

THESIS

WALKING IN ANOTHER'S SKIN:
THE CULTIVATION OF EMPATHY AND INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING IN THE
INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE PROGRAM

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

WALKING IN ANOTHER'S SKIN: INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING AND THE CULTIVATION OF EMPATHY IN THE INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE PROGRAM

In 1968, the International Baccalaureate Program (IB) was launched and within 10 years the program exploded in popularity all over the world. Now that popularity has spread to 159 countries with nearly half of IB accredited world school located in the United States. Due to the majority of these schools being located in the west, arguments have begun to arise about the program veering away from its original intention of providing international education to produce intercultural understanding and global citizens, to prioritize western ideals and values. Despite the clear statement of purpose to foster intercultural understanding and global citizens in the Mission Statement and the Learner Profile a gap between the IB mission and classroom execution has begun to appear.

This thesis explores how this increasing gap between the IB Mission Statement and classroom execution can begin to be closed through the exploration of the use of literature from different cultures to develop empathy and increase intercultural understanding in the classroom. To demonstrate how to foster an empathetic reading through literature I analyze sections from Harper Lee's 1960 novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* and Sherman Alexie's 2007 novel *Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. I illustrate through this literary analysis, after identifying the foundational mission of the IB through an examination of the Mission Statement and the three terms – inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring – that appear both in the Mission Statement and the Learner Profile, how reading literature to cultivate empathy can increase intercultural understanding and international education.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the late Harper Lee, who deeply impacted my life though I never had the pleasure of meeting her. I never realized when I first read *To Kill a Mockingbird* my sophomore year in high school how important it and Lee would be in my academic career. Thank you to the woman who accompanied me through the highs and lows of student teaching and took my thesis from hypothetical to reality.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“You can never really understand a person until you consider things from their point of view – [...] – until you climb into his skin and walk around in it” –Harper Lee

While student teaching 9th grade International Baccalaureate (IB) at Loveland High School fall semester 2013, my mentor teacher gave me the option to teach *Fahrenheit 451* or *To Kill a Mockingbird (TKAM)*. I chose the latter, in part because I had not read *Fahrenheit 451* and was sure that I would spend more time trying to understand the novel myself than teaching the students. Primarily I chose *TKAM* because I had read it in high school and loved it. However, even though my love for the novel grew while I taught it, my fresh-faced premonition that my passion for it would transfer to the students ended up being completely incorrect. If students were not bluntly stating their dissatisfaction with the novel, they were silently communicating their dislike through heavy sighs, eye rolls, and body shifting. Yet, it was not the daily battle with the students on the value of *TKAM* that weighed heavy on my mind, but rather their complete lack of connection with the novel, and as a result, their inability to empathize with what was happening. Though I worked exhaustively to get the students to connect with the characters through free writes on what adventures they got into when they were younger, similar to Dill and Scout, and discussions on where they still saw injustice to minorities, those pathways never seemed to merge. No matter my efforts to connect the novel with the contemporary to try to get the students to understand and empathize with Lee’s greater purpose and inspiration, something never clicked and students continued to treat the novel and its subject matter as past and over rather than still active in the present.

The IB classroom context in which I student taught was a 9th grade Middle Years Program classroom. Offered since 1994 the MYP - serving students 11-16 - precedes the Diploma Program (DP). The MYP uses a challenging framework to encourage students to make practical connections between their academic and 'real' world. It is inclusive by design – designed for students of all interest areas and academic standings - so that students of all interests and academic abilities can benefit from their participation in the program. The MYP functions as an opportunity for students to sample the IB program, get acquainted with the purpose of the IB, and learn what will be demanded of them if they choose to continue on to the DP.

As an Advanced Placement (AP) student in high school, I was not introduced to the IB program until college, during my teacher licensing program placement at Loveland High School (LHS). As the only IB accredited world school in its district, LHS was proud of their accreditation and many of their teachers taught both IB and non-IB classes. During the year of 2012, I volunteered in a non-IB 10th grade classroom with a teacher that also taught 10th grade MYP IB 10th. Though I was aware of the high academic demand put on IB students, due in part because the teacher that I was working with used the same lesson plan for both non-IB and IB classes, I was unaware of the IB program as a whole. It was not until I student taught at LHS a year later, with a different teacher, that I became more familiar with IB and what it entailed.

The International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) stresses the importance of students being aware of the Mission Statement (Appendix A) and being able to demonstrate the attributes – a total of 10 – described in the IB Learner Profile (Appendix B). The IBO created the Learner Profile in 2006 to further encourage the teaching of and focus on attributes and values that describe the type of student that the program wishes to develop (Oord). This was evident while I student taught at LHS because there was an IB Coordinator whose job it was to meet with IB

teachers and discuss their plans for the year to ensure they met IB standards. There was also a bi-weekly IB meeting for both students interested in continuing to the Diploma program as well as students currently in the Diploma program. The Learner Profile was also published to create more coherence between the programs as well as providing ‘testable’ growth of a student within the program and desired classroom execution of the program and Mission Statement. The creation of the Learner Profile represents one example of the growing argument that the promised international education and development of intercultural understanding and global citizenship is not present in classrooms.

According to the IBO, intercultural understanding is the recognition and reflection on one’s own perspective as well as the perspectives of others; the IB programs foster learning how to appreciate critically the world’s rich cultural heritage by exploring human commonality, diversity, and interconnection. Intercultural understanding emphasizes the understanding of a student’s own culture as well as other cultures. Multiple cultures can, and do, exist within a single country. A culture is customs, attitudes, and beliefs that are shared by and distinguish a group of people. Culture is passed along through art, language, rituals, and often times, a unique historic significance. Cultures can range from being smaller and more close knit such as the various Native American tribes, to vast and spanning throughout a large area like Southern culture in the Southern United States.

Since this was an IB classroom, it was expected by the IB coordinator, and in essence the IBO, that students be familiar with the IB Mission Statement and Learner Profile. However, since the Mission Statement was only presented in the classroom once, students and myself quickly forgot about it. Yet, during my multi-layered attempts at getting the students to connect with Lee’s novel, particularly with the characters that were different from them in an attempt to

demonstrate how injustice to others (particularly minorities) can happen, I found myself recalling and contemplating the final line of the Mission Statement: “learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right”, and struggling with the use of ‘can’ over ‘are’ with regards to other people’s correctness. As the class got further in the novel they struggled more and more with their personal belief of what was correct and the different types of ‘correct’ thinking that were coming up in the text. For instance, students could not understand how a woman like Mayella Ewell was believed over a kind man like Tom Robinson just because she was white and he was black. This was the only part of the Mission Statement that resonated with me through my student teaching experience and I often thought on it while students worked to make connections between Lee’s novel, history, and other works. The level of doubt presented through this statement regarding other culture’s ‘rightness’ nagged at me not only because in retrospect, I struggle to understand how a Mission Statement with that as its final line could possibly foster global citizens but also because it directly related to the disconnection I was seeing in the classroom. My students, despite their efforts and mine, struggled to identify with and see how Lee’s commentary was not only relevant to them and the culture they live in, but still true in its presentation of injustice to minorities in the United States. Even more than that my experience highlighted the direct issue presented by this final statement in the Mission: that of the need for empathy in the classroom.

Empathy is a growing field of interest, particularly among emotion theorists, literary studies and educators, though due to its wide spread use it is difficult to deduce a single definition. Unlike sympathy, which often has a negative connotation in its simple definition of ‘pity’, empathy is the act of imaging oneself in the position of another (Nussbaum). Or as Lee

(through Atticus Finch) so eloquently puts it, walking around in someone else's 'shoes' as a means of trying to come to some understanding of who they are and what they are experiencing.

