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Teaching American Literature: A Journal of Theory and Practice
**Winter 2021 (11:3) Special Issue, Teaching the West and Native American
Literature in the American Literature Classroom**

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Introduction

As a young girl, I eagerly devoured all of Laura Ingalls Wilder’s *Little House on the Prairie* series. The stories of an inquisitive, adventurous, and out-spoken female protagonist were immediately satisfying and relatable, yet I always had questions: Why did the Ingalls move West in the first place? How did they tap maple syrup and put up preserves? Was the Ingalls family running toward something or away from it, with each move further West? And, finally, I wondered whether or not Laura was giving us a fair and accurate depiction of “the West” and those she encountered there. Indeed, when I reread the classic children’s series in college, with just a smidgen of literary theory, gender studies, and Native and Indigenous cultural studies under my belt, my perspective changed. I still pondered my original queries, but I also wondered what it was about Indigenous people that sparked Pa’s blatant xenophobia and why he would take part in an illegal land rush designed to strip away land from the very real people living on the Osage Diminished Preserve. I couldn’t understand why women didn’t want to be “spinsters” or why Pa didn’t eventually try to connect with and help those whose land he, perhaps unwittingly, had stolen. I researched questions about race and gender and settler colonialism, queries that I brought with me into and beyond my graduate education and ask my students to consider when I teach my “Literature and Film of the American West and Frontier” and “Native Voices, Native Lives” classes.

Today, when I teach the literature of the West and Native studies, I ask students to contemplate the above issues and to consider three major questions: “What IS Western

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literature,” “How is the Frontier defined and by whom,” and “What makes a work Native American/Indigenous literature?” In order to unpack all of this, I start with the flawed and familiar, the stereotypical. Together, my students and I watch the 1993 Hollywood blockbuster *Tombstone* and read online descriptions of “Westerns.” After, I ask students to brainstorm a list of all of the seemingly formulaic “required” elements for Western plots and themes, to list symbols and characters and locations like tumbleweeds, respectable Christian mothers and the more wildly colorful and risqué dance hall girls, cowboys, train robbers, spurs and black and white hats, horses, saloons, and of course, Native Americans who are often falsely depicted as “savages,” or at least the antagonist foils of the white, Christian, patriotic male protagonists early American literature and popular culture offered as prescriptive heroes and archetypes. Once we’ve finished our class list—often upwards of 50 topics and ideas—we immediately begin to question and challenge it, to reveal its untruths and biases and gaps, and to discuss the fact that “Western” and “Native” literatures have changed over time and can’t be conflated, although both might include any number of genres such as fiction, non-fiction, poetry, oral tradition, memoir, and many other forms.

To set the scene, my students and I discuss the disturbing truth that, until the 20th century, “Western” American literature was almost entirely written by and about white males. It emphasized Manifest Destiny and the conquest of both the land and the Indigenous people, and it largely overlooked or footnoted the talented Black cowboys, the successful Mexican American ranchers, and the strong, independent women who rode Pony Express, set up schools, became doctors, and so much more. It lumped all Indigenous people—some 570+ unique tribes—together under the misnomer “Indians,” and “the West” was seen as a static place, rather than one that changed over time. My students, learning on the edge of the Mississippi River in Dubuque, Iowa, are always surprised to learn that the line between “civilization” and the “Frontier” wasn’t always a set thing. It moved, as white Americans did with the Homestead Act and other incentives from the government, towards the Western and Northern boundaries of North America from both the East and the South. Indeed, during William Dean Howells’ and Mark Twain’s “Gilded Age,” the “Frontier” existed beyond the Mississippi and included their very own

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small river city of Dubuque, which Howells describes as Irene Lapham's Western destination in *The Rise of Silas Lapham*.

During the 19th and early 20th century, many works, including the famous Dime Novels, fictionalized and exaggerated accounts of real people—usually white men like Wyatt Earp and Buffalo Bill, but also rarely Blacks like Deadwood Dick and women such as Annie Oakley and Calamity Jane. This era, shaped by Frederick Jackson Turner's famous "Frontier Thesis," focused on rugged individualism, on encouraging settler colonialism, on fostering American patriotism, and on conquering and moving Native American tribes. Both literature and the government cried, "Go West, Young Man!" and, often falsely, promised those who did gold, adventure, and land in return for their efforts. This sort of literary propaganda enjoyed great success, but it was incomplete and inaccurate. Like the *Little House* series, these works were entertaining and told a good story. They were just not the *full* story. From this literary Western tradition, Hollywood used patriot-frontiersman John Wayne and nostalgically glorified a very male, very white archetype. Authors such as Zane Grey, Dorothy Johnson, and Louis L'Amour dominated and moved the limits of the frontier to the far West, to California and beyond to include the Hawaiian Islands and Alaska, but the formula remained stagnant.

Eventually, however, literature by and about women and Native Americans emerged with far different stories often about loss, assimilation, and reconciliation. In place of the earlier patriarchal, frontier-pushing tales like those featuring Pa Ingalls or "The Duke," revisionist voices became central to American literature and its teachings. These included works by and about immigrants and those of Latinx descent alongside the broad and rich genre of writing and oral retellings known as Native American literature. Across the board, these more diverse texts caution us to question the colonialist Frontier mentality and imperialist motives of the earlier writers and their plots, to listen and see in new ways, to reconsider old works in new lights and new works against different criteria for success. Indeed, they suggest that the "truth" includes a multiplicity of views—and, subsequently, multiple "West" and "Frontiers."

During what is known as the Native American Renaissance, authors including N. Scott Momaday, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Cormac McCarthy explored issues of hybridity,

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resistance, and race. In the works of Annie Proulx, Louise Erdrich, Michael Ondaatje, and poet laureate Joy Harjo, regardless of genre, the authors' focus is on real people and the relationships and tensions between city and reservation life, the landscape and exploitation of its resources, and the conflicts between individuals and communities. Recent Western works by Native writers Simon Ortiz, Sherwin Bitsui, Marianne Broyles, Sherman Alexie, and Layli Long Soldier follow in the footsteps of the Renaissance writers, yet they take things to a whole new level, experimenting with genre, point of view, and language; voicing resistance, rejecting hybridity in favor of balance; and embracing post-modern language and form in intricate and exciting ways. They showcase the beauty and unique challenges of Native life and the consequences of navigating, balancing, and/or rejecting white or hybrid worlds.

In the essays found in this issue, we present articles by scholars who have found unique and creative ways to integrate literature by and about the West and the people located there into their syllabi and classrooms. They explain how and why they do so, and more importantly, what their students can learn about the mythic Frontier and both those Indigenous people who were first there and the others who came later. Our authors consider and extend not only the questions I raised as a girl and those posed in my teaching of Western and Indigenous literatures, but also queries about authorship and storytelling, gender and sexuality, context and form, intersectionality and hybridity, the importance of the landscape and place to identity. They contemplate the importance of research strategies and information literacy, as well as the necessarily interdisciplinary nature of literature by and about Native Americans, Blacks, immigrants, and others marginalized historically. By offering multiple interpretive lenses through which to read and study literature and film, we hope that the information found here helps you to enable your own students to become better critical thinkers in all areas. By considering the West from varied perspectives and as more than a clichéd and stereotyped white, male conquest zone beyond the Mississippi River, we hope to give you and your students access to a more complete, realistic, and interesting understanding of the Frontier and the people who created, changed, contributed to, and manipulated it.

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In “Teaching Gender, Sexuality, and the West in American Literature,” Eric Sterling discusses the ways in which the historically based play by Barbara Lebow, *Little Joe Monaghan*, and Annie Proulx’s short story, “Brokeback Mountain,” may be used to examine gender roles, cross dressing, stereotypes, and sexual orientation in new and unexpected ways. In his assignments and discussions, he foregrounds geography and landscape as it relates to identity and opportunity, helping students to re-envision the West as a place that allows for the exploration and questioning of sexism, homophobia, and race. Through his consideration of context and connections, as well as through his discussions of the taboo and heteronormativity, Stirling encourages critical thinking and discussion. In his flipped classroom activities relating to the works by Lebow and Proulx, he juxtaposes the urban with the rural, leading students to discover that the “isolated nature of the geography offers solitude and opportunities not available elsewhere,” particularly for women.

Allison Graham-Bertolini’s “How have you stayed alive this long?: Teaching Indigenous Survivance through Stephen Graham Jones’ *Mongrels*,” challenges the pop culture myths of the West by exploring the loss of stories and cultural knowledge that Natives have faced due to settler colonialism and perpetuated mistruths. She finds this work incredibly teachable and accessible to her students, perhaps because its author, a member of the Blackfeet Nation, offers a teenaged werewolf-type character as his work’s protagonist, a hero that is a hybrid in many ways, just as they are. Graham-Bertolini incorporates popular culture references and multiple media resources to introduce and situate the work, and she asks students to consider the hero’s blended identity and the challenges and strengths that come with it, issues that give meaning and completeness to an aware and empowered bildungsroman that might not have existed had he not been “both/and.”

Similarly, in her essay, “The ‘Prologue’ and ‘Interlude’ in Tommy Orange’s *There, There*: Reading Literature with ‘Patient Ears,’” Kristin Rozzell Murray teaches her students to read and consider the implications of the “Prologue” and “Interlude” of Tommy Orange’s wildly popular, Pulitzer-nominated work, *There, There*, in unexpected ways, using what Shakespeare called “patient ears.” Through her assignments, she encourages

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students to shed their previous misperceptions about these two parts of his book, as well as the “ways in which truth can be transmitted.” She focuses on his blending of form and style and his conscious incorporation of traditional concepts of Native storytelling, including inclusivity, being “listener-readers,” and communality, in order to show that reading and talking about literature and other cultures can enable students to become agents of change.

Finally, in John Pruitt’s “Introducing and Teaching Forgotten Wisconsin Authors: A Case Study of Glenway Wescott in the Library Reference Section,” he introduces his Midwestern students to information literacy and scholarly research. By reading and studying the works of lesser-known, Lost Generation author Glenway Wescott from Wisconsin, Pruitt helps his students build upon their prior learning and discover self-awareness. They use interdisciplinary skills, informal writing, and flexible questioning activities, as well as library research related to Wescott’s short stories and life in order to demystify literary topics such as context and annotation and to consider authorial aims such as social commentary and the relevance of place. Pruitt makes unexpected connections to popular culture, media, and other varied works and genres linked to Wisconsin, ranging from *Milwaukee poet* Mildred Fish-Harnack to my childhood favorite, Laura Ingalls Wilder’s the *Little House on the Prairie* series.

Reading and reviewing the articles submitted for this issue was a privilege and a pleasure. Not only did I find creative, insightful answers to my ongoing questions about the mythic and literal West—and the unique ways in which my students might approach the stories from and about it—but I also gained some excellent practical ideas for my own teaching and scholarship. Hopefully, you will enjoy and learn from this special issue, too.

Susan M. Stone, Loras College

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Eric Sterling, Teaching Gender, Sexuality, and the West in American Literature

Abstract:

INTRODUCTION

In my upper-level American literature course, I teach a unit on gender and sexuality in the American West, using Barbara Lebow's play *Little Joe Monaghan* (first performed in 1981) and Annie Proulx's short story "Brokeback Mountain" (first published in 1997). Lebow's poignant play dramatizes the life of Josephine Monaghan. It is historically accurate and beyond dispute that Josephine Monaghan (also known as Joanna Monahan) was a single female who cross-dressed and lived as a man for thirty-seven years in the American West. According to reports by publications such as the *American Journal Examiner*, which Lebow adheres to in her play (publications that have recently been disputed), upon being disowned and kicked out of her house in the late 1860s by her parents after becoming pregnant, Monaghan decided that in order to stay safe and avoid sexual assault, she had to dress as and pretend to be a man. She moved from New York to Ruby City in Owyhee County, Idaho, then to Rockville, Idaho, then to Malheur County, Oregon, before dying and being buried back in Rockville. For several years, she lived as an unsuccessful gold and silver prospector; she then gave up on mining and worked for three decades as a successful rancher, horse tamer, and cowboy. She even rode wild horses while known as Cowboy Joe in Whaylen's Wild West Show: the Greatest Show on Land or Sea, with Andrew Whaylen offering \$25 to anyone who could find a horse Joe that could not ride; but she could ride any bronco easily. When Vitagraph Film Company made a movie of Whaylen's Wild West Show in 1897, "this would be the first Western movie to be filmed west of the Mississippi.

The show's star performer, Cowboy Joe Monaghan, was filmed on a bucking bronco, earning him a place in film history" (Turner 4). Monaghan hoped that finding gold and silver would allow the Western frontier to grant him the prosperity and happiness that had eluded him in the East. It was not discovered until during the burial preparations at the Malloy Ranch (by the Boise River) in March of 1904 (according to the *Rocky Mountain News* and the *Boise [Idaho] Evening Capital News*) that Monaghan was actually a female ("Cowboy Jo," *Rocky Mountain News*). Monaghan lived disguised as a man in Southwestern Idaho and the Owyhee

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Mountains for three and a half decades. Upon Monaghan's death and burial at the Hat H Ranch in Rockville, the estate included one hundred head of cattle (*Boise*). Lebow's play focuses on gender roles, sexual orientation, cross-dressing, and stereotypes of men and women in the American West in the late the nineteenth century. Similarly, Proulx's story deals with sexual orientation and stereotypes in the West (Wyoming) from 1963 until the death of Jack Twist decades later. Although a work of fiction, the story of two gay cowboys in the West who cannot commit to a relationship because of homophobia and the fear of conflicting with societal norms and expectations is quite realistic.

Course Objectives

Pairing these two intriguing texts allows students not only to learn—but, more importantly, to teach themselves—about gender and sexual orientation issues in the American West and how attitudes and stereotypes have evolved over the last several decades. Students also learn about writing a paper as a process, “how the sausage is made”; they construct an essay after reading and discussing two works of literature, learning about the cultural context of the works, comparing and contrasting, brainstorming and clustering, outlining, creating a thesis, and then finally writing the paper, workshopping it, and then revising it. What they learn will help them not only for the rest of my course but also, I hope, in all the subsequent classes in which they have to write essays.

