Teaching Literature in America: Demonstrating Relevance in the Early Cold War 1945-1963

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TEACHING LITERATURE IN AMERICA: DEMONSTRATING RELEVANCE IN
THE EARLY COLD WAR (1945-1963)

by

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of the Requirements for a Degree with Honors
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Abstract

This historical research focuses on how literature was taught in American high schools in the early Cold War period (1945-1963) and why it was taught that way. It aims to discover how the Cold War culture of conformity impacted secondary literature education. What were literature teachers’ concerns? What was the historical context of these concerns, and how did they affect methods in the classroom and rhetoric in academic journals? Finally, how did methodology and rhetoric change over time? Research involved gaining familiarity with Early Cold War culture, politics, and events through secondary sources; narrowing to U.S. education in the early Cold War; and examining primary source articles in The English Journal between 1945 and 1963.

Throughout the period, literature teachers used this journal to explain how and why literature prepared high school students to be successful in American society. Teachers expressed concern about preparing students for a democratic society and reflected the countrywide focus on demonstrating that the U.S. political and economic model of democracy and free trade would be more successful than the Soviet Union’s communist and socialist model. When the Soviet Union launched Sputnik in 1957, the United States competed to be scientifically superior, and teachers adapted to demonstrate that literature was still relevant to a society focused on science and competition. This project concludes that during the early Cold War, teachers feared for their reputations and jobs if they did not conform to societal expectations and prove that their lessons prepared students to be good Americans. Due to the heightened concern and potential consequence, this is a particularly relevant time period in which to study the ongoing compulsion for literature educators to demonstrate their subject’s relevance to society.
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Literature: A Weapon For Subversion

“Uncle, the rumor of witchcraft is all about; I think you’d best go down and deny it yourself.”¹ This line from the first scene of *The Crucible* was the first indication that Arthur Miller’s 1953 play might have been a political allegory for the time and culture in which it was written. The audience immediately caught on to this connection, and a controversy quickly developed. “When *The Crucible* opened on January 22, 1953,” English Literature professor Robert A. Martin has explained, “the term ‘witch-hunt’ was nearly synonymous in the public mind with the Congressional investigations then being conducted into allegedly subversive activities.” From 1949 to 1958, more than 100 Communist Party USA (CPUSA) leaders were prosecuted for violating the Smith Act, which had passed in 1940 to prevent people from advocating violent overthrow of the government. Accusations were so abundant because they were often based on beliefs that CPUSA leaders held, rather than on their proven “activities.” In the 1957 *Yates v. United States* decision, the Supreme Court mandated that trials be based on action rather than belief, and the Smith Act trials began to subside. In 1953, though, the trials were ongoing and present on the minds of many Americans. Since “Arthur Miller's plays have always been closely identified with contemporary issues,” the atmosphere was ripe for comparison of “the witchcraft trials at Salem, Massachusetts in 1692 and the current Congressional hearings,” and this became “the central issue of the play.”²

Since 1953, Miller has admitted that he “could not have written *The Crucible* at any other time,” implying that this time in American history was unique and that he

intended for the play’s plot and themes to call out to contemporary America. The playwright himself demonstrated the connection between the two eras: in much the same way as his characters were accused of witchcraft, Miller was accused of associating with the Communist Party. He testified before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), where he refused to give any names of other alleged Communists and perpetuate the witch-hunt. Since his hearing, Miller concluded that the Salem judges were genuinely evil. He has even said that given the opportunity to re-write *The Crucible*, he might make that commentary even more blatant.³

HUAC’s choice to investigate and subpoena Miller after he wrote *The Crucible* demonstrated that an extreme fear of Communism – or at least an extreme effort to extinguish it – existed in American culture and politics in the 1950s. But this situation also suggested that literature itself could bring about fear and accusation alongside the people who wrote it. Literature was in fact used as a primary mode of evidence during the first Smith Act trial in 1949. Eleven CPUSA leaders were “charged with conspiring to teach and advocate the duty to overthrow the government by force and violence at some future time.” Prosecutors used “passages from books the defendants had studied and taught” as proof of their guilt, and the judge called these books the “tools of their conspiracy.” One of the accused CPUSA leaders, Gil Green, later reflected on the role that literature played in this investigation: “[It was] as if we were thieves and the books were our weapons.”⁴

Mid-twentieth century Americans recognized that literature could be shown to contain anti-government sentiment, that it was a medium with which to make radical or

³ Martin 289-290.
subversive political commentary, and that reading or teaching it could be used as proof of one’s desires to overthrow the government or one’s Communist Party associations or sympathies. As Miller’s and Green’s hearings demonstrated, literature could prove that someone had questioned the government. In early Cold War America, literature was seen as a potential weapon for subversion.

Since teaching literature was used as an incriminating activity in Gil Green’s hearing, teaching as a profession of its own was deeply impacted. Americans became aware of the potential danger of reading, interpreting, and taking lessons from literature. Literature teachers were most directly affected by this change in the public perception of literature, which was their main instructional material. As private and public school teachers assigned texts to their students and taught them how to interpret, they remained sensitive to how their lessons could be perceived by their employers and the government. To avoid criticism and accusation, literature teachers made conscious choices about how to present their subject to students and to society.

The politics, ideologies, and culture of conformity during the early Cold War motivated secondary English literature teachers’ instructional choices. Many of these choices were then recorded in the articles of the primary academic journal for literature teachers, *The English Journal*. These articles track an evolution over the course of the early Cold War: as the concerns of the nation changed, so did the teachers’. An analysis of the concerns that teachers discussed, the methods they advocated, and the rhetoric they used in these articles reveals that as society changed, teachers readily adapted in order to continually demonstrate their subject’s relevance and thereby their own conformity to cultural expectations.
The Early Cold War: A Culture of Conformity

A government’s policy decisions have consequences throughout society. They impact not only political processes but the nation’s culture as well. This effect has been particularly relevant to the history of the Cold War period in the United States.\(^5\) Historians have studied extensively the economy, politics, and culture of the early Cold War period (1945-1963), noting a few defining characteristics of that time. After World War II, U.S. economic and political goals were closely intertwined, and they involved both the domestic and international spheres. Economically, the United States emerged from WWII with a desire to establish free trade internationally and to maintain the domestic economic upturn that had resulted from the war. However, political disagreement within the United States and conflict outside the United States posed some obstacles to these economic goals in the early Cold War.\(^6\)

In the international sphere, the United States spent much of the period attempting to establish hegemony in Europe, Africa, and South America in an effort to promote democracy, a government system that attempts to unite individual opinions to determine the most universally pleasing decisions, and to eliminate totalitarianism, a government system in which the state controls the public and private activities of its citizens. In doing so, rhetoric and propaganda from U.S. government, business, and popular culture caused many Americans to associate these political systems with certain economic systems – democracy with capitalism and totalitarianism with socialism, or communism – even

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though these two political systems did not necessitate the respective economic systems. Economically, the United States sought to stop the spread of any system that interfered with global capitalism or offered an alternative to the free market, private enterprise system. Communism was one type of economic system that interfered with U.S. goals for international free trade; it involved more government involvement and control than free trade would allow.

At the end of WWII, the United States and the Soviet Union stood as the two greatest world powers, while Germany’s and Japan’s infrastructure, economy, and morale were left destroyed and their political values delegitimized. The United States and the Soviet Union both sought post-war stability, but they approached the issue in different ways. The United States established the Marshall Plan (1948) to help rebuild the German and the larger European economy and infrastructure. They hoped that this would ultimately restore prosperity in Europe and open up lines of free trade, from which the United States would benefit economically. However, the Soviet Union posed an obstacle to the U.S. achievement of worldwide free trade because it did not want to rebuild Germany but rather set up economies and governments like its own around Europe to protect itself. It feared rebuilding Germany because Germany’s potential for aggression had been demonstrated in two world wars. In reaction to the Marshall Plan, the Soviet Union established the Eastern Bloc, its sphere of influence, and put up an “iron curtain” to block itself off from Germany. The United States established the Truman Doctrine, which included a policy of containment to contain communism and prevent the further spread of the Soviet Union’s influence as well as a promise to support other nations that fought communism. In the early 1950s, the United States and the Soviet Union faced
each other on opposite sides of the Korean War.\textsuperscript{7} Political and economic conflicts such as these contributed to the change in American ideology through the late 1940s and early 1950s. Domestically, these conflicts shed a positive, heroic light on American democracy and a negative, antagonistic light on Soviet communism.

In the domestic sphere, economics and politics were also closely connected. Beginning in 1945, Democratic President Harry Truman announced domestic government-funded social and economic reforms, including higher minimum wage, price controls, and assistance to small businesses, farmers, and the unemployed. In 1949, he formally proposed the Fair Deal to encompass these reform efforts.\textsuperscript{8} Most of the Fair Deal’s larger initiatives did not pass through the conservative-dominated Congress, made up of Republicans and conservative Southern Democrats, who promoted corporate capitalism – freedom and competition for big businesses with few government restrictions – to a greater degree than President Truman. This free enterprise economic system continued to grow through the Presidency of Dwight Eisenhower (1953-1961) and came to represent what most conservative leaders of the day thought of as a keystone of U.S. political ideas. Conservatives as early as the 1940s began to accuse liberal Democrats of sympathizing with communism because they sought increased government control over the economy through labor unions and social welfare programs, much like the Fair Deal had proposed. Conservatives did not believe that liberals could promote these socialist-leaning programs and also be democratic, so they accused anyone who did


not promote free trade and private enterprise of being communist and thereby undemocratic.⁹

As a result of this fundamental disagreement, as historian Elizabeth Fones-Wolf has recognized, Americans defined the concept of democracy in a couple of key ways during this period. Liberal Democrats endorsed the democratic ideals of equality in social, political, and economic spheres, but – believing such an achievement to be unpractical – they compromised with conservatives and advocated economic growth by allowing big business to operate freely and only asked that the government provide “social welfare and social insurance” when the private sector could not meet the needs of all American citizens.¹⁰ Meanwhile, conservatives defined the democratic, “American way” as “a harmonious, classless society, [of] nationalism, individual rights, free enterprise, and abundance rising from ever increasing productivity.”¹¹ Throughout the 1950s, Americans championed democracy, though liberals stressed the way it promoted equality for all while conservatives stressed the way it promoted individual freedoms. This difference in the language of the two definitions represents a distinct and significant divide that Americans attempted to overcome during this period in an effort to follow the process of democracy, whereby citizens’ votes, or their ideas and preferences, allowed them to contribute to and influence their government’s decisions and policies. The participatory nature of democracy came to be the central focus. American philosopher and social and educational reformer John Dewey highlighted the way that democratic government provided the opportunities and resources necessary for people to participate

⁹ Godfried. “Consumerism, Anti-Communism, and the 1950s.”
¹¹ Ibid. 5.
in “political, social, and cultural life,” and he called the democratic process of government “the most effective means of organizing consensus and preserving stability.” Still, the United States did not present the opportunities and resources necessary for all people to participate in the democratic process at this time. The Jim Crow laws, which limited political rights in the South, are perhaps the most prominent example of this. Another limitation to this effort to organize consensus and preserve stability was the significant contradiction that arose from it during the early Cold War period. The United States and its citizens championed the democratic process so emphatically that the government began to suppress any thoughts or actions that it saw as un-democratic, and it thereby violated the tenets of the democratic process.

Regardless of this contradiction, as the United States promoted and propagandized democracy, acting democratically became a defining characteristic of a good American citizen and of the overall culture of the early Cold War. To explain how such a focused aim came to encompass so many American’s political beliefs, historians have also used the word consensus. Fones-Wolf, for example, explained that most Americans “[believed] in equality of opportunity for individuals [and] in the existence of an open, classless society.” Stephen J. Whitfield commented on the liberal compromise, calling it a “palpable weakening of the left” and a “formation of a right-of-center consensus.” With a slightly more critical tone than Fones-Wolf, he said, “The spectrum of reputable opinion narrowed, shriveling the framework within which realistic political choices were entertained. ‘Americans live in fundamental agreement concerning

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13 Ibid. 41.
14 Fones-Wolf 4.
certain long-range aims and principles,' Fortune magazine proclaimed in 1951."

