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Constructing Anne Frank: Critical literacy and the Holocaust in eighth-grade English

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A critical approach to the writings by and about Anne Frank leads to a better understanding of crucial historical events. Misconceptions about Frank's life and death are discussed, leading to greater knowledge.

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> Knowing Anne, she was happy in the concentration camps. She didn't have to be quiet anymore; she could frolic outside. She could be in nature. She loved nature. I think this was a welcome relief for her. (Charlotte, a student in the study)

> Every generation frames the Holocaust, represents the Holocaust, in ways that suit its mood. (Novick, 1999, p. 120)

There are few ambassadors of the Holocaust more deeply embedded in American adolescent consciousness than Anne Frank. Partly because of the uplifting Goodrich and Hackett (1956) play based upon her diary, Anne Frank has become an American icon of optimistic thinking and individual triumph (see Doneson, 1987; Novick, 1999; Ozick, 2000). In keeping with the Americanization of Anne Frank, students in this study liked to think of her as being hopeful, in love, frolicking, and—perhaps most surprising—still alive.

It is cause for concern, then, that through some version of her story (referred to simply as "the *Diary*" unless we are referencing a particular edition), school children first come into contact with the events of Nazi-occupied Europe, including the distortions that are part of the American version of Anne Frank's story. Teachers may suppose that by having students read the *Diary* they will become motivated to learn about the history. In fact, using first-person accounts is highly recommended for just that reason (Hernandez, 2004; Levstik, 1989; Totten, 2001; United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2006a, 2006b). But if the *Diary* and American cultural narratives lead students to construct an overarching narrative about the Holocaust that is redemptive, then this framing may delimit Holocaust construction rather than open it up for close scrutiny.

Representations are built toward some end (White, 1981), often a moral lesson that "accompanies" the Holocaust. Anne herself began building a representation of her life in hiding when she wrote in her diary and again when she began editing her diary on March 29, 1944 after she learned over their illegal radio that diaries would be sought at war's end. Because she didn't survive the Nazi onslaught, her father published *his* edited version of her diary in 1947 to fulfill her wish that she live on after death. *The Diary of Anne Frank: The Revised Critical Edition* (Barnouw & van der Stroom, 2001), prepared by the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation, clears up questions about the editing of the *Diary* by authenticating and positioning the three earli-

est versions along side one another: her original diary entries (version a), her edited entries (version b), and the version her father published in 1947 (version c). These three versions of the *Diary* create a multidimensional representation of Anne Frank.

The most persistent controversy surrounding the representation of the *Diary* has swirled around the Goodrich and Hackett play that was first staged in the U.S. in 1955 and in Europe in 1956. The play was a huge success, winning a Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award. But it always had its detractors, foremost among them Meyer Levin who wanted to stage a *true* version of Anne's diary. According to Melnick (1997) and Ozick (2000), the play secularized Anne, emphasized the comical side of life in hiding, and set up Anne as an icon of optimism. These tendencies of the play even seem to have cast their light on students' readings of *other* versions of Anne Frank's diary. The lesson of the *Diary* for students in the study echoed the memorable refrain that ends the play: "I still believe that people are really good at heart" (Goodrich & Hackett, 1956, p. 174; students read the play from their textbook, Applebee et al., 1994). But lessons are not straightforward (Schweber, 2004), and as Novick (1999) claimed, people may take away from the Holocaust only what they bring to it. We argue that the enshrinement of Anne in American consciousness causes some students to repel thoughts that may shatter the culturally acquired uplifting vision they have of Anne Frank.

Our goal in this article is twofold: to complicate the practice of using the *Diary* as representative of the Holocaust in the classroom, and to demonstrate how teachers can bring critical literacy practices to the study of the *Diary* in ways that help students gain more nuanced views of Holocaust history and more robust views of historical actors. We are not postulating an anything-goes attitude toward historical events. Rather, we are encouraging a critical view of Holocaust representation and consumption via the *Diary* in English Language Arts classrooms.

