World Literature for the 21ˢᵗ Century

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CENTER FOR CURRICULUM REDESIGN

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Introduction: Storytelling is inherently human

"Children come into the world and they learn to make up stories, to tell stories, to live inside stories, and then make believe by nature, but not by nurture. It's as natural and as reflexive for them as breathing."[1]

CCR's philosophy of teaching literature is highly informed by arguments, such as those of Jonathan Gottschall, that humans are storytelling animals.[2] Stories are an integral part of human existence, daily and social life. "Stories can change our behavior. They can influence our perceptions. They may even have the potential to, quite literally, change the flow of history—or at least some parts of it.[3]"

Gottschall reminds us that humans "dream, fantasize, and socialize in stories. Story infiltrates every aspect of how we live and think. Did you know that fiction enhances our empathy? That it is better at changing our values and beliefs than non-fiction that is designed to persuade? Did you know that stories have brought on wars, inspired atrocities, and driven massive social change? Did you know that the stories in dreams, literature, and children's make-believe, all share the same universal structure? Did you know that we all boldly fictionalize the stories of our own lives?[4]"

Why teach World Literature (WL)?

Collective storytelling is central to human cultures and reading literature, notably the "classics," and has enormous value in expanding learners' **cultural literacy**. Because of the impact of collective stories on human history and social life, reading literary works that have contributed to the upheavals and changes that have culminated in the modern world is not only an exercise in literary learning, but informs other domains of knowledge (e.g., History, Art, Science).

Secondly, WL provides a unique ground to expand **problem solving** skills. WL often explores social issues in different contexts, affecting specific groups. Readers are faced with novel vantage points on known problems, or new problems of which they were unaware. WL obliges readers to follow the different kinds of plot structures, work through the issues and conflicts the story presents and deduce - come to conclusions -

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[1] PBS, Jonathan Gottschall (2012)
[2] *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human*. Gottschall (2012).
[3] Scientific American (2012)
[4] Skidmore College (2012)

about how these should be solved (and whether or not, for instance, they agree with the ending and narrative choices of the author).

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, WL broadens the horizons of **imagination, fostering creativity and innovation**[5]. Reading exercises imagination by using words to describe images which readers must then manipulate in their minds.[6] WL brings readers into contact with, often, drastically new or unknown images that they must make sense of by expanding their capacity to imagine. WL reveals unfamiliar knowledge, exotic or fantastical realities, the hidden or that which remains in the periphery, permitting the discovery of new ideas, and the creation of novel conceptions and "insurgent imaginations."[7]

Imagination is key to human life: it enhances problem solving skills, develops memory, contributes to empathy, increases self-confidence and triggers curiosity.[8] Imagination is fundamental to discovery, innovation and understanding. "If imagination and magical thinking connected to reason spur discovery, innovation, and new understandings, it can be maintained that literature has a key role in both developing and engaging imaginative and magical thinking[9]".

What should be taught in WL?

While all reading provides a diverse range of cognitive, emotional and social benefits to readers, WL courses should have the principal goal of providing learners with diverse experiences of the world, across space, time, culture, languages, worldviews, identities and the like. ***The goal of WL is to understand the world from different perspectives.***

Reading is practical both from an academic standpoint as well as a human one. Stories teach us about human nature and interactions. As the French novelist Marcel Proust noted, "It is through the contact with other minds which constitutes reading that our minds are fashioned."[10] Reading WL provides an exposure to new vocabulary, new

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[5] World Literacy Foundation (2021)

[6] "Does Reading Improve Imagination?" The Book Buff (2022). Research using functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) scans demonstrates that reading activates sections of the brain associated with imagination, strengthening them like a muscle.

[7] "Insurgent Imaginations: World Literature and the Periphery." Majumder (2020).

[8] "The Awesome Importance of Imagination." Brooks (2021); "Reading: How Readers Beget Imagining." Trasmundi and Cowley (2020); "Harnessing the Imagination: Mental Stimulation, Self-Regulation and Coping." Taylor et al. (1998).

[9] "Reading Enhances Imagination." World Literacy Foundation (2021).

[10] *On Reading Ruskin*. Proust et al. (1989). See also "Proust's Views on Perception as a Metaphoric Framework." (Jack Murray, 1969)

ideas and understandings, new ways of fostering relationships between ourselves and others and ourselves and the world, and new forms of reasoning that help learners fashion their minds *globally*.

It is with this goal in mind that CCR's design process prioritizes **relevance, modernity and a global diversity of perspectives** in literary works. *Research demonstrates[11] that learners are more likely to take interest in a subject that is immediately relevant to their lives and experiences.* Literature in the classroom should speak to learners' lives and the world around them, as well as showcase diverse perspectives that broaden learners' understanding of the world and the experiences of others.

