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A taste of YA
Introducing young adult literature in the EFL
classroom

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Abstract

Although there have been instances in which literature has been part of English as a Foreign Language lessons, it is not a common phenomenon. Young adult literature in particular is a popular genre among readers, but not in the educational system. This paper aims to introduce this literary genre into the English as a Foreign Language classroom through a project based on three celebrated novels, chosen for both their contents and for what they may contribute to students educationally and personally. This paper can be divided into three parts. The first one is a brief examination of how literature and young adult literature have been used in EFL classrooms and the benefits they can have in students. The second part presents the three novels and the authors chosen: *Turtles All the Way Down* by John Green, *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas and *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda* by Becky Albertalli. Finally, the third and last part involves the nine lesson plans that compose the project and the worksheets that can be found in the annex.

Key words: Young Adult Literature, English as a Foreign Language, Teaching Language, Teaching Culture.

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1. Introduction and objectives

This paper aims to suggest using young adult literature as a tool in the English as a foreign language (EFL) secondary classroom. Literature is not really part of the English curriculum nowadays, because communication is key and there are plenty of resources teachers can use in order to make lessons more compelling for their adolescent learners, such as classroom games or videos. Since young adult literature, as its name indicates, is made for young adults, they could relate to it and find enjoyment in reading. Besides that, students could not only benefit from practicing verb tenses or learning new vocabulary through this kind of literature, but teachers could also use examples from the chosen books to show how native teenagers speak. It has to be taken into account that these novels are great opportunities to learn colloquial English that is not usually taught in class. Since culture is also a part of the learning process of a new language and it is part of the curriculum of secondary education in Spain, these novels could bring a foreign culture from an English speaking country into the classroom. The examples used in this paper will be three young adult novels from the United States that have been chosen because of their content and their success: *Turtles All the Way Down* (2017) by John Green, *The Hate U Give* (2017) by Angie Thomas and *Simon vs. The Homo Sapiens Agenda* (2015) by Becky Albertalli.

2. State of the question

2.1. Literature in the EFL classroom

Generally speaking, it could be said that Spanish secondary school students are not given much access to literature in English in the classroom. While other language subjects include literature in their curriculum, such as Spanish or Catalan, both native and official languages in the Balearic Islands, that is not the case for English. At most, students are assigned simplified or abridged books aimed at the reading level they are supposed to have achieved. However, that is not always the case, as in some schools, such as IES Arxiduc Lluís Salvador, a high school located in central Palma, students do not get to do any extra English reading whatsoever once they reach the third year of ESO. It

should certainly be mentioned, though, that there is a reading section in every unit of the students' textbooks.

It could be said that this reticence to including literature in the English as a Foreign Language classroom is due to the tendency to prioritize a communicative and functional use of the language. Despite the fact that speaking is not a skill assessed in the *Selectividad* exams, textbooks now include a great deal of speaking activities and most, if not all, schools have a language assistant, usually a native speaker. Sell (2005) mentions that EFL teaching should deal with real-life situations, something that is not often associated with literature, which is considered by some as unrealistic and not relevant. He adds that in a communicative approach, teaching "should favour speaking and listening skills, whereas literature is a matter of reading writing, or writing to be read".

According to various authors, there is a great deal of EFL teachers who feel reluctant to introducing literature in their lessons. McRae (1991) mentions them feeling inadequate, mostly because they do not enjoy it or they feel insecure about not being literature experts. McRae disregards these feelings by saying that teachers do not really need to have read a full book in order to use it in class, nor do they have to know every single detail about the author or the genre, because they are linguistically more proficient than their students, a fact that is much more important in his eyes. In this regard, Sell (2005) introduces the subject of linguistic and cultural imperialism. According to him, EFL teachers may feel like they are contributing to the status of English as an imperialist language by teaching it, so introducing classic and canonical British authors in class may contribute to a cultural imperialism of British culture in their country. A possible solution to this problem could be using books written by multiethnic English speaking authors, such as Amy Tan, Cade Bambara or Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

Though it may seem that literature in the classroom is an overly complicated issue, there are a few countries that have already implemented it. Too (2004) mentions two reading programs that Malaysia introduced in the 1980s and

1990s, the English Language Reading Programme (1983) and The Class Reader Programme (1993), however, he adds that literature was not incorporated into the English syllabus until 1999. It should be noted that English, while a foreign language in Malaysia, it is considered a second language. In a more recent article, Govindarajoo and Mukundan (2013) explain that the Malaysian Ministry of Education selects the books that their ESL students have to read and has included young adult fiction novels since 2010.

Another program to take into account is the BritLit Project, born out of the necessity for EFL and ESL students to understand cultural messages implicit in the language they are learning in class. It was conceived between 2002 and 2003 after two teaching seminars, and the idea behind it is to introduce British culture in the classroom through British literature. It was decided that the literature should be contemporary, so as not to offer an old-fashioned view of British society. This way, there was also the possibility that some of the chosen authors could be involved in the Project. The main purpose of the BritLit Project was to “encourage a more thoughtful and purposeful language learning” (11). In 2004 it was successfully implanted in Portugal, and since then there have been a few other countries or regions that have used it in some way or another, such as Hungary, Romania, Czech Republic, Italy and Spain.

As for a brief historical overview of how and when literature has been used in the classroom, one can be found in a 2014 article written by Bobkina. According to this author, literature started being used in an EFL context as part of the grammar-translation method, which is how dead languages such as Ancient Greek or Latin are still taught nowadays in Spain. The focus, then, was more on the mother tongue and the grammar, with very little attention put in the contents of the texts. In the mid 20th century this method was seen as outdated, mostly because it was not communicative enough for teaching modern languages, and literature started disappearing from the classroom. Bobkina mentions a turning point happening in the 1963 King’s College conference on education, where “the importance of literary texts as a useful tool in the language teaching / learning process was highlighted [...] while the traditional approach was called into question for its incapacity to develop language skills and communicative abilities” (249). Despite this conference, she mentions a lack of research on this

topic from the 1960s to the 1980s, because, again, literature was perceived as dated and not communicative enough. Apparently, university EFL students in the 1980s lacked basic knowledge and skills, so basic literary texts were introduced in the curriculum and it was decided that literature should be implemented as a part of communicative language programs. From the 1980s onwards, she cites various researches and authors, such as Maley, Brumfit, Carter or Hess, who defend that literature offers students something that they cannot obtain through merely instructional or informational texts.

In the 2000s and 2010s Bobkina mentions how there was and continues to be a lot of research done on the positive aspects and effects of literature in the EFL classroom, such as the role of literature and culture in developing “language materials, syllabi and curriculum” (249).

Regarding the approaches to teaching literature, Bobkina’s article offers a good summary. One can find approaches from Wellek and Warren’s intrinsic and extrinsic one from 1984, which differentiates between the text at a lexical, grammatical, cultural and structural level and its framework, with biographical, aesthetic, historical and philosophical factor; to integrative approaches, such as Dhanapal’s 2010 one, used to improve Malaysian student’s development of their thinking skills, both creative and critical.

A particularly interesting view is Carter and Long’s who in 1991 suggested three approaches that, according to Bobkina, were the result of developing Maley’s 1989 distinction between using literature to learn a language and studying literature as part of a culture. Carter and Long’s models are:

- a) The Cultural: Literature is optimal for transmitting culture and literary and historical notions, genres, and theories or the author’s biography. In this approach language is seen as a cultural accessory, so instead of approaching texts from a literary analysis perspective, they are approached through cultural, historical, social or political perspectives.
- b) The Language: Texts are not chosen for their literary quality, but for what they can do in order to help develop proficiency and language

awareness. Students work on the linguistic features of the texts through activities.

- c) The Personal Growth: The priority is to benefit student's development and language awareness by engaging them and taking into account their personal experience.

The lesson plans and the activities created for this paper are based on a mixture of these three models, in order to develop students' personal, linguistic and cultural skills.

2. 2. In favor of using literature in the EFL classroom

There is plenty of literature to be found that agrees with integrating literature in the EFL classroom.

In his book *Literature with a small 'l'* (1991), McRae distinguishes between what he calls literature with a capital L, or classic literature, which is often used in schools, and small 'l' literature, which includes novels, poetry, advertisements, comics and song lyrics, among others. He uses the terms 'referential' and 'representational' uses of language to establish his thesis, which is that both of these uses of language and materials should be used in class.

Referential language is used when people only communicate in a single level, for example when asking or giving information. Though it is the base of learning a language, he finds it mechanical and limited, since it can only be used to communicate superficially. It is the language found in textbooks, so students can use it in fixed situations to achieve a standard mark. Students who need the language for a specific purpose, such as business transactions, will probably be perfectly content merely using referential language.

Representational language, on the contrary, is the language of emotion and imagination. According to McRae, it is essential to what he considers the fifth skill in English, which is thinking in the foreign language. Representational language expands the basic skills earned through referential language so students can be more self-aware and have a wider knowledge of the foreign language they are learning. For the author, when representational materials are

used, the learning process transcends the lesson, in his own words, “when a student recalls and recycles a texts that he or she has already read in a second, later context, this imaginative cross-reference is, I suggest, a sign that language learning has moved beyond the merely referential” (13).

McRae suggests that instead of giving a whole text to students that are resistant to read, teachers should select extracts to be worked on. For him, students should be exposed to representational materials early on their language learning process, and possibly be introduced to a new extract every week or so. He argues that a regular use of representational materials will make learning enjoyable for the students, and the unpredictability of these materials in contrast with the referential language they can find in their textbooks will motivate them. Students can start slow and then move on to slightly longer texts that will help them develop a higher level of reading autonomy.

McRae points out that what students learn through representational materials could be measured in many different ways, such as language learning, memory or cultural awareness, to name a few. He highlights language development and language awareness when affirming that “knowledge of use and usage, awareness of L1 as well as competence in L2, the ability to apply language learning to a range of practical, cultural and social contexts, are all vital elements in the overall linguistic development of any learner” (26). He introduces cultural awareness, unreachable through referential language, and argues that it is inseparable from language development.

For him, representational materials always lead to open conclusions, as opposed to fixed ones. He argues that “what will emerge from the exercise will depend not so much upon the texts themselves as upon what the readers bring to the texts: cultural awareness, sensitivity to point of view, ideas of social class, sense of humor, and so on” (28). This can lead students to discover new vocabulary, to learn more about a different culture or to imagine the characters in different situations. He adds that he finds he has succeeded when his students remember and reuse something they learned through representational materials.

Inspired by McRae's work, English teacher Carla Ferradas talks in a 2009 article about using literature in her classes, as part of the BritLit Project mentioned earlier. She lists the benefits that literature can have in an EFL class. According to her, literature can motivate and stimulate teenagers, it encourages the acquisition of new language by giving new context for vocabulary and grammar structures, it helps students to better interpret the meaning of a text, it develops cultural awareness and it prompts imagination and the ability to respond in a more critical and personal way.

In the subject of culture, briefly mentioned by McRae, Carey-Webb (2001), who advocates for a response-based and cultural studies approach to teaching English, argues that teaching contemporary literature helps everybody's voices be heard. He also focuses on how literature integrates with cultural expression. In his opinion, culture should be included in the curriculum emphasizing how social structures and historical circumstances affect real people, therefore social class issues should also be included, as well as popular culture and women's studies. In a 2005 article, Sell maintains that, in the era of multiculturalism, it is hypocritical that EFL students are mostly taught British culture through British literature. While he does believe that literature raises cultural awareness and can help students acquire a good cultural competence and socialization skills to integrate in the target language culture, he believes that English should be taught through several culture frames, as it is in contact with many cultures nowadays, and thus the classroom could become a mirror image of reality. He also believes that EFL teachers are not teaching a pure and native English, and that students' goals should be to communicate in English with native and non-native speakers. He proposes using international literature in EFL lessons, either written in English or translated, so learners can have the opportunity to get to know many cultures.

We can find other experts views in Bobkina's 2014 article, which summarizes several authors' positive views on using literature in the classroom. In his 1983 book *Best Laid Plans: English Teachers at Work for School Council*, Horner divides the positive factors of introducing literary texts into English language classes in three groups: the aesthetic, which deals with the students "aesthetic

involvement into the reading process; the psycholinguistic, which “deals with the student’s identification and internalization of certain behavior patterns”; and the socio-moral, which is “centered on theme and content issues” (250). The three groups are connected and therefore end up contributing to the personal development of the students.

