Curriculum and Instruction Faculty Publications and Presentations

Curriculum and Instruction

2018

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Maika Yeigh
*Portland State University*, myeigh@pdx.edu

Todd Cherner
*Portland State University*, chernert@pdx.edu

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# Text-to-Web: Adding Digital Connections into the Mix

Maika J. Yeigh
Todd Cherner
*Portland State University*
*Portland, Oregon*

### Editor's Note

As we prepared the Summer *IRCJ* issue with this manuscript as one of the featured articles, accusations regarding Sherman Alexie's behaviors toward women came to light. The authors and I realized that teachers are increasingly finding themselves in a position of using books in the classroom by authors whose personal lives may be in the news for various reasons, not all of them particularly admirable. Rather than revising the article to use another novel, the authors and I decided to publish the original article with an additional "Resources for Tackling Tough Issues in Classrooms" sidebar (p. 25) and an "Epilogue" (p. 31).

–Roxanne F. Owens, PhD

### Introduction

Like Gutenburg's printing press, the Digital Age has revolutionized the world. Hallmarked by *Web 2.0* tools designed for smartphones and tablets (Boulos, Maramba, & Wheeler, 2006; Ioannou, Brown, & Artino, 2015; Sigalov & Nachmias, 2017), the methods used to locate information, collaborate with colleagues, and spread ideas have changed in unprecedented ways. In essence, *Web 2.0* technologies have redefined communication. Text messages, e-mails, websites, and social media posts have all but made letter writing, reading newspapers, and sending faxes obsolete. Emoticons, hashtags, and fonts (e.g., boldface, italics, all capital letters, and colored text) have become new forms of nonverbal communication for Post-Millennials, or the iGeneration, who are now progressing through school (Kuhagen, 2013; Turner, 2015).

For teachers, the challenge becomes identifying and implementing methods that integrate these new communicative practices into their instruction. The *web literacy* research has focused on the ability to read, write, and actively participate using technological resources (Buckingham, 2015; Lawrence, 2017) and Web-based applications and interactive software products (Bauer & Mohseni Ahooei, 2018; Lysenko & Abrami, 2014). Within the current political context, research is emerging on how to support user understanding of fact-based sources and the evaluation of digital resources for accuracy (Bråten & Braasch, 2017; Eagleton & Dobler, 2012; McVerry, Belshaw, & Ian O'Byrne, 2015; Pilgrim & Bledsoe, 2015). With schools and districts purchasing devices for their students and teachers to use in the classroom, there is little chance that education is going to devolve and return to being a paper-based field. In response, the literacy community can support this digitalization of education by providing frameworks that integrate technology into the reading and writing processes. Similar to how Mishra and Koehler (2006, 2009) advanced Shulman's (1986, 1987) Pedagogical Content Knowledge framework with technology that resulted in the now widely adopted Technological, Pedagogical, and Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework, the time is ripe for the literacy community to follow suit and demonstrate how technology advances its previously established structures.

As such, this article's purpose is to introduce a different kind of connection that readers can make with a text as an extension to Rosenblatt's (1978, 1985) seminal transaction theory of reading. To frame this discussion, the researchers will

first provide an overview of Rosenblatt's theory and its three established types of text connections. Next, they will introduce text-to-web as a fourth type of connection that students can make while reading, followed by a vignette that offers ideas for how teachers can blend this new type of connection into their instruction. The article concludes with ideas for future research in this area.

## Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory of Reading

Rosenblatt's (1968) transactional theory of reading describes how a reader and a text come together to make new meaning. This theory positions reading as an active process during which readers bring personal knowledge and experience to the page as they make meaning from text. Readers actively manipulate text meaning by bringing their own experiences into the reading process, which Rosenblatt described as a "continuously reciprocal influence of reader and text in the making of meaning" (p. xvi). This new-to-known transaction connects texts with the reader's existing knowledge and previous experiences to create meaning, and this continuous interplay between what is new and known to the reader results in increased metacognition and deeper comprehension (Cai, 2008; Connell, 2000).

