

Grades

6-12

Upping Your Novel Study or Literature Circle Game:



Deep Thinking Through World Knowledge Companion Text Sets



World Knowledge Companion Text Sets are intentionally crafted sets of supplemental resources **focused on building knowledge that is complementary** to a novel or full-length work. These sets contain a variety of resources (e.g., articles, websites, poems, primary source documents, multimedia resources, and/or art) that **put multiple topically connected texts and resources in meaningful conversation with one another**. This is an opportunity to deepen students' thinking about a topic by expanding their understandings beyond what's included in one novel or book, inviting them to consider additional views, people, or events. As a bonus, text sets can **scaffold students' access** to a novel through growing background knowledge.

It's a Game Changer!

When students' curiosities and real-world context are centered in the learning, engagement naturally follows. By creating these text sets, we can provide literacy experiences that invite:



Academic Growth: Building knowledge and literacy skills through grade-level and standards-aligned work



Community & Connection: Connecting to students' experiences and backgrounds



Expanding Perspectives: Exploring a variety of views, people, and events



Agency & Autonomy: Supporting student choice and interests through the opportunity to select resources in the set

Build Your Own World Knowledge Text Sets



Wondering how to create a text set that centers your unique students and what's coming up in your unit? Follow this 4-step process to develop and deliver!

1

GET STARTED.

Reflect on the novel or texts in your upcoming unit and on your students:

- *What and who is this novel about?*
- *Whose perspectives are included? Whose are not?*
- *Are the ideas, perspectives, and content of this text close to or far away from students? In what ways and for which students?*
- *What additional knowledge may help my students deepen their thinking?*

Identify additional topics (people, views, perspective(s), historical knowledge) to enhance the reading of this novel(s).

2

GATHER RESOURCES.

Which resources will connect to students' existing knowledge, build background knowledge, and add additional perspective(s) to this novel study unit?

Think about 5-10 shorter texts and multimedia resources.

Mix It Up: What visual "text(s)" will boost the text set?

- image* *infographics* *art* *videos* *photos* *maps* *websites*
 other _____

What additional genres, formats, or content areas will elevate this text set?

- primary sources* *poems* *interviews* *lyrics* *social media posts* *science* *social studies*

3

MAKE A PLAN.

Thoughtfully sequence the text set resources:

- *How can one resource build upon the next?*
- *When will each resource be used (before, during, or after the novel study)?*

Plan for how students will engage:

- *Plan time for student discussion and writing, including use of home language(s) when possible.*
- *Use lightweight tasks to support students' use of the text set.*
- *Identify moments for choice. For example, select 3 "must read" resources and ask students to choose 2 additional resources from the set.*

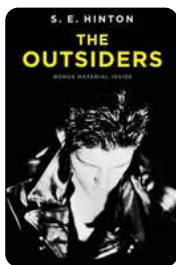
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LEVEL UP.

Ready to further amplify thinking and critical engagement? Try these suggestions:

- *Gather and delve into students' questions about the topic.*
- *Create multiple text sets for students to select from, each representing a different perspective.*
- *Identify ways that you will collect student feedback. See this sample student survey for inspiration.*



**Paired Novel: *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton**

The Outsiders follows 14-year-old Ponyboy Curtis, a member of the Greasers, as he grapples with the concept of right and wrong, feeling like an outsider in the divided society of 1960s Oklahoma. The greasers are a gang of working-class rebels, so when his friend Johnny kills a teenager from the Socs, a more affluent gang of teens, Ponyboy's perspective shifts, and he realizes that pain is universal regardless of social class.

TEXT SET TOPIC: POVERTY THEN & NOW

This set of resources builds historical context about the economic conditions in the United States before, during, and after the 1960s. It helps students to examine socioeconomic disparities of the past and the ongoing issues of poverty in today's society. The broader context invites analysis of multiple perspectives concerning the tensions between classes and the hardships of poverty over time.