Past empirical research

Despite the fact that Holocaust literature in general, and versions of the *Diary* in particular, are ubiquitous in secondary English classrooms, scant published empirical research is available to guide the practice. Much has been written about teaching and learning about the Holocaust in social studies classrooms, but most of this body of research deals with the evaluation of one curriculum, *Facing History and Ourselves* (Stern-Strom & Parsons, 1982). Examining student gains in moral reasoning and prosocial thinking through exposure to this curriculum is the hallmark of these studies (Bardige, 1983, 1988; *Facing History and Ourselves*, 1993; Lieberman, 1981, 1986; Schultz, Barr, & Selman, 2001). However, the studies do not seem to take into account that as in all texts, Holocaust emplotment (the way events are sequenced) and enfigurement (the characterization of historical actors) position students to learn certain lessons rather than others.

One recent standout in the field of Holocaust education studies in classrooms is Schweber (2004) who studied four different Holocaust units. As in the other studies, Schweber began with the premise that moral lessons were inevitable, but unlike most of the other studies, she explored how the lessons were taught within each unit, not just whether students said they learned them. Her finding, that moral lessons do not simply "accompany" the study of the Holocaust but are constructed through the interaction of the texts teachers choose, the activities in which students participate, and the ideological narratives that teachers and students bring with them to the study of the Holocaust, is fundamental to this current research. Schweber found that emplotments varied widely from unit to unit and could be placed along three continua: particular to universal, insular to expanded, and tragic to redemptive. She also found that enfigurements of historical actors could be placed along three continua: individualized to collectively represented, normalized to exoticized, and personalized to depersonalized (see Table 1). Schweber's continua

Table 1
Schweber's (2004) continua of emplotment and enfigurement

Description of poles on the continua of emplotment	
Particular	Emphasizing the uniqueness of Jewish suffering, anti-Semitism
Universal	Emphasizing universality of suffering, lessons, or racism
Insular	Teaching the Holocaust in historical isolation
Expansive	Teaching the Holocaust as parallel to other historical events (e.g., other genocides)
Tragic	The trajectory of meaning leans toward meaningless or "useless knowledge" (Delbo, 1995)
Redemptive	The trajectory of meaning leans toward hope, salvation, redemption, or something else that brings meaning to the Holocaust
Description of poles on the continua of enfigurement	
Individualized	Focusing on particular historical actors (e.g., Anne Frank, Miep Gies)
Collectivized	Focusing on "the Jews," "the perpetrators," "the righteous gentiles"
Normalized	Focusing on ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances
Exoticized	Tending toward mythologizing victims or rescuers, demonizing perpetrators

are important not only for understanding Holocaust representations, but also for critically viewing other socially constructed knowledge.

Holocaust literature has been the subject of few empirical studies. Hernandez (2004) looked at a unit of "witness narratives" in his own English classroom. Hernandez expected that his students would learn moral lessons, just as researchers in the social studies classroom had expected of their participants. In Schweber's terminology (2004), Hernandez used individualized Holocaust accounts to lead students to universal lessons, which tended to be redemptive (echoed in the title of his dissertation: *Voices of Witness, Messages of Hope*). His study showed that students can be limited in how they construct the Holocaust by the dictates of the teacher. This underscores the necessity for teachers to submit their intentions and plans for teaching the Holocaust to serious scrutiny. Britzman (1999) argued that a teacher's desire for "stable truth found in the insistence upon courage and hope" can shut out "the reverberations of losing and being lost" which are part of the "difficult knowledge" of the Holocaust (p. 304).

A critical literacy approach

Instead of beginning with the assumption that particular lessons simply accompany the study of the Holocaust, a critical literacy approach to Holocaust literature attempts to make visible the sometimes invisible narratives that guide text choice, text authorship, and text consumption, all of which work together to open up or shut down particular avenues of meaning making. We use critical literacy in the sense that Haas-Dyson (2001) did, to include the participation "in activities or practices in which we use language, oral and written, to reflect on given words and most importantly, on their familiar relational backdrops (Freire, 1970; Weiler, 1991)" (Haas-Dyson, 2001, p. 5). "Given words" can be those given by the texts under consideration or by the students as they interact with the texts. Reflection on the words and on the backdrops they index is how

meaning is constructed, and hence the place to focus critical literacy efforts. We shut down thinking about texts when we predetermine what students should be thinking instead of encouraging students to "(re-) construct" themselves and others through the process (Haas-Dyson, 2001). We argue that a critical literacy approach to the *Diary*, as opposed to a traditional one, may open up students to reconstructions that they may not be equipped to consider on their own. Although we certainly have our own preferred ways of constructing Anne Frank, we don't think it is wise to impose our views on students; rather, we choose to teach them to use the tools of critical literacy which can help them read multiple perspectives.