Schema theory builds on constructs from psychology and cognitive sciences and blends them together with Rosenblatt's work (Behrman, 2006; McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004). In psychology and the cognitive sciences, *schema* refers to the patterns that are created to categorize thoughts in the human brain (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1991; Mandler, 2014). In reading comprehension, schema theory describes the taking in of new information and combining it with the reader's background knowledge and experiences (Vacca et al., 2014; Xie, 2005). This connection between new material and the reader's schema is a crucial aspect of the comprehension process (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Dole, Nokes, & Drits, 2009). When a reader accesses prior knowledge, that information travels through the brain's pathways and into short-term memory storage. The more attention paid to an event results in the memory trace being solidified, allowing for stronger pathways to form. Readers naturally attend more carefully to familiar information, comparing the new information with existing knowledge and chunking it together. The chunked information allows for easier storage in the reader's long-term memory and, in turn, easier retrieval (Pardo, 2004; Schallert & Martin, 2003).

Practitioners have adopted strategies that tap into cognitive processing as a way to teach the construction of meaning and increase comprehension in their classrooms (Goudvis & Harvey, 2000; Tovani, 2000). Successful readers use a variety of cognitive strategies to support text comprehension such as activating background knowledge, asking questions, drawing inferences, determining the importance of information, constructing mental images, rereading difficult passages, making predictions, and summarizing (Tovani, 2000), and these strategies have implications for how readers may connect with a text. In all, researchers (Duke & Pearson, 2008; Ellers & Pinkley, 2006; Fielding & Pearson, 1994; Guthrie et al., 2004; Pressley, 2002; Reutzel, Smith, & Fawson, 2005) have identified three main ways readers connect with texts: (1) Text-to-Self, (2) Text-to-Text, and (3) Text-to-World.

## Connections and Comprehension

### Text-to-Self

Text-to-self connections are personal connections that readers make between their background knowledge and the text. Making personal connections helps readers gain deeper understanding of the material as they can connect the words on the page with their schema on the topic (Block, Gambrell, & Pressley, 2003; Brown, Palincsar, & Armbruster, 1984).

Personal connections allow readers to create a visual image of what is happening in the text based on their personal experience. Reading without making personal connections makes it more difficult for the brain to compare the information to existing knowledge and transfer it into long-term memory. When readers make personal connections, they recall other information that links to the new information on the page. Personal connections help readers engage with texts in ways that support increased comprehension by entering the information into their long-term memory.

Readers often come across new information as they engage with texts. Chances are that if readers are engaging in a text for the first time, they need a variety of strategies to support their understanding (Dole, Duffy, Roehler, & Pearson, 1991; Duke & Pearson, 2008). For example, in the Pacific Northwest, Sherman Alexie's (2007) *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* is commonly read in freshman English (Portland Public Schools, 2009). Readers who have never spent time on a reservation or lived with extended family may have a difficult time visualizing the events in the text and connecting to the important details of Junior's lived experience. However, freshmen may have experienced times when they did not fit in with a group, been bullied, or have felt marginalized in some way. Having even a small connection on a personal level with Junior's feelings of alienation allows readers to connect with the protagonist in a deeper way and make sense of the novel.

### Text-to-Text

Text-to-text connections support readers in identifying themes, settings, and experiences that cut across texts. In fact, these connections have been recognized by the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers [NGA Center & CCSSO], 2010). In the English-Literacy standards, making connections between texts is an important component of understanding an author's purpose. In addition, the standards also require text connections between different types of documents and texts beyond the traditional English classroom. In a Social Studies context, students are expected to integrate information from diverse sources to demonstrate understanding of texts and events. If students cannot successfully create connections between texts, they will have a difficult time meeting these standards.

In classrooms, students are asked to notice common organizational patterns between texts, to connect information gained from an article with a textbook, and to compare authors' purposes between two different selections. Additionally, there is an assortment of other ways students can integrate the information they gain from a variety of texts. When readers come across new information, they go through the comparison process in their thinking, adding additional layers to their understanding.