Whitfield recognized the effect of political consensus on Cold War culture by explaining that it kept Americans from making decisions that were too far outside the box: The first chapter of his book The Culture of the Cold War, titled “Politicizing Culture: Suspicious Minds,” indicated the sense of fear created by this narrowing field of acceptable thought. Similarly, cultural historian Nancy E. Bernhard, in the introduction to her book U.S. Television News and Cold War Propaganda, noted the following general tendency:

“When consensus is strong, dominant institutions exert tremendous power to delineate legitimate lines of debate and exclude others.” She explained, “The political climate during the early Cold War, especially concerning questions of foreign policy, is perhaps the foremost example of that kind of time in U.S. history.” Historians thus agree that political decisions can and do affect culture and that the early Cold War era presents an opportunity to analyze that relationship. Fones-Wolf, Whitfield, and Bernhard all explored the concept of consensus and its impact on specific elements of American culture: Fones-Wolf addressed business and labor; Whitfield addressed religion, film, television, music, literature, and theater; and Bernhard addressed television news broadcasts and propaganda. They explained how specific cultural topics reflected overall political and cultural tendencies.

Other historians have done similar work with the topics of literature and education in this period, some focusing specifically on university education, secondary-level

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16 Bernhard 10.
education, university-level education in literature, and secondary-level education in social studies. In doing so, they have danced around the topic of secondary-level education in literature.

In the books *No Ivory Tower* and *Many Are the Crimes*, historian Ellen Schrecker established the extent to which U.S. attempts to “[protect] internal security…against the threat of Communism” disrupted Americans’ lives, causing many to lose their jobs. *No Ivory Tower* gave evidence of the effect on university-level educators, many of whom did lose their jobs during this period – a period Schrecker called “the most widespread and longest lasting wave of political repression in American history.” Although she focused on the university, Schrecker revealed anecdotally that one of her own childhood teachers “lost his job for political reasons” and then struggled to find another. In doing so, she indicated how widespread were the effects of McCarthyism across American education. By also noting the extensive media attention given to many of the professors’ hearings, Schrecker revealed that teachers at all levels had reason to worry about losing their jobs and that they likely were aware of this potential danger.

Two additional concerns compound the situation of high school literature teachers, making their case particularly interesting. As literature teachers, they feared the potential subversion of their instructional materials, and as high school teachers, they knew they were feeding students directly into the adult workforce or to the universities,

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22 Ibid. xii.
23 Ibid. xi.
making them the final line of mandatory education and the primary target for blame if their students became somehow detrimental to society. Thus, there is compelling reason to study high school literature teachers’ choices, methods, and rhetoric and to explore how the concept of consensus impacted this element of American culture in order to have a complete understanding of how political concerns permeated American culture during the early Cold War.

In this period’s culture of conformity, the work of literature teachers – just like that of film-makers, artists, and authors – illustrated that the government had “delineate[d] legitimate lines” of cultural expression. To protect their reputations and their careers, literature teachers sought to prove the relevance of their subject in the American high school and in society by demonstrating that literature could adhere to the government-delineated lines of acceptable cultural expression and did help to create American citizens who conformed to the accepted American ideals, politically and economically.

People in the discipline of English literature have probably always been concerned with proving that the study of literature is relevant to society. Today, in the university setting, students, faculty, and administrators alike often ask English majors, “What kind of job will you get with a degree in English?” because they might not see it as relevant to preparing students for today’s society. They believe literary scholarship to be subjective and based on empiricism; and they recognize that society values objectivity and hard evidence. Most English majors and teachers understand that language and literary analysis is not entirely subjective. The disciplinary discourses, theories, and practices with which literature is approached at the university level transform it into
something of a soft science, but many people outside the subject doubt that reading books and writing papers could prepare students for the job market after college.

Literature teachers during the early Cold War period dealt with similar concerns: They had to show that their subject and classes were relevant to preparing students for life after high school. It is particularly interesting to observe this tendency during the early Cold War because of the era’s push for consensus. At a time when conformity was so crucial, teachers of English literature had greater motivation to prove their relevance. Because the consequences to not demonstrating literature’s relevance were heightened, teachers’ attempts to do so were exaggerated. If they did not demonstrate that literature was relevant to society – that it could conform to society’s expectations and prepare students for adulthood – it did not just risk criticism of irrelevance, as it might today. It also risked accusations of subversion, and so did the people who taught it. For example, if literature classes today do not teach students to analyze texts systematically and compose effective arguments about their ideas, they do not adequately equip students with the skills they need for today’s competitive job market, which is oriented toward those who have the critical thinking and communication skills to solve problems strategically. The consequence of noncompliance is criticism of inadequacy and irrelevance. In the early Cold War period, the job market called for workers willing to participate in a capitalist society with a competitive spirit and enthusiasm for the mission of their employers and big business. Workers had to buy into the conservative ideal that hard work for private industry would allow all Americans greater personal success “rising from ever increasing productivity” for the entire country. If literature classes did not attempt to prepare students to buy into this free enterprise, private industry ideal, they might send the
message to students and society that they were intentionally teaching students to protest this system by default. In the anti-communist-charged atmosphere, teachers who did not prepare students for a democratic, capitalist society risked being accused of preparing students to be subversive – to be communists – by default. To avoid accusations and investigations, teachers made deliberate decisions about how to present literature to their students and how to present their discipline to society.

The articles teachers wrote in *The English Journal*, a journal for American English teachers and professionals since 1912, demonstrated that their decisions about pedagogy and rhetoric were based on the overarching cultural ideologies of their time. Throughout the period, *The English Journal* considered issues of societal relevance and sought to implement cultural and political conformity. Beginning in 1946, the journal’s articles explained that literature education could and did prepare students to live in a post-WWII society, where Americans championed democracy, Western knowledge, and conformity. Then, in 1957, when the Soviet Union launched the first artificial satellite into space, the United States revised its concerns. The United States wanted to compete with and out-do the Soviet Union, so it added scientific development and competition to the list of American values. As a result, English literature teachers modified their rhetoric to prove their cultural relevance in the new scientific society. The teaching of English literature, then, was an expression of the early Cold War culture in its pedagogical methodology and also in the way that, as an academic discipline, it attempted to conform to societal expectations rather than risk being accused as subversive like university educators and other professionals were.
The English Journal’s articles from 1945 to 1963 track a change over the course of the early Cold War, which historians often identify as ranging from the mid 1940s – at the end of World War II – to the early 1960s. For the purpose of this project, 1963 is an appropriate year with which to mark the end of the period because the climate of the United States shifted significantly upon the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963, the start of Lyndon B. Johnson’s presidency, and the beginning of the Vietnam War. Additionally, significant early Cold War events continued to impact culture and affect the field of literature education through 1963. Analyzing the articles of The English Journal from 1945 to 1963, in the context of other concurrent historical events of the early Cold War, reveals that as U.S. concerns and culture changed, teachers adjusted their concerns, methods, and rhetoric as well. The most noteworthy adaptation during this period occurred when the Soviet Union launched the satellite Sputnik in 1957 and teachers made distinct pedagogical modifications to demonstrate their subject’s continued relevance and their own conformity to cultural expectations.

Teaching Literature for a Democratic Society

Between 1946 and 1956, literature teachers championed Western culture, promoted democratic pedagogical methods, and used conservative, patriotic rhetoric as they discussed and debated what type of literature to teach and how to teach it. Two opposing opinions dominated the conversation: Some believed in teaching contemporary literature and employing new, individualized, student-specific teaching methods; others preferred teaching classic literature and using traditional methods that gave all the students in the classroom identical assignments. By 1956, teachers came to a consensus
and proposed the “multiple approach.”\textsuperscript{25} The process by which they resolved to use this multiple approach paralleled the country’s democratic political ideal: the organization of a variety of ideas to produce a consensus. As Americans defined democracy in three different ways and worked to reconcile the differences, literature teachers used all three definitions to demonstrate that their three teaching methods, new, traditional, and multiple, were relevant to the political culture and ideology. Some pedagogy aligned with the conservatives’ definition of democracy – \textit{individual freedoms} – and some aligned with the liberals’ definition – \textit{equality for all} – but the process by which teachers discussed and debated the various methods and came to a common resolution aligned with the overall consensus surrounding the democratic political process and finding a stable, unified outcome.

In 1946 at the convention for the National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE), the council’s president, Harold A. Anderson, gave an address at the opening general session entitled “The Function of English Instruction in Education for Democracy.” It illustrated that at the beginning of the early Cold War period, English teachers were concerned with creating an educational setting in their classes that would be proper for a democratic society and that they were making decisions based on the culture of the time.

In his address, Anderson mentioned that the theme of the 1946 convention was “The Emerging English Curriculum” and then acknowledged that “important changes have been taking place in the English curriculum at all levels in recent years.”\textsuperscript{26} This


statement from Anderson, along with the word “emerging” in the convention’s theme, supports the assumption that English literature education has not always been the same; rather, it changed over time and those changes affected all levels of literature education – university, secondary, and primary. Anderson also demonstrated that at the beginning of the Cold War, literature educators sensed that their subject would soon be evolving: “[I]t should be equally clear that a number of impending changes will take place during the years that lie immediately ahead.”27 Although Anderson referred directly to the field of literature education, the early Cold War changed the political, economic, and cultural spheres alike. Anderson could not have known in 1946 exactly how society would change in the years to come, but he anticipated that, due to the “urgent need [to clarify]”28 the function of English education in society, literature pedagogy would have to adapt to these changes regardless. His article demonstrated both that teachers expected to prepare students for a democratic society and that they were willing to conform as society evolved.

In 1946, the expectation that education prepared students to live in a democracy could not yet be explained by the early Cold War culture of conformity and anti-communist fervor. In the years immediately following WWII, overt repression had not yet begun. Schrecker explained that in these years, “[t]races” of the “anti-Communism of the Nazi-Soviet Pact period [still remained].” These lingering fears manifested themselves in coworkers’ “occasional coldness” toward those who had previously been accused and in “the unwillingness of liberals to revive the Popular Front alliances with

27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
Communists. Yet that unwillingness did not, at first, translate itself into repression.” In fact, Schrecker even noted an “efflorescence of political radicalism” at some American universities at this time. In this post-war calm before the storm of McCarthyism, Anderson and the NCTE did not yet have serious reason to fear accusations of subversion if they did not conform, so the motivation for Anderson’s recommendation that teachers prepare students for a democratic society must be explained another way.

In 1946, one obvious explanation was that teachers were likely motivated by pride and patriotism to prepare students for the democratic society that had just emerged victorious from WWII. Additionally, educators had begun to prepare students for a democratic society well before Anderson’s address. The pre-World War I Progressive Era had reformed American education, giving it a renewed focus on preparing students for the post-Industrial Revolution world. Since the end of the nineteenth century, American schools had made significant strides and adaptations at systematic, structural, and curricular levels due to the heightened stress on progressive education. The lasting effects of this movement likely influenced Anderson’s address, especially his acknowledgement of past and ongoing curriculum changes.

A movement for progressive education existed in many countries by the early twentieth century, and philosopher and psychologist John Dewey of the University of Chicago emerged as a major progressive educational reformer in the United States.  

29 Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower*, 84.
30 Westbrook 94; Dewey and his wife opened a school in Chicago to put in place and test some new, progressive teaching methods. Dewey believed students should receive schooling in science, art, history, “fundamental methods of inquiry,” the tools of communication, and how to succeed in industry, persevere, lead, and follow. Graduates from Dewey’s Laboratory School were seen to be more successful at the university level than students who had graduated from traditional, college preparatory-style schools that focused on rote memorization. Through the first half of the twentieth century, many American schools embraced components of Dewey’s educational ideals and began to move away from the teaching methods
Dewey rethought what students should learn, how they should be taught, what effect they should have on society, and how school systems should operate. He developed his educational ideals from his philosophy of democracy. In Dewey’s participatory democracy, “men and women…[would] build communities in which the necessary opportunities and resources [were] available for every individual to realize fully his or her particular capacities and powers through participation in political, social, and cultural life.”31 Schools in this society prepared students to participate in their community and “help[ed] children develop the character – the habits and virtues – that would enable them to achieve self-realization,” or to hone their unique skills and to thereby become productive members of their community.32 In his theories about how school systems should operate and how teaching methods should be formed, Dewey suggested “intellectual initiative, discussion, and decision throughout the entire school corps,”33 again drawing from the process of participatory democracy. By the middle of the twentieth century, the characteristics of the educational system and the democratic process that Dewey advocated had been naturalized into the culture of The English Journal, where ideas were proposed, discussed, and advocated through continual conversation.

Given Dewey’s influence on American education in the early twentieth century, Anderson was likely continuing to follow the progressive model when he pushed teachers to prepare students for life after school. His speech suggests that the culture of progressive education still affected literature teachers' ideas and decisions in 1946 and

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31 Ibid. xv.
32 Ibid. 104-105.
33 Ibid. 107.
thereby put them in a special position at the outset of the early Cold War. Before political repression began to threaten their jobs and reputations, teachers already believed that they must conform to society’s expectations and demonstrate that literature prepared students to live in the early Cold War culture.