One of my course objectives is that while the students construct the assignment, they will discern a connection between discussing literary works in class and writing papers about them. High school teachers and college professors often demarcate literary interpretation in class from the subsequent task of writing papers in which students discuss their literary analysis. Students struggle because after they do well when discussing literature in class, they find themselves on their own when writing a paper, as if the class discussion and subsequent paper are entirely dissociated tasks. Making insightful comments in class often does not translate into constructing a solid thesis or a well-structured essay. Answering random questions in class does not require the same skill set or the same process needed to formulate and support a cohesive thesis. In this assignment, I attempt to join the two actions,

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integrating reading and writing. Focusing on the top three levels of Bloom's Taxonomy,¹ I want my students to ANALYZE by drawing connections between ideas through asking questions about the texts, as well as distinguishing, comparing, and contrasting ideas within and between literary works. I want students to EVALUATE the texts by arguing, supporting, or defending a particular idea or point of view, which occurs when they formulate and support their thesis. I want them to CREATE by constructing a new work (an essay) in which they formulate, develop, and investigate ideas and theories.

In this upper-level undergraduate / master's level course on gender, sexual orientation, and race in American literature,² by the time we read *Little Joe Monaghan* and "Brokeback Mountain," we have already read and discussed works such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-paper," Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Tennessee Williams' *Streetcar Named Desire*, and Alex Sanchez's novel *Rainbow Boys*. These works play a role in our discussion of Lebow's play, Proulx's short story, and gender and homosexuality in the American West. I want students to see that they should not read these works, nor should they discuss them, in a vacuum. I don't want students to read each work on the syllabus as a separate entity, as another hoop through which to jump. Instead, I want them to find common ground between the texts and analyze these similarities critically. For instance, the stigma against gays that we have discussed in *Rainbow Boys* appears just as strongly in "Brokeback Mountain," with characters fearful of the negative social ramifications of their same-sex attraction. One of my course objectives is to inspire students to make connections between texts and to identify paradigms that will stimulate critical thinking and literary analysis. My goal is that by the conclusion of the semester, my students should be able to create, evaluate, analyze effectively—in other words, to achieve competence in the three highest levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.

¹ Bloom's Taxonomy is the hierarchical framework that helps instructors concentrate on knowledge-based, skill-based, and affective goals; the higher levels of the taxonomy cover critical and analytical thinking while the lower levels relate to baser learning such as rote memory.

² At my university, the upper-level courses combine junior, seniors, and graduate students in the same class. This combination works well, with the upper-class undergraduates working seamlessly with the master's-level students. The students tend to be English majors, English minors, or Secondary Education/Language Arts majors. In many cases the undergraduates are as intelligent and as talented as the graduate students. They work well together. In order to receive graduate credit, the master's students have to write an extra paper, 4-6 pages, and lead the class in a 15-20 minute discussion on a topic related to a work we cover on the syllabus—in addition to what the undergraduates must do.

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Critical Thinking

I include my goals for my students on my Teaching Statement that I distribute on the first day of class. Whenever my department does a job search for a new Assistant Professor, we ask applicants for a Teaching Statement in order to assess their views on pedagogy and working with students, but I firmly believe that such statements should not be merely for job searches. Students should know their professors' expectations, course objectives, and teaching methodology, and I want them to know that when they read and write about literature, I expect them to extend beyond mere summary, description, identification, classification, memorization, and regurgitation. Although many high school English teachers want their students to prove that they read the material, I want my students to prove that they have thought deeply about what they have read and have applied what they have read to their own lives or have made connections to other texts on the syllabus. In my Teaching Statement that I distribute along with my syllabus on the first day of class, I stress the importance of critical thinking and literary analysis, as well as the need for students to participate at the top levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.

One aspect of critical thinking involves encouraging students to learn more about geographic areas with which they are unfamiliar and discovering how those areas and landscapes become an integral part of literary works—of the plot and of the characters' identity. The geography and landscape in which Monaghan, del Mar, and Straw live shape their lives because "identity is an arrangement or series of clusters, a kind of stacking or layering of selves, horizontal and vertical layers, the geography of selves made up of different communities you inhabit" (Anzaldúa 238). Most of my students have never ventured west of New Orleans. Their knowledge of the American West is limited to stereotypes and anecdotes. In this course, I want them to learn about American Western Literature and Culture by seeing how certain literary works and the environment embody and shape the characters. Fiction writer and environmentalist Wallace Stegner noticed this connection and was intrigued by Western geography and "how geography affects character and belief" (Van Noy 148). With these connections between the environment and character in mind, I want my students to recognize what makes works such as "Brokeback Mountain" a piece of Western literature, a short story that would not have been effective anywhere but in the West. My students and I have already discussed what makes Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* a play about New York City, how the drama relates to the capitalistic world of Wall Street and big business. We

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discuss how *A Streetcar Named Desire* relates to New Orleans, how a literary work is often intimately connected to its geographic region and its local color. As M. Scott Momaday notes, “The events of one’s life take place, *take place*. . . they have meaning in relation to the things around them” (142). I want my students to ponder what makes *Little Joe Monaghan* and “Brokeback Mountain intrinsically Western—in what ways geography and landscape play a role in, become a character in, and profoundly influence the work.

Representations of the West

When we discuss *Little Joe Monaghan*, I ask students how this play represents the West. What about the drama makes the setting crucial so that the plot and action could occur nowhere but in the West. This exercise helps students garner a strong familiarity with the text as they read through it, searching for examples that connect the work specifically to the landscape and the ideals of the West. Students point out physical labor usually associated with the American West, such as busting broncos, prospecting for gold and silver, herding sheep, and working as a cattle rancher. Joe owns items that in the 1880s were owned primarily by people living in the West—objects such as chaps,³ spurs, and a gunbelt (Lebow 5). Students point out that this New York debutante with beautiful milk-like skin has been visibly altered by working outside in the American Western sun: while busting broncos and shepherding, “her face [has become] sun-tanned and leathery” (Lebow 5). When she looks at her tin mirror, she is appalled at how working on ranches and shepherding in Idaho and Oregon have negatively affected her looks: “Face looks like a saddle-bag. No, more like an old cactus berry” (Lebow 6). She wishes she had some bear grease⁴ to rub on her face; by the late 1800s, bear grease was available primarily out West. Not only has working out West with horses and sheep affected her skin, but her languages, such as her similes, indicates how she has been indoctrinated into the geography, for she compares her face to a saddle-bag and a cactus berry, items with which people in her native New York might not be familiar. But people living in the West would.

People on the Western frontier lived much further apart than in urban areas such as New York. Joe and her friend Fred also mention the loneliness of the men, sleeping under

³ Leather leggings worn by cowboys over their pants for protection when riding horses.

⁴ Bear grease is made from the fat of bears, bear bone tissue, and perfume.

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the stars with sheep or in wide open spaces (like in “Brokeback Mountain”), and the dialect and dialogue of the characters. Historically, Joe wanted to hide the fact that she was actually female, so she preferred to live in unpopulated, desolate areas; she chose Rockville, Idaho which, including her, had a population of merely 21 (Bragg 51). The characters in the play are isolated, living far apart from one another in makeshift cabins, not traditional houses, to which she was accustomed back in New York. A stage direction indicates, “She is [now] used to being alone and talking to herself” (Lebow 5). Musing to herself regarding her son Laddie’s picture of himself, Joe says, “Anyway, don’t matter. Don’t matter? Listen at that? . . . Miss Finch spinning around in her grave. Miss Finch’s pop a stay! . . . (*Then she speaks as if imitating a cultured young girl.*) I beg your pardon, Miss Finch. Certainly, I know better, Miss Finch. Do forgive me” (Lebow 6). In this passage, Joe juxtaposes the formal English that she was taught in New York with the incorrectly spoken Western slang that she has heard and copied in her years in mines and on ranches in Idaho and Oregon. The phrasing that she uses when she speaks to Fred demonstrates the local color and regionalism of the American West.

Similarly, students can find many aspects of “Brokeback Mountain” that embody life in the West. There are many references to ranch life and rodeos in Wyoming, where Jack and Ennis worked before they converge at Brokeback Mountain: “Jack Twist in Lightning Flat up on the Montana border, Ennis del Mar from around Sage, near the Utah line” (Proulx 1). Ennis reads nothing but Hamley’s Saddle Catalog, a reference to Hamley & Co., a prominent seller of saddles and Western apparel based in Pendleton, Oregon. Students point to the references to wide open spaces and the beautiful scenery on the mountain (in the text and the movie) and Jack’s fascination with rodeo life (including his bull-riding buckle). Jack and Ennis meet as shepherders who deal with sheep trucks, horse trailers, and mules (Proulx 3); clearly this short story is focused on Western life and eventually how the two protagonists attempt to deal with their homosexuality in a Western culture predominated by macho and homophobic men who despise men of their sexual orientation. Ennis cannot commit to a gay relationship because of his memory of a horrific homophobic act involving a gay Wyoming cowboy. Ennis makes this problem clear when he tells Jack he has been traumatized by an incident that happened when he was nine years old: his homophobic father forced him to witness the aftermath of the scene as a warning.

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Ennis tells Jack the story about a gay cowboy couple, Earl and Rich. Earl was physically attacked because his gay lifestyle conflicted with the macho way of life of Western cowboys: “[T]hey found Earl dead in a irrigation ditch. They’d took a tire iron to him, spurred him up, drug him around by his dick until it pulled off, just bloody pulp. What the tire iron done looked like pieces a burned tomatoes all over him, nose tore down from skiddin on gravel” (Proulx 14-15). Disturbingly, Ennis thinks that his father might have been one of the killers and would kill him if he knew of Ennis’ relationship with Jack: “If he was alive and was to put his head in that door right now you bet he’d go get his tire iron. Two guys livin together? No” (Proulx 15). Furthermore, when Alma tells Ennis that she knows that when he went fishing with Jack, he never used his fishing pole, he replies, “That don’t mean nothing” (Proulx 17) Alma demands, “Don’t lie, don’t try to fool me, Ennis. I know what it means, Jack Twist? Jack Nasty. You and him—” (Proulx 17). Students discern that Alma’s comment is homophobic, insinuating that gay sex is nasty and unnatural. Some suggest that the homophobic remark is typical for a rural, Western setting, while others consider this suggestion a stereotype of the West because in the 1980s, when the scene seems to be set, homophobia was prevalent throughout the United States and not primarily in the rural West.

Proulx intends for Ennis’ phrasing in the aforementioned paragraph to manifest the local color and phrasing of Wyoming cowboys, just as Lebow attempts to do in *Little Joe Monaghan*. Ennis’ phrases such as “in a irrigation ditch” and “What the tire iron done looked like pieces a burned tomatoes all over him, nose tore down from skiddin on gravel” demonstrate the vernacular of a rural Wyoming cowboy who left his education early to pursue a job as a rancher. Students notice how the Western dialect in both works is meant to create a feeling in the reader that the characters have grown up, worked, and acquired their values in the American West.

Proulx mentions in her narration that del Mar and Straw never return to Brokeback Mountain, instead meeting at mountain ranges in Yellowstone National Park and throughout Wyoming: “the Big Horns, Medicine Bows, south end of the Gallatins, Absarokas, Granites, Owl Creeks, the Bridger-Teton Range, the Freezeouts and the Shirleys, Ferrises and the Rattlesnakes, Salt River Range, into the Wind Rivers, over and again, the Sierra Madres, Gros Ventres, the Washakies, Laramies. . .” (17). The list is extensive not only to demonstrate that the two men went camping together for decades but also to provide the reader with the feeling that the couple enjoyed beautiful landscapes throughout the West.

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When I teach these two works together, I focus on the landscape's natural beauty, juxtaposing the rural settings with the urban areas from which the characters escape. The rural and isolated nature of the geography offers solitude and opportunities not available elsewhere. For instance, Lebow's text mentions voting several times, which is important because Monaghan, while posing as a man, voted in elections in Idaho and Oregon, long before women were permitted to do so. The issue of voting is relevant to our class discussion because voting is obviously important to her, and Western states and territories understood that voting was valued by women. The ratio of women to men in Western states and territories was quite high because of the rugged conditions and few opportunities for females. Nina Baym notes, "Women in particular tended to loathe the isolation and drudgery, not to mention the squalor, of farm life; they couldn't wait to get off the farm into town. Many went back home; a surprising number of memoirs were penned later from the friendly confines of Wisconsin, Ohio, Illinois, to which the women had returned after decades in the West" (8).

In *Daily Life on the Nineteenth Century American Frontier*, Mary Ellen Jones notes that that in addition to child rearing and taking care of the home, Western American women "tended the garden, nursed the sick, taught the children before a school was organized, sewed and repaired the family's clothing, cooked and baked—often without benefit of a stove. Washday was often a nightmare" (193). In her diary published in 1862, Miriam Davis Colt adds that in order to do the wash for her family, she walked to and from the spring five times to collect water, walking a total of five miles. Many women, therefore, declined to go West to live, or after moving west, they missed the conveniences of home and moved back. Many men were extremely unhappy because there were so few available women to marry or have sexual intercourse with. My students see this point when I show the movie *The Ballad of Little Jo* (the movie based on Lebow's play); the film contains a scene in which more than a dozen aggressive, sex-starved male ranch hands line up to have sex with one prostitute. Western states and territories, concerned about losing male residents, some of whom were moving back east, attempted to lure women to the West by offering them voting rights and other opportunities not available in the East.

Wyoming was the first territory that granted women voting suffrage; in fact, their willingness to appease women by granting them voting privileges almost prevented the territory from becoming a state. The historical Little Joe Monaghan, in fact, might have been

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the first woman in American history to vote in a public election and to serve on a jury.⁵ The disdain that some people felt for women's suffrage and the strong opposition to Wyoming's application for statehood are noteworthy because these attitudes indicate unequivocally the opposition of many male citizens and legislators to women's suffrage and the women's rights movement in the time in which Joe Monaghan lived and voted. These male chauvinistic attitudes manifest why Little Joe Monaghan felt compelled to cross-dress and pretend to be male in order to empower herself and succeed socioeconomically. The voting issue appears briefly in the play yet serves as a microcosm of Josephine's struggle against anti-feminism. In Lebow's play, Joe must cross-dress and disguise her true gender in Idaho and Oregon so that she may thrive in society and support her child (and her sister) financially. Once the students are familiar with both literary works, it is time to let them take a more active role.

