

Fiction and Nonfiction:

A Symbiotic Relationship

sym-bi-o-sis (sim'be-o'sis, -bi) *n. Biol.* A close association between two or more different organisms, esp. when mutually beneficial (Evenson & Patwell, *American Heritage Dictionary*, 1994, p. 821)

Although not exactly different organisms, fiction and nonfiction texts are often classified in relationships that seem anything but mutually beneficial. For example, recent mandates from the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSS], 2010) call for 55–70% of secondary reading to focus on informational texts, resulting in curricular shifts in some English/language arts departments that require teachers to increase their focus on nonfiction (Layton, 2012; Petri, 2012). However, traditionally trained to teach fictional narratives, essays, and the occasional autobiography, a significant number of English teachers feel overwhelmed and ill prepared to offer students opportunities to authentically encounter nonfiction texts outside the realms of their content area. Proponents of the Core attempt to assuage teacher concerns by explaining that these percentages represent schoolwide reading, not just reading done in English/language arts (Jago, 2013). But, despite this assurance, many English teachers resent watching the literature they love replaced with procedural texts they deem of little literary value.

However, young adult nonfiction poses a solution to this dilemma that addresses both the concerns of teachers and the demands of the Common Core Standards. Librarian Ed Sullivan (2001) alluded to

this answer when he explained, “Unrecognized is the potential nonfiction has to stimulate the analytical and critical thinking skills students use in reading fiction” (p. 45). In other words, instead of placing fiction and nonfiction in curricular competition, symbiotic relationships allow the reading of one form to support and compliment the reading of the other. In this way, incorporating high-quality YA nonfiction into the study of young adult and canonical fiction supports comprehension and authentic inquiry for students of all ability levels and interests.

Why Both Are Needed

The NCTE/IRA Standards for the English Language Arts explain that students need to read a range of texts to understand other texts, themselves, and the cultures around them (Greer, Smith, & Erwin, 1996). Similarly, the Common Core requires students to analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics to build knowledge (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). In some ways, these may seem like top-down requirements, but these policies mirror the literacy demands of the rapidly changing societies in which students live (Deshler, Biancarosa, Palincsar, & Nair, 2007).

In addition, research supports integrated approaches to literacy learning. Exposing students at the earliest stages to nonfiction texts through daily read-alouds, explicit reading and comprehension instruction, and books in classroom libraries, offers balanced instruction where both fiction and nonfiction are

valued (Dreher, 2002). Although nonfiction texts present information more directly, fiction offers narrative structures that are easier for students to comprehend, demonstrating the advantages to using both (Camp, 2000). Teachers who purposefully integrate multiple forms of text in classroom inquiries engage student interests and experiences, while simultaneously building background knowledge, providing supplemental information, and supporting understanding of fiction and nonfiction (Duke & Bennett-Armistead, 2003). In multiple instances, elementary and secondary teachers demonstrated how using fiction and nonfiction together facilitate the teaching of concepts and the exploration of essential questions in deeper and more meaningful ways than either could accomplish alone (Epstein, 2000; Tovani, 2004; Vasquez, 2003).

When used symbiotically, the study of fiction and nonfiction texts as paired texts (Camp, 2000) or text sets (Ebbers, 2002; Tovani, 2004; Vasquez, 2003) promote authentic inquiry and meet the demands of the Common Core. However, finding or creating these symbiotic combinations can prove challenging. As a result, this article explores high-quality YA nonfiction that helps middle and high school students build background knowledge to comprehend fictional texts, as well as combinations of fiction and nonfiction that facilitate opportunities for differentiated instruction and invite students to consider multiple perspectives.

Providing Background Knowledge

Using high-quality nonfiction to introduce background knowledge exists as one effective use of nonfiction in the English/language arts classroom. In order to comprehend a text, students need to be able to make connections to and access their own understandings about a topic or idea; however, students often lack knowledge about essential concepts necessary to make sense of the literature they read. As Gallagher (2004) explained, “[Y]our prior knowledge guides you when considering what *not* to read” (p. 31). In other words, if students feel no connection to or interest in a story, the probability of them reading it diminishes. Therefore, teachers must do two things: first, establish a context for literary works, and second, introduce background knowledge in ways that engage students and motivate them to read.