Similarly, in their 1990 book *Literature*, Duff and Maley divide their reasons for supporting the use of literature in the classroom in three groups: linguistic, that is, literary texts are genuine and include real language and several styles, registers and types of text; methodological, which means that different students can interpret a text differently; and motivational, in which adequate texts can help students face their own emotions and motivate them. Maley also lists seven virtues of learning EFL through literature. Authors like Collie and Slater (1987) remark that literature is one of the best ways students can get to know and understand a new culture and language, more so if they are not able to travel to a foreign country. Students can therefore get familiar with different points of view and lifestyles. Maley’s seven virtues are:

1. Universality: language does not exist without literature, oral or written, and certain topics are shared among all cultures, such as love or death.
2. Non-triviality: The language students work with in class tends to be artificial, and literature is an opportunity for offering authentic language
3. Personal relevance: Literature is not afraid of dealing with feelings and ideas that affect readers personally, so they are able to relate their personal experience to what they are reading and use their previous knowledge.
4. Variety: A great variety of topics and varieties of language are found in literary texts.
5. Interest: Books deal with all kinds of themes and topics; therefore some are bound to be interesting to readers.
6. Economy and suggestive power: Literature has a great suggestive and imaginative power, so it is ideal for creating debates in class.
7. Ambiguity: Literature is subjective and students can start discussions based on their different opinions.

Finally, Bobkina talks about how in the first two decades of the 21st century the new advancements in fields such as “sociolinguistics, pragmatics, semiotics, discourse analysis and psycholinguistics” (251) have found new advantages of using literature. Literary texts develop emotional intelligence (Ghosn, 2002), nurture our emotional quotient (Khatib et al., 2001) and are related to being able to control emotions (Averil, 2001). Literature is also a great way to enhance critical thinking (Gajdusek, 1988, Ghosn, 2002, Van, 2009), it can make students reflect on their surroundings and their own lives (Langer, 1997) and make them change their attitude towards the rest of the world (Ghosn, 2002). McKay (2001) suggests that “the sociolinguistic and pragmatic components of the linguistic knowledge” (248), thought as the main parts of the communicative competence model, can be developed through reading literature.

2.3. Young adult literature

Young adult literature (also known as YA or YA fiction) saw its dawn with the publication of *The Outsiders* by Susan E. Hinton in 1967, which was the first novel published specifically for teenagers and not young children or pre-teens. As young adult literature is not a well-established genre in academia, since it is quite recent, it can have many names, such as teen fiction or adolescent fiction, and the age range it encompasses is often topic of discussion. According to Michael Cart (2008), this genre was meant for young readers aged 12-18 in the 1960s, when it first appeared, but thirty years later, in the 1990s, the age range grew and YA books could then be aimed for people in their late twenties. Nowadays, it could be said that young adult novels can be read by anyone, even though they mostly deal with teenage characters.

Ever since the establishment of the prestigious Michael L. Printz Award in 1999, young adult fiction has seen a rise in the United States, so much so that young adult literature has been included in the well-known *The New York Times* bestseller lists. Young adult fiction novels nowadays show no hesitation in dealing with hard topics such as teenage pregnancy, bullying, self-harm, suicide, addiction, violence or racism. Besides dealing with hard topics, they are also helping normalize LGBT rights and gender equality, among other social

issues. These novels do not necessarily have to be social novels, we can also find fantasy, science fiction and other kinds of genres within young adult literature.

2.4. Using young adult literature in the EFL classroom

As we have seen, although young adult literature does not have to be exclusively read by young adults or teenagers, they are its intended audience. Sell (2005) addresses the fact that textbooks may not focus topics that are relevant to students. Literature in general is not afraid to deal with hard issues, such as “human relations, sexual relations, sexual orientation, drugs, alcohol, racism, loneliness, fear, bullying, violence, growing up, dying” (92). Learners can benefit from literature to learn emotionally with real materials. If the teacher chooses novels or texts that fit their students socially and culturally while also taking into account their personal development and their preferences, said texts can “be an effective tool for stimulating and achieving language learning and equipping learners with relevant linguistic and socio-cultural competences” (92).

Introducing young adult literature in secondary schools’ English classrooms could be beneficial, as it might help students learn while enjoying themselves. In Rosenblatt’s (1978) words, “The really important things in the education of youth cannot be taught in the formal didactic manner; they are things which are experienced, absorbed, accepted, incorporated into the personality through emotional and esthetic experiences.”

It could be said that one of the main benefits of this genre is the fact that it may feel like teenagers have chosen the books themselves instead of the teacher, and therefore “the student benefits from creative and highly motivating practice of the four different skills” (Monte, 2009). When Malaysia implemented literature in the English curriculum, they found out students were not really interested in the books they were being offered. Too (2004) explains that the government was advised by numerous experts that perhaps young adult literature was the solution that would link student’s interests with the content of the mandatory books they were assigned. It was thought that, since young adult novels tended to address topics and issues lived by teenagers, they would be encouraged to

reflect and give their opinion. Another benefit researches found was that the language used in young adult novels tended to correspond with the proficiency level students had, and would help introduce students to literary forms, styles and themes in an agreeable and pleasant way. Making young adult fiction part of the Malaysian educational curriculum was seen as providing alternative and diverse materials in order to encourage students to become proper readers. Here, young adult fiction is seen as temporary literature teenagers use to develop their identity.

O'Connell King (2010) finds plenty of reasons to use young adult fiction as a teacher. She talks about how young adult fiction includes a great variety of genres that can spark students' interests. O'Connell King confronts the recurrent criticism of young adult books by saying that while not all of them can be "masterpieces", students can still analyze the ones that lack literary quality. She states the evolution of young adult fiction, saying that it has gone from one-dimensional characters and plotlines to multiple and up-to-date storylines that explore diversity in matters of class, race, gender and sexuality. Given this heterogeneity, students can easily connect with the stories and the characters.

Often, young adult literature is not seen as a means to an end. Researchers such as secondary school teacher Karen Coats (2011) believe that young adult literature should not be perceived as a bridge teenagers have to cross to get to the classics. Therefore, she argues that young adult literature should be considered a destination in secondary education and not a passing fad, so students can learn to be evaluative through novels they enjoy. In Coats' opinion, young adult fiction is the genre most teens would read on their own, so they find it more relevant to their lives and it can greatly influence them. Contemporary young adult literature is here seen as a mirror that reflects teenagers and "makes moral, social, and cultural problems both accessible and urgent" (318) while it helps them consider cultural trends. Young adult literature tends to question society and authority, and that is why it is ideal for generation Z teenagers who "generate their identities and subjectivities through an increasingly visual, iconic, and virtual web of images that has largely been stripped of traditional modes of authority" (323).

Coats argues that because change is the nature of this type of literature, as it mainly deals with a transitional moment in a person's life, it is why it is often not chosen as a research subject. The author proposes the study of the history of young adult literature and an establishment of a canon of texts that belong to said literature so this genre can start being recognized in academia. In her own words, "to point not only to structural necessities for the critical study of YA literature, which include attention to the distinctive emotional life and embodiment of teens, the historical, social, and cultural environments in which they live, and the prevailing metaphors for the construction of adolescence, but also to fill some of those structures with content from contemporary YA literature" (328).

3. Three young adult novels

3.1. *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas

Angie Thomas (1988, Jackson, Mississippi) was the first African American woman to graduate in Creative Writing from Belhaven University, a predominantly white school. She cites books as her refuge from growing up in a neighborhood where she witnessed crime and drug dealing on a daily basis. Before becoming an author she was a teenage rapper, and, in her words, her major accomplishment used to be having published an article in Right-On Magazine, a popular teen magazine about African American celebrities. Her debut novel, *The Hate U Give* (2017), initially started as a short story for her creative writing class in college, and was inspired by the murder of Oscar Grant, a 22-year-old who was shot by the police in California while he was unarmed. She was especially shocked by the narrative portrayed by the media after his murder and by how people seemed to be talking negatively about Grant's past, as if he deserved to be killed.

In 2015, while she still was an unpublished author, she applied for a Walter Dean Myers Grant, a grant given to emerging writers by the non-profit organization We Need Diverse Books. This organization aims to promote and help publish books that reflect the lives of all children and teenagers. According

to their website, this includes LGBTQIA, Native Americans, people of color, gender diversity, people with disabilities and minorities.

The Hate U Give has been praised by many literary journals, and has received many awards, including the William C. Morris Award, the Boston Globe Horn Book Award and the Coretta King Scott Honor. It has also been long listed for the National Book Award, the Michael L. Printz Award, and the Edgar Allan Poe Award. It has been translated into more than 17 languages, including Spanish and Catalan. Its adaptation into a film is on the works, and Amandla Steinberg has been casted as the main character.

3.1.1. Summary

The Hate U Give tells the story of 16-year-old Starr Carter. Starr's life is torn between Garden Heights, her impoverished inner city neighborhood, plagued with gangs and drug dealers, and the suburban private school she attends. She feels like she has to put on a different persona in order to talk to her white friends. Starr's own family is quite complex, her father, Maverick, is a former gang member who spent years incarcerated and now owns a small grocery store, and Carlos, her uncle, is a police officer who acted as Starr's father figure while her father spent time in jail.

One night, when Starr is at a party with her childhood friends, a few gang members start a gunfight and she escapes with her friend Khalil, who she has not seen in a while. They are driving away in Khalil's car when a police officer stops them because of a broken taillight. Starr is clearly agitated and scared and Khalil decides to disobey the officer's orders and open the door to check on his friend. The officer shoots him on the spot and Khalil dies.

The teenager's murder implies a whirlwind of chaos not only for our main character, but also for Garden Heights. Starr's family is thinking of moving to the suburbs in order to be safer, since the local gang leader keeps threatening them. When the police officer that shot Khalil is not indicted, riots start at the neighborhood. Even though she is no stranger to violence, Starr is initially reluctant to identify herself as a witness in the murder, but she eventually

decides she will fight injustices for her friend's memory and she will no longer remain silent.

It is a tough novel to read, as it does not really sugarcoat reality, but it could also be argued that it is quite necessary, especially given that activism seems to be on the rise in the United States ever since they elected a new president in 2016.

As an interesting fact, Thomas explains that the U in the title is on purpose, as it references a code famous rapper Tupac Shakur used to refer to poor neighborhoods: "The Hate U Give Little Infants Fucks Everybody" or "T.H.U.G. L.I.F.E." Thomas says she did not include the whole sentence, as it would make too long of a title and it would not be wise to use a swear word on the title of a young adult novel.

3.1.2. Themes

- Injustice: Police brutality and Black Lives Matter

The main concern one could have before reading this novel would be the fact that it seems to be biased against police officers, but it could be argued that it is not. Real life is complex, and so is Starr's relationship with the police. As it was mentioned earlier, her uncle Carlos is a police officer, and he works with the officer who shot Khalil. For Thomas it was important to have a cop character that did his job right and held other police officers accountable of their actions, since she also has family in the police force and is aware of the fact that not all officers are murderers. Uncle Carlos tries to be objective and analyze the facts before taking a conclusion and he also tries to convince Starr that not all police officers are the same.

It is understood that Khalil's murder is an act of police brutality, that is, an act of excessive force perpetuated by the police, or an abuse of authority. It is a term that is mostly used when the police are violent against minorities. Victims of police brutality may not always get justice, as many people are concerned that officers are either defended by their superiors and their colleagues who may try to cover up their actions or may be labeled as rogue

officers. According to an article published in the Smithsonian Magazine (2017), in the 1920s African Americans made up 5% of the population of Chicago, while also being 30% of the victims of police. The Civil Rights era was plagued with brutality, with the police using “aggressive tactics” in order to stop peaceful demonstrations or sit-ins. According to this magazine, there has always been a bias against African Americans in terms of police victims, and the new era of social media has brought this subject back to the spotlight, as witnesses can now record violent acts and post photos and videos from a crime scene online easily. Nowadays, African-Americans make up 13% of the country’s population but are 24% of the victims in killings perpetrated by police.

The Black Lives Matter Movement (BLM) is an activist movement created in 2013 by Alicia Garza, Patrice Cullors and Opal Tometi as a response to police brutality and specially the acquittal of George Zimmerman after he murdered Trayvon Martin, an unarmed 17-year-old, a case that was extremely controversial and talked about in social media. According to the Black Lives Matter’s website, the movement “gained national recognition for street protests” after more African-Americans were murdered and mistreated while in police custody.