My Use Of A Flipped Classroom

Using a flipped classroom,⁶ I break the students into groups after we have discussed "Brokeback Mountain," having already discussed *Little Joe Monaghan* the previous week. In our flipped classroom, the students engage in learning exercises in which they teach and learn from each other rather than silently listening to a lecture from me. There is a shared

⁵ According to Dee Brown, a woman voted for the first time in an American election on September 6, 1870 in Wyoming: "Early on the morning of that historic day, Louisa Ann Swain, age seventy, of Laramie, Wyoming, fastened a fresh clean apron over her housedress and walked to the polls. . . . Louisa Swain was the first woman in the world to cast a vote in a public election" (220). But Brown was not aware of Little Joe Monaghan and her voting record because Joe voted while disguised as a man and because she was not a famous person who made headlines. Joe Monaghan voted in the 1868 and 1869 elections in Ruby, Idaho, before Louisa Ann Swain of Laramie. Although women acquired the right to vote in Wyoming (a territory at the time), the Wyoming legislature voted to repeal the suffrage law in 1871 (Governor John Campbell then vetoed the repeal bill), and many Wyoming legislators, such as C.K. Nuckolls and W.R. Steele, expressed outrage that women could vote. Nuckolls declared that women's suffrage was wrong, arguing that because women were supposed to obey their men, voting conflicted with marriage vows. Steele added:

This woman suffrage business will sap the foundations of society. Woman can't engage in politics without losin' her virtue. No woman ain't got no right to sit on a jury, nohow, unless she is a man and every lawyer knows it. They watch the face of the judge too much when the lawyer is addressin' 'em. I don't believe she's fit for it, nohow. If those hev it tuck from 'em now can at least prevent any more of them from gitten it, and thus save the unborn babe and the girl of sixteen. (Brown 222)

The United States House of Representatives and Senate almost voted against Wyoming's application for statehood in 1889 (the votes were 139-127 in the House and 29-19 in the Senate) because Wyoming was the only place in North America where women could legally vote (Brown 222), with women's suffrage becoming a national right much later.

⁶ Student-centered, collaborative learning sometimes with online components.

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hegemony rather than the instructor holding all the power in the course. The students control the discussion in their groups, and even the most laconic students make comments and feel comfortable expressing themselves in class. All the students find a laptop computer on their desk when they come to class. One group selects the significance of the Western landscape in both works, while another group focuses on the sexual tension in both works, such as Joe's love for Fred, which can't reach fruition because Fred does not recognize that Joe is actually a female disguised in male clothes, and Ennis's fear of commitment to Jack because of the traumatic sight that he witnessed of the homophobic murder of gay cowboy Earl. One group of students provides a historical context for the play and short story.

Students can access the library databases and the Internet from the classroom. If the students need more time or access to the library, I willingly allow them to make their presentation during the following class meeting. For instance, there are books on cross-dressing female cowboys in the West (usually featuring Monaghan) that the students can't access online and need to find in the library. I ask them to do research on female cross-dressers and the treatment of gays in the West during the times in which the two works are set. The name Josephine Monaghan (and Joanna Monahan) invariably comes up in their research, which proves helpful. It is crucial that students have a cultural context about female cowboys and gays in the American West. Although the students could comprehend the works without the historical context, the cultural understanding makes the reading and the class discussion richer and provides for a more profound understanding of how people dealt with male chauvinism and homophobia, and what mining, ranching, shepherding, and other activities were like in the West. They need to know that the percentage of female citizens in the West from 1867-1904, when the historical Joe Monaghan lived there, was extremely low and that the lack of women in the area affected her situation and led to her decision to cross-dress. Single women were defenseless, and men knew that convictions for the rape of women in the nineteenth-century American West were quite rare. Another group concentrates on identity and posing, for the characters in both works assume alternative identities in order to achieve safety and happiness.

Yet another group focuses on taboos and alternative perspectives in the two works. In *Little Joe Monaghan*, Lebow faithfully follows the story (the only version available at the time) of Josephine Monaghan being forced to cross-dress after having a baby out of wedlock and being disowned by her parents. Monaghan becomes a man out of desperation and

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necessity, not choice. I want my students to discuss the possibility, however, that historical and literary accounts can be altered to fit a certain narrative. Recent historical studies have determined that the person was actually named Joanna (or Johanna) Monahan and that she was never pregnant. Monahan was a New York female who liked to dress and act like a male and seemed to feel more comfortable as a boy than a girl. She moved to Idaho and pretended to be a male for decades—not out of necessity, pregnancy, or fear of rape, but simply because she thought of herself as male. Such behavior was considered unnatural and subversive, so perhaps some people constructed the narrative of a pregnancy, believing that a more acceptable reason had to be constructed for her gender shift and cross-dressing. I share with this group a quotation from Pamela Craig:

Drowning the possibility of Joe Monahan's transsexualism, the heteronormalized accounts of Joe Monahan's life in Idaho contributed to a larger national effort in creating a gender normalized regional history of the American West during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Heteronormalization and heterosexualization referred to the efforts of the press and the media of the time period to explain the strong presence of transvestites and transsexuals (transgendered people) in the American West. The mythical Old West was heteronormalized at the turn of the century to balance frontier gender deviations and contextualize them according to existing gender stratifications. (11)

This group in my class discusses Craig's belief that a more heteronormalized reason for Monaghan's (or Monahan's) cross-dressing had to be constructed so that her behavior did not seem abnormal or subversive to Westerners. Peter Boag claims that the *American Journal Examiner's* false narrative was designed to

assuage contemporary anxieties about Monahan's sex and gender. . . [and was] part of a broader turn-of-the-twentieth-century national undertaking Americans engaged in: the heteronormalizing of the fictive frontier and the mythical Old West. . . . [A]s the local and national press reimaged western cross-dressers' gender and sexuality, it drew directly and purposely on western tropes and myths as well as on contemporary and long-circulating literary

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devices to explain why a woman might dress and live as a man at a specific place and moment in history. (104)

A more normative narrative had to be constructed because Monaghan's neighbors could sympathize with her cross-dressing, but there would be a strong stigma against transgender thoughts, simply wanting to be male when she was born female. Similarly, this group in the class talks about the stigma against homosexuality in "Brokeback Mountain." Despite Ennis' fears of homophobia, attitudes toward homosexuality have become more enlightened over the decades; Proulx's short story and the movie it inspired would have not been successful many decades ago. Similarly, same-sex marriage could not have been legalized in the 1960s.

I have my students read passages from Leslie Fiedler's "Come Back to the Raft Ag'in, Huck Honey!", such as this one: "And yet before the continued existences of physical homosexual love (our crudest epithets notoriously evoke the mechanics of such affairs), before the blatant ghettos in which the Negro conspicuously creates the gaudiness and stench that offend him, the white American must make a choice between coming to terms with institutionalized discrepancy or formulating radically new ideologies" (3). Students learn that in *Huckleberry Finn*, which many have read in an American Literature survey but the rest know something about, the two male characters who spend much time together do not have a physical relationship, perhaps because of the stigma of miscegenation. One taboo prevents another from occurring. Students focusing on this topic can learn about the taboos against transgender behavior and homosexuality in the West. As with any geographical area, there are some prejudices that exist. In his essay, Fiedler discusses the stigma against homosexuality, just as he discusses prejudice against Native Americans in "Montana; or the End of Jean-Jacques Rousseau." This group has the intriguing topic of alternative or false narratives deriving from taboos or stigmas.

Discussing the works and their task in their groups, each student participates actively. They learn more when they take an active role in a flipped classroom than they would in a lecture class in which they listen and passively take notes to memorize—as in the 'banking' concept of education, as outlined by Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. The members of the group report to the class and help prepare the students for the readings. I want the students to be responsible for their own particular theme involving the works; all

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students need to be part of the presentation and to answer questions from their peers, who participate freely and ask about connections between the works and about their conclusions.

After each group makes its presentation, with me taking notes on the dry erase board or the data projector, the class works together to create several possible theses for an essay—theses that are unique and specific. The students can later select one of the theses for their paper or they can subsequently devise their own. This is an important exercise because students who do not create a solid thesis end up submitting papers that contain much plot summary rather than literary analysis. I don't want a thesis that reads, "In these two works, the characters had a hard life," "In these two works, the characters faced prejudice," or the vague and unhelpful, "When looking at these two literary pieces, it is clear that they have similarities and differences."

I prefer a thesis such as, "In *Little Joe Monaghan* and "Brokeback Mountain," the landscape and geography become integral parts of the plot because Joe (miner and bronco buster), Ennis (sheepherder), and Jack (rodeo rider) perform jobs normally attributed to virile men in order to disguise their true gender (Joe) and sexual orientation (Ennis and Jack) and thus protect themselves from men harboring societal prejudices." Another good thesis is, "Joe cross dresses and Ennis and Jack marry women in order to hide their taboos in plain sight and to gain freedom, but this essay will prove that their disguises actually constrain them, thereby preventing them from seeking happiness." Yet another strong thesis is, "Barbara Lebow's play and Annie Proulx's short story demonstrate that prejudice and intolerance force the protagonists to deny their identity and true selves, but Joe possesses the power to free herself merely by revealing her true gender, yet Ennis and Jack are condemned forever to hide their true sexual orientation; this assertion suggests that the taboo against homosexuality in the American West is more severe than the one against cross-dressing and pretending to be of a different gender."⁷ I invest much class time to ensure that students know how to create a solid thesis that will take their paper far beyond plot summary and trite statements.

The students take ownership of their work, and each student must submit a 3 to 4 double-spaced-page overview of what she or he learned about Western American culture

⁷ It is noteworthy that although historically and in Lebow's play, no one discovers Joe's true gender until her death, in the film, her best friend finds out accidentally that she is female and then he tries to rape her.

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and the two works in their groups. They must also write a 5 to 7-page paper based on the aforementioned thesis and are allowed to incorporate ideas from their overview. They are required to cite any source they use, such as an article on the influence of Western landscapes on literature or an essay on homosexuality and taboos in the American West or in “Brokeback Mountain” in particular. I encourage them to use only refereed, academic sources. However, I do not require the students to use secondary sources if they prefer to focus simply on the class discussion and the two literary works. I have concerns about the usage of secondary sources in regard to critical thinking. I want my students to write rough drafts and then consider literary or cultural criticism, but many students unfortunately feel the need to find secondary sources too early in the process and rely too heavily on them. If my students employ literary criticism, I want the sources to support their ideas, but too often I see critical thinking stymied because the students rely too heavily to their sources, with the students following the ideas of the critics rather than vice-versa. I find that students are more creative and think more critically when they refrain from using secondary sources. I am looking for originality and creativity, not the ability to incorporate criticism. Therefore, students have the choice of writing a literary and cultural analysis using the primary texts or writing a research paper.

After the students create their rough draft, we break into the same groups to workshop the papers; I give each student a checklist of what to look for when peer-editing so that the students stay on task. Student peer-editing functions much better in person than online, when they can discuss the essay with the writer and share their ideas for revision with the group. Furthermore, I meet with the students individually for twenty minutes to discuss their rough drafts with them so that they know how to revise their essays before they submit them for a grade.

My Use of Film in the Classroom

I show the film version of both works—Maggie Greenwald’s *The Ballad of Little Jo* and Ang Lee’s *Brokeback Mountain*—in class. It is important to show the movies in class because neither film is available on Netflix, and some students don’t own DVD players. I prefer that students view the movie as a group, with them discussing the film at the end of the class period and leaving the room with their peers, still ruminating together over what they have seen. I also want my students to be able to learn about the texts by seeing how directors

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and actors have altered the work for the screen. They take notes on how the film versions differ and, more importantly, what these differences signify about the themes in the text. What does it mean that historically and in Lebow's play, no one discovers that Joe is female until after she dies, but Greenwald changes this fact in the film, creating an ahistorical scene in which Joe's best friend accidentally learns that she is female and subsequently attempts to rape her? The students also learn by pointing out how the visual imagery and the visual text differ from the written text. What can we learn by seeing that we don't discern when reading the text and vice-versa? The students benefit by using our *Brokeback Mountain: Story to Screenplay* text, which contains not only Annie Proulx's short story but also Larry McMurtry and Diana Ossana's screenplay.

Conclusion

The flipped classroom approach leads to solid papers and usually a better understanding of theses and synthesizing information and paradigms from two different literary texts. Students learn by working actively in their groups and by receiving and giving help during peer-editing. It amazes me when I see students having trouble with an aspect of their writing but being able to identify such errors in the essays of their peers because of their objectivity. Eventually, after identifying such problems a few times in the work of their colleagues, they begin to stop making the mistakes in their own work. They also improve their critical thinking skills by employing skills at the top levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. Students learn about the treatment of women and gays in the West and also about the Western landscape.

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Alison Graham-Bertolini, "How have you stayed alive this long?": Teaching Indigenous Survivance through Stephen Graham Jones' *Mongrels*

Abstract:

In writing of the fictional circumstances of a family of werewolves living on the margins of human society, Stephen Graham Jones imparts a lesson about why the loss of historical cultural knowledge as the result of genocide has had catastrophic quantifiable consequences for Indigenous peoples. Jones's popular novel *Mongrels* (2016) provides students with the opportunity to learn that a loss of stories is tragic not only because of the disappearance of a specific world view or the disappearance of a unique artistic message, but because it leads to the disappearance of cultural knowledge, which can lead to the annihilation of culture. Here I explain my approach to teaching *Mongrels* in the undergraduate literature classroom, to help students appreciate the metaphoric implications contained within the novel about Indigenous survivance and contemporary life.

Stephen Graham Jones' *Mongrels*, published in 2016 to wide acclaim¹, tells the story of an unnamed boy recording his experiences as he comes of age in a family of werewolves. Because of its gory violence, the novel has been categorized by readers on sites such as Goodreads.com as "horror" and "fantasy"; however, it is also rife with humor and joy, and can be used to introduce important critical discussions about the effects of settler colonialism on Indigenous nations in the United States. I argue that the novel is an excellent addition to the contemporary literature classroom because it makes the significant point that for any cultural group, a loss of stories is tragic not only because of the disappearance of a specific world view or the disappearance of a unique artistic message, but because a loss of stories leads to the disappearance of cultural knowledge, which can lead to the annihilation of an entire lifestyle. In writing of the fictional circumstances of a family of werewolves living on the margins of human society, Jones imparts a lesson about why the loss of historical cultural knowledge as the result of genocide has had catastrophic consequences for Native American peoples.