Returning to *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* example, freshman year of high school may not be the first experience students have had grappling with the themes explored in the novel. Students may have read other texts that share those themes in elementary and middle school. For example, *Hoot* (Hiaasen, 2002) is a regular "America's Battle-of-the-Books" title since 2005, making it a highly read text with children in every state reading the novel and competing to demonstrate comprehension (America's Battle of the Books, 2014). The text focuses on themes of bullying and school strife as the protagonist Roy struggles to fit into a new school. Passive readers tend to read texts in isolation, but active readers will connect the text they are reading to other materials they have read. Students who have read *Hoot* and connected with Roy's struggles in his new community may make a connection to Junior's struggles as he changes schools. As readers come into classrooms with

a variety of reading experiences, teachers would be wise to talk with them about the novels and texts they have read, which may make comprehension of new texts easier by accessing previous textual experiences.

## Text-to-World

Text-to-world connections are made when readers bring their lived experiences and understandings of the world into a text as they read. All experiences, whether they come from first-hand interactions or from watching television, make up our interpretations of the world and how it works. Effective readers use their knowledge of the world to successfully navigate the interrelatedness of information, using connections to expand their thinking. All students have experiences, opinions, and thoughts on multiple subjects that they can access to make meaning. In classrooms, educators structure learning opportunities that build connections between their students' lives and the course content to create hooks that new concepts and textual information can link. In the larger educational frame, bringing individual learners' understanding of the world into the classroom context is an aspect of culturally responsive pedagogy that increases both engagement and achievement (Delpit, 2006; Gay, 2000). In the context of reading, prior knowledge is activated to expand the understanding of a topic.

Reading *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* may be the first time some students have read a story with a Native American protagonist. Throughout the novel, Junior navigates systems and structures that have historically subjugated Native American communities, both on his reservation and in the wealthier community of Reardan, where he chooses to attend school. The tensions between the worlds where Junior lives and where he attends school may be foreign to many adolescent readers, and many students may be unfamiliar with the history of tribal lands, the creation of reservations,

and the scarcity of resources in tribal communities. However, in 2016 and 2017, there was press coverage of the protests by the Standing Rock Sioux and their allies over the Keystone XL Pipeline in North Dakota. Making connections between articles on current issues that demonstrate conflict between tribal communities and the surrounding areas brings additional context and deepened understanding of the simmering tensions in Junior's worlds, which may connect readers to the larger community.

## Connections in a Digital Age

As technologies change, new literacies emerge that are determined by societal forces (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, Castek, & Henry, 2017). This demand for new literacies happens outside of the school walls, with students engaging with technology as a regular part of their daily lives (Kinzer & Leu, 2016). When considering how adolescents actively connect with the world, educators need to understand the ways in which teens are already being engaged. Not only did *Time for Kids* (*www.timeforkids.com*), *NewsELA* (*https://newsela.com*), and other online educational sites provide resources about the Keystone XL Pipeline controversy, but there were also numerous Instagram pages, Twitter handles, and Tumblr logs (among several other social media platforms) that provided information about the protests and the pipeline. At the click of a link, students could experience real-time events and reactions to those events in ways never experienced in classrooms before. In addition, each time students follow a link, the content they encounter in these spaces has been changed by the interactions with others. Whereas one moment the Instagram page might show peaceful protesters, hours later that same feed could show protesters being sprayed with fire hoses, and then the reactions and comments from a multitude of perspectives. The way users of these online communities interact with information is a unique Web-based experience that represents a different type of text connection.

## Text-to-Web

Text-to-web connections build on the interactive transactions readers have with texts (Heller, 2006; Ness, 2011) by adding a digital component. Whereas the other connections are based on experiences in the tangible, physical world, text-to-web connections are anchored in the interactive experiences that can only take place online. Just as readers can connect with various types of physical texts (e.g., short stories, images, videos, and articles), their digital experiences cannot be confined to only one or a few select types of texts. Rather, text-to-web connections lend themselves to the ways readers interact with online versions of traditional texts and also texts that only exist digitally (e.g., websites, social media, and real-time maps). The difference between the more traditional text connections and text-to-web connections is it extends transaction to interaction. In this context, interaction means that readers transact with a text by contributing to the community-based understanding of it. Depending on the technology, these interactions may look different, but common characteristics include the following:

- Commenting on social media platforms about popular, trending topics

- Clicking a "thumbs up" button to indicate agreement with a post

- Providing a ranking about a product as an expression of their opinion about it

These experiences are taking place frequently online, and they have changed the way digital texts are being read.