- Race and code switching

Race and race-bias are obviously central to the novel. Starr, who was sent to a private school outside of her neighborhood after one of her friends was caught in a gunfight when they were children, feels like she cannot be herself with her school friends, seeing as they are mostly rich white teenagers. She even hides what she considers her “ghetto” parts from her boyfriend Chris. Code-switching, which according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary is “the switching of one language or dialect to the other” also plays a huge part here. Starr often uses African-American Vernacular English when talking to her family and neighborhood friends, but she feels the need to talk in what is considered “white” and “proper” English at school. In an article by Maahfio Otchere (2017), the author mentions that Starr’s persona in school would not be accepted in

Garden Heights and vice versa. He goes on to affirm that “using certain speech patterns from the black community within a white one would be considered loud, obnoxious, aggressive, unintelligent and [...] ‘ghetto’” and that most black children and young adults see code-switching as a necessity to survive in “America’s racialized society.”

- Community

While Garden Heights is a poor and violence-ridden neighborhood, the sense of community is strong. This feeling of community is seen in the way people react to Khalil’s murder, bringing his mother food because there is nothing else they can do to help her. Despite the fact that the Carter family ends up moving to the suburbs, this situation is seen as a conflict throughout the novel, especially for Maverick, Starr’s father, who sees it as abandoning a neighborhood who helped him mend his ways and provide for his family. The community also helps the Carter family after their grocery store is set on fire: other shop owners act as witnesses in order to get the gang leader responsible for the crime imprisoned and a great deal of people either help rebuild it or encourage the family in the process.

It could be said that gangs also imply a sense of community, though a negative one. Members of the King Lords, the main gang present in Garden Heights, are often blackmailed to join it, and they are forced to sell drugs or fight in order to keep their families safe.

3.2. *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda* by Becky Albertalli

Becky Albertalli (Atlanta, Georgia) is a clinical psychologist turned author. She specialized in treating teenagers and volunteered as co-leader of a support group for gender nonconforming children. According to her own website, since it is extremely complicated to find other biographical information about her, she decided to become an author in 2012 after quitting her job in order to take care of her newborn son. She states that *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda* (2015), her debut novel, is the book she had always wanted to write.

Since said first novel, she has published a second one, *The Upside of Unrequited* (2017), in which a few characters of her first novel make a brief cameo. Her third novel *Leah on the Offbeat* was released in April of 2018, and it focuses on Simon's best friend, Leah, therefore it is considered to be the sequel to *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda*. Albertalli is also working on two projects that are due to be published in late 2018; a novel co-written with popular young adult fiction author Adam Silvera, titled *What If It's Us*, and a short story that will be included in *Dear Heartbreak: YA authors and Teens on the Dark Side of Love*, a collection edited by Heather Demetrios.

Albertalli's *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda* won the William C. Morris Award for Best Young Adult Debut of the Year, an accolade given by the American Library Association to debut Young Adult authors who are considered remarkable new voices in the genre. The novel was also long listed for the National Book Award, the Lincoln Award, and the Pennsylvania Young Readers Choice Award. It has been translated into more than eighteen languages, including Spanish, French and Italian, among many others.

The great deal of success of the novel made it possible for it to be adapted into a movie directed by Greg Berlanti and starred by Nick Robinson, Jennifer Garner, Josh Duhamel, Katherine Langford and Keiynan Lonsdale. The title of the film was changed into *Love, Simon*, and it was released in March of 2018 in the United States. According to articles published in *Variety* and *Entertainment Weekly*, it is the first major studio film to focus on a romantic storyline between gay teenagers.

3.2.1. Summary

16-year-old Simon Spier is a musical theatre lover and your average teenager. He has a group of friends composed of Leah, his insecure best friend; Nick, his childhood best friend; and Abby, a newcomer. Simon is gay, but he has never come out to anyone, even though he thinks that his family and friends would be supportive. Students in Simon school have created a Tumblr blog in which they can anonymously post secrets. A guy nicknamed Blue makes a post talking

about his experience being in the closet and Simon decides to create an online persona to contact him.

Simon and Blue send emails back and forth and, as a result, get to know each other while still remaining anonymous. One day, while he is at his high school library, Simon makes the mistake of not logging out of the email account he uses to talk to Blue. Martin, a fellow member of the drama club, reads Simon and Blue's emails, takes a few screenshots, and uses them to blackmail Simon. He has a crush on Abby, so he threatens Simon with telling the whole school he is gay if he does not get Abby to like him.

Simon tries his hardest, but he cannot help that Abby likes Nick instead of Martin. Simon's friend group suffers because Leah also likes Nick. At the same time, Simon tries to guess who Blue could be, but he cannot seem to find him. He comes out to Abby and Martin sees them hugging. He thinks that Abby has a crush on Simon and, in a jealous rage, he posts Simon's secret on the school's Tumblr blog. This leads to cyber bullying, and Martin really regrets not letting Simon choose when and how to come out.

Simon ends up writing a post for Blue on the school's Tumblr blog and they meet up at the school fair. It turns out that Blue is Bram, a shy soccer player who sits with Simon and his friends at lunch. Simon and Bram get their happy ending.

3.2.2. Themes

- Sexual identity

Simon's sexuality is obviously central to the plot. He does not even seem to remember when he realized he liked boys, that it was simply a combination of little things and not wanting to kiss a girl when he was in middle school.

Simon's homosexuality is not treated as something shameful or tragic, which is refreshing given how LGBT characters used to be treated in the media just a few years ago, that is, they hardly ever got a happy ending and their stories usually dealt with AIDS. According to Cart and Jenkins (2006) Young adult novels that include homosexuality can be divided in three categories: problem

novels, homosexual visibility and gay assimilation/gay consciousness. Problem novels were mostly published in the sixties and merely perpetuated negative stereotypes about homosexuality. Homosexual visibility novels were published in the seventies and usually dealt with a character, which had never been considered homosexual, coming out, either by choice or forcefully. Gay assimilation and gay consciousness novels started being published in the eighties and nineties with the intention of normalizing homosexuality.

Coming out is not seen as something scary for Simon, just awkward. He mentions a few times how frustrating he thinks the act of coming out is, because it forces you to have an embarrassing conversation with your parents and loved ones. He often questions the norm and why straight people do not have the need to come out to anyone. He is worried about Blue, though, because he is a pretty private person.

Martin, the student who blackmails Simon, does not do it because he is a homophobe, but because he is really desperate and does not know how to get Abby to like him. He has a gay brother and even gives advice, albeit unwelcome, to Simon, telling him nobody would care if he came out and that he would just be whom he is.

- Bullying

Martin's blackmail could be considered a form of bullying, seeing as he threatens to expose Simon's secret to the whole school. To make things worse, Martin actually writes a very offensive post about Simon's sexuality on the school's Tumblr. Even though, as mentioned earlier, Simon does not see coming out as something that will impact his life negatively, he should do it on his own terms. When he sees the post and comes out to his family he does not feel relieved afterwards, he feels tired and unhappy.

When Christmas holidays are over and Simon goes back to school, he notes that nobody has left homophobic notes on his locker or written slurs all over it. There are a few supportive students, he mentions a few straight students who tell him how they support him and a lesbian couple who tell him he can talk to them anytime. Despite that, there are a few instances of bullying, such as:

-A football player kisses Simon on the mouth as a joke and yells that some other players want a turn. Everyone in the hallway laughs.

-People laugh and whisper about him.

-A few students dress up as Simon and hold signs insulting him.

3.3. *Turtles All the Way Down* by John Green

John Green (1977, Indianapolis, Indiana) is one of the world's most famous young adult literature authors. Unlike Thomas and Albertalli, he is a veteran in the world of publishing, and *Turtles All the Way Down* (2017) is his seventh and most recent novel. He graduated from Kenyon College in 2000 with a double major in English and Religious Studies.

Aside from being a critically acclaimed author, he is well known for his various YouTube projects. In 2007, when he had already written and published two novels, he started a channel with his brother Hank in an attempt to communicate with each other via video blogs for a year. The channel, *VlogBrothers*, was a huge success, gaining a loyal community who adopted the name of *Nerdfighters*, and the brothers decided to maintain it indefinitely. As of April 2018, the channel has more than 3.1 million subscribers and more than 700 million views. The videos they make range from personal video blogs to political, historical or literary discussion. The Green brothers have opened a few other channels since, such as *CrashCourse* and *SciShow*, two educational channels that cover subjects such as world literature, sociology, history, astronomy or anatomy; *Mental Floss*, the YouTube version of the magazine with the same name; or *Art Assignment*, a channel that focuses on art. Other channels they have helped create are *sexplanations*, *hanksgames*, *Eons* and *Healthcare Triage*. Both brothers are also the founders of *VidCon*, an annual conference celebrated in the United States and Europe that honors the online video community. In 2007, they also launched Project For Awesome, a yearly charity project in which their fan base or other YouTube users record videos in favor of non-profit organizations and charities which get money raised through online fundraiser campaigns in exchange for what they call perks, which range from a signed book to an role in a movie adaptation of one of John Green's

books. The project lasts for two days, during which the brothers and other YouTube personalities host a live stream. Recently, the brothers have created a podcast, titled *Dear Hank and John*, in which they offer advice by responding to questions sent by their listeners. In January 2018, Green released a new podcast titled *The Anthropocene Reviewed*, in which he reviews things and beings created during the scientific era influenced by human existence.

As for his writing career, Green is a #1 New York Times Bestselling author and the recipient of prestigious literary awards such as the Michael L. Printz Award, the Edgar Allan Poe Award and the Indiana Authors Award. He has published seven novels, several short stories (either as part of various collections or as Project For Awesome perks), two novellas, an interactive novel, and a few early drafts and extracts. Hereunder is the full list of his written works in chronological order of publication.

- *Looking For Alaska* (2005), his debut novel.
- “The Approximate Cost of Loving Caroline” a short story published in *Twice Told: Original Stories Inspired by Artwork* (2006), edited by Scott W. Hunt.
- *An Abundance of Katherines* (2006), his second novel.
- “The Great American Morp” a short story published in *21 proms* (2007) edited by David Levithan and Daniel Ehrenhaft.
- *Let It Snow: Three Holiday Romances* (2008), his third novel, co-written with Maureen Johnson and Lauren Myracle.
- *Paper Towns* (2009), his fourth novel.
- “Freak the Geek”, a short story published in *Geektastic: Stories from the Nerd Herd* (2009), edited by Cecil Castellucci and Holly Black.
- *Thisisnottom* (2009) an interactive novel.
- *Will Grayson, Will Grayson* (2010), his fifth novel, co-written with David Levithan.
- *Zombicorns* (2011), a free novella.
- “Dear Mr. Potter”, a non-fiction letter published in *Dear Mr. Potter: Letters of Love, Loss and Magic* (2011), edited by Lily Zalon.

- “Reasons”, a short story published in *What You Wish For* (2011), a collection edited by G. P. Putnam’s Sons Books for Young Readers in honor of Darfur.
- *The Fault in Our Stars* (2012), his sixth novel.
- *The War for Banks Island* (2012), sequel to *Zombiecorns*, released as a Project For Awesome perk.
- *Double On-Call and Other Stories* (2013), a short story collection released as a perk for a Harry Potter Alliance’s fundraiser.
- “Unnamed short story”, a short story published in *Who Done It?* (2013), edited by Jon Scieszka.
- *The Sequel* (2013), an unfinished novel released as a Project For Awesome perk.
- *This Star Won’t Go Out: The Life and Words of Esther Grace Earl* (2014) by Esther Earl, Lori Earl and Wayne Earl. Green wrote the introduction and a short letter.
- *The Space & The Cat and the Mouse* (2014), a draft for a new novel and the first story Green wrote as a child, released as a Project For Awesome perk.
- *An Imperial Affliction* (2014) a short story released as a Project For Awesome perk.
- *Turtles All the Way Down* (2017), his seventh novel.
- “Super into a Person’s Personness: A conversation between YA powerhouses on writing epic – yet real – teen love” a non-fiction short story co-written with Rainbow Rowell. Published on *Rookie on Love* (2018), edited by Tavi Gevinson.

His worldwide success arrived with *The Fault in Our Stars*, arguably Green’s most famous novel. It was adapted into a movie, released in 2014, directed by Josh Boone and starred by Shailene Woodley and Ansel Elgort. A year later his third novel, *Paper Towns*, was also adapted into a movie, directed by Jake Schreier and starred by Nat Wolff and Cara Delevingne. His books have been translated into more than 25 languages, including Spanish and Catalan.

3.3.1. Summary

Aza Holmes is a 16-year-old girl who suffers from a severe case of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. She is haunted by the human microbiome and by falling ill because of it, which results in her having unbearable thought spirals, invasive thoughts and in various acts of self-inflicted violence, such as re-opening a callus on her finger in order to drain microbes or even drinking hand sanitizer. She has two friends: Daisy Ramirez, her best friend, who is extroverted and an avid Star Wars fan fiction writer and Mychal Turner, a talented artist.