In designing a WL database, CCR pushes the ideas of modernity further than pertinence to the present-day world, with an emphasis on texts with relevance for the human future. Future-facing texts are those that encourage imagination, problem-solving, and innovation for the future and also those texts that cultivate imaginations of alternative futures. Science fiction and speculative fiction are examples of future-facing literature, but there is future-facing richness to be found over centuries of WL.

Relevancy to student experience is also emphasized by giving attention to questions of **power, belonging, and identity** in literature. This can be done on a macro level through classic texts that have influenced the human collective, as well as on a micro level that introduces texts written by local authors or discussing more localized issues (e.g., Teaching *La Curée* as an example of French literature in a classroom in Paris or *Germinal* in a classroom in Dijon - both are classic texts by Zola, but present different localized perspectives).

Giving attention to issues of power, belonging, and identity also permits a WL curriculum to highlight texts that have been seminal in the formation of the present world. Not only are texts such as *The Yellow Wallpaper* (Charlotte Perkins Gilman) or *The Invisible Man* (Ralph Ellison) excellent works of literature, they demonstrate changing social norms and the struggles of individuals and groups against power structures, exclusion and inequality. Literature is able to transmit these lessons with greater emotional power than the typical facts and figures of a traditional history course or gender studies class, for instance.

Though it is often said that one must "separate the artist from her art," CCR considers it important to **contextualize** literary works in basic ways to "set the scene" in the real

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[11] "Readicide" (Kelly Gallagher); Two recent reports about reading from the National Endowment for the Humanities—*Reading at Risk* and *To Read or Not to Read: A Question of National Consequence*—confirm the disturbing scope and nature of this problem.

world for the fictional work they will read. Literature is never a product of "pure imagination" but is always grounded to some extent in experiential and culturally shared knowledge.

Issues of **relativism**, both temporal and cultural, are inherent in the contextualization and the consumption of literary works. What is considered "normal" changes over time and space and literary works can potentially present learners with ways of being and thinking that are vastly different from their own. Critical and ethical thinking are reinforced by reading and subsequent discussion of texts.

Finally, the **literary merit,** intrinsic beauty or inventiveness of literature is crucial to communicate to learners as these merits contribute to the love of reading and to the development of learners' personal tastes. Reading effective, well-written texts also furthers learners' writing abilities, by providing them with a variety of examples of efficient and compelling writing strategies.

Recommendations for Evaluating WL

Based on the heuristics for the "why" and "what" of teaching literature, we have developed four primary parameters for curating literary texts that are exceptionally beneficial for contemporary readers of all ages. Our design process aims to balance the texts chosen for study based on these key elements. This is not a strict prescription in which every text studied must cover all parameters, but rather a guide for choosing a curriculum of texts in which each of these parameters are addressed from different angles.

Because of our goal for a future-facing WL database, greater emphasis is placed on *Accessibility* and *Modernity and Relevancy,* in our curation of texts. The purpose of these parameters is not to identify texts that address all of them, but to ensure that they are covered within the curriculum (e.g., through reading novels, watching films, or comparing poems).

The four primary parameters for evaluating literature in our design process are:

- **Accessibility:** A literary work can be accessible to learners on three levels of difficulty (Easy - Intermediary - Difficult). Accessibility can be determined based on the level of language used in the text, content and the "fun factor" (Is this an exciting read or boring and arduous?)
- **Modernity and Relevance:** A literary work's modernity and relevance depend on its content, message and applicability to the present and future worlds of learners.

- **Diversity/Representation:** A literary work can provide representations of the vast array of human diversity and the diversity of human experiences in the past, present and imagined future.
- **Message and Merit:** The message of a text is taken into account, particularly in terms of the applicability of texts (see below). The literary merit of a text can be determined by a number of factors, notably seven "literary standards."[12] With these concepts in place readers learn to determine a text's merit themselves as they develop their particular literary tastes.

Accessibility

Reading *must be accessible* to learners. Learners should not have the impression that reading is boring, arduous or that educational reading and reading for pleasure are mutually exclusive. No matter the canonical literary merit, high school reading lists need to be populated with books that are page-turners - action, melodrama, adventure, suspense, humor - and emotive content connect readers to stories. Literary depth should also be sought after. Most high school students do not need to be taught how to read J.K. Rowling or Haruki Murakami. To maintain interest, a book must be "above their heads," to use a phrase from Mortimer Adler's *How to Read a Book*[13].

The majority of learners will not need deep knowledge of the "classics," nor literary theory. **CCR advocates the prioritization of *accessible* texts, to avoid discouragement, and recognizes that many "classic" or "canonical" literary works may have very little value for a student in a modern world.** A literary canon comprises those texts considered the most influential, important or definitive works in *all* literature and philosophy; the canon grants these texts a certain "sainthood" that cannot be revoked as they are considered "essential," or the standard by which all other texts are judged. The canon serves a useful purpose, but that purpose is not to curate the most important or "essential" texts for understanding the present and facing the future in the 21st century.