Additional Themes: Inequality, Belonging, Perspective, Empathy, Class

Essential Questions: What does it mean to be an “outsider” in society? How does being labeled an “outsider” relate to the fight against poverty?

SUGGESTED SEQUENCE: The text set resources below are chronologically ordered, building contextual understanding of poverty leading up to the 1960s setting of the novel and drawing parallels to its persistence in contemporary times. Additionally, this sequence moves between different forms of text and media, addressing visual, emotional, and data-driven perspectives on poverty.

Note: Sequencing is flexible depending on your students and instructional foci over the course of the unit.

SAMPLE TEXT SET RESOURCES

1936 - **Migrant Mother (photograph)**, **Dorothea Lange**: This iconic photograph captures the desperate circumstances of a migrant farm worker of Cherokee Indian descent and her children during the Great Depression. It has become a powerful symbol of the era's poverty and social struggle. Read more [here](#).



1940 - **“I Ain't Got No Home In This World Anymore” (video/song lyrics)**, **Woody Guthrie**: This folk song depicts the adversities of displaced people and families during the Great Depression. Its lyrics convey the essence of poverty, homelessness, and despair.



1964 - **War on Poverty: Portraits from an Appalachian Battleground (photo gallery)**, **Life Newsletter**: John Dominis' photo essay tells a poignant story about the dire living conditions of impoverished Appalachians during the early days of Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty.

Paired resource: Consider pairing the above resource with [Looking at Appalachia](#), a contemporary photo gallery created to [push against preconceptions](#) about this region.



1964 - **LBJ's War on Poverty (brief video)**, **PBS Learning Media**: Description of Lyndon Johnson's legislative agenda aimed at addressing root causes of poverty.



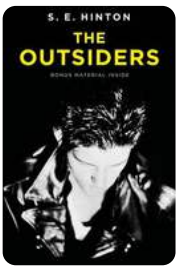
1968 - **Poor People's Campaign - Challenges and Successes (article)**, **National Museum of African American History and Culture**: Brief history of the Poor People's Campaign, including the power and challenges of bringing together many voices into the movement.



1999 - **And2Morrow (poem)**, **Tupac Shakur**: A reflection of the state of society, depicting fear and pain, yet carrying a message of hope and resilience despite adversity.



Historical Poverty Trends & Measurement (website), **Center on Poverty & Social Policy, Columbia University**: A website documenting the changes in poverty and related social policy over time.



WORLD KNOWLEDGE TEXT SET TOPIC: POVERTY THEN & NOW



SAMPLE SUGGESTED TASKS

The sample tasks below are intended to:

- Connect to and build upon the knowledge gained from both the text set and *The Outsiders*
- Provide opportunities for application to students' lives, real world contexts, and student-driven learning

Socratic Seminar: Exploring Socioeconomic Disparities: Students engage in thoughtful reflection on themes related to class, economic tensions, and being considered an “outsider” in society. Facilitate a Socratic Seminar during which students explore the following questions: What were the intended goals of movements to fight against poverty? How did these goals align with the struggles from different perspectives and experiences we explored in *The Outsiders* and in the text set?



Community & Civic Engagement Research Project: Students create digital media presentations centered on poverty and economic disparities in their state or community. Presentations should: connect to the historical context built from the text set, include localized action being taken to address local poverty, and increase awareness and inspire action to address these issues effectively.



Voice & Choice: Engage students around the questions: Who might be considered an “outsider” in our community today? What changes could be made so that they could become an “insider”?

- **Research option:** Use at least two articles from your own research to support your response.
- **Literary option:** Which character from a piece of fiction we have read could also be considered an outsider? Why? Use evidence from the text in your response.



TEACHER CHALLENGE: BUILD AN ADDITIONAL TEXT SET

Now that you've read all this information, identify possibilities for a text set built around a different perspective on this topic. What other lenses of being an “outsider” might you explore through an additional text set?