Websites are the Internet's hallmark. When the first website was launched by Tim Berners-Lee (1990), it not only introduced a new platform but also a new type of text. Although it was still a static text that readers could not modify, it previewed the way websites would change how digital texts would be read. Unlike printed texts that are typically read from beginning to end, websites often include links that

### Action Steps

Here are steps classroom teachers can use to apply text-to-web ideas into classroom practice:

1. Get to know your adolescent students and the technology they access and use on a daily basis.

2. Explore the sites and tools yourself to deepen understanding of what is available, potential online hazards, and ways the tools can be accessed in tandem with content.

3. Choose materials (texts, units of study, etc.) that adolescents find interesting and relevant and that connect to the larger world.

4. Provide time for students to explore the topic using tools from their everyday experiences. Depending on your students' independence with technology, provide a menu of tools and sites for them to use.

5. Give students an organizer to use to manage the connected information they find online.

6. Have students use a class website to share ideas, get feedback, and interact with their classmates.

7. Offer prompts that promote students discussing their online behavior to build your sense of familiarity with the technologies they are already using.

allow readers to navigate to other websites, access videos that add a multimedia element, and communicate with an online community of readers. Each of these elements represent a way that readers can interact with a website's text, which is unique and does not exist in a paper-based text. As Handsfield, Dean, and Cielocha (2009) explain, those attributes are how readers "actively construct meaning [when interacting with a website] rather than passively receive the words or meaning on the screen" (p. 40). Since Handsfield et al. published their work, *Web 2.0* tools and online communities have grown significantly, and the construction of meaning from digital texts can be further developed.

When readers interact with websites, they are not just constructing meaning by the information presented to them as lettered text, videos, images, and links to other websites. They are building understanding through the exchange of ideas and perspectives centered on a digital text. This exchange allows readers to access multiple viewpoints related to the text, which informs their understanding of it, and also to share their ideas related to it. In this way, readers are not just transacting with the text in isolation; rather, they are interacting with it by engaging a community about the text. Readers gain knowledge from these interactions, and the following vignette will highlight ways that teachers can integrate those exchanges into their instruction.

## A Vignette of Ms. Bell: Text-to-Web in the Classroom

In just the last five years, Ms. Bell has noticed a distinct shift in her students that centers on their relationship and use of technology. From her perspective as a middle school English teacher, Ms. Bell has anecdotally noticed how her students changed their view of technology from being a form of entertainment into an extension of their selfhood, and she saw the latter as being lived experiences. With a goal of deepening her students' engagement with text in the upcoming unit, Ms. Bell saw technology as an opportunity to improve her instruction. Instead of having students mainly use technology to access information or complete assignments, she wanted to increase her students' awareness of what they were doing online and how that could improve their learning. With these goals, Ms. Bell began planning how she was going to facilitate the reading of Alexie's (2007) novel, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, in the next unit.

Similar to previous years when she taught the novel, Ms. Bell wanted a pre-reading activity that activated her students' schema about experiences they had in common with the novel's protagonist, Junior. In past years, Ms. Bell used examples like making purchases at the grocery store, remembering scenes from other texts they read, and recalling childhood memories. This year, however, she wanted to capitalize on the online activities her students were having so they could connect authentically with the text.

Based on a survey her students completed earlier in the school year and then by talking with them and observing their behavior, Ms. Bell knew several of her students avidly were using social media websites, like Instagram and Facebook, and they were invested in carefully crafting their online identities. She also knew they read reviews and articles about almost everything—restaurants, clothes, movies, songs, colleges, sports teams, politicians, and products—and they were comfortable making online purchases using gift cards for iTunes, GooglePlay, and GameStop.