Canonical works such as *The Red and The Black* (Stendhal) or *The Aeneid* (Virgil) are rich with information about past societies, events, and cultural norms. Nevertheless, sociological satire of the Bourbon Restoration in 19th century France and Grego-Roman legends concerning Roman ancestry are not directly applicable to the present day nor

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[12] "The Seven Literary Standards." Teacher Training, Elcomblus (2019); *Literatures of the World*. Sialongo et al. (2007). It is telling to note that these standards for the literary canon were devised in 1909 and are still in widespread use.
[13] https://www.nicksenger.com/blog/dos-and-donts-of-choosing-literature-to-teach-to-teenagers

future lives of learners. *The literary canon is an exquisite object for literary study, but not a one-size-fits-all tool for preparing learners for the modern world.*

A second key element of accessibility is language. The works of Chaucer have great literary merit, but are essentially indecipherable to modern readers, and have little relevance to modern lives (outside of the statistically low population of experts in 15th century English literature). This is not to say that our design process advocates eliminating these kinds of texts entirely.

Modernity and Relevance

CCR's design process prioritizes the use of modern texts, in the sense of modern prose, texts that address the modern world and future-facing texts. These texts demonstrate direct links between trends at their time of publication and present circumstances and possess applicability beyond the literature classroom into real-world contexts and problems. This criteria often coincides with the relevance and accessibility of a text, but not always.

Reading must be *relevant* to learners. This relevance can be achieved in diverse ways: making use of texts addressing global issues, local people and places, the exploration of different identities and cultural worlds, current polemics, etc. If connections between texts and the real world are not established, not only will learners lose interest, but much of the interest of learning literature is also lost.

Diversity and Representation

There are a multitude of expressions signifying that through books one can go anywhere and anytime. CCR prioritizes a literature curriculum that showcases works of literature from diverse regional origins, time periods, and individual perspectives (e.g., gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic class).

One of the great strengths of a WL course is the variety of *Representations* of human life and experiences that can be utilized and discussed. Literature not only exposes learners to different styles of writing, different kinds of stories, different ways of being and different beliefs, but a panoply of representations of being human. This parameter is closely related to concepts of identity, belonging and questions of politics and power.

Message and Merit

The *Message* of a text is directly relevant to the Applicability of text (see Section III below) and therefore important in CCR's framework for the curation of literary texts. The future-facing objectives of CCR's curation prioritize texts with implicit, explicit (or

accidental!) messages that are insightful for the 21st century and/or to understanding the mentalities that have culminated in the present world.

The purely aesthetic *Merit* of some texts, or boundary-pushing innovations of others, cannot be ignored. For this reason, the CCR design process incorporates literary merit into its parameters for text selection. Even if not read in their entirety, the canonical examples of "beauty" in global prose, poetry and short stories should be integrated into WL curricula. For all of its functions and potential purposes, literature remains an art form. Value should be placed on works that are not only accessible, or present diverse identities, but also their creativity and artistry.

Rubric for Significance: Prioritizing Content

The parameters above inform our curation of texts, enabling that the texts in the database are chosen for different epochs, literary styles, world regions and language groups. In order to choose a set of texts for a course, a Rubric for Reading Lists was created. This rubric rates texts based on their Impact and Applicability.

Impact

The impact of a text is determined based on three factors. The rubric determines impact by combining the number of *Citations* (researched through Google Scholar in English) and the *Diffusion* of a text, through Adaptations (film, animation, comic book, podcast, and so forth) and Library holdings (researched through Worldcat in English).[14]

These factors are not comprehensive for determining a text's impact, but allow for numerical values that help track the production of and reference(s) to a text over time and into the present. Texts that have been translated into major world languages, have high citation counts, numerous adaptations and/or are found in libraries worldwide have arguably more impact on collective storytelling, identity and artistic tradition than those who score low on these measures. The Impact formula is:

- LOW + LOW + No Adaptation = LOW
- LOW/MED + No Adaptation = LOW
- LOW + LOW + Adaptation = MED
- LOW/MED + Adaptation = MED
- MED/MED +/- Adaptation = MED

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[14] Translation of a text was initially used as an impact factor, however, it later became a method of exclusion (if a text has not been translated, it cannot be taught in English speaking classrooms and will not have, yet, had a significant global impact).

- LOW/HIGH + No Adaptation = MED
- LOW/HIGH + Adaptation = HIGH
- MED/HIGH +/- Adaptation = HIGH
- HIGH/HIGH +/- Adaptation = HIGH

Applicability

Applicability refers to the level of potential application of the message or lessons from a text to current or future-facing issues. The applicability of a text is therefore determined in the present. Though a text may have been groundbreaking at its time of publication, it may not necessarily be applicable to modern problems (and vice versa).