During the five months that I was student teaching, neither the Mission Statement nor the IB Learner Profile were clearly present or noticeably important in the classroom. Despite the 10 IB Learner Profile values hanging on the classroom walls, my mentor teacher sporadically, rather than consistently, drew the students' attention to them. The students, and myself, often expressed confusion at this sudden inclusion. Similarly, only once were the students exposed to the Mission Statement, at which point they were asked to interact with it through a group discussion and analysis. Despite this, by the close of the semester, if asked, none of the students were able to recall either the Mission Statement or explain the relevance of the Learner Profile. I cannot say if this was the case in all IB classrooms in LHS because teachers are trained to be IB teachers and there was an IB coordinator whose job it was to check in on classrooms. To the students I taught, the lack of presence of the Mission Statement and Learner Profile likely meant little, after learning more about the IB it began to bother me that the students were being taught in a certain way to attain certain values but did not understand why. This bothered me further after doing research on the IB because the goals that it states cannot be fully obtained by students if they are not consciously aware and told in class that that is what they are working towards in every lesson. Students, I argue, need to be consciously aware of the values that they are being asked to develop in order to apply them.

This struggle to comprehend how students were gaining what they needed to from the IB without even being consciously aware of what it was, along with my frustration at being unsuccessful at getting the students to connect with *TKAM* drove me to explore further the International Baccalaureate, what it aims to do, and where it stands among scholars and

educators today. This exploration in turn led me to the discovery of a pattern among scholars in the argument that the program, as I had unconsciously realized in my struggle with the final line of the Mission Statement, is elitist, prioritizing dominant Western cultural ideals. This can be seen in the literature taught in English because though the IB emphasizes the importance of students being aware of their own culture and other cultures, the majority of the literature taught is predominantly written by dead, white, male, British or American authors. Despite the numerous arguments presented by scholars on this point none offered any possible solution to this problem though all of them agree to some degree that the program is valuable and worthwhile despite its dangerous shortcomings. In response to this, this study aims to answer the following research questions in an effort to provide a possible solution to the IB program's westernized and elitist stance in the current global education sphere:

1. [How] can the increasing gap between the IB Mission Statement and classroom execution begin to be closed?
2. [How] can reading literature from different cultures develop empathy and increase intercultural understanding in the classroom?

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Before jumping into answering the research questions of this study it is necessary to explore the history and context of the IB program as well as present the major schools of thought on empathy. The first section of this literary review will present the important history and context behind the creation and evolution of the International Baccalaureate Organization (now known as just IB). This will include the foundational thought that the IB was born from and the different programs that are now offered. The second section of this literary review will highlight major scholars in the field of empathy, as well as educators who are beginning to move towards the importance of empathy in the classroom. This mix will present a pattern of thought in the use of literature to foster empathy with two main positions standing out: the educators who argue for the use of empathetic reading and affect theorists who warn against the danger of such an activity arguing that it creates a power hierarchy between the reader and the other.

IB History and Context

In the summer of 1950 the Conference of Internationally Minded Schools held by the Council of International Schools (CIS) organized a four-week course to discuss international education. By the close of the four weeks the 50 teachers and heads of schools from Europe, Asia and the United States agreed on a definition of international education:

It should give the child an understanding of his past as a common heritage to which all men irrespective of nation, race or creed have contributed and which all men should share; it should give him an understanding of his present world as a world in which peoples are interdependent and in which cooperation is a necessity.

In such an education emphasis should be laid on a basic attitude of respect for all human beings as persons, understanding of those things which unit us and an appreciation of the positive values of those things which may seem to divide us, with the objective of thinking free from fear or prejudice. (Hill 22)

Eighteen years after this course, in 1968, the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme was created with the goal of providing such international education as was laid out by the educators present at the CIS course.

The International Baccalaureate (IB) is a non-profit educational foundation offering four highly respected programs of international education that develop the intellectual, personal, emotional, and social skills needed to live, learn, and work in a rapidly globalizing world. Formerly known as the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO), the IB program was founded in Geneva, Switzerland. Intended primarily for the children of Ambassadors and United Nations officials, the IB filled a need for an internationally accepted college entrance exam.

The framework for what would eventually become the IB Diploma Program was created in 1948 in the work *Is There a Way of Teaching for Peace?* a handbook for United Nationsite, written by Marie-Theresa Maurette. Maurette, head of the International School of Geneva, believed that students need “a complete and rounded view of the world, not only knowledge and understanding but the desire for peace, the feeling of the brotherhood of man” (Hill 21). Over a decade later, in the mid-1960s a group of teachers from the International School of Geneva created the International Schools Examination Syndicate (ISES), which became the International Baccalaureate Organization (Hill).

Former Deputy Director General of the International Baccalaureate Organization, Ian Hill pinpoints the beginning of the IB in 1962, when the first IB course emerged from a conference of teachers of social studies held in Geneva by the International Schools Association (ISA). During this conference there was a call by teachers of social studies for the creation of common standards for grading and marking systems. The teachers further wanted to address national biases to attempt to develop an appreciation of the range of cultural perspectives, specifically

with historical events (Hill). The parents, international civil servants, who dominated the ISA supported this, wanting their children's education to reflect the objectives of the organizations they served: "the promotion of world peace and international understanding" (19). What came out of these demands was the IB Diploma Programme, a program for students 16-19 that would result, if completed, in an internationally recognized university entrance diploma. The Diploma programme uses the same external examination for students across the globe and fulfilled the need for an internationally recognized diploma, which would function as an international passport to higher education facilitating global mobility (Hill). This meant that students would be able to easily study in a multitude of different countries without worrying about taking a separate college entrance exam. This new program also responded to growing concerns about the inappropriateness of the teaching of national curricula to provide an international experience in the academic programs that were present in existing, 1962-1964, international schools around the world (Hill).

Despite its early presence within the debate over international education and schools the IBO was not officially founded until 1968. Even after its official creation, the program continued to evolve over a series of 50 meetings spanning from 1967-1975, which brought about the establishment of the profile of the Diploma (Hill). This involved six subjects including a first and second language, mathematics, a subject chosen for each of the humanities and experimental sciences, and a subject chosen from an elective group. The profile further included the Theory of Knowledge (TOK) course taken by students before entering the DP, the compulsory artistic activity known as Creativity Actions Service (CAS), and the Extended Essay, which, along with CAS, are the two main things students have to accomplish to obtain the Diploma. A year following the establishment of the Diploma, participating schools started paying an annual

registration fee. Hill argues that by providing a common curriculum that was academically rigorous with an international perspective, critical thinking and research skills, and emphasizing the development of the whole student the IB responded to the dilemma of international schools by promising to create world citizens.

Over 40 years since its creation, there are IB World Schools offering one or more programs in 159 countries throughout the world, with 40% (1,571) in the United States alone (IBO). It has grown from a single program offering an internationally recognized diploma, to four programs – PYP, MYP, CP, DP- that develop the intellectual, personal, emotional, and social skills needed to live, learn and work in a rapidly globalizing world and provide a continuum of education. The original program of the IB, the Diploma Program (DP) has been offered since 1968 to students 16-19. It aims to develop students to have an excellent breadth and depth of knowledge; that flourish emotionally, physically, ethically, and intellectually. 26 years after the implementation of the DP, in 1994, IB offered the Middle Years Program (MYP) for students 11-16. The MYP uses a challenging framework to encourage students to make practical connections between their academic and real world, the program is designed to be inclusive so that students of all interests and academic abilities can benefit from their participation. Like the DP, the MYP grew quickly with MYP schools in 51 countries just five years after its development. Following this success the IB offered in 1997 the Primary Years Program (PYP) for students ages 3-12. The program focuses on the development of the whole child while preparing the students to become caring, active, lifelong learners who demonstrate respect and the capacity to participate in the world around them. Like those that came before it, the PYP exploded in popularity with 87 authorized PYP schools in 43 countries five years after its creation (IBO). The final addition to the IB came in 2006 with the Career-related Program (CP)

offered to students 16-19 to address the needs of students interested and engaged in career-related education. The CP uses a framework of international education, leading to further/higher education, apprenticeships, or employment. This program has not experienced the popularity of the other programs but is viewed as a less demanding alternative to the DP.