Historian M.A. Hepburn, who has written about social studies education during the early Cold War, recognized the continued impact of progressivism on American education after WWII. Hepburn cited the Educational Policy Commission of the National Education Association, who described the purpose of American education to be “personal development, vocational preparation, and civic responsibility and competence” in both 1944 and 1952. She interpreted this to be a more practical version of progressive education.34 The remainder of Anderson’s address, which expressed how literature was relevant to the United States in the late 1940s, aligned with this definition of progressive education based on personal development toward civic competence. Anderson’s thesis was, “English instruction for all American youth must be justified in terms of its contribution to human development and to the improvement of the democratic way of life”(emphasis added).35 He argued that literature education should help students become more competent democratic citizens and that it could do so by extending people’s consciousness and introducing them to geographic, historical, and moral situations that they would not otherwise experience.36

While Anderson’s thesis demonstrates a continued effort toward progressive education, it also speaks to the very early Cold War political atmosphere in the United States. To explain “the democratic way of life” that he mentioned in his initial argument,

34 Hepburn 153
35 Anderson 76.
36 Ibid. 72
he later described the “democratic ideal” as the process of achieving “unity amid diversity,” or consensus among varying ideas. He explained that literature would improve this way of life by teaching students to “meet emotional crises,” exemplify “moral virtues,” and achieve “mutual understanding.” The historical context in which Anderson used these phrases indicates what he may have been referring to and illustrates the American mentality after WWII. During the war, Americans faced “emotional crises” as they fought in the war, watched their friends and family leave for war, and changed their routines at home to fill the roles of the men who left for war. Then, when the war ended, Americans saw democracy defeat dictatorship, and the United States continued to propagate the “mutual understanding” that democracy was morally superior to other evil political systems on the losing side of the war. Anderson’s 1946 address to the NCTE, then, was both a sample of the political and educational mentality of the post-WWII period and a set of guidelines for literature educators in the early Cold War.

In the following ten years, the changes that Anderson expected occurred around the world, in the United States, and in the English classroom. From 1946 to 1956, high school literature teachers approached their work in various ways that all matched American “moral virtues,” sought to help students form “mutual understanding,” and prepared students to handle the “crises” of the world. During these years, teachers’ methods adhered to the “democratic ideal.” By 1956, their process of discussion and debate even brought them to a “unity amid diversity.” They found consensus among their various methods, just like Anderson advised in 1946.

In 1956, Walter Loban’s article “Teaching Literature: A Multiple Approach” gave a concise overview of the literature teachers’ specific pedagogical concerns through this

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37 Ibid. 73-74.
first ten years of the early Cold War period. Looking back, he acknowledged two distinct groups, the “defenders” and the “innovators,” that had been debating nearly opposite methods.38 Loban’s categories now serve as a tool for analyzing the articles of the The English Journal and recognizing the major views of the era. Between 1946 and 1956, the articles’ ideas and rhetoric placed them within one of Loban’s two groups and demonstrated that both groups were conforming to the culture of the time.

Defenders

Defenders were traditionalists who believed in teaching the classics because “even a small acquaintance with a great author would be more valuable than a complete understanding of the works of a relatively mediocre mind.” Defenders “were genuinely concerned over the danger of inferior literary quality and insufficient challenge to the intellect and judgment of the reader.”39 They valued what they believed to be high quality literature that would challenge their students and give them foundational knowledge about the great works of literature of the past. In this way, they adhered to the cultural ideology of the time because post-WWII Americans believed the Allies’ victory in the war indicated the strength and superiority of Western ideas. Teaching classic works of western thought and philosophy to prepare students to succeed as adults in a thoroughly westernized world made sense in this context. Furthermore, defenders gave their students uniform assignments, regardless of the students’ reading level and interests, and aligned themselves with the liberal definition of democracy, which treated everyone the same. By advocating these uniform assignments and classic texts, a number of articles in The English Journal between 1946 and Loban’s article in 1956 confirm the presence of

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38 Loban 75.
39 Ibid. 76.
the defenders among literature teachers. Below are two examples of defenders along with analyses of their traditionalist qualities and their overall conformity to the early Cold War culture.

In 1949, Regina Heavey of a Pennsylvania high school wrote “Goodbye, William Shakespeare.” She expressed concern that high school syllabi drooped “traditional great works of literature” term after term, and she championed the “exaltation of mind and spirit so essential to great literature.”

She saw the ability of great literature to enhance students’ overall knowledge and understanding, and she called this “exaltation of the mind.” A few years earlier, Anderson had called this enhancement of the mind “human development” and he had credited it with helping students to achieve “mutual understanding.” Anderson and Heavey believed in the potential for literature education to increase students’ worldly awareness.

After establishing herself as a defender in just the title and central concern of her article, Heavey reinforced her classification as she spoke for “[e]very experienced high-school teacher to whom the tradition of English literature [was] dear” (emphasis added).

By also declaring that there was an ongoing “assault upon our literary tradition,” she echoed the developing culture-wide fear of attack from political non-traditionalists – non-Americans, non-democrats – and she promoted the “democratic ideal” that Anderson advised. She feared straying from tradition, and thereby supported conformity and consensus. Throughout Heavey’s article, there were a number of other indications that she was reacting to a series of significant historical events that took place in 1949 and

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brought the United States out of the post-war “unwillingness” to ally with communists and into the era of overt anti-communist political repression.

One of the first anti-communist events of 1949 actually began the previous year at the University of Washington, when professors were called before the Canwell Committee, a state-level investigative committee similar to HUAC. By the time the hearings ended in January of 1949, “[t]he majority of the committee agreed that the proceedings had shown that belonging to the Communist Party should disqualify a teacher.”\textsuperscript{41} This case then became known as “the first important academic freedom case of the Cold War.”\textsuperscript{42} Schrecker further explained its national impact:

The Washington firings had stimulated a national debate and, for a few months in 1949, the question of the fitness of Communists as teachers received considerable attention in the national media. There were debates over network radio and articles in the \textit{New York Times Magazine} and \textit{Saturday Evening Post} as well as in more specialized journals. In them…respected thinkers…explained why Communists should not be teachers.\textsuperscript{43}

The removal of University of Washington faculty for nonconformist political beliefs gave “greater saliency”\textsuperscript{44} and publicity to the idea that educators who did not demonstrate democratic values for their students should not be allowed to teach. Surely literature teachers across the country heard about the case.

Later in 1949, the threat to literature teachers increased when the Smith Act trials began implicating Communist Party leaders for \textit{teaching} and advocating activities that

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[41]{Schrecker, \textit{No Ivory Tower}, 102.}
\footnotetext[42]{Ibid. 104.}
\footnotetext[43]{Ibid. 105.}
\footnotetext[44]{Ibid.}
\end{footnotes}
threatened the stability of the established democratic structure and using the literature they read and recommended to their followers as evidence of their guilt. CP leader Gil Green’s initial five-year prison sentence was later increased when he resisted, and for much of the time he was also prohibited from contacting his family.\textsuperscript{45} Such life-altering punishment for subversive behavior gave concrete reason for apprehension, especially to Americans who regularly engaged with and taught literature, which could be interpreted freely. Although teachers might teach what they believed to be an innocent, nonpolitical, or even democratic interpretation of a text, prosecutors could make a different interpretation and then convict teachers for advocating illegal activities to their students. The Smith Act trials in 1949 gave teachers even greater reason to demonstrate that their curricula were relevant to American democracy. So, in November of 1949, when Heavey used the words “assault upon our literary tradition,” she seemed to acknowledge the events of the year. Her rhetoric echoed the developing sense of fear surrounding the repression of politically nonconforming teachers and literature. Simultaneously, she used this word choice to argue for her preferred method of traditional literature pedagogy.

In the remainder of Heavey’s article, she not only argued for her preferred pedagogical method, but she also demonstrated how this method was relevant to preparing students for a capitalist and democratic society, aligning herself with the conservative definition of democracy and distancing herself from the Communist Party. First, she used the principle of individual freedoms to explain the relevance of the defender method. Consistent with Loban’s explanation of defenders, Heavey feared “the danger of inferior literary quality and insufficient challenge to the intellect and judgment

\textsuperscript{45} Shultz and Shultz 75-88.
of the reader." Giving literary quality the utmost importance, Heavey was willing to sacrifice the defenders’ other defining tendency. She preferred to make sure students read traditional, challenging literature and did not worry about trying to give uniform assignments regardless of students’ reading levels. Heavey demonstrated that this adhered to cultural ideals by explaining that literature education could be democratic, in the conservative sense, if it recognized “the fallacy that equal opportunity means the same opportunity” and instead allowed for varied instruction for students at different reading levels. For the sake of maintaining the high standards of the national culture, Heavey believed students at higher levels should be reading classics – works by Scott, Dickens, Eliot, DeQuincey, Macaulay, Addison, Steele, and Aristotle. They should not be treated uniformly with students at lower levels because that required expectations to be lowered for all. As a defender, Heavey preferred superior literary quality and intellectual rigor, and she was willing to break the defender mold of uniform assignments to maintain this superiority. Still, she justified this choice by proving it was relevant to preparing students for a democratic society.

Next Heavey connected the defense of traditionalism in literature to a defense of democracy and capitalism in the overall culture by referring to “redistribution of wealth” in the United States. She feared that the resulting “classless society” would not be intellectually rigorous. By examining these fears in the context of 1949, Heavey’s concerns can be better understood. This was the same year that Truman formally announced the Fair Deal. Not until an address in 1950 did he promise conservatives that the Fair Deal’s social programs would “[raise] the standards of [the] poorest families” but

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46 Loban 76.
47 Heavey 512.
would “not be at the expense of anybody else,”\textsuperscript{48} recognizing the prevalent fear among conservatives that a system of social welfare would turn the country toward communism.\textsuperscript{49} Truman’s speech addressed Americans like Heavey, whose article demonstrated that she feared that a system of social welfare in the English classroom would turn the classroom into a communist environment. Her tone indicated a fear for the future of American culture and for the future of literature education. Truman said, “We will all benefit [from the Fair Deal], for the incomes of the [richest] of us will rise at the same time [as that of the poorest].”\textsuperscript{50} In Heavey’s words, Truman promised that his plan would give “equal opportunity,” or equitable opportunity. It would not just give the “same opportunity,” where the same opportunity represented redistribution of wealth.

Heavey had advocated the same plan for literature education. In a time defined by growing optimism about the economic system of capitalism, Heavey’s pessimism toward redistribution of wealth and a classless society demonstrated her cultural conformity because although Americans generally believed that the United States had no inherent class conflict, they did not believe in restricting economic freedom to maintain one uniform class.

Finally, as Heavey explained her concern that too much “leisure time” would be detrimental to society and especially to literary tradition, she used rhetoric that allowed for further insight into her concerns as a literature teacher in 1949. She said that too much leisure time would foster a “proletariat of the mind and annihilate…literary

\textsuperscript{50} Truman 1.
This statement makes a number of implications at varying levels of complexity. First, the meaning of proletariat – working class – allowed Heavey to demonstrate the danger that inferior literature posed to “personal development” and “exaltation of the mind.” She used social classes as an analogy for intellectual capacity and literary quality, where the working class represented inferior literary quality and intellectual capacity and the upper class represented high quality traditional literature and exalted intellectual capacity. This analogy helped Heavey to explain the defender methodology and its reasoning. Second, Heavey’s use of the word proletariat, which was originally used by communist writers, rather than just “working class,” allowed her to portray communism negatively and to further decrease the potential that she or the defenders would be accused of subversive teachings. Third, by juxtaposing the concepts of proletariat and literature in 1949, Heavey was likely distancing herself from a genre of literature that once had favor among the U.S. working class but was no longer popular: proletarian literature.