The study

How do secondary students construct meaning about the Holocaust through Holocaust literature units? This question fueled the initial stages of this research when Karen (first author) entered the classroom of Mrs. Parker, an instructor well-known for teaching Holocaust literature in Adams Township, a primarily white, middle class, suburb outside of a large Midwestern city (the participants and the location have all been given pseudonyms). In the first year of the study, Karen spent 84 hours as a participant-observer in Mrs. Parker's accelerated English Language Arts classes during the length of the Holocaust unit. Forty-six of 47 students in Mrs. Parker's three classes participated in the study.

After analyzing the first-year data and finding that nearly all students saw the *Diary*, in the words of one eighth grader, as "more hopeful than sad," Karen in consultation with Stephanie (second author), devised a critical literacy unit revolving around the *Diary*. Karen then went to Mrs. Parker's new eighth-grade English classes the following year and asked the new set of students to participate in the study, including the critical literacy unit. Forty-five of Mrs. Parker's 52 eighth-grade students agreed to participate in the study. Karen spent 135 hours observing and teaching this group of students during the second year of the study. When she taught the critical literacy unit, she began by giving students short readings about the history of the Holocaust, anti-Semitism, Jews in Denmark, and the Frank family. After reading historical sources, the students read the Goodrich and Hackett (1956) play. Attempts to complicate students' readings of the *Diary* included showing students heavily edited video clips about Anne's deportation, imprisonment, and death (Dornheim, 2001) and comparing versions of the *Diary* (the Goodrich and Hackett, 1956, version and the *Definitive Edition*, Frank, 2001). The unit concluded with students engaging in critical discussion and writing about how they constructed the historical events and actors.

In the next section, using data from both years of the study, we demonstrate the following two reasons why we thought a critical literacy unit was necessary.

1. Students in both years of the study came to the *Diary* with preconceived cultural narratives about Anne Frank; and
2. Students in both years of the study distorted the text in order to maintain these already present cultural narratives.

We include tips for teaching the *Diary* that evolved from each of these findings.

The need for a critical literacy lens

Already knowing Anne Frank

In both years of the research, students felt as though they knew Anne Frank even before reading the Goodrich and Hackett (1956) version of her diary. They knew she was a young girl who hid from the Nazis. They knew she had a crush on Peter. They knew she was optimistic and brave. All of this could be chalked up to background knowledge (Fairclough, 1995), which "involves the representation of the 'the world' from the perspective of a particular interest" (p. 44).

The construction of Anne that students knew mirrored the perky and sentimentalized Goodrich and Hackett (1956) Anne, even though most students hadn't yet read the play. In the words of one student, Anne's story presented the "Holocaust in a lighter kind of way" (Kylie).

In Anne's own words, and in her last diary entry ever, from Tuesday, August 1, 1944, she described herself as "a bundle of contradictions" who was "trying to find a way to become what [she'd] like to be and what [she] could be if...if only there were no other people in the world" (Frank, 2001, pp. 335–337; ellipsis in the original). But there were other people—namely Germans, the Dutch police, the Gestapo, and her betrayer—all of whom imposed their will on Anne, all of whom worked to cut her life woefully short. Most students weren't even aware that she vacillated between hope and despair while in hiding or that she perished in Bergen-Belsen a mere two months before the concentration camp was liberated. Their version of Anne Frank left her intact, still spreading her infectious spirit of optimism, still writing diary entries. The "snuffing out of her spirit" (Ozick, 2000, p. x), her death by typhus, her skeletal body dumped into a mass grave were not part of their versions of Anne Frank's story. The difficult knowledge of the Holocaust, and the pedagogic power of it, was bypassed (Britzman, 1999).

Even when students were explicitly told of her cruel death, they still tended to imagine her in hopeful ways. When students answered a question in their textbook (Applebee et al., 1994) that asked how Anne could have been happy in a concentration camp, Charlotte answered, "Knowing Anne, she was happy in the concentration camps. She didn't have to be quiet anymore; she could frolic outside. She could be in nature. She loved nature. I think this was a welcome relief for her." The basis for Charlotte's version was simply, "Knowing Anne...." When Karen asked Charlotte's classmates if they agreed with her, the room was filled with lifted arms; some had both hands raised, yet no one raised a voice or kept an arm down in protest of Charlotte's statement. No one. This is a testament to the powerful pull of the Americanized Anne Frank.

