

## High School Student Working Groups Feedback

### Do you feel like you can relate to the books in your English Classes?

In Their Own Words - Post-It Note Responses	Discussion Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Sometimes but mostly no bc it feels like most of the books are out of touch</i></li> <li>● <i>Most are about the "perfect family" two parents and kids and in reality that's not the case</i></li> <li>● <i>As of this year, I feel like I can relate better than years before</i></li> <li>● <i>I think I can relate to some books, a book called Kesha's House, but I can't relate to books like Shakespeare or The Outsiders</i></li> <li>● <i>No, just stereotypes mostly, not much uplifting</i></li> <li>● <i>No, I cannot relate to dead old white men/women</i></li> <li>● <i>No, because we read about white history and how that affects Black history. We don't read about hispanic history in America</i></li> <li>● <i>Um not really, I've never really related to any of the books in English</i></li> <li>● <i>No, not at all. We rarely read books featuring people of color</i></li> <li>● <i>No, because it's hard to relate to Romeo and Juliet, etc. a lot of books aren't modern in our timeline</i></li> <li>● <i>No, most English books that English classes read aren't easy to relate to and are written by white authors. When we read books from a black or asian authors it's a "special case"</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No, it's boring. I can't relate, the books and stories are old</li> <li>● Since I've gotten to high school, I've been able to relate a little more and I can tell teachers are making a more conscious effort</li> <li>● I feel like if I read a book and I relate to it I still think there are stereotypes</li> <li>● No, because we only read about the history of white Americans and how it affected minorities but we don't read about it from the opposite side</li> <li>● We can choose to read what we want but the assigned books aren't about us</li> <li>● No, Not, District had a choice to read the Hate You Give but chose To Kill a Mockingbird</li> <li>● A little, it depends on what type of book it is</li> <li>● I feel like I don't relate because they are written by older white men or women and not by any other minorities and when they do introduce a minority its either about terrible stereotypes or slavery, never positive or anything we can relate to now or the future</li> <li>● We are reading the same books out parents read, the curriculum hasn't changed</li> <li>● In MS I didn't relate, in freshman year we got to choose a book, we choose Keisha's House and that was the only book I could relate to</li> <li>● We only talk about white america and I don't relate to that at all</li> <li>● We rarely see books featuring people of color it was <i>to kill a Mockingbird</i> and the characters were presented in a negative light would like more in the positive light</li> <li>● Not modern</li> <li>● Not realistic or addressing real world issues (don't need to read about a firefighter hiding things in the walls)</li> <li>● If we do read out dated or non diverse text, should have discussion about how to make it relevant or topic specific, don't get to hear or create other people's story</li> </ul>

**Do you feel like the texts and activities positively highlight minority and/or non-dominant populations?**

**Post-It Note Responses**

- *Um sometimes but not always. It's usually just the majority.*
- *No because we are either portrayed as thugs, poor, addicts, or slaves. They feed into the stereotypes that we should not feed into*
- *No, I feel like they mostly don't or that it only focuses on things like slavery or being oppressed*
- *No, we read a lot of sad stories abt minorities and not enough success stories*
- *Not at all especially since the books are older this could be helpful with targeted discussion*
- *No. One of the only books I believe we read about people of color was "To Kill a Mockingbird" which showed people of color in a negative light*
- *Not rly bc a lot of stories are not very realistic to anyone but maybe they should be*
- *No. In my experience, the books we read don't focus at all on non-dominant populations, mostly standard books like Romeo and Juliet*
- *No, most texts with minorities specifically African Americans, depict struggles and do not highlight all of their history*
- *No in most stories it's more of one type of person & different problems that occur & doesn't differ in that sense*

**Discussion Responses**

- Even books like *The Hate You Give*, I cried a lot and it was a good book but I was still left empty because of the stereotypes in the books
- The stories always has a sad ending when it comes to minorities like we are never successful or like they don't want us to
- We learn about black history through the white perspective and not the minority perspective and the reason may be that they think it's going to be too graphic but we need to hear and should be trusted to handle and have the conversation and they could put it in context
- A lot of the fictional stories are about basketball players, there is so much more that we can do, like they think that's all we can do, why don't we read about the doctors, the lawyers, the successes, constantly focus on the bad
- Missing out on the success stories, it's unfortunate we all need to hear the positives so we don't reinforce the already narrow stereotypes and expectations, the current readings don't encourage black students to do more
- Don't focus on just slavery related or only during black history month, only primarily read white authors talking about white people
- No books by or about Asians or other cultures, and if so they are written by white people and their point of view vs those who are don't truly represent the voice of the culture
- If diversity is presented it reinforces stereotypical views: sports, in trouble or "the issue"
- See myself as a white person but the stories are outdated which makes it hard to get through
- A Lot of the stories are depressing
- Before 9th grade I felt like English was okay but as soon as 9th grade hit and we read *To Kill a Mockingbird*, it changed things for me because the characters weren't presented in a positive light and he got killed
  - Black man being accused by a white woman who ended up dying at the end
  - Black person was a maid, etc.
- I like *To Kill a Mockingbird*, we have to read about realistic stuff too
- I feel like *The Hate You Give* Is a good replacement for *To Kill a Mockingbird* to see and explore similar themes but more realistic and relevant today
- Most books have two parents happily married or straight parents, not representative of real families today, makes me feel a way
- Books don't typically put other cultures down they just have typical stereotypes