The first element, activating background knowledge, helps students make sense of texts. Bomer

(2011) explained that to read efficiently, students “tap into the pockets of knowledge they think will be relevant to [a] text,” but in the absence of this knowledge, they access whatever understandings seem most related (p. 99). Therefore, it becomes essential to establish a reading context that will “lead readers into texts and support their understandings of texts” (Allen, 2000, p. 129). Picturebooks and other shorter texts often provide students with accessible routes to understanding longer texts, primarily because shorter counterparts offer students ways to make sense of abstract ideas, vocabulary, or concepts (Keene, 2007). In this manner, nonfiction can create essential connections to support comprehension.

Second, background knowledge can motivate students to wrestle with texts. Many students don’t see themselves as readers because the reading they value—nonfiction reading—isn’t represented in the classroom (Kaplan, 2003). Some studies suggest this is particularly true for males, who tend to prefer nonfiction to fiction (Moss, 1998; Young & Brozo, 2001). But for many readers, especially those who struggle, nonfiction texts provide appeal. Nonfiction not only engages reluctant readers, but, in some instances, becomes a catalyst for independent inquiry beyond the classroom (Allen, 2000; Bomer, 2011). Because of this appeal, pairing nonfiction texts with a fictional counterpart provides an entry point to stimulate engagement with texts students may not traditionally enjoy (Camp, 2000).

For example, chapters from Georgia Bragg’s *How They Croaked: The Awful Ends of the Awfully Famous* (2012) can be used to build background knowledge and supplement understanding of a variety of historical and literary subjects. Although marketed at tweens, this text provides accessible accounts of historical figures and incidents that prove engaging, even to advanced readers. Before teaching Shakespeare’s play *Julius Caesar*, a teacher could introduce the figure of Caesar by asking the class to read the chapter from *How They Croaked* called “Julius Caesar: Putting the ‘I’ in ‘Ides.’” This selection not only introduces facts about Caesar’s life and his reign, but presents a concise presentation of the motives of Brutus and his followers. Background information provided also explains the complex political backdrop that led to Caesar’s ultimate death, acquainting students with the context of the time.

The accessibility of this chapter makes topics and concepts that often confuse students easy to understand, while the voice and tone bring life to what might otherwise be considered dry background material. In addition, sidebars and definitions encourage students to make connections between the text and word etymologies, such as words like “caesarean section,” “czar,” and even months and origins of the Roman calendar. For students who are not anxious to read Shakespeare, these connections to modern day language and traditions can bring relevance to the text, even in small ways.

Another example of engaging YA nonfiction that builds background knowledge includes *Bootleg: Murder, Moonshine, and the Lawless Years of Prohibition* by Karen Blumenthal (2011), which presents the historical, social, and political context of Prohibition. Opening with a description of the 1929 St. Valentine’s Day murders, Blumenthal traces the origins of the 18th Amendment and spotlights individuals who held a stake in its consequences. Black-and-white pictures, along with a glossary of terms specific to the temperance movement, support readers as they read about this influential movement in US history.

For classes reading the Newbery Honor Book *Al Capone Does My Shirts: A Tale from Alcatraz* (Choldenko, 2004), the chapter in *Bootleg* entitled “Smoky and Scarface” provides a detailed depiction of the life and crimes of gangster Al Capone to supplement student understanding of this real-life individual. Or, for older readers tackling F. Scott Fitzgerald’s 1925 novel *The Great Gatsby*, *Bootleg* offers useful background information as students conduct research and seek to understand this era. In particular, Chapter 7, called “Milk and Moonshine,” proves particularly worthy of attention as it portrays the effect prohibition had on average Americans, as well as its influence on the styles and youthful abandon of the 1920s. It also offers numerous pop culture connections, such as how prohibition influenced Coke sales and the evolution of NASCAR. In addition, sketches and charts throughout explain how smugglers transported their product, providing visual representations of statistics and ideas presented in the text.