Empathy

The first part of the definition of ‘caring’ in the IB Learner Profile is that students show empathy. ‘Empathy’ is a wide spread concept, with a definition that is a matter of debate, given this diversity of opinion it is difficult to insist upon a narrow definition (Hammond and Sue). Ann Jurecic presents two of the major opinions on empathy through reading literature. The first perspective is that of the educator who maintains that “deep engagement with the interior lives of characters, attention to how language and narrative function, and practice reflecting on ambiguities and uncertainties of others minds and lives” may encourage readers to be more empathetic (11). While on the other side of the spectrum affect theorists, like Paul Ricoeur, argue “the idea that one can, through reading, try on the experience of another and thereby understand that person’s experience cognitively and emotionally is absurdly simplistic” (16). In other words, Jurecic notes that to affect theorists, empathy “covers over a shameful complicity with oppressive practices” while educators argue for the necessity of reading literature for empathy (17).

Philosopher Martha Nussbaum, in her work *Upheavals of Thought* straddles the two perspectives presented by Jurecic. Nussbaum defines empathy as involving “the imaginative reconstruction” (327) in which an empathetic person “attempts to reconstruct the mental experience of another” (328). Nussbaum argues that a key part of empathy is the separateness between oneself and the other. Similar to the affect theorists, Nussbaum warns against the

possible danger of empathy arguing that empathy does not contribute anything of ethical importance using the example of a torturer who can “use it [empathy] for hostile and sadistic ends” (333). But on a similar side of the argument with educators, Nussbaum stresses the importance of empathy in compassion. She states that empathy “may not be strictly necessary for recognizing humanity in others” but it “does count for something, standing between us and a type of especially terrible evil” (334). With the habits of mind involved in imaging someone’s experience making it “difficult to turn around and deny humanity to the very people with who experiences one has been encouraged to have empathy” (334). So for Nussbaum empathy is an important part in compassion because it forces an individual to see the humanity in the ‘other’ whose experience they are trying to imagine.

Philosopher Adam Morton follows the line of thought presented by Nussbaum. He defines empathy as “applying emotional and imaginative capacities to the task of understanding others”, arguing that it is ‘real understanding’ that “gives one a grasp of the motivation of another” (318). Morton argues that empathy, in short, is understanding the motivation for action, maybe not why that action was taken but how one was able to take it. But unlike Nussbaum, who stresses the conscious knowledge of the separateness of self and other, Morton considers a closer connection between the self and other which “requires that the empathizer share some of the ‘tone and perceptive’ of the person they are empathizing with” (319). More specifically, Morton argues that empathy cannot just result from “imagining oneself into all the details of the others person’s situation” but rather in order to grasp another’s situation “one ignores some of these [acts or emotions], imagines some of them in a rudimentary not-very-vivid way, and imagines a few in a vivid way that incorporates the person’s perspective” (324). One basic function of

empathy, Morton argues, is “to transfer understanding from the familiar to the unfamiliar” (328), thus challenging an individual’s world view.

Educator Megan Boler, unlike Nussbaum, does not straddle the two perspectives but leans towards that of the affect theorists arguing against Nussbaum’s call for compassion. Boler aligns what Nussbaum calls ‘compassion’ with what Aristotle referred to as ‘pity’ – and what Boler calls ‘passive empathy’ (257). Boler problematizes this ‘compassion’ arguing that instead of positively having an effect by producing action to make change, it actually allows for a guilt-free reading that “produces no action towards justice but situates the powerful Western eye/I as the judging subject, never called upon to cast her gaze at her own reflection” (259). Boler argues that the function of empathy is in fact an act of power relations with the reader holding power over the ‘other’.

Assistant Professor of Rhetoric and Composition Eric Leake presents a similar form of empathy to Boler’s passive empathy, which he calls easy empathy. Empathy, Leake argues, is a “cognitive and affective form of identification and understanding” (175), while easy empathy is empathy given to a character that is seen as deserving of it (i.e. a victim). But unlike Boler, Leake argues that easy empathy is important because it helps us to relate to others and by extension helps us understand ourselves. Though he does point out a similar danger with easy empathy that occurs with passive empathy, in that it “does not much challenge our view of ourselves” and “can actually make us complacent in that view, as we are reassured that we are the caring people we consider ourselves to be” (174). Leake goes on to explain that difficult empathy, empathy that places easy empathy into question and unsettles us, mediates the dangers that arise with easy empathy, in that difficult empathy shows us “our vulnerabilities reflected in

victims and our shared human capacity to victimize reflected in victimizers” (174). Difficult empathy, in short, shows the reader their capabilities of becoming and being a victimizer.

On the other side of the spectrum English educator Emily Wender argues for the need of empathy in the classroom. Though Wender is looking at how teachers need to take an empathetic stance towards their students, many of the points that she argues are transferable to the reading of literature. Wender argues that empathy is not just an imaging, as Nussbaum and Jurecic argue, of what it is to be in someone else’s place but rather an exercise in shifting point of view. However, she does not discredit the argument that empathy is an act of imaging but extends it, through the use of McCann, by arguing that the empathic stance is defined in two ways: “being able to put oneself in the place of the other” and “being able to imagine vividly what he or she is experiencing” (34). Empathy, Wender argues contrary to Boler, is “a *practice*, a process that extends in time”, an action itself not a feeling that can be claimed (34).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Context for Analysis

Since this study is concerned with the IB program and cultivating empathy, I will be looking at the participant, the novels *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, through the context of the IB curriculum and empathetic reading, or reading with the intent of empathy. Specifically, the values and attributes laid out by the Mission Statement and Learner Profile that pertain to the development of empathy and intercultural understanding. The analysis will be working to answer the research questions of this study:

1. [How] can increasing the gap between the IB Mission Statement and classroom execution be closed?
2. [How] can reading literature from different cultures develop empathy and increase intercultural understanding in the classroom?

In order to analyze the participant with the goal of developing empathy I will be utilizing literary analysis.

Educator Kelly Gallagher argues that English teachers teach great works of literature “because we want our student to do more than appreciate a good story. We want to provide them with what Kenneth Burk calls ‘imaginative rehearsals’” for the world that they will soon enter outside of the classroom (89). He goes on, in his book *Deeper Reading*, to discuss the multiple layers that exist within a well-crafted text and the importance that students not only read to begin to see those layers but read to go beyond the plot to think deeper about the text and “the issues that will affect their [students’] lives” (89). In order to get students to actively participate with a text to gain meaning from it, literary analysis is often employed. Literary analysis is the

examination of a technique or element of a text –character, plot, diction, ect. – and how it creates meaning or supports an argument being made about the text. Literary analysis helps to “instill intellectual values by engaging students with big ideas about which they may already be concerned and showing them the meaningful results of that engagement” (Buckley 3). It is literary analysis that helps students to “move *beyond* the text and consider its implication to them as human beings”, to move past simply recognizing craft and enjoying the plot to get to what the story means to students’ lives now (Gallagher 20).

Participants

To demonstrate how literature can be taught to develop empathy I have created a series of criteria that I used to choose the two texts that will be analyzed in the following section. I chose these criteria after considering my student teaching experience and what I learned about teaching reading during my teacher licensing classes, the aims of the IB program, and the benefit and potential dangers of empathy. The criteria is as follows:

1. The text is one that I have read in depth (studied at some point so that I have been able to look at it as a reader and analyzer before this analysis). This is so that I am able to come to the text as a student, teacher, and analyzer.
2. The text is widely circulated/ well known and used within the secondary classroom.
3. The text is narrated from the perspective of a single character who comes in contact with characters who are ‘other’ or different from them (either culturally, racially, economically, ect.) presenting the dual identities of the self (protagonist) and the other.