Teaching tips

Before reading any version of the *Diary*, find out what students bring with them to the study of the text and the Holocaust in general. Ask students to discuss their knowledge of Anne Frank—and how they came to that knowledge—in small groups. Each group can create a poster depicting their version of Anne Frank using words and drawings and then present it to the whole class. This exercise serves several purposes. First, it activates students' prior knowledge and gets them to think about the sources of their prior knowledge. Many students in the study had sketchy understandings of how they came to know Anne Frank; some "just heard about" or "just knew about" her. Second, teachers can begin to talk about taken-for-granted understandings of Anne and how they are rooted in ideologically inscribed narratives (the "relational backdrops") that co-produce meaning. Fiske (1989) argued that "Knowledge is never neutral, it never exists in an empiricist, objective relationship to the real. Knowledge is power, and the circulation of knowledge is part of the social distribution of power" (p. 149). In other words, get students thinking about the sources of their information—in what ways did the sources position students to understand Anne, and why? What ideological narratives did students possess that positioned them to accept only a happy and optimistic Anne? (See Table 2 for a list of critical literacy questions).

After the initial reflection on what students bring with them to the study of the Holocaust, teachers can better plan what historical information will help students come to a more nuanced and robust understanding of the events and actors. Bos (2004) suggested that postsecondary instructors place the Jewish Frank family within the assimilationist milieu of prewar Germany and the Netherlands. Kopf (1997) provided excerpts from texts that give historical information about the

Table 2
Critical literacy questions

About readers
(Questions/prompts that can be used with any text):
Who might feel comfortable reading this text and why?
Who might feel uncomfortable reading this text and why?
Encourage readers to locate disconnections or feelings of disconnect as they read. This disconnect can lead to questioning and challenging of the text or their preexisting assumptions and beliefs.

(Questions/prompts that can be used with various versions of Anne Frank's diary):
What do you believe about the Holocaust? Anne Frank?
From what source does your knowledge come?
Can you think of other people who would view it differently?

About authors
(Questions/prompts that can be used with any text):
What constraints on perspective does the author have?
How is the author using his or her power in this text?
Does the use of power lean more toward perpetuating stereotypes or toward challenging them?
Is the author engaging in a dialogue with the reader, encouraging critical examination for example, or is the text positioned as "truth"?
Who, or what, is given more power or privilege through this text?
Who, or what, is given less power or privilege through this text?
What power relations might the author have had to negotiate through the publishing of this text?

(Questions/prompts that can be used with various versions of Anne Frank's diary):
What is the author's perspective on Anne Frank?
What does the author/editor want you to believe about Anne Frank?
How did the author write the text to get you to believe this?
What did the author/editor add to or take away from Anne Frank's diary?
How does this revision change the way readers might interpret Anne Frank's experiences?

About texts
(Questions/prompts that can be used with any text):
Who could have created this text?
What can you guess about the perspective of the writer (composer, speaker)?
Who are the intended audiences—and how can you tell?
What assumptions are made about the intended audiences?
What readers might have a similar perspective?
What readers might have a very different perspective?
What perspectives, practices, or people are marginalized or devalued in the text?
Does this text position the reader as an "insider" or an "outsider" and how does that change the reading?

(Questions/prompts that can be used with various versions of Anne Frank's diary):
What information in the text does not match what you thought you knew about Anne Frank? (A focus on disconnection)
Whose interests might be served by this representation of Anne Frank?

(continued)

Table 2
Critical literacy questions (continued)

Whose voices are not heard in the text?
How does the text's beginning and ending push you to interpret it in a particular way?
How does a redemptive or tragic ending change what you believe about Anne?
What moral lessons does the text support or push toward its readers?
Is the text more particular or more universal in orientation? Does the text focus on the particulars of Anne Frank's experiences or does it attempt to universalize them?
Are groups of people portrayed as individuals or as collectives?
Are the historical actors normalized or exoticized?
Which version is Anne Frank's diary?