These two engaging YA nonfiction texts offer students valuable help in connecting to the content of literary texts by offering significant background knowledge to support their understanding. Not only

do these nonfiction texts supplement the study of fiction, but they also prove appealing as independent reads that can entice students to read connected (and often required) fictional texts. In this way, the study of fiction and nonfiction enhance each other as students draw on both texts to improve their understanding of content.

Supporting Differentiated Instruction

Teaching a whole-class novel often proves challenging because of the wide range of student ability levels and interests within a single class, but pairing fiction and nonfiction texts (Camp, 2000) as the basis of classroom inquiries meets the needs and interests of all students through differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 2001). Offering more than one nonfiction counterpart to supplement the study of fictional texts supports the principles of differentiated instruction by providing access and flexibility for each student, as well as opportunities for meaningful instruction with authentic texts customized to the needs of individual readers (King-Shaver & Hunter, 2003).

Although differentiation takes place based on a variety of factors, including interests, learning style, and ability level, the following texts offer ideas for differentiation based on reading ability, as determined by Lexile levels. Lexile levels exist as one quantitative measure of text complexity and reader ability level (MetaMetrics, 2013). Although Lexile levels don’t necessarily offer a reliable gauge in terms of appropriate age level content or themes, they do quantify text complexity that can be useful for comparisons. In terms of comprehension (as measured by sentence length and vocabulary in texts), these numerical rankings can help teachers determine which informational texts might be best suited to the variety of readers in their classrooms. The following texts, already filtered in terms of content and appeal to adolescent readers, provide a range of text complexity, allowing teachers to offer students opportunities to engage in whole-class inquiry through well-written nonfiction texts that support the study of their whole-class novel.

Ranked at a Lexile level of 1000L, Christopher Paul Curtis’s novel *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* (1995), is commonly taught as a whole-class novel in middle schools across the country. Winner of the Coretta Scott King Award and New-

bery Honor, this text offers a fictional account of the Watson family who travels from Michigan to Alabama during the summer of 1963, only to experience some of the most volatile moments of the desegregation of Birmingham. Although students enjoy the hilarity of the Watson family dynamics, the narrative turns serious as the characters experience the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church and deal with its aftermath.

In the epilogue that follows the conclusion of the story, Curtis offers a concise overview of many of the real-life events that occurred during the civil rights movement and invites students to consider the real individuals who led this quest for freedom. For teachers who wish to support students in this inquiry, the question, “What does it take to be a hero?” allows students to examine both the fictional characters and events in *The Watsons*, as well as the accounts of actual individuals who took part in this fight.

A number of high-quality nonfiction texts on a variety of reading levels allow students to learn more about these individuals through individual inquiry. For instance, *We've Got a Job: 1963 Birmingham Children's March* (Levinson, 2012), winner of the 2013 IRA Young Adult Nonfiction Award and a 2013 Orbis Pictus Honor Book, follows firsthand accounts of four students involved in the march, simultaneously weaving together the events preceding the bombings. Black-and-white photographs capture the enthusiasm and fear of the marchers as they wrestled with police dogs, endured the sprays of fire hoses, and faced KKK and white demonstrators marching in response to the children's protests. A map of Birmingham allows readers to trace the different routes taken by four of the marchers spotlighted in the book. The written text is supplemented with a timeline of events, and those interested in seeking additional information can discover additional sources in the bibliography. Rated at a 1020L level, this text's complexity ranks as only slightly more challenging for students than its fictional counterpart.

However, for those students reading at a slightly more sophisticated level, *Black & White: The Confrontation between Reverend Fred L. Shuttlesworth and Eugene "Bull" Connor* (2011) by Larry Dane Brimner profiles two of the most controversial figures in the Birmingham struggle. Texts and pictures throughout the first two sections highlight the lives of Reverend Shuttlesworth and Commissioner Connor, respec-

tively, including how each rose to power in their individual spheres and their history with one another. The third section of the book, “Confrontation,” focuses specifically on the events leading up to “Project C,” or the Birmingham Children's March of 1963, and ultimately the desegregation of Birmingham. The use of the black, white, and orange color throughout supports the powerful retelling of these events. Rated at a Lexile level of 1150, this text provides advanced readers with detailed accounts of these two men and their roles in the movement, but the large font and abundance of photographs invites readings by all interested students.