4. The text is set in a context or has a protagonist that students can directly identify with (ex. the protagonist is of a similar age, experiencing a similar difficulty, ect.).
5. The text has historical relevance so that it may be taught along with historical events to allow for greater student understanding of how literature functions within society, gain greater understanding of their own culture and other cultures, as well as challenge students understanding of history and their world view. (This final criterion is very important in consideration of the IB curricula because the program aims to get students to understand their own cultures as well as other cultures and how the past is a common heritage for all humankind).

After consideration of these criteria the two texts that I chose are Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird (TKAM)* (1960) and Sherman Alexie's *Absolutely True Diary of Part-Time Indian* (2007).

I have read *TKAM* for class in high school, to teach while student teaching, and for analysis. This variety of reading contexts allows me to approach the novel as student, teacher and analyzer. The novel is not only widely circulated within the United States but is also often taught or suggested for outside reading in secondary education, as well as actively taught in IB classrooms. *TKAM* is narrated through the adult character of Scout looking back on a transitional period during her childhood in Maycomb, Alabama during the Great Depression. Through the novel Scout is exposed to a series of characters that are different from her culturally (the black community, Calpurnia's church), racially (Tom Robinson and the black community), and economically (Walter Cunningham and the Ewells). From her interactions with these characters, and of course Boo, the adult Scout presents the dual identities of Scout and 'other'. However, unlike Alexie's narrator Junior, Scout represents the minority population in the novel, providing

the alternative perspective of a child who does not understand the experience of the ‘other’.

Despite being placed during the Great Depression and in the time of Jim Crow Laws, there is the opportunity for students to be able to connect with the young characters of Scout, Jem, and Dill. Students can relate to these characters as children experiencing a period of transition, as well as relate to Scout, Jem, and Dill’s adventures, games, and difficulty understanding ‘adult’ matters. Finally, in the novel Lee draws heavily on historical events including the Great Depression, Jim Crow Laws, and the Scottsboro boys¹. This allows for not only a reading of this text for plot and other literary devices but also for historical relevance for greater student understanding of how literature functions within society.

Though I have not read *Absolutely True Diary* as many times as *TKAM* I have still read it for an education related class for teaching adolescent literature and for analysis. Though I have not taught it specifically I am still able to approach the text as a student, teacher and analyzer due in large part to the college course (adolescent literature) that I originally read the novel for. Since Alexie’s novel is not as old as Lee’s it has not gained the momentum in secondary classroom that Lee’s has. However, the novel is still taught in classrooms and recommended for outside reading (Metzger, Box, and Blasingame). The novel is narrated through the semi-autobiographical character of Junior (Arnold) Spirit who decides to leave his home on the Spokane Indian Reservation to enroll in the all-white high school of Reardan. This decision brings Junior into contact with those who are culturally, racially, and economically different from him, though unlike Scout, Junior is the minority or characterized ‘other’ in this context. This interaction not

¹ According to my mentor teacher, it was the Scottsboro boys trials that persuaded Lee to write *TKAM*. In Alabama, in 1931 nine black teenagers were accused of raping two white women on a train. The trials lasted from 1931 – 1937 and despite the evidence that the two white women accusing these nine boys were prostitutes and that the boys were not near them on the train all nine boys spent an average of 10 years in prison before finally being released.

only presents the dual identity of the self and the ‘other’ but also the difficulty of dealing with a split identity that comes from being the only Native American in an all-white school. Students can understand and identify with Junior and his experiences even if they struggle to comprehend his dual identity. When teaching Alexie’s novel educator Andrea Box found that all “students, non-Native and Native American, said they could relate to the topics and issues, including the school mascot [...], substance abuse, death, friendship, and coming of age today” (Metzger, Box, and Blasingame 60). Despite being set in the present, *Absolutely True Diary* deals extensively with historical events surrounding Native Americans within the United States. Alexie, utilizing comedy, provides an accessible entrance into the overlooked and underrepresented history and culture of Native Americans and specifically the Spokane Indian reservation.

Analysis

Using literary analysis I will provide four examples of reading to develop empathy. I will begin the analysis by compiling the arguments that I have explored in the literature review on empathy to formulate an empathetic lens and list of criteria, focusing specifically on the work of Adam Morton and Eric Leake. Morton provides the closest thing that I could find to a list of how to read literature for empathy and I found that Leake’s argument regarding easy empathy and difficult empathy best presented the multiple layers of reading for empathy, namely empathy for the victim and being able to see oneself in the acts of the victimizer. I will then use these criteria to analyze *TKAM* and *Absolutely True Diary*. I will then look at the chosen segments from each text using literature analysis and focusing on character analysis specifically. Since empathy is a tool used by one to imagine the situation of another and reading literature critically acts as an ‘imaginative rehearsal’, the chosen sections from each novel will focus on the interactions between characters. While the analysis will focus in on one specific character and, utilizing an

empathetic lens, work towards understanding that character's situation and motivation. This analysis will begin with the text, examining a scene closely through summary and looking at the character's context before branching out to the reader and their experiences to move towards getting students to imagine themselves in the character's 'shoes'. While examining each individual section from each novel for an empathetic reading I will also be building off the previous analyses to draw connections between them to further demonstrate the varied ways to read literature for empathy.

It is important to note here that though a major part of *TKAM* deals with injustice towards black people, neither of the sections I chose to discuss for this novel deals with black characters. I chose to only address white characters because I felt that similar to Boler's argument about Art Spiegelman's *MAUS*, the situation that black people faced during the time that the novel takes place is unimaginable for students, even if they are themselves black or a minority who has experienced some level of injustice. Boler argues that the Holocaust is something that students can never understand and it is through historical facts that students gain understanding that the experience of those in the Holocaust is one that is unimaginable: "to learn successfully about the Holocaust required reading stories and statistics until it becomes, precisely, *unimaginable*" (261). I argue, from my experience teaching *TKAM* as I discussed in the introduction to my thesis, that the same can be said for the experiences of the black characters within *TKAM* who are experiencing Jim Crow Laws, lynching, and being black in Alabama in the 1930s.

After demonstrating how literature can be used to develop empathy I will, in my conclusions chapter, examine the foundational goals that the IB has for students who participate in its program through the analysis of the Mission Statement and Learner Profile. Specifically I will look at the three attributes that appear in both documents – inquirers, knowledgeable, and

caring – and explain how they are imperative to intercultural understanding and international education. Finally, I will explain how my analysis of the sections from *TKAM* and *Absolutely True Diary* for an empathetic reading relate back to the mission of the IB and answer the second question of my research: how can reading literature with the intention of developing empathy increase intercultural understanding in the classroom?

CHAPTER 4: CULTIVATING EMPATHY THROUGH LITERATURE

As presented in the literature review, the use of literature to develop empathy is a complex argument. Despite this ever growing line between the two poles of agree and disagree on using literature to cultivate empathy, the fact remains that empathy is a necessity, though “not a luxury in human affairs” (Morton 318). Empathy is necessary in our ever growing and globalizing world because it helps us to relate to others as well as, helping us understand ourselves. It even, at times, does the important work of challenging our world-views (Leake). So though it is up for discussion how successful the development of empathy can be through the reading of literature, the fact remains that empathy is imperative to the continuation of a globalized world working towards peace (Leake).

Simply, empathy is an act of imagination, similar to reading a book. However, not all texts are acceptable for use to cultivate empathy. Texts that nearly replicate the views of the reader, though enjoyable for the reader since their viewpoints go unquestioned, do little to develop empathy. Morton argues that “a skillful author will direct the imagination to aspects of the fictional situation, including aspects of the fictional character’s motivation, that are similar to those of the reader, so that one gets a partial imagination of the motivation [...] a partial grasp of motivation is all one ever has” (325). Rather a novel like Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* and Sherman Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* are examples of books to teach with the mindset of fostering empathy because both novels present aspect that all students can connect to while also challenging their world views.