Stephen Graham Jones, an enrolled member of the Blackfeet nation, possesses a relatable, accessible style of speaking that is an excellent way to introduce students both to the novel, and to Jones himself. In the short video "*Mongrels* and Me" from May 19, 2016,

¹ The novel was a finalist for the 2016 Shirley Jackson Award, a finalist for the 2016 Bram Stoker Award, and was named one of the best books of 2016 by Book Riot.

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posted to YouTube.com, Jones reads from the postscript to *Mongrels*, a piece titled “Werewolves at the Door.” He asks

What if the werewolf’s just scraping by, though? What if the werewolf’s just like us? ... Doing what they could to survive ... a monster like me and mine. It gave me hope. Back then, my family was always check-to-check, always piling all out boxes and trash bags of belongings into a truck bed or a horse trailer, moving to the next town, the next place, the next life. In a way—the way I figured it—we were already kind of werewolves ... We were too dangerous to stay in one place very long ... If you wrap yourself in the right story, everything makes sense. (“*Mongrels and Me*”)

Jones connects the experiences of the werewolves to his own experience of growing up poor and transient. He used stories not only to make sense of his reality, but to improve his reality; to empower himself and cast his circumstances as something extraordinary.

Undergraduates are initially excited to find that *Mongrels* features a teenage protagonist who is ‘just like them’ in many ways. The students’ investment in this character grows even stronger when we watch portions of the “*Mongrels Q & A*” video, also on YouTube, during which Jones notes the age-old link that society has constructed between werewolves and Native Americans. Jones explains that his inspiration for writing *Mongrels* stemmed from the fact that “at every truck stop you see there’s a t-shirt with a howling wolf wearing a headdress, or a blanket with a double wolf superimposed on an Indian who is surely dead. That’s the image of Indians and wolves that America kind-of has a fetish for” (“*Mongrels Q & A*”).

The link in popular culture between werewolves and Native Americans is one that students are quick to corroborate. As evidence, they point to Stephanie Meyer’s immensely popular *Twilight* series, in which members of the Quileute Nation, an American Indian tribe in Northwest Washington, can shift into powerful werewolves. Less familiar to them is the 1981 film *Wolfen*, whose plot, explains Elizabeth A. Lawrence, “stresses the likeness between American Indians and wolves: they evolved together and both are superb hunters that do not overpopulate the earth” (3). Lawrence also aptly explains that much like Native Americans, wolves have a history of being persecuted and hunted, nearly to extinction. She writes,

numerous causes underlie the hatred that motivated brutal wolf-extermimating campaigns ... Culturally ingrained superstitions imbued the animal with mysterious

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frightfulness. Anti-wolf sentiment was inspired by the desire to protect vulnerable livestock and also to preserve the species preyed upon by the wolf, such as deer and elk, for human sport-hunting purposes. But ignorance of the actual ecological role of the wolf, and its value, also accounts for much of the tragedy. Overall, the issue at stake has always been a lack of knowledge about humankind's relationship to the universe, the age-old dilemma relating to determining 'man's place in nature.' (108)

Similarities between the wolf-extermination campaigns noted by Lawrence and efforts to eradicate Indigenous peoples from North America become clearer to students as we read and discuss chapters taken from Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz's *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States: For Young People*.

An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States: For Young People by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz is an excellent resource to pair with *Mongrels* to provide students with a well-researched and accessible account of the attempted genocide of Native peoples in the United States. The chapter "Bloody Footprints" provides an important overview of how and why the campaign to eradicate different bands of Indigenous people across North America began. "Jefferson, Jackson, and the pursuit of Indigenous Homelands" explains forced removal and relocation policies, such as the Trail of Tears, for the purpose of expanding white settlers' land ownership; and "Indigenous Lands Become Indian Country" explains how the US government intentionally "set out to completely destroy the buffalo herds and force indigenous peoples onto reservations" (145-6). Additional short selections from the text can be assigned to effectively explain that eradication of Native Americans continued through colonization, relocation, and reeducation efforts that reached well into the twentieth century and today. Historical knowledge of attempts by White Europeans to eradicate Native peoples from North America allows students to recognize that in its broadest sense, *Mongrels* is asking how contemporary Indigenous people, often of mixed descent themselves, can survive while living within a dominant culture that fears them, or wishes to harm them, or thinks of them only as bloodthirsty killers.

Gerald Visenor, in *Natural Reason and Cultural Survivance*, argues that "many contemporary native novelists present the imagistic consciousness of animals in dialogues and descriptive narratives, and overturn the monotheistic separation of humans and animals" (14). He suggests that the impulse for contemporary Native novelists to explore the man-

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beast connection can be understood as part of the native literary aesthetic of survivance². Hybrid characters, Vizenor asserts, are an intentionally “tricky, totemic union of animals, birds, humans, and others” (14), that overturn “dominance and closure” in a “shamanic, godly, and pretentious” manner (14). I believe that Jones, in *Mongrels*, is working within the aesthetic tradition that Vizenor identifies, by writing from the perspective of a human/beast hybrid who actively finds ways of overcoming problems faced by contemporary Indian youth, including the stigma, but then appreciation, of his individual difference; the survival and eventual triumphs of his unusual family; and the restoration of knowledge to his immediate family via oral stories that detail methods of healing and instructions about how to safely reproduce.

Even the novel’s title, “Mongrels,” evokes the idea of hybrids as powerful and cunning survivors. In a review published by the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, Kristina Baudemann writes

The term [mongrels] evokes Anishinaabe author Gerald Vizenor’s notion of half-breeds and genetic hybrids. In this sense, the term can signify people who are part-white and part-Native American, and it functions as both a subversive gesture toward an obsession with pure Native American blood and a compassionate embrace of multiple conditions of being. In appropriating Vizenor’s term, Jones has created his own powerful metaphor; when Darren tells the narrator, “[w]e’re all bastards [...] Mutts, mongrels,” this imbues his werewolf story with cultural undertones, permitting us to replace “werewolf” with “Indian” at times, while still suspending our disbelief in werewolves and participating in the pleasure of reading horror stories for their own sake” (1).

Baudemann’s reading reinforces the premise of permeable messages within the novel that apply to anyone with mixed ancestry, but especially to those growing up Indian or part Indian.

Jones’s belief in the importance of storytelling to empower Native realities is meaningful to students, especially to those of them who are aspiring writers themselves. Stories are central to the plot of the novel both as a way of tracking the protagonist’s quest

² Gerald Vizenor defines the term “survivance” in *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance* as “an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories, not a mere reaction, or a survivable name. Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy and victimry” (vii). In *Natural Reason and Cultural Survivance*, Vizenor defines Native survivance as “a continuance of stories” (1).

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for identity but also because the survival of this family literally depends on information about their species that is passed along to them by word of mouth. The novel opens with the narrator recounting his grandfather's stories, all of which are exciting, strange, often ambiguous, and slightly terrifying. The boy recalls

He'd rope my aunt Libby and uncle Darren in, try to get them to nod about him twenty years ago, halfway up a windmill, slashing at the rain with his claws. Him dropping down to all fours to race the train on the downhill out of Booneville, and beating it. Him running ahead of a countryside full of Arkansas villagers, a live chicken flapping between his jaws, his eyes wet with the thrill of it all. The moon was always full in his stories, and right behind him, like a spotlight. (1)

The narrator recognizes the importance of the stories, which is why he records them in his notebook. Yet, as we read what the boy has written, we remain perpetually uncertain of the narrator's reliability. Is this actually a family of werewolves doing their best to evade discovery, or is this version of events meant to disguise the circumstances of this lawless family just enough that they can escape identification? As if to assuage our worry the narrator comments, "This is the way werewolf stories go. Never any proof. Just a story that keeps changing, like it's twisting back on itself, biting its own stomach to chew the poison out" (8).

Joshua T. Anderson reads the amalgamation and embellishment of family stories in *Mongrels* as generative, writing, "this method of mixing and regenerating stories does not simply produce new fictions or 'lies' but, instead, the embellished stories that 'keep changing' require acts of critical and creative interpretation and afford opportunities for 'twisting back' to uncover hidden truths" (130). Thus, as Anderson argues, the boy's reinterpretations of family lore lead both the family, and the reader, to understand that there are multiple versions of the truth contained within each tale (131).

In interviews, Jones has established that his novels work on multiple levels, which is one way of infusing a narrative with multiple truths. In conversation with Billy J. Stanton, Jones explains,

For *Mongrels*, I wrote the first couple of stories and then I realized that what I'm doing is writing Indian stories dealing with what I would consider issues that are fairly local to Indian life right now. It opened up the book for me, to realize

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I could talk about things that I'd kind of been chased away from in my other work, but I could do it with my first love, horror. (53)

Here, Jones again acknowledges that the parallels between portions of the werewolf narrative and issues of contemporary Indian life are intentional.

The use of fiction, and especially science fiction, to acknowledge, question, and (attempt to) reconcile social anxieties has been well documented. When introducing this idea to students it helps to provide examples, like how the Cold War sparked a string of novels and films about apocalyptic, end-times invasions (such as the 1956 film *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*), or more recently, how the spate of Zombie novels and novels about post-humans is commonly attributed to social fears concerning a widespread loss of humanity. Once we agree that stories can help us work through real-world issues, students are much more likely to accept a werewolf protagonist who writes about living on the margins of society as possible code for a youth of mixed heritage (a “mongrel”) struggling with his own outsider status.

Yet, the werewolves that Jones depicts in *Mongrels* are not the uncontrollable beasts typically found in horror novels. They do not hunt human flesh with abandon, or even show disregard for the lives of those who would certainly destroy them if they could. Rather, these werewolves are extremely conscientious about their difference, eating meat from the supermarket when they can afford to, running down deer and wild game when possible, and moving around constantly to avoid wiping out animal populations. This regard for the lives of other species, including the human beings who hunt and torture them, seems like the biggest metaphor of all—they are not trying to eradicate human kind; instead, they are trying to find space to exist within human society by working human jobs to earn money in legitimate ways and by sending the boy to public school for a human education. Meanwhile, they maintain their own traditions as best they can: taking out all the trash before shifting, wearing denim because it rips more easily, reading nature, going on hunts. The quest to exist autonomously resonates with undergraduates who are often still working out who they wish to be and what they wish to do; additionally, it reflects the reality of many Native Americans who have been required to assimilate as the result of relocation programs, religious and educational indoctrination, and genocide.

Everything that the young narrator knows about himself comes from family lore. While entertaining, the stories are also designed to teach him something about his personal history, or to help him navigate his bodily changes, when they finally come. The stories teach him

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how to shift without harming his human body, where and how to hunt without detection, and how to avoid capture. The boy would not survive to adulthood without the knowledge that these stories provide, and yet simultaneously the audience recognizes that his knowledge of his own species is incomplete, because of the conditions within which werewolves must survive. Thus, reading the journal entries is also a means of educating the audience, positioning the reader as a recipient of the boy's storytelling and a receptor for understanding what repercussions the werewolves have experienced as the result of attempts to annihilate them.

The narrator uses his family stories to identify alternate perspectives and solutions to help him navigate his place in the world. When pieces of his history are missing, the family loses large chunks of self-understanding. This point is conveyed most clearly within the circumstances surrounding the death of the boy's mother and grandmother, both of whom died while giving birth to their werewolf offspring. The loss of stories has led to the male werewolves' inability to produce offspring without killing their human mates. The protagonist's family is aware that they once had the knowledge to overcome what they have come to call "the curse"; that is, they once knew of a way to reproduce with human women without endangering the life of the mother, but they have lost this knowledge as the result of their estrangement from others of their species, and are thus in danger of dying off entirely. For years, Grandpa tried to solve "the curse" by locating old werewolf legends in library books and on the internet. His goal? To rediscover "the old way for a human woman to live with a werewolf and not die from giving birth" (11). He is unsuccessful—as with any culture whose most prominent method of record keeping is by word of mouth, nothing has been written down. The dispersal and eradication of the werewolf species itself means that it is likely that no living record remains. Within the undergraduate classroom, this portion of the text can be used to explain why the termination and relocation programs of the twentieth century United States were so detrimental to native languages, oral histories, and cultural traditions.

When, much later, Darren falls in love with a human woman named Grace-Ellen, his fear that she will die while giving birth becomes more urgent. Aunt Libby puts it most bluntly when she takes the couple aside to remind Darren, "You know it can't work. Start a family, she dies" (287). However, Grace-Ellen has the missing information that the family needs to safely reproduce. In response to Libby's comment about the dangers of interbreeding, Grace-Ellen says, "What are you talking about? ... Maybe five hundred years ago that's how it went,

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yeah,” and then proceeds to show them a photograph of her own adult part-werewolf daughter, along with the silver hoops piercing her ear that made her daughter’s birth possible. She explains, the silver “gets in your blood... just enough to kick the wolf in the baby. To keep it down for the birthing process” (288). Grace-Ellen thus becomes the conduit for passing along information that will save the family. “This is what Dad was always *looking* for” (288), Darren says to Libby, elated at the recovery of knowledge the family had thought was lost.

After realizing how little they know of werewolf culture, Grace Ellen implores, “Y’all’ve really been living out there on the road, not knowing any of the old ways?” (262); and later, “How have you stayed alive this long?” (265). Here, she highlights the very real threat of death that comes when the past is made inaccessible, as well as how a loss of historical knowledge makes it more dangerous to function even WITHIN the dominant culture. Jones, then, demonstrates to readers exactly how a culture that has been stripped of its stories as the result of genocide, forced relocation, and estrangement is not just suffering an artistic loss, but enduring severe and specific corporeal danger.

The idea that the loss of stories can lead to the loss of historical knowledge that contributed to thousands of years of survival of a people (or in this case, beasts with a human consciousness) is a radically important point that might otherwise be glossed over in classroom discussions of Indigenous peoples’ survivance. In grappling with the fictionalized scenario posited by Jones, students come to understand the extent of the devastating physical and mental impact that a loss of stories can have on a culture, including lost histories, language, medicinal practices, and tribal relationships.

