with a complex narrator happened in a relaxed high school environment. I took an elective English course focusing on the novel during my senior year. The teacher alternated class readings between simple texts and time-tested classics in a calculated attempt to draw this roomful of self-professed readers into literary worlds that we hadn’t yet imagined or experienced. In this manner, I discovered Raskolnikov. I began to realize that I was sympathizing with and, in a bizarre way, rooting for a double murderer to escape his fate. My reading of *Crime and Punishment* (Dostoyevsky), unencumbered with a teacher’s lecture or fancy assignments, led me to start contemplating how fiction explored the complex nature of the human condition. Instead of mandating a rigid curriculum, the teacher simply ushered me into a reading experience that I have revisited for thirty years. Like *Crime and Punishment*, *Inexcusable* provides a tormented narrator, confused about his actions and the ramifications of those actions in the face of society’s sense of right and wrong. As narrators, Raskolnikov and Keir eventually reach an understanding that they must and will suffer the consequences of their actions. Not all students are prepared to read and struggle with the complexities of Dostoyevsky’s classic novel. In reality, many more students are prepared to read *Inexcusable*. They can more readily identify with the language and themes of the novel. Dealing with the issues of popularity, an alcoholic father, and even date rape are more central to the world in which many of our students live.

### Narrative Structure

Janet and Zac found literary components, other than the narrator, that attracted their attention. According to my two senior readers, the book was

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“messed up” beyond Keir, the disturbed narrator. Zac noticed that the plot was more complicated than most of the books he was assigned in school. “The book is full of little flashbacks that happen before the rape. I started looking for stories before and after the rape.” Zac focused on the narrative to see if he could put together a clearer picture of events than the one supplied by the narrator. Janet explained that as she continued to read she was captured by the flow of the book. “It seemed to get faster and faster.” She also commented that the book jumped around a lot, not like “most of the books that are assigned, which move from point A to point B, even the classics we are supposed to read.”

Janet and Zac had again pointed to another characteristic of fiction that English teachers wish their students would analyze more completely, the narrative structure. The flashback is a standard feature of fiction that most students at every level encounter in their English classroom. *To Kill a Mocking Bird* (Lee), *A Separate Peace* (Knowles), and *Their Eyes are Watching God* (Hurston) are novels that employ a flashback to frame or situate the narrative. Of course, many novels included in the traditional canon of secondary English classrooms have complex narrative lines, but these novels are most frequently reserved for honors or Advanced Placement classes. Novels like *Heart of Darkness* (Conrad) and *The Sound and the Fury* (Faulkner) use complicated narrators that disturb the traditional narrative flow. Conrad’s famous narrator, Marlowe, weaves a narrative in *Heart of Darkness* that begins with a flashback that frames the entire story. Conrad also interrupts the narrative flow with philosophical meanderings as the action proceeds up the river and towards Kurtz. Many students have puzzled over Marlowe’s reliability and his various interruptions that often comment on his own understanding of the events he experienced. Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* also provides the reader with a set of problematic narrators. All three of the Compson boys, Benji, Quentin, and Jason complicate the narrative and the narrative order through their points of view. Clearly, Faulkner’s masterpiece is one of the most complex narratives that an English teacher can offer a high school student. *Inexcusable*, on the other hand, is a YA novel with themes that interests students but also introduces them to a problematic narrator and a complex narrative pattern.

Janet and Zac, self-proclaimed “average” students, engaged in a complex discussion about narrative structure after reading *Inexcusable*. *Inexcusable* joins other recent YA novels that play with creative and experimental narrative structures. Most notably, perhaps, is the recent success of *Holes* by Louis Sachar. *Holes* is an example of an adolescent novel that is easy to read from middle school on, but is finely crafted using multiple narratives, suggestions of magical realism, parallel plot lines, interconnecting story arcs, mythical symbolism and compelling character studies. Other YA novels including *Looking for Alaska* (Green), *Monster* (Myers and Myers), and *Whirligig* (Fleischman) provide complex narrators couched inside dynamic narratives that allow secondary students the opportunity to explore the possibilities of narrative structures. Teachers do not need to push to the side or even forgo the teaching of demanding critical and structural analysis just because their students are not reading traditional texts. It should be increasingly inexcusable for teachers to ignore YA fiction such as *Inexcusable* and other books I have mentioned to teacher literary skills.

### Literary Devices Janet and Zac Suggest as Teaching Tools

In addition to the complex narrative structure and unreliable narrator, *Inexcusable* can easily be used to discuss other literary concepts commonly covered in an English classroom. I asked Janet and Zac about the variety of tasks they had been asked to complete in an English class that were associated with reading fiction.