Four categories of "Applicability" have been chosen to identify the merits of a text:

1) Technoscientific
2) Sociocultural
3) Political
4) Economic

For example, *Frankenstein* (Mary Shelley) has become increasingly applicable to the 21st century world in all four categories, whereas, at its time of publication, it was more "fantastical" than applicable to the real-world problems of the Georgian period in British history.

In terms of the application of a text for understanding and solving future problems, *In Search of Lost Time* (Marcel Proust*)* and *Hedda Gabler* (Henrik Ibsen*)* are both classics of WL but have very little to propose in terms of future-facing applicability. This is not to say that these texts should be excluded from WL reading lists (they figure in the CCR WL database). However, there is a pressing need for a greater balance between the "classic" and "canonical" texts that make up the overwhelming majority of current WL curricula (e.g., AP Literature, IB, ACARA) and contemporary or less known (i.e., non-canonical) literature that is directly pertinent to understanding the human present and preparing for the future.

Each text is categorized as being of Low, Medium, or High applicability according to the following criteria:

LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Albeit important in its time, the lessons of the text no longer apply to current or projected future problems. Author's intent is irrelevant to the current application. Although of low applicability, these texts may still be wonderful reads!	Lessons from the text can be directly transferred to current or future problems (even if not intentionally focused on said problem). Author's intent does not necessarily align with the text's applicability.	Directly referencing and/or intended to impact a field (e.g., social problem, scientific domain); continues to impact said field. Often the author's intent aligns with the text's applicability.

This Rubric, combined with the parameters defined in Section II, provides the tools to curate a thoughtful, well-distributed, future-facing (world) literature curriculum. Not all texts must score high on all measures to warrant study; these metrics allow for well-informed precision in choosing texts based on the goals of a literature course. The database of texts, fully tagged according to these metrics, can be used to design a plethora of courses at different levels of granularity, concentrations on regions, identities or issues or be used to complement other courses (e.g., finding pertinent supplementary texts for History or Science courses).

CCR's WL Database

The CCR WL Database represents a curation of 343 texts in three categories: Long Fiction/Drama (150), Short Fiction (105) and Humanistic Texts (88) according to the metrics above. These texts are tagged according to eight Literary Periods, five Epochs, 99 Topics (organized into five Topic Domains), 47 Genres (organized into three primary Genres as well as 13 thematically organized mid-level genres), primary themes, Lexile reading level and the presence of mature content (e.g., violence and sex).

In addition to this, the CCR database incorporates studies concerning human values across the globe and tags texts and topics according to this research. The database tags 56 dominant values identified[15] in recent global studies, organized into five clusters:

- Relationships
- Security

[15] "The World's Most Influential Values." Neufeld (2020).

- Community
- Personal Growth
- Morality

This tool within the database permits learners to position texts within global systems of sense-making and human values, further contextualizing texts and connecting them to the present and future, as well as complementing knowledge learned in other domains (e.g., history, anthropology, philosophy).

Distribution

The goal of the database was to create a selection of *truly global* literature, with a target **cultural** distribution of:

Eastern	40%
Africa/Other	10%
Western Anglo	10%
Western non-Anglo	40%
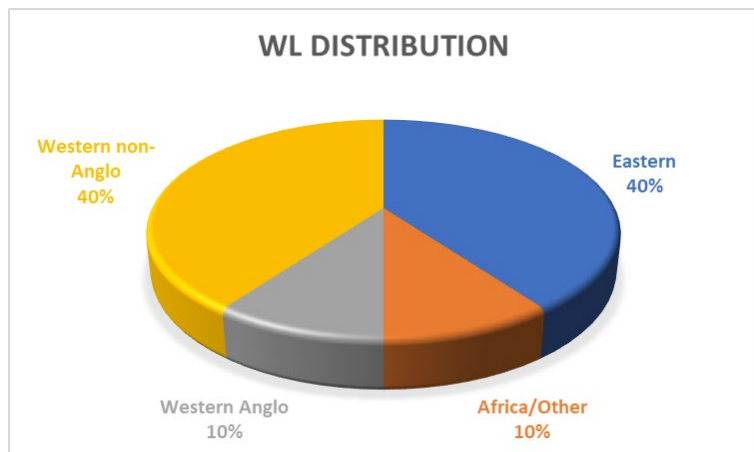
The choice in distribution is based on several factors, the first being the goal of balancing the WL database *evenly between the eastern/southern and western regions* of the globe. An even 50-50 split was therefore chosen, with 10% of each half reserved for Anglo-Saxon texts, and African, Oceanic and other texts, respectively. The decision to reduce African, Oceanic and Other texts to 10% reflects the general impact on global literature of texts from these regions. This effect can be explained by demographic factors (i.e., a much smaller population in Oceania nations that resulted in less cultural production) as well as factors of isolation (e.g., the insulation of much of Africa because of the Sahara Desert, and therefore lack of connection with other cultures, resulting in less diffusion and innovation of texts[16]), and eventual disruption, appropriation/destruction and domination by colonizing powers.