Proletarian literature has been written in countries around the world, including the Soviet Union, Britain, and Japan, and it was particularly popular in the United States in the 1930s. It did not receive its name until after it fell from popularity and critics began to analyze it for its political implications. Proletarian literature is characterized by working-class characters or authors and anti-capitalist or pro-socialist themes. In the United States, there were at least three groups of people who wrote proletarian literature after the Great Depression: authors who had established themselves before they had begun to associate with the political left and who seemed to have then gone through a “conversion” when they began to write pro-socialist literature (moderns), authors who had left fascist

\[51\] Heavey 515.
regimes and come to the United States (emigres), and authors who came from U.S. working-class families and established themselves by writing proletarian literature (plebians).\(^5^2\) There were also at least four types of proletarian writing: the fictional autobiography, in which the protagonist matures by gaining class-consciousness; the proletarian bildungsroman, in which a class-conscious protagonist helps the reader learn to dislike capitalist “possessive individualism”; the multiprogtagonist social novel, in which various classes and their concerns are represented; and the collective novel, in which society as a whole is the protagonist.\(^5^3\) These realistic portrayals of the United States were written by people who did not portray the American ideal of prosperity from ever-increasing capitalist productivity, and they were meant to cause readers to sympathize with the working class and doubt the merits of capitalism. Although they were widely read during the Great Depression, they were criticized as aesthetically lacking and distastefully controversial by the early Cold War.\(^5^4\) By the 1940s, critics had recognized this literature as a way to create social change. By writing, reading, and teaching this literature and by attending the plays put on by labor unions, Americans were showing support for anti-capitalist texts.\(^5^5\) This behavior fell out of favor by the beginning of the Cold War.

By using the word proletariat to describe a displeasing body of literature, Heavey associated herself with the critics who named proletarian literature and used the term to refer to politically undesirable literature by the early Cold War. By portraying the word

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\(^{54}\) Ibid. 1.

“proletariat” in a negative light through her tone and the word’s connotation, Heavey showed that she disproved of communism, that she expected her students to achieve the personal development necessary to participate in a democratic society, that proletarian literature could not be considered traditional or classic literature, and that she would not teach proletarian literature in her classroom. With this rhetorical choice, Heavey disentangled herself and her pedagogy from a web of potentially incriminating associations.

In 1949, there was a fine line between liberal and communist in the United States. Barrows Dunham, a professor of philosophy at Temple University who was investigated in 1953 for his own Communist Party associations, explained, “The victims show you where the attack was aimed...the efforts to prove guilt by association were aimed at splitting the center off from the left. It was very effective. The liberals were scared of being called reds, from Truman on down.” The U.S. government aimed at people associated with communism so that they could weed out one potential threats to one perspective on U.S. stability. This unnerved American liberals. Heavey’s rhetorical choices allowed her to denounce liberal values like “redistribution of wealth,” to portray them as socialist, and to separate herself from proletarian literature, thereby splitting herself off from the left and avoiding being called red. Throughout “Goodbye, William Shakespeare,” Heavey demonstrated her personal cultural conformity, the relevance of the defender-style pedagogy to creating a democratic society, and thereby the relevance of literature education as a whole.

In 1955, as anti-communism continued to rage in the United States, Dwight L. Burton proved that his opinions about the education of high school students were relevant.

56 Shultz and Shultz 129.
to preparing students for a democratic society and aligned with the defenders. In his article “Teaching Literature to our Youth Today: Helping them to Grasp its Meanings,” he promoted uniform instruction using classic, or well-established texts for older students. Like Anderson advised in 1946, Burton believed literature education would “[contribute] to human development.” In the long term, literature could help a student to “understand this world and himself,” thereby helping him to mature. He noted, “Adolescence is a time of bewilderment, and often fear, concerning one's own emotions,” and he gave *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Twain, 1884) as an example of a book that features a young character “wrest[ling] with the problem of whether or not to turn his friend over to the authorities [and] struggling in his mind to adjust to the adult world with its puzzling codes.” Although the book may have been from a different era, Burton explained that it helped “adolescents of all places and times” to mature by teaching them about “the complexities of their own motivations.” Just like Loban explained, defenders like Burton believed in the timelessness and lasting quality of classic texts, along with their usefulness in adjusting modern adolescents to western “moral virtues.”

Increasing the student's overall awareness was Burton’s major objective for literature education. To give students this mature worldly awareness, he had long-term goals, or “touchstones,” and short-term goals, or fundamental skills. Burton concerned himself in this article with the “interplay” of the long- and short-term outcomes of reading literature. All three of Burton’s touchstones addressed characteristics that American citizens needed in the democratic society that feared outsiders or subversives:

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57 Anderson 76.
58 Burton 274.
59 Anderson 73.
60 Burton 274.
awareness of complexity, recognition of falseness, and concern for moral values. In this way, Burton’s methods prepared students for the “democratic ideal,” just as Anderson advised.61

Burton's first touchstone was “awareness of the complexity of human character.” By studying literature, students could learn that “character development” over a long period of time is different than “metamorphosis,” or a “sudden change for which no adequate cause appears,” and they could learn how to recognize the difference in their own lives.62 Burton found that classic novels, rather than “junior novels,” were more appropriate for teaching human complexity, or character development vs. metamorphosis, to high school students. Still, he admitted that contemporary texts were appropriate for “younger students” to read and learn about character metamorphosis. They were written for adolescents and “replete with mousy little heroines” who changed and “blossom[ed] over night” when someone came and fixed their “hairdo and style of dress” so that she could “[go] to the prom with the fullback.”63 He cited a specific book written in 1946 as a tool to teach younger students about character development as well. However, “older students,” he asserted, should have been reading “The Outcasts of Poker Flat” (Francis Bret Harte, 1917) to examine character metamorphosis and Macbeth (William Shakespeare, 1606) to examine character development and to practice “estimat[ing] character from what the person says and does and how others react to it.”64 Burton stressed the value of “inferring from clues” to avoid confusion when a story did not

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61 Anderson 73.
62 Burton 274.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid. 275.
present “an orderly sequence of events.” Through these examples, Burton identified himself as one of Loban’s defenders: he advocated teaching classic, established texts. He also demonstrated that his discipline was relevant and conformed to society: literature could teach critical analysis of personal interactions.

The ability to estimate other people’s intentions from what they said or did and from how others reacted to them was crucial in the anti-communist fervor that had developed by 1955. Americans analyzed their friends, family, coworkers, and neighbors for possible signs of subversion. With the potential for Soviet spies among their citizens, Americans valued the ability to infer from clues, to unlock puzzling codes, and to intuit truth despite a possibly disorderly sequence of events. Teachers, students, and other citizens wrestled with whether or not to tell the authorities about suspicious behavior, just like Huck Finn and the characters of The Crucible. Three court cases between 1951 and 1954 contributed to this culture, illustrated the extent of repression, and demonstrated the relevance of estimating character and inferring from clues in the anti-communist atmosphere of the mid 1950s.

First, in March 1951, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were convicted of espionage in one of the most infamous court cases of the McCarthy era; they were accused of conspiring to pass information about the American atomic bomb to the Soviet Union. Ultimately, they were sentenced to death, and they became the only two Americans executed in the anti-communist fervor of the Cold War. Nonetheless, this case involved a complicated trajectory of accusations and convictions, illustrating that many people

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65 Ibid.
66 Schrecker, Many Are the Crimes, xv.
were involved in passing information about the atomic bomb to the Russians and indicating to Americans that Soviet spies did exist among them.

Another way that this case helped to establish the culture of the early Cold War was through the pattern of reporting, or naming names, that it cultivated. The court encouraged those accused of un-American activity to cooperate with investigators by implicating others for un-American activity. Ethel and Julius Rosenberg did not name names of anyone else involved in their crime or anyone who was associated with the Communist Party; they did not cooperate with the courts to estimate the character of other potentially dangerous Americans, and they were executed. Although additional evidence in the case contributed to proving their guilt for the courts and determining their sentence, the Rosenbergs’ case highlighted the relationship between analyzing personal interactions and acting as a law-abiding, unsuspicious U.S. citizen. To demonstrate that one possessed the proper moral virtues, one had to draw conclusions about the intentions of their peers and report them for anything potentially un-American. This case not only demonstrated the extent of the political repression during this period and its influence on literature education, but it also fueled additional investigations in the following years.

Between the Rosenbergs’ conviction in 1951 and their execution in June 1953, HUAC and two Senate committees took it upon themselves to “investigate education.” In a few months in 1953, hundreds of teachers and professors lost their jobs. 68 Dunham, the philosophy professor from Temple University, appeared before HUAC. 69 During his hearing, both the Rosenberg case and the other education investigations contributed to the tense, repressive atmosphere. “I was conscious of being in peril all the time,” Dunham

68 Shultz and Shultz 127.
69 Ibid. 128-129.
later wrote. “We had that atmosphere hanging around us… The committee manufactured atmosphere, which they substituted for evidence.” Here, Dunham commented on how the courts determined guilt, and he judged the committee’s evidence to be inadequate. In his hearing, he was forced to prove his fitness to continue teaching, and he felt he had to comply with the committee to do so. However, by naming names, he would lose the trust of his students and colleagues and thereby lose his ability to do his job effectively. As a result, he refused to perpetuate the pattern of unqualified estimations and inferences from clues; he did not name names. Dunham was ultimately fired and barred from employment for previously having been a member of the Communist Party and for then refusing to talk about it. He was not reinstated as a professor until 1981.

When Dunham reflected on this situation, he revealed a mindset that was likely common among educators at this time, when many educators faced the same situation. Dunham said his university “didn't need any grounds [to fire him]. They create[d] a whole fictitious universe in which they [could] make events justify what they want[ed] to do.” This assessment of early Cold War America, when employers and the courts commonly drew conclusions based on interpretations, and not always on concrete evidence or actions, helps to contextualize Burton’s literature pedagogy. Burton believed students needed to learn to make interpretations, though he did not elaborate on what constituted proper and improper interpretations. Instead, he emphasized that students should be taught interpretive skills so that they could derive meaning from what they encountered, such as other people’s characters and actions. If teachers did not teach

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70 Ibid. 132-134.
71 Ibid. 134-135.
72 Ibid. 128-129.
73 Dunham quoted in Shultz and Shultz 132.
students these skills, their students might not know how to cooperate with their employers and the courts, and the teachers might be accused of advocating that their students engage in un-American behavior instead.

Students who interpreted behaviors and drew conclusions from clues were prepared to name names. Whitfield’s chapter on “informing” cited one book written in 1955 that encouraged school-aged children to cooperate with this culture of reporting suspicious activity. The book said, “The FBI urges Americans to report directly to its offices any suspicions they may have about Communist activity on the part of their fellow Americans.” The text assured students that reporting was “acting in line with American traditions.”

Burton, using much of this rhetoric, assured his audience that reading literature would help prepare students to do just what the FBI advised and to do it well.

The final of the three hearings complicates the repressive, anti-communist atmosphere in which Burton wrote “Teaching Literature to our Youth Today: Helping them to Grasp its Meanings.” It provides further contextualization for Burton’s discussion and recommendation of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and brings to the table the concept of race. In 1954, Myles Horton, the founder of Highlander Folk School in Tennessee, was called before the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, run by the Tennessee Senator James Eastland. The Subcommittee summoned him because he taught black students. Like Dunham and the Rosenbergs before him, he refused to name names of those who had worked with him. He chose not to justify his actions and the methods of his school in a way that might appease the government. In other words, he did not

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74 Whitfield 102.
75 Shultz and Shultz 28.
attempt to demonstrate that his educational methods were relevant to the accepted idea of American society. When he was convicted, other American educators saw the consequences of nonconformity. By 1957, there was another committee hearing to try to close Horton's school. One undercover government photographer testified, “integration is communism and it's against our way of life.” The case of Horton and the Highlander school demonstrated the repressive atmosphere in which teachers worked during the early Cold War, the importance of assessing the appropriateness of fellow citizens’ beliefs and behaviors in American society, and the role that race played in the anti-communist era. In the context of this case and the Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision, which constitutionalized racial integration the same year, Burton’s judgment of Huck Finn’s value becomes more complicated.

Burton assigned The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn to help students learn to confront the world’s “puzzling codes” and “the problem of whether or not to turn [one’s] friend over to the authorities.” In the novel, the protagonist struggles to accept his society’s customs, and he ultimately chooses to remove himself from society rather than hold himself to its standards. The most challenging custom for Huck to accept is racial prejudice. He tries to simultaneously protect his African American friend Jim, a slave, and avoid punishment for breaking the law. Students and teachers during the Civil Rights Movement faced the same challenge. By assigning this text, Burton demonstrated that his curriculum was relevant to contemporary issues and he gave himself the opportunity to teach his students what Huck should have done to overcome society’s obstacles.