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They mentioned character descriptions through dialogue, foreshadowing, and the importance of setting. It was remarkable how quickly they sounded like English teachers. They knew the tasks even though they might have been reluctant participants in the past. Their rationale for lackluster participation tended to revolve around their lack of interest in the text. We might cite a variety of reasons for their hesitant response to other assignments. Perhaps a

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text's reading level was simply too hard. Maybe the style was too old or rigid for their tastes. Then again, the subject matter or the characters might have been too removed from their concerns or every day experience. Nevertheless, they had the ability to mimic their teachers and list possible assignments.

Among the possible literary techniques that they saw as teachable in combination with *Inexcusable* were dialogue, flashbacks, foreshadowing, characterization, and

setting. At a more immediate level they saw rich possibilities in discussing a variety of themes that appear in the novel including rationalization, peer pressure, the importance of appropriate adult guidance, the difference between nature and nurture, and the idea of double standards commonly held in society. The list of literary techniques and the possible thematic discussion posed by Janet and Zac demonstrate that our students are often more insightful than we might imagine when asked to play the role of teacher. I was more than a bit taken back that these two previously semi-reluctant scholars supplied such a rich list of possibilities.

## Dialogue

As Janet and Zac point out, *Inexcusable* provides ample opportunity for students to work with dialogue. At one level, students can analyze the dialogue

between Gigi and Keir. A close look at these encounters between the two main characters allows students the opportunity to closely examine selected passages. Careful dialogue examination helps students see the ways in which Keir misreads situations and just how angry and violated Gigi feels as a result of Keir's transgression. Dialogue between Keir and his sisters alludes to a discomfort that his two sisters feel concerning their father. Dialogue between Keir and his father illustrates the father's weaknesses as a parent. For example, his father's willingness to let Keir bend the boundaries of behavior between adolescence and adulthood allows Keir to flounder. All of these situations promote student discussion of how dialogue reveals theme, character development, foreshadowing, and a variety of other literary elements.

In another arena of skill development, students could be given the opportunity to expand their writing skills by writing dialogue that connects to the book. They could create a scene at the dinner table with Keir's family. This writing exercise allows students the opportunity to attempt creative writing that deepens their understanding of the characters. The writing assignment could demonstrate a student's understanding of the how family dynamics are developed in *Inexcusable's* dialogue. In a similar manner, dialogue writing involving characters as they are paired in the novel would reveal further understanding of character development. For example, writing a new or expanded dialogue between Gigi and Keir would demonstrate how well a student understands their relationship.

## Flashbacks and Foreshadowing

*Inexcusable's* narrative depends on the complex intertwining of the scenes that flashback to various moments in Keir's senior year. Both Janet and Zac realized that they began to understand Keir, not only through the intense short scenes with Gigi after the rape, but through the flashbacks that show the various missteps that Keir makes throughout the school year. As students, Janet and Zac understood that the flashbacks contained important information about Keir's character, as well as hints to the future. Perhaps the strength of *Inexcusable* is that the rape is immediately introduced but only hesitantly discussed. This technique creates a narrative gap that demonstrates sophisticated craftsmanship that draws the reader into the story.

Janet and Zac understood that they were reading a book that pushed the boundaries of what subjects might be openly talked about in a public school classroom. They suggested that date rape might be alluded to by a teacher in a discussion but would hardly be the focus of discussion. As they read they understood the importance of how the author foreshadowed Keir's horrible decision by illustrating and illuminating his mistakes during his senior year. Foreshadowing may be the most frequently discussed literary device in the literary classroom. Zac and Janet indicated that foreshadowing was an important aspect of how they understood Keir's character development. This raises the question once again; how important is it to teach the classics or something that we traditionally teach, when many new adolescent novels are so expertly written?

## Setting

It might appear unimportant that two average English students in high school would mention that *Inexcusable* could be used to teach something so seemingly pedestrian as the setting. On the contrary, setting can sometimes be the most direct way to have students enter the symbolic and thematic workings of a novel. Several texts, traditionally used in the high school classroom, illustrate how important setting can be to the interpretation of literature. How important is the river to the understanding of both *Heart of Darkness* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*? At the very least, the events on the river are symbolic of the journey that both Marlowe and Huck are trying to internalize. Untold numbers of students have mapped both journeys, marking important points along the rivers that connect to events that shape the narrators and correspondingly the readers understanding of the journey. While Keir's journey is obviously not on a river, he is flowing toward an unalterable course of destruction. A reader's understanding of the physical points that mark the course of Keir's journey will help them interpret his mental condition and eventual breakdown.

The settings in *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *A Separate Peace* are certainly important, as well. The small southern town in *To Kill a Mockingbird* helps the reader understand the small mindedness of many of the characters and helps Atticus stand out as a moral

giant in his community. The isolated boarding school in *A Separate Peace* provides Gene and Finny with an idealistic setting that seems far removed from the horror of WWII. Small episodes in specific settings within each novel's world help the reader understand the characters. For example, Atticus's stand at the jail and Finny's record setting swim in the pool teach the reader something about the quiet confidence and resolve of each character.