For the western portion, the preponderance of alphabetic, rather than ideogrammic, scripts, China's retrenchment[17], India's relative geographic isolation as a subcontinent, and finally the Renaissance, all favored western cultural expansion from its Greco-

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[16] *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. Diamond (1997).
[17] "The Ming Voyages." Asia for Educators, Columbia University (2022).

Roman (and partially Arabic) roots. Then, Anglo-Saxon texts have been given 10% of the distribution for both historical and future-facing reasons, notably the predominance of the English language over the past 200 years[18]. This is due to the Industrial Revolution, and the expansion of the anglophone sphere through British colonization, which allowed Anglo-Saxon texts to have enormous influence in WL; and, because of the continued importance and expansion of English,[19] these texts have significant impact both in the present and future[20].

The database is designed to provide an interactive, annotated bibliography of literature that truly spans the globe and allows educators and individuals to choose texts based on a wide variety of factors. The database represents an unprecedented effort in WL education as its *cultural diversity far surpasses that of existing world literature curricula* (K-12[21] *and even high-end, sampled* Higher Ed[22]!) in the US (and Australia and France[12] as well, as non-US examples).

Reading Level Scoring

To further make the database as accessible as possible for learners of all ages, comparative research concerning widely used reading level scoring systems[23] was conducted. While there are a number of different reading level scoring methods in use (e.g., Flesch-Kincaid[24], Guided Reading Levels[25], Developmental Reading Assessment[26]), currently the Lexile[27] Reading Levels scoring possesses the most stringent numerical filtering for the English language. and provides an online tool for scoring texts that have yet to be officially assessed by Lexile.

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[18] "English as a Lingua Franca." Seidlhofer (2005); "How and Why Did English Supplant French as the World's Lingua Franca?" Marques (2017).

[19] *Power Language Index*. Chan (2016).

[20] In addition to these considerations, research was conducted on the current, dominant religions in the world (top 10, based on population), to ensure that the database provides representations of these belief systems and their alternatives. Human philosophy and spirituality are not only reflected in the collection of Humanistic Texts, but also in the major topics of many works of Fiction, Drama and Short Fiction in the database.

[21] IB World Literature, Australian Curriculum, *Programme littéraire* (FR)

[22] St John's College: Great Books Reading List; Harvard's Masterpieces of World Literature; Stanford's Foundational Books list; UCLA's Comparative Literature course.

[23] "Reading Levels Explained." Prodigy (2022).

[24] "Flesch Reading Ease and Flesch Kincaid Grade Level." Readable.com (2022).

[25] "F&P Text Level Gradient." Fountas and Pinnell Literacy (2022).

[26] "Understanding Your Child's DRA Reading Level." Scholastic (2021).

[27] "Lexile Framework for Reading." Lexile (2022). This scoring system was developed in 2000 by UK-based MetaMetrics (responsible for designing the SAT I exam).

Using Lexile therefore permitted the collection of existing scores as well as the analysis of texts for which reading level had yet to be determined. All texts in the WL database have been tagged for their Lexile score[28], as well as the grade level for which this score typically corresponds. It must be noted that Lexile scoring is based on characteristics of a text such as sentence length and complexity, word frequency and vocabulary. *The reading level score of a text does **not** reflect a score of the appropriateness of the text's content for a particular age level.* Currently, no consistent scoring system exists for determining both difficulty of text structure and language and maturity level of text content.

Mature Content Ratings

Because current reading level scoring does not address content, and because CCR judges that warning readers about potentially inappropriate content is important when curating texts, the WL database includes tagging for mature content. This aspect of the design complements existing reading level scores and begins to respond to the lack of comprehensive and consistent mature content readings for literature. There are at least two groups that attempt to address this issue[29].

Because of the extensiveness of the database, and the unavailability of information in Western languages (i.e., English and French) concerning many non-Western texts, texts in the database for which we do not yet have accurate information concerning mature content are tagged as "In Progress" and will be researched with other scholars.

CCR's Top 100 WL Reading List

Within the database, CCR has curated a Top 100 WL reading list. This list contains texts with the highest scores in both the Impact and Applicability metrics and are distributed according to our target distribution for a truly global literature course.

All of the texts within the database warrant perusal to some degree and have been vetted according to the factors discussed above. The Top 100 list represents what CCR advises are the indispensable reads for the 21st century, both to understand the human past that has culminated in our present and to prepare for human futures. These texts have been curated according to our future-facing objectives, in addition to their literary merit, creativity and impact.

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[28] Excluding poetry, for which accurate Lexile scores are impossible to obtain.
[29] Compass Book Ratings; Common Sense Media.