In *Mongrels*, the protagonist’s grandfather spends years desperately working to recover knowledge that he fears has been lost to the past. Notably, his research results in nothing, because he’s looking for information within the historical records of a dominant culture that is unable to realize the value of cultural practices not their own. This scenario pans on to discussions of actual historical record keeping in which white Europeans recorded only one version of history from one limited perspective, and that is only now being rewritten to take other perspectives into account.

As he matures, the young narrator becomes more intentional about asking his family for information about their history, first as part of a school assignment (49), but later too, when he casts himself as a “reporter” who collects werewolf stories in his notebook (50). When his aunt Libby acknowledges that she is aware of his journaling the boy responds, “It’s all

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different... the way I did it I mean. Nobody would know anything, if they found it. If they [read] it... you may have fought a bear" (293). This line is especially ironic, because in the novel, Libby DOES fight a bear. With this sentence, Jones overturns all that we have trusted to be true about the characters and their stories (within the fictional world of the novel), imbuing all we have read with just enough uncertainty as to cause us to question the boy's version of events. Here again is an opportunity for classroom discussion to focus on whose version of history is recorded, accepted, and reproduced? The boy, who has become the author, just as his grandfather once had, considers very intentionally how he will retell stories of his life for his grandchildren, noting, "someday when I'm telling my grandkids about the one time we went to North Carolina, ... I'm going to end [the story] with three werewolves running hard for their homeland." And he finally reflects proudly that he is "getting my own stories" (257) and adding to the family lore.

With *Mongrels*, Jones makes the duality of the boy's identity (part boy, part wolf) a way to move fluidly across cultural boundaries and *also* a way to move beyond a single literary trajectory, so that we understand the importance of both written and oral traditions. Through engrossing tales of life as a werewolf, Jones hammers home the way that a loss of stories can lead directly to cultural demise. The metaphoric cast of the storyline reveals the value of multiple interpretive systems and showcases the necessity of reinventing stories for new audiences while simultaneously retaining the significance of years of historical knowledge. Thus, despite the fact that the terms "Native American," "Indian" and "Indigenous" are never explicitly mentioned in the novel, this is an excellent text for engaging undergraduates in discussion and understanding of Indigenous survivance and contemporary life.

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Kristin Rozzell Murray, The “Prologue” and “Interlude in Tommy Orange’s *There, There*: Reading Literature with Patient Ears”

Abstract: This paper examines the “Prologue” and “Interlude” of Tommy Orange’s *There, There*, suggesting that these pieces are microcosms of the qualities and controversies of Native American literature. Thus, they serve as perfect pieces to introduce or further explore Native American literature with students.

In the “Prologue” of *Romeo and Juliet*, the chorus pleads for “patient ears to attend” the complicated and important story of Romeo and Juliet. Teaching and reading Native American literature requires patient ears as well, a responsibility to the work, as a stand-alone piece of literature and as a cultural and historical document, and everything in between. Most of us do teach literature this way. However, when teaching Native American literature, there is a tendency to focus solely on the works as texts that reveal the lives and cultures of real Native Americans. David Treuer, an Ojibwe writer, critic and academic, argues in 2006 that it is unfair to view Native American literature as “a cultural artifact, or as a means of revealing the mystical or sociological core of Indian life to non-Natives” (Treuer). The implication is that Native American literature can be studied in many ways even in the isolation of a reader’s world. Treuer encourages readers to read not with the “same footprint of automatic thought,” but rather with a mind and heart that has no preconception to what the author has meant through his/her text. This is completely fair but requires patience and thought to decide how best to teach a Native American work.

Native American writers should have the right to make things up, to create, to do what fiction does. They should not have the impossible task of somehow making their fiction nonfictional, and even though narrative pursues verisimilitude in most cases, fiction is imaginary. This truth should be paired with the idea that Native literature contains an urgent message for the good of present-day Native Americans and their histories: Native Americans existed and do exist in a multitude of complex ways. As Scholar Rebecca Tillett argues: “for Native peoples...the stakes are high, with cultural stories representing the social, political and economic conditions of possibility for Indian identity within the national context. Native literature is thus intrinsically political” (Tillett 3-4). Native American fiction should

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always be taught as fiction, but sometimes it should also be taught as political documents. I propose that a productive starting place is Tommy Orange's 2019 novel *There, There*, which is a political work of fiction that includes a prologue and interlude. The novel is a Pulitzer Finalist in Fiction that explores the lives of twelve characters from Native communities, all heading to the big Oakland Powwow. His novel has been labeled with every positive adjective a new writer could want: astonishing, brilliant, masterful and stunning (Margaret Atwood, *People*, *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe*). Specifically, it is Orange's inclusion of a "Prologue" and "Interlude" that puts the novel firmly in the political category. Orange's novel includes a nine-page, five-section "Prologue" and a seven-page, five-section "Interlude. The "Prologue" and "Interlude" of *There, There* are forms both inside and outside the narrative that simultaneously read as creative, personal, meditative, historical, sociological, and chant-like pieces. These often-undervalued parts of the novel will immerse students in Native American literature, in all of its complexity. As teachers, we can start a conversation at the crossroads of teaching the "Prologue" and "Interlude" in a formalist vacuum and teaching them as a sociological/historical text. It is at this crossroad and all along this road where important concepts about literature arise.

An interview by Kate Laubernds for Powell's bookstore is a good starting point for students. Laubernds asks Orange: "What was your intention in starting the novel this way [with a prologue]?" Orange's answer justifies the "Prologue," and by association the "Interlude": "For Native writers, there's a kind of burden to catch the general reader up with what really happened, because history has got it so wrong and still continues to. It feels like you want to get everybody on the same page as where your voice is coming from, and your experience" (Laubernds). His answer implies that to hear his novel correctly, readers first need to have history and present circumstances about Native Americans corrected for them or at least reminded to them. His "Prologue" argues that the "the truth of what happened in history like the Indian cent and the Buffalo nickel...are now out of circulation" (Orange 7). The "Prologue" puts that truth back in the mix. Similarly, halfway through the novel, Orange feels compelled to stop and calibrate his readers with an "Interlude" giving a current explanation of powwows, which most students will probably only understand from an old western movie scene. The "Prologue" and "Interlude" of *There, There* when read as part of the novel offer students a chance to connect these sections to the characters, plot and theme, and ask themselves how these sections affect their reading of the novel. When read alone, these

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sections can serve as valuable introductions to the qualities of Native American literature, but also set students with “patient ears” on a valuable journey in which they will discuss history, genres, narrators, authors and the very purpose of literature.

The first question for students should be: What are prologues and interludes? Traditionally, prologues and interludes in novels are from the point of view of a narrator who may or may not be a character in the story. Prologues and interludes are understood in general to be fiction and part of the overall story. Prologues open a story and establish the setting and/or give background details and/or introduce characters. As for the interlude, students should know that it almost always refers to a pause in the narrative, most often in drama, in which the author tells a story or gives information that in some way thematically connects to the work.

A discussion of how prologues and interludes work in other texts is important here. Using a story that students know well works for an introduction to the forms. The two prologues (Act I and Act II) of *Romeo and Juliet* work well, as does the prologue in *Jurassic Park*. In *Romeo and Juliet*, “Act I Prologue” gives the important information that there is an “ancient grudge” between two houses that has created “star-crossed lovers.” “Act II Prologue” explains how deep Romeo and Juliet’s love is and how difficult the circumstances are. In *Jurassic Park*, “Prologue: The Bite of the Raptor,” it is suggested to readers that a worker’s death is due to a raptor attack in a small Costa Rican town. Both *Romeo and Juliet* and *Jurassic Park* are stories that most students will know, so reading and discussing their prologues will foster an introduction to the form. Examples of interludes that are accessible include the interlude of Stephen King’s novel *It* that is in the form of a diary that one of the characters is keeping. The interlude in the novel *The Help* is written like a news article reporting on the events of the Christmas charity ball and the attendees’ individual thoughts. Both of these interludes written in forms different from the main narrative give readers important information that isn’t available through the normal narrative; this is what prologues and interludes do. This general discussion will set up an understanding of prologues and interludes that students can use to compare/contrast the “Prologue” and “Interlude” of *There, There* with.

It is also important to talk about the overall perceptions of these two parts of a novel. Most creative writing advice warns that the prologue will be skipped by the reader and that a good writer should introduce “the essential components of a story...within the body of a novel”

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(Scribendi). In general, prologues are thought of by many as information dumps. Interludes are less likely to be skipped but are best received when they deepen a reader's understanding of the story world or situation.

Reading the "Prologue" and "Interlude" of *There, There* should lead students to the initial reaction that the pieces are important, too important to be skipped. The "Prologue's" goal is to get readers on the same page about the Indian-head test pattern, Thanksgiving, movie Indians, historical massacres, and the effects of urban life on Native Americans. The "Interlude's" goal is to set readers straight about the what, where, why, when and how of powwows, blood quantum, and death as a reality that permeates Native Americans' past and present. The events from the "Prologue" and "Interlude" are not fictional events or concepts, nor are they directly connected to the story; thus, comes the point of departure for Orange's "Prologue" and "Interlude" that read as non-fictional, informational essays about Native American history, cultures, and beliefs.

Why a prologue then? Here students can discuss Orange's choice of including a prologue and interlude when they do not read like most traditional prologues and interludes. To begin, student can try to read the "Prologue" and "Interlude" of *There, There* as complete fiction, but this won't work because these sections deal with true events. Next, they can try to read them from an omniscient narrator who is giving not the specific background of the story, but a historical and cultural background/history of Native Americans and information on their present lives. The piece most similar to *There, There's* "Prologue" and "Interlude" is Part 4, Chapter I of *Les Misérables*. This chapter is dedicated to a historical interlude, and a meditation on the political situation in France in the early 19th century. The question remains, however: wouldn't a preface or introduction from Orange's non-fictional first-person voice accomplish his truth-telling, history-correcting more effectively? A preface or introduction are more likely to be taken as the truth by readers. Here students can explore the difference between a prologue, preface and introduction, and discuss Orange's choice of a prologue and interlude.

It is important to steer students away from the idea that Orange made a mistake in his novel with his decision to include a prologue and interlude. Orange wrote a novel; he has no obligation to teach readers about his Native American culture, and even if as the interview suggests, he does want to correct, he has no obligation to do it from his first-person singular voice. The mistake is with the readers who wish for the surety of a preface or introduction

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because they wish for the autobiographical, ethnographer's voice. Students, at this point, can explore in what ways truth can be transmitted. Students can start by exploring what it means to read the "Prologue" and "Interlude" as if Orange is speaking directly to them.

This temptation to read the "Prologue" and "Interlude" as first-person essays from Orange himself is exactly what Treuer warned about, but given what Orange revealed in the Laubernds' interview, it is worth discussion. Orange did not choose to call his introductory section a preface or an introduction, forms that are usually understood to be from the writer's voice. When a novelist uses an "Introduction" in a novel, it is often still a fictional narrator and part of the story introduction, like the Introduction of *Jurassic Park* that is written as a fictional brief introduction to genetic engineering. The point is that Orange's goal, as the interview reveals, was not one that fit easily in an introductory or middle section of a work of fiction. Orange's "Prologue" comes after the "Cast of Characters," and he is not listed as a character, but students can consider the implications of placing him there and in the "Interlude," speaking directly to readers as part of the first-person plural "we" and as important to the story as any of his twelve fictional characters in his polyphonic novel. This misreading is one that students can debate, as it defies the concept of narrator and brings up the question of responsibility of an author and the purpose of literature.

Concepts about Native American storytelling are one way for students to understand Orange's decision to include a "Prologue" and an "Interlude." There are so many diverse Native American cultures that it is impossible to list a belief that applies to all, but one that applies to many is the belief in the truth-giving quality of storytelling. In many Native American cultures, the truth lies not in the details but in the idea that the story explains the way things are; stories are "indisputably true" (Momaday). Within this thinking, prologues and interludes as part of the story, as both inside and outside the story, can contain truths as well. If Orange views the storytelling in his novel as truth-telling, then a prologue and an interlude are acceptable and "truthful" way to right history. N. Scott Momaday's classic essay "Man Made of Words," which is a pleasure to read, can be used to introduce this concept to students.

When students imagine *There, There* starting with an introduction, they might realize that it makes them even more uncomfortable than a prologue. Might they even turn away from Orange's view of Thanksgiving if it were thrust on them from the first-person? What is the difference in hearing the hard truth from the Orange vs a narrator? Students should also be introduced to how Orange might have felt writing a preface or introduction from the first-

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person. They might imagine him feeling as Wendy Rose does about using the first-person: the "simplified," "come right out and state it" way can be exposing and humbling, embarrassing even (qtd. in Krupat and Swann 261). A preface or introduction might be exhausting for Orange, justifying once again his existence, history, and culture. His "Prologue" and "Interlude" let him speak truthfully, but also might have felt natural, invigorating, and hopeful to write because they are part of the storytelling in a novel. He ends *There, There* hopefully; thus, his ideas about Native Americans in the "Prologue" and "Interlude" can be and are hopeful too. Furthermore, the "Prologue" and "Interlude" as Native American stories might mean to Orange that readers do have a responsibility similar to if they had just read an essay. This is due to the concept of "listener-readers" (Brill de Ramirez). Susan Berry Brill de Ramirez argues, "Within American Indian literatures as well in various other traditions of oral storytelling, listener-readers are participants in the storytelling event *and* in the told stories" (335). As a participant, readers have a role. This is the concept of conversive writing in which the writer thinks of him or herself in a relationship with the listener/reader; this changes the role of the reader from static to active. This concept actually makes Orange's "Prologue" and "Interlude" as "potentially subversive and threatening" (Brill de Ramirez 353) as first-person opinion essays because if he wrote as a storyteller with the expectation of a reader-listener, then he expects that conversive relationship to be transformative and change readers.