Between texts
(Questions/prompts that can be used with various versions of Anne Frank's diary):
How do the endings change how readers might interpret the Holocaust and Anne Frank?
What overall impressions does each version create?
How would you decide which version is the most historically accurate?

Adapted from questions from Comber, 1992; Wooldridge, 2001; and Jones, 2006; and including concepts from Schweber, 2004.

Frank family, the Jews of Holland, and anti-Semitism in prewar and wartime Germany, and these excerpts are on target for secondary students. We do suggest that teachers explore brief histories of anti-Semitism and the Holocaust (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2006b) in order to place in context the fate of Dutch Jews. The purpose of presenting the historical information is to contextualize the particularity of Jewish suffering. If you think of Schweber's continua (2004), adding historical information of this kind would slide students toward the poles of particularity and insularity. This can help to balance the presentation of the Holocaust because many teachers focus on expansive and universal representations of the Holocaust (cf. University of Cincinnati, 2003).

Within the next section, we discuss the ways that students attempted to maintain the hopeful and optimistic version of Anne Frank that they brought with them to the study of the *Diary*. Also within the section, we explore how questions grounded in critical literacy practices (Table 2) can be used to complicate the enfigurement of Anne as *only* optimistic.

Distorting Anne and her world

Students enfigured Anne in ways that accentuated her optimism, thus distorting her experiences and even, at times, obscuring her death. For example, during a group exercise, Brooke enfigured a hopeful Anne by expurgating material from the *Definitive Edition* (Frank, 2001) that didn't fit her thesis—that Anne Frank was optimistic.

Brooke: [Reading from a handout of questions the teacher gave each group] What kind of girl is Anne Frank? And what are her most noticeable characteristics?
Candace: She is very energetic.
Brooke: Optimistic.
Carl: Positive.
Brooke: Okay. [Writing this down] She's an optimist who loves talking. Where's our support?
[several turns pass as Brooke looks in her book]

Brooke:	Here it is! [She reads] "It's utterly impossible for me to build my life on a foundation of chaos...." Blah, blah, blah. No, here it is, "...ideals, dreams and cherished hopes rise within us, only to be crushed." Blah, blah, blah, "...I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are truly good at heart" [p. 333]. That's it! That's the one. Someone else write that down.

While trying to find the one line that supersedes all other statements Anne Frank made in the Diary, Brooke literally drowned out with "blah, blah, blah" the contradictory material. She focused on "people are basically good at heart" rather than on hopes crushed, a "foundation of chaos," a "wilderness" with "approaching thunder that, one day, will destroy us too" (Frank, 2001, p. 333).

Others accentuated her optimism by casting the diary as a love story, a survival story, or simply "the hopeful side of the Holocaust" (Zoe). All of these characterizations contain partial truths. She *did* have a crush on Peter; she *did* have an optimistic side; she and the other seven Jews *did* survive for over two years. Moreover, the *Diary* itself did not (and could not) capture the horror of concentration camps or even provide details about the Gestapo and SD raid on August 4, 1944 that put Anne and the others on the road to destruction. Her last entry was made on Tuesday, August 1, 1944. Because of this, the teacher and some students forgot, if only for a while, that Anne perished at Bergen-Belsen. For example, in an interview with James, Karen asked him about his impressions of Anne Frank:

James:	Optimistic, never giving up, never giving in.
Karen:	Okay, optimistic, hmmm. What happens at the end of the play?
James:	They are discovered.
Karen:	And?
James:	That's it, I think.
Karen:	Does she live?
James:	Yeah.
Karen:	Yeah?
James:	Wait, nnnn no. Wait, we wouldn't have her diary. No, no, she dies. I remember. Miep gives the dad the diary at the end when she is dead.
Karen:	Okay, she dies.

There are text-based reasons why students enfigured Anne as optimistic, in love, and alive. But these impressions distort the complex picture of life in hiding that Anne's own words convey when considered in their entirety.