In its current form, the database's impact matrices remain biased by 1) English language resources and 2) publication recency. The Impact factors of library holdings and citations (both researched in English) give greater weight to texts that are well-known in the anglophone world. Additionally, these measures bias the results based on temporality, as texts that have been in circulation for longer have a greater probability of being more well-cited and distributed. However, the target distribution in the database, which applies equally to the Top 100 list, corrects for these biases by forcing for content issued from global literature. For example, though an Eastern text may possess fewer citations or library holdings than an Anglophone text, all of the highest scoring texts for the distribution percentages were taken, so *Hamlet* (England) and *I Stared at the Night of the City* (Kurdistan) both have their rightful place. Texts are in competition for scoring within their regional distributions, not with numerical values of the full database.

How Should WL Be Learned?

CCR recommends WL learning that incorporates online resources and interactive media to teach in a learner's native language about "writers and writing from around the world without colonizing or excluding other languages and cultures."[30] WL presents distinctive challenges concerning availability and accessibility of non-dominant works in non-English languages, and learners' limited historical and cross-cultural knowledge. Expanding the idea of "texts" to the diverse digital media available mitigates these barriers and promotes a broader understanding of the contexts and cultures within which texts are situated. Through the incorporation of open-source Internet and interactive multimedia resources[31] WL becomes an arena in which "alternative and outsider voices can challenge and expand national, ethnic, linguistic, socio-political, and disciplinary boundaries."[32] The use of these resources encourages an inclusive notion of WL, not only as passive reading, but as a dynamic, collaborative and relevant practice. These resources not only economize learners' time, they allow multi-sensorial experiences that bring "stickiness" to global literature. Furthermore, when accessible adaptations (e.g., movie, comic book, or even summary) can accomplish what (or more!) an arcane book may teach, CCR recommends prioritizing the use of such adaptations

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[30] "Teaching World Literature for the 21st Century: Online Resources and Interactive Approaches." Bernstein (2013).

[31] For instance, blogs, videos, maps, interactive timelines, primary documents, archive materials, photographs, social media.

[32] "Teaching World Literature for the 21st Century: Online Resources and Interactive Approaches." Bernstein (2013).

over reading full length texts.[33] For this reason, we have incorporated a tag for "Recommended Media" in the WL database, to provide suggestions for alternative formats to traditional novels, treatises, etc.

Core Concepts in WL

Core concepts complement content knowledge in the 4-Dimensional Framework. **While content can be memorized, core concepts are *internalized and transferred to other circumstances***, and facilitate complex tasks like analyzing, evaluating, and creating. They are the "big ideas" of a discipline that can drive lifelong modern learning, and serve as disciplinary lenses through which a learner can see the world, enabling them to "think like a literary critic." Learners will not be able to retain all they read in WL, but if they can recognize and work with the core concept that "*power decides the 'Classics,'*" they will have a framework for analyzing and evaluating literature throughout their lifetime.

Each core concept has a concise "tagline" intended to facilitate learning and conversation. These taglines trade nuance for brevity and "stickiness," as their purpose is to provide learners with a memorable sentence. The description fills in this gap of nuance with additional detail. Then, accompanying examples provide learners with contexts for how these core concepts manifest themselves in WL.

Core concepts in WL apply to the full discipline, and, because of this, have been organized beginning with the most basic and fundamental concepts to more specific, interpretative and transformative concepts. To introduce learners to WL and its significance, the core concept organization tells a story about stories that begins with macro level concepts (e.g., concerning language and human creativity) and advances towards more specific core concepts concerning literary production, interpretation and influence. All core concepts for WL have been categorized into the following four clusters based on similarity of function:

- Human Basics
- Writing and Texts
- Interpretation
- Links and Change

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[33] "*I see many teachers spending four weeks on a book to teach concepts that could be taught in a much shorter period of time using several classic films or short stories. Be efficient with your students' time. For example, you could use short stories and movies to teach the elements of fiction. In two weeks they can read four stories and watch two movies and compare the plot structure, setting, and theme of each one. On the other hand, novels are necessary to teach students how an author uses figurative language, for instance. We need to be economical with our students' time*" (Nick Senger)

Core concepts relate to the materiality and creation of texts, as well as to questions of identity, connection, and communication. In this way, the core concepts for WL provide learners with "big ideas" about literature as production, consumption and an influential force in human history. The following core concept serves as an example:

Canon

Power decides which texts are "Classics."

Description: It is easy to assume books have always been considered classics, or been in the canon, or been banned -- but that is not the case. Exploring when and how texts move in and out of these categories can be an interesting way to track social movements and developments. It is also important to understand why something is considered a classic or in the canon and create your own valuation of it, instead of assuming its superiority or importance. While those structures can sometimes be a good guide to quality, they are always reflective of contemporary valuations of class, race, gender, sexuality, ableism, and more.

Embedding Competencies in WL

WL is an excellent school subject through which to instill Competencies/Subcompetencies into K-12 education, namely **Creativity**, **Critical Thinking, Communication, and Metacognition**[34].