Orange's choice of a prologue and interlude might also stem from the "we" philosophy of some Native American culture. This is important concept of many Native American cultures. A preface or introduction would put the focus on Orange I-ing us, and not his heritage or his community. I realize that Orange is an American man of today. Still, scholar Stephanie Ann Sellers in her 2005 dissertation *Redefining Native American Autobiography* says: "An individual from a communal people thinks of herself always in terms of the community, not of the 'I' in relation to one's group, and indeed, not as an 'I' at all but as a 'We'" (Sellers 21). The *I* would have been a fundamental part of a preface or introduction as it is in any essay, but the focus for Orange is not inward, so that his *I* can speak outward. The focus is on his community, the uncovering of his *we* of the past and present, so that the *we* of the then and now are understood.

Specifically, the discussion could then turn to the specifics of the "Prologue" of *There, There* which has been called "rallying cry" (Laubernds), "scorching-hot." (Angelini) and *one of the* "most memorable sections" (Noisecat) of the novel. Strong words for an introductory

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section that in general is quite controversial. The first of the five-section Prologue, titled "Indian Head" starts with chanting/singing: "There was an Indian head, the head of an Indian, the drawing of the head of a headdressed, long-haired Indian" (Orange 3). The repetition and alliteration give readers the sound and image of an American Indian singing, but also lets readers imagine the Indian head test pattern that came on tv after the shows ran out; students can even research this test pattern. Students will have this example of how Native American literature often has qualities of the oral tradition. Orange is a Native chanter in his style, but also an activist when he points out that the Indian head was just above the bulls-eye and basically was a target both spatially and historically. Orange is making a strong argument that this image made tv watchers think of Native Americans as targets. The tragedy in the novel is that some of the Native Americans turned on each other as targets, no less influenced by this message of worthlessness. Students can discuss how images in popular culture can contribute to racism.

Orange then moves on to give us the reality of Thanksgiving. He describes Thanksgiving as a "land deal," and a "successful massacre" (Orange 4, 5). Students' warm feelings of Thanksgiving are challenged with shame-filled historical references. The first-person plural *we* dominates this section. "*That* meal is why we still eat a meal together in November" (Orange 4). With that *we*, students will be swept up into Orange's world. That *we* is all U.S. Americans who celebrate Thanksgiving, and Orange is part of that *we* too. He has eaten or might still eat that now controversial meal on the last Thursday of November. This is important to know so that students can understand that celebrating Thanksgiving for some is celebrating the massacre of Indians and to help them understand why the characters in *There, There* feel unwelcome in their own country. Students can discuss the many holidays they celebrate and what their historical beginnings are. Students will hopefully realize that their own traditions and cultures should be thoughtfully examined.

In Section 2, Orange uses an old Cheyenne story about a rolling head that "drank all that water up" to revise readers' understanding of the movie images of rolling heads and "sad, defeated Indians[s]" (Orange 7). Orange's Cheyenne story will likely crack students' misconceptions of the simplistic "feathered image" (Orange 7). When students go into this novel with the knowledge that Native Americans are just as complicated in the past and present as the rest of us, those same readers are open to let the complex characters of *There, There* into their psyche and believe the same of actual Native Americans. Furthermore, here

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students can learn more about the value of storytelling in most Native American cultures and how it was used to teach, learn, celebrate, mourn, remember, and worship. They can also examine the stories they grew up with and their cultural stories.

In section 3, “Massacre as Prologue,” students will hear Orange’s truth about massacres of Native Americans, giving them images of “soft baby heads” broken “against trees,” “unborn babies torn out of bellies, and mutilated body parts worn as ornaments (Orange 8). Research will reveal to students that massacres by Indians were also shocking. Those massacres, however, ended, whereas the early massacres of Native Americans were a prologue to the massacre of most of the people and much of the cultures and is still happening today. Students then enter the novel knowing that the characters’ struggles to remain part of their cultures stem from a long line that goes back to those first massacres. Most importantly the concept of history as an argument will be introduced.

In the last two “Prologue” sections 4/5 titled respectively “Hard, Fast,” and “Urbanity,” Orange explains that urban Indians, despite what non-Natives might believe, still hold fast to their culture. The hard, fast push to take the Indian out of the man by citifying him has backfired. Students can discuss the imagery that this section creates, images of Native Americans like vines growing unexpectedly in the city and finding their way to each other. The idea of a less-than Indian living in the city changes to an Urban Indian still rooted to the past, surviving through song, dance, prayer, memories and hope. The land, though concrete, still pulses with life for the urban Indian, and readers understand that what has changed is not the Indian, not the beliefs, nor the traditions. What has changed is the way that these are understood: as mobile, coming with American Indians to form their foundation. The urban Indians of the novel, living outside of reservations, are like some real Indians and also like every culture trying to adapt in a different environment.

In the “Interlude” of *There, There*, Orange sets readers straight about the what, where, why, when and how of powwows. The tone of the “Interlude” is not preachy or even accusatory. A listing strategy, reminiscent of Sherman Alexie, shows the diversity among Native Americans. The lists blur the lines around the image that readers might have about Native Americans. In fact, readers feel that information is piled upon them. The topic is the powwow experience, and readers get lists from the beginning of the “Interlude.” “Powwows,” the first section of the “Interlude,” makes a map in readers’ minds, and on this map, as Orange lists the places that Native Americans come from to go to powwows, students might imagine

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Native Americans like ants crawling from all over the map to head to a particular powwow. The message here is that Native Americans are not all holed up on in one area; they are part of the fabric of many places. In an interview with Heather Shotton, Orange explains that his novel is a “resistance to the [stereotype that the] only way to be a Native is to be from a reservation” (57). This section continues with a list of the ways Native American get to powwows and a list of why they go to powwows. The gist is that Native Americans come from different places in different ways and “for different reasons” (Orange 135). Students with any implicit bias about powwows are challenged as Orange uses more and more commas to show the diversity of his people. Students will begin to understand more about the American averageness of Native Americans. This section works like Google, giving readers many search results and helping them understand that the Native American experience can be found in any of the results.

In section two, “Big Oakland Powwow,” and section four, “Last Names,” students are exposed to Native American bumper stickers, categories of Native American status, and lists of Native American last names. Here again students will read an encyclopedic-like list that bows any rigid stereotypes. Orange starts the second paragraph of “Big Oakland Powwow,” “We are Indians and Native Americans,” and continues listing categories down to the blood quantum idea: “We are full-blood, half-breed, quadron eights, sixteenths, thirty-seconds” (Orange 136). By the end of this section students’ heads should be spinning among the details. In “Last Names” the same information overload strategy is used, accomplishing Orange’s goal of setting readers straight by overwhelming them with the diversity of all things Native American/Indian. If Orange accomplishes his goal, students won’t be able to pigeon-hole Native American lives ever again and won’t have any expectations about any future characters in Native American works that they read.

In the third section “Blood,” between all of his listing, students will get a history lesson on blood quantum, rhetorical questions, and scenarios. This section surrounds students with words without letting them reply. This is not readers’ time. The answer to, “Would you call an attempted murder victim resilient?” is answered in its rhetorical question status. The wrongness of expecting Native Americans to “Get over it” is clear, and the fortunateness that some readers might feel having been “born into a family whose ancestors directly benefited from genocide and/or slavery” might be changed to embarrassment. Students can discuss this concept of fortunateness that Orange brings up and debate its responsibility.

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The last section of the “Interlude,” “Apparent Death” is particularly disturbing in our time of mass shootings in the United States. Even more disturbing, however, is Orange’s statement as a Native American that “death is and always has been coming for us” (Orange 141). “An animal, prey,” is state of mind that Orange explains is not new to Native Americans; “the bullets have been coming from miles. Years” (Orange 141). This section prepares students for not just the possibility of violence to come in the novel, but with the understanding of the horrible, naturalness of that violence in a Native Americans’ past and present. Students can then discuss what other countries, cultures, groups are also steeped in death.

A Writing Forum on prologues asks the writer: “how vital are the backstories to the actual story you are telling?” For Orange, the information in the “Prologue” and “Interlude” is real and vital, and when taught that way this information will become real and vital to students. In his “Prologue” and “Interlude” Orange makes readers feel guilty, like citizens in a town near a WW11 concentration camp; “maybe you think the more you don’t know, the more innocent you can stay, which is a good incentive to not find out, to not look too deep” (Orange 138-139). The “Prologue” and “Interlude” of *There, There* will push students to face many controversial questions, and best-case scenario is that they will no longer think of Native Americans or Native American literature as slotted into simplistic categories. The ending of the novel *There, There* may seem inconclusive. Who lives; who dies? But the message is bigger than that, there will always be Native Americans singing. Orange made the novel hopeful in his way (Shotton Interview). Orange has colored his novel with his presence in the “Prologue” and “Interlude,” and Native American literature is changed; the novel is changed, and undoubtedly student-readers will be changed.

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John Pruitt, Introducing and Teaching Forgotten Wisconsin Authors: A Case Study of Glenway Wescott in the Library Reference Section

Abstract: It can be a struggle to encourage students to use library resources regardless of the class and assignment. This case study details an active learning exercise in Modern Literature, an exercise incorporating both information literacy and literary research into unfamiliar Wisconsin author Glenway Wescott. The exercise begins with the Question Formulation Technique, continues through primary sources and four of Wescott's short stories, pauses while the students formulate questions inquiring about different types of information to elucidate aspects of these stories, and ends with a class trip to the library in order to use secondary sources from the reference section. The students reveal that such library research can be frustrating and tedious because they're seeking out the "perfect source," but they also find pleasure in the struggle once it ends.

As the only literature instructor at my small two-year campus in south central Wisconsin, I work toward meeting the academic needs of a broad spectrum of readers who take my courses in order to meet the Humanities designation required for fulfilling the Associate of Arts and Science degree. Faced with a student body with varying abilities and expectations, I've experimented with two extremes of literary study in order to cultivate a critical eye toward analyzing literary works for their structure and meaning: (1) basic close reading, such as tracing a symbol or image through a novel, which bores my advanced students, and (2) academic literary scholarship involving incorporating into research papers sources drawn from the MLA International Bibliography, which alienates the less practiced readers.

Before enrolling in any literature course, students must earn at least a C in or exempt English 101 (College Writing and Critical Reading), the introductory degree-credit course covering the writing process from invention to editing, peer critique, revision, and reflection, a process applicable to writing assignments across disciplines. In this way, I view English 101 as a prerequisite not just to literature courses, but to most courses, for the threshold concepts and principles of rhetoric and composition covered here and in its successor, English 102 (Critical Writing, Reading, and Research), ideally transfer across disciplines for further cultivation. Seeking to encourage this transfer across disciplines and situations, I seek to create meaningful research-based assignments through a program of integrated instruction across my American literature courses through a cultural studies approach to literary Wisconsin.

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Locating Literary Wisconsin

I've lived in Wisconsin since 2004, when I began my career in higher education and welcomed a deeper exposure to nationally recognized Wisconsin authors. For example, the now-defunct University of Wisconsin Colleges bestowed to students the August Derleth creative writing award. I live a short drive from Fort Atkinson, where I've attended the Lorine Niedecker Wisconsin Poetry Festival. I also had my picture taken with Michael Perry at the Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English convention some time ago, so my scope and list of teachable authors continually extend and expand.



Figure 1 Michael Perry with author at the Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English convention

In order to expand this working list of Wisconsin's literati to include on syllabi, I've also turned to three important references: James Roberts' *Famous Wisconsin Authors*; Orrilla Blackshear's *Wisconsin Authors and Their Books, 1836-1975*; and Richard Boudreau's two-volume *Literary Heritage of Wisconsin*. While perusing through these selections, I realized the difficulty of defining a Wisconsin author, for it seems that few were born in, lived in, died in, and wrote about their state. For example, Edna Ferber moved with her family to Wisconsin

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in 1897 at age 12, later attended but withdrew from Lawrence University, wrote for the *Appleton Daily Crescent* and *Milwaukee Journal*, then moved to New York in 1912, where she lived and wrote until her life ended in 1968. But these lists also intrigued me because it seems that their compilers and editors desperately sought out even the most tangential link to the state. For example, they include Eudora Welty because this revered Southern author transferred from the Mississippi State College for Women in 1927 to the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she completed her degree in English literature, immediately left for New York, then returned to Mississippi shortly thereafter. Lorraine Hansberry's story is similar: she moved from Chicago in 1948 to attend UW-Madison, but moved to New York after only two years. These lists even include Orson Welles simply because of his birth in Kenosha.

Studying Wisconsin authors also evinces mixed emotions in my students. For some, Sterling North and Laura Ingalls Wilder inspire fond memories of growing up with Rascal the raccoon and *Little House on the Prairie*. For others, such bucolic sensibilities reflect the stark realities of those seeking both literary and physical escape from more rural areas. Although my county identifies less as rural and more as working class, my local students often look longingly toward Madison, Milwaukee, and Chicago.

What delights me, though, is that I introduce these authors to students ignorant of their own literary histories because I then have the privilege of introducing these authors. For example, my Modern Literature (ENG 266) course, covering roughly 1900-1945, certainly includes the canonical: Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston jazzing up Harlem, William Faulkner and Katherine Anne Porter processing the Gothic legacy of slavery in the Deep South while flicking away boll weevils, and Gertrude Stein and her entourage animating the art scene of expatriate Paris. This canon that constitutes American literature anthologies, however, fails to include Wisconsin connections, so, when I introduce these voices both strange and local, the story of Milwaukee poet Mildred Fish-Harnack (1902-1943) always perks up my students' ears. Serendipitously, I discovered on the Wisconsin Historical Society's website her short poem "In the Library," which I share in class:

I look up from my book of rondels
At the gray silhouette of a painter
Against the many-paned windows.
How like are we, I thought,

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To painters standing on a ledge,
Painting the mullions of life's windows;
Never pressing close enough to the dark glass
To peer within.

I enjoy this poem because of my appreciation for the Humanities. However, it fails to impress my young students until they discover that the poet, this Mildred, was the only American woman executed for espionage by order of Adolf Hitler. Furthermore, her decapitated body was released to Humboldt University for research into the effects of stress on the menstrual cycle, stress such as awaiting execution. Mildred Fish-Harnack, who wrote a lovely poem about reading and art, suddenly becomes cool.