One day at lunch time, the three friends learn that Russell Pickett, a local billionaire, disappeared before he was to be put in police custody, and that there is a reward of \$100,000 for any information that will lead to his capture. Since Aza was a childhood friend of the billionaire's son, Davis, and remembers that the man's mansion had motion capture cameras, Daisy convinces Aza of sneaking into Pickett's land and trying to find any proof about his whereabouts in order to get the reward money. Both friends manage to recover a photo of Russell Pickett from the camera, but they are caught and brought into the house, where they learn that the man has left all his fortune to his pet Tuatara, a species of reptile endemic to New Zealand. Davis gives the girls \$100,000 so they stop looking for his father, and so he can pursue a romantic relationship with Aza without worrying that she only wants the reward money. Daisy and Mychal, Aza's friends, also become romantically involved.

Despite the fact that Davis is very patient and understanding of Aza's problems, she worries that her anxiety and her OCD are not letting her be in a normal relationship with her boyfriend, so they decide to break up. At the same time, her relationship with Daisy deteriorates when she finds out that she is portrayed in Daisy's fan fiction as insufferable and frustrating, which leads her to a car accident and spending some time at the hospital, where she and Daisy eventually make up. Aza is still interested in what happened to Russell Pickett, mostly because she feels very empathetic towards Davis' little brother, Noah, whose personality has changed a great deal ever since his father's disappearance.

One day, when the two friends are on their way to their friend Mychal's art exhibition inside a tunnel system, they smell a strange odor. Aza remembers a

note Noah found on Russell's phone, and ends up thinking that Russell's body may be in the tunnel system. She tells Davis, and he anonymously tips the police department, who end up finding Russell's body.

Davis and Noah move away to Colorado in order to move on with their lives. We learn that Aza is recalling this story as an adult, probably as part of a psychological treatment for her OCD.

3.3.2. Themes

- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

Based on the main plot, the book may seem like a mystery novel, but when it is read it is pretty clear that the novel revolves around Aza and her mind. So-called thought spirals that will not let her live a normal life constantly consume her. Her illness is the center point of most of her relationships: her friend Daisy finds her frustrating and annoying, her mother does not know how to help her and she cannot maintain physical contact with her boyfriend without thinking of deadly microbes. Even her therapist, Doctor Singh, is not capable of fully understanding the way Aza feels.

Something that is perhaps unusual about *Turtles All the Way Down* is that we do not see the main character getting better or recovering, we actually see her getting worse. For example, in one instance, she is so worried she may have microbes in her body as a result of kissing Davis that she ends up drinking hand sanitizer. This proves how irrational her OCD makes her.

The title of the book also references her thought spirals. In an article by Emma Oulton, the author explains that "turtles all the way down" is an expression with an unclear origin that is part of an old philosophic joke. The article goes on to quote the expression being used in Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time*, in which a lady affirms that the Earth is flat and supported by a turtle, who is in turn supported by another turtle and so on, in the same way that Aza's spiral thoughts seem to be never ending.

The author, John Green, also suffers from Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. In his *Vlogbrothers* videos he often referenced having anxiety and mental health issues, but in a Reddit AMA (Ask Me Anything) in 2015 in response of how he dealt with press junkets, he wrote: “I have OCD and a lot of problems with anxiety. So I’ve known that I have this mental illness for a long time, and I’ve had a lot of therapy and learned a lot of strategies for dealing with my illness.” He has often said that his success after *The Fault in our Stars* and his mental health problems lead him to believe he would not be able to write a full novel anymore. In a 2017 interview with Alison Flood, a journalist from *The Guardian*, he stated that it was “very hard” to write the novel, as it is very personal: “it’s not entirely confined to the past for me. Having OCD is something that is an ongoing part of my life and I assume will probably be a part of my life for the rest of it.” In another 2017 interview with Alexandra Alter from *The New York Times*, he states that “I want to talk about it [his OCD], and not feel any embarrassment or shame [...] because I think it’s important for people to hear from adults who have good fulfilling lives and manage chronic mental illness as part of those good fulfilling lives” and that he would like for the novel to “help people who struggle with that terror to feel less alone.” He has also recorded and posted a few videos talking about his experience with OCD, such as “What OCD Is Like (For Me)” on *Vlogbrothers* or “Reflections: Day 70 / 100 Days” on *100days*, a channel he shared with his best friend Chris Waters.

- Language and lack thereof

It is common for a John Green novel to include poems or literary references, which leads some of his critics to believe that his teenagers are unrealistic. *Turtles All the Way Down* is not different, for example, *Tender is the Night* by F. Scott Fitzgerald is the key to opening Davis’ cinema room, Davis and Aza discuss Yeats’ poem “The Second Coming” and they also reference a poem by African-American poet Sekou Sundiata.

Davis and Daisy also express themselves through words. Daisy, as stated earlier, is a very popular Star Wars fan fiction author, and she uses her writings

to vent about people from her life, such as Aza. Davis has a very personal blog in which he writes poems and reflects on famous quotes.

The most important aspect of language in the book is the fact that Aza does not seem to know how to put her pain into words, often expressing herself in metaphors, such as the thought spiral. This inability to express what she feels leads her to doubt her realness.

In Doctor Singh's words regarding Aza's problem, "One of the challenges with pain –physical or psychic –is that we can really only approach it through metaphor. It can't be represented the way a table or a body can. In some ways, pain is the opposite of language." She goes on to reference Virginia Woolf's words about the subject and finishes with "And we're such language-based creatures that to some extent we cannot know what we cannot name. And so we assume it isn't real. We refer to it with catch-all terms, like crazy or chronic pain, terms that both ostracize and minimize. The term chronic pain captures nothing of the grinding, constant, ceaseless, inescapable hurt. And the term crazy arrives at us with none of the terror and worry you live with" (88-89).

4. Proposal: A taste of YA

This paper proposes introducing fragments of young adult novels into the English curriculum. The fragments have been carefully selected, and they often deal with topics shared with other subjects, such as philosophy or history, making them interdisciplinary. While there are plenty of other approaches to using literature in the classroom, it could be said that a mixture of Carter and Long's three approaches will be used to design the lesson plans. That is, the exercises students will do after reading will take into account the content of the text and the vocabulary and grammar used, but students will also be able to focus on the texts from a historical or cultural perspective while also giving their opinion and reflecting on their emotions and feelings.

The three novels have been chosen for a great variety of reasons. What is most noticeable is that the three authors are from the United States. Students in Spain tend to be taught British English, so these novels could be seen like a breath of fresh air and an opportunity to introduce different varieties of English

in the classroom. Furthermore, in my experience, the majority of the media consumed by students is in American English, so perhaps they would be able to relate their leisure time with the reading they have to do.

The topics and issues the novels deal with are especially relevant for today's youth. *The Hate U Give* was, without a doubt, 2017's most popular and read young adult fiction book. While the Black Lives Matter Movement is obviously of American origin, racism is found worldwide. Many Spanish secondary school students nowadays are immigrants or people of color. They might appreciate learning what it is like to be Starr and they might have gone through similar experiences, though not necessarily as tough. At the same time, native-born students can be educated on how some minorities live. It is obvious that Spain does not have a firearms problem, but teenagers can be inspired by Starr's journey and they can also relate it to the gun control movement started by high school students from Florida and learn to believe in themselves and to stand up for their opinion. As for the intersectionality of the project, the history and English departments could work on a unit (or just a few lessons) about the Civil Rights Movement, which is mentioned in the book and pretty important for Starr's family.

In *Turtles All the Way Down*, the main character suffers from mental health issues, a topic that can be addressed in the tutoring hours students have with their tutor teacher. René Descartes is also mentioned in one of the fragments chosen, so students could connect what they have seen in their philosophy lessons with the novel. John Green is one of the most successful young adult writers, and students probably know him for his 2012 novel, *The Fault in Our Stars*.

Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda deals with sexuality and bullying, topics that can be seen in ethics class or tutoring. Students can relate to Simon's experience even if they are not homosexual.

Students would be informed of the project at the beginning of the school year and would work on one of the three selected novels each term, and would have the whole novel available for them, should they wish to read it, although it would not be mandatory. Before starting a particular book, the teacher would contextualize it to the students, so they would be able to work on it confidently.

The project of introducing these novels in the class would be called “A taste of YA”, and it would consist on three main lessons for each book, guided by worksheets, with the occasional help from videos or other resources. Each lesson would include a fragment of one of the novels. The activities would mostly student-centered, as students would work in groups and would be encouraged to discuss their opinions with their peers. The teacher would act as a guide that provides the necessary explanations and answers any doubts students may have.

The evaluation would mostly be formative, the teacher would take into account whether students spoke in English or not, if they did the activities and if they answered any questions asked. The evaluation would also be summative in the sense that the project would be 10% of the English subject final mark.

These lesson plans are aimed for students ranging from 4th ESO to 1st and 2nd of *Bachillerato*.

The fragments selected are the following:

The Hate U Give

1. Chapter 3, pages 25-26. The main character, Starr, witnesses her friend Khalil’s murder. This sets up the novel and could lead up to a discussion about police brutality and the Black Lives Matter Movement.
2. Chapter 17, pages 295-297. Starr and her boyfriend Chris have an argument and the differences between them are apartment. Students are introduced to code-switching and African-American English.
3. Chapter 18, pages 314-216. Starr’s dad and uncle Carlos talk about good and bad cops. Students could compare Carlos to the police officer that kills Khalil. Maverick, Starr’s father, mentions the Black Panthers and Malcolm X, so students are introduced to the Civil Rights Movement.

Simon vs. The Homo Sapiens Agenda

1. Chapter 1, pages 1-6. Simon’s classmate, Martin, who has seen his private emails, blackmails him. Bullying can be addressed in this fragment. Students can put themselves in Simon’s place.

2. Chapter 12, pages 103-104; chapter 14, pages 116-117, chapter 16, pages 126-127. Blue comes out to his mom and Simon comes out to his family. Both reactions can be compared. Students can have a discussion about what coming out is and means.
3. Chapter 31, pages 257-259. Simon writes his final email to Blue. This fragment can make students interested in reading the whole novel just so they can find out Blue's identity. In this and the previous fragments we see examples of informal emails, which they will have worked on in class in previous years.

Turtles All the Way Down

1. Chapter 1, pages 5-8. Aza has a thought spiral, a consequence of her Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. Students can understand how mental health affects people's daily lives.
2. Chapter 13, pages 165-187. During therapy with her psychologist, Aza confesses that she doubts her existence. Dr. Singh talks about Descartes, making students relate what they are reading to another subject's curriculum.
3. Chapter 10, pages 116-117; chapter 22, pages 266-267. Aza and Daisy solve the mystery that starts the novel, the disappearance of Russell Pickett. Since students will not have read the whole novel, they can hypothesize and speculate about what has happened to mister Pickett.

4.1. Lesson plans

Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda, Lesson 1

Topic

- Bullying and blackmail

Aims

- To read comprehensively
- To introduce the students to a new book
- To acquaint the students with another culture and way of living
- To learn new vocabulary and revise grammar students already know
- To incorporate new topics to the English class
- To make students reflect on issues that may affect them, such as bullying.

Age / Level

- 15-18 / 4th ESO – *Bachillerato* students

Time

- 55 minutes

Materials

- Worksheet.

Overview

In this first lesson of the project, students will be introduced to a young adult novel, Simon vs. *The Homo Sapiens Agenda*.

The students will be given a worksheet do in class in which they will find a fragment of the novel that deals with bullying and blackmail and comprehension and vocabulary activities.

Finally, they will do a brief brainstorming about bullying.

Procedure

1. Greeting.	The teacher greets the students and gives them a few minutes to get ready.
5 minutes	

2. Explanation 10 minutes	The teacher reminds the students that they are starting a new young adult literature project that will last all year and will consist of reading fragments of three books, one each term. The teacher gives the students a brief synopsis of the book, and hands out the worksheet.
3. Reading and activities 25 minutes	A few students read the fragment out loud. The teacher asks them to summarize what has happened to make sure they have understood. The students start working on the activities individually. The teacher goes around the class solving any doubts students may have.
4. Brainstorming 10 minutes	The students and the teacher reflect on the last question and the topic of bullying. They try to find solutions to Simon's problem.
5. End of the lesson 5 minutes	The teacher wraps up by telling the students that the next lesson will be a normal one, and that they will continue with the project later on during the term. The teacher says goodbye to the students and wishes them a nice day.

Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda, Lesson 2

Topic

- Sexuality and coming out

Aims

- To read comprehensively
- To introduce the students to a new book
- To acquaint the students with another culture and way of living
- To learn new vocabulary and revise grammar students already know
- To incorporate new topics to the English class
- To use new resources in class
- To encourage group work

Age / Level

- 15-18 / 4th ESO – *Bachillerato* students

Time

- 55 minutes

Materials

- Worksheet, laptop, speakers, whiteboard.

Overview

In this lesson, students will continue working on the novel assigned to this particular term.

Students will work on the worksheet, which in this case deals with sexuality and coming out, topics that will probably have been talked about with the class' tutor teacher.

Finally, students will have the chance to work in groups and talk about a couple of videos they will be shown.

Procedure

1. Greeting 5 minutes	The teacher greets the class and gives the students a few minutes to get ready.
2. Explanation 10 minutes	The teacher tells the students they have talked about sexuality in their ethics class, and that the fragment they will read will have to do with coming out.
3. Reading and activities 20 minutes	A few students read the fragment included in the worksheet out loud, stopping a few times so the teacher can ask them questions to make sure they have understood. The students start working on the first three activities individually.
4. Group discussion 15 minutes	Students are shown two videos dealing with the topic of coming out: #GIVEYOURVOICE: People Read Coming Out Stories by As/Is and I'm bisexual! A coming out song by Dodie. Afterwards, they are divided in groups of 4 in order to discuss what they have taken from the videos.

5. End of the lesson 5 minutes	The teacher wraps up the lesson, he or she says goodbye to the students and wishes them a nice day.

Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda, Lesson 3

Topic

- Creativity, the end of a story

Aims

- To read comprehensively
- To practice the students' writing skills
- To acquaint the students with another culture and way of living
- To learn new vocabulary and revise grammar students already know
- To incorporate new topics to the English class

Age / Level

- 15-18 / 4th ESO – *Bachillerato* students

Time

- 55 minutes

Materials

- Worksheet.

Overview

In this last lesson of the term, students will finish working on *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda*.

Students will read the fragment assigned to this particular lesson and they will work on the activities.

Finally, they will write an informal letter that they will have to give to the teacher at the end of the class.

Procedure

1. Greeting 5 minutes	The teacher greets the students and gives them a few minutes to get ready.
2. Reading and activities 15 minutes	The teacher hands out the worksheet and students start working on activities I-III on their own after a few have read the fragment out loud, and the teacher is sure they have understood the fragment.
3. Writing 30 minutes	The students write an informal email. They have probably written one before, but since they really have to think about what to include in it and think about what Blue would say, they have approximately half the lesson to do it.
4. Feedback 5 minutes	Once the students have finished the writing and have turned it in they will have a brief discussion about the book and the project. If there is no time, this can be done in the following English lesson, even if it is not part of the project.
5. End of the class 5 minutes	The teacher wraps up the class by telling the students that there will be a new book next term. The teacher says goodbye to the students and wishes them a nice day.

Turtles All the Way Down, Lesson 1

Topic

- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and mental health

Aims

- To read comprehensively
- To remind students of topics they have seen in other subjects
- To acquaint the students with another culture and way of living
- To learn new vocabulary and revise grammar students already know
- To incorporate new topics to the English class

Age / Level

- 15-18 / 4th ESO – *Bachillerato* students

Time

- 55 minutes

Materials

- Worksheet.

Overview

In this first lesson of the second part of the project, the students will start working on a new novel, *Turtles All the Way Down*.

The teacher will briefly summarize the novel for the students, so they can understand what they are reading.

Finally, the students will be handed out the Lesson 1 worksheet and will work on the five activities it includes.

Procedure

1. Greeting 5 minutes	The teacher greets the students and gives them a few minutes to get ready.
2. Explanation 15 minutes	Since this is the first lesson of the second term, the teacher gives the students a brief synopsis of the novel, careful of not giving away plot points that will be relevant in future lessons. Students are also reminded that they worked on mental health in their tutoring lessons during the first term.

3. Reading and activities	<p>The teacher hands out the worksheet a few students read the fragment out loud. Afterwards, they start working on both the grammar/vocabulary activities and the reading comprehension activities individually. Students are encouraged to be creative.</p> <p>The teacher walks around the class solving students' doubts and answering their questions.</p>
4. End of the class 5 minutes	<p>The teacher wraps up the lesson and reminds the students that there will continue working on this novel in two more future lessons.</p> <p>The teacher says goodbye to the students and wishes them a nice day.</p>

Turtles All the Way Down, Lesson 2

Topic

- Existence

Aims

- To read comprehensively
- To remind students of topics they have seen in other subjects
- To acquaint the students with another culture and way of living
- To learn new vocabulary and revise grammar students already know
- To incorporate new topics to the English class

Age / Level

- 15-18 / 4th ESO – *Bachillerato* students

Time

- 55 minutes

Materials

- Worksheet.

Overview

In this lesson, students will continue working on *Turtles All the Way Down*.

Students will be given the worksheet for this lesson and work on the first few activities.

For activity III, students will have to be creative and unafraid to give their personal opinion and express their feelings. Since this lesson revolves around a philosophical topic, they will be able to use their philosophy/ethics notes and the philosophy/ethics teacher will be available to help them during the last part of the lesson.

Procedure

1. Greeting. 5 minutes	The teacher greets the students and gives them a few minutes to get ready.
2. Reading and activities 15 minutes	The teacher hands out the worksheet and, after a few students read the fragment out loud, they work on both the grammar/vocabulary activities and the reading comprehension activities individually.
3. Personal writing 30 minutes	For activity III, the philosophy or ethics teacher (depending on the age of the students) will come to class in order to help the students with their writing. Students are encouraged to express their feelings and opinion and to ask for help should they need it.
4. End of the lesson 5 minutes	The teacher wraps the class by telling the students they will discuss Descartes in both the next philosophy class and the next English class. The teacher says goodbye to the students and wishes them a nice day.

Turtles All the Way Down, Lesson 3

Topic

- Solving a mystery

Aims

- To read comprehensively
- To acquaint the students with another culture and way of living
- To learn new vocabulary and revise grammar students already know
- To incorporate new topics to the English class
- To encourage group work

Age / Level

- 15-18 / 4th ESO – *Bachillerato* students

Time

- 55 minutes

Materials

- Worksheet.

Overview

This lesson will be the last one for *Turtles All the Way Down*.

During the first half of the class, students will be given the worksheet and work on activities I-III.

The later half of the lesson, students will start planning a video in groups of 5. The video will be shown at the beginning of the third term.

Procedure

1. Greeting 5 minutes	The teacher greets the students and gives them a few minutes to get ready for the lesson.
2. Reading and activities	Students are given the worksheet and a few read the fragment out loud. Once the teacher is sure they all have understood the text, students can work on activities I to III

15 minutes	individually.
3. Planning a video 25 minutes	Students are divided in groups of five (of their choosing) and start writing the script of the video mentioned in activity IV. They may assign themselves the role they have to play in the video.
4. End of the lesson 5 minutes	The teacher reminds the students that the videos will be shown at the beginning of the third term. Students are encouraged to show the script to the teacher and ask for help. The teacher says goodbye to the students and wishes them a nice day.

The Hate U Give, Lesson 1

Topic

- Police Brutality and Black Lives Matter

Aims

- To read comprehensively
- To introduce the students to a new book
- To acquaint the students with another culture and way of living
- To learn new vocabulary and revise grammar students already know
- To incorporate new topics to the English class

Age / Level

- 15-18 / 4th ESO – *Bachillerato* students

Time

- 55 minutes

Materials

- Worksheet.

Overview

In this lesson the students will start working on a new novel, *The Hate U Give*. The teacher will start the class by introducing the book to the students, giving them brief information about it. The students will then work on the worksheet and its activities, which will be also explained by the teacher.

The last 10 to 15 minutes of the class will be dedicated to a debate about police brutality and the contents of the fragment.

Procedure

1. Greeting. 5 minutes	The teacher greets the students and gives them a couple of minutes to get ready for the class. The teacher also hands out the worksheet that is the central part of the lesson.
2. Explanation 5 minutes	The teacher briefly introduces the new novel, careful so as not to give away major plot points that will be seen in class.
3. Reading and activities 25 minutes	Students read the fragment of the novel included in the worksheet out loud and then work on the activities. The teacher answers any doubts students may have and explains the activity as many times as it takes for students to understand what they are asked to do.
4. Informal debate 15 minutes	Students give their opinion on the last question of the worksheet. They are encouraged to debate among themselves.
5. End of the lesson 5 minutes	The teacher wraps up the lesson by telling the students they will keep working on the novel the following month. The teacher says goodbye and wishes the students a nice day.

The Hate U Give, Lesson 2

Topic

- Code-switching

Aims

- To introduce students to a new variety of English
- To read comprehensively
- To acquaint the students with another culture and way of living
- To learn new vocabulary and revise grammar students already know
- To incorporate new topics to the English class
- To help students prepare for an oral presentation

Age / Level

- 15-18 / 4th ESO – *Bachillerato* students

Time

- 55 minutes

Materials

- Worksheet, students' laptops.

Overview

In this lesson students will keep working on the novel assigned to this term, *The Hate U Give*.

Students will work on the worksheet provided by the teacher during approximately half the class. They will use the rest of the class to do some research in order to do an oral presentation on a variety of English at a later date.

Procedure

1. Greeting 5 minutes	The teacher greets the students and gives them a couple of minutes to get ready for the class. The teacher also hands out the worksheet that is the central part of the lesson. The teacher reminds the students of the novel they are working on this term.
2. Reading and activities	Students read the fragment of the novel included in the worksheet out loud and work on the activities.

25 minutes	The teacher answers any doubts students may have and explains the activity as many times as it takes for students to understand what they are asked to do.
3. Research 20 minutes	<p>The teacher reads activity IV of the worksheet out loud, and gives a brief explanation about what African-American English or Ebonics is. The teacher reminds the students that they can find more African-American English examples on the book and that they might read it if they are interested.</p> <p>The teacher tells the students that in ten days, they will have to do an individual presentation on a variety of English they choose, and that they have 20 minutes to do some research on the laptops provided by the school.</p> <p>The teacher goes around the class writing down the varieties of English students choose for their presentation.</p>
4. End of the lesson 5 minutes	<p>The teacher reminds the students about the date of the oral presentation and tells them that he or she will answer any doubts they have during the following lessons.</p> <p>The teacher says goodbye and wishes the students a nice day.</p>

The Hate U Give, Lesson 3

Topic

- The Civil Rights Movement

Aims

- To read comprehensively
- To acquaint the students with another culture and way of living
- To learn new vocabulary and revise grammar students already know
- To incorporate new topics to the English class
- To make students write a biography
- To use new resources in class
- To share concepts and content between subjects

Age / Level

- 15-18 / 4th ESO – *Bachillerato* students

Time

- 55 minutes

Materials

- Worksheet, laptops, speakers, projector, whiteboard.

Overview

In this lesson the students will read the last fragment of the novel and will be introduced to the Civil Rights Movement, a topic that they will also study in history.

Students will read the fragment chosen for the third worksheet and will then be introduced to the Civil Rights Movement through a YouTube video. Students will continue doing the activities and finish up by researching a prominent figure from the time and starting to write his or her biography, which they will finish at home.

As this is the last lesson of the project, the students will be encouraged to give feedback and make suggestions to the teacher.

Procedure

1. Greeting. 5 minutes	<p>The teacher greets the students and gives them a few minutes to get ready for the lesson. The teacher also gives the students the last worksheet.</p> <p>The teacher reminds the students that this is the last lesson of the young adult literature project and that they are expected to give the teacher feedback on it or make suggestions, preferably at the end of the lesson.</p>
2. Reading 10 minutes	<p>A few students read the fragment out loud.</p> <p>The teacher walks around the class answering any doubts students may have.</p>
3. Video and activities 15 minutes	<p>The students watch a YouTube video called Civil Rights Movement Cartoon: Watch this Civil Rights Movement for Children Cartoon (Black History) and discuss their thoughts in pairs.</p> <p>Students complete activity II of the worksheet and read activity III.</p>
4. Research and	The teacher tells the students that activity IV should be

outline 10 minutes	ready for the next lesson, so they do not necessarily have to complete it during this lesson. The students choose one of the three historical figures mentioned in activity IV and start outlining his or her biography.
5. Feedback 5 minutes	The students are asked to write their honest opinion on the project, so they can give it to the teacher anonymously. The students will make suggestions so the teacher can improve the project and will give their honest opinion, provided that they do not mind sharing it with the class.
6. End of the lesson 5 minutes	The teacher wraps up the project and reminds the students that they need to have the biography ready for the next lesson. The teacher says goodbye and wishes the students a nice day.