Skills				Character						Meta-Learning	
Creativity	Critical Thinking	Communi -cation	Collabo -ration	Mindful -ness	Curiosity	Courage	Resilience	Ethics	Leadership	Meta -cognition	Growth Mindset
		*								*	

Creativity

WL is a fertile domain in education for the development of *Creativity*. Literature enables learners to engage with the arts without taking on some of the risks and challenges necessary in fields like writing. Texts serve as a vital space for readers to see examples of how authors connect, reorganize, and refine ideas into a cohesive whole, while simultaneously enabling readers to link and organize ideas themselves. Similarly, reflecting on processes and outcomes are integral to reading any text. The reading process serves as a useful space for readers to practice making connections between ideas, which can be leveraged in other creative spaces. WL also provides a challenging series of ideas and processes for learners to cogitate, and later deploy in new creative ways.

WL exposes learners to new ways of thinking, presenting ideas which must be engaged with to appreciate and understand a story. Finally, WL provides a global terrain in which learners can develop their personal tastes and sense of aesthetics - different styles of writing, voice, character development, setting, and so forth unearth new perspectives to which learners can respond according to their subjective impressions.

Critical Thinking

Critical Thinking is a key component of reading any text, and WL is an excellent arena for the development of this competency as learners are necessarily presented with other points of view and prompted to reflect on their own reasoning and assumptions. By bringing the experiences of others across space and time into a learner's world, WL not only presents novel or foreign opinions and practices, but contextualizes these, often with emotive content and personal narrative. Literary texts are very different from other forms of written media in that they provide rich landscapes of difference that learners must think through as they progress through a text.

Additionally, diverse literary practices and forms of narrative require learners to identify, clarify and organize information while assessing the validity of this information. (e.g., Is the narrator of the story reliable? Unreliable? Only telling part of the story?) Learners must reason through often complex tales and make decisions based on the information provided by a text. For instance, who is the villain in a novel like *Frankenstein* (Shelley)? Who is the hero in a short story like "The Metamorphosis" (Kafka)? Interpreting message and meaning in WL is an unparalleled exercise in *Critical Thinking* because of the range of content, its complexity and diversity of human experience.

Communication

The objective of any text in WL is to communicate. WL fosters both passive *Communication*, through the consumption of ideas, messages and stories and active *Communication* in the discussion of these messages. Ideally, learners retain messages, ideas and differences in perspective from their reading of WL that they can apply in their daily lives and articulate according to their interpretations. The diverse characters, situations and relationships portrayed in WL provide learners with a plethora of examples of how communication can occur, differences based on audience and the adaptation of language and writing to different purposes. Exposing learners to different forms of discourse from the past, present and potential future not only gives them examples of written communication, but of other modes of communication as described or enacted within the text (e.g., oral, nonverbal, paralingual, symbolic). Written texts are rarely solely about writing, but explore human communication in diverse forms.

Metacognition

WL provides an excellent arena for the development of *Metacognition*. Alternative ways of being and thinking and different perspectives are integral to WL and learners must consider these perspectives when engaging with a text. Stories provide learners with a clear, linear opportunity to monitor their comprehension and manage information. If something doesn't make sense, it is necessary to go back a few pages and review what happened to continue the story. Ideally, WL texts are compelling enough to make learners *want* to correctly understand the plot, encouraging them to monitor their understanding. Close reading, active reading, and note-taking strategies are fundamental gateways in enabling a reader to conceptualize the ways they process information.

WL is also rife with highly emotional content. Whether it be violence, discrimination, loss, sickness, rejection and so forth, reading diverse narratives nurtures self-awareness and regulation of one's emotions. Texts can incite the gamut of human emotion, without learners ever having to engage personally with the situations described. In this way, WL fosters *Metacognition* in a neutral, practice space and better prepares learners to identify and regulate these emotions when they happen outside of the printed page.

Technology and the Future of Human Literature

Technology has always influenced human writing. From stylus to typewriter to computer, machine assisted writing has developed over centuries and the influence of technology on writing throughout history is undeniable. Over the past several decades, research and innovation in AI has targeted human language use and artificial

comprehension and creation of human-like speech and writing. Recent developments (in particular GPT-3) have produced AI which has increasing capacities to create characters, narratives and plot lines with limited human input. AI tools such as GPT-3 can be complemented by conversational AI prototypes to create dialogue and develop characters.

Projects such as Stories By AI[35] combine existing machine learning technologies to explore the intersection between machine and human creativity. Machine co-writers can act as random thought generators or as the creators of connections humans may not make. By working with machines, humans can discover ideas that may not come to us intuitively. Many writers argue that AI is a useful tool in the creative process, but cannot replace the human elements of literature[36] - namely, human steering of AI technology, human creativity in informing these technologies and the goal of literature of communicating to human readers.