Finally, *Birmingham Sunday* (2010), also by Larry Dane Brimner and a 2011 Orbis Pictus Honor book, tells the story of the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church and of its victims. Drawing on newspaper and eyewitness accounts, as well as FBI files and other documents, Brimner recounts the events for consideration. Registering as the most complex text, at a Lexile level of 1190, it includes pictures, quotes, and textboxes to present the stories and events leading up to the bombing.

Although a fictional text, also worthy of note is *Birmingham, 1963* (2007) by Carole Boston Weatherford. In this text, Weatherford uses free verse poetry, photographs, and notes to tell a fictional account of the actual events surrounding the bombing. Winner of the 2008 Jane Addams Children's Book Award, this book registers at 790L on the Lexile scale, making it very accessible for students who might struggle as readers. However, drawing on the text features, photos, and notes offers them an opportunity to share in this inquiry in a meaningful and significant way.

As the class concludes their reading of *The Watsons* and some or all of these nonfiction texts, a variety of ways exist to facilitate student investigation into the question, “What does it take to be a hero?” For example, the tic-tac-toe activity (see Figure 1) allows students to read and research individual nonfiction texts while focusing on the same central question as a class (King-Shaver & Hunter, 2003). Students select three assignments in a row they wish to complete, each engaging in independent exploration of their nonfiction text. As students work on their individual projects, the teacher spends time further differentiating instruction in small groups or with individuals. Then, as a whole class, students collabo-

rate as they compile information about the individuals they learned about and answer their original inquiry question.

Although these numerical rankings can help teachers determine informational texts best suited to the readers in their classrooms, it's important to note motivation and interest play a role as well. Students may be driven to tackle complex texts based on their interests about a particular facet of this story, so teachers shouldn't confine students to a single text; rather, Lexile levels and other measures should be used as a guide. Ultimately, drawing on a variety of high-quality informational texts on the same subject allows all students to engage in whole-class inquiries, but the range of texts allows all learners to read at levels that meet their needs.

Considering Multiple Perspectives

Appleman (2009) explained the limited understanding available to students when they read a story or consider a text from a single perspective, without taking into account other points of view. In contrast, encouraging students to ask questions such as, "How might considering another point of view change the story?" opens up students' interpretations of narratives and invites them to think about implications on a wider level.

Text sets consist of a variety of texts organized around an inquiry question and invite students to learn from fiction and nonfiction books, articles, websites, poetry, movies, and other sources that represent a diversity of perspectives (Ebbers, 2002; Ivey, 2002; Tovani, 2004). This variety becomes key because "having different access routes can create productive pathways to understanding the classics and the important questions that undergird them" (Wold & Elish-Piper, 2009, p. 88). Often used in elementary classrooms, but increasingly present in secondary classrooms, text sets support conversations that consider multiple perspectives and invite students to engage in sophisticated synthesis of information.

On the most basic level, teachers might use fiction and nonfiction books to compare various perspectives of an event. For example, National Book Award Finalist *Flesh and Blood So Cheap: The Triangle Fire and Its Legacy* (2011) by Albert Marrin highlights the political and social conditions that ultimately contributed to the cause of the 1911 fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory that killed 146 workers. Weaving together eyewitness accounts of the events, and supplemented by maps and photographs from the era, Marrin describes the sociopolitical forces that contributed to the tragedy, as well as the experiences of the victims from both the upper and working class.