As she planned, Ms. Bell was aware that each of those actions represented a specific experience that was unique of the previous ways she had students connect with the novel, and she knew that those online experiences are rich in reading, writing, and digital literacy. Ms. Bell realized that the online experiences her students were having represented a part of their life and identity. With that in mind, Ms. Bell decided she was going to be purposeful in having students relate the experiences that Junior had in the novel to her students' experiences online.

While reviewing old lesson plans and notes, Ms. Bell remembered that drawing cartoons is essential to Junior. Quickly, Ms. Bell found the quote in the novel's first chapter when Junior explains why he draws cartoons: "I draw because I want to talk to the world. And I want the world to pay attention to me" (Alexie, 2007, p. 6). As she read, Ms. Bell brainstormed ways her students were engaging in conversation with the world. Whereas Junior talks to the world through pictures, Ms. Bell thought of her students posting their experiences, opinions, and ideas on social media as a form of talking to the world. As she thought more, Ms. Bell recalled a small group of her students who

actively wrote, read, and shared their own pieces of fan fiction. (Fan Fiction is a genre where fans of a book, movie, or television series write additional chapters, scenes, or episodes that continue the creator's narrative. These works typically use the same characters, settings, and themes from the original works, and there are website communities devoted to writing, sharing, and reviewing works of fan fiction.) Ms. Bell wondered if her students' use of social media and fan fiction websites represented opportunities for them to connect with Junior. To be intentional in her students making this connection, Ms. Bell wrote a journal prompt that students would respond to as a pre-reading activity to be completed the day they read Chapter One. Her prompt read,

*In 90-110 words, respond to one of the following:*

1. *How do you talk to the world?*
2. *What are some ways you communicate or hope to communicate with a larger audience?*
3. *What do you create that you think many people could celebrate?*

Ms. Bell saw these prompts as being relevant to her students because they could potentially respond to them using their online activities. When they posted on social media or wrote a piece of fan fiction, they were outwardly communicating with the world. Plus, there was always a chance their post or writing would go viral, Ms. Bell thought, so it has the potential to reach a large audience. If that does in fact happen, she continued, that would be a way of celebrating the work. With that prompt in place, Ms. Bell then looked for another opportunity to directly use technology to deepen student engagement with the text.

In the novel, a conflict between Junior and his best friend, Rowdy, develops over Junior's choice to transfer schools. As the tension continues to mount, the two characters exchange messages online. Junior explains the scenario:

*Today at school, I was really missing Rowdy, so I walked over to the computer lab, took a digital photo of my smiling face, and emailed it to him. A few minutes later, he emailed me a digital photo of his bare ass. I don't know when he snapped that pic. (Alexie, 2007, p. 130)*

Ms. Bell identified this scene as a key moment in the rising actions that she wanted to highlight, and she felt it was an ideal opportunity to purposefully integrate text-to-web connections because the scene revolves around the two characters using e-mail to communicate. Furthermore, it is an important scene in the novel because of the emotions embedded in it, which Ms. Bell hoped her students would be able to articulate.

To create the activity, Ms. Bell planned to use the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) strategy (Angelo & Cross, 1993; Lyman, 1981) with guided prompts aligned to the "In Your Head" quadrant of the Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) framework (Raphael & Au, 2005). TPS is a cooperative learning strategy in which students first develop a response to a prompt individually before partnering with a classmate to share and refine both their answers. The TPS concludes with a whole-class discussion or activities in which each pair of students offers their ideas. QAR is a framework comprised of two categories, and each category includes two question types. The first category is "In the Book," and its question types are *Right There* and *Think & Search*. A *Right There* question can be answered with a specific detail, fact, word, or phrase found directly in one part of the text. A *Think & Search* question is answered with multiple details, facts, words, or phrases scattered throughout the text. The second category is "In My Head," and its question types include *Author & You* and *On My Own*. An *Author & You* question requires readers to combine their background knowledge about the topic with the information from the text to respond; whereas, *On My Own* questions require readers to state their own opinions and ideas in