Imagining with the intent to foster empathy is more difficult and must be done consciously. Despite the abundant work being done on empathy and literature, I was unable to

find during my research specifics of how to approach a text with the intention of an empathetic reading. As such I have created and will be using the following criteria to analyze *TKAM* and *Absolutely True Diary*, I have done so as an attempt to mediate the absence of a measurable way to develop empathy through reading. The criteria is as follows:

1. The scene being discussed in the novel needs to be detailed enough that it can be imagined clearly by students to ensure comprehension.

Gallagher highlights that students need to be able to comprehend a work in order to “move beyond the literal, and to free up cognitive space for higher-level thinking” (80), otherwise analysis will be ineffective and likely shut students down.
2. Boler (1997) highlights the need for understanding the historical context surrounding the events taking place in a text². The reader needs to be able to analyze historical context and character context.
3. The reader needs to draw connections between themselves/their experiences and acts/emotions/aspects that are presented in the character being analyzed, or what Morton (2011) refers to as things that the reader can vividly imagine. This is key after considering context because, as Gallagher argues “reflection begins with the self, and this is the level of reflection adolescents are most comfortable with” (156).

The best place to begin with imagining oneself in another’s skin, for students, is with the self.

² Boler discusses the Art Speigman text *MAUS* and how it is imperative for students to fully understand and be familiar with the historical facts of the Holocaust to avoid passive empathy or the misconception of being able to completely ‘understand’.

4. Acts/emotions/aspects that challenge the reader's imagination. The reader needs to attempt to understand an 'other' and when doing that there will be aspects that are difficult to imagine or are nearly unimaginable.
5. At times the reader needs to identify who is a victimizer in relation to the character that they are empathizing to show "our shared human capacity to victimize reflected in victimizers" (Leake 175). Simply, a victimizer is someone who does harm to another. This act of victimization can range from verbally hurting someone to physically harming someone's property or someone's body³. The way that victimizer is being used here is not so much in the extreme acts such as rape and murder but rather in the everyday acts of cruelty that all human beings are capable of including: insulting someone, destroying or harming something of importance to someone, physically hurting someone like a punch or a smack.

The above criteria works to break down the difficult and often varied ways of imagining, by presenting a tangible way of reading with the intention of developing empathy. Using two sections from Lee's *TKAM* and two sections from Alexie's *Absolutely True Diary* I will illustrate the use of this criteria.

³ Eric Leake (2014) examines the characters of Bigger Thomas from Richard Wright's *Native Son* and Patrick Bateman in Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*, both are at the extreme of victimization in their acts of murder.

***To Kill a Mockingbird*: Walter Cunningham and Mrs. Dubose**

The first consideration when approaching this scene is to check for understanding, by summarizing what is happening in the scene and the key events of the situation, specifically the interaction between Scout and Walter. In the third chapter of the *TKAM*, Jem invites Walter Cunningham over for dinner [lunch] to make up for Scout's bullying. Walter graciously accepts and accompanies them home. During the dinner Walter proceeds to pile food high on his plate and top it with a heavy coat of molasses: "Walter poured syrup on his vegetables and meat with a generous hand" (32). He continues to do so with his entire meal until Scout stops him and asks "what the sam hill he was doing" (32). As a result of this sudden interruption, Walter replaces the saucer of molasses, removes his hands to his lap and bows his head in shame. Scout, reprimanded by Atticus and Calpurnia for her rude behavior to a guest, removes herself from the dining room into the kitchen where Calpurnia gives her a stern talking to about her behavior to her guest. Scout replies, "He ain't company, Cal, he's just a Cunningham" (33). Walter does not fit into Scout's definition of company; rather he is just a Cunningham, which is self-explanatory to Scout.

This is an example of a scene in a text that presents the danger of reader sympathy because of the presentation of Walter, who clearly is not accustomed to eat in this way, and is scrutinized for how he is choosing to indulge. However, this scene also has the potential for an empathetic reading to get students away from simple sympathy to a more complex understanding of those around them and themselves. The second consideration when looking at this section of the novel for an empathetic reading is the context behind Walter Cunningham's character in direct relation to Scout's. Walter is a member of a proud farming family in Maycomb who has been hit hard by the Depression; as a result, they have little money and little food. Scout, though

still from a family that has been hit by the depression, is better off. With Atticus being a lawyer rather than a farmer, who can afford three meals a day and a housekeeper. This understanding then allows students to begin to be able to imagine Walter's motivation for pouring molasses all over his food (with molasses being a delicious delicacy in this time). With this in mind, students can use their own experience to imagine what it would be like to walk around in Walter's skin: at someone else's house, indulging in a good meal, slightly uncomfortable because it is a different eating setting than one is used to, and maybe even being questioned about how they eat. This will then allow students to fill in the blanks of Walter's feelings about being criticized for his actions and his motivation for subduing his behavior and bowing his head.

After students are able to put themselves in Walter's skin and come to an understanding of his experience through imagining, the last step would be to consider Scout's position. Not so much to empathize with her actions but rather to get students to see themselves as a 'victimizer' and begin to learn how they treat people who are different without considering their motivation and emotions. This alternative view would also prevent students from trying to feel bad for Walter or fall into easy empathy, which does little more than perpetuate one's own ideas of them self.

Of the four sections that I will examine in this work, Walter is probably the easiest to empathize with because the section provides a variety of acts and emotions that students would be able to relate to directly. Furthermore, Walter is younger and seemingly uncomplicated in his youth. Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose, however, presents difficulty for empathy both in her seemingly unexplainable attitude and her age.

In chapter 11, after previously meeting Mrs. Dubose earlier in the novel, she appears in more detail. Following Jem's birthday and neck deep in the build-up to the Tom Robinson Trial,

Jem and Scout journey into town to spend Jem's gift. On their way, they pass Mrs. Dubose's house, where she sits outside in her rocking chair. Though they are used to Mrs. Dubose's cruel comments, this day she seems particularly vial spitting out: "what has this world come to when a Finch goes against his raising? I tell you [...] Your father's no better than the niggers and trash he works for" (135). By this point Scout is used to hearing people say foul things about Atticus and his defending of Robinson but for some reason this particular remark rubs Jem, who "had a naturally tranquil disposition and a slow fuse" the wrong way (136). Despite this they continue into town where Jem buys a steam engine he had his eye on and a baton that Scout had been admiring. On their return home, while Scout practices tossing and catching with her new baton; Jem, seeing that Mrs. Dubose is no longer on her porch, grabs the baton from Scout and proceeds to "cut the tops off every camellia bush Mrs. Dubose owned" (137). Later, after having talked with Mrs. Dubose, Atticus returns home and demands that Jem go and apologize. As payment for his actions, Jem must go to Mrs. Dubose's every afternoon and read to her for two hours. Jem and Scout, who decides to accompany him, realize that this is not as bad as they originally believed because Mrs. Dubose often drifts to sleep and with the sound of a timer by her bed, they are then shooed out by 'her girl' Jessie. As the days pass Scout realizes that "each day we had been staying a little longer at Mrs. Dubose's, that the alarm clock went off a few minutes later every day" (145). Shortly after this, Mrs. Dubose relieves Jem of his duties and Jem and Scout learn from Atticus that the reason for Mrs. Dubose's strange behavior was due to morphine withdrawal. Atticus tells them that Mrs. Dubose was on morphine for many years due to pain but upon hearing that she only had a few more months to live, she decided that she wanted to enter death clear of her addiction.

Mrs. Dubose presents a more difficult empathy as argued by Leake, though not nearly to the same degree of severity discussed by Leake, though similar in that she unsettles the reader. It is necessary to address difficult forms of empathy when working to develop empathy because often times those who are misunderstood and misjudged are those who, like Mrs. Dubose, are initially unlikeable or difficult.