Write a journal or diary entry from the perspective of one of the individuals you read about in your nonfiction text. What motivates this individual? What is he or she afraid of?	Compile a list of quotes from individuals in your nonfiction text that reveal what it means to be a hero.	Create a news report of one of the major events leading up to the 16th Street Church bombing. Be sure to include a summary of the events and detailed accounts from witnesses.
Make a chart comparing daily life in Flint to daily life in Birmingham. How was life different for Black people in these places? How was it the same? How do these observations compare to your own life?	Select one of the individuals in your nonfiction book and one of the characters from <i>The Watsons</i> . Use their lives and choices to answer the question, "What does it take to be a hero?"	Choose one individual from your nonfiction text and one character from <i>The Watsons</i> . If these two characters met, what would their exchange be like? Using events and evidence from both texts, write a dialogue between these two characters.
How do heroes respond in the face of adversity? Create a collage of pictures or sketches that demonstrate how the characters and individuals in these texts demonstrated heroic responses to their challenges.	Write a newspaper article reporting the church bombing. Be sure to include a summary of the circumstances surrounding the bombing, the actual events, as well as possible motives. Include real quotes from people you find in your nonfiction book.	Make a Venn diagram comparing one of the individuals in your nonfiction text with one of the characters in <i>The Watsons</i> . What qualities do they share? How are they different?

Figure 1. Tic-tac-toe differentiated instruction

Although an outstanding text itself, students can delve into deeper inquiry about working-class conditions or the forces that led to the tragedy when this text is paired with young adult historical fiction about the same event. Both Esther Friesner's young adult *Threads and Flames* (2010) and Margaret Paterson Haddix's *Uprising* (2007) tell the story of the tragedy through the eyes of young girls working at and associated with the events surrounding the fire. Friesner's text focuses on the experiences of a young Polish immigrant who gets a job working at the factory, while Haddix tells the story through the voices of three girls of different social classes, shared in alternating points of view.

When paired with *Flesh and Blood So Cheap*, these texts allow students to deconstruct the gender and social class issues at the heart of this tragedy. For example, students might note and analyze the accounts in *Flesh and Blood So Cheap* specifically from the perspective of a working-class immigrant, a union protester, or a wealthy sympathizer, all similar positions to those offered through the perspectives of the main characters in *Thread and Flames* and *Uprising*.

In addition, text features in *Flesh and Blood So Cheap* bring these perspectives to life in ways written text alone cannot. A map of Lower Manhattan allows students to make inferences about how the migration of wealthy families out of certain neighborhoods influenced the deplorable housing conditions that remained for immigrants. Similarly, a sketched floor plan of dumbbell tenements provides a visual resource to help students understand the cramped conditions where many of the workers lived. Although alluded to in each of the fictional texts, the specific descriptions offered in the nonfiction text provide an alternate means to consider ways status influenced daily life and how the value of individual lives varied by socioeconomic standing.

As they read through these various and unique lenses, students can collaborate and teach one another how the Shirtwaist Factory tragedy influenced all layers of society. Another worthwhile investigation asks students to question how the events preceding this tragedy might have had different results if the majority of workers at the factory were men or of non-immigrant status.

Building on the paired texts about the Birmingham Children's March, the list provided in Figure 2

highlights a text set designed to investigate issues of civil rights in the US. As 2013 marks the 50th anniversary of the civil rights movement, YA fiction and nonfiction can launch student-led inquiries into the question of "Separate, but Equal?" then and now.

Although the study of text sets can begin in a variety of ways, reading one of the fictional picturebooks on the list proves a particularly useful introduction to this inquiry. This reading can be followed by a discussion of philosophical issues from the text, focusing on questions such as, "How do laws of the nation and social practices sometimes conflict?" or "Which of these is most important to follow?" and "Can laws ever be wrong?" (Other examples of philosophical questions to pose with picturebooks can be found at <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/omc/kidsphil/stories.html>.)

After discussing the book, groups of students can begin their own investigations into these ideas through a variety of nonfiction picturebooks. This approach offers opportunities to practice productive discussion strategies in small groups as they prepare for literature circles that will follow. Next, through the use of literature circles organized around both fiction and nonfiction texts, students continue their group and individual inquiries. A variety of high-quality, YA fiction and nonfiction organized around this theme exist for teachers to consider adopting. The list in Figure 2 includes myriad resources to use in this inquiry, but three particularly useful nonfiction texts are highlighted in the paragraphs that follow.