**Do you feel a sense of belonging in your English classes?**

In Their Own Words - Post-It Note Responses	Discussion Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Sometimes I do. We really just focus on writing skill - not the importance of what we need to write about</i></li> <li>● <i>Yes, I feel like my opinions are heard (I'm white)</i></li> <li>● <i>No There is not really much I can relate to and find interesting.</i></li> <li>● <i>No. These English teachers only talk about their people books</i></li> <li>● <i>I don't feel like I belong in most of my English classes because we don't talk that much about African American culture or anything</i></li> <li>● <i>My classmates and teachers are pretty welcoming of me and my culture</i></li> <li>● <i>Yes all of my peers get along and my teachers make the activities fun</i></li> <li>● <i>Yes, I feel like I belong</i></li> <li>● <i>Yes. There's never a book bringing down a group it just doesn't always show the full story of non dominant populations</i></li> <li>● <i>Sometimes I do, other times I don't. For three years of my English classes, I was the only black student, which sometimes fostered this feeling of isolation</i></li> <li>● <i>Sometimes bc I feel like when we talk about most things I can't relate to the stories</i></li> <li>● <i>Sometimes I always have to choose to pick a book/subject that represents black people it's not always by the teacher</i></li> <li>● <i>Sometime - my english teacher tries to include everyone, but it doesn't always work</i></li> <li>● <i>No more or less than other classes rly but w race discussions not rly</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● My classmates have been very welcoming and they understanding even though there's more they can do</li> <li>● I notice the teachers are trying particularly after what happened over the summer, they are trying to be more conscious and make me feel more welcome</li> <li>● They understand, I feel like I belong, there is no issue</li> <li>● Because the majority of the people in the class are white, white students are more comfortable speaking</li> <li>● The "n" word conversation around the book and when race comes up in class people just look at you and it becomes "super sticky" uncomfortable</li> <li>● When modern texts or authors are presented people of color are uncomfortable because they reinforce stereotypes</li> <li>● Can choose a book that represents yourself at time</li> <li>● Seems like we are now being introduced to more diverse text</li> <li>● Its difficult to be the only black student in classes especially in Ap and Honors classes, I feel isolated</li> <li>● It's really hard to see yourself in the books that most teachers pick</li> <li>● Because the majority of the people in the class are white, white students are more comfortable speaking</li> <li>● The "n" word conversation around the book was tough, and when race comes up in class people just look at you and it becomes "super sticky" and uncomfortable</li> <li>● When modern texts or authors are presented people of color are made to be uncomfortable because they reinforce stereotypes</li> <li>● Can choose a book that represents yourself at times like "now's your chance"</li> <li>● Seems like we are now being introduced to more diverse text</li> <li>● Its difficult to be the only black student in classes especially in AP and Honors classes, I feel isolated</li> <li>● It's really hard to see yourself in the books that most teachers pick</li> <li>● The did a good job when given the opportunity to choose an independent reading book</li> </ul>

**What could/should teachers do to increase students' sense of belonging and relatability to the curriculum?**

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Hold more discussions if certain groups' ethnicities are portrayed poorly</i></li> <li>● <i>I believe we should most definitely incorporate more books into our course curriculums which portray people of color positively</i></li> <li>● <i>Something teachers could do to increase sense of belonging is to increase the diversity of the text w/ regards to race, sexual orientation, one parent households, etc.</i></li> <li>● <i>Have hard conversations and talk about relevant subjects</i></li> <li>● <i>Many white male straight authors are repeated too often in HS (Shakespeare, Steinbeck)</i></li> <li>● <i>Different books to focus on minorities</i></li> <li>● <i>Include more recent novels</i></li> <li>● <i>Incorporate minority authors</i></li> <li>● <i>I think teachers can talk more as a discussion &amp; come to students if they have questions about race topics</i></li> <li>● <i>Include POC authors outside of mini-units (not just in poetry/short story units</i></li> <li>● <i>Um nothing really I like the curriculum</i></li> <li>● <i>Introduce more Black poets and writers of all social and economical classes. Really all minorities! Not just black people.</i></li> <li>● <i>Most relatable stories, more work by not only African Americans but other minorities</i></li> <li>● <i>Include more diverse material that is relatable to every student</i></li> <li>● <i>Hire more minority teachers!</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Talk about more important people that we can aspire to be</li> <li>● Embed good fictional books with black people and other minorities</li> <li>● It's hard to suggest because we don't know and haven't been exposed to what's out there</li> <li>● We've always learned about the same people - Martin Luther, Rosa, there are so many other positive people and minorities we know nothing about</li> <li>● Every year we tune out because we are talking about the same people and the same story that we learned about in elementary</li> <li>● Open the doors and horizons of what all students particularly students of color can do through the curriculum</li> <li>● Increase the number of minority teachers</li> <li>● Select newer stuff that we can relate to and understand better</li> <li>● The always praise Black Lives Matter or talk about how you shouldn't be racist but they don't do anything</li> <li>● They don't hold kids accountable if someone is behaving or saying things or making others feel uncomfortable (referenced an online situation where no consequence was given but consequences are given for other less offensive actions)</li> <li>● Have texts about diverse student make ups</li> <li>● Should do more to inform students about AP &amp; Honors courses they aren't that hard</li> <li>● Allow more choice not just limited to one time independent book choice</li> <li>● Right now people of color are chosen for poetry - replace current texts with people of color, there are black playwrights, use for comparison if we have to read Shakespeare</li> <li>● Increase support for teachers             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ They express and seem scared to talk about race</li> <li>○ Admit you don't know and may be wrong</li> <li>○ Help them have an open and honest discussion with students</li> </ul> </li> </ul>