This segue into early-twentieth-century Wisconsin authors contributes to satisfying my primary course objective: because a significant percentage of my students have admittedly never read an entire novel, I want them to continue reading once the semester has ended. Frankly, although it breaks my heart, I've stopped teaching novels for that reason: the students often fail to finish them despite accountability. Instead, I assign sets of short stories, which actually proves advantageous because I can expose everyone to a longer list of diverse voices and perspectives. Also, short stories may coerce reluctant readers to pick up novels by those same authors later. Either way, I teach these texts as imaginative pieces conditioned by the world in which their authors lived, a world constructed of multiple competing texts that collaboratively articulate meaning. Ultimately, with the local paired with the canonical, I teach the institutionally and historically determined "major authors" plus the lesser-known Wisconsin authors with whom the class may more directly identify, and I require a foray into the campus library's reference section in order to contextualize these authors in Wisconsin's history.

QFT, QFocus, and Information Literacy in Literature Classes

Because one core component of our first-year writing curriculum requires both informal and rigorous research processes, from the short interview with a classmate to searches through library databases, I likewise integrate information literacy into the learning processes of my literature courses. In 2016, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) adopted a definition of information literacy as "the set of integrated abilities encompassing

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the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning.” With this definition driving much of my teaching, I seek to discover how assignments shaped by these threshold concepts affect depth of literary reading and encourage independent use of a variety of sources to increase comprehension, thus encouraging their continued use.

This emphasis on prior learning and concurrent knowledge, with an equal emphasis on metacognitive processes, requires an awareness among the students of themselves as learners, particularly when they understand the application and transfer of skills from this course to those across disciplines. Carrying the conversation beyond the first-year composition classroom, the contributors to Kathleen Johnson and Steven Harris’s collection *Teaching Literary Research* acknowledge the need for greater collaboration between literature instructors and librarians to develop this metacognition through assignments teaching research strategies within specific methodologies. As Van Hillard suggests in the opening chapter, students, instructors, and librarians alike must consider the library “not as some vast storehouse of data, but rather as an elaborate house of argument, a site where users activate and reactivate conversations and disagreements across time and space” (16). Furthermore, as our students increasingly consume technology while struggling with effective research methods, we must continue to help them understand when information is needed, where to find it, and how to evaluate and use it.

Thus began my most recent Modern Literature class, when we began our excursion by asking questions about Wisconsin at the beginning of the twentieth century. I discovered this activity in Dan Rothstein and Luz Santana’s *Make Just One Change: Teach Students to Ask Their Own Questions* when I served as a fellow with the Greater Madison Writing Project in 2015, and it changed my teaching. This short and magnificent book introduces the Question Formulation Technique (QFT), designed to help students generate, improve, prioritize, and use questions by following this group process:

1. The instructor chooses a brief and simply stated phrase with a clear focus to inspire questioning among the class (the Question Focus, or QFocus).
2. The instructor establishes rules for producing questions in groups.
3. Students produce questions.

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4. Students improve questions by changing close-ended to open-ended and *vice versa*.
5. Students prioritize questions.

Such a practice requires an intellectual flexibility, an epistemological shift from one who answers to one who asks. During this first week, for the purpose of introducing the semester-long theme, I scaffolded the QFT with the QFocus phrase “Wisconsin 100 years ago” and allowed anyone to contribute questions that I in turn recorded on the whiteboard. Over ten minutes, the class compiled this list:

1. Did they have the same Wisconsin accent?
2. How did they make cheese?
3. How did they dress?
4. How did they live without internet?
5. Did they drive?
6. Was everyone a farmer?
7. What were their jobs?
8. How long did they live?
9. Did Indians live here?
10. Did women have to stay home while men worked?
11. Did they catch smallpox?
12. What were the buildings like?
13. Was there electricity?
14. How did people pay for college?
15. Who was allowed to go to college?

I wasn’t sure what to expect from this exercise as many unfamiliar students populated this class, but I found that this statement required introspection, the need for them to look into their own definitions, perspectives, interests, and histories. Once completed, I introduced the three Wisconsin writers we’d study: Zona Gale, Margery Latimer (incidentally the first wife of Harlem Renaissance poet Jean Toomer), and, for this case study, Glenway Wescott, an unpopular member of the Lost Generation.

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Introducing Glenway Wescott

Enthusiasts of the Lost Generation may recognize Wescott (1901-1987) from Gertrude Stein's *Autobiography of Alice B Toklas*, where he appears briefly on the celebrity roster including Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Picasso, Joyce, and Matisse who socialized at 27 rue de Fleurus. However, according to the *Autobiography*, "Glenway Wescott at no time interested Gertrude Stein. He has a certain syrup but it does not pour" (219). Despite this venomous indignity, through the work of biographer Jerry Rosco and the University of Wisconsin Press, Wescott's name is re-emerging and his *oeuvre* is circulating.

Wescott's biography appeals to much of my class for the reason I mentioned above: something better must lie away from rural Wisconsin. Wescott was born the oldest of six children on a pig farm in Washington County, located near Milwaukee in the southeast area of the state. Rather than choosing to inherit his family's livelihood, he matriculated at the University of Chicago at 16; joined Carl Sandburg and Edgar Lee Masters in the Poetry Club; met Monroe Wheeler, who became his lifetime companion; and began publishing in magazines such as *Poetry* and *Dial*. Like many other promising authors and artists, he relocated to New York but continued writing about his birthplace. In 1924, Wescott published *The Apple of the Eye*, a regionalist *bildungsroman* reflecting on the rural Wisconsin of his childhood in a narrative criticizing its repressed conservatism, especially through characters such as Hannah Madoc, driven by heartbreak to prostitution, and Dan Strane, a young man simultaneously attracted to and repulsed by his sister's suitor, Mike Byron.

Wescott continued writing when he and Wheeler relocated to Paris in 1925 to consort with the other expatriates at Stein's salon. During this productive decade, he wrote and published *The Grandmothers* (1927), a semi-autobiographical novel that earned the applause of Somerset Maugham and Thornton Wilder. The novel follows Alwyn Tower, who leaves his family farm to live in Europe, where he pores over family albums in order to construct the stories of his relatives who died during the Civil War. Praising the novel's "artistically satisfying rendition of the soul of an American pioneer community and its descendants," Clifton Fadiman's review in *Nation* lauds Wescott for his depiction of "the spirit of a people who, existing among primitive conditions, were forced as a preservative measure to emphasize loyalty to the clan" (396). Wescott followed this recipient of the Harper Prize with *Good-Bye, Wisconsin* (1928), a collection of short stories in whose introductory essay he admits that "I should like to write a book about ideal people under ideal circumstances. No sort of under-

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nourishment, no under-education, nothing partial or frustrated, no need of variety or luxury—in short, no lack of anything which, according to its children, Wisconsin denies” (20). When he left Wisconsin, he didn’t look back.

In order to further contextualize Wescott’s autobiographical fiction with primary sources, I turned to the Wisconsin Historical Society’s digital collection of maps and atlases, which houses several texts specific to Washington County in the early twentieth century. I began with a selection of advertisements in the *Ownership Map and Breeders’ Guide of Washington County* (1920), which my students perused in groups in order to draft an informal social history of the area: the trends, interests, possibly social structures and interactions among different groups. Most emphasize farming, farm equipment, and livestock, thus providing insight into Wescott’s immediate surroundings on his family’s pig farm, while others list additional businesses such as banks, saloons, real estate, medical treatments, and merchandise (see figs. 1-3).

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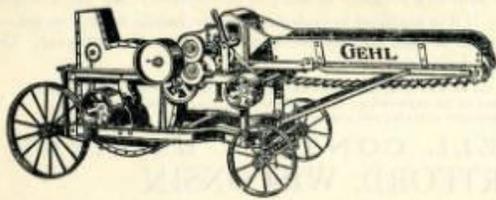
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| <p>THE GEHL ENSILAGE CUTTER</p>  <p>The GEHL cutter, equipped with Meal Making Attachment handles any form of dry roughage. Alfalfa Hay, reduced to a meal has a feeding value equal to that of bran.</p> <p>GEHL BROS. MFG. CO., <i>West Bend, Wis.</i> <small>ENSILAGE CUTTERS SILOS SPREADERS</small></p> | <p>Locks 50 Cows Instead Of One</p>  <p>West Bend BARN EQUIPMENT</p> <p>West Bend Automatic Locking Mechanism equipped with our wonderful locking-leaving lever save you time and labor—save money in locking up or releasing the cows, as you pay no more for West Bend equipment than for ordinary equipment that you must reset and closed singly by hand. The West Bend lever controls from instantly by one throw of the lever. Cow stops are operated at same time, and when set guide cow into the stall. Saves over 50% the ground labor ever brought out in modern barn equipment. You certainly want it in your barn. Write today for circular showing complete line of West Bend Barn Equipment.</p> <p>WEST BEND BARN EQUIPMENT CO., 279 So. Water St., West Bend, Wis.</p> <p>WEST BEND BARN EQUIPMENT CO.</p> |
| <p>Badger Condensed Milk Co. J. P. GEHL, Prop.</p> <p>Washington County's Largest Producers of Condensed Milk and Milk Products</p> <p>Factories at South Germantown and Allenton</p> <p>IN BUSINESS FOR OVER 20 YEARS</p> | <p>Rockfield Products Co.</p>  <p>Write to General Office 720—721 M. & M. Bank Bldg. Milwaukee, Wis.</p>  <p><small>"Trade Mark Reg. in U. S. Pat. Off."</small></p> |
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Figure 2 Adapted from *Ownership Map and Breeders' Guide of Washington County* (<https://content.wisconsinhistory.org/digital/collection/maps/id/18543>). In the public domain.

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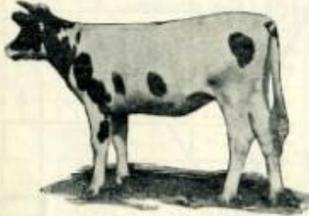
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| <p>The HARVEST FARM LOUIS ESSELMAN, Prop.</p>  <p>Breeder of Registered HOLSTEIN FRIESIAN CATTLE</p> <p>Also Breeder of POLAND CHINA HOGS</p> <p>CATTLE FOR SALE AT ALL TIMES Telephone Connections ROUTE 5, HARTFORD, WIS. Farm located 1½ miles south of city. Take Thompson road.</p> | <p>PH. LINKER & CO. Breeders of Pure Bred Registered HOLSTEIN FRIESIAN CATTLE STOCK FOR SALE AT ALL TIMES Telephone 928—R 4 HARTFORD, WIS.</p> |
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Figure 3 Adapted from *Ownership Map and Breeders' Guide of Washington County* (<https://content.wisconsinhistory.org/digital/collection/maps/id/18545>). In the public domain.

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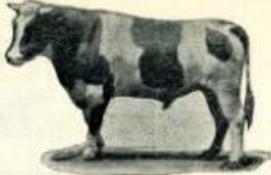
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| <p>River Valley Guernsey Farm WM. F. STAUSKE, Prop.</p>  <p>Breeder of Registered GUERNSEY CATTLE</p> <p>— ALSO HIGH GRADES</p> <p>Berkshire Swine—Silver Laced Wyandotte Chickens Telephone Connection Newburg ROUTE 2, FREDONIA, WIS.</p> |  <p><small>Superba Price Farm Rag Apple 19107. Sired by Rag Apple Koszyko 8th. Dam Eirone Payne, 31.5 lbs., sister to the first 50 pound cow, Segie Payne Johnson.</small></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td data-bbox="857 604 1094 785"> <p>Elmwood Stock Farm W. H. GRUHLE, Prop.</p> <p>Breeder of Registered Holstein Friesian Cattle</p> <p>Barred Plymouth Rocks and S. C. White Leghorn Chickens Route 7, West Bend, Wis.</p> </td> <td data-bbox="1117 604 1370 785"> <p>Evergreen Dairy Farm WM. MEUSCHKE, Prop.</p> <p>Breeder of Registered Holstein Friesian Cattle</p> <p>Stock for sale at all times Route 2, West Bend, Wis.</p> </td> </tr> </table> | <p>Elmwood Stock Farm W. H. GRUHLE, Prop.</p> <p>Breeder of Registered Holstein Friesian Cattle</p> <p>Barred Plymouth Rocks and S. C. White Leghorn Chickens Route 7, West Bend, Wis.</p> | <p>Evergreen Dairy Farm WM. MEUSCHKE, Prop.</p> <p>Breeder of Registered Holstein Friesian Cattle</p> <p>Stock for sale at all times Route 2, West Bend, Wis.</p> |
| <p>Elmwood Stock Farm W. H. GRUHLE, Prop.</p> <p>Breeder of Registered Holstein Friesian Cattle</p> <p>Barred Plymouth Rocks and S. C. White Leghorn Chickens Route 7, West Bend, Wis.</p> | <p>Evergreen Dairy Farm WM. MEUSCHKE, Prop.</p> <p>Breeder of Registered Holstein Friesian Cattle</p> <p>Stock for sale at all times Route 2, West Bend, Wis.</p> | | |
| <p>FAIRVIEW STOCK FARM WM. H. JAEHNIG, Prop.</p> <p>Breeder of Registered HOLSTEIN FRIESIAN CATTLE ALSO HIGH GRADES S. C. WHITE LEGHORN CHICKENS</p> <p>Telephone Connections Correspondence Solicited ROUTE 2, FREDONIA, WIS.</p> | <p>JOS. P. RILEY Breeder of Registered HOLSTEIN FRIESIAN CATTLE</p> <p>Correspondence Solicited ROUTE 5, KEWASKUM, WIS.</p> | | |
| <p>Orchard Blossom Farm ED. W. GERNER, Prop.</p> <p>Registered Milking Short Horn Cattle Also Registered Duroc Jersey Swine</p> <p>MILK RECORDS KEPT. STOCK FOR SALE. Telephone 569 Newburg Line and Route 2, West Bend, Wis.</p> | <p>The REGNER PHARMACY THE REXALL STORE</p> <p>DRUGS AND DRUG SUNDRIES SCHOOL SUPPLIES</p> <p>The Biggest Ice Cream Parlor in the County M. H. Regner, Prop. - - West Bend, Wis.</p> | | |

Figure 4 Adapted from *Ownership Map and Breeders' Guide of Washington County* (<https://content.wisconsinhistory.org/digital/collection/maps/id/18569>). In the public domain.

