“The first purpose of an epic poem is to entertain, to tell a story. But close at the heels of pleasure is the message that no careful listener can avoid. We, too, must define and contest the ‘issues of importance’ for our own society. We, too, must become heroes.” p. 11.

The idea of pairing epic poetry with hip-hop lyrics.

A way of thinking about or framing analysis of literature: “through stories young people can learn to confront ethical dilemmas. ‘Our most powerful ethical influences - except perhaps for parental modeling - are stories: it is in responding to, taking in, becoming transported by story that character is formed, for good or ill’” (48).” p. 14. If every analysis is done with a focus on how it builds or adds to our character consciously or subconsciously we are very intentionally utilizing quality literature.

Conversation is Key: Starters: Where did you see that in the text? ; If I were in this character’s place; Those lines make me feel as though; When I compare this with what came before; I can understand how you see it that way, but I; Does this word have other connotations?; I was struck by the line where; I’m unsure. Can you please come back to me?

**SparkNotes as Ally**

“Go to the SparkNotes website and print copies of the paragraph-long summary of the chapter you assigned for homework, and hand this out when students come to class. Then tell students to write down three things that occurred in the chapter you assigned for homework that don’t appear in this paragraph” (p. 58).

**Four Corners**

Have students close their eyes and visualize the most powerful image they remember from last night’s reading. Fold a piece of paper in four.

1st Corner: draw the powerful image.
2nd Corner: Put the picture into words.
3rd Corner: Image you are a professor of literature giving a lecture on the scene described – GOAL = Analysis
4th Corner: Poem, word collage, text rendering, found poetry.

*For those who didn’t do it – have them work from a previous chapter or print a section to work from.

**Placing the Sentence**

“select a key sentence or two from toward the end of the chapter that has been assigned and ask students to write for five minutes, placing this sentence within the context of the story” (p. 57).

Question Stem: Explain the following quote from last night’s homework. What is _______ talking about? “Insert quote.”

**Thematically Paired**

- The Diary of a Young Girl and The Book Thief
- A Tree Grows in Brooklyn and Angela’s Ashes
- Romeo and Juliet and Like Water for Chocolate
- Jane Eyre and Annie John
- The Red Pony and All the Pretty Horses
- Lord of the Flies and John Dollar
- Red Badge of Courage and The Things they Carried
- Brave New World and Never Let Me Go
- The Odyssey and The Road

**Book Recommendations:** Punished by Rewards by Alfie Kohn;

“We are seeing a mass exodus of young people from the real world to virtual worlds. I am concerned that their blissful engagement in virtual worlds could lead to a dangerous disengagement from the real” (p. 68).

“I know that seeds planted in middle school often do not bear fruit until much, much later” (p. 61).
“Undergraduates currently majoring in business need to bring to their future workplaces knowledge of books like Upton Sinclair’s The Jungle in order to make humane decisions about labor and profit. They need to read George Orwell’s 1984 to help them consider the extent to which technology provides Big Brother access to our every keystroke. They need to learn from Jay Gatsby about what money can buy as well as what it can’t.” p. 18.

Poems and Movies
• Use a longer poem to teach story design
• Use a film to discuss and chart the plot diagram

Ten Year Rule
“Before a teacher, especially a middle school or high school instructor, sits down to plan a course, he or she should ask the question, ‘what can I reasonably expect that students will retain from this course after a decade?’” p. 56

Mentor Texts: Reading and Writing Integrated
“When students become caught up in the work of studying literature, the difficulties posed by the text seem manageable and the literature more accessible.

One method for making this happen is to invite students to model writing of their own after the masters” p. 79
• “If students are unsure of how the iambic pentameter works, ask them to imitate a line of Shakespeare’s, inserting words of their own in place of the bard’s, following his rhythmic pattern” p. 80.
• Epic Similes – “Choose one of Homer’s epic similes and adapt it to describe how they perform an ordinary act; how you practice an instrument, how you text a friend, how you work out for soccer. “Homer’s opening invocation to the muse as a model for the opening of an epic poem they might write someday about their odyssey through high school...When I offer students this invitation to describe something they experience every day in elevated language, they begin to see how they, like Odysseus, have embarked on a journey of self-discovery” p. 82.

Czikszentmihalyi: Theory of Flow
“When caught up in a state of flow, a person finds the work itself so enjoyable that distractions and even time disappear. Intensely involved, the person will often continue to work even at great cost, simply for the sheer pleasure of doing it” p. 85

While students are in a state of flow – return to the text to connect that enjoyment with the literature. They actually discourage both reading and thinking” p. 90. “the challenge to those of us who object to right-and-wrong –answer tests...is to devise ways of assessing students’ reading that actually teach them more about what they have read. I want to use assessment to deepen student learning” p. 91. After a reading have student write about a major character most like them explaining the similarity using examples from their own life as well as text.

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