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Ten Literary Tweets: Steering Clear of My Usual Kardashian Commentary

Reflection:

Tweeting is a love-hate relationship in my eyes. I know that I use Twitter mostly as a social outlet to air (in 140 characters) my observations and opinions—primarily about television and popular media. I’m going to be perfectly honest: I am not a value-adding persona on Twitter. I follow C-list celebrities. I watch *Keeping Up With the Kardashians* and mock them mercilessly. I live-tweet *The Bachelor* episode-by-episode.

When we were posited with the task to add value and discuss, however briefly, the texts we have been exploring in class via Twitter, I felt like my known persona on Twitter versus the literary minded teacher that would tag each post with #ENGL7711 were clashing. It was not a bad thing. In fact, I found it ever humorous when a random non-English teacher friend would retweet my #ENGL 7711 tweets because they found the material or the hyperlink that I had attached to be particularly fascinating.

I began my literary tweet adventure by purposely taking things we had discussed in class (particular questions or a section that caused lots of discussion or controversy) and trying to find materials that extended that thought process. When we first discussed the idea of what multicultural reading looks like in the English classroom, we immediately began considering how to extend the pieces to avoid tokenism. This fascinated me. Why is it so easy to feel like we need to represent various cultures in piecemeal fashion? If my goal on Twitter for this assignment is to add value, then I want to find unique links that continue discussion we had in class. I want to find biographical documentation or have interviews with key players or the author him/herself. I want to enhance the reading, not just perform the rote task of linking the first random thing I see and calling it a substantial piece of commentary. I feel like I was ultimately successful this semester with this assignment because, even though at the beginning of the semester I felt like my tweets about the texts sounded inauthentic to my usual Twitter persona, I noticed that throughout the semester, I got bolder and the two voices started to meld. My tweets were not out of place. I was simply taking the teacher role I exhibit for hours on end at school and in grad school and allowing it to find its place in my Twitter world.

Tweet One and Two:



For my first tweet, I wanted to continue our discussion about multicultural awareness. For the first two class periods this semester, we had primarily discussed multicultural literature’s role in the classroom and what we noticed was that our schools were often being culturally sensitive but not culturally aware or seeing the opportunities that we could be taking to enhance our students’ understanding of other cultures.

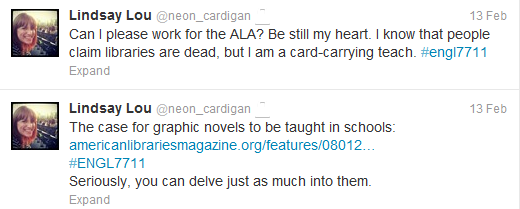
For my second tweet, I thought that an extended interview with the *Woman at Point Zero* was a great opportunity for us to see the controversy behind the book. The first part of the interview was just a basic overview of the writer’s process and the writer’s background, but the second part got to the meat of the story.

Tweet Three:



NPR did a fabulous interview that was led by author Gene Yang while discussing *American Born Chinese*. I thought that this interview enhanced our understanding of not just the comic form of *American Born Chinese* but also about the message behind it. I think that often when we look at graphic novels we look at the form and not the text in depth because we are glamorized by the framework.

Tweet Four:



I don’t want my third tweet to make it seem like I don’t love graphic novels. I LOVE graphic novels and I wanted to highlight how we as educators can teach graphic novels just as well as traditional novels and get kids’ interests piqued.

Tweet Five and Six:



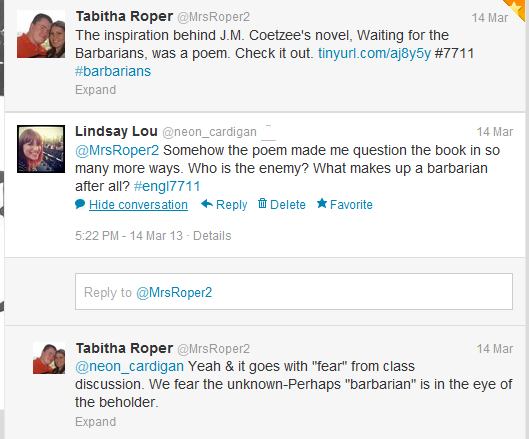
As the semester progressed, we began to discuss how we as educators might tackle these books in our classroom. Even though I would love to have a class set of any of the texts we have encountered this semester, I fell in love with *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* as a text. I want to teach this book so badly. I was really curious about student perspectives on learning with the text and how students were assessed on the text. These two tweets highlight student perspectives and a book trailer created by students. We can learn so much from what students are capable of doing in other classrooms. It’s really inspiring to see what kids can be able to discuss with a text and the work they can contribute.

Tweet Seven:



Psychological realms in our multicultural lit began to take precedence in our discussions, and I was riveted by this perspective of who the real barbarians are.

Tweet Eight:



I think this discussion between Tabitha and I was one of my favorite moments of the literary tweet process because it was so casual and natural. I was really curious after reading the barbarian poem that Tabitha posted. I began to really think about binaries like good/evil and friend/enemy. They are all so fickle and can change with varying evidence. The poem opened my eyes to these questions and doubts. I think it is human nature to want to put blame on someone.

Tweet Nine:



This is probably my weakest tweet. I was obsessed with *Mexican Whiteboy* after “meeting” Matt de la Pena via Skype. I know I could have gone into more detail tweet-wise about what I learned from his candid discussion about the writing and revision process, how I originally felt his novel was weak and his main character was unlikable, how he had amazing hair and that was better than his protagonist who is often whiny? But I instead chose to produce a surface-level tweet. But I asked a semi-strong question about how he sees his books being currently used in schools and how would he like to see his book being used in schools. That counts, right?

Tweet Ten:



I am happy that my literary tweet journey ended with this tweet as it seems to come full circle with our beginning semester questions about how schools are currently attempting to be politically correct and not step on anyone’s cultural toes. I think that we are getting bolder with the choices of materials we use in classrooms to increase multiculturalism and in the discussions we hold. How can we extended multicultural lit to all classes? It’s imperative that we try to think beyond the English classroom.