Settings are equally important in *Inexcusable*. In this case, the primary setting is a small room that has been the scene of rape. Keir and Gigi are confined in this small room while the flashbacks take the reader to several places that reveal more about Keir's character and limitations. These settings include a football game, a school party, his home, and a limousine. Together, these locations supply the reader with snapshots of Keir that demonstrate his confusion and a series of tragic choices. Clearly, guiding students through how a setting helps a reader understand a novel's

character or theme is as important as Janet and Zac suggested. While the novel first appealed to them because of its controversial theme and "messed up" narrative structure, they readily understood that traditional literary devices, like the setting, would supply them, and other students, with tools for understanding. In sum, *Inexcusable* provides teachers with a text that can easily be used to meet their instructional objectives. In fact, its compelling themes and storyline might attract more students than many traditional texts.

## Conclusion: Make No Excuse

*Inexcusable* is an intellectually invigorating YA novel with a complex narrator and a narrative structure that invokes careful reading and contemplation. From my initial reading, I began to compose an explication of the narrative structure. At first, I was interested in teaching the novel because it was an

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accessible and interesting text for my students, and would allow me to show how well I can “read” a text. In short, I could show off, I could easily be the sage on the stage. In fact, one of my major difficulties in writing this paper was deciding when I could display my explication of the narrative structure. I could easily explicate the novel and demonstrate its potential. I felt myself succumbing to what I call the English teacher’s disease—the urge to teach literature to my high school classes as if they were all going to run off to college and become English majors. Some will, and good for them, we still need people to read and write thoughtfully about beauty and truth (Keats). Our call as English teachers is to help all of our students to better master the tools of reading and writing. If we do so they can then apply those skills in the variety of fields they choose to pursue.

I avoided providing my own reading of the text as much as possible. It is more important to illustrate what Janet and Zac, as representative students, do with this YA text. They can and do find meaning in the text for themselves. Furthermore, they point to the ways in which traditional literary devices can be employed by other students to explore *Inexcusable*. They point directly to discussing and evaluating the reliability of a narrator. While I was anxious to discuss the complexity of the narrative structure, they discovered this issue on their own. They indicate how the flashbacks serve as a controlling device for the narrative and trouble what a shifting story line means for the reader’s understanding. They suggest that working with dialogue, either through discussion or creative writing, builds a more thorough understanding of the characters. They discuss how flashbacks not only work with the narrative, but serve as means for foreshadowing the action and thematic impulses of the story. Finally, they discuss the settings of the novel and how each setting suggests a new way to understand Keir’s development. All of these literary devices are tools that we, as English teachers, hope our students learn to apply to the texts they are assigned in the classroom. I agree with Smith who suggests, “Ultimately, however, we want students to exert their own textual power. Consequently, the instruction continues by asking students to develop and debate their interpretations of stories without the benefit of a teacher’s questions” (Rabinowitz and Smith 78). Both Janet and Zac used the questions and methods they

received in their English classes. Finally, they were able to give me their interpretation of *Inexcusable* and provided suggestions on how other students might explore the novel.

In today’s English classroom there is room for quality YA novels. The craftsmanship and ideology of YA novels in many instances is exceptional. I have tried to point to several in the course of this paper. These novels are engaging because they speak to our students in language that is familiar and with themes that clearly match the concerns of their lives. As English teachers, media specialist, English educators, and critics we can promote and discuss quality options for our students. We can achieve all of the traditional goals of teaching literature with YA fiction. In fact, as this small qualitative study with Janet and Zac suggests, if we trust what we have already taught our students they might meet these books with more enthusiasm than some of the more traditional texts in our classrooms. Students can apply the same strategies we hope they use with the classics with YA texts. Teachers should begin to include YA literature in their curricula without apology. It is, I believe, inexcusable to ignore *Inexcusable* and many other quality YA novels.

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*Author’s note: Janet and Zac are pseudonyms to maintain the anonymity of two students who were so helpful to the writing of this article.*

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### Call for Proposals: NCTE Theory and Research into Practice (TRIP) Book Series

The NCTE Books Program invites proposals for its TRIP series (Theory and Research into Practice). These books are single-authored and focus on a single topic, targeting a specified educational level (elementary, middle, or secondary). Each book will offer the following: solid theoretical foundation in a given subject area within English language arts; exposure to the pertinent research in that area; practice-oriented models designed to stimulate theory-based application in the reader's own classroom. The series has an extremely wide range of subject matter; past titles include *Creative Approaches to Sentence Combining*, *Unlocking Shakespeare's Language*, and *Enhancing Aesthetic Reading and Response*. For detailed submission guidelines, please visit the NCTE website at <http://www.ncte.org/pubs/publish/books/122687.htm>. Proposals to be considered for the TRIP series should include a short review of the theory and research, as well as examples of classroom practices that can be adapted to the teaching level specified. Send proposals to: Acquisitions Editor, NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096,