### Table 1. Graphic Organizer Aligned to QAR "In My Head" Questions

| Question | Text-Based Evidence | Your Experience |
|---|---|---|
| How do you think Junior felt when he e-mailed Rowdy after not speaking to him for some time? Have you ever tried to rekindle a relationship with someone you have not spoken to for over a month using online tools? | | |
| How do you think Rowdy felt when he received Junior's e-mail? Have you ever received a message from someone who wanted to rekindle a relationship? | | |
| Based on your understanding of Junior and Rowdy's relationship, what do you think Junior was trying to say without words by sending Rowdy that picture? | | |
| Based on your understanding of Junior and Rowdy's relationship, what do you think Rowdy was trying to say without words by sending Junior that picture? | | |

response. In her activity, Ms. Bell decided that her students were going to combine their own experiences with communicating online with the novel's plot to complete a TPS.

To structure the activity, Ms. Bell displayed four questions as part of an organizer on the projector screen for her class (see Table 1). She then instructed her students where to access the organizer on their class website so they would have a copy of it to complete.

Next, Ms. Bell instructed her students to respond to the organizer by finding a quote from the novel and recording it under the "Text-Based Evidence" column. Then, in the "Your Experience" column, students were to write a short example of something that happened to

them that connected back to the prompt. Ms. Bell saw this activity as another way students would be able to bring their experiences that they have had online and with technology into the reading of the novel. With these two activities in place, Ms. Bell decided that she was ready to capitalize on her students' digital experiences, but she also began brainstorming ideas for extension projects for after the reading of the novel.

With the vastness of the Web and an understanding of her students' interests, Ms. Bell could use those components to extend her students' understanding of the novel. For example, with 567 American Indian tribes formally recognized by the U.S. government and a wealth

of information about reservation life easily accessible online, Ms. Bell's students could use the Web to understand the tensions in Junior's life like never before. Just following the #spokaneindianreservation Instagram feed or accessing the Reclaim Native American Tumblr blog would provide a wealth of information students could incorporate into presentations, research projects, and debates. The interaction students would have among themselves and their fellow readers in these communities were the experiences Ms. Bell wanted her students to learn from as she brainstormed possibilities for extension activities. In addition, Ms. Bell wanted these online interactions—these text-to-web connections—to reflect the responsiveness of idea-sharing in an online world. Posting to one of the online sources that students found would be one requirement of the project work. It was important to Ms. Bell that her students position themselves as participants in the conversation by asking questions and sharing connections. Students could then check back into the online community to learn from active participants and other cultural informants. With these fresh ideas in mind, Ms. Bell began scanning the essay prompt she used previously when teaching Alexie's novel and was excited as she thought about all the possibilities she could use to revise it!

## Final Thoughts

This work is incomplete. With teens already interacting with digital texts, it is no longer a question as to whether text-to-web connections should be utilized in the classroom; rather, it is an issue of how teachers can blend them in their instruction. TPACK positions are at the forefront when choosing electronic resources that support content understanding. In the vignette, the researchers used Ms. Bell to demonstrate general strategies that can be applied across the curriculum. By accessing students' previous digital experiences, Ms. Bell used them to

> ### For Further Exploration
>
> - *Inklewriter* (*www.inklestudios.com/inklewriter*) is a website for creative writing that lets students write choose-your-own-adventure style stories and share them in a community of readers.
>
> - *FanFiction* (*https://www.fanfiction.net*) is a forum for sharing pieces of writing that build on popular television shows, movies, books, and more!
>
> - Check out Raine and Anderson's (2017) *The Internet of Things Connectivity Binge: What Are the Implications.*

facilitate how her students connected with the novel in ways that utilize the TPACK emphasis on blending content knowledge with pedagogical approaches. Teachers in other content areas can follow similar methods. For example, in an algebra course, students who need support can go to online forums and access the examples, guidance, and models needed to be successful. In a world language class, students can design and share electronic flashcards with classmates to develop their language proficiency. In both examples, students are not only transacting with the text, but they are interacting with a literate community. The math student is engaging the community to develop understanding of the concept, and the world language student is building fluency through an exchange with classmates. Though this article focused on text-to-web connections made using the Internet, there are implications for bringing connections made from the gaming community into the classroom.