To avoid the inevitable that goes along with a character like Mrs. Dubose, who is initially angering, and instead approach this section for an empathetic reading it is important to begin by revisiting the scene to ensure that students are able to go beyond the literal and move to an analysis for empathetic reading. The next step is to look at context to break down her character and begin to understand her motive behind her words. This is slightly more difficult than when looking at Walter because a) the reader is provided a multilayered look at Walter through not only Scout but also Jem and Atticus; and b) the Cunningham family closely resembles and represents farming families that lived during the Great Depression. While Mrs. Dubose is largely portrayed negatively because Scout as a child cannot understand her, as such the reader is at the mercy of Scout's biased representation. Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose is an old woman who lives alone with her black 'girl' (assumedly a house keeper) Jessie. She is very ill and as a result spends most of her time either in bed or sitting on her porch, wrapped in a shawl, harassing passers by. She is stubborn and despite her cruelty very brave in her choosing to fight through the agony of morphine withdrawal and welcome the pain of her body just to die clean. Furthermore, contextually it is important to know about withdrawal and how difficult it is in order to begin to understand Mrs. Dubose's motive and reasoning for acting the way that she does. This consideration and clarification of context, particularly the agony of drug withdrawal, then allows students to be able to imagine her motivation for being so mean and dislikable. With

this in mind students can begin to use their own experience to imagine what it would be like to be in Mrs. Dubose's situation. This would likely be far more difficult than with Walter but it is more probable that students would be able to understand the difficulty of being kind when in pain, they could consider a time when they felt ill or were in serious bodily pain and think on how they acted. Likely many of them would be able to begin to understand Atticus' words to Jem about Mrs. Dubose: "Jem, she's old and ill. You can't hold her responsible for what she says and does" (140). This move towards being able to begin, on a very small scale, to relate to Mrs. Dubose's situation would then allow students to fill in the blanks of her feelings, acts and motivation possibly still using their experience but with elders they have dealt with so that some of it is rudimentary in detail. However, since Mrs. Dubose is so drastically different, namely in age and possibly as an addict, there will be many aspects students will be unable to imagine. Despite these blanks students will begin to be able to understand Mrs. Dubose's situation better and put themselves in her skin, or rather wrap themselves in her shawl.

Similar to the previous excerpt from the novel, after students are able to imagine Mrs. Dubose's situation and come to an understanding of her experience, the last step is to consider Jem's position as a victimizer. Despite his typically calm and collected personality, in this instance he takes on the role of victimizer through his intentional destruction of Mrs. Dubose's camellias, lopping off every head of each flower before he is done just to harm her in retaliation for her words. Jem's actions towards Mrs. Dubose are worse than those by Scout to Walter because he destroys Mrs. Dubose's flowers with the intention of hurting her. It is probable that students more easily relate to Jem and could imagine themselves in a similar situation. This understanding of the capacity to victimize is important here because it is likely that students will identify more with Jem than to Mrs. Dubose and so they will more easily be able to see

themselves acting in a similar way in response to her cruelty (whether they have actually done so or not). Furthermore, this illustrates Leake's point that by identifying who the victimizer is in the relation to the character being read for empathy, demonstrates "our shared human capacity to victimize" as reflected in victimizers (175). This is particularly important in this context because it encourages critical thinking on how we react to those we do not like and possible lengths we may go to punish those for things they do, without trying to understand why they do it.

Both the readings of Walter Cunningham and Mrs. Dubose demonstrate the act of imagining oneself in the position of another. This not only works to develop empathy in that Walter and Mrs. Dubose illustrate the differences of people, but through looking at the similarities between themselves and the characters, students are able to begin to understand the characters' motives and situation. Furthermore, both sections challenge the reader's perspectives of themselves because along with reading Walter and Mrs. Dubose through an empathetic lens students are also working to see themselves as the victimizers who assault these two characters. This duality encourages students to not only come to a greater understanding of others and the situations/contexts they come from but also of themselves and how they react to those who are different or present differences.

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian: Rowdy and Penelope

The Absolutely True Diary, though humorous, deals with many things including the difficulty of identity, extreme poverty, hopelessness, and the problematic presence of the Native American in the United States culture. Due to the deep complexity of this novel it can be easy to get swallowed by the text and completely bypass empathy. However, doing this will often lead to sympathy and likely reader (particularly white reader) guilt. To avoid these pitfalls it is important

to step away from the multiple things that are happening and look at the text with the goal of developing empathy.

After his expulsion from the reservation high school, Junior, with Mr.P's prompting, decides that the most likely place to have the most hope is Reardan high school. Following this decision, Junior goes to tell his best friend Rowdy and to invite him to come with. Before breaking the news to Rowdy, Junior is struck by a desire to tell him how much he cares about him, that "he was my best friend and I loved him like crazy" (49) but resolves that boys do not say such things. When Junior finally tells Rowdy about Reardan, he thinks it's a joke and when Junior asks him to come with he begins to get angry realizing that not only is it true that his best friend is leaving for an all white high school but also that he cannot follow. In an attempt to calm Rowdy and show him that he still cares Junior touches Rowdy's shoulder but Rowdy pulls away and yells: "Don't touch me you retarded fag" (53). At this Junior feels his heart break and begins to cry, Rowdy too begins to cry. Upon discovering this he suddenly screams a scream of "pain, pure pain" (53). When he finally stops screaming, Junior again while explaining why he must leave the reservation, tries to touch Rowdy's shoulder to which Rowdy responds to by punching Junior right in the face and walking away. With that Junior realizes that his best friend had become his worst enemy and he would be leaving the reservation for Reardan alone.

This chapter is chaotic emotionally and physically. Similar to other interactions between Rowdy and Junior following this point in the text, it is heaving with the unspeakable truth that even if Rowdy wanted to join Junior he could not, on Rowdy's end, with cruelty and violence. This scene along with the one later in the text when Rowdy elbows Junior in the head at the basketball game makes it difficult to like Rowdy, let alone empathize with him. It is especially hard to even begin to relate to him when it seems that he is purposefully doing things to hurt

Junior like calling him a ‘fag’ and hitting him in his head fully aware of the fragility of his brain. However, similar to Mrs. Dubose it is important to develop an empathetic stance that is flexible in an effort to understand everyone including those who are regarded by students with aversion. As with the sections above from *TKAM* the first consideration when approaching this chapter for an empathetic reading is to return to the scene to get the students familiar with it enough so that they can move beyond what is happening and begin to look at it analytically. The next important step is to consider the context from which Rowdy is a product. Like Junior, Rowdy was born and raised on the Spokane Indian Reservation, a reservation that is increasingly poor and full of individuals who have given up their dreams; because no one listens to the dreams of an Indian. Rowdy’s dad, like many residents of the reservation, is an alcoholic and a mean one at that. On a daily basis Rowdy shows up to school with a new bruise, cut or welt. As a result of this helplessness that he experiences at home Rowdy tries to take back power by then beating up someone (or at times something) else. Rowdy, as Mr. P points out to Junior, like so many others on the reservation has given up and as a result he is going to get meaner because there is no hope left for him. Key here is that Junior is the only good thing in Rowdy’s life and Junior’s house acts as a safe place for Rowdy from his abusive father and his dismal future. Also important here is that though Junior invites Rowdy to come with him to Reardan the fact is that even if he wanted to he never could: he’s not smart enough, he’s not brave enough, and his dad would likely kill him if he ever mentioned leaving the reservation. So Junior leaving the reservation is literally the final good thing in Rowdy’s life walking away to a better place that he cannot go. These parts are key to Rowdy’s context when reading for empathy because once students understand this context they can better understand Rowdy and his motivation for physically and verbally hurting Junior.