Teaching tips

We don't want to suggest that there is only one way to view Anne and her world, but we argue that the questions suggested in Table 2 may equip students to consider more evidence than only that which conforms to their already present enfigurement of Anne Frank. For example, what information in the text does not match what you thought you knew about Anne Frank? This kind of question asks students to focus on disconnections with texts. Secondary students can be skilled in finding *support* for their positions, as Brooke was in the example above, but asking them to find *contradictory* evidence is a critical skill that will ultimately help them assess the viability of their original thesis. This question may also help students develop a more nuanced impression of Anne. With teacher help, they can find quotations that speak to Anne's disappointment in Peter, thus complicating the love story and exposing students to an intelligent and mature Anne, not someone simply captivated by romance (e.g., Frank, 2001, pp. 306, 324–332). They can find quotations that bring them face to face with Anne's fear and despair, thus encouraging them to amend their solely optimistic view of Anne (e.g., Frank, 2001, pp. 27, 48, 54–55, 57, 134–135, and 211, to list but a few)

Anne's perspective has limitations, and asking students to consider questions under "About Authors" (Table 2) will help bring those limitations to the fore. For example, one might ask students: What constraints on perspective did the

author have? She wasn't allowed, as Ozick (2000) reminded us, to give readers her final word on the events she experienced. And the diary genre doesn't always allow for the retrospective appraisal of what was written earlier, and particularly not in this case because the events that caused her to go into hiding also caused her death at 15 years old. We have no record of what Anne Frank thought about the heart of mankind after experiencing Westerbork, Auschwitz, and Bergen-Belsen. The Critical Literacy Questions and Schweber's (2004) continua make useful tools for complicating and assessing the representations of Anne Frank and the Holocaust that students construct, and we think these tools can lead students to more nuanced and robust versions of historical actors and emplotments.

In the previous section, we showed interpretative inclinations students had as they read the *Diary*. We sought to disrupt these inclinations with our critical literacy unit, highlights of which we present below. We are not attempting to provide a comparison between a traditional and critical literacy unit. We have given teachers reasons to believe one is needed and now we will provide advice for constructing a critical literacy unit around the *Diary*.

A selection of elements in the critical literacy unit

Hope interrupted

Drawing attention to the way the students' textbook (Applebee et al., 1994) framed the play within a section called "The Invincible Spirit," Karen began a classroom discussion about how the readers are positioned by the publishing company. She asked, "What if I were the textbook author, and I called this section 'The Depravity of the Nazis,' or 'The horror'?" Students were quick to point out that the story was not about horror at all, but "the story itself makes it fit better in 'the invincible spirit'" (Ted). Students were initially resistant to efforts to complicate their reading of the play. Karen asked them if Anne Frank's spirit really was invincible in the end. We discussed how the play merely alluded to her death and that the *Diary* itself could not possibly include the final chapter of her life.

To make "the depravity of the Nazis" and "the horror" more real to the students, Karen brought in movie clips (Dornheim, 2001) that depicted Anne Frank's deportation and imprisonment—a graphic and competing narrative to the hopeful Goodrich and Hackett play (1956). At the end of the clips, the students were somber and silent.

Karen:	Let's talk about Anne's experiences in the concentration camps.
Ted:	It's awful.
Tom:	Thanks a lot. You ruined it for us!
Annabelle:	Um, I still think she thought people were good [at heart].
Karen:	Why? Why do you think that?
Annabelle:	I don't know.
Tom:	I don't think any human can go through that and still remain optimistic.

In a matter of the 15 minutes it took to show movie clips, students went from a unanimously—and solely—optimistic view of Anne Frank's story, to some students like Ted and Tom making adjustments to their previous constructions of Anne. Tom mentions that the clips "ruined" Anne Frank's story for the class. That is, the clips ruined the "familiar relational backdrop" (Haas-Dyson, 2001, p. 5) of hope. Before the clips, Ted was sure that that Anne Frank's story was about her invincible spirit and not about Nazi-induced horror, but after the clips he commented simply, "It's awful." Others, like Annabelle, still held on, however tenuously, to their original appraisal that Anne would still think people were good at heart, but she couldn't explain why she felt this way. Clearly, not all students accepted the alternative version Karen presented for them, and it could be argued that this new version should have a strong effect because it was visual and was sanctioned by the teacher-researcher.

Comparing the play and the Definitive Edition

After students saw the movie clips, some started to get mad at Goodrich and Hackett (1956) for duping them. They wanted to see what else the playwrights covered up or got wrong. Working in groups and using the texts of the Goodrich and Hackett play (1956) and the *Definitive Edition* (Frank, 2001), students searched for ways that the playwrights had constructed Anne. Ted railed against the playwrights in an essay he wrote.