Although Burton could have drawn accusations by assigning a text that addressed race so bluntly, he demonstrated that the text was relevant and acceptable by justifying

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76 Ibid. 30.
that it would help “[contribute] to human development” and “moral virtues.” In doing so, he dissociated himself from the movement for racial equality and desegregation because, as Horton’s case demonstrated, to be sympathetic to African Americans was to be communist. Furthermore, to be communist was to be un-American, and to be un-American was to lack moral virtues. With this logic so ingrained in the American mindset by 1955, Burton avoided accusation and demonstrated his relevance by assuring his readers that he would be using a classic text like *Huck Finn* to teach moral virtues, and that he thereby would not be using it to advocate subversion. After he quickly continued on to his first touchstone, teaching students to analyze their surroundings and interpret from clues, he further distanced himself from potential blame.

Burton’s second touchstone, another way literature education could increase student awareness, was “a firm understanding of the reality in human experience and the ability to detect oversimplification and falsity in the assumptions underlying it.” To Burton, this involved the immediate skills of determining cause and effect, “handling various types of plot structure,” understanding “the difference between material realism and moral realism,” and dealing with different points of view. With these skills, students could better judge what was and was not relevant to their own lives, even with literature that included unfamiliar characters and settings, such as classic or well-established, historical texts. Burton advocated texts such as *Ivanhoe* (1820), *Ethan Brand* (1852), and *The Monkey’s Paw* (1902), and he classified texts such as *Sixteen* (1948) as

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77 Burton 275.  
78 Ibid. 275-276.
less appropriate for high school readers. In doing so, Burton remained on the side of the
defenders.

In this second touchstone, there was not as much political rhetoric as in the first; however, some of Burton’s phrasing could have worked to exonerate literature as a threat of subversion and thereby prove its relevance and conformity. Burton taught students to be aware “that any [piece of literature] is an illusion of reality which artists interpret in different ways.” In other words, all texts represent real life in some way, but people may interpret them in many different ways. Here, Burton seemed to warn of the possible dangers of misinterpretation of literary texts. He taught students that people could interpret all literature to be “true to life” – or commenting on actual events – in one way or another, but not every interpretation was necessarily correct. Rather, there are systematic and accepted ways to interpret literature, and interpretations can be wrong if they do not follow accepted theoretical approaches and draw conclusions based on textual evidence. Burton explained that literature education would teach students how to interpret literature correctly. It would help students to understand what they encountered and to recognize incorrect interpretations. This was a particularly relevant skill in 1955, when there was an increased emphasis on interpreting actual events and finding evidence of subversion if it existed. For example, The Crucible demonstrated that literary interpretations could mark certain texts as subversive, and the hearing of CP leader Gil Green demonstrated that interpretations of real events could mark people and their actions as subversive. Burton pointed out that, often, these interpretations were correct, but sometimes they were not. Education in literature would help students recognize when

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79 Ibid. 276.
80 Ibid.
these interpretations were correct and incorrect. More importantly, perhaps, it would help students to make interpretations correctly and to thereby find subversive behavior where it existed.

Although Burton did not necessarily intend or even directly imply these connections between recognizing realism in literature (when it was “true to life”) and recognizing subversion in literature or in life, he doubtlessly gave students the analytical skills to make correct interpretations. Yet, it can also be said that by increasing his students’ awareness of what is real and what is false, Burton demonstrated that he prepared students for anti-communist investigations. However, he likely also prevented his students from jumping to any unqualified conclusions about their peers or their literature; and he may have thereby taught them how to end the pattern of unqualified accusations.

Burton’s third and final touchstone for increasing student maturity and awareness was “concern with a set of values by which to regulate life.” Students could learn values – or Anderson’s “moral virtues” – from literature and apply them to their daily lives. But to do so, they needed the skills to detect subtle themes; so, they needed practice with works that presented their themes subtly. For this, Burton suggested texts like The Great Gatsby (1925), The Cherry Orchard (1904), A Farewell to Arms (1929), and again Macbeth. For contrast, he listed contemporary texts for younger audiences: Blue Willow (1940), Swiftwater (1950), and Good-bye, My Lady (1941). In addition to the way Burton again defended well-established texts, he also demonstrated literature’s relevance in this touchstone by explaining that reading taught students to detect and learn cultural

81 Ibid. 277.
82 Ibid. 278.
values in a time when the United States prided itself in having more virtuous behavior than its enemies.

Burton admitted, “The pros and cons of teaching certain so-called ‘classics’ still resound among us,” and he recognized that literature programs varied on “how to organize the literature program: by types, by themes or topics, by chronological survey.” Burton even said, “No doubt the best high school programs are eclectic in their basis of organization.” Here, Burton indicated that he recognized that the democratic process led to compromise and consensus, just as Dewey described in his definition of participatory democracy, Anderson recognized with the phrase “unity amid diversity,” and Loban would recognize the following year. Burton individually supported organizing literature into units by theme or topic, which aligned with the organizational preferences of Loban’s moderate defenders (more on them later). Still, Burton proposed, “[T]he essential distinction [is] not who is a progressive and who is a traditionalist,” but rather who teaches and who acts like a “drill sergeant.” Despite Burton’s individual preference for traditionalism, his desire to resolve the controversy over progress and tradition, supported the observations that Loban would make in 1956: literature teachers – even with their different preferences about how to adhere to the culture of the time – were coming to a consensus. Throughout “Teaching Literature to our Youth Today,” Burton aligned himself and his proposed defender-style teaching methods with the necessary cultural skills of his time, reassuring the public that literature education as a whole was conforming to the established values and that it was culturally relevant.

83 Ibid. 278.
84 Ibid. 279.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid.
Both Heavey and Burton spoke primarily for a traditionalist style of teaching literature. As defenders, they both argued that classic texts were superior to modern texts; and they both outlined curricula that seemed to expect all students would complete the same assignments. Although Heavey did recognize a separation between higher and lower level students, she used this separation to argue that teachers should not lower their expectations so that all students would satisfactorily meet the same low level. Instead, they should teach classic texts to raise the standards and give equal opportunities for all students to be challenged by literature. As Heavey and Burton argued for the defender methodology, they followed the same path that Anderson carved at the beginning of the period by justifying that literature education “contributed to human development and to the improvement of the democratic way of life.”

In doing so, they illustrated more than one of the acceptable definitions of democracy at the time. Heavey’s rhetoric – her fear that socialism in the literature classroom would create a proletariat of the mind – matched that of American conservatives, who defined democracy by individual freedoms. Burton’s rhetoric – his emphasis on preparing students to analyze characters and situations for subtle differences, misrepresentations, and changes – fit the definition of democracy as the opportunity to participate in forming a consensus. Both defenders’ rhetoric espoused the American culture of conformity: both seemed to champion democracy and advise readers on ways to avoid accusations of communist leanings in their teaching. In doing so, both Heavey and Burton demonstrated the relevance of the defender methodology in American society.

87 Anderson 76.
88 Dewey quoted in Westbrook 41.
Innovators

In contrast to defenders, Loban’s innovators advocated teaching more contemporary texts and abandoning the classics. They believed classics were too difficult for adolescents to read, and they did not believe students could relate to the classics, which did not align with contemporary adolescents’ problems and concerns. Instead, innovators believed in teaching texts and topics that immediately interested the students. They also believed in individualized education. Innovators’ specific methodology included “guided individual reading” and “resource units.”89 With guided individual reading, innovators gave their students personalized assignments and required students to read literature on their own. Teachers consulted with students to create resource units, which allowed each student to read a collection of texts all at the student’s personal reading level and all with a common topic that interested the student. With these styles and methods, innovators too conformed to the cultural expectations of the time. Their emphasis on individuality and personal preference directly reflected the conservative definition of democracy and its stress on individual freedoms. Like the defenders, the innovators produced a number of articles in *The English Journal* between 1946 and 1956. Below are two examples of articles by innovators along with analyses of how their innovative qualities demonstrated conformity to the early Cold War culture.

In 1947, during the relative calm of the postwar period and before the University of Washington and CPUSA hearings of 1949, Olive Eckerson, a California high school teacher, wrote “Give Them What They Want.” In this article, she argued that literature

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89 Loban 75.
teachers should allow students to read recently edited and published “school editions” of classic texts to compete with “motion picture[s], the radio,…comic book[s], [and] the lurid crime and fantasy magazine[s]” for students’ attention. Eckerson recognized that high school students wanted “excitement, suspense, fast action, approximation to life, and a good laugh,” and she said, “Nothing in the world [is wrong with that].” Although Eckerson did not advocate reading modern texts, like Loban’s article suggests of innovators, she did suggest reading texts that aligned with student interests. Additionally, as an innovator, she recognized students’ individual differences: “Let us take a youth of fifteen, of slightly below average intelligence, and reading ability of thirteen years…Could you imagine his picking up an original copy of Oliver Twist and reading it through…without once having to ask for teacher help?...[I]t simply would not happen.”

Despite this pessimistic and patronizing view of contemporary student intelligence and capabilities, Eckerson’s explanation conformed to American expectations of society: Not everyone was brilliant, and they did not have to be. Literature could be made appropriate and enjoyable for everyone. These new editions, by adding notes, illustrations, and colorful binding, would make all students see that Oliver Twist really involves “kidnapping, brutal murder, professional crime, hidden identity, [and] midnight robbery.” They would appeal to contemporary students’ expectations of entertainment while maintaining intellectual rigor.

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91 Ibid. 523.
92 Ibid. 524.
93 Ibid.
94 In this description of Oliver Twist, I believe the inclusion of “hidden identity” as a factor that would interest contemporary readers is merely based on the plot of the text, rather than intentionally indicative of the culture of suspicion of hidden Communist identities. Still, it is a relevant connection between literature and culture that is worth mentioning, though likely only in this tangential form.
By advocating that teachers cater to students’ tastes and reading abilities, Eckerson showed that she thought literature should promote equality, regardless of the students’ abilities. The teachers should help give all students equal opportunities.

Although students might not understand *Oliver Twist* in its original form, they should still get the chance to read and understand *Oliver Twist* in some form. In this way, Eckerson’s ideas paralleled liberal Democrats’ ideas, who also believed in the idea of *equality for all*, or equality for all people and classes in social, political, and economic spheres. When Eckerson requested that literature be modified and made accessible to all students at all intelligence levels, she echoed liberals’ request that the government provide “social welfare and social insurance” when the private sector could not meet Americans’ needs. In this innovator’s literature classroom, individualized assignments created equality and new editions provided support to struggling students.

Although Eckerson did not use unmistakably political rhetoric in her article, by conjuring these parallels to liberal ideals, she demonstrated that innovators promoted at least one version of the “democratic ideal.” Furthermore, when Eckerson wrote “Give Them What They Want” in 1947, the democratic ideal was not yet influenced by anti-communist repression, nor were liberal educators being questioned regularly. Instead, President Truman and the components of his forthcoming Fair Deal both legitimized and supported political liberalism.

One of Eckerson’s pedagogical concerns was particularly telling of this post-war political atmosphere. When Eckerson asked about “[imagining a student of below average intelligence] picking up an original copy of *Oliver Twist* and reading it through
from cover to cover, without once having to ask for teacher help,”95 her tone and argument revealed her hopes that students would read without asking teachers for help. She did not indicate any concern for the consequences of allowing students to read and interpret literature on their own. She may have only been referring to “help” with technical issues of reading comprehension, rather than interpretation, but she did not clarify. In 1947, Eckerson did not seem concerned about demonstrating that she regulated her students’ literary interpretations. Rather, she preferred that they read, and presumably interpret, independently. Just a few years later, both Heavey and Burton addressed issues of interpretation; both ensured that their teaching methods and literary interpretations would help students develop in politically acceptable ways. Eckerson’s willingness to let students read literature without regulation demonstrated a lack of concern for how they might interpret the literature and thereby an absence of fear for the political consequences of literary interpretation. In the context of 1947, this lack of awareness makes sense. Literature had not yet been used as evidence of communist associations, and Eckerson had no reason to worry that she might later be blamed and even fired for her students’ interpretations. Two years later, she might not have wanted her students to read without her help.

Eckerson’s article contributed to the process of determining a consensus about literature pedagogy in the early Cold War; it demonstrated that innovator pedagogy was appropriate for the democratic society that existed in the United States after WWII; and it exemplified literature teachers’ effort to demonstrate the relevance of their subject to contemporary students and society.