With this budding understanding of Rowdy's motivation students can then begin to use some of their own experience to get a clearer idea of what it would be like to be in Rowdy's situation. Students could think of a time when they were irrationally angry because they were unable to process their sorrow when someone or something they loved deeply was leaving or being taken away from them. Thinking about this anger specifically is important because anger is often times a guise put up to conceal deeper emotions like sorrow or grief, as well as a front for helplessness. This will then allow students to begin to fill in the blanks of Rowdy's feelings, actions, and motivation. Though Rowdy presents a complex history of oppression, repression, and stereotyping that likely most (and depending on the classroom, all) students would be unable to imagine. Despite this students will be able to work towards a greater understanding of Rowdy and his motives particularly with the realization that Rowdy uses anger and violence to deal with his problems and using their personal experience students may begin to be able to understand this coping mechanism. Though Rowdy is a complicated character created not only on a personal level but also a product of a heavily repressed and misrepresented culture through considering his context and imagining his situation students will be able to come to a better understanding of his motivation behind his cruel actions towards Junior.

After being in Reardan for a while and continuing to struggle both socially and personally, one day in history class Junior, bored, asks to be excused to use the bathroom. While in the bathroom he hears what sounds like:

“ARGGHHHHHHHHSSSSPPPPPPGGGHHHHHHHAAAAARGHHHHHHHHHHAGGGGHH” in the girl's bathroom (105). He realizes that it sounds like someone vomiting, or more specifically “like a 747 is landing on a runway of vomit” (105). After continuing to hear the sounds Junior knocks on the door and asks if the person inside are okay or would like him to go

and get someone, the person inside tells him to go away. Picking up the hint, Junior begins to return to class but then feels something pulling him back so he decides to wait outside the bathroom for the person inside. To his surprise the person who walks out of the girls bathroom chewing on a giant piece of cinnamon chewing gum is none other than Penelope. Seeing him she asks what he is looking at and he says an anorexic, she corrects him that she is not anorexic but bulimic and puts her nose in the air as if she is proud of her bulimia. Junior asks what the difference between the two is and she responds: "Anorexics are anorexics all the time [...] I'm only bulimic when I am throwing up" (107). To which Junior thinks that she sounds like his dad when he says that he is only an alcoholic when he gets drunk, a lie addicts use to convince themselves that they still have control over the problem. So Junior decides to say to Penelope what he always says to his dad: don't give up. To which Penelope responds by suddenly bursting into tears and talking about "how lonely she is, and how everybody thinks her life is perfect [...] but that she is scared all the time" (108). Junior realizes that even his beautiful crush Penelope is not as perfect as he originally believed, which only makes him like her more, despite her vomit and cinnamon breath.

Though this scene does not appear to be as complex as the others I have discussed because not a whole lot seems to be going on, it does provide the potential for an empathetic reading. Though it is different because Penelope is not a character that students approach with aversion like Mrs. Dubose and Rowdy, or at the mercy of judgment for what she is doing like Walter Cunningham. Rather she is a character who is likeable (though shallow at times), relatable, and always in her comfort zone. Regardless it is necessary to use her as an example for an empathetic reading because often times those we are meanest to are those who are like us but choose to act in ways that we do not understand. As with the previous readings the first

consideration when looking at this section with an empathetic reading in mind is to return to the text and summarize it to ensure comprehension as well as pick out important things that may have been missed the first read. The second thing to look at is Penelope's context. Penelope is a beautiful and popular girl in Junior's grade who on the first day of meeting Junior scolds him for lying about his name. She comes from a well off family and lives comfortably in the rich white farming community of Reardan and she is the apple of her father's eye. Despite her good fortune, however, Penelope struggles with the image that she believes is expected of her: to be "pretty and smart and popular" (108), so she tries to maintain control of her life through bulimia.

This understanding of Penelope's context may likely create a larger barrier for students to empathize with her but understanding this context in light of their personal experiences will begin to help students to be able to imagine her situation and motivation. Many students would likely be able to relate to Penelope's struggle to maintain perceived expectations of who they should be created by their peers. Though they may not go the route of bulimia they likely can understand the alteration of the self to maintain some form of control over that expectation. Then looking at Penelope's experience through the lens of their own experiences in high school and growing up with societal and personal expectations will then allow students to begin to be able to imagine Penelope's situation and motivation. This will then allow students to fill in the blanks of her feelings, acts and motivation. Many students, particularly females, will be able to continue to use personal experience to imagine Penelope's choice to become bulimic even if it is something they have never done themselves. Though some things will be unimaginable for students, despite these absences students will be able to understand how she does what she does even if they do not understand why. Though this final example of an empathetic reading is not nearly as complex as the others it is important because working to understand someone's seemingly

ridiculous actions even when it seems they have everything because often we do not know everything that is happening in someone's life and it is necessary to try to understand their situations rather than just perpetuating a problem.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

The IB program, I believe, is an important program. The goals and mission that it aims to achieve through the connective education provided by the PYP, MYP, and DP are paramount to our rapidly globalizing and interconnected world. Despite this solid foundation however, like any large program that has grown exponentially and uncontrollably, the mission of the IB has begun to falter in the classroom so that it is beginning to get a reputation of being elitist in its value of Western ideals (Bunnell). In response to this growing argument, I have, in this study worked to answer the following research questions:

1. [How] can the increasing gap between the IB Mission Statement and classroom execution begin to be closed?
2. [How] can reading literature from different cultures develop empathy and increase intercultural understanding in the classroom?

As stated in the introduction, my definition of culture here is, broadly, a group of people that share customs, attitudes, beliefs, and a unique historical background that is passed along through language, art, religion, ect.

The Mission Statement in the Classroom

I started this research into the International Baccalaureate with the simple question: what are the pros and cons of the IB? The answers to this question revealed a disparity between the aims of the Mission Statement and classroom execution. Believing that this pattern, of the lack of the presence of the Mission Statement in the classroom, was key to understanding the experience I had while student teaching, I began this study with the question: [how] can the increasing gap between the IB Mission Statement and classroom execution begin to be closed? This is a large

question in need of far more research than I have done here. However, I have, through my analysis of *TKAM* and *Absolutely True Diary*, demonstrated that this gap can begin to be closed and provided a way in which classroom execution can connect directly back to the Mission Statement.

Through the Mission Statement (Appendix A) the IB aims to create compassionate, active, lifelong learners committed to working to develop a more peaceful world through respect and intercultural understanding. It argues that this will be developed in students through “challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment”. Empathy works to illustrate the shared connectivity that we all, as humans, have through the use of imagining oneself in another’s position in order to gain an understanding of their motivation and actions. Similar to the aims behind the IB and international education, a major purpose of empathy is to create respect for all humans through illustrating those things that unite us and demonstrating that difference should not divide us.

In my above analysis I have demonstrated how reading literature in the classroom for empathy can actively connect with the goals stated in the IB Mission Statement. While reading for empathy students need to approach the text and the character that they are analyzing with respect and the belief that the views of that person can also be right even if they differ from the student’s own views. This is particularly evident when looking at Rowdy and Mrs. Dubose, whose views and approaches to the world would seem unusual and almost ridiculous to many students. Furthermore, the tools provided for developing empathy through reading can be transferred to the students’ real lives, and, in fact, through the use of their own experiences to begin to imagine the character’s motivation they are already transferring it to their real world. These tools must continue to be honed and polished pushing for an active lifelong learning to

participate in our rapidly interconnected world. This in turn, along with the use of texts from multiple cultures, pushes students closer to intercultural understanding and to becoming global citizens working towards a more peaceful world because the practice of empathy forces students to see the humanity within all people regardless of their cultural, racial, or economic background.

Furthermore, my analysis demonstrates how classroom execution can align with the Mission Statement in that the Mission Statement highlights the program's aim to be challenging and rigorous in its material and assessment. Reading to develop empathy is difficult and can be particularly challenging because, as illustrated throughout the analysis, it is more than breaking down a character but rather taking on the perspective of that character and getting into their 'skin'. An empathetic reading challenges students because it asks them to take on another's mindset which can be difficult because that other may be racially, culturally, economically different or act in a way that students find repugnant such as Penelope's choice to be a bulimic in an effort to control her [still] seemingly perfect life.