> They wanted to make Anne this heroic, amazing, optimistic person. She seems almost like a super human.... Super-Anne then stays optimistic even in death camps and believes everyone is good at heart. Anne though in real life was not a super human.... [They] wanted the audience to be lifted, not to learn about how terrible life was in the concentration camps. They didn't want to show Jews being dehumanized and disgraced, so, they made you think that the camps weren't really that bad and that Anne was happy there. They wanted to focus on the good and not on the bad.... I [also] wanted it to be happy and hopeful, though this is not the case. (Ted)

These excerpts from Ted's paper demonstrate his belief that the playwrights had exoticized Anne (mythologized her into Super-Anne), universalized her suffering ("they didn't want to show Jews being dehumanized"), and created a redemptive trajectory of Holocaust emplotment ("everyone is good at heart"). Interestingly, these are some of the very criticisms that scholars like Melnick (1997) and Ozick (2000) have leveled against the text.

Florence ended up finding "many discrepancies between the play version and [the *Definitive Edition* (Frank, 2001)]." She wrote in an essay that the playwrights had misled the audience by ripping the "good at heart" quotation from the context in which it was written (Frank, 2001, p. 333). Florence ended her essay by writing, "If she had survived, I believe she would not have written that all people are truly good. She would have known better."

Instead of passively consuming ideology, students like Ted and Florence were engaging in critical literacy practices through actively constructing meaning from several texts and challenging the familiar relational backdrops that they had formerly associated with Anne Frank. Although students were doing a pretty good job of finding discrepancies between texts, we wanted to make sure that they could apply critical literacy skills to other Holocaust representations and not just to the *Diary*. Using the foundation of their work with the play (Goodrich & Hackett, 1956), the movie (Dornheim, 2001), and the *Definitive Edition* (Frank, 2001), we introduced Schweber's continua (2004) and encouraged students to think about how they were interpreting the Holocaust throughout the unit. We explore what happened in the next section.

Raising awareness about enfigurement and emplotment

We wanted students to consider how characterizations of historical actors and the sequencing of events pushed them to accept certain interpretations, and hence lessons, of the Holocaust. Karen introduced students to Schweber's (2004) continua of enfigurement (individualized to collectivized and normalized to exoticized), and to the collectivized terms commonly used for Holocaust actors: victims, survivors, bystanders, perpetrators, collaborators, and rescuers. Because students tended to enfigure perpetrators as collectivized and exoticized, often referring to Nazis as "demonic," Karen asked them to write monologues from a perpetrator's point of view that served to individualize and normalize them. By demonizing perpetrators, human responsibility for the atrocities of the Holocaust can be diminished or obscured. As the Holocaust unit continued, students were asked to consider the way that actors were depicted in the texts they read, using Schweber's (2004) continua.

We also challenged students to consider how the endings of the texts they read pushed

them to accept redemptive or tragic interpretations of the Holocaust. Just like with the *Diary*, students originally tended to ascribe redemptive endings to the other literary texts they read—*Night* (Wiesel, 1982), *Maus II* (Spiegelman, 1991), and *The Sunflower* (Wiesenthal, 1997)—even if redemptive readings seemed to overlook conflicting evidence. Students preferred to believe that after the Holocaust "things returned to normal," that the Holocaust was a blip that thankfully passed off the radar screen. In one student's words, "All the books end happy because the Holocaust is finally over" (Tess).

Within the next section, we provide some teaching tips that evolved out of the critical literacy unit. We give suggestions for points of comparison between the Goodrich and Hackett play (1956), the Kesselman (2001) adaptation of the Goodrich and Hackett play, and the *Definitive Edition* (Frank, 2001).

Teaching tips

The Goodrich and Hackett play (1956) was a good choice, from a critical literacy perspective, to acquaint students with the *Diary*. It helped to make visible the inclination toward universal, redemptive, and expansive readings that students and the American public in general seem to gravitate toward. The play, Novick (1999) argued, was exactly the optimistic and sentimental schlock that Americans in the 1950s craved. Perhaps little has changed. We do not encourage the use of the play unless it is followed by critical comparisons to Anne Frank's own words.