Terry Kanefield's (2014) *The Girl from the Tar Paper School: Barbara Rose Johns and the Advent of the Civil Rights Movement* tells the story of Barbara Rose Johns of Prince Edward County, Virginia. In an effort to oppose the unequal and inhumane conditions maintained at the separate but equal school for Black students, Johns led her peers in a protest that ultimately resulted in one of the five lawsuits that comprised the US Supreme Court case *Brown v. the Board of Education*. This text demonstrates how John's refusal to endure the conditions thrust upon her in a small Virginia town contributed to the integration of public schools across the US.

Also, *Marching for Freedom: Walk Together, Children, and Don't You Grow Weary* (2009) by Elizabeth Partridge highlights another important battle in the war for civil rights. This National Book Award finalist chronicles the role of children in the 1965 march

Separate, but Equal?

In many ways, the ideas and practices of those who lived generations before you significantly affect how you think and live. As we begin our study, this text set is designed to help you understand the issues of race and civil rights faced by the characters in your book, as well as the way these issues influence our society today. The following questions will help guide your inquiry:

- What was daily life like for White people during the Civil Rights era? For Black people?
- What official legislation and social practices prevented integration? How did people bring about change?
- Is our country still fighting for civil rights? Explain your position.

Books

Young Adult Fiction

- Carnes, Jim. (1996). *Us and Them: A History of Intolerance in America*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Crowe, Chris. (2002). *Mississippi Trial, 1955*. New York: Penguin.
- Draper, Sharon M. (2008). *Fire from the Rock*. New York: Penguin.
- Levine, K. (2012). *The Lions of Little Rock*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.
- Williams-Garcia, R. (2010). *One Crazy Summer*. New York: HarperCollins.

Nonfiction

- Bartoletti, Susan Campbell. (2010). *They Called Themselves the KKK: The Birth of an American Terrorist Group*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- Bowers, Rick. (2012). *Superman vs. the Ku Klux Klan: The True Story of How the Iconic Superhero Battled the Men of Hate*. Washington DC: National Geographic.
- Bridges, Ruby. (1999). *Through My Eyes*. New York: Scholastic. Biography.
- Brimner, Larry. (2010). *Birmingham Sunday*. Honesdale, PN: Calkins Creek.
- Brimner, Larry. (2011). *White & Black: The Confrontation between Reverend Fred L. Shuttlesworth and Eugene "Bull" Connor*. Honesdale, PN: Calkins Creek.
- Crowe, Chris. (2003). *Getting Away with Murder: The True Story of the Emmett Till Case*. New York: Penguin.
- Kanefield, Terry. (2014). *The Girl from the Tar Paper School: Barbara Rose Johns and the Advent of the Civil Rights Movement*. New York, NY: Abrams Books for Young Readers.
- Levinson, C. (2012). *We've Got a Job: The 1963 Birmingham Children's March*. Atlanta, GA: Peachtree.
- Myers, Walter D. (1994). *Malcolm X: By Any Means Necessary*. New York: Scholastic.
- Partridge, Elizabeth. (2009). *Marching for Freedom: Walk Together, Children, and Don't You Grow Weary*. New York: Penguin.

Picturebooks

- Burleigh, Robert. (2007). *Stealing Home: Jackie Robinson: Against the Odds* (Illus. Mike Wimmer). New York: Simon & Schuster. Nonfiction.
- Crowe, Chris. (2012). *Just as Good: How Larry Doby Changed America's Game* (Illus. Mike Benny). Somerville, MA: Candlewick. Nonfiction.
- Pinkney, Andrea. (2010). *Sit-In: How Four Friends Stood Up by Sitting Down* (Illus. Brian Pickney). New York: Little, Brown. Nonfiction.
- Shange, N. (2009). *Coretta Scott*. New York: Amistad/Katherine Tegen Books. Nonfiction.
- Wiles, Deborah. (2001). *Freedom Summer* (Illus. Jerome Lagarrigue). New York: Aladdin. Historical fiction.
- Woodson, Jacqueline. (2001). *The Other Side*. New York: Penguin. Historical fiction.