5. Conclusion

As it is mentioned at the beginning of this paper, literature stopped being a part of the EFL classroom a long time ago, mostly because it was seen as tedious and static. While that may be what adolescents feel about the classics they might be assigned to read in other subjects, this paper believes that young adult literature could be an excellent addition to ESO and *Bachillerato* classes. Young adult literature, or YA, has grown in popularity since the publication of the *Harry Potter* books in the late 1990s, and nowadays teenagers can find a very extensive offer of young adult novels. Seeing as these books revolve around teenagers who are going through similar experiences, students can easily relate to them or even find comfort in their pages.

The lesson plans found in this paper show a way young adult literature can be used in class. All the activities and other resources used in them revolve around the fragments of the novels.

Ultimately, maybe this brief taste of young adult literature could encourage students to read more or even get them to start reading.

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A TASTE OF YA

Simon vs. The Homo Sapiens Agenda I - Becky Albertalli

Read the following excerpt from the book:

It's a weirdly subtle conversation. I almost don't notice I'm being blackmailed.

We're sitting in metal folding chairs backstage, and Martin Addison says, "I read your email."

"What?" I look up.

"Earlier. In the library. Not on purpose, obviously."

"You read my email?"

"Well, I used the computer right after you," he says, "and when I typed in Gmail, it pulled up your account. You probably should have logged out."

I stare at him, dumbfounded. He taps his foot against the leg of his chair.

"So, what's the point of the fake name?" he asks.

Well. I'd say the point of the fake name was to keep people like Martin Addison from knowing my secret identity. So I guess that worked out brilliantly.

I guess he must have seen me sitting at the computer.

And I guess I'm a monumental idiot.

He actually smiles. "Anyway, I thought it might interest you that my brother is gay.

"Um. Not really."

He looks at me.

"What are you trying to say?" I ask.

"Nothing. Look, Spier, I don't have a problem with it. It's just not that big of a deal."

Except it's a little bit of a disaster, actually. Or possibly an epic fuckstorm of a disaster, depending on whether Martin can keep his mouth shut.

"This is really awkward," Martin says.

I don't even know how to reply.

"Anyway," he says, "it's pretty obvious that you don't want people to know."

I mean. I guess I don't. Except the whole **coming out** thing doesn't really scare me.

I don't think it scares me.

It's a giant holy box of awkwardness, and I won't pretend I'm looking forward to it. But it probably wouldn't be the end of the world. Not for me.

The problem is, I don't know what it would mean for Blue. If Martin were to tell anyone. The thing about Blue is that he's kind of a private person. The kind of person who wouldn't forget to log out his email. The kind of person who might never forgive me for being so totally careless.

So I guess what I'm trying to say is that I don't know what it would mean for us. For Blue and me.

[...]

Because I had written Blue from my secret account this morning. And it was sort of an important email.

I just wanted to see if he had written back.

"I actually think people would be cool about it," Martin says. "You should be who you are."

I don't even know where to begin with that. Some **straight** kid who barely knows me, advising me on coming out. I kind of have to roll my eyes.

"Okay, well, whatever. I'm not going to show anyone," he says.

For a minute, I'm stupidly relieved. But then it hits me.

"Show anyone?" I ask.

He blushes and fidgets with the hem of his sleeve. Something about his expression makes my stomach clench.

"Did you — did you take a screenshot or something?"

"Well," he says, "I wanted to talk to you about that."

"Sorry — *you took a fucking screenshot?*"

He purses his lips together and stares over my shoulder. "Anyway," he says, "I know you're friends with Abby Suso, so I wanted to ask—"

"Seriously? Or maybe we could go back to you telling me why you took a screenshot of my emails."

He pauses. "I mean, I guess I'm wondering if you want to help me talk to Abby."

I almost laugh. "So what — you want me to put in a good word for you?"

"Well, yeah," he says.

"And why the hell should I do that?"

He looks at me, and it suddenly clicks. This Abby thing. This is what he wants from me. This, in exchange for not broadcasting my private fucking emails. And Blue's emails.

[...]

"You're actually going to make me do this," I say.

"Make you? Come on. It's not like that."

"Well, what's it like?"

"It's not like anything. I mean, I like this girl. I was just thinking you would want to help me here. Invite me to stuff when she'll be there. I don't know."

"And if I don't? You'll put the emails on Facebook? On the fucking Tumblr?"

Jesus. The creeksecrets Tumblr: ground zero for Creekwood High School **gossip**. The entire school would know within a day.

We're both quiet.

"I just think we're in a position to help each other out," Martin finally says.

[...]

"So just think about it." He dismounts his chair.

"Oh yeah. I mean, this is so **goddamn** awesome," I say.

He looks at me. And there's this silence.

"I don't know what the hell you want me to say," I add finally.

"Well, whatever." He shrugs. And I don't think I've ever been so ready for someone to leave. But as his fingers graze the curtains, he turns to me.

"Just curious," he says. "Who's Blue?"

"No one. He lives in California."

If Martin thinks I'm **selling out** Blue, he's fucking crazy.

Blue doesn't live in California. He lives in Shady Creek, and he goes to our school. Blue isn't his real name.

He's someone. He may even be someone I know. But I don't know who. And I'm not sure I want to know.



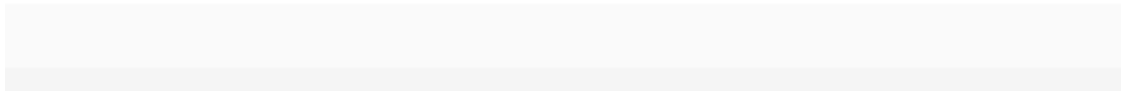
Exercises

A TASTE OF YA

I. Why is Martin able to blackmail Simon?

II. Who else is or would be affected by Martin's blackmail?

III. Do you think Simon is a confident person? Think about his repeated use of "I guess".



A TASTE OF YA

IV. The words in bold in the text might be new for you. Read the following definitions and either translate the words into Spanish or think of a synonym in English:

a)coming out: to openly declare one's homosexuality.

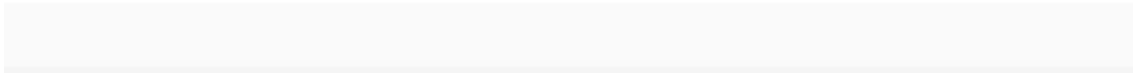
b)straight: of, relating to, or characterized by a tendency to direct sexual desire toward the opposite sex.

c)gossip: rumor or report of an intimate nature.

d)goddamn: curse, often used to express annoyance, disgust, or surprise.

e)selling out: to deliver or give up something in violation of duty, trust, or loyalty and especially for personal gain.

V. Would you consider what Martin is doing a case of bullying? Justify your answer.



Simon vs. The Homo Sapiens Agenda II - Becky Albertalli

Read the following excerpt from the book:

FROM: bluegreen118@gmail.com
TO: hourtohour.notetonote@gmail.com
DATE: Dec 2 at 5:02 PM
SUBJECT: I should be...

[...]

Here's something. My dad's driving in from Savannah this weekend, and we're doing the traditional Hotel Hannukah, It will be just him and me, and I'm sure we'll hit all the awkward highlights. We'll do the non-lighting of the menorah (because we don't want to set off the smoke detectors). And then I'll give him something underwhelming like Aurora coffee and a bunch of my English essays (he's an English teacher, so he likes getting those). And then he'll have me open eight presents in a row, which just drives home the fact that I won't see him again until New Year's.

And the thing is, I'm actually considering doubling down on the awkward factor and turning this mess into a coming out thing. Maybe I should capitalize that. Coming Out Thing. Am I crazy?
—Blue

[...]

Okay. I didn't exactly do it.

[...]

Anyway. My new plan is I'm going to tell my mom first.

[...]

FROM: bluegreen118@gmail.com
TO: hourtohour.notetonote@gmail.com
DATE: Dec 13 at 12:09 AM
SUBJECT: out and about

Jacques, I did it. I told her. I almost can't believe it. I'm still feeling so wild and jittery and not myself. I don't think I'll be able to sleep tonight.

I think she took it well. She didn't bring Jesus into it at all. She was pretty calm about the whole thing. Sometimes I forget that my mom can be very rational and analytical (she's actually an epidemiologist). She seemed mostly concerned that I understand the importance of Practicing Safe Sex Every Time, Including Oral. No, I'm not kidding. She didn't seem to believe me when I told her I'm not sexually active. So, I guess that's flattering.

Anyway, I wanted to thank you. I didn't tell you this before, Jacques, but you should really know that you're the reason I was able to do this. I wasn't sure I'd ever find the courage. It's really kind of incredible. I feel like there's a wall coming down, and I don't know why, and I don't know what's going to happen. I just know you're the reason for it. So, thanks for that.

—Blue

[...]

"Hey. I want to talk to you guys about something." I try to sound casual, but my voice is froggy. Nora looks at me and gives me a tiny, quick smile, and my stomach sort of flips.

"What's up?" says my mom, sitting up straight.

I don't know how people do this. How Blue did this. Two words. Two freaking words, and I'm not the same Simon anymore. My hand is over my mouth, and I stare straight ahead.

I don't know why I thought this would be easy.

"I know what this is," says my dad. "Let me guess. You're gay. You got someone pregnant. *You're pregnant.*"

"Dad, stop it," says Alice.

I close my eyes.

"I'm pregnant," I say.

"I thought so, kid," says my dad. "You're glowing."

I look him in the eye. "Really, though. I'm gay."

Two words.

Everyone is quiet for a moment.

And then my mom says, "Honey. That's... God, that's... thank you for telling us."

And then Alice says, "Wow, bub. Good for you."

And my dad says, "Gay, huh?"

And my mom says, "So, talk me through this." It's one of her favorite psychologist lines. I look at her and shrug.

"We're proud of you," she adds.

And then my dad grins and says, "So, which one of them did it?"

"Did what?"

"Turned you off women. Was it the one with the eyebrows, the eye makeup, or the overbite?"

"Dad, that's so offensive," says Alice.

"What? I'm just lightening the mood. Simon knows we love him."

"Your heterosexist comments aren't lightening the mood."

I mean, I guess it's about what I expected. My mom's asking me about my feelings. Dad's turning it into a joke, Alice is getting political, and Nora is keeping her mouth shut. You could say there's a kind of comfort in predictability, and my family is pretty goddamn predictable.

But I'm so exhausted and unhappy right now. I thought it would feel like a weight had been lifted. But it's just like everything else this week. Strange and off-kilter and surreal.



Exercises

I. Imagine Simon is telling his friends what happened. Rewrite the following sentences using indirect speech:

a) "I know what this is," says my dad. "Let me guess. You're gay. You got someone pregnant. *Tú're* pregnant."

b) And then my mom says, "Honey. That's... God, that's... thank you for telling us."

c) "We're proud of you," she adds.

II. Simon believes that coming out (*salir del armario*) in Spanish is unfair, because it is an awkward conversation only people who are homosexual have to have. How do you feel about it? Do you agree with Simon's opinion? Do you think coming out is necessary?

III. What are the main differences between Blue and Simon's coming out stories? Think about the fact that we only know what Blue wants us to know, because we only hear about him through his emails, whereas Simon is our narrator, so we know everything that happens to him.

IV. We are going to watch a couple of videos about coming out, we will discuss them afterwards in groups of 4. Feel free to take notes.

Simon vs. The Homo Sapiens Agenda III - Becky Albertalli

Read the following excerpt from the book:

FROM: hourtohour.notetonote@gmail.com
TO: bluegreen118@gmail.com
DATE: Jan 25 at 9:27 AM
SUBJECT: Us

Blue,

I've been writing and deleting and rewriting this email all weekend, and I still can't get it right. But I'm going to do this. So here we go.

I know I haven't written in a while. It's been a weird couple of weeks.

So, first I want to say this: I know who you are.

I mean, I still don't know your name, or what you look like, or all the other stuff. But you have to understand that I really do know you. I know that you're smart and careful and weird and funny. And you notice things and listen to things, but not in a nosy way. In a real way. You overthink things and remember details and you always, always say the right thing.

And I think I like that we got to know each other from the inside out.