In addition to the two topics we mentioned earlier in the article (Anne's optimism and her relationship with Peter), there are a few key scenes that present the opportunity for students to see the differences between what Anne wrote in her diary and the bricolage of distortions that amass into the hopeful and universal theme consciously constructed by the Hollywood screenwriters who authored the play (Goodrich & Hackett, 1956). The Kesselman adaptation (2001) provided an interesting example of an attempt to rectify shortcomings ascribed to the original screenplay (secularizing Anne, universalizing the theme, isolating Anne from her own fears and desperation, giving the impression that Anne may still be alive at the end).

One key scene to use for comparison purposes is the Hanukkah celebration within each of the three versions. The Hanukkah celebration in the Goodrich and Hackett (1956) version is the moral center of the play, according to the original director of the stage production, Garson Kanin (Melnick, 1997). In it, Anne wears a lampshade on her head (literally), passes out presents she made for everyone, and sings an upbeat Hanukkah song about playing with dreidels and eating latkes. At the end of the scene, a noise is heard and the audience is reminded that the inhabitants of the annex are happy despite the fact that Nazis want them dead. In the Kesselman version, fear frames the Hanukkah celebration. Before the celebration, Anne has a nightmare about being discovered and the sounds of airplanes and bombs are heard overheard. Anne, in this version sans lampshade, still hands out presents, and still sings a song, but this time she sings "Ma'oz Tzur" in Hebrew—a traditional hymn of Jewish suffering and God's protection. In the *Definitive Edition*, the Hanukkah celebration is barely mentioned. Anne writes, "We didn't make much of a fuss with Hanukkah, merely exchanging a few small gifts and lighting the candles" (Frank, 2001, p. 73). She then mentioned that they sang "the song," which Otto Frank later confirmed was "Ma'oz Tzur" (Melnick, 1997). The opening of each text and the end of each text equally lend themselves to such critical comparisons. The critical literacy questions and Schweber's (2004) continua will help when leading students to critical deconstructions and reconstructions.

Students in the study tended to construct hopeful versions of Anne Frank's story by distorting the texts they read in order to bend them into the shape of their already present cultural narra-

tives. Through concerted efforts to equip students with critical literacy skills, some students were able to begin viewing the *Diary*, in several versions, as sites for investigating how texts position readers and readers position texts. As we interrupted the solely hopeful construction through which most students read the *Diary*, some were able to uncover a more nuanced and robust version of the writer whose diary is said to be the most widely read text after the Bible (Bos, 2004). Along the way, we provided teaching tips to help classroom teachers who were interested in equipping students to take a critical literacy stance toward the construction of Anne Frank.

Tom, a student in this study, claimed that problematizing the frolicking version of a happy, hopeful, and immortal Anne Frank "ruined" it for him. Critical literacy practices could be framed as spoiling naïve perceptions students of any age have of society in general, a sort of end of an age of innocence. The truth is, however, that such innocence has been socially constructed, and perpetuating practices that reinforce fairy-tale endings is not going to equip students with the tools and strategies they need to critically understand how texts operate to position readers. An extreme version of language wielding power to position readers is the Holocaust itself, where slogans, pamphlets, and speeches were used to position Jews as vermin and Germans as advanced human beings. Less extreme versions of this play out every day in the lives of young students in the form of advertising campaigns for products and services that are not necessarily promoting a healthy lifestyle, and more dangerous forms including recruitment for soldiers in a time of war by the U.S. government, where advertising positions readers and potential soldiers one particular way while the signed contract positions them very differently (Bigelow, 2005).

We want teachers to hear one resounding message, if nothing else: lessons and Holocaust meaning emerge from the interaction between texts, readers, and the ideological narratives that inspire both. Lessons are not conveyed through any simple formula of representation; emplotment and enfigurement create trajectories for meaning that once in motion collide with cultural narratives that people bring with them to the study of the Holocaust. And these things are not only true for the interpretation of the Holocaust, but also for other cultural narratives that frame the way we think about the world. Anstey (2002) argued "the availability of vast amounts of information and the ideologies represented in it will...require new and sophisticated literacy and social skills in order to examine, accept, or resist the variety of ideas presented" (p. 446). Engaging a critical literacy approach to representations of different sociocultural events will create powerful literacy through which students can begin to both deconstruct and reconstruct themselves and their worlds.

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