95 Ibid.
In 1952, John H. Burrowes of Pennsylvania aligned himself with the innovators in his article “Outside Reading.” Like Eckerson, he observed that students preferred exciting, entertaining literature and recognized that they did not always immediately see that excitement in classic texts. Burrowes believed that, one way or another, students must be reading: “[T]here is something wrong with people of any age who are not probing the pile of human life and experience given to us in books.” Burrowes’s argument for the importance of teaching students to read and analyze texts mirrors that of Heavey, Burton, and Anderson: Literature can give students conscious experience and teach students how to be better citizens, how to analyze what they encounter, how to draw conclusions, and how to form “mutual understanding,” as Anderson said. To facilitate this engagement with literature, Burrowes reasoned that teachers should suggest modern texts. When he suggested *The Track of the Cat* (1949), which was “full of adventure, death, and tension,” he found the students “thinking a little more deeply about real values in literature after reading this book.” He successfully taught his students to analyze situations using modern texts instead of classics, and he also taught them about “real values,” which Anderson called “moral virtues.”

Burrowes’s justification for the innovator approach was two-fold. First, students must enjoy books before they can enjoy classics, and it is easier to help them enjoy books by beginning with modern texts, which are generally more intellectually accessible. Nonetheless, Burrowes recognized that classics were “great works of fiction that enrich[ed] so many shelves and so few minds,” and he believed that once a student read and enjoyed a modern text suggested by the teacher, the student would begin to trust the

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97 Anderson 73.
teacher’s judgment and would be less reluctant to engage with a classic text if the teacher suggested it. The second component of Burrowes’s rationale was that the modern texts of today might become the classics of tomorrow. He reasoned, the texts that contemporary teachers judged as “foolish,” future scholars would likely praise. Critics might not have seen the value in modern literature yet, but that did not mean they never would. In addition to guiding students to the highest quality literature, even if they had to go through modern texts first, it was the teachers’ duty to “cultivate [the students’] judgment and discernment,” or as Anderson said, “[contribute] to human development.” By allowing students to engage with newer texts and teaching them how to interpret them, teachers could ensure that those texts would ultimately be criticized with the same high standards that the teachers themselves possessed.

The interest in cultivating students, their values, and their interpretations set Burrowes apart from Eckerson, even as they both advocated innovator pedagogy. In 1947, Eckerson favored reading assignments that students could complete without help from the teacher. In 1952, Burrowes preferred to make sure that students were extracting “real values” from their texts. He did not seem to allow students so much room to read independently and without his influence. By 1952, the events of 1949 and the beginning of the McCarthy era had affected literature teachers’ concerns and influenced their teaching methods. The political events that occurred in the five-year period between these two articles caused a shift in innovator pedagogy, as evidenced by Eckerson’s willingness to allow students to read without teacher help and Burrowes’s focus on carefully cultivating student reading experiences. By 1952, literature teachers had increased their attention to regulating how students developed when they read and interpreted literature.
In addition to supporting the use of modern texts as a way to begin to cultivate students’ judgment, Burrowes adhered to two other characteristics of the innovators: He advocated independent, “outside reading” to supplement in-class reading, and he catered his literature suggestions to students’ individual interests. In doing so, Burrowes successfully adapted his teaching methodology to the expectations of American democratic culture: he considered individuals’ differences and he gave them the freedom to follow their interests. In doing so, he seemed to echo the conservative emphasis on individual freedoms. At the same time, he also demonstrated that he believed in using whatever means necessary to give all of his students the opportunity to interact with complex texts, even if he had to lead them there through modern texts. Here, his interest in equal opportunity to read complex texts adhered to the liberal definition of democracy. Ultimately, Burrowes’s use of individual freedoms (conservative) in allowing students to follow their interests helped him to achieve equal opportunity (liberal) when his students later agreed to read more complex texts. In this way, his approach to literature education reflected the liberals’ compromise. Liberals supported big business as long as the government would provide “social welfare and social insurance” to anyone who was still in need. Liberals conceded to using conservative means to reach their own ends. Burrowes similarly conceded to innovator means to reach defender ends. In the case of the liberals, equality was the end and supporting free enterprise was the means. In the case of Burrowes, reputable literary criticism of classic texts from all students was the end, and engagement with modern texts on an individual basis was the means. Thus, in “Outside Reading,” Burrowes utilized all of the accepted definitions of democracy to prove that his pedagogical methods adhered to “the democratic ideal,” and he promised to

98 Burrowes 205.
cultivate students’ values, which would “[improve] the democratic way of life,” just as Anderson advised.

Both Eckerson and Burrowes advocated primarily innovator values. They both recognized the need to cater to student interests in at least some capacity, and they did not believe that teaching just the classics would be effective. They explained the value in some recently written or modified texts as well. Additionally, they both recognized individual differences among students and believed that despite those differences all students deserved equal opportunities to engage with literature. By framing their arguments in this way, they showed that innovators too could follow instructions such as Anderson’s, could justify that literature education contributed to society in a meaningful way, and could conform to accepted American culture.

**Moderate Defenders**

By 1956, Walter Loban recognized a “synthesis of various viewpoints.” He asserted that from that point forward, teachers must work toward combining the best elements of traditionalism and innovation. Already, he observed, a third group sat between innovators and defenders, closer to his synthesizing “multiple approach.” Moderate defenders advocated generally maintaining the traditional approach. However, they proposed catering to student differences by changing their expectations about how well the students would perform. They did not think teachers should expect the same level of literary criticism from every student. They also deviated from tradition by organizing literature into topical or thematic units, much like the innovators proposed. Within those units, they taught both classic and modern texts as a compromise. Moderate

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99 Loban 75.
defender units resembled the innovators’ “resource units,” but they differed in that they included three phases: First, the entire class read the same texts; next, small groups received different assignments; then, the class came back together with some activities to “bring the various features of the unit to a satisfactory culmination.” With this model, students had some individual freedom: more than in the defenders’ uniform assignments but not as much as in the innovators’ resource units. Moderate defender texts and teaching methods compromised between the desires of the innovators and the defenders and settled slightly closer to the defender end of the spectrum. By unifying “various features” of both the innovators and defenders, they came to a “satisfactory culmination.” The moderate defenders thereby illustrated the relevance of the democratic process and determining consensus in literature pedagogy.

Evidence of the presence of moderate defenders and Loban’s emerging synthesis of viewpoints can be seen in the articles already discussed. Burton, though a defender, thought “the best high school programs [were] eclectic in their basis of organization;” he valued organizing literature units by theme or topic; and he recognized that there were “pros and cons” for pushing classic texts. Similarly, Eckerson, clearly an innovator, advocated teaching modern versions of classic texts. Finally, Burrowes proposed first suggesting modern texts to students, establishing their trust, and then luring them to engage with classics. The limited examples of radically innovative or radically defending commentary in *The English Journal*’s articles during this period, demonstrated that, despite strong beliefs about the correct way to teach English, a compromising spirit

100 Ibid. 77.
101 Burton 279.
dominated the discussions and restricted the field of acceptable commentary from teachers.\textsuperscript{102}

**Multiple Approach**

Loban’s own methods seemed to be moving toward compromise as well. He addressed one specific concern about organizing literature by types, a common defender method of curriculum organization. Loban pointed out that if teachers organized literature by types – reading only essays, then only poems, then only epic poems, and then only novels, for example – time constraints would pose a challenge. It would be difficult to compare a number of very long novels because there wouldn’t be enough time for the students to read them all. To solve this problem, Loban proposed “intensive study of a single novel or epic rather than upon the type as illustrated by numerous examples.”\textsuperscript{103}

He hoped teachers would focus on one piece of complicated literature, encouraging students to understand its intricacies, rather than doing a shallow study of many complicated texts, and also limiting student exposure to literature.

This method exemplified compromise between innovators and defenders, and it also conformed and demonstrated literature’s relevance to the culture of the time in much the same way as Anderson and Burton had recognized. Anderson said literature teachers had the opportunity to “contribut[e] to…the improvement of the democratic way of life,” and Burton said they could do this by teaching students how to adequately analyze their surroundings for “complexity,” “metamorphosis,” or “falsity.” These ideas manifested themselves in Loban’s discussion of thoroughly analyzing one complex text rather than

\textsuperscript{102} This restriction of the field of acceptable teacher commentary echoes what Stephen Whitfield observed as a narrowing spectrum of reputable opinion during this time.

\textsuperscript{103} Loban 78.
cursorily analyzing many complex texts. His major objective was to teach students to recognize “the relation between form and content,” and he thought it was most practical to “emphas[ize]” form and content with “intensive study” of one longer work. There just was not enough time for “comparative study” of multiple texts. Loban believed that focusing on one text would accomplish his objective more reliably and efficiently. Similarly, anti-communist prosecutors might ask what use a cursory glance at a crowd of complex individuals would be? If people took each other at face value, without analyzing the relation between their content and form (what they believed and how they acted), they might miss the subtle signs of metamorphosis or falsity, of sudden or hidden communist sympathies. Americans had to pay close attention and analyze individuals, and Loban’s method would help them learn to do so.

After explaining the methods of innovators, defenders, and moderate defenders, along with his personal methods, Loban ended by asserting that teachers were beginning to choose the best parts of each of the methods and to create a “multiple approach”:

A sound program of literature for any semester or year of the secondary school could very well feature a multiple approach: several thematic units, some established classics, at least one modern great book or document, some study of types of literature, and a considerable amount of individual reading with teacher guidance. In the units, content related to the values most needed by pupils will receive the main emphasis…In the best sense of the word, this multiple approach to the study of literature is conservative.105

104 Ibid.
105 Ibid. 78, 91.
On one level, Loban’s conclusion outlined the logistics of a “multiple approach.” On another level, it demonstrated that, by 1956, most teachers, regardless of their individual beliefs, were committed to “guid[ing]” students to the “values” and skills that they “needed” to mature and to successfully analyze their surroundings through literature lessons, just as Anderson had advised ten years earlier. And on a third level, Loban made a direct rhetorical reference to the political culture when he praised the “multiple approach” as “conservative.”

When Loban expressed the commitment to “guid[ing]” students to the “values” and skills that they “needed” to succeed in society and analyze their surroundings, he echoed the same early Cold War concerns that Burrowes revealed in 1952. Loban used the word guide where Burrowes used the word cultivate, which was consistent with Loban’s more conservative opinions. They both described the process of drawing students to classic texts through modern texts. These articles documented literature teachers’ concern for controlling student interpretations and learning outcomes and revealed that the U.S. cultural narrowing of acceptable beliefs was embedded into literature pedagogy. By 1956, this interest in limiting interpretation in the literature classroom began to reflect another U.S. cultural trait as well: science. Loban’s methods involved guiding students, or creating systematic processes for them; he also used the words “values,” “units,” and “amounts.” He used terms common to math and science to explain literature pedagogy, foreshadowing a more distinct cultural shift toward math and science education that would come a year later. Loban’s use of this rhetoric in 1956 indicated that a scientific approach to literature education was already gaining popularity.
Another important implication of Loban’s conclusion involved his use of the word “conservative.” Like Burrowes and Cold War liberals, Loban believed in compromising some of the more radical components of an established pedagogical method to create consensus around one sound method that would be both effective for students and relevant to society. The multiple approach was “conservative [in the best sense of the word]” because it used politically conservative means, given that political conservatism attempts to preserve tradition, to make its liberal ideas more acceptable and to reach the ends of consensus and societal relevance. The multiple approach incorporated accepted, conservative ideas into more radical, liberal ideas and created a unified, relevant pedagogical method that literature teachers could safely rally around.

A close analysis of Loban’s definition of the multiple approach reveals that half of the components were innovator methods (new, radical, liberal) and half were defender methods (traditional, conservative). He said the multiple approach included several thematic units [innovator, liberal], some established classics [defender, conservative], at least one modern great book or document [innovator, liberal], some study of types of literature [defender, conservative], and a considerable amount of individual reading with teacher guidance [innovator, liberal]. In the units, content related to the values most needed by pupils will receive the main emphasis [defender, conservative].

Thematic units, modern texts, and independent assignments were new innovator ideas; classic texts, study of literature by types, and emphasis on content and form were traditional defender ideas. Loban demonstrated the compromising spirit in this definition by providing a perfect balance of innovator and defender ideas. He also showed that he

106 Ibid. 78.
was using the defender components to temper the innovator components by alternating between the two sides, always listing an innovator method and following it up with a corresponding – and more acceptable – defender method. In doing so, Loban utilized the same tactics as Cold War liberals, who accepted conservative free enterprise as long as the government provided social welfare and insurance to Americans whose needs were not met by the growth and success of big business.

It is impossible to be sure whether or not Loban intended the word “conservative” to be political, but his definition of the multiple approach invoked politically conservative ideas in the way that it attempted to preserve some tradition. Additionally, Loban’s entire article illustrated American ideals as it outlined literature teachers’ use of the democratic process to find a consensus about the best literature pedagogy. For these reasons, it is reasonable to conclude that Loban intended to allude to American government at the end of his article. The democratic political process had guided literature teachers’ discussions throughout the period that Loban addressed, providing the “means of organizing consensus and preserving stability,”107 and Loban’s conclusion acted as the ends to this process, the organized consensus.