The world of machine learning will undoubtedly affect the creative process of writing (as well as literary content and topics!) AI may even create its own literature one day. Nevertheless, human literature will endure as human because of the individual embodied experiences and collective knowledge that informs it. Our stories may change, but as long as humans are involved in the creation of these stories, AI will remain a co-writer, not the sole author of our tales.

The consumption of literature has already been impacted by technology. Audio book accessibility creates access to literature for people with disabilities, and also builds upon the medium of literature as narrators can use voices and effects to create more immersive experiences. Book summary apps, such as Blinkist, distill lengthy texts into quickly digestible nuggets to enable increased access to big literary ideas. With AI technologies improving in their ability to process, synthesize, and summarize complex ideas, as well as make connections across large literary data sets, we can anticipate pathways to more easily and efficiently access challenging literature across languages to only increase. It then becomes useful to break down the benefits of reading into composite parts, as a reader can optimize those composite parts with modern tools based on their goals. If reading to quickly ascertain key ideas to leverage them in real-world challenges, use of apps can streamline the process. If reading to increase focus and attention span, utilizing a text-to-speech converter to play words out loud while visually reading can enhance focus. If a reader seeks full immersion in a literary world, a well-produced audio book featuring an assortment of character voices can bring the

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[35] Stories By AI
[36] "How GPT-3 Helps Me Write Short Stories." Kallio, 2022.

fantastic to life. Equipping readers with the metacognition (as highlighted in Section 8) will enable them to best identify and optimize their goals

Conclusion

Because of the integral role of storytelling in human life, WL is a key domain of study, not only the content of "great literature," but also how stories work, what stories can do and our inherent, cognitive drive towards appreciating and telling stories.

The framework outlined in this paper aimed towards forwarding the study of WL through the following recommendations:

- Truly *globalizing* WL courses and prioritizing their content towards future-facing goals.
  - Rating texts on scales of Impact and Applicability, liberating reading lists from canonical repetition
  - Advocating for cultural diversity, representation and relevance in texts curated
  - Modifying instruction to incorporate texts in various forms of media (e.g., film, graphic novels, interactive videos on the internet).
- Creating a database of texts from across time and space through which educators and individuals can tailor their reading based on fifteen different metrics.
- Providing recommendations for preferred media through which to enjoy the text within the database to facilitate exposure to the richness of global literature and expand literacy in its multiple forms.
- Tracking the progress of technology, for its impact and affordances.

CCR believes that this combination of approaches will allow for a truly global experience of WL and the opportunity to expose readers to the ever-growing richness of human literary creation.

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Appendix - Sample Core Concepts

Constructed Texts

Texts are a product of their culture.

Description: All texts are a product of context - sociocultural, economic, and traditional - to some extent. There is no such thing as a "purely" imaginative text; all human-produced texts are saturated by the context of their writing and the lives of their producers. Texts may express the values and beliefs of a society or put them under a critical lens. Sometimes this is easy to spot, but for the most part, the source of a text's mood or temperament takes a bit of digging. To understand a text is also to understand the time and place in which it was written and read.

Grammar

Grammar reflects a writer's intent.

Description: Though every language possesses specific grammatical rules, writers can make use of and manipulate grammar to a diverse array of ends. Grammar can be used to reflect class, race, culture, religious affiliation, level of education and so forth. The grammatical style used within a text is not innocuous, but purposefully crafted to attain a writer's goals, whether that be to set the scene for a short story, or a social revolution.

Message

The medium impacts the message.

Description: How a text is delivered impacts what it can communicate and how it communicates it. A play, novel, short story, etc. can all address the same theme or situation but will be amplified and limited by their respective mediums.

Texts are vehicles for communication of messages. Analyzing texts lets us examine how writers "speak" through texts and how the structures and styles of these vehicles for communication have changed over human history. Reading is a relationship between readers, writers and texts that allows us to delve into unique aspects of human communication.

Perspectives

Texts give new vistas on real and fantastical worlds.

Description: Texts can offer us new perspectives on any aspect of human experience and encourage us to consider our own viewpoints and reasoning. The multitude of characters, situations, relationships, and worlds that texts present give readers an invaluable (and inexpensive!) opportunity to explore different perspectives throughout space and time, both real and imagined, fantastical or possible.

The logic, practices, beliefs, and ideologies of other worlds, as well as how different characters respond to these circumstances, are richly presented in narratives and allow not only for "windows into other worlds," but engagement with diverse global perspectives and sense-making practices.

Connection

Texts connect across space and time.

Description: Texts are powerful; their themes, language, fears, and observations often resonate across time periods and across the world. Finding these emotional through-lines can be very powerful and can help us connect with people and cultures we've never met or experienced. This can be key for developing empathy and for seeing into worlds you don't have access to. The history of literature continually echoes the human experience and always has the potential to create connections between people, places, and experiences.