The Foundational Goals of the IB

Before moving on to examine the answer to the second question of this study, of how using literature to foster empathy can increase intercultural understanding in the classroom, it is important to look more closely at the foundational goals of the IB program as presented in the Mission Statement and Learner Profile. As discussed above, the IB Mission Statement states a goal of creating active, passionate, lifelong learners who continue to work towards a more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and international education. To further this mission the IB created the Learner Profile (Appendix B) in an effort to more clearly lay out exact values and attributes that the IBO would like students to have and use. Of the 10 listed attributes

on the Learner Profile three of them are present in the Mission Statement: inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring. These terms are defined as follows in the Learner Profile (IBO):

1. Inquirers: students develop their natural curiosity. They acquire the skills necessary to conduct inquiry and research and show independence in learning. They actively enjoy learning and this love of learning will be sustained throughout their lives.
2. Knowledgeable: students explore concepts, ideas, and issues that have a local and global significance. In so doing they acquire in-depth knowledge and develop understanding across a broad and balanced range of disciplines.
3. Caring: students show empathy, compassion, and respect towards the needs and feelings of others. They have a personal commitment to service, and act to make a positive difference to the lives of others and to the environment.

Of the 10 attributes these three represent the foundation not only of the IB but also of international education as well because they speak to the importance of students being open-minded and passionate to keep learning, motivated to continue to not only acquire knowledge but also to use it critically, and driven to be respectful, compassionate, and empathetic towards others to work towards making a difference in the world. These three things are present and fundamental in international education because they emphasize knowing the similarities between the self and others as well as being able to understand and appreciate the “positive values of those things which may seem to divide us” (Hill 22). These attributes are key to the IB, over the

other 7, because they directly connect to the goal of intercultural understanding and the creation of global citizens stated in the Mission Statement⁴.

Along with the fundamental importance of students being inquirers, knowledgeable, and caring as stated in the Mission Statement and Learner Profile, there is also the need for students to understand their own culture as well as other cultures. According to the IB, intercultural understanding is the recognizing and reflecting on one's own perspective as well as the perspective of others; the IB programs, with this in mind, foster learning how to appreciate critically the world's rich cultural heritage by exploring human commonality, diversity, and interconnection (IBO). The importance of this understanding of one's own culture as well as other cultures is also repeated throughout the three discussed terms in the Learner Profile because one must be passionate and curious to understand their own culture as well as others; they must be able to apply knowledge they already have to connect and reflect on the differences and similarities between their own culture and other cultures; and they must approach other cultures with respect and empathy rather than viewing their own culture as dominant to others.

IB and Empathy

At the beginning of this study I stated that my intention was to demonstrate how the reading of texts to develop empathy could work to cultivate intercultural understanding in students and in essence work to more closely connect the Mission Statement and Learner Profile to classroom execution. Above I have provided an analysis of two sections from Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* and Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, as well as providing an answer through these analyses for my first research question for this study

⁴ The IB Mission Statement does not actually mention the creation of global citizens though this is an important goal of the IB program and so despite its absence in the physical document it is necessary to utilize it here as though it were.

of how the gap between the Mission Statement and classroom execution can begin to be closed. I also looked over and analyzed the IB Mission Statement and three important values – inquirers, knowledgeable, and caring - from the Learner Profile and how these two documents reveal the primary things that the IB wants students to walk away being able to do. But the question still remains: how can reading literature for empathy foster intercultural understanding and international education?

Through the use of *TKAM* and *Absolutely True Diary* I demonstrated how, using a series of steps, students can begin to understand a character's motive and situation and in turn empathize for them. This process utilizes and demands that students be inquirers because they need to want to be curious about another person and their motivation; they need to want to try to understand a person by 'walking around in their skin'. It demands that students be knowledgeable, that they utilize the contextual information that they have to explore issues and ideas to better imagine and understand an individual's situation. Finally, it demands caring – which in turn demands empathy – because students must begin the process with the goal of respecting another's needs and feelings and go through the process with the hope of working to create a positive difference through their understanding of others' situations and motives. This process of empathetic reading results in students acknowledging and reflecting on their perspectives and the perspectives of others. Each section presented characters through which students needed to explore human commonality in an effort to begin to imagine being in that character's situation. Each section also demanded the exploration of diversity in that some feelings and actions of the characters would be unimaginable for many students, like Mrs. Dubose because of her age and addiction or Rowdy because of his cultural identity as a Spokane Indian. Finally, each section demonstrated the interconnectivity of cultures and peoples because

through the empathizing process students needed to use their own experiences and knowledge to imagine another's situation.

The IB Learner Profile definition of caring starts with the need for students to show empathy but empathy, as Morton alludes to, is not a natural human instinct but rather something that must be developed and honed so as to avoid sympathy, passive empathy (Boler), or easy empathy (Leake). Though, as is evident in the above analyses, empathy is a fundamental piece of the stated goals of the IB to create global citizens who demonstrate intercultural understanding through international education. The analyses of *TKAM* and *Absolutely True Diary* illustrate how literature can be read to develop empathy and in turn intercultural understanding because it demonstrates how students can explore aspects of their own culture through Walter Cunningham, Mrs. Dubose, and Penelope; as well as another major culture within the United States that is often overlooked through Rowdy (as well as Junior since he is the narrator).

Questions for Further Study

As previously stated in the conclusions, I was unable in this study to fully examine and provide ways of going about closing the growing disparities between classroom execution and the IB mission. Though I have provided one possible way of beginning to move towards closing this gap through the use of literature and empathy to foster intercultural understanding, the question of how can the increasing gap between the IB Mission Statement and classroom execution be closed, still remains. This is a question in need of more study both within the classroom to gather data on how classroom execution of the program is managed (or not), as well as outside of the classroom to formulate possible solutions.

Another question that I originally intended to examine in this thesis but found that it no longer fit in the scheme of things is: [how] can intercultural understanding and international

education be instilled in the classroom? This I feel is a major piece to the above stated question of how can the gap between the Mission Statement and classroom execution begin to be closed, in need of further inquiry because it directly relates to the mission of the IB and something that seems to be inconsistently done in the IB classroom.

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APPENDIX A

IB Mission Statement

The International Baccalaureate® aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.

These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

APPENDIX B



IB learner profile

The aim of all IB programmes is to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world.

As IB learners we strive to be:

INQUIRERS

We nurture our curiosity, developing skills for inquiry and research. We know how to learn independently and with others. We learn with enthusiasm and sustain our love of learning throughout life.

KNOWLEDGEABLE

We develop and use conceptual understanding, exploring knowledge across a range of disciplines. We engage with issues and ideas that have local and global significance.

THINKERS

We use critical and creative thinking skills to analyse and take responsible action on complex problems. We exercise initiative in making reasoned, ethical decisions.

COMMUNICATORS

We express ourselves confidently and creatively in more than one language and in many ways. We collaborate effectively, listening carefully to the perspectives of other individuals and groups.

PRINCIPLED

We act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness and justice, and with respect for the dignity and rights of people everywhere. We take responsibility for our actions and their consequences.

OPEN-MINDED

We critically appreciate our own cultures and personal histories, as well as the values and traditions of others. We seek and evaluate a range of points of view, and we are willing to grow from the experience.

CARING

We show empathy, compassion and respect. We have a commitment to service, and we act to make a positive difference in the lives of others and in the world around us.

RISK-TAKERS

We approach uncertainty with forethought and determination; we work independently and cooperatively to explore new ideas and innovative strategies. We are resourceful and resilient in the face of challenges and change.

BALANCED

We understand the importance of balancing different aspects of our lives—intellectual, physical, and emotional—to achieve well-being for ourselves and others. We recognize our interdependence with other people and with the world in which we live.

REFLECTIVE

We thoughtfully consider the world and our own ideas and experience. We work to understand our strengths and weaknesses in order to support our learning and personal development.

The IB learner profile represents 10 attributes valued by IB World Schools. We believe these attributes, and others like them, can help individuals and groups become responsible members of local, national and global communities.



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