Furthermore, by equating his conclusion to conservatism and by leaving his readers with that word to end the article, Loban also advanced his own personal ethos. By associating the multiple approach with conservatism, he increased the legitimacy and relevance of the method and encouraged other teachers to believe it would be safe to use this method. In this way, Loban used politically conservative means to demonstrate the societal relevance of his ideas and to meet his own pedagogical ends. He also exemplified the U.S. political atmosphere in 1956, when Americans were free to express

107 Dewey quoted in Westbrook 41.
their individual ideas but were careful to keep them within the narrow frame of legitimate, acceptable opinions by tempering any radical ideas and striving for consensus.

In 1956, as the period that Loban recognized for its ongoing discussion between innovators and defenders came to a close, anti-communist investigations persisted but were beginning to wane as well. Schrecker has explained that “McCarthyism flourished for nearly ten years, roughly from 1946 until 1956,”\(^{108}\) and in 1957 the Supreme Court decision *Yates v. United States* brought the Smith Act trials to an end. This decision “[drew] a distinction between the ‘advocacy and teaching of forcible overthrow [of the government] as an abstract principle’ and the ‘advocacy and teaching of concrete action for the forcible overthrow of the Government.’”\(^{109}\) By making it unconstitutional to try someone for his or her *beliefs*, this decision made it more difficult to carry out investigations of people who were thought to threaten the stability of the government. People could only be investigated on the basis of their actions. As a result, the potential for being accused of communist associations or sympathies lessened, and so did the sense of fear.

Between Anderson’s address in 1946 and Loban’s article in 1956, the atmosphere of fear and caution affected the decisions and actions of American citizens, including high school literature teachers. The rhetoric they used and the concerns they expressed in *The English Journal* doubtlessly carried political tones and implications. Literature teachers used the expectations and values of society at large to determine rhetorical choices in their articles and methodological choices in their classrooms. They demonstrated the relevance of their subject for preparing students to function in

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\(^{108}\) Schrecker xviii.

American society; they followed the democratic process to determine pedagogical methods; they made compromises to reach a consensus; and they avoided criticism and criminal investigation.

Teaching Literature for a Scientific, Competitive Democratic Society

On October 4, 1957, the Soviet Union launched the first artificial satellite into orbit about 550 miles away from Earth. They called it Sputnik. Although the White House downplayed the issue – they did not actually believe it to be very concerning – American scientists were surprised, and the American public reacted much more sharply. Time, Newsweek, and New Republic framed Sputnik as an indication that “the Soviet Union [had] gained a commanding lead in certain vital sectors of the race for world scientific and technological supremacy.” People feared the implications of this accomplishment: The Soviet Union might soon be capable of sending “a nuclear warhead” across the world to the United States. Democrats, eager to criticize President Eisenhower for weak national defense, jumped on the bandwagon of the developing “Sputnik crisis.” Eventually, most Americans, including Republicans, bought into the “popular belief [that] American supremacy in science and technology” had been “outshone by the Red Moon,” and they urged the President to push for an American “conquest of space;” an accomplishment that would give superiority, on some level, to the nation that achieved it.

111 Ibid. xiv.
112 New Republic quoted in Divine xiv.
113 Divine xviii.
From the outset of the Sputnik crisis, education became a key component of competing with the Soviets. Many people implicated American schools for causing the United States to “[fall] behind the Soviet Union” in scientific and technological advancement.¹¹⁴ Most critics of education emphasized the weakness of science and engineering training, but as they planned educational reforms, some favored “a well-rounded approach that included the humanities” and seemed to recognize literature’s relevance in education, while others preferred to focus reform “exclusively on science and math.”¹¹⁵

Many of the proponents of science, math, and engineering reform pushed for increased federal funding for those programs. In response, President Eisenhower initially created a “dual program” to fund the National Science Foundation and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) in their efforts to advance science, math, and foreign language education in high schools and universities. Following in 1958, he signed the National Defense Education Act, one component of which “provided $280 million…for the purchase of equipment for the teaching of science, math, and foreign languages.”¹¹⁶ Still, Eisenhower believed that the real “responsibility for education” lay “close to the people it serve[d].”¹¹⁷ He encouraged students, parents, and teachers to take the initiative and “improve [the local curriculum] to meet ‘the stern demands of the era we are entering.’”¹¹⁸ For Eisenhower and Americans, it would be a “cooperative [task]” to improve education and compete with the Soviets.¹¹⁹ Historian Robert A. Divine

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 52.
¹¹⁵ Ibid. 54.
¹¹⁶ Ibid. 164.
¹¹⁷ Eisenhower via Divine 91.
¹¹⁸ Divine 55.
¹¹⁹ Eisenhower via Divine 55.
reported that even in the fall of 1958, “a new emphasis on science and math…and the adoption of new courses for students ‘with high intellectual potential!’” seemed to characterize American schools from elementary to high school levels. Within a year of the launch of Sputnik, educational reform produced a newly vitalized focus on science and competition.

Three years later, an assistant superintendent in Minnesota observed a similar phenomenon, but he painted it in a much more negative light. “Secondary Education and the Cold War” was an essay published in *The Clearing House: A Journal for Modern Junior and Senior High Schools*. Its author, Glenn F. Varner, explained that by 1961, reactions to Sputnik had halted the progress that secondary education curriculums had been making in the previous twenty years. He, like Loban, observed that high schools had been moving toward improved methods, such as more individualized assignments and attention to students. After Sputnik, a revision of educational priorities changed the course of secondary education. Schools began to stress uniformity, to provide “special programs for the gifted with complacent neglect of the ungifted,” and to give preference to “currently popular subjects,” like science, math, and foreign language, while ignoring the fine arts. Varner blamed government policies and funding, along with the “individuals whose prominence in other [non-education] fields [had] given them the status necessary for leadership in mass hysteria movements.” Meanwhile, “educators who were well informed on the real problems of secondary education” before Sputnik, were

120 Divine 166.
122 Ibid. 453.
“completely bypassed” after Sputnik. Finally, he warned that the reactionary trends resulting from Sputnik might have undesirable consequences in secondary education, such as overly rigid graduation requirements and the loss of elective courses like home economics and art.

Both Divine’s book and Varner’s article observed that secondary education after Sputnik emphasized science, math, engineering, and foreign language through increased funding and preference, and it gave more attention to high-performing students. The discussions and articles in The English Journal after 1957 demonstrated that secondary literature teachers adapted to these changes: They continued to conform to the democratic culture while simultaneously adjusting some of their methods and rhetoric to stay relevant in the newly scientifically and competitively driven culture of the latter part of the early Cold War period (1957-1963).

Science in Literature Education

In 1959, a high school teacher from Minnesota responded to the new stress on the importance of science education by writing “Science Visits an English Classroom.” Kathleen B. Dowling instructed teachers to pay attention to current events and to bring “science into the English classroom” because science was a “currently popular subject,” as Varner later reflected. Dowling outlined a unit that would do this. The literature teacher would propose a topic and ask her students what they knew about it. After brainstorming a list of prior knowledge, the students would form groups to search

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123 Ibid. 452.
124 Ibid. 453.
for further knowledge of the topic. Throughout the unit, the teacher would suggest reading material (some of which would be literature), request the help of science teachers and librarians, and generally facilitate the students’ research. At the end of the unit, there would be a presentation composed of “fantastic tales retold, original poems and short stories read, words written on the board and explained, situations dramatized (for example, student role-playing of scientists or of a roundtable discussion...).”

Dowling’s proposed unit incorporated science in a number of ways: it required research and elements of the scientific method, like hypothesis and experimentation; it emphasized the importance of correct, “exact” spelling; it required “precise” figures; and it encouraged the use of diagrams, graphs, and models. This scientific rhetoric went beyond that of Loban three years earlier. No longer were literature teachers just creating processes to guide student interpretation and using words like values, units, and amounts. By 1959, Dowling’s literature unit incorporated science more explicitly with research, an emphasis on precision and objective correctness, and visual representations of data. In three years, pedagogy had evolved from hypothetically supporting a methodical approach to literature to specifically designing one such approach.

Dowling’s specific model dissected literature for students, cutting it into sections so that the students could divide and conquer it methodically. It asked them to retell, reread, and replay information, not only making the process scientific but also extracting the freedom and creativity of interpretation. By asking students to regurgitate facts, literature education possibly even regressed, as Varner observed, to the era before progressive educational reform. When John Dewey developed his pedagogical beliefs,

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126 Ibid. 147.
127 Ibid. 148.
teachers focused on moving beyond rote memorization and preparing students for the
skill set required by the Industrial Revolution, when job tasks were repetitive and did not
require critical thinking.\(^{128}\) Dowling’s unit, like pre-progressive pedagogical methods,
prepared students to complete tasks rather than to interpret ideas, indicating that cultural
concerns after Sputnik – and the influence of prominent individuals outside the field of
education – may have caused the field of education to lose some of the ground gained by
its own experts in the previous half-century. Nonetheless, by demonstrating that science,
research, and precision could be components of a literature assignment, Dowling helped
to prove the relevance of literature in a scientific society.

Dowling concluded her article with the following assertion about how to be a
good literature teacher: “At the end of [this] unit…the teacher of language arts will have
done what all good teachers would like to do: shown ability and knowledge in his own
field and interest and guidance far beyond it.”\(^{129}\) To be a good literature teacher,
Dowling suggested, required the incorporation of other subjects. If one was aware of the
“present,” of the popular cultural ideas, then one understood that science, in particular,
must be incorporated. By heeding the call for science in the curriculum, Dowling had
taken “responsibility for education” and “met the stern demands of the era,” just as
President Eisenhower had requested of the people closest to local education. In this
article, Dowling also demonstrated that she was willing to alter her teaching methods to
include scientific topics and methods. She was willing to conform to the changing
American culture – in both her methods and her rhetoric.

\(^{128}\) See previous footnote on John Dewey.
\(^{129}\) Dowling 149.
Still, as the United States continued to champion the democratic political process throughout the Sputnik crisis, especially as it helped to set the United States further apart from the Soviet Union, literature teaching methods continued to align with democratic ideals. Just like the teachers from the first ten years of the early Cold War period, Dowling continued to demonstrate that her ideas were relevant to preparing students for a democratic society. Although the threat of losing one’s job and reputation for associating with communism had lessened, a teacher’s ability to align pedagogy with democracy could only make his or her pedagogy more relevant to American society during the Sputnik Crisis.

The research-based unit that Dowling proposed in “Science Visits an English Classroom” demonstrated an effort to “organiz[e] consensus and preserv[e] stability,” consistent with Dewey’s definition of participatory democracy, Fones-Wolf’s observations of Cold War liberals, and Loban’s judgment of literature teachers by the late 1950s. To find the best method to teach literature, Dowling did not just consult other literature teachers; she sought to organize consensus among teachers of other subjects as well, recognizing the need to expand the scope of the democratic process and incorporate more perspectives. Even as Dowling’s teaching methods and rhetoric adapted to include science after the launch of Sputnik, they did not exclude democracy. This literature teacher, it seems, recognized a need to adapt to the scientific emphasis in society to improve and continue to demonstrate literature’s relevance after 1957.

Also in 1959, Edgar Logan, a Michigan high school teacher, wrote “Stretch for the Stars.” In comparison to Dowling’s article, Logan gave a more subtle and metaphorical demonstration that literature education conformed to the changing culture
and was still relevant to society. The article’s title spoke to both the societal and educational preoccupation with scientific advancement and competing with the Soviet Union in the race to conquer space. “Stretch for the Stars” was cleverly alliterative, cutely scientific, and metaphorically competitive.

Within the article, Logan explained his school’s “Great Books Club” for “[t]op-notch eleventh and twelfth graders,” those with the “high intellectual potential” that Divine referred to. To be asked to join such a club, students had to first read ten books from the “Great Books list.” To stay in the club, they had to “read much, much more than [they] probably [were] in the habit of reading.” Eventually, students would improve their reading ability and pace.  

Logan’s rhetoric centered on accomplishment: it involved “[t]op-notch” students reading “much, much more,” striving to be better and faster. The article, its rhetoric, and the teaching method it highlighted all championed students who drove for achievement. In doing so, they spoke to the American cultural value of competition. Even if the students in Logan’s school did not have to compete with each other to get into the book club, they did constantly need to compete with themselves to accomplish more. They needed a competitive spirit and inherent motivation for high achievement.