Magazine

- Christie, Gregory. (2004, Spring). "50 Years Later: Brown v. Board of Education Special Classroom Section." *Teaching Tolerance*..

Newspaper Articles

- "50 Years of Brown vs. Board of Education" pullout from *The Salt Lake Tribune*, May 3, 2004.
- Dillon, Sam. (2006, April 15). Law to Segregate Omaha Schools Divides Nebraska. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/15/us/15omaha.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>.

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- *All about Barbara Rose Johns* by Teri Kanefield. Retrieved from www.barbararosejohns.com.
- *What Was Jim Crow?* Retrieved from <http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/what.htm>.
- Pictures from *Life*, August 9, 1937, pp. 50–52. Retrieved from <http://resources.mhs.vic.edu.au/mockingbird/life.htm>.
- *Race: The Power of an Illusion* by PBS. Retrieved from http://www.pbs.org/race/000_General/000_00-Home.htm.
- "1965 Alabama Literacy Test." Retrieved from www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/teachers/lessonplans/us/.../alabamatest.pdf.

Figure 2. Separate, but equal texts

from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, seeking voting rights for African Americans. From Bloody Sunday to the signing of the Voting Rights Act, this text draws on historical documents and black-and-white photographs as it documents the stories from individuals who marched to change history.

In order to understand the historical context of the prejudice, this next text brings an added dimension to this study. From pre-Civil War to modern day, Susan Campbell Bartoletti's (2010) *They Called Themselfes the KKK: The Birth of an American Terrorist Group* explains the origins, motivations, and life of the Klu Klux Klan. Engravings and photographs supplement the discussion drawn together from journal entries, firsthand accounts, and other research. The final chapter and timeline that follows details the story of the Klan in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Each of these texts presents the perspectives of specific individuals and groups regarding the "separate, but equal" question. As students engage in their investigations of these texts, they will see this issue examined through the lens of protesters seeking equal voting rights, victims of violence, hate groups, student protesters, and others. Questions that allow for the examination of each different perspective can be useful to guide students' inquiries. These might include, "What underlying beliefs influenced the actions of this particular group?" "Where do the beliefs of each group differ?" "Where do they overlap?" or "What motivated the actions of each group?"

Throughout their investigations, students should be encouraged to seek out additional information from the other nonfiction books or Internet resources listed on the page. They may also want to collaborate across groups and learn from one another as certain texts support students in becoming specialists on specific aspects of this subject. As students take part in discussions and research to unpack these questions, they benefit from opportunities to compare their stories and their findings with one another.

A variety of ways exist to incorporate these texts and the others in the text set into the classroom; the preceding discussion offers just one possible use for student-led inquiry. However, the multiple perspectives gained when using these fiction and nonfiction texts together allow students to consider the complexity of the issues influencing notions of the "separate but equal?" question in specific instances and in their own lives.

Conclusion

When used together, fiction and nonfiction allow students to read and engage in authentic inquiry into subjects, themes, and ideas in both kinds of texts. As a result, rather than positioning these texts as competitors in the classroom, teachers and librarians should seek out ways to use these texts in complimentary ways, harnessing their symbiotic potential to support student learning.

Although few teachers may have the funds to purchase these texts for their own classroom libraries, many of these nonfiction resources can be accessed from school or community libraries. In addition, a variety of resources are available online, including text previews and online nonfiction supplements. Websites such as pbslearningmedia.org and education.national-geographic.com offer many nonfiction resources that support inquiries similar to those described. Finally, many businesses and community organizations offer grants to teachers seeking to enhance the learning in their classrooms, making them ideal for purchasing nonfiction books such as those listed here.

Rather than viewing the adoption of nonfiction as detrimental to the study of fiction, teachers can increase learning potential by using both types of texts in the classroom. The pairings and combinations discussed offer students alternative ways to view and comprehend content as they explore multiple perspectives and build their content knowledge. But perhaps most important, they allow students to engage in authentic inquiry where both fiction and nonfiction contribute to student understanding in meaningful and lasting ways.

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