Text-to-web connections represent an opportunity. With students already making these connections in their academic and personal lives, teachers can capitalize on them to deepen comprehension and content knowledge. In this article, the researchers first operationalized their conceptualization of text-to-web connections before

## Resources for Tackling Tough Issues in Classrooms

When tough issues arise, it is useful for classroom teachers to tackle the issue thoughtfully. Here are some resources classroom teachers can use to navigate tough issues with students:

- *Education World* provides a list of ways to tackle tough issues: *www.educationworld.com/a_curr/ difficult-discussions-classroom-tips.shtml*.

- The *Teaching Channel* provides a video example of a teacher approaching a difficult conversation in "Never Easy, but Essential: Tough Conversations in the Classroom": *www.teachingchannel.org/ blog/2013/04/09/tough-conversations-in-the-classroom*.

- *Edutopia* provides suggestions for teachers in discussing sensitive issues with students: *https:// www.edutopia.org/discussion/creating-safe-space-students-discuss-sensitive-current-events*.

- *Teaching Tolerance* provides suggestions for teachable moments and "constructive controversy" in "Controversial Topics in the Classroom": *www.tolerance.org/magazine/ controversial-subjects-in-the-classrooms*.

- Classroom teacher Andie Cunningham shares how to work with students (and other teachers) who have survived trauma: *www.learninglandscapes.ca/ index.php/learnland/article/view/When-my-mom-was-incarcerated-I-missed-her-Trauma's-Impact-on-Learning-in-Pre-K-12-Classrooms/807*.

putting forward example strategies teachers can use in their practice. It is the hope of the researchers that teachers and the researcher community alike will build on these new types of connections, and they offered the video game example as a springboard. In closing, text-to-web connections formalize the interactive experiences students are already having online to promote student engagement with text. With new technologies being continually developed, adding these types of connections is a timely addition to Rosenblatt's work.

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## Epilogue

It happens. In the news is an event that cannot be ignored in the classroom—it could be a tragedy, a controversy, or some other impactful incident that a teacher needs to address with students. Consider the vignette of Ms. Bell. She is in the middle of teaching *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* when accusations surface about Sherman Alexie's treatment of women. Soon the author himself comes out with a statement of apology to women who may have been hurt by his actions. Ms. Bell now has a predicament. Does she abandon the novel and ignore the topic? Or does she address the issue with her students? And, if she addresses the topic with her students, what is the best approach? It seems both impossible and unhelpful to ignore the issue—some students know about it and will bring it up in class. Plus, the topic is important and topical: Can we (should we) separate the novel from the author?

Teachers have to make this difficult decision, and if Ms. Bell decides to use this as a learning opportunity for her students, it will be important to first take a few things into consideration. The school and community context are critically important factors to consider when tackling controversial and sensitive issues. Ms. Bell will need to decide whether she has support from her administration to talk about the topic. If she does, the administration and school counselors can advise her on ways to discuss the issue and handle student questions. Ms. Bell could send a letter to parents of her students to inform them of the topic if the administration deems this necessary. In addition, Ms. Bell needs to decide whether the climate in her classroom will support conversations based on respect when discussing difficult topics. And, of course, consideration has to be made for students (and teachers) who have potentially been victims of similar trauma themselves (Cunningham, 2017).

With careful consideration, Ms. Bell can build on new and unexpected text-to-web learning experiences. She may not have initially planned for students to explore the #metoo movement in conjunction with the novel, to read Alexie's words of apology, or to consider whether art and artist can be separated, but with thoughtful consideration and planning, Ms. Bell can support an additional and topical learning experience for her students.

## About the Authors

Maika J. Yeigh, EdD, is an assistant professor of Education at Portland State University where she teaches secondary teacher candidates in the Graduate Teacher Education Program. Her research interests include English/Language Arts, teacher inquiry, and clinical practices.

Todd Cherner, PhD, is an assistant professor of Education in the Graduate School of Education at Portland State University. He specializes in using instructional technology to develop students' literacy abilities across the content areas, and he is committed to the purposeful use of technology to promote students' reading and writing in the classroom.