By instituting a program like the Great Books Club that encouraged students to develop a competitive spirit and praised motivation and high achievement, Logan’s school fulfilled its “responsibility for education,” as tasked by Eisenhower. The program prepared students for a competitive American society and, by tying in science and the space race with the title, also seemed to suggest that it would somehow prepare students

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for the *scientific* American society as well. Maybe this was because of the way science and competition came to be so intertwined in the U.S. ideology about the Soviet Union.

Logan’s title and article demonstrated, through scientific rhetoric and competitive methods (and thereby possibly scientific methods by default), that literature education remained culturally relevant; his article also demonstrated that literature education continued to adhere to the democratic ideal, even with these adaptations. When Logan proudly declared that his school’s Great Book list contained classic texts and that it “prominently displayed [those classics] on a separate shelf in the school library,” he demonstrated his defender leanings. By holding classic texts in such high regard, he also showed that he conformed to the American emphasis on the superiority of democratic, western culture during this period. Furthermore, although Logan’s seemingly uncompromising preference for classics may not represent the democratic ideal of compromise the way the “multiple approach” did, it may demonstrate what Varner observed about secondary education at this time: Teachers like Logan were “well informed on the real problems” of their disciplines, and the teaching methods that they found to be the most effective persisted through the “hysteria” propelled by prominent leaders outside the field of education, who commented on education more regularly in this period.

Logan followed the literature teachers who came before him in that he was willing to conform to cultural ideals, even as those ideals evolved. However, he did not follow their lead when he refused to concede his emphasis on the classics. This indicates that by 1959, it was not as crucial to teach modern texts alongside classic texts. Instead, emphasizing western values and classic texts likely helped Logan to dissociate his

131 Ibid.
pedagogy and his school from the Soviet Union. Logan conformed to the cultural emphasis on the democratic process and on Western values, which persisted through the first and second half of the early Cold War period. He also demonstrated literature’s relevance to science and competition when they gained cultural significance in 1957.

Together, Dowling’s and Logan’s articles demonstrated that as science gained popularity as an academic subject and intertwined with competition, literature teachers began to place “new emphasis” on it, integrating it into their discussions and even their methods. Still, they did not lose sight of Americans’ continued appreciation for democratic ideals. Accordingly, they demonstrated that their methods of literature education could still conform and remain relevant to a society that agreed on the importance of both democracy and science.

Attention to Gifted Students

After 1957, The English Journal placed greater emphasis on distinguishing the higher-performing literature students from the lower-performing literature students. For example, the number of articles that mentioned gifted and ungifted students increased substantially. In the ten-year period from 1946 to 1956, only two article titles included the word gifted, and none included the word honor. In the six-year period between 1957 and 1963, five article titles included the word gifted or the word honor, and a number of other articles featured the distinction between high- and low-performing students. Some telling article titles between 1957 and 1963 included “Teaching ‘Julius Caesar’ to Slow Learners” (1960), “Teaching Gifted Students to Teach Themselves” (1961), “Improving Selection of Pupils for Remedial Reading: A Report of Research” (1961), “English for the Ungifted” (1961), “Honors Enrichment in the Eleventh Grade” (1961), “Reaching
Slow Learners” (1962), “Slow Learners – Instructional Tapes and Insight” (1962), and “Humanities for the Less Able Student” (1962). Articles like these demonstrated the increased societal emphasis on competition that both Divine and Varner observed. A closer analysis of two such articles reveals just how teachers continued to strive to demonstrate their subjects’ relevance to a society still focused on democracy and increasingly focused on science and competition.

In 1960, “Identifying Students of Superior and Low Ability” by John W. Myers of California described a study performed by his school that sought to identify and clarify how “students of superior, average, and low ability” performed in secondary English classrooms. Some of the study’s findings were relevant to literature specifically. They were as follows: Superior students “under[stood] complex directions,” and could thereby “readily [grasp] main plot and sub-plot relationships in literature”; they were “interested in many subjects,” including “any and all aspects of a novel: plot, characterization, idea.” By contrast, low-ability students “like[d] very simple or humorous poetry” and “lack[ed] reading ability.” This study identified what classified good and bad literature students and thereby facilitated literature teachers’ participation in the culture of competition. It allowed them to identify and promote more intelligent Americans and to thereby enhance the national reputation, especially in comparison to the Soviet Union.


134 Ibid. 486.

135 Ibid. 487.
Myers’s school used these results to help clarify the parameters that they would use for proper “ability grouping” of students. This was part of an overall effort “to improve and develop” their literature classes. They recognized that determining the characteristics of high- and low-ability students was “not only needed but indispensable before really effective progress could be made in curriculum-building.”\textsuperscript{136} This conscious effort to improve curriculum – and the belief that grouping students by the level of their abilities would be crucial to improvement – demonstrated a response to the President’s call for schools to take “responsibility for education” and also provided some preliminary evidence for Varner’s later criticism that high schools were establishing “special programs for the gifted with complacent neglect for the ungifted.” Although Myers’s school did not seem to neglect the ungifted, the extensive effort to properly separate them from the gifted students was certainly a step in that direction. In fact, six years earlier the Supreme Court decision \textit{Brown v. Board of Education} had addressed issues of separation on the basis of racial difference. In this case, the Governor of California – the same state in which Myers taught – determined, “[I]n the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.”\textsuperscript{137} Two separate programs could not be equal. With this prominent assertion in the not-too-distant past, there is reason to believe that Myers’s school recognized the implications and even foresaw the outcomes of its plans to identify and separate gifted and ungifted students. It would almost inevitably bring better opportunities to the gifted students.

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid. 485.
Even as this California high school adapted its literature curriculum to the evolving culture of competition, it continued to conform to the culture of democracy. By recognizing differences among students and treating them accordingly, the school paralleled the conservative push for individual freedoms. Their study also recognized that students who could analyze complex literature were on the track to success, implying that such skills would be necessary later in their lives. As Myers explained this study, he justified literature education’s democratic relevance in a fashion similar to Burton and Burrowes, emphasizing the necessity of analytical skills and strategies for success in a democratic society. When Burton and Burrowes wrote about these skills, they were already relevant to American democracy because conservatives were already pushing for a free enterprise economic system, in which increasing productivity from big businesses would bring greater prosperity to everyone. By the time Myers wrote about analytical skills, the spirit of competition and “ever increasing productivity” had crossed further into the political sphere; it was no longer just tied to politics through economics. In 1960, to achieve greater productivity in a democratic, capitalist system was to achieve greater prowess and credibility for the United States and for its political and economic systems. It was to beat and to discredit the Soviet Union and its political and economic systems.

Thus Myers’s article demonstrated, first, that to improve literature education and prove societal relevance, American high schools recognized the need to “[adopt] new courses for students ‘with high intellectual potential;’” and second, that literature education still used democratic teaching methods and prepared students for a democratic society, despite the changes after 1957.

138 Fones-Wolf 5.
139 Divine 166.
The following year, Ralph John Moriconi, a literature teacher in another California school, wrote an article that described a high school honors literature class. “Eleventh Grade Honors Program” (1961) detailed the methods for structuring a class specifically for students who were gifted in the discipline of literature. Moriconi’s school, then, not only separated high- and low-ability students to improve the curriculum overall, but it also began to create those “special programs for the gifted.” It gave special attention to improving the curriculum for high-ability students, which Varner later criticized.

Some of the teaching methods in Moriconi’s literature honors program included structuring literature by type (short story, essay, poetry, etc.) and chronology, assigning extra projects for students to do outside of class, and implementing thematic units.140 These units required students to break into groups, become experts on their theme and the literature in their unit,141 and reconvene for a symposium where they shared their work with the other students in the class, the teachers, and the community. This way, by the end of the unit, all the students would have learned about all of the thematic units.142 Many of these methods were consistent with the different factions of literature teachers described by Loban in 1956. Innovators considered differences among students; defenders organized literature by type and chronology; and moderate defenders created thematic units where students did some individual assignments and some group assignments and reconvened at the end of the unit to assess the outcome. This article demonstrated concretely that many of the teaching methods that were relevant to

141 Ibid. 194.
142 Ibid. 195.
preparing students for a democracy in the first half of the early Cold War period persisted through the Sputnik crisis. It also demonstrated that the use of scientific rhetoric and processes, which began to emerge even before the Sputnik crisis in Loban’s article, became even more prominent after 1957. Like Dowling’s literature unit from 1959, Moriconi’s honors literature unit required students to research, dissect a project into manageable parts, and report information. The difference in Moriconi’s article was the focus and the objective of the educational methods: none of the aforementioned innovators, defenders, or moderate defenders focused on honors students alone, or even classified any students as such. By 1961, though, Moriconi compounded scientific rhetoric with competitive rhetoric by using the word “honors” and directing his pedagogy at the students with the greatest potential for achievement. In doing so, he demonstrated the interconnectedness of science and competition in literature pedagogy and thereby the relevance of literature education in a scientific and competitive society.

*The English Journal’s* articles’ abundant emphasis on distinguishing between students’ learning levels and Moriconi’s explanation of his school’s honors program demonstrated that after Sputnik was launched, literature teachers answered the call to make American students more competitive with the Soviet Union, especially in scientific advancements. By identifying and encouraging the students most capable of success, they showed that the literature discipline would be relevant to that effort. These two articles also indicated that to participate in the culture of competition, literature teachers probably did not have to change many of their methods. Many teachers were already creating some assignments that were individualized to their students’ interests and abilities. Nonetheless, Myers and Moriconi emphasized the distinction between various
student ability levels much more blatantly than previous advocates of individualized instructional methods for literature, like Burrowes for example.

In the second half of the early Cold War period (1957-1963), literature teachers recognized, as Whitfield might have described it, that the spectrum of reputable and realistic choices that literature teachers could make in regards to their methods and their rhetoric had widened. No longer did that spectrum include just the democratic process; it had expanded to include science and competition as well. Teachers could no longer focus on preparing students for a democratic society; they had to prepare students for a scientific, competitive democratic society. Literature teachers adjusted their methods and rhetoric to conform to cultural ideals across the entirety of the larger spectrum, demonstrating a continued focus on proving the relevance of literature to society over the course of the consensus-driven early Cold War period.

**Conclusion**

Throughout the period and through the articles in *The English Journal*, teachers of English literature emphasized the relevance of their discipline and assured their readers that they were conforming to the constraints of the early Cold War culture – which accepted nothing but conformity. Literature teachers illustrated this most clearly through their rhetoric, the ideas that they chose to address in their articles, and their methods, which all shifted suddenly in 1957 to mirror the change of emphasis in American culture, catalyzed by the Soviet Union’s launch of Sputnik. When the United States suddenly inserted fervor for scientific development and competition into its already-established culture of democracy and consensus, many American literature teachers inserted science and competition into their classrooms and their pedagogical discussions as well.
The behavior of literature teachers in the early Cold War and the continued struggle of college students today to defend their choice to major in English seems to indicate that in times when literature seems especially unimportant, or marginal, to society at large, the discipline makes an effort to prove its relevance to the values that *are* important to society. This effort is noticeable – and possibly exaggerated in comparison to other time periods in which it likely occurred – in the early Cold War period because of the strong cultural emphasis on consensus during that period, which seems to have compounded teachers’ efforts to prove their subject’s relevance. Not only did they have to defend their professional credibility and the reputation of an academic discipline about which they were presumably passionate, but they also had to defend their political validity, permissibility, and trustworthiness as well.
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Author’s Biography

Jennifer Pauline Chalmers was born on October 2, 1991 in Framingham, Massachusetts. She was raised in Foxborough, MA by her mother Debbie Broderick, her father Jim Chalmers, her step father Kevin Broderick, and her step mother Diane Chalmers. She attended Foxborough High School, where she spent much of her time playing clarinet in the concert band and marching band, and graduated in June 2010.

Jenn began attending the University of Maine in the fall of 2010 with a major in English. Over the next few years, she added a second major in History and minors in Spanish and Education. During her time at UMaine, she participated in the honors societies Sophomore Eagles, All Maine Women, Sigma Tau Delta, and Phi Beta Kappa. She has joined History Club, Autism at UMaine, Pep Band, and Symphonic Band, and she worked for Black Bear Dining, the Maine Journal, and the Writing Center. Jenn will graduate in May 2014 with a dual degree in History and English.

Upon graduation, Jenn will begin a job with Teach for America in southern New Jersey. She plans to gain experience teaching secondary English before attending graduate school and ultimately pursuing a career in educational policy or publishing.