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We then turn to a plat highlighting Wescott's birthplace of Kewaskum and the importance of trade and commerce to the area.

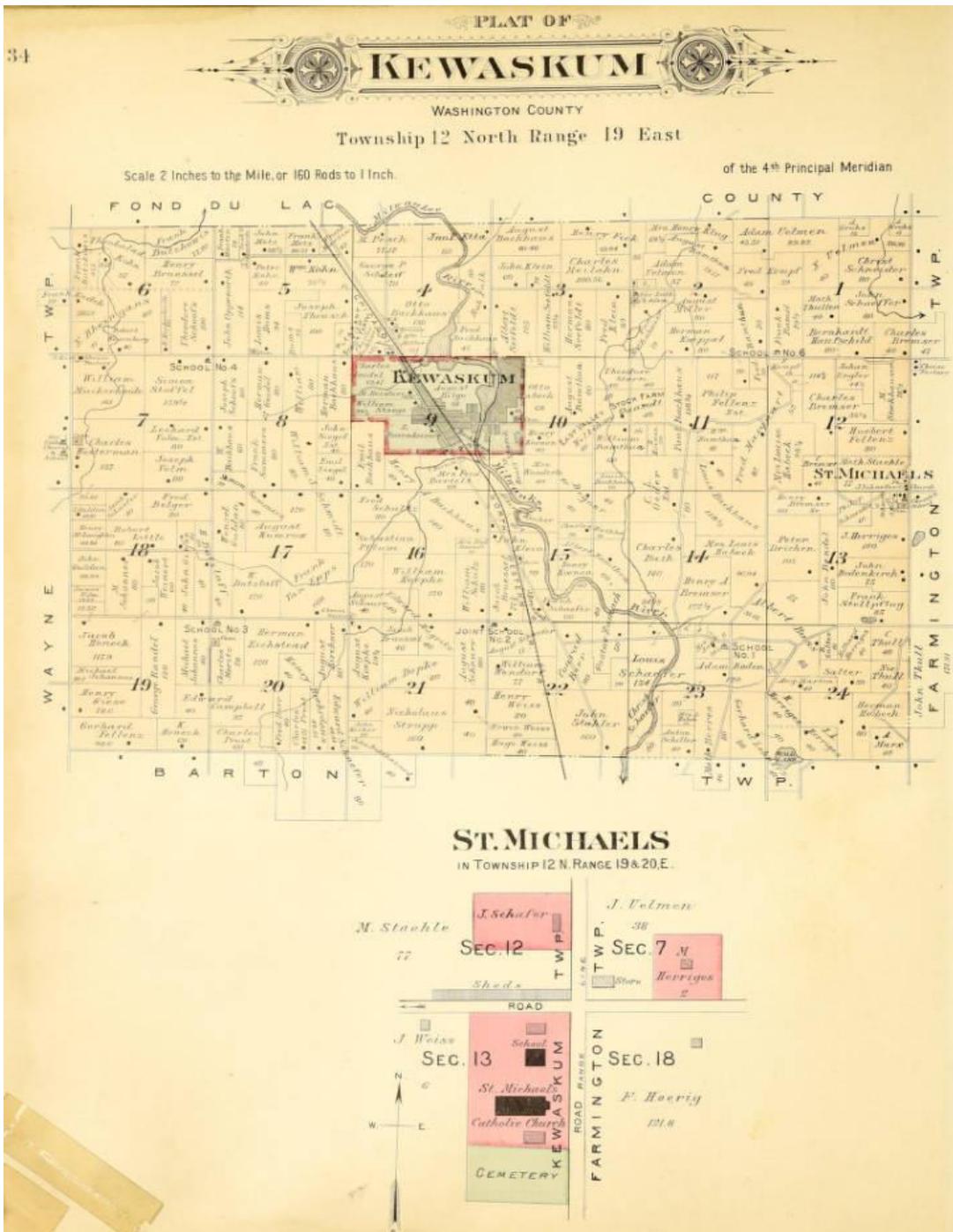


Figure 5 Adapted from Plat Book of Washington and Ozaukee Counties, Wisconsin (<https://content.wisconsinhistory.org/digital/collection/maps/id/26243>). In the public domain.

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Figure 6 shows Kewaskum settled on the Milwaukee River and serving as a junction on the North Western Railroad, thus linking major agricultural trading ports including Chicago, Milwaukee, St Paul, Omaha, and Sioux City over more than 5,000 miles of track.

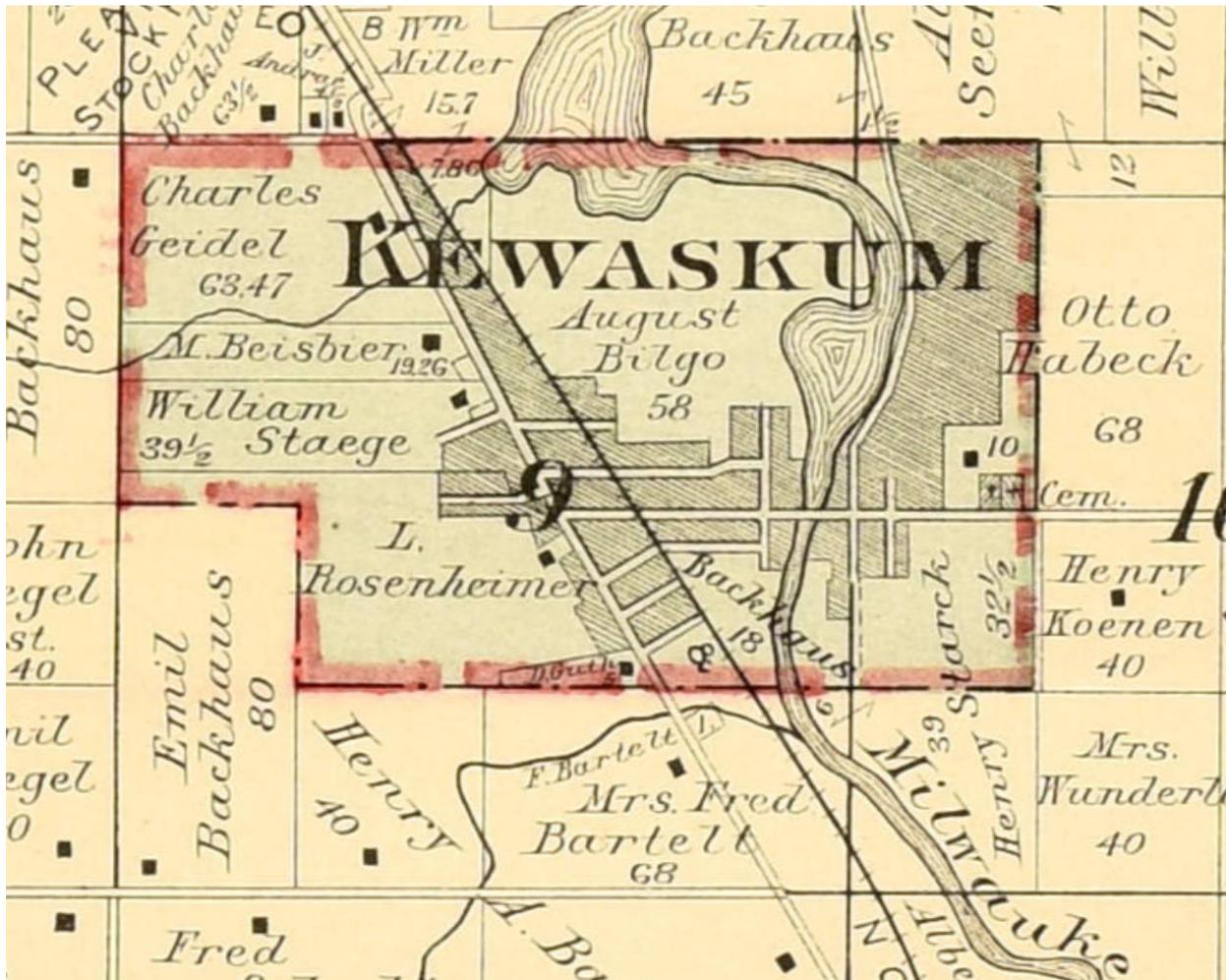


Figure 6 Detail from Plat Book of Washington and Ozaukee Counties, Wisconsin
(<https://content.wisconsinhistory.org/digital/collection/maps/id/26243>). In the public domain.

This is where my students met Wescott over two weeks, by annotating for their titillating social commentary four of the stories from *Good-Bye, Wisconsin*, all set in an isolating Midwest cloaked by idyllic uprightness. In “Adolescence,” Philip disguises himself as a girl to attend a party, where a persistent soldier kisses him on the cheek. In “In a Thicket,” young Lily lives with her grandfather in the woods at the edge of town, where she wonders at

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the shirtless Black man nocturnally prowling on her porch and testing the screen door. In “The Dove Came Down,” Arthur Hale and his fiancée, Emily Grover, attend the same church service, which Emily finds emotionally invigorating while Arthur finds it a frivolous, perfunctory ritual. Finally, in “Prohibition,” Old Riley’s drunken perambulations in the dead of winter, leading to frostbite and amputations, serve as a foil against a temperate community.

Wescott in the Library Reference Section

Once we covered all four stories, we reunited them in order to compile a list of questions about southern, rural Wisconsin stemming from curiosity about what we found in Wescott’s narratives. For these purposes, as an introduction to information literacy specific to literary research, I suggested that the questions focus on a word, idea, allusion, reference, or location, in other words a research question asked simply for seeking out information for clarity and edification.

When we met in the library, with questions about southern Wisconsin in hand, the research librarian and I introduced the class to the physical books in the reference section and various online tools designed for quick information rather than for rigorous research, depending on the type of information sought. First, I modeled the research process with my own question: In “In a Thicket,” we learn that the man on Lily’s porch had escaped from the nearby state penitentiary because the warden had trusted him to act as his chauffeur and also to drive independently on occasion. What forms did penal labor take in the state’s correctional system that would allow such liberties and an escape to happen?

Second, with that question in mind, I asked the students which type of information I was seeking:

1. *Definitions*, found in general or specialized dictionaries
2. *Background*, found in general or specialized encyclopedias or handbooks
3. *Data and Statistical*, found in almanacs and other datasets
4. *Geographical*, found in atlases or gazetteers

They debated: although the question itself asked for background information, it could also incorporate definition and statistics, so for this introduction we considered useful sources from the reference section that would *likely* provide this very general information. One group found the *World Encyclopedia of Police Forces and Penal Systems* (1989), published by the American Society for Industrial Security, and another spotted the *Gale Encyclopedia of*

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American Law (2011). When we turned to online sources, they found historical data and statistics on arrests, crimes, and criminal prosecutions, all archived in the Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau's biennially published Wisconsin Blue Book.

After this brief lesson, I charged the class to keep, edit, or write new questions; to determine the type of information they sought; and to find reference sources that might help them appease that curiosity. By the end of the session, I found many students working collaboratively. For example, one group, inspired by the outfits depicted in "Adolescence," investigated the process of fabric and clothing production in Peterson and Kellogg's *Greenwood Encyclopedia of Clothing through American History, 1900 to the Present* (2008). A different group expressed interest in seeking background information on social services during the temperance movement. When reference materials such as Davies' *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social Work* (2000) produced no results, they reconsidered the subject terms and turned instead to the history of alcohol, which uncovered Heath's *International Handbook on Alcohol and Culture* (1995). Ultimately, through informal feedback about this specific assignment, I learned that such inquiry-based tasks, from writing questions to finding answers based on one's own curiosity, reminded everyone of the importance of actively seeking out areas of interest that may become the subject of research projects across courses and disciplines.

Student and Instructor Reflections

To me, the benefits of reading the works of statewide authors across decades and centuries are obvious: It enables identification with (un)familiar settings, dialects, cultures, and lifestyles, plus with national conversations from that more localized perspective. The 1920s might be popularly known as the Jazz Age, but probably not on a pig farm in Kewaskum, Wisconsin. At the end of the unit on the Lost Generation, I asked my students to complete a one-minute writing about how reading Wescott's stories helped them envision life between the wars, alongside Fitzgerald's "Babylon Revisited," Stein's "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene," Hemingway's "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," Eliot's "Prufrock," the *Blast Manifesto*, performances from Josephine Baker in her banana skirt and from Stravinsky's tumultuous *The Rite of Spring*, images from the Armory Show, and Bunuel and Dali's experimental film *Un Chien Andalou*. To my Wisconsin natives, Wescott seemed "safer," "normal," and "glad to be off the farm." Perhaps that's why his syrup failed to pour for Stein.

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As the semester ended, after several such research assignments building from this isolated activity, I asked the class to write statements reflecting on the process of conducting research, on what they believed had transferred from their first-year writing courses to use in this new writing and research context, and the knowledge they'd acquired about this process to transfer to across disciplines. This excerpt stood out:

This semester we had to do a lot of annoying research where I had to struggle to find exactly what I wanted because we couldn't just Google it. Most of those library things I would've already had to know about if I wanted to use them, and then I had to figure out how they worked. Maybe I'm just a dimwit with computers.

Based on this response, I may have failed a bit: although it's unstated, I wondered if this student carried a preconceived idea of what the ideal library source looked like as "I had to struggle to find exactly what I wanted." Perhaps many of us do. As stated by another, "I had a lot of trouble finding the perfect source for my research, but if these sources were easy to find, then this probably wouldn't even be an assignment." The diction interests me because I hear it in my writing courses as well, the quest for the "perfect source."

But what are they looking for through the research process? My priority, as stated, was to ensure that my students developed and enhanced their existing transferable relationship with the library and that they would apply critical thinking techniques while conducting library research across disciplines. My interest lay less in a mastery of the mechanics of a particular database, but rather in the ability to make discerning choices about the information found.

Although it pains me that students rarely enter the library to conduct research, I believe that the stationary and portable electronic devices disseminated across campuses enable their users more independently to set their own research goals and assume increasing responsibility for planning and enacting their own learning activities. Plugged in or not, they must still leave the academy with the information literacy skills that will serve them in and out of a variety of research and writing situations. Once they accept the truths that research can be frustrating, tedious, and rewarding, I hope that they'll continue to develop their information literacy skills during the futile search for that "perfect source."

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