So, it occurred to me that I've been spending a lot of time thinking about you and rereading your emails and trying to make you laugh. But I've been spending very little time spelling things out for you and taking chances and putting my heart on the line.

Obviously, I don't know what the hell I'm doing here, but what I'm trying to say is that I like you. I more than like you. When I flirt with you, it's not a joke, and when I say I want to know you, it's not because I'm curious. I'm not going to pretend I know how this ends, and I don't have a freaking clue if it's possible to fall in love over email. But I would really like to meet you, Blue. I want to try this. And I can't imagine a scenario where I don't want to kiss your face off as soon as I see you.

Just wanted to make that perfectly clear.

So, what I'm trying to say is that there's an extremely badass carnival in the parking lot of Perimeter Mall today, and it's apparently open until nine.

For what it's worth, I'll be there at six thirty. And I hope I see you.
Love,
Simon



Exercises

I. Find words or phrases in the text that mean:

-intelligent:

-strange:

-curious, prying:

-to explain in detail:

-to risk getting hurt/being rejected:

-cool:

II. Are these sentences true or false? Justify your answers.

- a) Simon and Blue have never met in person.
- b) Simon is in love with Blue.
- c) The carnival opens at nine.
- d) Simon will be waiting for Blue by the ferris wheel at seven.

III. Who do you think Blue is? Is it someone Simon knows? How do you imagine him?

A TASTE OF YA

IV. Pretend to be Blue and write an email back to Simon. Make sure you remember how to write an informal email.

Turtles All the Way Down I - John Green

Read the following excerpt from the book:

Ever since I was little, I've pressed my right thumbnail into the finger pad of my middle finger, and so now there's this weird callus over my fingerprint. After so many years of doing this, I can open up a crack in the skin really easily, so I cover it up with a Band-Aid to try to prevent infection. But sometimes I get worried that there already is an infection, and so I need to drain it, and the only way to do that is to reopen the wound and press out any blood that will come. Once I start thinking about splitting the skin apart, I literally cannot not do it. I apologize for the double negative, but it's a real double negative of a situation, a bind from which negating the negation is truly the only escape. So anyway, I started to want to feel my thumbnail into the callused skin until I felt the crack open.

"Holmesy," Daisy said. I looked up at her. "We're almost through lunch and you haven't even mentioned my hair." She shook out her hair, with so-red-they-were-pink highlights. Right. She'd dyed her hair.

I swam up out of the depths and said, "It's bold."

"I know, right? It says, 'Ladies and gentlemen and also people who do not identify as ladies or gentlemen, Daisy Ramirez won't break her promises, but she will break your heart.'" Daisy's self-proclaimed life motto was "Break Hearts, Not Promises." She kept threatening to get it tattooed on her ankle when she turned eighteen. Daisy turned back to Mychal, and I to my thoughts. The stomach grumbling had grown, if anything, louder. I felt like I might vomit. For someone who actively dislikes bodily fluids, I throw up quite a lot.

"Holmesy, you okay?" Daisy asked. I nodded. Sometimes I wondered why she liked me, or at least tolerated me. Why any of them did. Even I found myself annoying.

I could feel sweat sprouting from my forehead, and once I begin to sweat, it's impossible to stop. I'll keep sweating for hours, and not just my face or my armpits. My neck sweats. My boobs sweat. My calves sweat. Maybe I did have a fever.

Beneath the table, I slid the old Band-Aid into my pocket and, without looking, pulled out a new one, unwrapped it, and then glanced down to apply it to my finger. All the while, I was breathing in through my nose and out through my mouth, in the manner advised by Dr. Karen Singh, exhaling at a pace “that would “make a candle flicker but not go out. Imagine that candle, Aza, flickering from your breath but still there, always there.” So I tried that, but the thought spiral kept tightening anyway. I could hear Dr. Singh saying I shouldn’t get out my phone, that I mustn’t look up the same questions over and over, but I got it out anyway, and reread the “Human Microbiota” Wikipedia article.

The thing about a spiral is, if you follow it inward, it never actually ends. It just keeps tightening, infinitely.



Exercises

I. In your own words, and aided by the text, try to guess what the following words mean:

-fingerprint:

-drain:

-nodded:

-threaten (threatening):

-annoying:

-calves:

A TASTE OF YA

Now, look the words up in the dictionaries available in class and write down the definition of the words:

-fingerprint:

-drain:

-nod (nodded):

-threaten (threatening):

-annoying:

-calves:

II. Find at least one example of the following verb tenses:

-Present simple:

-Present continuous:

-Present perfect:

-Past simple (regular and irregular verbs):

-Past continuous:

-Past perfect:

-Future simple:

-Modal verbs:

III. As you know, our main character, Aza Holmes, suffers from OCD. One of her symptoms are what she calls "thought spirals". What do you think she means when she talks about that?

IV. How does this fragment make you feel? Do you think she is having thought spirals? If so, why do you think so? Give examples from the text.

V. Intrusive thoughts are those thoughts that you have against your will. They are usually negative and appear when you least expect them, making it impossible for you to stop thinking about them. Most people have intrusive thoughts, what makes Aza's different from yours or from those most people have?

Turtles All the Way Down II - John Green

Read the following excerpt from the book:

"What aren't you saying? What are you scared to say, Aza?"

I thought about the real question, the one that remained constantly in the background of my consciousness like a ringing in the ears. I was embarrassed of it, but also I felt like saying it might be dangerous somehow. Like how you don't ever say Voldemort's name. "I think I might be a fiction," I said.

"How's that?"

"Like, you say it's stressful to have a change in circumstances, right?"

She nodded.

"But what I want to know is, is there a you independent of circumstances? Is there a way-down-deep me who is an actual, real person, the same person if she has money or not, the same person if she has a boyfriend or not, the same if she goes to this school or that school? Or am I only a set of circumstances?"

"I don't follow how that would make you fictional."

"I mean, I don't control my thoughts, so *they're* not really mine. I don't decide if I'm sweating or get cancer or *C.diff* or whatever, so my *body* isn't really mine. I don't decide any of that —outside forces do. I'm a story they're telling. I am circumstances."

She nodded. "Can you apprehend these outside forces?"

"No, I'm not *hallucinating*," I said. "It's... like, I'm just not sure that I am, strictly speaking, real."

Dr. Singh placed her feet on the floor and leaned forward, her hands on her knees. "That's very interesting," she said. "Very interesting." I felt briefly proud to be, for a moment anyway, not *not* uncommon. "It must be very scary, to feel that your self might not be yours. Almost a kind of... imprisonment?"

I nodded.

"There's a moment," she said, "near the end of *Ulysses* when the character Molly Bloom appears to speak directly to the author. She says, 'O Jamesy let me up out of this.' You're imprisoned within a self that doesn't feel wholly yours, like Molly Bloom. But also, to you that self often feels deeply contaminated."

I nodded.

"But you give your thoughts too much power, Aza. Thoughts are only thoughts. They are not you. You do belong to yourself, even when your thoughts don't."

"But your thoughts *are* you. I think therefore I am, right?"

"No, not really. A fuller formation of Descartes' philosophy would be *Dubito, ergo cogito, ergo sum*. 'I doubt, therefore I think, therefore I am.' Descartes wanted to know if you could really know that anything was real, but he believed his ability to doubt reality proved that, while *it* might not be real, he was. You are as real as anyone, and your doubts make you more real, not less."



Exercises

I. Words like *C.diff* which is a bacterium, and sentences like *dubito, ergo cogito, ergo sum* are written in italics because they are foreign words. Why does the author use italics with other words in the text?

II. Find the following information on the text:

- The name of a fictional character:
- What Aza can't decide:
- The name of a novel:
- A translated sentence:

III. Rewrite the following sentences replacing the words in bold with one of the words below:

completely / ashamed / actually / ashamed / corrupt

It must be very scary, to feel that your self might not be yours. Almost a kind of... **imprisonment?**

I was **embarrassed** of it, but also I felt like saying it might be dangerous somehow.

But also, to you that self often feels deeply **contaminated**.

Descartes wanted to know if you could **really** know that anything was real.

You're imprisoned within a self that doesn't feel **wholly** yours.

III. Aza doubts she is real sometimes. Have you ever doubted your existence? Based on what you have learnt about Descartes and your own personal opinion, how do you know you exist? Feel free to use your philosophy notes.

Turtles All the Way Down III - John Green

Read the following excerpts from the book:

To kill time that morning, I went through Noah's file of entries from his dad's notes app. It was a long, seemingly random list —everything from book titles to quotes. [...] But the last four notes in the documents interested me:

Maldives Kosovo Cambodia

Never Tell Our Business to Strangers

Unless you leave a leg behind

The jogger's mouth

[...]

"The jogger's mouth" made no sense to me.

[...]

We went out to the meadow that night, talking about college and kissing and religion and art, and I didn't feel like I was watching a movie of our conversation. I was having it. I could listen to her, and I knew she was listening to me.

"I wonder if they'll ever finish this thing," Daisy said at one point.

"I kind of hope not," I said. "I mean, I'm all for clean water, but I kind of want to be able to come here again in like ten or twenty years or something. Like, instead of going to my high school reunion, I want to be here." *With you*, I wanted to say.

"Yeah," she said. "Keep Pogue's Run filthy, because the view from the unfinished water treatment tunnel is spectacular. Thanks, Russell Pickett, for your corruption and incompetence."

"Pogue's *Run*," I mumbled, "Wait, where does Pogue's Run start? Where is its mouth?"

"The mouth of a river is where it ends, not where it begins. This is the mouth." I watched her realize it. "Pogue's *Run*. Holy shit, Holmesy, We're in the jogger's mouth.

I stood up. I felt for some reason like Pickett might be right behind us, like he might push us off the edge of his tunnel and into the river below.

"*Now* I'm a little freaked out," I said.

"What are we gonna do?"

"Nothing," I said. "Nothing. We're gonna turn around, walk back to the party, hang out with fancy art people, and get home by curfew." I started walking back toward the distant music. "I'll tell Davis, so he knows. We let him decide whether to tell Noah. Other than that, we don't say a word."

"All right," she said, hustling to catch up to me. "I mean, is he down here *right now*?"

"I don't know," I said. "I don't think it's for us to know."

"Right," she said. "How could he have been down here this whole time, though?" I had a guess, but didn't say anything. "God, that smell..." She said, her voice trailing off as she said it.

You'd think solving mysteries would bring you closure, that closing the loop would comfort and quiet your mind. But it never does. The truth always disappoints. As we circulated around the gallery, looking for Mychal, I didn't feel like I'd found the solid nesting doll or anything. Nothing had been fixed, not really. It was like the zoologist said about science: You never find answers, just new and deeper questions.



Exercises

I. What do you think happened to Russell Pickett?

II. Do you notice something different with Aza in this scene? Is she having any intrusive thoughts?

III. Complete these sentences with words from the text.

a) One of my favorite _____ is "The nitrogen in our DNA, the calcium in our teeth, the iron in our blood, the carbon in our apple pies were made in the interiors of collapsing stars. We are made of starstuff."

b) The garbage collectors have been on strike for three days and the city is already _____!

c) I saw a Van Gogh painting in the new art _____.

d) I am a religious person, I believe in _____.

e) Horror movies _____ me _____.

A TASTE OF YA

IV. This may be the end of the mystery, but how should Aza's story end? In groups of 5, record a 5-10 minute video giving an end to this story .

The Hate U Give I - Angie Thomas

Read the following excerpt from the book:

The officer approaches the driver's door and taps the window. Khalil cranks the handle to roll it down. As if we aren't blinded enough, the officer beams his flashlight in our faces.

"License, registration, and proof of insurance."

Khalil breaks a rule—he doesn't do what the cop wants.

"What you pull us over for?"

"License, registration, and proof of insurance."

"I said what you pull us over for?"

"Khalil," I plead. "Do what he said."

Khalil groans and takes his wallet out. The officer follows his movements with the flashlight.

My heart pounds loudly, but Daddy's instructions echo in my head: *Get a good look at the cop's face. If you can remember his badge number, that's even better.*

With the flashlight following Khalil's hands, I make out the numbers on the badge - one-fifteen. He's white, mid thirties to early forties, has a brown buzz cut and a thin scar over his top lip.

Khalil hands the officer his papers and license.

One-Fifteen looks over them. "Where are you two coming from tonight?"

"Nunya," Khalil says, meaning none of your business. "What you pull me over for?"

"Your taillight's broken."

"So are you gon' give me a ticket or what? Khalil asks.

"You know what? Get out the car, smart guy."

"Man, just give me my ticket—"

"Get out the car! Hands up, where I can see them."

