

**TEXT SETS:
PROVIDING POSSIBILITIES FOR ADOLESCENT
READERS**

JANIE RIDDLE GOODMAN
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA

Creating Text Sets for Your Classroom

What are text sets? Text sets are collections of resources from different genre, media, and levels of reading difficulty that are designed to be supportive of the learning of readers with a range of experiences and interests. A text-set collection focuses on one concept or topic and can include includes multiple genres such as books, charts and maps, informational pamphlets, poetry and songs, photographs, non-fiction books, almanacs or encyclopedias.

What's the best way to arrange text sets? Text sets are most readily accessed when they are stored in containers that allow the front covers of books or prints to face forward. Half size crates [half height, half depth] are perfect for this. Alternately, large magazine holders that hold oversized texts can be used. You will need one such container for every 4-5 students in your class and some way to label the containers.

How is a text set assembled? What do you look for in a collection?

Typically, text sets are unified by the topic that they explore. At the same time, they are differentiated by their genres and format. The collection should include a range of kinds of texts all on the same topic. "Flight," for instance, can be a text set focal point for a collection of books that range from books on Charles Lindbergh to how birds fly.

As the text sets you assemble will demonstrate the possibilities to your students, strike a middle balance. A slim collection may not inspire their efforts, and an amazing collection might intimidate your students. If you have a number of English language learners or special education students, try to locate a picture dictionary and copy the pages particular to your concept.

What drives the text set? Think about your students and what would interest them. Include enough diversity in the text set that any student would be able to pursue an interest and access the material.

HINTS FOR CREATING A TEXT SET

1. Take full advantage of the resources at your local public library! Even though the librarians will help you pull texts, you will need to determine which ones (if any) will be appropriate for what you are trying to create. Remember that the librarian probably does not know your state standards or what you are trying to do as a teacher. Tovani (2004) tells us that reading must be purposeful in order to be meaningful. Likewise, you should make purposeful decisions for what you include in your text set.
2. Your resources in your text set **MUST** address various reading levels. This is not to say that your most advanced reader can't read the picture books. The text set is for everyone's use. Since this will be aimed at adolescents, you will need an extremely wide range of material----from the children's section, Junior lit, YA lit, and probably adult lit as well.
3. Your text set **MUST** have a wide variety of resources! Look carefully on your handout at all of the items that I have listed as possibilities. Remember to include resources that will appeal to **ALL** of your students' interests.
4. If you are going to teach adolescents, you **MUST** read their literature. Look at the brochures that you can get from the library and read the blurbs about the books. You will find hints that could possibly become the cornerstone for a text set. For example, *No Pretty*

Pictures: A Child of War by Anita Lobel is about World War II. This could be in a text set with all sorts of things about WW II. *Catherine, Called Birdy* by Catherine Cushman is a novel about a girl in medieval times. This could be the beginning of a text set. You might want to focus on a novel or two, read them, and then start collecting resources.

5. You must LOVE what you are creating! Be careful and think about options. This is going to take a lot of time and effort on your part. You want your passion for the concept of the text set to be very obvious to your students. Your interest and enthusiasm will spill over to them.

6. Tovani (2004) says this is your opportunity to teach students about a CONCEPT. So if you want to teach them the concept of life in a swamp, you would think of the plants, animals, people, art, poems, stories, etc. that you can find about a swamp. Students come away with lots of ways of thinking about and looking at a swamp. Then you could ask the librarian to help you find a novel set in a swamp. An example is *Lostman's River* by Cynthia Defelice.

7. If you don't read the newspaper every day, begin to do that. You will find many possibilities lurking within the pages---local events, references to places, etc. It is a great resource!

8. Don't forget about looking through the children's and YA's magazines in the public library. These magazines are usually themed and could provide you with an inspiration for a text set!
9. Your text sets will grow and change with your curriculum. New ones will be added as current ones are replaced. Current ones can be tweaked or refocused to grow with curricular requirements.



TEXT SETS: A SUPPLEMENTAL ALTERNATIVE

When teachers make the transition from textbook only classrooms to multitext classrooms, the focus of study becomes concepts rather than the content of one particular book. Students gain both a broad perspective and an in-depth sense of the subject matter from reading many texts on the same topic. I know of no one textbook that contains enough information to help a student become even mildly expert on any topic.

Gail Ivey (2002)

EVALUATIONS OF TEXT SETS

Text sets are not designed to catch kids who aren't reading. Text sets are designed to give reluctant readers a choice of interesting and accessible text. They provide opportunities for learning and practicing reading strategies.

The use of text sets can be evaluated in the following ways:

Writing letters to future users of the sets to include with the materials.
Observing students as they use the sets and conferring with them.
Asking students to compare and contrast pieces in the text set.
Recording questions to ponder and research. (These questions can also be attached to the lid of the box for others to see.)
Marking interesting and important places in the text with sticky notes that describe connections made by the reader.

EXAMPLES OF ACCESSIBLE TEXT

Poems
Short nonfiction selections
Fiction
Picture books
Newspaper articles
Short stories
Vignettes
Biographical information
Internet pieces
Student writing
Mathematical writing
Lists
Historical recounts
Photos
Primary sources
Quotes
Song lyrics
Stamps
Letters and journals
Pictures of artwork
Calendars
Recipes
Brochures
Maps
Charts and graphs
Catalogs
Menus

Almanacs
Magazine articles
Non-print resources

References for "Text Sets: A Supplemental Alternative"

Ivey, G. (2002). Getting started: Manageable practices. Educational Leadership, 60, 3: 20-23.

Tovani, C. (2004). Do I really have to teach reading? Content comprehension, grades 6-12. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

Project RAISSE Website Presents Text Sets

Website address for Project RAISSE Homepage

<http://www.ed.sc.edu/raisse/index.htm>

Website address for Text Sets posted on Project RAISSE website

<http://www.ed.sc.edu/raisse/contentareaarticles.htm#textsets>

Samples of TEXT SETS on Project RAISSE Website

 [American Revolution](#)

 [Colonial and Revolutionary America](#)

 [Contemporary United Kingdom](#)

 [Control](#)

 [Courage](#)

 [Elections and Voting](#)

 [Heroes](#)

 [Holocaust](#)

 [Middle Ages](#)

 Multicultural

 Spanish