A LIBRARY OF PRIVILEGE

Collection of Childhood Texts & Commentary
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As I moved into my first year of teaching, I wanted to examine how I teach and connect with students, all while unpacking my own privilege and examining how it affects how I interact with literature and teaching. My privilege was enabled by years of private, White education. My essential questions were threefold: How did what I read and what I was exposed to build me as a teacher of literature? How do I tie this to my and my student’s relationship with literature and learning? How can each student understand their starting point and grow in understanding of themselves and others?

I see myself as an amalgamation of the things I have read, so intentionally sitting down and digesting all of the things that I read and studied showed me how one-dimensional my education had been – some things were missing, and that was expressly reading and studying works by and about people of color.

I built a “book” that showed my literary history, which I found appropriate as I am teaching English. Each chapter that I include in this literary history will showcase contents that represent books, literature and other interactions or data that built me as a student. I will highlight artifacts and show how I can move forward and action on them as a teacher. From every visual depiction of “White Jesus” to the classics in American literature, I want to showcase how these have built me, and how new understanding can help me look through a different lens as an educator. I will add content to show how I engaged this year and the things I have learned, as well as defining action items that each student can take as they engage in learning.

As Louise Rosenblatt teaches via her reader-response theory, every person enjoys and understands literature in their own way, given their unique background, context and emotion that they bring to the act of reading. Looking at context and experience, I can change understanding for my students, by giving them insight into what they are reading and challenging them to take different lenses as they read. While every chapter of my life has built my personal book, I can keep adding chapters which then allows me to read, experience and teach literature differently, even if I read the same book over and over and over. Each time I read it, I potentially could experience it differently.

I believe that each person’s literary history continues to grow; learning is never done. You can always keep adding books to your library and those books can change meaning by broadening perspective. I also have included an interactive element to the content – a QR code with links to additional information that may be interesting to the viewer, and which have helped me as I unpack this topic personally.