Khalil gets out with his hands up. One-Fifteen yanks him by his arm and pins him against the back door.

I fight to find my voice. "He didn't mean—"

"Hands off the dashboard!" the officer barks at me. "Don't move!"

I do what he tells me, but my hands are shaking too much to be still.

He pats Khalil down. "Okay, smart mouth, let's see what we find on you today."

"You ain't gon' find nothing," Khalil says.

One-Fifteen pats him down two more times. He turns up empty.

"Stay here," he tells Khalil. "And you." He looks in the window at me. "Don't move."

I can't even nod.

The officer walks back to his patrol car.

My parents haven't raised me to fear the police, just to be smart around them. They told me it's not smart to move while a cop has his back at you.

Khalil does. He comes to his door.

It's not smart to make a sudden move.

Khalil does. He opens the driver's door.

"You okay, Starr—"

Pow!

One. Khalil's body jerks. Blood splatters from his back. He holds on to the door to keep himself upright.

Pow!

Two. Khalil gasps.

Pow!

Three. Khalil looks at me, stunned.

He falls to the ground.

[...]

Instinct says don't move, but everything else says check on Khalil. I jump out the Impala and rush around to the other side. Khalil stares at the sky as if he hopes to see God. His mouth is open like he wants to scream. I scream loud enough for the both of us.

"No, no, no," is all I can say, like I'm a year old and it's the only word I know. I'm not sure how I end up on the ground next to him. My mom once said that if someone gets shot, try to stop the bleeding, but there's so much blood. Too much blood.

"No, no, no."

Khalil doesn't move. He doesn't utter a word. He doesn't even look at me. His body stiffens, and he's gone. I hope he sees God.

Someone else screams.

I blink through my tears. Officer One-Fifteen yells at me, pointing the same gun he killed my friend with.

I put my hands up.



Exercises

I. Based on the end of the text, what do you imagine is going to happen to Starr?

II. Why do you think One-Fifteen shot Khalil? Justify your answer referencing the text.

III. Imagine you had to submit this text and get a mark. How would you rewrite the following sentences to make them sound more formal?

- a) "What you pull us over for?"
- b) "Nunya"
- c) "So are you gon' give me a ticket or what?"
- d) "You ain't gon' find nothing"

IV. Angie Thomas uses onomatopoeia instead of describing the actions of One-Fifteen. Was it easy for you to understand what was happening? Try to fill in the blanks and write the actions of One-Fifteen and Starr during the three shots.

IV. Khalil's murder is considered an act of police brutality, that is, an act of excessive force perpetuated by the police, or an abuse of authority. Acts such as this one you have just read were the cause of the creation of the Black Lives Matter movement, which protests against violence towards black people. In response, some people used "All Lives Matter" and "Blue Lives Matter", the second one being in support of the police.

What is your opinion on this matter? What do you think of One-Fifteen's actions during the whole fragment? And what about Khalil's and Starr's? Write your ideas down and we will discuss them in class.

The Hate U Give II - Angie Thomas

Read the following excerpt from the book:

"Babe, you should've told me. Why would you keep something like that from me?"

I tilt my head. "Wow. I saw someone get murdered, and you're acting like a brat 'cause I didn't tell you?"

"I didn't mean it like that."

"But you think about that for a second," I say. "Tonight you could hardly say two words to me because I didn't tell you about one of the worst experiences of my life. You ever seen somebody die?"

"No."

"I've seen it twice."

"And I didn't know that!" he says. "I'm your boyfriend, and I didn't know any of that." He looks at me, the same hurt in his eyes like there was when I snatched my hands away weeks ago. "There's this whole part of your life that you've kept from me, Starr. We've been together over a year now, and you've never mentioned Khalil, who you claim was your best friend, or this other person you saw die. You didn't trust me enough to tell me."

My breath catches. "It's - it's not like that."

"Really?" he says. "Then what is it like? What are we? Just *Fresh Prince* and fooling around?"

"No." My lips tremble, and my voice is small. "I... I can't share that part of me here, Chris."

"Why not?"

"Because," I croak. "People use it against me. Either I'm poor Starr who saw her friend get killed in a drive-by, or Starr the charity case who lives in the ghetto. That's how the teachers act."

"Okay. I get not telling people around school," he says. "But I'm not them. I would never use that against you. You once told me I'm the only person you could be yourself around at Williamson, but the truth is you *still* didn't trust me."

I'm one second away from ugly crying. "You're right," I say. "I didn't trust you. I didn't want you to just see me as the girl from the ghetto."

"You didn't even give me the chance to prove you wrong. I wanna be there for you. You gotta let me in."

God. Being two different people is so exhausting. I've taught myself to speak with two different voices and only say certain things around certain people. I've mastered it. As much as I say I don't have to choose which Starr I am with Chris, maybe without realizing it, I have to an extend. Part of me feels like I can't exist around people like him.

I am not gonna cry, I am not gonna cry, I am not gonna cry.

"Please?" he says.

That does it. Everything starts spilling out.

"I was ten. When my other friend died, "I say, staring at the French tips on my nails. "She was ten too."

"What was her name?" he asks.

"Natasha. It was a drive-by. It's one of the reasons my parents put me and my brothers in Williamson. It was the closest they could get to protecting us a little more. They bust their butts for us to go to that school."

Chris doesn't say anything. I don't need him to.

I take a shaky breath and look around. "You don't know how crazy it is that I'm even sitting in this car," I say. "A Rolls freaking Royce. I used to live in the projects in a one-bedroom apartment. I shared the room with my brothers, and my parents slept on a fold-out couch."

The details of life back then are suddenly fresh. "The apartment smelled like cigarettes all the damn time," I say. "Daddy smoked. Our neighbors above us and next to us smoked. I had so many asthma attacks, it ain't funny. We only kept canned goods in the cabinets 'cause of the rats and roaches. Summers were always too hot, and winters too cold. We had to wear coats inside and outside.

"Sometimes Daddy sold food stamps to buy clothes for us," I say. "He couldn't get a job for the longest time, 'cause he's an ex-con. When he got hired at the grocery store, he took us to Taco Bell, and we ordered whatever we wanted. I thought it was the greatest thing in the world. Almost better than the day we moved out the projects."



Exercises

I. If you compare the end of the fragment with the beginning, do you notice any difference in the way Starr expresses herself? Provide examples.

II. Join each word with its meaning.

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| a) Projects | 1. To pass the time casually or to have casual sex |
| b) Brat | 2. Shooting someone from a moving car |
| c) Fool around | 3. A product manufactured to be sold |
| d) A drive-by | 4. Houses owned by the government rented by low-income families. Negatively associated with crime and drugs in the United States |
| e) Goods | 5. A coupon issued by the government that can be exchanged for food |
| f) Food Stamps | 6. Someone who has been to prison |
| g) Ex-con | 7. An immature person, someone that behaves like a child |

III. Why does Starr think she has to be a different person when she is at school?

IV. African-American English, also known as Ebonics or African American Vernacular English, is a dialect or variety of English used predominantly among the African-American community in the United States. It has its own grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. It is mostly used in informal settings, and African-Americans tend to switch to a "standard" American English in formal situations. This is known as code-switching, that is, the switching of one language or dialect to another. Starr does it in school and around her school friends in order to fit in. When she is at home and around her neighbors, she often speaks in African-American English.

Some examples of Ebonics found in the book can be:

-“Her folks don’t let her go nowhere.” (p.13): double negative to emphasize that the sentence is negative.

-“Ain’t King your daddy?” (p. 145): Ain’t is used to indicate a negative instead of saying “am not, isn’t, aren’t, haven’t, hasn’t, don’t, doesn’t, or didn’t”.

-“We sick of this! Somebody march ‘bout that!” (p.187): The verb to be is not used in the present.

The Hate U Give III - Angie Thomas

Momma calls Uncle Carlos. He gets to our house in half an hour.

Daddy hasn't stopped pacing the den, and he hasn't put his **Glock** down. Seven takes Sekani to bed. Momma has her arm around me on the sectional and won't let go.

Some of our neighbors checked in, like Mrs. Pearl and Ms. Jones. Mr. Charles from next door rushed over, holding his own **piece**. None of them saw who did it.

I have this sick feeling like I got when I ate ice cream and played in hot weather too long when I was younger. Ms. Rosalie said the heat "boiled" my stomach and that something cool would settle it. Nothing cool can settle this.

"Did you call the police?" Uncle Carlos asks.

"Hell nah!" says Daddy. "How I know it wasn't them?"

"Maverick, you still should've called," Uncle Carlos says. "This needs to be recorded, and they can send someone to guard the house."

"Oh, I got somebody to guard the house. Don't worry about that. It definitely ain't gon' be no crooked **pig** who may have been behind this."

"King Lords could've done this!" says Uncle Carlos. "Didn't you say King made a veiled threat against Starr because of her interview?"

"I'm not going tomorrow," I say, but I have a better chance of being heard at a Drake concert.

"It ain't no damn coincidence that somebody's trying to scare us the night before she testifies to the grand jury," Daddy says. "That's some shit your buddies would do."

"You'd be surprised at how many of us want justice in this case," says Uncle Carlos. "But of course, classic Maverick. Every cop is automatically a bad cop."

"I'm not going tomorrow," I repeat.

"I ain't say every **cop** is a bad cop, but I ain't gon' stand here like a fool, thinking that some of them don't do dirty shit. Hell, they made me lay face-down on the sidewalk. And for what? 'Cause they could!"

"I could've been either one of them," Momma says. "Trying to figure out who did it will get us nowhere. The main thing is making sure Starr is safe tomorrow—"

"I say I'm not going!" I shout.

They finally hear me. My stomach holds a roiling boil. "Yeah, it could've been King Lords, but what if it was the cops?" I look at Daddy and remember that moment weeks ago in front of the store. "I thought they were gonna kill you," I croak. "Because of me."

He kneels in front of me and sits the Glock beside my feet. He lifts my chin. "Point one of the Ten-Point Program. Say it."

My brothers and I learned to recite the **Black Panthers' Ten-Point Program** the same way other kids learn the **Pledge of Alliance**.

"We want freedom," I say. "We want the power to determine the destiny of our black and oppressed communities."

"Say it again."

"We want freedom. We want the power to determine the destiny of our black and oppressed communities."

"Point seven."

"We want an immediate end to police brutality," I say, "and the murder of black people, other people of color, and oppressed people."

"Again."

"We want an immediate end to police brutality, and the murder of black people, other people of color, and oppressed people."

"And what did Brother Malcolm say is our objective?"

Seven and I could recite Malcolm X quotes by the time we were thirteen. Sekani hasn't gotten there yet.

"Complete freedom, justice, and equality," I say, "by any means necessary."

"Again."

"Complete freedom, justice, and equality, by any means necessary."



Exercises

1. As you may know, long before the Black Lives Matter movement, there was the Civil Rights Movement, a movement that was aimed towards African-Americans getting the same rights as the rest of the country's population. The movement has its origins when slavery was abolished, back in the 19th century. After the American Civil war, with the passing of the Jim Crow laws in the southern states of the United States, African-Americans were treated like second-class citizens. Racial segregation was enforced, that is, white people and black people could not share public spaces like schools, bathrooms or public transport.

The movement was especially notorious in the 1950s and 1960s, with numerous non-violent protests and sit-ins that led to the 1964 passing of the Civil Rights Act, in which segregation and other Jim Crow laws were made illegal. Many more acts were passed in the following years that prohibited discrimination based on race for voting or buying, selling and renting houses.

We are going to watch a video about the Civil Rights Movement. After watching it, talk about it in pairs. You may take notes.

II. Uncle Carlos is a police officer. What adjectives would you use to describe him? Do you think he is different from One-Fifteen? How so?

III. Vocabulary you may not understand.

-Glock: A brand of semi-automatic pistol. Popular in the United States among civilians.

-Piece: Slang for gun/firearm.

-Pig: Derogatory slang, used to talk about a police officer.

-Cop: Slang for police officer.

-Black Panthers: An African-American political organization formed in 1966 and active until 1982. Its main aim was to control the police's behavior due to the high number of cases of police brutality. Later, it instituted social programs such as health clinics or free breakfast for poor children.

-Ten-Point Program: Ten guidelines that state the Black Panthers' ideals.

-Pledge of Alliance: A pledge to the flag and the country of the United States that is usually recited in unison in public events, such as sport games, or daily in public schools. "I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

IV. Notorious African-American figures that fought for equality during the Civil Rights era were Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Jr and Malcom X, among others. Choose one of these three historical figures and write his or her biography.